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The Expulsion of the Mormons from Jackson County, Missouri

BY WARREN A. JENNINGS*

As October frosts transformed the green summer foliage into golden hues in Jackson County, Missouri, in 1833, across the border to the west the Indians commenced their fall hunts by firing the prairies. A murky cloud drifted eastward on the autumn winds, filling the valleys with blue haze, making what the settlers termed the "smoky days."

There was a new stir of activity in the county after the quiet which followed the outbursts of violence the previous July. Irate Jackson Countians had demolished the Mormon printing establishment at Independence, tarred and feathered Bishop Edward Partridge and committed other depredations against the unwelcome Mormons who had been attempting for two years to build up a religious Utopia known as Zion. The Mormons had created much antagonism among the original settlers with their talk of the Second

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Advent, which they believed would take place soon on the temple site dedicated two years before by Joseph Smith on a plot located a half mile west of the village of Independence. The Mormons were not indifferent to the feelings of others; but they were filled with a sense of urgency which permitted them little time or energy with which to concern themselves about the attitude of their "Gentile" neighbors. Their rapid migration into the county (they eventually numbered about 1,200) caused the original settlers to feel threatened. The latter had dealt with the violent problem in the forthright manner of the frontier. Under duress the Mormons were forced to sign an agreement that no more of their number would settle in the county, that one-half of those already within the county would remove by January 1, 1834, and that the remaining half would vacate the area by April 1, 1834.

In the ensuing period the Mormons sought assistance from Governor Daniel Dunklin and counsel from Smith, who was residing in Kirtland, Ohio. It was determined, partly on the governor's advice, to try to settle the matter through legal process. Four lawyers from Liberty, Missouri, were consulted. These included Alexander W. Doniphan and David Rice Atchison. They recommended

Mormons Being Tarred and Feathered

Stenhouse, Rocky Mt. Saints



that the Mormons arm themselves for protection against any future attacks. This the Mormons determined to do.

When the Missourians learned that the Mormons would now stand on the defensive, they were incredulous. They felt that the Mormon promise to be gone by April 1, 1834, had been broken. They were further provoked when informed that the Mormons had appealed to the governor and were even contemplating taking some of their assailants to court to answer for past conduct. One resident of the county wrote:

It was found not only that the Mormons did not intend to move according to agreement, but that they were arming themselves, and threatened to kill if they should be molested. This provoked some of the more wild and ungovernable among us to improper acts of violence, such as breaking in upon Mormon houses, tearing off the covering, &c. On this the Mormons began to muster, and exhibit military preparations.¹

The original settlers lost no time in responding to this challenge. About fifty of them met on Saturday, October 26, and voted to move the Mormons. All day Sunday they rode over the county spreading the word. Monday, court day, came and "fewer people were seldom seen at a Circuit Court."² A few Mormon families arrived during the week from Ohio and Indiana. They were threatened by the Jackson Countians, but none were injured. In Independence the citizens began stoning Mormon houses and intimidating individuals. At this the Mormons were not greatly alarmed. They felt that the agreement would protect them until January 1.

On Thursday, October 31, the first concerted action was taken. This was the day following a decision by the Liberty lawyers to take charge of the Mormons' legal affairs. That night a group of forty or fifty men, "without other warrant than their own judgment of the requirements of the situation,"³ attacked a Mormon colony eight miles west of Independence. This was just over the Big Blue River and was known as the Whitmer settlement. Ten houses were unroofed and several men were whipped. Philo Dibble remembered:

¹ B. Pixley to New York *Observer*, November 7, 1833, as quoted in Washington, D. C., *National Intelligencer*, December 24, 1833; see also, Isaac McCoy to editor, November 28, 1833, in St. Louis *Missouri Republican*, December 20, 1833.

² See "Extract of a letter dated, Independence, October 30, 1833," in Kirtland, Ohio, *Evening and Morning Star*, December, 1833. Hereafter cited as *Kirtland Star*.

³ *History of Jackson County, Missouri* (Kansas City, 1881), 255.

I was aroused from my sleep by the noise caused by the falling houses, and had barely time to escape to the woods with my wife and two children when they reached my house and proceeded to break in the door and tear the roof off. I was some distance away when the whipping occurred, but I heard the blows of heavy ox goads upon the backs of my brethren distinctly.⁴

In truth, the Mormons were short of weapons. The raid took them completely by surprise and in the confusion no force could be organized. Many of the men, along with their families, fled into the fields and forests. The marauders finally completed their depredations and dispersed "after having threatened to come again in a more violent manner."⁵ No injury had been done to the women and children. As they withdrew they boasted of their intention to tear down the grist mill owned by the Mormons at the Colesville settlement three miles away.

The next morning the fugitives came out of hiding to find their homes and furniture destroyed. The sight made a vivid impression on three-year-old John Brackenbury, the son of a widower. He had spent the night in a cornfield. He testified later:

In the morning when we came back to the house I remember that the house was torn down to the eaves, and the rafters were all off of it, and I remember going into the house, and there was a table sitting in the middle of the room, and a big large pan of honey sitting on it. Then they took us away from there off into the woods to a school-house, and there were the women, children, and an old man there, but I do not remember the old man's name. We staid there all day, women, children, and the old man were there all day, crying, and in great distress.⁶

The news of the raid soon spread among the settlements, causing great consternation. The Mormon prospects were not bright; "houseless, and unprotected by the arm of civil law in Jackson county—the dreary month of November staring them in the face."⁷ Parley Pratt walked the three miles from Colesville that morning. He wrote that he was "filled with anguish at the awful sights of

⁴ *Early Scenes in Church History* (Salt Lake City, 1882), 82.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *In the Circuit Court of the United States, Western District of Missouri, Western Division, at Kansas City. (Complainant's Abstract of Pleading and Evidence) In Equity. The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Complainant vs. The Church of Christ at Independence. Missouri (Lamoni, Iowa, 1893), 232. Hereafter cited as Temple Lot Suit.*

⁷ Parley Parker Pratt, *Late Persecution of the Church of Jesus Christ, of Latter Day Saints* (New York, 1840), 32.

houses in ruins, and furniture destroyed and strewed about the streets; women in different directions, were weeping and mourning, while some of the men were covered with blood from the blows they had received from the enemy; others were endeavoring to collect the fragments of their scattered furniture, beds, &c.”⁸ Some of the citizens pitied the Mormons, but they dared not offer help.

Until this time the Mormons had not mobilized for defense, though it appears that a number of them had guns. None, apparently, had joined the local militia regiment. Mormon leaders met near Independence to discuss the situation. At first it was suggested that they gather all the people together into one group. This would have meant leaving their settlements to the prey of raiders, and so large a number could not be supplied with food and shelter. It was, therefore, concluded that each settlement would organize its own defenses and muster its own men. The men would assemble in small bodies in the different neighborhoods and take up guard duty. They were, however, to be prepared to march anywhere on a moment’s notice. At this time the men felt little compunction about leaving their families, since “women and children were considered safe, they seldom being abused.”⁹

In an effort to protect the grist mill, Pratt took charge of approximately sixty men from the Colesville settlement who had armed themselves as well as possible. On Friday night (November 1) Pratt was posting guards when two Missourians, Robert Johnson and a man named Harris, came walking by. Pratt hailed them, “and commanded [them] to advance and give the countersign.”¹⁰ A fight immediately broke out. Johnson cracked Pratt over the head with the barrel of his rifle. Pratt was momentarily stunned, but help came from the guard house, and the two men were taken prisoners. After being detained the remainder of the night, they were released in the morning.

Jackson Countians, in bands of ten to twenty members, began stoning the Mormon structures in Independence on the same Friday night. A number of Mormons, including John Corrill, were gathered on the Temple Lot. The night was clear and the clatter of stones against the houses was plainly audible. It was decided not to intervene as long as nothing more destructive took place. Finally,

⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁹ Nauvoo, Illinois, *Times and Seasons*, December, 1839.

¹⁰ Washington *National Intelligencer*, December 24, 1833.



Parley P. Pratt

a party was sent into the village to survey the situation, and they discovered that the citizens had "commenced pulling down the dwelling house of brother A. S. Gilbert."¹¹ The damage was mainly to a brick annex.

About midnight other parties of Mormons marched into Independence where they surprised a group attacking the store owned by the Mormons. When the raiders saw the Mormons they fled. Richard McCarty, however, who had broken in one of the doors, was captured. All the doors into the store were smashed and some of the goods strewn in the streets. Gilbert, accompanied by several others, took his prisoner to Samuel Weston, justice of the peace, to obtain a warrant for his incarceration; but Weston refused to issue one. The Mormons reluctantly set their prisoner free and returned to their homes, where they discovered that long, ragged rails had been thrust through the windows and shutters of many of their houses. No longer could they feel that the women and children were safe at home.¹²

The next morning (Saturday, November 2) a council was held by the Mormon leaders to discuss this latest development. It was determined to move all the families which resided in the village to the Temple Lot. Hiram Rathbun, who was twelve at the time, testified later:

Finally the women and household goods of the members of the church were taken to the Temple Lot, and piled up there on the Temple Plot in the woods; and we were there, I think it was three days. . . . They were yelling and hollering and swearing and shooting around there night and day.¹³

About thirty Mormon men were formed into an irregular military unit to guard the refugees on the Temple Lot.

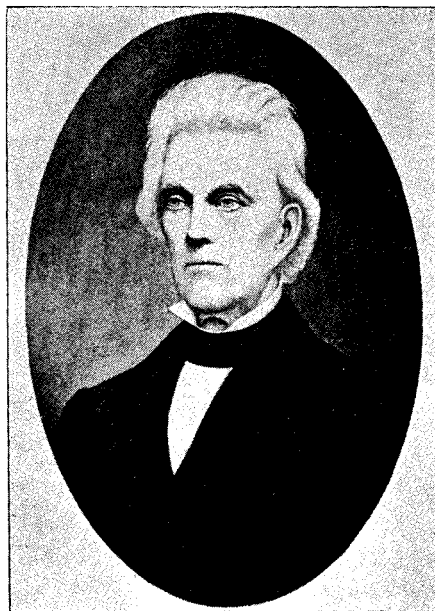
That night another party of Missourians raided a settlement on the Big Blue River about six miles west of Independence. They

¹¹ John Corrill to Oliver Cowdery, December, 1833, as printed in *Kirtland Star*, January, 1834.

¹² *Nauvoo Times and Seasons*, December, 1839.

¹³ *Temple Lot Suit*, 217.

tore the roof from one house and wrecked the furniture. The party then divided. One group pulled the roof from another dwelling while the other attacked the home of David Bennett. The owner was sick in bed, but they beat him anyway. One attacker drew a pistol and swore that he intended blowing out Bennett's brains. The gun discharged and the ball cut a deep gash in the top of the Mormon's head. There is some disagreement about what then transpired.¹⁴ A party of Mormons was nearby, and hearing the noise came up to investigate. In the ensuing confusion, firing commenced. Who fired first is still in doubt, but one of the marauders, the son of Justice of the Peace George Manship, was shot in the thigh.¹⁵ These were the first shots fired by the Mormons and word raced through the county that the Mormons had shot a man.



John F. Ryland

The Jackson Countians were busily engaged the next day in organizing their forces. The retaliation had incensed them still further. The rumor spread that a six-pounder would be used against the Mormons in an open engagement the following day. Some of their Gentile friends warned the Mormons that "Monday would be a bloody day," and that they would be massacred if such an engagement took place.¹⁶ This greatly alarmed the Mormons, and they prepared for the worst. According to Corrill, "two or three

¹⁴ Isaac McCoy claimed that "a company approached a house, about five miles from Independence, with a view no doubt of injuring it; and as they approached the Mormons fired upon them." *St. Louis Missouri Republican*, December 20, 1833. "Some shots were exchanged, the Mormons having given the first fire and wounded one man." Pixley's letter in *Washington National Intelligencer*, December 24, 1833. Compare, "A party of the saints were collected nearby, who hearing the disturbance went to the place. The mob began to fire upon them." *Nauvoo Times and Seasons*, January, 1840. Orson Hyde wrote the editor of the *Boonville Herald* on November 8, 1833, that after the citizens "had fired five or six guns upon the Mormons without effect, the Mormons fired upon them, and one of the mob screamed, 'O my God; I am shot.' The mob then dispersed in much confusion." Reprinted in *St. Louis Missouri Republican*, November 12, 1833.

¹⁵ Letter, dated November 6, 1833, printed in *Kirtland Star*, December, 1833.

¹⁶ *History of Jackson County*, 255.

branches west of the Blue gathered together as well as they could, leaving their houses and property to the ravages of the *mob*.”¹⁷

On Sunday night Parley Pratt, Thomas B. Marsh, Hiram Page, and Joshua Lewis set out to see Circuit Judge John F. Ryland at Lexington, forty miles away, to get a warrant for the arrest of the leaders of the mob. Taking the back roads and cutting through the woods to avoid interception, they lost their way and had to wait until it grew light. A heavy rain drenched men and horses. They made no halt for food or rest, however, until their arrival in Lexington. Stopping first at a friend's house to breakfast and refresh, they then went to Ryland's home. Here they made statement, “but were refused a warrant,” Pratt later claiming that the judge “advised us to fight and kill the outlaws whenever they came upon us.”¹⁸ Deeply disappointed, they returned to their friend's house to spend the night. The next day they headed back to their settlements in a dispirited mood.

On Monday, November 4, a large party of citizens gathered on the Big Blue River, captured the ferry owned by the Mormons, and threatened some of those present. Moses G. Wilson, a member of the raiding party, testified that their purpose was “in expectation of having a fight with the Mormons.”¹⁹ Tired at last of this sport, they returned to Wilson's store a half mile west of the river. In the meantime, the Mormons who had assembled at the Colesville branch were apprised of the escapade. They were informed that the citizens were doing damage and that their brethren needed their help. Accordingly, nineteen men, among whom was David Whitmer, volunteered to give assistance. Corrill wrote: “But when they had proceeded a part of the way, they learned that the *mob* were not doing mischief at that time, but were at Wilson's store, so they turned about to go home.”²⁰

¹⁷ Corrill to Cowdery, December, 1833, in *Kirtland Star*, January, 1834.

¹⁸ Parley Parker Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt* (Salt Lake City, 1950), 98. Compare, “I wish to know whether Joshua Lewis and Hiram Page handed the writ to the sheriff of Jackson county, that I made and issued on their affidavit against some of the ringleaders of the mob in Jackson county, dated the sixth of this month.” John F. Ryland to Robert W. Wells, November 24, 1833, as printed in “History of Joseph Smith,” *Nauvoo Times and Seasons*, June 1, 1845. Hereafter cited as “H. J. S.”

¹⁹ Testimony at a court of inquiry into the conduct of Colonel Thomas Pitcher in Liberty, Missouri, as reported in *St. Louis Missouri Republican*, January 20, 1834. This ferry was operated by Orrin P. Rockwell who was later charged as being the attempted assassin of Gov. Boggs. See Monte B. McLaws, “The Attempted Assassination of Missouri's Ex-Governor, Lilburn W. Boggs,” *MISSOURI HISTORICAL REVIEW*, LX (October, 1965), 50-62.

²⁰ *Kirtland Star*, January, 1834.

At this point, two small boys—one of them Wilson's son—happened to pass along the road on their way to the store. They were detained and questioned by the Mormons. When the boys finally arrived at their destination, they told those assembled about the band of Mormons. Thirty or forty armed and mounted men set out at once in pursuit. After riding about two miles, they overtook the Mormons, who fled and dispersed. A few hid in the woods; others, including Whitmer, sprinted to the Colesville Branch. According to Dibble, Whitmer was the first to bring the news, and he took charge, saying: "Every man go, and every man take a man."²¹ Thirty men with seventeen guns hastened back toward the river.²²

Meanwhile, the Missourians were still seeking those who had fled. They searched a cornfield which belonged to Christian Whitmer, a cripple who had not left his home, and "fed their horses freely upon his corn."²³ They bullied Christian, attempting to coerce him to tell the whereabouts of his brethren. They were engaged in this manner for about an hour, and the sun was just setting, when Whitmer's group came up after having jogged the three miles. It will probably never be determined who fired the first shot, but a hot engagement ensued. The Missourians soon fled the field, followed in close pursuit by the Mormons. The fire must have been heavy; for when the battle was over, two of the citizens and a number of their horses were dead on the field. Dead were Thomas Linville, who had his jaw shot away, and Hugh L. Brazeal, an attorney, who had received two balls in the head. Several others were wounded.

The Mormons also suffered casualties. Andrew Barber died the following day,²⁴ and it was not expected that Philo Dibble would survive. He had received "an ounce ball and two buck shot" in the bowels,²⁵ claiming later that it was from "the first gun that was fired."²⁶ He remained a lifetime cripple. Abigail Leonard later asserted that her husband Lyman had returned from the affray

²¹ *Early Scenes*, 83; David Whitmer headed the disciples, according to "John Whitmer's Manuscript History," 44, in the Office of the Historian of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Independence, Missouri.

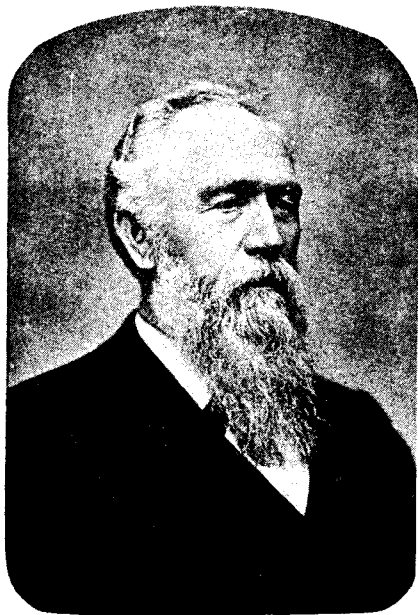
²² "H. J. S.," *Nauvoo Times and Seasons*, May 15, 1845.

²³ *Kirtland Star*, January, 1834.

²⁴ "He was the first to give his life in the cause of the Church, the first modern martyr for the truth," according to an article published in the *Salt Lake City Deseret News*, June 13, 1959.

²⁵ *Early Scenes*, 83.

²⁶ *Nauvoo Times and Seasons*, January, 1840.



Alexander Majors

with fourteen bullet holes in his garments and two slight wounds, one on the hip and the other on the arm.²⁷

Wilson's boy, who had gone out to show the Jackson Countians where he had seen the Mormons, may also have been wounded in the encounter. Lieutenant Governor Lilburn W. Boggs, a resident of Independence, wrote:

The information which reached [Independence] about eight o'clock on Monday night, the 4th instant, by an express, giving intelligence of the

afosaid battle, stated that the Mormons, to the number perhaps of sixty, well armed, attacked a party of the citizens, numbering about twenty; that he had left them fighting, and bore off the body of a small boy, who was shot in the back; that he could not tell the extent of bloodshed that had taken place.²⁸

That same day, Gilbert, Corrill, Isaac Morley, William McLellan, and William Phelps, Mormon leaders in Independence, had been arrested for assault and battery and false imprisonment on warrant of McCarty, the man they had taken prisoner at the store. Late that evening these men were being tried in the courthouse in Independence when news of the skirmish arrived. Corrill wrote that it was rumored "that the mormons had gone into the house of Wilson and shot his son."²⁹ Those present were enraged, and the prisoners were in a precarious situation. All doors out of the courtroom were barred, and there was no possible escape. But Samuel C. Owens, seeing that the Mormons were without counsel and in imminent danger, advised them to request imprisonment as the only alternative for saving their lives.³⁰ Corrill noted: "The court

²⁷ Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* (New York, 1877), 163.

²⁸ To editor, November 26, 1833, *St. Louis Missouri Republican*, December 6, 1833; also printed in *Jefferson City Jeffersonian Republican*, December 21, 1833.

²⁹ *Kirtland Star*, January, 1834.

³⁰ "H. J. S.," *Nauvoo Times and Seasons*, May 15, 1845; *History of Jackson County*, 256.

house being filled, a rush was made upon us by some to kill us; but the court esteeming it too dishonorable to have us killed while in their hands, on our request shut us up in the jail to save our lives.”³¹ Guns were brandished, and there was a vocal demonstration.

That night mounted horsemen were dispatched in all directions to call out the Jackson County militia. Lieutenant Governor Boggs stated that “the information of that battle having taken place, produced the call of the Militia.” He noted further that this was “for the purpose of suppressing the insurrection.”³² Rumors were rife: one that the Mormons had taken Independence, another that they were allied with the Indians. Alexander Majors observed that “every citizen, as soon as he could run bullets and fill his powder horn with powder, gathered his gun and made for the town; and in a few hours men enough had gathered to exterminate them had they approached.”³³

In the jail, according to Corrill, the prisoners were “frequently told that night . . . by men of note, that without any doubt many lives would be lost the next day; for now not only the *mob*, but the whole county were engaged and greatly enraged against us and that nothing would stop them short of our leaving the county forthwith.”³⁴ Even this might not calm the cry for vengeance. The leaders in prison talked it over and then sent word to some of their brethren “that they might not expect anything the next day but a general slaughter of our people.”³⁵ It was decided that in view of the rage of the Missourians, they should agree to evacuate the area. One elder wrote his brethren in Kirtland:

We saw plainly that the whole county were enraged, and preparing for a general massacre the next day. We then thought it wisdom to stop the shedding of more blood, and by agreeing to leave immediately we saved many lives; in this we feel justified.³⁶

Their sentiments were conveyed to Sheriff Jacob Gregg. He and two others took Gilbert, Corrill and Morley to discuss their decision with some of their brethren. A short consultation was held

³¹ Kirtland *Star*, January, 1834.

³² St. Louis *Missouri Republican*, December 6, 1833.

³³ Colonel Prentiss Ingraham, ed., *Seventy Years on the Frontier: Alexander Majors' Memoirs of a Lifetime on the Border* (Chicago, 1893), 47.

³⁴ Kirtland *Star*, January, 1834.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ November 17, 1833, as printed in Kirtland *Star*, December, 1833.

in which the leaders persuaded the others to agree to leave the county. When the prisoners were being returned to jail after midnight, they were hailed by a party of men with guns. Six or seven citizens were seen standing near the jail. The sheriff called out his name and the names of his prisoners. Some hostile moves were made, and the sheriff shouted, "Don't fire, don't fire, the prisoners are in my charge."³⁷ Corrill turned, ran, and was fired upon. Morley also made his escape, but Gilbert stood his ground. The citizens came up to him, pointed two guns at his chest and fired. Fortunately, "one snapped and the other flashed in the pan."³⁸ Gilbert was then knocked to the ground by Thomas Wilson but was not seriously injured. Upon the arrival of another group of citizens, the affair came to an end. Gilbert was then placed in jail. He and the remaining prisoners were freed at sunrise, probably because of their promise to vacate the county. Edward Partridge, the bishop in charge of Zion, Gilbert and others promptly went across the Missouri River and sent an affidavit to Governor Dunklin.

On Tuesday, November 5, the militia, called out by Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Pitcher, in the absence of Colonel Samuel D. Lucas, the commanding officer, assembled in Independence. Corrill wrote that the ostensible purpose was "to quell the *mob*: but it would have been difficult for one to have distinguished between the militia and *mob*, for all the most conspicuous characters engaged in the *riot* were found in [its] ranks."³⁹ Boggs had given his approval to this action.⁴⁰ Most of the Missourians, like most of the Mormons, had not as yet been informed of the elders' intentions of leaving. As the ranks formed and the citizens were told of this agreement, a strange quiet descended over the town. Stores were closed and business activity was suspended completely. More than two hundred men were standing in the ranks when alarming news was carried into town by persons riding in from the west. They had seen a large body of Mormons, "well armed," marching toward the village. It was reported that they were "coming on with a view to

³⁷ Pratt, *Late Persecution*, 42.

³⁸ Kirtland *Star*, January, 1834.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ "The Militia were ordered into service by Lieut. Colonel Pitcher, (the colonel being absent,) for the purpose of suppressing the insurrection. I approved of the course adopted by Col. Pitcher, as the only means of saving bloodshed, and of restoring order." Quoted from Boggs to editor, November 26, 1833, St. Louis *Missouri Republican*, December 6, 1833.

attack and destroy the place.”⁴¹ It was around 9:00 o'clock in the morning.

One of the members of the militia was Josiah Gregg, who had returned only a few days before from Santa Fe, Mexico. He reported:

I had often heard the cry of “Indians!” announcing the approach of hostile savages, but I do not remember ever to have witnessed so much consternation as prevailed at Independence on this memorable occasion. The note of alarm was sounded far and near, and armed men, eager for the fray, were rushing in from every quarter. Officers were summarily selected without deference to rank and station; the “spirit-stirring drum” and the “ear-piercing fife” made the air resound with music; and a little army of as brave and resolute a set of fellows as ever trod a field of battle, was, in very short time, paraded through the streets. After a few preliminary exercises, they started for a certain point on the road where they intended to await the approach of the Mormons.⁴²

The Jackson Countians erroneously believed that the objective of the oncoming force was “to kill or drive out all the inhabitants, and to destroy the Village.”⁴³ Pitcher later asserted that the Mormons had the “avowed intention of burning the town and to kill Col. Sam Owens, Gen. S. D. Lucas, myself, and several other leading citizens.”⁴⁴

At the same time the Missourians mustered, the Mormons united their forces. Approximately 150 men from west of the Big Blue River volunteered to march to Independence under the leadership of Lyman Wight, a veteran of the War of 1812.⁴⁵ They were poorly armed; only about one in three had a gun. The others had improvised weapons; some made spears by fastening chisels to poles while others found clubs.⁴⁶ They had not been informed that their leaders had agreed to leave. Word had come to them that several of their brethren were in prison “and the determination of the mob

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Josiah Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, Max L. Moorhead, ed. (Norman, Okla., 1954), 220.

⁴³ McCoy to editor, November 28, 1833, St. Louis *Missouri Republican*, December 20, 1833.

⁴⁴ Interview of Thomas Pitcher in *Kansas City Journal*, June 17, 1881.

⁴⁵ The number of men in this force has been estimated variously. Pitcher, McCoy and Corrill claimed there were 150, while Smith asserted there were 100. Wight alleged he had 200 men with him.

⁴⁶ *Kansas City Journal*, June 17, 1881; *Nauvoo Times and Seasons*, January, 1840.

was to kill them.”⁴⁷ They had heard also that the branch in Independence was in imminent danger since the main body of Missourians was gathering there.⁴⁸ Leaving early in the morning, they hastily covered ten miles. They intended making a stand on the temple lot, but before reaching that objective they were advised that their leaders had promised to leave the county and that the militia had been called out. Wight directed his men off the road into the woods, a move the Missourians interpreted as a military movement for the purpose of forming lines.⁴⁹

Lieutenant Colonel Pitcher dispatched a Mormon as a messenger “with this information, that the militia were raised to quell this insurrection, and that they must come forward, surrender their arms, and return to their homes.”⁵⁰ Negotiations then began between the leaders of the two forces. Boggs was present, acting as intermediary between the two groups.⁵¹

The Mormons, faced by a superior military force, were at a considerable disadvantage. Their elders had already come to an understanding with the Missourians. Pitcher, according to Correll, “would not give us peace only on the conditions that we should deliver up those men who were engaged in the battle the day before, to have them tried for murder; and also, that we must deliver up our arms, and then, he said, we should be safely protected out of the county.”⁵² Pitcher remembered that “they were to surrender their arms and leave the county within ten days.”⁵³ Later the Mormons contended that they understood that the Missourians also were to be required to give up their weapons.⁵⁴ According to Smith, “the fear of violating the law, in resisting this pretended militia, and the flattering assurances of protection, and honorable usage, promised by Lieutenant Governor Boggs, in whom they had reposed confidence up to this period, induced them to submit.”⁵⁵

It was late in the afternoon before the negotiations were

⁴⁷ “H. J. S.,” *Nauvoo Times and Seasons*, May 15, 1845; John Correll, *Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints* (St. Louis, 1839), 20.

⁴⁸ *Nauvoo Times and Seasons*, January, 1840.

⁴⁹ *Kansas City Journal*, June 17, 1881; *St. Louis Missouri Republican*, December 20, 1833.

⁵⁰ Boggs to editor, November 26, 1833, *ibid.*, December 6, 1833.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*; “H. J. S.,” *Nauvoo Times and Seasons*, May 15, 1845.

⁵² *Kirtland Star*, January, 1834.

⁵³ *Kansas City Journal*, June 17, 1881.

⁵⁴ “H. J. S.,” *Nauvoo Times and Seasons*, May 15, 1845, and testimony of Lyman Wight before Municipal Court of Nauvoo, Illinois, on July 1, 1843, as printed in Liverpool, England, *Millennial Star*, August 6, 1859.

⁵⁵ “H. J. S.,” *Nauvoo Times and Seasons*, May 15, 1845; Pratt, *Late Persecution*, 44.

terminated. The Mormons understood that their weapons would be returned to them after they had left the county.⁵⁶ Both units were marched into town where a committee was appointed to receive the arms. The weapons, fifty in all, were stacked around a white oak stump standing in the public square. Afterwards they were placed in the jail for safekeeping where they "were eaten up with rust."⁵⁷ Those Mormons who were present and had participated in the battle gave themselves up. Who these were is un-



Lilburn W. Boggs

known, but it seems that only three were turned over to the authorities and imprisoned.⁵⁸ According to Boggs, the militia men—weapons still in hand—were dismissed, "with the exception of a small guard intended to guard the Mormons."⁵⁹ The Mormons, Wight recorded, "returned home, resting assured . . . that we should not be further molested."⁶⁰ In celebration of their victory the Missourians fired a number of rounds from their cannon that night.

Orson Hyde and John Gould, two Mormons who had been present when McCarty was taken before the magistrate, had completed their business in Jackson County and were prepared to return to Kirtland. They boarded the *Charleston* at Liberty Landing on Tuesday, November 5, and during the night they heard the cannon fire. The next morning before the steamboat cast off from its moorings, "a messenger rode by, saying that he had just come from the seat of war, and that the night before, another battle had been fought, in which Mr. [Russel] Hicks, Attorney at Law, fell,

⁵⁶ Corrill, *Brief History*, 20.

⁵⁷ Ingraham, *Majors' Memoirs*, 49.

⁵⁸ St. Louis *Missouri Republican*, December 6, 1833. "I am sorry to add that such was the ungovernable and unmanly conduct of some in our community, that it was with the utmost difficulty that the civil authorities could protect their prisoners from being massacred on the spot." Pixley's letter in *National Intelligencer*, December 24, 1833.

⁵⁹ St. Louis *Missouri Republican*, December 6, 1833. It appears that a group of the more prominent citizens of Jackson County formed a guard to see that the Mormons were protected and that the provisions of the agreement were carried out. Clearly, they were not always effective. See entries under November 7, 8 and 9, in "Isaac McCoy's Manuscript Journal," Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas.

⁶⁰ Liverpool *Millennial Star*, August 6, 1859.

having three balls and some buck shot, through his body, and about twenty more of the mob.”⁶¹ As the steamer proceeded down river, Hyde prepared a report of all that he had seen and heard in Jackson County. This statement was given to the editors of the papers in the river towns at which the steamer stopped. It was printed widely throughout the nation and was responsible for an impression that more blood had been shed than actually was. Gould and Hyde arrived in Kirtland on November 25 “and brought the melancholy intelligence of the riot in Zion.”⁶²

On Wednesday, November 6, Pitcher, acting in his civil capacity as constable, released the remaining Mormon prisoners. According to the Mormons, he first warned them and then took one of their watches “to satisfy costs.” Leading them out to a cornfield, Pitcher released them and told them to “clear.”⁶³

At first the Mormon leaders planned to move south into Van Buren County. They discussed the matter with some of the more prominent Jackson Countians, who gave their approval. At a meeting of the citizens, however, it was resolved that the Mormons could go neither to the south nor the west, but must move north of the river. It can only be surmised that the motive behind this was fear—fear that the Mormons might establish contact with the Indian tribes to the west and encourage the savages to attack the Jackson Countians.

The Mormons later accused “Lt. Gov. Boggs, Col. Pitcher and Col. Lucas, of practising a stratagem upon them, and thereby depriving them of their arms.”⁶⁴ In the light of that which followed, it appeared to the Mormons that they had been deliberately deceived into giving up their weapons so that the citizens might torment them without fear of harm or retaliation. Without arms the Mormons were helpless and the Missourians had “full power to come upon [them] when they pleased.”⁶⁵

On Wednesday, November 6, a systematic policy of harassment began. Companies of from fifty to eighty men, mounted and with guns on their shoulders, visited the Mormon settlements. Many

⁶¹ This letter was first printed in the *Boonville Herald*, November 7, 1833. It appeared subsequently in *St. Louis Missouri Republican*, November 12, 1833; *Columbia Missouri Intelligencer*, November 16, 1833; the *Washington National Intelligencer*, November 30, 1833; and *Kirtland Star*, December, 1833.

⁶² “H. J. S.,” *Nauvoo Times and Seasons*, June 1, 1845.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, January, 1840.

⁶⁴ On December 12, 1833, Pratt, Corrill and Newel Knight issued a handbill stating the Mormon position on the events in Jackson County. See *St. Louis Missouri Republican*, January 30, 1834.

⁶⁵ *Kirtland Star*, January, 1834.

of the Mormon men were away making arrangements for departure. Homes were broken into and searched for weapons. Some of the Mormon men were caught and whipped, and others were fired upon. A few were chased for several miles into the woods. As the aggressors passed through the Whitmer settlement, "they swore that if the people were not off by the time they returned at night, they would massacre the whole of them."⁶⁶ They rode on to the Colesville branch. Emily Austin recalled that one of these was a man named Campbell, who drew a horse pistol on a woman.

'Madam, where is your husband? tell me the truth; do you see this weapon, which is only waiting for your heart's blood?' My sister-in-law calmly replied that she knew nothing as to his whereabouts, and could not tell anything more about it. 'Well, can you tell us when the Yankee's intend to leave this county?'⁶⁷

After intimidating the inhabitants "they rode off, with their broad-brimmed hats and blanket overcoats, which costume was in those days characteristic of a fully developed Missourian."⁶⁸ Consternation and confusion swept the settlements. Women and children fled to the woods; others hastily packed what they could and headed for the Missouri River.

Lyman Wight was one of those who had been chased "by about 60 of these ruffians five miles." He later recorded:

I fled to the south and my wife was driven north to Clay County, and for three weeks I knew not whether my family was dead or alive. . . . At one time I was three days without food. When I found my family I found them on the banks of the Missouri River under a rag carpet tent short of food and raiment. In this deplorable situation, on the 27th of December, my wife bore me a son.⁶⁹

Mrs. Wight and her three small children had made their escape in a skiff which they rowed down the Big Blue River for fourteen miles to the Missouri River.

Typical of the experience of many might have been that of Parley Pratt. On Tuesday afternoon he and Thomas Marsh had ridden within four miles of Independence on their return from

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Emily M. Austin, *Mormonism: or, Life Among the Mormons* (Madison, Wisc., 1882), 70.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁶⁹ "Lyman Wight's Journal," as quoted in Joseph Smith and Heman C. Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (Lamoni, Iowa, 1897), I, 335.

Lexington. They stopped at a farm house and passed themselves off as strangers. The farmer asked them where they were from, and they replied from Lexington. "Have you heard?" he asked, "The Mormons have *riz*, and have killed six men."⁷⁰ Circling the town, Pratt came upon some of his brethren about sunset and was informed of the surrender. Walking his horse through the woods in order to avoid the main roads, he arrived home about the middle of the night. After resting a few hours, he arose before daybreak and rode off into the forest.

That afternoon Pratt headed for the river. On his way he came across a Mormon, John Lowry, who was moving his family in a covered wagon. Lowry had a permit to pass in safety, and he concealed Pratt in his wagon. They made it safely to the Missouri River, "although frequently meeting armed men, who were pursuing our brethren." When night came they were still on the south side of the river, where they were forced to camp, since the ferry did not operate after dark. Pratt found a cave in which to sleep in the limestone ridge which overlooked the river. Later in the night he was joined by Isaac Morley and several others bringing rumors that "the mob were driving and probably butchering men, women and children."⁷¹ The next morning Pratt crossed over without mishap.

Return I. Holcombe, who gathered his information from old settlers, wrote: "Affrighted and almost terror-stricken, the Mormons crossed the river and sought safety in Clay county." When the crossing began "the weather was cold and rainy; and the plundered, half clad women and children suffered severely."⁷² In their hurry to depart many had taken no extra clothing or bedding. They were ill prepared to face the rigors of the coming winter. Those encamped on the temple lot appeared to have fared better than most since they already had their possessions packed and loaded.

Just north of Independence on the Missouri river was located the Wayne City landing where the steamboats and Everett's Ferry operated. This was the place where the major portion of the Mormons congregated to cross the river. Pratt described the scene as it appeared on Thursday, November 7:

The shore began to be lined on both sides of the ferry with men, women and children; goods, wagons, boxes,

⁷⁰ Pratt, *Autobiography*, 98-99.

⁷¹ Pratt, *Late Persecution*, 45-46.

⁷² Walter B. Stevens, *Centennial History of Missouri (The Center State): One Hundred Years in the Union, 1820-1921* (St. Louis, 1921), II, 104.

provisions, etc., while the ferry was constantly employed; and when night again closed upon us the cottonwood bottom had much the appearance of a camp meeting. Hundreds of people were seen in every direction, some in tents and some in the open air around their fires, while the rain descended in torrents. Husbands were inquiring for their wives, wives for their husbands; parents for children, and children for parents. Some had the good fortune to escape with their families, household goods, and some provisions; while others knew not the fate of their friends, and had lost all their goods. The scene was indescribable, and, I am sure, would have melted the hearts of any people on the earth, except our blind oppressors, and a blind and ignorant community.⁷³

Not all groups, crossed over to Clay County. One wandered on the southern prairies for several days. A large number of women and children, approximately 130, had been collected at the Colesville School. On Wednesday when the harassment began, a party of seventy-five to one hundred men rode through the area, ordering every Mormon out of the region within two hours. Most of the Mormon men were absent, looking for wagons or in hiding, and only six were present—among them young John Brush. Only four wagons were available, and the group, in a state of near panic, loaded these with bedding and provisions. Everything else was left behind. The party, under the leadership of Solomon Hancock, then headed south with no apparent objective other than to flee from the raiders. The first day they covered six miles. When night fell they made camp as best they could and after prayers retired.⁷⁴

The following day, still drifting southward, they debouched upon an open plain and trudged fifteen miles. The prairie had been burned over, and the bunch grass left sharp stubs above the surface of the earth. Very few of the children had shoes, and by night their feet were torn and bleeding.⁷⁵ The next day another fifteen miles were covered without meeting a single traveler or passing a farm site until evening when they stopped near a small house owned by a single man. He offered them the use of his home. The rain commenced to fall, and the women and children huddled together in the one room of the house while the men and larger boys leaned

⁷³ Pratt, *Autobiography*, 102.

⁷⁴ This trek is covered in "Elder John Brush," *Autumn Leaves*, IV (January, 1891), 23-24, 64.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 23; Tullidge, *Women of Mormondom*, 164-165; *Liverpool Millennial Star*, August 6, 1859.



against the house and wagons until morning with the rain streaming down their backs.⁷⁶

After breakfast they again took up their journey, but the land was inundated. When the party came to a slough they found the water from ankle to waist deep for a distance of over a mile, and across this they were compelled to wade. Nearly every adult had to carry a child the entire distance without resting. That evening they finally found a dry camp site under a bluff. When they awoke in the morning, the earth was covered with two inches of snow. They ate their last morsel of food for breakfast. With no apparent place to go, and without food, resignation swept the group. After prayers they remained inactive to await further developments. About mid-morning a man came riding up and offered them assistance if they would come to his place five miles away. He had some potatoes to be dug and fence rails to be split. He promised them, in return for their labor, an ox and half the potatoes. The man was David G. Butterfield, and he and his neighbors collected clothing and provisions for the Mormons and took families into their homes. They also gave them work. But word soon came to the refugees that their brethren had crossed over into Clay County. Desiring to be reunited with their families and friends, many of the Mormons packed up and set out for the Missouri River. They circled around Independence, took Williams' Ferry across the river, and camped above the northern bluffs until spring.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ *Autumn Leaves*, 23.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 64; Tullidge, *Women of Mormondom*, 165.

On the night of November 13 there occurred a singular phenomenon. According to Mormon eschatology, one of the signs of the end would be: "The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall be turned into blood, and the stars fall from heaven."⁷⁸ That night the stars "fell." There was by all accounts a very remarkable meteoric display, probably the greatest Leonid shower ever observed and recorded in the United States. Parley Pratt remembered:

About two o'clock the next morning we were called up by the cry of signs in the heavens. We arose, and to our great astonishment all the firmament seemed enveloped in splendid fireworks, as if every star in the broad expanse had been hurled from its course, and sent lawless through the wilds of ether. Thousands of bright meteors were shooting through space in every direction, with long trains of light following in their course. This lasted for several hours, and was only closed by the dawn of the rising sun. Every heart was filled with joy at this majestic display of signs and wonders, showing the near approach of the coming of the Son of God.⁷⁹

Judge Joseph Thorp, a Clay Countian, also observed this spectacle, "The saints," he wrote, "looked at it as being a sign from heaven that the Lord would in some miraculous manner enable them to overcome the ungodly Gentiles who had so recklessly driven them from their homes and exposed their wives and little ones to the cold and chilling blasts of winter without shelter."⁸⁰

It was not alone the Mormons who saw this as a portent. Josiah Gregg wrote that many of the citizens in Jackson County "began to wonder whether, after all, the Mormons might not be in the right; and whether this was not a sign sent from heaven as a remonstrance for the injustice they had been guilty of towards that chosen sect."⁸¹

⁷⁸ *Book of Commandments, for the Government of the Church of Christ* (Zion [Independence, Mo.], 1833), 62, 107.

⁷⁹ Pratt, *Autobiography*, 103. "And let others think as they may, I take it as a special manifestation to fulfill the scriptures, and to rouse our drooping spirits, by a fresh memorial, reminding us of a coming Messiah," in Pratt, *Late Persecution*, 50. The Leonid meteor shower occurs annually around November 14. It is so named because it appears to originate in the constellation of Leo.

⁸⁰ Judge Joseph Thorp, *Early Days in the West: Along the Missouri One Hundred Years Ago* (Liberty, Mo., 1924), 76.

⁸¹ Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairie*, 220. This meteor shower was seen all over the United States. That night in Virginia the wife of a strolling actor gave birth to a son, and the midwife told her that he would be a great man since the heavens proclaimed his birth. The baby grew up to be one of America's greatest actors, Edwin Booth. The Washington *National Intelligencer*, November 21, 1833, reprinted a report from the Columbia *Spy* that many persons assumed that "the last day had arrived," and that only one drink was consumed at a

At first, of course, the hardships were cruelly difficult for the Mormons, especially the women and children. Babies were born those first nights in the cottonwoods, and the exposure to the chill and dampness apparently ruined the health of some of the elderly Mormons. Many had sold their cattle and personal effects at a very low price before leaving Jackson County.

The initial response of the Clay Countians to the plight of the Mormons was warm and friendly. One reason, perhaps, was that their county had been settled longer than Jackson County. Liberty, the county seat, was six years old when Independence was founded; and it was "one of the proudest towns in the West, with its aristocratic families."⁸² There was considerable difference in the political sentiments of the two counties, too, as their names would imply. Clay Countians tended to be Whigs; those from Jackson County were generally Jacksonian Democrats. The citizens of Clay very hospitably opened their homes to the refugees, providing them with shelter, provisions and work. This irritated the Jackson Countians, and for years thereafter they stigmatized persons from Clay County as being "Jack Mormons."⁸³

Some of the Mormons moved into abandoned slave cabins or built huts in the woods, while others lived in tents or even in the open. Every vacant cabin in the southern half of the county was occupied by the fugitives. In the spring some of the Mormons rented unimproved land in the southeast corner of the county, where they again built homes and put in crops. The harvests were generally good, and by fall some began to enjoy a degree of comfort. A number of the Mormons hired out to work. Judge Thorp, who employed several of them, observed:

The Mormons, in the main, were industrious, good workers, and gave general satisfaction to their employers, and could live on less than any people I ever knew. Their women could fix up a palatable meal out of that which a Gentile's wife would not know how to commence to get half a dinner or breakfast. They had the knack of economizing in the larder, which was a great help to the men, as

public house the next day "and no charge was made for that." The *Washington National Intelligencer*, December 9, 1833, took notice of the death of a young woman in New York whose mind had given way from fear that the meteors portended the speedy dissolution of the world.

⁸² William Larking Webb, *Centennial History of Independence, Missouri* (Independence, 1927), 70.

⁸³ *History of Clay and Platte Counties* (St. Louis, 1885), 133.

they had mostly to earn their bread and butter by day's work, and wages about half what they are now.⁸⁴

Considering the implacable hostility that had been created by the Mormons in Jackson County, perhaps they should have abandoned their efforts to build Zion. This they did not do. While it was reported by the *Missouri Republican*, as early as November 22, 1833, that the Mormons had ceased all resistance and were leaving Jackson County "with intention of forming another community elsewhere," they did not abandon Jackson County as the chosen site. They made several efforts to obtain reinstatement onto their lands, by legal process and the display of armed strength. These efforts failed, but the dream did not die. Though violently expelled, the Mormons still adhere tenaciously to the belief that Zion will yet arise on the prairies and hills of Jackson County.

⁸⁴ *Early Days*, 76-77.

They Wouldn't Use Pop-Guns

Paris Mercury, February 11, 1873.

About the commencement of the war, Judge Rice made a speech in North Alabama, in which he said that the Southern soldiers could whip the Yankees with pop-guns. Since the war he chanced to make another speech at the place.

A big, double-jointed fellow was present, who heard and remembered the former speech, and being in no amiable frame of mind, concluded to go for Sam.

Rolling up his sleeves and popping his fist in the palm of his hand, pronounced the fearful question: "Sam Rice, didn't you make a speech here in 1861?"

"I did," said Sam.

"And didn't you say we could whip the Yankees with pop-guns?"

"Certainly I did, but the d---d rascals wouldn't fight us that way!"

Music Hath Charms

Kansas City Star, July 30, 1965.

Chadwick, Mo. (AP)—The charm that guitar music has for copperheads still isn't explained, but 149 of the snakes have been killed at the Pine Ridge Pentecostal church since revival services began July 16.

Regulars at the church said they'd seldom seen a copperhead around until the guitar music started.

The phenomenon—or the revival—has boomed attendance.

"We can't hardly seat the people or park their cars," said Lloyd Walker, a member of the church in the Mark Twain national forest.