

Harris Family Witnesses

Lucy Harris Affidavit, November 29, 1833

As originally published in *Mormonism Unveiled* (sic) by Eber D. Howe, 1834.

Being called upon to give a statement to the world of what I know respecting the Gold Bible speculation, and also of the conduct of Martin Harris, my husband, who is a leading character among the Mormons, I do it free from prejudice, realizing that I must give an account at the bar of God for what I saw.

Martin Harris was once industrious and attentive to his domestic concerns, and thought to be worth about ten thousand dollars. He is naturally quick in his temper and in his mad-fits frequently abuses all who may dare to oppose him in his wishes. However strange it may seem, I have been a great sufferer by his unreasonable conduct. At different times while I lived with I'm, he has whipped, kicked, and turned me out of the house. About a year previous to the report being raised that Smith had found gold plates, he became very intimate with the Smith family , and said he believe Joseph could see in his stone any thing he wished.

After this he apparently became very sanguine in his belief, and frequently said he would have no one in his house that did not believe in Mormonism; and because I would not give credit to the report he made about the gold plates, he became more austere towards me. In one of his fits of rage he struck me with the but end of a whip, which I think had been used for driving oxen, and was about the size of my thumb, and three or four feet long. He beat me on the head four or five times, and the next day turned me out of door twice, and beat me in a shameful manner.--

The next day I went to the town or Marion, and while there my flesh was black and blue in many places. His main complaint against me was that I was always trying to hinder his making money. When he found out that I was going to Mr. Putnam's in Marion, he said he was going too, that they had sent for him to pay them a visit. On arriving at Mr. Putnam's, I asked them if they had sent for Mr. Harris; they replied they knew nothing about it; he, however, came in the evening. Mrs. Putnam told him never to strike or abuse me any more; he then denied ever striking me;

she was however convinced that he lied, as the marks of his beating me were plain to be seen, and remained more than two weeks. Whether the Mormon religion be true or false, I leave the world to judge, for its effects upon Martin Harris have been to make him more cross, turbulent, and abusive to me. His whole object was to make money by it. I will give one circumstances in proof of it. One day, while at Peter Harris' house, I told him he had better leave the company of the Smiths as their religion was false; to which he replied, if you would let me alone, I could make money by it.

It is in vain for the Mormons to deny these facts; for they are all well known to most of his former neighbors. The man has now become rather an object of pity; he has spent most of his property, and lost the confidence of his former friends. If he had labored as hard on his farm as he has to make Mormons, he might now be one of the wealthiest farmers in the country. He now spends his time in traveling through the country spreading the delusion of Mormonism and has no regard whatever for his family.

With regard to Mr. Harris being intimate with Mrs. Haggard, as has been reported, it is but justice to myself to state what facts have come within my own observation, to show whether I had any ground for jealousy or not. Mr. Harris was very intimate with this family, for some time previous to their going to Ohio. They lived a while in a house which he had built for their accommodation and here he spent the most of his leisure hours; and made her presents in a private manner, and frequently when he went there, he would pretend to be going to some of the neighbors, on an errand, or to be going into the fields--After getting out of sight of the house, he would steer a straight course for Haggard's house, especially if Haggard was from home. At times when [Mr.] Haggard was [away] from home, he would go there in the manner above described and stay till twelve or one o'clock at night, and sometimes until day light.

If his intentions were evil, the Lord will judge him accordingly, but if good, he did not mean to let his left hand know what his right hand did. The above statement of facts, I affirm to be true.

LUCY HARRIS

Henry Harris Affidavit, November 28, 1833

Editorial note: Henry William Harris was Martin and Lucy's second child and oldest son. As originally published in *Mormonism Unveiled* (sic) by Eber D. Howe, 1834.

I, Henry Harris, do state that I became acquainted with the family of Joseph Smith, Sen. about the year 1820, in the town of Manchester, N. York. They were a family that labored very little--the chief they did, was to dig for money. Joseph Smith Jr. the pretended Prophet, used to pretend to tell fortunes he had a stone which he used to put in his hat, by means of which he professed to tell people's fortunes.

Joseph Smith, Jr. Martin Harris and others, used to meet together in private, a while before the gold plates were found, and were familiarly known by the name of the "gold Bible company." They were regarded by the community in which they lived as a lying and indolent set of men and no confidence could be placed in them.

The characters of Joseph Smith Jr. for truth and veracity was such, that I would not believe him under oath. I was once on a jury before a Justice's Court and the Jury could not, and did not believe his testimony to be true. After he pretended to have found the gold plates, I had a conversation with I'm, and asked him where he found them and how he came to know where they were. He said he had a revelations from God that told him they were hid in a certain hill and he looked in his stone and saw them I the place of deposit; that an angel appeared and told him he could not get the plates until he was married, and that when he saw the woman that was to be his wife, he should know her, and she would know him. He then went to Pennsylvania, got his wife, and they both went together and got the gold plates--he said it was revealed to him, that no one must see the plates but himself and wife.

I then asked him what letters were engraved on them, he said italic letters written in an unknown language and that he had copied some of the words and sent them to Dr. Mitchell and Professor Anthem of New York. By looking on the plates he said he could not understand the words, but it was made known to him that he was the person that must translate them, and on looking through the stone was enabled to translate.

After the Book was published, I frequently bantered him for a copy. He asked fourteen shillings a piece for them; I told him I would not give so much; he told me he had had a new revelation that they might be sold at ten shillings a piece.

State of Ohio, Cuyhoga County, Ss:

Personally appeared before me, Henry Harris, and made oath in due form of law, that the foregoing statements subscribed by him are true.

JONATHAN LAPHAM

Justice of the Peace.

Palmyra, Warne Co. N.Y. 11th mo. 28th 1833

Abigail Harris Affidavit, abt. 1833

Editorial note: Abigail Cook Harris married Lucy Harris' brother Peter Harris.

As originally published in *Mormonism Unveiled* (sic) by Eber D. Howe, 1834.

In the early part of the winter in 1828, I made a visit to Martin Harris and was joined in the company by Jos. Smith, sen. and his wife. The Gold Bible business, so-called, was the topic of conversation, to which I paid particular attention that I might learn the truth of the whole matter.—They told me that the report that Joseph, jun. had found golden plates, was true and that he was in Harmony, Pa. translating them—that such plates were in existence, and that Joseph, jun. was to obtain them, was revealed to him by the spirit of one or the Saints that was on this continent, previous to its being discovered by Columbus. Old Mrs. Smith observed that she thought he must be a Quaker, as he was dressed very plain. They said that the plates he then had in possession were but an introduction to the Gold Bible—that all of them upon which the bible was written, were so heavy that it would take four stout men to load them into a cart—that Joseph had also discovered by looking through his stone, the vessel in which the gold was melted from which the plates were made, and also the machine with which they were rolled; he also discovered in the bottom of the vessel three balls of gold, each as large as his fist.

The old lady [Lucy Mack Smith] said also, that after the book was translated, the plates were to be publicly exhibited—admittance 0-5 cents. She calculated it would bring in annually an enormous sum of money—that money would then be very plenty, and the book would also sell for a great price, as it was something entirely new—that they had been commanded to obtain all the money they could borrow for present necessity, and to repay with gold.

The remainder was to be kept in store for the benefit of their family and children. This and the like conversation detained me until about 11 o'clock. Early the next morning, the mystery of the Spirit being like myself (one of the order called Friends) was revealed by the following circumstance: The old lady took me into another room, and after closing the door, she said, "have you four or five dollars in money that you can lend until our business is brought to a close? the spirit has said you shall receive fourfold." I told her that when I gave, I did it not expecting to receive again—as for money I had none to lend. I then asked her what her particular want of money was; to which she replied "Joseph wants to take the stage and come home from Pennsylvania to see what we are all about." To which I replied, he might look in his stone and save his time and money. The old lady seemed confused and left the room, and thus ended the visit.

In the second month following, Martin Harris and his wife were at my house. In conversation about Mormonites she observed, that she wished her husband would quit them as she believed it was all false and a delusion. To which I heard Mr. Harris reply : "What if it is a lie; if you will let me alone I will make money out of it!"

I was both an eye and an ear-witness of what has been stated above, which is now fresh in my memory, and I give it to the world for the good of mankind. I speak the truth and lie not, God bearing me is witness.

ABIGAIL HARRIS

Martin Harris, Interview from 1859

Editorial Note: This document focuses on the published statements of the Harris family members beyond Martin. However, these lesser-known interviews describe several key early interactions between Joseph and the Harris family, so I wanted to include it in full for the reader's reference.

Martin Harris 1859 Interview with Joel Tiffany on the Early Events in Mormonism
Originally published in "Mormonism—II," Tiffany's Monthly 5, in August 1859

Joel Tiffany: The following narration we took down from the lips of Martin Harris, and read the same to him after it was written, that we might be certain of giving his statement to the world. We made a journey to Ohio for the purpose of obtaining it, in the latter part of January, 1859. We did this that the world might have a connected account of the origin of Mormonism from the lips of one of the original witnesses, upon whose testimony it was first received. For it will be remembered that Martin Harris is one of the three witnesses selected to certify to the facts connected with the origin of that revelation.

Mr. Harris says: Joseph Smith, jr., found at Palmyra [Manchester], N.Y., on the 22d day of September, 1827, the plates of gold upon which was recorded in Arabic, Chaldaic, Syriac, and Egyptian, the Book of Life, or the Book of Mormon. I was not with him at the time, but I had a revelation the summer before, that God had a work for me to do. These plates were found at the north point of a hill two miles north of Manchester village. Joseph had a stone which was dug from the well of Mason Chase, twenty-four feet from the surface.

In this stone he could see many things to my certain knowledge. It was by means of this stone he first discovered these plates. In the first place, he told me of this stone, and proposed to bind it on his eyes, and run a race with me in the woods. A few days after this, I was at the house of his father in Manchester, two miles south of Palmyra village, and was picking my teeth with a pin while sitting on the bars. The pin caught in my teeth, and dropped from my fingers into shavings and straw. I jumped from the bars and looked for it. Joseph and Northrop Sweet also did the same. We could not find it.

I then took Joseph on surprise, and said to him—I said, “Take your stone,” I had never seen it, and did not know that he had it with him. He had it in his pocket. He took it [out] and placed it in his hat—the old white hat—and placed his face in his hat. I watched him closely to see that he did not look [to] one side; he reached out his hand beyond me on the right, and moved a little stick, and there I saw the pin, which he picked up and gave to me. I know he did not look out of the hat until after he had picked up the pin.

Joseph had had this stone for some time. There was a company there in that neighborhood, who were digging for money supposed to have been hidden by the ancients. Of this company were old Mr. Stowell[]—I think his name was Josiah—also old Mr. Beman, also Samuel Lawrence, George Proper, Joseph Smith, jr., and his father, and his brother Hiram Smith. They dug for money in Palmyra, Manchester, also in Pennsylvania, and other places. When Joseph found this stone, there was a company digging in Harmony, Pa., and they took Joseph to look in the stone for them, and he did so for a while, and then he told them the enchantment was so strong

that he could not see, and they gave it up. There he became acquainted with his future wife, the daughter of old Mr. Isaac Hale, where he boarded. He afterwards returned to Pennsylvania again, and married his wife, taking her off to old Mr. Stowel[']s, because her people would not consent to the marriage. She was of age, Joseph was not.

After this, on the 22nd of September, 1827, before day, Joseph took the horse and wagon of old Mr. Stowel[], and taking his wife, he went to the place where the plates were concealed, and while he was obtaining them, she kneeled down and prayed. He then took the plates and hid them in an old black oak tree top which was hollow. Mr. Stowel[] was at this time at old Mr. Smith's, digging for money. It was reported by these money-diggers, that they had found boxes, but before they could secure them, they would sink into the earth. A candid old Presbyterian told me, that on the Susquehannah flats he dug down to an iron chest, that he scraped the dirt off with his shovel, but had nothing with him to open the chest; that he went away to get help, and when they came to it, it moved away two or three rods into the earth, and they could not get it. There were a great many strange sights. One time the old log school-house south of Palmyra, was suddenly lighted up, and frightened them away. Samuel Lawrence told me that while they were digging, a large man who appeared to be eight or nine feet high, came and sat on the ridge of the barn, and motioned to them that they must leave. They motioned back that they would not; but that they afterwards became frightened and did leave. At another time while they were digging, a company of horsemen came and frightened them away. These things were real to them, I believe, because they were told to me in confidence, and told by different ones, and their stories agreed, and they seemed to be in earnest—I knew they were in earnest.

Joseph did not dig for these plates. They were placed in this way: four stones were set up and covered with a flat stone, oval on the upper side and flat on the bottom. Beneath this was a little platform upon which the plates were laid; and the two stones set in a bow of silver by means of which the plates were translated, were found underneath the plates.

These plates were seven inches wide by eight inches in length, and were of the thickness of plates of tin; and when piled one above the other, they were altogether about four inches thick; and they were put together on the back by three silver rings, so that they would open like a book. The two stones set in a bow of silver were about two inches in diameter, perfectly round, and about five-eighths of an inch thick at the centre; but not so thick at the edges where they came into the bow. They were joined by a round bar of silver, about three-eighths of an inch in diameter, and about four inches long, which, with the two stones, would make eight inches. The stones were white, like polished marble, with a few gray streaks. I never dared to look into them by placing them in the hat, because Moses said that "no man could see God and live," and we

could see anything we wished by looking into them; and I could not keep the desire to see God out of my mind. And beside, we had a command to let no man look into them, except by the command of God, lest he should “look aught and perish.” These plates were usually kept in a cherry box made for that purpose, in the possession of Joseph and myself. The plates were kept from the sight of the world, and no one, save Oliver Cowdrey, myself, Joseph Smith, jr., and David Whitmer, ever saw them. Before the Lord showed the plates to me, Joseph wished me to see them. But I refused, unless the Lord should do it.

At one time, before the Lord showed them to me, Joseph said I should see them. I asked him, why he would break the commands of the Lord? He said, you have done so much I am afraid you will not believe unless you see them. I replied, “Joseph, I know all about it. The Lord has showed to me ten times more about it than you know.”—Here we inquired of Mr. Harris—How did the Lord show you these things? He replied, “I am forbidden to say anything how the Lord showed them to me, except that by the power of God I have seen them.” Mr. Harris continues: I hefted the plates many times, and should think they weighed forty or fifty pounds. When Joseph had obtained the plates, he communicated the fact to his father and mother. The plates remained concealed in the tree top until he got the chest made. He then went after them and brought them home. While on his way home with the plates, he was met by what appeared to be a man, who demanded the plates, and struck him with a club on his side, which was all black and blue. Joseph knocked the man down, and then ran for home, and was much out of breath. When he arrived at home, he handed the plates in at the window, and they were received from him by his mother. They were then hidden under the hearth in his father’s house. But the wall being partly down, it was feared that certain ones, who were trying to get possession of the plates would get under the house and dig them out.

Joseph then took them out, and hid them under the old cooper’s shop, by taking up a board and digging in the ground and burying them. When they were taken from there, they were put into an old Ontario glass box. Old Mr. Beman sawed off the ends, making the box the right length to put them in, and when they went in he said he heard them jink [clink], but he was not permitted to see them. He told me so.

The money-diggers claimed that they had as much right to the plates as Joseph had, as they were in company together. They claimed that Joseph had been [a] traitor, and had appropriated to himself that which belonged to them. For this reason Joseph was afraid of them, and continued concealing the plates. After they had been concealed under the floor of the cooper’s shop for a short time, Joseph was warned to remove them. He said he was warned by an angel. He took them out and hid them up in the chamber of the cooper’s shop among the flax [flax].

That night some one came, took up the floor, and dug up the earth, and would have found the plates had they not been removed. These things had all occurred before I talked with Joseph respecting the plates. But I had the account of it from Joseph, his wife, brothers, sisters, his father and mother. I talked with them separately, that I might get the truth of the matter.

The first time I heard of the matter, my brother Preserved [Preserved] Harris, who had been in the village of Palmyra, asked me if [I] had heard about Joseph Smith, jr., having a golden bible. My thoughts were that the money-diggers had probably dug up an old brass kettle, or something of the kind. I thought no more of it. This was about the first of October, 1827. The next day after the talk with my brother, I went to the village, and there I was asked what I thought of the Gold Bible? I replied, The Scripture says, He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is foolishness unto him. I do not wish to make myself a fool. I don't know anything about it. Then said I, what is it about Joe's Gold Bible? They then went on to say, that they put whiskey into the old man's cider and got him half drunk, and he told them all about it. They then repeated his account, which I found afterwards to agree substantially with the account given by Joseph. Then said I to them, how do you know that he has not got such gold plates? They replied, "Damn him! angels appear to men in this enlightened age! Damn him, he ought to be tarred and feathered for telling such a damned lie!" Then I said, suppose he has told a lie, as old Tom Jefferson said, it did [not] matter to him whether a man believed in one god or twenty. It did not rob his pocket, nor break his shins. What is it to us if he has told a lie? He has it to answer for [it] if he has lied. If you should tar and feather all the liars, you would soon be out of funds to purchase the material.

I then thought of the words of Christ, The kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. I knew they were of the devil's kingdom, and if that is of the devil, his kingdom is divided against itself. I said in my heart, this is something besides smoke. There is some fire at the bottom of it. I then determined to go and see Joseph as soon as I could find time. A day or so before I was ready to visit Joseph, his mother came over to our house and wished to talk with me. I told her I had no time to spare, she might talk with my wife, and, in the evening when I had finished my work I would talk with her. When she commenced talking with me, she told me respecting his bringing home the plates, and many other things, and said that Joseph had sent her over and wished me to come and see him. I told her that I had a time appointed when I would go, and that when the time came I should then go, but I did not tell her when it was. I sent my boy to harness my horse and take her home. She wished my wife and daughter to go with her; and they went and spent most of the day. When they came home, I questioned them about them. My daughter said, they were about as much as she could lift. They were now in the glass-box, and my wife said they

were very heavy. They both lifted them. I waited a day or two, when I got up in the morning, took my breakfast, and told my folks I was going to the village, but went directly to old Mr. Smith's. I found that Joseph had gone away to work for Peter Ingersol[¹] to get some flour. I was glad he was absent, for that gave me an opportunity of talking with his wife and the family about the plates. I talked with them separately, to see if their stories agreed, and I found they did agree. When Joseph came home I did not wish him to know that I had been talking with them, so I took him by the arm and led him away from the rest, and requested him to tell me the story, which he did as follows. He said: "An angel had appeared to him, and told him it was God's work." Here Mr. Harris seemed to wander from the subject, when we requested him to continue and tell what Joseph then said. He replied, Joseph had before this described the manner of his finding the plates. He found them by looking in the stone found in the well of Mason Chase. The family had likewise told me the same thing. Joseph said the angel told him he must quit the company of the money-diggers. That there were wicked men among them. He must have no more to do with them. He must not lie, nor swear, nor steal. He told him to go and look in the spectacles, and he would show him the man that would assist him. That he did so, and he saw myself, Martin Harris, standing before him. That struck me with surprise. I told him I wished him to be very careful about these things. "Well," said he, "I saw you standing before me as plainly as I do now." I said, if it is the devil's work I will have nothing to do with it; but if it is the Lord's, you can have all the money necessary to bring it before the world. He said the angel told him, that the plates must be translated, printed and sent before the world. I said, Joseph, you know my doctrine, that cursed is every one that putteth his trust in man, and maketh flesh his arm; and we know that the devil is to have great power in the latter days to deceive if possible the very elect; and I don't know that you are one of the elect. Now you must not blame me for not taking your word. If the Lord will show me that it is his work, you can have all the money you want. While at Mr. Smith's I hefted the plates, and I knew from the heft that they were lead or gold, and I knew that Joseph had not credit enough to buy so much lead. I left Mr. Smith's about eleven o'clock and went home. I retired to my bedroom and prayed God to show me concerning these things, and I covenanted that if it was his work and he would show me so, I would put forth my best ability to bring it before the world. He then showed me that it was his work, and that it was designed to bring in the fullness of his gospel to the gentiles to fulfill his word, that the first shall be last and the last first. He showed this to me by the still small voice spoken in the soul. Then I was satisfied that it was the Lord's work, and I was under a covenant to bring it forth. The excitement in the village upon the subject had become such that some had threatened to mob Joseph, and also to tar and feather him. They said he should never leave

until he had shown the plates. It was unsafe for him to remain, so I determined that he must go to his father-in-law's in Pennsylvania.

He wrote to his brother-in-law Alvah Hale, requesting him to come for him. I advised Joseph that he must pay all his debts before starting. I paid them for him, and furnished him money for his journey. I advised him to take time enough to get ready, so that he might start a day or two in advance: for he would be mobbed if it was known when he started. We put the box of plates into a barrel about one-third full of beans and headed it up. I informed Mr. Hale of the matter, and advised them to cut each a good cudgel and put [them] into the wagon with them, which they did. It was understood that they were to start on Monday; but they started on Saturday night and got though safe. This was the last of October, 1827. It might have been the first of November.

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