

JOSE DAVILA & THE GOLD PLATES

By Terry L. Carter

Many interesting things could be written about Jose Davila. With all of the interesting and exciting things that have gone on in his life, he is a true adventurer. But as with all adventurers, he has had just as many heart breaking bad experiences as good. I will not try to write everything I could about Jose, only bits and pieces of his involvement with the mysterious symbols in Fillmore, Utah.



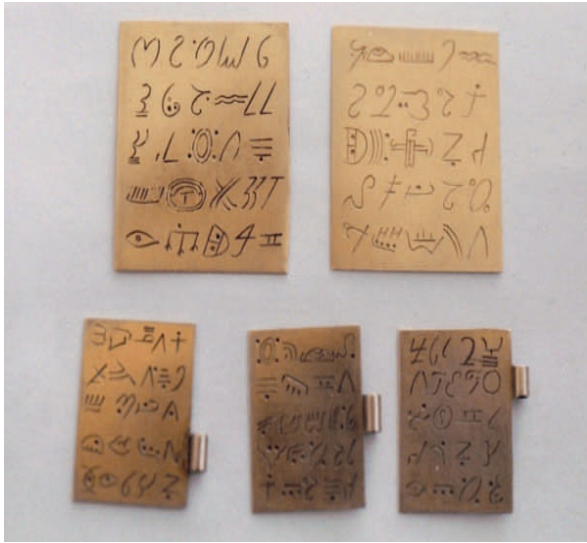
Jose Davila and the author at the ruins of Tulum

JOSE'S BACKGROUND

Jose is of Mayan decent, and is a highly self-educated man with a photographic memory. His love for history and archaeology is the reason he spends all of his time and efforts in these areas. He accompanied Milton R. Hunter, a general authority of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints on an expedition to the Lacandon Indian area in Southern Mexico and Guatemala. He was also asked to accompany a Brigham Young University archaeological team to several Mayan areas in 1953 and 1956. He assisted Dr. Wells Jakeman in an excavation of Izapa Mexico.

He was also asked to assist in the explorations by the New World foundation, a digging arm of the department of Archeology at B.Y.U. University. He spent many years as a tour guide of the ancient ruins in the Yucatan peninsula. When I interviewed him in 1995, he was involved in the digs at Tulum, where he was looking for the Hall of Records that his ancestors kept and then hid in ancient times.

CRACKING THE CODE



The 5 gold Padilla plates Jose studied and claims to have deciphered.

In 1961 Jose acquired 5 out of 12 Gold plates that were found in a tomb at Amuzgus, Oaxaca, Mexico, by Dr. Jesus Padilla. These gold plates now known as the Padilla plates had a strange writing on them, never being seen before by archaeologists. Jose immediately recognized the style of writing as being the same as facsimile no. 2 from the book of Abraham, printed in the Pearl of Great Price, in the book of Mormon, called Nephite reformed Egyptian.

Jose spent two long years trying to crack the code to reading these hieroglyphs. Along the way he received help from Elder Joseph Fielding Smith. He gave Jose a copy of a manuscript entitled "Grammar and Alphabet of the Egyptian Language" an unpublished work from Joseph Smith's school of the prophets. The book was on interpreting Nephite reformed Egyptian. With this information he says, along with Budge's dictionary on Egyptian symbols, he finally cracked the code to interpreting the symbols written on the gold plates.



Some of the other Padilla plates.

ALONG COMES DEL ALLGOOD



Del Allgood stands by the Moroni signature rock while holding one of his woodcarvings.

Del Allgood owned a small rock shop in Fillmore UT. He was a talented man who could do the most amazing things with an old twisted piece of wood or a pile of ordinary rocks. If he wasn't busy creating his works of art, he was in the hills looking for more rocks and trees to build his artwork. It was during one of these excursions that he stumbled upon the mysterious symbol site in the hills above Fillmore Utah. He wasn't

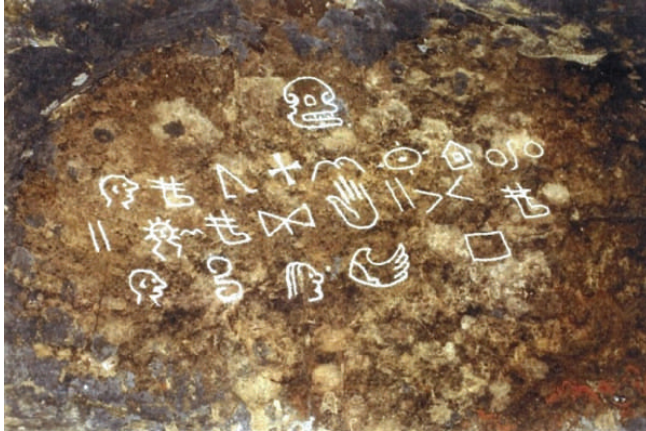
the first to discover them, but he did take an unusual interest in them, trying to figure out there meaning.

Del worked at the local gas station to help subsidize his income. He loved talking to the customers about the symbols and the Spanish mines in the mountains. One day a man from Salt Lake City stopped by for a fill up. As usual Del started talking about the symbols and how they almost looked like Egyptian hieroglyphs. The man knew Jose Davila and his studies in reading Egyptian. He told Del that he knew a man, who could probably interpret them for him. He told Del all about Jose and the gold plates. He told him Jose was from Mexico but happened to be in Salt Lake.

Del wasted no time in getting a hold of Jose. He described the symbols to Jose over the phone. He agreed to pay for a round trip bus ticket and money for meals, if Jose would just come out to Fillmore, and take a look at the symbols. Jose agreed. Arrangements were made and bus tickets were purchased.

JOSE FINALLY SEES THE SYMBOLS

When Jose arrived in Fillmore in September of 1964 Del and Harold Huntsman met him at the bus station. They headed for the symbols, four miles east of Fillmore in Chalk



The Hieroglyphs Jose interpreted as Nephite reformed Egyptian.

Creek canyon. They came to rest in front of a small cave. On top of the cave's entrance was an inscription of 25 characters. In Jose's own words he said: "A sober evaluation of these inscriptions led me to the conclusion that I was confronted by the first kind of Nephite Idiogramic writing that had ever been found in petroglyphs in North America." Five days later, [Jose had translated](#)

[a number of the symbols](#) and was very excited about them. He says they talked about sacred records deposited there. And they gave the instructions to retrieve them.

LOOKING FOR THE SACRED RECORDS

The rest of that winter found Jose working on the translation of the symbols and surveying the area. When the snow finally melted, they started marking the area for the place to dig. Jose figured the inscriptions said to draw a square area 100 cubits per side. And



Rock with the drill hole they found while determining where to sink their shaft.

put intersecting diagonal lines to determine the center where they were suppose to dig. As they were marking one side of this area, they found a carved stone hand near one of the lines they just drew. They also found a rock with a drill hole in the middle of it. They didn't think anything of the drill hole and the hand. Other than they felt it was intended to let the searcher know they were right in there interpretations of the measurements they got from the symbols.

They proceeded to the center of the box they had just drawn and started preparation to sink their shaft.

During the rest of the summer (1965), they proceeded to dig a 20-foot tunnel and drilled over 600 feet of exploratory holes just to eliminate possible site locations. Jose said it was an expensive summer. They spent over \$1000 for drilling and over \$1000 for road-work, tunneling, dynamite, food and fuel. Jose spent that summer living near the site in his camper. When snow came, it forced them to stop. They had to wait until the following summer to start up again.

THE PRE-TRIAL

That summer Jose and his helpers put in an 80-foot shaft 20 foot wide. They felt they were close to breaking into the tunnel where the gold plates lay hidden. However, Jose said greedy eyes were watching their progress all the time. Just waiting for the right moment to jump in and finish the job for them selves.

At that moment, Devon Stanfield offered the owner of the mining claims, Harold Huntsman, \$100,000.00 dollars to step in and stop Jose before he broke into the chamber, so he could retrieve the gold plates. Devon was a film producer; he had approached Jose about making a documentary on the excavation and discovery of the gold plates. Jose felt that this was too sacred to let the world in on. Devon felt this was too important not to let the world know. So Devon went around Jose and went straight to the owner of the mining claims, Harold Huntsman. They wrote up an Ernest agreement and Stanfield gave Huntsman one dollar to bind the contract.

A pre trial broke out between Huntsman and Jose to determine if a court trial was warranted. With Jose losing at the pre trial, a court order was issued for Jose to stop all work until after the trial.

During the pre trial they reached the 80-foot mark and mushroomed the hole out at the bottom of the shaft. Their plan was to drill some exploratory holes 360 degrees around the bottom of the shaft hoping to locate the chamber, which they felt they were near.

THE FATEFUL DAY - NOVEMBER 6, 1966

On November 5, Duane White and Kent Neeley were working on the shaft. Jose was in the hospital with the ruptured appendix he got while running the air drill. Harold Huntsman showed up and ordered the men to stop work and to get off the property. The men told Huntsman they were working under Jose's orders and they were not leaving. Huntsman told them he would be back Monday morning with a court order and the sheriff to kick them off the property.

Duane and Kent decided they better get in and get the gold plates out before Monday. They drilled three 20-foot holes at the bottom of the shaft. The next day November 6, they loaded the holes with 91 sticks of dynamite at 60%. The large boom from the blast echoed across the valley. It was a Sunday, Jose had always preached against working on the Sabbath, but they felt the situation warranted it. The blast went off at 4pm. three air hoses were dropped down the shaft and the compressor was turned on full blast. Kent and Duane headed for town to eat while the fumes from the blast were clearing out.

While eating, Kent's parents showed up. Two hours after the blast, they all headed back up the mountain to the shaft. Kent went down first to see if they had broken into the chamber. When they didn't hear from him Duane went down. He started yelling to pull



Jose's excavation site, with the old air compressor sitting in front of the shaft

him up and as they did he fell out of the 55-gallon drum he was being lowered down in. [Both of them had been over come by the gases and lack of oxygen from the explosion.](#) Kent's mother went to town for help. But the Sheriff's posse had no way to retrieve the bodies. It was finally Del Algood who retrieved them. That night Del called Jose at the hospital and gave him the bad news.

JOSE ARRIVES ON SITE

In Jose's own words he stated "After Del called me that night I left immediately for the site and slept by it in my camper.

The next morning when I took the cap off of the shaft I could still smell the gasses. I headed back into town and the posse came back with me. At noon I was lowered into the shaft, wearing an oxygen mask. I found the wall at the bottom still wearing the three-drilled holes, all intact, un-demolished! What had happened? How could this have been? I finally figured the explosion had to have gone backwards. Perhaps the boys did connect with the chamber and the blast went into the chamber along with all the pressure and monoxide gases. So that 15 hours later the gases were still jettisoning out from the chamber through the three-drilled holes.

The bureau of mines stepped in and closed the shaft. Shoring, plat forming, mining cage elevators, ventilating systems, etc., were to be put in before I could proceed with the shaft. I never had money enough for food and fuel, let alone for these demands. I returned to Salt Lake City bringing the bodies of my friends. Two of the finest men Zion had ever reared.

The [funeral was held](#) under the devastating news that Huntsman was suing me and that I was barred from the premises by court order."

THE COURT BATTLE

The trial was held in May of 1967. Jose's strategy was to claim that Huntsman had never filed any proof of mineralization. That the only reason Huntsman filed a claim at all was because of the symbols, (which was all true.) Jose and Del Algood had filed claims over the top of Huntsman's claims, and stated that they did all the proper paper work with the assays and assessment work. And that huntsman had done none of this. After everything was said and done the judge finally handed down his verdict on August 10th 1967 with Jose losing the court battle. Huntsman was granted all the mining and mineral rights. Not only was Jose barred from the site, he was also ordered to pay five hundred dollars in court costs.

ANOTHER FATEFUL DAY - AUGUST 11, 1967

Harold Huntsman was ecstatic; filing a claim on the symbols was finally going to pay off for him. He was already figuring out what he was going to do with the one hundred thousand dollars Stanfield was going to be giving him for the mining claims. But that never happened, because just 24 hours after the judge handed down the verdict, Devon Stanfield met his untimely death by the same circumstances as [Duane and Kent](#).

It was Aug. 11th 1967 while working on his mining claim called the “ACE IN THE HOLE” not to far from where Jose’s shaft was. [Devon Stanfield was over come by mon-oxide fumes and fell to his death](#). Lawrence Oliphant who was waiting topside of the shaft sensed something was wrong so he went down and found Stanfield slumped over. He started to drag Stanfield out but started to be over come himself. Some how Lawrence was able to make it out and down the mountain to get help. But to this day he still doesn’t remember climbing back out of the shaft.

It was now three deaths three widows and a whole bunch of fatherless children and still no gold plates. The town’s people started whispering that maybe this site and the symbols were haunted. And so it was rumored that people who go looking for church treasure connected with these symbols end up dead. There are more of these symbol sites



Author at a mystery glyph symbol site in Provo, Utah

around the Western United States. To date I have tracked down and verified 25 such location. There has also been some mysterious deaths related to some of the other symbol sites. One of which I was indirectly involved in, and will be another story I need tell some day. So maybe there just may be something to the curse of these symbols.

Jose arrives back on the scene

Jose said that those boys' deaths would not be in vain. In May of 1968 he struck up a deal with Huntsman. A contract was drawn up and Jose was to start paying ten thousand dollars a year for 10 years beginning in September of 1970. If Jose failed to find the mine he was to leave enough work behind for the years assessments on Harold's other five claims.

Jose paid Huntsman fifteen hundred dollars as a down payment. Work began again in June of 1968. Jose had given the last of his money to Huntsman and never even had enough money left over for food. He lived off fruits that he got from Del Algoods farm, and from water crest he picked along the ditch banks. The bureau of mines would not let Jose do any more work on the shaft until he met their demands.

Jose said that Mr. and Mrs Neeley may have lost there first born to this project but they never lost faith in it. Mr. Neeley let Jose use the air compressor and drill again and he also bank rolled him two hundred dollars. Jose went down the hill and dug a 135-foot tunnel, hoping to intersect the shaft. Some how they missed the shaft. But Jose calculated that if they sunk another shaft at the end of their tunnel they should be able to intersect the ancient tunnel.

A 20-foot shaft was sunk inside their tunnel, the shaft was mushroomed out at the bottom so they could drill 30-foot exploratory holes to try and connect to the ancient tunnel.

Finally on Christmas day of 1968 Jose made a last ditch effort to find the tunnel. He probed and blasted but never connected with the ancient tunnel.

JOSE COMES TO THE SOBERING DISCOVERY OF HIS MISCALCULATIONS

That winter Jose tried to figure how he had missed the ancient tunnel. He went over all his interpretations of the symbols, his measurements etc. He couldn't find anything wrong.

Finally, while studying an astronomical chart, he discovered that the North Star was in a different location 1550 years ago than it is today. Armed with this new evidence he calculated that he was 5.30 degrees off from where he should have been. He figured he should

have been digging where they found the carved stone hand back in 1965. He went back and figured a translation for the stone hand and decided that the Egyptian meaning for the carved rock was "to remove".

During the summer of 1969 Jose scraped up enough money to repair the road up to the symbols and on up to the stone hand. Taking out some of the turns in the road and making it wide enough to get a drilling rig up there. Summer came and went and he was still no closer to retrieving the gold plates than when he first started back in 1964.

Spending all his time and money on this project caused major problems in his family life. He was suffering from a lot of persecution, and was called an embarrassment to the Mormon Church.

With no funds to pay Huntsman the ten thousand dollars he owed him for the 1970 season. Jose headed back to Mexico with a broken spirit. He had tried diligently for six years to get to the gold plates only to have all his hopes and dreams shattered.

CONCLUSION

Whether Jose was right in his deciphering of the symbols or not has been highly debated. Many people have tried deciphering them in many different ways with most of them using the Egyptian hieroglyphic definitive and ideograms to try and solve the mystery.

Letters I have in my possession between Jose and several noted Egyptologist state to Jose that they are not Egyptian, except for just a couple of the symbols. Egyptian is the closest thing that I know of that compares to these symbols. But if they are not Egyptian, what are they?

While researching and studying Jose and these particular symbols. I have come to the conclusion and believe that Jose 100% believed in his interpretation of the symbols. And he 100% believed that he would find an ancient tunnel with records written on gold plates inside. Not only did Jose believe this but also many years after their divorce, Jose's ex-wife and kids still believe that Jose was right in his deciphering of the symbols. Whether he was right or not we may never know. You decide and let me know what you think.

While in Mexico, Jose was sent to prison for four years, because he never registered two

broken down cars with the Mexican government. He was supposed to drive them to the border every six months to re-register them. But because they were broke he couldn't get them there, as the border was a long way away.

There were other charges of antiquity and illegal contra band (bank security camera's) but they were all dropped when Jose produced the proper paper work. This all came about because of the Padilla gold plates, and is still another long story that I need to tell sometime in the future. I think if Jose wouldn't have ended up in jail, he would have come back to Fillmore. And there would have been more to this saga and also more about his little known adventures near the cedar City mystery glyph site. [Where he determined the panel was giving directions to where the brass plates were buried.](#) Which is still yet another story that could be told about the adventures and heart ache's of the real life adventurer known as Jose Octavio Davila.

Written By Terry L. Carter, revised on 6/26/09

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