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THE EARLY REPUBLIC'S SUPERNATURAL ECONOMY: TREASURE SEEKING IN THE AMERICAN NORTHEAST, 1780-1830

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IN 1804 DANIEL LAMBERT'S NEIGHBORS IN THE RURAL TOWN OF CANAAN, MAINE of the upper Kennebec River Valley were impressed by his apparent new wealth. According to the traveler Edward Augustus Kendall, Lambert, like most of his



John Quidor, *Money Diggers* (1832), Courtesy, The Brooklyn Museum.

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neighbors, had been a poor farmer and logger “in a very abject condition of life.” So it attracted intense and widespread interest when Lambert and his two grown sons suddenly appeared in public mounted on good horses and wearing expensive clothes: twin marks of successful gentlemen. They ceased working on their homestead and idled their days away in the taverns of Canaan and adjoining Norridgewock. Daniel Lambert added immeasurably to his local popularity by buying round after round for his neighbors who gathered there to drink and gape at his fine appearance. He increased their consternation by ostentatiously lighting his pipe with burning bank-notes.¹

Lacking any other apparent explanation, his neighbors attributed Daniel Lambert’s sudden wealth to the discovery of buried pirate treasure. Despite Canaan’s location dozens of miles from navigation, the inhabitants readily believed that Lambert had found a treasure chest because, as Kendall explained, “The settlers of Maine, like all the other settlers in New England indulge an unconquerable expectation of finding money buried in the earth.” Indeed, backcountry folk insisted that troves of pirate treasure guarded by evil spirits pockmarked the New England countryside even in locales far from the coast. Daniel Lambert’s reputed occult skills in handling divining rods further encouraged his neighbors’ suspicions. Initially, the Lamberts remained guardedly mum, but in time hints of discovered treasure escaped from Daniel’s lips. He needed to say no more, for rapid word-of-mouth fleshed out the remaining details. “Lambert was pronounced to be one of those fortunate persons who, born under a certain planetary aspect, are endowed with various and extraordinary powers: and he was soon found to possess enchanted mineral rods, which had been grown in the mystic form, and been cut at the proper age of the moon,” Kendall recorded. Soon “nothing was talked of but Lambert and his gold; and every day gave birth to new histories of the chest that had been found, and of its immeasurable contents.” Lambert confirmed the reports by publicly demonstrating his divining ability to locate a gold coin buried, as a test, in a field.²

Lambert’s apparent good fortune inspired his neighbors’ fervent hopes of discovering, and intense efforts to secure, their own treasure chests. Kendall quoted an eyewitness to the intense excitement: “All hands are digging in search of money, to the neglect of tilling their lands, and securing their crops. Days and nights are spent by many person, in digging up old swamps and deserts, sixty, seventy and eighty miles from *navigation*.” Lambert encouraged this emulation by assisting several digging parties. In 1851 John W. Hanson recalled, “Gradually, he inoculated the entire population of the Kennebec valley with a treasure-seeking mania, and people in all conditions of life, were found digging from Anson to Seguin, and all along the coast, even to Rhode Island.” Hanson concluded, “The excitement so universal and intense, can hardly be realized at the present day.” It ended in June, 1804, when Lambert’s sudden disappearance revealed that he had discovered no chest, but had led his neighbors on in order to obtain their livestock on undeserved credit.³

The outbreak of mass treasure seeking in the Kennebec Valley in 1804 raises

two questions. First, was this a unique episode, or evidence of a widespread and systematic set of beliefs? In other words, how accurate was Kendall's assessment that many rural Yankees believed in the widespread existence of treasure chests and in the possibility of employing occult techniques to discover and recover them? If Kendall was essentially correct, a second question follows: why did this particular and peculiar set of beliefs thrive in the rural Northeast during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and what do these treasure beliefs tell us about the concerns and aspirations of these rural folk? Travelers' accounts from this period stress just what a sharp dealer the rural Yankee was. Similarly, recent investigations of rural transactions and economic relationships reveal shrewd complexity and precise calculations. Why did such astute people cherish incredible fantasies of finding buried treasure? The persistence of this complex of implausible beliefs in the face of repeated frustration argues that they were important to sustaining the rural Yankee's self-image and way of life. Treasure seeking offers valuable insight into the worldview of rural Americans prior to the industrial revolution—a subject of great current interest to early American historians.⁴

Treasure seeking's proliferation was symptomatic of the early Republic's rapid population growth, geographic expansion, cultural volatility, and economic transition to capitalism in the hinterlands. Treasure seeking lay at the murky intersection of material aspiration and religious desire; it possessed a dual nature: functioning at once as a supernatural economy (an alternative to a disappointing natural economy) and as a materialistic faith (an alternative to unsatisfactory abstract religion). Treasure seeking met the needs of some people who felt troubled by their culture's increasing premium on possessive individualism and religious voluntarism, by promising both quick wealth and a sense of power over the supernatural world.⁵

TREASURE

Because few treasure seekers left any documents, and because no institution recorded their activities, no precise calculation of treasure-hunting episodes is possible. Yet a canvas of travelers' accounts, town histories, and other antiquarian sources for the American Northeast documents over forty incidents where groups of rural folk employed occult techniques to seek buried treasure, generally in very unlikely inland locales, and usually during the fifty years between 1780 and 1830 (see Table 1). Most episodes involved small parties, handfuls of men bound to share equally in any discoveries. Tradition held that a minimum of three (a particularly magical number that occurs repeatedly in treasure lore) seekers was essential for a successful dig. In 1831 the *Palmyra, New York* newspaper described the previous decade's widespread treasure seeking:

The MANIA of money-digging soon began rapidly to diffuse itself through many parts of the country; men and women without distinction of age or sex became marvelous 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, and to facilitate those *mighty* mining operations . . . divers devices and implements were invented, and 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.

In 1825 a Windsor, Vermont newspaper observed, “We could name, if we pleased, at least five hundred respectable men who do in the simplicity and sincerity of their hearts believe that immense treasures lie concealed upon our Green Mountains, many of whom have been for a number of years industriously and perseveringly engaged in digging it up.”⁶

Treasure seekers left behind considerable monuments attesting to their fervor, industry, and numbers. Writing in 1729 from Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin and Joseph Bretnal noted, “You can hardly walk half a mile out of Town on any side, without observing several Pits dug with that Design, and perhaps some lately opened.” In Pittston, Maine’s “Pebble Hills” diggers excavated pits eighty feet deep. In Frankfort, Maine, a century of treasure seeking leveled a hundred-foot gravel mound named “Codlead”; observers estimated that the diggers removed enough soil to lay a twenty-mile railroad bed. A mid-nineteenth-century writer noted that rural New England abounded “in excavations, like those of the gold regions of California.” Seekers dug dozens of tunnels into the solid rock face of a Bristol, Vermont cliff in futile search for a lost Spanish mine. In the later nineteenth century a visitor to the town found the surface of Bristol Notch “literally honeycombed with holes a few feet in depth, where generation after generation of money-diggers have worked their superstitious energies. . . .” William Little of Weare, New Hampshire noted, “Great holes, found in many wild, out-of-the-way places, made nobody knows by whom, show how many silent parties have dug in the night of [Captain] Kidd’s gold.”⁷

The varied accounts of rural treasure seeking describe a remarkably similar phenomenon throughout the American Northeast. The presumed identity of the treasure buriers was the only significant variation between regions. In New Jersey, southeastern Pennsylvania, eastern New York, and all of New England except Vermont tradition attributed the treasures to seventeenth-century pirates and especially to Captain Kidd. In Vermont this tradition overlapped with rumors that early Spanish explorers had opened, abandoned, and sealed mines filled with valuable ores and coins. The Yankee settlers in western New York and northern Pennsylvania could search for Captain Kidd’s treasures, Spanish mines and coin caches, robbers’ plunder, lost Revolutionary War payrolls, and the antediluvian hoards left behind by America’s presumed original, ancient

inhabitants. The eclecticism resembled the area's religious diversity. Further west, in the upper Ohio Valley, the Kidd tradition dissipated and a mixture of lost Spanish mines and ancient Indian treasures lured the treasure seekers.⁸

Seekers preferred to dig during the summer because, as Joseph Smith, Sr., of Palmyra, New York explained, "the heat of the sun caused the chests of money to rise near the top of the ground." Almost all seekers insisted that digging could only succeed at night, particularly between midnight and dawn. They also thought that the phase of the moon affected their chances of success, but disagreed over whether a new moon or a full moon drew treasure chests closer to the surface.⁹

Dreams, especially if thrice repeated, guided seekers to a suspected treasure. For example, after an angel appeared three times in a dream to Joseph Smith, Jr., the Mormon prophet, he hurried to the indicated spot near Palmyra, New York and discovered his "Golden Bible." Apparently the rural Yankee's subconscious was peculiarly concerned with finding money. In the 1780s Silas Hamilton of Whitingham, Vermont kept an elaborate journal of every treasure rumor he could collect. His journal records forty-four informants' information about thirty-two treasures located in twenty-two different communities from the Hudson Valley to Maine's Seguin Island and reaching into inland Vermont and New Hampshire. Dreams revealed the location of nineteen of those treasures.¹⁰

In the early nineteenth century, treasure seekers turned increasingly to "seer-stones" or "peep-stones" as a more ready and reliable alternative to dreams. To obtain visions revealing a treasure's location, a "glass-looker" or "seer" placed his stone in a hat and stuck his face in so as to exclude all light, sometimes staring for hours at a stretch. The seer-stone of an eighteen-year-old Rochester, New York boy named Smith (apparently no relation to Joseph Smith, Jr.) was described as "a round stone the size of a man's fist" that on one side displayed "all the dazzling splendor of the sun in full blaze—and on the other, the clearness of the moon." A seer needed to find the particular stone that was right for him. At age fourteen, Joseph Smith, Jr., of Palmyra, New York looked into a hat at the stone belonging to another seer; according to Smith's father, "It proved not to be 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." Digging at that spot uncovered the stone that enabled the future Mormon prophet to begin his career as a seer.¹¹

To ascertain the precise spot to dig, the seekers employed a divining rod: a freshly-cut, forked witch hazel (or, sometimes a peach) branch with one eighteen- to twenty-four inch prong held in each fist and the third, center prong pointing directly away from the "conductor," who addressed his rod in a soft whisper, "work to the money." Then he advanced "with a slow and creeping step" over the suspected spot until a strong downward jerk indicated the proper spot. In a June 18, 1825 letter Joseph Smith, Jr. described an alternative method to divine treasure with a rod:

you Should not dig more untill you first discover if any valluables remain you know the treasure must be guarded by some clever spirit and if such is discovered so also is the treasure so do this take a hasel stick one yard long being new Cut and cleave it Just in the middle and lay it asunder on the mine so that both inner parts of the stick may look one right against the other one inch distant and if there is treasure after a while you shall see them draw and Join together again of themselves let me know how it is.¹²

As Smith's letter indicates, locating a treasure was but the early and relatively easy stage in the long, complex process of recovery; it was merely the preliminary to the real challenge of wresting the treasure away from its fierce guardian spirits, the ghosts of men sacrificed by the treasure buriers. Spirits did their job well, staging terrifying spectacles and frightening noises to scare off the treasure seekers. In Palmyra and Manchester, New York during the 1820s the seekers fled, once, when a nearby log schoolhouse "was suddenly lighted up," again when "a large man who appeared to be eight or nine feet high came and sat on the ridge of the [nearby] barn, and motioned to them that they must leave," and, a third time, when a spectral company of horsemen charged their hole.¹³

To fend off the guardian spirits, the seekers laid out protective magic circles, or, better still, three concentric circles, around the digging ground. For some seekers a surrounding groove scooped out with a silver spoon or incised with a sword blade sufficed. The failure of these relatively simple circles encouraged experimentation with evermore elaborate designs. In 1833 William Stafford of Manchester, New York described one of Joseph Smith, Sr.'s magic circles:

Joseph, Sen. first made a circle twelve or fourteen feet in diameter. This circle, said he, contains the treasure. 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. Within this circle he made another, of about eight or ten feet in diameter. He walked around three times on the periphery of the last circle, muttering to himself something which I could not understand. He next stuck a steel rod in the centre of the circles, and then enjoined profound silence upon us lest we should arouse the evil spirit who had charge of these treasures.

A party led by his son, Joseph Smith, Jr., drove stakes around their circle and one man with a drawn and brightly polished sword orbited the digging site while the rest shoveled. Ritual readings from astrological tracts and religious books frequently figured in the more complex circles. During the 1820s in the upper Ohio Valley diggers broke the enchantment, known there as "the single and double Spanish cross," placed by departing Spaniards over their mines, by laying out a circle large enough to enclose all their tailings; then they dropped nine new nails around the circle at equal distances; during the digging the conductor walked the circle "with the course of the sun" while reading a chapter in the "Apocrypha" where the angel Raphael exorcises the devil.¹⁴

Because the buriers had spilled blood to fix guardian spirits over their treasure, seekers often spilled animal's blood around or in their circles to help break the protective enchantment. In 1807, as a ten-year-old boy in Catskill, New York, the future publisher and Republican politician Thurlow Weed participated in a party of seekers who brought along a black cat and cut its throat over the digging ground, "and the precise spot was indicated by the direction the blood spurted." Joseph Smith, Jr., reputedly sacrificed either pure white or jet black sheep or dogs to lay out magic circles of blood. In the 1780s Silas Hamilton, Whitingham, Vermont's most enterprising treasure seeker, recorded in his journal a particularly elaborate design for a magic circle:

tak nine Steel Rods about ten or twelve inches in Length Sharp or Piked to Perce into the Erth, and let them be Besmeared with fresh blood from a hen mixed with hogdung. Then mak two surkels round the hid Treasure one of Sd surkles a Little Larger in Surcumference than the hid Treasure lays in the Erth the other Surkel Sum Larger still, and as the hid treasure is wont to move to the North of South, East or West Place your Rods as is Discribed on the other Sid of this leaf.

A diagram on the reverse side of the journal page showed the rods placed between the two circles with their heads alternately on the inner and outer circle, totally surrounding the treasure.¹⁵

To preserve their magic circle's efficacy, seekers strictly adhered to "the rule of silence," for any spoken word would, at least, cause the treasure to settle beyond their reach into the bowels of the earth or, at worst, imperil their lives by unleashing enraged spirits. By creating some frightening spectacle, spirits often provoked the seekers into involuntary cries of alarm. Sometimes a mishap caused them to cry out. When one member of a Middletown, Vermont digging party stepped on the foot of another, he bellowed, "Get off from my toes." The conductor sprang out of the hole, yelling, "The money is gone, flee for your lives" and all followed him in terrified flight. More often some digger exclaimed with joy when he struck a suspected treasure chest, only to lapse into dismay, if not terror, as his hasty words caused the chest to plunge out of reach. In 1814 a party of Rochester, New York treasure seekers barely escaped with their lives when the conductor exclaimed, "Damn me, I've found it!" With that, a local newspaper recorded, "The charm was broken!—the scream of demons—the chattering of spirits—and hissing of serpents rent the air, and the treasure moved." No doubt the rule of silence helped put a lid on expressions of doubt and futility, and thereby kept a party at their task. If some disgruntled member did give vent to his frustration he became, for the others, the scapegoat for failure.¹⁶

Yet even if the diggers located a treasure, carefully laid out their circles, and proceeded in perfect silence, success usually eluded them, for, upon striking a suspected treasure chest the seekers confronted their final challenge: to break the

enchantment. If they failed to do so, when they reached for the chest the spiteful spirits would violently attack, or simply wrest the chest away at the last minute. In 1804 an eyewitness reported the Kennebec Valley seekers' repeated frustrations, "Doleful sighs and dismal noises are heard; the chest moves in the earth, almost out of their very hands!" In 1826 Jonathan Thompson, one of Joseph Smith, Jr.'s compatriots, testified in court that "on account of enchantment, the trunk kept settling away from under them while digging; that notwithstanding they continued constantly removing the dirt, yet the trunk kept about the same distance from them." Most chests moved down deeper into the earth but one avidly sought pot of money in Braintree, Vermont moved horizontally; when diggers neared "the pot moved, the ground being seen to rise and fall in the direction in which the treasure took its departure." At one point the persistent seekers trapped the elusive pot by surrounding it with a magic circle of "old scythes stuck upright in the ground to prevent its escape." Unfortunately, a jealous onlooker pulled up one of the scythes and allowed the pot to flee.¹⁷

Occasional accidental discoveries of small coin caches along the New England coast encouraged the seekers, but few, if any, of the purposeful parties ever bested the guardian spirits (with the possible exception of Joseph Smith, Jr., and his "Golden Bible"). Nonetheless, seekers persisted year after year, decade after decade, even generation after generation. John W. Hanson noted that in Pittston, Maine despite unceasing failure, "there has hardly been a single summer which has not found men, wasting their time, and presenting a spectacle of folly, as they sifted and examined the locality for gold. As late as last year, 1851, there were several who were thus at work." Similarly, treasure diggers continued to excavate nocturnally in the hills of Pennsylvania's Susquehanna County and Vermont's Green Mountains into the 1870s.¹⁸

These treasure tales' fantastic details suggest that they were nothing more than folklore, elaborate fictions bearing little or no resemblance to actual events. Some may have been tall tales woven to explain away failures, a way of turning personal humiliations into public entertainment for the treasure seeker, to escape public ridicule by emerging as a locally celebrated storyteller with a good tale to tell. At other times fraudulent conductors enlisted assistants or the power of suggestion to shape the impressions of their jumpy and credulous followers. Yet some evidence does not fit these simple explanations of defensive or calculated deceit: contemporary letters, affidavits, and court depositions in which treasure seekers soberly described their confrontations with spirits. And seekers usually impressed contemporary observers with an utter conviction that their supernatural encounters had been real. Waitsfield, Vermont's nineteenth-century chronicler wrote of a local treasure seeker, "The most ridiculous part of the matter, is the fact well attested, that Mr. Savage believed all this, as long as he lived, and was never ridiculed out of it." Similarly, Martin Harris of Palmyra, New York believed his treasure-seeking neighbors' tales of spectral

appearances because different participants on separate occasions related the same details “and they seemed in earnest—I knew they were in earnest.” In an October 23, 1830 letter describing his confidence in Joseph Smith, Jr.’s supernatural powers, Harris matter-of-factly recounted:

Joseph Smith Jr first come to my notice in the year 1824. In the summer of that year I contracted with his father to build a fence on my property. In the course of that work I aproach Joseph & ask how it is in a half day you put up what requires your father & 2 brothers a full day working together? He says I have not been with out assistance but can not say more only you better find out. The next day I take the older Smith by the arm & he says Joseph can see any thing he wishes by looking at a stone. Joseph often sees Spirits here with great kettles of coin money. It was spirits who brought up rock because Joseph made no attempt on their money. I latter dream I converse with spirits which let me count their money. When I awake I have in my hand a dollar coin which I take for a sign. Joseph describes what I seen in every particular. Says he, the spirits are greived, so I through back the dollar.

Harris felt no need to explain to his correspondent, William W. Phelps of Canandagua, New York what strikes a modern eye as inexplicable. Writing in 1826, a skeptical but fair-minded observer provided the soundest assessment: “If there be a fraud, the diviners themselves are the first deceived, and the greatest dupes.”¹⁹

These supernatural encounters were very “real” to those who experienced them. Childhood exposure to treasure tales and their careful performance of elaborate ceremonies at the digging site created a nervous expectation to see the extraordinary. Long hours of strenuous, nighttime digging by flickering lanterns in dark, remote, and cold locales engendered exhaustion. Adherence to strict procedures, especially the rule of silence, produced sustained tension. Finally, seekers tended to bring along a generous supply of alcohol and drank freely to fortify their nerves and warm their bodies. These circumstances developed their anxiously expectant frame of mind to the point that one participant’s suggestion, or any unexpected sight or sound, could trigger a group hallucination. Subsequent, repeated narration to others rapidly confirmed, refined, and elaborated the experience.

TRANSITION

The American treasure seekers’ beliefs were neither indigenous nor new. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries their English and German forbears avidly employed divining rods, magic circles, astrological books, and religious rituals to wrest supposedly abundant buried treasures from evil guardian spirits. Until the mid-eighteenth century any New England treasure seekers kept a very low profile because of Puritanism’s rigorous hostility to magic. But Pennsylvania’s religious tolerance promoted an ethnic and religious diversity that allowed magic

to prosper, particularly in association with German pietism and Quaker mysticism. In 1729 a Philadelphia newspaper essay by Benjamin Franklin and Joseph Bretnal described local treasure seeking's extent:

There are amongst us great numbers of honest Artificers and labouring People, who fed with a Vain Hope of growing suddenly rich, neglect their Business, almost to the ruining of themselves and Families, and voluntarily endure abundance of fatigue in a fruitless search after imaginary treasures. They wander thro' the Woods and Bushes by Day to discover the Marks and Signs; at Midnight they repair to the hopeful spot with Spades and Pickaxes; 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.²⁰

Apparently, it was not until the late eighteenth century that treasure seeking proliferated in the Yankees' new backcountry settlements in northern New England and western New York. Settling there created both the opportunity and the desire to practice treasure seeking. Migration to the frontier removed settlers from the chilling influence of "enlightened" gentlemen and learned clergy equally hostile to occult beliefs as "irrational superstition," and as proof that rural folk were all too ready to forsake the disciplined labor that was their proper duty. Kendall quoted a gentleman who insisted, "[treasure seekers] become insolent and saucy, neglect economy and industry, and every benefit to society; and moral habits decay, wherever these ideas prevail." By the late eighteenth century rural Yankees were not immune to their wider culture's increasing emphasis on measuring a man's worth by his ability to accumulate wealth. However, they settled in backcountry district where poor soil, a harsh climate, and relative isolation from markets impeded their acquisition of prosperity from the natural economy. None of these circumstances "determined" that the hill folk would seek treasure. A multitude of religious sects and voluntary societies offered their adherents a variety of formulas for greater order and security in an increasingly fluid and disconcerting world. Treasure hunting with occult methods was but another response to the same social flux.²¹

For lack of quantifiable sources, the economic and social status of those who employed occult techniques to dig for buried treasure cannot be ascertained with precision. Literary sources indicate that in the early eighteenth century treasure seeking was not unknown among men of property and extensive education. But, as with witchcraft beliefs in the previous century, treasure beliefs lost their elite adherents to the Enlightenment's secular rationality. Thomas Forrest's satirical 1767 play on treasure seekers, *The Disappointment: or the Force of Credulity* suggested that the emerging cultural division over magic emerged along the lines of social class. The plot revolved around "four humorous gentlemen" making dupes out of four treasure-seeking tradesmen; a paternalistic desire to disabuse their humbler neighbors and restore them to "honesty and industry" and to a resigned contentment "with their respective stations" motivated the four gentlemen.²²

This contempt for treasure seeking became universal among the genteel by the early nineteenth as part of their wider criticism of the common folk for inadequate ambition, lackluster work discipline, labor, and attachment to tradition. These critics saw treasure seeking as one more irrational obstacle to the necessary reeducation of rural folk to perform properly in a more enlightened, more commercial world. In 1826 an astute observer noted that “from north to south, from east to west” many “respectable” men “of large information, and of the most exemplary lives” continued to believe that divining rods could detect underground water; but “in all parts of the land, if the diviner hunts for metals, he becomes distrusted by the better sort of men.” In 1842 the young Boston Brahmin and future historian Francis Parkman visited the ruins of Fort William Henry on the banks of Lake George, New York. He found “that some fools had come up the lake with a wizard and a divining rod to dig for money in the ruins. They went at midnight for many successive nights and dug till daylight.” This contributed to Parkman’s sour conclusion: “There would be no finer place of gentlemen’s seats than this, but now, for the most part, it is occupied by a race of boors about as uncouth, mean, and stupid as the hogs they seem chiefly to delight in.”²³

This attitude appears in James Fenimore Cooper’s 1823 novel *The Pioneers*, a fictional account of the settlement of Cooperstown, his childhood village in western New York. Marmaduke Temple (the novelist’s scarcely disguised father, the wealthy land-speculator Judge William Cooper) denounces a treasure seeker named Jotham Riddle as “that dissatisfied, shiftless, lazy, speculating fellow! He who changes his county every three years, his farm every six months, and his occupation every season.” Riddle is fatally burned in a forest fire while pursuing his folly. On his deathbed he explained that “his reasons for believing in a mine were extracted from the lips of a sibyl, who, by looking in a magic glass, was enabled to discover the hidden treasures of the earth. Such superstition was frequent in the new settlements; and after the first surprise was over, the better part of the community forgot the subject.”²⁴

Treasure beliefs persisted among rural folk with locally defined intellectual horizons. An observer considered seekers as “the simple-hearted people in the agricultural districts of the country.” Another writer described Morris County’s seekers as “aged, abstemious, honest, judicious, simple church members.” The extensive treasure seeking inspired by Daniel Lambert captured the interest of virtually everyone, male and female, prosperous and poor, in the Kennebec Valley, with the noteworthy exception of the merchants—those with the widest knowledge of, and most regular ties with, the outside world of commerce and ideas. Schooled in oral traditions and the Bible, rural folk clung to their belief in the direct intervention of spiritual beings in their daily lives. In Morris County, New Jersey during the 1780s “the generality were apprehensive of witches riding them” inflicting illnesses on their families, disturbing their livestock, and interfering with the churning of butter. Consequently the inhabitants were ready

to “spend much time in investigating curiosities.” In a letter written from Thomaston, Maine in 1805 William Scales observed, “The belief of witches, pharies, apparitions, hobgoblins, and all manner of ridiculous fables prevail in these parts.” Given such beliefs it was not unreasonable to identify spirits as the obstacle separating rural folk from the riches they needed to prove their worth in an increasingly competitive society.²⁵

Yet while traditional folk beliefs provided the raw intellectual materials from which these rural folk constructed their treasure seeking, this was a process of creative reconstitution. The treasure seeking practiced in the American Northeast during the early Republic was something more than a timeless survivor; it was an attempt to sustain a folk tradition by adapting it to the demands of a new era. Rural folk had not fully left behind the traditional world of spirit beings and enchantments but they were not unaware of the claims made by rational scientific enquiry. Like the nineteenth century’s spiritualists the treasure seekers were engaged in a quasi-science that through empirical experimentation sought to perfect practical techniques for understanding and exploiting the spirit world. These seekers sought to bring their spiritual beliefs into conformity with their notions of rational inquiry and logical proof. They meant to prove to themselves that they were canny investigators rather than credulous fools. As the historian Klaus Hansen notes, treasure seeking “frequently derived from logically consistent connections between religious belief, a specific need, and an empirical attitude toward nature.” Similarly, folklorist Gerald T. Hurley observes that in treasure tales the spirits behave “according to a simple common-sense logic once the premise of the supernatural is accepted.” A rather naive empiricism characterized the treasure seekers’ world-view; for example, one seeker became, characteristically, a thorough Universalist, “believing that all mankind would finally be saved, and however vile, made pure and holy,” as a result of his observation of a puddle of putrid water that upon evaporation formed clouds of pure moisture. The historian Whitney R. Cross nicely captures the rural Yankee’s personality: “they were credulous in a particular way: they believed only upon evidence. Their observation, to be sure, was often inaccurate and usually incomplete, but when they arrived at a conclusion by presumably foolproof processes their adherence to it was positively fanatic.” A 1791 account of the treasure seekers in New Jersey’s Morris County said as much: “when any curiosities are presented to them, they are zealous in the pursuit of knowledge, and anxious to know their termination.”²⁶

Persistent failure and insistent belief progressively promoted evermore complex techniques and tools in the search for treasure. Unwilling to surrender their treasure beliefs, seekers concluded that they needed more sophisticated methods. They remained confident that, by trial and error, they would ultimately obtain the right combination of conductor, equipment, time, magic circle, silence, and ritual. As a result, the precise performance of complicated

procedures increasingly characterized treasure seeking. In 1823 Joseph Smith, Jr. dreamed that a guardian spirit/angel pointed out a treasure that the young man could recover on an appointed day “if he would strictly follow his directions.” These including dressing in “an old-fashioned suit of clothes of the same [black] color,” bringing “a napkin to put the treasure in,” riding to the spot on “a black horse with a switch tail,” demanding the golden book “in a certain name, and after obtaining it he must go directly away, and neither lay it down nor look behind him.” But, because of the imprecision in Smith’s performance, the spirit snatched away the treasure on the appointed day for three successive years, before grudgingly giving it up on the fourth. Metal divining rods and mineral balls began to supplant mere witch hazel or peach rods, and seer-stones gradually eclipsed dreams as finding aids. These more complex tools and techniques increased the importance of pretended experts in the occult. As an expression of economic fantasy, perhaps treasure seeking was peculiarly sensitive to observed changes in the natural economy, and mirrored the increasing importance of substantial capital and expert knowledge.²⁷

The Morris County seekers attributed their repeated frustration by hostile “hobgoblins . . . to the mismanagement of their conductor, as not having sufficient knowledge to dispel those apparitions.” Seeking “a person whose knowledge descended into the bowels of the earth, and could reveal the secret things of darkness,” they recruited Connecticut-born Ransom Rogers to lead their operations because of “his extensive knowledge of every art and science.” Because of his “pretended copious knowledge in chemistry” Ransom could readily “raise or dispel good or evil spirits.” He began by conducting a seance where a helpful spirit told the company of forty seekers that they would never recover the treasure they sought “unless they proceeded regular and without variance” in performing Rogers’ complicated ceremonies over the next several months. In subsequent seances the seekers began with prayer on bended knees before parading around the room in an order “according to their age,” that circuted “as many times as there were persons in number.” They then cast blank sheets of paper into the center of their circle, “fell with their faces to the earth” and prayed with their eyes closed for the spirits to enter and inscribe directions for them.²⁸

Treasure tales are often found in peasant cultures. In his work on the treasure tales of rural Mexico in this century, the anthropologist George M. Foster argues that a world-view of “limited good” characterizes peasant societies; that, given their almost static available technology and their persistent scarcity of land, peasants conceive of resources as finite and see economic life as a sort of zero-sum game where it is rare for anyone to advance except at someone else’s expense. To explain sudden good fortune, peasants insist that the newly rich must have made a pact with the devil to recover a treasure. A different emphasis—on active, avid participation in treasure seeking—characterizes the treasure tales in the early American Republic. This suggests that treasure seekers

were in the midst of a transition from the world-view of limited good characteristic of peasant societies to the unlimited good promised by capitalism. They sensed scientific inquiry's potential but they had not fully forgotten their heritage of supernatural beliefs. They were beginning to feel capitalism's imperatives but still thought that sudden wealth could only be had from outside the natural economy. Consequently, they eagerly sought riches but clung to the notion that spiritual beings could assist or retard that acquisition. Rural folk located at that point in the evolution of popular economic attitudes were prepared to act the part of capitalists *as they understood it*: to employ the latest occult technology to manipulate the supernatural in order to tap the presumed abundance of treasure chests. This transition was particularly prolonged in rural regions where poorer folk predominated, in areas where economic growth lagged behind aspirations, and where religious beliefs were most heterogeneous.²⁹

THE SUPERNATURAL ECONOMY

As a supernatural economy treasure seeking appealed to the relatively poor men and women dwelling in rural areas where commercial prosperity was little known, where economic growth did not keep pace with enhanced post-Revolutionary aspirations. Seekers were men whose minds accepted the notion of unlimited good but whose bodies dwelled in locales offering only limited opportunity. Their belief in an alternative, supernatural economy helped psychologically to bridge the gap between their real conditions and what their competitive society taught them to aspire to; recovering a treasure would redress the unjust variance between the seeker's condition and his self-image. When he heard a (false) report that his son had recovered a treasure, a Rutland, Vermont blacksmith rejoiced; "he declared he would never shoe another horse for a living, that he always thought he was born to a better destiny." Joseph Smith, Sr. was a failed petty capitalist whose attempt to export Vermont ginseng to the Orient had plunged his family into deprivation; in 1827 he declared that as a result of his son's discovery of the golden bible, "my family will be placed on a level above the generality of mankind." Kendall quoted a settler in Maine's Sandy River Valley in 1804: "We go on toiling like fools; digging the ground for the sake of a few potatoes, and neglecting the treasures that have been left by those that have been before us! For myself, I confess it, to my mortification, that I have been toiling all my life, to make a paltry living, and neglecting all the while, the means that have been long been in my hands of making a sudden and boundless fortune." Treasure chests symbolized the long-promised prosperity still awaiting marginal farmers; they wanted to believe that their fortunes lay all about them beneath the stony ground that so slowed their material advance. Peter Ingersoll of Palmyra, New York recalled a conversation with Joseph Smith, Sr. that perfectly illustrates this theme: "You notice, said he, the large stones on the

top of the ground—we call them rocks, and they truly appear to be so, but they are in fact, most of them, chests of money raised by the heat of the sun.”³⁰

Substantial farmers who shared their humbler neighbors’ localist perspective and traditional culture often patronized treasure seeking, providing tools, food, drink, sacrificial animals, and, sometimes, wages. Two prosperous Susquehanna Valley farmers, Oliver Harper of Harpersville, New York, and Josiah Stowell of South Bainbridge (now Afton), New York, supported many of Joseph Smith, Jr.’s treasure-seeking forays. One of the most zealous treasure seekers, Silas Hamilton of Whitingham, Vermont was his small community’s principal landowner, frequent selectman, and first legislative representative; but he apparently disliked commercial men and their lawyers for he participated in Shays’s Rebellion and received a display in the pillory for his pains. As eager seekers, the same members of the Wood family who acted as Middletown, Vermont’s selectman, town clerk, and legislative representative lent their name to the local treasure-seeking outburst: the “Wood scrape.”³¹

Yet treasure seeking pivoted around seers rather than patrons. Many episodes occurred without a prosperous patron but none without a charismatic seer who could inspire confidence in his peculiar occult talents. Seers invariably began in poverty. An account of Morris County’s treasure seekers described seers as “some illiterate persons” with “a genius adequate to prepossess themselves in favor with many.” Western New York’s preeminent treasure seekers, the Palmyra Smiths, were conspicuously poor. Daniel Lambert was also a poor man whose small farm and winter logging promised no better future.³²

A black skin, female gender, and adolescent age were all marks of powerlessness in the early Republic and one or some combination of the three often characterized seers. Joseph Smith, Jr. and the Rochester Smith were both adolescents. Women seemed particularly prone to treasure dreams and particularly skilled at using seer-stones. Eleven of the nineteen dreamers cited in Silas Hamilton’s notebook were female. Prior to her death in 1838, Dinah Rollins, a poor widowed black woman, who dwelled in a leaky shack on the edge of town, conducted the treasure seekers in York, Maine. About 1815 a black adolescent known only as “Mike” parlayed his skill with a seer-stone into the leadership of the diggers in Pittston, Maine. In the late eighteenth century, James Marks, an aged black man from Warren, Massachusetts, convinced many of his neighbors that he had, as a boy, sailed with Kidd and could successfully conduct their treasure seeking.³³

Because treasure seeking thrived in the backcountry where few men were prosperous, most of the men who followed seers were in tight economic straits. The 1791 account of Morris County, New Jersey’s treasure seekers ascribed their “turn of mind” to their “indigence.” Because so many could not pay Ransom Rogers’ £12 assessment for gifts to the spirits, collection dragged on for months and eventually forced him to reduce the levy to £4-6. Thurlow Weed described the treasure hunting companions of his youth as “poor but credulous

people.” It seems likely that his father, a poor farmer and cart-man, participated; his father’s life reiterates the persistent themes of restless migration and recurrent economic disappointment despite hard work, themes that run through the lives of so many of the known treasure hunters, including the Palmyra Smiths. Thurlow Weed remembered, “everything went wrong with him. Constant and hard labor failed to better his condition. . . . The consequence was that we were always poor, sometimes very poor.” In July 1807 the traveler Christian Schultz visited Rome, New York and found a connection between the economic decay of a once-promising frontier community, and avid treasure seeking. “This village consists at present of about eighty houses; but it seems quite destitute of every kind of trade, and rather upon the decline. The only spirit which I perceived stirring among them was that of *money digging*; and the old fort betrayed evident signs of the prevalence of this mania, as it had literally been turned inside out for the purpose of discovering concealed treasure.”³⁴

Canaan and her sister town, Norridgewock, spawned the most extensive treasure-seeking episode. Possessed of an unproductive and stony soil, afflicted by the insistent demands of absentee land speculators for burdensome land payments, condemned by latitude to five-month-long winters, and located seventy miles by bad roads from tidewater market, the two towns could promise most of their inhabitants little more than a hard-earned subsistence. According to Canaan’s mid-nineteenth-century historian, the settlers “were very poor and much addicted to intemperance.” The town’s name “became a byword and synonym for poverty and drunkenness.” Similarly, in 1807 Kendall described, “Norridgewoc is not a paradise;—it is not a paradise, at least if vice, ignorance or poverty is incompatible with the definition! . . . Nothing, as I am assured, is more common, than for families to live for three months in the year without animal food, even that of salt-fish, and with no other resources than milk, potatoes and rum.” According to Massachusetts state valuation returns, Canaan and Norridgewock possessed less than half as much property per taxpayer as the average for the Commonwealth as a whole. Originally settled in the 1770s, by 1804 the two communities were classic examples of aging frontier towns which had yet to fulfill their settlers’ expectations.³⁵

In a postscript to their 1801 tax return Canaan’s appraisers went to unusual lengths to persuade the legislature that local poverty exceeded even the miserable statistical appearance. They insisted that “a considerable number” of the inhabitants were “very poor & their whole taxes abated.” Only 48 of the 144 taxpayers owned frame houses and most of those were “of little value, without windows or chimneys, there being not more than 10 or 12 houses of the 48 of much value & the residue consist of log huts.” The local saw and grist mills were “of an ordinary quality indeed & will scarce pay the annual repairs.” Only half the taxpayers possessed barns and most of those were “destitute of doors & underpinning & rapidly decaying.” The inhabitants’ horses, oxen, steers, cows,

and swine were all “of a small size” and “of a mean & ordinary quality.” Men did not become rich in Canaan or Norridgewock by any ordinary chain of events. In an era that insisted that all worthy men would prosper, the inhabitants of these districts desperately needed some alternative path to riches.³⁶

MATERIALISTIC FAITH

For many rural folk, treasure seeking was a materialistic extension of their Christian faith as well as a supernatural economy. For them the actual contest with the supernatural assumed an importance equal to recovering a treasure. The early Republic knew a fierce competition between rival religious denominations that cast doubt on the true path to salvation. Anxious for palpable reassurance that they had found the true path to salvation, religious seekers wanted direct contact with divinity; they yearned for a religion that they could experience physically. For some, no experience with the supernatural seemed more tangible than the pull of a divining rod or the precise creation of a magic circle. And to the seeker, successfully besting an evil spirit connoted a share of divine power, a reassuring sense of confidence that he shared in divine grace. Like the subsequent spiritualists, the treasure seekers regarded their activities as part of their “experimental” Christianity; treasure seeking was *not* anti-Christian.³⁷

Seekers considered adherence to a strict moral code and unqualified faith as indispensable to success. Many rural folk reached the hopeful conclusion that God would signify His favor by bestowing material good fortune on the deserving. In 1844 Joseph Smith, Jr. explained to Brigham Young that “every man who lived on earth is entitled to a seer stone, and should have one, but they are kept from them in consequence of their wickedness.” Ransom Rogers recruited “only those of a truly moral character, either belonging to the church or abstaining from profane company, and walking circumspectly.” He told his seekers that the spirits insisted they “pray without ceasing for they were just spirits sent unto them to inform them, that they should have great possessions if they should persevere in the faith.” Rogers told his followers that “as the apparitions knew all things, they must be careful to walk circumspectly, and refrain from all immorality, or they would stimulate the spirits to withhold from them the treasures.” Prayers and religious books figured in most attempts to break an enchantment. When a party struck a suspected chest they generally paused to pray, for if anyone doubted that God would help them overcome the spirits, the treasure would escape. Inevitable frustration led to recriminations that some member’s weak faith had robbed the rest of their just reward.³⁸

Joseph Smith, Jr.’s spiritual crisis and consequent first vision in 1820 at age fourteen exemplifies how religious concern could lead to treasure seeking. He was deeply troubled by sectarian conflict and “often” asked himself, “Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?” Thereafter, at first as a treasure seer

and eventually as the Mormon prophet, Smith sought regular, direct contact with his God. Hostile preachers' skepticism only reinforced his psychological need to validate his powers regularly by consulting his seer-stone and grappling with demonic spirits. Smith was not unique among treasure seekers in discovering God's voice within. A spirit told the mid-nineteenth-century spiritualist treasure seeker, Hiram Marble of Lynn, Massachusetts, "What shall you do? Seems to be the question. Follow your own calculations or impressions for they are right." The spirit promised that Marble would recover a treasure, proving to a skeptical world that spiritualism was the way to divine knowledge.³⁹

Treasure seeking closely paralleled, and occasionally intersected with, the evangelical proliferation in the rural Northeast. New evangelical sects enjoyed the same autonomy from orthodox authority that enabled treasure seeking to prosper in the backcountry. In a recent study Stephen Marini describes how evangelical sects emerged from dialogues between religious seekers collected into local prayer groups and charismatic preachers. He describes northern New England's evangelical seekers as marginal farmers discontented with their lot in the material world—the same sort of folk who sought treasure. The religious dynamic identified by Marini closely parallels Kendall's description of how treasure seers like Daniel Lambert gave "new food to the credulity of the multitude, and a fresh excitement to the inclination, constantly lurking in its mind, to depend for a living upon digging for money-chests, rather than upon daily and ordinary labour. The belief in the existence of these buried money-chests, and the consequent inclination to search for them, is imbibed in infancy; and there wants nothing but the slightest occasion to awaken both."⁴⁰

Backcountry treasure beliefs were widespread but ordinarily dormant. A charismatic seer encouraged men and women to act on their treasure beliefs: to become active seekers. When the young Smith of Rochester, New York began in 1814 to evince his skill with a seer-stone, "Numbers flocked to him to test his skill, and the first question among a certain class was, if there was any of Kidd's money hid in these parts in the earth." His confirmation that treasures abounded inspired numerous digging parties. According to the Palmyra *Reflector*, Joseph Smith, Sr.'s arrival in 1817 "revived . . . the vulgar yet popular belief" in abundant local treasure chests. The importance of a charismatic seer to the development of an extensive treasure-seeking episode helps to explain why treasure seeking was far from universal, even within the many towns that resembled Rome, Palmyra, Canaan, and Norridgewock in their stagnation. Many communities possessed the potential for such episodes but not all experienced the advent of a persuasive and charismatic treasure seer.⁴¹

Just as many treasure seekers found religious faith essential to their enterprise, some evangelical preachers found "rodomancy" a useful way to attract adherents who longed for tangible experience with the supernatural. In 1806 the first Universalist minister in western New York, M. T. Wooley of Hartwick, mixed avid treasure seeking with his preaching. Willard Chase, Palmyra's

Methodist preacher, avidly collaborated with the Smith family in their treasure seeking. The “New Israelites” of Middletown, Vermont also synthesized evangelical religion and treasure seeking. In 1789 Nathaniel Wood, Sr. and his extensive connections announced that they were the descendants of the ancient Jews and established their own separate church. In 1799 a seer named Wingate arrived in Middletown as a guest of the Woods and of William Cowdry in adjoining Wells, Vermont. The Woods began to feature divining rods in their rituals, insisting that the rods’ jerks in answer to their questions represented divine messages. The town’s historian recalled that “by the use of the rod many converts were added, and the zeal of all increased and continued to increase until it amounted to a distraction.” Under Wingate’s direction, for two years the New Israelites employed their rods to predict the future, seek lost property, detect valuable medicinal roots, search for buried treasures, and to order the construction, and then abandonment, of a “temple.” They expected to find sufficient gold to pave the streets of the “New Jerusalem” that they planned to construct. In late 1800 Wingate and the Woods employed the rods to predict the end of the world on the night of January 14, 1801. When January 15 arrived on schedule, and shortly thereafter, when it was learned that Wingate had been a counterfeiter, the sect collapsed in local disgrace. Most of the members, including the Woods, migrated to western New York.⁴²

A direct link can be drawn between the New Israelites and the Mormon church founded by Joseph Smith, Jr. in 1830. Both faiths stressed millennialism, confidence in their Jewish ancestry, insistence of recapturing Christian Primitivism, a separatist notion of building a New Jerusalem, and reliance on latter-day prophecies. There is also a genealogical connection. William Cowdry, the father of Oliver Cowdry who helped transcribe the *Book of Mormon* was a New Israelite. Some Middletowners who later moved to Palmyra claimed that they found Wingate there assisting the Smiths in their treasure seeking under an assumed name, perhaps the “magician Walters.”⁴³

No doubt the Smiths would have welcomed the discovery of a treasure chest to ease their material lot, and the pay young Joseph earned divining lost property, blessing neighbors’ crops to preserve them from frost, or helping patrons search for buried treasure was a welcome supplement to the household income. But the Smiths sought far more than material rewards. Just as the New Israelites had used their divining rods, Joseph Smith, Jr. employed his seer-stone to communicate with God. The Smiths believed that young Joseph’s talent indicated that God intended him for great things. At his 1826 trial before a justice of the peace in South Bainbridge, New York on the charge that his “glasslooking” disturbed the peace, Joseph Smith, Jr. testified that when he looked at his stone he “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.” Indeed, the Smiths were not entirely comfortable with the patrons’ materialistic employment of

young Joseph's spiritual talents. At the trial Joseph Smith, Sr. testified that he was "mortified" that his son's "wonderful power which God had so miraculously given him should be used only in search of filthy lucre." He hoped that in time God would "illumine the heart of the boy, and enable him to see His will concerning Him."⁴⁴

DECAY

Accumulated disappointments slowly took their toll of treasure seeking, as both a supernatural economy and a materialistic faith. Unless they continued their expansion, institutionalized their leadership and procedures, and harnessed their prophetic anarchy, evangelical sects enjoyed but a short and tumultuous life. This was particularly true when they dabbled in treasure seeking, exposing their members to disillusionment by rashly promising material returns on their faith in the immediate future. The Wood family's failure to find treasure or to predict accurately the end of the world doomed the New Israelites. Hiram Marble's lifetime of fruitless quarrying in Lynn for a pirate's treasure discredited rather than supported his cherished spiritualism. Meanwhile itinerant preachers from the more institutionalized denominations gradually consolidated northern New England's groups of religious seekers. This reincorporation into the intellectual currents of the wider culture inhibited the earlier, localized spiritual spontaneity that had spilled over into treasure seeking. For example, the Universalist General Conference disowned and dismissed T. M. Wooley for his experimentation with "rodomancy." In developing the Mormon faith, Joseph Smith, Jr. avoided the New Israelites' fatal error of banking upon material rewards in this world. Early Mormonism graphically promised tangible riches, power, and glory to its believers but only after death. Consequently, Mormonism not only emerged from concerns with treasure seeking, it helped supplant the latter by recruiting its adherents and redirecting their efforts.⁴⁵

Clever frauds discredited treasure seeking as a supernatural economy, disabusing many rural folk of their treasure beliefs. The early Republic was a golden age of imposters and counterfeiting because standards of trust in economic relationships lagged behind the escalating velocity of human movements and transactions. Because economic transformation was gradual and locally differential, opportunities developed for shrewd men to exploit the lax security of laggard districts. The treasure seekers in those areas were particularly ripe for exploitation because they wanted so badly for their beliefs to be true. In Morris County, Ransford Rogers proved an entrepreneurial-imposter who reportedly cleared £500 in gifts levied from his several dozen followers to mollify guardian spirits and persuade them to release their treasure. He fled the area to reenact similar scams in Adams County, Pennsylvania and Exeter, New Hampshire. Daniel Lambert banked on his reputed treasure to obtain livestock and produce in great quantities on credit from his neighbors. He set June 20,

1804 as the date of repayment in gold and promised all takers free rum and a public dinner at Ware's store in Norridgewock. He resold the livestock and produce for cash and fled to Canada before the appointed day.⁴⁶

Of course, the desire to find buried treasure outlasted faith in the efficacy of occult techniques to secure them. Although settlers carried their search for treasure westward to the Pacific, western treasure tales deemphasized spiritual obstacles in favor of natural obstructions: landslides, erosion, and collapsed tunnels. Finding a lost Spanish mine in the West became more a matter of reading the landscape correctly and obtaining a proper map, than of the use of seer-stones, divining rods, magic circles, and the rule of silence.⁴⁷

TABLE 1:

Treasure-Seeking Episodes In The American Northeast

Location	Year	Buriers	Methods
1. Chichester, Pa.	1695-6	?	rods ⁴⁸
2. Philadelphia, Pa.	1729	Pirates	rods, astrology ⁴⁹
3. Lebanon, Ct.	1752	Pirates	? ⁵⁰
4. Middleboro, Ma.	1756	?	rods ⁵¹
5. New Haven, Ct.	1785	Pirates	? ⁵²
6. Rutland, Vt.	1785	Settler	rods, conjurer ⁵³
7. Whitingham, Vt.	1786	Pirates	rods ⁵⁴
8. Morris County, N.J.	1788-9	Pirates	seances ⁵⁵
9. Adams County, Pa.	1797	?	seances ⁵⁶
10. Frankfort, Me.	1798	Pirates	rods ⁵⁷
11. Middletown, Poultney and Wells, Vt.	1799-1800	Pirates & Spanish	rods ⁵⁸
12. Exeter, N.H.	c. 1800	Pirates	rods ⁵⁹
13. Dalton, Ma.	c. 1800	Hessians	? ⁶⁰
14. Waitsfield, Vt.	1800	Pirates	dreams ⁶¹
15. Kennebec Valley, Me.	1804	Pirates	dreams, rods ⁶²
16. Hartwick, N.Y.	1806	?	seer-stone ⁶³
17. Rome, N.Y.	1807	Soldiers	? ⁶⁴
18. Catskill, N.Y.	1807	Pirates	cat sacrifice ⁶⁵
19. Flushing, N.Y.	1807	?	? ⁶⁶
20. Georgetown, Me.	c. 1810	Pirates	rods ⁶⁷
21. Jewel's Island, Me.	c. 1810	Pirates	rods ⁶⁸
22. Little Falls, N.Y.	1810	?	? ⁶⁹
23. Rochester, N.Y.	1814	Pirates	seer-stone ⁷⁰
24. Pittston, Me.	1815-51	Pirates	seer-stone ⁷¹
25. Marietta, Oh.	c. 1820	Spanish	rods ⁷²
26. Ogdensburgh, N.Y.	c. 1820	?	rods ⁷³
27. Ellisburgh, N.Y.	c. 1820	?	rods ⁷⁴
28. Groton, Ma.	c. 1821	Pirates	rods ⁷⁵

Location	Year	Buriers	Methods
29. Palmyra & Manchester, N.Y.	1817-27	Pirates & Indians	rods, dreams, & seer-stone ⁷⁶
30. Hancock & Antrim, N.H.	c. 1823	Pirates	rods ⁷⁷
31. Essex, Vt.	1824	Spanish	rods, seer-stone ⁷⁸
32. Tunbridge, Vt.	1825	?	rods, visions ⁷⁹
33. Afton, N.Y.	1825-6	Spanish	rods, seer-stone ⁸⁰
34. Harmony, Pa.	1825-6	Spanish	rods, seer-stone ⁸¹
35. Middlesex, Vt.	1825-6	Pirates	seer-stone ⁸²
36. New London, Ct.	1827	Pirates	seer-stone ⁸³
37. Bristol, Vt.	1830-50	Spanish	? ⁸⁴
38. Lynn, Ma.	1834-86	Pirates	seances ⁸⁵
39. York, Me.	c. 1835	Pirates	rods, ball ⁸⁶
40. Lake George, N.Y.	1842	Soldiers	rods ⁸⁷
41. Crown Point, N.Y.	c. 1845	Soldiers	? ⁸⁸
42. Brandon, Vt.	c. 1860	Spanish	? ⁸⁹
43. Harmony, Pa.	c. 1870	Spanish	? ⁹⁰
44. Monmouth, Me.	?	Pirates	dreams ⁹¹
45. Braintree, Vt.	?	?	dreams, rods ⁹²
46. Northfield, Ma.	?	Pirates	? ⁹³
47. Weare, N.H.	?	Pirates	rods ⁹⁴
48. Stockton Springs, Me.	?	Pirates	rods ⁹⁵

Possible Treasure-Seeking Episodes From
Folklore Sources⁹⁶

49. Wernersville, Pa. (Tories)
50. Cold Spring Bay, N.Y. (Pirates)
51. Shark River, N.J. (Pirates)
52. Sale, Ma. (Pirates)
53. Dighton Rock, Ma. (Pirates)
54. Oneida Lake, N.Y. (Pirates)
55. Hell's Gate, N.Y. (Pirates)
56. Monhegan, Me. (Pirates)
57. Milford, Ct. (Pirates)
58. Ipswich, Ma. (Pirates)
59. Lyme, Ct. (Pirates)
60. Portsmouth, N.H. (Pirates)
61. Medford, Ma. (Pirates)
62. Martha's Vineyard, Ma. (Pirates)
63. Schoharie County, N.Y. (Pirates)

NOTES

¹Edward Augustus Kendall, *Travels Through the Northern Parts of the United States in the Years 1807 and 1808* (New York, 1809), III:85; John W. Hanson, *History of the Old Towns, Norridgewock and Canaan . . .* (Boston, 1849), 148-50. Kendall, who visited Canaan and Norridgewock in 1807, dates the episode to 1804. At a much later date an eyewitness to the affair, William Allen, Jr., of Industry, Me., penned his reminiscences and dated the episode to 1801. Kendall must be correct because court records indicate Lambert's presence in Canaan until 1804. See William Allen, Jr., "Pittsfield, Maine," in William Allen, Jr., *Papers*, Maine Historical Society. No newspaper was published within forty miles of Canaan and Norridgewock to provide contemporary comment.

²Kendall, *Travels*, III:86; Hanson, *Norridgewock*, 148-50.

³Kendall, *Travels*, II:87-88; John W. Hanson, *History of Gardiner, Pittston, and West Gardiner* (Gardiner, Me., 1852), 168; Hanson, *Norridgewock*, 148-50. The fact that the English-born Kendall left the beaten path to travel to Canaan, Maine suggests that he was related to Abiatha Kendall, an English-born settler, who was probably his chief informant. For the Kendall family in Cannan see Clarence I. Chato, "History of Canaan," *Maine State Library*.

⁴In recent years there has been a spirited debate among historians over the "mentalité" of rural folk in pre-industrial New England. Some argue that rural folk tended to forsake individual economic advantage because familial and community ties were preeminent. Others insist upon the primacy of individual self-interest in rural economic behavior. The most pointed exchange in this debate occurs in James A. Henretta, "Families and Farms: Mentalité in Pre-Industrial America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 37 (1980), 688-700. For a recent summation of the abundant literature on this debate see Bettye Hobbs Pruitt, "Self-Sufficiency and the Agricultural Economy of Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts," *ibid.*, 41 (1984), 334n.

⁵Klaus J. Hanson, *Mormonism and the American Experience* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1981), 90-91.

⁶"Golden Bible, No. 3," *The Reflector* (Palmyra, N.Y.), 1 Feb. 1831, reprinted in Francis W. Kirkham, *A New Witness For Christ in America: The Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Utah Printing Co., 1967), II:69. The Windsor, Vermont newspaper is quoted in Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1974), 18. For the three-man rule see J. H. Temple and George Sheldon, *History of the Town of Northfield, Massachusetts* (Albany, N.Y., 1875), 18-19.

⁷On Pittston, see Hanson, *Gardiner*, 185; on Frankfort see George J. Varney, *A Gazetteer of the State of Maine with Numerous Illustrations* (Boston, 1882), 471; and Henry Buxton, *Assignment Down East* (Brattleboro, Vt.: Stephen Daye Press, 1938), 173; Benjamin Franklin and Joseph Bretnal, "The Busy-Body, No. 8," in Franklin, *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1959), I:136; on Bristol see Dorson, *Jonathan*, 185; for the traveler's quote see Curtis B. Norris, "The Ghost Shaft of Bristol Notch," in Austin N. Stevens, ed., *Mysterious New England* (Dublin, N.H.: Yankee, Inc., 1971), 318; William Little, *The History of Weare, New Hampshire* (Lowell, Mass., 1888), 589; L. C. Butler, "Essex," in Abby M. Hemenway, ed., *The Vermont Historical Gazetteer* (Burlington, Vt., 1867), I:785. For the mid-century writer see "The History of the Divining Rod: with the Adventures of an Old Rodsman," *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, 26 (1850), 218, 223.

⁸On the Kidd legends see Dorson, *Jonathan*, 174, on the Spanish see 185; and "History of the Divining Rod," 222, on Ohio see 224; Rev. W. R. Cochrane, *History of the Town of Antrim, New Hampshire* (Manchester, N.H., 1880), 317; and Caleb Butler, *History of the Town of Groton* (Boston, 1848), 256n; on the Spanish see Butler, "Essex," I:784-85; on New York see Donna Hill, Joseph Smith, *The First Mormon* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977), 66-67; on New York and Ohio see Curtis Dahl, "Mound Builders, Mormons, and William Cullen Bryant," *New England Quarterly*, 34 (1961), 178-79. The component details of this treasure belief complex are frequently found in treasure tales from Europe and Asia. See Stith Thompson, *The Folktale* (New York: Dryden Press, 1946), 262-63; and Emelyn E. Gardner, *Folklore from the Schoharie Hills, New York* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1937), 13n. Because treasure folklore is an American universal it is likely that treasure seeking was also an historical phenomenon in the South as well. For Louisiana see Lyle Saxon, *Gunbo Ya-Ya* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1945), 258-70; on North Carolina see the *Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore* (Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 1952-64), I: 691-95; on the far West see Gerald T. Hurlay, "Buried Treasure Tales in America," *Western Folklore*, 10 (1951), 197-216.

⁹"Imposition and Blasphemy!!—Money-diggers. Etc.," *The Gem* (Rochester, N.Y.), 15 May 1830, reprinted in Kirkham, *A New Witness*, II:48; on the summer as best see Peter Ingersoll's

affidavit, 2 Dec. 1833, reprinted in *ibid.*, II:135; Clark Jillson, *Green Leaves from Whitingham, Vermont* (Worcester, Mass., 1894), 121; Butler, "Essex," 785; *An Account of the Beginning, Transactions and Discovery of Ransford Rogers, Who Seduced Many By Pretended Hobboblins and Apparitions, And Thereby Extorted Money From their Pockets* (Newark, N. J., 1792, Evans #24754), 12; for a new moon as best see William Stafford affidavit, 8 Dec. 1833 in E. D. Howe, *History of Mormonism: or a Faithful Account of That Singular Impositions and Delusion* (Painesville, Oh., 1840), 237-38; for a full moon as best see Frank C. Brown Collection, I:695.

¹⁰On dreams see Kendall, *Travels*, III:84-85; Dorson, *Jonathan*, 184; Charles M. Skinner, *Myths and Legends of Our Own Land* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1924), II:268; Gardner, *Folklore*, 14-15; Rev. P. B. Fisk, "Waitsfield," in Hemenway, *Vermont*, IV:776; Frank C. Brown Collection, I:693. On Smith's dress see *The Gem* (Rochester, N. Y.), 5 Sept. 1829, reprinted in Kirkham, *A New Witness*, I:151. Hamilton's journal is reprinted in Jillson, *Green Leaves*, 115-18. Evidence of the treasure seeking by Joseph Smith, Jr., and his father, Joseph Smith., Sr. prior to Joseph's recovery of the golden bible has engendered heated controversy. Beginning in the 1830s anti-Mormon writers zealously gathered testimony that they treated as proof that the Smiths were, first, unique in their activity, and, consequently, peculiarly indolent, deceitful, credulous, and greedy. In response to these attacks, Mormon writers have, until recently, felt compelled to dismiss all evidence that the Smiths engaged in treasure seeking as trumped-up by their enemies. This stand has perpetuated the anti-Mormons' erroneous presumption that treasure seeking was rare and symptomatic of moral bankruptcy. Fortunately, Mormon scholars have recently taken a sounder stand that much of the evidence of the Smiths' treasure seeking is credible, but that this in no way proves that Joseph Smith, Jr., was insincere in his religious faith then or subsequently. Indeed, treasure seeking represented a relatively immature but sincere manifestation of the religious concerns that he eventually refined into the Book of Mormon. For an example of the anti-Mormon interpretation see Pomeroy Rucker, *Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism* (New York, 1867), 20-22. For a Mormon denial of the Smiths' treasure seeking see Hugh Nibley, *The Myth Makers* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1961), 182-89. For the more sophisticated recent work by Mormon scholars see D. Hill, *Joseph Smith*; Marvin S. Hill, "Joseph Smith and the 1826 Trial: New Evidence and New Difficulties," *Brigham Young University Studies*, 12 (1972), 231; Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippets Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984); and Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Chicago and Urbana: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1984), 64-76. For the persistence of the anti-Mormon perspective see David Persuitte, *Joseph Smith and the Origins of the Book of Mormon* (Jefferson, N.C., 1985). In April and May 1985 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints released two letters that document Joseph Smith, Jr.'s early career as a treasure-seer: Martin Harris to William W. Phelps, 23 Oct. 1830 in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Church News*, 28 April 1985, 6; and Joseph Smith, Jr., to Josiah Stowell, 18 June 1825 in *ibid.*, 12 May 1985, 10.

¹¹On young Smith of Rochester see "Impositions and Blasphemy . . ." *The Gem* (Rochester, N. Y.), 15 May 1830 reprinted in Kirkham, *A New Witness*, II:46; on Smith's seer-stone see Fayette Lapham, "Interview with the Father of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet, Forty Years Ago," *The Historical Magazine*, 2nd ser., 7 (1970), reprinted in *ibid.*, II:384; Brodie, *No Man*, 435-37; George W. Cowles, *Landmarks of Wayne County, New York* (Syracuse, N.Y., 1895), 80-81; Emily C. Blackman, *History of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1873), 580; and Pomeroy Tucker, *Origin, Rise and Progress of Mormonism* (New York, 1867), 19. Also see George Williamson to William D. Williamson, c. 1820, filed under "Pittston" in Maine Town File of the William D. Williamson Papers, Maine Historical Society, and Hanson, *Gardiner*, 169. See also Butler, "Essex," I:785.

¹²"History of the Divining Rod," 218-19, 319; Kendall, *Travels*, II:84-85, 101; Barnes Frisbie, *The History of Middletown, Vermont in Three Discourses* (Rutland, Vt., 1867), 47; and Robert Parks and Hiland Paul, *History of Wells, Vermont, For the First Century After Its Settlement*, 82; Herbert Leventhal, *In the Shadow of the Enlightenment: Occultism and Renaissance in Eighteenth-Century America* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1976), 111; Temple and Sheldon, *Northfield*, 18-19; Buxton, *Assignment*, 169; Hanson, *Gardiner*, 168; on a soft whisper see Peter Ingersoll's affidavit, 2 Dec. 1833 in Kirkham, *A New Witness*, II:134-35; on a slow step see "The Divining Rod," *American Journal of Science*, 11 (1826), 203; on Smith's alternative see Joseph Smith, Jr. to Josiah Stowell, 18 June 1825 reprinted in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Church News*, 12 May 1985, 10.

¹³Gardner, *Folklore*, 13-15; Leventhal, *In the Shadow*, 113; Skinner, *Myths*, II:268-89; Kendall,

Travels, 84-85; Dorson, *Jonathan*, 174-76; *An Account*, 10; "History of the Divining Rod," 223; Benjamin A. Botkin, ed., *A Treasury of New England Folklore* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1947), 322; Parks and Paul, *Wells*, 80; on Palmyra see Martin Harris quoted in Kirkham, *A New Witness*, II:378.

¹⁴Jillson, *Green Leaves*, 121; Kendall, *Travels*, III:84-85; *An Account*, 12-13; Butler, *Groton*, 256n; Leventhal, *In the Shadow*, 107-11; Andrew Barton [Thomas Forrest], *The Disappointment: or the Force of Credulity* (Philadelphia, 1767, Evans #10554), 41; "Gold Bible, No. 5," *The Reflector* (Palmyra, N. Y.), 28 Feb. 1831, reprinted in Kirkham, *A New Witness*, II:73-74; on Joseph Smith, Jr.'s circle see Joseph Capron's affidavit, 8 Nov. 1833 in Howe, *History*, 259; on his father's circle see William Stafford's affidavit, 8 Dec. 1883, in *ibid.*, 238; on breaking Spanish enchantments see "History of the Divining Rod," 224-25. On a magic triangle see Temple and Sheldon, *Northfield*, 18-19.

¹⁵"The Book of Pukei—Chapter I," *The Reflector* (Palmyra, N. Y.), 22 June 1830, reprinted in Kirkham, *A New Witness*, II:51; Harriet A. Weed, ed., *Autobiography of Thurlow Weed* (Boston, 1884), I:7; on a similar black cat sacrifice see Gardner, *Folklore*, 13-15; on Smith's use of blood in his circles see Tucker, *Origin*, 24; Blackman, *Susquehannah*, 580; and William Stafford's affidavit, 8 Dec. 1833, in Howe, *History*, 239; on Hamilton's circle see Jillson, *Green Leaves*, 119. It is interesting that later in life Weed became a vigorous foe to Mormonism, the faith founded by another New York treasure seeker, Joseph Smith, Jr. See Weed's introduction to Mrs. Ellen Dickinson, *New Light on Mormonism* (New York, 1885).

¹⁶Gardner, *Folklore*, 13; Blackman, *Susquehannah*, 577; Jillson, *Green Leaves*, 121; Skinner, *Myths*, II:269; Dorson, *Jonathan*, 174; Parks and Paul, *Wells*, 80; "History of the Diving Rod," 320; Temple and Sheldon, *Northfield*, 181-19; Little, *Weare*, 589; L. C. Butler, "Essex," I:785; C. Butler, *Groton*, 256n; on stepped-on toes see Frisbie, *Middletown*, 48-49; on Rochester see "Imposition and Blasphemy . . ." *The Gem* (Rochester, N.Y.), 15 May 1930, reprinted in Kirkham, *A New Witness*, II:48; Tucker, *Origin*, 21.

¹⁷Parks and Paul, *Wells*, 80; Brodie, *No Man*, 428; Leventhal, *In the Shadow*, 113; Marvin S. Hill, "Joseph Smith and the 1826 Trial: New Evidence and New Difficulties," *Brigham Young University Studies*, 12 (1972), 230; Cowles, *Landmarks*, 81; Frisbie, *Middletown*, 48, 51; the eyewitness is quoted by Kendall, *Travels*, III:89; Thompson quoted in Brodie, *No Man*, 429; on Rutland see "Rutland," in Hemenway, *The Vermont Historical Gazetteer* (Claremont, N.H., 1877), III:1090; on the Braintree money pot see Bass, *Braintree*, 46.

¹⁸On small accidental discoveries see Dorson, *Jonathan*, 179; D. Hill, *Joseph Smith*, 68; and Buxton, *Assignment*, 179. Some Rochester diggers insisted that they found a chest but the local editor was suspicious of their claim. See "Imposition and Blasphemy . . ." in *The Gem* (Rochester, N.Y.), 15 May 1830, reprinted in Kirkham, *A New Witness*, II:48. Rumors "of the private success of some people" sustained dickers around Philadelphia according to Benjamin Franklin and Joseph Bretnal, "The Busy-Body, No. 8," in *Franklin Papers*, I:137. On Gardiner see Hanson, *Gardiner*, 169; on the Commodore see "History of the Divining Rod"; on Pennsylvania see Blackman, *Susquehannah County*, 580; on Vermont see "Rutland," 1090.

¹⁹The folklorist Gerald T. Hurley treats treasure tales as exclusively fictions with standard conventions: "The treasure tale is presented as fact and told with the same sense of literal truth that marks newspaper accounts of actual rediscovered gold." See Hurley, "Buried Treasure Tales," 197-98n. On Savage see Fisk, "Waitsfield," 776; the Martin Harris interview is reprinted from *Tiffany's Magazine*, May 1859 in Kirkham, *A New Witness*, II:378; Martin Harris to William Phelps, 23 Oct. 1830, reprinted in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Church News*, 28 April 1985, 6. (Harris's letter is one, long, unpunctuated "sentence"; for easier reading I have inserted the necessary punctuation and capitalization; otherwise the letter is verbatim.) The 1826 assessment is in "The Divining Rod," 203.

²⁰On the early presence of treasure beliefs in and around early eighteenth-century Philadelphia see Leventhal, *In the Shadow*, 107-18; for treasure seeking in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England see Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribner's, 1971), 234-37; John Brand, *Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain* (London, 1849), III:332-33; and Jonathan Swift, *The Virtues of Sid Hamet the Magician's Rod* (London, 1710); the quote is from "The Busy-Body, No. 8," *Franklin Papers*, I:136.

²¹Gordon S. Wood, "Evangelical America and Early Mormonism," *New York History*, 61 (1980), 363-70; Hansen, *Mormonism*, 73-77. The gentleman's quote appears in Kendall, *Travels*,

III:96. For the social function of volunteer societies and religious sects in America's fluid society see Don Harrison Doyle, *The Social Order of a Frontier Community: Jacksonville, Illinois, 1825-1870* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1978), 156-93. For an example of an orthodox Congregational minister who exercised his influence over a Massachusetts town against conjuring see Francis G. Walett, ed., *The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman, 1703-1782; Part 1: 1719-1755* (Worcester, Mass.: American Antiquarian Society, 1974), 288.

²²On the early eighteenth-century adherence to treasure beliefs of some well-educated men see Leventhal, *In the Shadow*, 107-15; on the similar decay of witchcraft beliefs occurring first among the elite, and only later among the common folk see John Putnam Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), 393; on the discontinuity of elite and lower-class supernatural beliefs in England see Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 666. Thomas Forrest was probably the author of Barton, *The Disappointment*, see especially iv, 7, 55.

²³"The Divining Rod," 202-03; Mason Wade, ed., *The Journals of Francis Parkman* (New York: Harper, 1947), I:47, 53. On criticism of rural folk see Robert A. Gross, "Culture and Cultivation: Agriculture and Society in Thoreau's Concord," *Journal of American History*, 69 (1982), 42-61.

²⁴James Fenimore Cooper, *The Pioneers; or the Sources of the Susquehanna* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1851), 327, 467.

²⁵For the first observer see "History of the Divining Rod," 218; for Morris County see *An Account*, 7-8, 20; for Lambert see Kendall, *Travels*, III:90-92; William Scales to Henry Knox, Thomaston, 29 July 1805, Henry Knox Papers, vol. 46, item #67, Massachusetts Historical Society. See also Wood, "Evangelical America," 369-70; David D. Hall, "A World of Wonders: The Mentality of the Supernatural in Seventeenth-Century New England," in *Seventeenth-Century New England* (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1985), 239-73; and Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, 387-93.

²⁶Hansen, *Mormonism*, 42; Hurley, "Buried Treasure Tales," 199; on the Universalist see "History of the Divining Rod," 327; Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1950), 81; *An Account*, v. On American spiritualism see R. Laurence Moore, *In Search of White Crows: Spiritualism, Parapsychology, and American Culture* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), 3-39; and Howard Kerr, *Mediums, and Spirit-Rappers, and Roaring Radicals: Spiritualism in American Literature, 1850-1900* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1972). On the pliancy of tradition to fit changing cultural needs see Alfred F. Young, "English Plebeian Culture and Eighteenth-Century American Radicalism," in Margaret and James Jacob, eds., *The Origins of Anglo-American Radicalism* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1984), 186-89. I would emphasize here the interaction of "popular" and "high" culture rather than their separation as seems to be argued in Jon Butler, "The Future of American Religious History: Prospectus, Agenda, Transatlantic Problematique," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 42 (1985), 167-83.

²⁷On persistent experimentation despite repeated discouragement see "Golden Bible, No. 3," *The Reflector* (Palmyra, N. Y.), 1 Feb. 1831, reprinted in Kirkham, *A New Witness*, II:69; and *An Account*, 9-10; and "Rutland," 1090; on Joseph Smith's dress see Lapham, "Interview," in Kirkham, *A New Witness*, II:385-87; Willard Chase's affidavit, 11 Dec. 1833, in Howe, *History of Mormonism*, 242; and Martin Harris to William W. Phelps, 23 Oct. 1830, reprinted in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Church News*, 28 April 1985, 6.

²⁸A decade later Rogers conducted a similar treasure search in Exeter, New Hampshire and demanded that the seekers wear white caps while digging. *An Account*, 9, 13-14, 19; Charles H. Bell, *History of Exeter, New Hampshire* (Boston, Mass., 1888), 412.

²⁹George M. Foster, "Treasure Tales, and the Image of the Static Economy in a Mexican Peasant Community," *Journal of American Folklore*, 77 (1964), 39-40. Stith Thompson similarly argues that treasure tales express "the frustration that comes from thwarted ambition." See Thompson, *The Folktale*, 262.

³⁰The blacksmith is quoted in "Rutland," 1087; Joseph Smith, Sr.'s aspirations are quoted in Joseph Capon's affidavit, 8 Nov. 1833 in Howe, *History of Mormonism*, 260; the Sandy River Valley settler is quoted in Kendall, *Travels*, III:96; Peter Ingersoll's affidavit, 2 Dec. 1833 in Kirkham, *A New Witness*, II:135; see also Rowell Nichols' affidavit, 1 Dec. 1833, in Howe, *History of Mormonism*, 257.

³¹On Stowell, see Kirkham, *A New Witness*, II:363-63; on Harper see Blackman, *Susquehannah*,

580; on Morris County see *An Account*, 9; on Hamilton see Clark Jillson, "Whitingham," in Hemenway, *The Vermont Historical Gazetteer* (Brandon, Vt., 1891); on the Woods see Frisbie, *Middletown*, 59, 109-10. See also Bell, *Exeter*, 412.

³²For the quote see *An Account*, vi. On the Smiths' poverty see Kirkham, *A New Witness*, I:32, 50; Cross, *Burned-Over District*, 138-40; Tucker, *Origin*, 11-16; Brodie, *No Man*, 10-18; and Bushman, *Joseph Smith*, 47-49. According to the 1798 Federal Direct Tax Return for Canaan, Lambert owned 100 acres of barely developed land, and dwelled in a log cabin judged by the assessors to be of no real value. He ranked sixtieth out of that settlement's 106 taxpayers. Three years later, a state valuation return for Canaan showed a similar picture; Lambert still lived in a crude log cabin, possessed no barn, and owned 100 acres; only two of those acres were improved and forty-nine, or about half the homestead, were judged "unimprovable." He owned no horse, no oxen, but a single cow, and a lone pig. See the Canaan, Maine return, 1798 Direct Tax Returns for Massachusetts-Maine, I:351, New England Historic Genealogical Society Library; and the Canaan, Maine tax valuation, Maine valuation returns for 1801, reel 397, Massachusetts State Library.

³³On female seers see Skinner, *Myths*, II:282; M. S. Hill, "1826 Trial," 229; D. Hill, *Joseph Smith*, 68; Blackman, *Susquehannah*, 577; and Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 22. On the dreams in Hamilton's journal see the excerpt in Jillson, *Green Leaves*, 115-18. On Marks see Botkin, *A Treasury*, 533-34. On "Mike" see Hanson, *Gardiner*, 169; and George Williamson to William D. Williamson, c. 1820, William D. Williamson Town Papers, filed under "Pittston." For Rollins see George A. Emery, *Ancient City of Gorgeana and Modern Town of York* (Boston, 1874), 203. On adolescence as a time of psychological unease over identity see Hansen, *Mormonism*, 21. For another black treasure seer see James Dow McCallum, *Eleazar Wheelock* (Hanover, N. H.: Dartmouth College Publications, 1939), 52.

³⁴*An Account*, 7; Weed, *Autobiography*, I:2, 7; Christian Schultz, *Travels on an Inland Voyage Through the States . . .* (New York, 1810), 16. On the occasional participation of prosperous farmers see Blackman, *Susquehannah*, 580; Frisbie, *Middletown*, 59, 109-11; and Bell, *Exeter*, 412.

³⁵Kendall, *Travels*, III:72; Hanson, *Norridgewock*, 150-51; *Report of the Committee of Valuation* (Boston, Mass., 1802, Shaw-Shoemaker #2625), 6-14.

³⁶Samuel Weston et al. to the General Court Committee on Valuation, 20 Oct. 1801, at the end of Canaan's Tax Valuation, 1801 Maine valuations, reel 397, Massachusetts State Library. The inhabitants of these rural backwaters have generally escaped the attention of historians preoccupied with commercial centers and boom towns.

³⁷Wood, "Evangelical America," 368, 375. Jon Butler in his "Magic, Astrology, and the Early American Religious Heritage, 1600-1760," *American Heritage Review*, 84 (1979), 317-46 insists on a stark line between allegedly pagan "magic" and orthodox Christian "religion." He is more sensitive to their interrelationship in popular religion in his subsequent "The Dark Ages of American Occultism, 1760-1848," in Howard Kerr and Charles L. Crow, eds., *The Occult in America: New Historical Perspectives* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1983), 58-78.

³⁸For Smith see D. Hill, *Joseph Smith*, 66. For Rogers see *An Account*, 12, 20. For praying see Kirkham, *A New Witness*, II:367; Gardner, *Folklore*, 14-15; and Frisbie, *Middletown*, 48.

³⁹Joseph Smith, Jr., to the editor of the *Chicago Democrat*, 1 March 1843, reprinted in Kirkham, *A New Witness*, I:46-48; Cross, *Burned-Over District*, 138-50; Hansen, *Mormonism*, 28. For the quoted spirit addressing Marble see Alonzo Lewis and James R. Newhall, *History of Lynn, Essex County, Massachusetts* (Boston, 1865), 247.

⁴⁰Stephen Marini, *Radical Sects of Revolutionary New England* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982), 1-7, 28-31, 53-55; Kendall, *Travels*, III:87. On the importance of childhood stories in preparing treasure seekers see also Fayette Lapham, "Interview with the Father of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet, Forty Years ago," Kirkham, *A New Witness*, II:384; and "Rutland," in Hemenway, *The Vermont Historical Gazetteer* (Claremont, N. H. 1877), III:1087.

⁴¹For Rochester see "Imposition and Blasphemy!!—Money diggers, etc.," from *The Gem* (Rochester, N. Y.), 15 May 1830, reprinted in Kirkham, *A New Witness*, II:46-48. On Joseph Smith, Sr., see "Golden Bible, No. 3," *Palmyra Reflector* (Palmyra, N. Y.), 1 Feb. 1831, reprinted in *ibid.*, II:68-69.

⁴²For Wooley see Nathaniel Stacy, *Memoirs of the Life of Nathaniel Stacy* (Columbus, Penn., 1850), 172. For Willard Chase see Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 16. The "Wood scrape" is thoroughly documented in Frisbie, *Middletown*, 43-65, quotation 59. Barnes Frisbie was a local clergyman who in the 1850s and 1860s interviewed several elderly eyewitnesses and participants.

Frisbie was the grandson of a Middletown resident in 1801. See also Marini, *Radical Sects*, 54-55; and Parks and Paul, *Wells*, 79-80. The Woods called their divining rods "St. John's rod." This probably reflects survival of a folk tradition originating in seventeenth-century Germany that rods had to be cut on St. John's Day. Many sixteenth-century magical writers deemed the presence of a cleric essential to a successful treasure search; see Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 274.

⁴³For the link see Frisbie, *Middletown*, 57, 62; and Marini, *Radical Sects*, 55. A Mormon historian quotes Joseph Smith, Sr., as declaring in a High Council Meeting that "he knew more about money digging than any man alive, had been at it for 30 years." See D. Hill, *Joseph Smith*, 67.

⁴⁴Brodie, *No Man*, 427-29; Blackman, *Susquehannah*, 579-80; Tucker, *Origins*, 20. For the quotes see W. D. Purple's transcription of the 1826 trial record in Kirkham, *A New Witness*, II:356-66. See also M. S. Hill, "1826 Trial," 229.

⁴⁵For Wooley see Stacy, *Memoirs*, 172. For the materialism of early Mormonism see Hansen, *Mormonism*, 42, 71, 92; and Wood, "Evangelical America," 385. For Mormonism's appeal to marginal farmers of Yankee descent see Hansen, *Mormonism*, 41-42, 82, 122, 202, 208; Cross, *Burned-Over District*, 143-49; and Wood, "Evangelical America," 381, 383. For Marble's failure see Lewis, *Lynn*, 445-71.

⁴⁶For Rogers see *An Account*, 14-28; and Bell, *Exeter*, 411-13. For Lambert see Kendall, *Travels*, III:86-89; and Allen, "Pittsfield," 17. For the corrosive impact of fraud see *An Account*, vol. 26; Bell, *Exeter*, 413; "Rutland," 1087; Barton, *The Disappointment*, iv, 53.

⁴⁷For the persistence of treasure seeking until the early twentieth century in a few obscure corners of the Northeast see Emelyn E. Gardner, "Folklore from Schoharie County, N. Y.," *Journal of American Folklore*, 27 (1914), 304, 323. On western tales see Hurley, "Buried Treasure," 200.

⁴⁸Leventhal, *In the Shadow*, 109.

⁴⁹Franklin and Bretnal, "The Busy Body, No. 8," *Franklin Papers*, I:137.

⁵⁰McCallum, *Eleazar Wheelock*, 52.

⁵¹Leventhal, *In the Shadow*, 114.

⁵²Hemenway, "Rutland," 1087.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 1089.

⁵⁴Jillson, *Green Leaves*, 113.

⁵⁵*An Account*.

⁵⁶Bell, *Exeter*, 411.

⁵⁷Dorson, *Jonathan*, 176.

⁵⁸Frisbie, *Middletown*, 57-61; Parks and Paul, *Wells*, 80.

⁵⁹Bell, *Exeter*, 413.

⁶⁰Skinner, *Myths*, II:280.

⁶¹Fisk, "Waitsfield," 776.

⁶²Kendall, *Travels*, III:86; Hanson, *Norridgewock*, 148-50; William Allen, Jr., "Pittsfield."

⁶³Stacy, *Memoirs*, 172.

⁶⁴Schultz, *Inland Voyage*, I:46.

⁶⁵Weed, *Autobiography*, I:7.

⁶⁶John Harriott, *Struggles Through Life . . .* (New York, 1809, Shaw-Shoemaker #17708), II:168-70.

⁶⁷"History of the Divining Rod," 222.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 223.

⁶⁹William W. Campbell, ed., *The Life and Writings of De Witt Clinton* (New York, 1849), 47.

⁷⁰"Impositions and Blasphemy . . ." in *The Gem* (Rochester, N. Y.), 5 May 1830, reprinted in Kirkham, *A New Witness*, II:48.

⁷¹Hanson, *Gardiner*, 169.

⁷²"History of the Divining Rod," 224.

⁷³Benjamin Franklin Hough, *A History of St. Lawrence and Franklin Counties, New York, From the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (Albany, N. Y., 1853), 108-09.

⁷⁴Benjamin Franklin Hough, *A History of Jefferson County in the State of New York, From the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (Watertown, N. Y., 1854), 158.

⁷⁵Butler, *Groton*, 256n.

⁷⁶"Golden Bible, No. 3," *The Reflector* (Palmyra, N. Y.), 1 Feb. 1831, reprinted in Kirkham, *A New Witness*, II:69; Bushman, *Joseph Smith*, 69-76.

⁷⁷Cochrane, *Antrim*, 317.

⁷⁸Butler, "Essex," 785.

⁷⁹D. Hill, *Joseph Smith*, 68.

⁸⁰Brodie, *No Man*, 429; Bushman, *Joseph Smith*, 69.

⁸¹Blackman, *Susquehannah*, 578-80.

⁸²Stephen Herrick, "Middlesex," in Hemenway, *The Vermont Historical Gazetteer* (Montpelier, Vt., 1882), IV:241.

⁸³D. Hill, *Joseph Smith*, 68; Skinner, *Myths*, II:282.

⁸⁴C. B. Norris, "The Ghost Shaft," 317-19.

⁸⁵Lewis and Newhall, *History of Lynn*, 248-49.

⁸⁶Emery, *Ancient City*, 203.

⁸⁷Wade, *The Journals of Francis Parkman*, I:47.

⁸⁸Skinner, *Myths*, II:283.

⁸⁹"Rutland," 1087.

⁹⁰Blackman, *Susquehannah*, 580.

⁹¹Harry Hayman Cochrane, *History of Monmouth and Wales* (East Winthrop, Maine, 1894), 312.

⁹²Bass, *Braintree*, 46.

⁹³Temple and Sheldon, *Northfield*, 18-19.

⁹⁴Little, *Weare*, 589.

⁹⁵Dorson, *Jonathan*, 176.

⁹⁶Skinner, *Myths*, II:268-89; and Gardiner, *Schoharie*, 13-15.