

The evolving story of Translation

R0.3 – 2019.12.17

Translation Version 0 – 1827-1830

- 1827 – Joseph claims to obtain the plates and the “spectacles”.
- 1828 - He uses spectacles when translating with Harris and possibly Emma, but quickly abandons them and starts using his brown seer stone acquired around 1820 during a treasure dig on Chase’s property.
- 1828 (July) - 116 pages lost
- 1828-1829 – Translation with the seer stone completed; Book of Mormon published. In addition to using the stone for translation, the brown stone is probably used to receive all of the revelations between 1828-1829 (sections 1-19 of the current D&C).
- 1830 – early spring: Whitmer later reports that Smith has given up seer stone in 1830 and that revelations going forward would be via the holy ghost. Stone given to Oliver.
- 1830 – June: Joseph put on trial for “glass looking” (i.e. using a seer stone). Acquitted due to the statutes of limitation. Oliver testifies (inaccurately) that Joseph used “two transparent stones, resembling glass, set in silver bows” for the translation.
- 1830 – Dec: A Shaker reports that Oliver said that the translation was done by Smith “looking at the plates through spectacles and afterwards he put his head in a hat and the inspiration flowed”

“Seer Stone” and “spectacles” narrative

Translation Version 1 – 1831-1880

- 1831 – Joseph Smith moves to Ohio. At a church conference when requested to tell about the translation process, he refuses:
 - “Br. Joseph Smith jr. said that it was not intended to tell the world all the particulars of the coming forth of the book of Mormon, & also said that it was not expedient for him to relate these things &c”
- 1832-1833: W.W. Phelps speculates that the translation instrument might be the Urim and Thummim mentioned in the Old Testament
- 1834: Oliver Cowdery states, “These were days never to be forgotten – to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven, awakened the utmost gratitude of this bosom! Day after day I continued, uninterrupted, to write from his mouth, as he **translated, with the Urim and Thummim**, or, as the Nephites would have said, “Interpreters,” the history, or record, called “The book of Mormon.”
- 1838: Joseph Smith records: “I obtained them [the plates], and the **Urim and Thummim with them; by the means of which, I translated the plates**; and thus came the book of Mormon.”

“not intended to tell” followed by the creation of the “Urim and Thummim” narrative

The 1850s-1870s

- Brigham Young gets his brother to visit Oliver's widow and obtain the brown seer stone. He also obtained the white seer stone. Young evidently believed in the power associated with seer stones
- Young:

“Oliver sent me Joseph's first seer stone; Oliver always kept it until he sent it to me - the second seer stone Dr. Williams had - the third one was a very large - and Joseph found two small ones on the beach in Nauvoo - a little larger than a black walnut without the shock on - Joseph said there is a stone for every person on the earth - I don't know that I have ever had a desire to have one.”
- Woodruff regarding Young:

He (Young) did not profess to be a prophet seer & Revelator as Joseph Smith was, was speaking of men being born Natural Prophets & seers. **Many have the gift of seeing through seer stones without the Priesthood at all.** He had not this gift naturally yet He was an Apostle & the President of the Church & kingdom of God on the Earth and all the Keys of the Holy Priesthood & of Revelation was sealed upon him & the spirit & power of Revelation was upon him daily.
- John Taylor and Woodruff evidently also had a sincere reverence/respect for the stones, but no evidence that they were used to receive revelation.
 - 1870s (Taylor) are a period of high religious devotion and the Urim and Thummim are mentioned in General Conference more than 2x more than any other decade in church history.

Brigham Young collects at least two of Joseph's Seer stones (white & brown stones)

Translation Version 2– 1880-1939

- Aprox. 1878-1890
 - A series of articles, mostly by David Whitmer but also some 2nd hand accounts of Martin Harris published in church-owned papers
 - Most of these accounts talk about the seer stone and the hat as they were used in the translation process
 - Some of the newspaper accounts editorialize and suggest that the witnesses were mistaken in their accounts of the “urim and thummim” when they conflated this with the brown seer stone.
- 1905-1909 – Roberts – Dual translator approach (seer stone and Urim and Thummim)
 - B.H. Roberts of the presidency of the 70 (and assant church historian) publishes a number of articles and books which state clearly that the seer stone was used in addition to the Urim and Thummim. Roberts correctly describes the stone as singular, brown, and egg shaped.
- 1918-1934 – Regular references to the seer stone
 - Seer stone mentioned about every 4 years in Sunday school in lessons dealing with the coming forth of the book of Mormon
- 1939-1950 – quick fade of seer stone references
 - Kirkham published denials that the seer stone was used in translation
 - Around 1947 there was a more forceful denial of treasure digging after Brodie’s biography of Joseph Smith was published
 - Around 1950 is the last clear reference of seer stones.

Narriative (1907):
Seer Stone and Urim and
Thummim used interchangeably.
Seer stone used “for convenience”

Key Elements of the “Roberts” Narrative

- 1904 (Apr Improvement Era)
 - Roberts freely acknowledges that Joseph Smith used “Urim and Thummim and also the ‘Seer Stone’”
 - Frames the seer stone as a mechanical instrument to improve vision – similar to a telescope, spectroscope, or kinetograph
- 1906 (Apr Improvement Era)
 - Roberts **eliminates the hat from the narrative and modifies Whitmer’s quote** to include the concept of the Urim and Thummim

“A piece of something resembling parchment did appear (i.e. in **the Urim and Thummim**), and on that appeared the writing, one character at a time would appear and under it was the translation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Brother Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and then it was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph to see if it was correct; then it would disappear and another character with the translation would appear. Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man.
- 1907 Defense of the Faith and the Saints
 - The translation was done with the Urim and Thummim *and* the brown seer stone (using the Martin Harris quote as his justification).

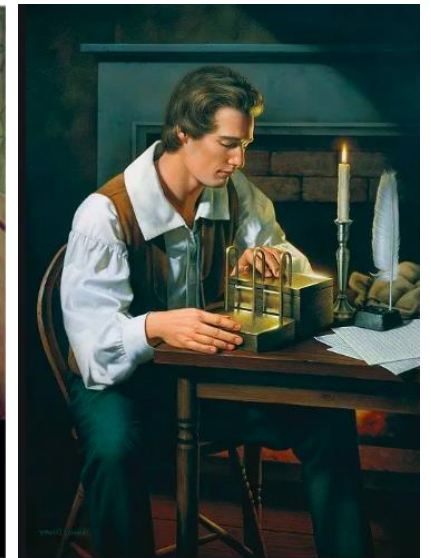
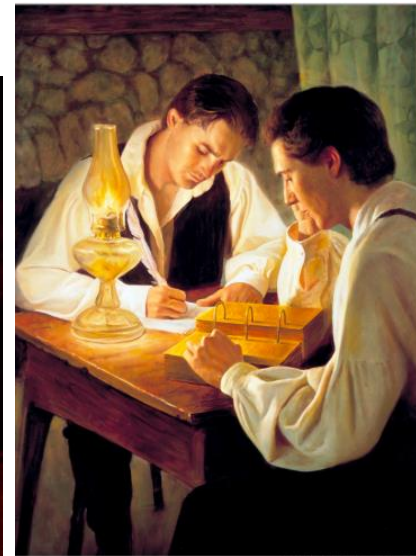
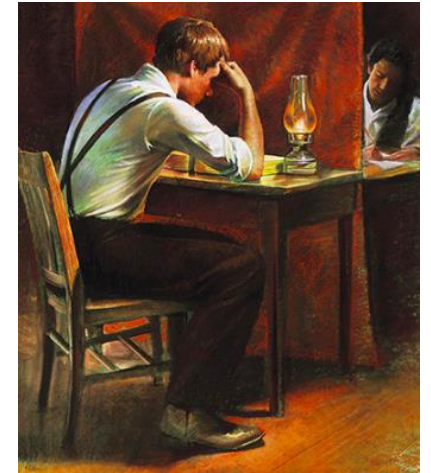
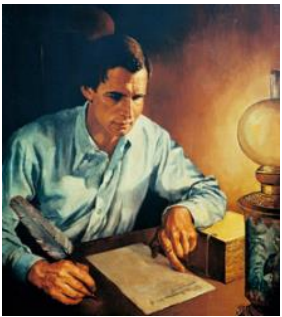
“He said that the Prophet possessed a seer stone, by which he was enabled to translate as well as from the Urim and Thummim, and for convenience he then used the seer stone.”
 - The seer stone was chocolate colored and egg-shaped.
 - The process was not merely a mechanical reading of the words. Effort was required by Joseph and much of the language used was Joseph’s language, grammatical errors, etc.
- 1909 New witnesses for God: II. The Book of Mormon
 - Similar to the 1907 account.
 - Forms the basis for the account in 1930 – Comprehensive History of the Church
 - Well read and referenced in the church from about 1909-1940

Hat is missing, but brown seer stone is included as one possibility for translation

Translation Version 3 – 1939-2012

Story:

Joseph translated by looking at the plates and using the Urim and Thummim. “Gift and power of God”. Most often pictured with a blanket between Joseph and his scribe. Seer stone missing and in some cases actively denied by leaders.



Key Denials

- Oct 1939 – Improvement Era - Francis Kirkham
 - **In the opinion of the writer, the Prophet used no seer stone in translating the Book of Mormon, neither did he translate in the manner described by David Whitmer and Martin Harris.** The statements of both of these men are to be explained by the eagerness of old age to call upon a fading and uncertain memory for the details of events which still remained real and objective to them.
- Aug 1946 – Improvement Era (responding to Faun Brodie's No Man Knows My History)
 - ...These *effusions of hate* may be reduced to three charges: 1, The Smith family were unworthy people; 2, Joseph Smith, the Prophet, was a money digger; and 3, he was a user of peepstones... Honest historians cannot safely make the charge that Joseph Smith was a professional money digger. **Likewise, no credence can be placed upon the charge that Joseph was a peepstone user.**
- Mar 1947 – Improvement Era (responding to Faun Brodie's No Man Knows My History)
 - If any evidence had been in existence that Joseph Smith had used a **seer stone** for fraud and deception, and especially had he made this confession in a court of law as early as 1826, or four years before the Book of Mormon was printed, and this confession was in a court record, it would have been impossible for him to organize the restored Church...

Key Denials, cont

1956 – Doctrines of Salvation, Joseph Fielding Smith (Bruce R. McConkie)

SEER STONE NOT USED IN BOOK OF MORMON TRANSLATION.

We have been taught since the days of the Prophet that the Urim and Thummim were returned with the plates to the angel. We have no record of the Prophet having the Urim and Thummim after the organization of the Church. Statements of translations by the Urim and Thummim after that date are evidently errors. The statement has been made that the Urim and Thummim was on the altar in the Manti Temple when that building was dedicated. The Urim and Thummim so spoken of, however, was the seer stone which was in the possession of the Prophet Joseph Smith in early days. This seer stone is now in the possession of the Church.

While the statement has been made by some writers that the Prophet Joseph Smith used a seer stone *part of the time* in his translating of the record, and information points to the fact that he did have in his possession such a stone, yet **there is no authentic statement in the history of the Church which states that the use of such a stone was made in that translation. The information is all hearsay, and personally, I do not believe that this stone was used for this purpose.**

Wording in green is similar to Kirkhams 1939 denial

Key Denials, cont

1958 – Mormon Doctrine – Bruce R. McConkie

Entry on “Peep Stones”

- *See DEVIL, REVELATION, URIM AND THUMMIM.*
- In imitation of the order of heaven whereby seers receive revelations from God through a Urim and Thummim, the *devil gives his own revelations to some of his followers through peep stones* or crystal balls. An instance of this copying of the true order occurred in the early days of this dispensation. Hiram Page had such a stone...

A more accurate account - 1974

- Sept 1974 Friend:

To help him with the translation, Joseph found with the gold plates “a curious instrument which the ancients called Urim and Thummim, which consisted of two transparent stones set in a rim of a bow fastened to a breastplate.”

Joseph also used an egg-shaped, **brown rock for translating called a seer stone...**

Soft Denial – Sept 1977 Ensign

Richard Lloyd Anderson - (long talk, not all key parts included in this summary)

(Seer stone sources quoted, but largely discounted, Urim and Thummim emphasized).

As Joseph Smith's first scribe (during the summer of 1828), Martin Harris spoke with authority of that phase of the translation. But *quoting him raises a key issue*: everything attributed to him does not necessarily represent his exact words. This caution is necessary because his statements on translation details are filtered through reporters...

...Stevenson reported, "He said that the Prophet possessed a seer stone, by which he was enabled to translate as well as from the Urim and Thummim, and **for convenience he then used the seer stone.**"

...Toward the end of this new work of 1829, David Whitmer on occasion watched and afterwards spoke of the seer stone. Yet as an intimate assistant, **Oliver Cowdery stressed the Urim and Thummim** in his statements. While editor of the Church newspaper in 1834, he made the comment already quoted on the inspiration of writing for Joseph Smith. Then the Prophet's exscribe added:

"Day after day I continued uninterrupted to write from his mouth as he translated, with the **Urim and Thummim**, or as the Nephites would have said, 'interpreters,' the history, or record called 'The Book of Mormon.'"

...(text from David Whitmer's *Address to All Believers in Christ*)

It is tempting to accept the above statement at face value. However, since David Whitmer had not personally translated, his accuracy on details depends on whether he correctly understood what Joseph Smith told him in the first place, and whether he correctly remembered such details after that.

Obfuscation – Neil Maxwell, 1986 BYU Speech

We naturally would like to know about that process of translation. In October 1831, Joseph Smith was asked by his brother Hyrum, at a conference held in Orange, Ohio, to give a firsthand account concerning the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. The Prophet replied “that it was not intended to tell the world all the particulars of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon; and. . . it was not expedient for him to relate these things” (*HC* 1:220). **Since Joseph, who knew the “particulars,” chose not to describe them in detail then, we cannot presently be definitive about methodology.**

<https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/neal-a-maxwell/joseph-smith-choice-seer/>

A more-accurate account: 1993

Ellipses added by Nelson. Original quote includes the phrase “Urim and Thummim” which is inaccurate

(Apostle) Russel Nelson to group of newly called mission presidents. Published in the July 1993 Ensign

I am intrigued, as you are, with the process Joseph Smith used to translate the Book of Mormon, which he said was done through “**the gift and power of God.**” ...

...there were **two stones in silver bows**—and these stones, fastened to a breastplate, constituted what is called the **Urim and Thummim**—deposited with the plates; and the possession and use of these stones were what constituted ‘seers’ in ancient or former times; and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book.”

...As Oliver Cowdery testified a few years later: “These were days never to be forgotten—to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven, awakened the utmost gratitude of this bosom! Day after day I continued, uninterrupted, to write from his mouth, as he translated ... the history or record called ‘The Book of Mormon.’” (JS—H 1:71n.)

The details of this miraculous method of translation are **still not fully known**. Yet we do have a few precious insights. David Whitmer wrote:

“Joseph Smith would **put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat**, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine....

(Nelson proceeds to give full and correct quote from An Address to All Believers in Christ, pg 12).

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1993/07/a-treasured-testament?lang=eng>

First mention of hat in official LDS sources since the 1880s

Internet and popular media in the early 2000s

- How did Joseph Smith translate the plates?



Preach my gospel – 2004

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/bc/content/shared/content/english/pdf/language-materials/36617_eng.pdf pg 7/21



South Park depiction of the translation process – Nov 19, 2003

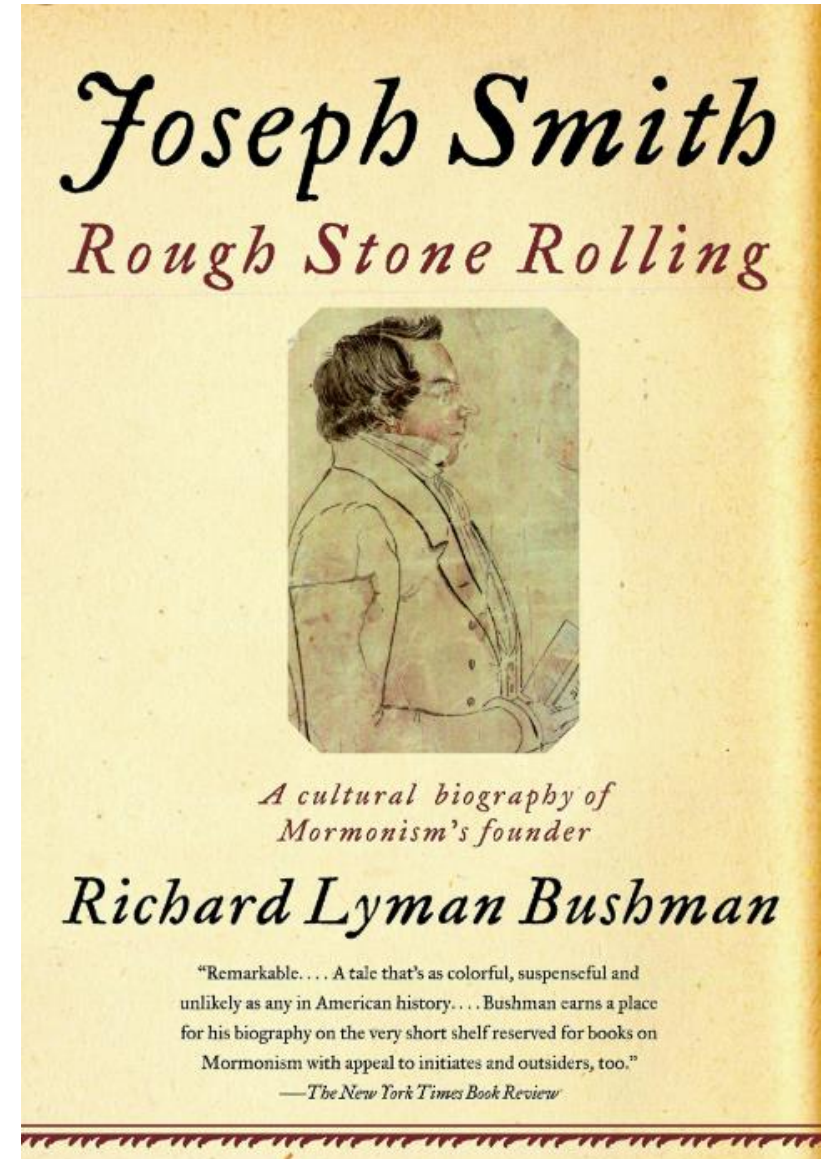
Seer stone was one of about 10 issues mentioned as a concern by “apostate” members during the Swedish rescue fireside (2010). The primary concern was that the church was not being open/honest.

2005 – Rough Stone Rolling

- While not published by the church and not official, this book
 - Discusses the use of the seer stone in the translation process
 - Was distributed and sold at Deseret Book.
 - Was created with at least some level of direction or approval of “the Brethren”
 - First widely distributed LDS book to accurately describe the seer stone since the 1930 comprehensive history of the church (B. H. Roberts).

The dominant narrative is not true; it can't be sustained. The Church has to absorb all this new information or it will be on very shaky grounds (and that's what it is trying to do) and it will be a strain for a lot of people.

Richard Bushman



Translation Version 4.0 – 2013

Narrative: Urim and Thummim or Seer Stone “apparently for convenience”.
Names (Seer stone/spectacles/Urim and Thummim) conflated after 1833.
Similar to 1907 Roberts narrative, but hat included.

- The other instrument, which Joseph Smith discovered in the ground years before he retrieved the gold plates, was a small oval stone, or “**seer stone.**” As a young man during the 1820s, Joseph Smith, like others in his day, used a seer stone to look for lost objects and buried treasure. As Joseph grew to understand his prophetic calling, he learned that he could use this stone for the higher purpose of translating scripture.
- **Apparently for convenience**, Joseph often translated with the single seer stone rather than the two stones bound together to form the interpreters.
- Joseph Smith and his associates often used the term “Urim and Thummim” to refer to the single stone as well as the interpreters.
- Joseph placed either the interpreters or the seer stone in a hat, **pressed his face into the hat** to block out extraneous light, and read aloud the English words that appeared on the instrument.

Translation Version 4.1 – 2015

- Pictures published as part of the JS papers (Aug 2015):
 - *Revelations and Translations, Volume 3: Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*
- *Oct 2015 Ensign* includes article "Joseph the Seer" which also includes the images.

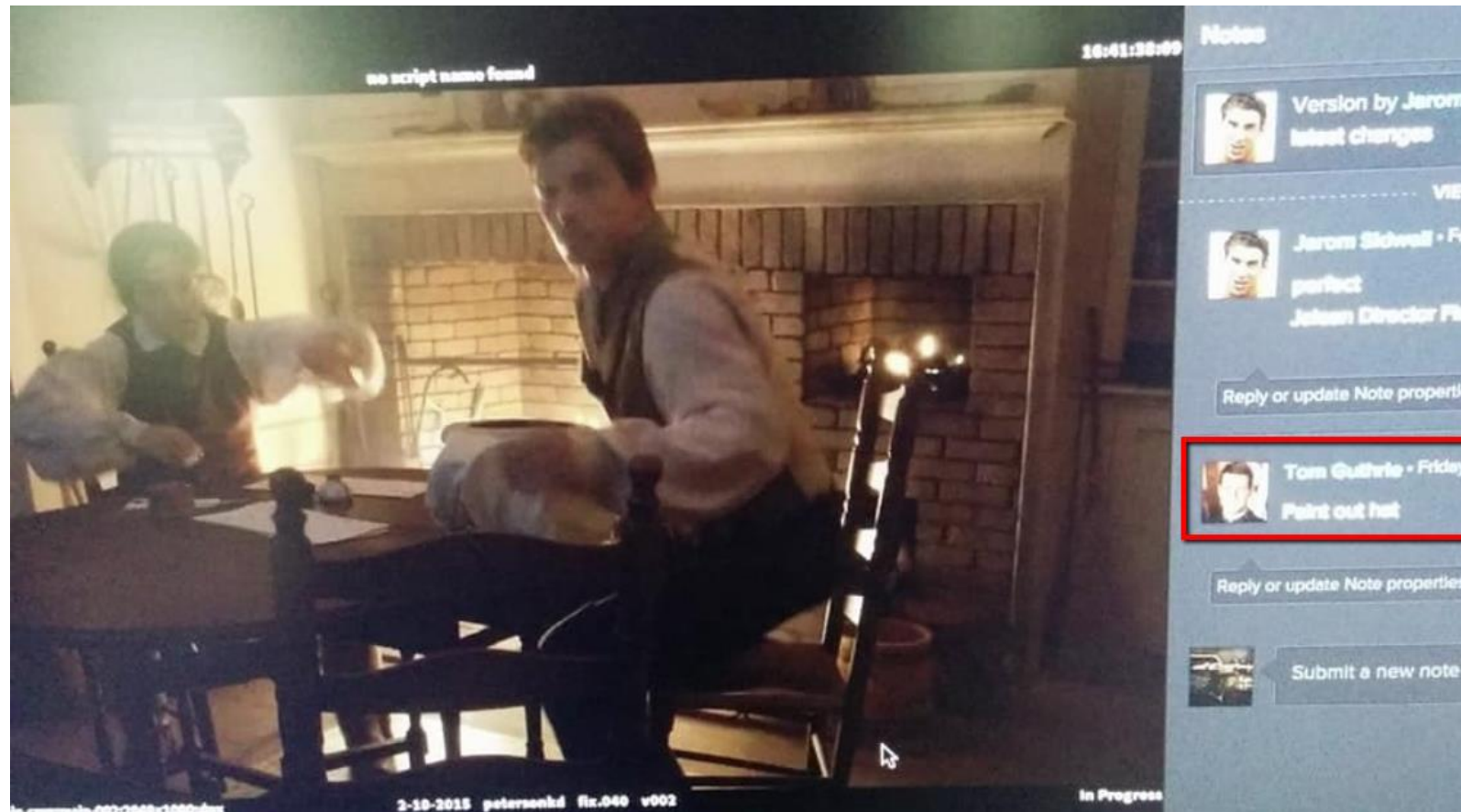


<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/church/news/book-of-mormon-printers-manuscript-photos-of-seer-stone-featured-in-new-book?lang=eng& r=1>

Seer stone – Iron banded Jasper, found on the Chase farm while digging for buried treasure (ostensibly digging for a well), about 1820. Image first published by the LDS church in 2013

2015 – “Days of Harmony” Film

- Seer stone included in filming
- Editors were instructed to “paint out hat” in post-production.
- May indicate mixed views regarding transparency among leadership



Film:

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/media-library/video/2018-03-1000-days-of-harmony?lang=eng>

One frame remaining at 9:10 shows the hat.

These images:

<https://www.missedinunday.com/memes/scripture/paint-out-the-hat/>

Translation V4.2 - 2016

The seer stone is like a smart phone

- Uchtdorf facebook post on June 21, 2016
- Modern version of Roberts' "telescope" analogy
- Post deleted (no later than 2019)



PRESIDENT DIETER F. UCHTDORF COMPARES SEER STONE TO CELL PHONES



Weird Alma – Dec 2017

Church critic releases song/album pointing out that the church has never released an accurate image of the translation.

Well, you could tell what those apostles said
Was so full of shit, that it hurt your head
“We won’t hide a thing from you.”
They said, “That’s not what the church would do.”

Well, hoo boy, holy cow,
Where do I begin right now?
***A picture please, I’d take just one
That shows a seer stone translation***

- <https://weirdalma.bandcamp.com/track/sayin-a-lie-2>
- Based on quote from broadcast by Ballard and Oaks, Nov 19, 2017: <https://www.lds.org/broadcasts/face-to-face/oaks-ballard?lang=eng>
- See also <https://www.sltrib.com/opinion/commentary/2017/11/26/commentary-the-gaslighting-within-mormonism-must-stop/>

Translation Version 4.2 – Ensign Dec 2017

Emma's Witness



Late in her life, Emma Smith recalled that at the time her husband translated the golden plates, he “could neither write

First official images showing hat

This strengthening will occur even in seemingly small things.



2015 film scene that was removed from “Days of Harmony”

Story: Hat shown, but Joseph not looking at it; stone inferred; plates wrapped in cloth, hat always at a distance and always with bright light coming in from the window

V4.3 - Mar 2018

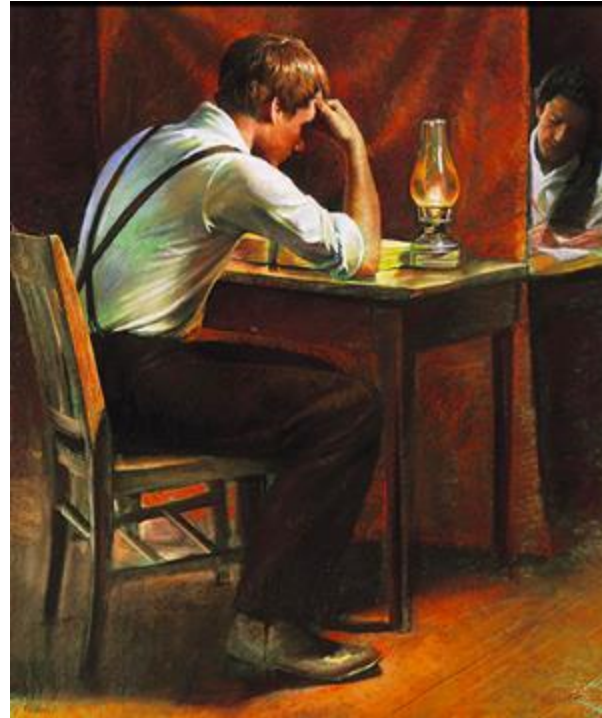
extending the cell phone analogy

- “Joseph takes the lenses out of the rim and puts them in the hat, which is the way he used the seer stone. So if he uses his own seer stone rather than the Urim and Thummim, he can put the Urim and Thummim and the breastplate away somewhere safe and just use his seer stone; and *that’s more convenient*.”
- OK. That makes sense, but also sounds a little bit strange to think of it then as Joseph Smith looking in a hat.
- Yeah, that’s an image that we’re unfamiliar with... But *actually it’s not that strange*, he’s just trying to block out light. That’s the point. So **it’s like on a really sunny day, if you get a text message and you pull out your cell phone, and you can’t see it because of the sun, and you make shade**; you block out light so that you can see what it says. It’s the same kind of idea. So in the stone he sees the translation in light, and he puts his face in the hat so that he can block out light and see what’s on the seer stone.



Churchofjesuschrist.org today (version 3 – 1950-2013)

- Current images in the church media library (2019.12.14)



Note: More accurate images can be found on the site, but you have to know where to search for them

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/media-library/images/category/church-history-all-gospel-art?lang=eng&start=41&end=80&order=>

The historical translation process

- The plates were *generally not in the room* during the translation process
- When the plates were present, they were covered with a cloth
- *All of the current Book of Mormon was created using the rock in the hat method*
 - Brown seer stone
 - White top hat
 - Face *pressed against the hat*



There is really no need to mention the Urim and Thummim because even the church's historians agree that the spectacles (ostensibly called the Urim and Thummim after 1833) were not used to create the Book of Mormon today. After the 116 pages were lost, they were never used again.

More accurate images

1. Face is buried in the hat
2. Plates are most often not in the room

Accurate version is acknowledged in official text, but not in official images:

- “Joseph placed either the interpreters or the seer stone in a hat, **pressed his face into the hat** to block out extraneous light, and spoke aloud the English words inspired by the instrument...”

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/history/topics/book-of-mormon-translation?lang=eng>



Images by Anthony Sweat –
not available on lds.org

What are the “interpreters” or “spectacles”

- A pair of spectacles
- About 6 inches between the lenses*
 - Too large for any 19th century person to use
- White or semi-transparent stones or lenses
- According to one account (1830, Oliver Cowdery, 3rd hand), Joseph would look into the spectacles at the plates and then put his face into the hat and inspiration would flow.
- Only used for a short period in 1827-1828. Abandoned prior to the loss of the 116 pages. Possibly lost along with the 116 pages. Not used to produce any of the current book of Mormon
- First called the “*Urim and Thummim*” by W.W Phelps in 1832 or 1833.
- By 1834, Oliver Cowdery had adopted the term Urim and Thummim and used it to describe the translation process



*The spectacles had this large/unusable size based on the belief that ancient Americans were “giants”.

No official images of the spectacles (or “Urim and Thummim”) on church’s web site(?)

Claims and counter-claims

Faith-destroying Myth

- “For nearly 200 years the Church has had the (brown seer) stone in their possession yet never actively taught about it”

A more accurate account

- Seer stone accounts were widely published in church owned newspapers in the 1880s as part of the testimonies of the 3 witnesses.
- B.H. Roberts discussed them in many of his writings including his widely-circulated book, “A new witness for Christ” vol 2. (1907)
- Seer stones were part of the Sunday school curriculum from 1918-1934
- Scholarly books by Mormon authors included details about the seer stones
 - 1983 – Bushman: Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism, University of Illinois Press
 - 2005 – Bushman: Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling, sold at Deseret Book.

Claims and counter-claims

Faith-promoting Myths

- The church has always been open about the translation process
- Joseph only said that the Book of Mormon was translated by the “Gift and Power of God”

A more accurate account

- Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery both denied or mischaracterized the use of a seer stone in the translation process
- Even during periods when the church was relatively open about the seer stones (1905-1935), details regarding the hat were generally omitted or changed.
- In the 1940s - 1970s, there were statements in LDS literature denying the use of seer stones in the translation process
- The church was working on their 3rd official history in the 1970s-1980s. When Bushman wrote about the seer stones in his 1983 book, “Joseph Smith and the beginnings of Mormonism”, the entire project was canceled by some senior apostles.
- The church has at least 2 and probably at least 4 seer stones in their collection. Images have only been made available of one of these stones.
- All images of the translation process on the church’s official web site are misleading. None of them show Joseph with his face against the hat.

Seer stones that the LDS church has in their collection

1982 account

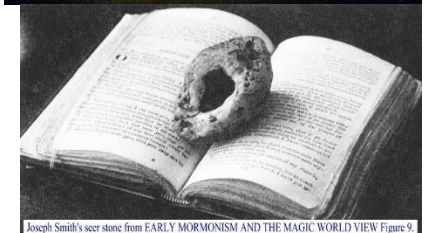
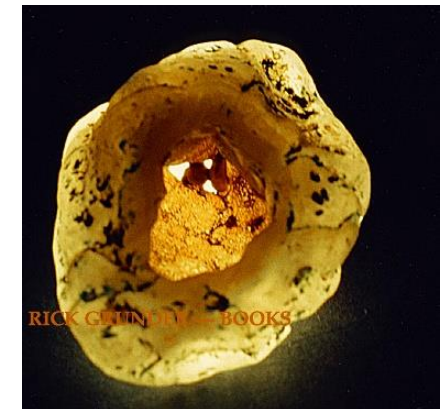
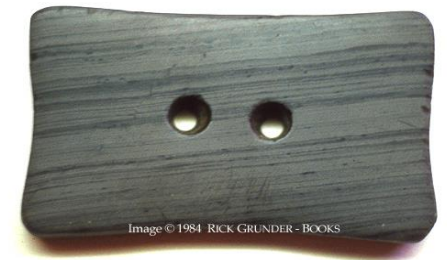
- 3 stones in collection
 - Brown stone, egg shaped
 - White stone, baby's foot shaped
 - Mystery stone(?)
- Brown stone was shown to descendant of Brigham Young



Mary Brown Firmage interview with Richard S. Van Wagoner, 11 Aug 1986. *Van Wagoner papers*, Marriott Library

Additional stones acquired?

- 1985(?) – David or Jacob Whitmer Stone
 - Not confirmed - Could be in a private collection
- 1991 – Green Stone
 - Associated with Joseph Smith
 - Sold to a private party in 1991 and probably donated to the LDS church at that time.



Summary

- Church leaders developed the Urim and Thummim narrative between 1832-1834, possibly due to embarrassment surrounding the seer stone and hat narrative or the lack of traditions regarding seer stones in Ohio among Rigdon's congregation. Phelps appears to have created the narrative which was then propagated by Cowdery and Smith. This narrative is an extension of the spectacles which Joseph used for a brief period in 1827-1828 prior to the loss of the 116 pages.
- In the 1880s several 1st and 2nd hand accounts emerged pointing to the use of a seer stone in the creation/translation process.
- By 1905, at least some apologists & leaders addressed and accepted at least parts of the seer stone narrative including the use of the brown stone
- The seer stone narrative was taught regularly in Sunday school between 1918 and 1934. It was addressed in church literature between about 1905 and 1937. Details about the hat were omitted.

Summary, cont

- After Roberts death in 1934, the church moved away from the seer stone narrative with active/strong denials starting in 1946 in response to *No Man Knows My History* by Brodie.
- Apart from a few hints at the accurate narrative in church magazines, the church first embraced a more accurate depiction of translation in 2013
- In spite of this increased accuracy/openness, the church seems reticent to provide a truly accurate image where Joseph buries his face in the hat. They created a new false image/narrative between 2015-2017 based around a cell phone usage scenario. The church fails to actively acknowledge that the “spectacles” or “Urim and Thummim” were not used to create the current Book of Mormon.

Additional Information

Related to translation, etc.

Select scholars who assert that Joseph Smith used the brown seer stone (alone) and not the spectacles (Urim and Thummim) to create all of the existing Book of Mormon

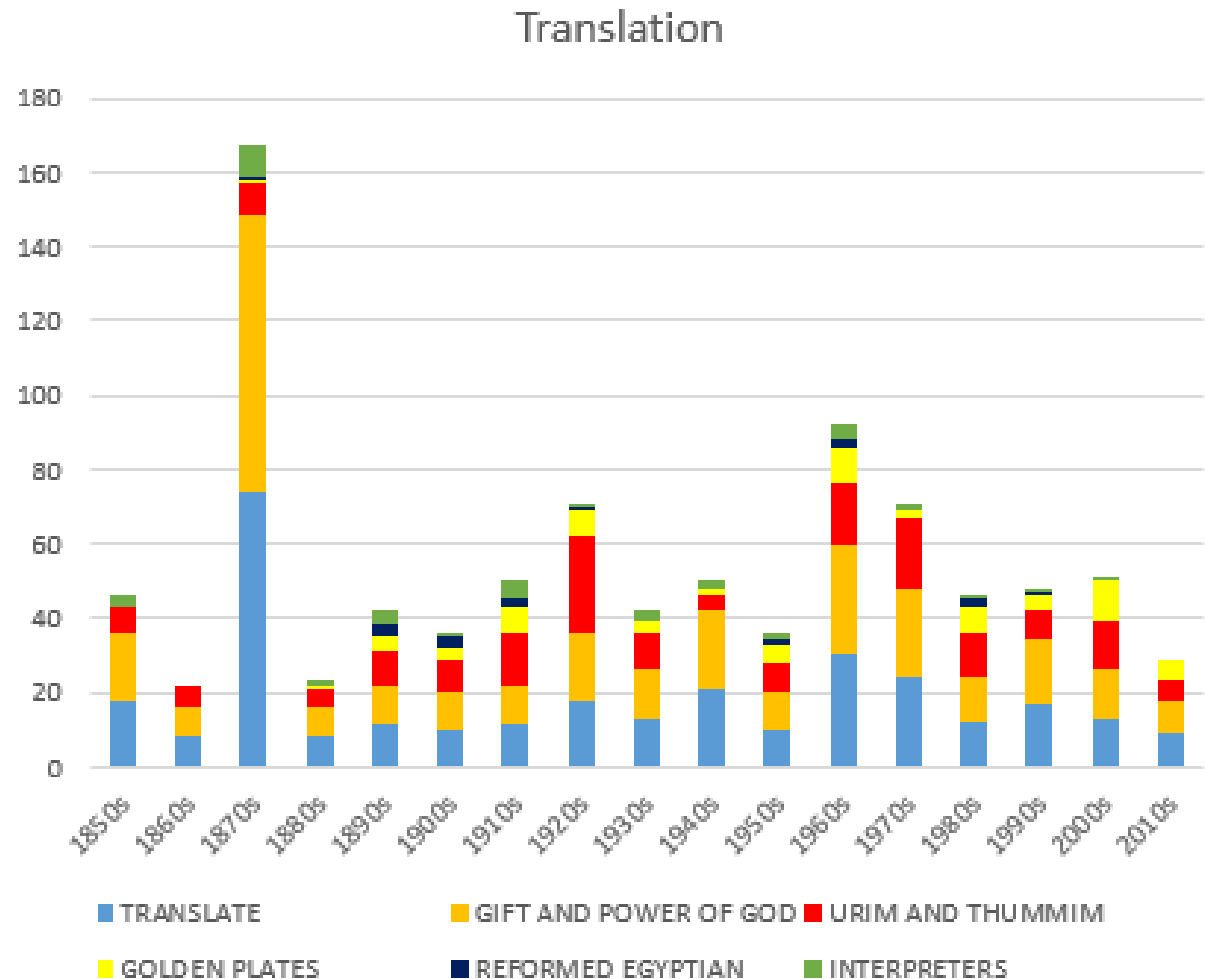
- Larry Morris - Joseph Smith Papers Project
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=53z8Tly8IX0&feature=youtu.be&t=3446>
- D. Michael Quinn – historian and former BYU professor
 - See Early Mormonism and the Magical World view pp 171-175.
- Dan Vogel – independent scholar & historian
 - https://youtu.be/HvtUh_sekps?t=105
 - See also:
 - <https://youtu.be/ksnbSh51itg>
 - <https://youtu.be/uawcYN-O8t4>

How leaders talk about translation in General Conference

Part of the transparency regarding the seer stone is association with how often it is mentioned relative to competitive narratives.

Although the Urim and Thummim have been mentioned 195 times in General Conference, there has not been a single mention of the seer stone with respect to the translation of the Book of Mormon.

Number of references per decade to various translation related terms



Members disciplined for discussing history

While it is difficult to say all of the reasons that members were excommunicated, writing about the seer stone narrative may have contributed to at least some of the following excommunications

- **Faun Brodie** – 1946 excommunication. Author of “No Man Knows My History” - a biography of Joseph Smith which detailed items including treasure digging and use of the seer stone to translate the Book of Mormon
- **D. Michael Quinn** – 1993 excommunication. Prolific author of several books including *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*
- **Brent Metcalfe** – 1994 excommunication. Editor of the anthology “New Approaches to the Book of Mormon” and “American Apocrypha”

While Brodie and Metcalfe no longer believe in the truth claims of Mormonism, Quinn remains a believer.

A more detailed list of accounts printed by the LDS church between 1850-1980 and references

- See this document: <https://docdro.id/bl67Qyk>

Disclaimers

- The author has attempted to present the information in an accurate and fair manner
- Please note:
 - I'm human. I make mistakes. There are probably multiple mistakes in this presentation. Please e-mail corrections to feedback@mormonscholar.org.
 - This presentation is influenced by my personal bias. I am not a believer in Joseph Smith as being divinely influenced by God in his organization of the LDS church, and this bias will inevitably be reflected in this presentation.

Images are the copyright of the respective artists and organizations. Used for illustrative purposes only.