

## **Prophet Sharing: The faithful are still waiting for Bishop Koyle's Mormon dream mine to pay out**

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By Eric S. Peterson

People who routinely drive along U.S. Highway 91 between Spanish Fork and Payson have come to consider the oddly futuristic, white-stone mill built into the hillside as part of the scenery.

Utah County's "Dream Mine," as it's been known for more than a century, rarely turns up in conversation, either.

It seems most people would rather not discuss the mine's ancient and fabled promise: wealth beyond imagination, where rivers of precious gold and platinum course beneath the docile farm community. What's more, nine vaults are said to lie deep within the mine, filled with the treasures left by an ancient race from the Book of Mormon known as the Nephites. As legend goes, the Nephites' wealth was set aside for God's chosen people during a time of uncertainty as a blessing to fortify the faithful against the ensuing chaos of the apocalypse.

John Hyrum Koyle foretold that prophesy in 1894. A poor Mormon farmer from Spanish Fork, Koyle said his visions led him to build the mine, where in the early 1900s, he preached the vision to a steadfast group of followers. He did so until 1948, when authorities of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints excommunicated him.

While the mine has always been part of the rural tapestry of southern Utah County, the Dream Mine hasn't always been the subject of polite dinner conversation. Koyle's prophecies prompted the church to question his mine operation—which sold stock for decades without producing an ounce of pay dirt—and his efforts eventually led to his excommunication.

The mystery of this mine, and of the man who dedicated his life to it, have both intrigued and inspired faith from modern-day believers. Many walk a fine line between embracing fundamentalism and living their mainstream Mormon faith. Believers once met for sermons at the mine itself, but through the years, fear of church reprisal drove the faithful from public worship. Decades passed, only to have believers reappear in a more discreet and anonymous gathering place: the Internet.

Online believers have brought new life to an old prophecy while trading stock, sharing stories and preparing for the last days—all while trying to fly under the radar of LDS general authorities. Today, the discussion group buzzes with followers' talk of the mine and predictions of the apocalypse. When will it come and how? The time seems close at hand and the signs are all around, according to the e-group discussion.

"More volcanoes, big [earthquakes], large tsunami or tsunamis," one believer posts. "Probably before the end of the year, unless geologically things calm down. A volcano in Alaska should be about to blow also. More volcanoes are about to erupt, probably in the Cascades. A chunk of people possibly dead within a few months from now.

"Spring: Church troubles—a ripe time for change, due to the shock of what's happening, and good time for the Servant to show up(?) May—church probs, power plant terror attacks (this is first econ collapse). 2nd collapse in Fall 08, along with Utah EQs and other locations."

An e-mail discussion group has helped resurrect the century-old dreams of a man who believed God's angels had singled him out for a very special mission.

### **Man of Visions**

According to late historian Ogden Kraut's book *John H. Koyle's Relief Mine*, John Hyrum Koyle was born in 1864 into a family of Mormon pioneers among the first to settle in Utah. Brought up in Spanish Fork, Koyle was exposed to the rigors of frontier life, even watching helplessly as a quarry landslide buried his father alive. Koyle was 9 years old at the time and quickly became head of the household.

He lived a Spartan existence, farming, going to church, marrying young and starting a family. While faithful, he held doubts about his religion and wanted a solid LDS Church testimony. He dedicated himself to prayers of forgiveness and understanding, which ultimately brought his first vision.

## **It was about a cow.**

It seems Koyle had been missing a heifer and, one night after prayers, had a dream. He saw his cow with a broken horn in a field adjacent to a nearby railroad track. The next day, Koyle set out to find this spot and found his cow in the pasture, broken horn and all—a perfect mirroring of his dream. He no longer doubted and promised God that if he would direct him in his visions, he would be a most dedicated servant. Little did Koyle know the things the Lord would ask of him.

Koyle acquired the gift of dreams, Kraut's book recounts, and the most important dream of all came to him Aug. 27, 1894. On that date, an angel visited Koyle in a fitful dream, urging him to dig a mine.

This mine would lead to nine vaults filled with the treasures of the Nephites, descendants of Lehi, an Israelite prophet in the Book of Mormon. Lehi's son, Nephi, is best known for rescuing the golden plates—from which the Book of Mormon would eventually be translated—and for leaving Jerusalem for the Americas.

The angel guided Koyle through the mountain itself. They passed effortlessly through miles of rock and dirt, which revealed rich veins, tunnels and the vaults.

Climbing the mountain several days later, Koyle saw a strange circle of light on the hill—the very halo of light the angel told him would mark his first dig.

Koyle would have numerous visions—from predicting two world wars, the Great Depression and nearly every development in the progress of the mine before it happened.

The Dream Mine was incorporated in 1909, and 114,000 shares of stock issued. Shares were \$1.50 but were promised to be worth more than a \$1,000 each when the mine came in. Most miners never drew a dime from their labor but preferred working at the rate of three shares of stock per day.

At one time, an estimated 20,000 to 30,000 people from the region were associated with the mine. But Koyle's visions were the kind reserved for anointed LDS prophets, and the groundswell of interest in the mine raised the church's suspicions.

According to the LDS Doctrine and Covenants official revelation in the LDS Church follows a chain of command: Individuals may receive divine guidance for themselves or their families and bishops may do so for their congregations. Only church presidents may revelate for the entire church.

Koyle's prophetic claims thus provoked renowned church apostle (and a geologist) James E. Talmage. He was certain the mine was worthless and that Koyle was a deceiver.

"I say to you that the misrepresentations that have been made in selling stock of the Koyle Mine are of the Evil One," proclaimed Talmage in a 1928 issue of the Spanish Fork Press.

Battle lines were drawn. The mine became a target for church authorities who perceived Koyle as a threat. They made the distinction clear: loyalty to the mine was loyalty to the devil.

But old beliefs die hard, and the mine withstood the pressure until January 1947, when Koyle was summoned to a high council and told to sign a statement repudiating his visions and work.

Fearful of losing membership in the church he loved, Koyle, 84 at the time, begrudgingly signed. Later, he told of instantly regretting it.

Koyle defiantly continued with the mine. In April 1948, he was excommunicated. He died in Payson less than a year later. Labeled a false prophet and a con man for having sold tens of thousands of dollars in allegedly worthless stock, Koyle died poor, just as he had lived.

Believers still await the day when the mine will redeem their fallen prophet and produce riches. Then, as Koyle was fond of saying (as noted in Norman Pierce's *The Dream Mine Story*), "in rapid sequence, the church, state and nation will be brought up a standin' to judgment like a wild colt to a snubbin' post."

## **The Dream Goes Digital**

Fear of their own excommunication drove Koyle's followers underground for years, and talk of the mine shrunk to a whisper.

But recently, followers have found safe haven in an e-mail discussion group created by Orem chiropractor (and mine stockholder) Delynn Hansen. "Doc" as he is known online, believes starting the e-group was no accident.

"The spirit told me to start the e-mail group, and I didn't question it. I just did it." Hansen says.

Hansen is busy on a recent day in his Orem office, cheerfully greeting clients and setting them up on matted tables. He's adorned his office walls with a variety of odd art-deco style tribal masks. In the farthest corner of the office, an unseen machine rhythmically emits a loud ticking noise like a metronome. Hansen's desk, tucked into the corner, overflows with papers and books. He retrieves his stock certificate from the Dream Mine, also known as the Relief Mine as it was renamed in 1961.

The stock still floats around nowadays, and since the creation of Hansen's e-group, trading has gone through the roof. The last time stock sold on the e-group, it was priced at \$25 a share, two dollars more than recently advertised EnergySolutions stock.

"It didn't take long after I started the group that they've been selling and trading the stock, and now there's very little left," Hansen says. Since no new stock is being issued, buyers purchase directly from shareholders, and the company signs the stock over to the new owner.

Coincidentally, Hansen started the mine discussion group the night before the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Since then, membership has swelled from a handful of friends to around 990 members.

Interest from the e-mail group led Hansen to host a tour of the mine a few years back. When former mine president Dean Cloward arrived at the gates, he was astonished to find more than 100 group members.

"After we all came out, I saw this big smile on the president's face when he saw the new generation," Hansen recalls. "I think it clicked for him why we have the e-group."

## **This Is How the World Ends**

Today, the mine sparks more interest than it has for decades. Stockholders, believers and even the casually curious have found freedom to talk and share experiences from the anonymity of the Web-based e-group.

Since the very mission of the mine was to ready Zion for the tumult of the last days, signs of the end are the hottest topic of e-group discussion.

Koyle was cryptic about details of the final days, so current believers have their own theories. Scanning his notes, Hansen refers to a story told by follower Jesse Young: "The time of trouble will be ushered in by a financial crash. We'll go to bed at night and wake up in the morning with no light, gas or heat."

Hansen has a theory as to what could wreak this havoc.

"Electromagnetic pulse," he says. "They say you could blast two of those over the skies of America, and that would literally fry everything. You could take down America, just that quick. The Russians have that capability. The only thing that would be left working would be hardened electronics that the military have."

Koyle once predicted that before the end, Russia would invade Turkey for access to the Black Sea. The weekend of October 26 this year, stories broke about Turkey attacking Kurdish rebels in Northern Iraq. Since that weekend, 22 posts on the discussion group shot back and forth speculating what this might mean with regard to the end of the world.

According to one post: Now that Turkey has crossed the border and engaged the Kurds it seems to me that Russia is biding its time. Who knows how patient the Reds will be in watching what goes on there, but when they think the time is right they'll invade Turkey for their water.

Another poster commented: The reason Russia attacks Turkey has more to do with our disabled condition, Conflict will start inside America over the loss of money power, greenbacks worthless, no power, no water, additional upheavals from nature as well as those brought on by collapse of dollar. And the attempted changeover to new currency, maybe the Amero. . . . The country reaps what it has become, a corrupt nation of wicked people turned from Christ and His teachings.

Hansen realizes this doomsday watch can become a morbid preoccupation. But he wants to be ready. "A lot of us have saved up supplies, I've got a ton of briquettes, propane gas, wind-up flashlights. If you don't ever need it, fine, but if you do need it . . ."

## Mine and Yours

Many have questioned the rigid faith of the mine believers. Are theirs a deeper testimony of the LDS Church or are they beliefs of another splinter group?

The church gave its last official warning against the mine in 1970, when President Harold B. Lee recited a 1913 declaration against the mine. Hansen believes the church at large has no ax to grind anymore with the mine's faithful because Koyle's followers don't hold the mine above the church itself. But, they also can't separate their beliefs in both institutions.

"Most people [who believe in the mine] that have a testimony of the gospel have that same testimony in the mine and can't disregard the one without disregarding the other," Hansen says.

Because of this, however, some believers worry that open talk of the mine might draw the scorn from fellow Latter-day-Saints—perhaps even excommunication. When asked about the status of mine believers' church membership for this story, the LDS Church declined to comment.

For many like Hansen, both works are divine—others eventually will come to learn the significance of the mine. "There are some people, even leadership in the church that have no knowledge or testimony of the mine. You can be president of the church and yet the Lord might not give you knowledge of the mine. It's something that's on a need-to-know basis, and you don't need to know," he says.

The belief that God might guide the faithful toward a bonanza of lost gold and riches might cause mainstream LDS members to scoff. But then again, a strikingly similar story is that of the Book of Mormon's discovery in which God revealed the location of golden plates inscribed with holy scriptures to church founder Joseph Smith.

D. Michael Quinn, an eminent LDS Church historian, referenced the mine in his controversial work *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*. Quinn saw treasure-seeking church members like Koyle as an integral part of early Mormon folk belief.

But old-time religion practices didn't have much support later on, explains Quinn in a telephone interview from California. "You had secular humanists and narrow-minded religionists united in the idea that they had to battle [the old] beliefs, for which the religionist considered Satanic and the secularist just considered embarrassing and stupid."

## Business As Usual

While, for some, faith in the mine and church are knotted tightly together, others don't see it that way.

"The mine is not the church, and the church is not the mine," says John Adams, who since last May has been president of the Relief Mine Co. (the official name of the mine).

Adams, acutely aware of the mine's controversial history among the church and the larger community, knows the kind of attention the mine has drawn in years past. "Some people have focused on the mine to an unhealthy degree," Adams says. "Some people end up on the fringes. Instead of focusing on the preparedness side [of the mine] and focusing on the interest of their fellow man, they tend to go off on tangents."

For Adams the mine is just a business, at least for now. "There's no mining going on now. We've got agricultural properties, rental homes and a gravel pit. We're just generating enough revenue now to keep the lights on and the doors open."

The money generated from these enterprises just pays the bills, while general upkeep of the mine remains with volunteers who come to clean up and make repairs. These frugal efforts have helped keep the mine open over its 113-year existence. All the while, the mine has never surrendered an ounce of gold. It's earned the reputation of being the longest-operating mine never to produce.

For Adams, it will continue this way until the time is right. Until then, the mine doesn't need to be a gathering point for folks living on the fringe.

"The thing people forget is that Koyle's testimony was first that the church is true, and second was that he had a unique experience he felt he needed to act upon."

## Nightmare of the Dream Mine

The e-group undoubtedly has brought new faith to work an old claim, but some doubt Koyle's dream is being realized.

Kevin Kraut is a believer in the dream, but a doubter of his fellow dreamers. Kevin's late father Ogden was one of few scholars to write about the mine, and the elder Kraut had no doubt that the mine was a divine mission. That's because Ogden actually worked on the mine and "witnessed" the prophecies of Koyle come true.

But the idea of relief, Kevin Kraut believes, is a Mormon fundamental lost on most members, and even on most mine shareholders. "They don't get it. When the mine comes in, do you think a lot of these people who got stock are gonna use it to help others, or help themselves?" Kevin asks.

Kevin refers to the United Order, an early Mormon utopian philosophy drawn from the "law of consecration" mentioned in the Bible and LDS scriptures. The order envisioned a society of common goods and property, where brethren labored together to take care of one another. But Kevin thinks this teaching often is forgotten.

"People's hearts are so set upon the things of this world. People don't understand the law of consecration. It's about trying to help the other guy before helping themselves. There are a lot of stockholders who just don't get the drift," he says.

Kevin acknowledges the e-group has been a blessing in the way it has helped to organize volunteer work at the mine and even in raising funds for publishing some his father's work. But still, he wonders if they get it.

"My father worked with Koyle, and he knows he was so inspired. He prophesied things on a dime, and he tried to live the old religion. These guys nowadays, LDS people living in big houses, fancy cars, paying their tithing and then just taking care of themselves, let me tell you—there will be more harlots that make it into the kingdom of heaven than some of these pompous LDS folks."

For Kevin, this isn't just a guess.

"Believe me, I've been to the other side, and those guys aren't there."

His trip to the "other side" was a near fatal diabetic coma. His troubles didn't end there; he also believes he was fired from his past job because of his father's belief in plural marriage.

Kevin bristles at the way he's been treated by former employers but is also at peace with his beliefs. The senior Kraut argued that Koyle believed in plural marriage, and so does Kevin.

Kraut distinguishes his own understanding of plural marriage from the coercive kind practiced by fundamentalist sect leader Warren Jeffs, convicted in September 2007 in St. George on two counts of being an accomplice to rape. "That kind of polygamy turns my stomach; it turns God's stomach," he says.

Despite the disdain his convictions draw from society and even fellow mine believers, Kevin is confident the mine has a sacred purpose. "Look, Sodom and Gomorrah weren't wiped out just because of sexuality. It's because they cared too much for the things of the world and didn't care about their fellow man. That's why the mine is there now. To get people from Babylon to Zion, that's all."

## White City

According to Ogden Kraut, in the early days, the mine was referred to as the "White City." It was to become a gathering for refugees fleeing the carnage of the last days. Today's keeper of the mine, so to speak, is a middle-age man named Joe Lentz. He rents property next to the mine and guards against trespassers.

The mine, constructed of solid minimalist blocks, rests against the Salem hills. While some pictures depict the mine as a white beacon, the winter has tarnished the building to a mottled gun-metal gray, like the clouds overhead.

"That building there," Lentz says, gesturing toward a tiny house adjacent to the mine the size of a small woodshed, "was built for Stan Wheeler. He was a member of the board who used to pray out there and wait for the mine to come in."

Inside the "house" is a room with a small table, a brick stove and a tattered chair set before a dingy window that looks out to the mine. "[Wheeler] spent about 30 days straight here once," Lentz says. "Yeah, they're animate folks"

My father, who is a Dream Mine stockholder himself, first told me of the mine. With his introduction, I was allowed to tour the grounds one recent frigid morning in November. We viewed old dynamite sheds, an ore-processing mill stacked with tons of raw dark earth, and the mine shaft itself—the "prophesied"

gateway to the fabled treasure vaults of the ancient Nephites. Standing sentry today is only a rusted mine cart, locked to the gate and meant to keep out the curious.

From the top of the mine, the valley spreads out in all directions, a blanket of farmlands, country roads, endless sky and the towns of Salem and Spanish Fork below.

At one time Koyle and the faithful lived right below the mine, forming a tight-knit community reverently bowed against the mountain above.

Ironically, the current residents are not believers but simply tenants of the Relief Mine property, like Joe Lentz.

Lentz, a devout Mormon, may guard the mine property, but he holds no stock in it—literally or figuratively. If otherworldly messengers did visit Koyle in a dream, Lentz wouldn't consider them to be "heavenly."

Far from it.

"Well, let's just say there's only one other person besides God who can send messengers to Earth. I think you know who that is."

## Dream On

Koyle said God commanded him not to write of his dreams. Thus, Koyle's many startling predictions were recorded only by his closest followers. Several well-known Koyle dreams, drawn from the Ogden Kraut's John Koyle's Relief Mine, and The Dream Mine Story by Norman Pierce, are detailed below:

1912: Koyle's vision of polygamists in Mexico contradicts the promise of LDS Church President Joseph F. Smith. In 1890, the LDS Church banned the practice of polygamy in the United States, causing many polygamists to settle in Mexico. The church officially forbade plural marriage worldwide in 1910. To offer consolation to members in Mexico who would now have to give up plural marriage, Smith promised that the next temple would be built there. Learning of this announcement, Koyle disagreed. According to his dream, settlers would flee Mexico with only two bags per person. In 1912, Mexican revolutionary forces led by General Pancho Villa forced these settlers out of Mexico allowing them only two bags per person. The next temple was not built in Mexico.

1918: Koyle predicted World War I and that the Utah Battalion would be spared casualties. In 1908, Koyle saw in a dream the horrors of World War I, a war he claimed would take the 145th Field Artillery squad (mostly Utah men) to Europe. He also saw that they would see no action nor suffer any casualties. Fred Squires, a Salt Lake City barber, hearing that the 145th had been called to the front lines, drove down to Spanish Fork to confront Koyle as a liar. Koyle reassured him the 145th would be safe. Squires read this news in an early morning Nov. 18, 1918, paper. By the time he returned to Salt Lake City, news of the signing of the Armistice arrived, and along with it came the peace that spared the boys of the 145th.

1929: Koyle foresaw the stock market crash. Koyle warns his banker and LDS stake president Henry Gardner to call in his loans before October of 1929. Gardner is most grateful for the tip.

Many say Koyle never got one wrong, but there is disagreement.