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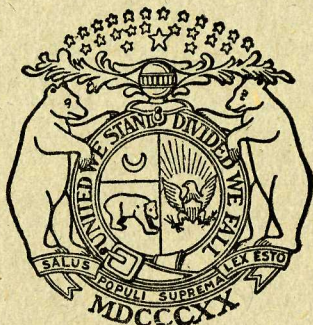
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**MISSOURI  
HISTORICAL  
REVIEW.**

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# MISSOURI HISTORICAL REVIEW.

EDITOR

**FRANCIS A. SAMPSON.**

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## CONTENTS

Bryant's Station and Its Founder, William Bryant, by Thomas Julian Bryant	-	219
Mormon Troubles in Missouri, by Herman C. Smith	- - - -	238
History of the County Press, by Miss Minnie Organ	- - - -	252
The Santa Fe Trail, by Prof. G. C. Broadhead		309
Missouri Weather in Early Days, by Prof. G. C. Broadhead	- - - -	320
Missouri Documents for the Small Public Library, by Grace Lefler	- - - -	321
Destruction of Missouri Books	- - - -	328
Notes	- - - -	329
Book Notices	- - - -	330
Necrology	- - - -	330

## MORMON TROUBLES IN MISSOURI.

It is not the purpose of this article to discuss the merits of this question, or to take a position regarding the extent to which either party was responsible or censurable. Many carelessly written articles have been written on the subject without close and careful investigation of the facts. For instance it is quite common for writers to state that in 1842, after the Latter Day Saints were expelled from the state by order of Governor Lilburn W. Boggs that Joseph Smith employed one Orrin P. Rockwell to return to Independence and assassinate Boggs, and that the attempt was made, Rockwell was apprehended, and escaped justice, etc.

An article of this kind appeared in the Missouri Historical Review for January 1910, written by William M. Boggs, son of the ex-governor. Mr. Boggs may have written his view of the case with a full desire to tell the truth, but he had evidently not informed himself upon the records in the case.

The Latter Day Saints began settling in and around Independence, Missouri, in 1831. Their customs, and their religious and political attitude were not in harmony with the feelings and prejudices of their neighbors. This resulted in bitterness and opposition which in time led to friction and conflict. The Missourians deciding that the Saints were not desirable citizens determined to rid themselves of their presence by taking the law in their own hands and excluding them by force.

A mass meeting was held in Independence in April, 1833, to consult upon a plan to remove or destroy this people. This meeting was attended by about three hundred men, and the company in consequence of drinking too freely broke up in a row among themselves. The animosity still continued however and on July 18, 1833, the following document was put in circulation:

“We the undersigned, citizens of Jackson county, believing that an important crisis is at hand as regards our civil so-

ciety, in consequence of a pretended religious sect of people that have settled and are still settling in our county, styling themselves Mormons, and intending as we do to rid our society "peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must," and believing as we do that the arm of the civil law does not afford us a guarantee or at least a sufficient one against the evils which are now inflicted upon us, and seem to be increasing by the said religious sect, deem it expedient, and of the highest importance, to form ourselves into a company for the better and easier accomplishment of our purpose, a purpose which we deem it almost superfluous to say, is justified as well by the law of nature, as by the law of self-preservation.

"It is more than two years since the first of these fanatics or knaves (for one or the other they undoubtedly are) made their first appearance among us, and pretending as they did and now do to hold personal communication and converse face to face with the most High God, to receive communications and revelations direct from heaven; to heal the sick by laying on hands; and, in short, to perform all the wonder-working miracles wrought by the inspired apostles and prophets of old.

"We believed them deluded fanatics or weak and designing knaves, and that they and their pretensions would soon pass away; but in this we were deceived. The arts of a few designing leaders amongst them have thus far succeeded in holding them together as a society, and since the arrival of the first of them they have been daily increasing in numbers, and if they had been respectable citizens in society, and thus deluded they would have been entitled to our pity rather than to our contempt and hatred; but from their appearance, from their manners, and from their conduct, since their coming among us, we have every reason to fear that with but a few exceptions, they were of the very dregs of that society from which they came; lazy, idle, and vicious. This we conceive is not idle assertion, but a fact susceptible of proof, for with these few exceptions above named they brought into our country little or no property with them, and left less behind them, and we infer that those only yoked

themselves to the Mormon car who had nothing earthly or heavenly to lose by the change; and we fear that if some of the leaders amongst them had paid the forfeit due to crime, instead of being chosen ambassadors of the most high, they would have been inmates of solitary cells. But their conduct here stamps their characters in their true colors. More than a year since it was ascertained that they had been tampering with our slaves and endeavoring to sow dissensions and raise seditions amongst them. Of this their Mormon leaders were informed and they said they would deal with any of their members who should again in like case offend. But how specious are appearances. In a late number of the Star, published in Independence by the leaders of the sect, there is an article inviting free negroes and mulattoes from other states to become Mormons, and remove and settle among us. This exhibits them in still more odious colors. It manifests a desire on the part of their society to inflict on our society an injury that they know would be to us insupportable, and one of the surest means of driving us from the county, for it would require none of the supernatural gifts that they pretend to, to see that the introduction of such a caste amongst us would corrupt our blacks and instigate them to bloodshed.

They openly blaspheme the most High God and cast contempt on his holy religion by pretending to receive revelations direct from heaven, by pretending to speak unknown tongues by direct inspiration, and by diverse pretenses derogatory of God and religion, and to the utter subversion of human reason.

They declare openly that their God hath given them this county of land, and that sooner or later they must and will have the possession of our lands for an inheritance, and in fine they have conducted themselves on many other occasions in such a manner that we believe it a duty we owe ourselves, to our wives and children, to the cause of public morals, to remove them from among us, as we are not prepared to give up our pleasant places and goodly possessions to them, or to receive into the bosom of our families as fit companions for our wives

and daughters the degraded and corrupted free negroes and mulattoes that are now invited to settle among us.

Under such a state of things even our beautiful county would cease to be a desirable residence, and our situation intolerable! We, therefore, agree, that after timely warning and receiving an adequate compensation for what little property they can not take with them, they refuse to leave us in peace, as they found us, we agree to use such means as may be sufficient to remove them, and to that end we each pledge to each other our bodily powers, our lives, fortunes, and sacred honors.

We will meet at the court house at the town of Independence, on Saturday next, the 20th inst., to consult ulterior movements." (1)

This was signed by several hundred names among whom were the following: Lewis Franklin, Jailer; Samuel C. Owens, County Clerk; Russell Hicks, Deputy Clerk; R. W. Cummins, Indian Agent; Jones H. Flourney, Post Master; S. D. Lucas, Colonel and Judge of the Court; Henry Childs, Attorney at law; N. K. Olmstead, M. D.; John Smith, J. P.; Samuel Weston, J. P.; William Brown, Constable; Abner F. Staples, Captain; Thomas Pitcher, Deputy Constable; Moses G. Wilson, Thomas Wilson, merchants.

It is impossible to ascertain at this late date just the proportion of truth and falsehood of which this document is composed, but one part of it is easily weighed when compared with the article published in the Evening and Morning Star to which reference is made in the foregoing document. The article as copied from the Star reads as follows:

"To prevent any misunderstanding among the churches abroad, respecting free people of color, who may think of coming to the western boundaries of Missouri, as members of the church, we quote the following clauses from the laws of Missouri:

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1. Evening and Morning Star, Kirkland, Ohio, December, 1833, pp. 227-228.

Section 4. Be it further enacted, that hereafter no free negro or mullato, other than a citizen of some one of the United States, shall come into or settle in this State under any pretext whatever; and upon complaint made to any justice of the peace that such person is in his county, contrary to the provisions of this section, if it shall appear that such person is a free negro or mulatto, and that he hath come into this state after the passage of this act, and such person shall not produce a certificate, attested by the seal of some court of record in some one of the United States, evidencing that he is a citizen of such State, the justice shall command him forthwith to depart from this state; and in case such negro or mulatto shall not depart from the State within thirty days after being commanded so to do as aforesaid, any justice of the peace, upon complaint thereof to him made, may cause such person to be brought before him and may commit him to the common goal of the county in which he may be found, until the next term of the Circuit Court to be held in such County. And the said court shall cause such person to be brought before them and examine into the cause of commitment; and if it shall appear that such person came into the State contrary to the provisions of this act, and continued therein after being commanded to depart as aforesaid, such court may sentence such person to receive ten lashes on his or her bare back, and order him to depart from the State; and if he or she shall not depart, the same proceedings shall be had and punishment inflicted, as often as may be necessary, until such person shall depart the State.

Section 5. Be it further enacted, that if any person shall after the taking effect of this act, bring into this state any free negro or mulatto, not having in his possession a certificate of citizenship as required by this act (he or she) shall forfeit and pay, for every person so brought, the sum of five hundred dollars, to be recovered by action of debt in the name of the State. to the use of the University, in any court having competent jurisdiction: in which action the defendant may be held to bail c<sup>t</sup> right and without affidavit; and it shall be the duty of the Attorney General or Circuit Attorney of the district in which



any person so offending may be found, immediately upon information given of such offenses, to commence and prosecute an action as aforesaid."

Slaves are real estate in this and other States, and wisdom would dictate great care among the branches of the Church of Christ, on this subject. So long as we have no special rule in the church, as to people of color, let prudence guide; and while they, as well as we, are in the hands of a merciful God we say, shun every appearance of evil.

While on the subject of law it may not be amiss to quote some of the Constitution of Missouri. It shows a liberality of opinion of the great men of the West, and will vie with that of any other State. It is good; it is just, and it is the citizens' right.

"4. That all men have a natural and indefeasible right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences, that no man can be compelled to erect, support, or attend any place of worship, or to maintain any minister of the gospel or teacher of religion; that no human authority can control or interfere with the rights of conscience; that no person can ever be hurt, molested, or restrained in his religious professions or sentiments, if he do not disturb others in their religious worship.

5. That no person, on account of his religious opinions can be rendered ineligible to any office of trust or profit under this State; that no preference can ever be given by law to any sect or mode of worship; and that no religious corporation can ever be established in this State." (2)

This mob, for they can be considered in no other light, met as per declaration in this signed document, Saturday, July 20. 1833, and sent a committee consisting of Robert Johnson, James Campbell, Moses Wilson, Joel F. Childs, Richard Bristoe, Abner F. Staples Gan Johnson, Lewis Franklin, Russell Hicks, S. D. Lucas, Thomas Wilson, James M. Hunter, and Richard Simpson, to Edward Partridge, A. S. Gilbert, John Carroll.

2. Evening and Morning Star, Independence, Missouri, July, 1833, pp. 218-219.



Isaac Morley, John Whitmer and William W. Phelps leading members of the church demanding the immediate suspension of the Evening and Morning Star and that the people of the church should forthwith remove from the country. The representatives of the church asked for three months in which to consider. This was denied. They then asked for ten days and were informed they could have but fifteen minutes. Not receiving the demanded pledge in the specified time the mob proceeded to raze to the ground the printing office and the dwelling of W. W. Phelps. Mrs. Phelps with her children, including a sick infant, were thrown into the street. The press was broken, the type pied, etc. The mob then proceeded to demolish the storehouse and destroy the goods of Gilbert, Whitney and Company. Upon Mr. Gilbert assuring them that the goods should be packed by the 23rd inst. they ceased the destruction of property and proceeded to do personal violence. They took Edward Partridge, Bishop of the church, and a Mr. Charles Allen and stripped and tarred and feathered them in the presence of the crowd before the courthouse. In a petition for redress subsequently addressed to Governor Daniel Dunklin the Saints stated their case in the following language:

“Now, therefore, for ourselves, as members of the church we declare, with the exception of poverty, which has not yet become a crime, by the laws of the land, that the crimes charged against us (so far as we are acquainted) contained in the documents above written, and those in the proceedings of the mob, as published in the Western Monitor of August 2, **are not true.** In relation to inviting free people of color to emigrate to this section of country, and other matters relative to our society, see the 109th, 10th and 11th pages of the Evening and Morning Star, and the Extra accompanying the same, dated July 16, which are annexed to this petition. Our situation is a critical one; we are located upon the western limits of the state, and of the United States—where desperadoes can commit outrages, and even murder, and escape, in a few minutes, beyond the reach of process; where the most abandoned of all classes from almost every State may too often pass to the Mexi-

can states or to the more remote regions of the Rocky Mountain to escape the grasp of justice; where numerous tribes of Indians, located by the General government amid the corrupting influence of midday mobs might massacre our defenseless women and children with impunity.

Influenced by the precepts of our beloved Saviour,, when we have been smitten on the one cheek we have turned the other also; when we have been sued at the law and our coat been taken, we have given them our cloak also; when they have compelled us to go with them a mile we have gone with them twain. We have borne the above outrages without murmuring, but we can not patiently bear them any longer; according to the laws of God and man we have borne enough. Believing with all honorable men, that whenever that fatal hour shall arrive that the poorest citizen's property, person, or rights and privileges, shall be trampled upon by a lawless mob with impunity, that moment a dagger is plunged into the heart of the constitution, and the Union must tremble! Assuring ourselves that no republican will suffer the liberty of the press, the freedom of speech, and the liberty of conscience to be silenced by a mob, without raising a helping hand, to save his country from disgrace, we solicit assistance to obtain our rights, holding ourselves amenable to the laws of our country whenever we transgress them.

Knowing as we do that the threats of this mob, in most cases have been put into execution; and knowing also, that every officer, civil and military, with a few exceptions, has pledged his life and honor to force us from the county, dead or alive; and believing that civil process can not be served without the aid of the Executive; and not wishing to have the blood of our defenseless women and children to stain the land which has been once stained by the blood of our fathers to purchase our liberty, we appeal to the Governor for aid; asking him by express proclamation or otherwise to raise a sufficient number of troops, who with us may be empowered to defend our rights, that we may sue for damages in the loss of property—for abuse, for defamation, as to ourselves, and if advisable try

for treason against the government; that the law of the land may not be defied or nullified, but peace restored to our country. And we will every pray." (3)

The mob assembled again on the 23rd when under duress William W. Phelps, Oliver Cowdery, William E. McClellan, Edward Partridge, Lyman Wight, Simeon Carter, Peter Whitmer, John Whitmer, and Harvey Whitlock signed an agreement to leave the county with their families before the first day of January 1834, and to use their influence to induce all their brethren to remove as soon as possible one-half before the first of January, and the other half by the first day of April, 1834.

Without waiting for the fulfillment of this pledge the mob in October, 1833, again commenced perpetrating acts of personal violence and destruction of property.

This resulted in a clash at arms near the Blue River west of Independence, about sundown November 4, 1833. Hugh L. Brazelle and Thomas Linville of the mob were left dead on the ground. Several were wounded on each side, one a Mr. Barber of the church party, died the next day.

These events naturally intensified the feeling of hostility and the weeks that followed were filled with deeds of horror resulting in the banishment of the Saints who took refuge in adjoining counties, principally in Clay. Efforts were made by the Saints to be re-instated or re-imbursed. Appeals were made to the Governor and to the courts but no substantial results were realized. Lilburn W. Boggs was at this time Lieut. Governor of Missouri; and for a time the Saints reposed confidence in him and looked to him for protection, but finally became convinced that he was aiding and abetting their enemies under color of using his influence to call out the militia which was composed largely of their persecutors. From the militia they received no relief but on the contrary it was used to render their sufferings more intolerable.

To follow the history of this people through the incidents of Clay, Caldwell, Daviess and adjoining counties would take

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3. Evening and Morning Star, Kirkland, Ohio, December, 1833, p. 230.

too much space for the limits of this article. Passing on to 1838 at which time, the main body of the church was in Caldwell county, and had established the town of Far West we note another scene of hostility confronted the church and conflicting accusations of crime, and lawlessness filled upper Missouri with anxiety. Conflict seemed inevitable. L. W. Boggs having in the meantime been elected Governor arrayed himself with the anti-church faction, and gave orders to treat the Mormons as public enemies. It was at this time he issued his famous exterminating order to General John B. Clark, which reads as follows:

“Headquarters Militia, City of Jefferson, Oct. 27, 1838.

Sir:—Since the order of the morning to you, directing you to cause four hundred mounted men to be raised within your division, I have received by Amos Rees, Esq., and Wiley E. Williams, Esq., one of my aids information of the most appalling character which changes the whole face of things, and places the Mormons in the attitude of open and avowed defiance of the laws, and of having made open war upon the people of this State. Your orders are therefore, to hasten your operations and endeavor to reach Richmond, in Ray county, with all possible speed. The Mormons must be treated as enemies and **must be exterminated** or driven from the State if necessary, for the public good. Their outrages are beyond all description. If you can increase your force you are authorized to do so, to any extent you may think necessary. I have just issued orders to Major-General Wallock, of Marion County, to raise five hundred men, and to march them to the northern part of Daviess, and there to unite with you. Doniphan, of Clay, who has been ordered with five hundred to proceed to the same point, for the purpose of intercepting the retreat of the Mormons to the north. They have been directed to communicate with you by express; you can also communicate with them if you find it necessary. Instead, therefore, of proceeding, as at first directed, to reinstate the citizens of Daviess in their homes, you will proceed immediately to Richmond, and there operate against the Mormons. Brigadier General Parks



of Ray, has been ordered to have four hundred men of his brigade in readiness to join you at Richmond. The whole force will be placed under your command. (4)

1854, from manuscript history of Joseph Smith written by himself.

L. W. BOGGS,

Governor and Commander in Chief.

To General Clark.

General A. W. Doniphan states that orders to the same effect were issued to General D. R. Atchison, who was in command of the militia in the vicinity of Far West, but he revolted and withdrew from the military force, declaring that he would be no party to the enforcement of such inhuman commands. This left General Samuel D. Lucas in command until the arrival of General Clark. Far West prepared for defense and war was eminent. On October 30, 1838, inspired by the exterminating order of the Governor a detachment of men under the command of Captains Nehemiah Comstock, William O. Jennings and William Gee fell upon a defenseless settlement of the Saints at Haun's Mills and murdered in cold blood the entire settlement of men, women and children very few escaping. On the same day the troops approached Far West and encamped one mile from the town.

The next day General Lucas induced several of the leading men to come into his camp for the purpose of consultation, but when they arrived they were made prisoners of war without an attempt at consultation. These were Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Parley P. Pratt, Lyman Wight, and George W. Robinson. The next day Hyrum Smith and Amasa Lyman were added to the number of prisoners. Though these men with the exception of Colonel Wight were not military men a court-martial was called and all sentenced to be shot. Lucas issued the following order to carry the decree into effect:

"Brigadier-General Doniphan; Sir: You will take Joseph Smith and other prisoners into the public square of Far West, and shoot them at nine o'clock tomorrow morning.

"SAMUEL D. LUCAS,

"Major-General Commanding."

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4. *Milnial Star*, Liverpool, England, Vol. 16, p. 446, July 15,

And he received the following reply :

“It is cold-blooded murder. I will not obey your order. My brigade shall march for Liberty tomorrow morning, at eight o'clock; and if you execute those men, I will hold you responsible before an earthly tribunal, so help me God! (5)

A. W. DONIPHAN,  
Brigadier-General.

This so disconcerted General Lucas that the sentence was not executed. The prisoners were kept by the militia for some time then turned over to the civil courts. After being imprisoned for several months under one pretext or another they were permitted to escape with the connivance of the officers, and no effort made to apprehend them on charges then pending.

The Saints at Far West were disarmed, their property confiscated, and they were banished from the State.

On May 6, 1842, ex-Governor Boggs was assaulted by an unknown would-be assassin in his home at Independence, Missouri, and severely wounded. Mr. Orrin P. Rockwell, a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints being in the town, suspicion at once attached to him. It was also suspected that Joseph Smith had sent him there for the purpose.

Based upon the affidavit of L. W. Boggs, Governor Thomas Reynolds made requisition on Governor Garlin, of Illinois, for the surrender of Joseph Smith charged with being accessor before the act. Several attempts were made to get possession of the person of Joseph Smith both by kidnapping and by civil process, all proving abortive. Joseph Smith finally went to Springfield, Illinois, and surrendered. The examination came on in December term of court before the Honorable Nathaniel Pope, after an extended examination the court handed down his decision in the following language :

“The decision of the court is that the prisoner be discharged; and I wish it entered upon the records in such a way that Mr. Smith be no more troubled about this matter.” (6)

5. History of Caldwell and Livingston counties, p. 137.

6. Times and Seasons, Nauvoo, Illinois, Jan. 2, 1843, Vol. 4, p. 60.

O. P. Rockwell was arrested in Independence, and probably had a preliminary examination, and was held awaiting the action of the Grand Jury. He escaped jail and was again apprehended. The evidence was doubtless presented to the Grand Jury and it failed to find sufficient evidence to indict him for assaulting ex-Governor Boggs, for on the third day of the August term of Circuit Court, 1843, Judge John H. Ryland presiding, the Grand Jury returned the following:

"A true bill State of Missouri against Orrin P. Rockwell, "Indictment, escaping from jail." Court Record E, p. 166.

This case came on for trial the same day. Defendant plead not guilty. Court appointed Honorable A. W. Doniphan to defend prisoner; case continued. Ibid p. 170.

Case called again sixth day of same term, defendant filed petition for change of venue, setting forth that an impartial trial can not be obtained in this circuit on account of prejudice of people.

It was ordered by the court that the case be sent to the County of Clay, 5th Judicial District, and the sheriff was ordered to deliver the body of the defendant to the sheriff or jailor of Clay county on Monday, August 21, 1843. Ibid 196-8.

William Patterson, John McCoy, Thomas Reynolds Ammon E. Crenshaw and R. C. Kennedy were each put under bonds of two hundred dollars to appear at Liberty, Missouri, on the first day of the August term of the 5th Judicial District to testify in this cause in behalf of the state. The records at Liberty disclose the following:

August 31, 1843, the case was called and Orin P. Rockwell by order of the court remanded back to the custody of the sheriff or jailor of Jackson county. Record Book G, No. 4, p. 228.

On November 24, a special term of Circuit Court was ordered to convene on December 11th for the purpose of trying this case. Ibid page 236.

The same page of the record shows that court convened as per order, the Honorable Austin A. King, presiding.

The prisoner plead not guilty in the manner and form charged, a jury was impaneled consisting of Samuel Rungo, Thomas McChives, Johnson Williams, Thomas Gardner, Fielding Buchanan, Richard Neely, James Burnaugh, Richard Brizeford, J. A. Futglin J. E. Whitsell, J. I. Atkins and Benjamin Gragg. After careful investigation the jury returned a verdict of "guilty", and assessed the punishment at "Five minutes confinement in the County Jail." Then the august Judge, the Honorable Austin A. King, Judge of the 5th Judicial Circuit, announced the dread sentence assessed by the jury, and so far as the records disclose the curtain fell. The presumption is that he served his sentence.

This is all there is of the often repeated story, reviewed by Mr. William M. Boggs in January number of Historical Review. When it is considered that all the machinery of the courts was in the hands of enemies of the church this whole affair about O. P. Rockwell attempting to murder ex-Governor Boggs and Joseph Smith being accessory before the fact, partakes of the nature of a huge joke.

HEMAN C. SMITH.



