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A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE

DISCOVERY OF THE BRASS PLATES

RECENTLY TAKEN FROM A MOUND NEAR KINDERHOOK, PIKE COUNTY, ILLINOIS.

(To the Editor of the "Times & Seasons.")

On the 16th of April last, a respectable merchant by the name of Robert Wiley, commenced digging in a large Mound near this place: he excavated to the depth of ten feet and came to rock. About that time the rain began to fall, and he abandoned the work. On the 23d, he and quite a number of the citizens with myself, repaired to the Mound, and after making ample opening, we found plenty of rock, the most of which appeared as though it had been strongly burned; and after removing full two feet of said rock, we found plenty of charcoal and ashes—also human bones that appeared as though they had been burned, and near the ecliphalon a bundle was found that consisted of SIX PLATES OF BRASS, of a bell shape, each having a hole near the small end, and a ring throught them all, and clasped with two clasps. The ring and clasps appeared to be iron, very much oxidated: the plates first appeared to be copper, and had the appearance of being covered with characters. It was agreed by the company that I should cleanse the plates. Accordingly I took them to my house, washed them with soap and water, and a woolen cloth; but finding them not yet cleansed, I treated them with dilute sulphuric acid, which made them perfectly clean, on which it appeared that they were completely covered with hieroglyphics, that none, as yet, have been able to read. Wishing that the world might know the hidden things as fast as they come to light, I was induced to state the facts, hoping that you would give them an insertion in your excellent paper, for we all feel anxious to know the true meaning of the plates, and publishing the facts, might lead to the true translation. They were found, I judge, more than twelve feet below the surface of the top of the Mound.

I am, most respectfully, a citizen of Kinderhook, W. P. HARRIS, M. D.

The following certificate was forwarded for publication at the same time:

We, citizens of Kinderhook, whose names are annexed, do certify and declare, that on the 23d of April, 1843, while excavating a large Mound, in this vicinity, Mr. Mc Wiley took from said Mound, *six brass plates*, of a bell shape, covered with ancient characters. Said plates were very much oxidated. The bands and rings on said plates mouldered into dust on a slight pressure. The above described plates we have handed to Mr. Sharp, for the purpose of having them taken to Nauvoo.

ROBERT WILEY,	G. W. F. WARD,	FAYETTE GRUBB,
GEORGE DECKENSON,	J. R. SHARP,	W. P. HARRIS,
W. LONGNECKER,	IRA S. CURTIS,	W. FUGATE.

(From the Quincy Whig.)

SINGULAR DISCOVERY—MATERIALS FOR ANOTHER MORMON BOOK.

A Mr. J. Roberts, from Pike county called upon us last Monday, with a written description of a discovery which was recently made near Kinderhook, in that county. We have not room for his communication at length, and will give so much of a summary of it as will enable the reader to form a pretty correct opinion of the discovery made.

It appeared that a young man by the name of Wiley, a resident in Kinderhook, dreamed three nights in succession, that in a certain Mound in the vicinity, there was treasures concealed. Impressed with the strange occurrence of dreaming the same dream three nights in succession, he came to the conclusion to satisfy his mind by digging into the Mound. For fear of being laughed at, if he made others acquainted with his design, he went by himself, and labored diligently one day in pursuit of the supposed treasure, by sinking a hole in the centre of the Mound. Finding it quite laborious, he invited others to assist him. Finally a company of ten or twelve repaired to the Mound, and assisted in digging out the shaft commenced by Wiley. After penetrating the Mound about eleven feet, they came to a bed of limestone, that had apparently been subjected to the action of fire. They removed the stones, which were small and easy to handle, to the depth of two feet more, when they found SIX BRASS PLATES, secured and fastened together by two iron wires, but which were so decayed, that they readily crumbled to dust upon being handled. The plates were so completely covered with rust as almost to obliterate the characters inscribed upon them; but after undergoing a chemical process, the inscriptions were brought out plain and distinct. There were six plates—four inches in length, one inch and three quarters wide at the top, and two inches and three quarters wide at the bottom, flaring out to points. There are four lines of characters or hieroglyphics on each. On one side of the plates are parallel lines running lengthwise. A few of the characters resemble, in their form, the Roman capitals of our alphabet—for instance, the capital B and X appear very distinct. In addition, there are rude representations of three human heads on one of the plates, the largest in the middle. From this head proceeds marks or rays, resembling those which usually surround the head of Christ in the pictoral illustrations of his person. There is also figures of two trees with branches, one under each of the two small heads, both leaning a little to the right. One of the plates has on it the figure of a large head by itself, with two ☞ pointing directly to it.

By whom these plates were deposited, there must ever remain a secret, unless some one skilled in deciphering hieroglyphics may be found to unravel the mystery. Some pretend to say that Smith, the Mormon leader, has the ability to read them If he has, he will confer a great favor on the public by removing the mystery which hangs over them. We learn there was a Mormon present when the plates were found, who, it is said, leaped for joy at the discovery, and remarked that it would go to prove the authenticity of the Book of Mormon—which it undoubtedly will.

In the place where these plates were deposited, were also found human bones, in the last stage of decomposition—also some braid, which was at first supposed to be human hair, but on a closer examination, proved to be grass; probably used as a covering for the bodies deposited there. This was also in the last stage of decay. There was but few bones found in the Mound, and it is believed that it was but the burial place of a small number, perhaps of a person, or family of distinction, in ages long gone by, and that these plates contain the history of the times, or of a people, that existed far—far beyond the memory of the present race. But we will not conjecture any thing about this wonderful discovery, as it is one which the plates alone can reveal.

On each side of the Mound in which this discovery was made, was a Mound, on one of which is a tree growing that measures two feet and a half in diameter, near the ground—showing the great antiquity of the Mounds, and of course all that is buried within them. These Mounds, likes others that are found scattered all over the Mississippi valley, are in the form of a sugar loaf.

The plates above alluded to, were exhibited in this city last week, and are now, we understand, in Nauvoo, subject to the inspection of the Mormon Prophet. The public curiosity is greatly excited, and if Smith can decipher the hieroglyphics on the plates, he will do more towards throwing light on the early history of this continent, than any man now living.

☞ The contents of the Plates, together with a Fac-Simile of the same, will be published in the "Times & Seasons," as soon as the translation is completed. ☜

FAC-SIMILE OF THE PLATES.

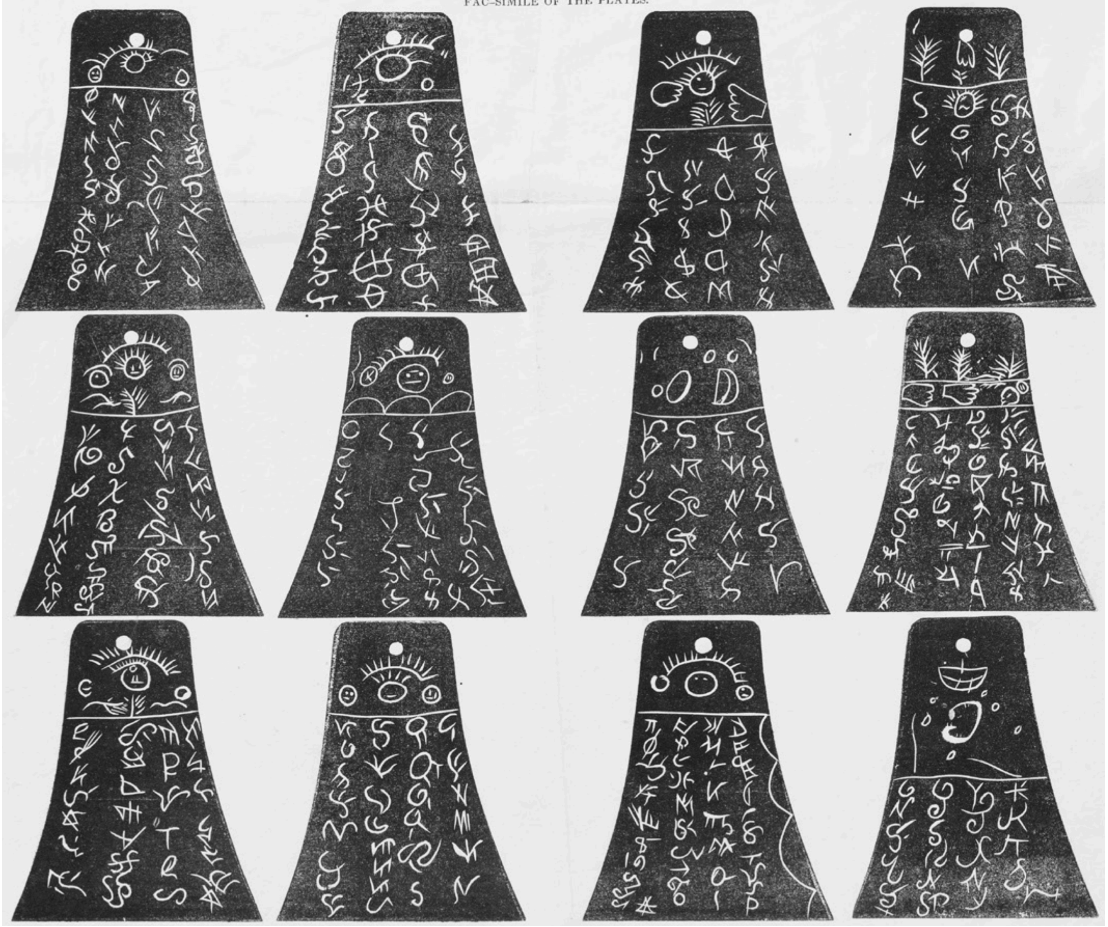

Figure 26. The Kinderhook plates.