

As a treasure seer, could Joseph Smith see in a stone?

Peter Ingersoll (ca 1789-1867) of Manchester, New York about 44 years old

Location: Harmony, Pennsylvania

Time: 1827

According to Ingersoll Isaac Hale said to Smith:

[“]You spend your time in digging for money--pretend to see in a stone, and thus try to deceive people." Joseph wept, and acknowledged he could not see in a stone now, nor never could; and that his former pretensions in that respect, were all false. He then promised to give up his old habits of digging for money and looking into stones.

Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, Ohio: E. D. Howe, 1834), 233.

Joseph Addison Spencer Austin (1796-1872) of Colesville, New York 34 years old

Time: 1825-26

Addison Austin testifying during a summer 1830 trial of Joseph Smith and mentioned that Smith told him he could not see with the stone. At a time when Smith was working for Josiah Stowell, Sr., he was asked if he could really see where some money was hidden, about 1825-26:

Addison Austin was next called upon, who testified, that at the very same time that Stowell was digging for money, he, Austin, was in company with said Smith alone, and asked him to tell him honestly whether he could see this money or not. Smith hesitated some time, but finally replied, "to be candid, between you and me, I cannot, any more than you or any body else; but any way to get a living." Letter by A.W.B. [Abram W. Benton] to editor, March 1831, "Mormonites," *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate* 2 (April 9, 1831):120, Utica, New York.

Joel K. Noble, the Justice of the Peace for the above trial in 1830:

At the instance of the people, *Joseph A. S. Austin* was by me duly sworn, and says "that he had been acquainted with Smith, the prisoner, for several years; that prisoner pretended to look in a certain glass, or stone, and said he could tell where stolen goods were, and could discover mines of gold and silver under ground; made some pretence at telling fortunes, but he, witness, never knew of prisoner's finding any thing by his pretended art. Once witness asked prisoner to tell him if he, prisoner, could tell any thing by looking in said glass, and wished a candid and true answer. Prisoner told witness frankly, he could not see any thing, and in answer, prisoner likewise observed to witness, *any thing you know for a living*: says, two or years before this present time, he saw prisoner drink a certain quantity of *distilled liquor, and was drunk, as he does believe; for he could not stand up, but lay in the woods for some hours.*

"Mormonism," *Boston Christian Herald* 4 (September 19, 1832):2-3, Boston, Massachusetts, emphasis in original.

Treasure Glass-looker and the Book of Mormon

Abram W. Benton wrote:

For several years preceding the appearance of his book, he was about the country in the character of a glass-looker: pretending, by means of a certain stone, or glass, which he put in a hat, to be able to discover lost goods, hidden treasures, mines of gold and silver, &c. . . . During the [1830] trial it was shown that the Book of Mormon was brought to light by the same magic power by which he pretended to tell fortunes, discover hidden treasures, &c.

Letter by A.W.B. [Abram W. Benton] to editor, March 1831, "Mormonites," *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate* 2 (April 9, 1831):120, Utica, New York.

Isaac Hale, father-in-law of Joseph Smith:

I first became acquainted with JOSEPH SMITH, Jr. in November, 1825. He was at that time in the employ of a set of men who were called "money-diggers;" and his occupation was that of seeing, or pretending to see by means of a stone placed in his hat, and his hat closed over his face. In this way he pretended to discover minerals and hidden treasure.

...

The manner in which he pretended to read and interpret, was the same as when he looked for the money-diggers, with the stone in his hat, and his hat over his face, while the Book of Plates were at the same time hid in the woods!

"Mormonism," *Susquehanna Register, and Northern Pennsylvanian* 9 (1 May 1834): 1. Reprinted in *The New York Baptist Register* (Utica, New York) 11 (13 June 1834); and E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled: or, A Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, from Its Rise to the Present Time* (Painesville, Ohio: E. D. Howe, 1834), 262-66.

The word "hat" is not found in the Book of Mormon.