

The Case of the Three Torn Pages

Joseph Fielding Smith's extraordinary attempt to hide Joseph Smith's hand-written 1832 account of the First Vision when he discovered it, nearly 100 years after it was written

(based on an article written by Stan Larsen, [Dialogue, Summer 2014](#))

Discovery of the 1832 Version

- 1832 – Joseph Smith, Jr records his hand-written account of First Vision in first three (2-sided) pages of *Letterbook 1*
- 1838/39 – Official account of First Vision
 - canonized in *Pearl of Great Price* in 1880
- 1844 – Joseph Smith, Jr. killed in Carthage, IL
- 1847 – Brigham Young and saints trek to Utah, bring boxes of Church records to Salt Lake City (including *Letterbook 1*)
- 1901 – Joseph Fielding Smith (JFS) began work in Church Historian and Recorder office
- 1910 – JFS called as Apostle
- 1921 – JFS called as Church Historian
- ~1921-1935 – JFS and Church Historian office process box of Nauvoo records, discover *Letterbook 1* (approximately 100 years after it was created)
- ~1930-35 - **Three pages containing JS's handwritten 1832 account are torn out of *Letterbook 1* and placed in JFS's office safe**
 - Rest of *Letterbook 1* and other Nauvoo records placed in Church archives

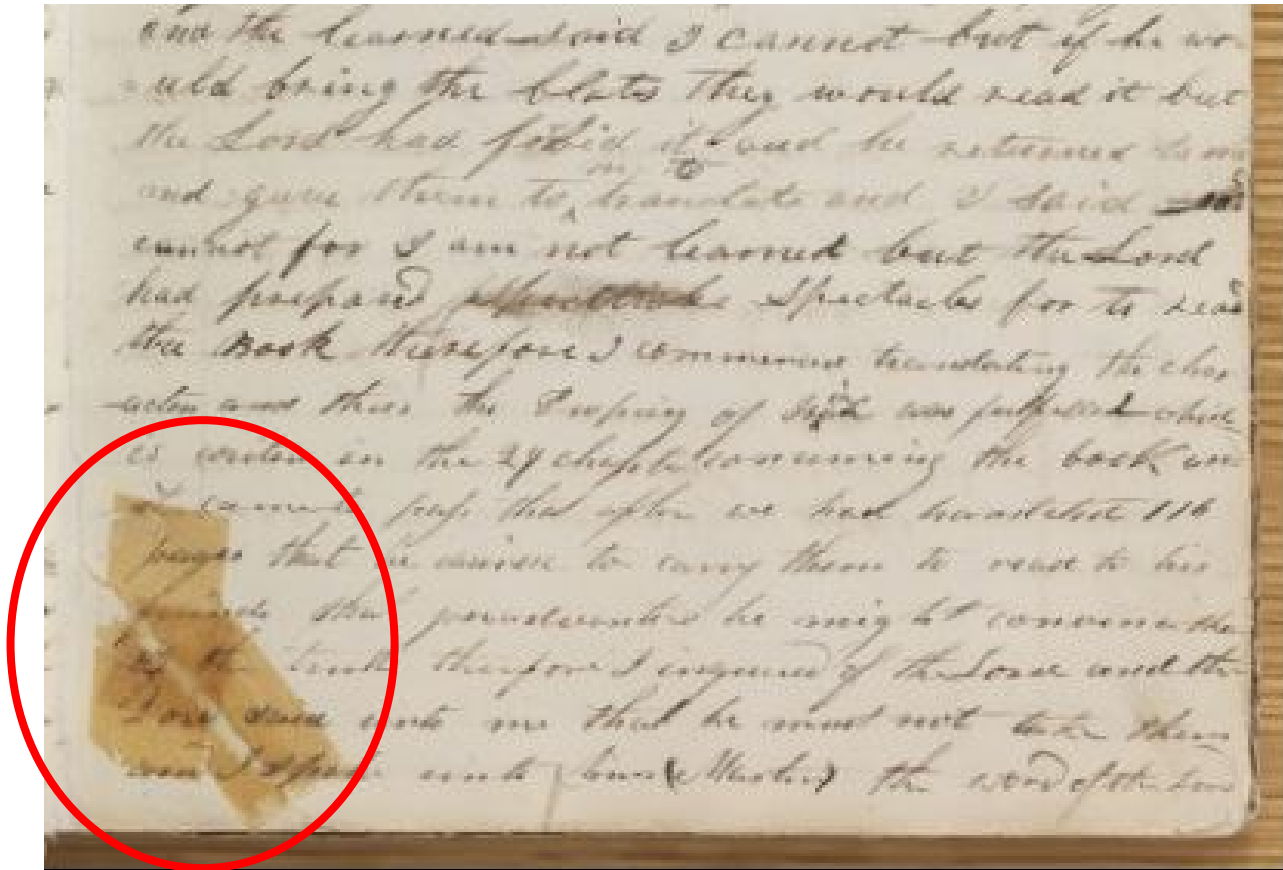
JFS Shares Three Pages w/ Confidant

- 1940s-early 50's – JFS showed president of the First Council of the Seventy, Levi Edgar Young, the torn-out 1832 account
- 1952/53 – Amateur historian, LaMar Petersen, interviewed Levi Edgar Young, who said:
 - Church should have committee to answer hard questions
 - He quit going down with his own questions to JFS “because he was laughed at and put off”
 - Asked to see documents, “Told to get higher permission”
 - Obtained permission, examined documents, “Was told not to copy or tell what they contained”
 - Said it was a “strange account” of First Vision
- 1963 – Levi Edgar Young dies - Petersen keeps information confidential until then

JFS's Hand Forced by Tanners

- Early 1964 - Peterson tells Jerald & Sandra Tanner about “strange account” of First Vision
 - Tanners write to JFS asking to see the 1832 account
 - JFS refuses their request
- JFS then moves three torn pages from private safe to the regular Church Historian’s collection
- <assumed skilled librarian tapes 3 pages back in *Letterbook 1* >
- JFS authorizes Assistant Church Historian to show restored *Letterbook 1* to BYU graduate student, Paul R. Cheesman
 - Perhaps preferring the story is told by friendly author, rather than antagonistic authors (Tanners)
- 1965 – Cheesman prepares typescript of masters thesis: *An Analysis of the Accounts Relating Joseph Smith's Early Visions*
- Tanners first to publish text of 1832 account, based on imperfect transcript in Cheesman’s thesis

Church publishes digital scans of *Letterbook 1* in early 2010's



Reinsertion of torn-out pages is very evident

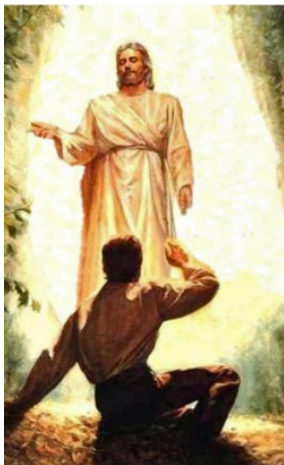
Who Tore Out the Pages? Why?

- **Who?**

- Evidence strongly points to **Joseph Fielding Smith**

- **Why?**

- JS's hand-written version **contradicted** the canonized 1838 version
 - 1832 - JS already knew no churches were right, only Christ appears
 - 1838 – JS seeks which church to join, Father and Son appears, told to join none of churches
- This struck at heart of Joseph Smith's claim of being divinely called to restore True Church. JFS must've **feared fallout**.



Why is this significant?



- The Church is widely accused of *hiding/white-washing* history
- But this is a case of JFS being caught *red-handed*
- Not only that, but *hiding* a *hand-written* account of a *foundational event* by the *Founder* of the Church

"MORMONISM, AS IT IS CALLED, MUST STAND OR FALL ON THE STORY OF JOSEPH SMITH. HE WAS EITHER A PROPHET OF GOD, DIVINELY CALLED, PROPERLY APPOINTED AND COMMISSIONED, OR HE WAS ONE OF THE BIGGEST FRAUDS THIS WORLD HAS EVER SEEN. THERE IS NO MIDDLE GROUND."

- PROPHET JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH, DOCTRINES OF SALVATION, PAGE 188

MORMON
TEACHINGS

www.mormonteachings.com

What else are they hiding?