

## MANUSCRIPT TRANSCRIPT

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Peterson, J. W. re: William. B. Smith, P13, f1490

January 12, 1989

Independence, Missouri, U.S.A  
May First, 1921

Statement of Elder J.W. Peterson concerning his acquaintance of William B. Smith a brother of the first president and prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints.

On the fourth day of July One Thousand Eight-hundred and Ninety I first met William B. Smith who was a brother of Joseph Smith the first president and prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Together with Elder W.S. Pender we crossed the Mississippi river from Cassville Wisconsin, to Turkey River Jcn., Iowa late in the afternoon and walked twelve miles or thereabouts, to Osterback Iowa and about ten oclock at night called the old man, then in his 79th year out of bed and was gladly welcomed by him at that late hour of the night into his humble home.

I was then in my twenty fifth year and the second year of my missionary experience. Most of the two or three days that followed was spent in asking the old man questions concerning his father's family and his brother Joseph in particular, being at that time especially interested in the Urim and Thummin with which his brother Joseph translated the Book of Mormon.

He told us many incidents of his youth and childhood and that of his father's family. One thing in particular impressed me forceably at that time and that was that Joseph had a natural gift of prophecy and revelation in his youthful days and often prophecied many things concerning the rise of the church and its development as well as the inhabitants of ancient America. Without stopping to mention the questions we asked I will relate very briefly what he said on two or three important points.

He said he had hefted the plates as they lay on the table warped in an old frock or jacket in which Joseph had brought them home. That he had thumed them through the cloth and ascertained that they were thin sheets of some kind of metal. When asked why he had not uncovered them he said they were told not to do so unless the Lord would give permission, that they were the property of an angel and had received strict command with regard to that matter. Bro. Pender remarked that most people would have examined them any way. The old man suddenly straightened up and looked intently at him and said. The Lord knew he could trust Joseph and as for the rest of the family we had no desire to transgress the commandment of the Lord but on the other hand was exceedingly anxious to do all we were commanded to do. Explaining the expression as to the stones in the Urim and thummim being set in two rims of a bow he said: A silver bow ran over one stone, under the other, arround over that one and under the first in the shape of a horizontal figure 8 much like a pair of spectacles. That they were much too large for Joseph and he could only see through one at a time using sometimes one and sometimes the other. By putting his head in a hat or some dark object it was not necessary to close one eye while looking through the stone with the other. In that way sometimes when his eyes

grew tires[d] he releaved them of the strain. He also said the Urim and Thummim was attached to the brestplate [sic] by a rod which was fastened at the outer shoulder edge of the brestplate [sic] and to the end of the silver bow. This rod was just the right length so that when the Urim and thummim was removed from before the eyes it would reach to a pocket on the left side of the breastplate where the instrument was kept when not in use by the Seer. I wan not informed whether it was detachable from the breastplate or not. From the fact that Joseph often had it with him and sometimes when at work, I am of the opinion that it could be detached. He also informed us that the rod served to hold it before the eyes of the Seer.

I was called to see the old man a few days before his death which occured in November 1893 and secured his dieing testamony and had it sworn to before a Baptist preacher of that place who was also a notary public. William Kephart by name. This same precher soon united with our church and later became one of our missionaries. As near as I can remember that document was exactly as the one he issued ten years before which is as follows... ..

Very Sincerely

(Signed) J. W. Peterson

Independence, Missouri, U.S.A.

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