

Story

In September 1827 twenty-one year old Joseph Smith Jr. took a horse and wagon with his wife Emma and drove to a nearby hill in Manchester, Ontario County, New York. The story was told that there was an ancient record buried on the hill. Joseph and Emma returned home and Joseph mentioned that he took the book out of the hill and hid it.

The Smith family was poor financially with Joseph working for Lemuel Durfee Sr., Mrs. Wells and Peter Ingersoll. About a week after his trip to the hill Joseph came into the Smith home with what he called plates of gold. They were concealed from view and put in a wooden box. No one could view the plates as it would displease God and they would die. Individuals could lift the box and feel that it had weight but were not permitted to examine its contents. This box was said to be hid in various places such as a fireplace, cooper shop or outside in the woods.

Before this Joseph Smith was known as a glass-looker claiming to locate lost objects and valuable hidden treasures beneath the ground. This controversial method was employed by Smith off and on in his quest for such treasures. When friend Martin Harris asked members of the Smith family separately how Joseph located the plates in the ground, they told Harris it was by a stone. According to Harris an angel told Smith that it was God's work and quit money digging.

The process in which Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon is understandable. Under the belief he was divinely inspired Joseph would orally dictate to a scribe the story he was producing. Smith wrote some of the text himself. At times it is reported that Smith used interpreters (large spectacles) or had his face looking in a hat, with a stone in it. He also would cite text from the King James Version of the Bible. With the Bible being used it shows that the information dictated does not come from the plates.

Joseph Smith acted entirely independent from the plates as he proceeded to restore the lost American scripture. He did not need, refer to, or utilize the legendary record. Smith like some of his contemporaries accepted the theory of Israelite origin of Native Americans. Ideas in the Book of Mormon can be explained by Joseph Smith using the Bible as a source text and by being influenced by events which occurred in his family, by his scribes and by the environment in which he grew up in. Smith was a man of his culture. He produced a religious work that was a product of his time.