

# *A Topical Guide of Treasure-Seeking Rituals*

*From the American Northeast during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries*

Compiled by Joseph T. Antley, October 2009.

*“There seems to be some peculiar Charm in the conceit of finding Money.”*

Benjamin Franklin

## Introduction

This document consists of a topical guide of early treasure-seeking rituals. The sources utilized are newspapers, town histories, autobiographies, affidavits, interviews, etc. With one exception, all of these sources were originally published in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although many were published in the latter half of that century, the majority recount anecdotes dating from the 1790s to the early 1830s, when treasure-seeking saw a surge in popularity.

Although this guide consists of many hours of research, it is by no means comprehensive. As a topical guide, the quotes given do not necessarily provide all of the material related to the topic, and so readers are encouraged to pursue the sources themselves. When multiple sources cite a single event in similar or identical ways, often only one source is given (generally the earliest or most reliable source). For example, there are many sources that cite Joseph Smith, Jr.'s treasure-seeking activities, however only the most relevant and earliest sources are given here. Again, as a topical guide, it is impossible to provide context and also keep quotations brief. Some sources represent treasure-seeking seriously while others do so satirically. Again, readers are encouraged to review the sources for themselves.

Any italicized words are as they were in the original; no emphasis has been added. Editing has only been done to begin and end sentences in a brief, coherent manner. Ellipses represent the omission of extraneous information not directly relevant to the topic. Bracketed words are my insertions. Capitalization at the beginning of sentences may not be as in the original source.

If you have any comments, suggestions, or corrections, please e-mail me at [jtantley@gmail.com](mailto:jtantley@gmail.com) or visit <http://www.josephantley.com>.

## Topical Guide

### Books

- “He has all necessary implements for finding and securing the fleeting treasure; the mineral rod, hazel sticks, crow-bars and bibles.”
  - “Money Digging,” *The Freedom Censor*, (Fredonia, NY), 14 September 1831.
- “A company of money diggers consisting of two men, a boy, and an old woman, armed with mining rods, crowbars, and the Bible, were employed on Saturday and Sunday nights in digging for money, over on Seavy’s point.”
  - “Money Diggers,” *Eastern Argus*, (Portland, ME), 23 October 1833.
- “But when even the most devout, pious and godly Christians, with the Bible, Prayer-book, and Pilgrim’s Progress lying near them, to keep off infernal spirits, had dug down to within an inch or two of the treasures, a daemon, in shape of some huge monster, with hideous yawning mouth and enormous white teeth.”
  - Caleb Butler, *History of the Town of Groton*, (Boston: T.R. Marvin, 1848), 256.
- “While the operator, reading the chapter in the Apocrypha, where the angel Raphael exorcises the devil, walked round the circle with the course of the sun. This, he asserted from experience, would entirely overcome the charm of the Spanish cross, and the mine be brought to light.”
  - “A History of the Divining Rod; with the Adventures of an Old Rodsman,” *United States Democratic Review* 26, no. 141, (March 1850): 225.

### Dreams

- “Having bribed him with a few coppers, he informed us that his father was first induced to undertake the business by a remarkable dream, which was repeated three nights in succession.”
  - “Money Diggers,” *National Gazette*, (Philadelphia, PA), 27 March 1822.
- “Men and women without distinction of age or sex became marvellous wise in the occult sciences, many dreamed, and others saw visions disclosing to them, deep in the bowels of the earth, rich and shining treasures.”
  - Abner Cole, “Gold Bible, No. 3,” *The Reflector*, (Palmyra, NY), 1 February 1831.
- “One of the party...spoke of a person in Ohio...who had a wonderful facility in finding the spots where money was hid, and how he could dream of the very spots where it was to be found. ... Away they went...to gain his money to pay the expensive of bringing the money dreamer from Ohio.”
  - “Mormonism,” *Rochester Daily Advertiser*, (Rochester, NY), 31 December 1831.
- “Soon after joining the Church, he had a very singular dream; but he did not tell his father of his dream, until about a year afterwards. He then told his father that, in his dream, a

very large and tall man appeared to him, dressed in an ancient suit of clothes, and the clothes were bloody.”

- Fayette Lapham, "Interview with the Father of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet, Forty Years Ago. His Account of the Finding of the Sacred Plates", *Historical Magazine [second series]* 7 (May 1870): 305.

## Incantations

- “Walters assembled his nightly band of money diggers in the town of Manchester, at a point designated in his magical book, and drawing a circle around laborers, with the point of an old rusty sword, and using sundry other incantations, for the purpose of propitiating the spirit, absolutely sacrificed a fowl, (*"Rooster,"*) in the presence of his awe-stricken companions, to the foul spirit, whom ignorance had created, the guardian of hidden wealth.”
  - Abner Cole, "Gold Bible, No. 5," *The Reflector*, (Palmyra, NY), 28 February 1831.
- “He walked around three times on the periphery of this last circle, muttering to himself something which I could not understand.”
  - William Stafford affidavit, 8 December 1833
- “These wonders they were wont to perform by means of rods of steel or witch-hazel, cunningly wound about with cords and prepared by diabolical incantations.”
  - Caleb Butler, *History of the Town of Groton*, (Boston: T.R. Marvin, 1848), 256.

## Magic Circles

- “And the Magician led the *rabble* unto a dark grove, in a place called *Manchester*, where after drawing a Magic circle, with a rusty sword, and collecting his motley crew of *latter-demillions*, within the centre, he sacrificed a Cock (a bird sacred to Minerva) for the purpose of propitiating the *prince* of spirits.”
  - Abner Cole, "Book of Pukei -- Chap. 1," *Reflector*, (Palmyra, NY), 12 June 1830. [Pukei 1:5]
- “Walters assembled his nightly band of money diggers in the town of Manchester, at a point designated in his magical book, and drawing a circle around laborers, with the point of an old rusty sword, and using sundry other incantations, for the purpose of propitiating [*sic*] the spirit, absolutely sacrificed a fowl, (*"Rooster,"*) in the presence of his awe-stricken companions, to the foul spirit, whom ignorance had created, the guardian of hidden wealth.”
  - Abner Cole, "Gold Bible, No. 5," *The Reflector*, (Palmyra, NY), 28 February 1831.
- “Joseph, Sen. First made a circle, twelve or fourteen feet in diameter. This circle, said he, contains the treasure. ... Within this circle he made another, of about eight or teen feet or diameter.”

- William Stafford affidavit, 8 December 1833
- “It was done by drawing a circle on the surface of the ground round the spot, so large that the earth thrown out of the hole should not roll over the ring nine new nails were then dropped into the ring at equal distances; while the operator, reading the chapter in the Apocrypha, where the angel Raphael exorcises the devil, walked round the circle with the course of the sun. This, he asserted from experience, would entirely overcome the charm of the Spanish cross, and the mine be brought to light.”
  - "A History of the Divining Rod; with the Adventures of an Old Rodsman," *United States Democratic Review* 26, no. 141, (March 1850): 225.
- “On a certain occasion in preparing the enchanted circle for digging, *a lamb was sacrificed*, to appease the guardian demons of the supposed treasure.”
  - Franklin B. Hough, *A History of Jefferson County in the State of New York*, (Albany, NY: John Munsell, 1854), 158.
- “The conjuror was present with his divining rod, and would go round making a circle. No one was permitted to cross this circle, else the charm would be broken and the conjuror be compelled to re-establish the circle by going round again.”
  - Lockwood L. Doty, *A History of Livingston County, New York*, (Geneseo, NY: Edward E. Doty, 1876), 605

### **Magic Triangles**

- “They were to form a triangle around the designated point, and work in perfect *silence* — as a word spoken would break the charm.”
  - J.H. Temple and George Sheldon, *History of the Town of Northfield, Massachusetts*, (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell, 1875), 18.

### **Night and the Moon**

- “At Midnight they repair to the hopeful Spot with Spades and Pickaxes.”
  - Benjamin Franklin, “The Busy Body,” No. 8 (1729)
- “The night was chosen for operation – already had two nights been spent digging, and the third commenced upon.”
  - “Imposition and Blasphemy!! Money-Diggers, &c,” *Rochester Gem*, (Rochester, NY), 15 May 1830.
- “Walters assembled his nightly band of money diggers in the town of Manchester, at a point designated in his magical book, and drawing a circle around laborers, with the point of an old rusty sword, and using sundry other incantations, for the purpose of propitiating the spirit, absolutely sacrificed a fowl, (*“Rooster,”*) in the presence of his awe-stricken companions, to the foul spirit, whom ignorance had created, the guardian of hidden wealth; and after *digging* until day-light, his deluded employers retired to their several habitations fatigued and disappointed.”

- Abner Cole, "Gold Bible, No. 5," *The Reflector*, (Palmyra, NY), 28 February 1831.
- "A company of money diggers consisting of two men, a boy, and an old woman, armed with mining rods, crowbars, and the Bible, were employed on Saturday and Sunday nights in digging for money, over on Seavy's point."
  - "Money Diggers," *Eastern Argus*, (Portland, ME), 23 October 1833.
- "The facility of approaching them, depended in a great measure on the state of the moon. New moon and good Friday, I believe, were regarded as the most favorable times for obtaining these treasures."
  - William Stafford affidavit, 8 December 1833
- "They kept around them constantly, a gang of worthless fellows who dug for money nights, and were idle in the day time."
  - David Stafford affidavit, 12 December 1833
- "Intrusting the secret to two confederates— for nothing could be done without the presence of *three* — he waited for the propitious time, which was when the full moon was directly over-head at midnight."
  - J.H. Temple and George Sheldon, *History of the Town of Northfield, Massachusetts*, (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell, 1875), 18.
- "Mr. Thompson, an employee of Mr. Stowell, was the next witness. He and another man were employed in digging for treasure, and always attended the Deacon and Smith in their nocturnal labors."
  - William D. Purple account of Joseph Smith, Jr.'s 1826 court proceedings, "Joseph Smith, the Originator of Mormonism," *Chenango Union* 30, no. 33, (Norwich, NY: 3 May 1877).
- "Observing all the required formalities, they commenced to dig, the moon shining brightly the while."
  - William B. Lapham, *History of Woodstock, Me.*, (Portland: Stephen Berry, 1882), 134.

### **Number of Treasure-seekers**

- "Intrusting the secret to two confederates— for nothing could be done without the presence of *three* — he waited for the propitious time, which was when the full moon was directly over-head at midnight."
  - J.H. Temple and George Sheldon, *History of the Town of Northfield, Massachusetts*, (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell, 1875), 18.

### **Prayer and Fasting**

- "So, after arming themselves with fasting and prayer, they sallied forth to the spot designated by Smith."

- William D. Purple account of Joseph Smith, Jr.'s 1826 court proceedings, "Joseph Smith, the Originator of Mormonism," *Chenango Union* 30, no. 33, (Norwich, NY: 3 May 1877).
- "Mr. Stowell went to his flock and selected a fine vigorous lamb, and resolved to sacrifice it to the demon spirit who guarded the coveted treasure. Shortly after the venerable Deacon might be seen on his knees at prayer near the pit, while Smith, with a lantern in one hand to dispel the midnight darkness, might be seen making a circuit around the spot, sprinkling the flowing blood from the lamb upon the ground, as a propitiation to the spirit that thwarted them."
  - William D. Purple account of Joseph Smith, Jr.'s 1826 court proceedings, "Joseph Smith, the Originator of Mormonism," *Chenango Union* 30, no. 33, (Norwich, NY: 3 May 1877).

### Ritualistic Rods and Sticks

- "They have entrenched the *kettle* all around, and driven a *steel ramrod* into the ground directly over it, to break the *enchantment*."
  - "Wonderful Discovery," *Wayne Sentinel*, (Palmyra, NY), 27 December 1825.
- "He has all necessary implements for finding and securing the fleeting treasure; the mineral rod, hazel sticks, crow-bars and bibles."
  - "Money Digging," *The Freedom Censor*, (Fredonia, NY), 14 September 1831.
- "Accordingly, orders were given to stick a parcel of large stakes in the ground, several rods around, in a circular form. This was done directly over the spot where the treasures were deposited."
  - Joseph Capron affidavit, 8 November 1833
- "He then stuck in the ground a row of witch hazel sticks, around the said circle, for the purpose of keeping off the evil spirits. ... He next stuck a steel rod in the centre of the circles."
  - William Stafford affidavit, 8 December 1833.

### Rodsmen and Divining Rods

- "Much, however, depends on the skillful use of the genuine *mineral rod*."
  - "Every Country Has Its Money Diggers," *New-Hampshire Sentinel*, (Keene, NH), 4 May 1822. Originally printed in Montpelier, Vermont.
- "After having been directed by the mineral rod where to search for the money, he excavated the earth about 15 feet square to the depth of 7 or 8; and all the while it was necessary to keep his pumps working to keep out the water."
  - "Money Digging," *Windsor Journal*, (Windsor, VT), 17 January 1825.
- "The instrument of their miraculous powers, was a cleft stick, or rod, something of the form of an inverted Y; and when this talisman was firmly grasped in either hand, by its two points, it was believed to indicate the proper course to be pursued, or point out some

substance of medicinal utility, or fix the locality of some valuable mine; -- whichever of these the agent was pleased to wish.”

- "The Rodsmen," *Vermont American*, (Middlebury, CT), 7 May 1828.
- “Mineral rods and balls, (as they were called by the imposter who made use of them,) were supposed to be infallible guides to these sources of wealth.”
  - Abner Cole, "Gold Bible, No. 3," *The Reflector*, (Palmyra, NY), 1 February 1831.
- “He has all necessary implements for finding and securing the fleeting treasure; the mineral rod, hazel sticks, crow-bars and bibles.”
  - “Money Digging,” *The Freedom Censor*, (Fredonia, NY), 14 September 1831.
- “A company of money diggers consisting of two men, a boy, and an old woman, armed with mining rods, crowbars, and the Bible, were employed on Saturday and Sunday nights in digging for money, over on Seavy’s point.”
  - “Money Diggers,” *Eastern Argus*, (Portland, ME), 23 October 1833.
- “These wonders they were wont to perform by means of rods of steel or witch-hazel, cunningly wound about with cords and prepared by diabolical incantations.”
  - Caleb Butler, *History of the Town of Groton*, (Boston: T.R. Marvin, 1848), 256.
- “WITH a large portion of the simple-hearted people in the agricultural districts of the country, from the earliest ages there has been an implicit belief in the powers and virtues of the Divining Rod--either for the discovery of water, mines, or hidden treasures.”<sup>1</sup>
  - "A History of the Divining Rod; with the Adventures of an Old Rodsman," *United States Democratic Review* 26, no. 141, (March 1850): 218.
- “One Sunday they came into our house; I saw their rods, all made of witch hazel so they would turn in their hands and point where the money lay.”
  - Nancy F. Glass letter, printed in Hiland Paul and Robert Sparks, *History of Wells, Vermont, for the First Century After Its Settlement*, (Rutland, VT: Tuttle and Co., 1869), 81.
- “A little, withered old man, yeled [sic] a wizard, armed with a twig of witchhazel, with a mystic OBI\* (\*a piece of letter dipped in the ashes of a witch) wound on the larger end, was actually seen traversing the highways of Essex north, and seeking, under supernal and infernal guidance, the *buried gold* which the credulous still believed these oblivious robbers had concealed somewhere in the neighborhood of the bridge.”
  - E. Vale Smith, *History of Newburyport*, (Boston: Damrell and Moore, 1854), 211.
- “Here he began to use the hazel rod (whether he had before used it at Cowdry's, in Wells, I cannot say). ... He gathered quite a number about him from the immediate neighborhood, and told them there was money buried in that region, and with his rod he

---

<sup>1</sup> This article is of considerable length and deals entirely with divining rods, their use in treasure-seeking and other endeavors, and (as the title states) the adventures of a rodsman. Because nearly this article deals with the subject of divining rods and rodsmen, it is impossible to quote every relevant section in this guide, although a few selections are given under other topics. The reader is encouraged to read this article as a whole.

could find it; and told them if they would assist in digging it out, and forever keep it a secret, he would give them a part of the money.”

- Barnes Frisbie, *History of Middleton*, (Rutland, VT: Tuttle & Co., 1867), 47.
- “The conjuror was present with his divining rod, and would go round making a circle.”
  - Lockwood L. Doty, *A History of Livingston County, New York*, (Geneseo, NY: Edward E. Doty, 1876), 605

## Sacrifices

- “And the Magician led the *rabble* unto a dark grove, in a place called *Manchester*, where after drawing a Magic circle, with a rusty sword, and collecting his motley crew of *latter-demillions*, within the centre, he sacrificed a Cock (a bird sacred to Minerva) for the purpose of propitiating the *prince* of spirits.”
  - Abner Cole, "Book of Pukei -- Chap. 1," *Reflector*, (Palmyra, NY), 12 June 1830. [Pukei 1:5]
- “Walters assembled his nightly band of money diggers in the town of Manchester, at a point designated in his magical book, and drawing a circle around laborers, with the point of an old rusty sword, and using sundry other incantations, for the purpose of propitiating the spirit, absolutely sacrificed a fowl, ("*Rooster*," ) in the presence of his awe-stricken companions, to the foul spirit, whom ignorance had created, the guardian of hidden wealth.”
  - Abner Cole, "Gold Bible, No. 5," *The Reflector*, (Palmyra, NY), 28 February 1831.
- “That was, was as follows: -- That a black sheep should be taken on to the ground where the treasures were concealed – that after cutting its throat, it should be led around while bleeding. This being done, the wrath of the evil spirit would be appeased.”
  - William Stafford affidavit, 8 December 1833
- “On a certain occasion in preparing the enchanted circle for digging, *a lamb was sacrificed*, to appease the guardian demons of the supposed treasure; but this act was generally regarded as a sacrilege, and did much towards bringing discredit upon these heathenish orgies.”
  - Franklin B. Hough, *A History of Jefferson County in the State of New York*, (Albany, NY: John Munsell, 1854), 158.
- “Joseph now declared to Harper that there was an *enchantment* about the place that was removing the treasure farther off; that Harper must get a perfectly *white dog*, and sprinkle his blood over the ground, and that would prevent the enchantment from removing the treasure. Search was made all over the county, but no perfectly white dog could be found. Joseph said he thought a *white sheep* would do as well. A sheep was killed, and his blood sprinkled as directed.”
  - Emily C. Blackman, *History of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania*, (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen, and Haffelfinger, 1873), 580.

- “Mr. Stowell went to his flock and selected a fine vigorous lamb, and resolved to sacrifice it to the demon spirit who guarded the coveted treasure. Shortly after the venerable Deacon might be seen on his knees at prayer near the pit, while Smith, with a lantern in one hand to dispel the midnight darkness, might be seen making a circuit around the spot, sprinkling the flowing blood from the lamb upon the ground, as a propitiation to the spirit that thwarted them.”
  - William D. Purple account of Joseph Smith, Jr.’s 1826 court proceedings, “Joseph Smith, the Originator of Mormonism,” *Chenango Union* 30, no. 33, (Norwich, NY: 3 May 1877).

### Seers and Stones

- “Like the girl, who a few years since, in the western part of the State of New-York, put a certain stone into a hat, and placing her face in front so as entirely to exclude the light, pretended, and made some credulous people believe, that by so looking into it she could see the whole world and what was there going on.”
  - H. Biglow and Orville L. Holley, *American Monthly Magazine and Critical Review*, vol. 2, (New York: Kirk and Mercein, 1817).
- “A few days since was discovered in this town, by the help of a *mineral stone*, (which becomes transparent when placed in a hat and the light excluded by the face of him who looks into it, provided he is fortune’s favorite,) a monstrous *potash kettle* in the bowels of the old mother Earth, filled with the purest bullion.”
  - “Wonderful Discovery,” *Wayne Sentinel*, (Palmyra, NY), 27 December 1825.
- “They had a wonderful son... who... discovered a round stone of the size of a man’s fist, the which when he first saw it, presented to him on the one side, all the dazzling splendor of the sun in full blaze – and on the other, the clearness of the moon. ... The oracle, after adjusting the stone in his hat, and looking in upon it sometime, pronounced that there was [treasure].”
  - “Imposition and Blasphemy!! Money-Diggers, &c,” *Rochester Gem*, (Rochester, NY), 15 May 1830.
- “And he took his *book*, and his rusty sword, and his *magic* stone, and his *stuffed Toad*, and all his implements of *witchcraft* and retired to the mountains near Great Sodus Bay, where he holds communion with the Devil, even to this day.”
  - Abner Cole, "Book of Pukei -- Chap. 1," *Reflector*, (Palmyra, NY), 12 June 1830. [Pukei 1:9]
- “*“Peep stones”* or pebbles, taken promiscuously from the brook or field, were placed in a hat or other situation excluded from the light, when some *wizzard* or *witch* (for these performances were not confined to either sex) applied their eyes, and nearly starting their balls from their sockets, declared they saw all the wonders of nature, including of course, ample stores of silver and gold.”
  - Abner Cole, "Gold Bible, No. 3," *The Reflector*, (Palmyra, NY), 1 February 1831.

- “It is well known that Jo Smith never pretended to have any communion with angels, until a long period after the *pretended* finding of his book, and that the juggling of himself or father, went no further than the pretended faculty of seeing wonders in a "peep stone," and the occasional interview with the spirit, supposed to have the custody of hidden treasures.”
  - Abner Cole, "Gold Bible, No. 5," *The Reflector*, (Palmyra, NY), 28 February 1831.
- “The power he pretended to have received through the medium of a stone of peculiar quality. The stone was placed in a hat, in such a manner as to exclude all light, except that which emanated from the stone itself. This light of the stone, he pretended, enabled him to see any thing he wished. Accordingly he discovered ghosts, infernal spirits, mountains of gold and silver, and many other invaluable treasures deposited in the earth.”
  - Joseph Capron affidavit, 8 November 1833
- “I picked up a small stone and was careless tossing it from one hand to the other. ... No, said the old man, it is of great worth; and upon this I gave it to him. ... He then put the stone which I had given him, into his hat, and stooping forward, he bowed and made sundry maneuvers, quite similar to those of a stool pigeon. At length he took down his hat, and being very much exhausted, said, in a faint voice, “if you knew what I had seen, you would believe.”
  - Peter Ingersoll affidavit, 2 December 1833
- “Joseph, Jr., could see, by placing a stone of singular appearance in his hat, in such a manner as to exclude all light; at which time they pretended he could see all things within and under the earth.”
  - William Stafford affidavit, 8 December 1833
- “We discovered a singularly appearing stone.... Joseph put it into his hat, and then his face into the top of his hat. ... After obtaining the stone, he began to publish abroad what wonders he could discover by looking in it.”
  - Willard Chase affidavit, 11 December 1833
- “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.”
  - Isaac Hale affidavit, 20 March 1834
- “One of those impostors who, by looking into a mysterious glass, or rather stone, pretended to be able to discover hidden treasures, or lost things, and even foretell future events... which he could plainly see by looking into his dark hat, having this stone in the crown.”
  - Nathaniel Stacy, *Memoirs of the Life of Nathaniel Stacy*, (Columbus, PA: W. Heughes, 1850), 171-172.

- “A negro boy named ‘Mike’ had a rare faculty bestowed on him. He could place a perforated stone which he had in his possession, in his hat, and immediately he could reveal the hiding places of buried treasure.”
  - John W. Hanson, *History of Gardiner, Pittston, and West Gardiner*, (Gardiner, MA: William Palmer, 1852), 169.
- “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 and placed it in his hat -- the old white hat -- and placed his face in his hat.”
  - Martin Harris interview, “Mormonism – No. II,” *Tiffany’s Monthly*, August 1859, 164.
- “Joseph requested the privilege of looking into the stone, which he did by putting his face into the hat where the stone was. It proved to be not the right stone for him; but he could see some things, and, among them, he saw the stone, and where it was, in which he could see whatever he wished to see. Smith claims and believes that there is a stone of this quality, somewhere, for every one. ... After this, Joseph spent about two years looking into this stone, telling fortunes, where to find lost things, and where to dig for money and other hidden treasure.”
  - Fayette Lapham, "Interview with the Father of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet, Forty Years Ago. His Account of the Finding of the Sacred Plates", *Historical Magazine [second series]* 7 (May 1870): 305.
- “Prisoner pretended to him that he could discover objects at a distance by holding this white stone to the sun or candle; that prisoner rather declined looking into a hat at his dark coloured stone, as he said that it hurt his eyes.”
  - Charles Marshall account of Joseph Smith, Jr.’s 1826 court proceedings, *Fraser’s Magazine* 7 (London): February 1873, 225.
- “He did so, and was permitted to look in the glass, which was placed in a hat to exclude the light. He was greatly surprised to see but one thing, which was a small stone, a great way off. It soon became luminous, and dazzled his eyes, and after a short time it became as intense as the mid-day sun.”
  - William D. Purple account of Joseph Smith, Jr.’s 1826 court proceedings, “Joseph Smith, the Originator of Mormonism,” *Chenango Union* 30, no. 33, (Norwich, NY: 3 May 1877).
- “With some labor and exertion he found the stone, carried it to the creek, washed and wiped it dry, sat down on the bank, placed it in his hat, and discovered that time, place and distance were annihilated; that all the intervening obstacles were removed, and that he possessed one of the attributes of Deity, an All-Seeing-Eye. ... On the request of the Court, he exhibited the stone. It was about the size of a small hen' a egg, in the shape of a high-instepped shoe. It was composed of layers of different colors passing diagonally through it. It was very hard and smooth, perhaps by being carried in the pocket.”

- William D. Purple account of Joseph Smith, Jr.'s 1826 court proceedings, "Joseph Smith, the Originator of Mormonism," *Chenango Union* 30, no. 33, (Norwich, NY: 3 May 1877).

## Silence Ritual

- "Then they conclude, that thro' some Mistake in the Procedure, some rash Word spoke, or some Rule of Art neglected, the Guardian Spirit had Power to sink it deeper into the Earth and convey it out of their Reach."
  - Benjamin Franklin, "The Busy Body," No. 8 (1729)
- "One of the company drove an old [file] through the rotten lid of the chest, and perceiving it to be nearly empty, exclaimed with an oath, "There's not ten dollars a piece." No sooner were the words out of his mouth, than the chest moved off through the mud, and has not been seen or heard of since."
  - "Money Digging," *Windsor Journal*, (Windsor, VT), 17 January 1825.
- "The effect was powerful, and contrary to an explicit rule laid down by himself he exclaimed, "d---n me, I've found it!" The charm was broken! – the screams of demons, - the chattering of spirits – and hissing of serpents rent the air, and the treasure moved!"
  - "Imposition and Blasphemy!! Money-Diggers, &c," *Rochester Gem*, (Rochester, NY), 15 May 1830.
- "He...then enjoined profound silence upon us, lest we should arouse the evil spirit who had the charge of these treasures."
  - William Stafford affidavit, 8 December 1833
- "And upon the slightest word or whisper from one of the party, the chest, almost within their grasp, would move off with a rumbling noise, to some distant and less attainable spot."
  - Caleb Butler, *History of the Town of Groton*, (Boston: T.R. Marvin, 1848), 256.
- "After digging a few feet he came to the flat stone over the pot, when Steel involuntarily cried out, "By the Lord we have got it!" when instantly, with a low rumbling sound, it settled down out of sight. It is said such searches must always be conducted in silence, as the sound of the human voice irritates the evil spirit who has charge of the hidden treasures, and they vanish away."
  - "A History of the Divining Rod; with the Adventures of an Old Rodsman," *United States Democratic Review* 26 (April 1850): 320-321.
- "Not a word must be spoken while digging for money; if they did the money would fly away."
  - Nancy F. Glass letter, printed in Hiland Paul and Robert Sparks, *History of Wells, Vermont, for the First Century After Its Settlement*, (Rutland, VT: Tuttle and Co., 1869), 81.
- "They were to form a triangle around the designated point, and work in perfect *silence* — as a word spoken would break the charm."

- J.H. Temple and George Sheldon, *History of the Town of Northfield, Massachusetts*, (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell, 1875), 18.
- “If the searcher could only hold his peace and keep on with the work, he would succeed; but if he was frightened into speaking a word, the charm would be broken and all would be lost.”
  - William B. Lapham, *History of Woodstock, Me.*, (Portland: Stephen Berry, 1882), 134.

### Treasure-Guardians

- “Full of Expectation they labour violently, trembling at the same Time in every Joint, thro' Fear of certain malicious Demons who are said to haunt and guard such Places.”
  - Benjamin Franklin, “The Busy Body,” No. 8 (1729)
- “Even the frightful stories of money being hid under the surface of the earth, and enchanted by the Devil or Robert Kidd, are received by many of our respectable fellow citizens as truths.”
  - “Money Digging,” *Windsor Journal*, (Windsor, VT), 17 January 1825.
- “His Satanic Majesty, or some other invisible agent, appears to keep it under marching orders; for no sooner is it dug on to in one place, than it moves off.”
  - “Wonderful Discovery,” *Wayne Sentinel*, (Palmyra, NY), 27 December 1825.
- “The effect was powerful, and contrary to an explicit rule laid down by himself he exclaimed, “d---n me, I’ve found it!” The charm was broken! – the screams of demons, - the chattering of spirits – and hissing of serpents rent the air, and the treasure moved!”
  - “Imposition and Blasphemy!! Money-Diggers, &c,” *Rochester Gem*, (Rochester, NY), 15 May 1830.
- “Now Walters, the Magician, was a man unseemly to look upon, and to profound ignorance added the most consummate imprudence, -- the summons of the idle and slothful, and produced an old book in an unknown tongue, (Cicero's Orations *in latin*,) from whence he read in the presence of the Idle and Slothful strange stories of hidden treasures and of the spirit who had custody thereof.”
  - Abner Cole, "Book of Pukei -- Chap. 1," *Reflector*, (Palmyra, NY), 12 June 1830. [Pukei 1:2]
- “And I looked, and behold a little old man stood before me, clad, as I supposed, in Egyptian raiment, except his Indian blanket, and moccasins -- his beard of silver white, *hung* far below his knees. On his head was an old fashioned military half cocked hat, such as was worn in the days of the patriarch Moses -- his speech was sweeter than *molasses*, and his words were the reformed Egeyprian [*sic*].”
  - Abner Cole, "Book of Pukei -- Chap. 2," *Reflector*, (Palmyra, NY), 7 July 1830. [Pukei 2:4]
- “Legends, or traditions respecting hidden treasures, with the SPIRIT, to whom ignorance has formerly given them in charge.”

- Abner Cole, "Gold Bible," *The Reflector*, (Palmyra, NY), 6 January 1831.
- “He also revived, or in other words, propagated the vulgar, yet popular belief that these treasures were held in charge by some *evil* spirit, which was supposed to be either the DEVIL himself, or some one of his most trusty favorites. This opinion however, did not originate by any means with Smith, for we find that the vulgar and ignorant from time immemorial, both in Europe and America, have entertained the same preposterous opinion.”
  - Abner Cole, "Gold Bible, No. 3," *The Reflector*, (Palmyra, NY), 1 February 1831.
- “Although the *spirit* was always able to retain his precious charge, these discomfited as well as deluded beings, would on a succeeding night return to their toil, not in the least doubting that success would eventually attend their labors.”
  - Abner Cole, "Gold Bible, No. 3," *The Reflector*, (Palmyra, NY), 1 February 1831.
- “It is well known that Jo Smith never pretended to have any communion with angels, until a long period after the *pretended* finding of his book, and that the juggling of himself or father, went no further than the pretended faculty of seeing wonders in a "peep stone," and the occasional interview with the spirit, supposed to have the custody of hidden treasures.”
  - Abner Cole, "Gold Bible, No. 5," *The Reflector*, (Palmyra, NY), 28 February 1831.
- “He has no doubt of it, provided he can vanquish the spirits that continually guard it, and break the charm that constantly surrounds it.”
  - “Money Digging,” *The Freedom Censor*, (Fredonia, NY), 14 September 1831.
- “A huge misshapen *ghost* stood before him, as he says, at least 20 feet high. – ‘Dad,’ said the courageous boy, ‘maydn’t I thow a stone at him?’ But the old man silenced the boy, and with blanched lips and chattering teeth addressed the ghost in the name of the Lord Jesus and demanded to know how much he would take for interest in the money; the ghost replied in a very surly tone that he wouldn’t soul out and was about to make a semonstration [*sic*] of his power when the money diggers gave way to their fears and fled, closely pursued by more than five hundred ghosts, leaving the Bible on the spot. The old man says next he’ll have a ‘clinch for it.’ He begins to suspect the ghosts are made of tangible materials.”
  - “Money Diggers,” *Eastern Argus*, (Portland, ME), 23 October 1833.
- “They pretended... that he could also discover the spirits in whose charge these treasures were, clothed in ancient dress.”
  - William Stafford affidavit, 8 December 1833
- “But when even the most devout, pious and godly Christians, with the Bible, Prayer-book, and Pilgrim's Progress lying near them, to keep off infernal spirits, had dug down to within an inch or two of the treasures, a daemon, in shape of some huge monster, with hideous yawning mouth and enormous white teeth; or of some ugly night bird, with eyes

as big as saucers, would appear, as if on purpose to mock them, and hinder them from adding wealth to their wisdom.”

- Caleb Butler, *History of the Town of Groton*, (Boston: T.R. Marvin, 1848), 256.
- “His belief was, that he failed in finding the treasure not from any fault in the rod, but from the malevolence of the devil, or evil spirit, who was put in charge of the money by the pirates; and was thus inducted into the office of keeper, by the blood of some man, or animal, killed on the spot, and poured into the pit.”
  - "A History of the Divining Rod; with the Adventures of an Old Rodsman," *United States Democratic Review* 26, no. 141, (March 1850): 223.
- “They were in some way concerned with buried treasure, and this being concerned by the supposed indication of the divining rod, led in early times to explorations for them, despite of the guardianship of the spirits of the murdered, who according to the most approved demonologists, are ever placed sentries over concealed coffers.”
  - Franklin B. Hough, *A History of Jefferson County in the State of New York*, (Albany, NY: John Munsell, 1854), 158.
- “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.”
  - Martin Harris interview, “Mormonism – No. II,” *Tiffany’s Monthly*, August 1859, 165.
- “Soon after joining the Church, he had a very singular dream; but he did not tell his father of his dream, until about a year afterwards. He then told his father that, in his dream, a very large and tall man appeared to him, dressed in an ancient suit of clothes, and the clothes were bloody. . . . He said to him that, when the treasure was deposited there, he was sworn to take charge of and protect that property, until the time should arrive for it to be exhibited to the world of mankind; and, in order to prevent his making an improper disclosure, he was murdered or slain on the spot, and the treasure had been under his charge ever since.”
  - Fayette Lapham, "Interview with the Father of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet, Forty Years Ago. His Account of the Finding of the Sacred Plates", *Historical Magazine [second series]* 7 (May 1870): 305.
- “That the last time he looked he discovered distinctly the two Indians who buried the trunk, that a quarrel ensued between them, and that one of said Indians was killed by the other, and thrown into the hole beside the trunk, to guard it, as he supposed.”
  - Charles Marshall account of Joseph Smith, Jr.’s 1826 court proceedings, *Fraser’s Magazine* 7 (London): February 1873, 225.

- “Here, having placed the heavy chest in its hole, they sacrificed by lot one of their number, and laid his body a top of the treasure, that his ghost might forever after defend it from all fortune-seekers. ... Alas ! for that word. The charm is broken ; and instantly the chest settled down out of reach ; and as instantly the disturbed ghost appeared, flitting around them ! And before they can collect their scattered senses, Satan himself— full six feet tall — rises from under the bank, crosses the island " like a wheel," *going right through a hay-stack*, and plunges into the river with a yell and splash !”
  - J.H. Temple and George Sheldon, *History of the Town of Northfield, Massachusetts*, (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell, 1875), 18.
- “His idea was, that Capt. Kidd, after burying his treasure, made one of his men swear to guard it, and then killed him and buried him above the iron chest containing the gold. When anyone searching for the gold struck the chest, the sentinel ghost would always make some demonstration to frighten them away. ... After digging several feet...there appeared in the hole...a sow with a family of pigs. They understood this to be a demonstration of the guard, and resolved to stand their ground, but the animal became ferocious and caught one of the diggers by the leg.”
  - William B. Lapham, *History of Woodstock, Me.*, (Portland: Stephen Berry, 1882), 134.

### Treasure Moving or Sinking

- “Then they conclude, that thro' some Mistake in the Procedure, some rash Word spoke, or some Rule of Art neglected, the Guardian Spirit had Power to sink it deeper into the Earth and convey it out of their Reach.”
  - Benjamin Franklin, “The Busy Body,” No. 8 (1729)
- “One of the company drove an old [file] through the rotten lid of the chest, and perceiving it to be nearly empty, exclaimed with an oath, "There's not ten dollars a piece." No sooner were the words out of his mouth, than the chest moved off through the mud, and has not been seen or heard of since.”
  - "Money Digging," *Windsor Journal*, (Windsor, VT), 17 January 1825.
- “For no sooner is it dug on to in one place, than it moves off like “false delusive hope,” to another still more remote.”
  - “Wonderful Discovery,” *Wayne Sentinel*, (Palmyra, NY), 27 December 1825.
- “Joseph once showed me a piece of wood which he said he took from a box of money, and the reason he gave for not obtaining the box, was, that it *moved*.”
  - Joshua Stafford affidavit, 15 November 1833
- “He saw the spirit come up to the ring and as soon as it beheld the cone which we had formed around the rod, it caused the money to sink.”
  - William Stafford affidavit, 8 December 1833

- “And upon the slightest word or whisper from one of the party, the chest, almost within their grasp, would move off with a rumbling noise, to some distant and less attainable spot.”
  - Caleb Butler, *History of the Town of Groton*, (Boston: T.R. Marvin, 1848), 256.
- “After digging a few feet he came to the flat stone over the pot, when Steel involuntarily cried out, “By the Lord we have got it!” when instantly, with a low rumbling sound, it settled down out of sight. It is said such searches must always be conducted in silence, as the sound of the human voice irritates the evil spirit who has charge of the hidden treasures, and they vanish away.”
  - "A History of the Divining Rod; with the Adventures of an Old Rodsman," *United States Democratic Review* 26 (April 1850): 320-321.
- “They could often strike their spades through on to the boxes, but before they could be excavated they would move away; it was like going to the bottom of a rainbow for a treasure.”
  - Nancy F. Glass letter, printed in Hiland Paul and Robert Sparks, *History of Wells, Vermont, for the First Century After Its Settlement*, (Rutland, VT: Tuttle and Co., 1869), 81.
- “Thompson says that he believes in the prisoner's professed skill; that the board which he struck his spade upon was probably the chest, but on account of an enchantment the trunk kept settling away from under them when digging, that notwithstanding they continued constantly removing the dirt, yet the trunk kept about the same distance from them.”
  - Charles Marshall account of Joseph Smith, Jr.'s 1826 court proceedings, *Fraser's Magazine* 7 (London): February 1873, 225.
- “Alas ! for that word. The charm is broken ; and instantly the chest settled down out of reach.”
  - J.H. Temple and George Sheldon, *History of the Town of Northfield, Massachusetts*, (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell, 1875), 18.
- “In a few feet from the surface the box of treasure was struck by the shovel. on which they redoubled their energies, but it gradually receded from their grasp. One of the men placed his hand upon the box, but it gradually sunk from his reach, After some five feet in depth had been attained without success, a council of war, against this spirit of darkness was called, and they resolved that the lack of faith, or of some untoward mental emotions was the cause of their failure.”
  - William D. Purple account of Joseph Smith, Jr.'s 1826 court proceedings, “Joseph Smith, the Originator of Mormonism,” *Chenango Union* 30, no. 33, (Norwich, NY: 3 May 1877).
- “And might, in the mind of the doubter, recall some of the legendary incidents of money-digging, wherein just as the treasure-chest seems within grasp, it suddenly sinks away and is no more seen.”

- D. Hamilton Hurd, *History of Essex County, Massachusetts*, vol. 2, (Philadelphia: A.W. Lewis and Co., 1888), 1483.

Compiled by Joseph T. Antley, © 2009.

[www.JosephAntley.com](http://www.JosephAntley.com)