

Murder of the Mormon Prophet



Murder of the Mormon Prophet

The Political Prelude to the
Death of Joseph Smith

LeGrand L. Baker

Eborn Books

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The Frontispiece

In the 1960s Larry Prestwich, originally from Salt Lake City, Utah, lived for a short time in Southern California. While there he created a series of artwork on themes from the scriptures and Mormon Church history. One of the paintings was based on the time that Joseph Smith was imprisoned in Liberty jail in Missouri. This young artist had never visited Liberty jail, and did not know that the trap door to the cell was solid wood with only a small barred window. Consequently, when he painted Joseph in the jail, with his artist's prerogative, he removed that wooden door and let us view the pensive, but unbroken, 33-year-old Joseph Smith, standing as he might have done, as he considered the content of the letter he was then writing to the Saints. Larry and his wife Anne now live in Sterling, Colorado, where he is professor of art at Northeastern Junior College. They have 7 children and 19 grandchildren.

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Acknowledgments

Many 19th century American newspapers have been preserved on microfilm. My research assistants and I read almost 250 such newspapers—some were full runs, others: just whatever issues survived—that were published between November 1843 and November 1844, and we copied every article we could find that mentioned the Mormons. The result is that this book references almost everything American editors wrote (and therefore almost everything Americans generally knew) about the Mormons, Joseph Smith’s presidential campaign, the destruction of the *Nauvoo Expositor*, and the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. Many of those editors were not too careful about how they spelled words, and were not at all consistent about how they punctuated their sentences. I have made no attempt to retain either their spelling or their punctuation, but have modernized both.

This book is the product of more than 25 years’ research and writing. One does not do that, for that long, without involving many friends. Some helped with research. Some read the pages I was working on just then and made suggestions. Others read the entire manuscript and made major suggestions. There have been so many friends that I could never mention them all, so let me name just a few as representative of all the rest: Scott Stewart, Derek Jensen, Maryann Briggs, David S. King, David A. Thomas, and Richard L. Anderson. To them and to all the others I say “Thank you. I wish I could mention each of you by name, but you and I know who you are.”

There are also many professional archivists and librarians to whom I owe my gratitude. First and foremost are those of the Harold B. Lee and the J. Reuben Clark Law Libraries at Brigham Young University. Others are the people at the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Wisconsin State Historical Society, the Illinois State Historical Society, the Huntington Library, and the staffs of other libraries and research institutions. I owe a special thanks to the hundreds of archivists and librarians who have preserved the

nation's newspapers on microfilm so they could be accessed by historians like myself.

I also wish to thank my wife Marilyn, and my children, Dawn, Brian, Tonya, and Jason, for their understanding, patience, and love; and my publisher Bret Eborn for his friendship and support.

LeGrand L. Baker
Orem, Utah

Preface

by David A. Thomas¹

It is sometimes said that a new era in writing Mormon history commenced in the 1970s. Even historians who were committed member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints felt free to explore issues and perspectives that were not consistently apologetic for Latter-day Saints' (LDS) personal and church-related conduct in the history of the Church. Occasionally readers of this "new" genre of history would see attempts to explain or rationalize the persistent persecution that plagued early church members. The explanations—whether economic, sociological or from some other perspective—sometimes seemed to portray the persecutions as the natural consequences of conflict between different groups finding themselves in the same communities or otherwise in proximity with each other: It would be suggested that

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He served an LDS mission to North Germany, 1963-65, has been a bishop of two wards, has served on two high councils, and has been a stake president's counselor.

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something the Mormons did rather naturally incited or prompted an understandable reaction from non-Mormon citizens.

Unfortunately, the quest for rational explanations of the virulent and hateful attacks on early Mormons can easily degenerate into apologetics for the persecutors and is a common tactic of modern anti-Mormon writers. LeGrand Baker's new and exhaustively researched work demonstrates with convincing finality how hollow and profoundly wrong such a perspective is. The murders, rapes, violence, and official treachery visited upon the early Mormons were utterly without justification and, in their extremity, without apparent rationale. Only the dark dramas of pervasive official conspiracy remain to be explored as rationales, and that task is the essence of this work.

Baker's work does not need to interpret events to show how irrational and insidious the persecutions were. The events, carefully described and fully documented, speak for themselves. It is an ugly story, with stains in abundance upon both the private citizens and the public officials who perpetrated the crimes. The story recounted by Baker draws to a close with the deaths Joseph and Hyrum Smith, but the blight of this era persisted, and eventually infected the highest levels of national government. It led directly to "Buchanan's Blunder," when President James Buchanan in 1856 foolishly sent the nation's largest peacetime army to Utah to quell a non-existent rebellion, and later to clouding the collective judgment of the U. S. Congress and the Supreme Court as they attempted to destroy the Latter-day Saint Church as an organization.

This work is much more than carefully documented details of crimes against the early Mormons. While those details for this period of time are reported in great breadth and depth, they demand more than descriptive treatment. Baker's work shows convincingly how the Illinois persecutions, leading to the murders of the Smiths, were planned and executed to prevent the Mormons from participating in the political process and to drive the Mormons out so the persecutors could steal their property.

The extreme virulence of, the implacable persistence of, and the

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governmental connivance in the persecutions against the early Mormons call for such explanations, certainly for better explanations that the persecutions as spontaneous reactions of paranoid neighbors. Why, for instance, would hundreds of Missouri mobbers be poised to take part in the Smith assassinations in Illinois when it had been six years since the Mormons had had any presence in Missouri, and when news of the Smiths' arrest could not have yet reached them?

Baker lays out the only viable explanations: (1) The anti-Mormon movement was a spontaneous reaction and there was not a single individual or small group of individuals who were decision makers behind the coalition [of persecutors]. (2) Some one, or some small group of people who had enough power and money to pull the strings of four governors in two states and remain a silent partner in Illinois; Anti-Mormon organization, while maintaining enough momentum in anti-Mormon feeling in Missouri that they could set thousands of armed men in motion when the perfect time arrived.

Throughout the book Baker carefully distinguishes between the Anti-Mormon organization in Illinois and the more general anti-Mormon sentiment that arose wherever the Mormons settled. While the various persecuting groups' concerted actions intriguingly suggest a great deal of supporting influence and money, Baker concludes, "There is very little paper trail that ties the Anti-Mormon Party leaders in Illinois with Anti-Mormons in Missouri" and elsewhere. Therefore, rather than speculate on the operations of local or national conspiracies with only circumstantial evidence, he proclaims his task in this book must be limited to (1) looking at what is visible in the local organizations that sought to kill and eventually succeeded in killing the Mormon leaders and expelling the Mormons from the United States, and (2) pointing out the obvious coordination between the Anti-Mormons in Hancock County and the Anti-Mormons elsewhere.

The book is essentially a chronological narrative, with necessary detours into the backgrounds of key persons and events and much helpful explanation from the author, a trained historian with over four decades' scholarly experience. The prevailing tone of the book is a

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dispassionate laying out of the detailed information, respectfully leaving it to the reader to draw reasonable inferences and conclusions. It is divided by Chapters into blocks of time, 1838-41, 1841-42, 1843, Jan.-Feb. 1844, March 1844, and so on, with chapter subdivisions assigned to prominent persons or events within those time periods.

While the possibility of a conspiratorial circle extending beyond the Illinois-Missouri-Iowa region is left for another study, the massive amount of facts revealing the more local conspiracy are here shown as overwhelmingly damning. Avoiding the common historians' error of interpreting historical events with modern perspectives, Baker relies heavily on contemporary newspaper accounts to show attitudes and perceptions of the time, including an unprecedented canvass of about 250 newspapers from all over the United States between November 1843 and November 1844. This work reveals more than previously known about American attitudes toward Joseph Smith's campaign for the presidency of the United States, opinions about the municipal actions against the *Nauvoo Expositor*, and reactions to the murders of Joseph and Hyrum.

Baker is also careful to lay a foundation for analyzing the legal issues underlying many of these events. He avoids the danger of applying modern legal concepts to the legal issues and proceedings of the 1830s and 1840s, and instead faithfully reports the records and perceptions of the observers and participants. The Early part of this history is laced with references to the possibility of federal reparations to Mormon mob victims in light of perceptions about states rights, details of the Nauvoo charter and activities of the Nauvoo Legion, several attempts to extradite Joseph Smith from Illinois to Missouri and the use of the habeas corpus proceedings, bankruptcy law of the time, how the institution of the electoral college amplified the Mormons' political influence, and the role of English common law in American state jurisprudence.

Two supremely important legal issues are explored in depth. These are the validity of treason charges leveled against Joseph Smith and the legality of Nauvoo City action against the short-lived newspaper, the

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Nauvoo Expositor. This Latter action is often characterized as the immediate 19th century America is the most thorough and accurate scholarly review of this subject ever published. His analysis of the *Nauvoo Expositor* incident is a significant, original contribution to existing scholarly work on the topic, providing persuasive explanations for the parties; conduct in the context of the growing conspiracy against the Smiths in Nauvoo itself. Baker's discussion of these two legal issues represents the strongest evidence of official conspiracy to kill the Smiths.

This story has needed to be written for over a century, ever since emotions on both sides had somewhat subsided and an intelligent assessment of the events could be conducted. LeGrand Baker is the right scholar for the task. His patient quest for every available piece of evidence, his asking the right questions, his understanding of both minutiae and larger events, and his gift for written expression make this an essential addition to the written history of the United States of America and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Introduction

by David S. King²

There are few events in Mormon history that have received more scholarly attention than the assassination of the Prophet Joseph Smith. The ground has long since been plowed and re-plowed by friend and foe alike, and, predictably, has yielded conflicting views on the role played by the Prophet Joseph Smith in this tragic episode.

For the purpose of shedding much-needed light on the subject, Dr. Baker has skillfully located and organized into one coherent whole the essential pieces of this enigmatic jigsaw puzzle, which accomplishment has also had the effect of destroying a number of false notions which have caused so many historians to stumble. As a result, certain portions of Mormon Church history may have to be rewritten.

Completing this work required years of painstaking scholarly

² David S. King graduated from the University of Utah in 1937, and received his law degree in 1942 from Georgetown University College of Law, returned to Utah in 1943, served for two years as legal counsel for the Utah State Tax Commission, and then established a private law practice in Salt Lake City. He served as a Democrat from Utah in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1959-62 and 1964-66; as U.S. Ambassador to the Malagasy Republic (Madagascar) and to Mauritius, 1967-69; and as an alternate executive director of the World Bank, 1979-81.

He served an LDS mission to Great Britain, 1937-39; was assistant general superintendent of the Mutual Improvement Association (MIA) 1949-58; bishop of the Kensington Ward of the Washington D.C. Stake, 1970-78; president of the Haiti Port-au-Prince Mission, 1986-89; president of the Washington D.C. Temple, 1990-93; patriarch of the Washington D.C. Stake, 1994 until the time of his death in 2009. He is the author of *Come to the House of the Lord* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon Publishers, 2000).

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research and impartial evaluation, motivated by Dr. Baker's conviction that the true story underlying the Prophet's assassination had not yet been told. His extraordinary effort entitles him to the respect of all historians for whom honesty and impartiality are the bedrock essentials of their craft.

The author's four major theses are as follows: first, the Prophet's foray into national politics was much more important in shaping the ensuing tragic events than has been heretofore understood; second, the destruction of the *Nauvoo Expositor* printing press was not the immediate cause of the assassination, nor did it constitute a violation of the principle of freedom of the press; third, the criminal charge of treason, as well as the other charges leveled against the Prophet based on the Expositor incident were frivolous, and served no other purpose than to afford a flimsy pretext of legitimacy to a diabolical assassination; and fourth, plans to assassinate the Prophet had been long in the making, and grew out of the deteriorating relationships between the Mormons and the anti-Mormons, as they were exacerbated by the Mormons' decision to play a role in national politics. The plot to kill, once made, was bound to eventually achieve its goal by whatever means would appear to be the most consonant with the conspirators' overall strategies.

The assassination of the Prophet was only one of the conspirators' primary objectives. Another one, and of equal importance was the destruction or expulsion, of the entire Mormon community and the confiscation of their property as one of the rightful spoils of war. Some of these acts of hostility were perpetrated simply by irrational zealots, but other participants consisted in the criminals who were to be found in every western frontier community. These ruffians saw the possibilities of reaping unearned economic benefits through the appropriation of Mormon property at the muzzle of a loaded musket. It was in Missouri, in particular, that the hostile mobs committed acts of incredible barbarism. For example, on several occasions after raiding a Mormon community, they confiscated the latter's property, committed acts of rape and terrorism, and even treated the Mormons like belligerents,

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worthy of extermination. The verdict of history, however, is that, notwithstanding the clumsy and largely ineffective way in which the Mormons and their adversaries attempted to settle their differences, the Mormons committed no acts sufficient to morally or legally justify the outrages committed against them. One of the most sensitive of all the unresolved issues resulting in the Prophet's ultimate assassination, however, was political in nature. This was particularly true in Illinois.

Here was what caused the difficulty. The presidential electoral college-system was such that in each state, if the members of the electoral college supporting a particular presidential candidate received the majority vote (or plurality if there were more than two candidates) from that state's general electorate, then those electors would cast their votes, *en bloc*, in the electoral college, (which is where the president was actually elected) for their candidate. The electors who lost out in the popular election, even though by just a tiny fraction of the total vote cast, would have no vote at all in the electoral college. This was known (and still is) as the "winners take all" system.

That meant that if, in the presidential election as it was conducted in the state of Illinois, the Prophet Joseph Smith instructed all the Mormons in Illinois to vote for the electors pledged to support the candidate of his choice, and if, because of that Mormon bloc vote, the electors of the Prophet's choice received the majority of the Illinois vote, and if, nationwide, the electoral vote of the various states were so evenly divided that the votes of the Illinois electors would tip the balance in favor of the candidate of the Prophet's preference, then that would mean, in effect, that the Prophet Joseph Smith would be instrumental in electing the president of the United States, and thus of directing the course of national policy. This was the result which the anti-Mormons absolutely refused to tolerate.

In those pre-Civil War days, with emotions and tensions presaging our nation's most devastating war, it is understandable that the national electorate took their politics very seriously, and that the venue of the hatred generated against the Prophet Joseph Smith was not limited to those states in which the Mormons had a significant presence.

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The fact that Joseph Smith himself was a candidate for the presidency did not change the above political calculus in any way, for it would always be possible for him, according to his enemies, to withdraw his candidacy at the last minute in return for some *quid pro quo*, plus a pledge of support for one or the other of the two national candidates. Whether the Prophet would, in fact, actually have made such a deal is beside the point. In politics it is the *perception*, rather than the *reality*, that determines the voters' political orientation.

The real story of the assassination of Joseph Smith and his brother has subsequently undergone a willful distortion by the Illinois anti-Mormon history-makers. Winners write their own history, and *that history is always self-serving*. The myth that the Anti-Mormons and Nauvoo apostates were motivated by their outrage at Joseph Smith's alleged assault on their right to exercise their freedom of press was one of those ludicrous self-serving myths that the victorious Illinois history-makers found to be a very convenient means of clothing themselves in the drapery of patriotic innocence.

Moreover, this exculpatory strategy of placing all the blame for his own death on the Prophet himself was also the most convenient cop-out for them to make, for it was predicated on facts lying out in the open, which did not have to be proven. Everyone knew that the Expositor's press had been destroyed on the order of the City Council, presided over by Joseph Smith. This explanation would provide an excuse for the assassination, for a casual connection between a destroyed press and the ensuing assassination was easy to make. Although this line of reasoning would carry absolutely no legal weight whatsoever, it would appeal to the prejudices of a hostile judge and jury. In fact this is exactly what happened. Criminal prosecutions were instituted, it is true, but the judge and jury were looking the other way, and all the defendants were exonerated. The governor, who had taken a personal interest in the matter, was violently opposed to the Mormons. It would have required a courageous torch-bearer, indeed, to buck the establishment. Any good-faith investigation would have needed more time, patience, and resources than anyone was then willing to devote.

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As indicated above, many have since undertaken to further explore the events surrounding the infamy that occurred on June 27th, 1844, but the task of going beyond conventional wisdom by digging beneath the surface was more daunting than anyone wished to undertake—that is, until Dr. Baker decided to take on the task which had been left undone for 165 years.

Dr. Baker resolved to take on the task of replacing myth with reality, and out of that resolution this book was born. The world owes him a debt of gratitude for writing the most thorough and authentic account of this, the most horrid episode in the history of the Mormon Church.

David S. King

Chapter 1

1838 to 1841

Missouri, 1838

The homestead laws said that a man could move onto unclaimed land and make improvements. Then when the land was surveyed the homesteader could purchase his farm for just a few dollars. In the homesteader left the land before the survey, then someone else could claim the improved land and purchase it for the same price. The Mormons were driven from their homes and farms after they had improved their farms but just before the survey.¹

When Boggs activated the militia, members of the mob became part of the militia, with many of anti-Mormon leaders as their officers. This was according to the first provision of the Missouri law “to regulate, govern, and discipline the militia” read: “All able-bodied free white male citizens, between the age of eighteen and forty five, resident in this state...are subject to military duty.”²

The governor’s order thus changed the legal status of the atrocities against the Mormons: for under the rules of *sovereign immunity* they became acts of war for which individual perpetrators could not be held legally responsible. As a result of Boggs’s order, no outrage that was committed against the Mormons was a crime. So it was under cover of military law that the mob-militia first sacked and burned the town of DeWitt, then

¹ Jeffrey N. Walker, “Mormon Land Rights in Caldwell and Daviess Counties and the Mormon Conflict of 1838,” *BYU Studies*, vol. 47, no. 1 (2008), 4-55.

² *Laws of the State of Missouri*, 1837, 74.

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moved upon other Mormon individuals and communities. The refugees tried to escape to Far West, the largest Mormon city in Missouri. It was soon swelled with a population of destitute, homeless people, who only a few days before had owned and worked prosperous farms and businesses.

On October 27, Governor Boggs delivered the final thrust to eliminate the Mormon population. His extermination order said that, “the Mormons must be treated as enemies and must be exterminated or driven from the state.”³

Four days later, on October 31, a band of approximately 240 mob-militiamen rode into the small community of Haun’s Mill and opened fire. The men and boys of the town barricaded themselves in the blacksmith’s shop, and the structure became their execution chamber. The intruders stuck the barrels of their guns through the cracks in the logs and repeatedly fired into the bodies of the defenseless men and boys. When the Haun’s Mill massacre was over, of the 40 men and boys inside the blacksmith’s shop, 30 were either dead or severely wounded.⁴ No legal action could ever be taken against the killers because they were acting in accordance with the governor’s order that gave the militia the option of driving the Mormons out of the state or exterminating them.

On the evening of that same day, also acting on Governor Boggs’s extermination order, a state militia force of about 2,000 armed men commanded by General Samuel D. Lucas surrounded the crowded city of Far West.

³ Joseph Smith, edited by B. H. Roberts, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1950), v. 3, 175. Hereafter: *History of the Church*.

⁴ The names of the victims are given in *History of the Church*, 3:326, n.5.

Chapter 1: 1838-1841

Those dark days were the culmination of events that had begun in 1831 when the Mormons first began to settle in Missouri. What had happened in the intervening years is very briefly this:

In the 1830's Missouri was on the outer edge of the American frontier. Throughout the nineteenth century, America's western migration served as a "safety valve" for the new nation and its evolving democracy. Men and women who lived in the East, and who felt uneasy with eastern culture, or hemmed in by prying neighbors, would move west where they could live by their own rules, and then, when too many neighbors began to settle around them there, they would sell their improved land for a good profit and again move further west. As Frederick Jackson Turner, the historian who first described this phenomenon, observed:

Whenever social conditions tended to crystallize in the East, whenever capital tended to press upon labor or political restraints to impede the freedom of the mass, there was this gate of escape to the free conditions of the frontier. These free lands promoted individualism, economic equality, freedom to rise....⁵

In the West, the settlers' optimism, and self-reliance fostered democracy in its most fundamental and rugged form.

The hub of western commerce in those years was the town of Independence, Jackson County, Missouri. The town was located on the western-most edge of the United States—on the Missouri river,

⁵ Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York, 1920), 259. See also, Ray Allen Billington, *The American Frontier* (Washington, D.C., 1965), 1-2; William Cronon, "Revisiting the Vanishing Frontier: The Legacy of Frederick Jackson Turner," *Western Historical Quarterly*, XVIII (April 1986), 1.

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west of its confluence with the Mississippi, and east of Indian Territory. Because of its location, it was the American end of the illicit trade route to Sante Fe (Sante Fe was then in Mexico and the trade, though practice openly, was a smuggling enterprise).

Independence was also the juncture between western fur trappers and the eastern businessmen who bought their furs and sold them liquor along with their next year's supplies. The town epitomized the "wild west" as a refuge—a hiding place and a sanctuary—for the lawless, the angry, the ambitious, the oppressed, and those who simply wanted to escape the crowded conditions of eastern cities. It was a violent place in violent times. The settlers came, usually as individuals, often as families, and, in rare instances, as organized communities. The Mormons came to Independence as a tightly knit, communal, religious group who tried to recreate their eastern society with its eastern ways in this coarse western culture. Their neighbors were suspicious of their religious purposes, resentful of their cooperative prosperity, and rancorous toward their northern ideas about politics and slavery.

For the Mormons, the story of their movement to Missouri began in June, 1831, about a year after The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized. Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet, urged some of his followers to move to Jackson County, Missouri. Among the first Mormons to arrive there was a group from Colesville, New York. They came as a community, worked together, and helped each other establish their farms and build their homes. Their little sub-culture was very unlike the rough-and-tumble individualism of the "old settlers"—a phrase that was used to denote those who were the first settlers in an area.

About a year after the Colesville Saints arrived in Jackson County, Joseph came from his home in Kirtland, Ohio, to Missouri to visit them. While there, he received a revelation designating that area as the place for the establishment of Zion. The Saints selected

a site about twelve miles southwest of Independence, laid out a town, dedicated a spot where they could build a temple, and began to purchase lands throughout Jackson County. They also purchased a press that they brought to Independence, and with it they published a monthly newspaper called *The Evening and Morning Star*.

By the spring of 1833, about twelve hundred Saints were living in Jackson County, and more were coming all the time. The Mormons remained a tight-knit community, keeping themselves aloof from the other settlers. Even though their numbers were few, they were having an impact on their neighbors, for in that sparsely populated area the Mormons were gaining a political and economic presence that the old settlers perceived to be a threat. The antagonism grew until, in that April, a mob gathered at Independence and adopted a plan to force the Saints from the county. The Mormons appealed to Governor Daniel Dunklin at Jefferson City, who promised to enforce the laws that protected them and their property, but the governor did nothing to keep his promise. In October, a mob attacked a Mormon community west of the Big Blue, burned ten houses, and beat several of the brethren who lived there.

The next month the Saints at Independence were attacked by a mob that destroyed many more private homes, and partly destroyed the Gilbert & Whitney's store. They broke into the printing office and commandeered the Mormon press. (The stolen press and other materials were taken to Clay County where they were used to establish a newspaper called the *Missouri Enquirer*). Colonel Thomas Pitcher, commander of the mob in Jackson County, demanded that the Saints in Independence surrender their arms to prove that they had no intention of using them against their neighbors. The Mormons reluctantly complied. Then, that night

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and the next day, the mob drove the Saints from their homes at bayonet point.

It was winter. The exiled Mormons fled across the Missouri River, cold, hungry and without provisions. In some places they were received hospitably, in others, only with more persecution.

Some of the Mormons in Jackson County still hoped for legal recourse, and wrote a petition to the President of the United States, asking for redress, but received no help. Then in the following April, 1834, mobs sacked and burned about one hundred and fifty more Mormon houses in other parts of Jackson County.

That spring, in Kirtland, Ohio, Joseph Smith organized a small troop called Zion's Camp to go to Missouri and help the beleaguered Saints there. The company eventually numbered 205 men and 25 baggage wagons. It was not until late June that Zion's Camp arrived in Missouri. Its members had been plagued with bad weather and cholera. They brought moral support to the embattled Saints, but did not attempt to use force to take back their stolen property. After doing what they could to help, Joseph Smith and his party returned to Ohio.

For the most part, the Missouri Saints had taken refuge in Clay County, where they remained until June, 1836. Then, at a large meeting held at Liberty, the old citizens passed resolutions to expel them again. This time the Saints understood their danger, and were eager to leave before violence erupted. Once again they abandoned their homes and improved farmland and moved to another hoped-for haven. The place where they agreed to settle was near Shoal Creek, in an almost uninhabited part of Ray County. The following December, the Missouri state government organized that territory as Caldwell County. It was far from any old settlers, and the state government guaranteed the Mormons that they could settle there in peace and safety.

The Mormon gathering to "Zion" had been temporarily

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suspended in 1833 by their forced exodus from Jackson County, but after Caldwell County was created for them, a steady stream of Mormons began to flow into the area. At Shoal Creek they built the town of Far West, and through their cooperative efforts, began to prosper again. In 1837, they again broke ground for the foundation of a new temple.

Joseph Smith also traveled to Missouri that fall to help organize affairs there, but when he returned to Kirtland, he found that during his absence a number of prominent Church leaders had united against him. Consequently, he, his family, and many close friends and their families, left Kirtland in January, 1839, and traveled back to Far West where they made their new homes.

By this time a pattern was easily discernable. The Mormons were allowed to come and improve the unsettled land. Then they were driven out with no compensation for their homes and farms. After they were gone, their property was sold by the state to the members of the mob for unpaid taxes. And the Mormons were permitted to settle in another place, where the pattern would be repeated again.

In August, 1838, when the Saints at Gallatin, Daviess County, wanted to vote, the Missourians tried to stop them, and a skirmish ensued. That signaled the beginning of more violence and soon there were mobbings in Caldwell, Daviess, and Carroll Counties. Governor Boggs ordered out a part of the state militia to quell the civil disturbances, which, in practical terms, was taken to be legal license to drive out the Mormons.

In October, an overwhelming mob attacked the Mormon community of DeWitt in Carroll County. After several day's bombardment, the mob succeeded in driving the Saints from their homes. The exiles from DeWitt fled to Far West for safety. By the end of October, Saints from other small settlements were also leaving their property behind and fleeing into Far West. The mobs

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followed and the residents of the city prepared for attack. The state authorities called the Mormons' attempts to defend themselves "treason," and on Saturday, October 27, 1838, Governor Boggs issued the extermination order that authorized the militia to kill the Mormons who refused to leave the state.

Three days later, a "moblitia"⁶ attacked the little settlement of Saints at Haun's Mill in Caldwell County, where the men who had taken refuge in the blacksmith's shop were slaughtered. That same day a mob-militia, about two thousand strong, arrived near Far West. The Saints spent that night fortifying their city and preparing for tomorrow's desperate battle.

The battle, however, did not come. Rather, the next day Colonel George M. Hinkle, the highest ranking Mormon militia officer, left Far West to talk with General Lucas who commanded the opposing state militia. When he returned, he reported that he had arranged for a meeting with the Missouri general to negotiate terms so the Mormons could leave their city without further bloodshed. The general wished to talk to Joseph Smith and four other leaders of the Church.

Hyrum Smith, Joseph's brother, relates what happened next :

The next day after the arrival of the army, towards evening, Col. Hinkle came up from the camp, requesting to see my brother Joseph, Parley P. Pratt, Sidney Rigdon, Lyman Wight, and George W. Robinson, stating that the officers of the army wanted a mutual consultation with those men, also stating that Generals Doniphan, Lucas, Wilson and Graham, (however, General Graham is an honorable exception: he did all he could to preserve the lives of the people, contrary to the order of the Governor,) he (Hinkle) assured them that these generals had

⁶ "Moblitia" was a word the Mormons coined to denote the a mob that had been activated into a state militia.

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pledged their sacred honor, that they should not be abused or insulted; but should be guarded back in safety in the morning, or so soon as the consultation was over. My brother Joseph replied, that he did not know what good he could do in any consultation, as he was only a private individual: however, he said that he was always willing to do all the good he could, and would obey every law of the land, and then leave the event with God. They immediately started with Col. Hinkle to go down into the camp. As they were going down, about half way to the camp, they met General Lucas with a phalanx of men, with a wing to the right and to the left, and a four-pounder in the center. They supposed he was coming with his strong force to guard them into the camp in safety; but, to their surprise, when they came up to General Lucas, he ordered his men to surround them, and Hinkle stepped up to the general and said, "These are the prisoners I agreed to deliver up." General Lucas drew his sword, and said, "Gentlemen, you are my prisoners."⁷

That night, as Joseph and his friends lay chained on the cold ground, without shelter from the pelting rain, their guards taunted: "Show us a miracle." "Come, there is one of your brethren here in camp whom we took prisoner yesterday in his own house, and knocked his brains out with his own rifle, which we found hanging over his fireplace; he lays speechless and dying; speak the word and heal him, and then we will all believe."⁸

Inside a nearby tent, General Lucas and his officers held a secret "court martial" in which they gave their civilian prisoners an illegal military trial, and sentenced them to be shot in the presence of their families and friends, in the public square at Far West, at 8 o'clock the next morning. One brave man, Brigadier-General

⁷ Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, 272-73. The sworn statement of Hyrum Smith comprises all of chapter 48.

⁸ Pratt, *Autobiography*, 204.

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Alexander Doniphan, stayed their execution by challenging his superior officer: “It is cold blooded murder,” he protested, and then threatened to try the perpetrators for those murders in civilian criminal court if they carried out the executions.

What happened the next day made an indelible impression on the minds and in the emotions of the Mormons in Far West, so that, in June 1844, less than six years later, when the members of Nauvoo City Council met to consider the fate of the anti-Mormon newspaper, the *Nauvoo Expositor*, their memories of their betrayal at Far West became the heart and soul of their deliberations. One cannot understand the events in Nauvoo in 1844 unless one also understands the impact of what happened to them in Far West in October, 1838.

General Lucas demanded that the Mormons surrender their weapons. So, in accordance with Hinkle’s agreement, the Mormon militia in Far West was marched out of the city, grounded their arms, then returned to their homes. The rifles did not belong to the state, but were the private property of the men who had carried them. When Lucas took possession of them, he distributed them among his own men and prepared to attack the city.

The mob was then let loose upon the unarmed citizens of Far West, and under the pretext of searching for more weapons they ransacked every house, tore up the floors, upset haystacks, wantonly destroyed much property, and shot down a number of cattle just for the sport of it. Eyewitnesses reported that the people were robbed of their most valuable property, insulted and whipped; but more to the horror of the Saints a number of women were strapped to benches and repeatedly ravished by “brutes in human form” until they died.⁹

⁹ *Contributor*, v. 7, 1886, 406.

Liberty Jail

The next day, Friday, November 2, 1838, Joseph Smith, his brother Hyrum (who had also been captured and was very ill), and the other prisoners, were taken to Far West under strong guard. They were displayed before their families and friends but not permitted to talk with them. The people of Far West were told that the prisoners were going to be tried, found guilty, and executed. Guards from the mob-militia then started the prisoners on the 60-mile trip to Independence, where they were to be sentenced. The next morning, according to Apostle Parley P. Pratt,

As we arose and commenced our march on the morning of the 3d of November, Joseph Smith spoke to me and the other prisoners, in a low, but cheerful and confidential tone; said he: *“Be of good cheer, brethren; the word of the Lord came to me last night that our lives should be given us, and that whatever we may suffer during this captivity, not one of our lives should be taken.”*¹⁰

On the same day that the prisoners arrived in Independence, an army of about two thousand Missouri militiamen, under the command of General John B. Clark, marched into Far West. Clark immediately took most of the Mormon men prisoners: they had previously surrendered their weapons so they could not resist.

¹⁰ Pratt, *Autobiography*, 210. Italics in original. That prediction proved true, even though some of the men suffered terribly. The last of the imprisoned Mormons left Missouri in mid-October, 1839. (*History of the Church*, 4:17). His name was King Follett. In 1844, when Follett was accidentally killed in a well, the Prophet preached his funeral sermon to an audience which may have included as many as 20,000 people.

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Then he made a speech advising the Mormons to scatter and never gather again. He said the fate of the Church leaders in Independence was fixed, and these Mormons would never see them alive again. Clark compelled those who had been taken prisoner to sign deeds of trust, surrendering their property to pay the expenses of the mob-militia that had attacked and robbed them. After the signatures were taken, the general retained sixty men as hostages and ordered the rest of the Saints to leave the state or face extermination.

It was winter and very cold. The Mormons' horses and cattle had been stolen. They had no means of transportation, no food or supplies, and nowhere to go.

Joseph and those who were arrested with him, along with a number of other Mormon men were transported from Independence to Richmond, where they were imprisoned, bound in chains, and severely abused by their guards. There they were charged with treason, murder, burglary, arson, robbery, and larceny, but without evidence all were released, or released on bail—all except Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Lyman Wight, Caleb Baldwin, and Alex McRae. These six were sent to Liberty, Missouri, to await trial for treason and murder. They were not tried, but were kept through the bitter winter of 1838-39 in desperate conditions within the cold, damp, almost lightless, stone walls of Liberty jail.

During that same winter, many of the Saints who had been robbed and forced from their homes at gunpoint in Missouri made their way to Quincy, Illinois, where the members of that community welcomed them and treated them with kindness. The people of Quincy organized committees to provide the Mormons sustenance, food, and shelter, and in every way, tried to alleviate the suffering of the Saints. So many refugees had come to Quincy

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by March that the Church's headquarters were temporarily established there and the Saints held a conference in that city.

About the same time as the conference, Joseph, who was still imprisoned in Liberty jail, wrote an epistle to the Saints who were at Quincy and scattered elsewhere, in which he poured out his soul to God in behalf of his people. Parts of that epistle are published as sections 121, 122, and 123 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Joseph asked,

1 O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?

2 How long shall thy hand be stayed, and thine eye, yea thy pure eye, behold from the eternal heavens the wrongs of thy people and of thy servants, and thine ear be penetrated with their cries?

3 Yea, O Lord, how long shall they suffer these wrongs and unlawful oppressions, before thine heart shall be softened toward them, and thy bowels be moved with compassion toward them?

And the Lord responded:

7 My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

8 And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes.

9 Thy friends do stand by thee, and they shall hail thee again with warm hearts and friendly hands.

10 Thou art not yet as Job; thy friends do not contend against thee, neither charge thee with transgression, as they did Job.¹¹

¹¹ Doctrine and Covenants 121:1-3, 7-11. Joseph's contemplation of writing this letter is the event depicted by Larry Prestwich's painting that

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As spring approached, Joseph's captors decided to move him and his companions to Gallatin, where about fifty men had sworn they would never eat or drink until they had murdered the Mormon Prophet.¹² On April 6, 1839, Joseph and the other prisoners were removed from Liberty jail and taken to Gallatin. They arrived on the 8th and were subjected to a mock trial before a drunken court and jury. The prisoners' lawyers secured a change of venue, and the next day they started on their way to Boone County. They camped that night, and while the judge and some of the guards slept, the sheriff told the prisoners he would turn his back if they tried to escape. To facilitate their escape, two of the guards sold them horses, which they paid for with their clothing and a note. (Their guards actually accepted an IOU on good faith!) Then the prisoners slipped away into the darkness. After a fearful journey, during which they hid by day, traveled by night, and suffered much fatigue and hunger, they arrived in Quincy, on April 22, 1839.¹³

Very soon after Joseph's arrival in Illinois, he and his associates selected the next gathering place for the Saints. The site was a swampy little community called Commerce, on the banks of

is the frontispiece of this book.

¹² Having examined more than 250 newspapers—full runs in many cases—from November 1843 to November 1844 that were published throughout the United States, its territories, and Texas, I have noted that the title “the Prophet” or “the Mormon Prophet” was used to denote Joseph Smith not only locally among Mormons, but also among non-Mormons all over the United States. It is not rare to find a newspaper article that talks about him as simply “the Prophet,” without otherwise mentioning Joseph Smith's name. Governor Ford does that so frequently in his *History* that it was apparently commonplace to him and to the audience to whom he was writing. See, for example, Ford, *History*, 257.

¹³ *History of the Church*, 3:320-21 and fn. 4.

the Mississippi River in Hancock County, Illinois. There they purchased a large farm from Hugh White and another from Isaac Galland. On May 9, 1839, Joseph and his family left Quincy and moved into a little farm house near the banks of the river. Soon they changed the name of the community to Nauvoo (a Hebrew word meaning “the beautiful”), and the Saints began to gather there.

The Beginnings of Nauvoo

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had been organized only nine years when the Prophet Joseph Smith first came to Nauvoo. During those nine years the Mormons had attempted twice to establish communities where their people could gather—first in Ohio, then in Missouri. Both times they had been successful—much too successful for their neighbors liking. Both times they had been forcibly driven from their homes and farms. Now they had purchased a large tract of swamp land in Illinois, on the “big bend” of the Mississippi River, where they would try again. Their past experiences, though brutal and seemingly devastating, had taught them a great deal about how to create a community in a wilderness and what they must do to protect it.

Nauvoo’s location made it a natural place for a commercial center despite its swampy beginnings. Traffic on the river had increased dramatically during the previous few years, and the little frontier town soon grew from a few poor farms to one of the largest cities in the state. Most of the growth was due to the influx of Mormon converts from other parts of the United States and

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from Europe, but some was due to the economic attractiveness of the city and its location.

The first year in Nauvoo was the most difficult for the new settlers. The Mormons spent the summer and fall of 1839 rebuilding their lives and preparing themselves and their city for winter. Then, on October 29, Joseph, Sidney Rigdon, Elias Higbee, and Porter Rockwell left Nauvoo to go to Washington, D. C., in what proved to be a fruitless attempt to obtain redress for the wrongs suffered by the Saints in Missouri. As Joseph understood the United States Constitution, the states had the primary responsibility of guaranteeing the individual rights of their citizens. He believed the Missouri government should have defended the Saints against the mobs, rather than turning the mob into an official militia and then giving it license to plunder and exterminate. He also believed that because the state had failed to defend the rights of its Mormon citizens, the federal government had the obligation to intervene. Joseph Smith based his argument on the constitutional provision that, “the citizens of each State shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several states,”¹⁴ However; the Constitution does not suggest how that provision is to be interpreted or enforced. At the time Joseph made his appeal to Washington for help against Missouri, one of the most hotly debated political issues in the nation was states’ rights versus federal power. In taking his case against Missouri to the federal government, Joseph placed himself squarely in opposition to the supporters of the states’ rights doctrine that would ultimately trigger the American Civil War.

Joseph carried a petition from the Saints addressed to Congress, asking help for 491 individuals to obtain payment for

¹⁴ Article 6, Section 2. Joseph’s ideas were rather advanced for his time. After the Civil War, with the adoption of the 13th and 14th amendments, these ideas became a part of the federal Constitution.

more than a million dollars worth of property that had been stolen from them in Missouri. He received a cold reception from most congressmen; however, Richard M. Young, senator from Illinois, was polite and agreed to present the petition to Congress. Joseph also spoke with President Martin Van Buren, but with very unsatisfactory results.¹⁵ Joseph wrote:

During my stay I had an interview with Martin Van Buren, the President, who treated me very insolently, and it was with great reluctance he listened to our message, which, when he had heard, he said: "If I take up for you I shall lose the vote of Missouri." His whole course went to show that he was an office-seeker, that self-aggrandizement was his ruling passion, and that justice and righteousness were no part of his composition.¹⁶

Joseph reported that the president also said, "Gentlemen, your cause is just, but I can do nothing for you."¹⁷ (As it turned out, the Missouri vote would not matter that much to Van Buren. In the 1840 presidential election, the Whig candidate, William Henry Harrison, received 234 Electoral College votes to Van Buren's mere 60, so Van Buren only served one term as president.)¹⁸

After the interview with Van Buren, the Prophet called on leading members of Congress, most of whom treated him in a "cold, unfeeling manner." Among these were Henry Clay, who told him, "You had better go to Oregon," and John C. Calhoun who said, "It's a nice question—a critical question, but it will not do to agitate it."¹⁹

¹⁵ *History of the Church*, 4:39-42, 91- 92.

¹⁶ *History of the Church*, 4:40, 90-92.

¹⁷ *History of the Church*, 4:80; 5:393.

¹⁸ Hofstadter, *American Republic to 1865*, 695.

¹⁹ *History of the Church*, 4:80; 5:393.

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Calhoun had been vice president of the United States under both John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson, but resigned from the Jackson administration over the issue of states' rights. When he returned to Washington, D.C., again, it was as a senator from South Carolina, and in the Senate he became the champion of the states' rights doctrine. To Calhoun, Joseph Smith's belief that the federal government had the right to force Missouri to pay its debts was the antithesis of sound constitutional thinking. His attitude was reciprocated. Calhoun's antebellum states' rights doctrine that would deny justice to the Mormon people was equally repugnant to Joseph Smith, who would later observe, "The State rights doctrines are what feed mobs. They [the doctrines Calhoun was espousing] are a dead carcass—a stink and they shall ascend up as a stink offering in the nose of the Almighty."²⁰

Both men developed an instant and long-lasting contempt for the other. Joseph reported that Calhoun's "conduct towards me very ill became his station" and later added: "I became satisfied there was little use for me to tarry, to press the just claims of the Saints on the consideration of the President or Congress."²¹

The dislike on both sides, generated by that conversation, did not subside until Joseph was dead. In the spring of 1844, both Joseph and Calhoun declared themselves to be candidates for the office of President of the United States and waged a vigorous open-letter newspaper campaign against each other until Calhoun withdrew his name from consideration. How much negative influence his widely reprinted newspaper debate with Joseph Smith had on that decision is a matter of conjecture, but there can be no question about the antagonism.

After several weeks of delay, Congress decided in relation to the Latter-day Saints "that the case presented for their

²⁰ *History of the Church*, 6:95.

²¹ *History of the Church*, 4:80; 5:393

investigation is not such a one as will justify or authorize any interposition by this government.” Congress was not going to do anything to help the Mormons recover their losses from Missouri. But the Mormons were not going to stop trying.

Perhaps the most important thing Joseph learned on his trip to Washington was that the people in the federal government would not support the Saints until the politicians decided it was in their best interest to do so. Joseph had to find a way to convince them that defending the Mormons was in their best interest.

Joseph Returns to Nauvoo

Joseph arrived home in March of 1840, and immediately began working on both the physical and the legal structure of the city. In order to make Nauvoo a legal entity Joseph Smith, John C. Bennett, and Robert B. Thompson, wrote a draft of the city charter, and Bennett took it to Springfield, Illinois, where he guided it through the state legislature in just 21 days. The charter was then signed by Governor Carlin, to take effect on February 1, 1841.²²

Like other Illinois city charters, the one for Nauvoo included provisions for a regular city government, with a mayor and city council, a court system, and all other powers and offices necessary for an efficient city government.²³ It also provided for a city university, which ultimately became the first co-ed university in the United States.²⁴ The charter also provided for the organization

²² *History of the Church*, 4:239-48 quotes Nauvoo charter.

²³ The complete charter appears in *History of the Church*, 4:239-48.

²⁴ For a discussion of the University of Nauvoo, see Derek Jensen, “The University of Nauvoo: Truth Circumscribed into One Great Whole,”

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of the Nauvoo branch of the state militia—to be called the Nauvoo Legion.²⁵ The city of Nauvoo is sometimes said to have had the largest private army in the nation. This claim is not accurate because the Nauvoo Legion was not a private army. The correct way to describe it would be to say the state militia company in Nauvoo was one of the largest militia companies in Illinois. By law, membership in the Legion included almost every adult male in the city. The Mormons did not organize the Nauvoo Legion because they were paranoid, as some have suggested, and it was not because of some special favor granted to the city by the governor or the state legislature. It was because (as in Missouri) the Illinois state constitution required that

the militia of the State of Illinois shall consist of all free male able-bodied persons, Negroes, mulattoes and Indians excepted, resident of the State, between the ages of eighteen and forty-five years...and shall be armed, equipped, and trained as the General Assembly may provide by law.²⁶

Thus, virtually every man in the city was required by the state constitution to be a member of the Legion. A later state ordinance also permitted men living in the county outside the Nauvoo city limits to voluntarily become members of the Nauvoo Legion. The Legion existed because the city existed; if the Nauvoo city charter were repealed, the Legion would cease to exist as a legal branch of the state militia. (That was one of the major reasons the Anti-Mormons later insisted the Nauvoo city charter be repealed.) The Illinois state constitution also provided that the members of each

presented it at the Mormon History Association Conference in Cedar City, Utah, May 18, 2001. Manuscript in Author's possession.

²⁵ *History of the Church*, 4:244.

²⁶ 1818 Illinois Constitution, Article V, sec. 1.

local militia could elect their own officers. The Nauvoo Legion elected Joseph Smith to be Lieutenant General.

The Nauvoo city charter went into effect on February 1, 1841. In the first city election, John C. Bennett was elected mayor, with Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and several other leading Church officials as members of the city council.

Carthage and Warsaw, Illinois— Nauvoo's Neighbors and Competitors

Land was the greatest natural resource and source of individual wealth on the American frontier. The government sold it cheap in huge sections. Those who purchased it often then turned around and sold it for a profit in smaller sections to others, who in turn would divide it into farm-size segments and sell it again. Some land speculators would designate an area as a “city” and then try to get people to come and settle there. Such “cities” were usually pipe dreams that failed to materialize. More often, amid all the farms, small communities would develop around a saw mill, grist mill, and general store; next would come a saloon or two, a church, and a school. When a community grew large enough it would be recognized by the state government and given a city charter; and then by the federal government and given a post office. After several such communities had developed in the same general area there would usually be a vigorous political fight among them, and one would succeed in being designated as the county seat. Then property values in that town would go up and prosperity would set in. Taxes would be used to build a court-

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house, then would come a needed hotel, larger blacksmith and harness shops, and more saloons.

That was the history of Carthage, Illinois, just as it was the history of hundreds of other communities all over the American west. In Carthage, a harness maker and farmer named Robert F. Smith (no relation to Joseph Smith) became the most influential man in town. He obtained the political appointment of Justice of the Peace, and was elected captain of the town's militia, known as the Carthage Greys.

Apart from land, commerce was the greatest single source of wealth in the young nation, so the second most important resource on the American frontier was a navigable river. There were few roads, and fewer good ones. Transportation by boat was not only the cheapest and most efficient method of moving goods and people, but usually also the fastest. The most important cities in the American West were St. Louis and New Orleans—both on the Mississippi. Any land speculator who owned a prime town site on a river would expect to get rich, but that would only happen if he could induce others to settle there and turn his dream of wealth into a successful city. Warsaw was on such a site. The Mississippi was easily navigable from New Orleans to as far north as its first rapids. Warsaw sat at the foot of those rapids.

Consequently, Warsaw was not quite typical of most frontier communities. With a population of about 500,²⁷ its economy was not solely dependent on the farms that surrounded it. Its location held the promise that Warsaw might become an important river port, and its citizens had dreams of their city becoming a major link between the river's commercial transportation system and the farmland of the Illinois interior.

²⁷ Oaks and Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy*, 11.

In order to get around the rapids, some steamboat captains offloaded their cargo at Warsaw, arranged for the cargo to be carried by land to the top of the rapids, then brought their empty boats over the rapids, to be reloaded again. This traffic caused Warsaw to be a likely place for a major commercial center. All it needed was an infusion of people and money. Land speculators always needed people and money. Then the Mormons began to settle Nauvoo, about twelve miles up the river from Warsaw. Obviously the area would support only one major commercial center, and if the Mormon settlement grew as fast as Mormon settlements had grown in Missouri, Warsaw would soon be dwarfed by its new rival.

It took only a very short time for the people of Warsaw to realize that if something drastic did not alter the situation, Warsaw would become only an appendage to Nauvoo's prosperity.

Almost overnight the Mormons became a major economic and political competition to everyone else along that part of the river. At first the Church leaders designated several gathering places on both sides of the Mississippi, then they asked the Saints to concentrate on building up Nauvoo. In the five years between 1839 and 1844, Warsaw citizens would watch Nauvoo grow from almost nothing to a city with a population more than twenty times the size of Warsaw. And it seemed to have no end, for Nauvoo increased in population and importance with every river boat that brought more Mormons to settle there. The *American Almanac* for 1842 showed the Mormon Church membership to be only 12,000.²⁸ But by the end of 1843, there were probably more Mormons than that in Nauvoo alone. No American census was taken while the Mormons were at Nauvoo, but by 1844

²⁸ Reported in *Warsaw Signal*, January 12, 1842.

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contemporaries estimated the population to be between 10,000 and 20,000.²⁹

Nauvoo quickly became a remarkably beautiful city for its place and time. While many of its neighboring communities were built mostly of log cabins (Abraham Lincoln's New Salem is a contemporary example), Nauvoo boasted many large brick homes and public buildings—some with Greek facades. The city fathers had begun a public school system and founded the university,³⁰ established a public library, and were trying to find means for funding another. Docks on the river were to be expanded, and there was a plan to dam the river between the city and a nearby island in order to harness water power for mills and machinery. The dam would also provide additional space for landings for steamboats and other river craft.³¹

²⁹ Contemporary estimates of Nauvoo's population varied a great deal. For example, "An intelligent correspondent of the *New York Journal of Commerce*" reported that Nauvoo "is said to contain about 20,000 inhabitants; which, from appearances, I should be led to doubt." His account was reprinted in *Rochester Daily Democrat*, Rochester, New York, August 5, 1844; *Hartford Times*, Hartford, Connecticut, August 10, 1844; *New Hampshire Sentinel*, Keene, New Hampshire, August 21, 1844; *Alexandria Gazette*, Alexandria, Virginia, August 7, 1844. See *History of the Church*, 6:485.

³⁰ A newspaper article about the growth of Nauvoo, which mentions its university, appeared in the *Daily Herald*, Newburyport, Massachusetts, July 2, 1844. Reprinted in *Springfield Republican*, Springfield, Massachusetts, July 20, 1844; *Miner's Journal*, Postsville, Pennsylvania, August 7, 1844; *Florida Herald*, St. Augustine, Florida, September 3, 1844. Phineas Richards says he was one of the regents of the university. Autobiography, Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, Ms d 2050 bx 14, 4, #5 1028.

³¹ January 19, 1844, *History of the Church*, 6:334-40.

Success is not always popular. If the Mormons were to achieve their ambitious goals, one consequence would be to further dwarf the commercial importance of other towns—not just those along that part of the Mississippi River, but also inland towns like Carthage as well. Some folks in those towns were angry about that. Warsaw and the river towns were not the only ones who felt they were about to be overwhelmed by the Mormon population.

The phenomenal growth of the Mormon Church and consequently of Nauvoo and its environs, became a source of wonder to many people. Newspapers in the east, as well as in the west, began to report the amazing growth of the Mormon population along the Mississippi. For example, near the end of this growth period, in 1844, the *St. Louis Republican* reported,

One hundred and fifty Mormons, from England, arrived here yesterday on the steamer Congress. This makes about three hundred that have passed here within the last ten days, on their way to Nauvoo, the Mormon paradise.³²

The *St. Louis Gazette* similarly reported, “The immigration this spring has been so large and unexpected, comprising about a thousand souls, that food and lodging for all have been quite out of the question.”³³ Other newspapers, as far away as Kentucky and Maine, reported: “100 Mormons;” “208 Mormons on the way to Nauvoo;” “two hundred passengers on their way to Nauvoo;” and

³² *St. Louis Republican*, St. Louis, Missouri, April 24, 1844. Similar stories are found in: *Stamford Advocate*, Stamford, Connecticut, May 14, 1844; *Niagara Courier*, Lockport, New York, May 15, 1844; *Daily Picayune*, New Orleans, Louisiana, May 22, 1844; *Louisville Daily Journal*, Louisville, Kentucky, 29, April 30, 1844.

³³ Reprinted in the *Florida Herald*, St. Augustine, Florida, July 2, 1844.

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“there are said to be 1,000 more coming.”³⁴

By 1844, Nauvoo simply did not have the economic base to sustain its own growth.³⁵ The city was severely overcrowded and unable to find a place for many of the immigrants arriving almost weekly. Consequently, new converts to the Mormon Church spilled over the city’s borders and settled all along the river. Even if one knew the actual population of Nauvoo, that would not describe the impact Mormons were having on the state of Illinois as a whole. By 1844, many Illinois communities had at least a few Mormons—their economic and political influence was being felt all over the state.

Americans generally did not know what to think of the Mormons, their prophet, or their community, as the editor of the *New York Herald* wrote,

The rise, progress and present condition of the Mormons make up an enigma in society on this continent. From an obscure position in the western part of New York, from which they were hunted from place to place, they have grown into a community of some fifteen thousand persons, in the city of Nauvoo, one of the most beautiful residences in the northwest, and presenting points of interest that must attract the notice of every philosopher.³⁶

³⁴ *Western Citizen*, Paris, Kentucky, April 5, 1844; *Daily Argus*, Portland, Maine, April 1, 1844.

³⁵ *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, Baltimore, Maryland, June 26, 1844 reported, “The Mormons at Nauvoo are receiving large accessions to their number. It is stated that the immigration to that city, this last spring, has amounted to one thousand. The new comers are so numerous that food, lodging and employment for them all cannot be obtained; in consequence there has been much suffering.”

³⁶ *New York Herald*, New York, New York, June 27, 1844.

Thomas Sharp

(Thomas Sharp was a prime mover in the Hancock County political organization that called itself the Anti-Mormons. In this book I draw a very careful distinction between anti-Mormon and Anti-Mormon: “anti-Mormon” is an attitudinal characteristic. It may be an adjective, that is, one might say such a person had an anti-Mormon attitude, or it may be a noun, that is, one might refer to a person who had that attitude as an anti-Mormon. On the other hand “Anti-Mormon” was the proper name of a political party. Like other political parties, it held conventions and nominated candidates. In this book, the name of the political party is always capitalized, the attitude is not. An example of a sentence that makes that distinction might read: “The Anti-Mormons in Hancock County coordinated their plans with the anti-Mormons in Missouri.”)

From 1840 through 1846, when the Mormons were driven from Illinois, the loudest voice of a nationwide anti-Mormon propaganda campaign was that of Thomas C. Sharp, owner and editor of the *Warsaw Signal*. Even though Sharp was only briefly the leader of the Anti-Mormon political party, because of his newspaper he was, and still is, recognized as one of Joseph Smith’s most fervent, outspoken, and effective enemies. In 1844 he was one of the few people who was actually tried for Joseph’s murder.

Thomas Sharp was born in New Jersey, the son of a noted Methodist preacher.³⁷ He studied law in Pennsylvania and moved to Warsaw in 1840 when he was 22 years old. By that time the

³⁷ For a brief biographical sketch of Sharp, see Oaks and Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy*, 56-57 or Crowley, *Bibliography*, 1:408-09, n. 148.

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Mormons were already well established in Nauvoo.

In November, 1840, almost immediately after he arrived in Warsaw, Sharp and a partner bought a small newspaper and the next spring changed its name to the *Warsaw Signal*. Sharp was young, ambitious, and was trying to carve out a place for himself in this little community at the edge of American civilization, but he did not own land. Land was the key to social and political advancement, but the land had all been taken up by the first settlers.³⁸ He tried to practice law, but could not do well in the courtroom because he was hard of hearing. After about a year he closed his practice and purchased his partner's interests in the *Signal*. His ambitions lay in politics, the newspaper offered him a way to make money, his Anti-Mormon activities offered him a way to increase the paper's circulation, and he could use both to support his political intent.

**Public Relations War Between Sharp's *Warsaw Signal*
and John Taylor's Nauvoo Newspapers**

During the Nauvoo years, the war between the Mormons and Anti-Mormons in Illinois was fought on two separate and dissimilar fronts. The second phase, the violence of the Illinois mob-militia that lasted almost two years after Joseph and Hyrum Smith were murdered, ended when the Mormons crossed the Mississippi and headed west. However, the first phase of the war—the public relations war—began even before the Mormons came to Illinois, reached an emotional crescendo with the well-

³⁸ By the spring of 1844, one of those landowners died. Sharp married the widow and became one of the local gentry.

orchestrated murders in Carthage jail, gathered more strength during the military activities that followed, and then it continued on both sides for many generations after the blood and thunder of the military battles concluded. In the military war, the prize was land and political power. But the propaganda war was waged to secure personal and public opinion, and the weapons were words: word-of-mouth was the small arms of the battle, and the newspapers were the artillery.

The murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith were not the result of this propaganda battle; rather, they were the first-blood of the well-publicized purposes of the Anti-Mormon organization.

The militant epicenter of their campaign was at Warsaw in the person of Thomas C. Sharp, owner and editor of the *Warsaw Signal*.

Sharp's *Signal* was the most prolific Anti-Mormon newspaper. Sharp was playing to win—to drive the Mormons from Illinois. The Mormons were not trying to drive out the Anti-Mormons. So the Mormons were at a distinct disadvantage. They tried to devise a system of defense by which they could secure their position without being forced to go into offensive play. Their strategy centered on the two Nauvoo newspapers, the *Times and Seasons* and the *Nauvoo Neighbor*.³⁹ Both were printed in the same shop, and by 1844 both were edited by Apostle John Taylor. During these years, one of the greatest personal and political assets to Joseph Smith was his friend, Apostle John Taylor. He had been born in England in 1808; he was three years younger than Joseph Smith and seven years younger than Brigham Young. He received a good education in England before moving to Canada where he met Mormon missionaries, read the Book of Mormon, and, in 1836, joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Two

³⁹ The *Wasp* had been the name of the second Nauvoo newspaper until April of 1842 when its name was changed to the *Nauvoo Neighbor*.

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years later he was ordained an apostle and returned to England as a Mormon missionary. He remained there until 1841. By that time the Mormons had begun to settle in Nauvoo, and when Elder Taylor joined them there, he resumed his role as one of the Church and community leaders. He was elected to the city council, and purchased and edited the two Mormon newspapers. Those newspapers became the voice of the Church and Nauvoo, and remained so until the Mormons were expelled from Illinois.⁴⁰ The *Times and Seasons* was in a book-size, magazine format. It carried almost no advertising and was designed largely for circulation by mail outside the immediate environs of Nauvoo. It was the official voice of the Church to its members in the eastern United States and Europe, and to non-Mormons all over the nation.

Unlike the *Times and Seasons*, the *Nauvoo Neighbor* had the format of a typical local newspaper. It contained a good deal of advertising, and its stories were mostly of local interest. Its advertisers included several St. Louis merchants, indicating either that the *Neighbor* was widely circulated in the towns along the Mississippi River, or that the St. Louis merchants enjoyed a good deal of patronage from Nauvoo customers—or both.

The town of Warsaw was only about twelve miles down river from Nauvoo, so the citizens of each town had easy access to the newspapers of the other. Sharp frequently responded in his *Signal* to articles in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*. Sometimes he would reprint the *Neighbor's* article just to make sure his own readers knew what he was upset about. Sometimes the *Nauvoo Neighbor* did the same.

In the mid 1800's there were no great newspaper chains with centralized editorial policies, and no news agencies like Associated Press to provide articles to be republished all over the country. However, ever since the time of Benjamin Franklin, newspaper

⁴⁰ Jensen, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:14-19.

editors had been sending copies of their papers to other editors. American editors who exchanged their papers felt free to copy from one another, either with or without acknowledging where the material was copied from, and readers often could not tell whether editorial remarks were their editor's or someone else's. Sometimes an editor would reduce a larger story to a few sentences, or sometimes he would add his own comments, and then his paper would be passed on to other editors who would do the same. So a kind of network was established by which one story, with its second-hand editorial comments, might be repeated by newspapers from Maine to Florida and from Texas to Wisconsin.⁴¹

Both John Taylor and Thomas Sharp sent out their newspapers to editors at least as far away as New York and Washington, D.C., with full anticipation that the messages they contained would be copied into other newspapers and passed on to ever more readers. There was nothing new, unusual, or innovative about their trying to affect public opinion in this way. Both were acutely aware of the powers of public opinion, and their attempts to sway it were a central part of the first volleys of the Mormon war in Illinois.

As the spokesman for the Mormon Church and the city of Nauvoo, John Taylor knew how to get his message heard, as is evidenced by a statement published on January 27, 1844, in the *Public Ledger* in Philadelphia: "The 'Times and Seasons' gives a monthly account of the spiritual and temporal progress of the

⁴¹ In this way, news traveled more quickly than one might expect. For example on the July 17, 1844, the *Daily Mercury* in New Bedford, Massachusetts, reported, "We have received a copy of the *Nauvoo Neighbor, Extra*, containing full particulars of the atrocious murder of the Smiths, corroborating essentially the statements that we have already copied." That *Nauvoo Neighbor Extra* had been published on June 29. It took less than three weeks for the *Extra* to travel from Nauvoo to New Bedford.

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Latter Day Saints.” The *Ledger* paraphrases and quotes the Nauvoo paper about the growth of the city and the international expansion of the Church’s missionary work, then concludes, “From this account it will be seen that notwithstanding the abuse of this sect, and the characterizing Joe Smith and his followers as fools, they still know how to conduct their affairs with prudence and intelligence, and in this respect may set an example to many deemed much wiser.” It was precisely that message—perhaps more than the information—that John Taylor wished to convey.

John Taylor tried to counter Sharp by defending Joseph Smith and representing Nauvoo as a prosperous, productive, law abiding community. He tried to show that the Mormon Church as the driving force behind both the economic and the social well-being of the city, with the object of encouraging his Mormon readers and convincing the non-Mormons. Because his papers were the official voice of both the Church and the city, they, and the Prophet’s *Views*, were used as missionary and political tracts by those who left Nauvoo to campaign for Joseph Smith for president in 1844.

In contrast, Sharp fought the game more aggressively and with as much skill. His continual attack on the Mormons and their newspapers evinces that this was not only a contest he intended to win, but also one he enjoyed immensely. There was one story that Sharp published in May, 1844, that demonstrates his influence. After William Law left the Mormons and organized a church of his own, Sharp described Law and his followers as a “respectable number of the most intelligent members of that body.”⁴²

That phrase is unique and therefore is a useful gauge by which to measure the geographic scope of Sharp’s influence. Using the words *respectable* and *intelligent members* as keywords to show that the story was actually taken from the *Signal*, or that it was

⁴² *Warsaw Signal*, May 8, 1844.

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taken from a secondary source that quoted the *Signal*, one can follow how widely the article circulated. The *Signal* article was first published in back-country Illinois on May 8, 1844. The first Iowa reprint was three days later on the 11th. It took more than three weeks for the article to get to Philadelphia, where it was reprinted on the 4th of June, and another week to get to New York City where it was reprinted on June 12. By June 22 it had been republished in half the states in the nation.⁴³

⁴³ The following is a list of some newspapers that carried the story with the phrase “respectable...intelligent.” The newspapers are arranged by state according to the earliest date. This list is also an excellent indicator of how widespread interest was in what was happening among the Mormons, and also of how much time was required for news to pass throughout the United States. Please note that the following is not a complete list of all the times and places the story was republished. It is only a sampling to give an indication of how widely Sharp’s phrase was published, and how long it took to travel.

Iowa: *Lee County Democrat*, Fort Madison, Iowa, May 11, 1844; *Davenport Gazette*, Davenport, Iowa, May 30, 1844; *Kentucky Gazette*, Lexington, Kentucky, June 1, 1844.

Pennsylvania: *Pittsburgh Morning Post*, June 1, 1844; *Bradford Reporter*, Towanda, Pennsylvania, June 4, 1844; *Saturday Courier*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, June 8, 1844; *Adams Sentinel*, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, June 10, 1844.

Maine: *Daily Argus*, Portland, Maine, June 3, 1844.

Maryland: *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, Baltimore, Maryland, June 3, 1844.

Massachusetts: *Daily Mercury*, New Bedford, Massachusetts, June 3, 1844; *Daily Herald*, Newburyport, Massachusetts, June 5, 1844; *Springfield Republican*, Springfield, Massachusetts, June 15, 1844; *Pittsfield Sun*, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, June 20, 1844.

Virginia: *Alexandria Gazette*, Alexandria, Virginia, June 3, 1844.

New York: *Rochester Daily Democrat*, Rochester, New York, June 4, 1844; *Buffalo Daily Courier and Economist*, Buffalo, New York, June

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The widespread republication of that story is significant for other reasons. It demonstrates why the Latter-day Saints feared slander, and why John Taylor's *Times and Seasons* addressed a national rather than a local readership. Given the nationwide circulation of the *Warsaw Signal* and the national interest in the Mormon establishment, which the *Signal* so regularly defamed, it is remarkable that the *Signal's* accusations about the Mormons' "spiritual wifery" were only rarely reprinted or even alluded to by other editors. Perhaps the reason is that, by the spring of 1844, John C. Bennett had either been largely discredited,⁴⁴ or else the editors found the matter too distasteful to repeat, or perhaps they simply did not think the stories were credible. Whatever their reason, even though American editors received copies of the *Signal*, their readers rarely learned about those, and other severe accusations against the Mormons from their own local newspapers. This is also true of the much more explicit accusations published by the *Nauvoo Expositor*—which was also distributed nationally and which probably used the same mailing list as the *Signal*. The fact that the *Signal* and *Expositor's* claims about Mormon immoral

5, 1844; *New York Herald*, New York, New York, June 12, 1844; *Poughkeepsie Journal and Eagle*, Poughkeepsie, New York, June 22, 1844.

Georgia: *Columbus Enquirer*, Columbus, Georgia, June 5, 1844.

Indiana: *Richmond Palladium*, Richmond, Indiana, June 7, 1844.

New Jersey: *New Jersey Journal*, Elizabeth, New Jersey, June 11, 1844.

Ohio: *Daily Ohio State Journal*, Columbus, Ohio, June 6, 1844; *Cincinnati Weekly Herald and Philanthropist*, Cincinnati, Ohio, June 12, 1844; *Weekly Ohio State Journal*, Columbus, Ohio, June 12, 1844.

Tennessee: *Knoxville Register*, Knoxville, Tennessee, June 19, 1844.

⁴⁴ See chapter nine.

conduct were largely ignored by American editors is important because it shows that even though local anti-Mormons tried to stir up trouble with rumors of the origins of Mormon polygamy, Americans generally either did not know about those rumors, or did not think them worth repeating. It is not true that most Americans in the eastern part of the United States were shocked and enraged by the assertions made by the *Expositor*: it could not be true, because American editors ignored them—at least did not reprint them—and therefore the general public did not even know about them.

After Joseph and Hyrum were dead, Sharp continued to use his *Signal* and its national influence to try to convince Americans of the propriety of the Smiths' murders. Sharp boasted the murders were a carefully orchestrated "extra judicial execution."⁴⁵ His rationale was:

The old citizens felt that this one man power [Joseph Smith's] must be destroyed, *now* or they themselves must quietly surrender all their dearest rights and leave the county. They chose a bitter alternative—one revolting to their own sensibilities, but prompted by a high sense of duty to themselves and their county. As to the time and manner, it [the murders] had to be done then and thus, or not at all.⁴⁶

American editors did not accept that excuse anymore than they did the stories about the Mormon's sexual misconduct.

In virtually every issue of the *Signal*, Sharp attacked the Mormons generally and Joseph Smith specifically. His paper was the voice by which Robert F. Smith's Central Corresponding Committee communicated with local precinct leaders, and with

⁴⁵ *Warsaw Signal*, September 25, 1844.

⁴⁶ *Warsaw Signal*, July 10, 1844.

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anti-Mormons beyond Hancock County in Illinois, with Missouri and Iowa.

The *Warsaw Signal* was the Anti-Mormon Party's chief propaganda arm, conducting a major local and national anti-Mormon public relations and misinformation campaign. It gained a nationwide reputation as a primary source of anti-Mormon rhetoric. However, its reporting was suspect by many newspaper editors because of its incessant and often incredulous diatribe against the Mormons.

For example, of all the myths about this period of Mormon history, one of the most persistent, and one of the most erroneous, has been that Americans generally accepted Sharp's accusations about spiritual wifery and polygamy at face value, and turned against the Mormons because of it. Yet the the evidence does not support that conclusion

Because Sharp and Taylor each sent their papers to editors all over the country, those editors got both sides of the story as it developed. The two most telling consequences of their awareness were that, with rare exceptions (1) they did not accuse Joseph of violating freedom of the press when the *Nauvoo Expositor* was destroyed, and, again with rare exceptions (2) they were outraged when they learned of the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith.

The activities of Sharp and the influence of the *Warsaw Signal* are two of the major themes we will follow in this examination of the intrigue to murder Joseph and Hyrum Smith.

Early Organization of the Anti-Mormon Political Party

Even though Sharp was a major player in the intrigue to murder Joseph and Hyrum Smith and to drive the Mormons from

Illinois, his actual place in the Anti-Mormon Party's hierarchy remains uncertain, and he, himself, is an enigma.

It is not known how soon, or with whom, the Missouri anti-Mormon leaders coordinated their activities against Joseph Smith with the anti-Mormons in Illinois. Similarly, we do not know for certain when Sharp entered that coalition. However, it is known that Sharp was one of the founders of Hancock County's Anti-Mormon Party, and that the party was well organized by the time Illinois Governor Carlin received the first extradition papers from Missouri demanding that Joseph be returned to that state. That occurred during the month of September soon after the Mormons arrived in Illinois. Governor Boggs formally requested that Governor Carlin of Illinois turn over Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Lyman Wight, Parley P. Pratt, Caleb Baldwin, and Alanson Brown to Missouri officials, claiming they were escaped convicts and fugitives from justice. Governor Carlin made no response until the following June when he refused to extradite the Prophet. Before Carlin acted on the order, Sharp and his associates had already organized the Hancock County Anti-Mormon Party, and as soon as it was known that Joseph would not be forced to return to Missouri, he and the other party organizers held their first political convention.

Sharp and his newspaper were already a central part of their activities. So it is apparent that he was working to remove Joseph Smith and the Mormons from Illinois within a very short time after he came to Warsaw, and that well before 1842, the anti-Mormons on both sides of the Mississippi River were acting in near perfect tandem. Two years later, when Joseph and Hyrum were killed, the coordination of the anti-Mormon activities in Illinois, Missouri, and Iowa evinces a central organization that had some very powerful people at its helm.

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We cannot discover whether Sharp and his associates in Illinois initiated the cooperation, or whether it was someone in Missouri who was giving Sharp and his associates directions all along, or if it was someone else altogether. We do know that, when Sharp arrived in Illinois, the governor and other powerful politicians in Missouri were already heavily involved. It is plausible that Sharp quickly became an important subordinate, rather than leader, in the interstate anti-Mormon campaign. Furthermore, when Sharp was replaced by Robert F. Smith in the leadership of the Anti-Mormon Party in 1843, he was retained as the party's official spokesman. Sharp accepted the new assignment without complaint, perhaps because he was a subordinate. So whoever was really in charge considered Sharp a valuable asset to the workings of the plot, but preferred to work directly with Robert F. Smith instead. We may never know the whole truth about the interstate anti-Mormon organization, but the available evidence leans heavily toward the conclusion that the controlling hand—or hands—behind anti-Mormon movements in both Missouri and Illinois, and behind the intrigue to murder Joseph and Hyrum Smith, was a person or group of persons of much greater stature than could be found in Hancock County.

Between the years of 1840 and 1844, two men served as governor of Missouri (Boggs and Reynolds) and two of Illinois (Carlin and Ford). Boggs and Carlin both were involved, but neither was re-elected to office. Governor Reynolds, Boggs' successor, was heavily involved in the intrigue against Joseph Smith and the Mormons until he became despondent and committed suicide. (Some claimed that he killed himself because of the extreme pressure he was under for failing to have Joseph extradited to Missouri.) Ford was a key player in the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith and the subsequent expulsion of the

Mormons from Illinois, but at times his role was more like a pawn than a decision maker.

There were other key players also. One of the most important, John C. Bennett, was a major facilitator—both before and after he was excommunicated from the Mormon Church—but he was only a temporary player. By the time Joseph and Hyrum were killed he had lost much of his clout and was trying to raise money for himself on a not-very-successful lecture tour in New England.

Thomas Sharp was a master agitator, but not a natural leader. At one time Sharp wrote an editorial in his newspaper that suggested that he was expecting some kind of important payoff that would help the Warsaw economy, but the statement is imprecise, and he never wrote of it again. What the payoff was, and who was going to supply it, or if one really had been promised, he did not say.

Robert F. Smith did have leadership ability, and became an officer in the Civil War and somewhat of a local hero, but he came on the scene late and did not have the money or the prestige to have assumed early control of the Missouri and Illinois coalition. Since all of the apparent leaders—even the high state government officials—eliminate themselves as the prime movers of the coordinated effort to kill the Prophet and disperse the Mormons, that leaves only two possibilities: (1) The anti-Mormon movement was a spontaneous reaction, and there was not a single individual or small group of individuals who were decision makers behind the coalition. (2) Some one, or some small group of people, had enough power and money to pull the strings of four governors in two states, and remain a silent partner in the Anti-Mormon organization in Illinois, while maintaining enough momentum in anti-Mormon feeling in Missouri that they could set thousands of armed men in motion when the perfect time arrived. Let's look at both possibilities.

Mob Action was not a Spontaneous Movement

(1) In Illinois the Mormon population was growing so fast that some saw it as a threat to their political and economic future. The right agitation on the part of Sharp and others could—indeed did—help stimulate enough animosity that it could appear somewhat spontaneous. That is essentially how the early anti-Mormon apologists, Ford and Gregg, described the situation, and most historians have followed them with that description.

That kind of spontaneity may account for the feelings in Illinois, but cannot account for the sustained hatred in Missouri. The Mormons had been gone from Missouri for almost six years when, in 1844, Missouri men came by the thousands to surround and attack Nauvoo. Even if their feelings against the Mormons initially had been somewhat spontaneous and their motives had been to possess the lands and property the Mormons left behind, six years is a long time for such a hatred to continue to build steam on its own accord without some external stimulus.

As in Missouri, in Illinois the most immediate and visible reason to expel the Mormons was property—if they were gone the people could occupy the farms and buildings they left behind, just as they had in Missouri. But that is a local answer to our question, and only a temporary one. In Missouri, the people had already occupied the Mormon property and there was no reason supported by self-interest for them to go drive the Mormons from their lands and homes in Illinois. So one must conclude that the reason they wished to drive the Mormons from Illinois was pure hatred—without self-interest—that continued to build on its own for six full years. Or, one must conclude that the hatred did not build on its own accord, but rather was fed by a campaign of misinformation sufficient to overcome the inertia always

associated with a lack of self-interest. If the latter were true, one must look for whoever had the financial and political resources—and the motive—to sponsor and sustain such a campaign.

(2) The second scenario assumes that there was one or more persons, more powerful than state governors, who were orchestrating the anti-Mormon campaign in both Missouri and Illinois. The Mormon problem had begun as a local matter in New York and Ohio, but soon became something else. Not long after the Church members began to settle in Kirtland, Ohio, the Prophet designated Independence, Missouri, as their official gathering place. Independence was the hub of the fur trade between the eastern and western parts of the American continent, and also of the not-quite-legal trade between United States and Santa Fe, Mexico. The Mormons had chosen the most important commercial center on the western edge of the United States to call their own—and they were not welcomed there. They did the same thing with Nauvoo, on the Mississippi River, only this time they created a commercial center out of nothing and displaced the importance of other communities in the area. In both Independence and Nauvoo they were accused of seeking to dominate these trade centers both economically and politically. In both areas they infringed on very powerful political and economic interests that reached far beyond their immediate environs.

There was also the slavery issue. As the country expanded, one of the most heated political issues was about the extension of slavery into the western territories. In 1821 Missouri had requested to be admitted into the Union, and submitted to Congress a state constitution that prohibited the immigration of free blacks into the state. Many northern Congressmen objected, and only after the Missouri legislature pledged that nothing in its constitution would be interpreted to abridge the rights of citizens of the United States

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was Missouri admitted to the Union. That issue brought to a head one of the most difficult emotional and political questions in national politics. It was temporarily resolved by the work of Henry Clay, Speaker of the House, and Senator Jesse B. Thomas of Illinois. Through their labors, the Missouri Compromise permitted slavery in the territories south of 36° 30' (the southern boundary of Missouri), except within the limits of the proposed state of Missouri. There the question of slavery would be left to the residents of the state. Missouri became a slave state, but the issue was far from settled. The Mormons who moved there were from the North and were opposed to slavery. That difference had been a good part of the conflict between the Mormons and Missouri's "old citizens."

Now, the Mormons who were moving into Illinois, and elsewhere up and down the Mississippi River, came with the same philosophy. They were primarily from the northern states and from Europe—and were opposed to slavery. Joseph Smith's presidential platform recommended putting an end to slavery altogether. Slavery was an intensely emotional political issue, and any individual or group who supported slavery would have been opposed to Mormon migration into the Mississippi Valley. (The Missouri Compromise remained in effect only until 1854, when it was repealed by the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Then the slavery issue continued to fester until 1861 when it erupted into the Civil War.)

The Mormons were increasingly perceived to be in a position to make an impact on national politics. They were politically cohesive and becoming numerically powerful. These were important factors in their being driven from Missouri. In Illinois, given the remarkable rate they were making converts and gathering them into the Mississippi Valley, some people predicted they would not only control Hancock County and the swing vote in

Illinois, but by the next presidential election (1848) they might control the Electoral College vote in other western states as well.

If they were able to control the swing vote of just a few western states, they might have enough leverage to actually decide who would be the president of the United States. That idea is not as farfetched as it might appear. James Gordon Bennett, the editor of the *New York Herald*, saw it coming. He observed:

It is very well known that the Mormons are numerous enough in the State of Illinois to control the character of its vote. If they control the vote of that State, they will succeed in a great measure, in controlling the vote of the whole western country, for it will be a very close vote at best. It therefore will be seen, that this insignificant body of men, may, in the event of the next Presidency, control the destinies of all the candidates.⁴⁷

Joseph's running for president in 1844 seemed to demonstrate that he had high political ambition for himself, and there was talk that if Hyrum chose to run for Congress, Joseph could put him there. From this vantage point it is obvious that the power and influence of Mormonism was not perceived as a strictly local phenomenon and therefore there is no reason to insist that the anti-Mormon activities in Illinois were directed from an entirely localized organization either.

Between 1840 and 1846 the anti-Mormon movement was not isolated to just Missouri and Illinois but also included Iowa, Wisconsin, and places in the east as well. If the anti-Mormon movement was not entirely self-generated and self-sustaining, then it, like every other political campaign, might have been artificially sustained—and that could have cost a great deal of time and

⁴⁷ *Nauvoo Neighbor*, March 20, 1844, reprinted from the *New York Herald*.

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money. If that were true, then the question must be asked: by whom and for what purpose? So the ultimate question is: if the multi-state anti-Mormon movement was not spontaneous and not self-generated, where did its central leadership come from?, and more to the point—who supplied the money to keep the agitation going and to make that agitation worthwhile for the local anti-Mormon leaders?

With these questions, our speculation must end. There is very little paper trail that ties the Anti-Mormon Party leaders in Illinois with anti-Mormons in Missouri. The strongest evidence is what they accomplished together. Their carefully coordinated activities presupposes a clearly defined organization, but there is very little evidence of what that organization was. Similarly, there is almost no direct evidence that ties the local leaders in Illinois and Missouri to an outside central organization, except the proposition that if there is an organization, there must be an organizer, and there must also be enough money to pay people and otherwise provide the resources the organization needs to satisfy its purposes. However if one looks for such a national organization, one must not confine the search to a short period of time like the 1844 presidential election. The coordination of interstate anti-Mormon activities had been going on long before that. Because there is not sufficient evidence to pursue them, those notions, intriguing as they may be, must be set aside, and the task in this book must be limited to (1) looking at what is visible in the local organizations that sought, and eventually succeeded in, the death of Mormon leaders and expelling the Mormons from the United States into Mexican territory; and (2) point out the obvious coordination between the Anti-Mormons in Hancock County and the anti-Mormons elsewhere. We leave to future researchers the task of telling the larger national story.

Chapter 2

1841 - 1842

John C. Bennett

In January, 1841, important changes were made in the leadership of the Mormon Church. Joseph Smith's father had died, and the office that he held—that of Patriarch—went to his son Hyrum. This left a vacancy in the First Presidency. That vacancy would be filled by William Law, a wealthy convert from Canada whom Joseph had met while on his trip to Washington, D. C. Law was then leading a company of Saints to Nauvoo. When William Law and his brother Wilson arrived in Nauvoo, they built a steam-powered saw and flour mill, established a store, and invested in real estate on the hill behind the temple overlooking the city.⁴⁷

In February 1841, John C. Bennett, the mayor of the newly incorporated city of Nauvoo, gave his inaugural address, and the city council passed bills organizing the University of the City of Nauvoo and the Nauvoo Legion. The next day, at the first meeting of the Nauvoo Legion, Joseph was elected lieutenant general, John C. Bennett, major general; and Wilson Law, brigadier general. Most of the other officers of the Nauvoo Legion were also leaders of the Nauvoo community and of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.⁴⁸ About that same time, the state legislature passed an important addition to the charter of the Nauvoo Legion. It provided that any citizen could, by voluntary enrollment,

⁴⁷ *History of the Church*, 4:286.

⁴⁸ *History of the Church*, 4:195-6.

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become a member of the Legion.⁴⁹ That was important to the Mormons, because it meant that a member of the Church did not actually have to live within Nauvoo to be a member of the Legion. On March 8, Governor Carlin acted on the wishes of the Legion and commissioned Joseph as lieutenant general of that Nauvoo branch of the state militia.⁵⁰

With the reorganization of the First Presidency, and the organization of the city and the Legion, three men came into power who either were already, or would soon become, some of Joseph's most bitter and effective enemies: William and Wilson Law, and John C. Bennett.

Bennett later claimed that he came into the Church as a mole. *Mole* is a term used in espionage that refers to one who joins a group with the intent of ingratiating himself with its leaders so he could be an effective instrument in that group's demise. Only a year later, in 1842, after Bennett was excommunicated from the Mormon Church, he left Nauvoo and wrote *The History of the Saints, or An Expose of Joe Smith and Mormonism*, which was the most harmful anti-Mormon book of its time. In it, under the heading of "Reasons for Joining the Mormons," he wrote:

It is, of course, necessary for me to give some explanation of the reasons which led me to join the Mormons, and of my motives for remaining so long in connection with them. I am happy to have it in my power to do this easily and satisfactorily.

I find that it is almost universally the opinion of those who have heard of me in the eastern part of the United States, that I united myself to the Mormons from a conviction of the truth of their doctrines, and that I was, at least for some time, a convert to their pretended religion. This, however, is a very gross error. *I never believed in them or their doctrines.* This is, and indeed

⁴⁹ *History of the Church*, 4:295.

⁵⁰ *History of the Church*, 4:309-10.

was, from the first, well known to my friends and acquaintances in the western country, who were well aware of my reasons for connecting myself with the Prophet; which reasons I will now proceed to state.

My attention had been long turned towards the movements and designs of the Mormons, with whom I had become pretty well acquainted, years before, in the state of Ohio; and after the formation of their establishment at Nauvoo, in 1839, the facts and reports respecting them, which I continually heard, led me to suspect, and, indeed, believe, that their leaders had formed, and were preparing to execute, a daring and colossal scheme of rebellion and usurpation throughout the north-western States of the Union.... It at length occurred to me that the surest and speediest way to overthrow the Impostor, and expose his iniquity to the world, would be to profess myself a convert to his doctrines, and join him at the seat of his dominion. I felt confident that from my standing in society, and the offices I held under the state of Illinois, I should be received by the Mormons with open arms; and that the course I was resolved to pursue would enable me to get behind the curtain, and behold, at my leisure, the secret wires of the fabric, and likewise those who moved them.⁵¹

Most historians tend to discredit Bennett's insistence that he was never converted to Mormonism, but there is some circumstantial evidence he was telling the truth. He first encountered the Mormons when he was a Campbellite preacher. At that time Joseph converted a great number of Campbellites in and around Kirtland, Ohio, including Sidney Rigdon, to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In Kirtland, Rigdon had been a leader in the Mormon Church's First Presidency. In Nauvoo he retained his office but not his influence. Several years before, while the Church was still headquartered in Kirtland, Rigdon had been seriously hurt when he

⁵¹ Bennett, *History*, 5-7.

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was attacked by a mob. They dragged him by the legs across a field, his head bouncing on the frozen ground as it would over solid rocks. This caused a concussion from which he never fully recovered. His estrangement from Joseph is sometimes attributed to that injury.

Bennett may have developed a competitive dislike for Joseph then. When Bennett decided to move to Nauvoo and join the Mormon Church, he wrote to Joseph saying he would come only if he could be of assistance to the Church leaders. That would be typical of one who wished to be a mole. Joseph invited him to come, and Bennett was as good as his word. He showed the Saints how to drain the swamps around Nauvoo so the environment could become considerably more healthy, and he demonstrated himself to be capable of dealing with non-Mormons in state government. That may also suggest he was a mole.

Before he came to Nauvoo, he was already “an intimate friend” of some prominent people in Illinois, including Judge Stephen A. Douglas and the lawyer and land speculator Calvin Warren, who tried to swindle the Mormons and was a bitter enemy of Joseph Smith.⁵² Bennett used those and other connections to help push the Nauvoo charter through the state legislature. It was his initial enthusiasm for the city of Nauvoo that convinces many historians to discredit his claim to have never believed in Mormonism. However, it is that same enthusiasm (displayed ultimately in an apparent attempt to murder Joseph Smith and take his place as leader of both the Church and the community) and his strong connections with Missouri Mormon-haters that suggest he had come to Nauvoo to prove his superiority to Joseph by first using him, then killing him.

⁵² *History of the Church*, 4:479-50.

First Extradition Attempt

In May, 1841, almost as soon as Sharp got full control of the *Warsaw Signal*, he declared his intent to use his newspaper to lead a fight against the Mormons:

We do not believe in persecution for opinion's sake. But whenever they [the Mormons], as a people, step beyond the proper sphere of a religious denomination, and become a political body, as many of our citizens are beginning to apprehend will be the case, then this press stands pledged to take a stand against them.⁵³

The next month, he republished verbatim a call issued by the Mormon First Presidency for the Saints to gather at Nauvoo “without delay,” and with it Sharp editorialized,

If he [Joseph Smith] can command them to settle where he pleases—if his will is to be their law, and he is their God—what *may*—nay, what *WILL*—become of your dearest rights and most valued privileges, when that ascendancy is gained which the following proclamation is intended to effect.⁵⁴

Sharp was not the only one who felt that way. The governor of Illinois had let the Mormon population grow as far as he intended. On June 1, 1841, Joseph's brother Hyrum and William Law were going east on a mission for the Church, and Joseph accompanied them as far as Quincy. While there he called at the home of Governor Carlin. Carlin treated him “with the greatest kindness and respect” and did not mention the extradition request he had received from the governor of Missouri. However, when Joseph

⁵³ *Warsaw Signal*, May 19, 1841.

⁵⁴ *Warsaw Signal*, June 9, 1841.

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had been gone from Carlin's house only a few hours, the governor sent Thomas King (the sheriff of Adams county), Thomas Jasper (a constable of Quincy), and some others as a posse to catch him before he could reach Nauvoo. With the posse rode an officer from Missouri. The intent was that Joseph would be arrested by the Illinois officers and turned over to the Missourian, and the posse would assist them in taking Joseph to the Illinois boarder. From there the Missourians would do with them what they would.

That night, Joseph stopped in the town of Bear Creek, about 28 miles from Nauvoo, and was staying in Heberlin's Hotel when the posse caught up with him and arrested him. However, when some of the members of the posse learned the attitude of the Missouri officer toward Joseph, they "left the company in disgust and returned to their own homes." With those men gone, Joseph was able to insist they return to Quincy, where he obtained a writ of *habeas corpus* and appeared before Judge Stephen A. Douglas.

Habeas corpus is an ancient English common law procedure whereby a writ is issued by a judge or justice of the peace ordering an arresting officer to go to court and "produce the body" of the prisoner. A *habeas corpus* hearing is not a trial to determine guilt or innocence but simply a hearing to determine if the arrest is lawful. An arrest could be lawful even if, in a subsequent trial, the person were found innocent. However, an arrest would not be lawful if, for instance, it could be shown that the crime for which one was arrested had not been committed or if the action for which one was arrested was not a crime. So, a *habeas corpus* hearing was to determine whether the reason for the arrest was legitimate and had sufficient merit to warrant holding a trial in the future.

Some of the opposing lawyers were willing to stick to the matter of the legitimacy of the arrest, but some were intent on trying Joseph for his religion:

A young lawyer from Missouri volunteered to plead against me; he tried his utmost to convict me, but was so high with liquor, and chewed so much tobacco, that he often called for

cold water. Before he had spoken many minutes, he turned sick, requested to be excused by the court and went out of the court house, puking all the way down stairs. As the Illinoisians call the Missouri people “pukes,” this circumstance caused considerable amusement to the members of the bar.⁵⁵

Other parts of the hearing were much more somber. O. H. Browning, Joseph’s attorney,

gave a recitation of what he himself had seen at Quincy, and on the banks of the Mississippi river when the Saints were “exterminated from Missouri,” where he tracked the persecuted women and children by their bloody footmarks in the snow, they were so affecting that the spectators were often dissolved in tears. Judge Douglas himself and most of the officers also wept.⁵⁶

On June 10, the judge ruled in Joseph’s favor and ordered that he be liberated. The Prophet was able to return to Nauvoo the next day without much incident, but he had been given notice to be on his guard.⁵⁷

Anti-Mormon Meeting

Almost as soon as the extradition attempt failed, Thomas Sharp and others prepared to implement steps that would lead to an attempt to guarantee the success of the next extradition to Missouri. The first of these steps had been to create a coordination committee of local anti-Mormons, with as much reach as possible.

⁵⁵ *History of the Church*, 4:368.

⁵⁶ *History of the Church*, 4:368-69.

⁵⁷ *History of the Church*, 4:364-71.

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He and others organized a new Hancock County political party and called it the “Anti-Mormons.” His plan (as we watch it develop through his newspaper articles)⁵⁸ was to convince local Whigs and Democrats to lay aside their national political party affiliations and unite under his leadership into a single political organization whose purpose was to drive the Mormons from Illinois. That goal was too big to be immediately effective because the local and state leaders of both national political parties looked hungrily at the new Mormon population as a large, important, and exploitable block of votes.

Sharp did not try to change the whole political system at once. He and his newly founded Anti-Mormon Party decided to run only one candidate for each of two county offices—the school board and the county commission. That was not a trifling goal. Those were the two most important governmental bodies of Hancock County. If the Anti-Mormons had a representative in each, they would have a voice in the debates and enactments of county policies. In all of this, Sharp acted as the party facilitator, and his newspaper was its spokesman. He attended to matters behind the scenes, but he did not run for office himself. The next step was to call a countywide convention that they scheduled to meet on June 28th in Carthage, the county seat.

As the time for the convention approached, the Anti-Mormon leaders in each town or precinct called local meetings to select its convention delegates. The minutes of only one of those precinct meetings have been preserved—the one in Warsaw. Those minutes were published by Sharp in the *Warsaw Signal*. It was June 19, 1841, only about a week after Judge Douglas refused to let Joseph be extradited to Missouri. The intent of the Warsaw meeting was to formally choose their leaders and to select a delegation to attend the first Anti-Mormon convention in Carthage. Here, from his own

⁵⁸ The program was developed and refined over the next few years until they finally drove the Mormons from Illinois. Many of the articles Sharp published in the *Warsaw Signal* will be cited hereafter.

account, it is apparent that Sharp was in charge, and that he put the offices of temporary leadership in other people's hands.⁵⁹

As the meeting began, A. I. Chittenden was appointed chairman.⁶⁰ When the business of organizing the meeting was settled, W. H. Roosevelt⁶¹ spoke to the purpose of the meeting and explained the importance of the Anti-Mormon Party's running its own candidates for the school board and county commission. (Roosevelt would become one of the most ruthless mob-militia officers who forced Mormon farmers from their land and eventually helped drive all the Mormons from the state.) At the meeting, his reasoning was challenged by another man, J. C. Davis, who argued that it was wrong to try to create a third political party in Hancock County and contended that there should not even be an Anti-Mormon convention in Carthage.⁶² He said he was "as much as any opposed to the Mormons," but objected to creating a new party that would take votes from the Whig and Democratic candidates. Sharp then took the floor and addressed that question, arguing for the necessity of the new party and for its having its own slate of candidates for the county offices. Sharp's argument won the day and, with only one dissenting vote, those attending the meeting decided they should proceed to choose delegates to go to the Carthage convention. Among the delegates they chose were several men who would later play prominent roles in events surrounding the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith,

⁵⁹ An account of the meeting was published in the *Warsaw Signal*, June 23, 1841.

⁶⁰ For Chittenden's activities at the time of Joseph's murder see Oaks and Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy*, 168.

⁶¹ For Roosevelt's activities about the time of Joseph's murder see *Quincy Whig*, Quincy, Illinois, July 3, 1844.

⁶² Davis eventually became one of the leading Anti-Mormons, and was among those indicted by the grand jury for the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, but he was never tried for the crime. See Oaks and Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy*, 51, 54.

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and the ultimate expulsion of the Mormons from Illinois: Thomas Sharp, Mark Aldrich, William H. Roosevelt, Thomas Gregg, Abraham I. Chittenden, John Scott,⁶³ and Calvin Cole.⁶⁴

Apart from Sharp, the most colorful members of the delegation were Thomas Gregg and Mark Aldrich. Gregg was a one-time partner in Sharp's publishing business. He was the assessor for the town of Warsaw⁶⁵ and the librarian and treasurer of the Warsaw Library Association. He advertised his services as a book printer, with the intent of using Sharp's press to do the printing.⁶⁶ As a writer, he was a vigorous opponent of the Mormons while they were in Illinois and later wrote two books to justify their expulsion from the state. In his histories, Gregg painted a verbal picture of a spontaneous outburst of Old Citizens against the Mormons. To do that he omitted any discussion of the activities of this Anti-Mormon organization, did not mention its most important conventions, or even admit the organization existed at all. Had he described the party's organized activities against the Mormons that would have belied his claims to the spontaneity of the mobbing. In his histories, when the Mormons sought to defend themselves from the aggressive behavior of the Anti-Mormons, he reported what the Mormons did, said it showed that the Mormons were dangerous and aggressive, but consistently failed to mention what the Anti-Mormons had done to bring it on.

Mark Aldrich was a land speculator who tried but was unable to completely hoodwink Joseph Smith. He quickly became one of the major sources of Mormon problems in Warsaw. In 1844, he

⁶³ For an account of Scott's activities at the time of Joseph's murder see Oaks and Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy*, 193.

⁶⁴ Cole was a lieutenant in the Warsaw Militia company, see Oaks and Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy*, 79.

⁶⁵ *Warsaw Signal*, March 23, 1842.

⁶⁶ *Warsaw Signal*, December 29, 1841.

and Thomas Sharp were each indicted by the grand jury for the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith.⁶⁷

A few days after these men were selected by the Warsaw precinct, they traveled to Carthage to attend the Anti-Mormon convention. Unfortunately, there is no surviving account of what actually happened at that convention, so we do not know who else attended or even what was on the agenda. But this we do know: at the end of the convention, three men emerged as members of the party's central governing committee. Usually, such a standing committee is established to do the business of the group when the group is not in session. That also appears to have been the pattern of organization of the Anti-Mormons. The central committee exercised the executive authority to make decisions, give directives to precinct leaders, speak and write in behalf of the party, conduct the party's political campaign, call meetings, and oversee the entire program of the party organization. Since there is no surviving copy of the Anti-Mormon Party's constitution, we cannot be sure that those were always the functions of the party's central committee, but observing the party's history, we see that at one time or another the central committee did exercise each of those powers.

It is significant, then, that at the close of the 1841 convention, Sharp had been chosen as a member of the three-man governing committee of the Anti-Mormon Party. This young, unmarried, fledgling newspaper man and unemployed lawyer and preacher's son had positioned himself at the very center of what would soon become the most powerful vigilante movement in Hancock County.

From that time on, during the years when Sharp owned and operated the *Warsaw Signal*, the paper was, in fact, what its name implied. It was a signal—the source of both information and instruction for the local precinct leaders and members of the Anti-

⁶⁷ Oaks and Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy*, 51, 146, 169-70.

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Mormon Party. It also became the way for everyone else in the nation, including the Mormons, to know what the Anti-Mormons were doing and planning to do. This newspaper also became a vital link in coordinating the anti-Mormon organizations in Illinois and Missouri. It was the party's chief propaganda arm, conducting a major local and national anti-Mormon public relations and misinformation campaign. It had a national circulation (that is, Sharp exchanged his newspaper with other editors all over the country), and it gained a nationwide reputation as a primary source of anti-Mormon rhetoric. However, its reporting was suspect by many newspaper editors because of its incessant and often incredulous diatribe against the Mormons. The activities of Sharp and the influence of the *Warsaw Signal* are two of the major themes we will follow in this examination of the conspiracy to murder Joseph and Hyrum Smith.

Even though we do not have the minutes of the Anti-Mormon convention of 1841 and do not know who attended, what policies they adopted, or plans they made, we do know some things. Sharp published an official "address of the convention to the Anti-Mormon citizens of Hancock County." This address was signed by the committee—Joel Catlin, Thomas C. Sharp, and William H. Roosevelt—which meant it was they who had been elected to direct the actions of the Anti-Mormon Party when the convention was not in session.⁶⁸ Over the next three years, Catlin's name faded from prominence, but significantly the other two members of this first committee, who were both delegates from Warsaw, continued to be prominent members of the party throughout the remainder of its existence. In the address Sharp published, the committee urged the following:

You have heretofore been called upon to select delegates to a county convention for the purpose of nominating candidates for

⁶⁸ In 1843, this committee was replaced by the Central Corresponding Committee with Robert F. Smith as the chairman.

the office to be filled by your votes at the ensuing election, with a view to counteract the powerful influence of the Mormon party. Laying aside the old political landmarks, of Whig and Democrat, you have deemed it expedient to unite together against an enemy, that abides fair, soon, to swallow you up in its all-absorbing vortex.⁶⁹

In that same July 7, 1841 issue of the *Warsaw Signal*, the Anti-Mormon leaders cataloged the accusations against the Mormons that would remain the foundation of their political platform. The charges were (1) the Mormons were subservient to the control of Joseph Smith.

You have drawn the inference, and no doubt justly so, that the individual who, as Prophet of the Almighty, possessed supreme control over their religious matters, at the same time exercised his holy influence to direct their temporal concerns.⁷⁰

The Prophet Joseph was the primary target of the Anti-Mormon opposition, and all the other charges were subsets of that one. (2) The Mormons were “intermixing religion with politics.” (3) They were voting as a block, “depositing their votes as one man.” (4) The Nauvoo Charter gave Joseph Smith and the Mormons extraordinary legal and military powers. “As a consequence of this, you have seen your Legislature granting them charters, containing powers nearly, if not quite equal, to their own, without even reading the contents of their enactments.” (5) The strength of the Nauvoo Legion constituted a military threat to other citizens of the county.

Why [are these peo]ple so effectually drilled [in mil]itary warfare? Why is it that they have obtained the control of the arms of your state? And why this weekly parade and rigid

⁶⁹ *Warsaw Signal*, July 7, 1841.

⁷⁰ *Warsaw Signal*, July 7, 1841.

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discipline, commenced too, at a time when your prejudices were not excited, and your feelings were still friendly?⁷¹

Sharp and Roosevelt were officers in the Warsaw branch of the state militia and knew the answers to their inflammatory rhetorical questions. The Illinois constitution required that every able-bodied white male citizen of each community must participate in a well-trained, well-armed branch of the state militia, so the existence and efficiency of the Nauvoo Legion was required by the Illinois state constitution. Since almost every man in Nauvoo was a member of the Nauvoo Legion, the state militia company that Joseph commanded in Nauvoo became 20 to 30 times larger than the Warsaw company. That was the issue. The Nauvoo Legion was a formidable defensive force that precluded the kind of mob attacks the Saints had suffered in Missouri. The Nauvoo Charter not only legalized the Nauvoo Legion but required the city to maintain such a military force. For that reason the Committee demanded that the Nauvoo Charter must be repealed. The open letter concluded:

It is for you to say whether it was not because they well knew their principles to be so utterly repugnant to the genius of our republican institutions, that nothing but the point of the bayonet could enable them to live with safety, in any community.... As the remedy lies with yourselves, we entreat you all, if you regard the maintenance of your dearest rights, to assemble at the polls at this election—lay aside former party feelings and oppose, as independent freemen, political and military Mormonism.⁷²

Two weeks later, someone who styled himself “Marcellus” wrote a letter to the editor of the *Warsaw Signal* in which he

⁷¹ *Warsaw Signal*, July 7, 1841.

⁷² *Warsaw Signal*, July 7, 1841.

argued that Joseph Smith had been given political power by the Whigs and Democrats, who each sought to gain the Mormon vote. The writer warned that for Joseph that power “is not going to be given up without a struggle. He is not going to come down willingly from his high seat—and shall we postpone our action, for that purpose, until the time and occasion for successful action is forever lost?” The writer then urged:

Shall we refuse to assist in severing the chains with which our own folly has bound us, merely because their rust has not yet corroded our souls? Such reasons are not worthy of FREEMEN! and I feel confident that they will not be sued or advanced by freemen. Such freemen, I humbly fear, cannot long remain free.⁷³

The political stakes that year were not as high as the writer’s rhetoric suggested. The whole state was not about to fall to the Mormons, and the Anti-Mormons had only sponsored two candidates, Richard Wilson for school commissioner and Robert Miller for county commissioner.⁷⁴ But their campaigns were effective—both men were elected.⁷⁵

Warren, Illinois

Warren was a land speculation scheme that was designed to divert part of the Mormon growth to the Warsaw area, or it was

⁷³ *Warsaw Signal*, July 28, 1841.

⁷⁴ *Warsaw Signal*, July 28, 1841. Miller was from Warsaw, and may have participated in the Smiths’ murders, as he “had served in the Warsaw militia on the day the Smiths were killed” (Oaks and Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy*, 77).

⁷⁵ *Warsaw Signal*, August 4, 1841.

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only intended to make money. Perhaps it was both. Whatever the motive, back in 1839, Daniel S. Witter of Warsaw had approached the leaders of the Mormon Church about purchasing a section of land just a mile south of Warsaw and building a city on it. The land was owned by Daniel S. Witter, Mark Aldrich, and Calvin Warren. The Church leaders took no action on the proposal until 1841; by then the owners had surveyed the land and laid it out in town lots. The new town was to be called Warren.⁷⁶

Witter owned a flour mill at Warsaw. Aldrich was a land speculator who had been one of the original developers of Warsaw in 1832. He became the postmaster in Warsaw in 1834 and was elected to the Illinois State legislature in 1836, and he was a friend of John C. Bennett. Warren was an attorney from Quincy who specialized in bankruptcy cases. He had practiced law in Warsaw and still had business and property interests there.⁷⁷

When the leaders of the Church learned that there was a large group of convert immigrants coming from England, they realized they needed additional home sites and farmland to accommodate these new arrivals, so they investigated Warren as a likely place.

On Tuesday, August 21, 1841, during a meeting of the Twelve Apostles, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Willard Richards reported that they had visited the proposed town site of Warren with Mark Aldrich and others. They presented a favorable report to the Twelve, and it was agreed that “Willard Richards be requested to locate himself for a season at Warsaw, or vicinity, for the purpose of selling lots on the town plat of Warren, counseling

⁷⁶ Information about the settlement of Warren can be found in the following: Hamilton, “Money-Diggersville”; Jensen, “Transplanted to Zion,” 77; *Contributor*, v. 8 (November 1886-October 1887) May, 1887; *Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 2:19 120; *History of the Church*, 4:412, 470 471; Jesse, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2:341-43, 521-22.

⁷⁷ Oaks and Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy*, 83.

the brethren, and attending to such other business as may be necessary relating to the Church.”⁷⁸

Accordingly, on September 8, Willard Richards went to Warsaw, where he spent several weeks preparing to receive the English immigrants. In November, 204 Saints, led by Joseph Fielding, arrived at Warsaw from England. On November 24, Willard Richards and John Taylor went to Warsaw and counseled the new immigrants to settle in Warsaw and Warren.

At this point, the details of the story get very foggy. While the inhabitants of Warsaw were asking the Mormons to settle among them, those same “inhabitants of Warsaw attempted to form an anti-Mormon society, and were much enraged because Esquire Davis (who had spoken favorably of the Saints) was appointed clerk of the county by Judge Stephen A. Douglas.”⁷⁹ So there was a severe conflict brewing. Some people in Warsaw wanted to exploit the Mormons, others wanted to expel them—and no doubt some simply wanted to exploit them before they expelled them.

Some of the major players in this story of land speculation were Thomas Sharp (owner and editor of the *Warsaw Signal*), Mark Aldrich (land speculator and captain of the Warsaw militia) and Jacob C. Davis (a lawyer, militia captain, member of the state senate, and later would be a member of the U.S. Congress). In 1844, all would be charged with the murder of Joseph Smith. A counsel for their defense would be Calvin A. Warren, who would argue in the court room “that if the prisoners were guilty of murder he himself was guilty alleging that it was the public opinion that the Smiths ought to be killed, and public opinion made the laws consequently it was not murder to kill the Smiths.”⁸⁰

The speculators could not wait until the Mormon immigrants were settled in their new town before they began to take advantage of them. Witter himself was one of the first who turned against the

⁷⁸ *History of the Church*, 4:412.

⁷⁹ *History of the Church*, 4:470- 71.

⁸⁰ *History of the Church*, 7:423.

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new Mormon settlers. He raised the price of his flour by one dollar per barrel and sold the sweepings from the floor of his mill to the Saints at \$2.25 per hundred. He and Aldrich went yet further. In a time when wood was the primary building material, wood was the only fuel, and gathering and selling old dead wood was a source of ready money, Witter and Aldrich forbade the new settlers of Warren the privilege of gathering old wood on the site of their new town. The English emigrants who had stopped in Warsaw while they made more permanent homes in Warren soon found they also were being squeezed for higher rents.

The British Saints complained to the Church leaders about the high prices and low quality of provisions and the maleficent attitude in Warsaw. Joseph responded by directing the Saints to leave Warsaw immediately and move to Nauvoo. Aldrich, Witter, and Warren visited the Prophet in late December to try to patch things up. At that meeting “Warren frankly acknowledged, that his temporal salvation depended on the success of the enterprise, and made liberal proposals for the benefit of the brethren, to help forward the undertaking.” But the Mormons never returned to Warren.⁸¹

That Aldrich was badly hurt by the Mormon withdrawal is evident from the fact that he and Calvin Warren both took out bankruptcy within three months after their meeting with Smith. Yet, these were wily businessmen and potentially dangerous enemies, as is evident from their clever scheme to take advantage of the new national bankruptcy law. Aldrich filed for bankruptcy on March 22, 1842, and Warren (whose law firm, Ralston, Warren & Wheat, represented both men in the bankruptcy proceedings) filed three weeks later. Aldrich’s schedule of assets showed twenty-three parcels of land and numerous notes. His debts consisted of twenty-five judgments totaling about \$15,000 and an additional \$10,000 due to thirty-

⁸¹ Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2:348.

four other creditors on notes and open accounts. In the course of the bankruptcy proceedings, Aldrich's land was sold to his attorney, Calvin A. Warren, and also to attorney Thomas Morrison of Carthage for a total of \$163.25. Perhaps because they were subject to large mortgages or unpaid land contract balances, some parcels of this land sold for as little as twelve-and-a-half cents, twenty-five cents, or a dollar. The bills and notes owned by Aldrich were sold to Robert Foster, a Mormon dissenter, to Calvin A. Warren, or to Aldrich himself for about one cent on the dollar of their \$3,000 total face value. As a result of these proceedings, Aldrich's debts of \$25,000 were totally discharged, and he or his close friends, perhaps acting as straw men in his behalf, came back into possession of virtually all of his property. Such abuses of the first bankruptcy act, common throughout the country, led to its repeal a little over a year after its passage.⁸²

It is unlikely that the failure of the land scheme at Warren was the cause of Aldrich's hatred for the Prophet, because, given the outcome of their bankruptcy cases, it is apparent that the whole enterprise was not only a set up, but also an early manifestation of their contempt for what they perceived to be the ineptness of the Mormons and their leader.

In 1842, with enemies like those in Carthage and Warsaw, Joseph's task seemed impossible. He was not just trying to build a city, he was also teaching his followers the meaning of Zion. He wanted a safe home for the Saints, not just a home. He wanted the Saints to have a temple, but to make that meaningful he had to teach them the power of the temple endowment and the sealing ordinances. Finally, he knew he must remain their leader—he must stay alive—long enough to accomplish all that had to be done.⁸³

⁸² Oaks and Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy*, 54-55. See also, Oaks and Bentley, "Joseph Smith and Legal Process," 181.

⁸³ Baker, "On to Carthage to Die" In that article, I show that Joseph had known for a long time that he was going to be killed, and one of his

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Just before Joseph's father (Joseph Smith Sr.) died, on September 14, 1840, he called his family around him and gave each one a blessing. Joseph's mother tells what happened when it was Joseph's turn. To Joseph he said:

“Joseph, my son, you are called to a high and holy calling. You are even called to do the work of the Lord. Hold out faithful and you shall be blest and your children after you. You shall even live to finish your work” At this Joseph cried out, weeping, “Oh! my father, shall I?” “Yes,” said his father, “you shall live to lay out the plan of all the work which God has given you to do. This is my dying blessing upon your head in the name of Jesus. I also confirm your former blessing upon your head; for it shall be fulfilled. Even so. Amen.”⁸⁴

To survive, Joseph needed help, just as he needed help to establish Nauvoo and all that the city represented. Some detractors have since criticized him for trusting the wrong people, such as the land speculator Mark Aldrich, the charlatan John C. Bennett, and the traitor William Law. But he also accepted help from others: lawyers, mountebanks, and state and local politicians who used the Mormons—the politicians who first courted the Mormon vote, then turned against them with violence—all for their own political purposes. Others, like Judge James Adams, were genuine friends. But the Prophet had so much to do in such a short time that if they offered help, he accepted help. If they were deceitful, he still accepted their help and trusted God to work out the consequences of their deceit. However, a closer look at Joseph's political activities and at the enormity of his accomplishments in Nauvoo in such a short time, suggests a different appraisal: that beneath his apparent credulousness, moved a profound political ability.

greatest concerns was that he did not want to die before the Church was well founded in the doctrines and ordinances of the temple.

⁸⁴ Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 309 -10.

Bennett's Fall from Power

Sidney Rigdon and Mayor John C. Bennett were close friends, going back to their Campbellite days in Ohio. When Sidney became too ill to carry out his duties in the First Presidency of the Church, he had urged Joseph to let Bennett help with the workload. So in April, 1841, Bennett was temporarily made Joseph's "Assistant President." From that position of ecclesiastical authority Bennett advanced his illicit amorous activities by claiming that Joseph was secretly teaching that adultery was in line with God's commands. He called it the "spiritual wife" system and claimed his adulterous propositions had the private support of the First Presidency.

The fall of Mayor John C. Bennett began when Hyrum Smith and William Law learned in Pittsburgh that Bennett had an estranged wife and child. Bennett had come to Nauvoo claiming that he was unmarried. When Joseph confronted him with the information about his wife, Bennett did not deny it. Instead he attempted suicide. The suicide failed, which led many to believe the attempt was unsuccessful because, being a doctor, he knew how much poison he could take without actually killing himself. Joseph trusted people until they proved false. He accepted Bennett's melodramatic show of repentance and let him retain his places of prominence in the Church, city, and Nauvoo Legion, but a rift had been created between them that did not heal.⁸⁵

Later, when Joseph got wind of Bennett's adulterous intrigues he tried to stop it by preaching a sermon against adulterers and fornicators and against "those who have made use of my name to carry on their iniquitous designs."⁸⁶

⁸⁵ *History of the Church*, 5:35-40.

⁸⁶ *History of the Church*, 4:587-88.

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The timing of Bennett's spiritual wife system could not have been worse for the Prophet. While Bennett was seducing women by pretending to teach secret doctrines, Joseph was introducing the Mormon temple rites to a few select members of the Church. This is the way Joseph described the first temple endowment.

I spent the day [May 2, 1842] in the upper part of the store, that is, in my private office (so called because in that room I keep my sacred writings, translate ancient records, and receive revelations) and in my general business office, or lodge room (that is where the Masonic fraternity meet occasionally, for want of a better place) in council with General James Adams, of Springfield, Patriarch Hyrum Smith, Bishops Newel K. Whitney and George Miller, and President Brigham Young and Elders Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards, instructing them in the principles and order of the Priesthood, attending to washings, anointings, endowments and the communication of keys pertaining to the Aaronic Priesthood, and so on to the highest order of the Melchizedek Priesthood, setting forth the order pertaining to the Ancient of Days, and all those plans and principles by which any one is enabled to secure the fullness of those blessings which have been prepared for the Church of the First Born, and come up and abide in the presence of the Eloheim in the eternal worlds. In this council was instituted the ancient order of things for the first time in these last days. And the communications I made to this council were of things spiritual, and to be received only by the spiritual minded: and there was nothing made known to these men but what will be made known to all the Saints of the last days, so soon as they are prepared to receive, and a proper place is prepared to communicate them, even to the weakest of the Saints; therefore let the Saints be diligent in building the Temple, and all houses which they have been, or shall hereafter be, commanded of God to build; and wait their time with patience in all meekness, faith, perseverance unto the end, knowing assuredly that all

these things referred to in this council are always governed by the principle of revelation.⁸⁷

Notwithstanding Bennett's prominent place among Church leaders, his name is conspicuously absent from the list of persons present that day. Significantly, the names of Joseph's counselors, Sidney Rigdon and William Law are not there either.

As observed earlier, Bennett claimed that he had joined the Mormon Church in order to help destroy its founder.⁸⁸ He does not say that he also planned to supplant Joseph as leader of the city and perhaps of the Church, but his actions show that was his intent. Now that he had been exposed as a liar and his amorous activity was sure to become public knowledge, he saw that his positions of power in both the city and the Church were beginning to teeter. He determined to take decisive action that would eliminate Joseph as a rival and would insure his own continued authority. He and at least two or more accomplices planned to set Joseph up so his death would appear to be an accident. Then, Bennett's own leadership would be secure again. (There is no evidence about who those accomplices were, however to accomplish his purposes he would have needed at least one accomplice at each of the two locations in the Legion where Bennett wanted Joseph to be.)

Saturday, May 7, was a holiday in Nauvoo. The members of the Nauvoo Legion were all arrayed in uniform and preparing for a mock battle. The Legion consisted of 26 companies, numbering about two thousand troops. On this day they were first to parade in the large field under the brow of the hill where the temple was being built. Then, they would divide into two separate armies to fight a sham battle against each other. The entire show was under the supervision of General John C. Bennett. One of the armies was under the command of General Charles C. Rich whose devotion to Joseph cannot be questioned; the other, under the command of

⁸⁷ *History of the Church*, 5:1-2.

⁸⁸ Bennett, *History*, 5-7.

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General Wilson Law, who would soon be one of the publishers of the *Nauvoo Expositor*, along with his brother William Law. The infantries of the opposing armies would march toward each other, drop to their knees on command, and fire. The field would fill with smoke from the black powder in the rifles, and bits of paper would flutter in the air above the battle scene. Some men would drop as though dead, and the surviving officers would give orders to maneuver into positions of better advantage. The cavalries would charge, there would be more gunfire, the cannon would roar, and more casualties would drop as though dead.

This sham battle would be just like a real one except for three things: (1) The belligerents were having great fun and did not really want to kill each other. (2) The casualties were not really hurt because the bullets fired at them were only wads of paper. (3) The audience who stood nearby and cheered would not be afraid of being hit by a stray bullet or cannon ball. However, if one did wish to do murder, the smoke and fury of this sham battle would be a perfect cover. Joseph describes what happened just as the battle was about to begin:

I was solicited by General Bennett to take command of the first cohort during the sham battle; this I declined. General Bennett next requested me to take my station in the rear of the cavalry, without my staff, during the engagement; but this was counteracted by Captain A. P. Rockwood, commander of my lifeguards, who kept close to my side, and I chose my own position. And if General Bennett's true feelings toward me are not made manifest to the world in a very short time, then it may be possible that the gentle breathings of that Spirit, which whispered me on parade, that there was mischief concealed in that sham battle, were false; a short time will determine the point. Let John C. Bennett answer at the day of judgment, "Why did you request me to command one of the cohorts, and also to take my position without my staff, during the sham

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battle, on the 7th of May, 1842, where my life might have been the forfeit, and no man have known who did the deed?"⁸⁹

Bennett's urging would have placed Joseph on the side of the field where Wilson Law commanded, and far enough from Bennett that no one could ever suspect him of having any part in the killing. Joseph did not take the bait, but now he believed Bennett had tried to set him up for assassination.

From this point, the situation with Bennett deteriorated very quickly. As knowledge of his sexual exploits began to surface, in another melodramatic play for sympathy, Bennett resigned the office of mayor, then maneuvered to get it back again by making protestations of innocence, then of repentance, but neither worked. The city council accepted his resignation and Bennett was disfellowshipped from the Church May 25, 1842, on charges of immorality. He was excommunicated a short time later. Before he left Nauvoo in June 1842, he stayed at the home of his friend Robert Foster, another of the future publishers of the *Nauvoo Expositor*.⁹⁰

Bennett's resignation required another election. This time, Joseph ran for the office and was elected unanimously. His becoming mayor will become very important as our story unfolds—for in 1844, when the city council voted to destroy the press of the *Nauvoo Expositor*, Joseph's enemies laid that action directly at the feet of city mayor—Joseph Smith.

Bennett's hostility toward the Prophet did not end when he left Nauvoo. Almost immediately he sent to newspapers letters containing accusations about the Mormon leaders and their alleged "spiritual wifery." Later, he collected those and other anti-Mormon material into a book that became a bestseller. Then he went on a

⁸⁹ *History of the Church*, 6:3-4. There is a diagram showing the arrangement of the opposing armies and the positions where Bennett requested Joseph to be.

⁹⁰ Skinner, "John C. Bennett," 259.

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lecture tour titillating his audiences with his own confessions and stories of Mormon immorality. But before he went on the lecture tour, he went to Missouri, where he helped organize the next attempt to get Joseph back into the hands of his most bitter enemies.

The 1842 Attempt to Extradite Joseph Back to Missouri

One spring morning in 1842, Joseph was reading the *Quincy Whig* when he came across the account of an event that would not only impact his life, but ultimately be one of the excuses for his own murder. It reported that ex-Governor Boggs of Missouri—the governor who had issued the extermination order against the Mormons—had just been shot.

Lilburn W. Boggs, late governor of Missouri, was assassinated at his residence in Independence, Missouri, by an unknown hand, on the 6th instant. He was sitting in a room by himself, when some person discharged a pistol loaded with buckshot, through an adjoining window, three of the shots took effect in his head, one of which penetrated the brain. His son, a boy, hearing the report of the pistol, ran into the room in which his father was seated, and found him in a helpless situation, upon which he gave the alarm. Footprints were found beneath the window, and the pistol which gave the fatal shot. The governor was alive on the seventh, but no hopes are entertained of his recovery. A man was suspected, and is probably arrested before this. There are several rumors in circulation in regard to the horrid affair; one of which throws the crime upon the Mormons, from the fact, we suppose, that Mr. Boggs was governor at the time, and in no small degree instrumental in driving them from the state. Smith, too, the Mormon Prophet, as we understand, prophesied, a year or so ago, his death by violent means. Hence, there is plenty of foundation for rumor.

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The citizens of Independence had offered a reward of \$500 for the murderer.⁹¹

Joseph left the house and went directly to the printing office, where he wrote an open letter to the editor of the *Whig*:

In your paper (the *Quincy Whig*) of the 21st instant, you have done me manifest injustice in ascribing to me a prediction of the demise of Lilburn W. Boggs, Esq., ex-governor of Missouri, by violent hands. Boggs was a candidate for the state senate, and, I presume, fell by the hand of a political opponent, with “his hands and face yet dripping with the blood of murder;” but he died not through my instrumentality. My hands are clean, and my heart pure, from the blood of all men. I am tired of the misrepresentation, calumny and detraction, heaped upon me by wicked men; and desire and claim, only those principles guaranteed to all men by the Constitution and laws of the United States and of Illinois.⁹²

In fact, Boggs did not die. When he had recovered sufficiently from his wounds, he went before a justice of the peace in Independence and made affidavits that he believed Porter Rockwell had fired the gun, and that Porter had been hired to do so by Joseph Smith. At Boggs’s request, Governor Reynolds sent an agent, Edward R. Ford, to Illinois with the necessary papers to demand that Governor Carlin deliver up Joseph so he could be returned to Missouri to stand trial. But there was a legal technicality. If Joseph had hired Porter, he had done it in Illinois. The alleged hiring was the crime that Joseph was accused of, and since he had not left Illinois, that crime, if committed, must have been committed in Illinois, in which case Missouri would have had no jurisdiction. Reynolds circumvented this difficulty by writing that “Joseph Smith is a fugitive from justice, charged with being

⁹¹ *History of the Church*, 5:14-15.

⁹² *History of the Church*, 5:15, as published in the *Wasp*.

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accessory before the fact, to an assault with the intent to kill, made by one O. P. Rockwell, on Lilburn W. Boggs, in this state (Missouri) and is represented to the executive department of this state as having fled to the state of Illinois.” With the insertion of that statement, the extradition order could be taken as legal.⁹³ Governor Carlin acted on it and issued a warrant for Joseph’s arrest. Joseph Fielding Smith later assessed the impropriety of Carlin’s action:

Governor Carlin of Illinois appeared to be a party to this conspiracy. He had, at least, become embittered against President Joseph Smith, and was very willing to accede to the demand from Missouri. He was thoroughly acquainted with the law and knew perfectly well that the Prophet was in Nauvoo on the 6th day of May, 1842, consequently was not subject to the requisition of Governor Reynolds of Missouri. He knew that President Smith was not a fugitive from justice; and, even if the false and malicious charge had been true, he knew the Prophet was entitled to a fair and legal trial in Illinois, not Missouri. Yet, he would yield to this unlawful and unrighteous demand against his knowledge of these facts.⁹⁴

The Prophet Joseph’s own analysis is interesting on two counts. One is that it is informative. The second is that it shows Joseph was rather sophisticated in his knowledge of the law.

I have yet to learn by what rule of right I was arrested to be transported to Missouri for a trial of the kind stated. “An accessory to an assault with intent to kill,” does not come under the provision of the *fugitive* act, when the person charged has not been out of Illinois, &c. An accessory before the fact to manslaughter is something of an anomaly. The isolated affidavit of ex-Governor Boggs is no more than any other

⁹³ *History of the Church*, 5:234.

⁹⁴ *History of the Church*, 5:234.

man's, and the constitution says, "that no person shall be liable to be transported out of the state, for an offense committed within the same." The whole is another Missouri farce. In fact, implied power, and constructive guilt, as a *dernier resort*, may answer the purpose of despotic governments, but are beneath the dignity of the sons of Liberty, and would be a blot on our judicial escutcheon.⁹⁵

To Joseph, the most fundamental question was not one of law but of keeping alive. That meant keeping out of the hands of his enemies in Missouri. Joseph understood—as did everyone else—that if he were taken to Missouri, there would never be a trial, and he would never come home alive. So, he went into hiding for the next four months.

The most visible organizer of this new attempt to get Joseph was John C. Bennett. He began by spreading reports that he knew Joseph was responsible for the attempt on Boggs's life. L. B. Fleak, the postmaster of Keokuk, Iowa, wrote to Governor Reynolds,

Gen[eral] Bennett, late a *Mormon leader*, now a *dissenter* goes to you as he tells me for the purpose of giving information touching the attempted assassination of Ex Gov. Boggs—It is not doubted here in the least but that the information which he intends to convey to you is literally correct, i.e. that he knows who the person is that shot Boggs, and that he (Bennett) can prove Smith's agency in the matter sufficiently clear to satisfy any person of his participation in the matter. Bennet accuses a fellow by the name of Rockwood or Rockwell & from some circumstances I suspected him the very day the news reached & I wrote the post master of Independence, Missouri for a

⁹⁵ *History of the Church*, 5:87.

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description of the person, who was seen lurking around there about the time the affair took place.⁹⁶

On August 10, the deputies came to arrest Joseph and Porter, but they were not to be found. Porter eventually made his way east to be with his family. Joseph hid in various places, including his own home in Nauvoo. Occasionally he would even make a public speech, then disappear again. In October, the *Quincy Whig* published notices that Governor Carlin of Illinois and Governor Reynolds of Missouri had offered \$200 and \$300 rewards for Joseph and Porter. It was apparent that no matter how unsupported by fact the charges contained in the extradition papers were, both governors were determined to have Joseph delivered to his Missouri enemies.⁹⁷

The rewards were tempting and there were determined attempts to kidnap the Prophet and take him to Missouri. One of those was detailed by Fleak to Governor Reynolds.

I am informed that the Gov. of Illinois has added \$400 more to your reward and I at this time know of no less than three persons that are on the alert determined to arrest him if possible. There will be some *Judas* among themselves I think. I am in hopes to have it in my power to announce to you the capture of Smith by a week from this evening.... The intention of the three persons above alluded to, is to seize Smith some night in his own house perhaps, gag him, & carry him on board a small boat and bring him down to my house & keep him securely in a room in the 3rd story until the arrival of our regular St Louis Packets, one of which leaves here every night in the week except Monday night. I am the agent for all those Packets & when once on board there will be no further difficulty. If the enterprise succeeds I am entitled to one fourth

⁹⁶ Jennings, "Two Iowa Postmasters View Nauvoo," 278. Italics are in original.

⁹⁷ *Quincy Whig*, Quincy, Illinois, October 2, 1842.

of the reward which I will take pleasure in bestowing on the state of Missouri. One of those three is now in Nauvoo and has been there for 2 days since which time I have heard nothing from him, but I have no doubt but that he is making all the discoveries that can be made, without creating suspicion. They are all careful, resolute fellows & will do nothing without the utmost caution, & if they should, accidentally be detected it will take the half of Nauvoo to arrest them, for all is planned, either for victory or defeat.⁹⁸

The 1842 Election

As the 1842 election approached, members of the committee guiding the Hancock County Anti-Mormons published a strange-sounding threat. It seems to say that if the people of Hancock County did not send as many delegates to the upcoming Anti-Mormon convention as they sent last time, to nominate and elect “individuals of your own choice,” then there would be a mass meeting at the courthouse in Carthage. There is no context in which one can set this threat, but it seems real, so it is apparent the threat was intended to have greater meaning than the words now imply.

Anti-Mormon convention.

If we are defeated at all, it will be by Mormon votes, and the candidate who succeeds in opposition to us, must do it mainly by such votes—and should he succeed, he is welcome to the glory of it, say we.

In view of the important rights at stake, and considering this the last opportunity you may enjoy, in Hancock County, of both nominating and electing individuals of your own choice,

⁹⁸ Jennings, “Two Iowa Postmasters View Nauvoo,” 278.

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you are requested to send at least as many delegates as before, to the Convention, or the people in Mass may assemble at the Court House in Carthage, on Monday, the 30th day of May next, at 11 o'clock, a.m.⁹⁹

The May 4th issue of the *Warsaw Signal* was the last published before the Anti-Mormon Convention. Unfortunately, the next issue did not appear until July 9, and the minutes of the convention were not in that issue, nor were they published later. So we do not have an account of its proceedings. However, we get a glimpse of the party's expanded interests on the 23rd, when Sharp published the Anti-Mormon ticket as follows: "for [Illinois state] senator, Wm. H. Roosevelt; for representatives, Wesley Williams and Edson Whitney; for sheriff, Stephen H. Tyler, Jun.; for county commissioner, William D. Abernethy; and for governor, Benjamin Avise."¹⁰⁰ Clearly, the Hancock County Anti-Mormons had decided to expand their efforts and go statewide.

When the *Warsaw Signal* resumed publication in July, Sharp explained that he had closed the paper down because he was "laboring under pecuniary embarrassment, that our connection with the establishment had been but a source of vexation and loss, and, that it was more than could be expected of us to continue these sacrifices." He says his associates had asked him to resume publication, and if he could get enough subscriptions, he would do so. In asking for that support, Sharp promised to focus his newspaper on a single issue: the political defeat of Joseph Smith:

The issue, and the only issue, then, for the citizens of this county to decide, is, will you submit to this would be modern Mahomet's dictation? ...Such a man, we will resist—and wherever our feeble efforts can thwart, or our feeble pen

⁹⁹ *Warsaw Signal*, April 20, 1842. The announcement was dated April 1, 1842.

¹⁰⁰ *Warsaw Signal*, July 23, 1842.

expose his villainy; we will not be found relaxed in our duty.¹⁰¹

Soon after that, the *Warsaw Signal* published a letter from “Cato,” which was a kind of call for unity. It gives no details, but it is apparent that there had been a power struggle for the leadership of the Anti-Mormon Party, and that Sharp and his people had managed to retain their influence. Cato assured his readers that the party line of the Anti-Mormons had remained focused: The political campaign they were waging was not a contest of the Anti-Mormons against the Mormon people, but rather against just one man—Joseph Smith.¹⁰²

Joseph became increasingly active in state politics. On December 20, 1841, he published an address to his “friends in Illinois,” in which he expressed his support for the Democratic gubernatorial candidate Colonel Adam W. Snyder, and for Snyder’s lieutenant governor running mate, Colonel John Moore. Both men had been active in securing the Nauvoo charter. However, before the election Snyder died. Then, rather than suffer a demoralizing party infighting, the Democratic leaders nominated a dark horse named Thomas Ford, who was then a judge in the Illinois state Supreme Court.

Thomas Ford was the perfect example of “the American self-made man.” He and his widowed mother came to Illinois when he was just a lad. He worked hard, read law, established a good practice, and ingratiated himself with the most powerful political people in the state. At age 31, he became a judge of the circuit court for northern Illinois. Four years later he was commissioned a circuit judge for the Galena Circuit, and two years after that, was appointed by the state legislature to be a Justice of the Illinois Supreme Court. He served in 1841-1842.

¹⁰¹ *Warsaw Signal*, July 9, 1842.

¹⁰² *Warsaw Signal*, July 23, 1842.

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Ford acquired a favorable reputation on the bench, where he was respected by his peers and the attorneys who practiced before him; there is almost no disagreement about his learning, competence, and honesty as a judge. It was with this reputation for judicial probity and party loyalty that he was picked by Democratic party leaders to replace Adam W. Snyder as gubernatorial candidate after Snyder's death in May 1842.¹⁰³

He had dedicated his entire professional life to knowing and using the law, and was obviously admired for his success. He resigned from the Supreme Court after one year to accept the Democratic Party's nomination for Governor. He was then forty years old. He claimed there was even talk that he might become a challenge to Senator Stephen A. Douglas for his seat in the United States Senate.

After he had served his terms as governor, Ford wrote an autobiographical *History of Illinois* in which he told the story of the Mormons from his own, admittedly negative point of view—he made it very clear that he hated Joseph Smith. His *History* contains a self-deprecating, but probably honest, evaluation of the reason he was nominated for governor. “I was believed to have no more than a very ordinary share of ambition; because it was doubtful whether any of the leaders [of the Democratic Party] could be elected, and because it was thought I would stand more in need of support from leaders, than an actual leader would.”¹⁰⁴ Throughout all but the Mormon section of his *History of Illinois*, Ford shows himself to be both capable and ambitious.

Joseph Duncan, the Whig candidate, ran on a vigorous anti-Mormon platform. Ford did not. Neither did he make any special deal with the Mormons in exchange for their vote, but campaigned

¹⁰³ Davis, Rodney O., “Introduction to 1995 Edition,” in Ford, Thomas, *A History of Illinois* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995). xix.

¹⁰⁴ Ford, *History*, 271.

on a promise to improve the woeful economy of the state.

Even though Ford did not make his position about the Mormons clear, at least he had not overtly allied himself with the Anti-Mormons, so the Mormons voted for him—but given Duncan’s attitude, they really had no choice. With the help of the overwhelming Mormon vote, candidate Thomas Ford won the election, and in December, 1842, he was inaugurated governor of Illinois, replacing Governor Carlin. Ford would later prove to be one of Joseph Smith’s most effective enemies, and after Joseph’s death, Ford would use the power of his office to drive the Mormons from his state.

The 1842 election results were bitterly disappointing to the Anti-Mormons, for not one of their candidates had won. Instead, the election went to what they called “the Mormon-Democratic ticket.”¹⁰⁵ Sharp was not a good loser. He treated the election results with contempt and sarcasm. In a bitter editorial he wrote:

WHAT IS THE REMEDY?

The result of the recent election clearly demonstrates that the old citizens of Hancock County are the humble subjects of his Royal Highness, Joe Smith. We are now totally deprived of one of the dearest rights of Freedom—the Elective Franchise; and, hereafter, all our County officers and our Representatives, are to be chosen by the sole dictation of ONE MAN, and that man the most consummate villain and knave in the State! Know, then, fellow citizens, that we are in effect, but Political SLAVES—and are placed in the trilemma, of SUBMISSION—COMPROMISE—OR RESISTANCE. The later every thinking man will deprecate; the first is impossible to be long continued; peaceable compromise, then, is the only method by which we can regain our rights, without staining our cause. HOW CAN SUCH A COMPROMISE BE EFFECTED?—is a question which we now submit to the citizens of this county,

¹⁰⁵ *Warsaw Signal*, August 6, 1842. Official returns of the election were published August 13.

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and ask of them a calm, dispassionate, but decisive answer.

You are all aware that resistance to Mormon rule is an everyday topic among us; and every thinking man must see that there must be a compromise, or, sooner or later, it will come to this. ***Submission is out of the Question.*** We may not resist now—we may submit for years—but we must be contented to live as slaves, or seek a remedy for the existing evil. That remedy we may as well seek now as in the future. Again we ask—Can there not be a compromise?

In this matter, let the old citizens hang together; let not one portion of the county forsake the other; but let us make a common cause, and ask if there cannot be a peaceable division of the county, so as to set the Mormons off from us. We submit this subject, with the request that some of our citizens, in the various sections of the county, will give their views to the public through our columns.¹⁰⁶

Notwithstanding his blustering, with the general defeat of Sharp's Anti-Mormon Party during the last election, and with the assumed probability that the reward being offered for Joseph would result in his extradition to Missouri, Sharp found himself in both political and economic doldrums. His attempts to revitalize the *Warsaw Signal's* readership failed, and its last issue was published on October 1, 1842. The press was purchased by Thomas Gregg, who changed the newspaper's name to the *Warsaw Message*. Gregg quickly spelled out his attitude toward the Mormons:

In local matters—especially on the all absorbing question of Mormon Dictation and Tyranny—it will firmly maintain its old position: advocating, with all the zeal of which we are capable, the just rights and interests of the Old Citizens and exposing “without fear, favor or affection,” the crimes, villainies, and dangers, of that irresponsible and growing Power at Nauvoo,

¹⁰⁶ *Warsaw Signal*, August 6, 1842. All emphases are in the original.

which is daily fastening deeper and deeper its fangs upon the community. That a crisis is fast approaching in the affairs of this and the contiguous counties, is the opinion of most sober and reflecting citizens; and that it must be met—firmly—unyieldingly—yet rightfully met—is also the opinion of every good citizen and friend to his country. How to do this properly, will ever be a question of most vital importance with the conductors of this paper.¹⁰⁷

In Governor Ford, Joseph now had a new enemy who wielded the power of the state's executive office with all of the endearing proprieties of a sidewinder. A week after Ford took office, a Mormon delegation called on the new governor and were told that he believed the writ issued by Carlin against Joseph was illegal. This gave Joseph hope that Ford would not try to extradite him, and the Prophet again made his presence known in Nauvoo. In fact, Ford already had been contriving with Bennett about how to get Joseph out of Illinois and back to Missouri, and this was his way of bringing the Prophet out of hiding so he could hit him with a more substantial extradition order.

Nevertheless, Joseph's hope seemed justified in mid-December when Ford wrote to him, advising him to submit to the laws and have the court in Springfield decide whether the writ of extradition to Missouri was legal. Ford assured Joseph that he would ensure his safety. Joseph agreed, but was cautious. He allowed himself to be arrested by General Wilson Law of the Nauvoo Legion and then was escorted to Springfield under the guard of forty of the Legion's officers and men. He reached Springfield on December 30, 1842.

The trial began on January 4th and lasted two days. The whole issue was, as Joseph had said it was, whether Joseph could be taken from Illinois to Missouri to be tried for a crime that, if

¹⁰⁷ *Warsaw Messenger Extra*, n.d., copy in the Chicago Historical Society.

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committed, had been committed in Illinois. The judge ruled that he could not. The Missouri governor's action was unfounded, and the Illinois governor's arrest warrant and the entire extradition process had been illegal. Joseph was free to go home. The next day, January 6, Joseph called on Governor Ford and received from him a certificate stating the following:

Executive's Order of Release

I do hereby certify that I have inspected the foregoing record, and there is now no further cause for arresting or detaining Joseph Smith, therein named, by virtue of any proclamation or executive warrant heretofore issued by the governor of this state; and that since the judgment of the Circuit Court of the United States for the district of Illinois, all such proclamations are inoperative and void.¹⁰⁸

That seemed to settle the matter, so Joseph and his friends returned to Nauvoo on January 7. But it did not in fact settle anything. Joseph had avoided being taken to Missouri and almost certain death by assassination, but his enemies were not satisfied with the results of the trial and they had no intention of giving up.

¹⁰⁸ *History of the Church*, 5:244. The entire affair in Springfield, along with copies of legal documents are found in *History of the Church*, 5:209-45.

Chapter 3

1843

Bennett and Ford's Plot to Get Joseph to Missouri

Governor Ford's support was a prelude to betrayal. Ford had been working with Bennett and people in Missouri to arrange for another extradition order at the same time he was telling Joseph he would protect him if he came out of hiding to stand trial for the previous one.

Joseph got first wind of this new danger by reading a letter he was not supposed to see. It was written by John C. Bennett. Within three days after Joseph left Springfield, after the successful conclusion of his trial, Bennett had been with Ford in Springfield firming up the details of a plan that he had already made in Missouri. While he was in Springfield, Bennett sent the letter spelling out the entire plan to Sidney Rigdon and Orson Pratt. His addressing it to Pratt was based on an assumption that proved to be a mistake.

Springfield Illinois, January 10, 1843
Mr. Sidney Rigdon and Orson Pratt,

Dear Friends: It is a long time since I have written to you, and I should now much desire to see you; but I leave tonight for Missouri, to meet the messenger charged with the arrest of Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Lyman Wight, and others for murder, burglary, treason, &c., &c., who will be demanded, in

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a few days, on *new* indictments found by the grand jury of a called court on the original evidence, and in relation to which a *nolle prosequi* was entered by the District Attorney.

New proceedings have been gotten up on the *old* charges, and no *habeas corpus* can then save them. We shall try Smith on the Boggs case when we get him into Missouri. The war goes bravely on; and, although Smith thinks he is now safe, the enemy is near, even at the door. He has awaked the wrong passenger. The governor [Ford] will relinquish Joe up at once on the new requisition. There is but one opinion on the case, and that is, nothing can save Joe on a new requisition and demand predicated on the *old* charges on the *institution of new writs*. He must go to Missouri; but he shall not be harmed, if he is not guilty: but he is a *murderer*, and must suffer the penalty of the law. Enough on this subject.

I hope that both of your kind and amiable families are well, and you will please to give them *all* my best respects. I hope to see you all *soon*. When the officer arrives, I shall be near at hand. I shall see you all again. Please to write me at Independence immediately.¹⁰⁹

Bennett sent the letter to Sidney Rigdon with instructions that he should show it to Orson Pratt. He did not explain what he wanted from those two men, but clearly he expected assistance of some sort. Bennett chose these two men because he believed they would help. Rigdon and Bennett had been friends for a long time. By August, 1842, Rigdon's actions caused people to believe he was about to leave the Church, but when his daughter was miraculously healed, Rigdon publicly announced his firm

¹⁰⁹ *History of the Church*, 5:251. Italics are in the original.

intentions to stay. Nevertheless, after that time, he had been more supportive of Bennett than of Joseph.¹¹⁰

Orson Pratt was an altogether different matter. While he was away from Nauvoo, Bennett had convinced Orson's wife that Joseph was secretly practicing spiritual wifery. When Orson returned, he learned all about it from her, Bennett, and perhaps Sidney. Orson was so taken aback by what they told him that his response resulted in his being removed from the Council of the Twelve Apostles. Thus, both men were disaffected from the Prophet when Bennett wrote to them.

Neither the apostates nor the Anti-Mormon leaders understood the deep theological moorings of the Mormon doctrine of Celestial Marriage, so when they got wind of it they turned it into an excuse for their own sexual license or tried to expose it as such. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that sacral marriages, performed by appropriate authority in this world, are binding in eternity, and that this doctrine had been understood by the Old Testament patriarchs who practiced polygamy. Joseph also taught that in such marriages, a man could have more than one wife; that the relationships between a husband and each of his wives were equally sacred, and that they must not be violated by extra-marital sexual activity. Therefore, the Mormons could truthfully and vigorously deny the allegations that they were secretly practicing an adulterous "spiritual wifery." However, because the doctrine was not taught publicly, those who understood it felt that they must make their denials without exposing themselves by explaining the differences between their Celestial Marriage and the alleged spiritual wifery with which they were accused.¹¹¹ The difference

¹¹⁰ *History of the Church*, 5:121-23.

¹¹¹ *Nauvoo Neighbor Extra*, June 19, 1844; *Woodruff Journal*, 1:328.

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between Orson Pratt and the others who had left the Church was that Orson wanted to understand.

When Rigdon got the letter he followed Bennett's instructions and gave it to Orson, who took it directly to Joseph. This show of fidelity on Orson's part, and conversations we are not now privy to, quickly resulted in Orson's being reinstated as a member of the Twelve Apostles.

In contrast, even though Rigdon had an opportunity to do so, he did not admit to Joseph that he had received the letter until after Joseph confronted him with it. This convinced Joseph that Rigdon was in league with Bennett and the Missouri conspirators. In March, Joseph wrote a letter to Rigdon accusing him of being "in connection with John C. Bennett and George W. Robinson in the whole of their abominable practices, in seeking to destroy me and this people."¹¹² Rigdon replied in a letter reaffirming his devotion to the Church.

Notwithstanding Rigdon's protestations of innocence, the relationship between Joseph and him continued to worsen until October of that year. During a conference of the Church, Joseph proposed that Rigdon be dropped from the First Presidency. Joseph's reasons were "a supposed correspondence and connection with John C. Bennett, with Ex-Governor Carlin, and with the Missourians, of a treacherous character." Joseph said he had learned through Porter Rockwell's mother that Rigdon and others had given information to the Missourians about Joseph's whereabouts while Porter was in hiding. Notwithstanding Joseph's arguments, the conference voted to sustain Rigdon in his position in the First Presidency. Whereupon, Joseph arose and said, "I have

¹¹² *History of the Church*, 5:313.

thrown him off my shoulders. And you have again put him on me. You will carry him but I will not.”¹¹³

Kidnaping and Imprisonment of Porter Rockwell

When the court in Springfield ruled that Governor Carlin’s extradition order was illegal, the way was opened for Porter Rockwell also to come out of hiding and return to Nauvoo. He attempted to do so, but as he was returning, the river boat on which he had passage stopped at St. Louis, Missouri. There he was recognized and kidnaped. He was then arrested and taken to Liberty jail, where he was held without trial for nine months pending charges that he had shot ex-Governor Boggs. While he was in prison, he learned some very important information that he relayed to Joseph as soon as he was able to return to Nauvoo. Porter’s mother had learned about Rigdon, but Porter himself discovered that there was yet another traitor in the highest quorum of the Church.

¹¹³ *History of the Church*, 5:47-49. For the history of Joseph’s growing distrust of Sidney, see McKiernan, “*Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness, Sidney Rigdon*,” 115-124.

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The 1843 Extradition Attempt

In early summer of 1843, Illinois was preparing for another election. During the last one politicians learned that the Mormons had sufficient numbers to tip the results toward their preferred candidates. When the Mormons in Nauvoo voted for Democrats, they won. Now the Whigs wanted to win them over, but if the accusations made against them were true, the Whigs did not play by the rules. The following newspaper account is an accusative article in the Democratic *Illinois State Register*. The story has an obvious political bias, but the facts are essentially true.

The public is already aware that a demand was lately made upon the Governor of this State for the arrest of Joseph Smith, and that a writ was accordingly issued against him. We propose now to state some of the facts, furnishing strong ground of suspicion that the demand which was made on the governor here, was a maneuver of the Whig party.

1. A letter was shown to a gentleman of this city, by the agent of Missouri, from the notorious John C. Bennett to a gentleman in one of the western counties of that State, urging the importance of getting up an indictment immediately against Smith, for the five or six year old treason of which he was accused several years ago.

2. This charge had been made once before, and afterwards abandoned by Missouri. It is the same charge on which Smith was arrested and carried before Judge Douglas and discharged two years ago. After that decision, the indictment against Smith was dismissed and the charge wholly abandoned.

3. But in the letter alluded to, Bennett says to his Missouri agent, "Go to the Judge, and never leave him until he appoints a special term of the court; never suffer the court to adjourn until an indictment is found against Smith for treason. When an

indictment shall have been found, get a copy, and go immediately to the governor, and never leave him until you get a demand on the governor of Illinois for Smith's arrest; and then dispatch some active and vigilant person to Illinois for a warrant, and let him never leave the governor until he gets it; and then let him never come back to Missouri without Smith."

4. A special term of the circuit court of Daviess county, Missouri, was accordingly called on the 5th day of June last. An indictment was found against Smith five years old. A demand was made and a writ issued, as anticipated, by the 17th of the month.¹¹⁴

The old treason charges that the above newspaper mentioned and that Missouri now dredged up from the past went back to at least Sunday, November 11, 1838. That morning a blacksmith came into the cell where Joseph and others were imprisoned, and began to handcuff and chain them all together. He was a talkative fellow and told them what was going on in preparation for their appearance in court.

He also said the judge had done this that we might not get bail. He also said the judge declared his intention to keep us in jail until all the "Mormons" were driven out of the state. He also said that the judge had further declared that if he let us out before the "Mormons" had left the state, we would not let them leave, and there would be another damned fuss kicked up. I also heard the judge say, whilst he was sitting in his pretended court, that there was no law for us, or for the "Mormons" in the state of Missouri; that he had sworn to see them exterminated and to see the governor's order executed to the very letter; and that he would do so.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Reprinted in *History of the Church*, 5:512-15.

¹¹⁵ *History of the Church*, 3: Appendix, 404

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The Missouri code, like that in Illinois, provided the rights of bail except for a few specified crimes. Treason was one of them. Because the Mormons were accused of treason, their lawyers could not even request that they be set free on bail.

The prisoners were taken to the court of Judge Austin A. King. There, one of those prisoners, Caleb Baldwin, who was at that time chained to Joseph Smith,

...asked Judge King to grant him a fair trial at law, saying that with the result of such a trial, he would be satisfied. But Judge King answered that “there was no law for the Mormons:” that “they must be exterminated”; that the prisoners, this deponent Smith and others, must die.¹¹⁶

Given the judge’s attitude, it is understandable that he permitted “treason” to be used as a cover of law to prevent the prisoners from requesting bail. After the hearing before Judge King, the prisoners had been taken to jail.

In 1843 those old charges were dredged up again and used by Governor Ford to justify the phrase in the extradition order that Joseph was a “fugitive from justice.”

By late May or early June, all the arrangements Bennett had been coordinating between Missouri and Illinois were accomplished, and the pieces on the chess board began to move into place. On June 10, Samuel C. Owens, the sheriff who had been commander of the Jackson County mob that drove out the Mormons, wrote a letter to Governor Ford stating that at the last term of the circuit court in Daviess County an indictment was found against Joseph Smith for treason against the state. He explained Bennett’s involvement in the case and said a Mr.

¹¹⁶ *History of the Church*, 5:495.

Reynolds [not the governor] would soon deliver a letter to Ford from Governor Reynolds requesting that Joseph be arrested and sent to Missouri. The letter gave important details about the cooperative efforts of the Missouri and Illinois anti-Mormons. It read:

Sir:—for the last three months I have been corresponding with Dr. John C. Bennett relative to one certain Joe Smith, Mormon Prophet, etc., of your state. In several of Dr. Bennett's letters to me, he informs me that my name is known to you. Taking this for granted authorizes me without hesitation to write you full upon a subject that the people of this part of our state feel themselves vitally interested in.

At the last term of the circuit court of Daviess County, an indictment was found by the grand jury of said county against Joseph Smith for treason against this state. The necessary papers are now on their way to Governor Reynolds, who, on the receipt thereof, I have no doubt, will make a requisition on you for the apprehension and delivery of said Smith to the bearer, Mr. Joseph Reynolds, who goes as a special agent to attend to this business; and I am in hopes that, so soon as the proper papers come to hand, you will take that course that will secure this imposter and have him delivered over to Mr. Reynolds.

Dr. Bennett further writes me that he has made an arrangement with Harmon T. Wilson, of Hancock County (Carthage, seat of justice) in whose hands he wishes the writ that shall be issued by you to be put. From the tenor of his letters I am induced to believe that he has made the same suggestions to you. The only wish of the people of this state is that this man, Joseph Smith, may be brought to that justice which the magnitude of his crime merits.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ *History of the Church*, 5:422-23.

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In addition to the information about Bennett's connections with the Missouri extradition efforts, there are two other important disclosures in this letter. One is that Bennett had already made arrangements with Harmon Wilson of Carthage to accept and execute the arrest order from Governor Ford. The other is the sentence: "From the tenor of his letters, I am induced to believe that he has made the same suggestions to you." That sentence posits two things: (1) "Letters" is plural: Bennett and Ford had already discussed this matter more than once. That is also shown in the sentence in the first paragraph, "In several of Dr. Bennett's letters to me, he informs me that my name is known to you." Bennett's conversations with Ford had extended over a relatively long period of time—long enough that Bennett could write "several" letters in which he reported his conversations with Ford to his cohorts in Missouri. So Ford and Bennett were negotiating with Missouri about Joseph's capture during the time Ford wrote to Joseph that he should come out of hiding and be tried in Springfield.

The other disclosure was that Bennett and Ford anticipated the extradition request from Missouri, and had already planned that Ford would honor it when it came. They had even decided how to capture the Prophet.

Owens would not have risked offending Ford by making statements that Ford knew to be untrue. That evinces Ford's involvement with Bennett in the initial formation of the plans to get Joseph out of Illinois and into Missouri. This is an important backdrop to the story Ford tells about Joseph's imprisonment in 1844, when he represents himself as being completely impartial about the Mormon question. But while he was acting out that part then, he was doing the same thing and in the same way he is doing here—trying to entrap Joseph at any cost except his own reputation.

There was much more to the story than that. The editor of the *St. Louis Republican* later claimed Governor Ford had not only supported the extradition order when it came to him from Missouri, but that he had actually initiated the plan to get Joseph out of Illinois and back to Missouri.¹¹⁸

In accordance with the plan, on June 13, Missouri Governor Thomas Reynolds wrote the following extradition request to Ford:

Executive Department,
City of Jefferson.

Know ye that I, Thomas Reynolds, governor of the state of Missouri, having full trust and confidence in the integrity and abilities of Joseph H. Reynolds, do hereby constitute and appoint him as the agent of the said state of Missouri, to proceed to the state of Illinois, for the purpose of receiving from the proper authorities of the state one Joseph Smith Jun., charged with treason by him committed against the state of Missouri, and as having fled from justice to the state of Illinois; and I do hereby authorize and direct said Joseph H. Reynolds to convey said Joseph Smith, Jun., from the state of Illinois, and deliver him to the custody of the sheriff of Daviess county, in the state of Missouri.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the great seal of the state of Missouri.

¹¹⁸ *St. Louis Republican*, St. Louis, Missouri, June 24, 1844; reprinted in: *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, Bangor Maine, July 6, 1844. The name Locofocos had originated not long before when a group of Democrats in New York bolted from the regular party and captured control of a party meeting. The regular Democrats had the gas lights turned off in the building, but the rebels continued their meeting by the light of “Locofoco” brand matches. Thereafter liberal Democrats were given the derogatory title of Locofocos.

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Done at the city of Jefferson, this 13th day of June, in the
year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-three.

By the Governor,
[Seal.] Thos. Reynolds.¹¹⁹

On June 13, the same day that Governor Reynolds wrote to Ford, Joseph and Emma, with their four children, left Nauvoo to visit Emma's sister, Elizabeth Wasson, who lived near Dixon, more than 200 miles to the north. Ford knew when and where they were going.

On Friday, June 16, only three days after Reynolds's letter was dated, but probably before it had time to actually reach Governor Ford's office, Judge James Adams of Springfield (a dear friend who had assisted Joseph during the Springfield trials, who had been among the first to receive the temple endowment, and who addressed Joseph as "my son") sent an express message to Nauvoo warning that he had just learned that Governor Ford was going to issue a writ for Joseph's arrest the next day. Jefferson City, the Missouri state capitol, is about 230 miles from Springfield, via St. Louis. It is unlikely that Reynolds's letter could have reached Ford that quickly. The unlikelihood of that presents the real possibility that Ford, under pressure of time, learning that Joseph was leaving Nauvoo, acted on Owens's letter rather than waiting for Governor Reynolds's official request to arrive. Judge Adams's information was correct, and the next day, June 17, Ford issued the following:

Thomas Ford, governor of the state of Illinois, to all sheriffs
and constables of any county of the state, and to Harmon T.

¹¹⁹ *History of the Church*, 5:464.

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Wilson, of the county of Hancock, greeting:

Whereas it has been made known to me by the executive authority of the state of Missouri, that one Joseph Smith, Jun., stands charged with the crime of treason against the state of Missouri, and alleged that Joseph Smith, Jun., has fled from the justice of the said state of Missouri and taken refuge in the state of Illinois.

Now, therefore, I, Thomas Ford, governor of the state of Illinois, pursuant to the constitution and laws of the United States and of this state, do hereby command you to arrest and apprehend the said Joseph Smith, Jun., if he be found within the limits of the state aforesaid, and cause him to be safely kept and delivered to the custody of Joseph H. Reynolds, Esq., who has been duly constituted the agent of the said state of Missouri to receive the said fugitive from the justice of said state, he paying all fees and charges for the arrest and apprehension of said Joseph Smith, Jun., and make due returns to the executive department of this state, of the manner in which this writ may be executed.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand, and caused the great seal of the state to be affixed.

Done at the city of Springfield, this 17th day of June, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-three, and of the Independence of the United States the sixty-seventh.

By the Governor,
Thomas Ford.¹²⁰

Ford followed Owens's instructions. He gave the document to Joseph Reynolds, who, with Harmon T. Wilson of Carthage, went straight to Dixon to arrest the Prophet. There was no time between

¹²⁰ *History of the Church*, 5:465

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when they left Springfield and when they arrived in Dixon for them to have gone to Nauvoo or anywhere else to try to discover where Joseph might be found—so they must have already known. Someone, one of Joseph’s close associates in Nauvoo, had leaked information about where he would be—and that if they took him now, they could avoid the trouble of having to deal with his bodyguards and friends in Nauvoo. That would account for why Ford was in such a hurry to sign the extradition warrant and get it into the hands of the Missouri agent.

In Nauvoo, when Hyrum received the express from Judge Adams, he asked William Clayton and Stephen Markham to go find Joseph and warn him. They left at midnight, and rode at a furious pace to cover the 212 miles in just 66 hours. To do that, they sometimes forced liquor down their horses’ throats in order to keep them going. They reached the Wasson home on the afternoon of June 21, only to learn that Joseph was not there. He had gone to Dixon. They set out again, passed Reynolds and Wilson on the road (they were disguised as Mormon elders and the real Mormons did not recognize them for who they were), found Joseph, and returned to the Wasson home.

The fact that Governor Ford’s agents arrived at the same time as Clayton and Markham, calls into question the actual date of Ford’s extradition order. Nauvoo and Springfield are about the same distance from Dixon, so if Wilson had been ready and waiting in Springfield, he and Reynolds could have left the day after Judge Adams sent his express to Nauvoo, and arrived at Dixon when they did. But that presupposes Ford had already made arrangements for Wilson to go after Joseph.

Springfield is about the same distance from Nauvoo as from Carthage. So had those arrangements not been made, and Reynolds had to go to Carthage to pick up Wilson, Reynolds could not have left Springfield on the day the extradition order was dated, traveled

to Carthage to pick up Wilson, and still arrived in Dixon at the same time as the Mormon messengers. In that case, in order for them to have traveled that extra distance and arrived in Dixon when they did—the same day, and almost the same hour as the Mormon messengers—Ford would have had to postdate his extradition order by at least a day or two so that it would coincide with the date he anticipated receiving the request from Missouri. (Ford would do that again in 1844 when he sent Joseph a letter from Warsaw and postdated it the next day, claiming it was sent from Carthage.) In either case, Ford had arranged for the execution of the extradition order some time before the order was dated.

Reynolds and Wilson appeared at the Wassons' home while the family was at dinner. Represented themselves as Mormon elders, they asked to see Joseph. He was in the yard, going toward the barn when these two men came out of the house and accosted him, drew pistols, forced him into a wagon, and drove off. They did not arrest him. They presented him with no writ showing under what authority he was taken or why. Instead they kidnaped him, refused him counsel when he requested it, and raced with him at gunpoint toward Missouri, making sure he had no chance for a court hearing or an opportunity to get a writ of *habeas corpus*. When they stopped at Dixon to get fresh horses, they locked Joseph in a room that they personally guarded—one on the outside of the door, the other on the inside, while the horses were being changed. However, Stephen Markham, who had followed them, got word to Mr. Dixon, who owned the establishment where they had Joseph locked up. Joseph later recalled that Dixon and his friends

...gathered around the hotel door, and gave Reynolds to understand that if that was their mode of doing business in Missouri, they had another way of doing it in Dixon. They were a law-abiding people and Republicans, and gave

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Reynolds to understand that he should not take me [Joseph] away without giving me the opportunity of a fair trial, and that I should have justice done me; but that if he persisted in his course, they had a very summary way of dealing with such people.¹²¹

Reynolds agreed to give them 30 minutes to find a lawyer for his prisoner, then he would be off again to Missouri whether they had found one or not. Dixon sent a message to Cyrus H. Walker, “who happened to be near,” to come and get a writ of *habeas corpus* for Joseph. (He must have been really near, for he had to be found, told the story and convinced to come, then get back to Joseph—and all within the allotted half hour.)

When Walker, the Whig Congressional candidate, came, Joseph asked him to represent him. Walker said he was campaigning and could not take the time from that unless Joseph promised to vote for him. (That was Joseph’s report, but “this accusation of apparent bribery is recorded not only by Smith the Prophet, but is confirmed by E. B. Washburn, an important political personality of the time,”)¹²² Walker believed if Joseph voted for him, the whole Mormon population would follow, so his being Joseph’s lawyer would virtually guarantee him a seat in the next Congress. Joseph agreed to the precise conditions of Walker’s demands—that he, Joseph, would vote for Walker—and Walker agreed to be Joseph’s lawyer. Walker then boasted to Stephen Markham, “I am now sure of my election, as Joseph Smith has promised me his vote, and I am going to defend him.”¹²³

¹²¹ *History of the Church*, 5:442.

¹²² Gayler, “Attempts by the State of Missouri to Extradite Joseph Smith, 1841-1843,” 46.

¹²³ *History of the Church*, 5:444.

By this time our story has taken a strange turn about: Ford, the Democrat, is clearly behind the kidnaping, yet Walker, the Whig, is making all the political hay. The Democrats will claim that Walker was in Dixon by design, in order to take the Mormon vote away from the Democrats. If that were true, then both the Democrats and the Whigs had spies in Nauvoo to learn when and where Joseph was going, and the Whigs had spies in Ford's office to learn how Ford intended to catch him. Since Walker was already in Dixon, he also must have had sufficient notice so he could get to the right place at the right time.

So far, if what the Democrats wrote was true, up until this point everything was going according to Whig plan. Then, from everyone's point of view, Stephen Markham began to make a mess of things. Acting on his own, Markham found a justice of the peace and sued out a writ for assault and threatening his life against Reynolds and Wilson. They were arrested by Sheriff Campbell of Lee County, then Joseph also brought an action against Reynolds for false imprisonment. At a hearing Reynolds was assigned bail at \$400, but he did not have that much money and knew no one who would lend it to him. So on this charge he was held in custody by Sheriff Campbell.

Now the situation was this: Joseph was kidnaped by Reynolds and Wilson. Joseph found a lawyer and requested a writ of *habeas corpus*. Reynolds and Wilson were arrested by Sheriff Campbell on separate charges brought by Markham and Joseph. Reynolds could not pay bail so he also sought a writ of *habeas corpus*. Joseph's lawyer—who just happened to be in town—was the Whig candidate for Congress, and he thought he had just won the entire Mormon vote and was thereby assured of a seat in Congress. The *habeas corpus* hearings were all to be in the court of a judge in the town of Ottawa. That seemed to upset Reynolds's plans by losing

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him precious time, because now the entire party had to go to Ottawa.

Before they left Dixon, on the same morning that Walker agreed to be Joseph's lawyer, Joseph hired a man with a horse and buggy to take William Clayton to Rock Island. Clayton was fortunate enough to arrive there just a few minutes before the steamer came. He booked passage, got on board, and headed for Nauvoo to find Hyrum and ask him to send help to Joseph.

When the party looking for someone to give them writs of *habeas corpus* arrived in Ottawa, they learned the judge who was to receive the writs was out of town. Consequently new writs had to be made out. This time Stephen Markham had them worded so they could be ruled on by any judge in the Fifth Judicial District. Joseph's lawyer and Sheriff Campbell decided to take the writs to the court of Judge Stephen A. Douglas at Quincy, 260 miles to the south. Accordingly, the entire party set out the next morning for Quincy. That place was an interesting choice. Joseph no doubt liked it because going there would give him time to get help from Nauvoo. If Walker, Joseph's lawyer, had known about the plot and was in cahoots with Reynolds, they would have liked it because going there would have given Reynolds time and opportunity to re-kidnap Joseph (as he tried twice to do), and take him to Missouri before Joseph had a chance to get to the judge in Quincy.

On Sunday, June 25, while the Saints at Nauvoo were meeting at the temple, Hyrum went to the stand and requested that the brethren meet him at the Masonic Hall in thirty minutes. Their response was so overwhelming that one fourth of those who came could not get into the assembly room, so they adjourned to the green and formed a hollow square around Hyrum. He told them that William Clayton had arrived, bringing news that Reynolds and Harmon Wilson had arrested Joseph and were trying to spirit him off to Missouri. Hyrum called for volunteers to go make sure

Joseph got a fair trial. About three hundred men volunteered. The two Nauvoo Legion commanders, Wilson Law and Charles C. Rich, were chosen to lead two separate parties, both to start that evening. However, Wilson Law (William Law's brother) refused to budge:

Wilson Law declared he would not go a step unless he could have money to bear his expenses, upon which Elder Brigham Young said the money should be forthcoming although he did not know at the time where he could raise a dollar. In about thirty minutes he got on the track, and in the course of two hours he had borrowed seven hundred dollars, and put it in the hands of Hyrum Smith and Wilson Law, to defray the expenses of the expedition.¹²⁴

Not long before that, Wilson Law had commanded the side of the Nauvoo Legion's sham battle where Bennett had requested Joseph go without his bodyguards.

Now, more circumstantial evidence was slowly beginning to grow suggesting that the Laws might not be fully supportive of the Prophet. Nevertheless, Brigham delivered the money, so no matter what Wilson Law's private feelings may have been; he led the party to find Joseph. His brother William also went along.

It is an important legal matter to note, as Governor Ford later confirmed in his *History*, that the men from Nauvoo did not go as official units of the Nauvoo Legion, but as individuals and without any semblance of military authority or order. The reason why that was important is that if they had come as the Legion rather than as individuals, there would have been occasion for accusing the Legion of officially interfering with the execution of the law. But

¹²⁴ *History of the Church*, 5:447.

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because they went as individuals, there could be no such accusation. The Mormons often walked a legal tightrope, and they became very good at it.

While Joseph's rescuers were heading north to find him, he and his small party were headed south toward Quincy. As they traveled, that Monday, Joseph was under guard of Reynolds and Wilson, who in turn were guarded by Sheriff Campbell. During the day, Reynolds insisted that Joseph stay in or on the coach and refused to let him ride his own horse.

On Tuesday, Mormon men who heard of their Prophet's plight began to join the party in ever-increasing numbers—not challenging anyone's authority, just riding along in a neighborly way—until Joseph himself was in charge—symbolized by his riding his own horse because he chose to. As the number of Mormons in the party grew, Joseph's assailants became terrified for their own safety even though they were assured they would be treated well. Ford described the situation this way:

On the road, during their progress, they were met by parties of the citizens of Nauvoo, some or most of whom are said to have been members of the Nauvoo Legion, though there is no evidence that they appeared in a military capacity. There was no exhibition of arms of any description, nor was there any military or warlike array, nor was there any actual force used, though Mr. Reynolds testifies that he felt under constraint, and that Smith, soon after meeting the first parties of Mormons, enlarged himself from his custody.

Mr. Reynolds also testifies (and there can be no doubt of the fact) that he was taken to Nauvoo against his will.

But whether he was taken there by the command of Smith and his friends, or by the voluntary act of the sheriff of Lee County, who had him in custody, does not appear by any testimony furnished by Mr. Reynolds. The affidavit of the sheriff has not been obtained, though there is an evidence on

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the other side to show that the sheriff of Lee County voluntarily carried Mr. Reynolds to the city of Nauvoo, without any coercion on the part of anyone.¹²⁵

When they stopped for the night, Joseph's party began to discover more of the particulars of Reynolds' plan. About eight o'clock on Tuesday evening, Markham overheard "Reynolds, Wilson, and the landlord consulted about sending out to raise a company to take me [Joseph] by force, and run with me to the mouth of Rock River on the Mississippi, as there was a company of men ready to kidnap me over the river." Markham told Sheriff Campbell what he had heard, and the sheriff immediately ordered a guard placed on the house so no one could leave or enter during the night.

The bit of information Markham overheard threw a brilliant new light on the operation—this was a well-coordinated effort—not to take Joseph to Missouri where he was to be tried in court for some pretended crime, but to take him across the river where Reynolds expected to hand him over to a company of kidnappers. Once he got to Missouri, Joseph was not intended to live long enough to have his day in a Missouri court. The men on the other side of the Mississippi were being kept informed about where Reynolds' party was located in Illinois so they could be just across the river in the right place at the right time. Another part of the plan was revealed the next night:

Peter W. Conover laid down at the S.W. corner of the building outside the house. In about ten minutes, Reynolds and Wilson came out of the house with the son of the landlord. They talked for some time, and came to the conclusion to take the carriage

¹²⁵ Ford to Governor Reynolds, *History of the Church*, 5:534.

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horses, go to Monmouth, raise a mob, and come to the farmhouse in the night, seize Joseph, and convey him to the Mississippi River and take him to Missouri, as they had a steamboat in readiness at the mouth of Rock River for that purpose.¹²⁶

Again Sheriff Campbell was notified. This time Reynolds and Wilson were kept in a locked and guarded room for the night, and the landlord made sure his son would not do anything foolish and get in trouble with the law.

Now Joseph knew that not only was there a party waiting to kidnap him in Missouri, but there was also a steamboat waiting to take him across the river to the kidnappers. The plan in Missouri had been well devised, well organized, and well financed—and, necessarily, well in advance.

On Thursday the 29th, Joseph's group met up with his friends from Nauvoo. Joseph then consulted with his lawyer and Sheriff Campbell, and they all agreed that Nauvoo was the nearest place where writs of *habeas corpus* could be heard and determined, so the party decided to go to Nauvoo. Reynolds and Wilson were now even more frightened. They believed that they were headed for the very fate that they had plotted for Joseph. They protested that if they were forced to go to Nauvoo, they would never come out alive. But Sheriff Campbell insisted, so the entire party turned toward Nauvoo.

Before they arrived in Nauvoo, Joseph's friends in town had already learned they were coming. Joseph's party was met by a great throng of people—a train of carriages, the Nauvoo Brass Band, and the Martial Band—and this parade of happy people escorted their Prophet into the city.

¹²⁶ *History of the Church*, 5:453.

After Joseph arrived at home, a writ of *habeas corpus* was issued by the Nauvoo Municipal Court, so Reynolds was compelled by the authority of the court to produce Joseph before that tribunal. After hearing the case, the court discharged Joseph from arrest on the grounds that the arrest was without legal basis.¹²⁷

Joseph was home. To that degree one might say he had won a respite, but from the point of view of his enemies, it only meant that they had to re-evaluate their strategies.

The Democrats would later claim that the whole thing was a set up, and that Walker's being at the right place at the right time was no happenstance at all. Walker's boasting that he had just won the election gives some credence to the charge. The Democratic *Illinois State Register* accused Walker outright of creating the situation in order to put himself in the right place and the right time to win votes from the Mormons. In doing so the newspaper tied John C. Bennett securely to the Whig party.

Was the Arrest of the Prophet a Political Trick?

Bennett, it is well known, has for a year past been a mere tool in the hands of the Whig junto at Springfield. He has been under their absolute subjection and control, and has been a regular correspondent of the *Sangamo Journal*, the principal organ of the Whig party. He has been a great pet of both the *Journal* and the junto, and that paper has regularly announced his removal from place to place, until latterly and within the last year has published more of his writings than of any other person except the editor.

Cyrus Walker, a short time after his nomination as the Whig candidate for Congress, in the 6th district, made a pilgrimage to Nauvoo, for the purpose of currying favor with

¹²⁷ Ford to Reynolds, *History of the Church*, 5:553.

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the Mormons and getting their support. But in this he was disappointed, as it appeared that many of the Mormons were disposed to support the Democratic candidate. Cyrus went home disappointed and dejected; and it was generally believed that, failing to get the Mormon vote, he would be beaten by his Democratic opponent.

Let it be also borne in mind that the treason of which Smith was accused was five or six years old; that it had been abandoned as a charge by Missouri; that the circuit court of that State sat three times a year; that Smith was permanently settled at Nauvoo, no person dreaming that he would leave there for years to come; that they might have waited in Missouri for a regular term of the court, if the design was simply to revive a charge of treason against Smith, with a perfect assurance that he would always be found at home, and be as subject to arrest at one time as another. But this delay did not suit the conspirators, as it would put off an attempt to arrest Smith until after the August election.

Let it be borne in mind also that the agent of Missouri, after he had obtained the custody of Smith at Dixon, refused to employ a Democratic lawyer, and insisted upon having a Whig lawyer of inferior abilities, simply upon the ground, as he stated, that the Democrats were against him.

Let it also be borne in mind that Cyrus Walker, the Whig candidate for Congress, miraculously *happened* to be within six miles of Dixon when Smith was arrested, ready and convenient to be employed by Smith to get him delivered from custody; and that he was actually employed, and actually did get Smith enlarged from custody; and withal, let it be remembered that John C. Bennett is the pliant tool and pander of the junto at Springfield; and that he was the instigator of an unnecessary special term in Missouri, on the 5th day of June last, for the purpose of getting Smith indicted.

We say, let all these facts be borne in mind, and they produce a strong suspicion, that the whole affair is a Whig

conspiracy to compel a Democratic governor to issue a writ against Smith, pending the Congressional election, so as to incense the Mormons, create a necessity for Walker's and perhaps Browning's professional services in favor of Smith, to get him delivered out of the net of their own weaving, and thereby get the everlasting gratitude of the Mormons and their support for the Whig cause.¹²⁸

The newspaper went far beyond asserting that the Whigs had played a political dirty trick to get Joseph's vote for Walker. It claims that Bennett had been working *for* the Whigs all the time he was working *with* Governor Ford to achieve the extradition. So, they claimed, Bennett and the Whigs were using Governor Ford to kidnap Joseph in order to put Joseph in a bind so he would vote for Walker. It also asserts that Walker knew a great many details about the attempt to extradite Joseph to Missouri—that he was involved in the plot, and knew when and how it was going to happen. For example, he must have known (1) where and when Joseph was going on vacation; (2) that the Missouri governor would request extradition at the time when Joseph was away from the safety of Nauvoo; (3) that Bennett had already convinced Ford to sign the extradition papers; (4) that an agent from Missouri would come to Dixon to arrest Joseph; (5) that Joseph would need a lawyer while he was away from Nauvoo; (6) that the Missouri agent would allow only 30 minutes, which was not enough time for Dixon's messenger to get on a horse and go try to find someone else. If Walker was waiting in the wings where he expected to be found, then Dixon, who knew just where to find him, may also have been in on the plot. And most important of all: Walker knew all of this

¹²⁸ As reprinted in *History of the Church*, 5:515.

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far enough in advance that he could “happen” to be in Dixon at the perfect time and in the convenient place.

To accomplish all of that, would have required (1) The assistance of someone in Nauvoo who knew Joseph’s activities well enough in advance to get the ball rolling, and (2) The assistance of someone in Missouri who could help make things happen. There can be no question who the person in Missouri was reported to be, because everyone who writes about it gives John C. Bennett the credit for putting the whole operation together. And Ford must have known and agreed in advance to Joseph’s extradition, because the whole secret Whig plot revolved around their knowing the Democratic governor would cooperate. But who could be the person in Nauvoo who knew Joseph’s personal plans? There are two likely suspects. One was Sidney Rigdon, who was known to be in close contact with Bennett. But Sidney was out of favor just then, and probably would not have had access to the confidential information needed. The other was the person who most vigorously campaigned for Walker in Nauvoo during the election, and who, just 5 months later was actually named as the spy who was secretly working with Joseph’s enemies in Missouri. That was Joseph’s other counselor, William Law.

Ford was a key player in the plot from its beginning, and in his *History*, Ford repeatedly expressed his hatred for the Prophet. Joseph was fighting for his life against Governor Ford of Illinois, Governor Reynolds of Missouri, John C. Bennett, and whomever else Bennett had enlisted in Carthage, Springfield, eastern and western Missouri, and even Nauvoo. The irony was, that when it was over, Joseph alone had the power to choose the next Illinois representative to the Congress of the United States—but his position of power had almost cost him his life, and would require careful maneuvering in order for him to keep his promise and still

not elect the candidate who had been at the very root of the plot against him.

Election of 1843

When Reynolds and Wilson left Nauvoo, the matter did not end there. They went directly to Carthage and filed affidavits stating that Markham had taken Joseph from them by force. Then they headed for Springfield to ask Governor Ford to raise a posse to go to Nauvoo and re-capture Joseph. But before they got to Springfield, the governor had already heard the Mormon side of the story and had sent Mr. Bramen,¹²⁹ the governor's own special agent, to Nauvoo to investigate. When Reynolds asked the governor for another posse to retake the Prophet, the governor insisted that he would wait for Bramen's report. Secretly arranging with Bennett to kidnap and covertly extradite Joseph just before an election was one thing, but going into Nauvoo with a large group of armed men just before the election was altogether different.

Bramen arrived in Nauvoo on Friday, July 7, 1843, and requested copies of all testimonies given before the court relative to the *habeas corpus* hearings and also affidavits concerning the expulsion of the Mormons from Missouri. In order to comply, Joseph's clerks stayed up all night copying the material the governor had asked for. Bramen returned to Ford with a favorable report of the Mormons' conduct in the matter. Later, in a formal letter, Governor Ford explained his findings and the conclusion to Governor Reynolds this way:

¹²⁹ *History of the Church*, spells the name both Bramen and Bremen.

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Upon this indictment, the governor of Missouri issued a requisition to the governor of this state, demanding the arrest and delivery of Smith. A writ was thereupon duly issued by me for the apprehension and delivery of Smith as demanded. This writ was put into the hands of an officer of this state to be executed. The officer to whom it was directed immediately arrested Smith, and delivered him to Joseph H. Reynolds, the agent of Missouri, appointed to receive him. The writ has been returned to me as having been fully executed.¹³⁰

As Ford pointed out, Joseph Smith had been arrested and turned over to the Missouri agent, and that fulfilled his own responsibility in the matter. But agent Reynolds would not let the matter rest. When he found that Governor Ford would not allow the anti-Mormons in Hancock County to create a posse big enough to attack Nauvoo, he petitioned the governor, apparently in the name of the governor of Missouri (but whether with authorization or not is unknown), to accomplish the same purpose by activating the state militia and using them to go into the city to arrest the Prophet. At first Governor Ford responded to that request the same way he did to the other: He would wait until he had a full report on the situation.¹³¹ Then on July 26, he wrote to Governor Reynolds, "The demand of Joseph H. Reynolds, Esq., the agent appointed by you to receive Joseph Smith, Jr., for a detachment of militia to assist in retaking said Smith, has been duly considered by me...the request for a military force is declined."¹³²

By then, it was only a few days before the election and the Mormons still seemed inclined to vote for the Democrats.

¹³⁰ *History of the Church*, 5:533-36.

¹³¹ *History of the Church*, 5:592-3.

¹³² *History of the Church*, 5:533.

As the congressional race heated up, Walker came to Nauvoo, claiming what he believed was his by right—the vote of Joseph Smith, and therefore (he assumed) of all the Mormons. But Joseph had carefully promised that *he* would vote for Walker, and he had said nothing about all the other people in Nauvoo. Joseph did not intend to renege on his personal promise, but neither did he intend to use his influence to send Walker to Congress. He preferred, liked, or trusted Joseph P. Hoge, Walker’s Democratic opponent.¹³³

(A note to the reader: As I suggested above, someone in Nauvoo who was very close to the Prophet must have been working in tandem with John C. Bennett in order to pull off what was a well organized and almost perfectly executed kidnaping plot. I suggested that, in my view, the spy was William Law. This political fight between Walker and Hoge was the occasion for the first major public break between Law on the one hand, and Joseph and Hyrum Smith on the other. That break can be seen in two ways: (1) as an evidence that Law had helped plan the kidnaping scheme in order for Walker to maneuver Joseph into promising him the Mormon vote; or (2) it may be seen as a major step in Law’s eventual disillusionment with the Prophet and Hyrum Smith. My own inclination is to believe the former. For that reason, I wish to also let the story of this incident be told by a competent historian who presents it from the other point of view, so that you can have both sides of the issue.)

When the Mormon prophet was arrested in Dixon, Illinois, June 23, 1843, he was successful in acquiring the talented legal services of lawyer Cyrus Walker of McDonough County, Illinois. A Whig candidate for the United States House of

¹³³ *History of the Church*, 5:518.

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Representatives, Walker effectively pledged his influence in securing Joseph's release in exchange for the Prophet's support in the August election. The Irishman was present in July 1843 when (in Law's words) "Joseph promised Walker that he should have nine out of every ten Mormon votes." Within thirty days, however, Church leaders had decided that it would be in their interest politically to vote for Walker's opponent, Joseph P. Hoge. William Law violently disagreed with this so-called "trickery."

On Saturday, August 5, 1843, two days before the election, Hyrum Smith addressed the citizens of Nauvoo advising them to vote for Hoge. William had earlier warned Hyrum that because of Joseph's promise he would not tolerate such an action. After the Patriarch's talk, Law spoke and "showed the people how shamefully they had treated," the politician. "I made such an impression," remembered William, "that they began to shout for Mr. Walker." Hyrum then took the stand and "declared that he had a revelation from the Lord, that the people should vote for Mr. Hoge." On Sunday morning (6 August) the day before the election, William informed Joseph of what had occurred. "We went over to the meeting," continued Law, and "Joseph told Hyrum what I had said. Hyrum insisted that he had had a revelation. Oh, said Joseph, if this is a revelation, then it is all right and he went on the stand" and told the Saints to vote for Hoge. The Prophet's diary account of this occasion confirms some of the details provided by Law: "Bro Hiram tells me this morning that he has had a testimony that it will be better for this people to vote for Hoge & I never knew Hiram say he had revelation & it failed. [I] never told Bro Law to tell my private feelings. (Let God speak and all men hold their peace.)"¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Cook, "William Law," 56.

Law's claim that he heard "Joseph promised Walker that he should have nine out of every ten Mormon votes" presents a credibility problem. The statement was made by Law during an interview in 1878—about 34 years after the fact—and it leaves much room for doubt.¹³⁵ The most striking incongruity is that when Joseph and Walker made their deal, they were in Dixon but Law was in Nauvoo. So unless Joseph made a new deal with Walker after Law arrived, Law was remembering what he heard Walker report rather than what he actually heard Joseph say, or else he was simply not telling the truth.

On Sunday, August 6, 1843, Joseph made a public comment on the upcoming election. "The Lord has not given me a revelation concerning politics. I have not asked Him for one. I am a third party, and stand independent and alone." Joseph said Cyrus Walker was an honorable man and he would vote for him. However, he also said,

Brother Hyrum tells me this morning that he has had a testimony to the effect it would be better for this people to vote for Hoge; and I never knew Hyrum to say he ever had a revelation and it failed. Let God speak and all men hold their peace. I never authorized Brother Law to tell my private feelings, and I utterly forbid these political demagogues from using my name henceforth and for ever.¹³⁶

The next day, when state elections were held, Hoge got 2,000 Nauvoo votes and won the state by only 700 votes.¹³⁷ Clearly, the

¹³⁵ Cook cites: "The Law Interview" (Dr. W. Wyl interview with William Law in Shullsburg, Wis.), March 30, 1887, published in *The Salt Lake Daily Tribune*, July 31, 1887, 6.

¹³⁶ *History of the Church*, 5:526.

¹³⁷ Conkling, *Joseph Smith Chronology*, 198.

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Mormon vote had decided who would go to Congress. This upset the Whigs, but it also troubled the Democrats because it was now demonstrable that whichever side the Mormons were on would be the side that won. Neither party wanted the Mormons to have that much power, and both were aware that this was only the beginning—the Mormon population was growing steadily because converts were coming from the eastern United States and from England. Another, almost immediate result of the election was the revival of the Anti-Mormon Political Party in Hancock County.

About that same time, Orson Hyde was on board the steamboat *Anawan* when he was told by an officer of the boat “that some person in high standing in the Church of Latter-day Saints” had told ex-Governor Thomas Carlin that “he would use all the influence that his circumstances would permit to have Joseph Smith arrested and delivered into the hands of the Missourians.”¹³⁸ Since Sidney Rigdon had already been shown to be in correspondence with Bennett, Joseph suspected the person Hyde had learned about was Sidney. On Sunday afternoon, August 13, 1843, while Joseph was giving a speech, he said,

We have had certain traitors in this city, who have been writing falsehoods to Missouri; and there is a certain man in this city who has made a covenant to betray and give me up to the Missourians, and that, too, before Governor Carlin commenced his persecutions. That man is no other than Sidney Rigdon. This testimony I have from gentlemen from abroad, whose names I do not wish to give.

I most solemnly proclaim the withdrawal of my fellowship from this man, on condition that the foregoing be true; and let the Saints proclaim it abroad, that he may no longer be

¹³⁸ *History of the Church*, 5:553-54.

acknowledged as my counselor: and all who feel to sanction my proceedings and views will manifest it by uplifted hands.

There was a unanimous vote that Sidney Rigdon be disfellowshipped, and his license demanded.¹³⁹

Public Meeting in Carthage Set for August 19

As the *Warsaw Signal* had warned, when the election did not go the way the anti-Mormons wished, they scheduled the public meeting at the courthouse in Carthage for August 19. This was not an Anti-Mormon meeting, but was held “without distinction of party.” There were animated speeches, but other than that the most aggressive action was that a committee was appointed “to draft and report resolutions for the action of the meeting.” The members of that committee met then requested “to be excused from making a formal report at this time, owing to the short time allowed them and the importance of the business that has called us together.” They suggested a committee of six be appointed to draft resolutions for a future meeting. That was agreed upon and the time for the next meeting was set for September 6. A remarkable thing about this meeting was that the names of Robert F. Smith, Thomas Gregg, Thomas Sharp, and other known leaders of the Anti-Mormons are conspicuously absent from the published minutes.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ *History of the Church*, 5:231-32.

¹⁴⁰ *History of the Church*, 5:537-38.

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Threat from Missouri

On the same day the public meeting met in Carthage, Joseph received a copy of a letter from Mr. J. Hall of Independence, Missouri, that was written to a friend who was a respected lawyer in Dixon. It read in part,

...if Illinois by her own authority, cannot capture the Prophet, it will be but a small matter to raise volunteers enough here to raze the city of Nauvoo to the ground; if Illinois fails to deliver up Jo Smith, there will be something serious between the two states. Missouri will have Jo Smith for trial or impose as powerful restrictions as the Constitution will allow upon the intercourse of the citizens of Illinois in Missouri. If the governor of Illinois is so imbecile as to allow his warrant to be disregarded by the Mormons, and permit the Prophet to go at large, then let him be impeached, and a new, honorable, energetic man be placed in his stead. I have it from a high source that Missouri will hold the whole state responsible for the treatment of our messenger, and for the delivery of the Prophet. Had you liberated the Prophet by a regular writ of habeas corpus without mistreating our Reynolds, I should have gloried in my acquaintance with you; but to have done it in the manner it was done reflects no honor either on yourself, your people, or your government. The Mormons are only a lawless banditti, and I fear the pestilence has contaminated the whole community; and if Reynolds' opinion be correct, yourself among the rest, Holy Jo was not afraid of the "injustice of our people;" it is the just punishment and their violated laws that he fears.

Hall also made some remarks about Porter Rockwell, who was still in jail in Missouri:

I will now give you an impartial opinion of the prejudices against Rockwell here, and my opinion of his guilt. There is not a man in this community but believes him guilty. There is a chain of circumstances against him so strong that no rational man can doubt his guilt. I was at Boggs' house two minutes after the deed; it is in sight of mine; and the insidiousness of the offense renders it difficult to restrain the citizens from hanging him up without judge or jury. So far, however, we have succeeded in quelling it; but should he be discharged upon trial, the power of man cannot save him.¹⁴¹

Joseph had the letter published in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, and with it an editorial focusing on the threat that Porter would be killed even if he were "discharged upon trial." There can be no question that the majority of Mormons in Illinois and the anti-Mormons in Missouri believed that Porter was destined to die in Missouri and that if Joseph were ever returned to that state he also would be murdered.

Before the scheduled September 6 meeting, the Anti-Mormons held their own gathering in Carthage. There are no published minutes of that meeting, however, the *Lee County Democrat*, in Fort Madison, Iowa, called it a "Tempest in a Teapot." Nevertheless, the participants were explicit about what their Anti-Mormon agenda was going to be: the Mormons would be forced out of Illinois.

A meeting was held in Hancock County in which they declared the Mormons shall either peaceably leave the state or they will forcibly be driven away. It is said that the notices to that affect have been posted in public places in the county... Two to three

¹⁴¹ *History of the Church*, 5:538-39.

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thousand qualified voters—rather a great number to be much alarmed by their Carthaginian brethren. Wouldn't it be amusing if the county seat should be removed from Carthage to Nauvoo? This we predict will be the result of this anti-Latter-day Saint movement.¹⁴²

A few days later, on September 6, 1843, at another meeting in Carthage, the Anti-Mormons completely restructured their organization. The minutes of that meeting show an outline of their strategies and give the names of the leaders who would conduct their new campaign. This new and revitalized organization was under the leadership of Robert F. Smith of Carthage.

Robert F. Smith's chairmanship turned the Anti-Mormon Party from the political machine Sharp had visualized into the paramilitary organization that would orchestrate the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith and expel the Mormons from Illinois.

Robert F. Smith had come to Illinois in 1833, and set up shop as harness maker and saddler. He was elected to the Anti-Mormon Party's Central Corresponding Committee in 1843 and retained the power of that office until after September, 1846, when he was severely wounded while commanding the Anti-Mormon forces that attacked the Saints in the battle of Nauvoo. It was this same Robert F. Smith, who, as justice of the peace, confined Joseph and Hyrum Smith in Carthage jail without a hearing and who was commander of the Carthage Greys, the militia company that Governor Ford assigned to protect the prisoners at the time they were murdered. A few years later, when the Civil War began, Smith recruited volunteers and was appointed regimental colonel in the 16th Illinois infantry. Later, he commanded a brigade in Sherman's march from Atlanta to the sea. After the war, in

¹⁴² *Lee County Democrat*, Fort Madison, Iowa, September 2, 1843.

Washington, D.C., he was breveted brigadier-general and offered a commission of major in the regular army. He declined the offer and returned to his farm in Illinois. At the time of his death he was one of the richest and “the oldest pioneer of Hancock County.”¹⁴³

The policies adopted by the Anti-Mormon Convention under Robert F. Smith’s leadership on September 6, 1843, foreshadowed the murder of Joseph Smith less than a year later.¹⁴⁴ The preamble of its resolutions focused all the animosity of the Anti-Mormons on the person of the Prophet, whom they described as “a most dangerous character, especially when he shall have been able to place himself at the head of a numerous horde, either equally reckless and unprincipled as himself, or else made his pliant tools by the most absurd credulity that has astonished the world since its foundation.”

One cannot discover whether they hated Joseph more for his political influence or for his claim to be a prophet of God. “And, to crown all, he claims to merge all religion, all law, and both moral and political justice, in the knavish pretension that he receives fresh from heaven divine instructions in all matters pertaining to these things; thereby making his own depraved will the rule by which he would have all men governed.”

The convention passed a series of resolutions, in which party members swore to use vigilante tactics against the Mormons:

¹⁴³ “SMITH, Robert Frederick, soldier, b. in Philadelphia, August 2, 1806; d. in Hamilton, Ill., April 23, 1893.” Wilson, *Appleton’s Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, 7:25. A brief history of the Illinois Sixteenth Infantry, with Col. Robert F. Smith as its commander can be found in *Union Army*, 3:256-57.

¹⁴⁴ The minutes from which the following quotes are taken is printed in *History of the Church*, 6:4-8.

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...we pledge ourselves in the most solemn manner to resist all the wrongs which may be hereafter attempted to be imposed on this community by the Mormons, to the utmost of our ability,—peaceably, if we can, but forcibly, if we must... That in the event of our being forced into a collision with that people, we pledge ourselves that we will stand by and support each other in every emergency up to the death.¹⁴⁵

Perhaps the most significant of the resolutions invited the Missouri authorities to try again to arrest and extradite Joseph Smith and promised that the Anti-Mormons would “stand ready at all times to serve the officer into whose hands such warrant may come, as a posse,” in order to get Joseph back in the hands of his Missouri enemies.

The meeting was described by Edward Stevenson as follows:

September. 6, 1843, at Carthage Court House, was vile with threats against Joseph. One of the resolutions was that they pledge themselves in the most determined manner to stand ready to aid in capturing Joseph if Mo. should make another attempt or demand for him and in case of emergency stand by each other unto DEATH. Other precinct meeting similar, were organized throughout Hancock Co.—to hold correspondence with the head quarters a resolution of great infamy was to request the Governor of Mo. to make still another demand for the arrest of Joseph pledging themselves to enforce the order for his arrest.

Mob Pledge. Other counties of the state of Ill. were invited to hold similar meetings, Reynolds report to Mo. was terrifically false, which increased indignity by the Missourians against the Illinois Citizens whole Sale as a State. However they knew in Justice—they had not a Shadow of an excuse for

¹⁴⁵ *History of the Church*, 6:4-8.

their attempts to arrest and drag Joseph over to Mo. their own Crimes so recently in expelling him and the whole Church from their State for which they deserved the severest punishment, caused them to feel weak and it was the last open attempt they made to get Joseph into their hands.

“BUT there was to be no peace or rest for the Prophet, traitors within and the County without thirst for his blood, and us, who live in Iowa, are unsettled in our feelings, and business for we cannot rest in, peace, while our Nauvoo Saints, and especially our Prophet is so harassed and constantly in danger.”¹⁴⁶

From that time, a primary focus of the Anti-Mormons activity was to accomplish that extradition when it came. If that meant taking Joseph from Nauvoo by force, then the Anti-Mormons of Illinois intended to coordinate their plans with the anti-Mormons in Missouri and Iowa to create a mob large enough to attack Nauvoo, defeat the Nauvoo Legion, arrest the Prophet and scatter his people. But it is not possible to discover who they were working with in Missouri. It was no longer John C. Bennett. At about this time he faded from the picture in Illinois and Missouri and began his lecture tour in the east.

The Anti-Mormons were good propagandists and couched their threats in the rhetoric of their own fear. There is no evidence the Mormon leaders ever threatened to kill any of the Anti-Mormons, yet they resolved that “if the Mormons carry out the threats they have made in regards to the lives of several of our citizens, we will, if failing to obtain speedy redress from the laws of the land, take summary and signal vengeance upon them as a

¹⁴⁶ Edward Stevenson, Autobiographical Sketch, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, f 103.

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people.”¹⁴⁷

It was to guarantee the fruition of these resolves that the convention created a Central Corresponding Committee as “a general committee of supervision.” They elected Captain Robert F. Smith as chairman, then empowered the committee “to communicate with the different parts of this county, and also with other counties.”¹⁴⁸ The convention then selected local corresponding committees to represent eleven precincts in Hancock County. These precinct-level committees were to keep in touch with the Central Committee and transmit its orders to the people in their respective precincts. The persons they selected to be the precinct committee for Warsaw were Thomas C. Sharp and Mark Aldrich.

The final resolutions of the convention provided for the formation of the huge posse they anticipated would be necessary to defeat the Nauvoo Legion and arrest Joseph Smith. “And, in case of a contingency occurring requiring aid, they [the Central Corresponding Committee] immediately call on the precinct committees and upon all others favorable to our cause to furnish such aid as the exigency of the case may require.”

When the convention adjourned, the Anti-Mormon organization was no longer under Sharp’s old committee; however, Sharp controlled the precinct corresponding committee at Warsaw and his *Signal* was still the official mouth of the central organization. Thereafter, he used his newspaper to transmit statements of policy and orders from the Central Committee to the local committee chairmen. If there was a *coup d’état* that established a new party leadership among the Anti-Mormons, Sharp did not lose out entirely.

¹⁴⁷ *History of the Church*, 6:4-8.

¹⁴⁸ *History of the Church*, 6:4-8.

Still, one cannot tell precisely what Sharp's relationship was with Robert F. Smith and his Central Corresponding Committee. By February, 1844, Sharp was acting as the Central Committee's official public spokesman and perhaps had become a member of the Central Committee itself. He was certainly something more than the chairman of the Warsaw corresponding committee, but was also something less than Chairman Robert F. Smith.

Mormon Counter Action—Foray into National Politics

When the Mormons were driven from Missouri they were forced to leave behind not only much of their personal property, but also all of their homes, public and private buildings, and improved farmland. They received no compensation for their losses, and neither the people, the government, nor the legal system in Missouri was going to give them any. So the Mormons decided to appeal to the nation for help in obtaining payment for their lost property. However, in doing so, they were caught in a dilemma of their own making. Their private object (soon to be shown by the organization and purposes of the Council of Fifty) was to move the whole body of the Church west to the Rocky Mountains just as soon as the Nauvoo Temple was completed. However, in an attempt to gain national public support to recover some money from Missouri to help finance that migration they did things that seemed to belie their purposes. Their actions were interpreted to mean that their object was expansion: locally, nationally, and internationally, in both missionary work to increase their numbers, and in politics to increase their power.

The Mormon leaders had not only learned the logistics of

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gathering their converts and of creating and organizing them into beautiful communities, they had also learned a great deal about how to protect themselves legally from persecution and how to use their numbers to their advantage in local and state politics. Their increased numbers gave the Mormons a great deal of political clout, but it also gave their neighbors reason to fear and distrust them. By the election of 1843, the Mormons in Nauvoo's Hancock County had a clear majority of the vote and could select their choice of county officials, even though both the Whigs and the Democrats had united against them. The Mormons could also choose the members of the state legislature from their part of Illinois.

On the state level, the Mormons held a clear balance of power. In Illinois, they had the swing vote, that could not only let them determine the outcome of state and local elections, but it also gave them the power to decide who would go to the national Congress and which presidential candidate would get the entire Illinois Electoral College vote. These facts turned what would have otherwise been a local political struggle into one with national ramifications, because it gave the local Mormon vote a power of national consequence. It also gave the Mormon majority in Hancock County a national political leverage that was entirely out of proportion to their small population.

One reason the Mormon vote was so important on the national front is that in the United States, citizens do not actually vote for the president and the vice president. Rather, they vote for members of the Electoral College who represent their state, and the Electoral College members vote for the president and vice president. The American constitution says that each state shall have the same number of members of the Electoral College as it does members in the national Congress. So, states with large populations have more members than states with small populations. In each presidential

election, the people of each state elect new members to the Electoral College. Each political party in each state selects a slate of candidates for the college. When the people who are voting see a presidential candidate's name on their ballot, and check the box for that candidate, they are actually voting for the entire slate of Electoral College candidates who have pledged their vote to that candidate. If a plurality of voters in Illinois in 1844 checked the box with the Democratic candidate's name, then the entire slate of Democratic voters in the Electoral College would have been elected in Illinois. Then, when the members of the Electoral College voted, the Democratic candidate would get the entire Illinois vote.

This system looks complicated and some have called it "undemocratic," but it is responsible for the most important republican characteristic of the American political system. The existence of the Electoral College both created and guarantees the continuance of the American two-party system. The reason for that is very simple. In any state, only the largest party gets all the electoral votes. If there are three parties, the two smallest parties are bound to lose. The only way they can win is to join together and make one larger party. This is the reason that only once in all of American history has a third party ever won a presidential election— just before the Civil War when the newly created Republican Party nominated Abraham Lincoln. People left the Whig and Democratic parties and became Republicans. This shift of allegiance left the Whig party as the small third party. The Republicans won, and the Whig party passed out of existence.

The fact that the Mormon population in Illinois was now sufficiently large that they could virtually decide which of the national candidates would get the Illinois vote for president and

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vice president was well understood even outside of Illinois.¹⁴⁹ In an article about the relationship between the Mormons and Martin Van Buren, one of the candidates for the presidency, the editor of the *Columbus Enquirer* in Columbus, Georgia, February 14, 1844, wrote that the Mormon vote was important to Van Buren because “the disciples of Joe undoubtedly hold the balance of power in Illinois.”¹⁵⁰ A New York newspaper went even further. It published this analysis of the Illinois state politics and concluded, “If the Whigs are beaten, it will be by the vote of Nauvoo.”¹⁵¹

The Mormons understood this, but so did the “old citizens” of Illinois and that put enormous pressure on the Mormon leaders who were aware they were balancing on a cultural-political tight rope. Illinois politicians who lost elections blamed the Mormons. Politicians who won and were beholden to the Mormons, resented it, and were reluctant to acknowledge or to pay their political debts. The Mormons had the power, but no matter how they spent it, they could not win.

William Smith, Joseph’s most difficult brother, was a member of the Illinois state House of Representatives until the spring of 1844 when he resigned his seat under pressure (but reportedly “in consequence of the sickness of his family, now in the hands of a

¹⁴⁹ For a detailed look at the part Mormons played in Hancock County and Illinois state politics see, Flanders, *Nauvoo*, 211-41.

¹⁵⁰ *Columbus Enquirer*, Columbus, Georgia, February 14, 1844, This was generally understood, not only in Illinois, but also in other parts of the nation. After Joseph Smith’s death, *Jamestown Journal*, Jamestown, Virginia, September 20, 1844, observed, “The Mormons have publicly resolved to take no part in the approaching Presidential Election. This lifts a dead weight of some 1,500 to 2,000 votes off the Whigs of Illinois, and will allow them to make a fair battle.”

¹⁵¹ *New York Daily Tribune*, New York, New York, June 10, 1844.

doctor in the city of Philadelphia”).¹⁵² As they approached the next election, Editor John Taylor recommended that Hyrum was the best candidate to take William’s place. Hyrum was killed before that nomination materialized, but at the time, non-Mormons amplified the announcement, and in Springfield it was rumored “that General Hyrum Smith will be a candidate for Congress for the sixth district.”¹⁵³

Everyone understood that the Mormons had carefully cultivated their political power, as an Iowa newspaper explained:

When driven from their homes in Missouri, they sought shelter and protection in Illinois, they were fed, nursed, and hugged to the bosom by men of both political parties, each anxious to win their favor by excelling the other in kindness towards them. For a while all worked well. They purchased their town site, to which the Prophet and many of his followers removed, and in a short time their village numbered several hundred souls. Election after election came and so unsettled were they in political sentiments that each party dreaded their strength, yet feared to offend, so a city charter, conferring unwarranted powers upon its authorities was passed by the Legislature of Illinois, neither party having independence enough to oppose it.¹⁵⁴

After Robert F. Smith became chairman, the Hancock County Anti-Mormons began meeting quite regularly. In mid-October they took up Reynolds’ cry to attack the city of Nauvoo itself. The *Lee County Democrat* reported:

¹⁵² *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, May 15, 1844.

¹⁵³ *Sangamo Journal*, Springfield, Illinois, February 29, 1844.

¹⁵⁴ *Bloomington Herald*, Bloomington, Iowa, June 21, 1844.

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Another anti-Mormon meeting at Warsaw, a resolution was passed to ask the governor to withdraw the state arms from the hands of the Mormons and the citizens be allowed to form themselves into independent companies in case of emergency.¹⁵⁵

When that plan matured it would be a central part of the Anti-Mormon program.

Joseph Writes to Major Potential Presidential Candidates

On the surface, Nauvoo looked as peaceful as it was prosperous. River boats at dock; horses, buggies, wagons, and people moving about the streets; shops, carpenters, and brick yards unable to keep up with demand; a theater company, Masonic Hall, and Seventy's Hall; church, civic, and educational activities—all these gave Nauvoo the appearance of an island of New England architectural serenity and comfort in the middle of the American frontier.

But for Mayor Joseph Smith and his close associates, there was also a sense of imminent doom—and of the urgency to avoid or outrun it. The place to run was west, but moving the entire Mormon Church population into the western wilderness would be dangerous and extremely expensive. In theory, but only in theory, a great deal of money might become available if the Mormons could find a way to force Missouri to pay for their stolen property. But, in order to do that, they had to form an alliance with someone

¹⁵⁵ *Lee County Democrat*, Fort Madison, Iowa, October 21, 1843.

strong enough to protect them, and strong enough to force the Missourians to pay. They had just demonstrated that they could control enough votes to decide who would represent them in Congress and who Illinois would vote for in a presidential election, so they decided to try to negotiate an agreement with one of the presidential candidates.

The first public suggestion of that plan appeared in the *Times and Seasons* on October 1, 1843. In an editorial, John Taylor asked:

Who shall be our Next President? This question we frequently hear asked, and it is a question of no small importance to the Latter-day Saints.

We, as a people, have labored and are still laboring under great injustice from the hands of a neighboring state. The Latter-day Saints have had their property destroyed, and their houses made desolate by the hands of the Missourians; murders have been committed with impunity, and many, in consequence of oppression, barbarism, and cruelty, have slept the sleep of death. They [the Saints] have been obliged to flee from their possessions into a distant land, in the chilling frosts of winter, robbed, spoiled, desolate, houseless, and homeless, without any just pretext or shadow of law, without having violated the laws of that state, or the United States; and have had to wander as exiles in a strange land, without as yet being able to obtain any redress for their grievances.

We have hitherto adopted every legal measure. First, we petitioned the State of Missouri, but in vain. We have memorialized Congress, but they have turned a deaf ear to our supplication, and referred us again to the State and *justice* of Missouri....

We shall ask no one to commit themselves on our account. We want no steps taken but what are legal, constitutional and honorable. But we are *American citizens*; and as American

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citizens we have rights in common with all that live under the folds of the “star-spangled banner.” Our rights have been trampled upon by lawless miscreants. We have been robbed of our liberties by mobocratic influence, and all those honorable ties that ought to govern and characterize Columbia’s sons have been trampled in the dust. Still we are *American citizens*; and as American citizens we claim the privilege of being heard in the councils of our nation. We have been wronged, abused, robbed, and banished; and we seek redress. Such crimes cannot slumber in Republican America. The cause of common humanity would revolt at it, and Republicanism would hide its head in disgust.

We make these remarks for the purpose of drawing the attention of our brethren to this subject, both at home and abroad, that we may fix upon the man who will be the most likely to render us assistance in obtaining redress for our grievances; and not only give our own votes, but use our influence to obtain others; and if the voice of suffering innocence will not sufficiently arouse the rulers of our nation to investigate our case, perhaps a vote of from fifty to one hundred thousand may rouse them from their lethargy.

We shall fix upon the man of our choice, and notify our friends duly.¹⁵⁶

There was nothing subtle about this suggestion. The Mormon leaders were going to find a way to determine which presidential candidate would be most apt to support them, and they—not just in Illinois but throughout the United States wherever there were Mormon converts—would support that candidate. Neither was their anything modest about the plan. Copies of the *Times and Seasons* were sent to every important editor in the United States

¹⁵⁶ Reprinted in *History of the Church*, 6:39-40.

and the Mormons expected that many of the newspapers would pick up this rather unusual declaration and republish it, giving notice to the nation that they were about to start playing national politics with all their considerable energy.

On November 2, 1843, Joseph, with his brother Hyrum, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, John Taylor, William Law, and William Clayton, sitting in council “agreed to write a letter to the five candidates for the Presidency of the United States, to inquire what their feelings were towards us as a people, and what their course of action would be in relation to the cruelty and oppression that we have suffered from the State of Missouri, if they were elected.”¹⁵⁷

Two days later they sent letters over Joseph’s signature to the five men who seemed most likely to be candidates for the U.S. presidency in the next election: James K. Polk,¹⁵⁸ John C.

¹⁵⁷ *History of the Church*, 6:62-63.

¹⁵⁸ The correspondence is found in *History of the Church*, 6:64-65, 155-60, except for the letter from Cass (mentioned in *History of the Church*, 6:144), and Joseph’s reply to Clay. They are found in *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, June 1, 1844. The newspapers which mentioning Joseph Smith and James K. Polk in the same article were:

Iowa: *Davenport, Gazette*, Davenport, Iowa, June 27, 1844.

Massachusetts: *Springfield Republican*, Springfield, Massachusetts, August 24, 1844.

Michigan: *Democratic Free Press*, Detroit, Michigan, May 30, 1844.

New York: *New York Herald*, New York, New York, June 12, 1844; *Rochester Daily Democrat*, Rochester, New York, June 14, 1844; *Livingston Republican*, Geneseo, New York, June 18, 1844.

Pennsylvania: *Pittsburgh Morning Post*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, June 7, 1844; *Hollidaysburg Register and Huntingdon County Enquirer*, Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania, June 19, 1844.

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Calhoun,¹⁵⁹ Lewis Cass,¹⁶⁰ Richard M. Johnson,¹⁶¹ Martin Van

Tennessee: *Knoxville Register*, Knoxville, Tennessee, June 12, 1844; *Joneborough Whig and Independent Journal*, Joneborough, Tennessee, July 12, 1844.

¹⁵⁹ Joseph Smith's correspondence with Calhoun was published in the *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, January 1, 1844, and in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, January 10, 1844. It received much more actual newspaper space than the others because, as will be discussed below, some editors published the entire correspondence. Those newspapers which had the names of both Calhoun and Joseph Smith in the same article were:

Illinois: *Ottawa Free Trader*, Ottawa, Illinois, February 23, April 15, 1844; *Upper Mississippian*, Rock Island, Illinois, May 11, 1844. Indiana: *Evansville Journal*, Evansville, Indiana, February 22, 1844.

Iowa: *Hawk Eye*, Burlington, Iowa, February 15, 1844; *Bloomington Herald*, Bloomington, Iowa, March 8, 1844.

Kentucky: *Morning Courier*, Louisville, Kentucky, June 6, 1844.

Maryland: *Sun*, Baltimore, Maryland, January 29, 1844.

Massachusetts: *Daily Mercury*, New Bedford, Massachusetts, January 29, February 13, 1844; *Haverhill Gazette*, Haverhill, Massachusetts, June 1, 1844.

New Jersey: *New Jersey Journal*, Elizabeth, New Jersey, January 30, 1844.

New York: *Evening Post*, New York, New York, January 27, 1844; *Rochester Daily Democrat*, Rochester, New York, February 8, 1844; *New York Herald*, New York, New York, May 16, 1844.

Ohio: *Dayton Journal and Advertiser*, Dayton, Ohio, February 13, 1844; *Telegraph*, Painsville, Ohio, February 21, 1844; *Scioto Gazette*, Chillicothe, Ohio, June 6, 1844.

Pennsylvania: *Pittsburgh Morning Post*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, February 1, 1844; *Pittsburgh Christian Advocate*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, February 21, 1844.

Rhode Island: *Rhode Island County Journal and Independent*

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Buren,¹⁶² and Henry Clay.¹⁶³ Joseph wanted to know what they

Inquirer, Providence, Rhode Island, February 2, 1844.

Tennessee: *Knoxville Register*, Knoxville, Tennessee, February 28, 1844.

Virginia: *Alexandria Gazette*, Alexandria, Virginia, February 2, 7, 1844.

¹⁶⁰ Apparently only one editor mentioned Cass and Joseph Smith in the same article. It was in *Knoxville Register*, Knoxville, Tennessee, February 28, 1844.

¹⁶¹ My research has discovered no newspaper except those published in Nauvoo which mentioned Johnson and Joseph Smith in the same article.

¹⁶² The newspapers which carried the names of Joseph Smith and Martin Van Buren in the same article were:

Georgia: *Columbus Enquirer*, Columbus, Georgia, February 14, 1844; March 20, 1844.

Illinois: *Belleville Advocate*, Belleville, Illinois, April 18, 1844; *Illinois Gazette*, Lacon, Illinois, March 9, 1844; *Northwestern Gazette and Galena Advertiser*, Galena, Illinois, May 3, 14, 1844; *Ottawa Free Trader*, Ottawa, Illinois, April 15, 1844. Indiana: *Evansville Journal*, Evansville, Indiana, February 22, 1844.

Iowa: *Davenport, Gazette*, Davenport, Iowa, March 28, 1844; *Bloomington Herald*, Bloomington, Iowa, March 8, 1844.

Kentucky: *Western Citizen*, Paris, Kentucky, March 15, 1844; *Louisville Daily Journal*, Louisville, Kentucky, March 6, 13, 1844; *Morning Courier*, Louisville, Kentucky, June 6, 1844.

Louisiana: *New Orleans Bee*, New Orleans, Louisiana, May 24, 1844.

Maryland: *Sun*, Baltimore, Maryland, June 14, 1844.

Massachusetts: *Daily Mercury*, New Bedford, Massachusetts, February 13, 1844; *Daily Mercury*, New Bedford, Massachusetts, July 12, 1844; *Daily Herald*, Newburyport, Massachusetts, July 15, 1844; *Daily Herald*, Newburyport, Massachusetts, June 15, 1844.

Missouri: *Jeffersonian Republican*, Jefferson City, Missouri, March

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New York: *New York Daily Tribune*, New York, New York, July 11, 1844; June 12, 1844; May 20, 1844; *Evening Post*, New York, New York, July 11, 1844; *Bucks County Intelligencer*, Doylestown, Pennsylvania, March 25, 1844; *Evening Post*, New York, New York, March 16, 1844; *New York Herald*, New York, New York, May 16, 1844; *Rochester Republican*, Rochester, New York, February 6, 1844; *Working Man's Advocate*, New York, New York, May 18, 1844.

Pennsylvania: *Pittsburgh Morning Post*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, June 17, 1844; *Pittsburgh Christian Advocate*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, February 21, 1844; *Erie Gazette*, Erie, Pennsylvania, May 23, 1844; *Erie Observer*, Erie, Pennsylvania, March 23, 1844; *Public Ledger and Daily Transcript*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 15, 1844; *Democratic Union*, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, March 16, 1844; *Tioga Eagle*, Wellsborough, Pennsylvania, March 27, 1844.

Ohio: *Dayton Journal and Advertiser*, Dayton, Ohio, February 13, 1844; *Daily Ohio State Journal*, Columbus, Ohio, March 9, 1844; *Telegraph*, Painsville, Ohio, March 27, 1844; *Weekly Ohio State Journal*, Columbus, Ohio, March 13, 1844; *Western Star*, Lebanon, Ohio, March 22, 1844.

Tennessee: *Knoxville Register*, Knoxville, Tennessee, February 28, 1844; *Nashville Union*, Nashville, Tennessee, April 6, 1844.

Texas: *Northern Standard*, Clarkesville, Texas, April 3, 1844.

Virginia: *Alexandria Gazette*, Alexandria, Virginia, March 16, 1844.

Washington D.C.: *Daily Globe*, Washington, D.C., March 4, 1844; *National Intelligencer*, Washington, D.C., June 8, 14, 1844.

Wisconsin: *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, May 22, 1844.

¹⁶³ Henry Clay's correspondence with Joseph Smith was published in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, May 29, 1844; reprinted in: *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, June 1, 1844. Significant articles about Henry Clay appeared in the *Nauvoo Neighbor* on May 29; 5, June 5, 12, 1844. The following newspapers mention Joseph Smith and Henry Clay in the same

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article:

Delaware: *Delaware Gazette*, Wilmington, Delaware, May 17, 1844.

Georgia: *Columbus Enquirer*, Columbus, Georgia, March 20, 1844.

Illinois: *Northwestern Gazette and Galena Advertiser*, Galena, Illinois, February 14, 16, 1844; *Illinois Gazette*, Lacon, Illinois, March 9, 1844; *Indiana State Journal*, Indianapolis, Indiana, March 11, 1844; *Illinois State Register*, Springfield, Illinois, March 15, 1844; *Ottawa Free Trader*, Ottawa, Illinois, April 15, 1844; *Belleville Advocate*, Belleville, Illinois, April 18, 1844; *Alton Telegraph*, Alton, Illinois, June 8, 1844.

Iowa: *Davenport, Gazette*, Davenport, Iowa, June 27, 1844.

Kentucky: *Louisville Daily Journal*, Louisville, Kentucky, March 6, 1844; *Western Citizen*, Paris, Kentucky, March 15, 1844; *Morning Courier*, Louisville, Kentucky, June 6, 1844.

Michigan: *Democratic Free Press*, Detroit, Michigan, March 25, May 30, 1844.

Maryland: *Sun*, Baltimore, Maryland, June 14, 1844.

Massachusetts: *Daily Herald*, Newburyport, Massachusetts, June 15, 1844; *Daily Mercury*, New Bedford, Massachusetts, July 12, 1844.

New York: *New York Herald*, New York, New York, May 16, June 12, 1844; *New York Daily Tribune*, New York, New York, June 12, 10, 1844, July 11, 1844; *Rochester Daily Democrat*, Rochester, New York, June 14, 1844; *Livingston Republican*, Geneseo, New York, June 18, 1844; *Evening Post*, New York, New York, March 16, July 11, 1844.

Pennsylvania: *Public Ledger and Daily Transcript*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 15, 1844; *Democratic Union*, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, March 16, 1844; *Erie Observer*, Erie, Pennsylvania, March 23, 1844; *New Orleans Bee*, New Orleans, Louisiana, May 24, 1844; *Pittsburgh Morning Post*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, June 7, 17, 1844. *Bucks County Intelligencer*, Doylestown, Pennsylvania, March 25, 1844;

Missouri: *Jeffersonian Republican*, Jefferson City, Missouri, March

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would do for the Mormons if they were elected. These letters and their replies were published in the *Nauvoo Neighbor* and in the *Times and Seasons*. So, the correspondences were, along with the newspapers, distributed all over the nation. They received a great deal of publicity and did much to call national attention to the plight of the Mormons who had been driven from Missouri. Later they helped generate interest in Joseph Smith's own presidential campaign. However, the responses from the candidates themselves did not offer Joseph the hope he sought for.

The Mormon campaign to gain national support continued. On November 21, Joseph Smith and his associates wrote a statement that would later be published as an "Appeal to the Green Mountain Boys." It was addressed to the people of Vermont, the state where he had been born, but it was intended for a much wider circulation.¹⁶⁴ The burden of his message is found in the lines, "I

2, 1844.

Ohio: *Daily Ohio State Journal*, Columbus, Ohio, March 9, 1844; *Weekly Ohio State Journal*, Columbus, Ohio, March 13, 1844; *Western Star*, Lebanon, Ohio, March 22, 1844; *Telegraph*, Painsville, Ohio, March 27, 1844.

South Carolina: *Edgefield Advertiser*, Edgefield, South Carolina, May 1, 1844.

Tennessee: *Knoxville Argus*, Knoxville, Tennessee, October 16, 1844; *Knoxville Register*, Knoxville, Tennessee, February 28, 1844; *Nashville Union*, Nashville, Tennessee, April 6, 9, 1844.

Texas: *Northern Standard*, Clarkesville, Texas, April 3, 1844.

Washington D.C.: *Daily Globe*, Washington, D.C., March 14, 1844; *National Intelligencer*, Washington, D.C., June 8, 14, 1844.

¹⁶⁴ *History of the Church*, 6:80. The full text of the Appeal is found in *History of the Church*, 6:88-93. It was also published in the *Times and Seasons* and the *Nauvoo Neighbor*. In the summer of 1844 John Taylor published it in a pamphlet titled, *The Voice of Truth, Containing General*

appeal to the “Green Mountain Boys” of my native state to rise in the majesty of virtuous freemen, and by all honorable means help to bring Missouri to the bar of justice.”¹⁶⁵

At a meeting with the Twelve, on November 29, both the “Appeal to the Green Mountain Boys” and a memorial to Congress were read. Whereupon Parley P. Pratt offered to deliver the “Appeal” to every large town in New York if he could have copies. The Twelve voted that Elder Pratt should have his wish and that he should also take copies to Vermont. Immediately after the meeting, the “Appeal” went to press.¹⁶⁶ After its publication, copies were sent to “various authorities of Vermont and the United States.”¹⁶⁷ Parley P. Pratt went to New York, where he would become a key player in Joseph Smith’s presidential campaign.

The “Appeal” received wide approval in Nauvoo. On several occasions the Prophet’s journal records that William W. Phelps read it to gatherings there.¹⁶⁸ Soon after that, Benjamin Andrews

Joseph Smith’s Correspondence with Gen. James Arlington Bennett; Appeal to the Green Mountain Boys; Correspondence John C. Calhoun, Esq.; Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States; Pacific Innuendo, and Gov. Ford’s Letter; A Friendly Hint to Missouri, and A few Words of Consolation for the “Globe;” Also, Correspondence with the Hon. Henry Clay.

¹⁶⁵ *History of the Church*, 6:92.

¹⁶⁶ *History of the Church*, 6:93-95.

¹⁶⁷ *History of the Church*, 6:103. The appeal, along with derogatory comments, was republished in full in the *Warsaw Signal*, and republished in part in *Southern Recorder*, Milledgeville, Georgia, March 12, 1844; *Hawk Eye*, Burlington, Iowa, February 15, 1844, but otherwise seems not to have received much national public attention.

¹⁶⁸ *History of the Church*, 6:98, 99, 149. *Woodruff’s Journal*, 1:329-330.

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wrote a similar “Appeal to the People of the State of Maine” in which he said,

After paying hundreds of thousands of dollars for land, and making improvements worthy of the character of American operatives, all which were lost to us; the managers of the war, acting under the direct authority of the chief magistrate, forced us, at the point of their bayonets, to sign a treaty, the items of which would have disgraced the damning deeds of a Pharaoh or an Antiochus.¹⁶⁹

Sidney Rigdon, now somewhat reconciled to the Prophet, also sent a memorial to the senate and house of the state of Pennsylvania describing the treachery of the Missouri government and urging them “to use all their influence in the national councils, to have redress granted.”¹⁷⁰

In the meantime, tensions increased around Nauvoo. On December 2, two Mormon men, Daniel Avery and his son, Philander, who lived in Warsaw, were kidnaped by Levi Williams and others. Williams was one of the Anti-Mormon candidates defeated by the Mormon vote and was among the most ruthless Anti-Mormon mob leaders. He conducted his own private war against Mormon farmers and drove them from their property. Later, he would buy the property for back taxes. The Averys were whisked away to Missouri where they were imprisoned and tortured. They escaped, then were the subject of a bitter exchange between the Nauvoo officials and the Illinois state government, whose officials refused to assist the Mormons to prevent further incidents like that one.

¹⁶⁹ *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, January 15, 1844.

¹⁷⁰ *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, February 1, 1844.

In response to this, on December 21, the Nauvoo city council petitioned Congress to intercede by making the city of Nauvoo an independent sovereign territory, free from the control of the state of Illinois, to be governed as the Congress governs any other territory.¹⁷¹ An Indiana newspaper summed up the Mormon proposals this way:

A petition has been presented in the US Senate from three or four thousand citizens of Hancock County, Illinois, to have extended to Nauvoo and the adjacent Mormon dominions, the powers and privileges of territorial government. The subjects of Joe Smith have also, it is said, several intelligent agents for prosecuting a claim upon the general government for \$2,000,000, being, as they allege, the amount of damage sustained by them in the violent proceedings by which they were driven out of the State of Missouri.¹⁷²

The Mormons had learned from their experience in Missouri that their appeals to hostile state government officials were of no use. They had also learned to recognize the signs of a gathering storm of persecution. Now they were trying to find a way to stay that storm before it broke with the same or worse fury than the one in Missouri. Their petition accomplished nothing. The editor of the New York *Democratic Union* published a letter from Washington, D.C., that described one man's response to the petition.

Occasionally some very strange memorials are presented to Congress. Of this nature was one which comes from the Mormon association in Illinois. Joe Smith, the great leader and prophet of these people, asks Congress to make Nauvoo a

¹⁷¹ *History of the Church*, 6:130-32.

¹⁷² *Illinois State Register*, Springfield, Illinois, May 2, 1844.

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separate and independent territory. Joe seems very desirous to have an imperium in imperio, where he can establish a republic to suit his own peculiar views. One of his documents was signed by upwards of four thousand of these strange people, men and women who shadow forth a long list of frightful grievances and persecutions, which they said they were made to suffer through the wantonness of some Missouri marauders in the year 1833. If what they say, or indeed only one half of it, be true, then they have been a much injured people... They ask Congress for such relief as they may deem meet.¹⁷³

Even though Congress rejected Joseph's requests for help, the Mormons would not give up, and the next few months saw their ever intensified effort to influence public opinion and to help set the agenda for American politics.

¹⁷³ *Democratic Union*, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, April 8, 1844; *Porter Pioneer*, Clouderport, Pennsylvania, April 26, 1844 (letter from Washington, D.C., copied from the *Democratic Union*, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, April 8, 1844).

Chapter 4

January & February, 1844

William Law

Porter Rockwell remained in prison without trial until the winter of 1843. He was accused of trying to assassinate Governor Boggs, but since he had not been in Missouri at the time of the shooting, it was impossible to prove him guilty. Porter was freed from prison, but his enemies had sworn to kill him as soon as they found him. Retaining his freedom and managing to stay alive, he stealthily made his way through Missouri and back to Illinois. He succeeded, and arrived at Joseph's home in Nauvoo on Christmas day, 1843. He was received with much warmth, but after the festivities were over, he delivered a report to Joseph that changed the whole complexion of the Mormon community.¹⁷⁴

We do not know precisely what Porter Rockwell told Joseph Smith when he returned from Missouri. However it is apparent that Porter reported his information as fact, not conjecture, and that he believed his source was credible. Joseph believed Porter was telling the truth, and was convinced there was a very well-placed mole among his confidants.

¹⁷⁴ *St. Louis New Era* quoted in *History of the Church*, 6:36; Schindler, *Orrin Porter Rockwell*, 74-76; Boggs, "A Short Biographical Sketch of Lilburn W. Boggs," 50-54; and *Jeffersonian Republican*, Jefferson City, Missouri, May 14, 1842.

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The Prophet, in his role as mayor of Nauvoo, quickly and dramatically increased police security in the city. Within four days after Porter's return, the city council organized a 40-man police force with Jonathan Dunham as captain; Charles C. Rich, as 1st lieutenant; and Hosea Stout, 2nd lieutenant. On December 29 these men attended a city council meeting where they were sworn in and instructed by Mayor Joseph Smith in part as follows:

If the bloodthirsty hell-hounds of Missouri continue their persecution, we will be forbearing, until we are compelled to strike; then do it decently and in good order, and break the yoke effectually, so that it cannot be mended. The mob have been so repulsed in their last attempt at kidnapping, they may stand in fear, at least for a short time....

My life is more in danger from some little dough-head of a fool in this city than from all my numerous and inveterate enemies abroad. I am exposed to far greater danger from traitors among ourselves than from enemies without, although my life has been sought for many years by the civil and military authorities, priests, and people of Missouri; and if I can escape from the ungrateful treachery of assassins, I can live as Caesar might have lived, were it not for a right-hand Brutus. I have had pretended friends betray me. All the enemies upon the face of the earth may roar and exert all their power to bring about my death, but they can accomplish nothing, unless some who are among us and enjoy our society, have been with us in our councils, participated in our confidence, taken us by the hand, called us brother, saluted us with a kiss, join with our enemies, turn our virtues into faults, and, by falsehood and deceit, stir up their wrath and indignation against us, and bring their united vengeance upon our heads,...and *we have a Judas in our midst.*¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵ *History of the Church*, 6:150-52. Italics in original.

Nauvoo was not a particularly safe city. The Mississippi River was a magnet for rogues and ruffians, as well as legitimate trade and business ventures. There was a crime wave along that part of the Mississippi, and Nauvoo was not immune to it. Besides that, there was always the fear that people from Missouri might try to enter the city and kidnap the Mormon leaders, or even that a large contingent of Missourians might invade. During that same speech to the police, Joseph warned:

There are speculators in this state who are wanting to sell revolving pistols to us in order to fight the Missourians, and at the same time inciting the Missourians to fight us. Don't buy: it would be better to buy ploughshares and raise corn with them.¹⁷⁶

Notwithstanding these real and perceived dangers, some men in Nauvoo were deeply offended by the fact that policemen patrolled the streets at night. The three who objected most vigorously about these special watchmen were William and Wilson Law, and William Marks. Marks was president of the Nauvoo Stake and close friend of Joseph's wife, Emma.¹⁷⁷

These men caused such a ruckus about the police that the city council held two special sessions to inquire into their concerns. At first, on January 2, 1844, William Law swore that he had been informed that Joseph said he was the "Judas," and Law claimed he feared for his life. He named his informants, who, when sworn in, said they believed Law was the mole for Missouri, but that Joseph

¹⁷⁶ *History of the Church*, 6:152.

¹⁷⁷ Marks stayed in the Church during Joseph's lifetime, but left it later. It was he who secured Emma's cooperation about creating the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and it was Marks who ordained Joseph Smith III to be its first president.

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had not told them so. During this city council meeting, Mayor Joseph Smith explained,

The reason why I made the remarks I did was on account of the reports brought from the Missouri jail by O. P. Rockwell, that my enemies were determined to get me into their power and take my life, and thereby thought they would accomplish the overthrow of “Mormonism.” And to enable them to effect this, they had secured the services of some of my most confidential friends, whom I did not suspect, and who were living in Nauvoo, to deliver me into their hands so that their religious organizations upon their own principles might stand; for they feared that “Mormonism” would destroy their present religious creeds, organizations, and orthodox systems. They did not design to try me, but hang me, or take my life anyhow: that they had a man in our midst who would fix me out, if they could not get me into their power without.¹⁷⁸

By the end of the day William Law had cross-examined all the police and said he was satisfied that Joseph had not given secret instructions to dispose of him. Law shook hands with Joseph and said he would stand by him “to the death.”¹⁷⁹ Judging from what Law was about to do, he may have meant precisely what he said.

Two days later on January 5th, in another special session of the city council, similar complaints were heard from William Marks, Wilson Law, and others. Wilson Law made a similar protestation of loyalty. He said, “I am Joseph’s friend: he has no better friend in the world: I am ready to lay down my life for him.”¹⁸⁰ Joseph did not take these oaths of fealty at face value.

¹⁷⁸ *History of the Church*, 6:164.

¹⁷⁹ *History of the Church*, 6:165.

¹⁸⁰ *History of the Church*, 6:166-70.

After the meetings, he mused,

What can be the matter with these men? Is it that the wicked flee when no man pursueth, that hit pigeons always flutter, that drowning men catch at straws, or that Presidents Law and Marks are absolutely traitors to the Church, that my remarks should produce such an excitement in their minds. Can it be possible that the traitor, whom Porter Rockwell reports to me as being in correspondence with my Missouri enemies, is one of my quorum? The people in the town were astonished, almost every man saying to his neighbor, “Is it possible that Brother Law or Brother Marks is a traitor, and would deliver Brother Joseph into the hands of his enemies in Missouri?” If not, what can be the meaning of all this? “The righteous are as bold as a lion.”¹⁸¹

The following Sunday, January 7, the Prophet’s history records, “At six p.m. attended prayer-meeting with the quorum in the assembly room. Law and Marks absent.”¹⁸² The fact that neither Law nor Marks attended and that Joseph noted their absence shows that the rift had not healed between these two men and the quorum.

Joseph, who was usually quick to forgive friends who had once turned against him, did not give Law a second chance. On Monday the 8th, the Prophet’s history records, “I also had an interview with William Law in the streets,” but there is no indication what that interview was about.¹⁸³ However, Law’s diary shows that on that day, Joseph informed him that he had been

¹⁸¹ *History of the Church*, 6:170.

¹⁸² *History of the Church*, 6:171.

¹⁸³ *History of the Church*, 6:171.

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dropped from the First Presidency. He wrote,

I confess I feel annoyed very much by such unprecedented treatment for it is illegal, inasmuch as I was appointed by revelation (so called) first [and was sustained] twice after by unanimous voice of the general conferences.¹⁸⁴

But he also confessed to his diary,

I feel relieved from a most embarrassing situation. I cannot fellowship the abominations which I verily know are practiced by this man, consequently I am glad to be free from him.¹⁸⁵

In any covert operation involving a mole, it takes time to develop both the contact and the lines of communication. If William Law was the mole then it is likely that he had been working with the Missourians for years rather than just for a few months. If so, there ought to be some early indication of it—and there is.

The first evidence is presented by Law's biographer, Lyndon W. Cook, but Cook did not make the following statement in conjunction with any inference that Law might have been a mole.

The vehemence with which William Law denounced the Prophet in 1844 was not due to disbelief in Mormon polity, but to his conviction that the Mormon leader had plunged into apostate practices. It was Joseph Smith's influence that Law sought to destroy.

William Law's justification for his position of dissent was

¹⁸⁴ Diary of William Law, cited in Cook, "William Law," 60.

¹⁸⁵ Diary of William Law, January 8, 1844 cited in Cook, "William Law," 67.

based on at least five points of contention. First, he alleged that Joseph Smith was defiant of state laws. His particular reference was to the 1842 and 1843 attempts by the state of Missouri to extradite the Mormon prophet on charges of (1) being an accessory to an attempted murder (in 1842) and of (2) committing treason (in 1843). Although he initially assisted Joseph Smith in avoiding imprisonment and extradition during this period, William later believed that this was wrong. Specifically, William accused Joseph of uniting church and state in the 1842 extradition attempt.¹⁸⁶

To further make the point that Law supported Missouri's extradition of the Prophet, Cook quotes Law's attitude as stated in the *Nauvoo Expositor*:

¹⁸⁶ "According to his own statements (made just prior to and after his excommunication), William Law turned against the Mormon prophet because of William's perception that (1) Joseph was totally ungovernable and defiant and was determined to obey or disobey the law of the land at his convenience (i.e., a claim to higher law); (2) Joseph united church and state, both as mayor of Nauvoo (in the passage of city ordinances and the use of police power) and as an influential religious leader by manipulating or seeking to manipulate politicians for private purposes (i.e., breakdown of the rule of law); (3) Joseph had allowed the established judicial order of church government to be trampled under foot; (4) Joseph had attempted to control the temporal (financial) interests of the Mormon people by ecclesiastical authority; and (5) more importantly, Joseph had corrupted the Church by introducing "false and damnable" doctrines such as a plurality of Gods, a plurality of wives, and the doctrine of unconditional sealing up unto eternal life (i.e., Joseph Smith was a fallen prophet)." Cook, "William Law," 56. See also Cook, "Brother Joseph Is Truly a Wonderful Man," 207-18.

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The hostile spirit and conduct manifested by Joseph Smith, and many of his associates towards Missouri...are decidedly at variance with the true spirit of Christianity, and should not be encouraged by any people, much less by those professing to be the ministers of the gospel of peace.

Another evidence that William Law was early in cahoots with Joseph's Missouri enemies is a sworn statement made by Truman Gillett:

June 18th, 1844. Personally appeared Truman Gillett, Jr., before me, Willard Richards, recorder of the city of Nauvoo; and after being duly sworn, deposeth and saith that on or about the first day of June, 1842, while passing up the Ohio river on the steamboat *Massachusetts* deponent overheard two men, one a resident of Missouri and the other of Ohio, as reported, conversing together concerning incidents on the Upper Mississippi, when one said to the other. "If Law could have succeeded in getting an introduction for us to Joe Smith, damn him, we would have gagged him and nabbed him; and, damn him, all hell could not have rescued him from our hands."

The next morning deponent got in conversation with the man before mentioned from Missouri, who stated that he had been on the Upper Mississippi on business; that he stopped at Nauvoo on his way down with some twelve or fourteen other men, who laid a plan to kidnap Joe Smith; that some of the company queried about getting access to him, but one of them said he knew they could if he could find William Law.

They called on William Law in the evening to get an introduction to their great Prophet, and Law went with them to the gate, where they were stopped by the police; "and it was well for him that we did not succeed in getting an introduction to him."

Deponent said, "Did William Law know your business?" And he said "Yes." Deponent asked, "What have you against

Joseph Smith? Did he ever injure you?" The man replied, "No, but he has others." "Did you ever see him?" "Yes. I was one who helped to run the Mormons from Missouri," and related many circumstances concerning the Missouri mob.

Deponent said to the man, he was acquainted with William Law; considered he was an honorable man, and was led to doubt his being engaged with them in a conspiracy against Joseph Smith. He replied, "G-d d-n you, it is true, whether you believe it or not," and repeatedly affirmed it. Deponent did not believe the statements of the man from Missouri as mentioned above until after hearing the recent developments before the City Council.

Truman Gillett, Jr.

[Seal]

Sworn and subscribed at the time and place above written, before me.

Willard Richards, Recorder C. N.¹⁸⁷

If Gillett was telling the truth, and there is no evidence that he was not, then Law had been working with Missouri anti-Mormons for at least a year and a half before Porter Rockwell told Joseph there was a mole, and two years before Law published the *Nauvoo Expositor*.

And the *Expositor* is the most interesting evidence of all. Law's decision to purchase the press and bring it to Nauvoo came very soon after the Anti-Mormons realized it was no longer possible to plan their attack in conjunction with an extradition order from Missouri. The timing of the events involving the *Expositor* is evidence—rather compelling evidence—that Law brought the *Expositor* press to Nauvoo as an alternative to the

¹⁸⁷ *History of the Church*, 6:500-01.

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failed opportunity to get an extradition order from Governor Reynolds. (The evidence will be discussed in detail in later chapters.)

If Law's actions against Joseph Smith in 1844 were based on his disapproval of what the Prophet was doing and saying, then one can analyze his motives as Cook has done. But if he were a mole working to get Joseph out of Nauvoo and into the hands of his enemies in Missouri, and if this arrangement with the Missourians predates his being removed from Church leadership, then the reasons Cook gives for his disillusionment become the justification rather than the cause.

Joseph's Correspondence with John C. Calhoun

During the first week of January, 1844, Joseph had to deal with a lot more than the defection of William Law. One of the most pressing matters was how to respond to the replies he had received from the likely candidates for the 1844 presidential election. Not one had offered any help in getting compensation for the property the Saints had lost in Missouri. John Taylor published their letters in his newspapers, and he also published Joseph's replies. Of that correspondence, Joseph's exchange with John C. Calhoun received the most national attention. Calhoun's response to the Prophet's letter did not contain anything like the answer Joseph wanted, but emphasized their differing views on the states' rights issue. Its final paragraph read:

But, as you refer to the case of Missouri, candor compels me to repeat, what I said to you at Washington: that according to my views the case does not come within the jurisdiction of the federal government, which is one of limited and specific powers.¹⁸⁸

Joseph's response struck at the very heart of Calhoun's state's rights doctrine. A sampling from his letter reads:

Your second paragraph leaves you naked before yourself, like a likeness in a mirror, when you say that "according to your views the federal government is one of limited and specific powers," and has no jurisdiction in the case of the Mormons. So then, a state can at any time, expel any portion of her citizens with impunity, and in the language of Mr. Van Buren, frosted over with your gracious "VIEWS OF THE CASE," though the cause is ever so just, government can do nothing for them, because it has no power.

Go on, then, Missouri, after another set of inhabitants (as the Latter-day Saints did) have entered some two or three hundred thousand dollars' worth of land, and made extensive improvements thereon; go on, then, I say; banish the occupants or owners, or kill them, as the mobbers did many of the Latter-day Saints, and take their land and property as spoil; and let the Legislature, as in the case of the "Mormons," appropriate a couple of hundred thousand dollars to pay the mob for doing that job; for the renowned Senator from South Carolina, Mr. J. C. Calhoun, says the powers of the Federal Government are so specific and limited that it has no jurisdiction of the case... And let me say that all men who say that Congress has no power to restore and defend the rights of her citizens have not the love of the truth abiding in them. Congress has power to protect the

¹⁸⁸ *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, January 1, 1844.

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nation against foreign invasion and internal broil; and whenever that body passes an act to maintain right with any power, or to restore right to any portion of her citizens, it is the supreme law of the land; and should a State refuse submission, that State is guilty of insurrection or rebellion.¹⁸⁹

Joseph's letter to Calhoun was not intended for Calhoun alone. It was printed, along with Calhoun's letter, in the January 1, 1844, issue of the *Times and Seasons*, and in the *Nauvoo Neighbor* on January 10. As usual, copies of both papers were sent to editors of other newspapers all over the United States.¹⁹⁰ By publishing the correspondence in both of their newspapers, the Mormons intended to make Joseph Smith's challenge to Calhoun known and discussed in every city in the country.

To a remarkable degree they succeeded. The correspondence was republished in full or in part by newspaper editors in New York, Massachusetts, Virginia, Ohio, and elsewhere.¹⁹¹ Other

¹⁸⁹ *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, January 1, 1844; *History of the Church*, 6:156-60.

¹⁹⁰ An example of the national circulation of both newspapers is that when the *Tompkins Democrat* (Ithaca, New York, March 5, 1844) announced Joseph Smith's candidacy for the presidency of the United States, it cited the *Nauvoo Neighbor* as its source. When *Public Ledger and Daily Transcript* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 15, 1844) made the announcement, it cited *Times and Seasons*.

¹⁹¹ For example, the correspondence between Joseph Smith and John C. Calhoun was republished in the following newspapers: *Evening Post*, New York, New York, January 27, 1844; *Daily Mercury*, New Bedford, Massachusetts, January 29, 1844; *Alexandria Gazette*, Alexandria, Virginia, February 7, 1844; *Rochester Daily Democrat*, Rochester, New York, February 8, 1844; *Hawk Eye*, Burlington, Iowa, February 15, 1844; *Telegraph*, Painsville, Ohio, February 21, 1844; *Evansville*

editors did not publish the correspondence itself, but commented on it. As one would expect, whether one supported the Prophet or Calhoun depended on the editor's own political bias. A Southern editor wrote,

Mr. Calhoun's letter, and especially the first part of it, is an exceedingly proper one, and just such an answer as should have been given to Joe Smith or any other stupid knavish villain who may choose to obtrude his crudities upon public men—if it were proper to answer at all.¹⁹²

An Iowa editor saw something good on both sides:

Mr. C. replies as briefly, and in a very sensible manner, stating that government has no power to interfere in matters pertaining to his sect either for or against it. This nettles "Jo" who sends back a two or three column letter, in which he says all sorts of naughty things about Mr. Calhoun, giving him to understand that he cannot expect the support of his men, &c. &c. Smith seems determined, if possible, to obtain a redress of grievances, for the treatment his people received from Missouri, and he is right, if he will use nothing but fair and honorable means.¹⁹³

Journal, Evansville, Indiana, February 22, 1844; *Ottawa Free Trader*, Ottawa, Illinois, February 23, 1844.

¹⁹² *Alexandria Gazette*, Alexandria, Virginia, February 4, 1844.

¹⁹³ *Hawk Eye*, Burlington, Iowa, February 15, 1844. Some newspaper editors simply reported the correspondence without showing much bias at all. Examples of these newspapers are: *Sun*, Baltimore, Maryland, January 29, 1844; *New Jersey Journal*, Elizabeth, New Jersey, January 30, 1844; *Pittsburgh Morning Post*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, February 1, 1844; *Rhode Island County Journal and Independent Inquirer*, Providence, Rhode Island, February 2, 1844; *Daily Mercury*, New Bedford, Massachusetts, February 13, 1844; *Dayton Journal and*

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At the beginning of 1844, Calhoun had been considered a viable candidate for the presidency, but later that spring he withdrew from the race when it became apparent that he did not have enough support to win. What part Joseph Smith's actions or the publicity he generated played in that decision, one cannot know.¹⁹⁴

The Mormons were maneuvering themselves into the political spotlight, as the editor of the *Knoxville Register* wrote:

Nauvoo is getting to be a great place, and the doings of these "Saints of the Latter Days," who constitute a little republic among themselves, are becoming quite as interesting as those of foreign governments and principalities. Prophet Joe possesses more power than many of the crowned heads of Europe, for while their subjects are always kicking against their authority, his people are ready to obey all his recommendations, and carry out cheerfully his plans:

We see by a late number of the "Times and Seasons," that the question who shall be president is being agitated in that community, as one of no small importance to them. The editor does not commit himself in favor of either of the prominent candidates, Van Buren, Clay, Calhoun, Buchanan, Cass or Scott, but he thinks the subject is one which is well worthy the attention of the brethren at home and abroad.—The State of Missouri has turned a deaf ear to their petition for redress—Congress has done the same thing, referring them to

Advertiser, Dayton, Ohio, February 13, 1844; *Pittsburgh Christian Advocate*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, February 21, 1844; *Bloomington Herald*, Bloomington, Iowa, March 8, 1844; *Haverhill Gazette*, Haverhill, Massachusetts, June 1, 1844; *Scioto Gazette*, Chillicothe, Ohio, June 6, 1844.

¹⁹⁴ *Upper Mississippian*, Rock Island, Illinois, September 7, 1844. Statement by William Law.

Missouri, and now they think it time to fix upon a man for the President who will be most likely to address their grievances. The editor says—"We not only give our own votes, but use our influence to obtain others, and if the voice of suffering innocence will not sufficiently arouse the rulers of our nation to investigate our case, perhaps a vote of from fifty to one hundred thousand may rouse them from their lethargy." Here is a new element in the political field, which the maneuvering politicians who are looking for success will have to keep their eyes upon. Joe himself may possibly become a candidate, and outstrip them all.¹⁹⁵

(In 1844, news sometimes traveled very slowly. Here, for example, the above editorial was written on February 28, 1844, and it is a prediction of a meeting that took place a month earlier, on January 29, 1844. The reason that works is because the editor in Tennessee did not know about the January meeting, and was commenting on events that preceded it. He is treating events of more than a month earlier as though it were "today's news." The fact is, it was "today's news"—not because the events happened recently, but because the report of them only just arrived. That lag in time between when things happened and when they were reported will appear again and again in this history as we trace the movements of newspaper stories across the nation. In some cases, as in this one, a month or more will have passed between an event and an editor's comments about it, but since it was current in the editors' thinking, I will treat their comments as though they were actually contemporary with the event.)

¹⁹⁵ *Knoxville Register*, Knoxville, Tennessee, February 28, 1844.

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Joseph Smith Announced as a Candidate for U.S. Presidency

The editor of the *Knoxville Register* was more correct than he knew. On January 29, 1844, at a meeting in the mayor's office in Nauvoo, Joseph, Hyrum, John P. Greene, and the Twelve decided that they would "have an independent electoral ticket, and that Joseph Smith be a candidate for the next Presidency; and that we use all honorable means in our power to secure his election."¹⁹⁶ The Prophet responded:

If you attempt to accomplish this, you must send every man in the city who is able to speak in public throughout the land to electioneer and make stump speeches, advocate the "Mormon" religion, purity of elections, and call upon the people to stand by the law and put down mobocracy....

After the April Conference we will have General Conferences all over the nation, and I will attend as many as convenient. Tell the people we have had Whig and Democratic presidents long enough; we want a President of the United States. If I ever get into the presidential chair, I will protect the people in their rights and liberties. I will not electioneer for myself... There is oratory enough in the Church to carry me

¹⁹⁶ *History of the Church*, 6:188; *Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 2:209. B.H. Roberts does not think they took Joseph's candidacy seriously, however, more recent historians disagree. Among the latter are: Flanders, *Nauvoo*, 301-302; Hansen, *Quest for Empire*, 75-79; Both Flanders and Hansen believe his wish to be president was related to his establishment of the Council of Fifty. See also: Godfrey, "Causes of Mormon Non-Mormon Conflict in Hancock County, Illinois." 60-69; Thompson, "A Study of the Political Involvements in the Career of Joseph Smith," 113-116.

into the presidential chair the first slide.¹⁹⁷

Joseph and his friends immediately set to work writing a definition of his political platform. His statement, when published, was called *General Smith's Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States*. Much of the pamphlet was written by Joseph Smith himself. His history shows that he “dictated” part of it on January 29, 1844, and revised it on February 5. However, it was not entirely the work of the Prophet. There were major additions and editing by William W. Phelps,¹⁹⁸ Dr. John M. Bernhisel,¹⁹⁹ and others.

In its next issue, the *Times and Seasons* laid the foundation for an announcement of Joseph's candidacy by editorializing on the need for a new national candidate.²⁰⁰

Who shall be our next President? We have not forgotten what we said a few weeks ago,—We have our eye on the man; we shall notify our friends in due time; and when we do, we will take “a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together.”²⁰¹

Soon both the *Nauvoo Neighbor* and the *Times and Seasons* displayed a logo announcing and supporting the Prophet's candidacy.

¹⁹⁷ *History of the Church*, 6:188.

¹⁹⁸ *History of the Church*, 6:189, 197.

¹⁹⁹ *History of the Church*, 6:221.

²⁰⁰ *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, February 1, 1844.

²⁰¹ *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, February 1, 1844.

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Anti-Mormons Prepare for another Convention at Carthage

As noted above, in mid-December, about the same time that Porter Rockwell was making his way out of Missouri, the leaders of the Anti-Mormons held a meeting in Carthage. With Robert F. Smith in control of the party's leadership, they resolved that if the Mormons would not surrender their weapons they would be driven from the state.²⁰²

At that meeting, the leaders passed several other resolutions, the most significant of them read:

That we recommend to the Militia of our Precincts, to form themselves forthwith into independent companies, in order to be better prepared in case of emergency, to maintain the freedom of our beloved country.²⁰³

That had important overtones because it focused the party on military preparedness rather than on political rhetoric. What Robert F. Smith's Central Committee recommended was that local militia companies take upon themselves a second identity—one that was independent of their state militia chain of command—ultimately reporting to the Anti-Mormon Central Corresponding Committee rather than to the governor.

The arrangement was illegal, but it became the key to Anti-Mormon success. To understand how it worked, we must project ourselves a few months forward and see that in conjunction with the publication of the *Expositor*, and before Governor Ford took

²⁰² *History of the Church*, 6:145.

²⁰³ *Iowa Territory Gazette and Advertiser*, Burlington, Iowa, February 24, 1844.

any official action, the Committee called out its own companies with the intent of making up a posse large enough to defeat the Nauvoo Legion and arrest the Prophet. When Ford activated those same men as state militia companies, they were already in place around Nauvoo.

The Central Corresponding Committee also called for a full countywide political party convention to meet on February 17 at Carthage.

When Thomas Gregg announced the upcoming Carthage convention in his *Warsaw Message*, he stirred up a good bit of attention. He wrote:

We see no use in attempting to disguise the fact that many in our midst contemplate a total extermination of that people; that the thousand defenseless women and children, aged and infirm, who are congregated at Nauvoo, must be driven out, aye, driven, scattered, like leaves before the autumn blast! But what good citizen, let us ask, what lover of his country and his race, but contemplates such an event with horror?²⁰⁴

²⁰⁴ For a short time Thomas Gregg took over the *Warsaw Signal* and published it as the *Warsaw Message*. That paragraph from the *Warsaw Message* was reprinted all over the country: *Southern Christian Advocate*, Charleston, South Carolina, February 23, 1844; *Louisville Daily Journal*, Louisville, Kentucky, February 27, 1844; *Daily Enquirer and Message*, Cincinnati, Ohio, February 28, 1844; *Daily Cincinnati Gazette*, Cincinnati, Ohio, February 29, 1844; *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, Baltimore, Maryland, March 6, 1844; *United States Gazette*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 6, 1844; *New York Daily Tribune*, New York, New York, March 7, 1844; *Public Ledger and Daily Transcript*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 7, 1844; *Alexandria Gazette*, Alexandria, Virginia, March 7, 1844; *Saturday Courier*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 9, 1844; *Pennsylvania Telegraph*, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, March 9, 1844; *Southern Patriot*, Charleston,

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That paragraph was republished in newspapers all over the nation. In Philadelphia, the editor of the *Bicknell's Reporter* responded:

Horror indeed! What have the Mormons done that they should be thus threatened? Will any of our Western contemporaries inform us? Their leaders are no doubt hypocrites and impostors; but it is equally certain that the great mass of their deluded followers, are simple-minded and honest in their convictions, however erroneous. Stories reach us ever and anon, of alleged atrocities committed by them, but the nature of these outrages is not stated, and in many cases indeed, the accounts bear upon their face, an air of gross improbability. In the name of all that is just and humane—why do not the authorities interfere? Such a massacre as is threatened, would be disgraceful to the country and the age, while the authorities of the State in which it is contemplated, could be fearfully culpable, in not adopting preventive means.²⁰⁵

The *St. Louis New Era* reported:

From the publications in the Warsaw Message we learn that there is a most bitter state of public feeling in that part of Illinois against the Mormons. Meetings have been held at

South Carolina, March 9, 1844; *Adams Sentinel*, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, March 11, 1844; *Washington Examiner*, Washington, Pennsylvania, March 16, 1844; *Illinois State Register*, Springfield, Illinois, March 19, 1844; *Telegraph*, Painsville, Ohio, March 20, 1844; *Knoxville Register*, Knoxville, Tennessee, March 20, 1844; *Planet and Weekly News*, Hanover, Pennsylvania, March 22, 1844; *Liberty Advocate*, Liberty, Mississippi, March 22, 1844.

²⁰⁵ *Bicknell's Reporter-counterfeit Detector*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 12, 1844.

Carthage and other places, for the purpose of organizing opposition to the encroachments and usurpations of Jo Smith, the despotism of the Nauvoo corporation, and the hostilities of the Mormon Legion. The same state of public feeling appears now to exist in Illinois that formerly existed in Jackson county, and in the Grand River country, in this State. They talk openly of the extermination of the Mormons as the only means of securing their own safety.²⁰⁶

With this announcement, Gregg's tenure as publisher was coming to an end. He stopped publishing the *Warsaw Message* in February, 1844, when he had to sell the paper to pay his debts. Sharp bought it back again and changed its name to the earlier *Warsaw Signal*.

Governor Ford's Correspondence with Thomas Sharp

Even though Robert F. Smith was running the Anti-Mormon Party, Sharp was still acting as its spokesman.²⁰⁷

Sharp sent Governor Ford a copy of the proceedings and resolutions of the Central Corresponding Committee's meeting. We do not have the cover letter that accompanied those minutes, so we do not know exactly what Sharp wrote to Ford—whether

²⁰⁶ *St. Louis New Era* as reprinted in: *Bicknell's Reporter-counterfeit Detector*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, February 27, 1844; *Pittsburgh Morning Post*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, March 1, 1844.

²⁰⁷ After the murders Ford dealt with the "Warsaw Committee" as representatives of Robert F. Smith and his Central Corresponding Committee (see the *Quincy Herald*, July 15, quoted below.)

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Sharp sent the minutes as a report to a silent partner, or as a threat to the governor that they intended to take Joseph with or without his cooperation. However, we do have Ford's response, dated Springfield, January 29, 1844. The tenor of that response intimates the former rather than the latter.

In the letter, Ford refers to Sharp's request that the governor "take away the arms from the Mormons [and] to raise the Militia to arrest a supposed fugitive [Joseph Smith]; and in fact to repeal some of the ordinances of the city of Nauvoo."²⁰⁸ Ford wrote that as governor he could not repeal city laws, so he had understood the request to be asking for a guarantee that he would work for the repeal of the Nauvoo charter—which would automatically dissolve the Nauvoo Legion. The governor reminded Sharp that he had already sought to repeal the Nauvoo charter.

As yet, I believe, that there has been nothing like war among you; and I hope that all of you, will have the good sense to see the necessity of preserving peace. If there is anything wrong in the Nauvoo Charters, or in the mode of administering them, you will see that nothing short of Legislative or Judicial power is capable of affording a remedy. I myself had the honor of calling the attention of the legislature to this subject at the last session; but a large majority of both political parties in that body, either did not see the evil which you complain of; or if they did they repeatedly refused to correct it... Let it come to this; let a state of war ensue, and I will be compelled to interfere with Executive power. In that case also, I wish in a friendly, affectionate, and candid manner, to tell the citizens of Hancock County, Mormons and all, that my interference will be against those who shall be the first transgressors. I am

²⁰⁸ Ford's letter in the *Warsaw Signal*, February 14, 1844; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 6:189-90.

bound by the laws and constitution to regard you all as citizens of the state, possessed of equal rights and privileges; and to cherish the rights of one as dearly as the rights of another....²⁰⁹

Sharp's request to disarm the Mormons and send a state militia into Nauvoo to arrest the Prophet was an overt attempt to repeat what had happened in Far West. The difficulty for Ford was that the state militia could not legally interfere unless Joseph was accused of crimes that fell under state jurisdiction. What Ford really needed was an excuse to intervene, and the most obvious would be another extradition request from Missouri. Ford did not write that, but what he wrote was that as things then stood, Joseph had not broken any law that could legally warrant intervention by the state's governor. He is reminding them that if they wanted him to intervene there must be a legal excuse. In that same letter he wrote:

I have observed with regret, that occasions have been presented, for disturbing the peace of your county; and if I knew what I could legally do to apply a corrective, I would be very ready to do it. But if you are a lawyer, or at all conversant with the law, you will know that I as a Governor have no right to interfere in your difficulties.

There was another great gap between what Ford wrote and what he did. At the same time he was claiming to be impartial, he was supplying the militias in the towns around Nauvoo with more weapons from the state arsenal. Ford was commander-in-chief of

²⁰⁹ The original of this letter, in the handwriting of Governor Ford, is in the Mormon MSS Collection of the Chicago Historical Society. Sharp published the letter in the *Warsaw Signal*, February 14, 1844. It was republished in the *Ottawa Free Trader*, Ottawa, Illinois, March 8, 1844.

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the Illinois state militia and no major transfer of state-owned arms could have been made without his knowledge and permission. So the following story, published in the *Quincy Herald* less than two weeks after he wrote to Sharp and a week before the convention at Carthage, tells more about the alliance between Governor Ford and Robert F. Smith than one can find in Ford's carefully worded correspondence with Sharp:

We understand that four wagons passed through this city Tuesday morning last, on their way to the State arsenal at Alton, for the purpose of procuring arms and munitions of war, to be used against the Mormons. We fear much trouble will grow out of this difficulty sooner or later. We are also informed that the knowledge of what is going on in this quarter has been brought to the notice of Gov. Ford, and we would suggest whether it is not the duty of his Excellency to protect the innocent in their lives and property.²¹⁰

In Missouri, the editor of the *St. Louis Era* understood exactly what was going on. He told his readers:

There are more rumors of a Mormon war in Illinois. A number of wagons have been sent to Alton for a large supply of public

²¹⁰ *Quincy Herald*, Quincy, Illinois, February 9, 1844. Americans were aware that Ford was involved on the side of the Anti-Mormons because versions of this story were reprinted throughout the United States. A few examples are: *Danbury Times*, Danbury, Connecticut, February 28, 1844; *Columbus Enquirer*, Columbus, Georgia, March 3, 1844; *Mobile Register and Journal*, Mobile, Alabama, March 8, 1844; *Daily Enquirer and Message*, Cincinnati, Ohio, February 2, 1844; *Western Star*, Labanon, Ohio, June 28, 1844; *Arkansas Intelligencer*, Van Buren, Arkansas, March 9, 1844.

arms, to be used against the Mormons, either for attack or defense. If the authorities of Illinois will say the word, they will get volunteers enough from Western Missouri, to quiet the Mormons at Nauvoo.²¹¹

That comment would be interesting in a vacuum, but it was not written in a vacuum. Those words in the *St. Louis Era* would have been read in Missouri as a signal to prepare, and in Warsaw and Carthage as a promise of assistance. They would have been read in Nauvoo as a threat.

In his letter to Sharp, Ford wrote that if there were a local civil war, he would intervene, then left open the question of which side he would support. However, if, as he implied, the Nauvoo charter were repealed, then even the continued existence of the Nauvoo Legion would be illegal, and that would identify the Mormons as “the first transgressors.”

Sharp published Ford’s letter in the *Signal*, along with a reply that was not entirely complimentary but that contained the same kind of double-talk. Sharp objected to part of what Ford wrote, approved of the rest, and concluded:

If a state of war should absolutely occur, might not his excellency find some difficulty in determining who were the aggressors? And if he should not, might not, in this democratic country, the multitude which he should send here to mediate between the belligerents, take a different view of the matter? This we merely throw out as a suggestion, and it may pass for what it is worth.²¹²

²¹¹ *St. Louis Era*, St. Louis, Missouri, St. Louis, Missouri, February 24, 1844.

²¹² *Warsaw Signal*, 14 February 1844.

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Sharp's "suggestion" was not very obscure. The multitude he mentioned was the army the Anti-Mormons could command. What he was saying to his readers, who looked to his paper for directions from the Central Committee—and what he was telling the governor and warning the Mormons—is this: Let the governor send us militia reinforcements, and leave it to us to decide who the aggressors are! Sharp's double language was as transparent as the governor's. Sharp was chiding the governor, while, in fact, he reiterated the governor's real message to his readers. If these two letters were the only evidence, it might be very difficult to read their sub-texts, but as tensions increased the governor's relationship with the Central Corresponding Committee became less obscure, until Ford overtly declared himself by forcing Joseph and Hyrum Smith into the grasp of Thomas Sharp and Robert F. Smith.

Chapter 5

February, 1844

The Prophet's Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States

On February 7, 1844, John Taylor's *Nauvoo Neighbor* announced its support for Joseph Smith for president of the United States. In a long editorial, Taylor wrote:

WHO SHALL BE OUR NEXT PRESIDENT?

There is perhaps no body of people in the United States who are at the present time more interested about the issue of the Presidential contest, than are the Latter-day Saints....we have suffered great injustice from the state of Missouri, [and] are still groaning under accumulated wrongs. Is there no power anywhere to redress our grievances? Missouri lacks the disposition, and Congress both lacks the disposition and power...

Under these circumstances the question again arises, who shall we support? GENERAL JOSEPH SMITH

One great reason that we have for pursuing our present course is, that at every election we have been made a political target for the filthy demagogues in the country to shoot their loathsome arrows at. And every story has been put into requisition to blast our fame, from the old fabrication of "walk on the water" down to "the murder of ex-Governor Boggs." The journals have teemed with this filthy trash, and even men who ought to have more respect for themselves; men

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contending for the gubernatorial chain have made use of terms so degrading, so mean, so humiliating, that a billingsgate fisher woman would have considered herself disgraced with. We refuse any longer to be thus bedaubed for either party; we tell all such to let their filth flow in its own legitimate channel, for we are sick of the loathsome smell.

Gentlemen, we are not going either to “murder ex-Governor Boggs,” nor a Mormon in this state for not giving us his money; nor are we going to “walk on the water”; nor “drown a woman;” nor “defraud the poor of their property;” nor send “destroying angels after Gen. Bennet to kill him;” nor “marry spiritual wives;” nor commit any other outrageous act this election to help any party with, you must get some other persons to perform these kind offices for you for the future. We withdraw.

Whatever therefore be the opinions of other men our course is marked out, and our motto from henceforth will be GENERAL JOSEPH SMITH.²¹³

This time, Taylor not only sent copies of his newspaper to editors throughout the United States, but he also sent it to other prominent people in the nation. This announcement was not addressed to only a local readership. As he intended, the announcement caused quite a stir nationally.

On that same day, February 7, Joseph’s history records: “In the evening I met with my brother Hyrum and the Twelve Apostles in my office, at their request, to devise means to promote the interests of the General Government. I completed and signed my *Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United*

²¹³ *Nauvoo Neighbor*, February 7, 1844; reprinted in: *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, February 15, 1844.

States...”²¹⁴

One of the men present at that meeting was Wilford Woodruff, who recorded this in his journal:

His views were written & were read by Wm. W Phelps & were in the highest degree interesting. Gen Smith gave his reasons for permitting his name to go forth as a candidate for the Presidency of the United States which were as follows:

I would not have suffered my name to have been used by my friends on any wise as President of the United States or candidate for that office if I & my friends could have had the privilege of enjoying our religious & civil rights as American Citizens even those rights which the Constitution guarantee unto all her citizens alike. But this we as a people have been denied from the beginning. Persecution has rolled upon our heads from time, to time from portions of the United States like peels of thunder because of our religion & no portion of the government as yet has stepped forward for our relief & under view of these things I feel it to be my right & privilege to obtain what influence & power I can lawfully in the United States for the protection of injured innocence & if I loose my life in a good cause I am willing to be sacrificed on the altar of virtue, righteousness & truth, in maintaining the laws & constitution of the United States if need be for the general good of mankind.²¹⁵

Joseph Smith's *Views* show that he and his associates had an intelligent, well-considered, and well-informed grasp of national

²¹⁴ *History of the Church*, 6:197.

²¹⁵ *Woodruff Journal*, 1:349. See *History of the Church*, 6:210-211.

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politics.²¹⁶ The *Views* cover many subjects in only a few pages, but even though they were succinct, they said what needed to be said. Near its beginning, the Prophet spelled out the fundamental principles that underpinned all his arguments by quoting George Washington:

I behold the surest pledges that as, on one side, no local prejudices or attachments, no separate views or party animosities will misdirect the comprehensive and equal eye which ought to watch over this great assemblage of communities and interests, so, on another, that the foundations of our national policy will be laid in the pure and immutable principles of private morality, and the pre-eminence of free government be exemplified by all the attributes which can win the affections of its citizens and command the respect of the world.

Then the Prophet addressed political issues of his day, but he did not make any sweeping or innovative generalizations that can readily translate into answers to political questions for the 21st century. Many of his ideas countered the beliefs of John C. Calhoun. For example, Joseph advocated the elimination of slavery by compensating the slave owners who would free their slaves. He proposed the establishment of a national bank, with the capital stock owned by the federal government and with branches in every state. The Prophet was quite pleased with that proposal. He once

²¹⁶ The *Views* were printed in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, May 8, 1844; the *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, May 15, 1844; and are reprinted in a slightly abbreviate form in *History of the Church*, 6:179-209. Also see: Melville, “Joseph Smith, the Constitution, and Individual Liberties,” 65-74; and Poll, “Joseph Smith’s Presidential Platform,” 17-21.

recalled, “I was the first one who publicly proposed a national bank on the principles set forth in that pamphlet.”²¹⁷

He also recommended a “judicious tariff” and insisted on efficiency and economy in government, and he urged a reform of the penal system.

In his *Views*, Joseph did not hesitate to be specific. He expressed admiration for Andrew Jackson; said America had declined “under the withering touch of Martin Van Buren”; and described General Harrison “as a star among the storm clouds for better weather.”

To Joseph, the most important platform of his candidacy was the proposal to give the president the power to stop local mob violence even if a state governor did not request federal help. He illustrated the need for this measure with a graphic description of the ill treatment the Saints had received in Missouri.

Give every man his constitutional freedom and the president full power to send an army to suppress mobs, and the States authority to repeal and impugn that relic of folly which makes it necessary for the governor of a state to make the demand of the President for troops, in case of invasion or rebellion.

The governor himself may be a mobber; and instead of being punished, as he should be, for murder or treason, he may destroy the very lives, rights, and property he should protect. Like the Good Samaritan, send every lawyer as soon as he repents and obeys the ordinances of heaven, to preach the Gospel to the destitute, without purse or scrip, pouring in the oil and the wine. A learned Priesthood is certainly more honorable than “a hireling clergy.”²¹⁸

²¹⁷ *History of the Church*, 6:197.

²¹⁸ *Views in Nauvoo Neighbor*, May 8, 1844; *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, May 15, 1844.

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That was an unmistakable signal that the Prophet and his people intended to make their expulsion from Missouri, and their fear of the same treatment in Illinois, the major issues of their campaign.

Joseph's insistence that the federal government had the power to protect its citizens, even if protecting them against their own state governments, had a double purpose, and his interest in the western territories was directly related to that purpose. Moving the Saints west would be a very expensive undertaking, but if they could obtain the million dollars owed them by Missouri, that would help enormously in financing the move. But the other question was where to go.

Joseph was personally interested in the annexation of Texas and Oregon because both places were possibilities for establishing new Mormon colonies. The twin questions of the annexation of Texas and who owned the Oregon territory were among the hottest national political questions of the 1844 campaign. At that time Texas was an independent nation and Oregon was a disputed territory claimed by both Great Britain and the United States,²¹⁹ so Joseph's straightforward assertion that America should claim both Texas and Oregon attracted widespread interest among newspaper editors, and increased interest in his candidacy.²²⁰ He also

²¹⁹ *Nauvoo Neighbor* articles about Texas: 13, 20, March 27, 1844; April 10, 17, 1844; May 22, 29, 1844; June 5, 19, 26, 1844. *Warsaw Signal* articles about Texas: April 3, 10, 17, 25, 1844; May 1, 8, 15, 16, 29, 1844; June 5, 1844.

²²⁰ See, for example, *Knoxville Register*, Knoxville, Tennessee, February 28, 1844; *Illinois State Register*, Springfield, Illinois, March 1, 1844; *Louisville Daily Journal*, Louisville, Kentucky, March 13, 1844; *Milwaukee Courier*, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, March 20, 1844; *Rochester Daily Democrat*, Rochester, New York, March 21, 1844; *Boston Post*,

suggested that the U.S. expansion might include that part of northern Mexico called California—including what later became Utah. Even though it was not overtly stated, the Prophet's *Views* were more about the Mormons' plans to move west than they were about national politics.

Mormon Preparations for the Carthage Anti-Mormon Convention

The attention of the Mormon leaders was not focused entirely on their objectives in national politics. In January, 1844, they had been as aware as everyone else that Robert F. Smith and his Central Corresponding Committee had called another Anti-Mormon convention in Carthage, and they were very apprehensive about its outcome. When Sharp published Governor Ford's letter of January 29, 1844, and with it his own rather critical reply, John

Boston, Massachusetts, March 25, 1844; *Davenport, Gazette*, Davenport, Iowa, March 28, 1844; *Weekly American Eagle*, Memphis, Tennessee, April 19, 1844; *Plattsburgh Republican*, Plattsburgh, New York, April 27, 1844; *Upper Mississippian*, Rock Island, Illinois, May 11, 1844; *Working Man's Advocate*, New York, New York, May 18, 1844; *National Intelligencer*, Washington, D.C., June 25, 1844; *Dayton Journal and Advertiser*, Dayton, Ohio, July 9, 1844; *Peoria Democratic Press*, Peoria, Illinois, March 20, 1844; *Lee County Democrat*, Fort Madison, Iowa, March 2, 1844; *Ottawa Free Trader*, Ottawa, Illinois, March 8, 1844; *New Hampshire Sentinel*, Keene, New Hampshire, April 3, 1844; *Planet and Weekly News*, Hanover, Pennsylvania, March 29, 1844; *Tompkins Democrat*, Ithaca, New York, March 5, 1844.

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Taylor tried to mollify the Anti-Mormons and gain Ford's support by printing a long article approving of what the governor had said. The editorial, titled "Pacific Innuendo," read as follows:

PACIFIC INNUENDO

The very candid, pacific, and highly creditable advice, which Governor Ford has done himself the honor to address to "the citizens of Hancock County, Mormons and all," and which appears in the "Warsaw Signal," of the 14th inst. is, like the balm of Gilead, well calculated to ease the pain, which has troubled the heads and hearts of the Carthaginians, Warsawinians, and other over jealous bodies for weal and wo. It certainly must be admitted, on all hands, that Governor Ford has exalted himself as a mediator, patriot, lawyer, governor, peace maker, and friend of all; not only to magnify the law and make it honorable, but also in pointing out the path of peace. Such is what the Latter-day Saints have ever sought at the hands of those in authority....

For general information it may be well to say that there has never been any cause for alarm as to the Latter-day Saints. The legislature of Illinois granted a liberal charter for the city of Nauvoo; and, let every honest man in the union, who has any knowledge of her, say whether she has not flourished beyond the most sanguine anticipations of all; and while they witness her growing glory: let them solemnly testify whether Nauvoo has willfully injured the country, county, or a single individual one cent: With the strictest scrutiny publish the facts whether a particle of law has been evaded or broken: virtue and innocence need no artificial covering: Political views and party distinctions, never should disturb the harmony of society; and when the whole truth comes before a virtuous people: we are willing to abide the issue....There is nothing for a bone of contention! even those ordinances which appeared to excite the feeling of some people, have recently been repealed—so that, if the "intelligent" inhabitants of Hancock County want peace;

want to abide by the Governor's advice; want to have a character abroad grow out of their character at home; and really mean to follow the Savior's golden rule: "To do unto others as they would wish other to do unto them," they will be still, now, and let their own works praise them in the gates of justice, and in the eyes of the surrounding world. Wise men ought to have understanding enough to conquer men with kindness....

Intelligence is sometimes the messenger of safety; and willing to aid the governor in his laudable endeavors to cultivate peace and honor the laws; believing that very few of the citizens of Hancock County will be found in the negative of such a goodly course; and considering his views a kind of manifesto, or olive leaf, which shows that there is rest for the soles of the Saints' feet, we give it a place in the *Neighbor*, wishing it God speed, and saying, God bless good men and good measures, and, as Nauvoo has been, so it will continue to be, a good city, affording a good market to a good country, and let those who do not mean to try the way of transgressors, say, Amen.²²¹

Whether that editorial did any good locally is questionable. It did not win Ford over to the Mormon cause and it did nothing to placate the Anti-Mormons who were soon to meet in Carthage. What it did do, however, was tell every editor in the United States who got a copy in the mail that the Mormons wanted only peace. It was statements like this, published by John Taylor that caused the nation's editors to reject much of the fire-eating rhetoric of the *Warsaw Signal* and accept more of what Taylor wrote in his two newspapers.

²²¹ *Nauvoo Neighbor*, February 7, 1844; *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, February 15, 1844.

Warsaw Preparations for the Carthage Anti-Mormon Convention

While the Mormons were appealing to the nation to stop the persecutions against them, the Hancock County Anti-Mormons were consolidating their plans to forcefully cooperate with the next Missouri extradition attempt against Joseph. After February, 1844, Sharp was once again the owner and editor of the *Warsaw Signal*, and in his newspaper's new *Prospectus*, Sharp announced the *Signal* would be "a family newspaper, every way worthy, and deserving of patronage." It would not be concerned with partisan politics, because "the all-absorbing local question renders such a journal negatory in its effects, and contracted in its sphere of usefulness. We have a common cause, and we want a common advocate." Then he married his Anti-Mormon movement with a plea for additional readership to increase the paper's circulation and profitability.²²² This time Sharp's newspaper enterprise proved to be financially successful, and he later boasted, "Our paper has now a larger circulation in this town and vicinity, than any paper has ever had heretofore."²²³ During the next two years, he and his paper would be a major factor in the acceleration and coordination of mob violence against the Mormons.

By Tuesday, February 13, 1844, the citizens of Warsaw were reaching an impasse on the question of what to do with the Mormons. On that day, Sharp, who had been appointed Warsaw precinct chairman during the September Anti-Mormon convention, conducted a meeting whose purpose was to select Warsaw delegates to attend the upcoming party convention in Carthage.

²²² *Warsaw Signal*, February 14, 1844.

²²³ *Warsaw Signal*, February 28, 1844.

But to his chagrin, many who attended his meeting were not in the Anti-Mormon camp, so from the first gavel, there was a bitter struggle between the factions. Sharp published his version of what happened in the *Signal* and complained:

Certain individuals of our village, with whose motives at present we have nothing to do, it appears were very busy in bringing together at this meeting, all who were of like stripe with themselves, without those of the opposite sentiment having any knowledge of their proceedings. In the evening the church was crowded. The meeting was organized by the appointment of Th. Gregg, Esq., to the chair and Mr. Breckenridge Secretary. The object of the meeting was then stated by our self [Thomas Sharp]; and in a few brief remarks we urged the necessity of action.

Mr. Hosford then arose, and in substance said, that he should like to know what encroachment the Mormons had been guilty of? What violations of law & our rights had been made?

We [Sharp] briefly replied—reciting instances of aggression, and the manner in which they had violated, insulted and defied the laws.

Mr. Hosford again arose — assumed that the meeting was got up for the purpose of inciting to mobocracy — accused us of getting up a press to promote such an object, and of using the influence of our tongue for the same purpose.. . [Sharp] got the floor, and in very plain terms stated to Mr. Hosford, that his charge that we were endeavoring to excite mobs by our tongue and press, was false! We then referred to the motives of gentlemen in coming here to obstruct proceedings. If they were not friendly to the object of the meeting, why did they not keep away?

After more debate “the Chairman rose and stated that the call was for an Anti-Mormon meeting—that those who moved the resolutions had no business there, if they did not come to promote the objects for which the meeting was called; and

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concluded by refusing to entertain them.” The arguments continued: “Great excitement here prevailed—and there was some skirmishing between Mr. Davis and ourselves [Sharp], in relation to our matters in establishing an Anti-Mormon newspaper.” By this time the Anti-Mormons decided if the moderates would not leave the meeting, the Anti-Mormons would leave it to them. “Mr. Grover moved that the Anti-Mormons adjourn to Tuesday evening which they accordingly did.”

Sharp was one who left. His report of the rest of the meeting concluded,

After the Anti-Mormons had left, the other party passed their resolutions, and otherwise acted no doubt to their perfect satisfaction.”²²⁴

With this maneuver, Sharp again gained control of the situation. He reported that the Anti-Mormons met separately as arranged and appointed delegates to the convention. Among those elected were Sharp; Thomas Gregg; William N. Green, captain of the militia company called the “Warsaw Cadets”; and William Grover, who was also an officer of the militia (he would later boast that “he had killed Old Joe”²²⁵). Sharp reported without modesty that the “meeting was then ably and eloquently addressed by Messrs. Grover and Sharp.”²²⁶

²²⁴ *Warsaw Signal*, February 14, 1844.

²²⁵ Oaks and Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy*, 147.

²²⁶ *Warsaw Signal*, February 14, 1844.

Carthage Anti-Mormon Convention

The Anti-Mormon convention met in Carthage on February 17 as scheduled. Here again, there was no absolute accord about what should be done with the Mormons. Unlike the Warsaw meeting, the discord was not with moderates but with the fire eaters who were too eager to drive the Mormons out immediately. Robert F. Smith, Thomas Sharp, and the Central Committee had to convince the less-restrained delegates that whatever action they were to take must be taken under the cover of the law.

Thomas Gregg was chosen secretary of the convention with the instructions that he was to keep minutes that would be published in the *Signal*. Unlike Sharp, Gregg's inclination was to whitewash events to hide the intent and activity of the Anti-Mormons, thus placing all of the blame for whatever happened squarely on the heads of the Mormons. He persisted in this attitude even 35 years later, when he wrote a *History of Hancock County* in which he failed to even mention this meeting or any other official activities of the Anti-Mormons. His *The Prophet of Palmyra*, published in 1890, takes the same approach. So when we consider what happened in this February meeting, we must recall who wrote the minutes and what his motives were. There are four purposes behind Gregg's minutes: (1) They are a follow-up to Sharp's correspondence with Governor Ford in which Ford insisted that if he, as governor, and the state militia were to get involved, their involvement must be done with the color of correct legal action. That accounts for why the minutes reveal so little of the fire eaters' arguments. (2) The minutes reiterated to the over-anxious in Hancock County that they must make no move that would be premature and thereby jeopardize the larger plan. (3) The minutes contain no details about the arrangements with Missouri, so either

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the members of the convention were not told precisely what the arrangements were, or the information was not for publication. (4) The minutes underplay the discord among the Anti-Mormons that prevailed at the convention. Gregg reported only enough disagreement that he could make his other points. The minutes read in part:

The Secretary [Gregg himself] submitted the following resolution:

Resolved, that this Convention seriously and urgently recommend to the Anti-Mormon citizens of Hancock County, to maintain peaceable and orderly action in all their difficulties with the Mormons, and to make it a paramount object to sustain the Laws. Mr. Wilson, of St. Mary's, moved to amend as follows: add—"and our reserved rights of self-defense."

Mr. Bagby, of Carthage, offered as a substitute, the following:

Resolved, That in case any portion of our citizens have determined on any course in future that would tend to bring about a collision between the Mormons and Anti-Mormons, without good and justifiable cause, that this meeting earnestly recommended to that portion of our citizens, to reconsider that proposition forthwith. The substitute offered by Mr. Bagby, after an animated discussion, was adopted.²²⁷

Gregg's minutes do not give details about the "animated discussion," but by the end of the discussion, the fire-eaters among the Anti-Mormons lost to those with leveler heads. Thus, the preliminary moves in this deadly chess game were completed, the strategy established, the pieces put in place, and the board set up

²²⁷ *Warsaw Signal*, February 21, 1844.

for the attack. When the *Warsaw Signal* published the minutes of the convention, Sharp urged his readers:

Let us act up to this determination.—The best guarantee for our rights, under the existing state of things, is always to be prepared to defend them. Let us submit to the Laws so long as they are administered in such a manner as to ensure us justice. We owe this to ourselves; for a contrary course will only weaken our cause, and give strength to our enemies.²²⁸

Here Sharp spelled out the Committee's overriding tactic—use the law to justify violence against the Mormons and to insulate the perpetrators against legal retaliation. That tactic had worked in Missouri where the mobs had been able to pillage, rape, and murder under the cover of legal authority, and it would work again in Illinois—but only if the action were done under legal authority, preferably a mandate from the governor that would activate the Hancock County militias against the Mormons. The first step to that end had already been taken, as is shown in the undertones of their correspondence with Governor Ford, but more especially by Ford's providing additional state arms to the militants in Hancock County.

Thomas Sharp used Joseph's announcement that he would run for president to warn his readers that the Mormons' political activities were a direct attack upon the government of Missouri.

Well Jo! If you should be so fortunate as to be elected President of the United States; what would you do with the state of Missouri? Would you pluck out the eyes of her sovereignty? Or would you take her up in your expanded arms,

²²⁸ *Warsaw Signal*, February 21, 1844.

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and giant-like stride across the Western Prairies—leap the Rocky Mountains and hurl her headlong into the angry Pacific, there to remain until purged of every Anti-Mormonism?²²⁹

THE PRESIDENCY

Well, Joe is fairly in the field! He can't go for Clay nor Van Buren, because they can't trample down the constitution to go for him. All right, Joe; no doubt you will be elected! and according to the opinion of our "cat's-paw," the editor of the *Neighbor*, you will "administer justice with an impartial hand, and magnify and dignify the office of chief magistrate of the land."

Faugh! Is there a man in the nation but believes that Joe Smith is "a man of sterling worth and integrity, and of enlarged views; honorable, fearless, and energetic; and that there is not a man in the Unites States more competent to the task?" Bah! ...So good bye, Joe! when we can't vote for anybody else, maybe we will vote for you. No! We would as soon vote for *Old Nick*!

By the way, Joe, we suggest that you strengthen your ticket by putting "Old Nick," for Vice President. But, then, if both should be elected, and you should happen to die, we would be in a worse fix than the Whigs were when Tyler came into power.²³⁰

In the same issue of the *Warsaw Signal* in which Sharp mockingly announced Joseph Smith's candidacy, he published the proceedings of the Anti-Mormon's February convention at Carthage. The surest way to know what really happened at the convention and what plans were settled on is to see what the Anti-Mormons did after their strategies were established, and the key to

²²⁹ *Warsaw Signal*, February 21, 1844.

²³⁰ *Warsaw Signal*, February 21, 1844. Italics are in original.

the strategy was its timing. They feared the consequences of the upcoming 1844 fall election and were determined to break the back of the Mormon majority before that election took place. Their primary target, apart from Joseph Smith himself, was the Nauvoo charter. So in that first issue, after the convention minutes, Sharp also published the following editorial: (Note, he used the phrase “old citizens” to mean the same as it did in Missouri: the first settlers, those who came to Hancock County before the Mormons arrived.)

THE NAUVOO CHARTER

Much has been said in this community, in relation to the Nauvoo Charter—one party contending violently, for its repeal, and others, urging that the Charter is in itself unobjectionable—and that a repeal would be attended with no beneficial effect. As for ourselves, we are of the opinion, that the existence of these chartered privileges in the Mormons, is one of the most fruitful causes of the animosity existing between them, and the “old citizens”. As much interest has been manifested on this subject, we propose in this article, to present what we conceive to be a proper view of the case.

We have found in conversation with intelligent individuals, that doubts exist as to the right of the Legislature to repeal this Charter. They urge it would be an interference with vested rights—and to repeal it, would be deleterious as a precedent. Now, this argument is based entirely on ignorance of the distinction which exists between the various kinds of corporations....

But there is another view of the case. We hold that the Mormons have transcended their chartered powers—knowing that they had no shadow of authority for the passage of many of their ordinances. Some however, pretend to believe that these ordinances were passed because the Mormons did not understand the true limitation and provisions of their Charter.

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Now we hold it to be an incontrovertible maxim that “we should not give the sword to knaves, or power to fools.” If the Mormons knowingly and knavishly transcend the limits of their Charter, using it for purposes not contemplated by the Legislature—converting the bread that was given for their nourishment into a stone wherewith to wound their benefactors, would it not be just as reputable to grant chartered privileges to a band of blacklegs or horse thieves as to such men? On the other hand if the Mormons are not capable of understanding their charter—so stupid that they cannot comprehend the “King’s English,” would it not be quite as sensible for the Legislature to grant extensive corporate powers to a band of idiots, or babies, who are utterly incapable of construing them, and whose blundering would be a source of annoyance to all who happened to be so unfortunate as to live in their vicinity. Then which horn of the dilemma that please. If the Mormons have palpably transcended their corporate powers, they have either done it knavishly or because they are too great fools to understand them. Who would wish to give extensive corporate power to knaves? None! How much more sensible then is it, to give them to fools. Trust not a knave, for he may injure you for his own benefit. Trust not a fool, for like the Indian’s white man he is very “unsarlin.”²³¹

Plans to Move West

The Mormons were playing for time. They had five objectives: (1) to move the Church west as soon as possible, (2) to

²³¹ *Warsaw Signal*, February 21, 1844.

accrue enough national political clout to enable them to help finance that move by collecting some money for the property they had lost in Missouri, (3) to augment their numbers by gathering as many new converts as possible to Nauvoo in preparation for the move, and (4) to complete the construction of the temple so the Church members could receive the temple ordinances before they left Nauvoo. (5) But to achieve those ends, they first had to soften the attitudes of others toward what would appear to be their expansionist policies on local, state, and national arenas.

For the Mormons, who were playing on a much larger game board than the Anti-Mormons, and with pieces (like national public opinion and federal politics) that were not under their control, plans could be made quickly, but their implementation happened very slowly, or not at all. But the Anti-Mormons, under the direction of Robert F. Smith and his Central Committee, playing on the smaller, local board that they could control, they could execute their plans very rapidly.

Joseph and his friends crafted his presidential campaign carefully, but they had no illusions about the possibility of actually being elected. Besides that, the Prophet intended that he and his people would not remain in what was then United States territory, so for him the personal results of the election were beside the point. On February 20, three days after the Anti-Mormon convention in Carthage, Joseph formalized his plans for moving west. His journal states:

I instructed the Twelve Apostles to send out a delegation and investigate the locations of California and Oregon, and hunt out a good location, where we can remove to after the temple is completed, and where we can build a city in a day, and have a government of our own, get up into the mountains, where the devil cannot dig us out, and live in a healthful climate, where

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we can live as old as we have a mind to.²³²

The next day the Twelve met again. This time the discussion was even more specific. Brigham Young, who was present, recorded in his diary: “I met with the quorum of the Twelve at Joseph’s Store & according to Joseph’s Council we selected a company to go on an exploring expedition to California & pitch upon a spot to build a city.”²³³

Initial Reaction to Joseph’s Views

Joseph’s presidential campaign was in full swing by February 24, when fifteen hundred copies of General Smith’s *Views* had been printed on the *Times and Seasons* press and were ready for nationwide distribution.²³⁴ *The Nauvoo Neighbor* advertised that “a neat pamphlet, of twelve pages are for sale at this office, the Clerk’s Office in Gen. Smith’s store, at the Mansion House, and all the principal stores in the city.”²³⁵

The Mormons had become increasingly serious about this document. Joseph’s history reads: “We prayed that General Joseph Smith’s *Views of the Powers and Policy of the United States* might be spread far and wide, and be the means of opening the hearts of

²³² *History of the Church*, 6:222.

²³³ Preston Nibley, “Brigham Young in Nauvoo Up to the Death of the Prophet Joseph Smith,” *Improvement Era*, December 1925, 106-107.

²³⁴ *History of the Church*, 6:224.

²³⁵ *Nauvoo Neighbor*, February 28, 1844.

the people.”²³⁶ Two days later, February 27, copies of General Smith’s *Views* were mailed to “the President and cabinet, supreme judges, senators, representatives, principal newspapers in the United States, (all the German), and many postmasters and individuals.”²³⁷

Having sent out their announcement about Joseph’s candidacy, the Mormons then watched for a response.

Mormons in Nauvoo were pleased about this distribution, and the reception of the *Views* received. William Adams observed, “The views and policy of Government written by the Prophet was favorably received, and many of the newspapers commented upon them and recommended them to the nation as wise and sound policy which should be accepted by the Saints.”²³⁸ As copies of other newspapers came in, John Taylor gathered up several good ones and republished them for his neighbors to read.

A NEW CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENCY

“The Mormon Prophet in the field.” “Gen. Joseph Smith, for President,” and other announcements of the kind, we find are very plentifully circulated in our exchange papers; but very few of them however, have any opinion on the subject, or if they have, they have not ventured to give them. *The Missouri Republican* believes that it will be death to Van Buren, and all agree that it must be injurious to the Democratic ranks, inasmuch as it will throw the Mormon vote out of the field.

²³⁶ *History of the Church*, 6:225.

²³⁷ *History of the Church*, 6:225-226.

²³⁸ Adams, Autobiography.

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The "Iowan," Lee Co. Democrat, has the following:
"A NEW CANDIDATE IN THE FIELD"

"We see from the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, that Gen Joseph Smith, the great Mormon Prophet, has become a Candidate for the next Presidency. We do not know whether he intends to submit his claims to the National Convention or not; but, judging from the language of his own Organ, we conclude that he considers himself a full team for all of them."

All that we have to say on this point is, that if superior talent, genius, and intelligence, combined with virtue, integrity and enlarged views, are any guarantee to General Smith's being elected, we think that he will be a "full team of himself."

We copy the following from the *Springfield Register*:
GENERAL JOSEPH SMITH A CANDIDATE FOR
PRESIDENCY

"It appears by the Nauvoo Papers that the Mormon Prophet is actually a Candidate for the President. He has sent us his pamphlet, containing an extract of his principles: from which it [appears] he is up to the hub for an United States Bank and a Protective tariff. On these points, he is much more explicit than Mr. Clay, who will not say that he is for a bank, but talks all the time of "restoring the national currency;" nor will Mr. Clay say what kind of tariff he is for. He says to the South, that he has not sufficiently examined the present tariff, but thinks very likely it could be amended.

Gen. Smith professes no such fastidious delicacy. He comes right out in favor of a bank and a tariff; taking the true Whig ground; and ought to be regarded as the real Whig candidate for President, until Mr. Clay can so far recover from his shuffling and dodging, as to declare his sentiments like a man. At present we can form no opinion of Clay's principles, except as they are professed by his friends in these parts. Clay himself has adopted the notion which was once entertained by an eminent grammarian; who denied that language was

intended as a means to express one's ideas; but insisted that it was invented on purpose to aid us in concealing them.²³⁹

Sharp's *Warsaw Signal* also announced the appearance of the *Views*, but with emphasis on his own personal contempt for its author:

JOE SMITH'S VIEWS OF THE POWERS AND POLICY OF THE GENERAL GOVERNMENT We have by accident stumbled on a copy of Joe Smith's pamphlet, in which he shadows forth his views, in relation to the powers and policy of the General Government, preparatory to the announcement of his name for the Presidency. As our readers would like to know that Joe says in his document, we will proceed to give a brief review, merely for amusement: [Several quotes from the *Views* followed. The article then concludes with:]

Now Joe, set about that task, for it is evident that your errors are not all of the heart, some of them have a much higher locality. Candidly, from a review of your pamphlet we have come to the conclusion, that you are a greater dunce than nature ever intended you to be, and that you have about as much knowledge in your cranium of the relative limits and structures of our Governmental policy, as there is essential moisture in a January corn stalk. If it would be any accommodation we will lend you our devil to teach you the first rudiments of our National Economy.²⁴⁰

About the same time, someone in Nauvoo wrote a letter to the editor of the *Missouri Republican* in which he laid out what he said was the purpose of the Prophet's campaign:

²³⁹ *Nauvoo Neighbor*, March 20, 1844.

²⁴⁰ *Warsaw Signal*, March 13, 1844.

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You have seen it announced that Joseph Smith is a candidate for the Presidency of the United States. Many think this is a hoax—not so with Joe and the Mormons. It is the design of these people to have candidates for electors in every state of the union; a convention is to be held in Baltimore, probably next month. The leaders here are busy in organizing their plans—over a hundred persons leave in a few days for different states to carry them out as far as possible. I mention these facts only to show that Joe is really in earnest. He indignantly spurns the proposition to run for the second office on the same ticket with Mr. Van Buren: he thinks his chance would be much better alone than to be associated with the sage of Lindenwald; doubtless it is equally as good.—The true reason for this movement is, to prevent his followers in this county from becoming divided even upon political questions.²⁴¹

As activity for the campaign increased, people in Nauvoo became increasingly enthusiastic about it.

On Friday evening last a public meeting was held in the room over Joseph Smith's Store, at which a public address of General Joseph Smith's, to the citizens of the United States was read by Judge Phelps. The address is certainly an able

²⁴¹ Correspondence of the *Missouri Republican* from Nauvoo, April 25, 1844; reprinted in: *New York Daily Tribune*, New York, New York, May 28, 1844; *Rhode Island County Journal and Independent Inquirer*, Providence, Rhode Island, May 31, 1844; *Miner's Journal*, Postsville, Pennsylvania, June 1, 1844; *Public Ledger and Daily Transcript*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, June 6, 1844; *Boston Post*, Boston, Massachusetts, June 10, 1844; *Huron Reflector*, Norwalk, Ohio, June 11, 1844; *Pennsylvania Telegraph*, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, June 12, 1844; *Pittsfield Sun*, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, June 27, 1844; *Carolina Watchman*, Salisbury, North Carolina, July 20, 1844.

document, big with meaning and interest, clearly pointing out the way for the temporal salvation of this nation, showing what would be our best policy, pointing out the rocks and quicksand where our political bark is in danger of being wrecked, and the way to escape it and evincing a knowledge and foresight of our political economy, worthy of the writer. Appropriate remarks were made by several gentlemen after the reading of the address.²⁴²

Local and National Impact of Joseph's Views

The fact that the Prophet had announced his candidacy for the presidency was noted by many newspapers in America. Some republished long excerpts from his *Views*; others only commented on its contents. How well Joseph's *Views* were accepted is impossible to say, but we can find some good indicators. The editor of the *Mobile Register and Journal* used the Prophet's *Views* to ridicule his Whig opponent:

HURRAH FOR THE PROPHET—We have received, says the *Missouri Reporter*, Gen. Joseph Smith's "views of the powers and policy of the Government of the U. States"—in which he presents himself as a candidate for the Presidency. The Whig promises of 1840, of fine times, roast beef and two dollars a day, are thrown into the shade. Gen. Jo promises every thing and a little more. He goes, peace, plenty, a band and Mormonism—for Oregon, Texas, Mexico, Canada, and the

²⁴² *Nauvoo Neighbor*, February 7, 1844; *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, February 15, 1844.

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whole world.—Gen. Jo may become a dangerous rival of Prince Hal.²⁴³

On the other hand, New York's *Working Man's Advocate* took the Prophet's *Views* quite seriously.

GENERAL SMITH'S VIEWS OF THE POWERS AND
POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES

A pamphlet of this title has been handed to us, which we have read with much pleasure. The Mormon Prophet has there put forth many excellent ideas worthy of the perusal of a free people. It is a plain philosophical discourse, entirely free from cant, and full of the very best advice. General Smith appears to be neither Whig nor Democrat; but he is evidently in favour of the largest liberty, discountenances that mob spirit which is so prevalent in our country, and recommends unity, charity, and universal toleration. The address is well written, and the quotations from American Statesmen are excellent and appropriate, and made without reference to party. He advises legislators to "study the convenience of the people more than the comfort of the Cabinet." He praises Jefferson and Jackson, but seems disposed to sneer at Van Buren and Tyler, whom he calls a "pseudo-Democratic Whig President." He recommends the re-annexation of Texas, under certain circumstances. He says—"When a neighboring realm petitioned to join the Union of the sons of liberty, my voice would be, come, yea, come Texas; come Mexico; come Canada and come all the world—let us be brethren; let us be one great family, and let there be universal peace." Surely, none can complain of a want of liberality in these sentiments.

His opinions on the subject of Abolition are worthy of

²⁴³ *Mobile Register and Journal*, Mobile, Alabama, March 22, 1844. "Prince Hal" was Henry Clay.

attention. He goes for a liberal and generous policy, and advises government to use its surplus revenue for the purchase of the freedom of the slaves. He thinks the slave holders would agree to this, and that no other measure of emancipation is just.

General Smith's plan of taking surplus revenue to purchase the freedom of the slaves would never do. Before the Working Men of the North can pay taxes to free the Southern slaves, they must emancipate themselves from the dominion of land-lords. Of the two classes of slaves, the black, who is robbed of his body but has the land, and the white, who is robbed of his land but has his body, the black has rather the best of the bargain at present, because he is sure of some support in sickness and old age, which the white is not.²⁴⁴

A newspaper editor's reaction to Joseph's *Views* had little to do with the merits of the ideas expressed in the pamphlet. That is simply the way things were in America in 1844. At that time, most American newspaper editors considered themselves to be the local spokesman for a national political party (thus names like the *Nashville Whig* and the *Rochester Daily Democrat*) so their judgments of General Smith's *Views* were naturally consistent with how well his ideas lined up with their own party on important issues. Detroit's *Democratic Free Press* (whose editor supported Polk) summed it up: "Joe has put forth a long address to the 'people of the Union,' giving his *Views* on all the great national questions. He agrees with the Whigs in all things but one, viz: that Clay can't be elected. He bets on himself."²⁴⁵

²⁴⁴ *Working Man's Advocate*, New York, New York, May 18, 1844.

²⁴⁵ *Democratic Free Press*, Detroit, Michigan, May 30, 1844; a similar announcement is in *Pittsburgh Morning Post*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, June 7, 1844.

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The editor's comments were correct. General Smith's *Views* were much like the Whig platform, except that he was personally opposed to Clay as a candidate. It was predictable then, that the Democratic newspapers would use the Mormon candidate to attack Clay and the Whigs, and that the Whig newspapers would not support Joseph Smith's *Views* against Clay.

One of the best examples of a Democratic editor attacking the Whigs by fastening their campaign to the Mormons is the following article from Erie, Pennsylvania. The title is "A New Advocate of Coonery," and the editor cites the *Western New Yorker* as his source. Clay was called "the Coon," his followers "Coons," and his party ideology "Coonery." The article reads,

A NEW ADVOCATE OF COONERY

General Joseph Smith, or as he is more generally known, Joe Smith, the Mormon Prophet, has come out "flat-footed," to use an expressive Mississippi metaphor, for Whiggery in its broadest sense. Whooraw for Joseph—brother Joseph, as the Whigs will no doubt soon have it—he's just in time to help make out the trio, and fill a place heretofore vacant in the great coon army. Let us see how it will sound, First Henry Clay, Commander in-chief, a southern black-leg and duelist, has command of the southern division.... The eastern and northern division is entrusted to the command of the "God-like Daniel," who has thereby found out "where to go," ...while the western division which has heretofore, for the want of proper materials, been destitute of a captain, will be led on by the Prophet Joseph, Commander in chief of the Nauvoo Legion and Aids-de-camp to his Coonship, "The Mill boy of the Slashes."—Lest some profane doubters, may question Joseph's qualifications to assume such an important command, we will give his views of the importance of having a great *National Regulator* to regulate the money affairs of the country, as expressed in a recent resolution, setting forth his "Views of the Powers and Policy of

the Government of the United States,” and it will then be seen that the “Mormon Prophet’s” revelations do not differ very materially from those of Henry Clay, Daniel Webster and Millard Fillmore, and generally believed as political gospel by the “Universal Whig Party” throughout the Union....

But Joseph has a higher claim still to the confidence of Whiggery. Listen to the following eloquent description of the defeat of the democracy in 1844. The most successful efforts of the editors of the Erie Gazette have never equaled this, and we would suggest to them in a spirit of kindness, that they immediately send and secure his valuable service as a correspondent to their paper. But we are keeping our readers waiting for this precious morsel:

At the age, then, of sixty years, our blooming republic began to decline, under the withering touch of Martin Van Buren. Disappointed ambition, thirst for power, pride, corruption, party spirit, faction, patronage, perquisites, fame, tangling alliances, priest craft and spiritual wickedness in high places, shock hands, and reveled in midnight splendor. Trouble, vexation, perplexity and contention, mingled with hope, fear, and murmuring, rumbled through the Union, and agitated the whole nation, as would an Earthquake at the center of the earth, heaving the sea beyond its bounds, and shaking the everlasting hills. So, in hopes of better times, while jealousy, hypocritical pretensions, and pompous ambition were luxuriating on the ill-gotten spoils of the people, they rose in their majesty, like a tornado, and swept through the land, till General Harrison appeared, as a star among the storm-clouds, for better weather.

After this won’t Messrs. Fillmore and Sergeant withdraw from the course and let the General run for the Vice Presidency with Mr. Clay? We shall see.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁶ *Erie Observer*, Erie, Pennsylvania, March 23, 1844.

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Another editor in Pennsylvania made the same observations:

A Rescue.—Joe Smith of Nauvoo, the great head of the Mormons, has come to the rescue of the Coon and has pronounced in favor of a national bank, having published at great length, his views upon that and congenial subject; as, for instance, in proposing that all the rogues in the penitentiaries shall be pardoned by special act of the legislatures of the respective states; but whether or not this is to be done for the organization and management of the aforesaid National Bank and its branches, Joe does not distinctly say. The N. Y. *Evening Post* is of opinion, however, that such an act of grace would be unnecessary, as there are people enough of the kind contemplated by Joe now at large to conduct the institution, without recourse to the prisons. In the course of his remarks upon finance and financiers, General Smith is excessively severe on Mr. Van Buren, and is indeed in all respects quite a model of a coon.²⁴⁷

On the other side, the editor of the *St. Louis Gazette* was angry about General Smith's criticisms of Van Buren, and observed, "His ideas—and he certainly has some, such as they are—do not appear to be in the habit of subjecting themselves to much discipline." He quoted the *Views* statement about Van Buren, then added, "So much for Joseph—(we despise the fashion people have of calling him Joe) and his 'Views.' We have redeemed our pledge to 'notice,' and we now leave the General with the reader. Who will vote for him? Don't all speak at once!"²⁴⁸

Some American newspaper editors who did not express a

²⁴⁷ *Tioga Eagle*, Wellsborough, Pennsylvania, March 27, 1844.

²⁴⁸ Reprinted in: *Louisville Daily Journal*, Louisville, Kentucky, March 13, 1844; *Davenport, Gazette*, Davenport, Iowa, March 28, 1844.

political bias in this situation simply reported that the *Views* had been published, and then gave their readers a short synopsis of its contents. In some instances the synopsis was quite straightforward.²⁴⁹ Concerning the Prophet's proposal about a national bank, one editor wrote, "As Joe is a candidate for the Presidency, this avowal of attachment to an 'obsolete idea' will materially hurt his prospects. It is frank; however, for a man to come out with his principles before the election, it shows he does not wish to deceive the people."²⁵⁰

In other newspapers, the opinion was colored by the editor's dislike of the Mormons or of Joseph Smith.²⁵¹ An editor who was opposed to the annexation of Texas and the U.S. claims to Oregon wrote: "Joe Smith and Annexation. Joe Smith's ideas of matters temporal are as expansive as his opinions of things spiritual. He would grasp territory as he would eternity—by a process peculiarly his own—regardless of the claims of others or his own conscience."²⁵² Another editor was a little less critical: "Joe Smith is in favor of the admission into the Union of Texas, Mexico and Canada—when they shall ask it, and of the occupation of Oregon.

²⁴⁹ For examples see: *Bloomington Herald*, Bloomington, Iowa, March 8, 1844; *Alexandria Gazette*, Alexandria, Virginia, March 16, 1844; *National Intelligencer*, Washington, D.C., June 25, 1844; *Dayton Journal and Advertiser*, Dayton, Ohio, July 9, 1844.

²⁵⁰ *National Intelligencer*, Washington, D.C., March 19, 1844. The paper published another article about the *Views*, June 25, 1844; republished in *Dayton Journal and Advertiser*, Dayton, Ohio, July 9, 1844.

²⁵¹ *Warsaw Signal*, quoted in *Ottawa Free Trader*, Ottawa, Illinois, April 15, 1844.

²⁵² *Weekly American Eagle*, Memphis, Tennessee, April 19, 1844.

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Joe ‘goes his length’ in politics as well as religion.”²⁵³ In Joseph Smith’s old home town of Palmyra, New York, we read this:

Another Presidential Candidate—The Nauvoo *Times & Seasons*, published at the city of the Mormons, announces as a candidate for President of the United States, “General Joseph Smith”—alas, (as he would be more readily recognized here,) the “Hero of Stafford street.” So it seems that Jo is coming down from his high calling of revelation, and entering into the kingdom of this world. He has published an address to the people of the U. States, indicating the principles by which his administration of the government will be characterized, and how he will “make the wilderness blossom as a rose,” if he is elected. It is altogether a very curious document, evincing much of that shrewdness for which Jo is distinguished beyond any man that has lived since the days of Mohammad, and withal considerable intelligence and ability. We have been favored by the author with a pamphlet copy of the address, which may be seen by those of his boyhood acquaintances in this region who may feel a solicitude in regard to his rising greatness and future intentions!²⁵⁴

The most important Whig newspaper in Washington, D.C., the *National Intelligencer*, did not comment on the Prophet’s *Views*.

However, by far the most significant critical review of General Smith’s *Views* came from the *Daily Globe* in Washington, D.C. The *Globe* was the most influential Democratic newspaper in the nation’s capital and was considered the national spokesman for the Democratic Party. In New York City, the editor of the

²⁵³ *Plattsburgh Republican*, Plattsburgh, New York, April 27, 1844.

²⁵⁴ WSP, March 20, 1844.

Democratic *Evening Post* echoed the opinions of the *Globe*.²⁵⁵ For our study, the most significant thing about the article in the *Globe* is not what it says, but that it says so much. The *Globe* would naturally have disagreed with the Whig-like contents of the Prophet's *Views*, but if its editors had considered the candidacy of the Mormon Prophet a matter of little or no consequence, the paper would have ignored it rather than publish this major attack upon it. The *Globe* article read:

A NEW ADVOCATE FOR A NATIONAL BANK

We have cast our eyes hastily over General Smith's (Mormon Joe) "Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States. Nauvoo, 1844." This illustrious individual "goes the whole figure" with Messrs. Clay, Webster, Sergeant, and the Whig party in general, for a national bank. After this, who can doubt the propriety of such an institution? Here is Joe's plan for a "fiscal agent," which is quite as sensible, both in nature and object, as the famous Whig fiscalities:....

The prophet seems to be thoroughly imbued with the Whig financial doctrines. He wants a national bank for the "accommodation of the people," and to save the federal and State treasuries from taxation. In two respects, however, we think Joe's plan has decided advantages over those of Messrs. Clay and Webster. He sticks to the specie basis, dollar for dollar; and his plan is more economical, as the officers are to be elected by the people, "with wages at the rate of two dollars per day." There is another recommendation, however, of this "great financier" which, we fear, will somewhat embarrass the practical operation of his scheme. He tells the people:

"Petition your State legislatures to pardon every convict in

²⁵⁵ *Evening Post*, New York, New York, March 16, 1844.

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their several penitentiaries; blessing them as they go, and saying to them, in the name of the Lord—‘Go thy way, and sin no more.’”

We fear that, if this humane recommendation be adopted, the “specie basis” would soon disappear from Joe’s mother bank and branches, including that of Nauvoo, which would quickly show a “beggarly account of empty boxes.” Perhaps, however, we are unnecessarily apprehensive of the small thieves, who fall into the clutches of the law, since the great thieves, who robbed millions from the late Whig bank and its satellites, are permitted to roam at large with perfect impunity. Upon the whole, however, we will do General Smith the justice to state, that we think his financial doctrines more sound, his *Views* more honest, and his scheme more feasible, than those of the hypocrites and quacks, who supported by a great party, have fleeced the country to the very quick, and are now eager to repeat the application of the shears.

The following passage calls vividly to mind Mr. Clay’s Hanover speech, in which he promised a perfect millennium to the country, as soon as a Whig President should be elected:

“The country will be full of money and confidence, when a national bank of twenty millions, and a State bank in every State, with a million or more, give a tone (an odor of nationality) to money matters, and make a circulating medium as valuable in the purses of a whole community as in the coffers of a speculating banker or broker.”

The prophet is not only thoroughly imbued with the financial doctrines of the Clay-and-Webster school, but he has caught the very tone of their “eloquence.”

The General is not an admirer of lawyers. “Like the good Samaritan,” he exclaims, “send every lawyer, as soon as he repents and obeys the ordinances of Heaven, to preach the gospel to the destitute, without purse or scrip, pouring in the oil and the wine.” How it must have delighted his heart to learn that the pious Daniel has lately become an eloquent

preacher!—though we fear he does not “repent and obey the ordinances of the gospel,” nor is contented—not he—to preach “without purse or scrip,” however willing to “pour in the oil and the wine.”....

Joseph is unquestionably a great scholar as well as financier. Cannot Mr. Clay persuade the General to accompany him on his electioneering tour?... We propose, then that Joe Smith (Mr. Biddle being out of the way)²⁵⁶ be made president, and George Poindexter cashier, of the new Whig national bank that is not to be; that the mother bank be established at Nauvoo, with branches over all creation; that the Honorable Mr. Mitchell be appointed counsel, and that Mr. Webster have unlimited power to draw, with Governor Doty of Wisconsin as his security. With this arrangement, we should have the perfection of a Whig system of finance.²⁵⁷

The Mormons were pleased that the Prophet’s *Views* were attracting so much attention. John Taylor reprinted the *Globe* article, then responded,

We should not be surprised if a comet or some other powerful body, has struck the “globe,” and at least produced a great deal of uneasiness; but from the above we discover that a monstrous

²⁵⁶ Nicholas Biddle had managed the Second Bank of the United States. After Andrew Jackson withdrew the federal government’s money from the bank, Congress revoked its charter. Biddle was still a symbol of big banking when he died in the spring of 1844.

²⁵⁷ *Globe*, Washington D.C. March 14, 1844. This article was reprinted word for word by the *Buffalo Daily Courier and Economist*, Buffalo, New York, March 25, 1844. However, its editor made no acknowledgment of its story’s origin. That was not considered to be an unethical practice in 1844, but it gave the impression that it was written by, and expressed the opinions of the *Courier*’s editor.

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effort is made to ward off the blow, and cause it to pass in an oblique direction to some other tremendous body. But, Mr. "Globe," this will never do, you must take it as it comes.

It seems the editor of the *Globe* has got hold of an edged tool which he does not know how to use, which has caused no little uneasiness. But however in regard to the views of Gen. Smith, respecting a national bank, and sundry other items on the great affairs of the nation, he is obliged to acknowledge, are far superior to those of the Clay and Webster school, and no doubt, if he had spoke the honest sentiments of his heart, he would have said, "Mr. Van Buren and Tyler too." However, like all other specimens of meanness, he turns into ridicule everything that he cannot controvert with reason and evidence.

Gen. Smith's views on the great affairs of the government are unanswerable, for reasons they are views of a statesman who is uncorrupted with the schemes of political demagogues of the present age. Indeed, we know him to be a man well qualified for the highest station in our government, for he is a learned man and one that is well versed in the affairs of State, but he is a philanthropist. He is certainly the man that every person who regards the welfare of our country should vote for, at the next Presidential election.²⁵⁸

In Illinois, as was predictable, the response to the *Globe's* article was strictly along party lines. The editor of the Galena's *North Western Gazette* echoed the opinions that had already been expressed in Springfield's *Sangamo Journal*:

²⁵⁸ This quote is from the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, April 10, 1844; the *Globe* article was reprinted in *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, April 15, 1844; PNT, May 18, 1844 reprinted it from the *Nauvoo Neighbor*.

THE GLOBE AND JOE SMITH

The Globe of the 14th has a long article attacking Joe Smith's "Views of government," as lately published by him in the Nauvoo paper. The real cause for this attack, we presume, may be found in the fact that Smith does not choose to buckle on his armor and support Van Buren for President.... The *Globe* evidently believes in the potency of the rod held over Joe by Gov. Ford.²⁵⁹

Joseph Smith did not let the *Globe's* attack go unnoticed, but used it as a springboard to further advertise his campaign. Rather than respond to the *Globe* directly, he wrote a letter to John Taylor's *Nauvoo Neighbor*. Taylor published it in both the *Neighbor* and the *Times and Seasons*, and through them distributed it nation wide. Thereafter the most prominent newspaper in the United States, the *New York Herald*, which had spoken kindly of the Mormons in the past, republished Joseph's rebuttal in full:

Without reference to men, parties or precedents, the plan of banking, suggests in my "Views," is assumed upon the all commanding, and worthily considered, omnipotent petition of the people, and whether, as a "fiscal agent," "great financier, prophet, priest or king," I act wisely and righteously, so as to answer their virtuous prayers, without fear, favor, or partiality; and produce union; give satisfaction to twenty millions of freemen...

But it is extraneous, irrelevant and kick shawing to

²⁵⁹ This was originally published in the *Sangamo Journal*, in Springfield. It was quoted in *Nauvoo Neighbor*, April 17, 1844, and in *Northwestern Gazette and Galena Advertiser*, Galena, Illinois, May 3, 1844. There was a more negative article in the *Warsaw Signal* April 25, 1844.

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connect me or any part of my “Views on the Powers and Policy of the Government,” with Mr. Clay, Mr. Webster, Mr. Adams, Mr. Benton, Mr. Calhoun, Mr. Van Buren, or any of their galvanic cronies—what have they done to benefit the people? The simple answer is—nothing but draw money from the treasury. It is entirely too late in the age of this republic, to clarify a Harry of the West: deify a Daniel of the East; quidify a Quincy of the Whigs, or bigify a Benton of the Democrats: leaving Mr. Calhoun and Mr. Van Buren such fair samples of bogus democracy, that he that runs may read.... Why slur the noble project of letting the prisoners go free by petition? It is sanctioned by ancient custom; it is the counsel of God, and would be the only visible testimony to the world that this realm is what it professes to be, a Government of Liberty. Heaven, earth, and hell know that the penitentiaries of the several States are a disgrace to the United States, and a stink in the nostrils of the Almighty. And the county and city prisons are still worse. Unfortunate men, and in nine cases out of ten, innocent, are hurled into prison by corrupted Judges, suborned witnesses, or ungodly men who gamble themselves into Congress, into legislatures, into courts, into churches, and into notice and power, and then damn their friends and fellow beings to prison, wretchedness and ruin. And in ninety and nine cases out of a hundred, the prisoners are treated meaner than dogs; half starved to put money into the pockets of speculators; fed upon unwholesome provisions; shipped without mercy and even murdered with impunity....

The United States is the boasted land of “Liberty,” where “These truths are held self evident—that all men are created equal: and endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness but at the same time in the face of these truths, slavery is tolerated by law: and even fifteen thousand free citizens are exiled from one state to another—and the General Government has no power, (according to the opinions of Van

Buren and Benton) to redress the wrong. Queen Victoria, and ye lords and commons of Great Britain, what think ye of a Republican Government? and how do you imagine your daughter will come out in her attempt at equal rights and reigning in righteousness? "Pshaw (will they answer), your coffers are robbed with impunity; your citizens are mobbed, and driven like chaff from the threshing floor, and the government, controlled by a set of money gambling, chicken-hearted, public fed cowards, cannot redress you." Ask the reigning sovereigns of Europe, Africa and Asia, what they think of the boasted Republic in America. and will they not laugh in the face of the whole world, and taunt the United States, by exclaiming. Ah.! hah.! and hah! If there is any power in a Republican Government, in a real case of necessity, you have failed to find just men to exercise it. Party spirit cuts the cords of union; patronage veils the face of justice, and bribery closes the lips of honor, and when the wicked rule the people mourn....

The only suggestion worthy of commendation relative to a National Bank, in Mr Blair's remarks is, that the mother bank should be located at Nauvoo.

This is correct, for Nauvoo as a city, collectively or individually cannot be reproached with dishonor, crime, corruption or bribery....The blood of commodores and congressmen, shed by the heaven-daring, hell-begotten, earth-disgracing practice of dueling, has never stained the virtuous soil or city of Nauvoo. Nor does a slave raise his rusting fetters and chains, and exclaim, O liberty where are thy charms? Wisdom, freedom, religion, and virtue, like light, love water and air, "spread undivided, and operate unspent," in the beloved Nauvoo....

As the "world is governed too much," and as there is not a nation or dynasty now occupying the earth which acknowledges Almighty God as their lawgiver, and as "crowns won by blood, by blood must be maintained," I go emphatically,

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virtuously, and humanely, for a THEO-DEMOCRACY, where God and the people hold the power to conduct the affairs of men in righteousness. And where liberty, free trade, and sailor's rights, and the protection of life and property, shall be maintained inviolate, for the benefit of ALL. To exalt mankind is nobly acting the part of a God—to degrade them, is meanly doing the drudgery of the devil. *Unitas, libertas, caritas-esto perpetua!*

With the highest sentiments of regard for all men, I am an advocate of unadulterated freedom.

JOSEPH SMITH

Nauvoo, (Ill) April 15, 1844²⁶⁰

Thomas Sharp reveled in the *Globe's* response to the Prophet's *Views*:

We have rarely been more amused than in reading the notice made by the "Globe" of Jo Smith's Circular. It is too much of a political paper for insertion in the Signal, and our Whig friends would not like it, probably, as well as we did; but still it is rich, and will amuse the Democrats—beg pardon—some of the Democrats.

The *Neighbor* says, "Gen. Smith's views on the great affairs of government, are unanswerable." So we think, perfectly unanswerable; and so are Jo's views of that "old white hat," the "spiritual wife system," and the "turning the

²⁶⁰ This was originally published in *Nauvoo Neighbor* 17 Apr44 and republished in *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, May 15, 1844; *New York Herald*, New York, New York, May 16, 1844; *Prophet*, New York, New York, May 18, 1844. It was also partly reprinted in *Morning Courier*, Louisville, Kentucky, June 6, 1844; *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, June 8, 1844; *Tompkins Democrat*, Ithaca, New York, June 13, 1844.

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wife out of door system,” all unanswerable—And then his views of his follower’s purses, (We mean those who happen to come to Nauvoo with such appendages.) are unanswerable—a little transcendental, to be sure; but still better defined than his views of the Bank and Tariff.²⁶¹

In Missouri the *Views* were accepted with a tongue-in-cheek acclamation:

Joe Smith as an artist. We have looked over General Joe’s “views of the powers and policy of the Government.” They are well drawn, capitally colored, and fully entitle him to a membership in the National Academy of Design!²⁶²

In Wisconsin the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, and in Ithaca, New York, the editor of the *Tompkins Democrat* each quoted part of the Prophet’s letter, prefacing it with this remark,

The venerable Joseph Smith, the Prophet, the seer, and the legislator, is now before the people, as a candidate for the Presidency, as we are informed by the *Times and Seasons*, published at the Holy city. We noticed not a long time since, that his friends were stirring. Our readers will find the following, selected from an article written by the prophet himself, rather racy and inclined to the “Cambyes vein.”²⁶³

²⁶¹ *Warsaw Signal*, April 17, 1844.

²⁶² *St. Louis Reveille*, St. Louis, Missouri, May 22, 1844; reprinted in *Louisville Daily Journal*, Louisville, Kentucky, May 27, 1844.

²⁶³ *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, June 8, 1844; *Tompkins Democrat*, Ithaca, New York, June 13, 1844; *Morning Courier*, Louisville, Kentucky, June 6, 1844.

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In Ottawa, Illinois, the editor of the *Free Trader*, watched the newspaper war in Hancock and wrote,

The *Warsaw Signal* is waging all sorts of a fierce war against the holy city of Nauvoo, and brings to its aid all the force of argument, denunciation, reason, abuse, threats, and ridicule. The last number quotes from the *Nauvoo Neighbor* the following as the Prophet's latest instructions to his elders and apostles:

They are instructed to preach the truth in righteousness, and present before the people General Joseph Smith's views of the powers and policy of the general government, and *seek diligently to get up electors who will go for him for the presidency.*²⁶⁴

General Joseph Smith's *Views* were not only widely circulated; they were also widely read and commented on. But the impact they had on the actual outcome of the election is impossible to judge because the Prophet was murdered months before that election took place.

Thomas Sharp's *Warsaw Signal* can be credited, at least in part, for the fact that many American editors understood the situation in Nauvoo and were sympathetic with the Mormon side of the issues. Because Sharp sent his newspaper to editors all over America, just as John Taylor did, Americans could watch as tensions grew. Because Sharp's repeated attacks against the Mormons contrasted so sharply with the reports coming from the Nauvoo newspapers, the nation's editors, who read both versions, could decide for themselves who was telling the truth. Some believed Sharp, but others came to believe he was making trouble,

²⁶⁴ *Ottawa Free Trader*, Ottawa, Illinois, May 24, 1844. Underline is in original.

rather than reporting it. Some anticipated there would soon be a Hancock County civil war. For example, on the day after Joseph Smith's murder, but more than a week before the editor of the *Indiana American* knew about it, he predicted, "We have been looking for many months for the destruction of Nauvoo and dispersion of the Mormons..."²⁶⁵

Not only did Americans pay attention to what was happening in Nauvoo, they also understood the politics of why it was happening. The significance of an historical event is usually weighed by its impact on the future rather than its perceived importance in its present. So it has been with the campaign of the Prophet Joseph Smith to become president of the United States. Joseph was dead before the election. The campaign had no apparent permanent impact on either the state or national elections that fall, so it has largely been ignored by historians. Yet during the six months it lasted, it generated a great deal of interest and was predicted to have an important impact on the outcome of both state and national elections. Those predictions made it one of the major sources of the antagonism in Hancock County, where some believed Joseph might actually be elected president. That in turn lent energy to the feeling that he must be stopped, and that lent one more facet to the reasons the Church's enemies were determined to murder Joseph and Hyrum Smith.

²⁶⁵ *Indiana American*, Brookville, Indiana, June 28, 1844.

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**Suicide of Governor Reynolds and a New Plan to
Dislodge the Mormons**

Near the end of February, something unexpected happened that toppled all of the plans of Robert F. Smith's Central Corresponding Committee. Missouri's Governor Reynolds, who was a central figure in the plans to extradite Joseph Smith,

...came to his death by his own hand, on the morning of Friday, the 9th inst., at his residence in Jefferson City. The manner of his death was as follows: He procured a rifle—fastened a string to the trigger—placed the muzzle against his forehead, and shot himself.²⁶⁶

Reynolds had tried to expand his own political influence beyond the state of Missouri by running for the United States Congress. The state's response was less than enthusiastic. Even in Illinois, the editor of *The Politician* spurned his ambition, copying this short notice from the *Advocate*:

We are authorized to announce GOV. REYNOLDS, as a candidate for Congress. We are authorized, by the people of this District, "to announce" to "Gov. Reynolds," that his services will not be needed.²⁶⁷

The *Quincy Whig* speculated that the reason, in part at least, for the governor's suicidal despondency was because of the intense criticism he had received for not successfully extraditing Joseph

²⁶⁶ *Quincy Whig*, Quincy, Illinois, February 21, 1844.

²⁶⁷ *Politician*, Belleville, Illinois, April 13, 1844.

Smith. When word of his death reached Warsaw, Thomas Sharp was mortified. He reported in the *Signal*, “Death of Gov. Reynolds. Our city is overshadowed with gloom and distress! Governor Reynolds is no more! He has perished by his own hand!”²⁶⁸

The overt group of main players in the conspiracy against Joseph Smith (Governor Ford of Illinois, Governor Reynolds of Missouri, Robert F. Smith head of the Anti-Mormon political party, and Thomas Sharp spokesman and publicist for the Anti-Mormons) was now reduced to three, and all were residents of Illinois. They had lost their most valuable legal resource in Missouri. Governor Reynolds had been central to the plan they had adopted during their September, 1843, convention when the Anti-Mormons had agreed to work with Missouri to extradite the Prophet. Now, Reynolds’s death meant that whatever arrangements had been made between him, Governor Ford, and Robert F. Smith’s Central Corresponding Committee, would not come to fruition. This forced the Illinois leaders to rethink their plans and shift the focal point of the conspiracy from Missouri to Nauvoo.

Robert F. Smith’s Committee and the Anti-Mormons may have been delayed by the loss of Governor Reynolds, but they were by no means defeated. There was another plan, and Sharp knew about it. While he could not divulge its details, he could not restrain from boasting of its expected outcome, implying (or perhaps only expressing wishful thinking) that Warsaw would have an important financial future when Nauvoo was eliminated as a competitor.

²⁶⁸ *Warsaw Signal*, February 28, 1844.

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OUR TOWN

Warsaw, which for the past few years, has advanced by little in growth, we have reason to believe will soon rise from her lethargy and make rapid strides towards overtaking her more fortunate rivals. For the last year the spirit of improvement has been awakened amongst our citizens; and not only here, but capitalists at a distance are beginning to find out the advantages which we possess, and we have no fear but that sooner or later they will profit both themselves, and us, by the discovery.

What advantage is there which we have not? The whole beautiful and fertile region of the Des Moines is ours, the vast and productive country lying between the Mississippi and the Illinois Rivers, has Warsaw as the Natural depot for its immense surplus. We are at the head of low water navigation on the Father of Waters. We have in our vicinity immense water, water which only requires capital and enterprise to render it a source of unbounded wealth, beds of coal surround us, iron ore abounds in our hills, stone for building purposes is everywhere abundant. What natural advantage then, can there be which we have not? Either for commerce or manufacture, or agriculture, we acknowledge no section of the country in the Union as naturally our superior. Why then has Warsaw so long languished? Simply because we want capital to turn our immense natural advantages to produce the account. Give us the indispensable requisite, and we will soon, not only overtake but outstrip our sneering rivals. Give us but the necessary capital and it is our firm conviction that we can command the trade of a larger territory than any other town on the Mississippi River north of St. Louis. Other towns that like hot-bed plants have been stimulated to an unnatural growth by Eastern Capital, may now take from us a portion of our legitimate trade, but let the necessary capital grow here and we will soon consign their indecent boasted prosperity to premature decay.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁹ *Warsaw Signal*, February 28, 1844.

It is unfortunate that Sharp was not more explicit about what financial assistance he expected Warsaw would receive to support this expansion.²⁷⁰ But now emboldened by the hope of his new prospects, Sharp attacked Joseph Smith with all the venom his words could bring to bear.

If the Mormons wish to live in peace they must cease from pursuing such a course as they have heretofore. They must cease from screening each other from the just operations of the law—cease from sham trials, intended to let off offenders by a mere nominal penalty—cease from releasing persons in custody of state officers, by their city *Habeas Corpus*—cease from insulting the laws, and desecrating public morals by substituting for the laws of the state, a set of abominable ordinances, which give to all who believe in their validity free scope for licentiousness—cease from threatening the liberties of our citizens by their city authorities—and cease from

²⁷⁰ Whatever the source of Sharp's predictions, they had promise of fulfillment after he and his associates expelled the Mormons and decimated Nauvoo. In 1844, the population of Warsaw was estimated to be about 500 individuals. After Nauvoo was no longer a commercial competition, Warsaw grew substantially, and was at its height as shown by the map of Warsaw in the 1874 Hancock County Atlas insert in this book. [A.T. Andreas, *An Illustrated Historical Atlas of Hancock County, Illinois* (Chicago, A.T. Andreas, 1874).] Just four years before the map's publication, the 1870 U.S. Federal Census shows Warsaw's population at about 3,600 individuals. However, after that the town went into a steady decline. Its commercial advantage was lost entirely in 1910 when the federal government chose a site very near Warsaw to build the Keokuk dam and what was then the largest hydroelectric plant in the world. The dam was completed in 1913, with great locks that lift river boats over the Mississippi rapids. Now the river traffic passes by Warsaw without noticing.

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dictating who shall be our county officers. These are the only terms on which they can have peace.

The Mormons have the control of our elections, and while they see proper to obey the dictates of one man in political matters, what necessity is there for the “old citizens” going to the polls. Joe Smith sitting on his throne at Nauvoo, can name our sheriff and our county commissioners, he can name his nimble “cat’s paws” for these important stations, and thus hold under his own thumb, the jury panel of our County. Is it possible that when this state of things shall have been consummated, that there can be peace? Is it possible, in this land of Republican liberty that free men shall live in peace and know that their dearest rights are subject to the control of one man?

Don’t talk about peace Joe, until you become a *decent, honorable, and sensible* man. Then, but when? When the leopard changes his spots, when you shall have laid aside your inordinate ambition, your thirst for power shall have been quenched, your blackguard tongue changed for that of a gentleman’s, when you shall have ceased to control your people in temporal matters, and confine yourself exclusively to spiritual affairs, then you may talk of peace, but not till then. As well may vice say to virtue “be quiet and molest me not,” as for you to expect those whose rights you are trying to invade, to stand tamely while you impose the yoke.²⁷¹

Though the intent and intensity of the Anti-Mormon Party remained steady despite the loss of Governor Reynolds, the manifestation of that intent necessarily redrew itself as political fires grew hotter.

²⁷¹ *Warsaw Signal*, February 28, 1844.

Chapter 6

March, 1844

Organization of the Council of Fifty

From the first announcement that Joseph would run for the presidency, the Nauvoo newspapers played a key role in the Prophet's campaign. On Friday, March 1, 1844, the *Times and Seasons* ran two articles supporting Joseph's candidacy. The first read, in part:

The step that we have taken is a bold one, and requires our united efforts, perseverance, and diligence; but important as it may be, it is no greater than others have taken, and they have conceived that they had a right, without molestation to pursue that course, and to vote for that man whose election, they in their wisdom, thought would be most conducive to the public weal.... Mr. Smith is not so generally known personally as are several of the above named candidates, and although he has been much spoken of, as man, he has been a great deal calumniated and misrepresented, and his true character is very little known. It is for us to take away this false coloring, and by lecturing, by publishing, and circulating his works; his political views; his honor, integrity, and virtue; stop the foul mouth of slander, and present him before the public in his own colors, that he may be known, respected, and supported.²⁷²

²⁷² *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, March 1, 1844.

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The second article was about the very practical matter of how to implement the objects outlined by the first. It was an announcement that “a special conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will be held at Nauvoo, near the Temple, commencing on Saturday, the 6th of April next.” The announcement included the following:

Another thing that we would remind the brethren of, is that of the Presidential election. Don’t forget to mention this thing in your peregrinations. Tell the people who would be the best man, and the most able statesman; who could stand uncorrupted by bribes, and uninfluenced by power, other than the power of justice, and the cause of right; tell them where they can find a man of morality, purity, and virtue; tell them where they can find a man of sterling integrity, who is governed by the principles of righteousness; a patriot and a philanthropist, who has both the disposition and moral fortitude to administer justice, and whose delight it would be to administer to the wants of the nation; to “break off every yoke and to let the oppressed go free.” Use all of your own influence, and get the brethren, in every part to use theirs also. Recollect, for President, GENERAL JOSEPH SMITH.²⁷³

The March 6 issue of the *Nauvoo Neighbor* contained several articles about the political activities of the other presidential candidates, and its next issue contained an article written by “A. Doleseens,” who asserted “there has not a man been brought before the public for this office, so well qualified for the important trust as Gen. Smith, since the spirit of the immortal Washington took its exit for the associations of a more hallowed throng.” The qualifications he mentions are summed up by a rhetorical question:

²⁷³ *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, March 1, 1844.

“who would have imagined, five years ago when the General lay starving in chains, in a Missouri dungeon: that at this time, he would be Mayor of a City, commanding 18,000 inhabitants; Lieutenant General of the Nauvoo Legion; second to the Governor in command;—who would have thought it?”²⁷⁴

The Mormons were not politically naive. They were as aware as anyone that third parties do not do well in American national politics. This awareness is evinced by Joseph’s not taking seriously the possibility that he might actually win the election. Nevertheless, Joseph, the other Mormon leaders, and members of the Mormon Church generally took the Prophet’s presidential campaign very seriously indeed. This dichotomy can be easily explained. While it is true that some Mormons may have believed Joseph had a chance to win, the Church leaders saw the campaign as a means to other ends—it had a message to deliver and an object to achieve, but gaining the presidency was not the primary object. Except for Joseph’s official political platform, there is very little private or public discussion about “this is what we will do when we move into the White House.” The following is about as close an example as one can get.

On March 7, the Mormon leaders held another meeting in the assembly room in Nauvoo. Wilford Woodruff’s journal gives a detailed account of the meeting, and in so doing provides us with an important window into Joseph’s attitude about the campaign.

President Joseph Smith’s views of the government was then read, which was received with universal applause. Gen. Smith is now nominated by the Saints as a candidate for President of the U.S.A. next election....

President Smith remarked.... As to politics I care but little

²⁷⁴ *Nauvoo Neighbor*, March 13, 1844.

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about the Presidential chair. I would not give half as much for the office as I would for the one I now hold. But as the world have used the power of Government to oppress & persecute us it is right for us to use it for the protection of our rights. When I get hold of the eastern paper & see how popular I am, I am afraid myself that I shall be elected. But if I should be I would not say that your cause is just & I could not do anything for you.²⁷⁵

A week later Sharp directed another volley at Joseph Smith personally:

Now, as for ourselves, we regard Jo Smith, personally and individually, as beneath our contempt, but as the leader of an organized band, having power to inflict great mischief, we look on him as a dangerous and powerful man, whose actions should be watched, and closely scrutinized. If he has the power to injure us, and manifests the disposition to exercise that power, all we can do is, to place ourselves in a defensive posture, and in doing this we must regulate our movements by

²⁷⁵ *Woodruff Journal*, 6:243-244. For other reports of the meeting see: Mace, *Journal*, 6:240. George Alley also reported that the Prophet had no interest in the glory of the presidential office. In a letter to his brother he wrote that Joseph's campaign was a warning to the nation, but not one which he expects will be accepted: "I will say one word in regard to Joseph Smith offering himself as a candidate for the Presidency; it was not for the glamour of the office, but that the present generation should have no excuse if they rejected him & his views. As it is evident a great calamity is hanging over the Nation, and when the cup is full, will burst on the workers of iniquity in a manner that will be perfectly astounding to them." (George Alley, letter to his brother Joseph, dated City of Nauvoo, July 27, 1844, Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, F 473.)

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the actions of our common foe.²⁷⁶

In that same issue, after attacking Joseph Smith as “the leader of an organized band,” Sharp proceeded to justify his own organization of Anti-Mormons:

There is a class of individual, who ridicule the Anti-Mormons, because they have seen proper to organize themselves for mutual protection. They urge that such an organization, has a tendency only to encourage a spirit of mobocracy, and therefore should be discouraged. As for our part, we believe that it has a contrary effect. Even the incipient steps towards organization, more than any other thing that has transpired, has opened the eyes of the Prophet, and given him to understand that his career of usurpation and aggression must be stayed, or otherwise the consequence to himself will be fearful.²⁷⁷

When the *Nauvoo Neighbor* published what Sharp believed was an overstated adulation of Joseph Smith as a candidate, Sharp was quick to turn it into a source of ridicule: “We acknowledge the corn—as a General, Legislator, and Jurist, Joe cant be beat—except by a jackass.... We give in again; for Joe’s principles are like Paddy’s flea—‘hard to come at.’”²⁷⁸

The *Signal* was not the only Illinois paper to attack the Mormon leader. The editor of the *Quincy Whig* resented Joseph’s

²⁷⁶ *Warsaw Signal*, March 6, 1844.

²⁷⁷ *Warsaw Signal*, March 6, 1844.

²⁷⁸ *Warsaw Signal*, March 20, 1844. A corn is a growth on one’s foot that makes walking painful. “Paddy” is the name of a dog who scratches, but can never get rid of the flea.

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foray into politics and editorialized against it.²⁷⁹

On March 8, Joseph's history reports that the people in St. Louis were saying, "Things have come to a strange pass. If Joe Smith is elected President, he will raise the devil with Missouri; and if he is not elected, he will raise the devil anyway."²⁸⁰ The latter part of that saying probably had to do with all the publicity his *Views* were having, and their success in making the nation understand just what had happened to the Mormons in Missouri. The people who now lived on the farms that the Mormons had settled and improved must have felt more than just a little uneasy about what would happen if they had to pay the Mormons for that property. Many of them had participated in driving the Mormons away, and no doubt, would now be willing to do whatever was necessary to prevent them from claiming payment for their lands.

Exactly what Joseph intended to do with his presidential campaign became more clear on March 11 when he organized a Council of Fifty "to further the interest of kingdom of God."²⁸¹ This council was to have two major functions. (1) To turn the prophet's political campaign to the advantage of the Saints by obtaining a redress for the wrongs they had suffered in Missouri, and (2) to make preparations to move the Saints west. Brigham Young's journal entry of that day explains,

The Council was composed of about 50 members several of whom were not members of the Church. We prepared several memorials to Congress for redress of grievances and used every available means to inform ourselves of the unoccupied

²⁷⁹ Sharp liked the article so much that he reprinted it. *Warsaw Signal*, February 28, 1844.

²⁸⁰ *History of the Church*, 6:248.

²⁸¹ *Woodruff Journal*, 1:366.

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territory open to settlers. We held a number of sessions and investigated foundations and principles of all governments. Joseph Smith was appointed chairman, William Clayton, Clerk, and Willard Richards Historian of the Council.”²⁸²

It is difficult to know how Joseph Smith felt then. He knew and later said “that he had to die.”²⁸³ He wished to stay with his friends, yet he longed for a rest. Benjamin F. Johnson reported a conversation that occurred not long before the Prophet died. While Joseph was visiting the Johnson home,

with a deep drawn breath, as a sigh of weariness, he sank down heavily in his chair, and said, “O! I do get tired and weary, that at times I almost yearn for my rest,” and then proceeded to briefly recount to us some of the most stirring events of his life’s labors, sufferings and sacrifices, and then he said, “I am getting tired and would like to go to my rest.” His words and tone thrilled and shocked me, and like an arrow pierced my hopes that he would long remain with us, and I said, as with a heart full of tears, “O! Joseph, what could we, as a people, do without you and what would become of the great Latter-day work, if you should leave us?” He saw and was touched by my emotions, and in reply he said, “Benjamin, I would not be far away from you, and if on the other side of the veil I would still be working with you, and with a power greatly increased, to roll on this kingdom.”²⁸⁴

Joseph’s most immediate task was to prepare the Church for his own death. The Saints could never be prepared for the

²⁸² Brigham Young, Diary, Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, Ms f 310.

²⁸³ *History of the Church*, 6:601.

²⁸⁴ Johnson to Gibbs, 8.

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emotional shock, but he did need to settle the questions of who would have the responsibility of directing the Church after its Prophet was dead? Hyrum Smith should have been Joseph's successor, but he would choose to go to Carthage with his brother.²⁸⁵

After Hyrum, the next successors to the presidency were Brigham Young and the Twelve Apostles. Joseph taught them privately, but the Twelve were not the only ones who needed Joseph's tutoring. The Church as a whole also needed considerable instruction before the keys of presidency could be transferred from Joseph to the apostles. In response to that need, Joseph delivered some of his most important sermons in the months just before he died. The Prophet also had to prepare the body of the Church to move west. It was necessary that the Church membership understand that this projected move westward was a vital part of the plan, and was not an innovation that originated with Brigham Young and the Twelve. The Prophet took every opportunity to prepare the members for that move.²⁸⁶ He organized the Council of Fifty, and from that council organized an exploration expedition to

²⁸⁵ *History of the Church*, 6:520, and footnote on page 546. There are two statements that indicate that Hyrum did not know he would be killed at Carthage. They are in *History of the Church*, 6:549-50 and 598. However, other statements, such as D&C 135:4-5; *History of the Church*, 6:545-46, 549-50; and Huntington, *Diary*, vol. 2:408-409, clearly show that Hyrum understood the full implications of his decision to go to Carthage.

²⁸⁶ Anson Call in Edward W. Tullidge, *Tullidge's Histories of Utah*, 2:271-72; *History of the Church*, 5:85; Wilford Woodruff, Conference Report, April 1898, 57; O. B. Huntington, "Prophecy" *Young Woman's Journal* v. 2, no. 7 (April 1891): 314-315; Erastus Snow, *Journal of Discourses*, 16:207; *History of the Church*, 6:398; Eliza R. Snow, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow*, 76.

go west and find a place where the Saints could settle. However, rather than sending the expedition members out immediately, he had them remain in Nauvoo, where they met regularly, and made a thorough study of what was already known about the Rocky Mountain area.²⁸⁷

Edward Stevenson, who was a member of the Council of Fifty, gives additional details about its organization.

A Company organized to look out a location for the Saints in the Rocky Mountains. Joseph Said, “send 25 men well prepared to defend themselves with a good fit out let them preach teach wherever they go. I want every man that goes to be a King and a Priest. When he gets on the Mountains he may want to talk with his God.” The reason for Joseph speaking as he had done he had placed Endowments, sealings and keys of power upon the heads of a few chosen ones in the upper room of his brick Store, in Nauvoo. A few volunteers for the mountains Samuel Bent, G. D. Watt, David Fullmer, James Emmet, Samuel Richards, David Avery, Samuel Rolf, David Spencer, and A. Kettering. Father Samuel Bent, gave me an invitation to go with them to the Rocky Mountains, if I could obtain a fit out.”²⁸⁸

The Council of Fifty was created to govern the Saints during their migration west. At that time the Great Basin area was claimed by Mexico and so was not within the jurisdiction of the United

²⁸⁷ *History of the Church*, 6:222, 224-27; Samuel W. Richards, “Origin of the Plan of the Exodus,” *The Improvement Era*, Vol.7, 927-31.

²⁸⁸ Edward Stevenson, Autobiographical sketch, Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, f 103 .

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States. The Council of Fifty served as the non-ecclesiastical governing body of the Saints that directed their westward migration as well as much of the settlement of the Utah, Idaho, Arizona, Nevada, and southern California.²⁸⁹

Soon after its organization, the Council of Fifty sent Lucien Woodworth to Texas to learn if a large Mormon population would be welcome there.²⁹⁰ Lyman Wight and George Miller, who had recently returned to Nauvoo from the Church-owned lumbering project in Wisconsin,²⁹¹ were strong advocates of the possible move to Texas.²⁹²

Rumors about the Council of Fifty and its purposes soon began to circulate. Non-Mormons watched its activity and wondered what the Mormons would do next. In a rather long article that was only partly a spoof, an Iowa editor wrote:

An express has just arrived here from the city of Mexico, bringing the important intelligence that Joe Smith, the celebrated Mormon Prophet, of the Latter-day Saints, has concluded a treaty with President Santa Anna for the purchase of Texas; for which he agrees to assume ten millions of the Mexican debt to England.²⁹³

²⁸⁹ Hyrum L. Andrus, *Joseph Smith and World Government*, 77-78.

²⁹⁰ *History of the Church*, 6:264.

²⁹¹ They arrived in Nauvoo on May 1, 1844. *History of the Church*, 6:349.

²⁹² *History of the Church*, 6:255-56. See: Miller, *Correspondence of Bishop George Miller, Wight, An Address*,” 3-4.

²⁹³ *Lee County Democrat*, Fort Madison, Iowa, January 20, 1844. One rumor was published by Thomas Gregg, who was then assistant editor of the *Upper Mississippian*. Joe has been amassing money for several years, for the purpose of eventually going to Jerusalem, intending to issue a proclamation calling in the Jews, over whom he was to be head

The fact that the Mormons were planning to move west seems not to have been a very well kept secret—if indeed it was a secret at all, and that needs to be factored into our story. From this point it becomes increasingly clear that the objectives of the Anti-Mormons were two—both closely related to each other, but separate, nonetheless. One was to drive the Saints from Illinois and confiscate their property, just as had been done in Missouri. The other was to make sure Joseph and Hyrum Smith did not leave the state alive. While the Anti-Mormons were pushing to have things happen quickly, the Mormons were still playing for time.

Selection of the Vice Presidential Nominee

Another piece of evidence that Joseph was much more interested in the campaign than he was in winning the election was his lack of concern about who his vice presidential running mate would be. At first the Mormons proposed James Arlington

until the return of Christ upon the earth—which even he believed would take place 45 years from 1844. With reference to this expedition he was crowned “King of Israel in 1844 by the Council of Fifty, denominated the “Ancient of Days.” The fifty were all sworn to secrecy. I had the fact from one who assisted at the coronation—divulged since Joe’s death. This was the prophet’s grand design; and had it been generally known, would perhaps, have saved our State from the disgrace and infamy of perpetrating so foul a murder. The fact affords a key to certain movements of the prophet, which are otherwise inexplicable.” *Upper Mississippian*, Rock Island, Illinois, November 2, 1844; Reprinted in *Liberty Advocate*, Liberty, Mississippi, November 15, 1844.

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Bennett, a New York lawyer whom Joseph had never met.²⁹⁴ But Bennett was born in Ireland, so was not eligible to be a vice presidential nominee.²⁹⁵ Then they tried Colonel Solomon Copeland, of Paris, Tennessee, but he declined.²⁹⁶ So they settled on Sidney Rigdon, “of Pennsylvania,” for the vice presidential nominee.²⁹⁷ The Constitution provides that the nominee for vice president must be from a different state from the presidential candidate, so even outside Nauvoo it was understood that “Sidney Rigdon has been dispatched to Pennsylvania, to qualify him to run for vice president.”²⁹⁸

Given Joseph’s concern about Rigdon’s loyalty, his nomination for vice president was an unobtrusive way to get him away from Nauvoo. He had become a thorn in the side of the Church and would be again after the Prophet’s death. When he left to go to Pennsylvania, Joseph mused, “Poor Rigdon, I am glad he is gone to Pittsburgh out of the way; were he to preside he would lead the Church to destruction in less than five years.”²⁹⁹

²⁹⁴ For correspondence between Joseph and Bennett see Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1490 d Bx. 1 Fd. 6; *History of the Church*, 5:112-14, 156-59, 162-64; 6:71-78, 230-33.

²⁹⁵ Godfrey, “Causes of Mormon Non-Mormon Conflict in Hancock County,” 62.

²⁹⁶ Godfrey, “Causes of Mormon Non-Mormon Conflict in Hancock County,” 62; *Woodruff Journal*, 1:359, 366. Wilford Woodruff to Solomon Copeland, Nauvoo, March 19, 1844, Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, Ms 1352 Bx. 6 fd. 14, item 4.

²⁹⁷ *History of the Church*, 6:244, 248, 268, 356.

²⁹⁸ *Albany Evening Journal*, Albany, New York, July 6, 1844. For a similar statement see *Illinois Gazette*, Lacon, Illinois, July 20, 1844.

²⁹⁹ *History of the Church*, 6:593.

The Overriding Importance of the Mormon Political Question

Had Joseph Smith lived until after the November election, the importance of his political campaign would be easy to appraise. However, he did not, so any discussion of how important it might have been can be, at best, mostly conjecture. “How important was Joseph’s candidacy perceived to be in the spring of 1844 when the campaign year was just getting underway?” For a candid answer to that question we look to James Gordon Bennett, the distinguished editor of the nation’s most influential newspaper, the *New York Herald*.³⁰⁰ The *Herald* did not predict that Joseph Smith could win the election himself, but it did predict that the outcome of the national election might be determined by the Mormon vote in Illinois. This article spelled out the national and local significance of the Mormon political power more explicitly than anything else had:

We received on Thursday some very curious and important intelligence from Nauvoo—the capitol of the new Mormon Empire which is rapidly rising in the West. It appears that the Mormons are preparing to regulate matters so as to control the presidential question in the ensuing election.... Heretofore, Joe Smith and his disciples have principally distinguished themselves as religious innovators—the propagators of a “new revelation,” as they call it, designed to swallow up all other religions and sects that agitate the country. But it will be seen, from the intelligence that we give our readers to-day, that Joe Smith has gone a little beyond this, and has taken the field as a political agitator, determined to wield political influence and political votes for the purpose of advancing the temporal

³⁰⁰ See Arrington. “James Gordon Bennett,” 353-364.

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interest and prosperity of the empire. This presents a very singular case in politics. It is very well known that the Mormons are numerous enough in the State of Illinois to control the character of its vote. If they control the vote of that State, they will succeed in a great measure, in controlling the vote of the whole western country, for it will be a very close vote at best. It therefore will be seen, that this insignificant body of men, may, in the event of the next Presidency, control the destinies of all the candidates.³⁰¹

If that appraisal of Mormon political power were taken seriously by national political leaders of both major parties, then the question of what to do with Joseph Smith and the Mormon vote was as much a national concern as it was a local one. And if that appraisal were correct, then whether Joseph stayed alive or was killed would impact the outcome of the national election, just as it would the Illinois state and the Hancock County local elections.

On March 20, 1844, the *Nauvoo Neighbor* reprinted verbatim the *New York Herald's* assessment of Mormon political power. Anyone in Hancock County who had not read it in the *Herald* could now read it in the *Neighbor*. However encouraging it may have been to the Mormons, it drove home to the Anti-Mormons the certainty of the dangers they had been warning their neighbors about and gave them powerful evidence to justify their actions, if justification were needed, to prevent Joseph Smith from being a viable factor in the upcoming election.

³⁰¹ *Nauvoo Neighbor*, March 20, 1844, reprinted from the *New York Herald*, New York, New York.

William Law's Secret Society and the Conspiracy to Murder Joseph Smith

William Law was one of those people who did not want to wait. Law organized a secret society whose explicit purpose was to murder the Prophet Joseph. Evidence of that secret society first surfaced in March, 1844, but a good deal of groundwork had been laid before that. Indeed, the size and intensity of its membership indicates it may have been going for some time. Wilford Woodruff first got wind of it on Sunday, March 24th. His journal recorded:

I met with the Saints at the Temple. When I arrived President Joseph Smith was speaking. The following is the substance of what I heard him say:

I have been informed by two gentleman that a conspiracy is got up in this place for the purpose of taking the life of President Joseph Smith, his family, and all the Smith family & the heads of the Church. One of the gentlemen will give his name to the public & the other wishes it to be hid for the present. They will both testify to it on oath & make an affidavit upon it. The names of the persons revealed at the head of the conspiracy are as follows: Chancy Higby, Dr. [Robert D.] Foster, Mr. [Joseph] Jackson, Wm. & Wilson Law....

I will give the names of one of the gentleman who have divulged the plot. His name is Eaton. He will swear to it. He is a bold fellow. Jackson said a Smith should not be alive 2 weeks not over two months anyhow. As concerning the character of these men I will say nothing about it now but if I hear anything more from them on this subject I will tell what I know about them.”³⁰²

³⁰² *Woodruff Journal*, 1:368.

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Three days later, on March 27, both A. B. Williams and M. G. Eaton appeared before Justice of the Peace Daniel H. Wells and gave the following affidavits. Williams swore:

that on or about the 15th day of March, A. D., 1844, Joseph H. Jackson came to my house and requested me to walk with him; which I did. During the time we were walking, said Joseph H. Jackson said that he was then coming direct from Mr. Law's; that there was going to be a secret meeting in the city of Nauvoo, probably tomorrow evening: but, as it was not decided, he could not say positively as to the time; but he would inform me in season. The said Joseph H. Jackson said that Doctor Foster, Chauncey L. Higbee, and the Laws were red hot for a conspiracy, and he should not be surprised if in two weeks there should not be one of the Smith family left alive in Nauvoo. After we arrived at Mr. Loomis', near the Masonic hall, in the city of Nauvoo, he related some things which he stated that Dr. Foster had said relative to his family. This he did in the presence of Mr. Eaton and myself, and strongly solicited myself and Mr. Eaton to attend the secret meeting and join them in their intentions.³⁰³

M. G. Eaton's affidavit added:

Joseph H. Jackson came to me several times and requested me to go on the hill with him. I finally consented, went with him to the Keystone Store, in the city of Nauvoo. Dr. Foster and one of the Higbees (I think Chauncey L. Higbee) were in the store. The said Joseph H. Jackson, together with the said R. D. Foster and said Higbee, went into the back room of the store. They appeared to enter into private council. Soon after they went into the said room, the said Joseph H. Jackson invited me into

³⁰³ *History of the Church*, 6:278.

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the room where they were sitting. I immediately complied.

Soon after I went in, the said Higbee commenced talking about the spiritual wife system....

The said Higbee said he had not a doubt but there had been men killed in Missouri who had secrets that they were afraid they would divulge. He said he was afraid of his life.

The said Jackson further said he should not be surprised if there should be a real muss and an insurrection in the city in less than two months; and that if a disturbance should take place, the Carthaginians and others would come and help them.

He mentioned some names of persons who would come from Carthage, which names I do not remember. The same day, when in Mr. Loomis' room, I heard the said Jackson say that the Laws were ready to enter into a secret conspiracy, tooth and nails.

The said Higbee also said, while at the Keystone Store, that if ever he was brought before the Mayor's court again, and the Mayor told him to hold his tongue, he should get up and tell him he had a right to speak, and should do so; and then if any man attempted to put him out of court, he would shoot him through.³⁰⁴

There is another first-hand account of Law's activities in his secret meetings. As a young man, Dennison L. Harris attended the same, or a similar meeting as described in the above affidavits. For him and his young friend, it was a hair-raising experience.³⁰⁵

In the spring of 1844 I was invited by Austin A. Cowles, who was at the time a member of the High Council, to attend a secret meeting; I was also asked to invite my father. The

³⁰⁴ *History of the Church*, 6:279-80.

³⁰⁵ Sharp reported the same or similar meeting. His report, from the *Warsaw Signal*, Warsaw, Illinois, May 15, 1844, is quoted below.

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meeting was to be held on the following Sunday, at Wm. Law's brick house. There was another young man by the name of Robt. Scott who was also invited by Wm. Law to attend the same meeting—being intimate friends we found out during the week that both of us had been invited to attend the same meeting. I told my father about this meeting, and he went immediately to Bro. Joseph, who lived some 2 ½ miles distant, and informed him of the same. Joseph told my father to send the boys to him, but for him (my father) not to go to the meeting nor to pay any attention to it. When Sunday morning came Robert Scott (the young man referred to as my intimate friend) and I went and saw Brother Joseph. After telling him about receiving the invitation, he instructed us to go to this meeting and pay strict attention and do the best we could to learn, and remember all the proceedings. We went.

Harris and his friend reported to the Prophet, who told them to attend a second meeting. They did, then attended a third. Harris remembered:

That day we were received and welcomed by Wm. Law and Austin Cowles. We passed up the alley; on each side there were men with guns and bayonets on them; and when we got to the door there were men on guard armed in the same way. Before we went to this meeting Brother Joseph said to us: Boys, this day will be their last meeting, and they may shed your blood, but I hardly think they will as you are so young, but they may. If they do I will be a lion in their path. Don't flinch, if you have to die, die like men, you will be martyrs to the cause, and your crown can be no greater. But, said he, again, I hardly think they will shed your blood.

We went, as I have said, to the house of meeting and passed the guards. There was a great deal of counseling going on with each other. And every little while Austin Cowles would come and sit by my side and put his arm around my neck to

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ascertain how I felt with regard to their proceedings; and at the same time Wm. Law would do the same thing with Robert Scott. They talked about Joseph denouncing him and accusing him. We told them that we did not know anything against Joseph or about the things they were charging him with, that we were only young men, and therefore had nothing to say. They would then try to convince us by relating things to us against him; but we told them that we knew nothing about them, and did not understand them; that we had been reared in the Church and had always esteemed Bro. Joseph highly. Robert had been reared by Wm. Law, and I had been a neighbor of Austin Cowles and consequently they esteemed us as friends, and we did them. They continued to persuade us, we being the only ones who did not sympathize with their proceedings; but they failed to convert us.

Finally they went on to administer the oath to those present. Each man was required to come to the table and hold up the Bible in his right hand, when Bro. Higbee would say: "Are you ready?" When the man being sworn answered yes, he would say: "You solemnly swear before God and all holy angels and these your brethren, by whom you are surrounded, that you will give your life, your liberty, your influence, your all for the destruction of Joseph Smith and his party, so help you God." Each one was sworn in that way, numbering in the neighborhood of 200 persons; and they were sworn before we were called upon. There were also three women brought in who testified that Joseph Smith and others—Hyrum among them, had tried to seduce them into this spiritual marriage and wanted them for wives and also wanted to lie with them. They also made oath before this justice; after which they were escorted out of the room, by way of the back door. After all in the room had taken the oath but Robert and me, we were labored with by those two brethren William Law, and Austin Cowles. They sat us together side by side, with Bro. Cowles on one side and Bro. Law on the other. Their arguments were to try to convince us that Joseph was wrong; that he was in transgression, that he was a fallen prophet, and that the Church would be destroyed except action be taken at once against him—a strong one, one

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that would tell, etc. We told them that we were young, that we were not members of the High Council, and that we knew nothing at all about their charges. They then told us that Joseph had read the revelation on celestial marriage to the High Council and that Joseph had instructed them in this revelation, and that he had tried to make them believe it. After laboring with us in this way with a view of trying to get us to take the oath, we told them we could not do it. They then told us that they were combining and entering into a conspiracy for the protection and salvation of the Church, and that if we refused to take the oath they would have to kill us; they could not they said, let us go out with the information that we had gained, because it would not be safe to do so. And some one spoke up and said, "Dead men tell no tales." They gathered around us and after threatening they perceived that we could not be frightened into it, they again commenced to persuade and advise us in this way: Boys do as we have done; you are young, you will not have anything to do in this affair, but we want that you should keep it a secret and act with us. We then told them that we positively could not. They then said that if we did not yield to their requirement that they would have to shed our blood; and they went so far as to start us down stairs in charge of two men armed with guns with bayonets, and Wm. and Wilson Law, Austin Cowles and one of the Fosters started down stairs into the cellar, and there they said they would cut our throats if we refused to take the oath. we told them positively that we would have to die then because we could not receive the oath, but that we desired to be turned loose. They said they could not turn us loose with the information that we had received, because it would not be safe to do it. They then walked us off with one man on each side of us armed with sword and Bowie knife and two men behind us with loaded guns, cocked, with bayonets on them; we were started to the cellar, but we had not gone more than about 15 feet when someone cried out, "hold on", let us talk this matter over. We

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were stopped, when they commenced to counsel among themselves; and I distinctly remember one of them saying, that our fathers knew where we were, and that if we never returned it would at once cause suspicion and lead to trouble. They became very uneasy about it, for if they shed our blood it would be dangerous for them, as it was known where we were. Finally they concluded to let us go if we would keep our mouths shut. We were escorted out and then they hated to let us go; they took us toward the river, and still cautioned us about being silent and keeping secret everything we had seen and heard, for, said they, if we opened our mouths about it, they would kill us anywhere, that they would consider it their duty to kill us whenever or wherever the opportunity afforded either by night or by day. I told them it would be to our interest and to our peace and safety never to mention it to anybody. They said they were glad we could see that, and after warning us in strong terms, and before the guard left us, I saw Brother Joseph's hand from under the bank of the river, he was beckoning us to him. They turned back but were yet watching us and listening to us, and one of us said, Let us go toward the river. The guard made answer and said, Yes, you better go to the river. With this we started off on the run, and ran past where Br. Joseph was, and Bro John Scott was with him; he was one of his body guard. They slipped around the bank and came down to the same point where we were; and these men, the guard went back. We all walked down the river quite a piece, nearly a quarter, nearly opposite Joseph's store under the bank near Joseph's residence . . . We told him all that had happened. We also told him the names of those who were there....

Before leaving Joseph put a seal upon our mouths, and told us to tell nobody not even our fathers for 20 years. He

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cautioned us very seriously, and I did as he told me.³⁰⁶

There is no reason to believe Harris was not telling the truth as he remembered it, and the experience was so dramatic that there is little reason to suppose his memory was faulty in regards to the overall events and some of the more vivid details. Neither is there any reason to doubt the veracity of the collaborating evidence by Williams and Eaton. So, at least by the end of March 1844 William Law had organized a secret society whose express purpose was to murder Joseph Smith.

**The Plan to Have the United States Government Sponsor
Much of the Mormon Western Migration**

On March 30 (the end of the same week that Joseph learned about the oaths taken by the members of William Law's secret society) Joseph sent a memorial to President John Tyler proposing another way that the federal government might help finance the Mormon migration to the west. He requested that Congress create an armed force of 100,000 men "to extend protection to persons

³⁰⁶ "Verbal statement of bishop Dennison L. Harris of Monroe, Sevier Co., Utah, made by him to President Joseph F. Smith in the presence of Elder Franklin Spencer, at the house of bishop Dorius of Ephraim, Sanpete Co., Utah, on Sunday afternoon, May 15th, 1881. Reported by George F. Gibbs, who took the statement in shorthand." Typescript in Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, Ms d 2725. His story is retold by Horace Cummings in the *Contributor*, April 1844, 251-260.

wishing to settle Oregon and other portions of the territory of the United States, and extend protection to the people of Texas.” The Mormons would supply the men and the Prophet would command them. The volunteers who made up the army would patrol the American west coast and protect the wagon routes in order to make the territory safe for American settlers.³⁰⁷

When Thomas Sharp learned about this idea, he chided:

On the 6th inst., Mr. Sample presented the petition of Joe Smith, praying Congress, to allow him the privilege of raising a company of armed volunteers to protect emigrants going to the unsettled territories of the United States. Oh! don’t Joe! Your military genius has ample scope while parading the barefooted Legion of Nauvoo.³⁰⁸

Orson Hyde, Orson Pratt, and John E. Page were sent to Washington, D.C., to represent the Saints and arrange to have the memorial presented to Congress.³⁰⁹ They took it to John Wentworth, the Chicago editor who was then a member of Congress, and he presented the memorial to the House of

³⁰⁷ *History of the Church*, 6:281-283. After the Mormons were expelled from Illinois, a greatly modified form of this same idea materialized during the war with Mexico when Mormon men joined the “Mormon Battalion” and marched, at government expense, to California, leaving their advance pay with their families to help finance their migration to Utah.

³⁰⁸ *Warsaw Signal*, May 22, 1844.

³⁰⁹ The memorial and its accompanying proposed ordinance are found in *History of the Church*, 6:275-77. Hyde’s report is found in *History of the Church*, 6:369-73.

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Representatives on May 25, 1844.³¹⁰ The *Congressional Globe* tells what happened.

Wentworth asked permission to present a memorial from General Joseph Smith and requested that it be read by the clerk for the information of the House. When the clerk began reading, J. R. Ingersoll [Whig from Pennsylvania] objected. A vote was taken on whether the memorial should be considered. The vote was 79 yeas and 86 nays.³¹¹

Congress did not accept the Prophet's proposal, and the question, so far as that body was concerned, was dropped. However, of the members present in the House of Representatives that day, almost half voted to hear the memorial read. "A prominent member of Congress" who did not take it seriously summed up what happened in a letter he wrote to the editor of the *Louisville Daily Journal*.

Mr. Wentworth, today, offered a petition from Joseph Smith, of Nauvoo, Illinois asking Congress to authorize him by law to arm and equip one hundred thousand men, to take possession of and protect Texas and Oregon. After being read for information, its reception was objected to, and Dr. Duncan moved that the House go into Committee of the Whole, with the view of taking up the Oregon resolution, when Mr. Smith's petition could be considered. The petition embraces the law,

³¹⁰ See *History of the Church*, 6:282-83. Wentworth is the man to whom Joseph wrote the famous "Wentworth letter" which contained the Articles of Faith. The memorial and a report of the response by the House is found in *Prophet*, New York, June 1, 1844.

³¹¹ *Congressional Globe*, May 25, 1844. Vol. 13, No. 39, 624, reprinted in *History of the Church*, 6:282-283.

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which is desired to be passed. This armed force is not to be considered a part of the army of the nation, and there is nothing said as to how this armed force is to be paid. What humbug next?³¹²

Had Congress agreed to the plan and paid the salaries of these soldiers, that money would not only have supported the men but also their families, and would have gone a long way toward financing the Saints' movement to their new western homes.

But obtaining financial support through military salaries would only work if Congress agreed to provide the money, and Congress would need some reason more than just helping the Mormons before they would fund an enterprise that costly. Typically the way people get the members of Congress to do something is to demonstrate that the project has the support of their constituents. The best way the Mormons could do that would be to show that they could control a substantial number of votes. The major reasons the Mormons had entered national politics was to get the support of the American people by calling attention to their plight in Missouri and their danger in Illinois, and thereby to show that they could control enough votes to influence both the president and Congress. Those causes explain the increased intensity of the Mormon political campaign in May and June of 1844.

³¹² *Louisville Daily Journal*, Louisville, Kentucky, May 31, 1844. *History of the Church*, 6:282-283 footnote contains the quote from the *Congressional Globe* which describes Congress' reaction to the memorial. See also, *Prophet*, New York, New York, June 1, 1844.

Chapter 7

April, 1844

General Conference and Politics in Nauvoo

On a number of fronts, Joseph Smith was marked for murder. He had been warned by Porter Rockwell that if he were returned to Missouri, he would be killed before any trial could take place. The Anti-Mormons had resolved to do everything in their power to extradite Joseph to Missouri, and when that failed, they solicited Governor Ford for state military assistance to attack Nauvoo. Ford hedged on a commitment, but at the same time sent the Hancock County militia companies additional arms from the state arsenal. William Law had organized a secret society of 200 or more persons in Nauvoo who had taken an oath that they would give their lives, liberty and influence “for the destruction of Joseph Smith and his party.”³¹³

Church leaders and the Council of Fifty understood that if the Mormons were to find peace, and Joseph were to survive, he and his community would have to move far enough west that their enemies could not reach them.

On April 5, 6, and 7, 1844, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints held its Fourteenth Annual General Conference. Mormons from all over attended the conference, and Nauvoo’s

³¹³ Dennison L. Harris Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, Ms d 2725.

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population swelled temporarily to an estimated 20,000 people.³¹⁴ Conference is always important to leaders and members of the Mormon Church, but this time was more important than most. Though no one knew it at the time, it would be the last one over which Joseph Smith would preside. During that time Joseph delivered the famous King Follett funeral discourse, theologically one of the most important sermons ever taught by the Prophet. He stretched his hearers' minds back to before "the beginning" and explained that as children of God, persons have the potential to be like their Heavenly Father.³¹⁵

During the conference, the Twelve Apostles announced plans to hold special regional conferences at which the Twelve themselves would preside. The plan was that between May and September, 1844, the apostles would have attended conferences in 47 locations throughout the United States. These conferences were to be for people who lived in branches of the Church in those, and surrounding areas. It is impossible to ascertain the national strength of the Mormon Church at that time, as congregations were scattered, and many records have been lost, but the locations of these regional conferences gives us a good sense of the strength of the Mormon population in various parts of the nation. Mormonism was not simply a western Illinois phenomenon. The extent of these regional conferences gives one the sense that Mormon Church membership was quickly growing all over the country—"especially the northeast"—proportionally, the Church membership was growing faster than it is today. Given this phenomenal rate of growth, and the widespread geographic area of that growth, it is understandable that both the Mormons and their enemies

³¹⁴ For minutes to the conference see *History of the Church*, 6:287.

³¹⁵ *History of the Church*, 6:302-17.

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expected they would have enough political clout to make a difference in the coming national elections.³¹⁶

These regional conferences were also going to be the occasion for organizing the entire United States Mormon population into one huge campaign effort for the Prophet's presidential election. This effort would not be a religious campaign, but a political one. The Church leaders announced that on the day following each of the conferences, and in the same city, the Mormons would hold a local political convention where the Prophet's *Views* would be presented, his candidacy vigorously promoted, and a campaign organization and strategy for that area established.

Consistent with that plan, at the April general conference in Nauvoo, it was requested that as many missionaries as could, leave their homes to spread out over the nation, teach the gospel, and campaign for the Prophet. These political missionaries would be sent to each of the 26 states of the Union. Accordingly, on April 9, two days after the general conference, a special political meeting was held in Nauvoo during which Brigham Young asked for volunteers to go "preach the gospel and electioneer" for General Smith. When names were counted, 244 men had volunteered. A few days later the *Times and Seasons* published the schedule for the regional conferences and also the names and destinations of the political missionaries who had volunteered to stump for the Prophet.³¹⁷ This would be a political campaign with a strategy unlike anything ever before seen in the United States.

³¹⁶ For a list of the conferences see *History of the Church*, 6:334-35.

³¹⁷ The schedule was republished in *Nauvoo Neighbor*, April 17, 1844. The names of the missionaries who were going to campaign for the Prophet, and the areas to which each was assigned were published in *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, April 15, 1844; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 6:335-40.

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At the regional political meetings delegates would be selected to go to their state party conventions. Then, at the state conventions, delegates would be chosen to attend a national convention they planned to hold at Baltimore in August. The Mormons called their political party the Jeffersonian Party and they determined to do everything in their power to make the national convention an event that would catch the attention of the whole nation.

Their publishing in the Nauvoo newspapers the names and destinations of the political missionaries served a threefold purpose. First it announced to the local members of the Church who was going where. Second, it announced to non-Mormons in Illinois that the Saints were in full support of the Prophet's campaign and were vigorously carrying his message to the nation at large. Third, it gave notice to Mormons outside of Illinois, to the nation's newspaper editors, and to politicians, and to ordinary citizens all over the country that the Mormons were coming to talk serious politics.

Throughout much of April in Nauvoo, Church and political leaders continued to hold meetings and make preparations for their campaign. Then on the 23rd the Mormons revealed another surprising facet of their plans. Nauvoo citizens held a formal meeting "to elect a delegate to go to the [national Democratic Party] Baltimore Convention, to be held on the first Monday in May."³¹⁸ There they would negotiate with the leaders of the Democratic Party to try to achieve some of their own political ends. On the afternoon of April 23, after many enthusiastic speeches, the Mormons also decided that they would hold an Illinois state Jeffersonian Party convention in Nauvoo on the

³¹⁸ *History of the Church*, 6:342-3.

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second Monday in May, the week after the Democratic convention in Baltimore.

The next day, the *Nauvoo Neighbor* reported the meetings and made an enthusiastic prediction: “From the statements presented, we have no reason to doubt, but that we can bring, independent of any other party, from two, to five hundred thousand voters, into the field. Several gentlemen were nominated to attend the [National Democratic Party] Baltimore Convention, to make overtures to that body.”³¹⁹ That statement was sent out nationwide as part of the usual *Nauvoo Neighbor* mailing, and the story was expected to be read as an announcement to state and national Democratic party leaders that the Mormons were coming, that they would command a large block of votes, and that they wished “to make overtures” to the Democrats. There was nothing very subtle about the announcement. The Mormons hoped to use the national Democratic Party to put pressure on the Illinois Democrats (Governor Ford and his party) to help protect the Saints from their persecutors.

Sharp immediately saw the implications of Mormons’ sending delegates to the Democratic Convention. He responded with a strong expression of contempt, but in that contempt he was warning his own readers that this thrust into Democratic politics was to be taken as a major counter to their own purposes.

What will be the nature of these overtures, it is difficult to divine; but what will be the fate of them is very evident. The Mormons would no doubt like to thrust themselves in as one of the political parties of the country, but their efforts will only exhibit them to the world in a more contemptible position, than they even now occupy. Still we have no doubt but that Joe has

³¹⁹ *Nauvoo Neighbor*, April 24, 1844.

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the vanity to think that he can thrust his claims upon the great men of the land, and induce them to give him serious consideration.³²⁰

Many people believed the Mormons were planning to use their control of the Illinois elections to make deep inroads into federal politics. Upriver from Nauvoo, in Rock Island, Illinois, the editor of the *Upper Mississippian* reported that among the “Rumors in the Political World” was the one “that Joe Smith will suffer his name to be withdrawn, provided he can cast his ‘three to five hundred thousand votes’ to the Locofoco [Democratic] nominee for a proper consideration, for which negotiations are to be commenced.”³²¹

Attempts on the part of the Mormons to try to use national political pressure to stay the hands of the threatening mob increased the determination of the Anti-Mormons and helped Robert F. Smith, Thomas Sharp, and William Law built on those fears to achieve their own ends. Governor Ford later characterized this period of political dogfighting this way:

It is indeed unfortunate for their peace that they [the Mormons] do not divide in elections, according to their individual preferences or political principles, like other people.

This one principle and practice of theirs arrayed against them in deadly hostility all aspirants for office who were not sure of their support, all who had been unsuccessful in elections, and all who were too proud to court their influence, with all their friends and connections.

These also were the active men in blowing up the fury of the people in hopes that a popular movement might be set on

³²⁰ *Warsaw Signal*, May 8, 1844.

³²¹ *Upper Mississippian*, Rock Island, Illinois, May 11, 1844.

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foot which would result in the expulsion or extermination of the Mormon voters. For this purpose public meetings had been called; inflammatory speeches had been made; exaggerated reports had been extensively circulated; committees had been appointed who rode night and day to spread the reports and solicit the aid of neighboring counties.³²²

The telling phrase there is “the expulsion or extermination [not just of the Mormons, but] of the Mormon voters.”

As the Mormons had hoped, the reports of their increased political activities were attracting considerable national attention.³²³ The tactics by which Joseph entered into national politics convinced many that the Mormons intended to eventually throw all their weight for one of the major national parties in exchange for securing influence to further their own goals. Their plan looked well thought out, because they were courting the Democrats but sounding like Whigs. So they had left their options open to go either way.

A *Chicago Whig* editor wondered, “As our Locofoco

³²² Ford, *History*, 330.

³²³ These stories can be found in the following newspapers: *Bloomington Herald*, Bloomington, Iowa, May 10, 1844; *Louisville Daily Journal*, Louisville, Kentucky, May 10, 1844; *Northwestern Gazette and Galena Advertiser*, Galena, Illinois, May 14, 1844; *Sun*, Baltimore, Maryland, May 16, 1844; *Public Ledger and Daily Transcript*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, May 17, 1844; *Indiana State Journal*, Indianapolis, Indiana, May 18, 1844; *Daily Mercury*, New Bedford, Massachusetts, May 21, 1844; *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, Bangor, Maine, May 24, 1844; *New Orleans Bee*, New Orleans, Louisiana, 24 May 1844; *Long Island Democrat*, Long Island, New York, May 28, 1844; *Southern Banner*, Athens, Georgia, May 30, 1844; *Northern Democrat*, Montrose, Pennsylvania, May 30, 1844.

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[Democratic] friends are hard run for candidates to succeed Mr. Tyler would not Gen. Smith answer the purpose as an available, if Mr. Van Buren should decline? We trust his 'overtures,' will, at least, receive a respectful attention."³²⁴ Another editor asked, "What sort of overtures are to be made to the Convention? Is it possible Joe would withdraw from the canvass for the Presidency, if he could get to be Secretary of State or Minister to Russia?"³²⁵

The Democratic National Convention, to which the Mormon delegates were to make overtures, was expected to nominate Van Buren, but it did not. Instead, it nominated James K. Polk, of Tennessee, for the presidency, and George M. Dallas, of Pennsylvania, for vice president.³²⁶ This was pleasing to the Mormons, who had a particular distaste for Van Buren. However, what part the Mormons played in Van Buren's overthrow, what effect that change in party leadership had on the Mormon plans, and what overtures the Mormons actually made to the members of the convention, are not known.

On the same day, and in the same city, John Tyler's Whig convention nominated Clay for the presidency, by acclamation, but its members did not select a vice presidential candidate. Instead they appointed a committee to select the nominee. One editor had already suggested the Mormons "had better make their overtures to the Tyler Convention that is to assemble at Baltimore on the same day,"³²⁷ but after the convention, several editors who supported the Democrats chided Clay for what they claimed was political ineptness and suggested he choose Joseph Smith as a running

³²⁴ *Erie Gazette*, Erie, Pennsylvania, May 23, 1844.

³²⁵ *Alton Telegraph*, Alton, Illinois, May 11, 1844. See also, *Quincy Whig*, Quincy, Illinois, May 11, 1844.

³²⁶ *Prophet*, New York, New York, June 1, 1844.

³²⁷ *Alexandria Gazette*, Alexandria, Virginia, February 7, 1844.

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mate. “What say the Captain’s friends to the great Mormon Prophet, the pure and immaculate Jo Smith? What a bright star that would make—the Captain and Jo.”³²⁸

Alliance of Sharp and Law in the *Warsaw Signal*

As Joseph Smith’s national political activities became more overt, Thomas Sharp’s opposition became more intense. On April 25, two days after the announcement that the Mormons would send delegates to the National Democratic Convention, Sharp restructured his attacks on Joseph, and in doing so, confirmed his own alliance with William Law and his associates.

That day’s publication marked an important juncture in the *Signal*’s strategy, and began a new phase in the anti-Mormon activities. Until then, the *Signal* had been the voice of Robert F. Smith’s Hancock County Anti-Mormon Party, but now it also became the voice of William Law’s secret society. The arguments and misinformation contained in that April 25 issue of the *Signal* were an explicit foreshadowing of virtually everything against Joseph and the Mormons that would later be published in Law’s *Nauvoo Expositor*. For that reason, its contents should be considered in some detail.

On the front page Sharp published a 22-stanza poem titled

³²⁸ *Clarkesville Jeffersonian*, Clarkesville, Tennessee, June 8, 1844. A similar story is in: *Rhode Island County Journal and Independent Inquirer*, Providence, Rhode Island, February 2, 1844; *Haverhill Gazette*, Haverhill, Massachusetts, June 1, 1844; *Scioto Gazette*, Chillicothe, Ohio, June 6, 1844. “The captain” is a reference to Tyler.

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“The Buckeye’s First Epistle to Jo.” One of the stanzas read:

Repent, repent, there still is time—
And add no more dark crime to crime,
But think, how mighty and sublime
Thy calling first—
And in black sackcloth bow thee down
Low in the dust—

The next item in that issue of the *Signal* was Sharp’s response to an article in the *Alton Telegraph*.

WHY OPPOSE THE MORMONS

The *Alton Telegraph* in making some complementary remarks, in relation to our paper, regrets the course which we pursue in relation to the Mormons, and expresses the opinion, that it is the duty of the press to allay, as far as possible, the excitement against that people. Now Mr. Telegraph, you know but little of the circumstances by which the people of the County are surrounded—you know nothing of the repeated insults and injuries received by our citizens from the heads of the Mormon Church—you know nothing of the manner in which the laws are trampled under foot, and evaded by the Mormons, and they screened from their just operations behind a set of sham city ordinances—you know nothing of the baits held out, wherewith the more gullible portion of Jo’s followers, are induced to take up their residences in Nauvoo, and then of the manner in which they are fleeced of their all, and reduced to beggary—you know nothing of the iron rod by which Jo controls his followers; with threats of violence quieting the discontented, and by every species of tyranny restraining the liberty of the tongue and person, We say Mr. Telegraph, you can know nothing of these things, or you would not undertake to lecture us, for endeavoring to expose such a gang of outlaws,

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black-legs and bloodsuckers.³²⁹

Sharp also published several attacks on Joseph's political views and aspirations. He lauded the *Globe's* rebuttal to the *Views* and wrote a paragraph on "Church and State":

In the last *Nauvoo Neighbor*, we find a long list of the names of Elders of the Church, in the different states of the Union; at the conclusion of which, they are instructed in these words, to "*preach the truth in righteousness, and present before the people 'General Joseph Smith's views of the powers and policy of the General Government,' and seek diligently to get up electors who will go for him for the Presidency.*" That's it Jo! "Preach the truth in righteousness, and go for me for President!" That is Mormonism undisguised. First, "preach the gospel, and thereby gull the people, and then fleece them of their money, or induce them to elevate me to office." That is the sum and substance of all your teachings. Ain't it Jo?³³⁰

In that same issue Sharp also accused the Mormons of minting counterfeit money: "They are half dollars, dated 1828. They are a pretty good imitation of the genuine coin—so good, that some of our business men have been imposed upon by them. It is said they are manufactured in the city of the Saints."³³¹

That was simply not true. Hancock County court records do not show any cases of counterfeiting, and no such coins have ever been shown to exist. But the charge is significant because those same accusations will be echoed in the *Nauvoo Expositor*, and Ford will later use them again as an excuse to take a company of

³²⁹ *Warsaw Signal*, April 25, 1844.

³³⁰ *Warsaw Signal* April 25, 1844, Italics are in the original.

³³¹ *Warsaw Signal* April 25, 1844.

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militia into Nauvoo while he leaves Joseph and Hyrum in Carthage jail.

In that issue of the *Warsaw Signal*, Sharp devoted most of the space he usually reserved for local news to two letters, one by Alex Sympson and the second by Charles A. Foster. Sympson's letter purported to be an account of Joseph's illegal use of the Nauvoo court system. Foster wrote, "I speak for myself. Others may bear the lash of the Tyrant to their hearts content: but I am resolved, that no man whatever may be his pretension, or however lofty his professions, shall trample upon my rights with impunity." Foster accused Joseph of using the Nauvoo court system to tyrannize the citizens of the city.³³²

The *Nauvoo Neighbor* had published the affidavits by Williams and Eaton asserting that Law and others had formed a secret society whose intent was to murder Joseph Smith. Sharp responded:

CONSPIRACY IN NAUVOO — In the last *Neighbor*, we find two affidavits charging certain prominent individuals in the Holy City, with being implicated in a conspiracy against the Prophet. It will be recollected, that the persons against whom the charge is made, are those who have lately rendered themselves obnoxious to his majesty, by their discontent, and independence of the threats of the powers that be. We have no doubt but that these charges are made for the purpose of putting down these individuals through a legal formula. We trust however that they will stand their ground, and neither suffer themselves to be cowed by threats or galled into a compromise of their liberty of speech or action. Let Jo dare to harm one of them, and he will awaken a spirit to which

³³² *Warsaw Signal* April 25, 1844.

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resistance will be useless.³³³

That April 25 issue of the *Warsaw Signal* also contained a long letter with the same literary characteristics as the poem on the front page, likely written by William Law. The author styled himself “An Exile”—probably a reference to Law’s recent excommunication. The letter is a kind of manifesto.

Among the accusations brought by “An Exile” were spiritual wifery, baptisms for the dead, temple ordinances, and collecting tithing as the economic motivation behind the Mormon leaders’ villainy. The letter contained one overriding idea that sounded more like Law’s rationale in the *Expositor* than it did like the writings of the other apostates. Unlike letters published in the *Signal* that were written and signed by most Nauvoo dissenters, this letter acknowledges that Joseph had once been a true prophet. Its author tries to illustrate that by showing that a previous revelation had been valid, but now he purports to give evidence that the conditions of the revelation have been violated. His theme is that the Church is true, but its leadership is false, thus giving justification for why someone else should take the Church’s helm. The author lists the parts of the Mormon Church which he approved of, then accuses Joseph of making changes in Church doctrine that were not supported by revelation. He claimed that those changes were evidence that Joseph had become a fallen prophet.

Whether “An Exile” was actually William Law is not known, but in Sharp’s April 25 *Warsaw Signal*, he introduced almost every issue that the *Expositor* would later expand upon (politics, counterfeiting, spiritual wifery, and the notion that Joseph was a fallen prophet)—and he did it largely by publishing letters from

³³³ *Warsaw Signal* April 25, 1844.

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the Nauvoo apostates. In the next two months there would be more such letters in the *Signal*—until June 10, when the *Expositor* itself would virtually become the crescendo of the *Signal*'s accusations.

The content of the April 25 issue of the *Signal* is strong evidence that at least by that date the people who supported William Law's secret society were coordinating their anti-Joseph Smith campaign with Thomas Sharp. So, even by that early in the game, Law and his associates had set aside their immediate objective of assassinating the Prophet to adopt the Anti-Mormon plan of using Joseph as their reason to attack Nauvoo and drive the Saints from Illinois.

The next week, the *Signal* reported that Law was going to purchase a press on which to publish his own newspaper.³³⁴ It was another three weeks before the *Nauvoo Expositor*'s press arrived in Nauvoo. So about the same time that Law was making those arrangements, Sharp made his rather sudden editorial shift to support the members of Law's secret society.

Given the timing, the circumstances, and the events that followed, it is difficult not to conclude that when Law and the Anti-Mormons realized that extradition would no longer be possible, they decided to get a press and use it like a Trojan horse—to work from within Nauvoo itself as the implement by which they could achieve the objectives of the original extradition plan—not to take Joseph to Missouri to kill him, but to use his presence in Nauvoo to justify a war against the Mormons, and also to make sure Joseph was eliminated in the process.

³³⁴ *Warsaw Signal*, May 8, 1844.

William Law Organizes His Own Church

On Sunday, April 28, just three days after Sharp published the letter from “an Exile,” William Law organized his own version of the Mormon Church—either as an auxiliary to, or a public front for his secret society. The leaders of this church were the same people that Dennison Harris identified as the leaders of Law’s secret society. Law did not claim to be the “prophet” of his new church, only its president. He claimed that Joseph was a fallen, not a false, prophet, so now it was necessary to start the Mormon Church afresh with himself, Law, rather than Joseph at its head. Joseph reported:

There was a meeting at Wilson Law’s, near the sawmill, of those who had been cut off from the Church, and their dupes. Several affidavits which they had taken against me and others were read. William Law, Wilson Law, Austin A. Cowles, John Scott, Sen., Francis M. Higbee, Robert D. Foster, and Robert Pierce were appointed a committee to visit the different families in the city, and see who would join the new church; i.e., as they had decided that I was a fallen prophet, &c.; and they appointed William Law in my place, who chose Austin Cowles and Wilson Law as his counselors. Robert D. Foster and Francis M. Higbee to be two of the Twelve Apostles, &c., &c., as report says.³³⁵

Sharp’s *Warsaw Signal* announced this schism in the Mormon Church with enthusiasm.

³³⁵ *History of the Church*, 6:347-347.

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Well at last the Mormons are at it amongst themselves in a good earnest. A new church has been organized and we understand that a press will soon be procured, and a paper started which will be devoted to the building up on the cause of the seceders, and to an exposition of Joe Smith's enormities and mal-practices. The creed of the new church, differs but little from the old—they acknowledge the authority of the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, &c; the only essential difference being in relation to the inspiration of Joe Smith. The seceders believe that Joe *was* a prophet, but that he is now fallen from grace: They have a new prophet therefore, who is William Law.

The members of the new church are amongst the most intelligent, and respectable of the Mormon body, and it is said that their number is already quite respectable.

On Sunday last, Law preached in Nauvoo, and in the severest terms denounced Smith, for his arbitrary and immoral conduct. Some think that this breach will soon be healed, but we are inclined to believe that the disaffected have gone so far, as to preclude the possibility of retreat—sure it is, they cannot retreat honorably.

As regards our opinion of this matter, we will only say that we care nothing about the Mormon religion. No matter who may be their prophet, we believe the whole matter a humbug. But if you Mormons must have a prophet, do have a decent one—to believe such a scape gallows, loafing, blackguard as Joe Smith a prophet is burlesque on your common sense. Law, has the reputation of being a gentleman; and if a prophet must be your ruler, for God's sake, raise one that can lay some claims to decency.

Well, affairs are now assuming the aspect, which we have long desired they should, and every thing bids fair for the complete prostration of Joe Smith's influence. We devotedly hope that the Imposture stripped of the superstitious mantle that has long enveloped him, may soon be driven forth to wear

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upon his brow the brand of vagabond. From the days of his childhood he has been but a nuisance, and pest to the earth—one of those venomous reptiles with which God, in his Providence sees proper occasionally to afflict the children of men. We heartily rejoice, that there is a prospect of his fall; and our only surprise is that it has not come sooner. How such a heap of rottenness and pollution, the stench of which has afflicted the moral atmosphere through the land, should so long have escaped dissolution is to us a wonder; but come it must, or else the laws of Nature and virtue will prove false to themselves.³³⁶

If Sharp's words were read only as his own rumblings, they were dangerous enough, but it would have been a mistake to read them as only that. Robert F. Smith and his Central Corresponding Committee used Sharp's newspaper to send instructions to Anti-Mormon leaders in other communities. This editorial is such a message. The words that alert the Anti-Mormon leaders statewide to seriously begin to organize for their coming invasion of Nauvoo and the ultimate expulsion of the Mormons read: "Well, affairs are now assuming the aspect, which we have long desired they should, and every thing bids fair for the complete prostration of Joe Smith's influence. We devotedly hope that the Imposture stripped of the superstitious mantle that has long enveloped him, may soon be driven forth to wear upon his brow the brand of vagabond."

It was not a coincidence that Sharp's call to arms appeared in the same issue of the *Signal* as the announcement that Law's new church would soon acquire a press and start a newspaper "which will be devoted to the building upon the cause of the seceders, and to an exposition of Joe Smith's enormities and mal-practices."³³⁷

³³⁶ *Warsaw Signal*, May 8, 1844.

³³⁷ *Warsaw Signal*, May 8, 1844.

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Sharp's call to arms and his announcement about the Press appearing together identify the time when the anti-Mormons in Missouri, Iowa, and Illinois began to make preparations for what they believed would be the final attack on Nauvoo.

A rumor was soon circulated that Joseph had prophesied that the press would never be set up in Nauvoo. Sharp reported that, and alerted the Anti-Mormons that if Joseph did prevent its landing that would be the incident they were waiting for.³³⁸

In a subsequent issue of the *Signal*, there is another note about Law and his new church. This summary of their meeting is not as dramatic as young Harris's, but it either describes one of the meetings he attended, or one very like it. A major difference in the accounts is that the *Signal* says about 300 people attended the one it reported, while Harris wrote that there were about 200 in the meetings he attended. Sharp wrote:

The New Church appears to be going ahead. On last Sunday, there were about three hundred assembled at Mr. Law's house in Nauvoo, and listened with much seeming pleasure to a sermon from Elder Blakely, who denounced Smith as a fallen Prophet. He treated the Spiritual wife doctrine without gloves, and repudiated Smith's plan of uniting Church and State.

After Blakely had concluded, William Law gave his reasons in strong language for leaving the false prophet.

Francis M. Higbee then read a series of resolutions which set forth the reasons for withdrawing from Joe. After this, a number of Affidavits were read testifying to Joe's villainy, and showing the evils under which a large portion of the citizens are obliged to labor.

The new church, and those opposed to Mormonism in Nauvoo, are said to be strongly in favor of repealing their

³³⁸ See *Warsaw Signal* of May 22 and June 12, 1844.

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Charter, it having been made an instrument of oppression rather than a benefit.³³⁹

There Sharp encapsulated the entire Anti-Mormon program: first, to discredit Joseph Smith and the other Mormon leaders; second, to denude the Mormon community of its legal existence and to eliminate its defense system by repealing the Nauvoo charter.

Eastern papers did not give much credence to the *Signal's* charges of sexual impropriety (or at least they neither reprinted nor commented on them). While polygamy was being practiced secretly by some of the leading Mormons, “polygamy” was rarely the charge leveled against them by Sharp and others of their enemies. Rather it was the “spiritual wife doctrine”—the fancy name for adultery that had been concocted and publicized by John C. Bennett. In the weeks before the *Expositor* was issued, Sharp’s *Signal* published several articles accusing the Mormon leaders of “spiritual wifery,” but eastern newspaper editors did not think the accusations credible enough to republish in their own newspapers. Bennett was not accepted in the East as a credible witness (as evinced by the eggs and rotten vegetables with which he was pelted in Boston³⁴⁰).

One of the consequences of that disbelief, or lack of interest, was that when the *Expositor* renewed those charges the stories had already lost their credibility and eastern editors largely ignored them. Western newspaper editors did not often republish them either. Even the other newspapers in Illinois were largely silent about the subject. It is likely that Robert F. Smith and others in the

³³⁹ *Warsaw Signal*, May 15, 1844.

³⁴⁰ This story, which was first published in the *Boston Times*, will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 9.

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Anti-Mormon Party took them no more seriously than the newspapers—or even more likely that they just didn’t care.

A week after William Law organized his own church, he and his associates were excommunicated from the Mormon Church:

Robert D. Foster, Wilson Law, William Law, and Jane Law, of Nauvoo; and Howard Smith, of Scott county, Illinois, for unchristian like conduct, were cut off from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, by the authorities of said Church, and ordered to be published in the *Times and Seasons*.³⁴¹

On Monday, April 29, General Wilson Law and his brother William were suspended from duties in the Nauvoo Legion to await a trial by court martial on charges of ungentlemanly and unofficer-like conduct.³⁴²

The Satire of Belleville’s *The Politician*

About this same time, while the tensions were building in Warsaw and Nauvoo, one of the most delightful offshoots of Joseph Smith’s presidential campaign appeared in Belleville, Illinois. The newspaper, *The Politician*, was only published between April 13 and June 8, 1844.³⁴³ Belleville was the home of

³⁴¹ *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, April 15, 1844.

³⁴² *History of the Church*, 6:347-348. Wilson Law was also accused of molesting a young girl, *Nauvoo Neighbor Extra*, June 19, 1844.

³⁴³ Gregory, *American Newspapers*, 117.

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G. W. Goforth,³⁴⁴ who was not then a member of the Mormon Church but he took a prominent part in supporting Joseph in the Nauvoo State Jeffersonian Party Convention. On its second page *The Politician* carried a logo and motto that looked very much like the ones supporting Joseph Smith in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*.

We this week have the pleasure of presenting to the public the first number of *The Politician*. In doing so it is proper that we should briefly explain the motives which have led to the establishment of a new public journal in a community already so liberally supplied—and also the principles upon which *The Politician* will be conducted.

It must be obvious to every attentive observer that the times are sadly out of joint, in these latter days, both morally and politically....

Our paper being entirely free and independent of any sect, clique or party, we of course have the glorious privilege, of consulting our own individual judgment and preferences as to the men whom we will support for office. That privilege we are determined to enjoy and exercise, even at the risk of incurring the imputation of singularity. We shall not be whimsical, however, in our choice of candidates; nor present to the public the name of any man for office who is not fully convinced of his own fitness for the place; as the following ticket—our ticket will show,

³⁴⁴ Dr. Goforth was baptized April 8, 1845. *History of the Church*, 7:394.

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FOR PRESIDENT,
GEN. JOSEPH SMITH.
OF ILLINOIS
FOR VICE PRESIDENT,
JAMES GORDON BENNETT,
OF NEW YORK
FOR CONGRESS,
ELAM RUST
OF ILLINOIS.

A few words in behalf of our candidates. Since it has been ascertained that Captain Tyler can beat Mr. Van Buren or Mr. Clay, or both of them together, it has occurred to us that Joe Smith is the only individual who would stand even a tolerable chance of success against the Captain, to whom, be it understood we are decidedly opposed. That Joe is qualified for the place will be evident to anyone who will read with attention his recent address to the people of New Hampshire.

His availability will hardly be questioned when it is considered with what unexampled rapidity he has risen to fame and notoriety; within the last five years, while his well-known spiritual zeal precludes all doubt of his moral fitness for any political station to which he has any prospect of attaining.

James Gordon Bennett. We think there is a peculiar propriety in running this gentleman for vice president on the same ticket with Joe Smith. The only plausible objection to Smith is the fact that his hitherto exclusive devotion to spiritual concerns may lead him to give the affairs of our government a little too much of a religious turn, resulting in a virtual union of church and state. This result, however, will be effectually guarded against by investing Bennett with the second office in the government. His unexampled impiety will act as a very effectual counterpoise to Joe's exuberant religious zeal; and thus a beautiful harmony will be produced, under the influence of which "exchanges" will become regulated, prices of produce

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will rise, and laborers will get “two dollars a day and plenty of roast beef” without difficulty....

Sustained by such principles and sustaining such candidates, the career of “The Politician” cannot but be prosperous and brilliant. Our best energies will be devoted to its success—and whether immediately sustained or not by the cheering voice of public approbation—we doubt not that the time will arrive when the world will acknowledge with gratitude the blessings conferred by our labors as editor of “The Politician.”³⁴⁵

In fact, *The Politician* was an anti-Clay newspaper that was out to deride everyone. Snyder wrote about Clay and his followers:

The coons are trying to brag about Illinois. They boast confidently of their carrying this or that state, and of electing Mr. Clay by a large majority. Believe them not. Their bragging words are not efficient works. If the Republicans do their duty, we shall subdue all their hosts. But we must do it, everywhere—not sleep upon our posts—not fold our arms—but stretch, strain every sinew, and we shall preserve our Republic from the hands of a Dictator.³⁴⁶

He poked fun at both the Mormons and Dr. Goforth.³⁴⁷ The Mormons did not understand this at first, so when they saw a copy of *The Politician*, with its prominent announcement that it supported Joseph Smith, they thought it had something to do with Goforth’s commitment to the Prophet’s campaign, and accepted it at face value. The *Nauvoo Neighbor* reported happily:

³⁴⁵ *Politician*, Belleville, Illinois, April 13, 1844.

³⁴⁶ *Politician*, Belleville, Illinois, April 13, 1844.

³⁴⁷ There is a letter from W. G. Goforth published in *Nauvoo Neighbor*, May 22, 1844.

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A new paper has been started in Belleville, St. Clair County, Ill., entitled *The Politician*. It advocates Gen. Smith's claims for the Presidency. All right—may success attend it. Hang the banner upon the outer wall.³⁴⁸

Thomas Sharp, however, was in on the joke:

FUNNY—A paper has been started in Belleville Ills. Which supports Joe Smith's claims for the Presidency. It is edited by Frederick Snyder, (son of Adam W. Snyder deceased, late candidate for Governor) and entitled "*The Politician*."³⁴⁹

Snyder's attacks on the Mormons and Goforth were as inaccurate as they were sarcastic. He described the State Convention at Nauvoo this way:

We received the proceedings of a meeting, held at "Skunk Creek," on Saturday last. After numerous balloting, Gen. Joseph Smith, of Nauvoo, was declared as their choice for the Presidency, and James Gordon Bennett, for the Vice Presidency.

The meeting was large, enthusiastic, and harmonious. There was no difference of opinion prevailing, in consequence of there being no one there who could read. The President acted also in the capacity of Vice President, Secretary, &c. It

³⁴⁸ *Nauvoo Neighbor*, May 15, 1844. In New York, *The Prophet* picked up the story from the *Neighbor*, and announced, "The People are Moving—A new paper has been started in Belleville, St. Clair county, (Ill.) called the 'The Politician.' It advocates the claims of Gen. Joseph Smith to the Presidency. Our good wishes, Mr. "The Politician." "A long pull—a strong pull—and a pull altogether"—and success will attend our exertions." *Prophet*, New York, New York, June 8, 1844.

³⁴⁹ *Warsaw Signal*, May 8, 1844.

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must not be supposed by this apparent lack of intelligence, that the meeting was composed of gentlemen “of color.”

We have not room this week, for Dr. Goforth’s elegant, mastery, and classic description of his interview with Joe Smith. It is a production of great merit, and we feel sorry that we are compelled to deprive our readers of such a rich treat. It is an article of which the Doctor should, if he does not, feel proud. We beg our readers to obtain a copy, and listen to its thrilling appeal—its fervid eloquence. If after they have read it, they understand it, we will give them credit for more discernment than we possess.

All persons in favor of Joseph Smith Jr., Lieutenant commander of the Nauvoo Legion, and Chief of the Latter-day Saints, for President, are requested to meet in all the States of the Union for the purpose of appointing delegates to the Smith Convention, to be held in Nauvoo, on the first Monday of November next.³⁵⁰

JOSEPH SMITH
JAMES G. BENNETT
SIDNEY RIGDON
ELAM RUST,
Smith Central Committee of the United States.³⁵¹

The editorials in *The Politician* were not any more inaccurate than many other newspaper stories about the Mormons, but they do make a relevant point: not all of the people in Illinois who were opposed to Joseph Smith’s presidential campaign were Anti-

³⁵⁰ The implication was that the Mormons weren’t bright enough to know that the election would be over, and it would be too late to hold a Convention.

³⁵¹ *Politician*, Belleville, Illinois, April 20, 1844.

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Mormons; some were just good Democrats who wanted to see their party's man elected.

Chapter 8

May, 1844

Jeffersonian Party Convention in Nauvoo

On May 15, 1844, as the Mormons were preparing for their Illinois state convention, Josiah Quincy Jr. and his friend Charles Francis Adams, the son of John Quincy Adams, who were traveling together up the Mississippi, stopped at Nauvoo to see the Prophet. Both men were impressed by the personal presence of the man whom they sought. Adams observed:

There is a mixture of shrewdness and extravagant self-conceit, of knowledge and ignorance, of wisdom and folly in this whole system of this man that I am somewhat at a loss to find definitions for it. Yet it is undoubted that he has gained followers at home and abroad—and boasts of having twenty-five thousand at Nauvoo and two hundred thousand in the Union. This is an extravagant estimate, but the number must be large.³⁵²

Josiah Quincy wrote his observations somewhat later:

It is by no means improbable that some future textbook, for the use of generations yet unborn, will contain a question

³⁵² Adams, “Charles Francis Adams Visits the Mormons” 22. See also: *History of the Church*, 6:377.

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something like this: What historical American of the nineteenth century has exerted the most powerful influence upon the destinies of his countrymen? And it is by no means impossible that the answer to that interrogatory may be thus written: Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet. And the reply, absurd as it doubtless seems to most men now living, may be an obvious commonplace to their descendants.³⁵³

As had been planned, the Mormons held their Jeffersonian Party state convention in Nauvoo on May 17 for the purpose of formally nominating General Joseph Smith for the office of president of the United States,³⁵⁴ and to nominate electors to represent Illinois to the Electoral College.³⁵⁵ The convention was a typical celebration of American local political enthusiasm.³⁵⁶

At night a large assemblage burned a barrel of tar in the street. I [Joseph Smith] went out to see what was the matter, and found they were giving toasts; and as soon as they became aware of my presence; they carried me on their shoulders twice round the fire, and escorted me to the Mansion by a band of music.³⁵⁷

³⁵³ Quincy *Figures of the Past*, 376.

³⁵⁴ The convention proceedings were published in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, May 22, 1844. The minutes were republished in *History of the Church*, 6:386-97.

³⁵⁵ *Nauvoo Neighbor*, May 15, 1844.

³⁵⁶ The remarks of John S. Reed were published in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, June 5, 1844. See also, Godfrey, "Causes of Mormon Non-Mormon Conflict in Hancock County," 65-67.

³⁵⁷ *History of the Church*, 6:397. See also: *Nauvoo Neighbor*, May 8 and June 7, 1844, reprinted in *History of the Church*, 6: 386-97.

The convention attracted a good deal of attention elsewhere, as is suggested by the following excerpts from just two newspaper articles. “An immense assemblage of Delegates was there. Talents, eloquence and patriotic spirit were displayed on the occasion, and everything passed off harmoniously—so says a witness.”³⁵⁸ “The object was, to consider on the state of the country, as connected with the elevation of Joe Smith to the Presidency. The united expression was that he should be supported, and many thought his chance of success far from being desperate.”³⁵⁹

Soon after the Nauvoo State Jefferson Party Convention, the Mormon political leaders sought to find common cause with the beleaguered Irish Catholics in Philadelphia. For the better part of a year those people had been treated much the same way the Mormons were treated in Missouri. Their homes and public buildings were sacked and burned, and some of their people murdered.³⁶⁰ The newspapers had been full of stories about the riots, and most were very sympathetic toward the Catholics. On May 24, Willard Richards, writing in behalf of the committee for the election of General Joseph Smith to the presidency, sent a letter to Hugh Clark, who was an alderman representing the Irish Catholic district of Philadelphia. Richards invited him to “Help us to elect this man and we will help you to secure those privileges which belong to you. And break every yoke.” The letter concluded:

You will please to consider yourself a member of the corresponding committee with us, agreeable to the resolution of

³⁵⁸ *Belleville Advocate*, Belleville, Illinois, May 23, 1844.

³⁵⁹ *Northwestern Gazette and Galena Advertiser*, Galena, Illinois, May 3, 1844.

³⁶⁰ Paul Ellsworth, “Mobocracy and the Rule of Law,” 71-82.

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the State Convention, and lay this subject before your people, giving us your views on receipt hereof, and open such correspondence as wisdom shall dictate.³⁶¹

It is not likely that the Mormons expected that the overt support by these persecuted people in only one district of Philadelphia would have been an important addition to the Mormon campaign, so this gesture was as much an offer of assistance to the Catholics as it was a request for their support. There is no evidence of how Clark responded, or whether he responded at all.

People in Warsaw and other parts of Illinois were watching Joseph's eastern campaign with much interest. Eastern editors sent copies of their papers west, just as western editors sent theirs east, so the Hancock County Anti-Mormon leaders knew about the increased interest the Mormons were stimulating by their presidential campaign. From across the Mississippi, the *Bloomington Herald* gave its readers this succinct but insightful history of the Mormons in Illinois politics. It describes the situation as the anti-Mormons understood it:

When driven from their homes in Missouri, they sought shelter and protection in Illinois, they were fed, nursed, and hugged to the bosom by men of both political parties [Whigs and Democrats], each anxious to win their favor by excelling the other in kindness towards them. For a while all worked well. They purchased their town site, to which the Prophet and many of his followers removed, and in a short time their village numbered several hundred souls. Election after election came

³⁶¹ *History of the Church*, 6:403-404; original is in Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, Ms d 1490, Bx. 1 Fd. 6.

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and so unsettled were they in political sentiments that each party dreaded their strength, yet feared to offend, so a city charter, conferring unwarranted powers upon its authorities was passed by the Legislature of Illinois, neither party having independence enough to oppose it.³⁶²

There was one other factor too, intangible, but very real—Joseph had never failed in anything he had tried to do—withstanding opposition and persecution he had succeeded in gathering a community in Kirtland, built a larger community in Missouri, and an even larger one in Illinois, with thousands of converts now coming from the eastern states and Europe. Eastern papers were saying he controlled Illinois politics, and if he continued as he was going now, he would soon dominate the entire western vote, and so might gain the balance of power in the Electoral College—not this election but next.³⁶³ It does not matter whether that appraisal was correct or highly exaggerated. What matters is that Governor Ford, Robert F. Smith, and many others read it in the eastern papers, and saw it happening in Illinois. Therefore, their words and their actions show they reasoned that Joseph had to be killed before the election or he could not be stopped.³⁶⁴

³⁶² *Bloomington Herald*, Bloomington, Iowa, June 21, 1844.

³⁶³ *Nauvoo Neighbor*, March 20, 1844, reprinted from the *New York Herald*.

³⁶⁴ *History of the Church*, 6:605-606. Also see statements about Joseph's national campaign in the *Nauvoo Expositor*.

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Union of the Anti-Mormons and the Nauvoo Apostates

In Nauvoo that May, the Mormons were increasingly encouraged by what they were reading in the eastern newspapers. John Taylor quoted the positive comments in his papers, while Sharp quoted the negative ones. Joseph's national campaign was giving hope to the Mormons but at the same time it was adding credibility to the Anti-Mormons' predictions of a Mormon political takeover.

The Nauvoo apostates—the Laws, Fosters, and Higbees—began to use the courts to harass Joseph personally, but Joseph understood the law and had learned to use it to deflect legal attacks on his person. When he did that, Sharp publicized it, accusing him of manipulating the courts for his own purposes:

It is surprising to see the barefaced effrontery of Jo Smith's organ, the *Nauvoo Neighbor*. The last number contains an article intended to convey the impression that everything is peace, and quiet in the City of the Saints. The Fosters and C. L. Higbee are spoken of as the only discontented spirits, while the fact is well known through this region, that everything in the city is in commotion and confusion. Yet, notwithstanding the fact that some of Joe's hitherto principal supporters are now arrayed against him, and a division of the ranks has been effected, the organ of the Prophet has the effrontery to tell the world that all is peace in the City of the Saints. What must honest Mormons think of the man who can thus openly avow to the wide world, what is notoriously untrue!³⁶⁵

³⁶⁵ *Warsaw Signal*, May 8, 1844. The *Nauvoo Neighbor* article he is referring to is reprinted in *History of the Church*, 6:348-349.

To make his point, in that same issue of the *Warsaw Signal*, Sharp also published a long letter written by Charles A. Foster—one of the leaders of the apostates in Nauvoo—in which he described what he claimed was Joseph’s illegal use of the Nauvoo court system.³⁶⁶

By this time Joseph Jackson was riding on the very surface of the tensions. Jackson is still an enigma enshrouded in mystery. Historians are not sure where he came from, who he was working for, or where he went after the Prophet was killed. When he first came to Nauvoo, he tried to ingratiate himself into the Smith family, when that failed he exposed his true purposes. Lucy Mack Smith, the Prophet’s mother, reported that Jackson “continued seeking out our enemies, till he succeeded in getting a number to join him in a conspiracy to murder the whole Smith family.”³⁶⁷ In Sharp’s *Signal*, Jackson claimed to have been an intimate of the Mormon leaders and then published some of the most venomous stories of the Anti-Mormon campaign. In one of the first of these Jackson claimed he had been hired by Joseph Smith to murder William Law.³⁶⁸ Joseph Jackson later claimed that he had come to Nauvoo as a mole.

There were also others who joined the Church for cunning purposes. L. B. Fleak, postmaster of Keokuk, Iowa, boasted he knew one:

[He] claimed that Boggs [the governor of Missouri] sent a personal emissary to him whose name he subsequently forgot. After consultation it was decided that the emissary should go to Nauvoo and pass himself off as a friend of the Mormons.

³⁶⁶ *Warsaw Signal*, May 8, 1844.

³⁶⁷ Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by his Mother*. 321.

³⁶⁸ *Warsaw Signal*, May 8, 1844.

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Purportedly he became a member of the Church and was so successful in his deception that he became a trusted friend of the Prophet.³⁶⁹

Sharp published a bogus letter purportedly written “By Authority of the Twelve,” saying everyone must participate in the spiritual wife system or go to hell. The letter is an obvious forgery—Mormons did not write open letters signed “By Authority of the Twelve,” and the content of the letter is contrary to both the private and public teachings of the leaders of the Church. But for those who did not know that, the letter was intended to bear the stamp of credulity. One cannot know how it was received among the Anti-Mormons, but the fact that its content was not reproduced by a single Eastern newspaper, indicates they did not think it was authentic.³⁷⁰

In Nauvoo, the Legion was taking decisive action to curtail the influence of the apostates. On May 9, it held the promised court martial and Major-General Wilson Law, William Law’s brother, was found guilty of ungentlemanly and un-officer-like conduct, and released from his duties.

A short time before, when William Law and his associates organized their church in opposition to the Mormon Church, one of Law’s first actions was to arrange to purchase the press on which he would later publish the *Nauvoo Expositor*. Law claimed that he personally put up most of the \$2,000 to buy the press and to have it shipped to Nauvoo.³⁷¹

³⁶⁹ Jennings, “Two Iowa Postmasters View Nauvoo” 280, fn.

³⁷⁰ *Warsaw Signal*, May 8, 1844.

³⁷¹ March 30, 1887, interview with William Law, published in Gregg, *Prophet of Palmyra*, 505-506. Relative to his wealth, Law claimed, “We had property to the amount of about \$30,000, which was a

On Friday, May 10, the proprietors of the anticipated *Nauvoo Expositor* distributed a broadside called a *Prospectus* announcing their new newspaper and its intent. That was almost two weeks in advance of the press's arrival in Nauvoo, so the owners of the *Expositor* used some press other than their own to print it. One can be sure the *Prospectus* was not printed on the Mormon press in Nauvoo, so it is likely that it was published on the press of the *Warsaw Signal*.

The *Prospectus* was a remarkable document—as much for what it does not say as for what it does say. It was a more honest and straightforward statement of the purposes of the *Expositor* than the first issue of the *Expositor* itself. The newspaper was to be the voice of William Law's new church, yet there was almost nothing in the *Prospectus* that talked about his church. There was no mention of the need for such a church or its newspaper; no reference to spiritual wifery; no suggestion that Joseph was a fallen prophet; nothing about Mormon Church doctrines; not even anything about Joseph's running for president. The *Expositor* would deal with all those things, but if they were referred to at all in the *Prospectus*, they were only summed up in the assertion that the editors felt it their duty “to censure and decry gross moral imperfections wherever found,” and “exercising their own judgment in cases of flagrant abuses of moral delinquencies—use such terms and names as they deem proper, when the object is of such high importance that the end will justify the means.”³⁷²

The *Prospectus* was not a summary of the things that would soon be published in the *Expositor*—or of the reasons Law

good deal in those days. We had farms in Nauvoo, city lots, and our residences. My brother had a fine brick two-story building....we had a large steam flour and saw mill and a store.”

³⁷² *Nauvoo Expositor Prospectus*, May 10, 1844.

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objected to Joseph Smith and the Mormon Church—but rather, the *Prospectus* was a statement of support for the most important platform of Robert F. Smith’s Anti-Mormon political party: the repeal of the Nauvoo city charter.

A part of its [the *Expositor*’s] columns will be devoted to a few primary objects, which the publishers deem of vital importance to the public welfare. Their particular locality gives them a knowledge of the many *gross abuses exercised under the “pretended” authorities of the Charter of the City of Nauvoo*, by the legislative authorities of said city and the *insupportable oppression of the Ministerial powers in carrying out the unjust, illegal and unconstitutional ordinances of the same*. The publishers therefore deem it a sacred duty they owe to their country and their fellow-citizens to advocate through the columns of the *Expositor* the Unconditional Repeal of the Nauvoo City Charter, to restrain and correct the abuses of the Unit Power, to ward off the iron rod which is held over the devoted heads of the citizens of Nauvoo and the surrounding country, to advocate unmitigated Disobedience to Political Revelations, and to censure and decry gross moral imperfections wherever found, either in the plebeian, patrician or Self-Constituted Monarch—to advocate the pure principles of morality, the pure principles of truth, designed not to destroy, but to strengthen the mainspring of God’s moral government—to advocate and exercise the freedom of speech in Nauvoo, independent of the ordinances abridging the same—to *give free toleration to every man’s religious sentiment*, and sustain all in worshiping their God according to the monitions of their consciences, as guaranteed by the Constitution of our country, and to oppose with uncompromising hostility any Union of Church and State, or

any preliminary step tending to the same.³⁷³

This *Expositor Prospectus* was also a remarkably straightforward disclosure of Law's true colors as a mole who had been working within Nauvoo to help get Joseph into the hands of his enemies. In it, he expressed the rationale that would later be the excuse for mob to "act under cover of law," to storm Nauvoo and drive the Mormons from Illinois. When it came off the press, the *Expositor* would issue an invitation for the mob to do exactly that. The *Prospectus* was addressed to the people in Illinois, Missouri, and Iowa who were already organized and were aware that the time had come to assemble for an invasion of Nauvoo. That reiteration in the *Prospectus* of Robert F. Smith's Anti-Mormon policy was an undisguised announcement that the *Expositor's* purpose would be to help achieve all of the Anti-Mormon objectives, and it put the Anti-Mormons and their allies on notice that the hour of invasion had nearly come.

At the bottom of the broadside there was a list of the *Expositor's* publishers. They were not all leaders of Law's church. The members of his church's First Presidency were himself as president, and Austin Cowles and Wilson Law as his counselors. Rather the publishers were the leaders of the secret society: William and Wilson Law, Charles Ivins, Francis and Chauncey Higbee, Robert and Charles Foster. Cowles, though a member of the secret society, was not included as one of the publishers.

That document's call to arms was a spiked glove thrown in the face of the Nauvoo city fathers. The *Prospectus* itself took on all of the qualities of the perfect bait by giving the Mormons cause for preventing the *Expositor* from ever publishing its first issue. The

³⁷³ Italics and caps are in original. A copy can also be found in *History of the Church*, 6:443-444.

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Mormon leaders understood that if they had taken the bait and stopped the *Expositor* from being published, they would have violated the Illinois constitution's definition of freedom of the press. Yet, if they let it publish that first issue, they would be inviting it to endanger the legal existence of not only the city itself, but also of the state militia—the Nauvoo Legion—that protected them from the anticipated invasion.

The theory of freedom of the press that was accepted at that time was this: One could put no prior restraint upon any publication, but after something was published, if the publisher had infringed upon the rights of others, then appropriate legal action could be taken against the publisher. This principle was clearly reflected in the section of the Illinois State constitution that guaranteed freedom of the press and affirmed the publisher's responsibility for what he printed:

The printing presses shall be free to every person who undertakes to examine the proceedings of the general assembly or of any branch of government; and no law shall ever be made to restrain the right thereof. The free communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the invaluable rights of man, and every citizen may freely speak, write, and print on any subject, *being responsible for the abuse of that liberty.*³⁷⁴

Because freedom of the press was defined in that way, the *Nauvoo Expositor Prospectus* has all the characteristics of a perfect setup—it created an impossible dilemma that the Mormons could neither solve nor ignore.

If the Mormons prevented its publication, they would violate freedom of the press. But if they chose not to violate freedom of

³⁷⁴ Constitution of Illinois, 1818, Article VIII, sec. 22. Italics added.

the press and wait until after the *Expositor's* first issue, then the community leaders might choose to sue the proprietors of the newspaper for printing libels,³⁷⁵ or the city council might fine the editor, or order the paper to desist its operation because its editors had endangered the city by inviting the mob to come to Nauvoo and do what a mob had done in Far West. But if they waited to react to the first issue of the newspaper, and then did any of those things, they would be leaving the next move entirely up to the apostates. In that case Law and his associates could choose to pay the fine (not a likely choice) or to close down their own press (also not a likely choice) or to challenge the city's action in the courts (the more likely choice) and then continue to publish their paper within the city while the matter remained in the courts. If they continued to publish, they would force the city to either back down and take no overt action, or to take action that would risk providing Robert F. Smith's Central Corresponding Committee with the incident that had been anticipated by Sharp's *Warsaw Signal*. The editors of the *Expositor* had the city in a vise grip, and everyone involved knew the pressure was getting greater all the time.

What was not apparent at this early juncture was whether the *Expositor* could simply be ignored. If the paper turned out to be

³⁷⁵ On June 10, 1844, the Nauvoo city council passed an ordinance concerning libels which would help prevent such slanderous attacks as those of John C. Bennett and of the *Nauvoo Expositor*. However, that law is not a part of our story for it was neither used, nor intended to be used against the owners of the *Expositor*. Had they used it against the owners of the *Expositor* it would probably have been *ex post facto*, and therefore unconstitutional. The ordinance was published in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, June 12, 1844 and is reprinted in *History of the Church*, 6:433-434.

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only a thorn in the side of the city and its leadership, or if it limited itself to the kind of slanders its proprietors had already published through the editor of the *Signal*, there might be a way to deal with that. But if the *Expositor* became an overt threat to the community itself, then the city fathers would be forced to act.

There were two ways by which the newspaper actually could constitute a clear and present danger to the physical welfare of the city and its inhabitants. First, the *Prospectus* had already declared that one of the newspaper's priorities would be to take the offensive against the city by campaigning to have its charter revoked. In this context, that determination had even more serious overtones than the threat to leave the people without any legal city government. The repeal of the city charter would take all legal authority to define and enforce city law out of the hands of the city's inhabitants and place it under the jurisdiction of hostile county government officials, like Robert F. Smith who was justice of the peace in Carthage, the county seat. Not only would a repeal of the charter cause the Nauvoo Legion to cease to exist as a legal protection against the city's lethal enemies, it would leave the Mormons in Nauvoo without any police or legal recourse if their city were attacked by bandits or mobs. If the *Expositor* campaigned for the revocation of the city charter, as its publishers promised they would do, the city fathers would have to take a stand. What stand? The newspaper had the legal right to print whatever it wished as its own editorial policy. No one was quite sure what the city government would, should, or could do in that event.

Second, the *Expositor* might go farther than even Sharp's *Signal* had gone, and actually invite the mob to come into Nauvoo, sack the city, and drive out or exterminate its inhabitants. That was, of course, exactly what the *Expositor* did do, but judging by how completely the city fathers were taken aback by its move, it

seems they had not seriously considered the likelihood that the *Expositor* would take such a drastic and dangerous stance.

For the present, the Mormon leaders would not be goaded by the *Prospectus* into taking premature and illegal action to prevent the newspaper's publication. If they had done anything to prevent the publication of the first issue of the *Expositor* they would have violated freedom of the press, so legally, the Mormon leaders had little option except to wait and see what the *Expositor* would do. Then they would know how serious the problem was, and might decide whether to fine the proprietors of the paper, take some court action, or simply ignore it and let it do its worst. That, of course, was the overriding question: What was its worst going to be?

The *Expositor Prospectus* had not appeared in a vacuum. The Mormons still had a prosperous city and they still had a good deal of political clout, but all that was hanging by a thread that was growing increasingly tight and precariously slender.

Hyrum Smith and State Politics

In May, 1844, when the Democrats held their state convention in Illinois, Hyrum Smith demonstrated the reach of his own political clout. Hoge was again nominated as the party candidate for Congress, and Hyrum was one of the forces behind his nomination. The story is told in Rock Island's *Upper Mississippian*, a Whig newspaper that was not at all sympathetic with the Democratic cause, but most of all not sympathetic with the political power wielded by Hyrum Smith.

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DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION

Well—The long agony is over! And Joseph F. Hoge, the present incumbent, is again nominated for Congress in this District...

But the “observed of all observers,” and decidedly the “great one” in the convention, was “President” Hyrum Smith, the Delegate from the Holy Prophet at Nauvoo. Like Abraham of old—who was willing to offer up his son Isaac—so did this venerable “patriarch” of the Saints bring up his 2000 brethren, and yield them without a groan, as an appeasing sacrifice, upon the altar of Democracy! And he said he was “inspired” to do the act (Oh! That the pencil of a Hogarth might have been there to give that living scene to the canvas!). In that same spirit of Prophecy, which clothed his words in last year’s memorable campaign, he said that since he had set his foot on the green sward of Rock Island, the trump of victory had sounded, which was to carry their cause through triumphantly in this District! Well—as the prophet said last year—“when Heaven speaks let men be silent.”

The representatives of the Democracy of the Sixth District listened in a rapt suspense, to the oily words of the Patriarch, as they fell from his lips—and when he sat down the hall resounded with the plaudits of the audience.

After the Prophet’s Viceregent had resumed his seat, Mr. Wells, of this place, addressed the convention, eulogizing the peculiar beauties of the Patriarch’s speech, and apparently quite elated with the idea of Mormon suffrage.

Thus it will be seen that the 2000 majority in Hancock is already pledged to our opponents. We wish them joy of their acquisition! And hope they may ever keep it—at least until they can come to the polls as honest freemen, and not the sheep

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to the slaughter. Our candidates are freemen—and we wish none to vote for them but freemen!³⁷⁶

That article describes the situation very well from the Whig point of view. From the Democratic point of view, they were glad to have the power gained from the Mormon vote but were embarrassed that they got the power that way. Along with the other Democrats, Governor Ford, who was running for reelection in the fall of 1844, was walking a tightrope that could lose the election for him. His later actions show that he was working with the conspirators to destroy Joseph and Hyrum Smith and at the same time he was trying to convince the Mormons that he was on their side so they would vote for him.

Toward the end of May, Joseph learned William Law had sworn out an indictment against him charging him with polygamy, and Robert Foster and Joseph Jackson had charged him with false swearing. These charges were an annoyance, but they were not sufficient to bring the mob in upon the city. Something more serious would have to be used for that.

On Sunday, May 26, Joseph delivered a sermon in which he addressed the charges made against him, counter pointing each accusation and answering the people who made them. About himself, Joseph said:

I should be like a fish out of water, if I were out of persecutions. Perhaps my brethren think it requires all this to keep me humble. The Lord has constituted me so curiously that I glory in persecution.... When facts are proved, truth and innocence will prevail at last.”³⁷⁷

³⁷⁶ *Upper Mississippian*, Rock Island, Illinois, May 11, 1844.

³⁷⁷ *History of the Church*, 6:408-412.

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The next day, May 27, Joseph and several friends rode to Carthage to confront the charges made against him. While there, he learned there was a conspiracy afoot to murder him, and arranged to pay bail and return to Nauvoo as soon as possible.³⁷⁸ So far as Sharp was concerned, that would be the last time Joseph could safely leave his protection at Nauvoo. To Sharp, Joseph was the prey, caged and caught, but not yet completely dealt with:

We have seen and heard enough to convince us that Joe Smith is not safe out of Nauvoo, and we would not be surprised to hear of his death by violent means in a short time. He has deadly enemies—men whose wrongs have maddened them—whose lives have been sought by Joe, and who are prepared at all times, to avenge themselves.

Facts have within the past week come to our knowledge, which renders it evident, that Joe is desirous of putting every obnoxious individual out of the way. We have only to say to him, as we have before said, that, should any one of his enemies be assailed, or the blood of one of them spilled, it will be the signal for general hostilities. The feeling in this country is now lashed to its utmost pitch, and it will break forth in fury upon the slightest provocation.³⁷⁹

Sharp's frankness was quite transparent, and the editor of the *St. Louis Gazette* called attention to that:

The *Warsaw Signal* thinks the General's bodyguard by no means an unnecessary retinue. "We have seen and heard enough, says that paper, to convince us that Joe Smith is not safe out of Nauvoo, and we would not be surprised to hear of

³⁷⁸ *History of the Church*, 6:412-415.

³⁷⁹ *Warsaw Signal*, May 29, 1844.

his death by violent means in a short time.” If this be the case, how is it expected that the man can obtain a fair and impartial trial for his imputed offences? Violence and injustice have made more Mormons than has fanaticism. The Latter-day Saints, though doubtless bad enough, have their rights as well as other people, and those rights should be respected.³⁸⁰

Sharp replied even more frankly, arguing that the business had to be concluded before the August elections.

The *St. Louis Gazette*, quotes our remark that we do not believe Joe Smith safe out of Nauvoo, and thereupon makes the following comments: “If this is the case, how can it be expected that Joe can have a fair trial for his imputed offences?” We answer, that we do not believe that Joe can have a fair trial in this county. No! he can suborn a sufficient number of witnesses to swear any jury out of countenance: and besides this, the jury of this county will hereafter be of his own selection. How then can we procure a fair trial for Joe? How can justice be made to reach him?

The *Gazette* may not know, that in all cases where Joe, or one of his favorites is a party at Law, the opposite party are even now subjected to the inconvenience and expense of a change of venue. If such is the case now, what may we not expect after the August Election, when Joe will doubtlessly have County Commissioner’s Court under his control?³⁸¹

³⁸⁰ *St. Louis Gazette*, St. Louis, Missouri, June 6, 1844; Reprinted in *Public Ledger and Daily Transcript*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, June 18, 1844; *New York Daily Tribune*, New York, New York, June 19, 1844; *Bucks County Intelligencer*, Doylestown, Pennsylvania, June 24, 1844.

³⁸¹ *Warsaw Signal*, June 12, 1844.

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Even in Illinois, Sharp's continual harangue against the Mormons was not looked upon with universal approval. The editor of the *Ottawa Free Trader* observed, "The *Warsaw Signal* is waging all sorts of a fierce war against the holy city of Nauvoo, and brings to its aid all the forces of argument, denunciation, reason, abuse, threats, and ridicule."³⁸²

The stage was now almost entirely set. There had been earlier attempts to get Joseph Smith into the custody of his enemies—and Ford himself had been at the center of many of them³⁸³—but those had all failed. Now Sharp had just informed both the Mormons and their enemies that Ford's involvement would no longer be necessary. All that would have to happen is "should any one of his enemies be assailed, or the blood of one of them spilled, it will be the signal for general hostilities." "His enemies" were the apostates who had just issued the *Prospectus* of the *Nauvoo Expositor*. To "assail" them would be to do any hurt, including trying to prevent that paper's publication. If that happened, it would be the signal for "general hostilities," the mob would gather, and the horrors of Far West would be replayed all over again.³⁸⁴ Sharp had just let everyone know that the *Expositor* would now play the same role that their previous plans had assigned to the failed extradition attempts. In Sharp's statement, it was not "the Mormon's enemies," it was "his enemies." And the consequences—"general hostilities"—an attack on Nauvoo was on the agenda. Arresting Joseph was scheduled to be the excuse. Except for extradition's

³⁸² *Ottawa Free Trader*, Ottawa, Illinois, May 24, 1844.

³⁸³ See for example, Governor Thomas Ford's instructions to all sheriffs and constables in Illinois, June 17, 1843, *History of the Church*, 465. Missouri had also charged the Prophet with treason, but Joseph was not taken to Missouri so no trial on those charges was held.

³⁸⁴ *Warsaw Signal*, June 12 1844.

being replaced by a newspaper, nothing had changed.

It was equally apparent to Mormons and Anti-Mormons alike that all the Anti-Mormons had to do to create the incident they needed was to force the Mormons to defend themselves in such a way that Robert F. Smith and his Central Corresponding Committee could demand retaliation by naming the act of defense an act of provocation—just as had happened in Missouri.

Sharp had hoped that incident could come when the *Expositor* press arrived in Nauvoo, and he kept the tension tight. On May 22, he reported:

The printing materials intended for the office of the *Nauvoo Expositor*, passed up [the river] on Friday last, on the *Die Vernon*—They were landed without molestation, although a report was prevalent that Joe had sworn that the press should not be set up in Nauvoo.³⁸⁵

Later on, when no threat to the paper materialized, Sharp repeated his accusation, but with a new twist. He wrote, “It is rumored that his majesty Joe, had prophesied that the *Nauvoo Expositor*, would never make its appearance. The proprietors of the new press, took the hint; and I am informed that a guard watches around the office of the *Expositor*, to keep off the ‘Danites.’”³⁸⁶ This was the same warning Sharp had issued before: The Mormons were not to molest the *Nauvoo Expositor* or its owners. If they did so the military power of the Anti-Mormon Central Committee would retaliate.

The *Expositor* press was set up in a building located on the same hill, and just a block or so behind the new Mormon temple. If

³⁸⁵ *Warsaw Signal*, May 22, 1844.

³⁸⁶ *Warsaw Signal*, June 12, 1844.

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its proprietors and the Anti-Mormons were so sure that the Prophet would prevent its publication, and if their primary purpose had been for the press to be free to publish the paper without restraint, then it would have been more reasonable for them to set up the paper in Carthage, the county seat, away from the possible intrusion of the Mormon leaders. But they did not choose to do that. Their placement of the *Expositor's* office in Nauvoo, and Sharp's predictions and warnings show that the primary purpose of the *Nauvoo Expositor* press was not to publish, but to be prevented from publishing, thereby creating the incident the Anti-Mormons and Missourians were waiting for. Sharp knew the *Expositor* signaled that the final strategy had been worked out and he told his readers to be prepared:

The *Nauvoo Expositor* is the title of a new paper about to be started at Nauvoo by the opponents of Joe. The prospectus has been issued, in which the proposed character of the paper is set forth. It will have nothing to do with religion; but goes in for the repeal of the Nauvoo City Charter, against political revelations, and unconstitutional ordinances. As the conductors of this paper are well acquainted with Joe, it will in all probability make some disclosures which will render Nauvoo too hot either for Joe or his enemies. We will endeavor to keep our readers well apprised of every thing of interest to them. In the mean time we say success to the new undertaking—for “a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand.”³⁸⁷

Mormons would have read Sharp's words and recognized the similarity to the threats in the *Prospectus*. Anti-Mormons in Missouri and Iowa would also have read them and understood them as a broadcast that things were developing as planned.

³⁸⁷ *Warsaw Signal*, May 15, 1844.

Chapter 9

May and June, 1844

Joseph's Campaign For the Presidency

Joseph Smith's Campaign to Become President of the United States

Because the upcoming election and what the Anti-Mormons were learning about Joseph's national campaign were major factors in their decision about the timing of Joseph's murder, it is necessary that we take a close look at the campaign and at what the Anti-Mormons were reading in the nation's newspapers.

Joseph had asked most of his best friends to leave him and go east. It is not difficult to understand the feelings—expressed and unexpressed—by the Prophet and those who were close to him when they made the decision that the leading men in the Church, among whom were Joseph's closest personal confidants, should leave their friends and families at this critical juncture and go on missions to support his political campaign. Joseph sent all of the Twelve Apostles away except Willard Richards, who was his personal secretary, and John Taylor, who was editor of the *Times and Seasons* and the *Nauvoo Neighbor*. He was following a pattern he had established soon after he organized the Church. That is, rather than keeping the people whom he most trusted close around

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him, he sent them to proselyte and strengthen the members away from the center of Zion. He had done this many times before. The other side of that coin was that while his most trusted friends were gone, Joseph would gather others around himself, give them responsibilities and test their abilities and faithfulness. It was an oft-repeated pattern in Joseph's life, that he gave new men—including men like Bennett and Law—opportunity to prove themselves, while men like Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, his constant and trusted friends and supporters, he sent away on missions, making them the national and international foundation of the Church and the bulwark of its organization.

By the summer of 1844, Joseph believed his mission on earth was nearly completed, and the primary purpose of his remaining days would be to keep the people of Nauvoo safe by preventing the mob from attacking the city. In addition to his own words, many witnesses assert that he knew he would soon be murdered.³⁸⁸ One was Wilford Woodruff, who later recalled:

For months before his death Joseph had been “fully aware” that the Twelve would take the leadership of the Church. In order to prepare them for this duty he had “stood before the Twelve from day to day, clothed with the Spirit and power of God, and instructed them in the oracles of God, in the pattern of heavenly things, in the keys of the kingdom, the power of the Priesthood, and in the knowledge of the last dispensation in the fullness of times.”³⁸⁹

³⁸⁸ Baker, “On to Carthage to Die,” *Improvement Era*, June 1969, 10-15.

³⁸⁹ Wilford Woodruff, *Millennial Star*, Vol. 5, 136.

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Before the Twelve left on their “political missions,” they met with the Prophet Joseph to receive authority and instructions from him. Years later in 1897, Wilford Woodruff described a meeting with the Apostles this way:

I bear my testimony that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God, ordained of God to lay the foundation of His Church and Kingdom in the last dispensation and fullness of times. I bear my testimony that in the early spring of 1844 in Nauvoo, the Prophet Joseph Smith called the Twelve Apostles together, and he delivered unto them the ordinances of the Church and kingdom of God; and all of the keys and powers that God had bestowed upon him, he sealed upon our heads. He told us we must round up our shoulder and bear off this kingdom or we would be damned. I am the only man now living in the flesh who heard that testimony from his mouth, and I know it is true by the power of God manifest through him. At that meeting he began to speak about three hours upon the subject of the kingdom. His face was as clear as amber, and he was covered with a power that I had never seen in the flesh before. In all his testimony to us, the power of God was visibly manifest in the Prophet Joseph.

This is my testimony, spoken by myself into a talking machine on this nineteenth day of March, 1897, in the ninety-first year of my age. Wilford Woodruff.³⁹⁰

In another place, he described Joseph's “last speech” to the Twelve. This account sounds like the previous one, but it is not clear whether it is the same meeting:

³⁹⁰ A recording of Wilford Woodruff's voice and a transcript of the words are found in *The New Era*, vol. 1, no. 1, January 1972, center section and p. 66.

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The last speech that Joseph ever made to the quorum of the Apostles was in a building in Nauvoo, and it was such a speech as I never heard from mortal man before or since. He was clothed upon with the Spirit and power of God. His face was clear as amber. The room was filled with consuming fire. He stood three hours upon his feet. Said he: "You Apostles of the Lamb of God have been chosen to carry out the purposes of the Lord on the earth. Now I have received, as the Prophet, Seer and Revelator standing at the head of this dispensation, every key, every ordinance, every principle and every Priesthood that belongs to the last dispensation and fullness of times. And I have sealed all these things upon your heads."³⁹¹

Benjamin F. Johnson wrote that he and the other members of the Council of Fifty (which included the Twelve) were present at the same or a similar meeting. Johnson also described Joseph as shining like Moses when he came off Sinai, and quoted the Prophet as saying,

And in the name of the Lord, I now shake from my shoulders the responsibility of bearing off the Kingdom of God to all the world, and here and now I place that responsibility, with all the keys, powers and privileges pertaining thereto, upon the shoulders of you, the Twelve Apostles.³⁹²

³⁹¹ Wilford Woodruff, Conference Report, April, 1898, 89. Others who testified of Joseph's extraordinary appearance when he received revelation were: Philo Dibble in *Eighth Book of Faith-Promoting Series*, 80-81; and *Juvenile Instructor*, 27:303-304. Orson Pratt in John Henry Evans, *Joseph Smith, An American Prophet*, 326. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 9:89. Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography*, 65-66. Oliver B. Huntington, *Diary*, 2:168-169, 244, 415-416.

³⁹² Johnson, "Interesting Letter to Gibbs" 9.

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After Joseph had given these final instructions to his friends, they parted from him. Joseph's history reflects the depths of his feelings as his friends began to leave Nauvoo:

Elders Wilford Woodruff and George A. Smith called upon me this morning, and said they were ready to start on their mission to attend the conferences appointed throughout the north of Illinois, Indiana and Michigan. I blessed them in the name of the Lord, and told them to go, and they should prosper and always prosper.³⁹³

So once again, at what would prove to be the most critical period in the history of this young Church, Joseph Smith sent his most trusted friends away from him. As it turned out, this was a very fortunate thing for the Saints in the Eastern states. Before Joseph was killed, most of the leaders of the Church were in the East. They gathered the Saints together to attend Church conferences and to create a functional political organization. Consequently, the Saints in the East were probably better organized with a better sense of community at the time of Joseph's death than they had ever been before.

Soon there was a steady stream of men leaving Nauvoo to fulfill their political missions. Less than two weeks after the Prophet gave his blessings to Wilford Woodruff and George A. Smith, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Lyman Wight, and about a hundred others left Nauvoo to begin their campaign for the Prophet.³⁹⁴ Some of these men were intimate friends of their Prophet, and others, though not as closely acquainted, loved him almost as much. They were willing to leave their homes and

³⁹³ May 9, 1844. *History of the Church*, 6:362.

³⁹⁴ *History of the Church*, 6:399.

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families and travel at their own expense for an unspecified length of time, simply because Brigham Young had asked them to volunteer to support their Prophet.

There still exists a good sampling of the journals and autobiographies of those missionaries. They were not a well-oiled political machine; rather, they were a group of individuals sent to be alone or in small groups to conduct themselves according to their understandings of their responsibilities in the various places to which they had been assigned. Many of their surviving accounts assert that they were led by the Spirit of the Lord, but their attitude about politicking varied with their personalities, and also with the differences they found in their places of labor. Some considered preaching the gospel to be their primary mission, or at least their accounts do not show that they paid much attention to the political side of their calling. Others saw their missions as primarily political.

George C. Riser described his missionary activity “in the north part of Ohio, preaching principally to the German portion,” when he wrote: “We distributed Joseph’s *Views on the Power and Policy of Government* also Elder Hyde’s pamphlet published in Frankfort Germany entitled ‘A Voice from the Wilderness.’”³⁹⁵

Joseph Holbrook understood his mission was to “hold forth Brother Joseph Smith’s *Views* and policy of government.” He wrote, “I...continued to preach and put forth Joseph Smith’s *Views* which the people generally liked well but didn’t know so much about ‘Your Mormon prophet for President of the United States, etc.’”³⁹⁶

³⁹⁵ George C. Riser, Journal, University of Utah Library, Ms 22, Bx 1, Fd 1, 7.

³⁹⁶ Joseph Holbrook, “The Live of Joseph Holbrook,” 63-64.

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Not long after leaving Nauvoo, Wilford Woodruff and George A. Smith sent a report to John Taylor, who published it in his *Times and Seasons*. The part on political meetings reads:

We arrived at Ottawa on the 17th inst, after driving four days through constant rains, and over roads almost impassable for man or beast. We were soon informed that the Conference was removed twenty miles up Fox River, at the Newark branch. Notice had been given for a political address to be delivered in the Court House in the evening, by one of the Twelve, several hundred citizens assembled and was addressed by Elder G. A. Smith. The speaker considered General Smith the smartest man in the United States, and best calculated to fill the Presidential chair, which was applauded by the assembly; his political views as presented on that occasion, seemed to please most of the people; at the close of the speech the congregation quietly dispersed.... We have appointed a political meeting in Newark, this evening and one at Juliet, tomorrow evening, where we expect to present to the citizens, General Smith *Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government*, and discuss the subject of politics.³⁹⁷

Norton Jacobs began his politicking in Newark, Illinois:

we had a Political Lecture I first read the *Views* when Brethren Fullmer & Go A. Smith followed Br Smith made some ironical remarks on the government which gave offence to a part of Smith who raised quite a row but by the power of God it was soon quelled.”³⁹⁸

³⁹⁷ *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, June 1, 1844.

³⁹⁸ Norton Jacobs, Journal, 6, May 20, 1844, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, Ms q 131.

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James Burgess and Alfred Cordon left Nauvoo as companions. On their way to Vermont, they encountered both positive and negative feelings about the Prophet's political campaign. Burgess wrote that after having traveled a little more than thirty miles from Nauvoo,

we called at the first house we came where lived a Mr. Thompson we stayed here some time on account of the rain coming on again we had some conversation about the Mormon (prophet) and general being elected President but he was much opposed to it and said he would not mind shooting Joe Smith and said if there was any chance of him being elected that there was a man not far off that would shoot him he said there was no chance of him taking his seat at Washington. The conversation was not pleasing to us no more than it give us to see the wickedness of men.³⁹⁹

A few days later, on May 7, 1844, his diary reads:

We took breakfast with Mr. Willows, and read to him Joseph's *Views*...and he said that we were the best he had ever heard, we came on our journey through McComb, it commenced to rain about noon, we took shelter in the wood for a while, Then came on to a Mr. Creel tavern keeper and sheltered for a while. We intended to ask him for some dinner but he commenced railing against the Mormons and said if he had power in the county he would not let Smith have one vote and farther said if Joe Smith should get elected President, he would go to Africa, we then left him and traveled over a prairie of 8 miles called at a Mr. Thompson for shelter from the rain. As soon as he found we were Mormons, began to insult us and said if Joe Smith got

³⁹⁹ Burgess, Diaries, May, 1844.

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elected he knew a man that would shoot him Elder Cordon said that was a bad disposition, he [Thompson] said he thought it would be doing good to shoot him for he was a d—m rascal, finding no unity of spirit we left and traveled on in the rain.⁴⁰⁰

Cordon tells about an event that occurred on May 27. He and his new companion, Terry Nixon,

preached in the open air, in the morning at 9 o'clock and evening at 4 o'clock. The people that were assembled to hear began to abuse them, throw tobacco in their face, took Joseph's *Views* and torn them up....⁴⁰¹

In Virginia, Henry Bigler reported quite the opposite reaction to the Prophet's *Views*:

I had with me the "Views of the Prophet on the Powers and Policy of the General Government," also the correspondence between Joseph Smith and Henry Clay. Their men including James K. Polk were candidates for the Chair of State as President and there were those who read the Prophets *Views* and the correspondence between him and Clay who said they would sooner vote for Joseph Smith than for Clay or for Polk and as for the latter they knew nothing about and they would risk the Mormon Prophet.⁴⁰²

⁴⁰⁰ Burgess, Diaries, May 7, 1844. For a similar account see: Cordon, Journal.

⁴⁰¹ Cordon, Journal, May 27, 1844; Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, f 27.

⁴⁰² Bigler, Journal, 31-32.

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Jacob Hamblin found a very negative reception:

I preached once in Quincy Franklin Co Pennsylvania Circulated the *Views* of Joseph the prophet relative to the policy of government 17th started for Mechanics town Preached that evening on Blue mountain the next day I met Br M in Mechanics town where we had previously left an appointment this had caused an excitement they had locked the house and threatened us with a coat of tar and feathers if we did not leave we still traveled about through the different towns preaching wherever we could get the chance we were much persecuted for the gospel sake.⁴⁰³

George Miller left us a word picture of how Missouri tensions extended as far away as Kentucky:

I preached and electioneered alternately. When I had preaching meetings, as a general thing we had crowded houses, and our prospects bid fair for the accomplishment of a great work in each point of view, and of reaping an abundant harvest as fruits of our ministerial labors. All Kentucky was in a high state of political excitement, as it was just before their general election, which was to come off on the first Monday in August....

At one of those meetings, while one of the candidates was speaking, I was rather on the outskirts of the immense crowd reading to a few of my old acquaintances Joseph Smith's *Views* of the powers and policy of government. One of my old neighbors, and a relative by marriage, brought up a Missourian with him, and, addressing me, said, here is a man that knows all about the enormities committed by the Mormons in Missouri. Without a moment's pause I answered, yes, I have no doubt of it, and I believe I recognize in him one of those

⁴⁰³ Hamblin, Journal, 6-8.

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murderers who shot a little Mormon boy in the blacksmith's shop, under the bellows—Upon which the fellow struck off, and I saw no more of him.

Not so, however, with my old neighbor and relative. Now, said he, I have a matter to tell you as a friend, that if you do not leave this country and put a stop to preaching your religious *Views* and political Mormonism, the Negroes are employed to hang you to an apple tree. I told him that I had enough of his hollow friendship, and if I could believe that, there was courage enough among such intolerant scamps, I would hire a house and hold forth three months to give them an opportunity of carrying out their threat. By this time quite a crowd had collected around us, even more apparently than around the candidate that was then on the stand. I got on a large stump, and commenced reading aloud Joseph's *Views* on the powers and policy of government, and backed it up with a short speech, at the end of which I was loudly and repeatedly cheered, and a crowd bore me off about two miles to a Mr. Smith's tavern, where they had a late dinner prepared, for my benefit, all declaring that I should not partake of the barbecue prepared for the candidate who addressed the log cabin meeting; that I was worthy of better respect.⁴⁰⁴

William Appleby saw the campaign in a somewhat different light. To him it was a final warning to the American people. Joseph Smith had predicted that America was headed for a civil war, and Appleby's journal reflects his own belief in that prediction. Appleby was already on a proselyting mission in Pennsylvania when he learned the Prophet was a candidate for the

⁴⁰⁴ Miller, "Correspondence of Bishop George Miller with The Northern Islander," 20-22. Letter dated Saint James, Mich. June 28, 1855. (Copy at the Wisconsin State Historical Society Library, Madison, Wisconsin).

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presidency. He immediately changed the focus of his mission and began to electioneer. He wrote:

[Joseph] had published his *Views* on the Power and Policy of the Government, and hundreds of the Elders were abroad in the states delivering lectures in regard to the same, and holding up Joseph as a fit candidate for the office, competent to fill in every particular,—and we well knew if he was not elected, his skirts and ours would be clean of the nation. If a spiritual or temporal salvation were offered to them and they rejected either, their sins be upon their heads.

Accordingly in the evening we both lectured on the powers and policy of the Government.⁴⁰⁵

In Greenville, South Carolina, an editor doubted that the missionaries would be successful: “It seems almost impossible that the delegates of Jo Smith can find many voters in this section of the country.” The reason he gives is that, even though “there is a church not many miles distant from Marion, with something like forty members, who profess to place implicit confidence in the imposter,” a town preacher had gone to re-convert them away from the Mormon faith. The editor predicted the minister would visit them frequently and “be untiring in driving this cloud from their deluded minds.”⁴⁰⁶

As Brigham Young traveled east, he stopped to preach in the former Mormon capital of Kirtland, Ohio, where he spoke to a small group who had gathered in the Kirtland Temple. He reported the following to his wife:

⁴⁰⁵ Appleby, Journal, May 5, 1844.

⁴⁰⁶ *Greenville Mountaineer*, Greenville, South Carolina, January 12, 1844.

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I gave a lecture on the location of Nauvoo connected with other things in the evening. Had a pretty good congregation, they said it was interesting to them. I then gave an appointment for to deliver a political lecture on Tuesday at 6. p.m., I delivered lecture the people were satisfied said they would go for the Prophet Joseph Smith.⁴⁰⁷

The Prophet's *Views* were more popular than publisher John Taylor had anticipated. The first printing sold out quickly, and a second edition was soon on the way.

When the missionaries set out from Nauvoo they armed themselves with copies of General Smith's *Views* to distribute throughout their respective parts of the country. Some felt that their allotment was insufficient, or else they had been instructed to have more copies printed when they reached their appointed field of labor.

When Charles C. Rich arrived in Pontiac, Michigan, on June 20, he immediately contacted the publisher of the *Jacksonian* to arrange for 5,000 copies of the *Views* to be printed there. He picked up the finished copies on July 2, almost a week after Joseph and Hyrum were murdered. But Rich did not learn of the killings until two more weeks had passed, and distributed a good many copies of the *Views* in the interim.⁴⁰⁸ James Holt planned to have 500 copies printed in Tennessee. He reports the printer told him "that so many had borrowed the copy to read it that he had lost track of it, consequently he had not been able to print it."⁴⁰⁹

National distribution of the Prophet's *Views* was not limited to the work of the missionaries. John Taylor already had an important

⁴⁰⁷ Brigham Young to his wife Mary A., 12 June 1844, *Improvement Era*, July, 1942.

⁴⁰⁸ Rich, Journal.

⁴⁰⁹ Holt, Autobiography.

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mailing list and could effectively exploit it through his newspapers. On May 6, the *Times and Seasons* advertised, “Owing to the extensive call for Gen. Smith’s *Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States*, we have concluded to publish them in our next number.”⁴¹⁰

That week Taylor republished the text of the *Views* in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, and the next week in the *Times and Seasons*.⁴¹¹ By doing so, Taylor was virtually guaranteeing that it would be in the hands of the country’s most important newspaper editors as soon as the U.S. mails could take it there.

One of those newspapers was the Mormon-owned *The Prophet* in New York City. Its editor did not satisfy himself with only republishing the *Views* in his newspaper. Rather, he put it with the other political statements that had been published in the Nauvoo papers and created a small book. The editor announced:

GENERAL SMITH’S VIEWS

We have just issued from the press, a stereotyped edition of Gen. Smith’s Political writings, together with a copy of a Memorial to the Legislature of Missouri: the whole forming a neat octavo pamphlet of forty one pages.

Orders post paid, for the above work, will receive immediate attention, and be thankfully received. Price six dollars per hundred, or one dollar per dozen copies.⁴¹²

Some of the Saints who stayed in Nauvoo also participated in the campaign. John Murdock sent an open letter to “the inhabitants

⁴¹⁰ *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, May 1, 1844.

⁴¹¹ The *Views* were printed in *Nauvoo Neighbor*, May 8, 1844; *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, May 15, 1844, 5:528-533.

⁴¹² *Prophet*, New York, New York, June 22, 1844.

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of Delaware Co., State of New York” in which he described the ills of the nation and the divisions of party politics. He concluded, “If the people will give him the opportunity, and if they do not they will miss a blessing that the God of Heaven designs to bestow on them.”⁴¹³ He enclosed a copy of the *Views* and requested that his brother send both his letter and the pamphlet to a local newspaper for publication. Heber C. Kimball’s journal records that soon after he left Nauvoo to begin his political mission, he “folded two of General Smith’s *Views* on government and sent to Joseph Maywood.”⁴¹⁴ Jacob Secrist concluded a letter to William Terman with, “For I tell you he, Gen. Joseph Smith, has the best political principles of any man I ever heard of or read of and so let us have such a man for President then everything will go better concerning our government.”⁴¹⁵

Members of Joseph’s family also used their influence to campaign for the Prophet. Almira Covey wrote her sister, encouraging her to do what she could for the Prophet’s political support:

I presume you have learnt before this time that Cousin Joseph’s name is up for President of the United States. Tell Mr. Whittemore we want him to use all of his influence to gain votes for him for we desire to see a man of God placed in that chair that he may rule in righteousness that this Nation may be saved from destruction. If we have a man placed at the head of the Nation, and there is a prophet upon the earth, one through whom the Lord doth Speak is it not proper that he should be the one to take that seat? Would he not know better how to govern or what was better for the people than one who knew

⁴¹³ Murdock, Journal.

⁴¹⁴ Kimball, Journal, book 92, June 7, 1844.

⁴¹⁵ Jacob Secrist to William Terman, May 1, 1844.

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not God nor His ways? If our friends in Michigan felt this as sensibly as we do they would do all in their power to have Cousin Joseph in that seat for he is a man that is well fitted for that station.⁴¹⁶

The Mormon press continued to publish letters and other documents in support of the Prophet's campaign. One was a memorial to the governor, senate, and house of representatives of Massachusetts from Noah Packard requesting that the state government put pressure on Missouri to pay for the confiscated Mormon property.⁴¹⁷

An open letter "to the Church in Maine" from Benjamin Andrews, urged members to support Joseph's candidacy.⁴¹⁸ Another letter was written by one who said he was not a Mormon but had lodged for a short time in the Mansion House. Signing himself "An American," he wrote:

[Mr. Smith's] *Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government*, manifest a Republican spirit, and if carried out, would soon place the nation in a prosperous condition and brighten the prospects of those who now toil so incessantly to support the profligate expenditures and luxurious equipage of the present rulers and representatives of our nation.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁶ Almira Covey to her sister Harriot Whittemore, May 19, 1844.

⁴¹⁷ *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, May 1, 1844.

⁴¹⁸ *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, June 1, 1844; *Nauvoo Neighbor* May 22, 1844.

⁴¹⁹ The letter was dated May 12, 1844, and was published in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, May 15, 1844; Reprinted in: *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, May 15, 1844; *Prophet*, New York, June 15, 1844; *History of the Church*, 6:367-368.

Campaign in New York and Boston

The best-documented portion of Mormon campaign activity outside of Illinois was centered in New York City. The reason it is so visible is that the Mormons there published a weekly newspaper describing many of their political activities. The decision to publish the newspaper was made at the April, 1844, New York conference of the Church:

Elder George T. Leach [the presiding high priest in New York City], submitted to the conference a proposition for publishing a weekly paper for the dissemination of our principles, which was read by the clerk, after some discussion upon the wisdom of such a course. The President [William Smith] spoke at length in favor of the proposition.

On motion, Resolved, That the proposition be accepted, and a committee of five be appointed to act upon it. Whereupon, elder Wright, George T. Leach, Brockelbanks, Miles, and John Leach, were appointed to the committee.⁴²⁰

The Newspaper, called *The Prophet*, was soon ready to begin publication. Its first number was issued on May 18, 1844, and was published by the “Board of Control of the Society for the Diffusion of Truth,” with Leach as president. Subscription price was “one dollar per annum, invariably in advance.” Leach was also the newspaper’s first editor.

Leach had a good sense of marketing. The advertisements in *The Prophet* suggest he used the fact that many Mormons were

⁴²⁰ *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, May 1, 1844. Leach was the presiding High Priest in New York. He may have been well known in Nauvoo. See *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, March 1, 1844.

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moving from Europe and the eastern states to the Mormon colony in Illinois as means of securing advertisers for his paper—railroads, stage and canal companies who hoped to profit from the immigration of Mormon converts to the Mississippi Valley. He wished to give worthwhile information for those traveling to Zion. Leach also secured advertisements from small local businesses that might represent the support of Mormon businessmen in the New York area. Among them were a brush factory, shops that sold shoes and watches, and one business that declared itself to be “the cheapest coffin ware-room in the world,” promising very moderate prices and “attendance punctual.”⁴²¹

The Prophet’s office on Spruce Street was also a “Mormon Book Depository.” It listed the following among the works available to purchase: Joseph Smith’s *Views*; several works by Parley P. and Orson Pratt; Oliver Cowdery’s letters to W. W. Phelps; an index to the Book of Mormon; and several others, including the pseudepigraphal *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*. The newspaper also began a serialized publication of *The Book of Enoch* and *The Shepard of Hermas*.

Leach was considered a good editor by his contemporaries. One of them complimented him by writing:

A paper has been established in New York called “The Prophet,” devoted to the advocacy of Mormonism, and to the claims of Gen. Joseph Smith, of Nauvoo, Illinois, “a Western man with American principles,” as a candidate for the Presidency. It is edited with considerable ability as well as apparent fervor and piety, each number containing lengthy

⁴²¹ *Prophet*, New York, New York, June 1, 1844.

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articles explanatory of the Mormon doctrine and belief.⁴²²

On Saturday morning, May 25, 1844, the editor expressed his enthusiasm for the Prophet's campaign:

We this week have hoisted the banner and placed before the world a candidate for the Chief Magistracy of this Republic, the Prophet of the last days, General Joseph Smith of Nauvoo, Ill., and pledge ourselves to use our utmost endeavors to ensure his election, being satisfied that he will administer the laws of his country, hailing his nomination with joy, and we feel confident that if the intelligence of the American people prevail over their prejudices, he will be elected by a large majority.⁴²³

In his next issue, Leach became even more explicit about what the members of the Church should do to support Joseph Smith's bid for the Presidency:

Let the friends of Gen. Joseph Smith organize immediately in every state, in every town and village, throughout the wide extent of our Republic, and let no stone be unturned that will tend to secure his election, and we will show the corrupt, "kick-shawing" rulers of the United States, that we appreciate the "boon" fought and bled for by our ancestors, that we know our rights as American citizens, that we are both willing and able to defend them, through the medium allotted by our Constitution, viz, the ballot box. We will yet show the concentrated wisdom of the land "that our petitions are not to be treated as a

⁴²² *Sun*, Baltimore, Maryland, June 4, 1844; also in *Dayton Journal and Advertiser*, Dayton, Ohio, June 11, 1844; *Banner of Peace and Cumberland Presbyterian Advocate*, Lebanon, Tennessee, July 25, 1844; *Morning Courier*, Louisville, Kentucky, June 5, 1844.

⁴²³ *Prophet*, New York, New York, May 25, 1844.

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“laughing stock,” that we claim the protection of government—we have at all times been obedient unto the powers that be, we contribute our monies to the support of Government and we claim our constitutional rights. Come out ye friends of the rights of man and let the movement not slack by your negligence of duty; for it is a sacred duty you owe your God, and the cause of truth and humanity, to sustain the effort now made by the free and independent of all parties and of all sects to place at the head of our once happy country, a man of God an honest, independent man, influenced by the Spirit of the Living God, the spirit that actuated a Washington, Adams, a Jefferson, a Hancock and a Franklin of the times that “tried mens souls.”⁴²⁴

On the evening of May 25, supporters of Joseph Smith held a public meeting in New York City on Fifth Street. At that meeting they resolved “that a State Convention of the friends of Gen. Smith be called at Utica, Oneida Co., N. Y., on the 23d of August.... The friends of Gen. Smith be requested to organize in every part of the State immediately, and send delegates to the Convention at Utica.”⁴²⁵

An editor published a somewhat derogatory comment about the Prophet’s *Views*: “Jo Smith, the Mormon prophet, has appeared before the public with his Views. We think he defines his position about as fairly as either Clay or Van Buren, and it amounts to about as much, viz. More ostentation for effect.” To that Leach replied,

The above is from the “Olive Branch,” a liberal Methodist paper, published at Boston. As Gen. Joseph Smith “defines his

⁴²⁴ *Prophet*, New York, New York, June 1, 1844.

⁴²⁵ *Prophet*, New York, New York, June 1, 1844.

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position as clearly as either Clay or Van Buren,” are not the Editors as men of God, under obligations to use their influence to secure his election, in preference to either Clay or Van Buren, inasmuch as Joseph Smith is the Prophet of the Most High God. Come Messrs. Editors to the point, no “kick showing.”⁴²⁶

Leach's statement probably tells us more about him personally than do any of his other writings. His “inasmuch as Joseph Smith is the Prophet of the Most High God” presents an intriguing political philosophy that is implied but rarely stated in the Mormon political literature: that Joseph had the right to be President because he was the prophet. Leach's statement represents his belief in Joseph Smith's divine call, and it may also represent his understanding of the inner workings of the Council of Fifty and the temple ordinances performed in Nauvoo.

By the time Leach was ready to publish his next issue, he had secured from the engravers a masthead logo that declared his political intent.

For President
GEN. JOSEPH SMITH,
of Nauvoo, Illinois.
“A Western man, with American principles.”⁴²⁷

This masthead was published in all subsequent issues of *The Prophet* until after the death of Joseph Smith and after the Mormons held their national political convention in Baltimore. In the June 8 issue, directly under the new masthead, editor Leach addressed his critics' most obvious question:

⁴²⁶ *Prophet*, New York, New York, June 1, 1844.

⁴²⁷ *Prophet*, New York, New York, June 8, 1844.

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We contend for principles, unbiased by party, sect, or local prejudices. Our movement is looked upon as ridiculous—why? Simply because we have the moral courage to step out of the beaten rack of party hacks and sectarian demagogues and think for ourselves, or use the reason that God has given us to direct us. We hold “that all men are created equal;” if so, we are bound by the laws of reason to act and think for ourselves, and not as mere machines follow the footsteps of our predecessors any further than accords with our own views of right, or allow ourselves to be used as tools by men whose only aim is self exaltation.... Read Gen. Smith’s *Views* on the policy of government and deduce for yourselves, whether he is a fit candidate for your office, you may find it on our first page.⁴²⁸

On May 25, Samuel Brannan was appointed to a committee of three “to call a meeting of the friends of Gen. Smith in the city of New York.” Then, “after several very spirited and appropriate speeches by S. Brannan, Esq., G. T. Leach, Esquire, Messrs. Curtis, G. Watkins, and Wright, the meeting adjourned.”⁴²⁹ On June 8 *The Prophet* announced,

JEFFERSONIANS ATTEND !!

The friends of Gen. Joseph Smith of Nauvoo, Illinois, will meet at the Military Hall, (Bowery) on Tuesday evening next, 11th, inst. At 8 o’clock; to select delegates to the great State Convention at Utica N. Y. on 23d August, and take such other

⁴²⁸ *Prophet*, New York, New York, June 8, 1844.

⁴²⁹ *Prophet*, New York, New York, June 1, 1844. Sam Brannan eventually took the press of *The Prophet* with him to California, where he started a newspaper and became the state’s first millionaire.

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measures as will secure his election to the highest office in the gift of a free and enlightened people.⁴³⁰

The meeting met as scheduled. When *The Prophet* published its minutes, it included the full text of Parley P. Pratt's speech. Elder Pratt said in part,

As we have been in bondage in this country for about ten years, and without any Government as a general thing, is it not high time for the people to awake from their lethargy and begin to attend to the weightier matters of justice, judgment, right and protection, as well as to pay so much attention to "tithe," "mint" and "cummin." I again repeat that for some years past we have had no Government. My reasons are, that white men have been shot and hung, and Negroes burned without trial, judge or jury; abolitionists have been mobbed and shot; Catholic churches, dwellings and convents burned, and fifteen thousand American citizens robbed of millions, and driven from a State, and many of them murdered, and this by executive and legislative authority, without shadow of law or justice, and still there is no redress or protection, though years have passed since the perpetration of these horrid crimes: who then shall dare to say there is a Government?...

Fellow citizens, we want a Government which will protect our homes, our lives, and our wives and children—these are the weightier matters of justice, judgment, and the law. The tithe, mint and cummin of tariff, bank, and other questions of minor importance, we are not particular about; we are in no wise difficult, almost any Government is better than none at all. We have no fault to find with the laws or the Constitution of the country. Our complaint is that we cannot enjoy the benefit of them, for the want of an efficient administration. Laws are weak

⁴³⁰ *Prophet*, New York, New York, June 8, 1844.

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and powerless of themselves. The ministers of law are all in all, and without them we have no Government.... The Catholics may be the sufferers today, the Mormons tomorrow, the Abolitionists next day, and next the Methodists or Presbyterians. Where is safety if a popular mob must rule, and the unpopular must suffer? This course is directly calculated to fill the country either with martyrs or hypocrites. Martyrs if they have the courage to be honest, and hypocrites if they have not.

And while there is a man in America, black, white or red, who cannot enjoy his rights, and be protected in his person, property and liberty, or while there is a martyr's blood to cry, a widow to lament, or an orphan to weep, my voice shall be heard in behalf of right, and against oppression, and if I must die for this, my spirit shall cry from under the altar of the martyrs, for vengeance on the earth.

While I have a tongue to speak, or an arm to raise in behalf of the injured, I will not rest under so terrible a despotism....

And we will not vote for Henry Clay. Why? Because, knowing all these outrages he has refused to pledge himself to restore our rights and thus support the constitution, laws and rights of his country. We have no use then for such a servant, and sooner than vote for such men we will dwell in the clefts of the Rocky Mountains, or turn Quakers, and not vote at all.⁴³¹

After the meeting, the *New York Herald* published a mocking report of the Mormons' political power:

Another grand ratification mass meeting was held last evening in favor of one of the candidates for the Presidency, being none other than the Mormons coming out for the great Jo Smith.

⁴³¹ *Prophet*, New York, New York, June 15, 1844.

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This immense meeting numbered about 60 souls, besides little boys, and much cattle.⁴³²

Small as the Mormon force may have been, it attracted attention all over the rest of the United States. The *New York Courier and Enquirer* editor wrote a somewhat more positive report:

The Mormons had a meeting in Military Hall, in this city, a few nights since, in which brother Leach, Professor Pratt, and other worthies were tremendously severe and excruciating upon the prominent men of both parties....We venture to say that the Mormons will out poll the Tylerites three to one, if they do nominate Joe; and if the alternative were actually presented to the people of the United States, we are not quite certain but they would prefer the Mormon to the Tyler candidate.⁴³³

⁴³² *New York Herald*, New York, New York, June 12, 1844.

⁴³³ Reprinted in *United States Gazette*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, June 15, 1844. Other accounts of the Mormons' political meeting can be found in: *New York Daily Tribune*, New York, New York, June 12, 1844; *National Intelligencer*, Washington, D.C., 8, June 14, 1844; *Daily Herald*, Newburyport, Massachusetts, June 5, 1844; *Pittsburgh Morning Post*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, June 17, 1844; *Louisville Daily Journal*, Louisville, Kentucky, June 18, 1844; *Bicknell's Reporter-counterfeit Detector*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, June 18, 1844; *Evansville Journal*, Evansville, Indiana, June 20, 1844; *Rhode Island County Journal and Independent Inquirer*, Providence, Rhode Island, June 21, 1844; *Charleston Courier*, Charleston, South Carolina, June 25, 1844; *Northwestern Gazette and Galena Advertiser*, Galena, Illinois, June 28, 1844; *Miner's Journal*, Postsville, Pennsylvania, June 29, 1844; *Sun*, Baltimore, Maryland, July 6, 1844; *Lewiston Gazette*, Lewistown, Pennsylvania, July 20, 1844.

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George Leach and his editorship soon fell victim to politics within his own organization. His newspaper existed for only about a month when a dispute erupted between the editor and William Smith, Joseph's brother who was frequently in trouble—or more often was the fomentor of it. There are no details about what caused the dispute, but given William Smith's inability to get along with other people and his determination to be in charge, the conflict probably had more to do with Smith's irascible personality than it did with Leach's editorial or financial policy.⁴³⁴ The first rumblings of the infighting appear on June 17 when the Jeffersonian meeting was held, chaired by William Smith rather than Leach.⁴³⁵ One wonders what William Smith was doing in New York in the first place. He had been assigned to Philadelphia, and as far as the Church leaders in Nauvoo knew, he was still there.⁴³⁶ Further

⁴³⁴ William Smith's personality is assessed by Helen Whitney as follows: "In Joseph's life he [William Smith] was quarrelsome and frequently had to be dealt with before his brethren for unchristian-like conduct. He became very wicked and unprincipled, and his conduct towards Joseph was at times unbearable, but he exercised towards him all the kindness and forbearance that was possible. He was very deceitful..." Helen Whitney "Scenes in Nauvoo," *Women's Exponent*, 1889-1929, Salt Lake City, vol. 11 (1882), 162.

⁴³⁵ *Prophet*, New York, New York, June 22, 1844.

⁴³⁶ When, on June 20, 1844, Joseph Smith wrote letters to the members of the Twelve Apostles who were absent from Nauvoo on missions, asking them to come home immediately, he sent the letter for Parley P. Pratt to New York and the one to William Smith to Philadelphia where his wife was. *History of the Church*, 6: 518, Thursday, June 20, 1844. The addresses to which the Prophet sent the letters were: Brigham Young, Boston; Heber C. Kimball, Washington; Orson Hyde, Philadelphia; Parley P. Pratt, New York; Orson Pratt, Washington; Wilford Woodruff, Portage, New York; William Smith, Philadelphia; George A. Smith, Peterboro; John E. Page,

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rumblings appeared in the next issue of Leach's newspaper on June 22, when it announced, "A special meeting of share holders will be held on Monday 24th inst. at half past 7 o'clock, on business of importance, at the '*Prophet*' office."⁴³⁷ In the same issue, Leach quoted the *Nauvoo Neighbor's* announcement that William Smith was no longer to be a member of the Illinois state legislature representing the Mormons of Hancock County, and that Hyrum Smith was recommended to take his place. That was not the sort of story the New York newspaper usually copied from Nauvoo, so it appears that Leach inserted it to get one last shot at William Smith.⁴³⁸

After the stockholders' meeting, Leach had no further connection with the paper. The next issue contained a kind of professional obituary of its founder in the form of the notice that "Elder G. T. Leach has resigned the editorship of *The Prophet*. Any communications for him to be addressed to 187 Twentieth street."⁴³⁹ There is no note of appreciation, no acknowledgment of work well done, only this poorly disguised effrontery that Leach will not even be welcome into the publisher's office on such mundane errands as to pick up his own mail.⁴⁴⁰ Instead, there is an

Pittsburgh; and Lyman Wight, Baltimore. Also to Amasa Lyman, Cincinnati, Ohio, and George Miller, Richmond, Madison county, Kentucky.

⁴³⁷ *Prophet*, New York, New York, June 22, 1844.

⁴³⁸ *Prophet*, New York, New York, June 22, 1844.

⁴³⁹ *Prophet*, New York, New York, June 29, 1844.

⁴⁴⁰ Just as one cannot discover what happened to precipitate this change in the affairs of *The Prophet*, one cannot discover what happened to George Leach. One supposes he was so deeply hurt by his encounter with William Smith that he left the Church. His name simply disappears from Mormon history. There seems to be no evidence that he came west with Brigham Young, even though by the time of the western migration

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editorial by William Smith in which he crowed, “We have this week taken the management of *The Prophet*, and as many of the Saints have labored under the impression that the establishment of a paper in this city did not meet the sanction of the authorities of the Church, this impression may now give place to confidence.”⁴⁴¹ Arrogance rarely inspires confidence. Subsequent events showed that William Smith would have served the New York Saints better if he had stayed in Philadelphia.

Under William’s control, there came a new kind of belligerence to the paper’s editorials. His first one concluded, “Our political franchise, and religious rights we possess naturally as American citizens, and these rights we will have ‘by the gods,’ and if an American Congress will not protect us in them, or grant them to us, we will appeal to the justice of High Heaven to give them to us, and revenge our wrongs.”⁴⁴² Others of a similar tone were to follow.

When Wilford Woodruff and George A. Smith saw Leach’s first issue of *The Prophet* they wrote a letter complimenting Leach on his work and telling of their own campaign efforts. William Smith published the letter without comment:

Franklin, Oakland Co., Mich., June 13th, 1844.
Mr. Editor—The first No. of the Prophet fell unto our hands on

the members of the Twelve had excommunicated William Smith for trying to take over the whole church in the same way he took over George Leach’s New York newspaper. Leach’s name is not in the Membership record of Susan Ward Easton, comp., *Membership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1848*, 49 vols., Provo, Utah, Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1984.

⁴⁴¹ *Prophet*, New York, New York, June 29, 1844.

⁴⁴² *Prophet*, New York, New York, June 29, 1844.

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our arrival here—we feel highly gratified at the stand you have taken, and the spirit manifested in supporting “Jeffersonian equal rights and protection of person and property.” It seems necessary at the present day for all the lovers of law and order, to maintain inviolate those principles which are embodied in the spirit of the Constitution, and inspired the patriots of ‘76, in laying the foundation of universal liberty, peace, and equal rights, which they desired to secure to themselves and their posterity....

We have held mass meetings in the various cities, town and villages, through which we have passed in Illinois and Michigan and have laid before the people, the *Views* of Gen. Smith on the powers and policy of the government of the United States, and the claims of his friends, and made an appeal to the people, and have every reason to believe that Gen. Smith will receive a far greater support in this region, than was anticipated. Many influential men have expressed the sentiment that Gen. Smith has marked out in his *Views*, the wisest and most judicious course for the benefit of the nation that has been presented before the people, and that they will support him.

The friends of Jeffersonianism in Michigan have a state Convention on the 6th of July at Jacksonburg, and the order of the delegation has been so judicially arranged and planned by Gen. Rich that each portion of the State will be represented, send a few numbers of the *Prophet* for the benefit of the convention, addressed to Gen. C. C. Rich. Many in this place have expressed their intention of supporting your paper, and you probably will hear from them soon. Yours in haste,

WILFORD WOODRUFF

GEO. A. SMITH

Elder Woodruff will attend the conference in Boston and New York.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴³ *Prophet*, New York, New York, July 6, 1844.

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The Campaign in Boston: Eggs for John C. Bennett

The most exciting Mormon political event reported by *The Prophet* was one that took place in Boston. The stage had already been set earlier that spring by the appearance of the Mormon apostate John C. Bennett. After he was excommunicated he went to Missouri to work for Joseph's extradition; then he began a lecture tour to expose the Mormons. Bennett was in Boston to earn money by telling titillating stories of Mormon sexual extravagances, but the Bostonians did not appreciate his titillations. (Note: The following article contained many typos: I have corrected them except for the misspelling of Bennett's name. Here it is spelled "Dennett." I left it that way, because the mistake was copied by other newspapers editors who reported the story, and the "Dennett" spelling is a useful key to tracking the movement of the story.)

GREAT MORMON EXCITEMENT AT MARLBORO CHAPEL LAST EVENING

One of the most singular and remarkable exhibitions took place last night at Marlboro Chapel, N. 2, that was ever witnessed in this city. An individual, by the name of John Dennett, somewhat known in this community as an ex-Mormon lecturer of rare ability and possessed withal of great musical powers, had announced through the public prints that he would once more and for the last time expose the enormities and sins of the Mormon community. This announcement, of itself, was calculated to set the Mormons in particular, in a ferment, and when he went further and gave notice that he should sing a song, the whole musical public were agog at once, and some of our most distinguished vocalists were present, including those celebrated African melodists, Mr. Holmes and Mr. Johnson.

The room at half-past 7 o'clock, as a friend informs us, was instinct with life, animation and the elements of a

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tremendous outburst. Several well-disposed citizens had previously notified Mr. Dennett there would probably be many incensed Mormons present who might raise a whirlwind and subject the eloquent lecturer to a fearful storm of violence. But he would assume the responsibility and await the consequences. With the exception of the occasion on which Mr. Colver lectured, we have never witnessed a more exciting gathering of the tumultuous spirits of the present century. It was, we repeat, a scene of unsurpassed excitement.

At seven and a half o'clock the exercises commenced with some judicious remarks from one of our most respected citizens who acted as Secretary of the meeting; ex officio, by particular desire, and explained its objects. The Chairman, a Mr. Williams, by some singular hallucination of mind, inability of body, or excessive modesty, was not able to discharge his duties properly, and utterly broke down in the attempt amid the cheers, groans and hisses of the vast audience.

It was especially desired that the programme of the proceedings should be read, but the Chairman after having attempted the task, acknowledged himself incompetent to read the document, and sat down amidst bursts of laughter. It was shrewdly suspected that he could not read at all. Here there were tremendous calls on the part of some, supposed to be indignant Mormons, together with a few noisy young men in the corners of the room, for the programme to be read, or a return of the price of admission, twelve and a half cents. They were not to be humbugged, they said. We need scarcely say, that the highly respectable audience present, together with some enterprising Police officers were deeply afflicted, and tried in vain to secure peace, order and silence.

But one might as well stop the mighty surge of the ocean, as run counter to the declared sentiment of the malcontents. Again calls were made for the regular exercises—and it was not till the accomplished Dennett, who stands six feet in his stockings, arose in his seat and promised that he would

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commence his lecture, that the horrid din ceased. It seemed that while he was among the Mormons he unfortunately formed an acquaintance with a female Mormon by which he was led into a delicate and lamentable mishap, and was expelled by them. Of this sin he has since, he says, repented, but declares that the Mormons themselves are guilty of this same great sin, and should not have cast the first stone at him. While he was relating his experience with his Yankee brogue, and in unsophisticated innocence, and bearing down upon the Mormons with irrepressible energy, a snapping of Chinese crackers was heard, and soon a rotten egg came within three inches of his nose, and exploded on the wall behind him.

Showers of aromatic snuff and any quantity of wheat flour also lighted upon his devoted cranium, and clothed him in garments of radiant beauty. He was obliged to stop, demand order and enforce silence. A song was next called for vociferously, which received the assent of Mr. Dennett, and soon we heard something like the following snatches: we may not have the exact words, accompanied by explosion of crackers and breaking of eggs by way of symphony: Air—"Rory O' Moore."

I'll sing you a song, and it's perfectly new
If it has little merit I'm sure that it's true;
It tells how I followed the Saints of Nauvoo
Until I got into a duce of a STEW,
And the Latter Day Saints turned me out
of their crew,
The hypocrites, darn 'em, I hate 'em a few
For I know in my case, they would do as I do.
CHORUS
By jingo, they cried, that same is the way
That I have been doing this many a day;
And it's pleased that I am, and why not to be sure;

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That I run my old horse for the good of the poor.

Here there was a most fiendish din of yells, cries, hisses and denunciations, and Mr. Dennett was obliged to give way to the distinguished African vocalist, Mr. Holmes, of Central wharf, who sung, after some of his peculiar laughs, with great expression and with overpowering applause, "Old Dan Tucker," and another favorite air. At length Mr. Dennett proceeded:

They've tried to crush me, but darn 'em they can't,
They may tell me to stop my jaw—but I won't,
While friend DOOZENBURY stands by me I declare,
I'll give them as good as they send me I swear.
My musical efforts must stand alone,
For the Mormons have burst Andrew's Trombone—
And long metre, short metre, discords and cords,
Must carry the burthen of songs and of words.
By jingo, etc.

At this stage, the yelling commenced again, and flour, eggs, snuff and crackers descended upon Mr. Dennett, and he was literally in a cloud. The yolk of eggs was matted into his hair and ran down upon his face, mingled with flour and snuff. He was an interesting object indeed to look at. He could stand it no further, but rushed from the platform bare-headed, over the seats and benches, and for the door, followed by the motley assemblage.

He gave three tremendous leaps and bounded into Washington street, but the infernal pack were at his heels, peeling forth, as it were, and banner-cry of the infernal regions. The windows were raised from every house and store, and men, women and children looked forth upon the unwonted scene. Dennett heeded none of theses things but dove towards the South end with the speed of an engine:

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Murdoch of Alpine! Prove thy speed,
For ne'er had Alpine's son such need!
With hearts of fire and feet of wind,
The fierce avengers are behind.
Fate judges of the rapid strife—
The forfeit, money—the prize is life!

He outran his pursuers, however, and gaining the corner of Summer street, he rushed down that beautiful thorough-fare and disappeared in the dim distance. There was a report in town late last evening, that about 8 ½ o'clock he was crossing Neponset Bridge with railroad speed, and making the best of his way to Nauvoo.

We are sorry to say that he left a sorry scene behind him in the Hall. The lights were extinguished, benches overturned, and it is obscurely hinted that some of our excellent police officers, "suffered some" in the general melee. We hope, for the future that all those troubles will be obviated by an utter refusal on the part of the proprietors of rooms and halls to let their places for any such exhibitions. Such scenes are rather too rich for Boston.⁴⁴⁴

When the story got to Kentucky, an editor wrote,

John Dennett—of Anti-Mormon, rotten-egg, flour, torpedo, and Chinese-cracker notoriety, is still of opinion that "it will never do to give it up," and accordingly advertises in the Boston papers to give another lecture at Tremont Chapel. He must be a man of wonderful perseverance, and we shouldn't wonder if he

⁴⁴⁴ This is story, from the *Boston Times*, was is reprinted in full in the *Charleston Mercury*, April 1, 1844.

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destroyed Joe Smith's chance for the Presidency yet.⁴⁴⁵

The people in Boston had not forgotten the fun they had with the apostate Mormon lecturer, so when a more legitimate group of Mormons came to Boston to hold a political convention on July 1, the fun was resumed.

MORMON WAR IN BOSTON

A "State Convention" was holden in this city yesterday to take into consideration the claims of Gen. Joseph Smith for the Presidency. It was convened in the Melodeon, and was attended by a large assembly—many of the audience having probably gone to the meeting for the purpose of interrupting its proceedings. Although we have no sympathy in the objects of the meeting—yet we acknowledge the right of all to assemble peaceably in our midst and to be secure against disturbance and violence. We are sorry to say, that was not the case yesterday, and that the Mormons were interrupted through the day, by various noises, and in the evening the Melodeon was blessed with the presence of several well-known rowdies. Many of them Whig young gentlemen—who always act a conspicuous part in endeavoring to break up every assembly, which does not happen to be of their own political family. Many of the proceedings and speeches were eccentric of course, and characterized by a vein of ridiculousness and broad farce in the estimation of those who dissent from the Mormons in opinion—but these things offered no justification to others to rush in and break up their meetings. If this is the spirit they meet with in Illinois, then are they more

⁴⁴⁵ *Louisville Daily Journal*, Louisville, Kentucky, April 12, 1844. *Daily Picayune*, New Orleans, Louisiana, April 7, 12, 1844, has two stories about "Dennett" and the rotten eggs.

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sinned against than sinning. Abby Folsom⁴⁴⁶ was there in the course of the evening, and tried to get a hearing, but the cat-calls and other cries abounded so much, that even she was ashamed of the disturbers and retired from the Hall in disgust. Gen. White [Lyman Wight] of Nauvoo aptly declared in the course of the evening, that he had seen Eastern missionaries among the Indians of the West, trying to civilize them, but if the proceedings of the rowdies that evening were a sample of Boston civilization, he thought that for the future the missionaries had better stay and begin the work at home. Gen. White [Lyman Wight] also said that he would send a mission of Sacs and Foxes to civilize Boston. In fact the Mormons last night appeared to great advantage by the side of the Boston elite. During the latter part of the evening, while one of the

⁴⁴⁶ “FOLSOM, Abby, reformer, was born in England about 1792. She came to America in the year 1837, interested herself in the colored race; became a prominent advocate of anti-slavery reform, and delivered several addresses at the meetings of the American Anti-Slavery Society, during the years 1842-45. She was looked upon as a harmless fanatic on the subject of free speech, and was frequently removed from meetings and conventions on account of her determined desire to speak. On one occasion she was carried out of the hall in a chair by Wendell Phillips, Oliver Johnson, and one other man, when she remarked that she was more fortunate than her Lord for he had only one ass to ride, but she had three to carry her. Emerson called her “that flea of conventions.” After her marriage with Mr. Folsom of Massachusetts, she lived a retired life, rarely appearing in public. She wrote “Letter from a Member of the Boston Bar to an Avaricious Landlord” (Boston. 1851), and died in Rochester, N. Y., in 1867. *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, 2:394.

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speakers was addressing the audience, a young man in the gallery rose and commenced a series of rowdy remarks, in the delivery of which he was encouraged by some companions. He kept on, and when the police came in to take him out, they were assaulted and beaten badly by a set of young desperadoes. After much hard fighting however, they succeeded in clearing the gallery. One of the assistants, Mr. Sheldon a fine athletic fellow, was cut badly, but not dangerously in the face by a stick in the hands of one of the cut-throats. The meeting was soon after broken up. These things are a disgrace to Boston, and are owing to the culpable conduct of a portion of our respectable "six pennies," who make fun out of, and encourage these violations of the rights of others, and also to the supineness of the Mayor and other officers. The influence of such papers as we have referred to, if it continues to be exerted, will make Boston a Pandemonium shortly, where human devils will reign triumphant. The Mormons adjourned their meeting to Bunker Hill this afternoon at 4 o'clock.

We give the doings of the Convention below, as a feature in the history of the times:

Hon. Brigham Young of Nauvoo, President.

Hon. William Smith and Gen. Lyman White [Wight], of Illinois, Vice Presidents.

Hon. William Woodruff and Prof. Orson Pratt of Illinois, and Ananias McAllister Esq. of Salem Secretaries.

The Convention was addressed with much animation and zeal, in the course of the day and evening by the President Gen. White[Wight]. Hon. Orson Hyde, Daniel Spencer Hon. William Smith, Prof. Orson Pratt, all of Illinois, and George B. Wallace,

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Esq. of Boston.⁴⁴⁷

Someone who wrote under the pseudonym of Architectonic sarcastically complained:

“Patience,” exclaimed old Sir Harry Lee, “is a good nag, but she will bolt sometimes;” and if ever Mormon patience was put to the test, it was on the evening of July 1st, 1844, the anniversary of the dreadful battle of Aldbridge town; when the well dressed rowdies of Boston assembled en masse to “rout the Mormon humbugs;” and to their everlasting honor be it remembered, they achieved a victory that would have done honor to Napoleon. Surely, surely, the spirit of Washington hovered in gladness around his juvenile “natives,” whilst they were doing “a deed of dreadful note,” which should place their names in the highest niche of the temple of fame, emblazoned with gold, and add another honor to the fame of their Pilgrim Fathers, who have “Native” honors thick upon them....There is not on God’s footstool a set of whelps more contemptible than our Boston whiskerless and whiskered well dressed rowdies, vain, empty, brainless, shameless monkeys, it would do this State some service to send the most of them to South Boston Seminary, to finish their education.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁷ *Boston Times*, July 2, 1844. The story was widely circulated. Another version is found in the *Boston, Mail*, Boston, Massachusetts, July 2, 1844; reprinted in *New York Herald*, New York, New York, July 4, 1844; *New York Daily Tribune*, New York, New York, July 4, 1844; similar story found in *Sun*, Baltimore, Maryland, July 6, 1844, *Lewiston Gazette*, Lewistown, Pennsylvania, July 20, 1844.

⁴⁴⁸ *Prophet*, New York, New York, July 13, 1844.

Chapter 9: May and June, 1844
Joseph's Campaign for the Presidency

On June 29 and 30 (two days after Joseph was killed in Illinois), the Boston conference and convention, brought together Brigham Young, Lyman Wight, Orson Hyde, Orson Pratt, Wilford Woodruff, and Heber C. Kimball of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to work together in Joseph's presidential campaign.⁴⁴⁹ Consequently, these Church leaders were in close contact with each other when, a short time later, they learned of Joseph Smith's death, the sudden end of their own political missions, and the need for their immediate return to Nauvoo.

⁴⁴⁹ *Prophet*, New York, New York, July 13, 1844.

Chapter 10

June 1-12, 1844

Nauvoo Expositor

Preparations for the *Expositor*

On June 1, 1844, Joseph jumped again with full force into the fray of national politics. Earlier, in November, 1843, he had written to each of the major presidential candidates asking, “What will be your rule of action relative to us as a people, should fortune favor your ascension to the chief magistracy?” Clay had answered,

Should I be a candidate, I can enter into no engagements, make no promises, give no pledges, to any particular portion of the people of the United States. If I ever enter into that high office, I must go into it free and unfettered, with no guarantees but such as are to be drawn from my whole life, character and conduct.⁴⁵⁰

Joseph did not respond to Clay until May 13th, 1844, and his letter was not published until June 1. To a large extent his letter was a personal indictment against Clay, who had recently engaged in a duel, and who, Joseph said, had abandoned many of the

⁴⁵⁰ This and the two following correspondence between the Prophet and Clay are found in *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, June 1, 1844.

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principles that once had made him a statesman. He chided Clay for not committing himself to help the Mormons:

and when fifteen thousand free citizens of the high blooded Republic of North America, are robbed and driven from one state to another without redress or redemption, it is not only time for a candidate for the Presidency to pledge himself to execute judgment and justice in righteousness, law or no law, but it is his duty, as a man, for the honor of a disgraced country and for a union of all honest men, and appease the wrath of God, by acts of wisdom, holiness and virtue!

Now, using the national distribution of the *Times and Seasons*, Joseph had written an open letter to one of the most powerful political figures of his time. But in a larger sense, the letter was also addressed to the entire nation. Joseph warned:

Crape the heavens with weeds of woe, gird the earth with sackcloth, and let hell mutter one melody in commemoration of fallen splendor! for the glory of America has departed, and God will set a flaming sword to guard the tree of liberty, while such mint-tithing Herods as Van Buren, Boggs, Benton, Calhoun and Clay, are thrust out of the realms of virtue as fit subjects for the kingdom of fallen greatness....

One may wonder, at this late juncture why Joseph would have decided to write Clay, and through Clay to the nation at large. The most obvious answer is the least likely: that Joseph considered himself a viable candidate, and he was politicking with all of his might. That is unlikely for two reasons: First, Joseph never considered himself to be a viable candidate; and if he really believed his life was about to end, there would have been no point in continuing the campaign with such vigor.

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The second and more likely reason for his writing and publishing such a severe letter to Clay was that he again wanted to call attention to the plight of the Saints and hoped to stimulate another national discussion in the same way he had done through his correspondence with Calhoun.

A third reason might be that he knew he was about to be murdered. He had forewarned his people. Still he was deeply concerned for their welfare—not just as a community but as individuals. As a prophet he had blessed them, but now, as a prophet who was about to die, he cursed the nation who would not defend them.

In the *Signal* of June 5, Sharp derided Joseph's letter to Henry Clay:

Joe, you are everything that you accuse Messrs. Van Buren, Clay and Calhoun of being: and more, we do not believe that even your blackguard pen, or rather that of your man Friday's (for no one would accuse you of being able to put two sentences in the English language together correctly) can picture a wretch so depraved, and loathsome as yourself. Yes, Joe! We have that confidence in your saintship, that we do not believe that the concentrated extract of all the abominations of the infernal regions, can add one stain to the blackness of your character. Look in a mirror, Joe and you will see the reflection of the most detestable wretch that the earth contains.⁴⁵¹

Once again Joseph Jackson was behind the worst salvos of the Anti-Mormon assault. In that same issue of the *Signal*, Sharp published a letter by Jackson accusing Joseph Smith of being an atheist, of not being the author of the Book of Mormon, of forgery,

⁴⁵¹ *Warsaw Signal*, June 5, 1844

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and of hiring himself (Jackson) to murder Missouri Governor Boggs.⁴⁵² He wrote:

The law and its agents are mocked; and yet if the citizens of this community should rise up, and resort to the only means left us, to rid ourselves of this pest, there are fastidious moralists, who would immediately brand us as “mobocrats,” “persecuting men for religion sake,” and every opprobrious epithet would be applied by distant communities to us, and every palliating phrase used toward the vagabonds who have so long merited their fate. *When one portion of the community sets the laws at defiance, are we bound to respect the laws in our action towards it?* is a question in ethics which moralists may solve theoretically, at their leisure; but if we do not much mistake, the people in this vicinity will solve it practically, unless there is speedy and effec[tive] reform in Nauvoo.⁴⁵³

The next day in far off Philadelphia, the publisher of the *Public Ledger and Daily Transcript* evaluated the situation in Nauvoo as he understood it. The *Ledger* was an influential paper, and its editor’s opinion would be listened to. It is editorials like this one that leads one to believe that Sharp’s vendetta against the Mormons was much less effective than he had hoped, and that, in turn, lets us understand why the viciousness of the *Expositor* was not transmitted by American newspapers to the nation at large.

JOE SMITH, NAUVOO AND THE MORMONS.

A correspondent of the *St. Louis Republican* gives quite an interesting account of the Mormons, their city, and their leader. Joe and his religion, he states, have been the subject of

⁴⁵² *Warsaw Signal*, June 5, 1844

⁴⁵³ *Warsaw Signal*, June 5, 1844

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gross and unfounded misrepresentations. A story was recently put in circulation that Joe and his wife had quarreled, &c. This story, like a hundred others of a similar character, is not only false, but without the shadow of foundation. So long as these people are misrepresented or persecuted, so long will they grow and flourish; so long as they have a pressure from without to resist, they will be united as one man.⁴⁵⁴

June 7, 1844, the *Nauvoo Expositor*

On June 7, 1844, the *Nauvoo Expositor* published its first issue. The newspaper consisted of four pages (one folded sheet). It contained a short story, some poetry, some advertisements, and some national news. However, most of the paper was devoted to an attack on Mormonism generally and on Joseph Smith personally. The religious accusations were that Mormonism was once true, but now, it claimed Joseph had become a fallen prophet because he had introduced new doctrines. The political accusations were that Joseph had overstepped his bounds by running for president and seeking to combine the powers of church and state. The moral accusations were that Joseph had “taught secretly and denied openly” polygamy and the spiritual wifery.

Many years later, because polygamy became such a huge issue during the early Utah years of Mormon Church history, it was easy for a historian to read the importance of the polygamy question back into the Nauvoo period, it is often assumed that polygamy

⁴⁵⁴ *Public Ledger and Daily Transcript*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, June 6, 1844.

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was a major “cause” of the Prophet’s death, just as it is often asserted that “violating freedom of the press” was the cause of increased antagonism against the Mormons. But those notions are highly overrated. Bennett and the Anti-Mormons used “spiritual wifery” as an accusation against the Prophet, Law’s *Expositor* had added polygamy, but even so, it is irrational to argue that it was these charges of sexual misconduct that caused Sharp, Aldrich, Williams, Robert F. Smith, and other Anti-Mormon leaders to hate Joseph Smith. To do so would require that one also agree that those same men who murdered Joseph and Hyrum Smith, and, for the next two years raped, murdered, and drove innocent men, women, and children from their homes and property, acted on purely high-toned, moral motives. The polygamy argument cannot be made for the apostate Mormons either. Bennett was a confessed rake. Both of the Law brothers were reported to have had illicit affairs, and if William Law was a mole, he had been in league with the Missouri anti-Mormons long before he ever heard of polygamy.

The *Expositor* also claimed the Mormon leaders were at the center of a counterfeiting operation. Those charges will become increasingly important as our story develops, so they need to be discussed in some detail here.

The Mormons responded that they were innocent, but if there were a counterfeiting ring in Nauvoo, it was operated by the people who owned the *Expositor*. Neither accusation had substance; there was no counterfeiting in Nauvoo. There are no Hancock County court records that show anyone was ever accused of counterfeiting, and there are no extant examples of counterfeit money that was allegedly made there. Neither is there evidence that there was ever a press in Nauvoo that was capable of producing counterfeit money. An arming press was a relatively small machine used for stamping dies to make counterfeit coins. It

was small enough that it could have been carried in a wagon or a carriage, and easily could have been moved in or out of the city, or from place to place within the city, but no one ever testified of having seen one in Nauvoo. If counterfeiters were going to print bogus bank notes, they must have used an engraver's press to print from the copper plates—bank notes could not have been printed on the *Times and Seasons* press or on the *Expositor* press. Again, there is no evidence that an engraver's press was ever in Nauvoo. Counterfeiting was one of those charges that was easy to throw about, but impossible to prove without hard evidence, and in this case there is no evidence—only accusation. Yet, this accusation was to play an important part in the conclusion of our story.

The *Expositor* also attacked Hyrum Smith, who was a candidate for the state legislature, and it told its readers that Hyrum must also be stopped.

In supporting Hyrum Smith, are you not supporting Joseph Smith most assuredly; pause then my countrymen, and consider coolly, calmly and deliberately, what you do?... Then gentlemen, organize yourselves and prepare for the dreadful conflict in August; we go with you heart and hand, in the attempt to suppress this contaminating influence which is prostrating our fairest prospects and spreading desolation throughout our vale.⁴⁵⁵

As expected, the *Expositor* called for the repeal of the Nauvoo City charter, and leveled a severe attack on Joseph Smith's candidacy for the presidency of the United States.

Nauvoo's Mormon citizens were in an uproar about the many crude and slanderous accusations it published against their leaders.

⁴⁵⁵ *Nauvoo Neighbor*, June 7, 1844.

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But they should have been braced for that because of the warnings published in its *Prospectus*. Those slanders were not its greatest offences, and ultimately they would not be the reason why the city council voted to have the press destroyed.

The *Nauvoo Expositor* loudly joined the *Warsaw Signal* in trying to stimulate enthusiasm for driving the Mormons from Illinois. But it went even further. It invited the mob to come into the city and expel the Mormons from their homes. A composite of the *Expositor's* most violent words were these: (The quotes given here are not all from the same part of the newspaper. In selecting them, I have imagined people standing on the porch of a store in Nauvoo, with one saying, "Did you read this," and another adding, "Yes, and this." And so forth, as they went through the paper. These are the quotes that would have upset them the most, and therefore the ones that I suppose they would have read to each other.)

we have now the means in our hands, through which we can...affect our object. For ourselves, we are firmly resolved not to quit the field, till all our efforts shall be crowned with success. And we call upon all...to assist in this undertaking....

Shall we...lie still and suffer Joseph Smith to light up the lamp of tyranny and oppression in our midst?... Let us arise in the majesty of our strength and sweep the influence of tyrants and miscreants from the face of the land.

The question is asked, will you bring a mob upon us? In answer to that, we assure all concerned, that we will be among the first to put down anything like an illegal force being used against any man or act of man. If anyone has become amenable to the law, we wish to have tried impartially by the laws of his country. We are among the number who believe that there is virtue and integrity enough in the administrators of the law, to bring every offender to justice and to protect the innocent, if it is necessary to make show of force, to execute legal process, it

will create no sympathy in that case [for the Mormons] to cry out, we are mobbed.”⁴⁵⁶

That last statement and the threat it contained struck the most sensitive nerve of the Mormons’ fears. They understood the meaning of the thinly veiled “to execute legal process.” Many residents of Nauvoo were refugees from Missouri, where their own press had been stolen, and their homes had been pillaged and burned. Their people had been robbed, raped, and murdered by mobs who were legally organized as units of the state militia and who acted under the shield of executing the laws of Missouri. This is what the Mormons understood was meant by the *Expositor’s* “to execute legal process,” and subsequent events show that was precisely how the newspaper intended the phrase should be understood. (That was clearly shown a few days later when delegates from Carthage demand that Governor Ford activate the mob as a state militia to expel or exterminate the Mormons.)

Mobocracy was the word the Mormons had used to describe the union between the official Missouri government and the mob that had pillaged their homes under the legal immunity of military legitimacy. Now Mormons read in the *Expositor* an invitation for a similar mob to come to Nauvoo and violate its people. They were horrified by what they remembered, and terrified by what might come.

Sharp’s response to the *Expositor* was quite different. Consistent with his determination to make Joseph Smith the reason for attacking the city of Nauvoo, he summarized the *Expositor’s* message as a vilification of the Prophet:

⁴⁵⁶ These quotes are all from the *Nauvoo Expositor*.

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The Nauvoo Expositor

We have received the first number of this long looked for paper. In both its editorial and mechanical departments, it is highly creditable, and we hail it as a efficient auxiliary in the good cause of prostrating Joe's influence and exposing his villainy.

The first number contains a long exposition of the views of the new church, or dissenters. They still adhere to the doctrines originally taught by Joe, "which is contained in the Old and New Testament, the Book of Mormon, and Doctrines and Covenants, as verily true." They speak of Joe as the embodiment of every abomination, and state the reasons why they have not heretofore exposed him—which is, that they had hoped that gentle reproof in private would produce reform.⁴⁵⁷

The stage was fully set. All the Anti-Mormons had to do was wait. The *Expositor* had promised its next issue would be even more severe than this one. Now one of two things must happen. Either the city would take some action against the *Expositor*—which action would be the incident requisite for the Anti-Mormons' attacking the city. Or the city might do nothing, and let the *Expositor* continue to print stories that could be used, in place of an overt incident, as justification for the mob's exterminating the Mormons.

⁴⁵⁷ *Warsaw Signal*, June 12, 1844.

Nauvoo Response to the *Expositor*

The Nauvoo city council consisted of many of the leading men of the community. There was no outstanding lawyer among them, but Joseph Smith and several others had a good knowledge of the law. In those years, in America, there were two acceptable ways for one to become a lawyer. The first way was to go to a university like William and Mary in the South or Harvard in New England, and get a formal degree in law. However, if one lived on the frontier, attendance at a fancy law school in the East was both impractical and unnecessary.

For a westerner, the usual way one became a lawyer was to study with an established lawyer and spend a good deal of time reading law books. Both Andrew Jackson and Abraham Lincoln were self-taught in this way; so was Governor Thomas Ford. So was Joseph Smith.

While in Far West, Missouri, Joseph had studied with Alexander Doniphan, the respected lawyer and militia general who saved Joseph's life when he was taken prisoner by the Missouri mob.⁴⁵⁸ The internal evidence is that Joseph had a good working knowledge of the law.

One of the most important and universally appreciated reference books in any lawyer's library was the 5-volume set of Sir William Blackstone's *Commentaries on British Common Law*.

⁴⁵⁸ Wells, Junius F., "Alexander William Doniphan," *Improvement Era*, December 1902, 113-121. Andrew Jensen, *Church Chronology* (Salt Lake City, Deseret News, 1914), 15, under the date of September 4, 1838.

However, since the Mormons were imprisoned soon after that, the time Joseph was tutored could not have been very long.

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Newly created western states, like Illinois, needed a mature legal system long before their state legislatures had time to create their own. In those states, the law was the American Constitution, British Common Law, and whatever specific laws had been enacted by the state legislature. In Illinois, in 1844, any situation not covered by state law, was covered by Common Law as defined by Blackstone's *Commentaries*. So when the Nauvoo city council wished to know what they could legally do about the *Expositor*, the place they looked was Blackstone's *Commentaries*⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁹ The large majority of American states have "received" the English common law as the rule of decision in their courts (subject to local conditions and considerations) at about the time of being admitted as states. Common law reception is generally effected by statute, but is accomplished by either constitutional provision or judicial decision in a few states. Even in the few states, such as Connecticut, that have not officially received the common law, state courts have informally established a rule authorizing resort to the English common law when necessary. English common law has not been formally received into federal jurisprudence and, indeed, was by inference rejected in the 1938 U. S. Supreme Court case of *Erie R. Co. v. Tompkins*. Because the common law changes over time, in receiving the English common law into their jurisprudence, states must eventually decide on the body of common law as it existed at a particular point in time, and whether the judicial decisions that make up common law rules is to be considered embellished by major medieval English statutes that are traditionally considered part of the English common law. Most states choose as the reference date either 1607 (date of founding the first English North American colony in Jamestown, Virginia), 1776 (date of national independence from England) or the date of admission to statehood. The impact of English common law on any particular legal issue in state litigation usually cannot be known until that issue is presented in a case before a court of that state. See, generally, a state-by-state discussion of

Well-educated people in America (whether their education was formal or not) often had some familiarity with Blackstone. That was also true of the Mormons. There are a dozen references to Blackstone in the documentary *History of the Church*. One of the most interesting is this, which describes an event that occurred in February, 1839.

While they were waiting for their trial, some of the brethren employed lawyers to defend them. Brother [Erastus] Snow asked Brother Joseph whether he had better employ a lawyer or not. Brother Joseph told him to plead his own case. “But,” said Brother Snow, “I do not understand the law.” Brother Joseph asked him if he did not understand justice; he thought he did. “Well,” said Brother Joseph, “go and plead for justice as hard as you can, and quote Blackstone and other authors now and then, and they will take it all for law.”⁴⁶⁰

The Prophet’s instructions were not to make something up and credit it to Blackstone, but to “quote Blackstone and other authors now and then.” Joseph’s assumption was that Erastus Snow was well enough acquainted with Blackstone that he could quote the parts he needed to reference. The Nauvoo city council relied heavily on Blackstone, and used his *Commentaries* to determine how they should handle the *Nauvoo Expositor*. They believed, as they had a right to believe, that any action they took that was

English common law reception in [David A. Thomas, Chapter 7, “Development of American Property Law After Independence,” in David A. Thomas (ed.), *Thompson on Real Property, Thomas Edition* (Newark, New Jersey Journal, Elizabeth, New Jersey: Lexis Nexis Publishing, 1994).]

⁴⁶⁰ *History of the Church*, 3:256 footnotes.

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consistent with Blackstone would be legal and defensible in Illinois courts.

On Saturday, June 8, the day after the *Expositor* was published, the Nauvoo city council met in an emergency session to determine how the city should respond to the threats the newspaper had posed.⁴⁶¹ The city council also passed an ordinance protecting people from libel. That law is important to our study because its long preamble outlined the persecutions that had come upon the Mormons. One paragraph reads:

Whereas a horrid, bloody, secret plan, upheld, sanctioned and largely patronized by men in Nauvoo and out of it, who boast that all they want for the word *go*, to exterminate or ruin the Latter-day Saints, is for them [the Mormons] to do one unlawful act, and the work [of extermination] shall be done, is now fostered, cherished, and maturing in Nauvoo,—by men, too, who helped to obtain the very charter they would break, and some of them drew up and voted for the very ordinances they are striving to use as a scarecrow to frighten the surrounding country into rebellion, mobbing, and war.⁴⁶²

This preamble shows that the Mormons understood the purposes of the connection between William Law's secret society and Robert F. Smith's Central Corresponding Committee and of their determination to act against the city on the first incident they could represent as a provocation. The Mormons believed the *Expositor* was intended to create that incident.

⁴⁶¹ The City Council minutes for June 8 were published in *Nauvoo Neighbor*, June 19, 1844. They are republished in *History of the Church*, 6:435-442.

⁴⁶² *Nauvoo Neighbor*, June 12, 1844; republished in *History of the Church*, 6:433-434.

During the city council's emergency meeting the immediate issue was the *Expositor's* invitation for mob violence against the city and its people. Mayor Joseph Smith expressed the danger they all felt. The meeting's minutes show the Prophet said:

"The conduct of such men and such papers are calculated to destroy the peace of the city, and it is not safe that such things should exist, on account of the mob spirit which they tend to produce." He had made the statements he had, and called the witnesses to prepare the council to act in the case,...and said if God ever spake by any man, it will not be five years before this city is in ashes and we in our graves, unless we go to Oregon, California or some other place, if the city does not put down everything which tends to mobocracy, and put down murderers, bogus-makers, and scoundrels. All the sorrow he ever had in his family in this city has arisen through the influence of William Law.⁴⁶³

The city council also discussed the character of the three sets of brothers who owned the *Expositor*, William and Wilson Law, Francis and Chauncey Higbee, and Robert and Charles Foster. It heard testimony about instances of their dishonesty in business dealings and of their alleged attempts to assassinate Joseph Smith and then to put out a contract on his life. The mayor reported he had been told that William Law had offered Joseph Jackson \$500 to do the job.⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶³ *History of the Church*, 6:438.

⁴⁶⁴ *History of the Church*, 6:435. See also pages 435-442. That \$500 was about \$65,000 in today's money. Jackson was either not telling the truth, or he was trying to play both sides against the middle. In the June 5 *Warsaw Signal* article just quoted, he claimed the mayor had hired him to kill William Law.

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Normally a city council is a legislative body. It makes laws and leaves it to the mayor to enforce them. In this instance however, the city council was appropriately acting as the executive as well as the legislature. That was appropriate because even though the city's charter vested executive authority in the mayor, it also gave the city council executive authority in cases such as this:

Sec. 11. The City Council shall have power and authority to make, ordain, establish and execute all such ordinances, not repugnant to the Constitution of the United States or of this State, as they may deem necessary for the peace...; for the protection of property therein from destruction by fire, or otherwise, and for the health and happiness....⁴⁶⁵

The operative word is "execute," and the legitimacy of the city council's action rested on that authority.

The minutes of the Nauvoo city council meeting show that the Mormon leaders were truly afraid because they believed the intent of the paper was to incite mob action against their city:

Mayor said, if he had a City Council who felt as he did, the establishment (referring to the Nauvoo Expositor) would be declared a nuisance before night; and then he read an editorial from the Nauvoo Expositor. He then asked who ever said a word against Judge Emmons until he attacked this Council? or even against Joseph H. Jackson or the Laws until they came out against the city? Here is a paper (*Nauvoo Expositor*) that is exciting our enemies abroad. Joseph H. Jackson has been

⁴⁶⁵ *History of the Church*, 4:241. The mayor's responsibilities were: "Sec. 17. The Mayor shall have exclusive jurisdiction in all cases arising under the ordinances of the corporation, and shall issue such process as maybe necessary to carry such ordinances into execution and" (242).

proved a murderer before the Council, and he [the mayor] declared the paper a nuisance.... ***What the opposition party want, is to raise a mob on us and take the spoil from us, as they did in Missouri. He said it was as much as he could do to keep his clerk, Thompson, from publishing the proceeding of the Laws and causing the people to rise up against them. Said he would rather die tomorrow and have the thing smashed, than live and have it go on, for it was exciting the spirit of mobocracy among the people, and bringing death and destruction upon us.***

Orson Spencer accorded with the views expressed, that the *Nauvoo Expositor* is a nuisance. Did not consider it wise to give them time to trumpet a thousand lies. Their property could not pay for it. If we pass only a fine or imprisonment, have we any confidence that they will desist! None at all. We have found these men covenant-breakers with God, with their wives, &c. Have we any hope of their doing better! Their characters have gone before them. Shall they be suffered to go on, and bring a mob upon us, and murder our women and children, and burn our beautiful city! No! I had rather my blood would be spilled at once, and would like to have the press removed as soon as the ordinance would allow: and wish the matter might be put into the hands of the Mayor, and everybody stand by him in the execution of his duties, and hush every murmur.

Councilor Levi Richards said he had felt deeply on this subject, and concurred fully in the view General Smith had expressed of it this day; thought it unnecessary to repeat what the Council perfectly understood; considered private interest as nothing in comparison with the public good. Every time a line was formed in Far West, he was there—for what! To defend it against just such scoundrels and influence as the *Nauvoo Expositor* and its supporters were directly calculated to bring against us again. Considered the doings of the Council this day of immense moment, not to this city alone, but to the whole world; would go in to put a stop to the thing at once. Let it be

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thrown out of this city, and the responsibility of countenancing such a press be taken off our shoulders and fall on the State, if corrupt enough to sustain it.

Councilor Phineas Richards said that he had not forgotten the transaction at Haun's Mill, and that he recollected that his son George Spencer then lay in the well referred to on the day previous, without a winding-sheet, shroud or coffin. He said he could not sit still when he saw the same spirit raging in this place. He considered the publication of the *Expositor* as much murderous at heart as David was before the death of Uriah; was prepared to take stand; by the Mayor, and whatever he proposes; would stand by him to the last. The quicker it is stopped, the better

Councilor Phelps had investigated the Constitution, Charter, and laws. The power to declare that office a nuisance is granted to us in the Springfield Charter, and a resolution declaring it a nuisance is all that is required.

John Birney sworn. Said Francis M. Higbee and Wm. Law declared they had commenced their operations, and would carry them out law or no law.

Stephen Markham sworn. Said that Francis M. Higbee said the interest of this city is done the moment a hand is laid on their press....

Councilor Phelps continued and he felt deeper this day than ever he felt before,...and spoke at great length in support of active measures to put down iniquity, and the spirit of mobocracy.

Alderman Harris spoke from the chair, and expressed his feelings that the press ought to be demolished.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶⁶ Minutes of Monday, June 10, published in *Nauvoo Neighbor*, June 19, 1844. Republished in *History of the Church*, 6:446-447. Italics and bold in the first paragraph are added.

One sentence in the above, spoken by the Prophet, sums up all the fears of the city council: “What the opposition party want is to raise a mob on us and take the spoil from us, as they did in Missouri.” That was the reason the city council believed the press was a palpable menace to the safety of the inhabitants of the city, and that was the reason the press was destroyed.

Their debate on the question of what to do with the newspaper’s press was impassioned but intelligent, as the minutes show. First, John Taylor, who was editor of both the *Nauvoo Neighbor* and the *Times and Seasons*,

read from the Constitution of the United States on the freedom of the press, and said—“We are willing they should publish the truth; but it is unlawful to publish libels. The *Expositor* is a nuisance, and stinks in the nose of every honest man.”

Mayor [Joseph Smith] read from Illinois Constitution, article 8, section 12, touching the responsibility of the press for its constitutional liberty.⁴⁶⁷

Councilor Stiles said a nuisance was anything that disturbs the peace of a community, and read Blackstone on private wrongs. vol. 2, page 4; and the whole community has to rest under the stigma of these falsehoods (referring to the

⁴⁶⁷ This was probably a typographical error. It should read section 22 rather than section 12, but both articles may have been referred to during the debate. Article 8, section 12 of the 1818 Illinois Constitution reads: “Every person within this State ought to find a certain remedy in the laws, for all injuries or wrongs which he may receive in his person, property or character; he ought to obtain right and justice freely, and without being obliged to purchase it, completely and without denial, promptly and without delay, conformably to the laws.” It is Section 22, quoted below, which deals with freedom of the press, and which says editors are “responsible for the abuse of that liberty.”

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Expositor); and if we can prevent the issuing of any more slanderous communications, he would go in for it. It is right for this community to show a proper resentment; and he would go in for suppressing all further publications of the kind.

Councilor Hyrum Smith believed the best way was to smash the press and pi the type.⁴⁶⁸

No doubt, Hyrum believed his comments were not out of line.⁴⁶⁹ The record does not show he was reading Blackstone while he spoke, but the *Commentaries* would have afforded him a legal rationale for his suggestion.⁴⁷⁰ In Blackstone, *nuisance* was not a casual word, but a technical legal term. The English jurist devoted an entire chapter to defining it and explaining what should be done about it. That chapter ended by addressing the question, what if the perpetrator of the nuisance is such an ill-natured neighbor that one cannot persuade him to change his ways. To that, Blackstone holds, the owner of the nuisance (in this case he uses an unsafe building as an example) should be fined, until he corrects the problem,

unless a man has a very obstinate as well as an ill-natured neighbour: who had rather continue to pay damages, than remove his nuisance. For in such a case, recourse must at last be had to the old and sure remedies, which will effectually

⁴⁶⁸ “Pi” means to mix up or jumble printers type.

⁴⁶⁹ Dallin H. Oaks argues that while there was “considerable basis in the law of their day for their actions in characterizing the published issue of the *Nauvoo Expositor* as a nuisance...there was no legal justification in 1844 for the destruction of the *Expositor* press. “The Suppression of the *Nauvoo Expositor*,” 890-891.

⁴⁷⁰ See statements that they based their decision on Blackstone in *History of the Church*, 6:581; 7:90 and 126.

conquer the defendant's perverseness, by sending the sheriff with his posse comitatus, or power of the county, to level it.⁴⁷¹

Since it was the newspaper—the product of the press and its type—that constituted the public nuisance, rather than the building that housed it, there could be no justification in leveling the building. But otherwise, they perceived their situation regarding how to handle the press and the type as essentially equivalent to Blackstone's recommendation about an unsafe building. Their reasoning went this way:

The *Expositor's* threat to the physical safety of the community could not be averted by simply taking the owners to court or fining them. An analogous public nuisance, they observed, would be a rabid dog running about the city endangering the safety of the whole population. In that case the disease, rather than the dog, would be the real danger. But that fact could not alter the other reality: the dog carried the disease, and therefore the dog must be removed to avert the danger. The *Expositor* press was understood to be like that. What the newspaper's proprietors had published and threatened to publish were the overriding danger, but the press was the agent that made that danger real. Since the press was the instrument that carried the threat, it was the press that constituted the "public nuisance." Therefore, they argued, it was the press that had to be eliminated. They also found in Blackstone precedent for declaring a press a public nuisance, as Joseph later explained in a letter to Governor Ford.

The press was declared a nuisance under the authority of the charter as written in 7th section of Addenda, the same as in the Springfield charter, so that if the act declaring the press a

⁴⁷¹ Blackstone, *Commentaries*, 3:222.

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nuisance was unconstitutional, we cannot see how it is that the charter itself is not unconstitutional, and if we have erred in judgment, it is an official act, and belongs to the Supreme Court to correct it, and assess damages versus the city to restore property abated as a nuisance. If we have erred in this thing, we have done it in good company, for Blackstone on “Wrongs,” asserts the doctrine that scurrilous prints may be abated as nuisances.⁴⁷²

The minutes of the meeting conclude:

The following resolution was then read and passed unanimously, with the exception of Councilor Warrington: “Resolved, by the City Council of the city of Nauvoo, that the printing office from whence issues the *Nauvoo Expositor* is a public nuisance and also all of said *Nauvoo Expositors* which may be or exist in said establishment; and the Mayor is instructed to cause said printing establishment and papers to be removed without delay, in such manner as he shall direct.”⁴⁷³

It was in accordance with instructions from the city council that Mayor Joseph Smith sent a formal directive to the city marshal, John P. Greene, to destroy the press.

You are here commanded to destroy the printing press from whence issues the *Nauvoo Expositor* and pi the type of said printing establishment in the street and burn all the *Expositors* and libelous handbills found in said establishment; and if resistance be offered to your execution of this order by the owners or others, demolish the house; and if anyone threatens you or the Mayor or the officers of the city, arrest those who

⁴⁷² *History of the Church*, 6:538.

⁴⁷³ *History of the Church*, 6:448.

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threaten you, and fail not to execute this order without delay,
and make due return hereon.
By order of the City Council,
JOSEPH SMITH. Mayor.⁴⁷⁴

Some years later John Taylor summed up the city council's proceedings by quoting Joseph Smith as saying,

Upon investigating the matter, we found that our City Charter gave us power to remove all nuisances; and, furthermore, upon consulting Blackstone upon what might be considered a nuisance, that distinguished lawyer, who is considered authority, I believe, in all our courts, states, among other things, that a libelous and filthy press may be considered a nuisance, and abated as such.⁴⁷⁵

As its Lieutenant-General, the Prophet also sent orders to the Nauvoo Legion (which included most of the city's able-bodied male inhabitants) to provide the marshal with assistance should that be necessary. So almost everyone in town knew what was happening and came out to watch. One of those witnesses described the scene. This extraordinary account reveals the

⁴⁷⁴ *Nauvoo Neighbor*, June 12, 17, 1844. This was done in accordance to the Nauvoo Charter, Sec. 19, which reads, "All process issued by the Mayor, Aldermen, or Municipal Court, shall be directed to the Marshal, and, in the execution thereof, he shall be governed by the same laws as are or may be prescribed for the direction and compensation of constables in similar cases. The Marshal shall also perform such other duties as may be required of him under the ordinances of said city, and shall be the principal ministerial officer." (*History of the Church*, 4:243)

⁴⁷⁵ *History of the Church*, 6:581

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unabashed piety and unmitigated fear that prevailed in Nauvoo that night:

The order of the council was complied with in a very orderly and becoming manner; the building was literally gutted of its contents which were thrown into the street and burned. While the blaze sent up its lurid light into the darkening atmosphere making visible the calm, reconciled countenance of 400 or 500 people, many of whom had been left homeless by Missouri incendiaries [a reference to the Mormon homes that had been burned by mobs in Missouri], we involuntarily exclaimed, this is but retributive justice.⁴⁷⁶

The Prophet Joseph's account of what happened reads,

About 8 p. m., the Marshal returned and reported that he had removed the press, type, printed paper, and fixtures into the street, and destroyed them. This was done because of the libelous and slanderous character of the paper, its avowed intention being to destroy the municipality and drive the Saints from the city. The posse accompanied by some hundreds of the citizens, returned with the Marshal to the front of the Mansion, when I gave them a short address, and told them they had done right and that not a hair of their heads should be hurt for it; that they had executed the orders which were given me by the City Council; that I would never submit to have another libelous publication established in the city; that I did not care how many papers were printed in the city, if they would print the truth: but would submit to no libels or slanders from them. I then blessed them in the name of the Lord. This speech was loudly greeted by the assembly with three-times-three cheers. The

⁴⁷⁶ *Prophet*, New York, New York, July 13, 1844.

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posse and assembly then dispersed all in good order. Francis M. Higbee and others made some threats.⁴⁷⁷

The decision to burn the press and pi the type into the street was not just about what to do with the *Expositor*, it was a declaration that the Mormons would not be cowed by this threat. When the Mormons made that decision they were fully aware that the *Expositor* was a setup—a device to create the incident Robert F. Smith’s Anti-Mormons were waiting for. The assessment of the Nauvoo city council, as quoted above, was correct:

and whereas a horrid, bloody, secret plan, upheld, sanctioned and largely patronized by men in Nauvoo and out of it, who boast that all they want for the word *go*, to exterminate or ruin the Latter-day Saints, is for them to do one unlawful act, and the work shall be done....⁴⁷⁸

Now, with the urging of their mayor, Joseph Smith, they had just committed what would undoubtedly be construed as that “one unlawful act.” The overriding question is “Why?” Why had Joseph Smith urged that “if he had a city council who felt as he did, the establishment (referring to the *Nauvoo Expositor*) would be declared a nuisance before night?”

Joseph had read the *Signal* and the *Expositor*. He knew his enemies were waiting for an excuse to bring in an army so big it could defeat the Nauvoo Legion—there is no doubt that he also understood that their arresting him for that “one unlawful act” was intended to be their excuse. With the destruction of the *Expositor*, Joseph’s presence in Nauvoo would be the death warrant for his

⁴⁷⁷ *Nauvoo Neighbor Extra*, June 12, 1844.

⁴⁷⁸ *Nauvoo Neighbor Extra*, June 12, 1844.

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beloved city. So why did he do it? He answered that question during the city council meeting. “Said he would rather die tomorrow and have the thing smashed, than live and have it go on, for it was exciting the spirit of mobocracy among the people, and bringing death and destruction upon us.”⁴⁷⁹ George Laub wrote,

But Bro. Joseph called a meeting at his own house and told the people or us that God showed him in an open vision in daylight that if he did not destroy that press, Printing press, it would cause the Blood of the Saints to flow in the Streets & by this wise that Evil destroy. And I write what I know and seen & heard for myself.⁴⁸⁰

Joseph’s future actions bear out that he believed that if the *Expositor* were not destroyed, its harangue would become the evidence the Anti-Mormons wanted to justify their invasion of the city—that the *Expositor* would fabricate the hoped-for incident or series of incidents even if a real one did not exist—but if he silenced the paper immediately, then his own actions would become the “incident” they wanted, and that would keep the focus on himself rather than on the city—the mob would seek his life rather than the city’s destruction. If one accepts his statements at face value—and there is no evidence that one should not—what they say is that Joseph had already decided that his personal mission on this beautiful earth was accomplished. He had already given the keys of the kingdom to the Twelve Apostles, now, as he said, he would trade his life for time, for by dying he would deny his enemies the excuse they sought to destroy Nauvoo. (That is

⁴⁷⁹ This is quoted above in context. *Nauvoo Neighbor Extra*, June 19, 1844.

⁴⁸⁰ England, “George Laub’s Nauvoo Journal,” 159.

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precisely what happened.) All that does not imply he wanted to die, or even that he would die without defending himself to the last moment. But it does say that he would do everything in his power—including die—to preserve the city and give the Saints time to complete the temple and make arrangements for their migration West.

Contemporary descriptions of “Nauvoo the Beautiful”

The city Joseph loved so much was an amazing phenomenon in the west, as the following contemporary descriptions show:

Missouri Republican, St. Louis, Missouri, April 25, 1844.⁴⁸¹

Messrs. Editors:

Here am I in the holy city of the Mormons, especially set apart and dedicated to the use of that peculiar people by their great High Priest, Gen. JOSEPH SMITH. The “town site” of Nauvoo is most beautiful; probably no situation on the Mississippi above St. Louis, can compare with it for beauty of location. Rising gradually from the river to a slight elevation, it

⁴⁸¹ Reprinted in: *New York Daily Tribune*, New York, New York, May 28, 1844; *Rhode Island County Journal and Independent Inquirer*, Providence, Rhode Island, 31 May, 1844; *Miner’s Journal*, Postsville, Pennsylvania, June 1, 1844; *Public Ledger and Daily Transcript*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, June 6, 1844; *Boston Post*, Boston, Massachusetts, June 10, 1844; *Huron Reflector*, Norwalk, Ohio, June 11, 1844; *Pennsylvania Telegraph*, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, June 12, 1844; *Pittsfield Sun*, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, June 27, 1844; *Carolina Watchman*, Salisbury, North Carolina, July 20, 1844.

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extends out in a broad and level plain, nearly a mile, then rather more abruptly to a still higher elevation, on the highest point of which, the Temple is (to be) situated, the first story of which is now completed. Stone masons and other workmen, to the number of near a hundred, are busily at work upon it; all other public improvements are at present suspended, so that the faithful may concentrate their means for the purpose of completing it without delay.

If it is ever finished, (and the prospect seems now favorable,) it will be the most remarkable public building of modern times. It is to be built of stone, 127 feet long, 88 feet broad, 26 feet high, with a tower 140 feet high from the ground. —These are the general outside dimensions; the interior plan is yet undecided upon; or rather, the Prophet has not received a revelation in regard to the interior arrangements, the Lord having revealed to him thus far only, how the baptismal font must be constructed. This is quite finished. It is a large vessel built of wood—oblong in shape—about six feet deep, capable of containing twelve or fifteen hogsheads of water, and resting upon twelve oxen, carved out of wood; the beasts are as large as life, and about “three times as natural.” Although specially revealed to Joe in these latter days, yet the idea is evidently borrowed from scripture, as may be found in 1st Kings, 7th chapter.

There are two public houses—the “Nauvoo Mansion” and the “Masonic Hall.” The former is kept by the prophet. Another hotel, three stories high, built of brick, situated near the Temple, is nearly completed. The Nauvoo House, when finished according to the present design, will be an elegant and commodious hotel—fronting on two streets 126 feet; the foundation is already laid. The city is laid off into lots of one acre each—the streets all intersect each other at right angles. It is impossible to estimate correctly the number of buildings by a general observation; there are many substantial brick buildings, stores and private dwellings, dotted over a space of near three

thousand acres, comprising the limit of the city. The appearance of everything here is flourishing.

In reference to Joseph Smith, and the Mormon religion, I presume there can be but one opinion out of his Church; but Joe and his religion have been the subject of gross and unfounded misrepresentations. That his followers are laboring under most unaccountable delusion, admits of little doubt—the majority, however, are honest and sincere in their belief. Joe has, doubtless, become somewhat tyrannical. He has attempted to force measures of public policy, as well as articles of religious belief, which many of the better part of his people resist, causing at the present time some little trouble. In the end, such division will doubtless bring the whole system to an end; it is idle to think they can be put down by any other means. I cannot understand why it is that persons, having opportunity to judge correctly, will persist in misrepresenting these people and their leader. A story was recently put in circulation that Joe and his wife had quarreled, &c. This story, like a hundred others of similar character, is not only false, but without the shadow of foundation.

So long as these people are misrepresented or persecuted, so long will they grow and flourish; so long as they have a pressure from without to resist, they will be united as one man.

The country in the immediate vicinity of Nauvoo is really beautiful, the land being of the best quality, with an abundance of timber, &c. To a great extent it is under cultivation; many of the Mormons being farmers, have settled on these lands and opened fine farms, giving support and employment to a great number of laborers.

You have seen it announced that Joseph Smith is a candidate for the Presidency of the United States. Many think this is a hoax—not so with Joe and the Mormons. It is the design of these people to have candidates for electors in every State of the Union; a convention is to be held in Baltimore, probably next month. The leaders here are busy in organizing

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their plans—over a hundred persons leave in a few days for different States to carry them out as far as possible. I mention these facts only to show that Joe is really in earnest. He indignantly spurns the proposition to run for the second office on the same ticket with Mr. Van Buren: he thinks his chance would be much better alone than to be associated with the sage of Lindenwald; doubtless it is equally as good.—The true reason for this movement is, to prevent his followers in this county from becoming divided even upon political questions.

There are many thoughts suggested to the mind by a visit to this place; but I have neither the space nor present inclination to follow them out.

In conclusion, I would say, let no man sneer at these people, or deem them as of little consequence, either for good or for evil. They are becoming of potent influence to the people of the State of Illinois. It is a serious question: What will be the end of these things?

When it is considered that four years since this place was a desert—that but four families existed here, numbering scarcely twenty souls in all; and that now the population undoubtedly exceeds fifteen thousand, of hardy, persevering and enthusiastic people, surely it will strike the mind of the most ordinary observer that these people, whatever else may be thought of them, cannot with any degree of propriety be sneered at or deemed beneath notice.[signed] W.

Daily Herald, Newburyport, Massachusetts, July 12, 1844.⁴⁸²

NAUVOO, THE MORMON CITY

At the end of three years from its establishment it contained one thousand houses, chiefly whitewashed log cabins, with a few frame and brick houses. The public buildings are the Nauvoo House, a spacious hotel, fronting on two streets, 120 feet on each, 40 feet wide and three stories high above the basement. In this building, Joe Smith, the pretended prophet and leader of these "Latter-day Saints" was furnished with a suite of rooms. The Nauvoo Temple, not yet completed, will be 130 feet long and 100 feet wide. In the basement is a baptistry, supported on 12 gilded oxen the model of which is derived from the brazen sea of Solomon. The Nauvoo Legion consist of from 2 to 3,000 men, with proper officers, armed and disciplined. They have a University which contains a president, a professor of mathematics and English literature, a professor of the learned languages, and a professor of church history. The city is laid out with streets of ample width, crossing each other at right angles. Their property is held as private; but they have a large farm without the city which is occupied and cultivated in common. The population within the city limits is about 7,000, many of whom are from England, besides about 3,000 of the fraternity who reside in the vicinity. The city has a mayor, and is divided into four wards having two aldermen, four common council men, and a constable for each of the wards.

⁴⁸² Reprinted in: *Springfield Republican*, Springfield, Massachusetts, July 20, 1844; *Miner's Journal*, Postsville, Pennsylvania, August 17, 1844.

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Greensborough Patriot, Greensborough, North Carolina,
June 1, 1844.

A correspondent from Nauvoo, writes as follows: "There are about fifty masons and stone cutters engaged about the Temple. It will be one of the most extraordinary buildings on the American continent. We have a regular theater got up by the Mormons themselves. Last night the play of Pizarro went off in good style to a large audience, of which about one hundred were ladies. I was astonished to see such an array of beauty in the new Jerusalem.

Springfield Republican, Springfield, Massachusetts,
October 19, 1844.⁴⁸³

THE CITY OF NAUVOO

A correspondent writes this description of the city of the Mormons.

I arrived here about sunset, "and put up at the "Mansion House," kept by Joe Smith up to the time of his death, and by his widow until a week past. It is now kept by Mr. William Marks, (a leading Mormon,) Mrs. Smith [Joseph's mother, Lucy Mack Smith] having moved into a very commodious house on the opposite side of the street. Designing to make the best of a short time I could remain here, I immediately informed Mr. Marks that I was a stranger from "Yankee land," visiting Nauvoo for the purpose of learning every thing about the place and the people that circumstances would allow, and that he would lay me under great obligations if he would give me in the first place a horse and carriage and driver, to see what I could of the city, and the temple now building, and after that to answer all my questions which he might not consider impertinent. Mr.

⁴⁸³ This is a shortened version of one printed in *Florida Herald*, St. Augustine, Florida, November 12, 1844.

Marks very readily expressed willingness to aid me in my inquiries, and instead of sending his son, went with me himself.

Although the dusk of the evening was rapidly coming on, I soon saw that I was in a city. I had not before by any means acquired an adequate idea of the extent and population of the city of Nauvoo, nor the size, style, and superior workmanship of the Temple, so far as it is advanced, and determined to look at the whole by daylight, I returned to the hotel. I was introduced during the evening to Mrs. Joseph Smith senior, mother of Joe, and talked with her unreservedly of the affairs of the Mormons, and of the horrid act which resulted in the death of two affectionate sons, on whom she had for a long time leaned for support. Mrs. Smith was born in Montague, Massachusetts, is 63 years old, and her maiden name was Lucy Mack.—Her father kept for several years the tavern in Montague, known afterwards as the “Gunn Tavern,” and afterwards kept a public house in Keene, N.H. She, also for a time, before her marriage, lived with a relation in South Hadley, and when she found that I was familiar with the place where she had lived half a century ago, she expressed great satisfaction, and made many inquiries about persons, some of whom are now living. I gave her all the information in my power, and she became so engaged that she was unwilling to suspend her conversation when it became time to retire for the night.

This morning, Mr. Marks took his horse and wagon quite early, and carried me again to the Temple, and quite to the rear of the city. I saw and talked with the architect, who showed me all the drawings and plans of the Temple, and explained them as much as I had time to spare. I also saw and conversed with several of the workmen, and particularly with the stone-cutters and sculptors, and mounted the ladder and went on to the topmost part where they were laying the walls, and after all, I do not feel competent to give you an intelligible description, but will do the best I can.

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I will in the first place say that the ground plot has no rival for beauty and eligibility for the site of a city in any other town on the Mississippi river, and I have seen no spot that resembles it near as much as the ground on which the city of Washington is built. The river at the northern end takes a sweep, and by the time it gets to the lower part of the city it describes an ellipsis.—The front on the flat alluvial part embraces perhaps one third of the city, contains the principal part of the stores and the most of the public houses. This embraces Main street, which is a broad avenue 1 ½ miles long, and several parallel streets, and others crossing them at right angles. The city then rises an easy grade to the level of the prairies, say 150 feet above the river. On this elevation the Temple is situated, and shows to the very best advantage; back of this the city still extends at least a mile, and the whole comprises an area of perhaps ten square miles.

You will not suppose that all this ground is compactly built upon, yet it is nearly as closely built as the great city I am comparing it with, and one that may be called a “city of distances,”—with this difference, that at the rate the city of Nauvoo has progressed for five years passed, it will very soon go ahead of its “illustrious predecessor” in the number and compactness of its population. The buildings are in general well built, and a good portion of brick or stone: some of them are capacious and costly.

The Temple is situated relatively much as the City Hall is in Washington, and is a magnificent structure, so far as it is advanced. It is 128 feet long 88 feet wide, and the walls 57 feet high. The materials are white limestones, which are quarried on their own ground, within a convenient distance. There are 30 pilasters projecting about fifteen inches from the walls, the cases of which are wrought to represent the rising moon in its first quarter, and the capitals which measured six feet high and six feet wide at the top, represent the meridian sun, the whole executed in the most elaborate style, and indeed the

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workmanship throughout is as well done as anything in the United States. I speak with confidence, for I have been and examined all the best specimens of stone cutting and masonry in the country.

There are to be circular windows between each pilaster and midway between the upper and lower story windows, so finished as to represent steers. The whole is to be surmounted by a splendid dome. In the basement is the baptismal font, 18 feet long by 10 feet wide, standing on the backs of 12 oxen—4 looking south, 4 north, 2 east and 2 west. These are very handsomely carved of wood. I should not have known the nature of the material, if some lawless rascals had not defaced them by breaking off parts of the horns, &c. Two of the walls are now up for the roof, and the work is going on with great vigor. There are on the Temple and in the quarry 140 men employed, besides numerous teams! Mr. William Weeks, a native of Martha's Vineyard, is the Architect, from whose kindness I had most of the statements I have made.

Nauvoo contains 10,000 inhabitants, and has an organized military force of 4,000 armed men. There have been within a year at least 12,000 people residing within the city.

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St. Louis Reveille, St. Louis, Missouri, July 6, 1844.⁴⁸⁴

THE MORMON TEMPLE

One of the editors of the *St. Louis Reveille*, having lately visited Nauvoo, thus speaks of the new Mormon temple:

“The system upon which this temple has been building, is the exaction of labor every tenth day from every man who cannot purchase his exemption from the task with money. It will be, if ever finished, a very imposing edifice. It stands in a high commanding position, a prominent object, riveting the stranger’s eye at once; and, upon near inspection, the style of architecture is found to be more than commonly attractive, from its singularity. It is like nothing else; and, unless we may

⁴⁸⁴ Reprinted in: *Louisville Daily Journal*, Louisville, Kentucky, July 12, 1844; *Daily Picayune*, New Orleans, Louisiana, July 13, 1844; *United States Gazette*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 17, 1844; *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, Baltimore, Maryland, July 18, 1844; *National Intelligencer*, Washington, D.C., July 18, 1844; *Daily Herald*, Newburyport, Massachusetts, July 19, 1844; *Daily Mercury*, New Bedford, Massachusetts, July 19, 1844; *Albany Evening Journal*, Albany, New York, July 20, 1844; *Daily Times*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 20, 1844; *Daily Argus*, Portland, Maine, July 20, 1844; *Southern Patriot*, Charleston, South Carolina, July 20, 1844; *Charleston Mercury*, July 22, 1844; *New York Daily Tribune*, New York, New York, July 23, 1844; *Daily Madisonian*, Washington, D.C., July 24, 1844; *Banner of Peace and Cumberland Presbyterian Advocate*, July 25, 1844; *Hartford Daily Courant*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 26, 1844; *Jamestown Journal*, Jamestown, Virginia, July 26, 1844; *Troy Times*, Troy, Ohio, July 27, 1844; *Hartford Times*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 27, 1844; *Kentucky Gazette*, July 27, 1844; *OO*, July 31, 1844; *Morning Star*, Houston, Texas, August 2, 1844; *Illinois Gazette*, Lacon, Illinois, August 3, 1844; *Telegraph and Texas Register*, Houston, Texas, August 7, 1844; *Southern Christian Advocate*, Charleston, South Carolina, August 9, 1844; *Southern Recorder*, Milledgeville, Georgia, August 13, 1844.

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be allowed to designate it as the Mormon order, it certainly has no name at all. The stone is of excellent quality, quarried in the neighborhood, and very good mechanics have been at work upon it.

The massive caps of the columns are already carved from huge blocks, showing a gigantic round human face like the broad full moon. The columns are made to rest upon crescent moons, sculptured on the face of the stone, resting with their horns down, and with a profile of eyes, nose, and mouth upon the inner curve. What idea this is meant to convey we could not learn, though the impression is irresistible that the church is built upon moonshine.

Nauvoo was, from all outward appearances, a wealthy city, but much of its economy was based on a barter system where people helped each other. Cash money was extremely hard to come by. The city was a monument to the cooperative enterprise of the people who built it and to the Prophet whom they loved. The Mormons would leave Nauvoo in 1846, just two years after Joseph and Hyrum were killed, but not until they had finished building their temple and had received the blessings of the temple rites—and not until they had time to make sufficient preparations to enable them to move west in an orderly and well organized manner. Joseph's play for time worked, but it cost him and his beloved friends dearly.

Immediate Aftermath of the Press' Burning

The city council had caused the press to be burned because it had invited and, they believed, would continue to invite, the mob

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to come into the city. Even though they sought to avert that invitation to mob violence at its fountainhead, their building a bonfire in the street in front of the building that housed the office of the *Nauvoo Expositor* did little to relieve tensions in and around Nauvoo. Now that the press was removed, many citizens of the city feared its flames would become the incident Robert F. Smith's Anti-Mormons had been waiting for. The Nauvoo apostates clearly believed the same thing. They had remained in Nauvoo until the last minute, but now they tried to get out of town as quickly as possible. Even while the press was burning in the street, the Anti-Mormons boasted of their victory. One said Joseph Smith's home would "be strung to the ground" within three weeks. Another bested him by predicting "the city would be strung to the ground within ten days."⁴⁸⁵ How firmly they believed what they were predicting may be judged by the fact that the "members of the mob" who resided in the city, immediately began "selling their houses in Nauvoo and disposing of their property."⁴⁸⁶

With the *Expositor* incident, the Mormons expressed their determination to try to protect themselves against the mob violence that the newspaper had sponsored. But at the same time, they wanted it understood that this did not indicate a pattern of aggression on their part, and they certainly had no desire to be forced to take up arms and actually defend themselves. They wanted peace, but peace would be costly, perhaps more costly than they could afford. In such a contest, where one party wants peace and the other wants war, the side with the most men, guns, and ammunition gets to choose. Up until then, that had been the Mormons, with the advantages of their city charter, legal system, and the Nauvoo Legion. But the *Signal* and the *Expositor* had

⁴⁸⁵ *History of the Church*, 6:452.

⁴⁸⁶ *History of the Church*, 6:452.

already issued the call to arms to the mob, and now if the *Expositor's* demise became the excuse the Anti-Mormons were waiting for, then the balance of military power could change. If the governor succeeded in voiding the city charter and dissolving the Nauvoo Legion, then any defensive military preparations on the part of the citizens of Nauvoo could be interpreted as a kind of insurrection. In that case, peace would come at a very high price indeed.

The fire that consumed the press is more vivid in historical memory than the newspaper's published invitation to the mob to come to the city and drive the Mormons out. Some have claimed that the destruction of the press was the last straw that broke the endurance of the non-Mormons and brought about the deaths of the Smiths. That is an oversimplification teetering on the edge of falsehood. It would be equally inaccurate to argue that the *Expositor* incident was an inconsequential event, magnified out of proportion as a contributing factor in the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. The truth lies somewhere between those two extremes.

Many historians have seen the Mormons' response to the *Expositor* as their "greatest mistake." Some have interpreted the establishment of the *Expositor* as an expression of apostate frustration rather than as a part of a larger plan to drive the Mormons from Illinois. Thus, these historians also see the destruction of the press as an unnecessary overreaction to that frustration and write of the *Expositor's* destruction by the Mormons as the major single event that "caused" the Prophet's death.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁷ One historian wrote, "The Saints never did a more unwise thing than order the destruction of the *Expositor*." [Davis, *Story of the Church*, 335]. Gayler wrote: "Thus, led by their Prophet, the Mormon inhabitants

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However, a careful look at the “instructions,” “orders,” and reports that were subsequently published in the *Warsaw Signal* show a reality very different from that. The Anti-Mormons’ reaction to the *Expositor’s* demise was too well orchestrated; the mobs gathered from Missouri and Iowa far too quickly and were too well organized; and the “orders” published in the *Signal* too carefully adhered to by the mob for any of those responses to have been spontaneous.

Prelude to the Attack on Nauvoo

The question among the mob leaders that had caused them to delay the attack until after an appropriate incident was how to make their aggression into some kind of legal action. The only part of that discussion that has been preserved was published in the *Signal*, but as the story unfolds the newspaper revealed enough information about how they did it for us to know that the question boiled down to this: Was the attack to be made by the mob under the guise of a legal posse called by Hancock County law enforcement officers and under the direction of Anti-Mormon leaders in Carthage where its chairman, Robert F. Smith, was Justice of the Peace? That option was the justification under which the mob was initially gathered, but after Governor Ford came to

of western Illinois had finally from their unwise political maneuvers, succeeded in lighting the conflagration that was in a few weeks to snuff out the life of their leader and bring disaster to their proud city” (Gayler, “A Social, Economic, and Political Study of the Mormons in Western Illinois, 1839 to 1846,” 335.)

Carthage, it was not the one under which the mob actually functioned.

The second option was to have Governor Ford activate the state militia and turn its command over to its local officers as had been done in Missouri—again, that would be Captain Robert F. Smith of the Carthage Greys. However, as we shall learn, Ford would choose to come to Carthage himself and to keep the command of the militia in his own grip. So that second option did not fully materialize either. The point is that Sharp's later writings in the *Signal* show that the first two contingencies had been thought out in advance—well before the *Expositor* published anything. Such details as how the mob would be gathered, and how the people in Hancock County would feed and otherwise look after the invading army and their horses, were already in place. Such plans require a great deal of time and coordination. Robert F. Smith's Central Corresponding Committee and the local committee chairmen had been active and efficient. So had their counterparts who were coordinating the Missouri mob. Once the plans were made and the bait laid, it was only a matter of time to see how the Mormons would react to the *Nauvoo Expositor's* belligerence, and how and by whom the occasion would be generated that would turn the attack into a legal process.

On June 11, the day after the *Expositor* press was burned, Mayor Joseph Smith issued a proclamation, which was his official instructions to the citizens of the city about how they should respond to present and future threats of mob violence. The proclamation read:

By virtue of my office as Mayor of the city of Nauvoo, I do hereby strictly enjoin it upon the municipal officers and citizens of said city to use all honorable and lawful means in their power to assist me in maintaining the public peace and common quiet of said city. As attempts have already been

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made to excite the jealousy and prejudice of the people of the surrounding country, by libels and slanderous articles upon the citizens and City Council, for the purpose of destroying the charter of said city and for the purpose of raising suspicion, wrath, and indignation among a certain class of the less honorable portion of mankind, to commit acts of violence upon the innocent and unsuspecting, in a certain newspaper called the *Nauvoo Expositor*, recently established for such purposes in said city, and which has been destroyed as a nuisance, according to the provision of the charter. I further call upon every officer, authority, and citizen to be vigilant in preventing, by wisdom the promulgation of false statements, libels, slanders, or any other malicious or evil-designed concern that may be put in operation to excite and ferment the passions of men to rebel against the rights and privileges of the city, citizens, or laws of the land; to be ready to suppress the gathering of mobs; to repel, by gentle means and noble exertion, every foul scheme of unprincipled men to disgrace and dishonor the city, or state, or any of their legally-constituted authorities; and, finally to keep the peace by being cool, considerate, virtuous, unoffending, manly, and patriotic, as the true sons of liberty ever have been, and honorably maintain the precious boon our illustrious fathers won.

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the seal of said corporation at the city of Nauvoo, this 11th day of June, 1844.

JOSEPH SMITH, Mayor.⁴⁸⁸

The concluding half of that proclamation is an important key to understanding the mind-set of the Mormon people and of their

⁴⁸⁸ *Nauvoo Neighbor*, June 12, 1844; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 6:449.

leaders. The intent was “to keep the peace by being cool, considerate, virtuous, unoffending, manly, and patriotic.”

A week later, the mayor reiterated that council to “some thousands of the brethren”⁴⁸⁹ who were gathered at the temple in Nauvoo. Joseph’s history records, “I instructed them to keep cool, and prepare their arms for defense of the city, as it was reported that a mob was collecting in Carthage and other places. I exhorted them to be quiet and make no disturbance....”⁴⁹⁰ That had been and would remain the official policy of the Church, and it was also the personal policy of most of its members. Some of the Mormons had been driven from their homes in New York, Ohio, Missouri, and would soon be driven from Illinois. Each time, they left, not willingly, but as peaceably as they were able. Mormon retaliation would not erupt into a local civil war, even when their prophet was murdered, their temple defiled, and they were expelled from Nauvoo.

Had Governor Ford believed that, or had he chosen to act on the hope it might be true, the events of the next two or three weeks would have turned out very differently.

Initial Explanation for the Burning of the *Expositor* Press

While it was true that the Mormons technically did not violate freedom of the press, it was also true that the city had just made a public bonfire out of private property. That had to be explained. Consequently, almost as soon as the decision was made by the city

⁴⁸⁹ *History of the Church*, 6:479.

⁴⁹⁰ *History of the Church*, 6:479.

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council to destroy the *Expositor* press, the Mormons turned to their own newspaper to soften its impact on public opinion by explaining their reasons. In hopes of stifling violent retaliation locally and curbing criticism nationally, John Taylor's *Nauvoo Neighbor* published an *Extra* on June 12 in which he explained why the *Expositor* was such a threat and justified the city's action against it. He also included a plea for understanding and the rationale by which the Mormons concluded they must destroy the press.

When it was printed, the *Nauvoo Neighbor Extra* was intended to settle all questions about the *Expositor*. It included the minutes of the city council meetings that decided the press was a public nuisance; it detailed accounts of the arguments presented at those meetings; and it reprinted copies of other official documents. It gave evidence to prove that the *Expositor's* backers were grossly immoral and, more important, that they had intrigued with other Anti-Mormons whose purpose was to destroy the city of Nauvoo itself—just as Far West and other Mormon communities in Missouri had been destroyed. The objective of the *Extra* was to demonstrate that the *Expositor* was a threat to the public safety and that the eradication of the newspaper press had been judiciously considered, completely warranted, and entirely within the law. The Mormons made no apologies and insisted that the paper was not destroyed in the heat of anger. The *Neighbor's* stated purpose in reporting the city council proceedings was to show how desperately intolerable their situation was and to demonstrate the legitimacy—even the rectitude—of their action by providing documentation that every step taken to silence the *Expositor* “was sanctioned by legal proceedings founded upon testimony.”⁴⁹¹

⁴⁹¹ *Nauvoo Neighbor*, June 12, 1844.

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The article in the *Extra* that was most widely republished was called "Retributive Justice." It read in part,

RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

A knot of base men, to further their wicked and malicious designs towards The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and to bolster up the intents of blacklegs and bogus-makers, and advocate the characters of murderers, established a press in this city last week, and issued a paper entitled the *Nauvoo Expositor*. The prospectus showed an intention to destroy the charter, and the paper was filled with libels and slanderous articles upon the citizens and City Council from one end to the other.

"A burnt child dreads the fire;" the Church as a body and individually has suffered till "forbearance has ceased to be a virtue; the cries and pleadings of men, women and children, with the authorities were, will you suffer that servile murderous intended paper to go on and vilify and slander the innocent inhabitants of this city, and raise another MOB to drive and plunder us again as they did in Missouri? Under these pressing cries and supplications of afflicted innocence, and in the character, dignity and honor of the corporate powers of the charter, as granted to the city of Springfield, and made and provided as a part of our charter for legislative purposes: viz. "to declare what shall be a nuisance, and to prevent and remove the same," the city council of Nauvoo, on Monday, the 10th inst. declared the establishment and *Expositor* a nuisance; and the city marshal, at the head of the police, in the evening took the press, materials and paper into the street and burnt them.

And in the name of freemen, and in the name of God, we beseech all men, who have the spirit of honor in them to cease from persecuting us, collectively or individually. Let us enjoy our religion, rights and peace, like the rest of mankind. Why start presses to destroy rights and privileges, and bring upon us

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mobs to plunder and murder? We ask no more than what belongs to us—the rights of Americans.⁴⁹²

The Mormons published it as a plea for understanding, but when the *Warsaw Signal* reprinted it, Sharp wrote as an introduction, “We take the following, from the *Extra* of the *Nauvoo Neighbor*. It shows the devils in their proper light.”⁴⁹³

On the same day, June 12, 1844, that “Retributive Justice” appeared in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, it was also printed in the *Warsaw Signal*. In 1844, type was set by hand and newspapers were printed slowly, one side of the page at a time. That June 12th issue of the *Warsaw Signal* was put together so quickly that one of the printing blocks that contained an advertisement was put into the press sideways and another upside down.

As was true with other editions of his newspapers, John Taylor sent copies of the *Extra* to other editors throughout the United States, hoping they would be moved by its rationale and

⁴⁹² *Nauvoo Neighbor, Extra*, June 10, 1844. This, and/or other portions of the *Extra* was republished or paraphrased in the following: *Morning Courier*, Louisville, Kentucky, June 17, 1844; *Weekly American Eagle*, Memphis, Tennessee, June 21, 1844; *Evansville Journal*, Evansville, Indiana, June 20, 1844; *Public Ledger and Daily Transcript*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, June 24, 1844; *Liberty Advocate*, Liberty, Mississippi, June 25, 28, 1844; *New York Daily Tribune*, New York, New York, June 25, 1844 ; *United States Gazette*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, June 25, 1844; *Albany Evening Journal*, Albany, New York, June 26, 1844; *Illinois State Register*, Springfield, Illinois, June 27, 1844; *Sangamo Journal*, Springfield, Illinois, June 27, 1844; *Evening Post*, New York, New York, July 2, 1844; *American Union*, Steubenville, Ohio, July 4, 1844; *Poughkeepsie Journal and Eagle*, Poughkeepsie, New York, July 6, 1844.

⁴⁹³ *Warsaw Signal*, June 12, 1844.

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relay its message to their own readers. Their response was mixed. Many objected to the summary action of the city council. For example, a Louisiana newspaper used the information it obtained from the *Neighbor*, but did not carry its message. Instead, it called the *Expositor's* destruction a "lawless act."⁴⁹⁴

In Galena, Illinois, the anti-Mormon editor of the *Northwestern Gazette* and *Galena Advertiser* cited the *Warsaw Signal* as the source of its information and wrote:

There is something serious in this matter, otherwise it would be laughable. Were it not lamentable to see that a band of men in this state can thus deliberately commit crime in mock accordance with the law, it would be amusing. It is evident that this state of things cannot long progress. There must be a limit and an end to all this, but where will it stop, and what will the end be?⁴⁹⁵

Notwithstanding Taylor's efforts to make his side of the story known, some editors complained they did not have the Mormon version of the story, and said they would have published parts of the Mormon accounts if they had them. For example, the editor of the *Sangamo Journal* in Springfield reported the story as he had it, but wrote that "Most of the statements we have copied on this matter came from anti-Mormon authority."⁴⁹⁶ The problem was a serious one: the U.S. mails were no longer delivering to Nauvoo, and things sent out from Nauvoo were not getting to their destination. When letters or newspapers were mailed from

⁴⁹⁴ *Richmond Compiler*, Richmond, Louisiana, July 12, 1844.

⁴⁹⁵ *Northwestern Gazette and Galena Advertiser*, Galena, Illinois, June 18, 1844.

⁴⁹⁶ *Sangamo Journal*, Springfield, Illinois, June 20, 27, 1844. See also: *New York Herald*, New York, New York, June 30, 1844.

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Nauvoo, a messenger was sent with them to St. Louis, who then put them on a boat to go to New Orleans in order to make sure they would be picked up and carried by the U.S. mails.⁴⁹⁷ Even so, some mail from Nauvoo to other towns in Illinois never arrived.

National Newspaper Response to the *Expositor*

We do not have the *Nauvoo Expositor's* mailing list, but there is sufficient evidence in various newspaper accounts to know that many editors received a copy. The *Expositor* likely used the same mailing list as Sharp's *Warsaw Signal*. Some eastern newspapers actually republished extracts from the *Expositor*, but they quoted the same things that the *Signal* had quoted, so we cannot know whether those editors were using the *Signal* or the *Expositor* as their source.

The most frequently reprinted paragraph from the *Expositor* was not one of its stories, but one of its advertisements, and it was republished as a joke. The original title was "One Cent Reward," but the reprints were often titled "Domestic Troubles," and were introduced this way:

The ladies of Nauvoo seem to come in for a full share of trouble. The following advertisement copied from the Nauvoo Expositor, shows that defection has reached the highest functionaries of the Church [Then the *Expositor's* advertisement was quoted]:

⁴⁹⁷ *History of the Church*, 6:450-451.

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One Cent Reward — Whereas, my husband, the Rt. Rev. W. H. Harrison Sagers, Esq., has left my bed and board, without cause or provocation, this is to notify the public not to harbor or trust him on my account, as I will pay no debts of his contracting. — More anon.
[signed] Lucinda Sagers.⁴⁹⁸

That advertisement is an interesting evidence that the *Expositor* was aimed at a national audience where people knew very little or nothing about the Mormon Church. There was no such thing as the office of “Rt. Rev.” in the Church’s organizational structure. Everyone around Nauvoo, and anyone who was otherwise closely associated with the Mormons would have known that. But outside of Illinois, people who were not familiar with the Mormon Church would assume that this “Rt. Rev.” was an official in the Church’s hierarchy.

A copy of the *Expositor* itself reached Philadelphia about three weeks after it was printed, but not until after accounts of its demise had already been published in the city. The editor of the *United States Gazette*, read it and reported,

⁴⁹⁸ Newspapers that quoted or paraphrased, or only described portions of the *Expositor*’s contents include; *New York Herald*, New York, New York, July 1, 1844; *Pensacola Gazette*, Pensacola, Florida, July 13, 1844; *Liberty Advocate*, Liberty, Mississippi, June 28, 1844; *Bucks County Intelligencer*, Doylestown, Pennsylvania, July 1, 1844; *Bloomington Herald*, Bloomington, Iowa, June 15, 1844, 2; *Louisville Daily Journal*, Louisville, Kentucky, June 15, 1844; *Bicknell’s Reporter-counterfeit Detector*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 2, 1844; *Charleston Courier* July 1, 1844; *Saturday Courier*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 13, 1844.

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Our readers know that the present difficulties among Joe Smith's followers in Nauvoo, came from the destruction of the press and types of a newspaper establishment in that city. We have before us the first and only number of the paper, "The Nauvoo Expositor," which contains the offensive matter that drew down upon the establishment the wrath of the city authorities. A considerable portion of the paper is occupied with what is declared to be a true exposition of the gross immoralities prevalent in Nauvoo, and the shameful conduct of Joe, and his eleven elders. We do not know when we have read such offensive details. The offences are set forth in the *Expositor*, with affidavits. Among the mentionable offences, is the setting forth of strange doctrines—that there are many gods superior to Jehovah, and he is answerable to his superiors. This blasphemy seems to be publicly taught. But we notice that the expositors had been turned out of the Church.⁴⁹⁹

The underlined "had" is in the original. It is a subtle editorial comment calling into question the credibility of the *Expositor's* accusations against the Prophet.

The response in the *United States Gazette* was typical. If the proprietors of the *Expositor* had intended their newspaper to be an effective weapon in a national anti-Mormon campaign, they were not very successful. Few eastern newspapers accepted the *Expositor's* accusations at face value. Most newspaper editors brushed it off as a local and unimportant affair. For example an editor in Maine reported:

A serious riot came off a few days since in the city of the prophet between the old and new school Mormonites which

⁴⁹⁹ *United States Gazette*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 4, 1844; reprinted in *Lewiston Gazette*, Lewistown, Pennsylvania, July 20, 1844.

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results in the destruction of the printing establishment of the *Nauvoo Expositor*, besides other revenges. It seems that a portion of the Mormons became satisfied of the bad character of their prophet, Joe Smith, abandoned him and established a new church calling themselves the Reformed Mormon Church. Between this and the old organization, a most bitter and unfriendly spirit soon arose which resulted in the establishment of a new press as the organ of the new party.⁵⁰⁰

But the more usual report was simply that “the disclosures made through it [the *Expositor*] completely enraged Joe and his supporters.”⁵⁰¹

The response John Taylor liked the most, at least, the one he published for redistribution in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, was from the *People’s Organ* in St. Louis:

⁵⁰⁰ *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, Bangor, Maine, June 28, 1844.

⁵⁰¹ That was the comment made in the *Daily Cincinnati Gazette*, Cincinnati, Ohio, June 18, and was picked up and repeated by a number of other editors. Among those were: *Daily Ohio State Journal*, Columbus, Ohio, June 20, 1844; *Western Star*, Labanon, Ohio, June 21, 1844; *Richmond Palladium*, Richmond, Indiana, June 21, 1844; *Bicknell’s Reporter-counterfeit Detector*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, June 25, 1844; *Evening Post*, New York, New York, June 25, 1844; *Weekly Ohio State Journal*, Columbus, Ohio, June 26, 1844; *Illinois State Register*, Springfield, Illinois, June 27, 1844; *Pennsylvania Argus*, Greensburgh, Pennsylvania, June 28, 1844; *Liberty Advocate*, Liberty, Mississippi, June 28, 1844; *Springfield Republican*, Springfield, Massachusetts, June 29, 1844; *Republican Compiler*, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, July 1, 1844; *Hampshire Gazette*, Northhampton, Massachusetts, July 2, 1844; *Tioga Eagle*, Wellsborough, Pennsylvania, July 3, 1844; *New Hampshire Sentinel*, Keene, New Hampshire, July 3, 1844.

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It would seem from the newspaper noise, that we are to have the scenes of Jackson County in 1838 and Caldwell county in 1838, re-enacted again at Nauvoo. It seems that a schism has been effected in the city of Zion, among the followers of the Prophet, and they are some interlopers, procured a press, and poured out their wrath upon the Prophet and his party. This wrath was highly tainted with slanderous charges against male and female, together with such noxious epithets as are calculated to stir up the blood.

The blood of the Prophet and his city dignitaries was set in motion, and by color of their law and in their municipal corporate body, made a descent upon this public nuisance, as they declared it, and totally demolished the scandalous machine, the printing press. Now, if it be true that there is a schism in the Church of the Latter-day Saints, why not let them alone to devour each other? What business have the Gentiles to interfere in the matter? Some of our squeamish editors bawled out lately about the liberty of the press. What have they to do with the liberty of the press of Nauvoo? Let the Saints settle between themselves.⁵⁰²

Other editors were disgusted by both sides of this “Mormon War.” In Buffalo, New York, an editor wrote, “We strongly suspect that the Mormons concerned in getting up and publishing the *Expositor*, in character and honesty, are about on a par with the Mormons opposed to them.”⁵⁰³ Other editors reported:

It is an outrage of more than common enormity. There is no pretense that it was committed in hot blood, it was not deplored

⁵⁰² Reprinted in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, June 26, 1844.

⁵⁰³ *Bucks County Intelligencer*, Doylestown, Pennsylvania, July 4, 1844.

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as an abuse, it is actually justified upon principle, and made to assume the aspect of a legal process.⁵⁰⁴

Another newspaper reported:

The intelligence we give today is highly interesting. Whatever may be the truth of the charges preferred against Joe and his associates, of which we have never yet seen satisfactory proof, it is certain that Joe establishes the fact that his opponents are anything but moral and virtuous men. The most revolting outrage of which we have heard was the destruction of the press and printing office. We expect to hear some very serious news from Nauvoo in a day or two. The Mormons are well armed, and we should not be surprised to hear of a very bloody encounter.⁵⁰⁵

As far as the Saints were concerned, the most pressing question about the *Expositor* was its published threat to resume mob terror against the Mormon people. Occasionally, a distant editor would pick up on that and comment. An example is the editor of the *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser* in Baltimore, Maryland. His response was to wonder at, but not necessarily challenge, the validity of the Mormon argument. He wrote:

While the Prophet is thus laboring to extend his doctrines abroad he finds difficulties to contend with at home. It seems that some of the "Saints" not satisfied with SMITH'S administration to affairs set up a newspaper at Nauvoo, which gave great annoyance to the Prophet. His mode of proceeding

⁵⁰⁴ *St. Louis Reveille*, St. Louis, Missouri June 14, 1844.

⁵⁰⁵ *New York Herald*, New York, New York, June 27, 1844.

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in the premises was summary enough, and calculated to furnish some new notions concerning the liberty of the press. He declared that the complaints of the people of Nauvoo were incessant against that servile, murderous intended paper”—that they insisted on its being stopped. &c. It is added:

Under these pressing cries and supplications of afflicted innocence, and in the character, dignity, and honor of the corporate powers of the charter, as granted to the city of Springfield, and made and provided as a part of our charter for legislative purposes, viz: “to declare what shall be a nuisance, and to prevent and remove the same,” the city council of Nauvoo on Monday, the 10th inst. declared the establishment and *Expositor* a nuisance; and the City Marshal, at the head of the police, in the evening, took the press, materials and paper into the street and burnt them.

It is difficult to say what kind of people they are whom JOE SMITH has got about him at Nauvoo; it is difficult to understand what sort of *imperium in ipse* he has established within the State of Illinois; his system of doctrines, his whole movement, in its beginning, progress and tendencies, all are difficult of comprehension. His history and that of his followers, taken throughout, exhibit a singular phenomenon—one not unworthy of note.⁵⁰⁶

In Vermont, where Joseph was born, the response to the *Expositor* was no more positive. “These people are, or have been in trouble again. A paper called the *Expositor* has started in Nauvoo by some of the sect disaffected with Joseph Smith, which pretended to expose him as a bad man.”⁵⁰⁷

These newspaper articles certainly do not show a pro-Mormon bias, but neither do they suggest that the *Expositor* incident

⁵⁰⁶ *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, Baltimore, Maryland, June 26, 1844.

⁵⁰⁷ *Caledonian*, St. Johnsbury, Vermont, July 15, 1844.

actually created anything like a national negative attitude toward the Mormons. In fact, if one takes the nation's newspapers as an indicator of the nation's opinions, one observes that after the Mormons burned the *Expositor* press, there was no increase in negative connotation or innuendo in stories published about the Mormons in American newspapers. No editor in the United States wrote that the incident changed his mind about the Mormons, nor is an evidence of such a change of attitude apparent through their publications. Not one editor indicated that he had supported the Mormons before the *Expositor* was destroyed, but now did not.

Another evidence that the *Expositor* was not taken very seriously is the fact that even though it devoted a great deal of space to accusations about polygamy and spiritual wifery, those accusations were hardly mentioned by American editors who had read that sort of thing before in the *Warsaw Signal*. With very few exceptions, the editors did not repeat those accusations to their own readers. John C. Bennett had written an exposé of spiritual wifery, but the sensationalism of that had run its course, as his Boston experience showed. More recently a "history" of the "spiritual wife doctrine" in the *Warsaw Signal* of April 24 had been ignored altogether by American editors. Not one republished it. On May 8, the *Signal* had printed a phoney "epistle" from the Mormon Twelve Apostles that was supposed to be a public acknowledgment of the notion that it was all right to marry one wife while having several other "spiritual wives" on the side. Now the *Expositor* went even further by making the Church headquarters sound like a brothel. To American newspaper editors these stories seemed to be only a replay of the old tales—and not too credible a replay at that. Notwithstanding the sensationalism that such a scandal might have stirred, after the newspapers got through reporting about Bennett, there was almost no reference to the "spiritual wife system" in eastern newspapers 1844. When the

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Expositor published its vulgar stories about Joseph Smith and his associates, American editors did not take them seriously enough to pass them on to their readers. Indeed, in some instances it appears that the vulgarity of the *Expositor* and *Signal's* accusations hurt their own credibility more than they hurt the reputation of the Mormon Church.

There was one very good reason why the eastern editors did not take the *Expositor* or the *Signal* as seriously as they might otherwise have done. That reason was the personal integrity of John Taylor, Church Apostle, and editor of the *Nauvoo Neighbor* and the *Times and Seasons*. He had consistently and conscientiously kept his readers informed about what was going on in Nauvoo and had sent copies of his newspapers to editors everywhere in the United States. The nation's newspaper editors were as aware of the Mormon's side of the stories as they were of the gossip against them.

John Taylor was occasionally criticized, of course, but in contrast to Sharp's bombastic, accusative threatening, Taylor's was a quiet, usually unruffled voice, describing his city as a miracle of enterprise on the American frontier. He told of the growth of the city; wrote of the intelligence and dignity of the Prophet and other community leaders; and reported Church affairs, conferences, and the extent and success of the Church's national and international missionary work. American editors read Taylor's and Sharp's newspapers together. The contrast must have been remarkable: one speaking of peace and progress, the other seething with hate and threats that promised "extermination." The *Expositor*, when it came, seemed to be only another version of the *Signal*. Most editors read the *Expositor* as an oddity.

Taylor was largely accepted as a credible witness of what was really happening in Nauvoo. The *Expositor* had little success in stimulating eastern editors to reprint vulgar stories about the

Mormon leaders. An excellent example of John Taylor's attitude and of his writing skills is this short statement published in the *Nauvoo Neighbor Extra* of June 19, just a few days before he accompanied Joseph and Hyrum Smith to Carthage, where they were murdered and Taylor himself was severely wounded. He wrote:

As a soft breeze on a hot day mellows the air, so does the simple truth calm the feelings of the irritated; and so we proceed to give the proceedings of the City Council relating to the removal of the *Nauvoo Expositor* as a nuisance. We have been robbed, mobbed and plundered with impunity some two or three times; and as every heart is more apt to know its own sorrows, the people of Nauvoo had ample reason, when such characters as the proprietors and abettors of the *Nauvoo Expositor* proved to be before the City Council, to be alarmed for their safety.

The men who got up the press were constantly engaged in resisting the authority or threatening something. If they were fined, an appeal was taken, but the slander went on; and when the paper came, the course and the plan to destroy the city was marked out. The destruction of the city charter and the ruin of the Saints was the all-commanding topic.

Our lives, our city, our charter and our characters are just as sacred, just as dear, and just as good as other people's; and while no friendly arm has been extended from the demolition of our press in Jackson county, Missouri, without law, to this present day, the City Council with all the law of nuisance, from Blackstone down to the Springfield charter, knowing that if they exceeded the law of the land a higher court could regulate the proceedings, abated the *Nauvoo Expositor*.

The proceedings of the Council show, as sketched out, that there was cause for alarm. The people, when they reflect, will at once say that the feelings and rights of men ought to be respected. All persons otherwise, who, without recourse to

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justice, mercy or humanity, come out with inflammatory publications, destructive resolutions, or more especially extermination, show a want of feeling a want of respect and a want of religious toleration that honorable men will deprecate among Americans as they would the pestilence, famine, or horrors of war. It cannot be that the people are so lost to virtue as to coolly go to murdering men, women and children. No; candor and common sense forbid it!⁵⁰⁸

By June 19, when that was published, mobs were already gathering around Nauvoo and the U.S. mail was neither getting in or out of the city. Probably very few American editors had a chance to read that statement before they learned of the Prophet's murder. None quoted it; nonetheless, it is typical of Taylor's work.

The Question of Freedom of the Press

Newspapers have never been a very good source for one's knowing what actually happened, and that is certainly true in this instance. One could never reconstruct the events of the *Expositor* incident from reading the newspapers that were published in the eastern United States. It is also true that those same newspapers are our best and most accurate source for ascertaining and assessing general public opinion—because the newspapers were often both the origin and the expression of their readers' opinions. When one analyzes those newspapers for that kind of information they are an excellent source of information. Indeed, except for private letters

⁵⁰⁸ *Nauvoo Neighbor Extra*, June 19, 1844.

and journals, contemporary newspapers are almost our only access to anything like a national public opinion survey about American attitudes toward the Mormons in 1844.

From the nations' newspapers one can draw the demonstrable conclusion that Americans generally, and American newspapers editors in particular, did not approve of what happened to the *Nauvoo Expositor*, but neither did they condemn it on the grounds that it was a violation in fact or in principle of freedom of the press. There is virtually no evidence to support the proposition that American anger over the issue of freedom of the press contributed at all to anything like a contemporary lack of sympathy for the Mormons or their leaders.

American newspaper editors had sharp pens and could poke them with vigor into the ideas of an opponent with whom they did not agree. They did not approve of what the Nauvoo city government had done to the *Expositor* press, but they understood that it was not a violation of freedom of the press. For example, the editor of the *Missouri Republican* did not see freedom of the press as the issue at all. Rather, for him, the right of property was the major issue. His editorial read:

A new aspect is given to the proceedings of Joe Smith and his adherents at Nauvoo, in the destruction of the printing office of the "Nauvoo Expositor," of which we give an account today.... If the authorities of Illinois had any respect for themselves—any regard for the law—any desire to protect the person and property of citizens from outrage and destruction, they would at once adopt measures to put an end to these arbitrary acts....⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁹ That introductory paragraph was also republished in: *National Intelligencer*, Washington, D.C., June 25, 1844; *Southern Patriot*,

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That was the typical reaction, and the view of the overwhelming majority of American newspaper editors.

It is in the context of that, almost unanimous attitude of newspaper editors in all parts of the United States, that the question of whether or not the Mormons actually violated freedom of the press ought to be carefully examined. If American editors had believed that the Mormons had trampled upon their most sacred constitutional right, there would have been an uproar of editorial condemnations from one end of the country to the other. The fact that there was no such uproar—hardly even a squeak—evinces that those editors understood that Mormons had not—either in law or in principle—violated the doctrine of freedom of the press. Why?

As in other states, the Illinois constitution clearly stated that freedom of the press meant that one could not prevent someone from publishing whatever he chose—that is, one could not stop a publication *before* it was published. But the publisher was legally responsible for what he put in print. Libel, for example, could not be prevented, but neither could it be tolerated after it was printed. Article 8, Section 22 of the 1818 Illinois State Constitution reads:

The printing presses shall be free to every person, who undertakes to examine the proceedings of the general assembly or of any branch of government; and no law shall ever be made to restrain the right thereof. The free communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the invaluable rights of man, and every citizen may freely speak, write, and print on any subject, being responsible for the abuse of that liberty.

Charleston, South Carolina, June 27, 1844. So, those editors also saw property rights, rather than freedom of the press, as the central issue.

That was the universal American doctrine of freedom of the press in 1844, and every American editor understood that. Many of them had received copies of the *Expositor's Prospectus*, and the prediction in the *Warsaw Signal* that the press would never be permitted to be set up in Nauvoo. Later, they would learn from the *Signal* that the press had arrived in Nauvoo without incident—thus, the first opportunity for the Mormons to have violated freedom of the press by preventing its publication had come and gone, and nothing happened. Then the editors would learn, either from the *Signal*, the *Neighbor*, or from the *Expositor* itself, that the newspaper had published its first issue, and that it was only after its publication that the city council retaliated. That was all the editors needed to know. The Mormons had not prevented the *Expositor's* first publication, but had terminated the newspaper because of what its publishers had printed. The American editors did not approve of the Mormons' response, but their disapproval was not based a belief that the Mormons had violated freedom of the press.

Most newspapers reported the destruction of the *Expositor* without comment. For example, the editor of the *Hampshire Gazette* summarized what he had read in other papers and added the following:

There is reason to fear that the people of Illinois and the subjects of Joe Smith, in Nauvoo, will have some hard fighting. Joe will not tolerate a difference of opinion in his territory. Hence, when a paper there recently propagated heretical opinions, he caused the printing establishment to be publicly destroyed. Writs were obtained by the injured party, and the officers of the County in which Nauvoo is located, arrested

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some of the rioters....⁵¹⁰

Implicit in the story is the fact that the press was destroyed after, not before, it published the “heretical opinions.” But not all newspaper accounts were as detached as that. Of those newspaper editors who editorialized against the paper’s demise. “Outrage” was the word they often used. Even so, the outrage they described was against property rights, not against freedom of the press.⁵¹¹ In Missouri the editor of the *St. Louis Democrat* published a long and angry editorial. He condemned the Mormons for violating the newspaper owners’ property rights, but, again, he did not mention that the Mormons might have violated the principle of freedom of the press.⁵¹²

There were a few exceptions. For example, in Burlington, Iowa, the outspoken Anti-Mormon editor of the *Hawk Eye*, wrote in his June 13th issue, “We learn by passengers on the New Brazil that the new printing office of the *Expositor* at Nauvoo, was totally demolished on Monday night, by order of Jo Smith. Will the people countenance such an attack on the freedom of the Press?” However, in his next issue, June 20, that editor published a lengthy editorial about the destruction of the *Expositor*, reporting both true and false versions of the events, but this time, in his accusative statements against the Mormons, he omitted any mention of freedom of the press.

My research shows that in addition to the *Hawk Eye*, only five editors, nationwide, accused the Mormons of violating freedom of the press. They were: *Morning Courier*, Louisville, Kentucky,

⁵¹⁰ *Hampshire Gazette*, Northhampton, Massachusetts, July 2, 1844.

⁵¹¹ For example, see, *Liberty Advocate*, Liberty, Mississippi, June 28, 1844.

⁵¹² *St. Louis Reveille*, St. Louis, Missouri, June 14, 1844.

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June 17, 1844; *Alton Telegraph and Democratic Review*, Alton, Illinois, June 22, 1844; *Delaware Gazette*, Wilmington, Delaware, June 28, 1844; *Lee County Democrat*, Fort Madison, Iowa, June 29, 1844; and the *Saturday Courier*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 6, 1844. In each instance the newspaper made the accusation, but made no attempt to justify that charge. Two other newspapers mentioned freedom of the press in their article about the *Expositor*, but did not actually accuse the Mormons of breaking that law. They were the *Quincy Whig*, Quincy, Illinois, June 19, 1844; and the *American & Commercial Daily Advertiser*, Baltimore, Maryland, June 26, 1844.

In stark contrast, the three most influential newspapers in the United States—*Daily Globe*⁵¹³ in Washington, D.C., the *National Intelligencer*⁵¹⁴ in Washington D.C., and the *New York Herald*⁵¹⁵ in New York City—carried stories about the *Expositor's* end, but did not even mention the issue of freedom of the press. That was the usual way the story was handled. Below are listed more than eighty newspapers from every state in the union that carried stories telling about how the *Expositor* came to its end, but did not editorialize about, or even mention a possibility that the Mormons had violated freedom of the press. Where there are two or more newspapers in the list from one city, one was usually Whig and the other Democrat, showing that both sides of the political spectrum are represented. This list is not a comprehensive one, neither is it selective, it only represents a geographical spread. The conclusion that must be drawn from the lack of accusations by these editors is the most powerful argument possible that American newspaper editors did not believe, and certainly did not accuse, Joseph and

⁵¹³*Daily Globe*, Washington, D.C., June 28, 1844.

⁵¹⁴*National Intelligencer*, Washington D.C., June 25, 1844.

⁵¹⁵*New York Herald* New York, New York July 1, 1844.

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the Mormons of violating either the principle or the law regarding freedom of the press. In fact, many American newspapers did not report the *Expositor* incident at all when it happened, but only mentioned it later in connection with the events that led up to the Prophet's murder. It would be impossible to find a more prejudicial and self-interested jury than these fellow editors—and their verdict must stand—in the action against the *Expositor*, Joseph Smith and the Mormons did not violate freedom of the press.

On the date indicated in the list below, each of those newspapers reported the demise of the *Nauvoo Expositor*, but in doing so, they did not even mention the notion that the Mormons might have violated freedom of the press:

ARKANSAS

Van Buren, Arkansas, *Arkansas Intelligencer*, June 29.

CONNECTICUT

Hartford, Connecticut, *Christian Freeman*, July 4.

Hartford, Connecticut, *Daily Times*, June 24.

Hartford, Connecticut, *Hartford Daily Courant*, June 26.

Hartford, Connecticut, *Hartford Times*, June 29.

Hartford, Connecticut, *Norwich Courier*, July 3.

FLORIDA

Pensacola, Florida, *Pensacola Gazette*, July 13.

GEORGIA

Milledgeville, Georgia, *Southern Recorder*, July 16.

ILLINOIS

Belleville, Illinois, *Belleville Advocate*, June 20.

Galena, Illinois, *North Western Gazette*, June 14, 18 .

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Springfield, Illinois, *Sangamo Journal*, June 20, 27.

INDIANA

Brookville, Indiana, *Indiana American*, June 25, 28.

Evansville, Indiana, *Evansville Journal*, June 20.

Evansville, Indiana, *Evansville Watchman*, June 20.

Richmond, Indiana, *Richmond Palladium*, June 28.

IOWA

Bloomington, Iowa, *Bloomington Herald*, June 15.

KENTUCKY

Lexington, Kentucky, *Kentucky Gazette*, June 22.

Louisville, Kentucky, *Louisville Daily Journal*, June 17.

Louisville, Kentucky, *Morning Courier*, June 17.

LOUISIANA

New Orleans, Louisiana, *New Orleans Bee*, July 1.

New Orleans, Louisiana, *Daily Picayune*, June 23.

Richmond, Louisiana, *Richmond Compiler*, July 12.

MAINE

Portland, Maine, *Daily Eastern Argus*, June 29.

MARYLAND

Baltimore, *Maryland Sun*, June 21.

MASSACHUSETTS

Boston, Massachusetts, *Boston Post*, June 24 and July 19.

Boston, Massachusetts, *Liberator*, July 5.

New Bedford, Massachusetts, *Morning Register*, June 29.

Newburyport, Massachusetts, *Daily Herald*, June 29.

Springfield, Massachusetts, *Springfield Republican*, July 6.

MICHIGAN

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Ann Arbor, Michigan, *Michigan State Journal*, July 10.
Detroit, Michigan, *Democratic Free Press*, June 26.

MISSISSIPPI

Carrolton, Mississippi, *Western Statesman*, July 13.
Port Gibson, Mississippi, *Port Gibson Herald*, April 18.

NEW YORK

Albany, New York, *Albany Evening Journal*, June 6, 26.
Buffalo, New York, *Buffalo Daily Courier and Economist*,
July 4.
Jamaica, New York, *Long Island Democrat*, July 2.
New York, New York, *New York Herald*, June 27, 30;,
1 July.
New York, New York, *Evening Post*, June 25, July 2 .
Rochester, New York, *Rochester Daily Democrat*, June 29.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Keene, New Hampshire, *New Hampshire Sentinel*, July 3.

NEW JERSEY

Plainfield, New Jersey, *Plainfield Union*, July 1.

NORTH CAROLINA

Oxford, North Carolina, *Oxford Mercury*, July 12.

OHIO

Canton, Ohio, *Ohio Repository*, July 11.
Chilliothe, Ohio, *Scioto Gazette*, July 4.
Cincinnati, Ohio, *Daily Cincinnati Gazette*, June 18, 25, 27.
Cincinnati, Ohio, *Enquirer and Message*, June 19, 27 .
Cleveland, Ohio, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 15.
Columbus, Ohio, *Daily Ohio State Journal*, June 20, 29 .
Columbus, Ohio, *Weekly Ohio State Journal*, June 26 and July 3.
Dayton, Ohio, *Dayton Journal and Advertiser*, July 2.

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Hudson, Ohio, *Ohio Observer*, June 27.
Lebanon, Ohio, *Western Star*, June 21.
Norwalk, Ohio, *Huron Reflector*, July 9.
Painesville, Ohio, *Telegraph*, July 3.

PENNSYLVANIA

Erie, Pennsylvania, *Erie Gazette*, July 11.
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, *Republican Compiler*, July 1.
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, *Adams Sentinel*, July 1.
Greensburg, Pennsylvania, *Pennsylvania Argus*, June 28.
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, *Clay Bugle*, July 4.
Montrose, Pennsylvania, *Northern Democrat*, July 1.
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, *Bicknell's Reporter*, June 25.
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, *Public Ledger*, June 24, 25; July 1.
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, *United States Gazette*, June 24-25; July 1.
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, *Pittsburgh Morning Post*, June 22.
Pottsville, Pennsylvania, *Miner's Journal*, July 6 .
Wellsborough, Pennsylvania, *Tioga Eagle*, July 3.

RHODE ISLAND

Providence, Rhode Island, *Rhode Island Country Journal*, July 4.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Anderson, South Carolina, *Anderson Gazette*, July 12.
Charleston, South Carolina, *Charleston Courier*, July 11.
Charleston, South Carolina, *Charleston Mercury*, June 28, 29.
Charleston, South Carolina, *Southern Patriot*, July 5.

TENNESSEE

Knoxville, Tennessee, *Knoxville Register*, July 10.
Lebanon, Tennessee, *Banner and Advocate*, June 27.
Memphis, Tennessee, *Weekly American Eagle*, June 21.
Nashville, Tennessee, *Nashville Whig*, June 22, 27 .

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TEXAS

Clarksville, Texas, *Northern Standard*, July 10.

Houston, Texas, *Morning Star*, July 30.

VERMONT

St. Johnsbury, Vermont, *Caledonian*, July 15.

VIRGINIA

Charleston, Virginia, *Kanawha Republican*, July 9.

Richmond, Virginia, *Richmond Whig and Public Advertiser*, July 9.

WASHINGTON D.C.,

Washington D.C., *Daily Globe*, June 28.

Washington D.C., *National Intelligencer*, June 25.

Each of the above cited newspapers reported the destruction of the *Expositor* press without mentioning the principle of freedom of the press. That is not just a list of newspapers, it is also a reasonable substitute for the legal testimony of those editors—because in law, silence is evidence of approval rather than of disapproval—that in their opinion the Mormons had not violated freedom of the press.

Since freedom of the press was not the overriding issue to the nation's newspaper editors, it could not have been considered to be all that relevant by the great majority of American people who got their information and much of their opinion from those newspaper editors.

Since there was not the remotest possibility that Joseph's action against the *Expositor* violated the constitution principle of freedom of the press, why do some historians report it did?

The first issue of the Nauvoo *Expositor* appeared June 7, 1844; the next week, the press was burned. On June 27, less than three weeks later, Joseph Smith was killed. The proximity of these

events made it easy to assert that the destruction of the *Expositor* was a major cause of his death. Many historians have accepted that assertion,⁵¹⁶ calling the destruction of the *Expositor* press “the most serious blunder committed by the Mormons,”⁵¹⁷ and arguing that “The cry that the freedom of the press was being violated, united the factions seeking the overthrow of the Saints as perhaps nothing else would have done.”⁵¹⁸ Some have also asserted that the unconstitutionality of the attack on the *Expositor* focused adverse national attention on Nauvoo and brought the Mormons into general disrepute.⁵¹⁹ These assertions are all false.

The problem was that historians who made such claims analyzed past events in terms of their own attitudes, and the

⁵¹⁶ These historians, including myself, did not set out to distort the events as we saw them, but we only saw them through the light of their own time. We brought to events in the past the attitudes of our own culture about the social significance of the idea of freedom of the press. We were wrong. What we brought with us simply clouded our vision so we could not see things as they were then, we could only see them as we expected them to be now. As a young scholar, I wrote, “The conspirators then charged that their constitutional right of freedom of the press had been violated.” When I wrote that, it seemed correct, but I have since learned that is not what happened at all, and apologize for my earlier error. See my “On to Carthage to Die,” *Improvement Era*, June 1969, 10-15.

⁵¹⁷ Gayler, “*Expositor* Affair,” 3-15; Davis, *Story of the Church*, 335.

⁵¹⁸ Berrett, *Restored Church*, 255. Also: “That he was opposed to freedom of the press was the moral justification for legal action against him and his brother.” in Kenneth W. Godfrey, “The Road to Carthage Led West,” *BYU Studies*, 8 (winter 1968):213.

⁵¹⁹ Thomas F. O’Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1957), 66-67.

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thinking of their own times. The pitfalls of trying to do that was brilliantly addressed by Professor Nick Wyatt in a paragraph that describes the difficulty of one's understanding historical biblical texts without understanding their historical context. Professor Wyatt wrote,

We tend quite unconsciously to bring our own agenda to the reading of any work of literature, a fact which has been increasingly recognized in recent "reader response" literary studies. The work does not speak to us neutrally, but interacts with the reader to produce a synthesis of the author's and reader's agendas. The result of this, which can become a problem in direct proportion to the cultural gulf between author and reader, as when the book is an ancient one like the Bible, is that we import into the book our own cosmology, our own ways of thinking about, for instance, cause and effect, history, the nature of time, the norms of human behaviour, and the very shape of the world—which are bound to be entirely different from those of the original authors. The greater the gap between the two poles of expectation, the greater the risk of a serious lack of proper communication between the two, and the greater the consequent risk that all the serious input is our own, with a swamping of the authors' own contribution. This is perhaps nowhere more prevalent than in the reading of religious texts, in which so much of the reader's concerns and values are invested.⁵²⁰

Professor Wyatt's statement is equally appropriate to a discussion about why it was difficult for American historians in the 20th century to understand that destroying a newspaper in 1844 was not a violation of freedom of the press. In our time, if an American

⁵²⁰ Wyatt, *Myths of Power*, 1.

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city made a street bonfire out of the newspaper press it would indeed be in violation of the federal constitution—but the city government of Nauvoo did not destroy the *Expositor* press in our time. If historians insist on superimposing the legal definitions of this century upon the time, actions and, attitudes of 1844, then they will never understand what happened in Nauvoo, why it happened, or how America reacted to it.

Chapter 11

June 11-18, 1844

The Charges of “Riot”

After their press was destroyed, the proprietors of the *Expositor* rushed to Carthage, the county seat, and swore out a complaint against the mayor and all members of the city council—not on charges of violating their rights of freedom of the press, and not on charges of destroying their property—but on the charge that they “did on the 10th day of June instant commit a riot at and within the county aforesaid, wherein they with force and violence broke into the office of the *Nauvoo Expositor*.”⁵²¹

The Mormons later expressed amazement at the charge. The press’s demise was actually a rather orderly affair with the police standing about to make sure no one got out of hand and no property was destroyed except the press, its type, and all copies of a forthcoming *Extra* the press had just published. These were carried from the building, the type scattered, and the press and *Extras* were burned in the street.

Another oddity was that rather than accusing the participants, the warrants were made out to arrest the mayor and the members of the city council who had not been present at the bonfire. There might have been the color of legitimacy in the accusations if they had accused the members of the city government of inciting riot,

⁵²¹ The writ is printed in *History of the Church*, 6:453-454.

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rather than actually rioting, but they chose to do the later, and accused the Prophet of something that he clearly had not done. One group of people (the marshal, *et al.*) destroyed the press, but another group of people (mayor and city council) were charged with the riot. A riot in 1844 Illinois law was defined as follows:

Sec. 117. If two or more persons actually do an unlawful act with force or violence against the person or property of another, with or without a common cause of quarrel, or even do a lawful act in a violent and tumultuous manner, the persons so offending, shall be deemed guilty of a riot, and on conviction, shall severally be fined, not exceeding two hundred dollars, or imprisoned, not exceeding six months.⁵²²

The decision to charge the mayor and the members of the city council with riot may not have been as arbitrary as it appears on the surface. We will discuss this in much detail later when we analyze the bogus treason charges against Joseph and Hyrum. Suffice it to say here that one of the stories that was receiving national attention in the newspapers that spring was that Rhode Island's elected Governor Dorr was being charged with treason against his state. Before the Rhode Island election, Dorr's party had held a nominating convention. The party in power called the convention a riot and had Dorr arrested. After that, the riot charges were used as evidence that Dorr had committed treason against his state. The whole thing was absurd. Neither Blackstone nor any other legal commentator suggested riot might be equated with treason, but riot was effectively used to provide a rhetorical, if not

⁵²² *Revised Statutes of Illinois*, Chap. XXX, Criminal Jurisprudence. Division X. Offences Against the Public Peace and Tranquillity. Sections 117, 171.

a rational, excuse for the treason charges against the governor of Rhode Island. Illinois newspapers had carried stories about Dorr, so the riot charges against the Prophet and his friends may have stemmed from his accusers' knowledge of how that had been used in Rhode Island.⁵²³

The Carthage Resolves

When word of the fire that consumed the *Expositor* press reached Carthage, its streets became alive with excitement. The riot warrants were written and a posse was formed and sent to Nauvoo to arrest many of the leaders of the Mormon community. The posse that was sent was not the anticipated huge one that could defeat the Nauvoo Legion. There needed to be a better excuse for that big one to be formed, and the excuse would be a predictable one: Joseph would find a way to avoid capture or else he would refuse to come to Carthage. The plans and directives of Robert F. Smith's Central Corresponding Committee for the mob that was already gathering in Missouri, would be published in the next day's *Signal*, but now preparations had to be made that would give that call a more credible color of propriety.

This time, unlike other times when Joseph had come to Carthage to face legal charges, it was rumored that the game was up; the Smiths would soon be apprehended, and the posse would

⁵²³ Sharp's *Warsaw Signal* ran several articles about Dorr and the constitutional troubles in Rhode Island. See, for example, January 26, 1842, February 16, 1842, April 20, 1842, May 4, 1842, July 9, 1842, July 16, 1842, July 30, 1842; Sep 17, 1842.

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bring them to Carthage, or else a larger posse would go after them. As word spread, a “public meeting” gathered to discuss what to do when the Mormon leaders arrived. Sharp’s *Warsaw Signal* later described that meeting and its proceedings in some detail, but even cloaked in the legitimacy of Sharp’s description, it displayed all the characteristics of a well-orchestrated lynch mob.

While the citizens of Carthage restively waited for the posse’s return, they passed a series of resolutions designed to provide a quasi-legal justification for their intended course of action, and to cover their ultimate objectives with a veneer of lawfulness. They would then bring into play the huge posse that was waiting in the wings. They resolved that it was their intent

to command the efforts and the services of every good citizen to put an immediate stop to the career of the mad Prophet and his demoniac coadjutors, We must not only defend ourselves from danger, but we must resolutely carry the war into the enemy’s camp,...that we hold ourselves in readiness to cooperate with our fellow citizens in this state, Missouri and Iowa to *exterminate*, utterly exterminate, the wicked and abominable Mormon leaders, the authors of our troubles,... A war of extermination should be waged, to their entire destruction, if necessary, for our protection from its adherence.⁵²⁴

⁵²⁴ *Warsaw Signal*, June 14, 19, 1844. Italics is in the original. The resolves were reprinted in: *Louisville Daily Journal*, Louisville, Kentucky, June 20, 1844; *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, Baltimore, Maryland, June 25, 1844; *New York Daily Tribune*, New York, New York, June 27, 1844; *St. Louis Era*, St. Louis, Missouri, June 15, 1844; *Liberator*, Boston, Massachusetts, June 12, 1844; *Christian Freeman*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 4, 1844; *Daily Times*, Hartford, Connecticut, June 26, 1844; *Bucks County Intelligencer*, Doylestown,

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“Every good citizen” meant anyone who would support the Anti-Mormon cause. Those who would support the Mormons, whether they were members of the Mormon Church or not, would be required to abandon their homes and leave the county. Now that the Anti-Mormons believed they had found their incident, they wasted no time in laying claim to the Mormons’ property. Another resolve read:

Resolved, that a committee of five be appointed forthwith, to notify all persons in our Township, suspected of being the tools of the Prophet, to leave immediately on pain of instant vengeance, And we do recommend the inhabitants of the adjacent townships to do the same, hereby pledging ourselves to render all the assistance they may require.⁵²⁵

Relative to the Saints in Nauvoo, the resolves left nothing unsaid. The Mormon leaders were to be captured and their followers were to be driven from their homes, businesses, and farms.

Resolved, That the time, in our opinion has arrived, when the adherents of Smith, as a body, should be driven from the surrounding settlements into Nauvoo; that the Prophet and his miscreant adherents, should then be demanded at their hands; and if not surrendered, a war of extermination should be waged, to the entire destruction, if necessary for our protection of his adherents. And we do hereby recommend this resolution to the consideration of the several townships, to the Mass Convention, to be held at Carthage; hereby pledging ourselves to aid, to the utmost the complete consummation of the object

Pennsylvania, June 29, 1844.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*

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in view, that we may thereby be utterly relieved of the alarm, anxiety and trouble to which we are now subjected,

Resolved, that every citizen arm himself, to be prepared to sustain the resolutions herein contained.⁵²⁶

Attempt to Arrest the Prophet

In Nauvoo, things proceeded about as Robert F. Smith and his fellows expected. Constable Bettisworth arrived and presented his warrant to the Mormon leaders.

After the officer got through reading the writ, I referred him to the clause in the writ—"Before me or some other justice of the peace of said county," saying, "We are ready to go to trial before Esquire Johnson or any justice in Nauvoo, according to the requirements of the writ;" but Bettisworth swore he would be damned but he would carry them to Carthage before Morrison, who issued the writ and seemed very wrathful. I asked him if he intended to break the law, for he knew the privilege of the prisoners, and they should have it. I called upon all present to witness that I then offered myself (Hyrum did the same) to go forthwith before the nearest justice of the peace, and also called upon them to witness whether the officer broke the law or not.

I felt so indignant at his abuse in depriving me of the privilege of the statute of Illinois in going before "some other justice," that I determined to take out a writ of *habeas corpus*,

⁵²⁶ *Warsaw Signal*, June 14, 19, 1844.

and signed the following petition:⁵²⁷

One cannot be sure what was happening here. There is no reason to believe that Bettisworth actually had no legal grounds for taking his prisoners to Carthage. The writ commanded the constable to bring them before a justice of the peace; it did not say to bring them before the closest justice of the peace. It was probably not the case that the law or local practice permitted the prisoners to choose which justice of the peace they wished to be taken before. One would assume the warrant would have been properly executed if Bettisworth had chosen to take the prisoners before any justice of the peace in the county, and that would include, but not be limited to, one in Carthage. So his insisting the Mormons must go with him to Carthage was probably an adherence to instruction rather than to law. It appears that neither side of the argument was technically correct.

When the prisoners were brought to the Nauvoo Municipal Court, it held a formal *habeas corpus* hearing on the question of the reason for the arrest. At the hearing the resolution of the city council declaring the *Nauvoo Expositor* a nuisance was read, and witnesses were called. (Even though there were witnesses, this was only a hearing and not a trial.) The question at hand was not whether the mayor was guilty of the crime, but whether any crime had been committed of which he might have been guilty.

The witnesses testified that the mayor and the city council had acted under proper authority and that their action did not constitute a crime. At the conclusion of the hearing, the judge found that no crime had been committed, therefore the arrests were not lawful, and he ordered the prisoners released. As we have seen several times before, the courts, especially in Nauvoo, were the

⁵²⁷ *History of the Church*, 6:454.

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first line of Mormon defense. The reason the Anti-Mormon leaders could have predicted that the small posse would not bring Joseph back to Carthage was that they knew the Prophet would appeal to the Nauvoo court. Now they truly had the incident they needed. They could claim that by misusing the Nauvoo municipal courts, Joseph had evaded arrest.⁵²⁸

Response to the Carthage Resolves

In Carthage the production had gone off without a hitch, all that was lacking now were just two items to create a perfect finale—and they accomplished those with perfect dexterity: (1) a community outcry and demand for the upcoming war, and (2) evidence of overt support from Governor Ford.

After the *habeas corpus* hearing in Nauvoo, Bettisworth and his posse had little option except to return to Carthage. When they arrived, the waiting crowd was furious that the Prophet was not coming to be “utterly exterminated.” The mass meeting resumed

⁵²⁸ *History of the Church*, 6:454-461 reprints the writs and accounts of the court proceedings. “The next day, Thursday, June 13, this procedure was repeated for each of the other persons arrested on riot charges, so all the members of the city council were also discharged.” On the legality of this action, Joseph wrote. “Hyrum [Smith] and [Joseph P.] Hoge [a candidate of U.S. Candidate for Congress] called at the office, when Hoge acknowledged the power of the Nauvoo Charter *habeas corpus*.” (*History of the Church*, 6:535.) On that matter, Governor Ford expressed a contrary view. (Ford, *History*, 264, 267.)

and passed more resolutions. One was that they “would each one arm and equip ourselves forthwith.”⁵²⁹ “Forthwith” meant “*now*.”

That call to arms issued by the Carthage resolutions was not a preparation for defense. Neither was it, in their view, a strictly local matter to be handled by local people. Extermination meant *extermination*. This would be the aggressive war for which they had prepared. It would require small arms, cannon, and many reinforcements. The governor had already sent wagon loads of arms,⁵³⁰ what remained was to get more state owned weapons, and especially more cannon. After that they would need the governor’s assistance to weaken the enemy by taking the arms away from the Nauvoo Legion—just as had been done at Far West. Both obtaining more cannon and disarming the Mormons would require the overt cooperation of Governor Ford.

To secure that cooperation, they formally resolved that they would send a deputation to Springfield to see Governor Ford and demand his interposition.⁵³¹ This interposition, it turned out, meant that the delegates would demand that Governor Ford activate the state militia and put it at the disposal of the Anti-Mormon leaders to attack Nauvoo. All evidence suggests that at this point, things were moving along just as Robert F. Smith, Thomas Sharp, William Law, and their partisans had planned. The war of extermination had begun; all they had to do was wait for the governor to act, and for the reinforcements from Missouri and Iowa to arrive.

In the East, Americans looked on with wonderment at the promises of impending bloodshed that they read in the *Warsaw Signal*. The day after Sharp published the Carthage Resolves—but

⁵²⁹ *Warsaw Signal*, June 14, 19 1844.

⁵³⁰ *Quincy Herald*, Quincy, Illinois, February 9, 1844.

⁵³¹ *Warsaw Signal*, June 14, 19, 1844.

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three full weeks before they were known to the editor of the *New York Tribune*—the editor wrote:

There are other means by which the course of the Mormons, if unlawful or destructive of the rights of others, can be restrained and punished: but even if there be no immediate legal redress, are murder, rapine, desolation, the brand of civil war hurled among those who should be friends and neighbors—are these a suitable substitute for a little time and patience? Let the citizens of Illinois look to their votes when next they approach the ballot box, and examine well for whom and for what principles they are cast, and they can restore the Government of their State to hands that will remove their grievances and reassure them in their rights, much, much more speedily than they can rebuild one log hut sacrificed to brutal war, or atone for the blood of a single human victim.⁵³²

His words, and those of others who spoke of peace would go entirely unheeded.

Thomas Sharp's Reaction to the *Expositor*

Sharp was not in Carthage, but waiting in Warsaw to publish the announcement. He already knew what had happened in Nauvoo, and he knew what should be happening in Carthage, but when the stagecoach came in that evening it brought no new news. He believed the Mormon War had actually begun but had no details that he could convey to his readers. As he waited, he poured

⁵³² *New York Daily Tribune*, New York, New York, June 28, 1844.

his exuberance, frustration, and expectations into the pages of his *Signal*. This was the issue in which he published “Retributive Justice” and prefaced it with “It shows the Devils in their proper light,” and the issue where he put a woodcut block for one of the advertisements in sideways and another in upside down.⁵³³

After the *Expositor* press was burned, one of its owners, Charles A. Foster, wrote a letter to Thomas Sharp for insertion into his newspaper. Sharp published the letter in that issue. Consistent with Sharp’s editorial policy, the letter’s intent was more to infuriate than to inform. In Foster’s words, Nauvoo’s new libel law “providing that any thing that had been published,” was subject to the new law. That, of course, was not true. Even the Nauvoo city council knew that *ex post facto* laws were unconstitutional, and there was no retroactive provision in their libel law. But as Foster described their actions, it sounded like the Mormons had found they must defy the Constitution in order to send the owners of the *Expositor* to jail.

That day’s issue of the *Signal* also shows that Joseph’s brother Hyrum was increasingly becoming as much a target for elimination as Joseph was.

***Warsaw Signal*, Wednesday, June 12, 1844.**⁵³⁴

We received the above communication by the hand of Charles A. Foster about 1 past 11 o’clock today. We have only to state,

⁵³³ *Warsaw Signal*, June 12, 1844.

⁵³⁴ The italics and other marks of emphasis are here as they are in the original.

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that this is sufficient! War and extermination is inevitable! CITIZENS ARISE, ONE and ALL!!! Can you *stand* by, and suffer such INFERNAL DEVILS! to rob men of their property and rights, without avenging them. We have no time for comment, every man will make his own. LET IT BE MADE WITH POWDER AND BALL!!!

LATER—6 o'clock, p.m. We have just learned from Carthage, that writs have been procured, and officer despatched to Nauvoo, to arrest the perpetrators of the outrage.

It is also rumored, that Joe is causing the arrest of every man in Nauvoo, who is opposed to him, and does not justify his proceeding.

By the stage driver we learn, that the press, &c., were destroyed a little after sundown, last evening.

We await the final results with anxiety. Much excitement exists; but the course determined on is to throw Joe into opposition to the Laws.

FURTHER PARTICULARS FROM NAUVOO.

We have conversed with a gentleman of undoubted veracity, who was in Nauvoo, and present in the council room at the time the ordinance to destroy the *Expositor* press was under consideration; and from him we received the following items from the speeches of Joe and Hiram Smith.

Joe became very much excited in the course of his speech, and appeared wrathful at his own followers, because of their not entering into his schemes with sufficient zeal. In giving vent to his feelings he used the following language: "If you (the people of Nauvoo) will not stick by me, and WADE TO YOUR KNEES in BLOOD for MY SAKE, you may go to HELL and be DAMNED, and I will go and build another City!"

Hiram directed his fire against the PRESS; and in relation to the editor of this paper he made use of the following language: "We had better send message to long-nosed Sharp, that if he does not look out, he might be visited with a PINCH

of SNUFF that will make him SNEEZE. At this burst of oratory the Council were convulsed with laughter.

In relation to our press he said, "If any person would go to Warsaw, boldly, in daylight, and BREAK the PRESS of the SIGNAL OFFICE with a sledge hammer, he would BEAR HIM OUT in it, if it cost him his farm. He could only be taken with a warrant, at any rate, and what GOOD will that DO?"

These extracts, will show, the Rulers of Nauvoo have doffed their saintly robes, and have come out in their true characters of HELLISH FIENDS. Yes! Hyrum, Joe &c. Are as truly Devils as though they had served an apprenticeship of half of eternity in the Infernal Pit.

And now Hyrum, in relation to your threats; we wish no better sport than you should send your minions here to destroy our press. Let them come!! We are ANXIOUS ha! As regards your threats of our person, we scorn them. We DEFY YOU and YOUR boasts! Recollect that our death will be AVENGED!!! You, Devil as you are, cannot intimidate us. We will write and publish what we please and as we please!!!

STILL LATER—11 o'clock Wednesday morning. We have kept our paper back until this hour, in order to give the result of the meeting in Carthage. The stage however brings no later news than we gave last evening. The meeting preceded no further than to send officers with process to Nauvoo. We anxiously await the result. We will not promise our readers a paper, next week; but we will issue extras on the arrival of every item of news.

The citizens of this place held a meeting last night. The right feeling was up and in our meeting, which will be held this evening, our course will be determined on, We will issue an

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extra giving the result.⁵³⁵

The *Signal* was now, above all else, a signal. It was the official means of communication between Robert F. Smith's Central Corresponding Committee and the precinct committee chairmen in other towns in Illinois, as well as to the anti-Mormons in Missouri and Iowa. In this June 12 issue, Sharp used it for exactly that purpose. Since he had not received instructions from Carthage, he could not be specific. Nevertheless, Sharp announced that the time for the invasion of Nauvoo had come.

We have one chance left. Joe will undoubtedly have the power to oppose, but if he attempts to exercise it, we will throw ourselves on our reserved rights. Justice we will have. If the law is cheated out of its efficacy and can no longer protect our persons and property, we have the consolation to know that steel and gun powder can.⁵³⁶

Sharp would follow that up two days later with an *Extra* in which he announced the exact day and time of the planned invasion.

In the communities near Nauvoo, reaction to the *Expositor* affair was immediate, violent and above all, very well-orchestrated. The *Signal* had given the signal to those who were willing to do violence against the Mormons. They could now begin to commandeer Mormon property, and act upon their intent with as much enthusiasm as they wished.

⁵³⁵ Large portions of this were reprinted in: *Public Ledger and Daily Transcript*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, June 25, 1844; *Delaware Gazette*, Wilmington, Delaware, June 28, 1844; *Arkansas Intelligencer*, Van Buren, Arkansas, June 29, 1844.

⁵³⁶ *Warsaw Signal*, June 12, 1844.

Warsaw Resolves

On June 13, the day after the mass meeting in Carthage, the people of Warsaw held a mass meeting of their own. At that meeting Sharp gave a speech that he claimed was unanimously adopted. During the speech he asserted, “the only recourse left us is to take up arms.”⁵³⁷ The Warsaw meeting passed many of the same resolves that had been passed by the mass meeting in Carthage. Their resolves indicates that either a messenger from Carthage had brought a copy to Warsaw, or else the resolutions had been worked out in advance and were used by the committees of both towns.

One of the resolutions passed by the Warsaw meeting was that they would also drive out non-Mormons they deemed to be Mormon sympathizers. This meant that if an Anti-Mormon wanted a “Mormon sympathizer’s” farm, all he had to do was make the accusation, drive the “sympathizer” off of his own property, and assume ownership. Now it was not only the citizens of Carthage who had declared open season on the Mormons, their friends, and their property; the people of Warsaw had formally done the same. When Sharp published those resolves in the *Signal*, he instructed the leaders of every community in the league to hold mass meetings to pass similar resolutions. The enthusiasm with which those towns sent parties of armed men to surround Nauvoo suggests that most of the Anti-Mormon leaders followed Sharp’s instructions.

Even though Governor Ford had already sent wagon loads of arms and ammunition from the state arsenal to Quincy with the intent that they should be used by the Anti-Mormons when the

⁵³⁷ *Warsaw Signal*, June 14, 1844.

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time came,⁵³⁸ the people of Warsaw now looked beyond the borders of Illinois to find additional arms, including cannon. A delegation from Warsaw went to St. Louis to procure “several pieces of ordinance and stand of arms” to use in the Mormon war.⁵³⁹

In Missouri, the cannon they sought were not owned by private individuals, and one did not just drop by and borrow a few cannon from some local commanding officer. If they planned to actually get “several pieces of ordinance” from one state’s militia and transport them to another state, they must have known that arrangements had already been made for them to receive the cannon from the Missouri state government. Such arrangements could only have been made with the approval of the governors of both Missouri and Illinois. So Governor Ford’s involvement in the planned invasion of Nauvoo can be traced to the time those arrangements were initiated.

Friday, June 14—The Day of the Attack is Set for “Wednesday Next.”

Before the *Expositor* was silenced, some of the instructions from Robert F. Smith’s Central Corresponding Committee through the *Signal* may have been delivered by code or innuendo, so one would have to be privy to the code in order to know what they were writing. But now, as the mob was gathering, the Committee’s

⁵³⁸ *Quincy Herald*, Quincy, Illinois, February 9, 1844.

⁵³⁹ *Public Ledger and Daily Transcript*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, June 29, 1844.

instructions in the *Signal* were published in words that were perfectly clear for everyone to read.

On June 14, Sharp published the *Extra* that contained the minutes and resolutions of the Carthage and Warsaw mass meetings. It also included the awaited instructions from Robert F. Smith's Central Corresponding Committee in Carthage:

Friday 8 o'clock. p.m. We are informed by gentlemen direct from Carthage that the citizens are ordered to assemble at their various places of rendezvous on Wednesday next.⁵⁴⁰

The places of rendezvous were Warsaw, Carthage, Green Plains, Spilman's Landing, Chili, and La Harpe.⁵⁴¹

"Wednesday next" was June 19th. The order to assemble was published on Friday, June 14th. There were only four days between the evening it came off the press and the morning when the mob was to be gathered and ready to attack. That gave the Mormons almost no time to prepare for the battle, but it gave the messengers who would take the orders to western Missouri hardly enough time to get even as far as St. Louis, and certainly not enough time to round up an army of several thousand men and bring them to Nauvoo. A simple calculation of traveling time and space imposes the conclusion that if a mob large enough to defeat the Nauvoo Legion was expected to be in place by the following Wednesday, many armed men from the more distant places were already on their way toward Nauvoo.

When the publication of the *Expositor* is seen in the context of the time and distance in which all of the events occurred, one is compelled to conclude that the apparent reaction to the *Expositor's*

⁵⁴⁰ *Warsaw Signal*, June 14, 1844.

⁵⁴¹ *Warsaw Signal*, June 16, 1844.

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demise was not a reaction at all, but that the mob actually began to gather before the press was burned, and probably before it was even published (for more details, see below). That timing gives credence to the assertion that to Law, Sharp and their associates, the *Expositor* press had been considered expendable from even before the time Law purchased it.

The city council's reactions may have been more dramatic than Law had expected, but by the time the last sparks of its fire had gone out, the *Expositor* clearly had accomplished all it had been purchased to do. That is evinced by the speed with which Carthage and Warsaw resolves spelled out the Anti-Mormon strategy that was about to be fully implemented: (1) Drive the outlying Mormons off their farms into Nauvoo. (2) Demand that Joseph and others be delivered into the hands of the mob, knowing that the Mormons would not betray their Prophet. (3) Use an arrest warrant against Joseph as the cover of legitimacy to take an armed force large enough to defeat the Legion into Nauvoo, sack the city, and expel its inhabitants from the state, or kill them. But it becomes even more apparent as one observes the time coordination between the printing of the newspaper and the initial movements of the mob.

Nauvoo Reaction to the Carthage and Warsaw Resolves

The *Nauvoo Neighbor* republished the Carthage and Warsaw resolves so that everyone in Nauvoo, the Mormon missionaries in the East, and the Saints all over the nation (if they were able to get a copy) would know how resolute the mob had become. Most of the residents of Nauvoo had already read the resolutions and the

orders published in the *Signal*.

By now, John Taylor was using his newspapers to allay the fears in the community. Still, one can feel the tension in his words as he tried to prepare the Saints for the coming invasion.

Nothing is better calculated to exalt men, than, in the midst of vexations, adversity, poverty, or passions, to use reason. The ebullitions of passion, should always be cooled by reason: then the sober second thought, brings us to reflect and wisdom directs the mind, not to the comfort and happiness on *one*, but *all*.

Under such a course of meditation, we have thought it advisable to re-publish a few of the Resolves and orders of the Carthaginians, Warsawians, &c., for the purpose of mobbing, plundering, murdering, and “*utterly exterminate*” the Latter-day Saints. Among a multitude of other belligerent and other unchristian, un-American, and very mobocratical proceedings, the following are specimens:

“*Resolved*, That we hold ourselves at all times in readiness to cooperate with our fellow-citizens in this State...to utterly exterminate; the wicked and abominable Mormon leaders, the authors of our troubles.”⁵⁴²

The Mormons prepared for their defense. Many were refugees from the mobs who had burned their homes in Far West, Hauns Mill, and other communities in Missouri. They remembered the flames, cries of anguish, and smell of blood. To them, the specter raised by these resolutions of “extermination—utter extermination”—were terrifying. There was nothing to be imagined about the horrors of an invading mob—it was all too

⁵⁴² *Nauvoo Neighbor Extra*, June 1 26, 844. The *Neighbor* also quoted more of the resolves.

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vivid on the very surface of their memories.

During these days, Joseph Smith's history shows him to me tense and ill at ease. It tells of overt threats in a swarm of rumors and of working until midnight issuing orders for the defense of the city. Every mother and father in the city was probably doing the same, staying up late, unable to sleep, battening down their homes for the coming attack, not knowing whether it would come as a bloody moment or as a prolonged siege. They were afraid. Their children could see the fear in the parents' eyes and hear it in their voices, so the children were also afraid.

The Mormons and their leaders wanted peace, but they also wanted security. They had tried to obtain both by balancing the antagonisms and ambitions of the men in both Illinois' political parties against each other, and by using every power granted in the Nauvoo City Charter to give them legal and military protection from their enemies without. But enemies within had proven more dangerous. William Law's secret society had allied itself with the Mormon-haters in Missouri and with Robert F. Smith's Anti-Mormon Party in Hancock County. Until then, the Saints had been able to survive, even prosper, notwithstanding the external pressures they felt, but when the Nauvoo apostates built a Trojan Horse within the defenses of the city to create the requisite "incident" needed to justify an invasion, then the others gathered for the kill.

The Saints understood that their safety lay only in the superior size and training of the Nauvoo Legion. But if the Anti-Mormons were able to amass from Carthage, Warsaw, and other parts of Illinois, as well as from Missouri and Iowa, a mob large enough to defeat the Legion, then there would be no safety—not even in surrender.

The most effective strategy for the leaders of the Church was to stall for time and maneuver for defense. Mormon diarists of the

period speak of their fear for themselves and their city, but also of their concern for their Prophet.

Time was the key. The Prophet Joseph had already organized the Council of Fifty and given it the assignment to find a new location in the West, and to make arrangements to move the body of the Church there. But that would take time. If Joseph were to go West with them he would have to find a way to stay alive. And if the Saints were to go West in any assemblage of order, they would have to find a way to keep the mob out of the city until preparations could be made to transport thousands of people across the Mississippi River, across the Great Plains, and to another wilderness. That could not happen if the mob attacked now, so the mob must be kept away until the Saints were ready to go. And the Saints could not be ready until after they had gathered supplies of food and clothing, and teams of oxen and horses; obtained or built the necessary equipment, including enough sturdy wagons to carry the people, supplies and farm equipment to the mountains; and until they had finished building their temple and received their endowments.

They had tried an appeal to reason and law. “Reason” had proved ineffectual. “Law” was now in Springfield in the person of the slippery governor of Illinois.

Ford was difficult for the Mormons to read and impossible to trust. He had repeatedly shown his willingness to cooperate with Joseph’s enemies in both Missouri and Illinois; he had been opposed to the Nauvoo Charter; and he had recently sent military supplies to the Anti-Mormons. However, he also depended on the Mormon vote to keep himself and his party in power—and an election was coming soon. The Mormons hoped Ford would be opposed to seeing part of his state turned into a bloody battlefield. In fact, Ford was very much opposed to it, but, as it turned out, his method of preventing it would be altogether contrary to the one the

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Mormons had wished for—he would sacrifice two brothers on the altar of a pretended peace. In the meantime, a rumor was spreading that the Mormons had gathered up the *Expositor's* lead type from the streets where they had scattered it, and the type had “been converted into bullets.”⁵⁴³

Thursday, June 13, 1844—Anti-Mormon Preparations for the Battle Scheduled for “Wednesday next”

This early in the implementation of their plans, the entire Anti-Mormon gathering was still a vigilante operation. When the delegation that had been sent to meet with Governor Ford arrived in Springfield they demanded he legalize the mobs by calling up the state militia and placing it under the control of Hancock County authorities (that translates to: under the control of Robert F. Smith and his Committee). Until that happened the mob was without any legal authority (for it had not yet been deputized as a posse), and without any purpose except to sack the Mormon city.

In Missouri, it was understood that “Wednesday next” would not just be a day of assembly, but a day when “orders were expected to be issued for a march upon Nauvoo.”⁵⁴⁴ In St. Louis excitement erupted into a kind of frenzy, as the editor of the *St. Louis Era* reported:

Great excitement prevails in Hancock, Adams, and the adjacent

⁵⁴³ *Public Ledger and Daily Transcript*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 3, 1844.

⁵⁴⁴ *Jeffersonian Republican*, Jefferson City, Missouri, June 22, 1844.

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counties of Illinois, and also in the neighboring counties in Iowa and Missouri. The whole country is preparing for action. An immediate collision of the most sanguinary character is anticipated. The same spirit seems to prevail that formerly pervaded Jackson county and the Grand river country in Missouri.⁵⁴⁵

As there were encampments at various places around Nauvoo, and they were being filled at various rates, there is no sure way one can estimate the size of the mob as it was gathering.

The following reports that Warsaw itself only mustered about 150 men, but says nothing about how many others might have been gathered there.

we learn from the officers of the Boreas that at Warsaw on Sunday, the 16th inst., there was a muster of volunteers, and that they turned out 150 men armed and equipped for war. Great excitement is said to prevail in the vicinity of Warsaw, which seems to be on the increase every day. Tomorrow [the 18th] is the day set for general rendezvous of the forces who are to aid in the arresting of Joe Smith, and unless the Executive interferes by ordering out the militia, in accordance with the wishes of the citizens, we are afraid it will not end without bloodshed.⁵⁴⁶

A correspondent of a St. Louis newspaper gave additional information:

⁵⁴⁵ *St. Louis Era*, St. Louis, Missouri, June 17, 1844.

⁵⁴⁶ *St. Louis New Era*, St. Louis, Missouri, June 17, 1844; reprinted in *Richmond Palladium*, Richmond, Indiana, June 28, 1844; *Bicknell's Reporter-counterfeit Detector*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 2, 1844.

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The force at Warsaw and Carthage is estimated at 3,000 men, but were waiting an additional force of a thousand men before they directed an attempt to serve the writs in the hands of the officer. Of course they would be ready to sustain the constituted authority, if necessary, to the extremity of making war upon Smith and his men.⁵⁴⁷

From someone in St. Louis came this private report:

The *Cincinnati Commercial* of the 22nd ult. says: We have seen a letter to a gentleman of this city dated St. Louis, 17th inst. which says, "We expect a general war in a few days with the Mormons—the citizens are under arms, and about next Wednesday they expect an attack on Nauvoo with some 2,000 men."⁵⁴⁸

The *Alton Telegraph* told its readers,

Our latest intelligence from Nauvoo is down to Tuesday evening. It is reported that about 1,000 persons were assembled, in arms, at Carthage and Warsaw, and designed making an attack upon Nauvoo on Wednesday....⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁷ *St. Louis Republican*, St. Louis, Missouri, June 25, 1844; reprinted in: *Louisville Daily Journal*, Louisville, Kentucky, June 7, 1844; *Daily Times*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 2, 1844; *Hartford Daily Courant*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 3, 1844; *Public Ledger and Daily Transcript*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 3, 1844; *Christian Freeman*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 4, 1844; *Norwich Courier*, Norwich, Connecticut, July 10, 1844; *Hartford Times*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 13, 1844.

⁵⁴⁸ *Federal Union*, Milledgeville, Georgia, July 9, 1844.

⁵⁴⁹ *Alton Telegraph*, Alton, Illinois, June 22, 1844.

On Sunday the 16th, in Nauvoo,

Brother Butler, from Bear Creek, came in and made affidavit before the Recorder that fifteen hundred Missourians were to cross the Mississippi to Warsaw the next morning, on their way to Carthage.⁵⁵⁰

The Nauvoo Legion was claimed by the *Warsaw Signal* to be 4,000 strong.⁵⁵¹ To be assured that an invading army could successfully defeat an entrenched army of that strength, the invading army would have to be at least twice or three times the size of the defending one. By Wednesday, Robert F. Smith and his Committee would need an army in place of at least 8,000 to 12,000 men from Illinois, Missouri, and Iowa. Gathering that many men from their homes and farms within the four days between the time the *Signal* published the order to assemble and Wednesday the 19th would have been virtually impossible.

Carthage and Warsaw were only two of the rendezvous sites, and there were 3,000 or 4,000 armed men there. There were also four other places where the mob had been appointed to gather, Green Plains, Spilman's Landing, Chili, and La Harpe. The editor of the *St. Louis Reveille* reported that when Governor Ford "ordered out" the militia to prepare to go into Nauvoo, he had 10,000 men under his command.⁵⁵² That would have meant that the four other rendezvous locations had only about 1,500 men in each.

Ten thousand men were more than lived in Warsaw, Carthage, and all of their environs. In order to make an army that large it

⁵⁵⁰ *History of the Church*, 6:481.

⁵⁵¹ *Warsaw Signal*, June 19, 1844.

⁵⁵² *St. Louis Reveille*, St. Louis, Missouri, June 25, 1844; reprinted in *Christian Freeman*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 11, 1844.

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would have required the participation of a great many men from places other than just Hancock County.

As early as February, the *St Louis Era* had promised, “If the authorities of Illinois will say the word, they will get volunteers enough from Western Missouri, to quiet the Mormons at Nauvoo.”⁵⁵³ That promise was now being fulfilled, but it would have taken a lot of time to get the message from St. Louis to Independence (Jackson County is on the western edge of Missouri), or if not by boat, if a messenger traveled on horseback, overland from Warsaw, across Missouri, all the way to Independence. And when the messengers arrived, it would take more time still, to make arrangements and then to transport the men across Missouri, or up the river, and to the places they were supposed to rendezvous in Illinois.

It took about three days to get word from Warsaw down river by boat to St. Louis. It took longer to return because the boats had to go upstream. But the Committee had only allowed four days between the publication of their order and the Wednesday when the men were to be on site and ready for battle. In that four days their south and west bound couriers had to get the news to St. Louis, and western Missouri, while others would carry it throughout the rest of Missouri, Illinois, and Iowa; gather the men, have the mob organized and fully assembled in their designated places around Nauvoo by that Wednesday. That would have taken many messengers and a carefully planned and coordinated effort. But even so, the time restraint would have made it impossible to accomplish.

The impossibility of that task—those simple facts of time and distance—imposes upon us one obvious conclusion: Inasmuch as the people in western Missouri and elsewhere did learn about the

⁵⁵³ *St. Louis Era*, St. Louis, Missouri, February 24, 1844.

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assembly of the mob in Illinois in time for them to arrive on the appointed Wednesday, the messengers must have been sent to them sometime before the order was published in the *Signal*—realistically, several days before the Mormons burned the press, and more probably even before the *Expositor* published its first issue.

The complexity of the necessary preparations, the problems of communication in time and distance, and the effectiveness with which the plans were carried out, belie any notion that the mob uprising was a spontaneous reaction to the burning of the *Expositor* press, or that the destruction of the *Expositor* was anything like the “cause” of the gathering of the mob, or of the death of Joseph Smith. When one considers the events of those few days, this is what one sees:

- June 7, The *Expositor* was published.
- June 10, The press was burned.
- June 11, A mass meeting was held at Carthage.
- June 12, Joseph and others were arrested, then released by Nauvoo courts so that Constable Bettisworth returned to Carthage without his prisoners.
- June 14, *Warsaw Signal* relayed orders from Carthage that the mob was to be in place and ready to attack by “Wednesday next.”
- June 19, By this “Wednesday next,” thousands of armed men from Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri had arrived at their assigned rendezvous places and were prepared for battle.

On Monday the 17th (only three days after the order was published, but about the same time the first word of the order reached St. Louis) the *St. Louis Republican* printed this very significant report.

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Our intelligence from the seat of the disturbances at Nauvoo, is down to Friday night last. We learn by the *Die Vernon*, that great excitement existed in all the counties, on both sides of the river, and that a resort to arms was inevitable. The *Die Vernon* on her last trip, took about sixty stand of arms from Quincy to Warsaw, and efforts were making to get arms from other quarters. A week or two will determine the result of this movement....

The *Hibernia* brings information, that the people, who are rapidly concentrating for that purpose, would move to an attack upon Nauvoo on Wednesday next a patrol was kept at Warsaw, and all suspicious persons were arrested.⁵⁵⁴

The significance of that report is that it reveals a time sequence that shows the mob had begun to gather before the Mormons burned the *Expositor* press. Only three days had passed—only enough time for the news to get to St. Louis—but already there was organized excitement in “all the counties, on both sides of the river,” and of people “rapidly concentrating” to attack Nauvoo, at the same time it learned of the order to assemble. For that to be true, those people who were already on their way to Nauvoo must have been following orders that predated the one published in the *Signal*. That fact accounts for the wording and the brevity of the *Signal*’s order.

The only way it all adds up, is if the “order” relayed in the *Signal* was not so much a call to arms as it was last minute organizational directions to the mob that had already begun to gather. And the direction was, precisely what Sharp said it was:

⁵⁵⁴ This was reprinted in the *Pittsburgh Christian Advocate*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, July 3, 1844. It added, “Preparations are making throughout the county, for the coming contest.”

“the citizens are ordered to assemble at their various places of rendezvous on Wednesday next.”

If the original order for the men in the various states to make the necessary preparations and begin their journey to Nauvoo, had gone out from Carthage on horseback or by boat on June 7th (the day the *Expositor* was published), that would have allowed only 12 days to notify, organize, and transport them by horseback or by boat—upstream—to the towns surrounding Nauvoo. It was summer time; arrangements had to be made to leave their farms; the weather was dreadful; roads were muddy; travel was slow. Twelve days might have been enough time to summon and receive men who were already prepared to come, but even that would have been cutting it too close.

The most likely scenario is that the call to arms was not timed in conjunction with the *Expositor's* publication—but that the *Expositor's* publication was timed in conjunction with the call to arms—that is, that the call to attack Nauvoo went out before, not after, the *Expositor* published its first issue.

Sunday, June 16

In the Mormon capital, tensions sizzled as its inhabitants learned of an ever-growing army of angry men joining those who were already camped and maneuvering around the towns and in the countryside.

On Sunday the Saints gathered as usual near the temple where a hillside was used as a kind of amphitheater. The Prophet delivered what would be the last sermon of his lifetime. Joseph told them of his love for them, and he gave them a key to help

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them plumb into the depths of their own religion. He told them about the nature of the Godhead, observing that the Hebrew word *Elohim* is plural, that it is both the proper name of our Father in Heaven, and it also refers to the members of the pre-mortal council of gods.⁵⁵⁵ (Mormons accepted his statements as truth, just as they accepted all else he told them, but it would be almost a hundred years before the renowned Norwegian Christian scholar Sigmund Mowinckel would begin to explain why it was so. It was he, more than anyone else who first unlocked the mysteries of the lost and theretofore unknown temple worship and theology of ancient Israel before the Babylonian captivity. Mowinckel used the Psalms and Isaiah to explain why it was important that the word *Elohim* was the name of the Father and King of Heaven; and also, that the same word, when used in its ordinary plural sense, referred to the gods who made up the Council in Heaven over which Jehovah presided in the pre-mortal existence.⁵⁵⁶) The Saints who attended worship services in Nauvoo on that fateful Sunday heard one of the most profound public discourses Joseph ever delivered.

That same Sunday, Illinois Circuit Judge Jesse B. Thomas came to Nauvoo. He advised the mayor “to go before some justice of the peace of the county” on the “riot” charges, “it would allay all excitement, answer the law and cut off all legal pretext for a mob, and he [the judge] would be bound to order them to keep the peace.”⁵⁵⁷ Judge Thomas’ rationale was based on Article 8, sec. 11 of the Illinois Constitution. It provided that “No person shall, for the same offence, be twice put in jeopardy of his life or limb....” So if there were a trial in Nauvoo where Joseph and the others were

⁵⁵⁵ *History of the Church*, 6:473-479.

⁵⁵⁶ Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, and *He That Cometh*.

⁵⁵⁷ Sunday, June 16, *History of the Church*, 6:479.

tried for “riot,” then they could not be forced to be tried a second time in Carthage on those same charges. This would be different from the maneuver Joseph had used before. Earlier he had gone to court to prove that no crime had been committed, and thereby avoided having to go elsewhere to be tried in an unfriendly court. If Joseph followed the judge’s instructions and were found innocent, the Illinois Constitution guaranteed that he could not be taken to Carthage to be tried for riot a second time.

That Sunday afternoon, Joseph wrote an urgent letter to Governor Ford. He expressed his fears about the gathering mob and the public meeting that had been held in Carthage. In this letter Lieutenant-General Smith turned the command of the Legion over to his commander-in-chief, Governor Ford, if he wished to assume the command. Joseph wrote:

The Nauvoo Legion is at your service to quell all insurrection and support the dignity of the common weal.

I wish, urgently wish your Excellency to come down in person with your staff and investigate the whole matter without delay, and cause peace to be restored to the country; and I know not but this will be the only means of stopping an effusion of blood.⁵⁵⁸

Ford never acknowledged that he received Joseph’s letter.

⁵⁵⁸ *History of the Church*, 6:480.

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Monday, June 17

On Monday, Stephan Markham showed Joseph reports that the “mob may be expected to make an immediate attack upon the citizens at the various precincts, and threats to exterminate the Later-day Saints.”⁵⁵⁹ But Markham was not the only one to deliver such ominous reports. Joseph’s diary records, “I directed my clerk, Thomas Bullock, to remain in the Masonic Hall and take affidavits of the men who are constantly coming in with news of the movements of the mob and preserve copies to forward to the governor.”⁵⁶⁰

Many of these affidavits are published in the documentary *History of the Church*. Each tells its own story. There were guns and ammunition being unloaded from boats at Warsaw, and great numbers of men coming from Missouri to finish what they had started there. Some were organized as Missouri state militias, others were not.

The situation would have been frightening enough on its own, but it came in tandem with other reminders of what had happened in Missouri. Then, the Mormons who were living on isolated farms were most vulnerable. Now they were again. The marauders would set fire to their hay stacks and barns. When the Mormon men came out of their homes to put out the fires, the looters would shoot them, or sometimes capture, torture, and hang them while their wives and children were forced to watch by the light of their burning homes.

Then, families had fled to Far West for protection but their flight had not been to safety. Far West was also looted and burned.

⁵⁵⁹ *History of the Church*, 6:492.

⁵⁶⁰ *History of the Church*, 6:494.

Its inhabitants killed, imprisoned, or forced out to fend for themselves without food or shelter in the freezing wind and snow of that dreadful winter. Now it was happening all over again, like a replay of their recurring nightmares. In a systematic terrorism, the Saints on isolated farms were being killed or driven away from their property.⁵⁶¹ Those who could, fled to Nauvoo where they found refuge, but the Saints there could do nothing to help them recover their property. What might happen next was terrifying to think about. The Saints at Nauvoo were tired of running, unwilling to fight except to defend themselves, and afraid to stay. The entire city was afraid. For the most part, their fear came from a combination of what they knew, and what they knew they did not know. And the fear was greatly augmented by incidents like this one:

A Great deal of hostility, we are told, had been manifested by the people of Warsaw against the steamer Osprey, on the alleged charge of rendering assistance to the Mormons. They desired to search the steamer as she lay at the landing, and Captain Anderson objecting, they brought cannon to bear upon her unless the search was allowed. Capt. Anderson, of course unprepared for resistance, permitted the search, what the result of the same was, we are not able to learn. The Osprey, however, shortly after, resumed her course up to Bloomington.⁵⁶²

⁵⁶¹ *History of the Church*, 6:481-482, 505-518.

⁵⁶² *St. Louis Reveille*, St. Louis, Missouri, June 25, 1844; reprinted in *Christian Freeman*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 11, 1844; *Rochester Daily Democrat*, Rochester, New York, July 4, 1844.

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On Monday, June 17, following the suggestion of Judge Thomas,⁵⁶³ Mayor Joseph Smith and the accused members of the city council were arrested

on a writ issued by Daniel H. Wells, on complaint of W. G. Ware, for a riot on the 10th inst. in destroying the *Nauvoo Expositor* press. At 2 p.m. we went before Justice Wells at his house; and after a long and close examination we were discharged.⁵⁶⁴

Daniel H. Wells was not a Mormon, but would later join the Church and become a Counselor to President Brigham Young. At the trial, Joseph and the others were tried for riot and found innocent. That should have precluded their being forced to go to Carthage to be tried for the same crime a second time.

While legal maneuvers were being performed in Nauvoo to keep the Smiths out of the hands of their enemies, the delegates from Carthage arrived at Springfield to meet with Governor Ford. They were not evasive about their demands. They wanted war. They were determined to attack Nauvoo and drive the Mormons from the state, and they demanded that Ford place the state militia and its arsenal at their disposal to support them in that attack. They

⁵⁶³Joseph's history says that Judge Thomas had advised him "to go before some justice of the peace of the county." Nauvoo was in the county, and Joseph understood him to mean that. However, the way the history reads leaves open the possibility that the judge was recommending that Joseph and the others be tried outside of Nauvoo. (*History of the Church*, 6:479.)

⁵⁶⁴Monday, June 17, reported in *Nauvoo Neighbor*, June 19, 1844. Reprinted in *History of the Church*, 6:487-491. This appears to have been a preliminary hearing rather than an actual trial. At its conclusion the prisoners were discharged, not acquitted.

wanted the very thing the *Expositor* had threatened, that is, in Ford's words, that the state militia be "ordered out to assist in executing process in the city of Nauvoo."⁵⁶⁵

Because Governor Ford was commander-in-chief of the state militia, the final decision was his.⁵⁶⁶ He had three options: (1) He could do nothing and let justice of the peace Robert F. Smith deputize the entire mob to go into Nauvoo to arrest Joseph Smith; (2) he could activate the militia groups that were gathered around Nauvoo, and turn their command over to their local officers—i.e. to Captain Robert F. Smith and the other militia officers; or (3) he could activate the militia and go to Carthage and take command himself. He did the latter. Later he wrote that he was not willing to acquiesce to their demands and call up the militia immediately. Rather, he would travel to Carthage and see for himself what was going on before he did so. When we examine his published statement, we will discover that it is only partly true.

Tuesday, June 18, 1844—Martial Law

On Tuesday, June 18, Joseph Smith declared martial law. That was the day before the "Wednesday next" invasion was scheduled to begin. By then enough armed men had gathered around Nauvoo that they were confident they could defeat the Nauvoo Legion. Joseph H. Jackson was heard to say,

that they (the mob) were coming to Nauvoo with a sufficient

⁵⁶⁵ Ford, *History*, 227.

⁵⁶⁶ 1818 Illinois Constitution, Article III, Sec. 10.

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force to take Smith; and if the people endeavored to prevent them, they should kill the people; and that if Smith had left Nauvoo, they had determined to destroy the Mansion and other buildings.⁵⁶⁷

Nauvoo was an extraordinary city for any time and place, but especially so in this rugged American frontier. It was a community in the most classic sense of the word. There were exceptions of course—dangerous exceptions just now—but for the most part the inhabitants of the city were bound together by three very powerful forces. The first was their personal, individual conviction that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was in fact The Church of Jesus Christ. The second was that they had moved to this city because God was calling his elect from all over the world to gather at this place—because the call was divine, because the people were good, and because the city and its temple were sacred space. And third, they loved—truly loved, not an admiration or even a fascination—the Prophet Joseph Smith, and he loved them, and they knew it.

The Mormon diaries and letters of that time testify of it. That love spilled over to their feelings for others in the community whom Joseph also loved. That mutual charity has always been the single most internally obvious characteristic of the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but now, bolstered by the need to defend themselves and each other, it took on a new dimension—the determination to help each other and their Prophet survive, and to fight if necessary. Still it was a controlled determination, tempered with the resolution to obey “the brethren,” and sacrifice whatever they must.

For the people within the city who were under siege, Joseph’s

⁵⁶⁷ *History of the Church*, 6:503.

declaration of martial law formalized their mutual support; it gave each man a sense of place in the city's defenses; and it helped alleviate the fear. The city was not as vulnerable as their enemies might have hoped.

Joseph could have organized them into neighborhood watches or vigilantes, but that was neither necessary nor appropriate. Virtually every man in the city already belonged to a well structured, well disciplined company of the state militia, and each was determined to protect the city. All he had to do was mobilize the Nauvoo Legion of which he was commander, keep it in a state of alert, and give the Nauvoo Legion full authority to act by placing the government of the city in its hands.

If before he declared martial law, he consulted Blackstone, he would have found no rules about how martial law should be conducted.⁵⁶⁸ If he had consulted either of the other two most popular American commentaries, Kinne's *Law Compendium* or Kent's *Commentaries on American Law*, he would have found nothing. Neither mentioned martial law at all.

Martial law is the temporary replacement of civilian government by military authority. It is a necessary police power to be put in place only during the time of an emergency when the civil authorities are unable to exercise sufficient control to keep the peace.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁸ Blackstone mentions martial law, but only briefly. *Blackstone's Commentaries*, 2:413.

⁵⁶⁹ For example, a few years ago when severe floods and mud slides in a heavily populated part of the California hill country forced people to leave their homes, the governor activated the national guard. The guard evacuated people, gave and enforced strict instructions about behavior, and patrolled to prevent looting. In that case the national guard became the area's temporary government of that part of California. The

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Martial law was not mentioned in the Federal Constitution or defined by federal statute. Neither was it mentioned in the Illinois constitution or defined by Illinois statute.⁵⁷⁰ It is based on ancient precedent, established by English Common Law.

In Nauvoo, Joseph's declaration of martial law was the most efficient possible way of mobilizing all of its citizens and preparing the people for the pending attack. By his activating the Nauvoo Legion, virtually every man in the city became a part of its formal defense system. That meant that when the Wednesday attack came, there would be no chaos in the city's defenses: every man would know his chain of command, and the defense of the city could be achieved with maximum efficiency.

Except for the formal structure of the defense system, the declaration of martial law made very little difference in the affairs of the city. By declaring martial law, Mayor Joseph Smith simply turned civil authority over to Lieutenant General Joseph Smith. Most of the city's civil officials were also Nauvoo Legion military officers. The same men had authority now as yesterday, only now it was in a military rather than in a civilian capacity, and the male citizens of the city had become an organized army, prepared to defend themselves against the thousands in the mob surrounding the city. With the declaration of martial law, the Prophet had placed the responsibility and legal authority for the defense of the

newspaper report I read did not say that the governor had formally declared martial law, technically it did not matter, functionally that is precisely what he had done. He placed the area under military control until the danger had passed and the military power could be withdrawn.

⁵⁷⁰ Martial law is listed in *West's Smith-Hurd Illinois, Compiled Statutes Annotated*, but the laws discussed there were all passed after 1900 and deal with what to do in case of emergencies such as natural disaster.

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city into the well organized hands of virtually every adult male member of the community. Joseph's history for Tuesday, June 18th reads:

About 1:45 p.m. I proclaimed the city under martial law, and caused the following orders to be issued from the Mayor's office:

DECLARATION OF MARTIAL LAW.

Proclamation

Mayor's Office, City of Nauvoo,

June 18th, 1844.

To the Marshal of the City of Nauvoo:

From the newspapers around us, and the current reports as brought in from the surrounding country, I have good reason to fear that a mob is organizing to come upon this city, and plunder and destroy said city, as well as murder the citizens; and by virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor, and to preserve the city and the lives of the citizens, I do hereby declare the said city, within the limits of its incorporation, under martial law. The officers, therefore, of the Nauvoo Legion, the police as well as all others, will strictly see that no persons or property pass in or out of the city without due orders.⁵⁷¹

"Tomorrow" would be the fateful "Wednesday next" when the mob would be marshaled at the appointed places awaiting orders from Robert F. Smith and his Central Corresponding Committee to begin the bloody process of "utterly exterminating" the citizens of Nauvoo. The attack itself might come that morning or later in the day, but the city had to be prepared. The first step in that

⁵⁷¹ *History of the Church*, 6:497.

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preparation had been to declare martial law. The next step would be to assemble the men and give them encouragement and instructions. Therefore, Lieutenant General Joseph Smith ordered the Nauvoo Legion to assemble.

The Nauvoo Legion was atypical in its size, but not in its makeup. Following their commander's orders, almost every man in the city put on his uniform, picked up his weapon, and went to hear what their Prophet had to say.

Governor Ford later tried to claim that Joseph's declaration of martial law and his speech before the assembled Legion constituted an act of treason against the state. When we discuss the treason charges, I will show that Ford's claim had no foundation in either law or precedent. He made it up. His assertion was simply an attempt at self-justification. That needs to be pointed out here because since Ford's time some historians have accepted Ford's fallacious reasoning and have made the same accusations he made.

Joseph was commander of the Nauvoo Legion and had called it into assembly many times before. This time, the troop's assembly was as legal as the others had been, and there was nothing about it that could be construed as treasonous. If the assembly is seen as a militia assembly (which it was), the commander of the Nauvoo Legion had the right to assemble his troops whenever he chose. If the assembly is seen as an assembly of citizens, the Illinois constitution provided "that the people have a right to assemble together in peaceable manner to consult for their common good..."—which was precisely why they had gathered. Either way, there was nothing in this assembly that could reasonably be construed as anything like an act of treason.

There was a not-so-obvious advantage in assembling the troops. That is, not everyone in the city was friendly to the Mormons. There were spies about. Some could be identified by name, others could not. Perhaps those spies would report the

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Legion's assembly and its show of force. Perhaps this display of readiness might help defer action on the part of the mob until some peace accord could be reached. A show of force is not only the best way to prepare for a defensive war, it is also the best way to avoid having to fight one. If that was part of its purpose, it succeeded. The members of the mob had come to kill and plunder, but they had not come to get themselves hurt or killed.

General Joseph Smith was in full dress uniform when he stood on the platform and addressed his troops. Literally the entire city had turned out to hear him. The men were armed and standing in ranks. The women and children were also present. As he spoke to them, he reviewed the events of the last few days, asserting that neither he nor the members of the city council had broken any law, and that they would be acquitted if they could be brought before any unbiased court. He continued:

We are American citizens. We live upon a soil for the liberties of which our fathers periled their lives and spilt their blood upon the battlefield. Those rights so dearly purchased, shall not be disgracefully trodden under foot by lawless marauders without at least a noble effort on our part to sustain our liberties.

Will you all stand by me to the death, and sustain at the peril of your lives, the laws of our country, and the liberties and privileges which our fathers have transmitted unto us, sealed with their sacred blood? ("Aye!" shouted thousands.) He then said, "It is well."

Shortly thereafter, Joseph Smith drew his sword and said to the assembled men,

I call God and angels to witness that I have unsheathed my sword with a firm and unalterable determination that this people shall have their legal rights, and be protected from mob

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violence, or my blood shall be spilt upon the ground like water, and my body consigned to the silent tomb....

I do not regard my own life. I am ready to be offered a sacrifice for this people; for what can our enemies do? Only kill the body, and their power is then at an end. Stand firm, my friends; never flinch. Do not seek to save your lives, for he that is afraid to die for the truth, will lose eternal life. Hold out to the end, and we shall be resurrected and become like Gods, and reign in celestial kingdoms, principalities, and eternal dominions, while this cursed mob will sink to hell, the portion of all those who shed innocent blood.

God has tried you. You are a good people; therefore I love you with all my heart. Greater love hath no man than that he should lay down his life for his friends. You have stood by me in the hour of trouble, and I am willing to sacrifice my life for your preservation.

May the Lord God of Israel bless you for ever and ever. I say it in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, and in the authority of the Holy Priesthood, which He hath conferred upon me.

(The people said "Amen.")⁵⁷²

Some historians who have sought to discover an instance of treason to justify the accusations for which Joseph and Hyrum were held in Carthage jail have claimed that General Smith's speech was that act of treason. Such assertions are beyond the limits of legal possibility:

A mere conspiracy to overthrow the government, or an intention to commit treason, is not alone, without an overt act to carry out such traitorous intention, sufficient to complete the crime of treason. An overt act is one which manifests a criminal intention and tends toward the accomplishment of the

⁵⁷² *History of the Church*, 6:498-500.

criminal object. It must be of a character susceptible of clear proof and not resting in mere inference or conjecture. Words, so long as mere words, will not constitute an overt act of treason, but they may be part of a treasonable act. The acceptance of a commission in a traitorous army is not a sufficient overt act, there must be an attempt to act as such.⁵⁷³

There was no overt act of treason to which these historians can tie to Joseph's words, and the words alone could not be treason. As we shall discuss later, Chief Justice John Marshall's decisions in the Burr treason trials had already established precedents that precluded the possibility that anything Joseph Smith said during this assembly could reasonably have been called an act of treason.

In one's imagination, one might suppose that such an assembly of troops and such a speech might be used as evidence for treason, but in order to make that true, one would have to plug a number of additions into the story that were not actually a part of the history. For example, if, in his speech, Joseph Smith had said he intended to go to war against the state of Illinois to overthrow its government, that would *not* have been an overt act of treason. If he had marched the Nauvoo Legion to Springfield to capture the state capitol, even that would not have been treason under the then established meaning of the term. But if, while on that march, they had encountered the Illinois state militia and engaged it in battle, and if Joseph had participated in that battle against the state, then one could argue that he had met the criteria established for committing treason against the state of Illinois. Had those things happened, then any speech threatening to invade Springfield would be evidence of intent. But he did not say that and the overt act of

⁵⁷³ Mack Kiser, *Corpus Juris, Being a Complete and Systematic Statement of the Whole Body of the Law*, 815.

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treason would have been his participation in a shooting battle while trying to overthrow the state government. Nothing like that ever happened. He never made any threat to overthrow the Illinois state government. There never was an invasion of Springfield, and there never was a battle, so there never was an overt act of treason against the state of Illinois.⁵⁷⁴

The situation in Nauvoo was essentially as it was reported in Missouri by the *St. Louis New Era*.

The steamer Osprey arrived today from the upper Mississippi. She left Nauvoo yesterday. Things in the Holy city were pretty much the same condition as previously reported. We are informed by the officers of the boat that martial law was proclaimed by the city council on last Sunday, and that since then the Mormon Legion has been under arms, patrolling the streets night and day; another edict has also been issued by the same body prohibiting anyone from leaving the city under a severe penalty.⁵⁷⁵

Ford's *History* also described the situation and gave no evidence that this temporary military government in Nauvoo was

⁵⁷⁴ "(U.S. 1800) The assembling of bodies of men, armed and arrayed in a warlike manner, for purposes only of a private nature, is not treason, although the judges or other peace officers should be insulted or resisted, or even great outrages committed to the persons or property of citizens. In re Fries, Fed. Cas. No 5,127" quoted in *Century Edition of American Digest*, 46:201. There is a famous example of its happening a few years later, just before the Civil War, when all of those things did come together. John Brown tried to create an insurrection in Virginia. He engaged in a shooting battle with the military, was captured, and hanged for treason against the state.

⁵⁷⁵ *St. Louis New Era*, St. Louis, Missouri, June 20, 1844.

used in any way against the legal powers of the state or against any portion of the state's militia. He wrote,

In the meantime Joe Smith, as Lieut.-General of the Nauvoo Legion, had declared martial law in the city; the Legion was assembled and ordered under arms; the members of it residing in the country were ordered into town. The Mormon settlements obeyed the summons of their leader and marched to his assistance. Nauvoo was one great military camp, strictly guarded and watched; and no ingress or egress was allowed except upon the strictest examination.⁵⁷⁶

“One great military camp” was an inaccurate description of a city full of women and children, whose homes and lives are threatened by a marauding mob. For the Mormons, there was only one hope left—that Governor Ford might come to their rescue—but his secret plotting against the Saints would soon become evident, and he would prove to be no hope at all.

⁵⁷⁶ Ford, *History*, 332-333.

Chapter 12

June 19-24, 1844

The Anticipated “Wednesday Next”

On Wednesday, June 19, 1844, the stage was set, and the day of the anticipated invasion of Nauvoo had arrived. The Mormons were braced for their enemies’ attack.

At Nauvoo, by the last accounts, “a bayonet bristles at every assailable point!” Boats are not permitted to tarry, nor strangers permitted to land. The Mormon force under arms is estimated at between 2,000 and 3,000 men. Nauvoo is said to be short of provisions, and an order for 250 barrels of flour for that place was filled in St. Louis. Also, eight kegs of gunpowder.⁵⁷⁷

On this day, Carthage, Warsaw, and the other towns where the mob had been instructed to assemble were abuzz with excitement and expectation. So were communities in Illinois, Missouri, and Iowa. Men from those states had come to march upon Nauvoo and sack the city.

The order never came. The reason was Joseph’s declaration of martial law, and the mob’s knowledge that the city was capable of putting up a good defense. Mobs like this are typically made up of

⁵⁷⁷ *Public Ledger and Daily Transcript*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 3, 1844.

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individual bullies, and the personality of the mob is the same as the personality of a bully. That is, they will eagerly show their manhood by picking on someone weaker than themselves. However, the Mormons were prepared to fight and if necessary die for their homes and families. The mob was prepared to kill and to loot, but not to be wounded or to die. So there was a standoff.⁵⁷⁸

Joseph's foresight in declaring martial law had saved his city—for the time being at least. Sharp understood this and in that day's *Signal* he wrote what Ford should have taken as a personal warning: "When the governor learns that Nauvoo is under Martial Law, if he does not act, there is no need for a governor."⁵⁷⁹

War Rhetoric of the *Warsaw Signal*

In Warsaw, Sharp was preparing his newspaper for the day of the paper's greatest demand and largest circulation. The people who would buy his paper were the thousands of restless men who had been promised sport and spoil at the Mormons' expense. However, that day's issue of the *Warsaw Signal* was now going to be different from what he had anticipated. This issue provided the rationale for their having gathered around Nauvoo; justification for their future action against the city; justification for their postponing the attack until a more opportune time; and hoped-for justification for their not abandoning the project and going home.

⁵⁷⁸ For an example of this action by the mob see the story of their attack on the Loveland home, *History of the Church*, 6:504-505.

⁵⁷⁹ *Warsaw Signal*, June 19, 1844.

Sharp would soon go to Carthage to participate in the culmination of events there, so this was the last major issue of the *Signal* before the Smiths were murdered. The following pages are taken from that June 19 issue of the *Signal*.⁵⁸⁰

LATEST NEWS—The *Iowa* passed down (6 o'clock Wednesday evening) and reports that she was not allowed to land her passengers at Nauvoo the city having been declared by the prophet, under Martial law.

A rumor is afloat that the Mormons have melted the type of the *Expositor* office, and converted them into bullets.

JOE'S PROCLAMATION—Joe has issued a proclamation in his usual arrogant style. He contends that no law has been violated in the destruction of the press of the *Expositor*; and concedes by warning the world that so sure as there is a God in Israel, he will ride triumphant over all oppression. Go it Joe, and we will go it too!

HA ! HA ! HA !

By the *Neighbor*, extra, we learn that a meeting was held in Nauvoo, on Sunday last, at which, a committee for each Precinct were appointed to visit them, and disabuse the public mind in relation to the late affair in Nauvoo; and to make propositions of compromise. Well, Joe you would like peace doubtlessly, but you can't come to it. We will hear none of your flummery. We are all fully convinced of your baseness;

⁵⁸⁰ The italics and other marks of emphasis are here as they are in the original. There was much in this issue that is not include here. The first page is a reprint of the Carthage and Warsaw resolutions, followed by excerpts taken from a Missouri testimony of Sampson Avard regarding the Danites. On other pages there was the testimony of a former clerk of the Circuit Court of Caldwell county, Mo., news stories, and advertisements.

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and we are right glad the time has come to get rid of you and your band. Keep your committees at home Joe. We are all well acquainted with the facts, of the case, and don't for one moment presume that you can humbug us.

We learn that Joe's committee visited Green Plains yesterday, and proposed to compromise by surrendering Joe to be tried in Nauvoo, before one of his cat's paws. Bah! Joe. Try again.

STOP THIEF

If time would allow, we would reprint about one thousand copies of the late *Nauvoo Neighbor Extra*. It is the best evidence that can possibly be procured of the rascality of the Mormons. The City Council seemed to labor hard to convince the world that the Laws, Higbees and Foster &c. are all a pack of scoundrels, counterfeiters, seducers and cut-throats, and that they knew it long ago: and yet, these same individuals, during the time the Prophet knew of their baseness held high stations in the Church and ranked amongst his conspicuous friends and supporters. Joe proves too much. If the discovery concerning these men, were a recent one, there might be a shadow of excuse for his present abuse of them, but according to his own showing, he has long held fellowship with counterfeiters and cut throats.

Now nothing is more evident than that this ado about these individuals is all flummery, designed to screen Joe and his minions, from charges that fit them but too closely. They have therefore raised the cry of "stop thief": hoping thereby to ward off public sympathy from those individuals, whose fate has caused so much commiseration.⁵⁸¹

⁵⁸¹ *Warsaw Signal*, June 19, 1844..

THE PREPARATION

Our town for the last week has been in a constant state of excitement. Business has been almost entirely suspended; and every able bodied man is under arms and almost constantly in drill.

Never did we see exhibited a more determined spirit. An injured and insulted community suffering under their long born grievances are determined by an appeal to arms, as a last resort, to redress wrongs that have become insupportable.

On Monday last about 150 men mustered in this place under the command of General Knox. The attention paid by every man, and the anxiety manifested to acquire a knowledge of military movements, is a full guarantee for the good conduct of our men in the coming emergency.

At Carthage and Green Plains, the citizens are all in arms, and as far as we can hear, throughout the county, every man is ready for the conflict.

We have assurances that our neighbors in Missouri and Iowa will aid us. In Clark County Mo. we understand, that many are holding themselves in readiness to march so soon as wanted. From Rushville we have just learned by express that 200 men have enlisted for the struggle. McDonough County, is all alive and ready for the word of command. From Keosauqua, Iowa we have just received intelligence by a resident of that place that the citizens are in arms in our behalf, and only wait our call. From Keokuk and the river towns we learn that all are arming. Gen. Supp of the Brigade is requested to call out the Militia, and holds himself in readiness.

Joe is evidently much alarmed, but he has gone too far to back out. He must toe the mark, or run. Compromise is out of the question. The delegates sent to the Governor have not yet returned. If they fail to procure his interference, a day will be set forthwith, for a general rally as a posse, to assist the officers of justice. As soon as this is done, we will issue a handbill giving notice of the fact. Our friends in surrounding

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communities, who desire to aid us, will please hold themselves in readiness for this general order. When the word is given, everything depends on promptness.

Capt. Grover last week obtained from Quincy 59 muskets. Men and arms are promised from St. Louis, and everything betokens prosperity to our enterprise.

To our friends at a distance, we say come! We are too weak in this county, without aid to effect our object. Come! You will be doing your God and your country service, in aiding us to rid earth of a most Heaven daring wretch.

6 o'clock p.m.—D. W. Mathews, who was sent last Sunday to St. Louis, has just returned, by the Die Vernon. He has succeeded in procuring cannons; and brought up a good supply of ammunitions.

Mr. Sympson and Mr. Thompson, have just returned from their trip to Missouri, and report all right, and ready.

A gentleman who conversed with Gov. Ford last week, reports that his excellency said, that he would do all he could in case Joe again defied the laws to bring him to justice. This was before the news of our present difficulties reached him.

We expect a six pounder tomorrow night from Quincy.

8 o'clock p.m.—We have just leaned that Joe has ordered all his followers into Nauvoo. The settlements around are with all dispatch obeying the order.

At Lima a company was formed today and reported themselves in readiness for orders.

E. A. Thompson Esq., who saw Gov. Ford last week states that an order has been granted by His Excellency, to try Joe Smith by Court Martial for un-officer like conduct.⁵⁸²

⁵⁸² *Warsaw Signal*, June 19, 1844; reprinted in: *Louisville Daily Journal*, Louisville, Kentucky, June 27, 1844; *Morning Courier*, Louisville, Kentucky, June 26, 1844. Ford does not mention this plan to use Joseph's military rank against him if the then present plan failed.

LEAVING THE CITY

The Osprey passed down yesterday, having on board Sidney Rigdon and about 100 other Mormons who are making tracks for the lower country.⁵⁸³

At a large and respectable meeting of the citizens of Jackson Township, Lee county Iowa, assembled at Keokuk, June 18th, 1844. Moses Grey, Esq., was called to chair, and W. S. M'Gavic, chosen Secretary. On motion, Justice Millard, Adam Hine, Allen Brown, W. S. M'Gavic, and John M'Kain, Esq. were appointed a committee to draft resolutions concerning the conduct of a lawless Banditti, headed by Joe Smith, to form plans for our safety.

After a short absence, the committee reported the following, which were unanimously adopted:

Whereas, it is abundantly evident to us, that Joe Smith, is the boldest blasphemer, the greatest debauchee, the most successful swindler, and consummate outlaw that ever disgraced human form.

Therefore, be it resolved, That we intend by all lawful means to protect ourselves and families, from Joe Smith and his lawless banditti.

Resolved, That we will not shelter him nor any of his adherents, nor allow them to stop among us, if law can prevent it.

Resolved, That we do deeply sympathize with the citizens of Hancock County Ill., in their difficulties with Joe, and that

That trial would have taken place at militia headquarters in Springfield. Thus, it appears that another plan was being hatched to get Joseph Smith away from the protection of his friends at Nauvoo. By the time such a trial would take place, the election would be over, and then Governor Ford was a central player.

⁵⁸³ *Warsaw Signal*, June 19, 1844.

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we will give them any assistance they may require, or the law allow, to aid in the execution of the Laws of the land.

Resolved, That the proceedings of this meeting be forwarded to the *Warsaw Signal* for publication.

On motion, the meeting adjourned, until Tuesday next at 2 o'clock p.m.

MOSES GREY, Pres't

Wm. S. M'Gavic, Sec't.⁵⁸⁴

At a meeting of the President and Board of Trustees, of the town of Warsaw pursuant to a call of two members, the 17th day of June 1844; were present Messrs Coebran, Thomas, Avers, and Wood, members.

On motion of J. H. Wood: Ordered; that the sum of one thousand dollars be and the same is hereby appropriated out of the funds of the Town Treasury, for the purpose of furnishing provisions supplies, arms and munitions &c for the support and the use of the posse who have been called out by the civil authorities of the county and ordered to rendezvous at Warsaw on the 18th inst.

On motion of Wm. Ayers, Ordered; that James B. Mathews be and is hereby appointed special agent to carry into effect the foregoing order, and is authorized & empowered to borrow, contract for and purchase any of the above mentioned articles and to pledge the faith of the corporation for the faithful discharge of any debts thus contracted or liability incurred.

Attest: H. Stephens, Clerk⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸⁴ *Warsaw Signal*, June 19, 1844.

⁵⁸⁵ *Warsaw Signal*, June 19, 1844.

Two hundred and fifty men mustered under army yesterday at this place.

Troops are gathering from other counties to Carthage. About 300 are now encamped in that place, ready for action.

The Mormons say they have 4,000 well-drilled troops.

We have just learned by a gentleman from Keokuk, that they have organized a company of volunteers in that place, and appointed a committee of vigilance, and a committee of safety.

Provisions have been made by our citizens, to furnish all persons coming from a distance with provisions.

No news as yet of a definite character from the governor. It was rumored in Quincy, that the militia are ordered out; but no reliance is placed on the truth of it.

A passenger on the Waverly, states that up the river everything is working right for our cause.⁵⁸⁶

That last sentence quoted from the *Signal* tells a great deal about the planning that had gone into this invasion of Nauvoo. Not everyone from Missouri and Iowa had come to participate with the mob that would attack the city. Besides the pillage and the excitement, there were two prizes to be won in this war: one was the city itself, and the other was the person of Joseph Smith. Nauvoo was a river town, and the Anti-Mormons feared that when things got tight, Joseph would try to cross the river and escape. For that reason the river was heavily patrolled—to capture Joseph, most of all, but also to capture any other Mormon leaders who might be fleeing from the city.

The members of the mob who had come to loot Nauvoo had not planned to live off their own supplies. As is always true in this kind of war, innocent farmers and merchants near the action suffer as much as or more than the belligerents themselves. In this case it

⁵⁸⁶ *Warsaw Signal*, June 19, 1844.

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was not just Mormon farmers and merchants who suffered, but anyone who was in the way. One such incident happened across the river and just north of Warsaw:

The *St. Croix* in her upward trip, it is stated, was stopped at Keokuk and forced to land 200 barrels of flour and a quantity of ammunition, which was on board destined for Nauvoo. As soon as the mob which has congregated to arrest Joe, get tired of living on their own expenses in a country but thinly supplied with provender, they will disperse.⁵⁸⁷

In Nauvoo, as the Mormons prepared for the Wednesday attack, a company of Mormon militia reinforcements came to Nauvoo from Green Plains, and another from across the river in Iowa. Joseph gave orders to have picket-guards posted on all the roads leading in and out of the city, and others

posted in all the streets and alleys in the city, and also on the river bank. I [Joseph] also gave orders to have all the powder and lead in the city secured, and to see that all the arms were in use, and that all unclaimed arms be put in the hands of those who could use them.⁵⁸⁸

Notwithstanding the precautions he was making for the protection of lives and property in the city, Joseph was not concerned about the outcome, as is shown by this passage in his history:

I gave directions to Theodore Turley to commence the manufacture of artillery. He asked me if he should not rent a

⁵⁸⁷ *Davenport, Gazette*, Davenport, Iowa, June 27, 1844.

⁵⁸⁸ *History of the Church*, 6:505

building, and set some men to repairing the small arms which were out of order. I told him in confidence that there would not be a gun fired on our part during this fuss.⁵⁸⁹

But Joseph's feelings about the safety of the Saints did not extend to himself. Later that day,

I advised my brother Hyrum to take his family on the next steamboat and go to Cincinnati. Hyrum replied, "Joseph, I can't leave you." Whereupon I said to the company present, "I wish I could get Hyrum out of the way, so that he may live to avenge my blood, and I will stay with you and see it out."⁵⁹⁰

Governor Ford Secretly Stops at Warsaw

As Joseph predicted, Wednesday came and went and the attack on Nauvoo did not materialize.

Though Governor Ford does not tell us so in his *History*, he now became an active player on the field. Before he arrived in Carthage he had already begun to make arrangements for the invasion of Nauvoo—but we have to learn about it from sources other than his autobiography. When Ford wrote his *History*, he told his readers nothing about his going to Warsaw to confer with Sharp, or about his legalizing the actions of the mob by calling out the state militia, or about his emptying the state arsenal at Alton and turning all the weapons—including cannons—over to the mob.

⁵⁸⁹ *History of the Church*, 6:520.

⁵⁹⁰ *History of the Church*, 6:520.

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Notwithstanding his silence about his own activities, they were known to the people around him, and they were reported in the newspapers.

The day after Ford's visit an unnamed correspondent from Warsaw wrote in a letter to the editor of the *Missouri Republican* stating that as soon as Ford arrived in Warsaw, two men were "dispatched by the Governor to Alton, with an order for all the arms in the state arsenal, to be transported to Warsaw, and used in arming the people."⁵⁹¹ Elsewhere it was reported:

The Gov. also sent orders to Col. Buckmaster, at Alton, for all the arms of the state in his possession fit for service, and they were sent up on the *Die Vernon*. The number of these is comparatively trifling; consisting of say 100 yaugers, twenty muskets, and three six-pounders.⁵⁹²

Ford emptied the state arsenal at Alton to supply the Anti-Mormons—and this he did before he left Warsaw to go to Carthage and before he conducted any sort of investigation about the cause of the ruckus. The weapons may have been "trifling," but the three cannons that shot six-pound cannonballs would have been significant weapons during the projected siege of Nauvoo.

Back as early as February, the *Quincy Herald* had reported "four wagons on their way to the state arsenal at Alton, for the purpose of procuring arms and munitions of war, to be used against the Mormons."⁵⁹³ There is no indication when the boxes of arms arrived in Quincy, nor who authorized their removal from the

⁵⁹¹ Reprinted in *United States Gazette*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 4, 1844.

⁵⁹² *Ottawa Free Trader*, Ottawa, Illinois, June 28, 1844.

⁵⁹³ *Ottawa Free Trader*, Ottawa, Illinois, June 28, 1844.

arsenal. But Governor Ford was the state militia's commander-in-chief, and the arms and munitions could not have been taken from the state arsenal without the governor's foreknowledge and consent. The wagons would not have left unless the militia officers had received orders to do so. That shipment of arms places the governor's involvement in the plans to attack Nauvoo as early as February, 1844—at least four months before the *Nauvoo Expositor* published its first issue. Americans were aware that the Illinois government was preparing for war against the Mormons because versions of this story were reprinted in many parts of the United States.⁵⁹⁴

Whether the weapons were shipped to Warsaw immediately is uncertain. Ford also gave orders that arms should be transferred from Quincy to Warsaw. A newspaper reported: “we learn that the Warsaw Cadets, left for Quincy to procure a stand of arms, to be placed in the hands of the citizens of Warsaw.”⁵⁹⁵ Then, on Saturday, June 15, “Mr. John M. Crane, from Warsaw, said that several boxes of arms had arrived at Warsaw from Quincy.”⁵⁹⁶ The quantities of weapons are different in each account, so if reports are correct, they describe three different shipments. In Ottawa, Illinois, the *Free Trader* informed its readers:

⁵⁹⁴ See for examples: *Danbury Times*, Danbury, Connecticut, February 28, 1844; *Columbus Enquirer*, Columbus, Georgia, March 13, 1844; *Mobile Register and Journal*, Mobile, Alabama, March 8, 1844; *Enquirer and Message*, February 22, 1844; *Western Star*, Labanon, Ohio, June 28, 1844; *Arkansas Intelligencer*, Van Buren, Arkansas, March 9, 1844.

⁵⁹⁵ *Richmond Palladium*, Richmond, Indiana, June 28, 1844.

⁵⁹⁶ *History of the Church*, 6:471

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Our accounts from Nauvoo are up to the 24th. There has yet been no blood shed, though there is still danger there may be. It appears no attempt was made by the citizens of Hancock County to arrest the persons who destroyed the *Expositor* press on the 19th, the day they had appointed for that purpose; but they determined to await the arrival of Gov. Ford. The Gov. reached Warsaw on the 20th. He immediately declared publicly his fixed determination to bring to the aid of the civil authorities all the force he possessed for the arrest of those concerned in the destruction of the *Nauvoo Expositor*, and for the faithful and fearless administration of the law. To this end, he sent orders to the brigadier general of the fourth brigade to rendezvous forthwith at Warsaw, provided with eight days' provisions. This brigade consists of four regiments, and is about two thousand strong. There were, also, under arms at Carthage and its vicinity, one thousand citizens, ready to aid in the execution of the laws. Gov. Ford had dispatched two expresses to Nauvoo commanding Smith to send two of the most discreet members of the common council to the governor, with an explanation (if any they had to make) of their conduct in destroying the private property of citizens of this state. These messengers had not returned to Warsaw at the latest accounts.⁵⁹⁷

That is a remarkable statement and requires a careful analysis. Ford's autobiographical History says nothing at all about his stopping at Warsaw on the way to Carthage, yet the source of this article gives a great deal of detail about what he did there. The credibility of the newspaper article deserves careful consideration. It asserts:

(1) "Our accounts from Nauvoo are up to the 24th." The newspaper was published on the June 28, the day after the

⁵⁹⁷ *Ottawa Free Trader*, Ottawa, Illinois, June 28, 1844.

murders, and says its information is up to date as of the 24th of June. That is reasonable. Ottawa is on the other side of the state from Warsaw and Carthage, so the timing is not a problem.

(2) “It appears no attempt was made by the citizens of Hancock County to arrest the persons who destroyed the “Expositor” press on the 19th, the day they had appointed for that purpose; but they determined to await the arrival of Gov. Ford.” That information, including the date of the planned attack, is correct.

(3) “The Gov. reached Warsaw on the 20th.” There is no other source for that information. If the newspaper had reported that he arrived on the 21st, it would clearly be in error. Many contemporary reports say that Ford arrived at Carthage on the 21st. But his arriving at Carthage on the 21st does not preclude his being in Warsaw on the 20th.

(4) “He immediately declared publicly his fixed determination to bring to the aid of the civil authorities all the force he possessed for the arrest of those concerned in the destruction of the *Nauvoo Expositor*, and for the faithful and fearless administration of the law.” One would expect he would do that, so there is nothing in the statement that causes credibility problems.

(5) “To this end, he sent orders to the brigadier general of the fourth brigade to rendezvous forthwith at Warsaw, provided with eight days’ provisions. This brigade consists of four regiments, and is about two thousand strong.” That is also reasonable. On June 16 the *Warsaw Signal* had reminded the Anti-Mormons that “The places of rendezvous were Warsaw, Carthage, Green Plains, Spilman’s Landing, Chili, and La Harpe.”⁵⁹⁸ Ford’s sending instructions for a brigade to “rendezvous forthwith at Warsaw” is compatible with the instructions sent in the *Signal*.

⁵⁹⁸ *Warsaw Signal*, June 16, 1844.

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(6) “There were, also, under arms at Carthage and its vicinity, one thousand citizens, ready to aid in the execution of the laws.” That statement is also probably true. The regiments gathered very quickly at Carthage and at other places. Other sources cited below suggest there were at least that many armed men gathered in and around Carthage by the 24th.

(7) The newspaper says Ford sent Joseph a letter from Warsaw, yet Joseph writes on Friday, June 21, “I returned to headquarters about 2:30 p.m., having met Col. Elam L. Freeman and Mr. Bartlett, who came as express from the governor who had arrived at Carthage this morning, and they delivered to me the following letter.” The letter from Ford is dated Carthage, June 21, which is the day after Ford is reported to have been in Warsaw.

If the newspaper account is correct, Ford wrote the letter in Warsaw and instructed the messengers to deliver it the next day. The word “dispatched two expresses” may imply he sent them out immediately after the letter was written. If it means that, then the entire newspaper article must be discounted as incorrect. However, it may also mean that he instructed two men to hand-deliver the letter to Joseph. If it means that, then there is no conflict there. There is no question that the messengers delivered the letter to Joseph on the 21st, and then, on that same day went to Carthage to report to Ford. The only questions are whether Ford actually wrote the letter in Carthage and whether the messengers were from Carthage or from Warsaw. There are several reports that say that Ford sent the letter from Carthage. For example Samuel Otho Williams sent a letter from Carthage two weeks after the murders saying that he recalled that delegates from Carthage traveled to Springfield and returned with the governor to Carthage, that when he arrived there “he immediately dispatched a messenger” to Nauvoo demanding J. Smith’s surrender. He writes, “this was on

Friday,”⁵⁹⁹ which was June 21. He says “a messenger” when there were actually two. His information seems to be based on here-say, just as one would expect if he recalled the excitement when the messengers reported the Mormons were not coming. Whether his report is more accurate than the more contemporary *Ottawa Free Trader* report is something the reader must decide.

(8) “These messengers had not returned to Warsaw at the latest accounts.” This closing statement virtually confirms the validity of the rest of the information. There is no question but that after the messengers left Nauvoo they went to Carthage where they reported to Governor Ford. If the *Ottawa Free Trader* had received its information from Carthage, its source would have known that. But there are two reasons to believe the source was in Warsaw. If the entire newspaper story were incorrect, what it should have said was that Ford arrived in Carthage on the 21st and sent the messengers from there, then it should have also reported that they had returned to Carthage. But it does not. It implies that the messengers may have stayed in Carthage after they reported to the governor, but in any case it says they had not yet returned to Warsaw. Because all of the information is written from the perspective of what had happened in Warsaw, with very little information about events in Carthage, it is apparent that the source of the *Free Trader’s* information was in Warsaw rather than in Carthage.

There is nothing in the *Ottawa Free Trader’s* article that conflicts with the known facts about Ford’s arrival in Carthage except the information that Ford actually wrote the letter in Warsaw on the 20th and dated it the 21st.

⁵⁹⁹ John E. Hallwas and Roger Launius, *Cultures in Conflict: A Documentary History of the Mormon War in Illinois* (Utah State University, 1995), 223.

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Admittedly, sometimes newspaper stories are wrong, but sometimes they are right. Nothing in this article actually conflicts with established historical fact, such as the date Ford arrived in Carthage, but it paints an entirely new picture of Ford's early involvement in the murders. If one accepts the information the editor received from Warsaw as correct, and compares it with what Ford wrote, one finds a huge credibility gap. Ford gave no hint that he had stopped at Warsaw, or that he called out the state militia before he arrived in Carthage, and writes nothing about emptying the state arsenal in support of the Anti-Mormons before conducting an investigation. What he wrote was this:

On the seventeenth day of June following, a committee of a meeting of the citizens of Carthage presented themselves to me with a request that the militia might be ordered out to assist in executing process in the city of Nauvoo. I determined to visit in person that section of country and examine for myself the truth and nature of their complaints. No order for the militia was made; and I arrived at Carthage on the morning of the twenty-first day of the same month.

Upon my arrival I found an armed force assembled and hourly increasing under the summons and direction of the constables of the county, to serve as a *posse comitatus* to assist in the execution of process. The general of the brigade had also called for the militia en masse of the counties of McDonough and Schuyler for a similar purpose. Another assemblage to a considerable number had been made at Warsaw, under military command of Col. Levi Williams.⁶⁰⁰

⁶⁰⁰ Ford, *History*, 324. Williams was a preacher who was one of the first and most vigorous to drive isolated Mormons from their farms and commandeer their buildings and land.

Ford does not mention going to Warsaw but apparently he spent the afternoon and night there before traveling on to Carthage on the 21st. Yet he does report that as he slept (he does not say which town he was in), some of his subordinates contrived an entertainment for themselves at Ford's expense—but which Ford took very seriously. The experience should have taught him something about the supposed rebellion he had sworn to squelch. In his own account he reports,

A system of excitement and agitation was artfully planned and executed with tact. It consisted in spreading reports and rumors of the most fearful character. As examples: On the morning before my arrival at Carthage I was awakened at an early hour by the frightful report, which was asserted with confidence and apparent consternation, that the Mormons had already commenced the work of burning, destruction, and murder; and that every man capable of bearing arms was instantly wanted at Carthage for the protection of the country. We lost no time in starting; but when we arrived at Carthage we could hear no more concerning this story.⁶⁰¹

Ford fails to mention that Sharp traveled with him to Carthage, but when the Mormon delegation got there they found Sharp in the same room with the governor. Ford tried to expunge his stay in Warsaw from the record, so the evidence would show that he did not make a decision against the Mormons until after he received their delegation at Carthage. Hence the misdated letter that pretended to have been sent from Carthage in order to hide Ford's activities in Warsaw.

⁶⁰¹ Ford, *History*, 331.

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Ford Assumes Command in Carthage

Throughout the next week, Ford's words and actions show that he wanted to avert a civil war in Illinois. Certainly he did not want war just then, before an election when he would need the Mormon vote, but after the election he supported Robert F. Smith (who commanded the final Battle of Nauvoo) and his Anti-Mormons when they drove the Mormons from the state. Ford's words also said that he wanted Joseph Smith to be treated fairly and according to correct legal procedure—however, his actions say something quite different from that. Ford believed that if Joseph were removed from the scene, the Mormons would scatter and there would be no need to drive them out or exterminate them, and thus no civil war. Therefore he used his offices as chief executive and commander-in-chief—and the cover of law—to help with arrangements for Joseph Smith's death. As we will later observe, sometimes in his *History*, Ford tried to tell his story in a way that concealed his purposes. When he did that, his words stumble over his actions and leave unaccounted-for gaps in his credibility—as in the instance of this letter he mis-dated in Warsaw. That letter he wrote in Warsaw but dated Carthage read:

Headquarters Carthage, June 21st, 1844.

*To the Honorable the Mayor and Common Council of the
City of Nauvoo:*

Gentlemen.—Having heard of the excitement in this part of the country, and judging that my presence here might be necessary to preserve the peace and enforce the laws, I arrived at this place this morning. Both before and since my arrival, complaints of a grave character have been made to me of certain proceedings of your honorable body. As chief magistrate, it is my duty to see that impartial justice shall be

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done, uninfluenced either by the excitement here or in your city.

I think before any decisive measure shall be adopted, that I ought to hear the allegations and defenses of all parties. By adopting this course I have some hope that the evils of war may be averted, and, at any rate, I will be enabled by it to understand the true merits of the present difficulties, and shape my course with reference to law and justice.

For these reasons I have to request that you will send out to me at this place, one or more well-informed and discreet persons, who will be capable of laying before me your version of the matter, and of receiving from me such explanations and resolutions as may be determined on.

Col. Elam L. Freeman will present you this note in the character of a herald from the governor. You will respect his character as such and permit him to pass and repass free from molestation.

Your messengers are assured of protection in person and property, and will be returned to you in safety.

I am, gentlemen, with high consideration most respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

Thomas Ford.

Governor and Commander in Chief.⁶⁰²

In response to the governor's demands Joseph met with the city council that afternoon, and sent Dr. John M. Bernhisel, who would one day become Utah Territory's first delegate to the United States Congress, and Apostle John Taylor, editor of the *Times and Seasons* and *Nauvoo Neighbor*, to confer with Governor Ford.

With them, the mayor sent a personal letter to Ford inviting him to come to Nauvoo to investigate matters for himself. He also

⁶⁰²*History of the Church*, 6:521.

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sent copies of affidavits and other documents that detailed all that had happened and what was then happening from the point of view of the citizens of Nauvoo. By that time the Mormon delegation got to Carthage, Ford had also arrived there.

Ford wrote in his *History* that when he arrived in Carthage he was alarmed to find that the mob had already become powerful and unruly, and were awaiting orders to march on Nauvoo.

The force assembled at Carthage amounted to about twelve or thirteen hundred men, and it was calculated that four or five hundred more were assembled at Warsaw. Nearly all that portion resident in Hancock were anxious to be marched into Nauvoo.⁶⁰³

However, another report says that “Gov. Ford had arrived at Carthage, and approved of operations, to further which he had ordered out 2,500 men.”⁶⁰⁴ “Ordered out” means he officially informed them they were now activated as the state militia.

Ford’s *History* boasts that one of his most difficult tasks, and one of his most singular achievements, was keeping the lid on this trigger-happy lot. Among their officers were some of the most determined and outspoken enemies of Joseph Smith and his people, including Thomas Sharp, editor of the *Warsaw Signal*; and Robert F. Smith, chairman of the Hancock County Anti-Mormon Party, justice of the peace, and captain of the Carthage Greys. Both of those men and other leaders of the mob were now fully authorized officers of the state militia. So later on, when Ford

⁶⁰³ Ford, *History*, 339.

⁶⁰⁴ *Public Ledger and Daily Transcript*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 3, 1844.

wrote that he conferred with his “officers,” he meant he had conferred with the leaders of the Anti-Mormon Party.

The governor reported that the question of war was frequently the topic of discussion in his meetings in council with his officers, and that they “insisted much in council upon the necessity of marching to that place [Nauvoo].”⁶⁰⁵ He resisted them, he says, because he knew their purpose for going there was to start the war.⁶⁰⁶

Ford’s ostensible purpose in coming to Carthage had been to investigate the *Expositor* matter, but his mind was already made up about who was guilty of that, and what he was going to do about it. “I was convinced,” he wrote, “that the Mormon leaders had committed a crime in the destruction of the press, and had resisted the execution process. I determined to exert the whole force of the state, if necessary, to bring them to justice.”⁶⁰⁷ He would soon show how determined he was, for while he wrote to the Mormons assuring them he had come to investigate, he never asked why the city police and other men who were present at the alleged “riot” were not the men who were arrested. From the time he sent messengers from Warsaw, his singular objective shows itself to have been to get Joseph Smith away from Nauvoo and the protection of the Legion—which was also the primary objective of Robert F. Smith and his Central Corresponding Committee, who now appear to believe they could have it both ways—get Joseph and Hyrum, and find a separate reason to attack Nauvoo.

When the Mormon delegation arrived in Carthage and received an audience with the governor, they were shocked at his unmitigated contempt for both their persons and their message.

⁶⁰⁵ Ford, *History*, 342

⁶⁰⁶ Ford, *History*, 342-343.

⁶⁰⁷ Ford, *History*, 331-332.

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The chief executive read their documents and heard their pleas, but he did so in the mocking presence of the very men who were instigating the violence against them and their city. John Taylor's account of his interview with Governor Ford in Carthage confirms Ford's close connection with both the Nauvoo apostates and the leading Anti-Mormons, and their connection with each other.

After waiting the Governor's pleasure for some time, we had an audience—but such an audience! He was surrounded by some of the vilest and most unprincipled men in creation. Some of them had an appearance of respectability, but many of them lacked even that. Wilson, and, I believe, William Law were there, Foster, Frank and Chauncey Higbee, Mr. Marr, a lawyer from Nauvoo, a mobocratic merchant from Warsaw, Joseph H. Jackson, a number of his associates, and the Governor's secretary—in all fifteen or twenty persons, most of whom were recreant to virtue, honor, integrity and everything that is considered honorable among men. I can well remember the feelings of disgust that I had in seeing the Governor surrounded by such an infamous group, and on being introduced to men of so questionable a character; and had I been on private business, I should have turned to depart, and told the Governor that if he thought proper to associate with such questionable characters, I should beg leave to be excused; but coming, as we did, on public business, we could not of course consult our private feelings.

We then stated to the Governor that, in accordance with his request, General Joseph Smith had, in response to his call, sent us to him as a committee of conference; that we were acquainted with most of the circumstances that had transpired in and about Nauvoo lately, and were prepared to give him the information; that, moreover, we had in our possession testimony and affidavits confirmatory of what we should say, which had been forwarded to him by General Joseph Smith; that communications had been forwarded to his Excellency by

Messrs. Hunter, James and others, some of which had not reached their destination, but of which we had duplicates with us. We then in brief related an outline of the difficulties, and the course we had pursued from the commencement of the troubles up to the present, and, handing him the documents, respectfully submitted the whole. During our conversation and explanations with the governor, we were frequently rudely and impudently contradicted by the fellows he had around him, and of whom he seemed to take no notice.

He opened and read a number of the documents himself, and as he proceeded he was frequently interrupted by, "That's a lie!" "That's a G-d-d lie!" "That's an infernal falsehood!" "That's a blasted lie!" &c.

These men evidently winced on an exposure of their acts, and thus vulgarly, impudently and falsely repudiated them. One of their number, Mr. Marr, addressed himself several times to me while in conversation with the Governor. I did not notice him until after a frequent repetition of his insolence, when I informed him that my business at that time was with Governor Ford, whereupon I continued my conversation with his Excellency.

During the conversation, the governor expressed a desire that Joseph Smith and all parties concerned in passing or executing the city law in relation to the press had better come to Carthage; that however repugnant it might be to our feelings, he thought it would have a tendency to allay public excitement and prove to the people what we professed—that we wished to be governed by law.

We represented to him the course we had taken in relation to this matter, our willingness to go before another magistrate other than the Municipal Court, the illegal refusal by the constable, of our request, our dismissal by the Municipal Court, a legally constituted tribunal, our subsequent trial before Esq. Wells at the instance of Judge Thomas (the circuit judge), and our dismissal by him; that we had fulfilled the law in every

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particular; that it was our enemies who were breaking the law, and, having murderous designs, were only making use of this as a pretext to get us into their power.

The governor stated that the people viewed it differently, and that, notwithstanding our opinions, he would recommend that the people should be satisfied.

We then remarked to him that, should Joseph Smith comply with his request, it would be extremely unsafe, in the present excited state of the country, to come without an armed force; that we had a sufficiency of men, and were competent to defend ourselves, but that there might be danger of collision should our forces and those of our enemies be brought in such close proximity.

He strenuously advised us not to bring any arms, and pledged his faith as governor, and the faith of the state, that we should be protected, and that he would guarantee our perfect safety.

At the termination of our interview, and previous to our withdrawal, after a long conversation and the perusal of the documents which we had brought, the governor informed us that he would prepare a written communication for General Joseph Smith, which he desired us to wait for. We were kept waiting for this instrument some five or six hours.

About five o'clock in the afternoon we took our departure with not the most pleasant feelings. The associations of the governor, the spirit that he manifested to compromise with these scoundrels, the length of time that he had kept us waiting, and his general deportment, together with the infernal spirit that we saw exhibited by those whom he admitted to his counsels, made the prospect anything but promising.⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁸ John Taylor's account is in *History of the Church*, 6:543-545.

When Ford sent the Mormon messengers back to Nauvoo, they were accompanied by Captain Yates and a company of mounted men with orders to bring Joseph to Carthage. They carried with them a seething letter from Governor Ford addressed to the Nauvoo city officials. It was dated, “Headquarters Carthage, June 22nd, 1844.” Again, the “headquarters” emphasized to the people in Nauvoo that even though Governor Ford had really only taken up temporary residence in the Hamilton House, best hotel in the county seat, he considered himself to be the commander in a military camp.

Ford’s letter to Joseph Smith reads something like a judge’s court decision.⁶⁰⁹ In it Ford expresses his “opinion” that the Mormon “conduct in the destruction of the press was a very gross outrage upon the laws and liberties of the people.” He accuses the Mormons of violating the state constitution on several points. Most had to do with the city council’s presuming authority to conduct a court trial against the newspaper, find it guilty of libel, and then to order its destruction on the grounds that it was libelous and a public nuisance. Ford’s analysis did not reflect the factual information he had read in the documents presented to him, or the legal authority the Nauvoo city charter granted to the city council. With Ford’s legal background he should have known better than to write what he put in that letter. It seemed to show that he was either ignorant of the contents of the city council minutes or of the law, but he was not. So what it really showed was contempt for the people to whom the letter was addressed.

The governor also accused the Mormons of violating the constitutional guarantee of freedom of the press, but there again he ignored both the fact that the *Expositor* had not been prevented from publishing its first issue, and he ignored the law. His letter is

⁶⁰⁹ The letter is in *History of the Church*, 6:533-537.

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a bombastic grasp for legal straws that sink under the weight of his arguments.

He demanded that the Mormon leaders come to Carthage to be tried on the original charges of “riot” even though he knew that they had been tried once already and that the Illinois constitution said they could not be tried a second time. He wrote: “submit yourselves to be arrested by the same constable, by virtue of the same warrant and to be tried before the same magistrate whose authority has heretofore been resisted.” The penalty for not doing so, he threatened, would be the extermination demanded by the Carthage and Warsaw resolutions. “I tell you plainly that if no such submission is made as I have indicated, I will be obliged to call out the militia; and if a few thousand will not be sufficient, many thousands will be, [and] your city will be destroyed, and your people, many of them, exterminated.”⁶¹⁰ Ford could not have said it more clearly: He would bring the Smiths to Carthage even if he had to lay waste to Nauvoo and massacre its inhabitants to do it.

Joseph Crosses the Mississippi

Taylor and Bernhisel arrived back at Nauvoo about 8 or 9 that evening, accompanied by Captain Yates and his cavalry unit. They went directly to Joseph. Yates delivered the governor’s communication and demanded that he and the city counsel come to Carthage.

Joseph responded that he knew the law, and that Ford had not represented it correctly. He sent Ford a letter in which he pointed

⁶¹⁰ *History of the Church*, 6:533-7.

out that he had already been tried once on the riot charges, then added that he would comply with the governor's instructions—if Ford still wished to violate the constitutional principle.

we would not hesitate to stand another trial according to your Excellency's wish, were it not that we are confident our lives would be in danger. We dare not come. Writs, we are assured, are issued against us in various parts of the country. For what? To drag us from place to place, from court to court, across the creeks and prairies, till some bloodthirsty villain could find his opportunity to shoot us.⁶¹¹

Joseph's attitude about what was happening was well known. An Illinois newspaper reported,

The news brought by the *Brazil* [a riverboat]: ... A passenger informs us that he paid a visit to Jo, who seemed much alarmed but expressed a willingness to surrender himself to the authorities, if he could be tried at any other place than Carthage.⁶¹²

Later that evening, Joseph, Hyrum, Taylor, Bernhisel, and Willard Richards discussed what should be done, and the emissaries reported their interview with the governor. His journal records,

He never accorded to them the privilege of saying one word to him only in the midst of such interruptions as, "You lie like hell!" from a crowd of persons present. These facts show

⁶¹¹ *History of the Church*, 6:538-41.

⁶¹² *Northwestern Gazette and Galena Advertiser*, Galena, Illinois, June 28. 1844.

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conclusively that he is under the influence of the mob spirit, and is designedly intending to place us in the hands of murderous assassins, and is conniving at our destruction, or else that he is so ignorant and stupid that he does not understand the corrupt and diabolical spirits that are around him.⁶¹³

Joseph Smith had no illusions about the ultimate objective of Ford's demands. Ford had already tried to extradite Joseph to Missouri, and there was certainly nothing in his deportment or his letter that suggested he was more friendly to Joseph than he had been. They discussed several options: one was to go to Washington, D.C., and lay the case before President Tyler. John Taylor recalled:

It was Brother Joseph's opinion that, should we leave for a time, public excitement, which was then so intense, would be allayed; that it would throw on the governor the responsibility of keeping the peace; that in the event of an outrage, the onus would rest upon the governor, who was amply prepared with troops, and could command all the forces of the state to preserve order; and that the act of his own men would be an overwhelming proof of their seditious designs, not only to the governor, but to the world. He moreover thought that, in the east, where he intended to go, public opinion would be set right in relation to these matters, and its expression would partially influence the west, and that, after the first ebullition, things would assume a shape that would justify his return.⁶¹⁴

⁶¹³ *History of the Church*, 6:542.

⁶¹⁴ *History of the Church*, 6:78

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While they were discussing their options, Joseph received the message that two sons of Joseph's long-time enemy, John C. Calhoun, wished to see him. Joseph left his council and joined the strangers. He talked to them a long time, long enough that John Taylor decided Joseph was not coming back, so being very tired from his day's riding, went home and went to bed. There is no record of what Joseph learned from the Calhouns. Their conversation may have been cordial, but for Joseph at least it was neither pleasant nor reassuring. It convinced him that his going to Washington to seek help would accomplish absolutely nothing.

Consequently, when he returned to his friends, he told them they should leave Nauvoo that night and head west.⁶¹⁵

Joseph said, "Brethren, here is a letter from the governor which I wish to have read." After it was read through Joseph remarked, "There is no mercy—no mercy here." Hyrum said, "No; just as sure as we fall into their hands we are dead men." Joseph replied, "Yes; what shall we do, Brother Hyrum?" He replied, "I don't know." All at once Joseph's countenance brightened up and he said, "The way is open. It is clear to my mind what to do. All they want is Hyrum and myself; then tell everybody to go about their business, and not to collect in groups, but to scatter about. There is no doubt they will come here and search for us. Let them search; they will not harm you in person or property, and not even a hair of your head. We will cross the river tonight, and go away to the west."⁶¹⁶

At this point, Joseph's Nauvoo history ends, except for the very last entry, which reads,

⁶¹⁵ *History of the Church*, 6:77- 81, 545

⁶¹⁶ *History of the Church*, 6:545-546.

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*I told Stephen Markham that if I and Hyrum were ever taken again we should be massacred, or I was not a prophet of God. I want Hyrum to live to avenge my blood, but he is determined not to leave me.*⁶¹⁷

Two questions had been uppermost in Joseph's thoughts at the time. The first was a two-pronged problem of (1) how to keep the mob away from Nauvoo long enough for the temple to be completed and the Saints to receive their endowments, and (2) how to then get the endowed Saints safely west and out of the reach of the mob. He had begun to make plans for the latter when he organized the Council of Fifty and instructed them to locate a place in the west. The question of how to keep the mob away from Nauvoo was temporarily settled when he went to Carthage to die. Keeping the Saints safely together in Nauvoo until they could receive their endowments was a greater problem. Joseph wrote, "And my only trouble at the present time is concerning ourselves that the Saints will be divided & broken up & scattered before we get our salvation secure."⁶¹⁸

The second, a related and equally pressing question, was who would have the responsibility of directing the Church after the Prophet was dead. The leadership of the Church was Hyrum Smith's by right, as he was Assistant President of the Church. In this position (which had originally been Oliver Cowdery's), he held jointly with his brother Joseph all the keys and powers of Priesthood and Presidency. In accordance with that right, the Prophet had chosen Hyrum Smith to succeed him as President of the Church. Thereafter the Prophet had asked Hyrum to leave Nauvoo until after the danger had passed. The decision of what he

⁶¹⁷ *History of the Church*, 6:545-546. Italics are in the original.

⁶¹⁸ Woodruff Journal, 1:341-342

would do was left up to Hyrum. Either he could choose to succeed his brother as President of the Church, or he could go to Carthage and thereby make his testimony as binding upon the world as the Prophet's. He chose to go to Carthage.⁶¹⁹ After Hyrum, the successors to the leadership of the Church were Brigham Young and the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Two days earlier, on June 20, in accordance with Joseph's earlier promise to Brigham, Joseph had written to the Twelve Apostles and asked them to come home immediately.

Sunday, June 23

John Taylor later remembered that when he woke up the next morning and learned that Joseph, Hyrum, and others had crossed the river,

[I] called together a number of persons in whom I had confidence, and had the type, stereotype plates, and most of the valuable things removed from the printing office, believing that

⁶¹⁹ *History of the Church*, 6:520 and 546, footnote. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* 55 (under "Assistant President of the Church"). There are two statements that indicate that Hyrum did not know he would be killed at Carthage. They are in *History of the Church*, 6:549-550, 598. However, when taken in full context it appears these statements may have been made to spare others the agony of knowing how near death was for Joseph and Hyrum. Other statements, such as D&C 135:4-5; *History of the Church*, 6:545-46, 549-50; and Huntington, *Diary*, 2:408-9, show that Hyrum understood the full implications of his decision to go to Carthage.

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should the governor and his force come to Nauvoo, the first thing they would do would be to burn the printing office....⁶²⁰

From outward appearances at least, Nauvoo had returned to a state of normalcy. The record does not show which day martial law had been lifted, but it was very soon after Wednesday's threat had passed. In Joseph's letter to the governor, he justified the invocation of martial law and reported that, "the Legion was disbanded."⁶²¹ That reference to his already having lifted martial law is not explicit, but two others are. A St. Lewis newspaper reported, "Martial law had been revoked at Nauvoo when the Ohio left there on her downward trip, and things had assumed a more peaceable appearance."⁶²² And in Governor Ford's *History* he records that when the constable he sent to arrest Joseph returned to Carthage he reported that "Martial law had previously been abolished."⁶²³

Early that morning the officers sent by Governor Ford to bring Joseph back to Carthage learned the Smiths had crossed to the Iowa side of the Mississippi River, and since they had no jurisdiction to pursue them beyond the Illinois state line, they returned to Carthage, again empty handed. When Governor Ford learned that Joseph and Hyrum Smith had crossed the Mississippi river in order to evade the small contingent of troops the governor had sent to arrest them, Ford's reaction was swift and decisive. The editor of the *St. Louis Reveille* reported:

⁶²⁰ *History of the Church*, 7:79.

⁶²¹ *History of the Church*, 6:539

⁶²² *St. Louis Reveille*, St. Louis, Missouri, June 25, 1844

⁶²³ Ford, *History*, 333.

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By the clerk of the steamer Ohio, which arrived yesterday morning, we are informed that Joe Smith and his council, at the latest accounts, were not to be found, although in answer to the requisition of Governor Ford, they had agreed to surrender themselves up and abide the consequences. The Governor has ordered out 10,000 men and appears to be determined that the delinquents shall not escape the law.

Marshal law had been revoked at Nauvoo, when the Ohio left there on her downward trip, and things had assumed a more peaceable appearance.⁶²⁴

In telling this story, Ford complained, "The constable made no effort to arrest any of them, nor would he or the guard delay their departure one minute beyond the time, to see whether an arrest could be made."⁶²⁵ He wrote,

However, upon the arrival of the constable and guard the mayor and common council at once signified their willingness to surrender and stated their readiness to proceed to Carthage next morning at eight o'clock. Martial law had previously been abolished. The hour of eight o'clock came and the accused failed to make their appearance. The constable and his escort returned. The constable made no effort to arrest any of them, nor would he or the guard delay their departure one minute beyond the time, to see whether an arrest could be made. Upon their return they reported that they had been informed that the accused had fled and could not be found.⁶²⁶

⁶²⁴ *St. Louis Reveille*, St. Louis, Missouri, June 25, 1844; reprinted in *Christian Freeman*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 11, 1844; *Rochester Daily Democrat*, Rochester, New York, July 4, 1844.

⁶²⁵ Ford, *History*, 333.

⁶²⁶ Ford, *History*, 333.

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...I was perfectly satisfied that a most base fraud had been attempted; that, in fact, it was feared that the Mormons would submit, and thereby entitle themselves to the protection of the law. It was very apparent that many of the blustering, active spirits were afraid that there would be no occasion for calling out an overwhelming militia force, for marching it into Nauvoo, for probable mutiny when there, and for the extermination of the Mormon race. It appeared that the constable and the escort were fully in the secret, and acted well their part to promote the conspiracy.⁶²⁷

That will be a very important statement in our investigation of the treason charges against Joseph and Hyrum Smith. Its importance is in the fact that it contradicts one of the premises upon which Ford would later build his case to justify the treason charges against the Mormon leaders. He wrote that the posse left Nauvoo because they “feared that the Mormons would submit, and thereby entitle themselves to the protection of the law.” “It appeared that the constable and the escort were fully in the secret, and acted well their part to promote the conspiracy.” But later in his *History*, when he was trying to justify the treason charges Ford insisted that the Smiths had committed treason because they had used the Nauvoo Legion to prevent a posse from doing what it was sent to do. No such incident ever occurred. The attempt by the first posse that went to Nauvoo to arrest the Prophet was frustrated by the courts. There was no second posse unless Ford was referring to this contingent of troops he sent, not with an arrest warrant, but with a letter. In this instance they receive no resistance whatever. Ford’s own early account of this attempt to arrest Joseph proves

⁶²⁷ Ford, *History*, 333-34. It should be noted for future reference, that nothing in that statement suggests the actual intervention of the Nauvoo Legion against the posse.

that his later justification for the treason charges against the Smiths had no basis in fact, and therefore his reasoning was without legal foundation.

Early that afternoon, after the troops left Nauvoo, Joseph's wife, Emma, sent him a letter asking him to return to Nauvoo and give himself up. When her letter arrived, some of those present accused Joseph of cowardice for leaving his people, saying their property would be destroyed if the mob came looking for him again. Joseph responded:

"If my life is of no value to my friends it is of none to myself." Joseph said to Rockwell, "What shall I do?" Rockwell replied, "You are the oldest and ought to know best; and as you make your bed, I will lie with you." Joseph then turned to Hyrum, who was talking with Cahoon, and said, "Brother Hyrum, you are the oldest, what shall we do?" Hyrum said, "Let us go back and give ourselves up, and see the thing out." After studying a few moments, Joseph said, "If you go back I will go with you, but we shall be butchered." Hyrum said, "No, no; let us go back and put our trust in God, and we shall not be harmed. The Lord is in it. If we live or have to die, we will be reconciled to our fate."

After a short pause, Joseph told Cahoon to request Captain Daniel C. Davis to have his boat ready at half-past five to cross them over the river.⁶²⁸

There is a note of finality in Joseph's decision to re-cross the river. During the previous October General Conference, he had said, "I prophesy they never will have power to kill me till my work is accomplished, and I am ready to die."⁶²⁹ After they re-

⁶²⁸ *History of the Church*, 6:549-550.

⁶²⁹ *History of the Church*, 6:58.

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crossed the Mississippi and returned to their city, Joseph Smith wrote a letter to Governor Ford, saying he and his associates would give themselves up if they could be assured the governor would protect them.⁶³⁰

Governor Ford agreed to give them protection,⁶³¹ then he did something else as well. As commander-in-chief, Ford took decisive action to remove the means by which the citizens of Nauvoo could defend themselves. He ordered that the Nauvoo Legion surrender all of its weapons to the mob.

In Missouri, the editor of the *St. Louis Republican* remembered a similar incident earlier in Ford's political maneuvering and suggested this situation in Carthage was simply replay of the same tactic. He wrote:

Gov. Ford, of Illinois, is at Carthage, to negotiate with Jo Smith, just as he did prior to the last Congressional election—When he, or his agents, visited St. Louis, contrived a plan to get a writ against Jo, held it in terrorism over him until he had agreed to transfer the whole Mormon vote to Hoge, the Locofoco candidate, and then let him loose. It will be done. The Locofocos cannot dispense with the three or four thousand

⁶³⁰ *History of the Church*, 6:550.

⁶³¹ This promise on the part of the governor was widely reported. An article which appeared in the *St. Louis Missouri Democrat*, St. Louis, Missouri, June 27, 1844, is but one example. The promise made by the governor lingered after the Smiths' murders to haunt Ford until his end. Newspapers all over the country called attention to it when they reported the murders in much the same way as the *St. Louis Reveille*, St. Louis, Missouri, June 30, 1844, when it editorialized, "Joe Smith has been 'Lynched' while under the protection of Governor Ford and the laws!"

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votes controlled by Jo Smith.⁶³²

Notwithstanding the governor's presence in Carthage, the same men remained in control—Robert F. Smith, Levi Williams, and others. They had achieved one of their major objectives—now they were militia officers who were part of the governor's general staff, and they could officially influence, even insist upon the governor's course of action. But there was one technical drawback: to preserve the appearance of their acting according to the law, now they could not act without explicit orders of their commander, Governor Ford. That was only a technical problem however, when he proved to be too much of a hindrance, they found another way of using him to their purposes. For the present, Ford was doing exactly what they wanted him to do. He had already activated the militia and given their actions the cover of law; now he took the next necessary step in preparing for the final attack.

Governor Ford ordered Captain Dunn to take his company of dragoons to Nauvoo and collect all the weapons that had been assigned to the Nauvoo Legion from the state arsenal. These arms, including three cannons, were to be removed from Nauvoo and brought to Carthage, where they could be used by the militia companies that were encamped around Nauvoo.

Ford had gone as far as his authority would permit to disable the Nauvoo Legion. Because the Illinois constitution required that every incorporated city and town must have a militia company made up of almost every adult male in that community, the only way the Nauvoo Legion could be disorganized would be if the state legislature rescinded the Nauvoo city charter and cause the city to cease to exist as a legal entity. Even though Ford did not

⁶³² *St. Louis Republican* as quoted in *Daily Cincinnati Gazette*, Cincinnati, Ohio, June 29, 1844.

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have the authority to disorganize the Nauvoo Legion, he did have the authority to take away all of its state-owned weapons. In executing that authority Ford sought to make the Legion as defenseless as they had been in Far West.

This was a two-pronged attack on the Mormon city. If the Mormons complied, they would have fewer arms, and no cannons with which to defend themselves; but if the Mormons refused to surrender their weapons and used force to prevent Captain Dunn from executing his orders, that would prove the Legion was in rebellion and provide the incident needed to justify an all-out attack on the Mormon city.

Chapter 13

June 24-25, 1844

Tuesday, June 24. Joseph's Response to Ford

On June 24 Vilate Kimball wrote to her husband, Apostle Heber C. Kimball, who was then somewhere in New England on a mission:

Nothing is to be heard of but mobs collecting on every side. The Laws and Fosters, and most of the dissenting party with their families left here a day or two after their press was destroyed. They are sworn to have Joseph and the city council, or exterminate us all. Between three and four thousand brethren have been under arms here the past week. Expecting every day they would come, the brethren were called in from all the branches round to help defend the city. Joseph sent word to the governor if he and his staff would come here, he would abide their decision. But instead of his coming here, he went to Carthage, and there walked arm and arm with Law and Foster, until we have reason to fear he has caught their spirit. He sent thirty men in here day before yesterday to take Joseph and sent him a saucy letter, saying if these could not take him thousands could. He ordered the troops here to deliver up their arms, and disperse.

Yesterday morning (although it was Sunday) was a scene of confusion. Joseph had fled and left word for the brethren to hang on to their arms and take care of themselves the best way they could. Some were tried almost to death to think Joseph

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should leave them in the hour of danger. Hundreds have left the city since the fuss commenced. Most of the merchants on the hill have left. I have not felt frightened amid [it all] neither has my heart sunk within me, until yesterday, when I heard Joseph had sent word back for his family to follow him, and Br. Whitney's family were packing up, not knowing but they would have to go, as he is one of the city council. For a little while I felt bad enough, but did not let anybody know it, neither did I shed any tears. I felt a confidence in the Lord, that he would preserve us from the ravages of our enemies. We expected them here today by thousands but before night yesterday things put on a different aspect.

Joseph went over the river out of the United States, and there stopped and composed his mind, and got the will of the Lord concerning him, and that was, that he should return and give himself up for trial. He sent a messenger immediately to Carthage to tell the governor he would meet his staff at the big mound at eight o'clock this morning in company with all that the writ demanded. They have just passed by here, on their way there. My heart said, Lord bless those dear men, and preserve them from those that thirst for their blood. Their giving themselves up, is all that will save our city from destruction. The governor wrote if they did not do so, our city was suspended upon so many kegs of powder, and it needed only one spark to touch them off, so you can see how he feels. What will be the fate of our dear Brethren, the Lord only knows, but I trust He will preserve them. If you were here, you would be sure to be in their midst. This would increase my anxiety of course.⁶³³

⁶³³ Esplin, "Life in Nauvoo, June 1844: Vilate Kimball's Martyrdom Letters," 234-235.

Robert F. Smith and the Anti-Mormon leaders had long since understood that disarming the Nauvoo Legion was a necessary preparatory step toward taking possession of the city. A correspondent stationed at Warsaw sent the following report to his editor. The person whose initials were H.S. did not want the Mormons to surrender and find protection in the law. He understood “peace” to mean the expulsion or extermination of the Mormons.

His letter was written from Warsaw, so one cannot be sure whether, in his sentence that reads, “Orders will be received to march tomorrow, and to take and retain possession of the city,” he is affirming that before Ford left Warsaw he promised his troops that he would issue orders to attack Nauvoo as soon as he had completed the formalities of an investigation, or whether the correspondent was only repeating military gossip, or a combination of both.

Warsaw, 23rd June—5 p.m.

Messrs. Editors: When the governor arrived in Carthage—on Friday last—he immediately dispatched a messenger to Jo Smith, demanding the immediate surrender of the State arms at Nauvoo....

Six hundred men have arrived from McDonough County, and have pitched their tents at Carthage, the county seat. Volunteers are coming in from all quarters. Orders will be received to march tomorrow, and to take and retain possession of the city. Our men are anxious to march, and I think they will soon be gratified. I will keep this open until the boat arrives.

Nine o’clock, p.m.—An express has this moment arrived, and brings the intelligence, that four of the men engaged in destroying the printing press at Nauvoo, have given themselves up to the officer; and that Joe with his worthy co-mates, will do the same tomorrow morning. Should this be true, I fear that our troubles will be increased by his remaining in this community. I hope this is not true, for we are all anxious to rid the world of

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this pest, and restore peace and quiet again to this community. I shall leave, in the morning, for Carthage, and will return in the evening, and inform you of the finale.

H.S.⁶³⁴

When the governor activated the militia, placing the mob under his own command rather than under Robert F. Smith and his Committee, he gave the actions of the mob the cover of legitimacy, but he also placed its leaders in a somewhat awkward situation. Now if the Committee were to succeed in having the mob sack Nauvoo, they would have to either convince the governor to do it, or eliminate him altogether. They would try both.

On the morning of Monday, June 24, after the Mormon leaders had received a personal guarantee from Governor Ford that they would be protected, Joseph and Hyrum Smith, and other members of the Nauvoo city council, with a few guards to accompany them, traveled toward Carthage to surrender themselves to Constable David Bettisworth, who was then to arrest them and take them before the same justice of the peace who had issued the warrant. The trap was now fully set.

For many years, as I have studied the last week of Joseph's life, this part of the story simply did not fit. It made no sense at all that after they received a promise of protection from the governor whom they could not trust, that Joseph and the members of the city council were willing to travel with only a small guard, along the mob-infested country roads between Nauvoo to Carthage. At that time there were thousands of eager and well-armed men encamped in various places around Nauvoo. There was still a price on Joseph's head, and no doubt, some who had come from Missouri

⁶³⁴ *St. Louis Republican* as quoted in *Indiana State Journal*, Indianapolis, Indiana, July 6, 1844.

still remembered the frustration they felt when he slipped through their hands the other times they had tried to apprehend him. Some were bloodthirsty men who had already burned and looted Mormon homes and farms in Missouri and Illinois. Now they were stalking Nauvoo itself, waiting for a chance to kill the Prophet and to attack the city. Under those circumstances, why did the Mormon leaders believe that they could travel to Carthage without being ambushed, kidnaped, or killed by a band of those marauders? Joseph clearly did not trust Governor Ford, and even if he had, a governor's written promise would hardly have stopped the men who had come all the way from Missouri to do murder.

The story did not make sense until I plugged in what Sharp had written in the *Signal* a few days before: "...the course determined on is to throw Joe into opposition to the laws." The Mormons had read that, and they understood that Joseph and his friends would be safe until they got to Carthage, where they could expect to be thrown "into opposition to the laws." After that, he and his city would be fair game.

Not only does that explain why Joseph and his friends were willing to go, but it also throws a bit of light on another very shadowy part of the story. The above letter demonstrates that the correspondence between the governor and Joseph were not well-kept secrets, if they were secrets at all. Everyone knew the Prophet would be vulnerable during his ride to Carthage. Mob psychology makes individual actions in this sort of situation almost impossible to control. The members of the mob represented a wide geographical spread, yet they were all kept in check by the same orders. That shows that the individual unit commanders from Illinois, Missouri, and Iowa must have been under extraordinary pressure to follow those orders and prevent their men from acting independently against the Prophet. Otherwise, Joseph and his friends could not have ridden to Carthage in any degree of safety.

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Governor Ford had neither the personality nor the authority to exercise that much control over the mob.

The Anti-Mormons considered Ford to be expendable, even if he were not, as governor he commanded only the Illinois militia, and had no military authority or personal control over the men from Missouri and Iowa. But then, neither did Robert F. Smith's Hancock County Anti-Mormons, nor did William Law's apostate church. From our perspective, there is no visible central authority, yet, the heedfulness with which the various segments of the mob obeyed their orders insists there was a central authority. That imposes this conclusion: Even though it is evident that whomever was in charge of the operation against the Mormons had a much tighter control on the reins of the local leaders of the mobs from Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri than the governor of Illinois, or the local political cabals in Hancock County, could possibly have exercised, it is not evident who actually did hold those reins.

Surrender of the Legion's Arms and Cannon

On the road to Carthage, Joseph and his party were met by the company of state militia who were under orders from the governor to go to Nauvoo and collect all the state-owned arms and cannon that were then in the hands of the Nauvoo Legion, and take them all to the governor's headquarters at Carthage. Captain Dunn feared that when he got to Nauvoo and presented those demands to the Legion, the Mormons would refuse to comply, and he would have to try to force them to surrender their weapons, or else he would have to return to Carthage empty handed. When Captain Dunn met Lieutenant General Joseph Smith, the Legion's

commander, on the road to Carthage, he requested that the general return to Nauvoo with him so there would be no trouble in his collecting the weapons. Joseph understood that if the governor's demands were not met and the arms were not surrendered, or if there was any physical resistance to their surrender, that would be the incident necessary to justify a full scale attack on the city. So he complied with Captain Dunn's request, and returned with him to Nauvoo.

When Captain Dunn and his soldiers, accompanied by Joseph Smith and his party, arrived in Nauvoo, Joseph asked his friends to surrender the arms and cannon that belonged to the state. They did so. Captain Dunn's company accepted the weapons, and left town. There was no battle and no rebellion of any kind. The members of the Nauvoo Legion did not like what was happening: they felt they were being betrayed by the governor, but they trusted their prophet and followed his instructions.

Ford's *History* does not disclose the ultimate disposition of the "three pieces of cannon and two hundred and twenty stand of small arms"⁶³⁵ that were collected from Mormons and taken to Carthage. However he did report that the weapons were peacefully surrendered. Then he tried to explain why he had sought to make the city defenseless. His reasoning is the same sort of scramble of historical fact and fiction with which he later defined treason, and is characteristic of these chapters in his *History*. He wrote:

These arms were demanded because the Legion was illegally used in the destruction of the press and in enforcing martial law in the city in open resistance to legal process and the *posse comitatus*.

I demanded the surrender also on account of the great

⁶³⁵ Ford, *History*, 336.

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prejudice and excitement which the possession of these arms by the Mormons had always kindled in the minds of the people. A large portion of the people, by pure misrepresentation, had been made to believe that the Legion had received of the State as many as thirty pieces of artillery and five or six thousand stand of small arms, which in all probability would soon be wielded for the conquest of the country; and for their subjection to Mormon domination. I was of opinion that the removal of these arms would tend much to allay this excitement and prejudice; and in point of fact, although wearing a severe aspect, would be an act of real kindness to the Mormons themselves.⁶³⁶

When Ford wrote that in his *History*, he had already failed to tell his readers that he had previously emptied the state arsenal and turned the weapons over to the mob-turned-militia that had gathered around Nauvoo. Now he claimed he was taking away Nauvoo's means of defense as an act of kindness, so their enemies would not be fearful the Mormons would attack them. Usually, when people in a city are under siege, it would be an act of kindness to send them reinforcements rather than to take their weapons away to better arm their besieging enemy.

This event was the second of the only two times during those weeks when there was any direct interaction between the Nauvoo Legion and any other unit of the state militia. The other was when Captain Yates came to Nauvoo to get Joseph, but could not find him, and returned to Carthage. Consequently, these were the only two possible times when there might have been a shooting battle between the Mormons and the state militia—and thus, the only times when it would have been possible for the Mormons to commit treason against the state of Illinois. If the Nauvoo Legion

⁶³⁶ Ford, *History*, 336.

had fired on Captain Dunn and his men, then almost every man in Nauvoo might have been accused of treason against the state, but in this instance, as in the previous one, nothing happened. Even Governor Ford, in his *History's* somewhat irrational attempts to justify the imprisonment and murders of the brothers on the grounds that they had committed treason, did not explicitly identify either of those encounters with the state militia as evidence to support his claim that the Smiths were guilty of treason.⁶³⁷

Joseph Smith and his original party, along with Captain Dunn and his company, and the weapons they had collected, left Nauvoo late that afternoon and did not arrive in Carthage until just a few minutes before midnight.⁶³⁸

Ford and the Anti-Mormons

Even though Ford had come to Carthage to take charge of the situation, one cannot find any instance when he exercised the authority of command in a way that was contrary to the designs of the Anti-Mormon leaders. He cooperated with them completely—sometimes he acted as though he were subservient to them. One may detect that tone, for example, when he wrote a letter to Sharp to explain why there had been a delay in bringing the Mormon leaders to Carthage:

⁶³⁷ Ford's analysis of the treason charges is discussed below.

⁶³⁸ *History of the Church*, 6:554-559.

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Carthage, June 24, 1844.

Dear Sir: Some misunderstanding between the constable and the persons accused in Nauvoo, as to the time of departure, caused the constable to return yesterday without prisoners. In the evening four of the prisoners came in, and surrendered themselves. A request was made for another escort for Smith, and the others accused, for tomorrow, which upon due deliberation was refused.

Early this morning, I despatched Capt. Dunn with his troop, to demand the artillery and public arms in Nauvoo. On the prairie, four miles on the way to Nauvoo Capt. Dunn met Smith and the others coming out to Carthage. The order for the arms was endorsed by Smith, who returned to Nauvoo to deliver the arms as requested. I am assured that the arms and artillery will be delivered, and then all persons required, will return with Capt. Dunn to this place.

I am, most respectfully, & c.

THOMAS FORD

To the Editor of the Warsaw Signal.

N.B. A large portion of the militia will be discharged this evening. I have the most satisfactory information that the Nauvoo Legion has been discharged, and that the Mormons from the country, assembled under arms in the city, have returned to their homes.

THOMAS FORD⁶³⁹

The letter is important because by sending this report to be published in the *Signal*, Ford assured that the information it contained would be quickly and accurately distributed to all of the

⁶³⁹ *New York Daily Tribune*, New York, New York, July 6, 1844; reprinted in: *Albany Evening Journal*, Albany, New York, July 8, 1844; *Christian Freeman*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 11 1844.

military camps and communities around Nauvoo. As a window into Ford's purposes, the postscript of that letter is especially revealing. It informs the members of the Warsaw Cadets that Ford was sending home most of the military units that had assembled at Carthage. Upon receiving that information, the Warsaw militia left town and headed to Carthage. (Later, after Joseph and Hyrum were killed, the officers of the Warsaw militia were tried for the murders. At the trial, witnesses said it was the Warsaw militia that stormed the jail and killed the Prophet and his brother). Governor Ford's letter contained all the information they needed in order to know it was time to come to Carthage.

By then all pretense was over—except on the part of Ford and a few others who still needed to maintain the appearance of neutrality in front of the Mormons. Even the eastern newspapers knew that the men in the Warsaw militia had determined that Joseph should never return to Nauvoo alive, and that they had gone to Carthage for the express purpose of murdering him.

Surrender of Joe Smith

We have some little additional intelligence from Nauvoo. Gen JOE SMITH and the Nauvoo Council, or the persons who destroyed the *Expositor* office are said to have surrendered their persons to the officers in whose hands the writs against them were placed. They were taken to Carthage on Monday, where they arrived about 12 o'clock at night. An examination was to be had next day—they will probably be held to bail and let go again. Two hundred troops left Warsaw for Carthage, and it was thought with the intention of killing Smith, at all hazards. We should not wonder if they did.⁶⁴⁰

⁶⁴⁰ *Pittsburgh Morning Post*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, July 6, 1844.

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Another report added more information:

Smith and his Council have surrendered! They started for Carthage on Monday, 24th ult, arrived there at midnight, and were to be examined on the 25th. Joe will be set free on his giving bail; but it is said a body of 200 horse troops mean to follow him until they kill him.⁶⁴¹

Treason Against the State of Illinois

The morning after Captain Dunn, Joseph Smith, and others arrived in Carthage “the prisoners voluntarily surrendered themselves to the constable, Mr. Bettisworth, who held the writ against them.”⁶⁴² After that, nothing happened in accordance to what Governor Ford had promised or demanded in his letter.

Ford had written “submit yourselves to be arrested by the same constable, by virtue of the same warrant and to be tried before the same magistrate whose authority has heretofore been resisted.”⁶⁴³ His argument was that since the magistrate who had issued the warrant was in Carthage, they must come to Carthage. However, when they arrived that did not happen.

Contrary to their expectations, and contrary to what Ford had written, they were not brought before the magistrate who had

⁶⁴¹ *Southern Carolinian*, Columbia, South Carolina, July 4, 1844; reprinted in: *Alexandria Gazette*, Alexandria, Virginia, July 8, 1844; *Ohio Repository*, Canton, Ohio, July 11, 1844; *Weekly Ohio State Journal*, Columbus, Ohio, July 31, 1844.

⁶⁴² *History of the Church*, 6:561.

⁶⁴³ *History of the Church*, 6:533-7.

issued the original warrant. Instead, Joseph, Hyrum, and the other men from Nauvoo were taken before justice of the peace Robert F. Smith, chairman of the Anti-Mormon Central Corresponding Committee and captain of the Carthage militia, called the Carthage Greys. From that moment, Robert F. Smith had complete control of the fate of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. It was he who confined the brothers to Carthage jail, and kept them there until they were murdered.

Governor Ford did not try to justify his duplicity in turning the Smiths over to the leader of the Anti-Mormon Party, instead, in his *History*; he continued to insist that he intended to protect the Mormon leaders.

The governor was at headquarters in person, and had pledged his own faith and the faith of the state of Illinois, that the Smiths and other persons should be protected from personal violence, and should have a fair and impartial trial, if they would surrender themselves to be dealt with according to law. During the governor's stay in Carthage, he repeatedly expressed to the legal counselors of the Smiths his determination to protect the prisoners, and to see that they should have a fair and impartial examination.⁶⁴⁴

While he was promising the Smiths his protection, Ford was acting in every way in complete accord with the plans to murder them. The Mormon leaders were being accused of riot—that was a misdemeanor (The word means bad behavior. In our time, speeding violations and parking tickets are misdemeanors.) The maximum fine for one convicted of riot was \$70.⁶⁴⁵ The Prophet

⁶⁴⁴ *History of the Church*, 6:561.

⁶⁴⁵ Lcfl 1230 1A25 1845. Criminal Jurisprudence, Division X. Offences against the public peace and tranquillity, Sec 116, 171.

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and his friends were shocked, when, at the preliminary hearing, Robert F. Smith set bail at \$500 for each of them. That was a staggering sum in those days. One can better understand how exorbitant the bail was, when one realizes that the governor's annual salary was \$1,000.⁶⁴⁶ In 2005, the governor of Illinois earned \$150,691 annually. If those amounts can be assumed to be roughly equivalent in purchasing power, the bail assessed the mayor and each of the members of the city council was equivalent to about \$75,000 in 2005 currency. The total bail for the fifteen Mormons would have been the 2005 equivalent of nearly \$1,100,000.⁶⁴⁷ The Mormon leaders and the friends who had accompanied them did not have that kind of cash at hand, so they all—not only the prisoners but also their friends who had come to protect them—signed deeds to their homes and farms in lieu of cash to secure their release.

That afternoon, after the hearings on the riot charges but before the negotiations about bail were completed, Joseph wrote a letter to his wife, Emma. The letter is dated at Carthage, Tuesday, June 25th, 1844. 2:30 o'clock p.m. It reads:

⁶⁴⁶ Article II sec. 18. That could be changed after 1824.

⁶⁴⁷ Dollar equivalencies are virtually impossible to establish with accuracy between two economies as different as America's of 1844 and 2005. Perhaps a better criterion than governor's salaries would be the price of food. On August 6, 1842, the *Warsaw Signal* reported that wheat was selling in St. Louis for between 37 and 50 cents, but in Springfield for only 25 cents. The article does not say, because the farmers knew, what measure of wheat they were talking about, but it probably meant that wheat was selling for only 25 cents a bushel in Springfield, Illinois. *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, August 1, 1843 shows the value of a cow at \$14.00. (p.287). In 2005 a T-bone steak sells for more than \$6.00 a pound. So, in terms of today's money, one could only get two good steaks for 1844 price of a whole cow.

Dear Emma

I have had an interview with Governor Ford, and he treats us honorably. Myself and Hyrum have been again arrested for treason because we called out the Nauvoo Legion; but when the truth comes out we have nothing to fear. We all feel calm and composed.

This morning Governor Ford introduced myself and Hyrum to the militia in a very appropriate manner, as General Joseph Smith and General Hyrum Smith. There was a little mutiny among the Carthage Greys, but I think the governor has and will succeed in enforcing the laws. I do hope the people of Nauvoo will continue pacific and prayerful.

Governor Ford has just concluded to send some of his militia to Nauvoo to protect the citizens, and I wish that they may be kindly treated. They will cooperate with the police to keep the peace. The governor's orders will be read in the hearing of the police and officers of the Legion, as I suppose.

3 o'clock.—The governor has just agreed to march his army to Nauvoo, and I shall come along with him. The prisoners, all that can, will be admitted to bail. I am as ever,
JOSEPH SMITH⁶⁴⁸

Joseph was partly correct. There were plans for Ford to go to Nauvoo, but notwithstanding his promise, Ford had determined he would not take Joseph and Hyrum with him, and they would not return to their families.

⁶⁴⁸ *History of the Church*, 6:565.

The Dilemma of Ford's Duplicity

The mob that the Anti-Mormons and their allies had summoned to gather around Nauvoo was estimated to be about 10,000 strong. When Ford turned the Illinois portion of that mob into a state militia, he gave them military immunity from the legal consequences of their own actions. The state constitution read, "The militia shall, in all cases, except treason, felony or breach of the peace, be privileged from arrest during their attendance at musters and elections of officers, and in going to and returning from the same."⁶⁴⁹ Unruly men who believe they have a legal license for their otherwise illegal actions can become exceedingly difficult to control.

Most of the men who came in the first wave were individuals or groups from Missouri, Iowa, and Illinois who had come to vent their hatred for the Mormons, or else to participate in the looting that would accompany the extermination process. There were many others still coming from Illinois communities, but for the most part, these had a different motive from those who had originally arrived. Some of the more recent arrivals were individuals who were essentially uninterested in the "Mormon war," but who had come as part of their hometown militia companies, and who just wanted to get on with their assignment so they could go home. There were also militia companies who came because they had been summoned by what Ford claimed was a counterfeited command, representing itself as being from the governor, and ordering them to assemble. At least one company came because its officers had received "official" word the governor had already been assassinated by the Mormons and the

⁶⁴⁹ Article V, sec. 6.

war had already begun.

All these were milling about, wondering what to do, listening to and reading what Sharp and others of the anti-Mormons were putting out for their consumption. Ford's *History* reports all this, and claims that he thwarted several attempts to take this motley army into Nauvoo where they could start looting. He clearly believed the situation was explosive, and if it were not defused soon, the war of extermination would be premature and inevitable.

Governor Ford did not want war. He listed many reasons and all of them were strategic, except his squeamishness about slaughtering women and children.⁶⁵⁰ The three major reasons he gave were these:

First, Nauvoo was so well defended that if his army attacked, it would probably turn into a prolonged siege. But if it did, it could not be effective. After the initial excitement, it would be imprudent to try to keep the militiamen at their posts for long enough to affect a successful siege because they were farmers who needed to be home looking after their crops:

No ploughing of corn had been done, and but very little planting. The season had just changed to be suitable for ploughing.... The wheat harvest was also approaching; and if we got into a war, there was no foreseeing when it would end, or when the militia could safely be discharged.⁶⁵¹

Second, Ford also reasoned that even if he were able to convince the men to stay, it would be impossible to feed them. They were already robbing the local farmers. The governor had provisions to feed his men for only two days and no prospect of

⁶⁵⁰ Ford, *History*, 340-341.

⁶⁵¹ Ford, *History*, 334.

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getting more food.

This was the time of high waters; of astonishing floods in all the rivers and creeks in the western country. The Mississippi River at St. Louis, was several feet higher than it was ever known before;⁶⁵² ... [consequently] all the grist mills in all that section of the country had been swept away, or disabled, by the high waters [of this inordinately wet spring], leaving the inhabitants almost without meal or flour, and making it impossible then to procure provisions by impressment or otherwise, for the sustenance of any considerable force.

This great flood destroyed the last hope of getting provisions at home; and I was totally without funds belonging to the State with which to purchase at more distant markets, and there was a certainty that such purchases could not have been made on credit abroad.⁶⁵³

The weather has often played a decisive role in the under-

⁶⁵² That bad spring weather created all sorts of problems. The *Cincinnati Weekly Herald* reported, "The river at the latest dates at St. Louis, was still on the rise. Above, however, it had begun falling, immense damage had everywhere been done." The *Nauvoo Neighbor* of June 26 reported, "The St. Louis papers of last Saturday gave the particulars of a tremendous rise in the Mississippi river, which is higher than it has been for many years. The Republican says that the cellars on the wharf were all filling with water, and the river was still rising, notwithstanding an immense volume of water is pouring over the Illinois shore. The people are deserting their homes in Illinois towns. A letter from Alton says that the Missouri, at the point where it strikes the Illinois side, was making fearful work upon the shore, and it was apprehended that the abrasion might be so completed as to change the channel within the present year, leaving St. Louis an island town."

⁶⁵³ Ford, *History*, 335.

currents of human history. In this instance, it seems that those unusual storms—the flooding and damage to the crops and mills—were a major factor in the governor’s belief that he could not sustain his army long enough to besiege the well-defended city of Nauvoo. Thus, it appears that unusually bad weather may have saved the Mormons from the planned extermination.

Finally, Ford’s third reason was that he believed the cost of victory would be too great. Even if he and his army were able to destroy Nauvoo, they could not kill all the people. He surmised that the surviving Mormons, having nowhere to go, would form into small bands to plunder the countryside for their sustenance until they could be cleared out of the state altogether. Both the plunder and the cleaning out operation would cost the state a great deal of money. “For these reasons,” he writes, “I was desirous of avoiding a war if it could be avoided.”⁶⁵⁴

⁶⁵⁴ Ford, *History*, 335.

Chapter 14

The Question of Treason

Treason against an Individual State

After posting bail on the riot charges, the Mormons were technically free to return to Nauvoo. However, that same morning Joseph and Hyrum Smith had been arrested again by Constable Bettisworth, this time on charges of treason against the state of Illinois.⁶⁵⁵ So, the brothers were prevented from returning to Nauvoo. The warrants for the treason arrests were vague, so one cannot read them to discover what actions the brothers were accused of committing. The one against Joseph read:

Whereas complaint has been made before me [Justice of the Peace Robert F. Smith], one of the justices of the peace in and for said County aforesaid, upon the oath of Augustine Spencer,

⁶⁵⁵ The Illinois statute read that “all persons” should have an opportunity to post bail “unless capital offences, where the proof is evident or the presumptions great.” *Foley v. People*, 1 Breese, 32. Treason was a capital offence, but if the Smiths had received a fair hearing (in fact they received no hearing at all), the proof would *not* have been evident and the presumptions *not* great, so there would have been no need for them to post bail for the treason charges.

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that Joseph Smith, late of the county aforesaid, did, on or about the nineteenth day of June, A. D. 1844, at the county and state aforesaid, commit the crime of treason against the government and people of the State of Illinois aforesaid.⁶⁵⁶

The writ against Hyrum Smith used the same words, except it limited his alleged treasonous actions to June 19th, and the oath was sworn by Henry O. Norton.⁶⁵⁷

Their arrests for treason were illegal because there was not sufficient evidence to warrant the treason charges. In a somewhat similar situation, Chief Justice Marshall of the United States Supreme Court had held that “An indictment for treason in levying war against the United States must specify an overt act. It is not sufficient if it merely charges defendant in general terms with having levied war, omitting the expression of place or circumstance.”⁶⁵⁸

For several reasons, treason against the state was the most convenient of all possible charges to bring against Joseph and Hyrum Smith. It had been the one used by Missouri to prevent Joseph from seeking bail, and it had also been among the charges used on the extradition orders. But there was another precedent—and perhaps a more relevant one. During the past two years the sensational treason trial of Governor Thomas Dorr in Rhode Island

⁶⁵⁶ *History of the Church*, 6:561, 562.

⁶⁵⁷ *History of the Church*, 6:562. Spencer and Norton were residents of Nauvoo and dissident Mormons. The *Expositor* called Spencer “a respectable and peaceable citizen,” even though, six weeks before, Spencer had accosted the mayor and attempted to shoot him. The mayor wrenched the gun from Spencer’s hand and turned him over to the police.

⁶⁵⁸ *United States v. Burr* (1807), Fed. Cas. No. 14,693. See also *United States v. Burr* (1807), Fed. Cas. No. 14,692a.

had kept the idea of treason against an individual state at the forefront of public interest. The newspapers had been full of it.

As was true of the rest of the United States, the sensationalism of “treason against the state of Rhode Island” had caught the imagination of many people in Illinois. Thus it was easy, in this election year, for Ford and the Anti-Mormons to transfer Illinois citizens’ emotional and political responses about the Rhode Island trial to their own attitudes about the Smith brothers’ imprisonment and murder. Even though neither the Dorr nor the Smith treason charges were legally supportable, each had the temporary advantage of seeming reasonable enough to appeal to people who were satisfied with the anticipated lethal consequences, did not know the law, or did not consider its strict adherence to be all that necessary.

It was convenient for some people in Illinois that the Smith cases and the Dorr trial should come together in the public mind. It did not matter much that the cases had virtually nothing in common, for they could be made to appear similar easily enough. The advantages were obvious. Ford and the Anti-Mormons could stir up (or calm down) an angry mob by tying the two cases together rhetorically, without having to do so logically. Joseph and Hyrum Smith could be judged guilty by remote association. In his *History*, Ford used that tactic to justify their imprisonment and murders, to declare the Smith brothers were guilty, and to mollify whatever public outrage might have resulted from their illegal treatment by officials of the county and state. Ford was not entirely successful in this, of course. Some people saw the consequences of both the Rhode Island and Illinois cases as unconscionable breaches of public trust. But to the main players in Illinois, as in Rhode Island, the whole affair proved to be a very fruitful expedient that had nothing whatever to do with law, but everything to do with political, and more to the point, economic prowess.

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At this point our story takes on an entirely new dimension. Treason—not the legal question of the charges but the notion, treason—assumes its own role and becomes a main character in our drama, at times playing a part quite independent from the Smith brothers. If keeping the Smiths in jail long enough to kill them had been the only object of their enemies, any charge would have been effective, and the legality, or even the reasonableness of it, would have been beside the point. But “treason” was a capital crime charged with the emotion of lethal innuendo and with contemporary politics. As such it offered other, immediate opportunities that went far beyond simply retaining the Smiths in Carthage jail. Given Ford’s legal background, there can be no question but that he knew the Smiths had never been in a situation where it was even remotely possible that they might have committed treason, but still, in his *History*, he insisted that the Smiths were guilty of treason against the state of Illinois. Then, as his *History* continues, he shows how he used the presumption of their guilt again and again as he dealt with the militia and with the Mormons.

Only half an hour after the brothers were arrested for treason against the state, Governor Ford seized on his first opportunity to use the bogus treason charges to his advantage.

8:30 a.m.—Governor Ford called all the troops and ordered them to form a hollow square on the public ground near the Court House; and when formed, he mounted an old table, and addressed them in a most inflammatory manner, exciting the feelings of indignation against Generals Joseph and Hyrum Smith which were already burning in their breasts, occasioned by the falsehoods and misrepresentations that were in circulation, giving his assent and sanction to the rumors that had gathered them together, and stating that although they were dangerous men in the community, and guilty of all that they

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might have alleged against them, still they were in the hands of the law, which must have its course. He continued speaking twenty or thirty minutes.⁶⁵⁹

The governor had just pronounced the defendants “guilty” of a capital crime—without a trial or even a preliminary hearing—but to his hearers, Ford was governor and he had been a judge on the state supreme court, so if he said they were guilty that should be as good as a trial. It was no secret that treason was punishable by death, so by telling the mob that the Smiths were guilty, he had just assured them that their primary purpose in gathering had been accomplished. Few members of the mob would have been well enough acquainted with the law to know there could be no such thing as a peacetime treason against the state of Illinois, and that there was no reason to suppose the Smith brothers could be found guilty. The militiamen who listened to Ford’s speech believed the governor knew what he was talking about so they accepted the assertion that because treason was a capital crime it would keep the Smiths out of Nauvoo for a very long time, and ultimately it would provide a permanent solution to that part of the “Mormon problem.”

What else happened that morning is described by a correspondent of the *St. Louis Republican*.

Carthage, (Ill.) June 25, 1844.

Messrs Editors—You have probably heard, through other sources, most of our proceedings up to this time, but I will mention a few of the occurrences of the last few days. 500 men arrived on Sunday from McDonough and are still here. Orders have been issued for additional forces from Schuyler and Adams, and will be in tomorrow. The governor sent out an

⁶⁵⁹ *History of the Church*, 6:562-3.

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order yesterday, by Capt. Dunn with the Augusta Dragoons, for the State arms and met Joe and his Council within five or six miles of this place, on his way to deliver himself up to the officer. Joe and his squad returned with Capt. Dunn to Nauvoo, for the purpose of procuring and delivering up the arms—and last night, about 11 o'clock, Dunn returned with the cannon and small arms, accompanied by Joe and his council. This morning they were all arrested by the officer, Worth, on the old warrant, and Joe also on a warrant for treason. The trial of inquiry commenced this afternoon before Capt. Smith—Morrison, the Justice who issued the last warrant being absent. Positive orders are just now issued to the force to march on Tuesday morning next for Nauvoo. What will be done, except to march there with twice 500 men, and then march back again, I cannot tell. The avowed object is merely to display a force there to inspire the brethren with fear and awe of the power of the State. I have, however, very little confidence in the measure, without they add to it some act of aggression, either on property or person. Joe and his people will not be taught prudence or honesty, by any lesson that can be taught them. The whole evil lies in his corrupt and unprincipled character. Up to this morning all went on here with perfect harmony and unanimity of sentiment between the governor, citizens, and troops. But the citizens of this county, who are much and justly excited, and who have looked to this outbreak for inflicting summary punishment upon Joe, for the many injuries he had inflicted, begin to fear that he will escape justice and that we will be worse off than we have been heretofore.

A serious difficulty liked to have occurred this morning, and which has somewhat disturbed the harmony that has existed. When Joe arrived last night, a great crowd was at Hamilton's anxious to see him—The Governor requested them to leave, and that he would gratify them with a sight of Joe this morning. Accordingly, this morning, the governor and Gen. Deming, with Joe and Hyrum, passed in front of the

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McDonough line. Deming introducing Joe and H. as General Joseph and Hyrum Smith, the Carthage Greys accompanying them by orders of the General. By the time they got round, the Greys conceived that they had been appointed as an escort of honor to Joe, which insulted them much: and as soon as Joe got to Hamilton's they marched past the house, raising a shout of hisses and groans which made Joe faint. The word went round as soon as they reached their camp, that they were to be put under arrest, and their arms taken from them, for this insult to His Holiness. Their blood was up in a moment, their muskets charged with ball; and they declared they would die before they would give up their arms. The excitement in the camp was intense for a few minutes, and until the governor was sent for. He addressed them that they were acting in the capacity of guards to Joe, and not as an escort; and that if an order for their arrest had been issued it should be instantly countermanded. They applauded him, and quiet was restored; but it has created a feeling of dissatisfaction in the minds of the McDonough troops, who would have been directed to arrest them.

The governor is, I think, firm, but disposed to be prudent, and, as is proper for him, to do nothing contrary to law. The Warsaw forces arrived here a couple of hours ago, and are now returning, rather dissatisfied with the prospect of a fracas.

It will be mostly those who volunteer of the troops, who will go to Nauvoo. It is, I think, the design to provoke, if possible, the Mormons into some act of imprudence that might justify an attack, and the destruction of some property, as a lesson to them. This, I think, will be the result. How far it may be carried, who knows?⁶⁶⁰

⁶⁶⁰*St. Louis Republican*, St. Louis, Missouri, June 28, 1844, reprinted in: *United States Gazette*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 8, 1844; *Florida Herald*, St. Augustine, Florida, July 30, 1844.

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That summed up the essential points very well: It was assumed the governor would “do nothing contrary to law” and the men from Warsaw went home “rather dissatisfied” with how things had turned out.

However, what Ford really did was “contrary to law,” and he congratulated himself for successfully using the spurious treason charges to achieve his purposes. When he reported the incident in his *History*, he concluded:

This company had been ordered as a guard. They were under the belief that the prisoners, who were arrested for a capital offence, were shown to the troops in a kind of triumph; and that they had been called on as a triumphal escort to grace the procession.⁶⁶¹

The phrase, “They were under the belief,” confirms that Ford knew exactly what he was doing, and that he knew their belief was erroneous, but he was not about to tell them the truth. The mob was satisfied by Ford’s thinly veiled promise of things to come; but the Mormons were livid.⁶⁶² Both responses were justified by time.

Ford believed that his speech, with his allusion to the consequences of treason, was a great success. He told the troops they had done their work, and he would now order some of them to return to their homes.

After the brothers were dead, Ford used “treason” again. In December he delivered a speech before the Illinois state legislature during which he sought to justify the fatal imprisonments of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. He went to great length to cover his part

⁶⁶¹ Ford, *History*, 343.

⁶⁶² *History of the Church*, 6:562-4.

in the assassinations. Ford excused himself for leaving the brothers in jail because he said he knew all along that they were guilty of treason.

In reality, Ford had no excuse. If he had any question about the illegality—or the propriety—of the charges he could have consulted the law books in the county courthouse. One cannot be certain what books that library contained, but one can assume it contained the essential ones.

Ford certainly could have obtained a copy of the Illinois state constitution because it was printed in the Illinois state code.⁶⁶³ A new edition of the *Law of Illinois* was published every year after Illinois became a state in 1818. Copies could be found in the offices of lawyers, judges, and justices of the peace throughout the state. Carthage was the county seat. There would have been several copies in town and the governor could have checked the wording of its definition of treason any time he wished to.

Governor Ford might have had access to three other sets of books as well. One was Kent's *Commentaries on American Law*⁶⁶⁴ (one of the most authoritative legal commentaries on American law in 19th century America), but before the 1844 conviction of Rhode Island Governor Dorr, it did not mention the possibility of treason against an individual state. Another commentary that he

⁶⁶³ *Law of Illinois* published annually by the state, beginning in 1819

⁶⁶⁴ Kent, *Commentaries on American Law*, 4th ed. (New York, published by the author, 1840). The 5th edition was published in 1844. It was not until the 1848 edition that he wrote, "But levying war against one state is a levying of war against all in their federal capacity and is a crime belonging exclusively to the federal government.... However the statute laws in many of the states by their language cover the whole enlarged ground of treason, and the line of demarcation is not distinctly defined." Kent, *Commentaries on American Law*, 1:402.

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might have had access to was a five volume set of Kinne's *Law Compendium*.⁶⁶⁵ It would not have been very helpful either, because it does not mention the possibility of treason against the state. The fact that the best law commentaries in the country did not mention the crime of treason against an individual state should have caused him to question the charges against the Smiths.

The most helpful reference would have been the *Reports of Cases Argued and Adjudged in the Supreme Court of the United States*. That would have set the whole matter to rest. In it, Chief Justice John Marshall is quoted as finding:

To prevent the possibility of those calamities which result from the extension of treason to offences of minor importance, that great fundamental law which defines and limits the various departments of our government has given a rule on the subject both to the legislature and to the courts of America, which neither can be permitted to transcend.

“Treason against the United States shall consist only in levying war against them, or in adhering to their enemies, given them aid and comfort.”

To constitute that specific crime for which the prisoners now before the court have been committed, war must be actually levied against the United States. However flagitious may be the crime of conspiring to subvert by force the government of our country, such conspiracy is not treason. To conspire to levy war, and actually to levy war, are distinct offences. The first must be brought into operation by the assemblage of men for a purpose treasonable in itself, or the fact of levying war cannot have been committed. So far has this principle been carried, that, in a case reported by Ventris, and mentioned in some modern treatises on criminal law, it has

⁶⁶⁵ Kinne, *Kinne's Law Compendium for 1845*.

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been determined that the actual enlistment of men to serve against the government does not amount to levying war.⁶⁶⁶

That had to do with treason against the United States, rather than treason against the state of Illinois, but the Illinois constitution defined treason against the state in almost the exact same words as the Federal Constitution defined treason against the United States. Therefore, Marshall's decisions, and his definitions of terms were virtually the only precedents an Illinois court could have used.

Marshall's definition of treason was that the crime of treason could not be committed unless there was an actual shooting battle against government forces, and the accused had actively participated in that military engagement against the government. One would expect that any ruling different from that on a state level would be overturned by the federal courts.

Brief History of the Crime of Treason Against an Individual State

To put the treason charges against Joseph and Hyrum Smith in their historical context, it is helpful to know the background of the notion of treason against an individual state.

American laws dealing with treason date to the Revolutionary era. At that time the thirteen states thought of themselves as

⁶⁶⁶ Chief Justice John Marshall in *Ex Parte Bollman*, U. S. 1807, in *William Cranch, Reports of Cases Argued and Adjudged in the Supreme Court of the United States* (Flatbush, New York, I. Riley, 1809), 126.

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sovereign nations, united in their struggle to secure independence and loosely bound together by a compact of confederation. This compact, the Articles of Confederation, contained no provision for treason against the federal government, but, in its extradition clause it recognized that treason might be committed “in any state.”⁶⁶⁷ The words are ambiguous, and might mean that treason against the federal government might be committed within the boundaries of any state, or that treason might be committed against any state. In either case, both the definition and punishment of the crime are left to the individual states. The definition of treason is inseparably linked to the definition of sovereignty. Because treason is a crime against sovereignty, the Confederation’s deferring this matter to the states was an implicit recognition that the states had retained their individual national sovereignty under the Articles. That fact was not overlooked by the states, and within six months after ratification of the Articles almost half the states had enacted laws defining the crime of treason.

Pennsylvania is an important example. Its laws defined treason in two ways: first as levying war “against the state or government of Pennsylvania”; and second, as assisting the wartime enemies of the United States. This second definition made treason against the United States a Pennsylvania state crime rather than a federal crime.⁶⁶⁸ However, when the sovereignty status of the federal and state governments was reversed by the adoption of the Federal Constitution of 1789, Pennsylvania’s federal treason laws were superceded by the new national authority, and treason against the United States became a national crime. But the question of whether there could be treason against a single state was left unresolved.

⁶⁶⁷ Article IV, paragraph 2.

⁶⁶⁸ Leaman, “Treason Against the State,” 191-200.

During the Federal Constitutional Convention, Madison and the other Founding Fathers expressed their understanding that treason must be defined in terms of federal sovereignty. Thus the sentence in an early draft of the Constitution that had originally begun, “Treason against the United States, or any of them...” was changed. The phrase “or any of them” was removed, so in the final version the sentence reads, “Treason against the United States shall consist only in levying war against them, or in adhering to their enemies, giving them aid and comfort.”⁶⁶⁹ The reason for the change was that the framers of the Constitution agreed that either war or treason against any portion of the United States would constitute war or treason against the whole, so “there could be no treason against a particular state.”⁶⁷⁰

However, even though they accepted that idea in principle, the members of the Convention did not spell it out in the Constitution itself. Instead, they retained the word treason in the extradition clause, just as it had been in the Articles of Confederation.⁶⁷¹ Thus, they left room for the future argument that the Constitution admits the possibility of treason against an individual state.

That notion was reinforced when the Federal Constitution was ratified. Its ratification reversed the sovereignty status between the state and federal governments, making the latter supreme, but it did not require a rewriting of the states’ constitutions or of their laws. The provisions about treason against individual states remained on the states’ law books.

After the Federal Constitution was ratified, the new national

⁶⁶⁹ Article 3, paragraph 3.

⁶⁷⁰ James Madison. “Debates in the Federal Convention”, Documents illustrative of the formation of the union of the American State, Government Printing Office, Washington, 1927, 563-565.

⁶⁷¹ Article IV Section 2 of the Constitution.

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government repeatedly used “treason” to secure and augment its authority over the states and their citizens. Again Pennsylvania was the most important example.

Even after the suppression of the Whiskey Rebellion in back country Pennsylvania had established the precedent that leaders of a “localized insurrection” could be charged with treason against the United States, the folks in Pennsylvania revolted again. This second time was also about federal taxes. Their “House Tax Rebellion” demonstrated that Congress had pushed the uses of “treason” to the limits of absurdity.

Congress had passed the House Tax in 1798. It was a property tax based on the number and size of window panes in buildings. Consequently, federal assessors went all about the nation counting and measuring the window panes in private homes. A woman in the northeastern corner of Pennsylvania expressed her objection to this “impertinent occupation” by leaning out an upper window and dumping a bucket of hot water on the head of the assessor who was measuring the window below. He objected. Her husband came to her assistance, then the neighbors got involved. The federal government responded and “an army as large as that which captured Burgoyne was marched up to disperse the insurgents.” When some were arrested for treason against the United States, others abandoned the fight. The insurrection dissolved, and window measuring became acceptable in the neighborhood.⁶⁷²

Such flippant and exaggerated uses of treason ceased to be a constitutional possibility after the Aaron Burr affair. In *Ex parte Bollman*,⁶⁷³ which involved two of Burr’s confederates, justices of

⁶⁷² Wharton, *State Trials of the United States During the Administrations of Washington and Adams*, 458-648.

⁶⁷³ (U.S. 1807) To constitute a levying of war, there must be an assemblage of persons for the purpose of effecting by force a treasonable

the Supreme Court redefined treason by limiting the meaning of “levying war” to the actual waging of war. Under this new definition, if armies were not shooting at each other, it was not war. (Dumping water on someone’s head didn’t count any more.) There had to be actual shooting, not just preparations to shoot. Gathering an army to wage war was not waging war and therefore was not treason. The Marshall court found that, “the actual enlistment of men, to serve against the government, does not amount to the levying of war.” Later when Burr himself was tried, Marshall defined “waging war” even more narrowly. One could be convicted of treason only if it could be proven he were personally involved in those “actual hostilities.”⁶⁷⁴ So, under Chief Justice Marshall’s definition of the words in the treason clause of the Constitution, not only must there be a shooting battle, but one must be present and be overtly participating against American authority in that battle in order to “wage war.”

As the nation grew and western territories became states, they tended to copy into their own constitutions and legal codes much of what the eastern states had in theirs. Thus the idea of treason against an individual state was passed into these newer constitutions. The 1818 constitution of Illinois and acts of the first legislature of that state were typical. That constitution contained three, nearly identical references to treason.⁶⁷⁵ But these statements

purpose. Establishment of men to serve against government is not sufficient. Ex parte Bollman. 8 U. S. (4 Cranch) 455, 2 L. ed. 677.” quoted in *Century Edition of American Digest*, 46:202.

⁶⁷⁴ *United States v. Burr*, 4 Cr. 469, Appx. (1807).

⁶⁷⁵ “Senators and representatives shall, in all cases except treason, felony or breach of the peace, be privileged from arrest.... Electors shall in all cases except treason, felony, or breach of the peace, be privileged from arrest.... The militia shall in all cases except treason, felony or

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are *not about* treason. They neither define it nor posit action to be taken on account of it. Rather, they are simply safeguards, providing that senators, representatives, electors, and members of the militia shall be “privileged from arrest” when performing their duty, unless they were accused of “treason, felony or breach of the peace.” These references to treason are so broad that one cannot know whether they were about federal treason, state treason, or both—or whether the state constitution even recognized that there might be such a crime as treason against the state. The latter question, however, was soon resolved.

In 1819 the first state legislature passed a law that defined treason against the state of Illinois and provided the death penalty for those convicted. The law squared with the federal constitution as well as with Marshall’s pronouncements. The law provided that to commit treason one must “knowingly or willfully assist any enemies at war against the United States or this state.”⁶⁷⁶ In subsequent sessions the legislature removed the words “the United States” from its definition, limiting treason to “levying war against the government and people of this state.” By this legislation, treason against the state of Illinois was a wartime crime.⁶⁷⁷ Treason

breach of the peace, be privileged from arrest....” Constitution of Illinois, 1818, Article II, Sections. 12, 29; and Article V, Sec. 6.

⁶⁷⁶ *Laws Passed by the First General Assembly of the State of Illinois*, 212-213.

⁶⁷⁷ “State constitutions frequently make it a crime to commit treason against the state, but there have been very few prosecutions under such constitutional provisions or under statutes to the same effect. Treason is generally considered a crime against the nation and is said to consist only, in its criminally acceptable meaning, in levying war against the United States or adhering to their enemies, giving aid and comfort to them.” *American Jurisprudence*, ed. 2, 70:96.

required definable “enemies at war against...this state.” One had to participate on the side of those enemies in that war. Since war had already been defined by the federal Supreme Court as overtly participating in “actual hostilities,” the only environment in which one could commit treason against the state of Illinois was during a battle. One cannot assert with absolute surety that the Illinois Supreme Court would stick that closely to Chief Justice Marshall’s ruling about the meaning of “waging war.” However, there was no other precedent that the Illinois court might cite, it is reasonable that the state court would accept the federal precedent and rule the same way. Otherwise, it might expect its divergent ruling to be overturned by the United States Supreme Court. So given the wording of the Illinois law, an act of treason against Illinois in the absence of a shooting battle was a legal impossibility.

Those early Illinois laws settled the question of what might constitute treason against the state, but they did it in a vacuum. For the larger, more fundamental question was still unanswered: Is it possible that war can be waged against only one portion of the United States? The authors of the Federal Constitution had already addressed that question and concluded that war against any part of the nation constituted war against the whole, and asserted it would be impossible for anyone to wage war against only a portion of the United States.

These are the questions that should have been posed if Joseph and Hyrum Smith had received a properly conducted preliminary hearing on their arrest: (1) If treason against only the state of Illinois is defined in terms of war, and war cannot be waged against only a part of the United States, can there be such a crime as treason against the state of Illinois? (2) If the answer were “yes,” then the second question ought to have been: Given the wording of the Illinois treason law, and if “war” means a shooting engagement of armies, as Marshall said it meant, is it possible to

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commit treason when opposing armies are not engaged in an actual battle?

Even if the answer to the first question had been only a qualified “Maybe,” the answer to the second question must have been “No.” And that would have concluded the hearing.

Those two questions would have been sufficient to discover that no crime of treason could have been committed, therefore no crime of treason was committed, conclude the hearing, and release the prisoners. However, there was no such hearing. Robert F. Smith, who was the justice of the peace, repeatedly postponed it until after the Mormons were dead. Then there was no point in holding the hearing, and in his speech, Ford convicted the prisoners posthumously, pretending the questions were not there.

The reason the Marshall decision would have been the only possible precedent was because a study of the decisions of the courts of other states would have done nothing to help resolve the questions, because since the Federal Constitution was ratified, there had been only one conviction for treason against an individual state.⁶⁷⁸ It was the case of Governor Thomas Dorr in Rhode Island. That conviction had a shadow about it that made its decision murky at best, and there were no circumstances in the Dorr case that resembled the circumstances in the Smith case. Even so, the Dorr case in Rhode Island is central to our understanding of Governor Ford’s justification of the treason charges against the Smiths in Illinois.

Even though the Dorr case set no precedent that could have been used in the Smith cases, and, except for the name “treason,” they were so dissimilar there is little point in comparing them, yet the Dorr case is an integral part of our story. This is because understanding the Dorr case in Rhode Island is necessary to

⁶⁷⁸ Hurst, *Law of Treason in the United States*.187.

understanding what was going on in Illinois. The Dorr trial and the publicity surrounding it are keys to much of the rationale behind the charges brought against the Smith brothers, and to the political logic by which Governor Ford tried to explain that the Smiths were both guilty.

If the Dorr trial had any actual relevance to the Smiths' cases, that relevance was that what was happening in Rhode Island was absolutely contemporary with what was happening in Illinois. On June 27, 1844, the same day Joseph and Hyrum Smith were shot, Governor Thomas Dorr began his life sentence for treason against the state of Rhode Island.

The Trial and Conviction of Governor Thomas Dorr

In 1844, Rhode Island had no acknowledged state constitution. It was still operating under its original charter that had been granted by the King of England in 1663. Because the charter limited the franchise to only adult male landowners and their eldest sons, the same small group of families who had controlled Rhode Island in early colonial times still dominated it after almost 200 years. By the 1840s, when the population was shifting to the cities, most of the adult males in Rhode Island could not vote. Thomas Dorr was a member of the state's landed elite, but since 1834, when he was first elected to the state legislature, he had fought to broaden the franchise and to secure a state Bill of Rights.⁶⁷⁹ He had

⁶⁷⁹ For discussions of the Dorr and his "war" see : Mowry, *The Dorr War*; King, *Life and Times of Thomas Wilson Dorr*; Dennison, *Dorr War*; Wayland, *Affairs of Rhode Island*; "Burke's Report," House Doc.

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been frustrated at every turn. Those who had control exercised their control to retain their control.

Since the old charter said nothing about how it might be replaced by a new state constitution, or who might call a constitutional convention, Dorr and his friends decided they might apply the principle that the fundamental power to govern the people rested with the people themselves. They believed the people of Rhode Island could exercise the initiative to call a constitutional convention with as much right as the legislature might do so. They organized the “People’s Party,” which in turn called for a constitutional convention. The members of the popularly elected convention wrote a new constitution and submitted it for ratification by calling a statewide election in which all adult males could participate. The new constitution was overwhelmingly adopted by the previously legal voters as well as the new voters. Under the authority of this new constitution, a new executive and a new state legislature were elected. Thomas Dorr became governor. But the old state government refused to recognize the new one, so Rhode Island had two governors and two state legislatures.

When Dorr learned that the other governor, Samuel King, had obtained a promise of federal military support from Whig President William Henry Harrison, Dorr went to Washington, D.C., to appeal. While he was gone King’s government declared martial law, conducted wholesale searches of people’s homes and property for evidence, arrested hundreds of Dorr’s followers, and offered a reward for Dorr’s capture. Dorr returned, gave himself up, was arrested for treason against the state, and was sent to prison to await trial.

His case became a major national political issue. Democrats

No. 546, 28 Cong., I Sess.

all over the country interpreted the actions of Governor King and President Harrison as evidence of Whig contempt for the common man. The whole nation watched the developments with great interest, for as the story unfolded, its details were reported in newspapers all over the United States.

In Rhode Island, the uses of “treason” were pushed to the absurd by those who were opposed to Governor Dorr and his cause. One of the best examples of this is Circuit Justice Story’s 1842 charge to the Grand Jury that was investigating the accusations against Dorr. Story put on public display both his overriding prejudice and his legal ineptitude.

In that charge he began, as he ought to have begun, by quoting the United States Constitution that “treason against the United States shall consist only of levying war against them or in adhering to their enemies, giving them aid and comfort.” Then, Story completely abandoned Marshall’s definition of war and created his own, making it so broad that almost anything Dorr might have done could be called treason. Justice Story asserted that virtually any overt attempt to prevent the execution of any law constituted an act of war and was therefore treason. He claimed, “It will be equally treason, if the intention is by force to prevent the execution of any one or more general and public laws of the government, or to resist the exercise of any legitimate authority of the government in its sovereign capacity.”⁶⁸⁰ His definition was so broad that even the most trivial misdemeanor could fall under its umbrella, and therefore be called “treason.” A definition that includes everything, is in fact, a definition of nothing at all.

⁶⁸⁰ *The Federal Cases, Comprising cases Argued and Determined in the Circuit and District Courts of the United States*, Book 30, Case No. 18,275, Charge to Grand Jury—Treason, Circuit Court, D. Rhode Island, June 15, 1842, 1047.

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Story himself eventually became ashamed of it. When the *Manufacturers and Farmers Journal* of Providence, Rhode Island, June 23, 1844, wrote to him requesting a copy for publication, he replied,

That charge was wholly extemporaneous and without premeditation, except what referred to the law of Treason. I am utterly unable to recall either the thought or the language in which it was expressed, in any manner which would make it a just representation of what fell from me. The exposition of the law of treason, which was brief, I will certainly write out if it shall be thought important to a just view of the subject under existing circumstances.⁶⁸¹

The *Journal* never did publish the statement and it was not carried in either the *Illinois State Register* or the *Sangamo Journal* in Springfield, Illinois, so there is no reason to suppose that Governor Ford ever had access to it.

As local tensions increased about what would happen to Governor Dorr and his cause, Americans everywhere became increasingly interested. In Illinois, the fervently anti-Whig *Springfield State Register*, frequently expressed its pro-Dorr bias.⁶⁸² Even the *Warsaw Signal* made room in its columns for its

⁶⁸¹ *Manufactures and Farmers Journal*, Providence, Rhode Island, June 23, 1844.

⁶⁸² See, for example, *Illinois State Register*, Springfield, Illinois, October 2, 1842; May 5, 1843; June 3, 10, 24, 1843; July 8, 15, 22, 1843; August 9, 1843; September 22, 1843; November 17, 1843; December 1, 1843; April 5, 1844; May 3, 1844; May 10, 1844; and the announcement of his conviction on May 31, 1844. The *Sangamo Journal*, also published in the Illinois capitol, carried stories about Dorr on May 20, 1842; June 3, 1843, June 10, 1842, July 8, 15, 1842; May 2, 23, 1844. For a few examples

readers to learn about the Dorr trial. Sharp's *Signal* reported the time and place where the trial would begin and kept its readers informed as the trial progressed.⁶⁸³

The trial lasted from April 30 to May 7, 1844. Dorr pleaded innocent on the grounds that "treason, which is defined by the Constitution, and punished by the laws of the United States, excludes all separate state treasons, even if the exclusion be not in express terms." His lawyers argued that "treason is an offense against the United States only and cannot be committed against an individual state."⁶⁸⁴

In his *Warsaw Signal*, Sharp quoted the lawyers argument verbatim.⁶⁸⁵ In 1844 newspapers were printed one sheet at a time on a hand-operated press. The type was also set by hand. So Sharp went to a good deal of trouble to inform his readers about Dorr.

Notwithstanding those arguments, Dorr was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment with solitary confinement and hard labor.⁶⁸⁶ The editor of the *Northwestern Gazette* in Galena, Illinois,

of newspaper coverage in various parts of the nation see: The *Columbus Enquirer*, Columbus, Georgia, April 17, 1844; July 31, 1844. *Daily Times*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 16, 1844. *Indiana State Journal*, Indianapolis, Indiana, July 18, 1844.

⁶⁸³ *Warsaw Signal*, July 9, 16, 30 1842; October 1, 1842; Mar 27, 1844; May 1, 29, 1844.

⁶⁸⁴ Mowry, *The Dorr War*, 245.

⁶⁸⁵ *Warsaw Signal*, May 29, 1844.

⁶⁸⁶ *Report of the Trial of Thomas Wilson Dorr, for Treason: Including the Testimony at Length*, 112. The *New York Herald*, New York, New York, June 27, 1844, asked, "We learn verbally, that Governor Dorr was, on Monday, sentenced to confinement in the State Prison, for life. Is this true? It is a pretty severe sentence, to say the least of it." A number of newspapers reported Dorr's imprisonment this way: "Gov. Dorr is employed, in the Rhode Island State Prison, in painting

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wrote, “Dorr has been convicted of high treason. No doubt his crime, according to legal technicalities, was high treason, but we cannot help viewing it as about the lowest treason we ever heard of.”⁶⁸⁷

Even so, the technical legal question of whether treason could be committed against a single state was ignored in the decision by the Rhode Island court, but Dorr anticipated that and had intended to use the argument as the basis for his appeal to the Rhode Island Supreme Court.⁶⁸⁸ However, the judges of that court, who, coincidentally, also had connections within the ruling class, refused to review the case on the grounds that it was a political matter and not a legal one. Consequently, they held it was outside of their jurisdiction. So, Dorr did not get his day in the state’s supreme court. It was widely reported that,

Gov. Dorr is employed, in the Rhode Island State Prison, in painting fans. His imprisonment will remain a blot upon the country’s history, for scores of years. It is the most infamous and anti-republican act, that has occurred in the United States, for a long time.⁶⁸⁹

The following year, 1845, the Rhode Island legislature passed a kind of reverse bill of attainder that released Dorr from prison,

fans. His imprisonment will remain a blot upon the country’s history, for scores of years. It is the most infamous and anti-republican act, that has occurred in the United States, for a long time.” (*Daily Times*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 16, 1844.)

⁶⁸⁷ *Northwestern Gazette and Galena Advertiser*, Galena, Illinois, May 3, 1844.

⁶⁸⁸ Dennison, *The Dorr War*, 104.

⁶⁸⁹ *Daily Times*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 16, 1844.

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but his health was broken and he died not long after, at the age of 49.⁶⁹⁰

Justice, like beauty, is in the eyes of the beholder. All over the country, Americans who watched the Dorr and Smith cases develop together saw a good deal of similarity between them, and some were appalled by what they saw. An Indiana editor who disclaimed any belief in Mormon doctrine decried the “cold-blooded murder of the Mormon Prophet” as a crude violation of the Constitutional rights of freedom of religion and expression. He wrote,

Surely, nothing but the imprisonment of Dorr by the Algernine Whigs of Rhode Island, can match this dastardly act.... The dastardly wretches who perpetrated this murder upon unarmed and defenseless men, have already, as is common in such cases, fabricated falsehoods in extenuation of their villainy.⁶⁹¹

An angry editorial appeared in the pro-King *Rhode Island Country Journal and Independent Inquirer* that put the lawless action of the mob in Illinois and the lawless actions of the Dorr factions in one pot and condemned them both together. It read:

The recent riots in Philadelphia, the atrocious murder of the Smiths and other evidences of a disregard of law and order in

⁶⁹⁰ Knowles, John P., *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Rhode Island*, 3:299-311.

⁶⁹¹ *Indiana State Journal*, Indianapolis, Indiana, July 11, 1844. Other examples of editors either comparing or associating Dorr and the Smiths can be found in *New Hampshire Sentinel*, Keene, New Hampshire, July 24; *Niagara Courier*, Lockport, New York, August 7, 1844; *Tazewell County Whig*, Tremont, Illinois, June 7, 1844; *Morning Star*, Houston, Texas, July 30, 1844.

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various parts of the country, must awaken the serious attention of all thinking men. The evil is too deep to be reached by temporary expedients, or to find a remedy in any of the ordinary methods of putting down a popular excitement. The remedy can only be found in a correct public opinion; and men of character and influence, the natural conservators of the public peace and the public morals, must step out from their retirement and must make themselves felt....

The outrages which have disgraced the country, and which threaten more serious consequences than mere disgrace, are the legitimate fruits of Locofocoism, and no reasonable man can doubt it. Had not the foreigners in Philadelphia and other places been flattered by demagogues, and swelled into undue importance for the sake of their votes the dreadful mobs in that city would never have happened. Had not the Locofoco Legislature of Illinois granted to the Mormons privileges inconsistent with the rights of other citizens, and utterly subversive of all laws and constitutions, for the sake of their votes, the atrocious murder of Joe Smith would not have closed the outrages which have alarmed that section of the Union. Had not the Locofoco party in other States, in the hope of manufacturing political capital, encouraged the rebellion in this State, we should have been spared half the troubles of Dorrism. All these are facts which cannot be questioned.⁶⁹²

The nation's interest in Dorr's trial was far more than just passive curiosity. It was an election year, and, as one might expect in an election year, Congress created a "Select Committee on Rhode Island," that, it declared, would conduct a full and impartial investigation of the Dorr affair. This committee brought the Dorr treason trials right into the center of Illinois state politics, and

⁶⁹² *Rhode Island County Journal and Independent Inquirer*, Providence, Rhode Island, July 19, 1844.

provided the backdrop for Governor Ford's words and actions with regard to Joseph and Hyrum Smith.

Illinois's own Congressional Representative, Col. John A. McClernand, was a member of Congress's Select Committee on Rhode Island. In that capacity he fought a vigorous anti-Whig fight in behalf of Dorr and his followers. The people of Illinois were kept aware of McClernand's speeches and activities by the sympathetic editor of the *Springfield Illinois State Register*, a weekly newspaper published in the state capital, with a strong and outspoken pro-Democratic bias. The *Register* had lent significant support to the gubernatorial campaign and successful election of Democratic Governor Thomas Ford.

The *Register's* report of one of McClernand's speeches is of interest to us because some of the ideas expressed by McClernand are essentially the same that Ford used to force the Prophet to leave Nauvoo and come to Carthage. The speech was delivered in Congress by McClernand on March 19 and reported in Springfield on May 10.

The memorial, speaking of the grievances of the people of the State [of Rhode Island], sets forth that a constitution was ordained by the people, which was suppressed by force; that a riot act was enacted by the charter legislature, which prohibited the people from "assembling to ask redress of their grievances;" that martial law was enforced, by which the chartists were authorized to enter private dwellings, and to arrest the citizen upon suspicion, as was done in many instances. It alleges these and many other grievances, too numerous here to mention....

So, also, with regard to the charge of martial law. It was a well-known fact, that the law of arms, inexorably enforced, was the supreme law of the State. The military was placed above the civil authorities; and under the triumph of this grim and terrible despotism, the blood of un-offended McKelby was

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shed, the citizens of other States were kidnaped, private dwellings were forced, females insulted, the public arsenals turned against the people, and the people themselves, on one occasion, to the number of some two hundred, captured, shackled, and exhibited through the public streets, and some of them thrown into prison, there to remain for months.

Martial law—which is the substitution of force for civil authority; which is, in fact, the abrogation of all law—reigned supreme; and these were the practical illustrations of the beautiful theories of the “law and order party of Rhode Island. God save the mark!”⁶⁹³

Ford did not like McClernand,⁶⁹⁴ but that did not prevent his employing some of McClernand’s arguments, or from turning others of his ideas upside down and using them anyway.⁶⁹⁵

In his speech, McClernand said he was angered, first of all, that Rhode Island’s riot act had been used by King’s government to prohibit people from “assembling to ask redress of their grievances.” He was enraged because Dorr’s accusers had

⁶⁹³ *Illinois State Register*, Springfield, Illinois, 10 May 1844.

⁶⁹⁴ Ford did not like Lincoln and Douglas either. “Lincoln was several times elected to the Legislature, and finally to Congress; and Douglass, Smith, and McClernand have been three times elected to Congress, and Douglass to the United States Senate. Being all of them spared monuments of popular wrath, evincing how safe it is to a politician, but how disastrous it may be to the country, to keep along with the present fervor of the people.” Ford, *History*, 195-196.

⁶⁹⁵ McClernand wielded a great deal of power in Illinois. During the next election, “The Democrats in Illinois have elected the six members they had in the last Congress, five of them by largely increased majorities, and one other (Col. McClernand) without opposition.” *Delaware Gazette*, Wilmington, Delaware, August 23, 1844.

managed to circumvent the fact that Dorr had not participated in any “actual hostilities” by calling this lawful gathering a “riot,” then by calling the “riot” an “act of war,” and then calling the war an act of treason.⁶⁹⁶

McClermand was further incensed because Governor King’s government had declared martial law, and, “that martial law was enforced, by which the *chartists* [those who upheld the old colonial charter] were authorized to enter private dwellings, and to arrest the citizen upon suspicion....”⁶⁹⁷ McClermand, like other Democrats, argued that the Rhode Island legislature’s setting aside constitutional rights by the use of martial law was a flagrant violation of constitutional law. The clear implication of his statement was that the chartists, rather than Dorr, were the ones who had violated the constitution.

This speech was published in full in the most influential Democratic newspaper in Illinois only about six weeks before the Smiths were arrested on charges of “riot,” and the riot charges were followed by the charge of “treason”—and the treason charges were later justified by Ford on the grounds that Joseph had declared martial law.

⁶⁹⁶ The question was eventually put to legal test in the Homestead trials in Pennsylvania, where the courts decided that a riot was not the same as a war. “Treason of the Homestead Rioters,” and “Treason Against the State of Pennsylvania,” *American Law Register and Reviews*, *From January to December, 1892*, 31:691, iii-iv; 556-561; 691-700.

⁶⁹⁷ *Illinois State Register*, Springfield, Illinois, May 10, 1844.

Ford's Use of the Dorr Case to Justify the Treason Charges against Joseph and Hyrum Smith

Given Ford's legal and political background, he would have been intrigued by the Dorr case and every detail of its development. Because of the Dorr affair, the question, "What might constitute treason against an individual state?" created one of the most stimulating legal debates in America, and the trial itself was one of the most sensational legal battles in Ford's adult lifetime. Its potential political and legal implications demanded that the governor of Illinois be conversant with both the fact and the theory of the case. As a lawyer and judge it would have been automatic for Ford to wonder what precedent the Dorr case might eventually set for Illinois courts, and having wondered, he would have discovered that it would set none at all. In Rhode Island one might be able to remove an especially obnoxious political opponent by charging him with treason, but in Illinois one could not rightly charge an opponent of treason unless he had actually participated in a shooting battle in a war to overthrow the government of the state.

Were it not for the national and the local Illinois publicity surrounding Dorr's treason trial, one might argue that even though Ford had built his political career on knowing the law, it was likely that Ford might not have known that the Illinois law itself precluded any reasonable assertion that the behavior of either Joseph or Hyrum Smith constituted an act of treason. Therefore, a major significance of the popularity and importance of the Dorr trial to this study is that it virtually disallows that argument. Even if his prior legal training and practice in Illinois had not called Ford's attention to the question of the definition of treason, the importance of Dorr's trial would have thrust it upon him. One can

assert with near absolute certainty that from the very conception of the treason charges against the Smith brothers, Ford knew that the accusations were without legal foundation—and that holding Joseph and Hyrum Smith on those charges was as illegal as it was unethical.

In his December speech to the state legislature, Ford confirmed his interest in the legal questions about treason. As Ford reported on the events in Carthage and his own activities during the time the Smiths were in prison, he departed from his narrative long enough to analyze the nature of treason in light of the charges against the Smiths.⁶⁹⁸

Ford began by accusing the Smiths of “levying of war against Illinois.” That was a phrase he must use if his comments were to be seen as having any basis at all in Illinois law, but after that, he ignored entirely the established meaning of these words.⁶⁹⁹ Like

⁶⁹⁸ Ford reprinted the report with only minor changes in his History. A contemporary printing can be found in the *Nauvoo Neighbor* January 1, 1845.

⁶⁹⁹ “The definition of treason in the federal constitution having been borrowed from an English statute, the expression ‘levying war’ contained therein has been interpreted and applied in the sense in which it was employed in such statute. So interpreted, it means that a mere conspiracy to overthrow the government by force is not sufficient to constitute the crime of treason by levying war, but there must be an overt act of actual levying of war. More especially, there must be an actual assemblage of men for the purpose of executing a treasonable design by force...it is essential that the assemblage of men have an intent to carry out its purpose by violence; such an intent on the part of the leader or person who convened the assemblage, uncommunicated to the assemblage, is not sufficient....A private person cannot levy war by himself; there must be a combination of persons with such an intent.” Mack and Kiser, *Corpus Juris, Being a Complete and Systematic Statement of the Whole*

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Justice Story, Governor Ford invented a new definition of “war,” and of “treason,” and refused to acknowledge the precedents established by the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court. (One cannot argue that Ford did not know Marshall’s definition of “war” in treason cases, without insisting that Ford, the former Justice of the Illinois state supreme court, had been academically incompetent—and there is no evidence that he had been that. It is impossible that he did not know what the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court had written about the most important treason case in the early history of the United States.)

Governor Ford’s analysis of treason was not legally sound, but it was, in fact, very apt. It was a logical application of the national Democratic Party’s stand against the King government in Rhode Island. Ford began by reworking his party’s argument against the Chartists, then echoed McClelland’s anger about Governor King’s declaring martial law. But Ford went one step farther and claimed that the Prophet’s declaration of martial law was, by itself, an act of treason.

That analysis is most interesting because it makes no sense. Ford’s comments might have been appropriate if they had been a reference to events as they developed in Rhode Island, but it is virtually impossible to twist and squeeze them enough to make them fit as a learned appraisal of events in Illinois. In his analysis, Ford overlooked the criteria Chief Justice Marshall required. Marshall wrote:

While war may be levied without a battle or the actual application of force to the object on which it was designed to act, and a body of men assembled for the purpose of war, and

Body of the Law 63:815-816.

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being in a posture of war, do in fact levy war, the intent is an indispensable ingredient in the composition of the fact; and, if it is charged that war was levied without striking the blow, the intention to strike must be plainly proved.⁷⁰⁰

In contrast, Ford's analysis of the treason charges against the Smiths reads as follows:

The overt act of treason charged against them consisted in the alleged levying of war against the state by declaring martial law in Nauvoo and in ordering out the Legion to resist the *posse comitatus*.⁷⁰¹

In that statement, Ford had invented his own definition of treason—one that had no apparent relationship with any legal precedent. It was not “treason” to resist a posse, but even so, the mob that gathered around Nauvoo on that “Wednesday next” was not a legally constituted posse. Ford had plummeted the depths of his imagination to surface again with that definition. To achieve that end, he had once again misrepresented recent events and twisted them so they would fit into his argument. That was necessary because his argument could not be supported by an appeal to the treason law of the state of Illinois, or to decisions of the American courts. Nevertheless, we need to examine Ford's statement very carefully, for it is the only one we have that actually claims to give an authoritative legal justification for the treason charges against the Smith brothers.

First, the question of martial law. Blackstone says nothing that suggests the declaration of martial law was ever considered to be

⁷⁰⁰ *United States v. Burr*, Fed. Cas. No. 14,694a.

⁷⁰¹ Ford, *History*, 337.

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treason in England; neither Kent nor Kinne mention it; and it has never been equated with treason in any court of the United States.

Governor Ford's Rationale was Illogical and Without Legal Precedent.

Ford's rationale, by which he sought to justify the imprisonment of the Smith brothers on charges of treason against the state of Illinois on the grounds that *they* had declared martial law, was not an interpretation of the law, because there was no law to interpret.⁷⁰² There was nothing in the constitutions of either the United States or the state of Illinois, neither in the laws of Congress nor the statutes of the Illinois state legislature, that mentioned martial law—never mind defining it, telling how it should or should not be used, or what the legal consequences might be if used improperly.

Joseph Smith's declaration of martial law was not illegal, for no statute was in place that directed how and when martial law could be used, but even if imposing martial law could be shown to be illegal, it does not follow that doing it was, or even might have been, treason.

Ford was simply shooting from the hip, and he missed. The assertion that Joseph Smith had committed treason when he declared martial law was unsupportable and unconscionable; that same assertion about Hyrum was profoundly ridiculous.

⁷⁰² For an analysis of the uses of martial law see Breck, "The Habeas Corpus, and Martial Law" 34-36. This is a fervently anti-Lincoln publication that opposes the president's declaration of martial law.

Hyrum had also been accused of treason and was murdered while in prison. Ford tried to show that Hyrum was guilty for the same reasons he tried to explain Joseph's guilt. Ford might have argued that Mayor Joseph Smith had overstepped his authority, but he could not say the same thing about Hyrum, for Hyrum had no authority to exercise. So when one inserts Ford's comments about Hyrum Smith into his reasoning, its logic breaks down altogether. Hyrum's writ specifically accused him of committing treason against the state of Illinois "on the 19th day of June." Martial law had been declared the day before, on the 18th. Hyrum Smith was not mayor, had not declared martial law, and in fact held no city office that would have singled him out as a participant in making or enforcing the proclamation of martial law. It would have taken some impressive mental gymnastics to make Hyrum overtly responsible for doing something that only Joseph could do, and that only Joseph had done. To accuse Hyrum of treason for issuing a public proclamation that someone else issued, and that too on a day different from when he was accused of doing it, makes no sense whatever. Ford was grabbing at straws to try to justify Hyrum's detention for treason at the time he was murdered, and the straws could not sustain the weight of his fallacies.

In Ford's explanation of why the Smiths were each guilty of treason against the state, he also argued that it was because of their "ordering out the Legion to resist the *posse comitatus*." A close examination of that assessment shows it is on even shakier grounds than the one about declaring martial law. Joseph really had declared martial law, but Ford's other argument is pure fiction.

Only fifty years earlier, in *United States vs. Mitchell*, a case relating to the Whiskey Rebellion in back country Pennsylvania, the judge found that,

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for, if a bare opposition to the execution of a law can be considered as constituting a traitorous offence, as levying war against the government, it must be equally so, in relation to every other law, as well as in relation to the excise law; and in relation to the marshal of a court, as much as in relation to the supervisor of a district: And yet, in the Penal Code of the United States, the offence of wilfully obstructing, resisting, or opposing, any officer, in serving, or attempting to serve any process, is considered and punished merely as a misdemeanor.⁷⁰³

As we have traveled through these events, I have pointed out the places where Ford's own *History* testifies that there was no instance of their "ordering out the Legion to resist the *posse comitatus*." While the warrants did not describe a specific act of treason, both mentioned June 19, 1844.⁷⁰⁴ That was the Wednesday of the anticipated invasion of Nauvoo. On that day, no gunfire was exchanged, so no treason could have been committed. If the warrants are for activities of that day, then the crime Ford was identifying was that the Mormons had prevented—without firing a single shot—a mob of about 10,000 men from attacking their city. The mob had never been deputized as a posse, yet, that is what Ford was calling a *posse comitatus*.

Governor Ford placed himself in an awkward position in his speech when he tried to define the Smiths' treason against Illinois. There was no precedent in his own state that could justify his definition,⁷⁰⁵ and, as we have observed, there was no legal

⁷⁰³ Case no. 15,788, *U.S. v. Mitchell*. (26 Fed. Cas., 1279).

⁷⁰⁴ *History of the Church*, 6:561-562.

⁷⁰⁵ Foran, *Collaghan's Illinois Digest*, 3rd ed., 614, cites a 1922 case but indicates there were none before that: *People v. Lloyd*, 304 Ill 23, 136 NE 505. *Shepard's Illinois Citations*, extends that reference to cases

precedent anywhere that could support the proposition that the words in the Illinois law could have any other meaning than that given them by Chief Justice Marshall of the United States Supreme Court. In the absence of any contrary state precedent, the decisions of the Marshall court offered the only parallel precedents available.

In both the December speech and his later *History*, Ford felt obligated to justify the treason charges that kept the Smiths in prison. After all, he had been in Carthage when the brothers were arrested, and when they had sought his help he refused to intercede on their behalf. His difficulty lay in the simple legal fact that any such justification ought to be made within the express language of the Illinois treason law itself. That, of course, was impossible. So, he turned to his only other recourse—the Rhode Island precedent of using a political, rather than a legal justification of the treason charges. He could not echo the King government’s accusations against Dorr because they were not relevant to the Smiths’ situation, and also because they were a political anathema in his own Democratic party. He echoed McClelland’s condemnation of Governor King and the rest of the Whigs. He could not do that, however, without completely ignoring both the historical facts and the legal precedents regarding the Smiths’ charges—so he ignored them.

Ford was proud of his speech and later inserted it, in its entirety, into his *History*. In his *History*, he leaves his readers with the same disadvantage his listeners had. That is, in order to justify what he wrote as being intelligent and relevant, one must conclude he was talking politics rather than law, because his arguments are neither intelligent nor rational if they were really about the law, as he said they were.

One can hardly watch that kind of intellectual somersaulting

that post date 1922.

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without asking these questions: Why the evasive action on Ford's part? What was the governor trying to say—or trying not to say? If the latter, what was he trying to hide?

Ford's Political Orientation at Carthage

Some historians believe Ford's report to the legislature is evidence that he was not too bright, excusing his part in the murders by suggesting that the whole thing was beyond his abilities at the time, and beyond his comprehension later on. Ford himself provides good evidence for that. For example, Ford concludes his analysis of the treason charges against the Smiths with this statement:

Their actual guiltiness of the charge would depend upon circumstances. If their opponents had been seeking to put the law in force in good faith, and nothing more, then an array of a military force in open resistance to the *posse comitatus* and the militia of the state, most probably would have amounted to treason. But if those opponents merely intended to use the process of the law, the militia of the state, and the *posse comitatus*, as cats-paws to compass the possession of their persons for the purpose of murdering them afterwards, as the sequel demonstrated the fact to be, it might well be doubted whether they were guilty of treason.⁷⁰⁶

⁷⁰⁶ Ford, *History*, 337.

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The Anti-Mormon historian, Thomas Gregg, who knew Ford personally, was bewildered by that statement and its unsupportable claims that it was relevant to the facts of the Smiths' cases. He wrote:

Here historian Ford, in order to find fault with the Hancock people, gives us a new and novel definition of treason.

So that treason, instead of depending upon the acts and intentions of the person charged, is to be measured by the acts and intentions of others. It is a principle of law that intention must be taken into account; but it comes strangely from the Governor of a State, that to constitute crime, the intentions of the people who are endeavoring to bring a criminal to justice, rather than his own, are to be considered.⁷⁰⁷

Ford's report has been a source of puzzlement to generations of historians because it is not at all consistent with his character, his abilities, or his ambition. In the beginning chapters of his autobiographical *History of Illinois*, he shows himself to be intelligent and lucid.⁷⁰⁸ Yet when it reaches the story of the Mormons and incorporates his report to the legislature as a part of its narrative, his *History* becomes a disjointed account in which Ford makes himself weak and unable to cope with the Mormon situation when it occurred and, who still did not understand it when he tried to

⁷⁰⁷ Gregg, *History of Hancock County*, 321. Ford's statements on treason apparently made so little sense to Gayler that he left it out of his story altogether. Gayler, "Governor Ford and the Death of Joseph and Hyrum Smith", 391-411.

⁷⁰⁸ For example, Ford's appraisal of the state's economic situation is also evidence of his abilities. See, Ford, *Message of the Governor of the State of Illinois. Transmitted to the General Assembly, December 3, 1844*. It is partly reprinted in his *History* beginning on page 324.

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explain it in writing.⁷⁰⁹

Governor Ford's speech reads like a torn manuscript whose key sentence is missing, leaving the reader to stumble along its "evident mistakes" and "many distortions of facts."⁷¹⁰ Some elusive, central idea seems to have been repressed or deleted that, if supplied, would give a sense of direction, meaningfulness, and continuity to the whole.

That missing segment seems to be this: When Ford wrote his speech, he would not admit to his being an accessory before the fact of the Smith murders, so he imposed upon himself an impossible task—to tell the events of his story, while not telling the motives that propelled his actions, and omitting the parts played by the people with whom he had conspired. He wrote that even though he was aware there was a conspiracy to murder the Smiths, he could not remember the names of the leaders of the conspirators.⁷¹¹ When one inserts that single fact, a new and tragic story emerges. It is of a strong, decisive political leader who was fully cognizant of his military situation, and of the dynamics of the social and political turmoil that surrounded him; who feared above all else that the Mormon troubles would erupt into a bloodbath that would ruin his political career; who believed that if the Smith bothers were removed from the scene their enemies would be satisfied, and the violence of a full-blown civil war would be averted—that if the Smiths were out of the picture the Mormon Church would dissolve into nothingness, and all those tensions

⁷⁰⁹ Ford reprinted the report, with only minor changes in his *History*, beginning on page 324. A contemporary printing can be found in *Nauvoo Neighbor*, January 1, 1845.

⁷¹⁰ Those words are Gregg's appraisal of Ford's account of the Mormons in. Gregg, *History of Hancock County*, 320.

⁷¹¹ Ford, *History*, 394.

would go away—so, to achieve those ends, the brothers were removed.

Ford understood that the Anti-Mormons were determined that Joseph and Hyrum Smith would never return to Nauvoo alive. After the murders, Thomas Sharp candidly admitted that their attitude toward killing the Smiths was that it “would sooner or later have to be done, no one acquainted with the facts of the case could deny. It was inevitable, and the only question was the proper time.”⁷¹² The “proper time,” he assured his readers, came as soon as they got the Smiths away from the protection of their friends in Nauvoo. Once Joseph left Nauvoo and went to Carthage, his death was a foregone conclusion. Sharp spelled that out clearly: “As to the time and manner, it had to be done then and thus, or not at all.”⁷¹³ He reasoned that he and his associates had expended altogether too much time and energy getting the brothers away from Nauvoo to let this opportunity be wasted. There were also other people around the governor who wanted the Smiths to die:

A few minutes before 4, on that same afternoon that Joseph wrote to Emma, report came to Joseph that William and Wilson Law, Robert D. Foster, Chauncey L. Higbee and Francis M. Higbee had said *that there was nothing against these men; the law could not reach them but powder and ball would, and they should not go out of Carthage alive.*⁷¹⁴

Sharp would later justify the timing and manner of the killings by an appeal to the opinions of the religious people of Hancock County. Referring to the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith he

⁷¹² *Warsaw Signal*, July 10, 1844.

⁷¹³ *Warsaw Signal*, July 10, 1844.

⁷¹⁴ *History of the Church*, 6:566. Italics in original.

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wrote:

True it is, many regret the manner and the time; but still they say that if it could have been done in no other manner, and at no other time, it is better as it is, than that it should have been left undone. We know of some of the strictest religionists and moralists in the county, whom we thought, would as a matter of course condemn the act, yet they do not stop to apologize, they even go so far as to justify it, as being necessary for self-defense.⁷¹⁵

Wilson Law had contingency plans if Sharp's had failed to come to fruition.

Dan Jones heard Wilson Law, whilst endeavoring to get another warrant against Joseph Smith for treason, declare that while he (Mr. Smith) was once preaching from Daniel 2nd chapter, 44th verse, said that the kingdom referred to was already set up, and that he was the king over it. He also heard Joseph H. Jackson, and other leaders of the mob, declare that they had eighteen accusations against Joseph, and as one failed, they would try another to detain him there, and that they had so much trouble and hazard, and worked so hard in getting him to Carthage, that they would not let him get out of it alive. Jackson pointed to his pistols and said, "The balls are in there that will decide his case." Jones immediately went upstairs to Joseph and informed him what he had heard Jackson say.⁷¹⁶

Governor Ford made no attempt to hide his own feelings about the Mormon Prophet. His *History* shows his deep contempt for

⁷¹⁵ *Warsaw Signal*, July 24, 1844.

⁷¹⁶ *History of the Church*, 6:569.

Joseph Smith, whom he repeatedly described him as a scoundrel and fraud, and whom he viewed as a political if not also as a personal enemy.⁷¹⁷ He had that in common with many other Illinois politicians. According to Ford, at least eight months before the Smiths were killed, leaders of both parties had decided the Mormons must be driven from the state. Ford wrote that, “the Whigs generally, and a part of the democrats, determined upon driving the Mormons out of the state; and everything connected with the Mormons became political, and was considered almost entirely with reference to party [politics].”⁷¹⁸

As part of Sharp’s justifications of the Smiths’ deaths, when he wrote of the “extra judicial execution,”⁷¹⁹ he claimed that the timing had been of the utmost importance. He argued that it was generally agreed the Smiths had to be dead before the election, and that wasting this opportunity to achieve that end could not be justified.⁷²⁰

Even though Ford told the readers of his *History* that the expulsion of the Mormons had already been accepted as a political necessity by leaders of both parties in Illinois, he judiciously avoided spelling out what his own early position was on that issue.

⁷¹⁷ Ford expresses his opinion about the Mormons and their leaders throughout his *History of Illinois*. Chapters 10, 11, and 13 are about the Mormons. Among the best examples are his comments on pages 320-3, 327-8, 354-5. In one place, to make a point, he exaggerated the number of Mormons who left their homes to campaign for Joseph Smith to be president to “two or three thousand missionaries,” (p.321) even though a full list of those men had been published in *Nauvoo Neighbor*, April 17, 1844; May 15, 1844.

⁷¹⁸ Ford, *History*, 319.

⁷¹⁹ *Warsaw Signal*, September 25, 1844.

⁷²⁰ *Warsaw Signal*, September 25, 1844.

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Neither did he say whether he felt as Sharp did, that the murder of Joseph Smith must be accomplished before the coming election. But it is clear Ford did not want the Mormons to participate in the Illinois political process. After the murders, the governor exerted all his influence to prevent the Mormons from voting.”⁷²¹

In the spring and summer of 1844, Ford needed to balance his long-term ambitions and his immediate objectives. To do that he needed an issue that would separate himself from the personal fates of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. In the obscure notion of “treason,” he found the perfect resource. Ford tells us almost nothing about what was happening behind the scenes at Carthage, but on stage everything pivoted around his repeated assertion that the Smiths were guilty of treason.

Ford used the bogus treason charges to placate the mob in Carthage, then to dismiss some militia companies and send them back to the communities they came from. He used a projected prolonged treason trial to justify leaving the Mormon leaders in the hands of the Carthage Greys. He went to Nauvoo and used the seriousness of the crime of treason to try to intimidate the Mormons so they would be afraid to retaliate against the apostates and Anti-Mormons if something happened to Joseph and Hyrum Smith. A lesser crime would not have been sufficient to

⁷²¹ Relative to the August 1844 election, Ford wrote: “In all of this they [the Mormons] were but little less fanatical and frantic on the subject of politics, than were their Mormons about religion. Such a state of excitement could not fail to operate unfavorably upon the Mormon question, involved as it was in the questions of party politics, by the former votes of the Mormons. As a means of allaying excitement, and making the question more manageable, I was most anxious that the Mormons should not vote at this election, and strongly advised them against doing so.” (Ford, *History*, 362-63.)

Chapter 14: The Question of Treason

accomplish all of those objectives. Ford's own account of the way he used the charge of treason demonstrates that at some point he had carefully worked through the whole rationale, and then capitalized on it at every opportunity.

Chapter 15

June 25-27, 1844

The Murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith

Keeping Joseph and Hyrum in Jail

About eight o'clock on the evening of June 25, Constable Bettisworth came to the lodgings of Joseph and Hyrum Smith and presented them with a mittimus⁷²² that required they be committed to Carthage jail. The action was completely illegal, as Joseph's lawyer, H. T. Reid, explained later in a published statement:

The recitals of the mittimus, so far as they relate to the prisoners, having been brought before the justice for trial, and it there appearing that the necessary witnesses of the prosecution were absent, are wholly untrue, unless the prisoners could have appeared before the justice, without being present in person or by counsel; nor is there any law of Illinois which permits a justice to commit persons charged with crimes

⁷²² Mittimus is "A warrant of commitment to jail or prison." Ballentine, *Ballentine Law Dictionary*, 809.

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to jail, without examination as to the probability of their guilt.⁷²³

The Smith brothers appealed to the governor for help. Ford informed them that he did not think it within the sphere of his duty to interfere.⁷²⁴ Ford used this incident to insert his own disclaimer of responsibility for the Smiths' imprisonment and murder:

In all this matter the justice of the peace [Robert F. Smith] and constable, though humble in office, were acting in a high and independent capacity, far beyond any legal power in me to control. I considered that the executive power could only be called in to assist, and not to dictate or control their action; that in the humble sphere of their duties they were as independent, and clothed with as high authority by the law, as the executive department; and that my province was simply to aid them with the force of the state. It is true, that so far as I could prevail on them by advice, I endeavored to do so. The prisoners were not in military custody, or prisoners of war; and I could no more legally control these officers, than I could the superior courts of justice.⁷²⁵

⁷²³ *History of the Church*, 6:574.

⁷²⁴ *History of the Church*, 6:569-573. Tuesday, June 25. B. H. Roberts, the editor of the *History of the Church*, uses this incident, the illegality of the action, and Ford's refusal to interfere as evidence of the governor's willingness to let the Smiths' enemies do whatever they wished to do. In the latter part of volume six and in volume seven of *History of the Church*, one finds much circumstantial evidence to support Roberts' belief that Governor Ford was a party to the plot to imprison and murder the Smith brothers.

⁷²⁵ Ford, *History*, 338. See: Huntress, "Governor Thomas Ford and the Murderers of Joseph Smith," 48.

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In context, that is an odd statement. Huntress, in his short analysis of Ford's connection with the Mormon leaders, observed that while that comment is interesting, it "has little to do with the facts of the matter." Ford's assertion was a strange mixture of constitutional principle and misrepresentation of administrative fact. Ford had lured the Smiths into the trap by promising to protect them, and then he turned them over to Robert F. Smith, whom he knew to be their fervent enemy. Now he tells his readers that he, as governor, really did not have the authority to protect them after all and that his official relationship with the Anti-Mormon leaders "was simply to aid them with the force of the state."

When the constable received word that the governor had refused to interfere with the execution of the illegal mittimus, he escorted the brothers to the "safe keeping" of Carthage jail.

Even though Joseph and Hyrum were the only ones required to go to the jail, several of their close friends insisted on staying with them. Included among these were Stephen Markham, Dan Jones, and Apostles Willard Richards and John Taylor.

Joseph had come to Carthage believing he was going to be murdered, and now he understood this jail would become the corner from which he could not run. From that time, the Prophet began to find ways to limit the number of his friends who would be there with him.⁷²⁶

Joseph asked both Markham and Jones to deliver an urgent letter to Governor Ford asking for an interview. When the governor saw the messengers, he excused himself from responsibility by telling them that "he was taken by surprise last evening, and was very sorry." Ford sent word that he would visit

⁷²⁶ Baker, "On to Carthage to Die," *Improvement Era*, June, 1969, 10-15.

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the prisoners, but when Joseph's friends tried to return to the jail, the guards refused to permit them to enter. Ford's biographer observes:

Ford's difficulty in maintaining order may well have been compounded by his strict construction of his authority as militia commander-in-chief, for as chief executive he professed to be unable to interfere in some of the questionable judicial maneuvers that went on in Carthage before the Smiths were murdered. He complained further of his lack of influence over militia officers, deriving from his constitutional powerlessness to appoint or remove them. But at this time and also later, he lacked moral authority too, as he freely admits: "Officers, men, and all under me, were so infected with the anti-Mormon prejudice that I was made to feel severely the want of moral power to control them."⁷²⁷

By this point in his narrative, Ford's *History* has become so tangled that it retains neither its internal cohesiveness nor its credibility. He refuses to admit that he knew the Smiths were being detained without cause, and he claims he had no part in the decisions and actions of the Anti-Mormons. Historians tend to read into this tangle that he was simply unable to cope with the situation. Ford himself encourages that impression because of his unwillingness to explain, and his over-willingness to misrepresent the facts. For example, he cannot tell the real reason for his dismissing the troops who tended to be more sympathetic to the Mormons and for retaining the Carthage Greys under the command of Robert F. Smith to guard the prisoners in Carthage jail, so he uses the notion of treason, and misrepresents the law. He

⁷²⁷ Davis, "Introduction to 1995 Edition" of Fords, *History of Illinois*, xvii.

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cannot explain why he took the remaining troops with him to Nauvoo, so only the Carthage Greys were on hand when the assailants attacked the jail, so he creates an artificial reason for going, then claims he did not understand. In parts of this story he invents implausible explanations that are inconsistent with other parts. Consequently his actions, as he reports them, seem irrational, disjointed, and strangely executed.

He could more easily avoid that in the earlier part of his *History*. There, he could make himself appear innocent by simply failing to mention when he began supplying the Anti-Mormons with state owned arms and ammunition; and, then he could report that he went to Carthage, but expunge any indication that he stopped to confer with Sharp in Warsaw, and that it was from Warsaw that he sent the misdated letter demanding that Joseph surrender himself to the Anti-Mormons. Those omissions worked well in the earlier part of his *History*, but now he cannot avoid admitting that he was in the very center of the decision making councils of Joseph's most bitter enemies. Consequently, in this part of his narrative, while he continues to tell only part of the story, he encounters events that he can neither omit nor expunge, so he seeks to obscure his role behind a cloak of impotence and ineptitude.

Joseph knew he was being held on false pretenses, and when H. T. Reid, Joseph's lawyer, chose to do nothing about it, Joseph tried to replace him with someone else. He sent a note asking his uncle John Smith to request Almon Babbitt "to come and assist me as an attorney at my expected trial tomorrow before Captain R. F. Smith."⁷²⁸ But Babbitt refused because he had already agreed to represent the other side.

⁷²⁸ *History of the Church*, 6:598.

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June 26, 1844

The next day, Ford did come to the jail to talk with the prisoners, as he said he would. But, for the Mormons, the visit was not satisfactory, probably not even very pleasant. Ford did not admit to the Smiths that the treason charges against them were unreasonable or that their imprisonment was illegal. Instead, he let them believe he thought there was legal substance in the treason charges, and he did nothing to get them a hearing or to get them out of the jail—and he did not tell them he was going to Nauvoo without them. Years later, during an interview with a man who was with Ford at the time, Thomas Gregg was told,

While the Smiths were in jail, I went to the jail in company with Governor Ford, and there we conversed with them for some time, the burden of Smith's talk being that they were only acting in self-defense, and only wanted to be let alone. After leaving the jail, and while returning from it, the governor and I had still further conversation about the subject matter. After some time the governor exclaimed, "Oh, It's all nonsense; you will have to drive these Mormons out yet!" I then said: "If we undertake that, governor, when the proper time comes, will you interfere?" "No, I will not," said he; then, after a pause, adding, "until you are through!"⁷²⁹

That statement typifies Ford's entire passive-aggressive approach to Joseph and Hyrum's deaths and to the Mormon problem in general. His actions assert that he wanted to "drive these Mormons out," but he wanted it done in such a way that he

⁷²⁹ Gregg, *History of Hancock County*, 372.

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could not personally be tied to the bloodshed.

About four o'clock that afternoon, Constable Bettisworth received an order from Justice of the Peace Robert F. Smith to bring the brothers to his office "for an examination on the charge of treason."⁷³⁰ The prisoners attended as directed, but Robert F. Smith conducted no such hearing, nor did he take the question of treason into consideration.

The mittimus, issued by Robert F. Smith stated that the Smiths had been brought before him for examination, though they had not. The Smiths were given no hearing on the treason charges; instead they were scheduled to be held in Carthage jail for four more days, when Francis M. Higbee, a material witness who had unsuccessfully served as the complainant in two previous suits, would be available.⁷³¹

The Smiths were returned to jail to wait, once again being imprisoned without any preliminary hearing or examination whatever.⁷³² After the murders, Reid wrote a history of the events that was published in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*. In it he tells what happened after the Smiths were returned to jail.

Soon after a counsel of the military officers was called by the Governor, and it was determined to march on the next morning, the 27th instant, to Nauvoo, with all the troops except one company, which was to be selected by the Governor from the troops, whose fidelity was more to be relied on to guard the prisoners, whom it was determined should be left at

⁷³⁰ *History of the Church*, 6:596.

⁷³¹ Firmage and Mangrum, *Zion in the Courts*, 116

⁷³² The next day, June 27, noon came and went without the promised hearing, then, in mid-afternoon, they were murdered.

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Carthage.⁷³³

The company that Reid described as “whose fidelity was more to be relied on to guard the prisoners,” was the Carthage Greys under the command of Robert F. Smith.

An unanswered question about that day’s events is why did Reid not see through Robert F. Smith’s delaying tactic at the hearing, and do something about it. The answer may be found in several facts that add up to be rather incriminating evidence against Joseph’s lawyers. Back on June 24, Reid and J. W. Wood (Joseph’s other lawyer) just happened to be with Governor Ford at the time Ford wrote the letter demanding that the Mormons come to Carthage, and promising that he would protect them if they came. At that time, Reid also wrote to Joseph, urging him to come, assuring him that he could trust the governor’s word, and volunteering his own legal services in Joseph’s behalf. Wood wrote a postscript at the end of Reid’s letter, saying, “I concur fully as to the above, and will add, from an interview with Governor Ford, you can, with the utmost safety, rely on his protection....”⁷³⁴ So even from the start, both of Joseph’s lawyers had participated in the governor’s efforts to get Joseph away from Nauvoo. While in Carthage, Reid had failed to insist that the treason charges were bogus, and did not demand a writ of *habeas corpus* to prove no such crime had been committed. Then, on the day Joseph and Hyrum were shot, Reid was not even in Carthage.

Here Reid’s duplicity becomes most evident. At the time of the murders, Reid was across the river in Fort Madison, Iowa, in conversation with some of Joseph’s most bitter enemies. The evidence for that appeared in the Rock Island newspaper the

⁷³³ *Nauvoo Neighbor Extra*, June 30, 1844.

⁷³⁴ *History of the Church*, 6:558-559

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following September. William Law had moved there, and his neighbors wrote open letters to the newspaper saying they did not want such a man among them. In response, Law wrote a letter asserting that he had not participated in the Smiths' assassinations. He maintained that at the time the Smiths were killed he had been across the Mississippi River in Fort Madison, Iowa.

It has been rumored that the Fosters and Laws were engaged in the assassination of the Smiths, at Carthage. The statement is false; for Dr. R. D. Foster, Wilson Law and myself were in Fort Madison, Iowa Territory, at the time of the murder—which fact can be proved by Dr. Bostwick, Gen. Brown, Mr. Bullard, Mr. Reid, the Hon. John C. Calhoun's two sons, who were there at the time, and with whom we were conversing at the very hour.⁷³⁵

That was an interesting gathering: Joseph's lawyer was cavorting with William and Wilson Law, and Dr. Foster—all owners of the *Nauvoo Expositor*. Dr. Bostwick was Orsimus F. Bostwick, the outspoken, inflexibly brutal leader of the anti-Mormons at Ft. Madison. The two sons of John C. Calhoun were also present. Their father saw Joseph's political platform and presidential campaign as the very antithesis of his own political purposes. It was Joseph's interview with those two men that convinced him there would be no point in his going to Washington, D.C., to ask for assistance. Law does not reveal what they were discussing, but the make up of the group may teach us a great deal about what else was going on.

⁷³⁵ *Upper Mississippian*, Rock Island, Illinois, 7 September 1844. See also, Cannon, "John C. Calhoun, Jr., Meets the Prophet Joseph," 772-780.

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The Comparative Roles of the *Expositor*, and Politics

By the time events had developed to this point, it was obvious that the *Nauvoo Expositor* had played only a very limited role in the whole drama. It can no longer be argued that the destruction of the *Nauvoo Expositor* was the immediate, or even the primary cause of the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. The *Expositor* was used as the lever to pry Joseph loose from the protection of his friends in Nauvoo, and for bringing them to Carthage. But its significance ended there. Joseph and Hyrum were murdered for other reasons. The most important two were: (1) the determination to curtail Joseph's political and religious influence, and (2) the anticipated land-grab that would follow the Mormon expulsion from Illinois.

On June 26, the day before Joseph and Hyrum were murdered in Carthage, the *Nauvoo Neighbor* published a letter, by one who used the pseudonym *Libertas*, about uniting church and state. The letter struck at the very heart of the issue that would be settled the next day by assassins' bullets.

Wonderful things in Nauvoo! Terrible things from the great Mormon Empire Church and State! The modern PROPHET, a Candidate for President!!! Such are the exclamations of some of the remarkably intelligent citizens of our enlightened Republic. They seem thunderstruck at our audacity, in nominating a righteous man for the Presidency. All the great Reformers and learned Doctors have told us that ecclesiastical and civil government must never be united: and warned us to be careful how we mingle religion with politics. Therefore we must have a Deist and Infidel, or an Atheist, at the head of the government: lest forsooth, if we have a Christian, Church and State will be United. Great God! What an idea!!! We must have

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a wicked man for President, lest a righteous man should mingle religion with politics. When such is the policy of a nation, we cannot wonder that its citizens are oppressed, and its government dwindles away into insignificance....The time has come: we have long enough suffered under the rule of wicked men. Let us now have a righteous man at the head of the government. Citizens of the United States awake! Be no longer trampled upon; make an effort for your redemption. Arise in the majesty of your strength and shake off the chains which have so long fettered you; we have, long enough, had a president over a party; we have long enough, had a president over office holders and Aristocrats. Let us now have a President over the whole people. We can expect no reformation under such rulers, as have disgraced the country for the last ten years; we must look for a different man. Let us have a man of pure and upright principles—of an independent mind—of true patriotism—a man who will execute the laws with justice and equity, regardless of consequences—a friend to the poor—an advocate of liberty—in short a Christian and a man of God. But where shall we find such a man? Who is there possessed of such a character in this degenerated age? Where is a man that will carry out such principles? Let us Latter day Saints answer—let all patriotic men answer—let all honest, upright lovers of their country answer—and let all citizens of this vast republic answer, at the polls next fall, GEN. JOSEPH SMITH.

LIBERTAS.⁷³⁶

In Carthage, the question of Joseph's national presidential campaign was as much at the forefront of discussions as it was in Nauvoo.

⁷³⁶ *Nauvoo Neighbor*, June 26, 1844.

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**Thursday, June 27, 1844, Early Warnings and
Broken Promises**

About 9:30, on Thursday morning, June 27 (not long before Reid left Carthage to meet with Joseph's enemies in Madison, Iowa), the prisoners learned some important news from Joseph's lawyers. "Mr. Wood and Mr. Reid called. They said another consultation of the officers had taken place, and the former orders of the governor for marching to Nauvoo with the whole army were countermanded."⁷³⁷

Sometime later, an account of that same meeting was reported to the Prophet's friend Stephen Markham.

Dr. Southwick was in the meeting, seeing what was going on. He afterward told Stephen Markham that the purport of the meeting was to take into consideration the best way to stop Joseph Smith's career, as his *Views* on government were widely circulated and took like wildfire. They said if he did not get into the Presidential chair this election, he would be sure to the next time; and if Illinois and Missouri would join together and kill him, they would not be brought to justice for it. There were delegates in said meeting from every state in the Union except three. Governor Ford and Captain [Robert F.] Smith were also in the meeting.⁷³⁸

The implications of the report are very far-reaching. There is no indication about what was meant by, "There were delegates in said meeting from every state in the Union except three," but one

⁷³⁷ *History of the Church*, 6:605-606. Wood was an attorney from Burlington, Iowa.

⁷³⁸ *History of the Church*, 6:605-606.

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can't help but speculate. If there was such a wide geographical representation there, and if, that same afternoon, John C. Calhoun's sons and Reid were across the river together in a confab with some of Joseph's most active enemies, is it not likely that they crossed the river together, and that the Calhouns had been among the "delegates" in the meeting in Carthage that morning. The answer is not known, but the question is worth asking.

When Joseph and Hyrum were murdered, some wondered whether Joseph's presidential campaign and the popularity of his *Views* had been the major cause behind the killings. John Pulsipher asked that question when he wrote in his journal:

Some of the Great men of our nation thought if they could kill the Prophet it would stop Mormonism. They knew that unless they could stop the spread of the Gospel it would turn the world upside down & Joseph Smith would be at the top—at the head of the Nation. Because he proposed a policy of government which would be for the general good of the whole nation. & his *Views* united the people & they were about to Elect Joseph Smith the President of the United States. Now these great men who were in office know if he was elected they would have to work for a living—& not get \$25,000 dollars a year for being President—& not doing anything for the good of the people.⁷³⁹

⁷³⁹ John Pulsipher, Journal, University of Utah Library, Ms. 91 v. I, p. 8.

Ford Goes to Nauvoo without Joseph

By this time Ford had ordered most of the militiamen who had gathered from the surrounding communities to go back to their homes. He retained only two regiments in his service. They were the Carthage Greys, whom he detailed to guard the jail where Joseph and Hyrum were kept, and a company of dragoons from the town of Augusta, who were demonstrably the most professional and best trained outfit in the state. They would be his personal guard and accompany him to Nauvoo, as he said, “to strike a salutary terror into the Mormon people by an exhibition of the force of the State.”⁷⁴⁰ He also sent the following message to the jailor: “I would advise the jailor to keep the Messrs. Smith in the room in which I found them this morning, unless a closer confinement should be clearly necessary to prevent an escape.”⁷⁴¹ Not only was the governor not taking the Smiths to Nauvoo with him, he was making sure they did not get there on their own.

Years later, Ford overlooked that he wrote those instructions to the jailor, for his *History* records,

Neither they nor I seriously apprehended an attack on the jail through the guard stationed to protect it. Nor did I apprehend the least danger on their part of an attempt to escape. For I was very sure that any such an attempt would have been the signal of their immediate death.⁷⁴²

In a footnote in his *History*, Ford shifts the blame to the anti-

⁷⁴⁰ Ford, *History*, 338.

⁷⁴¹ *History of the Church*, 6:598

⁷⁴² Ford, *History*, 338-339.

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Mormons. He wrote, “I learned afterwards that the leaders of the anti-Mormons did much to stimulate their followers to the murder of the Smiths in jail, by alleging that the governor intended to favor their escape.”⁷⁴³

In explaining that his decision to take the dragoons into Nauvoo was legal and justifiable, Ford wrote that within a short time after he first arrived in Carthage he determined to go to Nauvoo “to search for counterfeit money and the apparatus to make it.”⁷⁴⁴ That remained his official reason for his going, and in his *History* Ford built his case for going to Nauvoo around his alleged need to carry out a search. Ford described how he made that decision as follows:

The force assembled at Carthage amounted to about twelve or thirteen hundred men, and it was calculated that four or five hundred more were assembled at Warsaw. Nearly all that portion resident in Hancock were anxious to be marched into Nauvoo. This measure was supposed to be necessary to search for counterfeit money and the apparatus to make it, and also to strike a salutary terror into the Mormon people by an exhibition of the force of the State, and thereby prevent future outrages, murders, robberies, burnings, and the like, apprehended as the effect of Mormon vengeance on those who had taken a part against them. On my part, at one time this arrangement was agreed to. The morning of the 27th day of June was appointed for the march; and Golden’s Point near the Mississippi river and about equal distant from Nauvoo and Warsaw, was selected as the place of rendezvous. I had determined to prevail on the justice to bring out his prisoners and take them along. A council of officers, however, determined that this would be

⁷⁴³ Ford, *History*, 339.

⁷⁴⁴ Ford, *History*, 339.

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highly inexpedient and dangerous, and offered such substantial reasons for their opinions as induced me to change my resolution.

Two or three days' preparations had been made for this expedition. I observed that some of the people became more and more excited and inflammatory the further the preparations were advanced. Occasional threats came to my ears of destroying the city and murdering or expelling the inhabitants.

I had no objection to ease the terrors of the people by such a display of force, and was most anxious also to search for the alleged apparatus for making counterfeit money; and, in fact, to inquire into all the charges against that people, if I could have been assured of my command against mutiny and insubordination.⁷⁴⁵

A few pages later he also claims to have set himself a task that could not have been accomplished in the time allotted:

The officers insisted much in council upon the necessity of marching to that place to search for apparatus to make counterfeit money, and more particularly to terrify the Mormons from attempting any open or secret measures of vengeance against the citizens of the county who had taken a part against them or their leaders. To ease their terrors on this head I proposed to them that I would myself proceed to the city, accompanied by a small force, make the proposed search and deliver an address to the Mormons, and tell them plainly what degree of excitement and hatred prevailed against them in the minds of the whole people, and that if any open or secret violence should be committed on the persons or property of those who had taken part against them that no one would doubt but that it had been perpetrated by them, and that it would be

⁷⁴⁵ Ford, *History*, 339-340.

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the sure and certain means of the destruction of their city and the extermination of their people.⁷⁴⁶

One does not know what to make of those two statements. There seems to be no conceivable way that story could be true. The contextual and constitutional evidence insist that the story could not be true. Ford's tiptoeing around the edges of that story supports the conclusion that the search was a coverup intended to hide something that would be even more difficult to explain than his plans to conduct a search that would have been blatantly unconstitutional. If one accepts his report, he went to Nauvoo intending to override the legal processes. He does not explain why he believed that would be acceptable behavior in this instance, when he had written that he based his refusal to help the Prophet on the assertion that he could never do such a thing.

The reason Ford's explanation for conducting such a wholesale search would have been constitutionally out of the question is this: There was no such thing in Illinois as a general search warrant. The state constitution did not allow "...general warrants whereby an officer may be commanded to search suspected places without evidence of the fact committed, or to seize any person or persons not named."⁷⁴⁷ Ford gave no indication that he suspected where to look for the alleged counterfeiting operation. Indeed, there is no evidence he obtained a search warrant at all, and if he did get one, he took no civilian authority with him who could have executed it. He tells us who accompanied him—"Colonel Buckmaster, Quartermaster-General, and Capt. Dunn with his company of dragoons."⁷⁴⁸ As militia

⁷⁴⁶ Ford, *History*, 342.

⁷⁴⁷ 1818 Illinois Constitution, Article VIII, Sec. 7.

⁷⁴⁸ Ford, *History*, 345.

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officers neither had the civil authority to execute a search warrant. They might have searched the city, but only under martial law, Joseph's martial law had been lifted⁷⁴⁹ and there is no evidence Ford was going to impose another. On the contrary, the evidence indicates he made no legal preparations at all to conduct a citywide or even a specific area search. Notwithstanding his words, Ford's actions insist that he had no plans to carry out a search of any kind.

Two days later, when Ford had fled to Quincy after the murders were accomplished, he changed his story. He told the people in Quincy he had gone to Nauvoo "for the purpose of ascertaining satisfactorily the strength of the Mormon force."⁷⁵⁰ That also was not true, because the strength of the Nauvoo Legion

⁷⁴⁹ Ford, *History*, 333.

⁷⁵⁰ *Quincy Herald*, Quincy, Illinois, June 28, 1844; reprinted in: *Morning Courier*, Louisville, Kentucky, July 3, 1844; *Illinois State Register*, Springfield, Illinois, July 5, 1844; *Bloomington Herald*, Bloomington, Iowa, July 5, 1844; *Daily Globe*, Washington, D.C., July 8, 1844; *Albany Evening Journal*, Albany, New York, July 8, 1844; *New York Herald*, New York, New York, July 8, 1844; *Albany Evening Journal*, Albany, New York, July 8, 1844; *Delaware Gazette*, Wilmington, Delaware, July 9, 1844; *Hartford Daily Courant*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 9, 1844; *Peoria Democratic Press*, Peoria, Illinois, July 10, 1844; *Indiana State Sentinel*, Indianapolis, Indiana, July 11, 1844; *Belleville Advocate*, Belleville, Illinois, July 11, 1844; *Christian Freeman*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 11, 1844; *Daily Globe*, Washington, D.C., July 12, 1844; *Daily Albany Argus*, Albany, New York, July 16, 1844; *Livingston Republican*, Geneseo, New York, July 16, 1844; *North Carolinian*, Fayetteville, North Carolina, July 20, 1844; *Republican Compiler*, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, July 22, 1844; *Florida Herald*, St. Augustine, Florida, July 30, 1844; *Radical Democrat*, Gallatin, Mississippi, August 3, 1844. *Liberator*, Boston, Massachusetts, September 20, 1844.

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was a matter of common knowledge, and was surely known by its commander-in-chief who had just taken away all its state-owned small arms and cannon. If Governor Ford's statements about why he took a well-trained military company away from Carthage and into Nauvoo are belied by his actions, then so is his stated reason for not taking the Smiths with him as he had promised.

It is true also that at this time I had not believed or suspected that any attack was to be made upon the prisoners in jail. It is true that I was aware that a great deal of hatred existed against them, and that there were those who would do them an injury if they could. I had heard of some threats being made, but none of an attack upon the prisoners whilst in jail. These threats seemed to be made by individuals not acting in concert. They were no more than the bluster which might have been expected, and furnished no indication of numbers combining for this or any other purpose.⁷⁵¹

Governor Ford's real reasons for going to Nauvoo are obscured in self-contradiction, but his *History* leaves no doubt about why he left the Smiths in the charge of the Carthage Greys and their commander Robert F. Smith—even though he “knew that this company were the enemies of the Smiths,”⁷⁵²

At any rate I knew that the jail would have to be guarded as long as the prisoners were confined; that an imprisonment for treason might last the whole summer and the greater part of the autumn before a trial could be had in the circuit court; that it would be utterly impossible in the circumstances of the country to keep a force there from a foreign county for so long a time;

⁷⁵¹ Ford, *History*, 344-345.

⁷⁵² Ford, *History*, 343.

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and that a time must surely come when the duty of guarding the jail would necessarily devolve on the citizens of the county.⁷⁵³

That is an extraordinary statement. Ford knew there could be no long imprisonment on the bogus treason charges, so there must have been another reason he insisted on going away and leaving the Smiths under the protection of people who had sworn to murder them.

In Ford's *History*, he refers to many meetings with the anti-Mormon leaders during his stay in Carthage. He does not give details of these meetings, but leaves no question about their flavor or their intent:

But I gradually learned, to my entire satisfaction, that there was a plan to get the troops into Nauvoo, and there to begin the war, probably by some of our own party, or some of the seceding Mormons, taking advantage of the night, to fire on our own force, and then laying it on the Mormons. I was satisfied that there were those amongst us fully capable of such an act, hoping that in the alarm, bustle, and confusion of a militia camp, the truth could not be discovered, and that it might lead to the desired collision.⁷⁵⁴

Ford claims for himself a major victory in defeating that plan:

...frequent appeals had been made to me to make a clean and thorough work of the matter, by exterminating the Mormons, or expelling them from the state. An opinion seemed generally to prevail, that the sanction of executive authority would legalize the act; and all persons of any influence, authority, or

⁷⁵³ Ford, *History*, 344.

⁷⁵⁴ Ford, *History*, 340.

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note, who conversed with me on the subject, frequently and repeatedly stated their total unwillingness to act without my direction, or in any mode except according to law.⁷⁵⁵

Ford asserts that Sharp and the other Anti-Mormon leaders agreed to abandon their enterprise, send home the mob they had so laboriously gathered, give up their designs to sack Nauvoo and drive the Mormons from the state, and also to lose the opportunity to get the Smiths out of the way before the election—and all that for only one concession on Ford’s part: He promised to go to Nauvoo and make a speech telling the Mormons they must not retaliate, because the cost of that retaliation would be the “destruction of their city and the extermination of their people.”⁷⁵⁶ Ford’s credibility collapses under the strain of that argument. There was an agenda he did not wish to discuss in his *History*. Something more than a search he never intended to make, and a speech he promised that he would make was moving in the shadows of their decisions.

It becomes increasingly difficult to accept the notion that Ford did not believe he understood the real reason why he was going to Nauvoo, but to have revealed that in his *History* would have exposed his foreknowledge of the murders. Once again he tried to hide his motives behind a muddle of inconsistencies. Thomas Gregg recognized the absurdity of Ford’s claim about why he was going, and cited this trip to Nauvoo as an example of the governor’s ineptness, observing, he “does not seem to have had any clearly defined purpose in so doing.”⁷⁵⁷

⁷⁵⁵ Ford, *History*, 345.

⁷⁵⁶ Ford, *History*, 347.

⁷⁵⁷ Gregg, *History of Hancock County*, 322.

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But Ford himself would later discover there was another covert objective in the Anti-Mormon leaders' sending the governor to the Mormon City—a reason that Ford did not then know about, but that later terrified him. The negotiations with the mob leaders that Ford here claims to be a tactical victory, he later believed, were actually part of a plot to arrange his own assassination. Ford came to believe that the Anti-Mormon leaders had decided that the governor's life was expendable if his murder could be used as the excuse to invade and destroy Nauvoo.

Near the end of his *History*, Ford described their plot against him. He reported that after the leaders of the mob realized he would not let the army sack Nauvoo at that time, they sent him into the city and timed the murders of the Smith brothers so Ford would be in Nauvoo when the Mormons heard the news. Ford believed the Anti-Mormons assumed the Mormons would be so enraged by the murders, that they would retaliate by killing the governor and perhaps some of his guards as well. If that occurred, then the governor's death would be used as a legitimate reason to plunder Nauvoo and exterminate its inhabitants. But Ford figured all that out after—not before—he took the bait and went to Nauvoo.

Ford used his *History* to try to expose their plot against him and make himself appear to be the unknowing victim. But even as he sought to condemn those who betrayed him, he stumbled around the pitfalls that would reveal his knowing too much. He claimed to understand the plot, but wrote that he was not able to remember the names of the plotters.

As for myself, I was well convinced that those, whoever they were, who assassinated the Smiths, meditated in turn my assassination by the Mormons. The very circumstances of the case fully corroborated the information which I afterwards received, that upon consultation of the assassins it was agreed amongst them that the murder must be committed whilst the

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governor was at Nauvoo; that the Mormons would naturally suppose that he had planned it; and that in the first outpouring of their indignation, they would get clear of the Smiths and the governor, all at once. They also supposed, that if they could so contrive the matter as to have the governor of the state assassinated by the Mormons, the public excitement would be greatly increased against the people, and would result in their expulsion from the state at least.⁷⁵⁸

Subsequent events reveal that his was an accurate analysis of their plan. The phrase “whoever they were” holds an important key to Ford’s strange actions, and his equally strange account of the events.⁷⁵⁹ Ford did not discover that the plot included his own demise until after he got to Nauvoo. In the meantime, after the decisions were made in Carthage, Ford played out his part, unaware of the crescendo his own role was supposed to provide.

Reid, in a published history of the events, described what happened in Carthage that morning, calling particular attention not only to the company that went with the governor and the Carthage Greys who stayed behind, but also to the company from Warsaw who suddenly found themselves on their own and no longer under the command of Governor Ford.

On Tuesday morning another consultation of officers took place, and the former orders for marching to Nauvoo with the whole army was countermanded.

One company was ordered to accompany the governor to Nauvoo; the Carthage Greys, who had but two days before

⁷⁵⁸ Ford, *History*, 349.

⁷⁵⁹ An excellent account of the conspiracy to cover up the identities of the murders and prevent their being held accountable for their crime is Oaks and Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy*.

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been under arrest for insulting the commanding general, and whose conduct has been more hostile to the prisoners than that of any other company, were selected to guard the prisoners, and the other troops, including those rendezvoused at Golden's Point from Warsaw, who had been promised that they should be marched to Nauvoo, were disbanded.

A guard of only eight men were stationed at the jail, while the rest of the Greys were in camp at a quarter of a mile's distance, and while his Excellency was haranguing the peaceable citizens of Nauvoo, and asking them to give up all their arms, the assassins were murdering the prisoners in jail, whom the governor had pledged himself and the faith of the State to protect.⁷⁶⁰

His words, referring to the Warsaw militia waiting at Golden's Point, "who had been promised that they should be marched to Nauvoo," raises an interesting question: it was the governor who ordered them there, and that was before he knew the real reason why they wanted him to be in Nauvoo, was it also he, or someone else, who promised them that they would soon march on Nauvoo? The web is simply too tangled to sort it all out.

Arranging the Murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith

On the morning of June 27, 1844, having secured the Smiths in the jail from which they would never escape, Ford departed for Nauvoo to carry out his part in the plans. Ford claimed he felt secure as he left Carthage that when he was told of a plot to attack

⁷⁶⁰ *Nauvoo Neighbor Extra*, 30 June 1844.

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the jail while he was gone, he dismissed it as hearsay, believing that the Mormons would not be killed until the Anti-Mormon leaders were sure he had time to get safely out of Nauvoo.

I myself entertained no suspicion of such an attack; at any rate, none before the next day in the afternoon; because it was notorious that we had departed from Carthage with the declared intention of being absent at least two days. I could not believe that any person would attack the jail whilst we were in Nauvoo, and thereby expose my life and the life of my companions to the sudden vengeance of the Mormons, upon hearing of the death of their leaders.⁷⁶¹

However, even before Ford arrived in Nauvoo, he began to have second thoughts about the wisdom of his project. Some detail in the report rang true, for he began to fear he may have over-trusted his collaborators. To ease his fears he sent word back to Carthage that the inmates must be kept safe “until my return.”⁷⁶² He says his sense of security returned after he sent those instructions.

By this time I had convinced myself that no attack would be made on the jail that day or night. I supposed that a regard for my safety and the safety of my companions would prevent an attack until those to be engaged in it could be assured of our departure from Nauvoo. I still think that this ought to have appeared to me to be a reasonable supposition.⁷⁶³

Ford’s next sentence makes no sense whatever:

⁷⁶¹ Ford, *History*, 346.

⁷⁶² Ford, *History*, 346.

⁷⁶³ Ford, *History*, 346.

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I therefore determined at this point to omit making the search for counterfeit money at Nauvoo, and defer an examination of all the other abominations charged on that people, in order to return to Carthage that same night, that I might be on the ground in person, in time to prevent an attack upon the jail, if any had been meditated.⁷⁶⁴

What he says is something like this, “The Smiths will be safe for as long as I am in Nauvoo, and for that reason I will leave Nauvoo as soon as possible to make sure they remain safe.” His words try to denote innocence, even self-assurance, but his actions resound with the fear he felt when he realized the Smiths might be killed early—while he was still within the grasp of the Mormons at Nauvoo. He announced to his men that he had abandoned his plans to search for counterfeiters and ordered the baggage wagons to remain on the outskirts of the city for the remainder of the day, “until towards evening, and then return to Carthage.”⁷⁶⁵ Then, unencumbered by the slow-moving wagons, he and his mounted militia moved into Nauvoo. They arrived about four that afternoon. Ford immediately declared he had come to make a speech, and ordered that an audience be gathered as soon as possible.

His was an accusative speech, designed to intimidate rather than to reassure. Once again he used the innuendos associated with treason to drive home his point. The Mormons were deeply offended, though they did not hear the full implication of the subtext of what he was saying. William Clayton recorded in his journal:

In the meantime the governor was making to the Saints in

⁷⁶⁴ Ford, *History*, 346.

⁷⁶⁵ Ford, *History*, 346.

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Nauvoo one of the most infamous and insulting speeches that ever fell from the lips of an executive. Among other things he said, “A great crime has been done by destroying the *Expositor* press and placing the city under martial law, and a severe atonement must be made, so prepare your minds for the emergency. Another cause of excitement is the fact of your having so many firearms. The public are afraid that you are going to use them against government. I know there is a great prejudice against you on account of your peculiar religion, but you ought to be praying Saints, not military Saints. Depend upon it, a little more misbehavior from the citizens, and the torch, which is already lighted, will be applied, and the city may be reduced to ashes, and extermination would inevitably follow; and it gives me great pain to think that there is danger of so many innocent women and children being exterminated. If anything of a serious character should befall the lives or property of the persons who are prosecuting your leaders, you will be held responsible.”⁷⁶⁶

In his speech, Governor Ford warned that the treason charges against the Smiths might equally apply to all of the “military Saints.” Thus, he used the idea of treason again, this time magnifying its possibilities beyond any reality. Ford’s own account of his speech emphasizes that he carried out his promise to warn the Mormons not to retaliate. He wrote:

I also told them plainly and emphatically, that if any vengeance should be attempted openly or secretly against the persons or property of the citizens who had taken part against their leaders, that the public hatred and excitement was such, that thousands would assemble for the total destruction of their city and the extermination of their people; and that no power in the

⁷⁶⁶ *History of the Church*, 6:623.

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state would be able to prevent it.⁷⁶⁷

From the time Ford arrived in Nauvoo, it took about two hours to gather the audience and give the speech. Then, as soon as he was finished, the governor and his troops made a kind of triumphal exit from the city. The Mormons watched and understood they were supposed to be intimidated.

...his escort performed the sword exercise, giving all the passes, guards, cuts and thrusts, taking up the entire width of the street, and making as imposing a show as they could.... This was apparently done to intimidate the people, as the governor had remarked in his speech that they need not expect to set themselves up against such “well disciplined troops.”⁷⁶⁸

Back in Carthage, Joseph and Hyrum Smith had already been murdered and Ford himself was now set up to be next.

Ford wrote that he left Nauvoo just in time. He and his party had gone only about three miles when they met two messengers who were bringing news of the murders. Ford was terrified. He believed that if those messengers had arrived with that news before he and his soldiers left Nauvoo, the Mormons would have murdered them all. The governor prevented the messengers from continuing to Nauvoo, and forced them to ride back with him almost as far as Carthage, so, he says, that he would have time to remove the public records and documents from the courthouse and get himself out of Carthage before the Mormons’ retaliatory attack—which attack, of course, never came, but which all of Ford’s actions show he truly believed would come.

⁷⁶⁷ Ford, *History*, 347.

⁷⁶⁸ *History of the Church*, 6:623-624.

The Murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith

The best brief scholarly account of the events at Carthage jail that day is that by Dallin H. Oaks and Marvin S. Hill:

On June 26, during the whole day and into the evening, great excitement prevailed at Carthage. George. T. M. Davis, editor of the Alton Telegraph, wrote a contemporary account: “No one could close his ears against the murmurs that ran throughout the entire community. Little squads could be seen at the taverns, at the tents of the soldiers, and in every part of the town...expressions falling from the lips of numbers, there assembled, could leave no other impression upon any sane mind, than that they were determined the Smiths should not escape summary punishment.”“

During the evening the troops urged Governor Ford to lead them to Nauvoo, ostensibly to search for bogus money allegedly minted in the Mormon city.” Eudocia Baldwin Marsh, a girl in her teens, reported that the troops looked with great anticipation toward the march on the Mormon stronghold. For days their women had been preparing supplies for the men sufficient to allow for a siege.” Minor Deming, the brigade commander, had already ordered the regiment of Warsaw troops to march north to Golden’s Point, a few miles short of Nauvoo.” Late in the evening Ford learned that once in Nauvoo the troops would seek a pretext to begin hostilities. During the morning of June 27 Ford went to his officers in Carthage and discussed the possibility of this development and the desirability of disbanding the troops, a measure that Thomas Sharp strongly opposed. Despite some objections, Ford dismissed the twelve or thirteen hundred men at Carthage and sent a messenger to the men at Golden’s Point, discharging them and telling them to return to their homes. He would go to Nauvoo with only a small force.

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When the Warsaw troops en route to Golden's Point received word of dismissal, they voiced bitter protests. About two hundred of them refused to return home, saying that the governor had trifled with them in promising to lead them into Nauvoo. Many felt that the "old citizens" must act now or surrender their rights to the Mormons. At about noon a majority of these men took the road to Carthage."

Prior to his departure, Governor Ford was warned by one of his aides that a plot was developing to kill the prophet." One of Joseph Smith's lawyers told Ford to place a guard on the Warsaw road to prevent an attack on the jail from that direction." Ford said he gave these warnings little consideration because he believed them based on rumor. He later told the members of the legislature that he made plans to hurry back from Nauvoo to forestall any attempt on the prophet's life."

In the Carthage jail on the morning of June 27 Joseph Smith wrote a letter to his wife, reassuring her that, if there was an attack, some of the militia would remain loyal." Later he and Hyrum entertained several visitors, including Cyrus H. Wheelock, who, fearing an attack on the jail, slipped a pistol into Joseph's pocket."

At about four o'clock William R. Hamilton, a young boy who had been stationed as a lookout on the courthouse roof by Captain Robert Smith of the Greys, hurried down from his perch to inform the captain that a large group of men were coming from the west. Captain Smith told him to tell no one, but to let him know should these men head directly toward the jail."

At the jail Franklin Worrell commanded a seven-man detail of guards. The main company of Greys was nearly a half mile away, in or near their tents on the southeast corner of the town square. Eudocia Marsh, visiting her sister in Carthage, reported that toward evening her brother-in-law, an officer of the Greys, burst into the house to announce that "a party of

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men are coming to take Joe Smith from jail and to hang him on the public square.”

On the square the Greys were formed up in front of their tents by Captain Smith, who had difficulty getting them into line as some had been sleeping and were slow to react to the captain’s commands. Tom Marsh, Eudocia’s brother, wanted to run to the jail without any military formality; he shouted, “Come on you cowards damn you, come on, those boys [the Greys on guard at the jail] will all be killed.”“ Tom broke away from the rest of the troops and ran toward the jail, but the remainder delayed, executing a slow, disciplined march, “with guns properly at shoulder and flag flying, as if on dress parade.”“ By this time the mob, grotesquely disguised by blackened faces, had already reached the jail.

“While there were guards around the jail,” eyewitness William Hamilton recalled later, “they were guards that did not guard and in fact I think understood the whole matter.” “The guards fired directly into the attackers from a distance of twenty feet, but no one fell. Scuffling briefly with the guards, the mob tossed them aside and stormed up the stairs toward the room where the prisoners were held. Upon hearing the guns firing below, Joseph and Hyrum seized their pistols and ran to the door to hold it shut against the attackers. Some of the mob fired shots through the wooden door, hitting Hyrum in the face. He fell upon his back, dead, his head toward an open window on the east. Joseph, seeing his fallen brother at his feet, stepped up beside the door and began firing his pistol at the men in the hallway. After attempting to fire all six barrels (three misfired) he ran to the window. Outside were more of the mob, who fired at him from below as bullets struck him from behind. He teetered on the sill, with one leg and an arm out the window, and then fell to the ground, landing on his left side.” An examination of his body showed that he had been hit four times, once in the right collar bone, once in the breast, and twice in the back.” Accounts differ as to whether he was dead

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before he hit the ground,” but Thomas Dixon, who was standing near the jail, said that while there was blood on his pants when he came to the window, “he was not dead when he fell—he raised himself up against the well curb.” He then “drew up one leg and stretched out the other and died immediately.” William R. Hamilton confirmed Dixon’s statement that the body was not molested after it hit the ground.

Hamilton was able to go upstairs, view the body of Hyrum, and return in time to see the Carthage Greys just arriving at the jail. According to another witness, when the Greys reached the jail members of the fleeing mob were still in sight, only three hundred yards away, but none of the Greys gave pursuit. Before sunrise of the next day most of the Greys had “broke for the tall timber,” expecting retaliation by the Mormons for their ineptitude at the jail.⁷⁶⁹

Contemporary Accounts of the Murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith

The following letter may be our only first-hand account of the murders from the point of view of the people who killed Joseph and Hyrum. Even though the author does not actually admit to being with the party that attacked the jail at Carthage, he gives details that strongly suggest he was actually there. His letter was published in the *Northern Democrat*, Montrose, Pennsylvania, August 1, 1844.

⁷⁶⁹ Oaks and Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy*, 19-21.

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The Mormons

The following interesting account of the transactions at Nauvoo which led to the murder of Joe Smith—of the death of the Prophet—& of the exciting scenes that followed that event—it contained in a letter written by a young gentleman formerly of this place to his friends here, and who resides in the neighborhood of the Mormon City. It will be read with a great deal of interest, as the details may be relied on as being correctly given. The letter was written three or four days after the events of which it speaks occurred, and is dated:

Appanoose, Ill. June 30th, 1844

“I hasten to inform you of the death of Joe Smith the Mormon Prophet, and his brother Hiram—I will go back a few weeks and give a brief outline of the causes of this great “Mormon War.” I will date back to the time of our robbery—You remember the Negro that was Lynched? on that being done, Joe Smith and his warm followers withdrew their sympathy for us on account of our loss, and enlisted them in behalf of the Negro, who was guilty without doubt.⁷⁷⁰ Quite a

⁷⁷⁰ The man was unlawfully beaten, and the Prophet did not support the action. One newspaper account complained: “A colored man named Chisem, was most severely lynched, by a lawless mob, in or near Nauvoo, about two weeks since, on suspicion of having been concerned in the robbery of a store in that City. Two or three persons, believed to have participated in this inhuman outrage, were apprehended soon after its perpetration, and taken before a magistrate; when one of the number was found guilty of assault and battery, and fined five dollars. The others were discharged—the evidence against them being deemed insufficient for their conviction. If this is not a mere mockery of justice, we know not what is: for, so far as is yet known, the poor man, thus cruelly abused on mere suspicion, was entirely innocent of the offence laid to his charge.” (*Alton Telegraph*, Alton, Illinois, April 20, 1844.) Another version is found in the

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number of law suits for lynching, threatening &c. &c., grew out of it—a few of the most wealthy and respectable citizens took a stand against Joe, and the course pursued by him and his crowd, not only in relation to our affair, but many others which actually originated in the same. This home war waxed warmer and warmer, and finally some 8 or 10 citizens established a Printing Office, (the *Nauvoo Expositor*) a No. of the same I sent to you) in order to make known to the world the tyrannical oppression of Joe, and the rascality carried on in the “Holy City.” They issued from the Press but one number (1000 copies) and the contents, (every word of which was truth) fell upon Joe, and the whole hog Mormons” like sledge hammers. They knew well, that...[if it were made] public, their downfall would be certain. Consequently a secret City Council was called, an ordinance passed declaring the Press a Nuisance—orders were given immediately to the Marshall and posse to destroy the Press and materials. It was done; and THAT ACT sealed Joe & Hiram’s death warrant. The publishers (or a part of them) left for Carthage, where a suit was commenced against all concerned in the mob, (for I can call it by no other name). The officers came in town and arrested the individuals.

Signal: “LYNCHING IN NAUVOO—We learn that the holy City has lately been the scene of a lynching operation. The facts in relation to the matter are briefly these. The store of Messrs. Rollinson & Finch of Nauvoo was broken open on the 29th ult., and robbed of from \$1400 to \$1500 worth of goods. A Negro by the name of Chesam was found in possession of some of the articles that had been taken from the store, and in order to make him confess and reveal the names of his partners, he was taken into the woods by some individuals, and severely beaten. Nothing, however was elicited. Out of this affair considerable excitement has been produced, and some of Jo’s hitherto strongest supporters, are now arrayed against him. We have not room for further particulars this week.” (*Warsaw Signal* April 10, 1844.)

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They were taken from the officers by “Habeas Corpus, and tried before themselves, (all were Mayor and Councilmen &c; this they had done several times before—and always as was the case in this instance, Honorably acquitted. The Citizens of the county would not put up with this—a messenger was dispatched for the Governor, laid their grievances before him. The Governor returned in person to Carthage. By this time the whole community were under arms, waiting the order of the Governor. Some 3000 Mormons in Nauvoo were under arms, all pledged to stand by Joe through thick and thin, and determined to fight before surrender. The Mormons or Nauvoo Legion were well armed, having some state arms, and 3 six pounders. Governor Ford ordered the officer again to arrest the prisoners they still refused to go out of the city—about this time Joe and Hiram were willing to make their escape, but their friends prevailed upon them to remain and to see them through the difficulty which they had occasioned, they did remain and paid for it with their lives: Upon the Prisoners refusing to surrender, the Governor orders out the militia of the state, and sent one Company to Nauvoo to demand the state arms. The Mormons gave them up and asked for quarters—were willing to submit to the laws of the state—were law abiding people &c, how suddenly docile? They saw the consequences and dared not do otherwise. The evening before the Military were to march to Nauvoo, and dreadful would have been the consequences, it could not have been otherwise, with 10,000 armed men, all Anti Mormons loose in Nauvoo, if such had been the case the Philadelphia riots would have been forgotten, what could the Governor have done? all the Governors in the world could not have controlled them: The innocent and guilty would have all suffered alike.

Yes, only 10 hours before the wholesale murdering would have commenced, Joe and Hiram and some others made their appearance in the Governor’s presence in Carthage. They were held to Bail for destroying the Press, but as soon as they were

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free, other writs were served upon them, for Treason, &c. &c. about this time big disturbances were being raised by some of the Military Companies. They hissed and hooted, and it was with the greatest difficulty that the Governor could control them—they all became quiet, and for the safety of Joe and Hiram they were confined or kept without confining in the Debtors' jail.

I will leave them there, and speak of the Governor and his movements. The Military went home, except the Carthage Greys (about 40) they were left to guard the Prisoners, and as a body Guard, of 60 Troops—with these the Governor marched to Nauvoo, and made a speech to the "Religious Legion," and Mormons generally. In the course of his speech he spoke of their beautiful City, but, says he, "Gentlemen, every house is built upon a Powder Magazine, and the least imprudent move on your part, will again arouse the people, who are anxious to furnish and apply the match." He condemned the "Habeas Corpus" proceedings and dwelt upon the abuses they had made for their Chartered rights. In fine, he went for the People's rights, and against the Mormons wrongs, and says he "The destroying of the Press sanctioned by law, has but one parallel; and that was in France in 1821, which hurled the King from his Throne and imprisoned four of his Prime Ministers for life. By the way, I forgot to mention that the Mormons declared Martial Law, and all ingress and egress was forbid under any circumstances. Even Steam Boats were forbid landing, all Provisions, ammunition, &c., were pressed, and in some instances at the point of the Bayonet—Stores were broken open and plundered and used as Barracks, and in one instance, they used, a fine Black Walnut Table Counter, handsomely polished and varnished to cut up Beef on.

The Governor very wisely concluded to leave the city with his guard the same evening, and on his way out, he met two messengers from Carthage with word that Joe and Hiram were both killed: and Taylor, (Joe's Editor,) who was in the Prison

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as a friend, was badly wounded. The particulars of this I have from an eye witness. The facts are these: About 5 o'clock on Thursday evening, the 27th, precisely the time that Governor Ford was addressing the crowd in Nauvoo, a company of some 200 men all painted and disguised, came from the woods about half a mile from the jail, and crept cautiously along a line of fence, until within 75 or 100 yards of the Prison house when they made a grand rush upon the guard, only 8 being then on duty, (the balance of the company being camped one fourth of a mile distant) and were fired upon by the guard, who were immediately seized & firmly held by some, while others were destroying the arms of the guard, and about 40 or 50 entered the prison. The door to the debtor's room was standing open: a Dr. Richards, one of Joe's trumpets, first discovered the game; he fled upstairs and concealed himself in a cell, thus he saved his life. Hiram attempted to shut the door, and while in the act was shot through the door and killed, he only exclaimed "I am a dead man." The ball entered his head near the eye, he also received another in his throat, and three in his body. Joe had a small six shooter pistol, which he shot 3...[times then tried to] jump through the window, but received several balls. (6) before, & while getting out, he only said "Oh God." As he fell a Youth, one of the mob plunged a Bowie knife into him saying "there d-n you, take that, you was the means of killing my father." The Mr. Taylor who was in the room with them hid himself under the bed, but did not escape wholly; he received 4 balls in his leg and arm, and is thought will recover, (doubtfully) all of this was performed in much less time than I am writing it, in fact the main company of the Greys did not reach the ground in time to see one of the mob, who fled to the woods and have not been heard of since. No man in the City was absent from his business, or usual places of abode. Then where did these men come from? It is my opinion, they were all Missourians, who have an old grudge against Joe and all Mormons. If they were such, they landed on our side with

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Boats of some kind and traveled across the Prairie to the woods, the night before and night after on their return. The distance is 20 miles. This strip of woods varies from Two to eight miles in width, and tends towards the River below Carthage 5 or miles. It is thought many of the mob were wounded if not killed by the Guard, and Joe, but none were left on the ground. Gov. Ford and nearly all the Citizens left Carthage for August, 18 miles distant. They feared the Mormons and well they might. Such a raving hydrophobic set, I never before heard of. They swore they would have blood for blood. They mourn the death of Joe, as a child would that of its Parents, in fact the Mormons have lost their Father, their leader, their all, and proves the Book of Mormon not true—he was to have conquered his enemies, and to have lived a thousand years, and if ever killed he was to have been killed by his best friends. They are a poor deluded people, now left without a leader they must fall they have fallen. This very hour 10,000 men and women can be seen in Nauvoo, all congregated around their unfinished temple, weeping like maniacs. The Bodies were brought in Town yesterday, and are to be seen this day from [?] to 4 o'clock. I have not yet learned how they intend to dispose of them, but probably will be preserved in spirits, and deposited in the new tomb near the Temple. Many of the Mormons are in the belief that Joe will be resurrected, & appear to them. In fact some, believe that he is not dead. Seeing is no evidence with the Mormons in any case. I can now hear the muffled Drum and roar of all arms in the fallen City, 8 miles distant. The Governor, in a letter to Joe's widow says "Mormons protect yourselves, for I cannot do it." He is now ordering out the Military, and officers from Jefferson Barracks & will take command. What will be the result God only knows, I would not be astonished if every Mormon be driven from the State: Time will tell.

n.b. As Joe was shot in the window, he fell to the ground, near a well curb. A young athletic man run out of the jail,

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caught Joe by the arms and set him up against the well curb, (he was yet alive) and said “look me in the face you old scoundrel, you caused the death of my Father.” He then stepped back one step and blowed him through with a small carbine, (an oz ball.) You must admit it to have been a dreadful outrage, and whoever the men were, they knew no fear. I have just learned that they had a reserve company with a 12 pounder a little distance off, to have destroyed the jail if necessary to find the Smiths.”

William Roosevelt, a resident of Warsaw and officer in the militia who had already used his military authority to drive isolated Mormon farmers from their property, rushed to Quincy to tell his version of the murders. His account was described in an *Extra* of the *Quincy Whig*.

Dreadful News.

ATTEMPT AT RESCUE—KILLING OF JOE SMITH—
HYRUM SMITH IN THE CARTHAGE JAIL

On Friday morning last, just before sunrise, our citizens were aroused from their slumbers, by the ringing of the bells of the city. The cause of the commotion was the astounding news that had just come down from Hancock, viz: of the attempt on the part of the Mormons to rescue Joe Smith from the jail in Carthage and of the killing of Joe Smith, Hyrum Smith, and Joe’s Secretary, William Richards! and of the great peril of Governor Ford, and the handful of troops now in Nauvoo! An immense crowd had collected at the court house, with Dr. Ralston in the chair. Wm. H. Roosevelt, Esq. being present, was called upon to give a statement of recent occurrences in Hancock. The gentleman seemed to be laboring under great excitement, but gave a tolerable well connected account of the events of the last few days in Carthage and vicinity. It appears that Joe Smith, Hyrum Smith, and a number of other Mormon leaders, were in jail at Carthage, confined on certain offences

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against the laws of the State. The “Carthage Greys,” a volunteer company, were placed as a guard around the jail.

About 6 o’clock, last evening, an attempt was made by the Mormons on the outside to rescue the Mormon prisoners from the custody of the guard. A youth about 19 years of age, (a Mormon,) began the fray, by shooting the sentinel at the door, wounding him severely in the shoulder. Simultaneously with this attempt, the Mormons on the inside of the jail, including the Smiths, presented pistols through the windows and doors of the jail, and fired upon the guard without, wounding, it is supposed, mortally four of the “old citizens” of Hancock! It is unnecessary to say that this bloodthirsty attempt, on the part of the Mormons, was the signal for certain and sure vengeance. The lives of the two Smiths, and Richards, were quickly taken, and we believe no others! Carthage was filled with Mormons—previous to the affray, the Mormons appeared to be collecting around the jail, it is now supposed, for the purpose of attempting the rescue of their leader.

G.T.M. Davis, Esq., of Alton, came down this morning from Nauvoo. The news of the killing of Smith, had not reached Nauvoo when he left. Governor Ford was in Nauvoo yesterday, and was to camp six miles out last night. Col. Singleton was in command at Nauvoo, with 120 troops. Great fears are entertained for their safety, if the Mormons rose upon him, after hearing of the death of the Prophet.

It is also feared that both Carthage and Warsaw have been burned by the Mormons, as threats of that kind have been made. The Women and children escaped to safety—a portion of them came down on the Boreas, this morning.

The “German Guards” and “Rifle Company,” are now assembling, as well as a portion of the Militia, for the purpose of marching to the scene of action. The Boreas has been

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chartered to take them up. Our city has the appearance of a military camp.⁷⁷¹

The following is Governor Ford's official version of what happened. He wrote it after he left Carthage and arrived in Quincy.

TO THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS.

I desire to make a brief but true statement of the recent disgraceful affair at Carthage, in regard to the Smiths so far as circumstances have come to my knowledge. The Smiths, Joseph and Hyrum, have been assassinated in jail, by whom is not known, but will be ascertained. I pledged myself for their safety, and upon the assurance of that pledge, they surrendered as prisoners. The Mormons surrendered the public arms in their possession, and the Nauvoo Legion submitted to the command of Capt. Singleton, of Brown county, deputed for that purpose by me. All these things were required to satisfy the "old citizens" of Hancock, that the Mormons were peaceably disposed; and to allay the jealousy and excitement in their minds. It appears, however, that the compliance of the Mormons with every requisition made upon them, failed of that purpose. The pledge of security to the Smiths, was not given upon my individual responsibility. Before I gave it, I obtained a pledge of honor by a unanimous vote from the officers and men under my command, to sustain me in performing it. If the assassination of the Smiths was committed by any portion of these, they have added treachery to murder, and have done all they could do to disgrace the State, and sully the public honor.

On the morning of the day the deed was committed, we had proposed to march the army under my command into Nauvoo. I however discovered in the evening before, that nothing but utter destruction of the city would satisfy a portion

⁷⁷¹ Reprinted in the *Quincy Whig*, Quincy, Illinois, July 3, 1844.

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of the troop; and that if we marched into the city, pretexts would not be wanting for commencing hostilities. The Mormons have done everything required of them. Offensive operations on our part would have been as unjust and disgraceful as they would have been impolitic, in the present critical season of the year, the harvest and the crops. For these I decided, in a council of officers, to disband the army, except three companies, two of which were retained as a guard for the jail. With the other company I marched into Nauvoo, to tell them what they might expect in case they designedly or imprudently provoked a war. I performed this duty, as I think plainly and emphatically, and then set out to return to Carthage. When I had marched about three miles a messenger informed me of the occurrences at Carthage. I hastened on to that place. The guard it is said, did their duty but were overpowered. Many of the inhabitants of Carthage had fled with their families. Others were preparing to go. I apprehended danger to the settlements from the sudden fury and passion of the Mormons and sanctioned their movements in this respect.

General Deming volunteered to remain with a few troops, to observe the progress of events, to defend property against small numbers and with orders to retreat if menaced by a superior force. I decided to proceed immediately to Quincy to prepare a force, sufficient to suppress disorders, in case it should ensue from the foregoing transactions or from any other cause. I have hopes that the Mormons will make no further difficulties. In this I may be mistaken. The other party may not be satisfied. They may recommence aggression. I am determined to preserve the peace against all breakers of the same, at all hazards. I think, present circumstances warrant the precaution, of having a competent force at my disposal, in readiness to march at a moment's warning. My position at Quincy will enable me to get the earliest intelligence, and to communicate orders with greater celerity.

I have decided to issue the following general orders:

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HEADQUARTERS, Quincy, June 29, 1844

It is ordered that the commandants of regiments in the counties of Adams, Marquette, Pike, Brown, Schuyler, Morgan, Scott, Cass, Fulton, and McDonough, and the regiments composing Gen. Stapp's Brigade, will call their respective regiments and Battalions together immediately upon the receipt of this order, and proceed by voluntary enlistment to enrol as many men, as can be armed in their respective regiments. They will make arrangements for a campaign of twelve days and will provide themselves with arms, ammunition, and provisions accordingly, and hold themselves in readiness immediately to march upon receipt of further orders.

The independent companies of Riflemen, Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery in the above named counties and in the county of Sangamon, will hold themselves in readiness in like manner.

THOMAS FORD.

Governor and Commander in Chief.⁷⁷²

⁷⁷² This statement by Governor Ford was first published in the *Quincy Herald Extra*, June 29, 1844, as mentioned in the preceding two footnotes. It was republished in many newspapers all over the United States. Some published it with the above account of the murder, others did not. Some which simply published it without comment are: *Nauvoo Neighbor Extra*, June 30, 1844; *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, July 1, 1844; *Indiana State Journal*, Indianapolis, Indiana, July 5, 1844; *Sangamo Journal*, Springfield, Illinois, July 11, 1844, published it in connection with a reprint of almost all of the *Nauvoo Neighbor Extra* of June 30, 1844.

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This is the way the *Warsaw Signal* told the Story:

On Thursday evening, Gov. Ford had given orders that all the troops should march to Nauvoo on Friday. On Thursday, the army was to rendezvous at Golden's Point about 5 miles from the city. The object for this visit was not made known, but rests entirely on surmise. On Thursday morning a council of officers was called in Carthage, and on account of the desire of the troops from Schuyler and McDonough, to return home, and the fear that if the army were marched into Nauvoo, it could not be controlled, it was determined immediately to disband the troops. This was accordingly done, with the exception of the Carthage and Augusta troops, and a company under Capt. Singleton, who had possession of Nauvoo. The troops from other counties who had been disbanded, immediately returned to their homes, and Gov. Ford, accompanied by the Augusta Dragoons, took up the line of march for Nauvoo.

About four o'clock, p.m., a company of about one hundred armed men, marched to the jail in Carthage, and demanded the prisoners. A rush was made on the guards, who fired, but hurt nobody. They were immediately secured, and the men rushed upstairs to the room of the prisoners. For about two minutes the discharge of firearms within the jail was very rapid. Finally, Joe Smith raised the window, exclaimed, "Oh my God," and threw himself out. He fell heavily on the ground, and was soon dispatched. Hyrum was shot in the jail. There were two other prisoners. Dr. Richards who we learn was not hurt, and J. Taylor, editor of the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, who received five balls in his arms and legs. Immediately on the work being done, the men fled....

We neglected to mention in the proper place, that on Monday last, about a half of the arms belonging to the State in possession of the Mormons, were taken from them, and all the cannon.

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The prisoners were not in cells, but in the private room of the jailor, the windows of which were not barred....

It was expected that as soon as the news reached Nauvoo, the Mormons would take vengeance on Carthage and Warsaw. The messenger however, who started for Nauvoo, met Gov. Ford, returning to Carthage, and was not permitted to go further. The Governor sent for Capt. Singleton's men, who were in Nauvoo, and proceeded to Carthage. The Public Records were removed to Augusta, and the women and children sent out of the town. Gov. Ford left for Augusta, and we learn this morning, that he proceeded to Quincy.

In Warsaw, as soon as the news of the death of the two Smiths was received, everything was placed in an attitude for defense and the inhabitants of the surrounding country requested to come to our aid, a portion of the women and children passed over the river on Friday afternoon five companies from Quincy, being about 250 in number, arrived on the *Boreas*. Many from Missouri and Iowa, have also come to our aid. We have three cannon, plenty of ammunition, and are fully prepared for any attack which the Mormons can make.

By the stage-driver from Nauvoo, we learn that about thirty men were sent for the dead bodies of Joe and Hyrum, and that they were to be buried on the same evening, with military honors.

What will be the final issue is yet to be ascertained—various surmises are afloat; but our opinion is, that either the “old citizens” or the Mormons must leave. The country cannot be quieted, until the expulsion of the one or the others is effected.⁷⁷³

⁷⁷³ *Warsaw Signal, Extra*, June 29, 1844; The first segment was reprinted in: *Richmond Palladium*, Richmond, Indiana, July 12, 1844; *Western Star*, Lebanon, Ohio, July 5, 1844. The second segment was reprinted in *Sangamo Journal*, Springfield, Illinois, July 11, 1844.

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This is the way the story was reported in Missouri:

MURDER OF MORMONS

On Saturday last, news reached this place that Joseph Smith and his brother, Hiram, had been killed, while held in close prison at Carthage, in Hancock County, Illinois. The first intelligence of this event was through an extra from the *Quincy Whig*, which gave a confused and highly improbable account of an attempt at rescue on the part of the Mormons, and was evidently intended to create the impression that the attack on the prisoners was a matter of accident and sudden heat, provoked by the prisoner's friends. Later accounts, however, show evidences of premeditation on the part of the assailants, and lead to the belief, that the taking of Smith's life was a most dastardly and perfidious murder.

The truth may be pretty well spelt out from two letters, which appeared in the *Evening Gazette*, of Saturday, from a person, who appears to have been near the scene of the tragedy at the time it was committed. The writer thinks so little of the affair that he treats the particulars as they were good matter for a joke, and has, evidently, not a particle of sympathy for the sufferers; but he, nevertheless, pointedly denies the statements in respect to a rescue, and tells the story in a way to leave no doubt that the set was one of deliberate premeditation. We do not admire the tone of levity which the letter exhibits, and are pleased to see that it is not relished by the editor of the *Gazette*; but we pass that by, in order to get at this statements. Writing under date of the 27th, he says:

Yesterday, the 26th, Gov. Ford having prevailed upon Joseph Smith and several other principal Mormons, to resign themselves into the hands of the officers of Justice at Carthage to be tried by due process of law, five, and I believe only five, viz: Joseph and Hiram Smith, a Doctor Richards, and two others were incarcerated in the Hancock County Jail, and guarded by the Governor's troops, until this morning, when

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Governor Ford discharged the troops, except 60 already stationed at Nauvoo, and a further reserve of 60, who, today, accompanied him to Nauvoo, to detect and annihilate the bogus factory, leaving the prisoners in the safe and efficient keeping of seven men of the Carthage Greys. Shortly after disbanding the McDonough troops, and the Governor's departure from Nauvoo, a large body of militia, say 200, resolved to wait on the prisoners in the room. Here was the beginning of trouble.

The faithful Greys could not consistently admit visitors to prisoners accused of treason and other felonies. The militia took efficient means to convince the guard of their impotence, and the opposing force joined the issue. At the charge of the militia the Greys fired, evincing a valor not surpassed nor even equaled by the renowned heroes of Thermopylae. Here 200 men were incompetent to intimidate these valorous seven, who, true to their trust, discharged their pieces with deadly aim. The militia soon ascertained, either by roll call or particular inspection and inquiry, that none were either killed or wounded, and bethinking themselves that cartridge paper without ball therein is harmless, the militia formed seven parties of seven men each, and thus arranged, each division seized one of the guard, and thus the seven were overcome, and yet a few militia, say 150, were at leisure to enter and pay their respects to the illustrious prisoners. The door was forced, and Joe shot the foremost, named Wills, through the wrist. A general melee ensued, in which pistols spoke eloquently and forcibly. Five of the militia were wounded, though slightly. Joe Smith, endeavoring to escape, precipitated himself from the window, receiving while between heaven and earth some half dozen shots, and five thereafter.”⁷⁷⁴

⁷⁷⁴ *St. Louis Missouri Democrat*, St. Louis, Missouri, June 28, 1844.

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In the next issue the editor continued:

“This morning appeared an extra or slip from the office of the *Quincy Whig*, of the fallacy of which statements, I respectfully beg leave to advise you and the public. It is therein stated that the Mormons had planned the liberation of the prisoners on Thursday. Let us examine this point. Joe Smith had surrendered to the Carthaginian officers, on being assured that violence would not be offered to him previous to an impartial trial by a jury of his peers. Furthermore, had there been numerous Mormons about Carthage, as the extra states, at the time of the assault on the prisoners, the death of the prophet would have been known at Nauvoo as early as at Warsaw: whereas, I am informed that his death was not known at Nauvoo at 5 o’clock this morning. The extra states that a young Mormon of 19 years, together with the prisoners, fired upon and wounded the guard, thus provoking the commission of the foul deed. Let me assure you that my information is derived directly from the corroborating testimony of several of these who were present, who saw Smith fall, and who, perhaps, directed the fatal deed. Nothing was mentioned at Warsaw last evening, of the probable purpose of the Mormons to hibernate the prisoners. But this I did hear, that the entire Mormon Legion, aided by Gov. Ford’s McDonough troops, would have been insufficient to retain Joe’s hide shot proof a month longer. I suspect the Anti-Mormon rather than the Mormons; yet I respect truth and justice rather than either.

The above statements, come from a person who, it seems, is a resident of this city, and the editor of the *Gazette*, in making them public, vouches for his correspondent as a man of honor.

A statement in the *New Era*, of Saturday, charged that all the individual’s of the mob which broke into the jail, had their faces blackened to escape detection and exposure.

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From all the facts now before us, we regard these homicides as nothing less than murder in cold blood—murder against the blighted faith of the chief magistrate of Illinois—murder of a character so atrocious and so unjustifiable, as to leave the blackest stain on all its perpetrators—their aiders, abettors, and defenders.

Here was Joe Smith in the custody of the laws to which he had surrendered himself, in the confidence that those laws would not be broken to his injury. He had promise of preservation and protection against the very mob violence to which he has fallen a victim. Ought not such faith to have been kept? Need we ask, indeed, whether, even if there had been no special promise, the law does not always hold out implied safety to its prisoners from all punishments, save what itself imposes? Indeed, the sight of such solemn pledges, so shamefully broken, is truly sickening. Why, an Arab, if you accept his hospitality, and eat of his salt—an American Indian, if you once pass his threshold in peace, will die, before he will suffer his pledges to be broken. If such sets are to be taken as a true expression of the spirit which pervades the public mind of our communities, it needs no seer to tell us that our course as a people is downward. It is a spirit, which seeks its gratification only in the indulgence of the most ignorant prejudices and the vilest passions. Nothing can stand against it, except the bayonets of a despot, and it is the very spirit, which, after a series of anarchies, naturally produces despots and their bayonets.

We think Smith was a despicable impostor, and that the dupes of a deceit so gross as his is must necessarily be most ignorant and debased. Hence we have always thought that the laws of the land were strong enough to control both him and them.⁷⁷⁵

⁷⁷⁵ *St. Louis Missouri Democrat*, St. Louis, Missouri, July 1, 1844.

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Willard Richards was with Joseph, Hyrum, and John Taylor when the jail was attacked. He describes what happened:

TWO MINUTES IN JAIL

Possibly the following events occupied near three minutes, but I think only two, and have penned them for the gratification of many friends.

CARTHAGE June 27, 1844

A shower of musket balls were thrown up the stairway against the door of the prison in the second story; followed by many rapid footsteps. While Generals Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Mr. Taylor, and myself, who were in the front chamber, closed the door of our room against the entry at the head of the stairs, and placed ourselves against it, there being no lock on the door and no ketch that was useable. The door is a common panel, and as soon as we heard the feet at the stairs head, a ball was sent through the door, which passed between us, and showed that our enemies were desperadoes, and we must change our position. Gen. Joseph Smith, Mr. Taylor and myself sprang back to the front part of the room, and Gen. Hyrum Smith retreated two thirds across the chamber directly in front and facing the door. A ball was sent though the door which hit Hyrum on his nose, when he fell backwards extended at length without moving his feet. From the holes in his vest, (the day being warm, and no one had their coats on but myself,) pantaloons, drawers and shirt, it appears evident that a ball must have been thrown from without, through the window, which entered his back on the right side, and passing through, lodged against his watch, which was in his right vest pocket, completely pulverizing the crystal and face, tearing off the hands and mashing the whole body of the watch, at the same instant the ball from the door entered his nose. As he struck the floor he exclaimed emphatically; "I'm a dead man." Joseph looked towards him and responded, "O, dear, Brother Hyrum."

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and opening the door two or three inches with his left hand, discharged one barrel of a six shooter (pistol) at random in the entry from whence a ball grazed Hyrum's heart, and entering his throat, passed into his head, while other muskets were aimed at him, and some balls hit him. Joseph continued snapping his revolver round the casing of the door into the space as before, the barrels of which misfired, while Mr. Taylor stood by his side and knocked down the bayonets and muskets which were constantly discharging through the door way, while I stood by him ready to lend him any assistance with another stick, but could not come within striking distance, without going direct before the muzzle of the guns. When the revolver failed, we had no more fire arms, and expected an immediate rush of the mob, and the door was filled with muskets—halfway in the room, and no hope but instant death within—Mr. Taylor rushed into the window, which is some fifteen or twenty feet from the ground.

When his body was nearly on a balance, a ball from the door within entered his leg, and a ball from without struck his watch, a patent lever, in his vest pocket, near the left breast, and smashed it in “pi,” leaving hands standing at 5 o'clock, 16 minutes, and 26 seconds—the force of which ball threw him back on the floor, and he rolled under the bed which stood by his side, where he lay motionless, the mob from the door continuing to fire upon him, cutting away a piece of flesh from his left hip as large as a man's hand, and were hindered only by my knocking down their muzzles with a stick; while they continued to reach their guns into the room, probably left handed, and aimed their discharges so far round as almost to reach us in the corner of the room to where we retreated and dodged and then I recommenced the attack with my stick again. Joseph attempted as the last resort, to leap the window from whence Mr. Taylor fell, when two balls pierced him from the door, and one entered the right breast from without, and he fell outward exclaiming, “O Lord my God.” As his feet went out of

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the window my head went in, the whistling all around. He fell on his left side a dead man. At this instant the cry was raised. He leaped the window, and the mob on the stairs and in the entry ran out. I withdrew from the window, thinking it of no use to leap out on a hundred bayonets, then around Gen. Smith's body. Not satisfied with this I again reached my head out of the window and watched some seconds, to see if there were any signs of life, regardless of my own, determined to see the end of him I loved; being fully satisfied that he was dead, with a hundred men near the body and more coming under the corner of the jail, and expecting to return to our room, I rushed towards the prison door at the head of the stair, and through the entry from whence the firing had proceeded to learn if the doors into the prison were open. When near the entry Mr. Taylor called out, "take me." I pressed my way till I found all the doors unbarred; returning instantly, I caught Mr. Taylor under my arm, and rushed by the stairs into the dungeon, or inner prison, laid him on the floor and covered him with a bed in such a manner as not likely to be perceived, expecting an immediate return of the mob. I said to Mr. Taylor, this is a hard case to lay you on the floor, but if your wounds are not fatal I want you to live and tell the story. I expected to be shot the moment and stood before the door awaiting the onset.

WILLARD RICHARDS.⁷⁷⁶

After many eastern papers had published the initial stories that the Smiths had been killed during an attempted jailbreak, they received copies of Governor Ford's statement published at Quincy, and of the *Nauvoo Neighbor* and the *Times and Seasons*, which told the story from the Mormon point of view. Many of the eastern papers then published in full, or in part, the Mormon account as the

⁷⁷⁶ *Nauvoo Neighbor Extra*, June 30 1844; reprinted in *Pittsburgh Christian Advocate*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, October 9, 1844.

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authentic version of what really happened. That report, as first published by the *Neighbor*, read in part:

AWFUL ASSASSINATION! THE PLEDGED FAITH OF
THE STATE OF ILLINOIS STAINED WITH INNOCENT
BLOOD BY A MOB!

On Monday the 24th inst, after Gov. Ford had sent word, that those eighteen persons demanded on a warrant, among whom were Joseph Smith and Hyrum Smith, should be protected by the militia of the State, they in company with some ten or twelve others, started for Carthage.

Four miles from that place, they were met by Capt. Dunn, with a company of cavalry, who had an order from the Governor for the “State Arms” Gen. Smith endorsed his acceptance of the same, and both parties returned to Nauvoo to obtain said arms. After the arms were obtained both parties took up the line of march for Carthage, where they arrived about five minutes before twelve o’clock at night.—Capt. Dunn nobly acquitting himself, landed us safely at Hamilton’s Hotel.

In the morning we saw the Governor and he pledged the faith of the State, that we should be protected. Gen. Smith and his brother Hyrum were arrested by a warrant founded upon the oaths of H. O. Norton and Augustine Spencer, for treason. Knowing the threats from several persons, that the two Smiths should never leave Carthage alive, we all began to be alarmed for their personal safety. The Gov. and Gen. Deming conducted them before the McDonaugh troops and introduced them as Gen. Joseph Smith and Gen. Hyrum Smith. This maneuver came near raising a mutiny among the “Carthage Greys,” but the Governor quelled it.

In the afternoon, after exertions on the part of our counsel, we dispensed with an investigation, and voluntarily gave bail for our appearance to the Circuit Court, to answer in the case of abating the *Nauvoo Expositor*, as a nuisance.

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At evening the Justice made out a mittimus, without an investigation, and committed the two Gen. Smiths to prison until discharged by due course of law, and they were safely guarded to jail. In the morning the Governor went to the jail and had an interview with these men, and to every appearance all things were explained on both sides.

The constable then went to take these men from the jail, before the justice for examination, but the jailor refused to let them go, as they were under his direction “till discharged by due course of law;” but the Governor’s troops, to the amount of one or two hundred took them to the Court House, when the hearing was continued till Saturday the 29th, and they were remained to jail. Several of our citizens had permits from the Governor to lodge with them and visit them in jail. It now began to be rumored by several men, whose names will be forthcoming in time, that there was nothing against these men—the law could not reach them—but powder and ball could!—The governor was made acquainted with these facts; but on the morning of the 27th, he disbanded the McDonough Troops, and sent them home: took Captain Deming’s company of Cavalry and proceeded to Nauvoo, leaving these two men and three or four friends, to be guarded by eight men at the jail; and a company up town of 60, 30 or 100 rods from the jail, as a corps in reserve.

About six o’clock in the afternoon, the guard was surprised by an armed Mob of from 150 to 250, painted red, black, and yellow, which surrounded the jail—forced in—poured a shower of bullets into the room where these unfortunate men were held, “in durance vile,” to answer to the laws of Illinois; under the solemn pledge of the faith of the State, by Governor Ford, that they should be protected! But the mob ruled! They fell as Martyrs amid this tornado of lead, each receiving four bullets! John Taylor was wounded by four bullets in his limbs but not seriously. Thus perishes the hope of the law, thus vanishes the plighted faith of the State; thus the

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blood of innocence stains the constituted authorities of the United States, and thus have two among the most noble martyrs since the slaughter of Abel, sealed the truth of their divine mission, by being shot by a Mob for their Religion!...

The Legion in Nauvoo, was called out at 10 a.m. and addressed by Judge Phelps, Col. Buckmaster, of Alton, the Governor's aid, and others, and all excitement and fury allayed and preparations were made to receive the bodies of the noble martyrs. About three o'clock, they were met by a great assemblage of people, east of the Temple on Mulholland street, under the direction of the City Marshal, followed by Samuel H. Smith, the brother of the deceased, Dr. Richards and Mr. Hamilton, of Carthage. The wagons were guarded by 5 men. The procession that followed in Nauvoo, was the City Council, the Lieut. Gen's Staff, the brigadier and staff commanders and officers of the Legion and citizens generally, which numbered several thousands, amid the most solemn lamentations and wailings that ever ascended into the ears of the Lord of Hosts to be avenged of our enemies!

When the procession arrived, the bodies were both taken into the "Nauvoo Mansion," the scene at the Mansion cannot be described: the audience was addressed by Dr. Richards, Judge Phelps, Wood and Reed, Esqrs., of Iowa and Col. Markham. It was a vast assemblage of some 8 or 10,000 person, and with one united voice resolved to trust the law for a remedy of such a high handed assassination, and when that failed, to call upon God to avenge us of our wrongs! Oh widows and orphans! Oh Americans, weep, for the glory of freedom has departed!⁷⁷⁷

⁷⁷⁷ *Nauvoo Neighbor Extra*, June 30, 1844; almost the entire *Extra* was republished in: *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, July 1, 1844; *Quincy Whig*, Quincy, Illinois, July 10, 1844; *Sangamo Journal*, Springfield, Illinois, July 11, 1844.

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John Taylor, who was in the jail with Joseph and Hyrum Smith, and Willard Richards, was badly wounded. Taylor's description of the murders of Joseph and his brother Hyrum Smith is published in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 135.

1. To seal the testimony of this book and the Book of Mormon, we announce the martyrdom of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and
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The portion which dealt with the Smiths' funeral was reprinted in: *Dayton Journal and Advertiser*, Dayton, Ohio, July 9, 1844; *Public Ledger and Daily Transcript*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 15, 1844; *Evening Post*, New York, New York, July 15, 1844; *Boston Post*, Boston, Massachusetts, July 15, 1844; *Daily Argus*, Portland, Maine, July 16, 1844; *Daily Herald*, Newburyport, Massachusetts, July 16, 1844; *Hartford Daily Courant*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 17, 1844; *Daily Albany Argus*, Albany, New York, July 17, 1844; *Livingston Republican*, Geneseo, New York, July 23, 1844.

Other portions of the *Extra* were reprinted in: *Davenport, Gazette*, Davenport, Iowa, July 4, 1844; *Indiana American*, Brookville, Indiana, July 12, 1844; *Boston Post*, Boston, Massachusetts, July 15, 1844; *Rochester Daily Advertiser*, Rochester, New York, July 18, 22, 1844; *Rochester Republican*, Rochester, New York, July 23, 1844.

A Shorter version of the funeral services for Joseph and Hyrum also circulated. It appeared in the following newspapers: *Daily Cincinnati Gazette*, Cincinnati, Ohio, July 9, 1844; *Troy Times*, Troy, Ohio, July 13, 1844; *St. Louis Republican*, St. Louis, Missouri, July 15, 1844; *Boston Post*, Boston, Massachusetts, July 15, 1844; *Hartford Daily Courant*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 17, 1844; *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette*, Concord, New Hampshire, July 18, 1844; *Rhode Island County Journal and Independent Inquirer*, Providence, Rhode Island, July 19, 1844; *Newport Mercury*, Newport, Rhode Island, July 20, 1844; *Caledonian*, St. Johnsbury, Vermont, July 22, 1844; *Racine Advocate*, Racine, Wisconsin, July 23, 1844; *Livingston Republican*, Geneseo, New York, July 23, 1844.

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Hyrum Smith the Patriarch. They were shot in Carthage jail, on the 27th of June, 1844, about five o'clock p.m., by an armed mob—painted black—of from 150 to 200 persons. Hyrum was shot first and fell calmly, exclaiming: *I am a dead man!* Joseph leaped from the window, and was shot dead in the attempt, exclaiming: *O Lord my God!*⁷⁷⁸ They were both shot after they were dead, in a brutal manner, and both received four balls.

2. John Taylor and Willard Richards, two of the Twelve, were the only persons in the room at the time; the former was wounded in a savage manner with four balls, but has since recovered; the latter, through the providence of God, escaped, without even a hole in his robe.

3. Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it. In the short space of twenty years, he has brought forth the Book of Mormon, which he translated by the gift and power of God, and has been the means of publishing it on two continents; has sent the fulness of the everlasting gospel, which it contained, to the four quarters of the earth; has brought forth the revelations and commandments which compose this book of Doctrine and Covenants, and many other wise documents and instructions

⁷⁷⁸ Some historians have made a great deal out of Joseph's final words. Because they are the beginning words of the Masonic cry for help, they claim this was Joseph's last-ditch attempt to save his own life. But that notion is contrary to his nature. Many of those involved in his death belonged to the Masons, but there is little contemporary evidence that it was a factor in the murder.

An entirely different explanation for Joseph's last words is this: As Brigham Young died, his last words were, "Joseph, Joseph, Joseph." This sounds like a greeting to his dearest friend whom he recognized had come to meet him. Joseph similarly spoke a greeting: "O Lord, My God"—perhaps to his dearest friend who had come to meet him.

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for the benefit of the children of men; gathered many thousands of the Latter-day Saints, founded a great city, and left a fame and name that cannot be slain. He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people; and like most of the Lord's anointed in ancient times, has sealed his mission and his works with his own blood; and so has his brother Hyrum. In life they were not divided, and in death they were not separated!

4. When Joseph went to Carthage to deliver himself up to the pretended requirements of the law, two or three days previous to his assassination, he said: "I am going like a lamb to the slaughter; but I am calm as a summer's morning; I have a conscience void of offense towards God, and towards all men. I SHALL DIE INNOCENT, AND IT SHALL YET BE SAID OF ME—HE WAS MURDERED IN COLD BLOOD." The same morning, after Hyrum had made ready to go—shall it be said to the slaughter? yes, for so it was—he read the following paragraph, near the close of the twelfth chapter of Ether, in the Book of Mormon, and turned down the leaf upon it:

5. And it came to pass that I prayed unto the Lord that he would give unto the Gentiles grace, that they might have charity. And it came to pass that the Lord said unto me: If they have not charity it mattereth not unto thee, thou hast been faithful; wherefore thy garments shall be made clean. And because thou hast seen thy weakness, thou shalt be made strong, even unto the sitting down in the place which I have prepared in the mansions of my Father. And now I...bid farewell unto the Gentiles; yea, and also unto my brethren whom I love, until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ, where all men shall know that my garments are not spotted with your blood. The testators are now dead, and their testament is in force.

6. Hyrum Smith was forty-four years old in February, 1844, and Joseph Smith was thirty-eight in December, 1843; and henceforward their names will be classed among the martyrs of religion; and the reader in every nation will be

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reminded that the Book of Mormon, and this book of Doctrine and Covenants of the Church, cost the best blood of the nineteenth century to bring them forth for the salvation of a ruined world; and that if the fire can scathe a green tree for the glory of God, how easy it will burn up the dry trees to purify the vineyard of corruption. They lived for glory; they died for glory; and glory is their eternal reward. From age to age shall their names go down to posterity as gems for the sanctified.

7. They were innocent of any crime, as they had often been proved before, and were only confined in jail by the conspiracy of traitors and wicked men; and *their innocent blood* on the floor of Carthage jail is a broad seal affixed to “Mormonism” that cannot be rejected by any court on earth, and their innocent blood on the escutcheon of the State of Illinois, with the broken faith of the State as pledged by the governor, is a witness to the truth of the everlasting gospel that all the world cannot impeach; and their *innocent blood* on the banner of liberty, and on the *magna charta* of the United States, is an ambassador for the religion of Jesus Christ, that will touch the hearts of honest men among all nations; and their innocent blood, with the innocent blood of all the martyrs under the altar that John saw, will cry unto the Lord of Hosts till he avenges that blood on the earth. Amen.⁷⁷⁹

⁷⁷⁹ Italics are in the original. Also printed in *History of the Church*, 6:629-31.

Chapter 16

Epilogue

The Smith Family

Joseph's widowed mother saw her family decimated by this Anti-Mormon attack. Not only did she lose Joseph and Hyrum at Carthage, but also her son Samuel. He was ill when he learned of his brothers' danger. Even so, he started to Carthage to help them. As he rode, he was accosted and chased by a mob. He out-rode them, but in the severity of the ride he sustained internal injuries that caused his death only a few days after his brothers died.

Emma remained in Nauvoo, where she remarried and reared her family. The wives and children of Hyrum and Samuel went to Utah with Brigham Young.

The End of Joseph's Presidential Campaign.

Because ten of the Twelve Apostles had been traveling among the eastern branches of the Church, gathering the members together to attend Church conferences, and creating a functional political organization, the Saints in the eastern part of the United States were better organized, with a better sense of community, at the time of Joseph's death than they had ever been before. When

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word came of the murders of the Smith brothers, the eastern Saints had among them the members of the Quorum of the Twelve who would soon take the reins of Church government. The eastern Saints' personal association with Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff, and others of the Twelve, just before and after they learned of the Prophet's death, did much to strengthen the Church members who were distant from Nauvoo. Even though their political organization no longer had its original purpose, having created it was important to the stability of the eastern members of the Church, to provide a continuity in their sense of gathering that had preceded the Prophet's death, and would continue until long after the Church headquarters moved to Utah.

Joseph Smith's presidential campaign came to a sudden end as the Mormons learned of his death. The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* reported how suddenly that was, and with what shock, the news was received.

Mormon Meeting

On Saturday a Mormon meeting was held in the grove near Euclid Street, for the purpose of advancing Joe Smith's chance for the Presidency. There were four Mormons present, and about forty listeners. A speech was made, and Joe Smith's view on government read. At the close, our Extra containing the news of the death of the Prophet was handed to the chief speaker, which he read aloud to the audience, and then left the stand in sullen silence.⁷⁸⁰

After the Prophet's death, his followers in Ohio still held the political convention they had planned. The *Cleveland Herald* reported:

⁷⁸⁰ *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, Cleveland, Ohio, July 10, 1844.

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The Mormons held a political meeting in one of the beautiful groves that adorn our city on Saturday afternoon. Some seventy five persons assembled and listened with respectful attention. The principal speaker, Mr. Winters, assigned the reasons why the Latter-day Saints had resolved on a political organization independent of all other parties, the principal one being that they had unsuccessfully applied to all political parties for a redress of the wrongs and outrages committed on their society. All had admitted that their cause was just, but could do nothing for them. A long address from General Joseph Smith, defining his position, and giving an outline of his proposed administration of the General Government was read. The object of the meeting seemed to be merely an exposition of "Jeffersonian Democratic principles," so no action was taken or proposed by the leaders. The death of Gen. Smith of course interrupts the arrangements by his followers for the Presidential campaign, and will probably arrest further political organization for the present. Mormon preaching took place in the grove yesterday, and the meetings were conducted with decorum. No allusion was made by the speakers on Saturday or Sunday to the murder of the two Smiths, and in conversation they manifest but little excitement, and do not anticipate any interruption of the progress of Mormonism. One of them remarked that the "county would be in a wretched condition if there was but one prophet in the land." and we understand that Sidney Rigdon, is next in the prophetic succession. In the grove, toward evening, an Englishman, who had been converted to Mormonism, and induced to immigrate from England to Nauvoo, gave an indication of the weakened condition of many of the immigrants to the holy city, and of the tyranny exercised by the rulers. He drew anything but a heartening picture of the condition and prospects of the

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deluded men and women who have embraced the Mormon faith, and spoke with apparent knowledge and candor.⁷⁸¹

Even his enemies and detractors saw Joseph Smith as one of the most remarkable men of his age, and those who could not accept him as a prophet attributed his success to something else. To those who believe in his prophetic call, Joseph Smith was the greatest man to walk this earth since the meridian of time.

Now notwithstanding the death of the Prophet, or rather to show their continued loyalty to him and his cause in spite of the murder, the delegates who were already elected to attend the Jeffersonian national convention at Baltimore met there as planned. When the Prophet was killed, D. S. Hollister had been at Baltimore preparing for the convention, and did not stop his preparations when he learned of the Prophet's murder. On July 9 he wrote to Ellis Sanders of Wilmington, Delaware, asking for a loan of money so he could get home. In the letter he said:

I know not what the effect will be on the contemplated convention but I hope the delegates will come one and all and send forth to the world such a proclamation as will make the nations tremble and the dark caverns of Hell echo with the wail of devils.⁷⁸²

In New York, Philadelphia, and Massachusetts the newspapers reported,

⁷⁸¹ *New York Herald*, New York, New York, July 13, 1844; reprinted in *Democratic Free Press*, Detroit, Michigan, July 10, 1844.

⁷⁸² Letter from D. S. Hollister at Baltimore preparing for the convention to Ellis Sanders of Wilmington, Del., July 9, 1844, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, d 5169.

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Mormon Convention

The *Baltimore Patriot* states that a Convention of Delegates from the Mormons will be held in Baltimore on Saturday next. The original intention of the Convention, as we are given to understand by the public notice, was to nominate their late leader, Joe Smith, as a candidate for the Presidency, but his death will render it necessary to make other arrangements upon the subject. Some of the members of the proposed Convention, we are informed, are not in that city for the purpose of making the necessary arrangements for the meeting.⁷⁸³

After the convention, a number of newspapers reported,

Saturday last was the day fixed upon by the Mormons for holding a Convention in the city of Baltimore to nominate candidates to be voted for by them for the offices of President and Vice President of the United States. We learn from the *Baltimore Patriot* of Saturday evening that a number of Mormons assembled in Baltimore on that day agreeably to appointment, and decided, on account of the death of their leader, Joe Smith, (who was to have been their candidate,) to

⁷⁸³ *Daily Mercury*, New Bedford, Massachusetts, July 12, 13, 1844; similar articles were in *New York Herald*, New York, New York, July 12, 1844; *Public Ledger and Daily Transcript*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 11, 1844; *New York Daily Tribune*, New York, New York, July 11, 1844; *Evening Post*, New York, New York, July 11, 1844; *Daily Herald*, Newburyport, Massachusetts, July 15, 1844. Shorter announcements were found in: *Pittsfield Sun*, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, May 23, 1844; *Democratic Free Press*, Detroit, Michigan, May 12, 1844; *Pittsburgh Morning Post*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, May 23, 1844; *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, June 8, 1844.

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make no movement on the Presidential question.⁷⁸⁴

Unless it played some part in Calhoun's decision to not run for the presidency, Joseph Smith's political campaign had little effect on the results of the 1844 presidential election. However, the campaign's sudden end had a great effect on the Mormon's immediate plans to move West. Joseph's death, and the abrupt end of his presidential campaign also ended Mormon hopes of exercising enough political clout to pressure the federal government to help the Saints get money from Missouri to finance their western emigration.

Governor Ford's Actions After the Prophet's Death

After Governor Ford realized the Smiths were murdered, his actions revealed a mental state of pure panic. His nearly irrational behavior, as observed by those who saw him, was described as everything from justifiable fear to evidence of collusion with the assassins. That was understandable, for at that time Ford did not know whether he was in greater danger from the Mormons or from his Anti-Mormon collaborators. However he did know he no longer trusted his life to the men who had betrayed him, and he

⁷⁸⁴ *National Intelligencer*, Washington, D.C., July 15, 1844; similar story in *Daily Mercury*, New Bedford, Massachusetts, July 17, 1844; *Springfield Republican*, Springfield, Massachusetts, July 27, 1844; *New Jersey Journal*, Elizabeth, New Jersey, July 30, 1844; *Sun*, Baltimore, Maryland, July 15, 1844; *Telegraph*, Painesville, Ohio, July 24, 1844.

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believed that he was as apt to be murdered in Carthage as in Nauvoo.

Upon hearing of the assassination of the Smiths, I was sensible that my command was at an end; that my destruction was meditated as well as that of the Mormons; and that I could not reasonably confide longer in the one party or in the other....I could not put myself at the head of the Anti-Mormon Party, because they had justly forfeited my confidence, and my command over them was at an end by mutiny and treachery.⁷⁸⁵

In his *History*, Ford equated the murders of Joseph and Hyrum and his own intended murder with the mutiny and treachery of his officers, but that is as close as Ford got to actually naming the names of the persons who conspired to kill Joseph and Hyrum Smith. The phrase “whoever they were,” in his sentence, “As for myself, I was well convinced that those, whoever they were, who assassinated the Smiths, meditated in turn my assassination by the Mormons,”⁷⁸⁶ leaves an enormous gap in his credibility and casts a shadow over his whole *History*. If Ford could not remember who the conspirators were, he was probably the only one who could not. According to “an intelligent correspondent” who filed this report with the *New York Journal of Commerce*, the people in Nauvoo believed they could tell each one by name. (The background of this story is that Ford promised to offer a reward for the capture of the murderers,⁷⁸⁷ then reneged on that promise.)

I went ashore at Nauvoo, and conversed with several of the Mormons. I asked them if Gov. Ford had offered a reward for

⁷⁸⁵ Ford, *History*, 349-350.

⁷⁸⁶ Ford, *History*, 349-350.

⁷⁸⁷ *Upper Mississippian*, Rock Island, Illinois, October 5, 1844.

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the apprehension of the murderers of Joseph and Hyrum Smith? They said no; “that he was afraid to do so,” I asked them if they knew who the murderers were? They replied ‘yes; that they could point every man out to the Governor, if he was disposed to have them arrested. They knew perfectly well who they were, ‘I asked who they expected would succeed Joseph Smith, as chief prophet of the Mormons? They replied in the most simple manner, “that they expected him to be called by the Lord. It was not the Mormons who made or appointed a prophet or leader, but the Lord, who would send them one, if one came at all.”⁷⁸⁸

Another report read:

Great apprehensions were entertained that the Mormons, on hearing the fate of their leader, would proceed to exterminate the Governor and his small force of sixty men, who were believed to have encamped about seven miles from Nauvoo. The fear of Mormon vengeance impelled the citizens of Warsaw, a small village on the Mississippi below Nauvoo, to embark their women and children on board the steamer Boreas, which carried them to Quincy for protection. It was thought probable at Quincy that Warsaw was already in ashes, and the militia of the neighboring districts were collecting there, thence to repair to the scene of action.⁷⁸⁹

Sharp himself almost admitted that Ford was correct in believing the conspirators’ plan included making the governor’s

⁷⁸⁸ Reprinted in: *Rochester Daily Advertiser*; August 5, 1844; *Hartford Times*, Hartford, Connecticut, August 10, 1844; *New Hampshire Sentinel*, Keene, New Hampshire, August 21, 1844; *Alexandria Gazette*, Alexandria, Virginia, August 7, 1844.

⁷⁸⁹ *Daily Times*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 8, 1844.

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death an excuse to start a civil war. As soon as word of the murders reached Warsaw, the men prepared for an invasion from the Mormons, and the women and children were put aboard the *Boreas* and sent to Quincy for safety. A note, sent from Sharp's office to a newspaper in St. Louis predicting the governor's death—using the same word the Anti-Mormons had used to describe what was going to happen to the Mormons. "It is feared that the Mormons at Nauvoo will be so exasperated as to exterminate the governor and his small force." Sharp sent a similar message to Quincy, where the newspaper reported the same story. Both the Quincy and the St. Louis papers understood Sharp's message to mean that the governor might already be dead. The Quincy editor added, "The excitement in our city is intense, and the anxiety to hear the fate of Gov. Ford and his men is very great"⁷⁹⁰

An editor in Arkansas, who apparently had his own source of information, gave his readers an even clearer message. "The excitement in the surrounding country was tremendous. Gov. Ford

⁷⁹⁰ It was first published in the *Quincy Herald*, Quincy, Illinois, June 28, 1844. All or parts of it were reprinted in: *Arkansas Intelligencer*, Van Buren, Arkansas, July 13, 1844; *Hartford Daily Courant*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 9, 1844; *Norwich Courier*, Norwich, Connecticut, July 10, 1844; *Christian Freeman*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 11, 1844; *Florida Herald*, St. Augustine, Florida, July 30, 1844; *Delaware Gazette*, Wilmington, Delaware, July 9, 1844; *Southern Recorder*, Milledgeville, Georgia, July 16, 1844; *Long Island Democrat*, Long Island, New York, July 9, 1844; *Evening Post*, New York, New York, July 8, 1844; *Milwaukee Courier*, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, July 4, 1844; *Fredonia Censor*, Fredonia, New York, July 17, 1844; *New Orleans Bee*, New Orleans, Louisiana, July 6, 1844; *Rochester Daily Democrat*, Rochester, New York, July 9, 1844; *Milwaukee Courier*, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, July 4, 1844;

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was in Nauvoo with only 200 militia, where it was feared the Mormons would cut him into pieces. Hundreds of volunteers were flocking to his assistance, but doubts were entertained whether they could reach him in time to save him from slaughter.”⁷⁹¹

Ford’s later statement that he did not trust the people around him was not something he thought of when he wrote his book. The fact was also well known at the time of the assassination of the Smiths.

The editor of the St. Louis Republican writes from Quincy, the 30th ultimo, that Gov. Ford had arrived there, and established his headquarters. He removed to Quincy in consequence of want of confidence in the people in the immediate vicinity of the excitement, being afraid to trust either the troops or the citizens around Carthage or Warsaw.⁷⁹²

After Sharp knew Ford had escaped to Quincy, he still wrote that he and the others anticipated a quick and bloody reprisal from the Mormons: “It was expected that as soon as the news reached Nauvoo, the Mormons would take vengeance on Carthage and Warsaw”⁷⁹³—implying, as Ford feared, that if the governor had been in the Nauvoo, he would have been the first casualty.

Ford had decided that Carthage was not a good place for a governor who had an aversion to being assassinated. He stayed in town only long enough to make sure the public records in the court

⁷⁹¹ *Arkansas State Gazette*, Little Rock, Arkansas, July 9, 1844.

⁷⁹² *Rochester Republican*, Rochester, New York, July 2, 1844.

⁷⁹³ *Warsaw Signal, Extra*, June 29, 1844; Reprinted in: *Richmond Palladium*, Richmond, Indiana, July 12, 1844; *Western Star*, Labanon, Ohio, July 5, 1844.

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house would be taken to Augusta for safekeeping, then he hurried to Quincy, forty miles down river.

Gov. Ford left Nauvoo last evening and returned to Carthage, and from thence immediately departed for Augusta, taking with him an escort of about fifty troops. Before leaving Carthage, he ordered all the records and public documents to be removed. This morning, the town [Carthage] was entirely deserted, with the exception of one or two families.⁷⁹⁴

While Ford was fleeing down river, companies of men from Quincy and Missouri were coming up.

In Warsaw, as soon as the news of the death of the two Smiths was received, everything was placed in an attitude for defense and the inhabitants of the surrounding country requested to come to our aid, a portion of the women and children passed over the river on Friday afternoon five companies from Quincy, being about 250 in number, arrived on the Boreas. Many from Missouri and Iowa, have also come to our aid. We have three cannon, plenty of ammunition, and are fully prepared for any attack which the Mormons can make.

By the stage-driver from Nauvoo, we learn that about thirty men were sent for the dead bodies of Joe and Hyrum, and that they were to be buried on the same evening, with military honors.

What will be the final issue is yet to be ascertained—various surmises are afloat; but our opinion is, that either the “old citizens” or the Mormons must leave. The country cannot be quieted, until the expulsion of the one or the other is

⁷⁹⁴ *St. Louis Republican*, about June 28-30 as reprinted in: *Daily Argus*, Portland, Maine, July 12, 1844; *Boston Post*, Boston, Massachusetts, July 12, 1844.

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effected.⁷⁹⁵

Governor Ford in Quincy

Mr. Chambers, one of the editors of the *Missouri Republican*, wrote about Ford's condition during his frantic escape from Carthage.

At Quincy, I found Gov. Ford. He reached Columbus on Friday morning, very much exhausted, so much so that he had to be lifted from the carriage. The next day he reached this place, where he has established his headquarters. He has established expresses between this and the seat of war, by which he is almost hourly advised of passing event. The reason for the Governor's removing to this place and establishing his headquarters here, is his want of confidence in the people immediately in the vicinity of the excitement. He is alike afraid to trust either the troops or the citizens around Carthage and Warsaw.⁷⁹⁶

After he arrived in Quincy, Ford wrote the proclamation, "To the People of the State of Illinois" (it is quoted in the preceding chapter with other accounts of Joseph and Hyrum's murder). He

⁷⁹⁵ *Warsaw Signal Extra*, June 29, 1844; reprinted in: *Richmond Palladium*, Richmond, Indiana, July 2, 1844; *Western Star*, Labanon, Ohio, July 5, 1844.

⁷⁹⁶ *New York Daily Tribune*, New York, New York, July 12, 1844; reprinted in *Dayton Journal and Advertiser*, Dayton, Ohio, July 16, 1844.

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sent it to the editor of the *Quincy Herald*, who published it as an *Extra*.⁷⁹⁷

Many newspapers in the United States published accounts of the murders as soon as information became available. Consequently, the first story many Americans read was that the Mormons had stormed the jail to get the Prophet out, and Joseph and Hyrum were killed during the attempted escape. But after Ford's official account was circulated, and then the newspapers got copies of the Mormon story from the *Nauvoo Neighbor* and the *Times and Seasons*, newspaper editors corrected their earlier stories and wrote about the killings as "cold blooded murder." Here are some examples.

It turns out, as was very evident from the first, that Joe Smith and his brother were murdered in the most cold-blooded and brutal manner. Gov. Ford, we are happy to see, intends ferreting out the cowardly assassins, and we hope a due punishment will follow. These scenes are most disreputable to our country.⁷⁹⁸

⁷⁹⁷ This statement by Governor Ford was first published in the *Quincy Herald Extra*, June 29, 1844, as mentioned in the preceding footnotes. It was republished in many newspapers all over the United States. Some published it with the above account of the murder, others did not. Some which simply published it without comment are: *Nauvoo Neighbor Extra*, June 30, 1844; *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, July 1, 1844; *Indiana State Journal*, Indianapolis, Indiana, July 5, 1844; *Sangamo Journal*, Springfield, Illinois, July 11, published it in connection with a reprint of almost all of the *Nauvoo Neighbor Extra* June 30, 1844.

⁷⁹⁸ *Bloomington Herald*, Bloomington, Iowa, July 5, 1844; reprinted in: *Milwaukee Courier*, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, July 9, 1844; *Indiana State Sentinel*, Indianapolis, Indiana, July 11, 1844; *Democratic Free Press*, Detroit, Michigan, July 13, 1844; *Pittsfield Sun*, Pittsfield,

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Another editor wrote:

We find in the Western papers the following official document, addressed by the Governor of the State. It declares, it will be seen, that the leading Mormons, Joe and Hyrum Smith, were basely assassinated, after they had voluntarily surrendered themselves, on the pledge of protection from the Governor of the State, and were waiting their trial, according to the laws of the land. We hope that Gov. Ford, and the authorities of Illinois will vindicate this horrible outrage upon humanity, and the honor and dignity of the State, by detecting and bringing to certain punishment every individual who had any hand in the murders.⁷⁹⁹

Another editor expressed his disdain for Ford in another way:

The following proclamation has just reached us from headquarters. We assure the Governor if he can manage human butchers, he has nothing to fear from armless, timid and law abiding Latter Day Saints: [He followed that introduction with a reprint of the proclamation.]⁸⁰⁰

In Springfield, the state capitol, the newspapers took sides according to strict party lines. On July 5 the editor of the *Springfield State Register* wrote, "Rumors of the bloody deed reached this city several days ago, but were not believed until Tuesday evening, when there was no further room for doubt." The

Massachusetts, July 18, 1844; *American Union*, Steubenville, Ohio, July 18, 1844; *Fort Wayne Sentinel*, Fort Wayne, Indiana, July 20, 1844; *Lewiston Gazette*, Lewistown, Pennsylvania, July 20, 1844.

⁷⁹⁹ *Kanawha Republican*, Kanawha, Virginia, July 23, 1844.

⁸⁰⁰ *Long Island Democrat*, Long Island, New York, July 6, 1844.

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day before, on July 4, the editor of Springfield's *Sangamo Journal* had written a bitter accusation against the governor for his rumored involvement in the Smiths' murders.

Notwithstanding all the rumors which are afloat, we are unable to state anything very definite in relation to affairs at Nauvoo, or "in the region round about" that city. It is certain that the Governor has called out some of the neighboring militia—that bodies of armed men had collected without waiting a call from the Governor—that the Governor had accepted the services of the militia at St. Louis under certain contingencies—that he had demanded of Smith the State arms at Nauvoo—that it had been reported that they were given up—that Smith and his Council had given themselves up to be tried by our laws for alleged offences. Thus far our news seems to be certain. Rumor says further, that on Thursday of last week Joe Smith, Hyrum Smith, and Dr. Richards were shot by a mob at Carthage. We are incredulous in regard to the truth of this rumor. We cannot think that under the circumstances of the case—the excitement against these men among the anti-Mormons—Gov. Ford would have received them as prisoners, to be tried under our laws—had pledged himself for their protection—and then placed them in a situation where they would be murdered. The rumor is too preposterous for belief.

We wait with much anxiety to hear the truth on this subject; and this feeling is general in this community.⁸⁰¹

To that, the editor of the *Illinois State Register* responded:

ASSASSINATION OF JOSEPH SMITH.

The *Journal* of yesterday, in that dastardly spirit for which its controllers are remarkable, intimates that Gov. Ford

⁸⁰¹ *Sangamo Journal*, Springfield, Illinois, July 4, 1844.

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received Joseph Smith and Hyrum Smith as prisoners, pledged himself for their protection, and “then placed them in a situation where they would be murdered.” But we will quote the exact language of the *Journal* as follows:

“Rumor says that on Thursday of last week Joe Smith, Hiram Smith, and Dr. Richards, were shot by a mob at Carthage. We are incredulous in regard to the truth of this rumor. We cannot think that under the circumstances of the case—the excitement against these men among anti Mormons, Gov. Ford would have received them as prisoners, to be tried under our laws—had pledged himself for their protection—and then placed them in a situation where they would be murdered.”

What opinion will the public form of a party, whose leading editor feigns disbelief in the murder of the Smiths, for the purpose of stabbing indirectly the honor of the State, through the bosom of its Chief Magistrate? And this, too, for a purpose, as is plainly manifest on the face of the dastardly article itself—that purpose being to induce the Mormons to vote with the Whigs. To obtain their votes, the *Journal* indirectly invents an infamous lie, which lie stabs the public faith, and blackens the honor of the State. Has the *Journal* got this cue from Maj. Baker, who had just arrived? We hope the Major has not suffered his personal difficulties with the Governor to poison his mind so far as to communicate the substance of the article which appears in the *Journal*, to its editor.

An editor who would make such a charge, would not be too good to blacken his face and join the band of midnight assassins who murdered Smith.⁸⁰²

The editor of the *Sangamo Journal*, like one who knew the game of politics, had raised the question of Ford’s involvement,

⁸⁰² *Illinois State Register*, Springfield, Illinois, July 5, 1844.

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but did not wish to pursue it. So he responded with:

On Gov. Ford's arrival at Quincy, he appointed Hart Fellows and A. Jonas, Esqrs., to proceed immediately to Nauvoo, and ascertain whether the people there were determined to avenge the deaths of their leaders, and then return to Warsaw—ascertain the disposition of the people there—and direct the return of persons from Missouri and Iowa, who had come to take part in the disturbances.

These gentlemen proceeded according to directions. The City Council of Nauvoo passed resolutions expressive of their determination to abide the action of the laws so long as the Governor shall sustain them in their constitutional rights—that they reprobated private revenge—and called upon the Governor to stay vexatious law proceedings against them until the citizens of Nauvoo can go to Carthage, or any other place for trial without fear of assassination. At a meeting of the citizens of Nauvoo the same desires and determination were announced.

We learn from reports that a similar determination was not manifested at Warsaw. The people and inhabitants congregated there—expressed a determination to force the Mormons to leave the country.

Gov. Ford was at Quincy at the last dates. The papers intimate that he made Quincy his headquarters, because he was not safe in Hancock County—there being much excitement against him among the Anti-Mormons.

We have thus given all the most important information we have from the seat of disturbance. Every man is qualified to form his own opinion of the state of affairs from the facts given. We have no doubt that the Governor is doing what he thinks his duty requires of him in the matter. The votes of the Mormons have given rise to much difficulty; and if his excellency shall so act as to prevent, hereafter the policy of his party from being governed by a desire to secure the votes of the

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Mormons, he will do an act for which he cannot be too strongly commended. Our language in reference to the reported assassinations at Carthage last week, having been tortured by the *Register* into a meaning never designed by us—we repeat on that subject, that although, the Smiths were placed in a position where their enemies could glut their vengeance upon them without resistance—where they could be premeditatedly assassinated—we have never supposed that such a thought ever entered the heart of Gov. Ford. The suggestion is a vile calumny upon him as well as ourselves. The placing of the Smiths, however, in the Carthage jail, under all the circumstances of the case, was a “blunder,” which was pregnant with the most disastrous consequences to our State character at home and abroad—a “blunder” which must be felt and acknowledged by every law-abiding citizen of our State.⁸⁰³

Like the editors of the Springfield newspapers, historians tend to disagree about what Ford’s role was in the events surrounding the murders. His most recent biographer, Rodney O. Davis wrote,

Both Mormon and anti-Mormon writers came to view the appropriate chapters of Ford’s *History* as mostly self-justification; ironically, he was accused by each of tilting excessively toward the opposing side, both as governor and as historian. Thomas Gregg’s anti-Mormon *History of Hancock County* contains a contemptuous treatment of Ford’s official activity relating to the Mormons and claims that the *History* purveys “many distortions of facts in order to make a case against the “old citizens,”” whereas what for years was the Mormon sure-text on events in Hancock County, B. H. Roberts’s edition of Joseph Smith’s *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, blames Ford for weakness

⁸⁰³ *Sangamo Journal*, Springfield, Illinois, July 11, 1844.

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and double-dealing as governor and for gross misrepresentation as historian.

What is most controversial here is Ford's official and unofficial behavior in Hancock County after local officials had activated the militia as a *posse comitatus* following the destruction of the anti-Mormon *Expositor* newspaper press by order of the Nauvoo municipal court. Both Mormon and anti-Mormon historians cited the recollection of Thomas Geddes that at the peak of the crisis, while Joseph and Hyrum Smith were in Carthage jail, Ford had remarked to Geddes that "it's all nonsense; you will have to drive the Mormons out yet," as evidence either of Ford's wishes or, worse, of his duplicity.⁸⁰⁴

Davis also reports that Ford drank too much:

More than one observer further claimed that Ford, while governor, lacked the resolve to contend with conflicting factions and pressures, indeed, that "to fortify" his feeble animation, and acquire artificial courage. He had recourse to stimulants, which....grew to a confirmed and ruinous habit." Although the cause of his death was probably tuberculosis, it is further hinted that he was weakened by the bad habits acquired at Springfield, which might also have contributed to his inability to establish himself as a lawyer in Peoria after retiring from the governorship.⁸⁰⁵

But Davis does not give much credence to the notion that liquor accounted for Ford's weakness when he was at Carthage.

⁸⁰⁴ Davis in his introduction to the 1995 reprint of Ford, *History of Illinois*, xxiii-xxiv.

⁸⁰⁵ Davis in his introduction to the 1995 reprint of Ford, *History of Illinois*, xx.

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Aftermath: What Became of the Anti-Mormon Leaders

Some have ascribed Ford's duplicity to his wanting to keep his feet in both political camps. In 1846, he could not succeed himself as governor,⁸⁰⁶ but he did hope to run for the United States Senate. If he had intended to use the Smith murders to purchase the continuance of his own political life, his plan failed completely, and his hopes for the seat in the Congress proved to be only an elusive dream.

Ford remained in office until 1846, and presided over the final expulsion of the Mormons from Illinois. Then he returned to his home in Peoria, a broken man and "in greatly reduced circumstances," depending on the charity of his neighbors for his support. In 1850, six years after the Smiths were murdered, Thomas Ford died in Peoria.⁸⁰⁷

His *History of Illinois*, which was written during the last years of his life and published posthumously, is a study in anger and self-justification. He concludes the part he titled "The Downfall of Joseph Smith" with this poignant prophecy:

The Christian world, which has hitherto regarded Mormonism with silent contempt, unhappily may yet have cause to fear its rapid increase. Modern society is full of material for such a religion. At the death of the prophet, fourteen years after the first Mormon Church was organized, the Mormons in all the world numbered about two hundred thousand souls (one half million according to their statistics); a number equal, perhaps,

⁸⁰⁶ 1818 Constitution of Illinois, Article III, Sec. 3: "The governor... shall not be eligible for more than four years in any term of eight years."

⁸⁰⁷ Bateman and Selby, *Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois*, 168.

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to the number of Christians when the Christian Church was of the same age. It is to be feared that, in course of a century, some gifted man like Paul...may succeed in breathing a new life into this modern Muhammadanism, and make the name of the martyred Joseph ring as loud, and stir the souls of men as much, as the mighty name of Christ itself. Sharon, Manchester, Kirtland, Far West, Adomon Diahmon, Ramus, Nauvoo, and the Carthage jail, may become holy and venerable names, places of classic interest, in another age; like Jerusalem, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Mount of Olives, and Mount Calvary to the Christian, and Mecca and Medina to the Turk. And in that event, the author of this history feels degraded by the reflection, that the humble governor of an obscure state, who would otherwise be forgotten in a few years, stands a fair chance, like Pilate and Herod, by their official connection with the true religion, of being dragged down to posterity with an immortal name, hitched on to the memory of a miserable impostor. There may be those whose ambition would lead them to desire an immortal name, even in those humbling terms. I am not one of that number.⁸⁰⁸

When Ford wrote those words, Nauvoo lay derelict on the banks of the Mississippi River, its temple burned and its people gone. The Mormons had been driven from their homes and were seeking refuge among the valleys of the Rocky Mountains.

Robert F. Smith continued to lead the Anti-Mormons until 1846, when he commanded the only military assault on the city of Nauvoo—and that was after most of the Mormons had already left the state. He was wounded during the battle but survived. After that, he was an officer for the North during the Civil War, then

⁸⁰⁸ Ford, *History*, 369-360. The spellings in this paragraph are Ford's, as are the estimates of the membership of the L.D.S. Church.

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returned home to live a long and successful life. After the Mormons left, he acquired much of their abandoned farmland, and died one of the wealthiest men in the county.

William Law eventually moved to Shullsberg, Wisconsin, where he was a respected citizen. He built a fine home and lived there comfortably until 1892.

Thomas Sharp remained in Warsaw. He stopped publishing the *Warsaw Signal* in 1846, after the Mormons were expelled from Hancock County, and thereafter served three terms as mayor of Warsaw. He died at age eighty in 1894.

[This is not the end of the drama. Sharp and others were tried, but not convicted of Joseph's murder. The trial was a farce. That story is brilliantly told in: Dallin H. Oaks, and Marvin S. Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy, The Trial of the Accused Assassins of Joseph Smith* (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1976.)]

Chapter 17

The Nation's Observations and Obituaries of the Prophet Joseph Smith

But notwithstanding this, he was a remarkable man, and has left the impress of his genius upon the age in which he lived; he has carved out for himself a title to a page in the history of his country, and his name will be remembered, for good and for evil, when the names of half the ephemeral statesmen of the age will be forgotten. (*Daily Evening Transcript*, Boston, Mass., August 1, 1844).

One of the great mysteries of early Mormon history is the answer to the question, “What was the American attitude toward the Prophet Joseph Smith?” In 1844 there were no opinion polls to which an historian can now refer, but there is a way we can know. American newspapers are an uneven source of correct information, but they are our very best source for knowing what people were being told by their local editors, and therefore what people knew—or what they thought they knew—about the Mormons. The

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local editors both created opinions and reflected them. My research assistants and I have read approximately 250 newspapers that were published in the United States, its territories, and Texas between November, 1843, and November, 1844. Some are full runs, some only the occasional numbers that have survived and been microfilmed. We extracted all the articles that dealt with Joseph Smith and the Mormons. Many express opinions about the Prophet. I cannot reprint them all here, but what follows is a good sampling from each of the states and territories. Some of the areas are well represented in this sampling, but others are not because they had few newspapers, and those they did have did not print much about the Mormons.

Most of the following writers had no personal contact with Joseph Smith or his people. Consequently, their statements are really about their own attitudes and feelings, rather than about the Mormons. Even those who had contact with the Prophet did not really write about him. They were not different from ourselves. When we talk about other people, we do not really talk about them, rather we open a window into our own souls and let the listener look in. They do the same. They write about their reactions to what they have heard, read, or seen in the Prophet, his teachings, and his people. So while these statements appear to be about Joseph Smith and the Mormons, they are in fact only about the authors and the opinions of the authors. That makes them an invaluable window through which to view the attitudes of contemporary Americans toward the Prophet Joseph. Some of the writers were very opinionated, some were curious, a few are hateful, most were sympathetic to the Mormon people but reluctant to give credence to their beliefs.

The following statements are arranged by state according to the first-known printing of the story or editorial comment. The footnotes show how widespread those statements were

republished. If there is no footnote, that indicates the article was not republished by another editor. Some redundancies occur when an editor borrows a sentence or a paragraph from another editor and inserts it into his own work. When those are relatively short, I have left them in for interest sake.

ARKANSAS

Arkansas Intelligencer, Van Buren, Arkansas, July 20, 1844.

[Governor Ford] says that his pledge, and that of his whole army, was given to hold their persons inviolate, when they surrendered themselves to the authorities of the State, and this pledge has been basely violated, and the character of the State blackened with infamy, by this cold blooded outrage.

CONNECTICUT

Hartford Daily Courant, Hartford, Connecticut, July 9, 1844.⁸⁰⁹

Our western papers received yesterday bring us accounts of a melancholy tragedy enacted at Carthage, Ill., on the 26th ult. which resulted in the death of Joe Smith and his brother Hyrum. Another leading Mormon named Richards was severely wounded at the same time. The particulars of this bloody affair are thus given in the Quincy Herald, Extra, of Friday morning, June 28....

⁸⁰⁹ Reprinted in *Christian Freeman*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 11, 1844.

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[repeated spurious story of the attempted jail break then added].

Since the above was in type, we have received several accounts, differing from this and from each other of the manner of the death of Smith and his brother. It is evident, however, that they were foully murdered, with little, if any provocation on their part, at the time, and the act seems to have been as cowardly as it was criminal.

Hartford Daily Courant, Hartford, Connecticut, July 13, 1844.

Affairs at Nauvoo.—It appears that only Joe Smith and his brother Hyrum were murdered. Nauvoo has been quiet since the murder. The accounts of the affair vary somewhat, but they all agree in showing that the mob committed the most atrocious murder.

Hartford Daily Courant, Hartford, Connecticut, July 25, 1844.

The following was written by a correspondent of the Courant.

FOR THE COURANT

In the recent disgraceful proceedings in the Mormon district, in Illinois, Joseph Smith, their great leader has been put to death, under circumstances which excite the regret of all the friends of good order and sound government.

Thus ends this great deceiver, who has no doubt, seduced and ensnared numbers to their ruin. We shall not attempt to draw the character of this extraordinary man. Some are famous for their good deeds, while others are equally notorious and infamous for their deeds of

darkness—of this latter character was the pretended Mormon prophet.

What principle (certainly no principle that deserves the name of religious) could unite men to so absurd and ridiculous a belief—and what motive could effect such a union, is not easy to see or imagine.

May not his success, and the forming this new sect be accounted for on the principle of cause by which the great imposter Mahomet collected an immense number of followers, and founded a sect in the seventh century which has increased in the Eastern part of the world, and continues to the present day. Now the charm which collected and held together this vast assemblage was the promise of an earthly and sensual paradise, and a licentious and unbounded gratification of their passions to the leaders and chief men of the sect.

If the Mormon sect in this country, under their pretended prophet, was founded and held together by certain seductive ties among their leaders, similar to the fascinating delusions of Mohammadanism; is it possible that a sect so singular and fanatical can exist and maintain itself in this age of the world? It has been said, that now their prophet and leader was dead, the sect would be dispersed and come to an end, but this does not seem to be the case or appear probable.

It has been said that the Mormons are dnizes [sic] and opposers to regular civil government; however this may be, we know they were expelled and obliged to leave the State of Missouri, and the disturbances, riots, and mobs which have recently taken place between the Mormons and the inhabitants of the district where they are located, were caused by the destruction of the printing press at

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Warsaw, which was effected by the influence and intrigue of their late prophet J. Smith. It seems as if perpetual collisions, hostility, and disturbances are occurring and likely to continue between the sect and the inhabitants of the district, so that they cannot live peaceably together.

Should the internal history of Nauvoo ever be laid open and the practices enacted there be brought to the knowledge of the world, we believe the scenes which have been there practiced, would astonish and disgust the American public.

Some biography of this extraordinary deceiver will probably be published which may be instructive. It has been said that history is precept touching by example.

[signed] Brief Remarker.

Stamford Advocate, Connecticut, Stamford, November 12, 1844.

The Mormon Sanhedrin at Nauvoo has resolved itself into a possession of entire power, and declared Twelve Elders Supreme Head of the church; taking individual rank and authority in the order in which they are named from Brigham Young downwards.—They have decided also to gather all the Saints at Nauvoo, and go on immediately to the completion of the Temple.

FLORIDA

***Florida Herald*, St. Augustine, Florida, July 30, 1844.**

THE MORMON WAR., DEATH OF THE LEADERS
OF MORMONISM., ALARMING EXCITEMENT IN
THE WEST

Our worst apprehensions are realized. The leader of the Mormons has fallen: and a war of extermination has been proclaimed against his followers. The following letters—the first from the St. Louis Rep. 28 ult., and the latter from the St. Louis Gazette—give a full account of the present alarming state of affairs in Illinois.

ILLINOIS

***Warsaw Signal*, Warsaw, Illinois, July 24, 1844.**

Public Opinion In Our Favor—We learn from the surrounding counties, that since the people have had time to enquire into the causes which led to the late fatal tragedy at Carthage, and have been made to feel and appreciate our true situation—the act of killing Joe and Hyrum is generally justified. When the news first reached them, it grated harshly upon their sensibilities, and corrupt politicians took advantage of the first impression, to prejudice the people against us for their own peculiar benefit; but they have been beaten at their own game. The people have hearts—demagogues have none. No sooner was our real situation made known, than the sympathies of the public were turned in our favor. This, heartless politicians never anticipated, but they have learned to their sorrow, that instead of turning popular indignation

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against us, they have set it with overwhelming fury against themselves.

We knew it would be thus—we knew that our cause was just, and that the people could be made to feel it. It was only necessary that a circumstance should transpire, that would arouse public attention generally, to our situation, and sympathy could not but be with us. The death of Joe and Hyrum Smith produced this effect, and now that public attention is aroused, if another conflict should arise the result will not be doubtful....

We will now state our candid conviction to the world, that there is only one way to quiet Hancock County, and that is to remove one or the other of the two classes of population. We are now living in a perfect state of anarchy. A civil officer does not feel safe in going amongst the Mormons to execute process; and we are sure that a Mormon officer would not be in attempting the like with the “old citizens”. The one party cannot trust the other, and they will resist by force before they will submit to any attempt to bring them to trial before their deadly enemies.

SLANDERS OF THE PRESS—There are some papers which exhibit such a malicious disposition towards the people of Hancock, that we are induced to believe, that they do not desire to see the truth in relation to our late difficulties. Such the *St. Louis Gazette* and the *People’s Organ*. These papers have indulged in every species of vituperation towards us, and they let no opportunity pass, to prejudice the public mind against us as a community.

Illinois State Gazette, Shawneetown, Illinois, July 18, 1844.

Our latest information from the Head Quarters of the Governor is up to Saturday last. No further outbreak had occurred in Hancock. Some families were leaving the county. We learn that the worst feeling still exists between the “old citizens” of Hancock and the Mormons. We hope the very first violator of the peace will be arrested, and made to answer to the laws. The Governor is still at Quincy, and will remain there while there is any reasonable danger of further violations of the law.

Chicago Democrat, Chicago, Illinois, July 10, 1844.

It is not rendered certain that Joseph and Hyrum Smith were killed in the affray at the Carthage jail, and none others, though several were wounded. The circumstances of their death are variously represented except that both were shot by a mob with their clothes turned wrong side out and with blackened faces. The Governor had left Carthage when all seemed quiet to go to Nauvoo.

Sangamo Journal, Springfield, Illinois, July 4, 1844.

Notwithstanding all the rumors which are afloat, we are unable to state anything very definite in relation to affairs at Nauvoo.... Rumor says further, that on Thursday of last week Joe Smith, Hyrum Smith, and Dr. Richards were shot by a mob at Carthage. We are incredulous in regard to the truth of this rumor. We cannot think that under the circumstances of the case—the excitement against these men among the anti-Mormons—Gov. Ford would have received them as prisoners, to be tried under our

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laws—had pledged himself for their protection—and then placed them in a situation where they would be murdered. The rumor is too preposterous for belief.

We await with much anxiety to hear the truth on this subject; and this feeling is general in this community.

Quincy Whig, Quincy Illinois, July 24, 1844.

MR. EDITOR: I propose, with your leave, to offer a few suggestions upon this subject to the people of Adams County, and to all others interested.

The recent death of Joseph Smith and his brother by lawless violence, while confined in jail, has been justly reprobated by the public voice, as well in the county of Hancock, where it happened, as in the State of Illinois, generally, and in other parts of the Union. No man, so far as my knowledge extends, has been found to justify that rash and guilty act, however much he might believe that the crimes of the prisoners had deserved punishment at the hands of the law.

But it seems to me that public sentiment, as is often the case, is in danger of reacting with so much force, as to overhear what, for want of a better term, I shall call public reason. In other words, our feelings have been so much revolted, by this instance of Anti-Mormon violence, that we sympathize with the Mormons alone, we are strongly set against their opponents, we forget the past conduct of the Prophet and his followers, we lose sight of the causes which led to the catastrophe, and the Mormons are becoming in our eyes, a peaceful, law-abiding people, while their dead leaders assume the semblance of innocent and martyred victims.... [There follows a long

review of the accusations against Joseph Smith and the Mormons. Then concludes:]

Let us not be run away with, by hasty and miscalculating sympathy—by sudden and temporary impulses. Let us endeavor to judge coolly of everything: and in our conscientious desire, to stand very upright between our old neighbors and the Mormons, take care not to lean too far the other way.

A CITIZEN OF ADAMS COUNTY.

St. Louis Republican, St. Louis, Missouri, October 29, 1844.⁸¹⁰

The Mormons—Gov. Ford appears determined to keep up the excitement between the citizens of Hancock County, and the Mormons, and if a collision does not ensue, it will certainly not be his fault. By the officers of the steamer Osprey, which left Nauvoo on Saturday evening last, we learn that a part of the Nauvoo Legion were being armed, and were to march to Carthage, in compliance with an order from the Governor. For what purpose was not positively known, but was supposed to relate to circumstances growing out of the trial of Sharp and others, which is now progressing at that place.

Upper Mississippian, Rock Island, Illinois, October 5, 1844.

One Sunday last, an officer and one assistant passed up the river on the Amaranth, with a warrant issued by a

⁸¹⁰ Also in *New Jersey Journal*, Elizabeth, New Jersey, November 12, 1844; *Stamford Advocate*, Stamford, Connecticut, November 12, 1844.

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Justice of the Peace in Nauvoo, for William and Wilson Law, Doctor and Charles A. Foster, and one of the Higbees—five in all—charged with being accessory to the murder of the Smiths. They arrived at Hampton in the evening, and arrested three of the parties, viz; Doctor Foster, C. A. Foster and Wm. Law the others being absent.

We learn that the arrested individuals refused to obey the writ, though expressed a willingness to go to Hancock to meet the charges. The officers remained there all of Monday and Monday night, awaiting a downward boat; the prisoners running at large in the mean time. During the night they slipped away, went up to Port Byron, went on board of a boat in the morning, came down to Hampton, where the officers had remained, came off the boat as they went on, and are yet at large.

The officers came on down to this place, on their way home; and when asked why they did not call assistance and proceed to arrest them—they answered that Governor Ford had told them not to do so, but return the writ, and he would offer a reward for them.

Now, we pronounce this matter a broad farce. In the first place, we don't believe the Governor gave them any such instructions. In the second place, if he did, he transcended his authority, as he has no power to interfere with the arrest of criminals. In the third place, any requisite number of men could have been obtained in this county, to have secured the individuals; and our Sheriff told the officers that the impression must not go abroad that offenders could not be arrested in this county. In the fourth place, we do not believe that a reward can be legally offered for them, as they manifestly made no

escape from the officers. In the fifth place, we do not believe they wanted to take them! as that object could have been very easily effected—as the citizens of Rock Island county will testify.

We have called this a farce and a humbug; after the above statement of facts, we leave it to our readers to determine whether we are right or not. Of one thing they may rest assured—should a reward of 500 or 1000 dollars be offered—and the offenders secured, as they doubtless would be—the people of Illinois will have to foot the bill!

P.S. For the benefit of those who can only see through party spectacles, we repeat that we do not believe that Gov. Ford had anything to do with THAT humbug.

Nauvoo Neighbor Extra, Nauvoo, Illinois, June 30 1844.⁸¹¹

⁸¹¹ *Nauvoo Neighbor Extra*, June 30 1844; almost the entire *Extra* was republished in: *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, July 1, 1844; *Quincy Whig*, Quincy, Illinois, 10 July; *Sangamo Journal*, Springfield, Illinois, 11 July 1844.

The portion which dealt with the Smiths' funeral was reprinted in: *Dayton Journal and Advertiser*, Dayton, Ohio, July 9, 1844; *CGC*, July 10, 1844; *Public Ledger and Daily Transcript*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 15, 1844; *Evening Post*, New York, New York, July 15, 1844; *Boston Post*, Boston, Massachusetts, July 15, 1844; *Daily Argus*, Portland, Maine, July 16, 1844; *Daily Herald*, Newburyport, Massachusetts, July 16, 1844; *Hartford Daily Courant*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 17, 1844; *Daily Albany Argus*, Albany, New York, July 17, 1844; *Livingston Republican*, Geneseo, New York, July 23, 1844.

Other portions of the *Extra* were reprinted in: *Davenport, Gazette*, Davenport, Iowa, July 4; *Indiana American*, Brookville, Indiana, July 12;

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[On June 30, The *Nauvoo Neighbor* published a large extra which told the circumstances of the Prophets death, included the official statement of Governor Ford, a letter from Emma Smith asking for calm, and an account of the bodies being returned to Nauvoo. This is that account.]

The Legion in Nauvoo, was called out at 10 a.m. and addressed by Judge Phelps, Col. Buckmaster, of Alton, the Governor's aid, and others, and all excitement and fury allayed and preparations were made to receive the bodies of the noble martyrs. About three o'clock, they were met by a great assemblage of people, east of the Temple on Mulholland street, under the direction of the City Marshal, followed by Samuel H. Smith, the brother of the deceased, Dr. Richards and Mr. Hamilton, of Carthage. The wagons were guarded by 5 men. The procession that followed in Nauvoo, was the City

Boston Post, Boston, Massachusetts, July 15, 1844; *Rochester Daily Advertiser*, Rochester, New York, July 18, 22, 1844; *Rochester Republican*, Rochester, New York, July 23, 1844.

A Shorter version of the funeral services for Joseph and Hyrum also circulated. It appeared in the following newspapers: *Daily Cincinnati Gazette*, Cincinnati, Ohio, July 9, 1844; *Troy Times*, Troy, Ohio, July 13; *St. Louis Republican*, St. Louis, Missouri, July 15, 1844; *Boston Post*, Boston, Massachusetts, July 15, 1844; *Hartford Daily Courant*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 17, 1844; *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette*, Concord, New Hampshire, July 18, 1844; *Rhode Island County Journal and Independent Inquirer*, Providence, Rhode Island, July 19, 1844; *Newport Mercury*, Newport, Rhode Island, July 20, 1844; *Caledonian*, St. Johnsbury, Vermont, July 22, 1844; *Racine Advocate*, Racine, Wisconsin, July 23, 1844; *Livingston Republican*, Geneseo, New York, July 23, 1844.

Council, the Lieut. Sens, Staff, the brigadier and staff commanders and officers of the Legion and citizens generally, which numbered several thousands, amid the most solemn lamentations and wailings that ever ascended into the ears of the Lord of Hosts to be avenged of our enemies!

When the procession arrived, the bodies were both taken into the “Nauvoo Mansion,” the scene at the Mansion cannot be described: the audience was addressed by Dr. Richards, Judge Phelps, Woods and Reed, Esqrs., of Iowa and Col. Markham. It was a vast assemblage of some 8 or 10,000 person, and with one united voice resolved to trust the law for a remedy of such a high handed assassination, and when that failed, to call upon God to avenge us of our wrongs! Oh widows and orphans! Oh Americans, weep, for the glory of freedom has departed!

INDIANA

Indiana American, Brookville, Indiana, July 12, 1844⁸¹²

Strange Occurrences—Joe Smith is the first candidate for the Presidency of the United States that was assassinated, and John Tyler is the first President of the United States led to the Hymenial Altar.

⁸¹² *Indiana American*, Brookville, Indiana, July 12, 1844.

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Indiana State Sentinel, Indianapolis, Indiana, July 11, 1844.

MURDER OF JOE SMITH.

A Mormon preacher who called on us the other day in the course of conversation assured us that the nation was shortly to be visited by a series of terrible calamities, the evidence of divine displeasure, and as a token that all men should embrace the faith of the Latter Day Saints, and thus escape the wrath of offended Deity. We regarded this, and much more to the same effect, as the ravings of a credulous monomania; but were we at all susceptible of the mental disease which we believe our visitor labored under, recent events might possibly infect us with it, though the first blow seems to have fallen in a quarter where he least expected it. We refer to the cold-blooded murder of the “Mormon Prophet,” the details of which will be found in another column. The example of the “Nativists” of Philadelphia seems to have been improved upon by the opponents of Mormonism in the neighborhood of Nauvoo, who have thus bravely murdered men who had thrown themselves upon their honor and their mercy, and had no means of self-defense. Surely, nothing but the imprisonment of Dorr by the Algerine Whigs of Rhode Island, can match this dastardly act. It can have no justification whatever in the mind of any honorable man. It is most shameful, most horrible, most detestable. Joe Smith may have been a bad man—we have no doubt he was; he may have been guilty of crimes—of this we have no certain evidence. But bad and criminal as he may have been, he voluntarily, on this occasion at least, yielded to the requirements of the law and its ministers; while his enemies have most shamefully and inexcusably violated the law, as well as every noble attribute of manhood and

Christianity. It behooves every man of whatever creed to rebuke and discountenance this diabolic spirit of religious intolerance and persecution whenever and however manifested, for it strikes at the first and most sacred of constitutional rights, freedom of opinion and speech. The rights of every man are liable to be invaded by it, if it be not scourged in subjection and kept so.

The dastardly wretches who perpetrated this murder upon unarmed and defenseless men, have already, as is common in such cases, fabricated falsehoods in extenuation of their villainy. The account we give, and we have received several, comes from a paper not favorable to Jo. Smith or the Mormons. It is the same from which we copied an article lately, of which the Mormons complained. It issued an “extra” previously to the article we copy, in which it was stated that the attack was first made by Smith and his brother upon the company of guards who surrounded the jail where they were confined. The *Warsaw Signal*, which all along has exhibited a most hellish spirit and continually yelled for blood, also publishes similar falsehoods. These statements must be regarded as utterly absurd, and false on their face. The exposition of Gov. Ford proves them to be so. We believe, in addition to what is stated by the account we copy and by the Governor, that the guard placed about the jail were false to their trust. We have seen it stated that the most of them deserted their posts previous to the attack of the mob upon the jail. God knows, that we lament and pity the infatuation of the Mormons; but their folly is not half so deserving of scorn, contempt and blasting indignation as that of their infamous assailants.

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Richmond Palladium, Richmond, Indiana, August 9, 1844.⁸¹³

The editor of the St. Louis Transcript states that, happening to meet with a Mormon, a Swede by nativity, he made some inquiry respecting the estate of affairs at the “holy city.” The Swede stated that the Mormons have still full faith in the doctrines of the prophet, that most of the cowards ran away on the first appearance of danger, and that a large number have now left the city, to assist in gathering the harvest in adjacent counties; but that the temple is still in progress, and that upon its completion he shall leave on a mission to his native land; that messengers have been despatched to various and distant parts of the country for the twelve Apostles, and that on their arrival, a successor to the prophet will be chosen.

IOWA

Bloomington Herald, Bloomington, Iowa, July 5, 1844.

From the following, issued as an extra from the office of the *Quincy Herald*, it will be seen that the worst anticipations with regard to the Mormon troubles have been more than realized—that the hitherto fair fame of Illinois has been sullied—blackened—by a deed which casts a stigma upon the whole human family. In vain may we search the whole catalogue of crime for an equal to this brutal, cowardly, hellish, (yes hellish is the word, but not half expressive enough to convey a proper idea of its enormity,) murder. Assassins may plunge the dagger to

⁸¹³ Reprinted in *Hartford Daily Courant*, Hartford, Connecticut, August 1, 1844.

the heart of the innocent and unsuspecting, savages may torture, kill and slay, but their crimes are virtues in comparison with the heart of the reputed civilized man who in cold blood murders the victim who has voluntarily placed himself in the hands of his enemy, to be tried and dealt with according to law. Only think of it—a man in the nineteenth century, an age of boasted light and reason, voluntarily surrendered as a prisoner, ready to suffer for his crimes or misdemeanors overpowered and slain in cold blood. Language is inadequate to paint the outrage in the color it merits. It matters not what may have been the misdeeds of Smith, they cannot be offered in palliation of this horrid crime—nothing can justify such an outrage.

By the statement of the Governor it appears that Smith yielded to every demand made by him under the pledge that no harm should befall his person, and that by the laws alleged to have been violated was he to be tried and that too, by his enemies. How shameful, then, is the violation of this pledge!

That Smith was an evil disposed man, dangerous in the community, we cannot dispute, but the great error lay not with him—'twas in the State in granting city charter conferring such unbounded powers.

The bodies of the two Smiths were taken to Nauvoo, and placed in the hall of a hotel, where several thousand persons called to take a last look at them. After being exhibited in this way for one day, they were placed in the vault of the church.

At the date of our latest accounts from Nauvoo, peace and quiet prevailed, and the people were in great sorrow and grief for the loss of their leader.

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Lee County Democrat, Fort Madison, Iowa, 29 June 1844.⁸¹⁴

DEATH OF THE MORMON PROPHET AND HIS
BROTHER!

We stop the press to hasten to lay before our readers the murder of Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum. The news reached here early on the morning of yesterday, but little credence was at the time given to the report until about 3 p.m., when we received from the hands of a gentleman direct from the city of Nauvoo the following developments which fully corroborates the report. They are written by a gentleman of undoubted veracity for truth, and the statement thus given of this horrible assassination may be relied on as correct.

To the Editor of the "Lee Co. Democrat."
NAUVOO, June 28th, 1844, 9 o'clock, A.M.

Sir,—I hasten to inform you that Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet, and his brother Hyrum Smith, were murdered in the jail of this county, at about 5 o'clock yesterday afternoon.

On Monday last the Smiths gave themselves up to the civil authorities under the most solemn assurances from Governor Ford, that they should be protected; and receive no personal violence. On Tuesday they both, by advice of Counsel, voluntarily without examination, entered into recognizance for their appearance at the next Term of the Hancock Circuit Court, to answer to the charge of riot on which they had been arrested—While they were in custody under the above charge they were arrested on a

⁸¹⁴ Reprinted in *Hartford Daily Courant*, Hartford, Connecticut, August 1, 1844.

charge of Treason against the State of Illinois and without any examination committed to jail, there to remain until discharged by due course of law. On Wednesday they were brought before justice Smith, and time given until 12 o'clock, Thursday, to get witnesses ready for trial. On the same day the Governor held a council of war, or rather of officers, and determined to march all the troops with the exception of one company into the city of Nauvoo, where he was assured by Captain Singleton who was stationed at Nauvoo, that all was peace and quiet. The examination of the Smiths, in consequence of this determination to march to Nauvoo, was postponed until Saturday next. On Thursday morning the orders for all the troops to march to Nauvoo were from some cause countermanded and most of the troops at Carthage, some 800 in number were disbanded. One company of some 50 men were left at Carthage to protect the prisoners, only 8 of this Company were stationed at the jail as guards while the remainder of the company were in camp a quarter of a mile distant. His Excellency with some fifty or sixty horsemen, marched to Nauvoo where he made a stump speech to what he called the military Saints, advising them among other things to give up all their own arms, as they had given up those belonging to the state.

In the absence of the Governor, an armed and disguised band of men, said to be about two hundred in number attacked the jail, overpowered the guard of eight men, entered the jail and shot both the Smiths. Hyrum received a ball in the head, and merely had time to exclaim, "I am a dead man," and expired; Joseph Smith received a number of balls which pierced his body, some while still in jail, some while he was in the act of leaping

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from the window of the jail, and others after he reached the ground, he exclaimed, "O God"—and expired. Elder Taylor who was also in the jail, not a prisoner, but as a friend of the Smiths, received several flesh wounds, none of which are considered dangerous. The murderers immediately escaped to the woods, before the company of soldiers, left a Carthage, arrived at the jail. The murderers were disguised with paint and of course not known; it is supposed that some of those who made the attack were wounded by the guard who fired upon them, but not so as to prevent their escape.

The news was received here about daylight this morning, by messengers and a letter from Governor Ford; his excellency calls upon the Mormons to prepare themselves for any attack that may be made upon them; and says that he has again called out the troops.

The people of this city are perfectly cool, no unnecessary excitement, no inflammatory speeches, indeed they appear to have expected the result. Notwithstanding the repeated and reiterated pledges of the Governor, that the prisoners should be protected from all violence.

YOURS &c.

The following letter was received by a gentleman in this city, from a gentleman in Nauvoo:

Warsaw, June 28, 1844.

Dear Sir: It is with feelings of regret that I acquaint you with the death of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, in the jail at Carthage, under most disgraceful circumstances, Whatever may have been the character of the men, no

honest man, in my opinion, can look at the facts attending such a diabolical and cold-hearted assassination with other feelings than those of abhorrence and condemnation, The facts are these:

The Smith's, together with eighteen or twenty others who were concerned in the destruction of the press, went to Carthage to answer the civil law in the case. In delivering themselves to the authorities, they received the assurances of the Governor and his forces that their persons should be held inviolable while at Carthage. With this understanding as to their safety they delivered themselves up, not however, without some fears.

In the course of the proceedings, it seemed expedient for the Governor to come to Nauvoo and address the people. His remarks consisted of a relation of the excited state of feeling abroad, and of what occasioned that feeling. He gave the people some good advice as to their future course, and closed by telling us, that should the property or the persons of those disaffected, who had fled to other towns from this city, be harmed in the least, we should be held responsible for it, and that tens of thousands would come upon us and avenge their wrongs, by burning our town and destroying every man, woman and child within our borders, A fearful conception with him, but inhuman to the last degree with us. And to make his tender mercies reach our keen sensibilities, he added, that should these things come upon us, he could interpose no power for our relief. What if one of these men should burn his own house—But I will not add.

Before the Governor left Carthage, he had disbanded the forces, except his guards that accompanied him to Nauvoo, and a company he left to protect the prisoners,

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These consisted of the two Smiths, Elders John Taylor and Willard Richards, who were confined in jail. The guards were deemed sufficient, as the Governor expected to be back in the night himself, But, alas, he was too late, The fatal deed was perpetrated before he reached this city. I am just informed that immediately on his arrival back at Carthage, and learning that the Smiths were dead, he left for Augusta, eighteen miles distant, fearing the Mormons would come before day, and lay the town in ashes. His fears were groundless, I think. They might have done this some days ago, and saved the life of one whom they held as dear as the apple of their eye. For there is not a man or woman in ten who would not have risked their lives, at any time, to save Joseph Smith, had it been required. But he is dead, and beyond the reach of mobs or human laws. The attack on the guard and jail were as follows:

About 6 o'clock the persons in jail heard a noise at the door, and immediately the cry of 'surrender,' followed by the firing of guns, and in an instant more a rush was made for the door, which was burst open. The assailants, shrieking themselves outside the door, fired into the room and, shot Hyrum Smith in the head, He fell instantly, exclaiming "I am a dead man." Jo Smith, who had a six shooter, fired three times, wounding two of the assailants in the hands, their bodies being out of sight. Elder Taylor was wounded in the meantime, but not mortally. Joseph, for some reason attempted to escape by a window opposite the door, when he received several balls, and fell outside, He had no sooner reached the ground that he was pierced by several bayonets, Mr, Richards, who escaped outside, says the mob did the foul deed in a moment, and were off for Warsaw, from whence they came, before the

citizens of the town could possibly come to the aid of the guard or unhappy prisoners. Here ended the murderous scene.

My feelings of indignation at such disregard of law and authority would allow me to say much on this matter, but I forbear. I am not a Mormon and do not expect to be; but I feel that they have been injured and humanity put to the blush, the Constitution and Law put at defiance, Why, sir, this community, with all their faults, (and they have many in my opinion,) are as quiet and honest as their neighbors.

I have just been informed that there is another mob collected at Warsaw, with a view of destroying our city and its inhabitants. Good heavens: When will these outlaws cease to devise their black-hearted deeds.

Lee County Democrat, Fort Madison, Iowa, June 29, 1844.

THE MURDER OF THE MORMON PROPHET AND HIS BROTHER

The murder of Jo Smith and his Brother has caused feelings of deep regret in the breasts of every peaceable and law abiding people; they look upon it as a high handed outrage, and as a cruel, cold blooded, cowardly and contemptible murder. That Jo and his brother were guilty of acts which required the interposition of the law, we are well aware, but after he and his brother had voluntarily surrendered themselves up to justice, under the full assurance that they would receive the protection of Governor Ford from all violence; they were entitled to all protection against all danger and all enemies. Yet still with all the assurance that were given to the Smiths and

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his people, and whilst in prison awaiting trial, they were by a ruthless mob, shot down. A more deeper stain could not have fallen upon the state of Illinois, or a more outrageous butcher be perpetrated. The State of Illinois has had its fair fame tarnished by the violence of an ungovernable mob, and it is time that such acts of violence should be arrested, or we may soon say, our laws are a dead letter and our freedom gone from us forever. Every good citizen must feel interested in putting down such outrageous acts—and every good citizen should lend his aid in ferreting out the MURDERERS, and bring them to justice.

KENTUCKY

***Louisville Journal*, Louisville, Kentucky, July 3, 1844.⁸¹⁵**

Yesterday morning we announced the murder of Jo. Smith and his brother in the Carthage jail. We have since received, by a traveler from St. Louis, a copy of the St. Louis Gazette, of last Friday evening, from which we copy several versions of the circumstances of the murder, all of them, no doubt, containing more or less error. We have seen a gentleman who was in Nauvoo on Friday, and who informs us that all was then quiet there, the prominent Mormons exhorting their followers to offer no insult or molestation to any one, and in no case to offer violence, except in strict self-defense. The deepest grief

⁸¹⁵ Reprinted in: *New York Daily Tribune*, New York, New York, July 9, 1844; *Christian Freeman*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 11, 1844.

and affliction pervaded the city. There appeared to be no danger of the burning of Warsaw or Carthage.

MAINE

Portland Transcript, Portland, Maine, November 2, 1844.⁸¹⁶

Mormonism has made considerable progress in Scotland. At a meeting of the faithful in Glasgow last month some 500 were present; all in mourning, for the prophet Joe Smith. The scotch Mormon Conference embraces thirteen churches.

WHAT THEY SAY OF US. Americans always exhibit great sensitiveness as to the opinions entertained of them abroad. The late riots in this country have afforded a fertile theme for European comment, and some of their remarks are not at all flattering or calculated to increase our national pride. The following which we copy from the *Liverpool Mercury* of August 3d, though brief is very expressive:

American Riots. The scenes which have taken place in Pennsylvania and Illinois would have disgraced a nation of savages. We question whether even amongst the aboriginal natives of the continent of America, distinguished as they have been for wild and pitiless ferocity, and other disregard of human suffering, any record can be found more sanguinary than the riots at Philadelphia, or the massacre of the Mormon leader and his brother, in the prison at Carthage. For the particulars

⁸¹⁶ Reprinted in *Knoxville Register*, Knoxville, Tennessee, November 20, 1844.

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of these events, so shocking to humanity, so disgraceful to America, and so discouraging to the friends of democratic institutions we must refer to our compendium.

MARYLAND

***Sun*, Baltimore, Maryland, July 12, 1844.**

THE ILLINOIS OUTRAGE—The murder of Joe Smith whilst in jail, after he had peacefully surrendered himself, and after the solemn promise of the Governor that he should be protected and have a fair trial, meets with merited condemnation in all quarters. Smith was, no doubt, deeply steeped in crime, but when he was under arrest, with public sentiment strongly setting against him, there was the most ample opportunity to convict and punish him legally. It is another vagrant instance of the triumph of the mob spirit, to the total disregard of reason, moderation and law. To inflict punishment on prisoners when in custody of the law, or to rescue them from confinement, when there is nothing to prevent their having a fair trial, cannot be justified, excused, or tolerated under any circumstances, and those guilty of such acts should be punished to the full extent of the laws which they have outraged. Every friend of Republican institutions should frown on the slightest attempt to degrade the supremacy of law by these outbreaks of disorganized passion. The fact that mobs and civil wars are frequent in other countries, is no palliation or excuse for the enactment of similar scenes here. In this country all law emanates from the people, and when illegally

trampled under foot it should be regarded by every good citizen as a personal outrage—a private degradation.

The excuse given by the mob which so cruelly murdered Joe Smith, is one that should never be allowed to exist in this country, but which is, unfortunately, of too frequent occurrence. They say, palliation of their conduct, that he had been arrested before, for equally criminal acts, both in Missouri and Illinois, but had been allowed to escape from the punishment due his crimes, either through Executive clemency or the influence of money. Lynch law certainly has received a strong impetus by the frequent exercise of this power, but then there is a legal and peaceable remedy for even this evil. It can be restricted by those who created it—but having created it, it should be respected until so restricted. The influence of money and powerful friends in degrading the law in the eyes of the people, has of late given a strong blow to the institutions of our country. On the same principle Joe Smith was shot, without trial, because the law had been previously trampled upon by those chosen as its especial guardians. Every precedent of this kind is, therefore, fraught with the most dangerous tendencies. If there are any favorites in the eye of the law, it should be those who are poor, desolate, and friendless, but in all cases those who have had the advantages of education and good training should be held amenable for the full extent of the punishment awarded to their crimes. [The editor concludes the editorial by writing that things used to be better in this country, and they would be better again if people would value integrity.]

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The Political Prelude to the Death of Joseph Smith*

MASSACHUSETTS

Daily Mercury, New Bedford, Massachusetts, July 12, 1844.

THE MURDER OF THE MORMONS

The State of Illinois is eternally disgraced by the recent murder of Joe and Hyrum Smith, the Mormon leaders—for murder it is beyond all question. It now appears that this outrage was perpetrated without any immediate provocation. Joe Smith and his brother were making no opposition to the authorities—they had voluntarily surrendered themselves to Gov. Ford, and were in the custody of the law. A slender guard was set over them, and they made no attempt to escape. An organized mob, disguised, overpowered the guard, marched into the jail and there murdered the Smiths. It was not until assailed by the mob that Joe Smith offered resistance as he of right might do. This act of barbarous ferocity and cruelty is a deep stain upon the character of Illinois and it can never be effaced.

It is said that the city of Nauvoo assumed too much power—that it was oppressive and tyrannical. Granted. But who was to blame? It was the Locofoco legislature of Illinois which chartered the city of Nauvoo and bestowed upon it despotic power. They knew who and what the Mormons were—they knew it was a strictly religious or fanatical corporation which they created—they knew how evenly and strictly the Mormon laws would be enforced—yet for the mere purpose of obtaining political support they gave extraordinary powers to the city of Nauvoo and to the Nauvoo Legion. Among other powers granted was one which is the exclusive province of Grand Juries, viz: the power of declaring what should be

nuisances and of suppressing the same. Acting under this broad power the City Council declared the Nauvoo Observer (we think that was the name) to be a nuisance and thus proceeded to abate it with all the forms of law. This was a matter strictly within the forms of the City Government, acting under its extraordinary charter—no one had a right to interfere otherwise than by issuing a *quo warranto* against the city or by arresting the City Council as rioters acting without authority of laws. But what was done by citizens of Illinois residing out of Nauvoo? Instead of putting a writ in the hands of the Sheriff and gathering a civil posse they made an appeal to arms—called upon the citizens of Illinois, of Iowa and Missouri to arm, and seize the leading Mormons and if resistance were made to sack the city. Large numbers of volunteers from all quarters poured into Nauvoo and preparations were made for a fight! Joe and Hyrum Smith thereupon peaceably surrendered, and were basely murdered for their pains. Is not this an outrage of the blackest dye? Is it not an utter abomination!

We do not take sides with the Mormons as such. None more than we abhor their fanaticism and their frame of government. But after they were recognized by law they were entitled to the protection of the law. They were not responsible for the powers conferred upon them with a view to their votes—they were not responsible for the legitimate exercise of those powers—or if they were so responsible or if they abused those powers they were entitled to be dealt with according to the forms of law.

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***Boston Post, Boston, Massachusetts, July 15, 1844.*⁸¹⁷**

It is now asserted in some quarters that the Smiths were murdered by the disaffected Mormon faction, whose press had been burnt and themselves expelled from Nauvoo. This is a rather plausible supposition, and may turn out to be true.—We are inclined to think, however, from the ferocity manifested by the *Warsaw Signal*, which claims to be the peculiarly Anti-Mormon organ there, that the story we already have is quite as likely to be the right one as any other. That paper, not satisfied with the murders of defenseless Mormons already perpetrated, clamors for the removal of the whole Mormon tribe from Illinois, and threatens loudly in case this is not complied with. On the other hand, the Mormons exhibit a moderation quite equal to the violence of their foes.

Hampshire Gazette, Northampton, Massachusetts, July 16, 1844.

[This is a letter from someone in Quincy, Illinois, addressed to the Massachusetts newspaper editor.]

Quincy, Ill. June 28, 1844

Your readers are probably aware that on the requisition of Gov. Ford, who was at Carthage, the capital of Hancock County, Jo Smith, with his brother Hiram and some members of the City Council came in from Nauvoo and surrendered themselves up as State prisoners. Owing

⁸¹⁷ This was published on the same day in three newspapers. Its original source is not known. The other newspapers were: *New York Daily Tribune*, New York, New York, July 15, 1844, *New York Herald*, New York, New York, July 15, 1844.

to the excitement against them, it was thought best that they should be kept in the county jail. They were, therefore, put in prison and a strong military guard placed over them. Yesterday the Governor dismissed most of the militia, which now amounted to some thousands, and then at the head of about 100 men marched to Nauvoo, to take possession of the arms said to be in the city. About 4 o'clock p.m., a mob, composed, I understand, principally of the disbanded militia, rushed upon the guard, overcame them, rushed into the jail, and shot Joe and Hiram Smith with two of the council. Smith, it is said, made a slight resistance with a pistol, but received in return 20 or more balls at once. I was at Warsaw, 18 miles from Carthage, when the news of the death of Smith came in. The Steamer 'Boreas, on which I had taken passage for St. Louis, was immediately chartered to bring off the women and children from W. and to proceed to this city for troops. She arrived this morning at 4 o'clock. The bells were immediately rung, a public meeting called, and a great excitement produced. At 9 A.M. she returned to Warsaw with four companies of infantry, two of which were volunteers, and comprising in all about 300 men. Thousands, both men and women, crowded the landing to bid farewell to their friends whom they might never see again. It is expected now that Smith has been murdered, that the Mormons will fight with desperation, but they cannot withstand the force that will assemble against them. They will probably be driven from the state. Having been for about a week very near the scene of action, and having had good opportunity to know the state of feeling in relation to the Mormons, I do not hesitate to say, that in my opinion they are more 'sinned against than sinning.'

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Some of them are doubtless bad men, but I must believe that the great mass, are poor, deluded men, who, weak in judgment, have nevertheless honestly come to believe that the Mormon faith is right. Be their deserts what they may, the conduct of the murderers of Smith are base and cruel. He threw himself into the Governor's hands, with the assurance that he should be protected. He has been murdered in cold blood!

Your friend.

W.H.S.

Daily Evening Transcript, Boston, Massachusetts, August 1, 1844⁸¹⁸

JOE SMITH, THE MORMON PROPHET

Joe Smith is dead and gone. He was one of the most remarkable men of the age. The time for writing his history has not arrived.—Men who have known him long and well, differ in their estimate of his character; the future historian alone can reconcile the contradictory statements of his friends and enemies, and place him in his true position. The personal manners of every man make him friends or enemies, regardless of his principles and of his conduct. This remark is clearly illustrated in the case of Smith. He was a man of rough exterior and course manners, thousands who approached him were so completely disgusted at once by his manners, that they refused to look at the good he claimed to have done.—But

⁸¹⁸ Reprinted in: *People's Press*, Ft. Wayne, Indiana, August 6, 1844; *New York Daily Tribune*, New York, New York, 13 September 1844; *Indiana American*, Brookville, Indiana, 13 September 1844.

notwithstanding this he was a remarkable man, and has left the impress of his genius upon the age in which he lived; he has carved out for himself a title to a page in the history of his country, and his name will be remembered, for good or for evil, when the names of half the ephemeral Statesmen of the age will be forgotten.

Born in the very humblest walks of life, reared in poverty and obscurity, without education, without intelligence, accustomed for years to rude and severe labor, rough even to the hours of his death in his deportment, course, vulgar, low, he has succeeded in establishing a RELIGIOUS CREED, which has been proclaimed throughout America and Europe, in the Barbary States of Africa, along the banks of the Nile, amid the ruins of ancient Jerusalem and in the Courtly Halls of the modern capitol of the Russian Empire. The Creed which he has established, and which in the last few years has made rapid progress throughout the civilized world, will continue to flourish until millions of converts will stake their eternal destiny upon its truth.

He has founded a city upon one of the most beautiful spots in the whole Western world, where has gathered together more than twenty thousand inhabitants from every part of the earth, of every nation, tongue and kindred; he has planned one of the most magnificent architectural specimens of the age, and reared to the height of forty feet a Temple which, when completed, will be at once the most beautiful, the most costly, and most noble building in America. Its walls are solid stone four feet in thickness, supported by thirty lofty pillars, whose huge size and strength will endure as long as time will last. That building is a monument which will never decay,

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and the name of its founder will never be forgotten. Who can gainsay that Smith was a remarkable man? He ruled by the force of his genius. Like Bonaparte, he could control and command his fellow men. The secret of his power is unknown, but the fact that he lived in the full enjoyment of unbounded influence up to the hour of his death is indisputable. For the last few years he had acquired property rapidly, and whenever he traveled he used an expensive equipage. He was a pretended prophet of God, and a tavern keeper. He labored for the souls of men gratuitously; he supplied their temporal necessities for dollars and cents.

In his personal appearance, I have said Joe was rough; he was a remarkably stout and athletic man; he loved to wrestle, and gloried in his ability to floor the strongest man in his community. In his deportment, he was either gay or angry, sometimes indulging in hearty but coarse jokes, and sometimes imprecating curses upon those who had displeased him. He was an arbitrary man, and loved power. He claimed for his Municipal Court such unbounded power as no Court ever yet exercised, and under shelter of such claim he committed acts alike destructive of law and order. He was also ambitious and vain, and it was this last trait that involved him in all his difficulties, and finally consummated his ruin. If he had not been intent on the exercise of his power, and determined to gratify his vanity as well as to glut his revenge, he would in all probability have been alive at this hour. But his vanity prompted him to disregard the threats of his enemies and to persevere in the execution of his own plans, when he ought to have conciliated and yielded. It was his great fault to persevere in all his plans,

even when prudence and circumstances demanded a different course. He has been accused of many crimes; of adultery, forgery, counterfeiting, and of an attempt to murder Governor Boggs of Missouri. That he availed himself of the power which he wielded to gratify his sensual appetite I have no doubt, he was a man of strong passions, and his education had not taught him to control or suppress his desires; but that he ever engaged in the other acts wherewith he stood charged, I seriously doubt. The men who would have sworn it—the men who murdered him—would not have stopped at the commission of a less crime, to gratify their hatred and their revenge. They had resolved on his destruction, but they feared to encounter him, when he had the ability to defend himself. He was a man of genuine courage, and would have fought to the last moment of his life. He was pursued by a band of three hundred infuriated demons, and cruelly shot down like a wild beast, while confined in a small room where he could not escape. It was a glorious exit for him. Whatever there was of evil in his heart will be forgotten in the recollection of his death. He will be eulogized by his disciples, and worshiped as a God. Time and distance will embellish his life with new and rare virtues, and more than earthly power; his doctrines will flourish, his influence will extend to ages yet unborn, and future generations will celebrate his birth and death by public festivals, public prayers, and an unlimited devotion.

[signed] H. J.

Lewistown, Illinois, July 10, 1844

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Haverhill Gazette, Haverhill, Massachusetts, August 24, 1844

John Tyler Withdrawn. The letter of Mr. Tyler, withdrawing his name as a candidate for the Presidency, is published in some of the papers. It is not of sufficient importance to merit publication, but is written in his usual vague and indefinite style. His withdrawal is of no consequence to any one, and we presume had Joe Smith have lived, their chances of election would have been about equal.

MISSOURI

St. Louis New Era, St. Louis, Missouri, June 29, 1844⁸¹⁹

The Mendota left Nauvoo yesterday at 4 o'clock. The Captain says he stayed at Nauvoo several hours and talked with a number of the Mormons, that whilst there a body of Mormons came in bearing the dead bodies of Joe Smith and Hiram Smith. Mr. Phelps was not killed, but was in Nauvoo when the Mendota left, making a speech to the Mormons, and advising them to peace. No Mormons were killed except Joe and Hiram Smith. The Mormons all expressed a determination to keep the peace, and not to resort to arms except in necessary self-defence. They state that at Carthage the Mormons were confined; that about fifty or one hundred men disguised suddenly rushed on the jail house; that the guard fired on them and wounded three of them—that the men in disguise fired into the jail and killed Hiram Smith before the door was

⁸¹⁹ Reprinted in *Mississippi Free Trader*, Natchez, Mississippi, July 10, 1844.

opened. Joe Smith had a revolving pistol, and fired it two or three times without effect, but was himself soon killed by the assailants; that Taylor, the editor of the Nauvoo Neighbor, was in jail, and was shot through the thigh, but not seriously injured; Richards was not injured. After the assault the disquieted mob retreated, and it was not even known who they were. The guard consisted of fifty men, left by the Governor, of whom eight or ten were on duty when the attack was made on the jail house.

By the *Hannibal Journal* and *Warsaw Signal* we learn that Joe and Hyrum Smith were murdered in jail and that great disturbances were apprehended in consequence of the act. The killing of these men is attributed to an attempt at rescue. Under the circumstances this tale is not probable. The consternation among the Mormons was so great that it is not probable that they would make such an attempt after they were disarmed, and when they knew that the jail was surrounded by a military force. It is still more improbable that Joe and Hyrum drew pistols and attempted to fire on the citizens when they were still in jail, and it is even very improbable that they were permitted to retain arms after they were imprisoned. The probability is that there was such a deep and determined hostility in the minds of the surrounding inhabitants against the Mormons, that they were determined to kill Joe at all events, and that they were ready to seize on any outbreak or imprudent act on the part of the Mormons as a pretext for carrying their designs into execution. In the excitement that prevailed, it is probable that any little disturbance would be called an attempt at rescue. The worst of consequences are to be apprehended.

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More Mormon News—From passengers and officers of the steamboat Dove, we learn that on yesterday a messenger from Governor Ford arrived at Rushville, calling on the militia to march speedily to Carthage to resist an attack apprehended from the Mormons. He stated that about 4 o'clock on the 27th, a mob of two hundred men, armed, painted and disguised, came to Carthage, demanded the key of the jail, and took out Joe Smith, Hyrum Smith and William Richards, and shot them forthwith. They were fearful that the Mormons would retaliate this murder by burning Carthage and Warsaw. Several hundred of the militia were about to march from Schuyler county when the Dove left. The Governor's message arrived at Rushville about 12 o'clock. Those who came down on the boat consider the news as authentic. If true, it is both alarming and disgraceful. It was cruel and cowardly to murder the unarmed prisoners when they had surrendered themselves and were in the custody of the laws. They were under the protection of the laws; the word of the Governor and the faith of the state were pledged to protect them from mobs, and to secure to them a fair trial.

St. Louis New Era, St. Louis, Missouri, July 3, 1844.

We are indebted to the officers of the steamer Osprey for the following up river news. The Osprey left Nauvoo yesterday morning about 11 o'clock; all was quiet and orderly then; she brought down the deputation from Gov. Ford, Messrs. Jonas and Fellows, to Quincy, who reported to the Governor everything quiet. On the trip the Osprey stopped at Warsaw, and waited there until these

gentlemen addressed the people; great excitement prevails, and manifestations of the most bitter feelings are still visible at that place. The inhabitants of Warsaw seem determined that either they or the Mormons must leave the country; and it is said that they have addressed the Governor, through the deputation, to that effect. This is about all that had transpired of importance up to the time of the Osprey's leaving.

St. Louis Reporter, St. Louis, Missouri, July 1, 1844.

By the Captain of the Mendota, who left Nauvoo at 4 o'clock on Friday evening, the Reveille was furnished with the following statement:

“According to the account which he brings, the Carthage jail is in the vicinity of a wood. A large body of men, disguised and painted, broke suddenly from the covert, overpowered the 8 or 10 men who were on guard—that larger body, appointed for that purpose, being at a greater distance off—entered the jail, and shot Smith and his brother at once. Richards was not hurt, but Edward [John] Taylor, the Editor of the “Nauvoo Neighbor,” was dangerously wounded in the thigh. There had not been the slightest attempt at rescue or escape.—Capt. Reilly had been about Nauvoo, and up at the Temple the people were terribly alarmed, fearing further violence.

“Gov. Ford, who had been encamped near the city, had intercepted the messenger with the news of Smith's death, and hastened to the spot, sending word to the people of Nauvoo to keep within their city, but to defend themselves if attacked. As the Mendota was about to

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leave, the body of Smith was brought into Nauvoo. Still, there was no signs whatever of an outbreak for vengeance. The people, in all the towns, were full of alarm and fabricating fearful rumors.”

We learn by a passenger, arrived here yesterday, on the Amaranth, that all was quiet in Nauvoo, on Saturday, when the Amaranth left that place; that the Mormons, so far from seeming disposed to retaliate, were apprehensive of an attack. The remains of Jo. Smith and his brother had been interred. If the statement of Captain Reilly be correct—and we have no reason to doubt that it is so—the conduct of the mob at Carthage, cannot be justified.

St. Louis Republican, St. Louis, Missouri, June 30, 1844⁸²⁰

[A letter to the editor from a person in Quincy]

THE MORMON MURDERS

“From numerous communications made to the Governor, there is not the remotest apprehension of an attack from the Mormons upon the citizens at the present time. They are a subdued people, aware, at last, of their weakness in a contest against the citizens, and satisfied that their conduct has brought upon them prejudices of all classes, sects and parties in the community. They are begging for mercy, and will not strike a blow unless first charged upon by the citizens.—At Carthage, there were two thousand militia collected, a portion of whom were for marching upon Nauvoo, and exterminating its inhabitants. Certain persons were busily employed in exciting the

⁸²⁰ Reprinted in *Indiana State Sentinel*, Indianapolis, Indiana, July 11, 1844.

passions and prejudices of the militia, by the circulation of the most exaggerated stories among them with a view to prevail upon them to aid in robbing the Mormons and driving them beyond the limits of the State.”

St. Louis Republican, St. Louis, Missouri, July 1, 1844⁸²¹

Death of Joe Smith and his brother Hyrum Smith.—All day on Saturday our town was in a state of feverish excitement, caused by the reception of the news of the death of the Mormon Prophet, Joe Smith, and of his brother Hyrum Smith, and, as was then reported, of others of the Mormon sect. As usual, too, there was no consistency in the circumstances, as the public caught hold of them, and this tended to increase the anxiety. Slips and publications from “the infested district” stated that the death of these men was the result of an attempt, by the Mormons, to rescue their leaders from confinement in the jail at Carthage—that an attack was made upon the guard from without—that the prisoners, who are said to have been armed, participated in the struggle, by firing from the Window of the prison, and wounding several citizens; and that then the jail was entered, and the prisoners shot down. This was the first version of the story, and, acting upon the presumption of its truth, although extremely improbable in itself, there was not much indignation expressed at the manner of the death of the Smiths. Soon, however, other statements were received; and when it was found, that, in violation of

⁸²¹ Reprinted in: *Indiana State Journal*, Indianapolis, Indiana, July 6, 1844; *Daily Ohio State Journal*, Columbus, Ohio, July 9, 1844.

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law—in disregard of the pledge of the Governor of the State for the personal safety of the prisoners—when they had given themselves up into the hands of Justice, and were committed to jail on a charge of treason—when they were thus at the disposition of the constituted authorities of the country—there was a revulsion of feeling, at the atrocious acts which ensued, and which terminated in their death.

Until the return of the editor of this paper, who left on Saturday with a view to ascertain all the facts by personal inquiry, connected with these disgraceful proceedings, we shall not speak of them as we think they deserve. But we must say that perfidy and cowardice marked every act of the enemies of the Smiths at Carthage. According to the most reliable statements, a mob, in the absence of Gov. Ford, disguised themselves, by blackening their faces, and proceeded to the attack. The jail is situated near a wood—it was an easy matter to overpower the guard—and this done, their way to the prison was clear. They entered it, and killed both the Prophet and his brother instantly by shooting and stabbing them. Another prisoner, Taylor, the editor of the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, was wounded—Richards escaped unharmed. It is averred that there was no attempt at rescue by the Mormons—and if this be true, there can be no excuse for the conduct of the mob: they were guilty of unprovoked murder; and by this single act have placed themselves in the wrong, and are deprived of all sympathy; just as Joe Smith did when he directed the destruction of the property of the Nauvoo newspaper, without any justification whatever, and for which he was everywhere condemned. We annex two letters from our correspondent, giving such

information as was in his possession up to Friday night. The Amaranth was at Nauvoo and Warsaw yesterday, but did not stop long enough to learn any news. A day or two will put us in possession of letters from the editor.

What will now be the fate of the Mormons, is uncertain. Deprived of their Prophet, by the means to which we have adverted, they yet, it is said, exhibited no intention of retaliating on those who had destroyed his life and that of his brother. They were under arms, but it is said, only to repel attacks—not to make them. This was the condition of things at Nauvoo at the lapse of more than a day after the death of the Smiths was consummated. If they persevere in this course no further bloodshed will take place, and they will disappoint those who have pressed these events, by remaining where they are. It is hardly possible, however, that any man exercising as much control over the sect as the Prophet Smith, can be found, and hence the community will soon be broken up and its members scattered over the country.

It was principally as a community, governed, politically and to their religious feelings, by one man, that they excited the ill-will of their neighbors, whereon they have lived; and the best thing which they can do, is to separate as speedily as possible. Upon one thing, we cannot forbear a remark. The course of Governors Carlin, Ford and others of the Locofoco party, whenever an election was pending, was such as to compel Joe Smith to vote for their ticket. Smith was charged with divers crimes committed while in Missouri, and as the Governors of both States have for a long time been Locofocos, it was a very easy thing to induce the Governor of Missouri to make a requisition for the body

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of Joe Smith, just before an election; and such a requisition in the hands of judicious men, has always had the effect of giving the Mormon vote to the Locofoco party. It had that effect at the last Congressional election, and, we have understood, was about to be put into operation for the August election. An agent from Illinois was in this city, two or three weeks since, on his way to Jefferson City, and did proceed thither, to procure a revival of the oft-repeated requisition for the person of Joe Smith. Knowing the use to which it was to be applied, we do not doubt that the writ was issued; but of this we have no positive knowledge. If the death of Smith has no other effect than to put a stop to this prostitution of official acts, it will not be without one wholesome effect.

***St. Louis Republican, St. Louis, Missouri, July 6, 1844*⁸²²**

It was evident to us that the Mormons are deeply wounded by the death of Joe and Hyrum Smith. They regard their deaths as unmerited, and the manner of killing them as bordering upon savage barbarity. They look for vengeance, in some way or other, upon assassins, and many of them, we believe, would cheerfully take the work into their own hands were it not that they, and in fact, the whole people, are restrained by fear of the consequences. They will endeavor not to be the first aggressors, for it is not to their interest to be, but they will probably not regret a sage occasion to vent their feelings.

⁸²² Reprinted in: *Scioto Gazette*, Chilicothe, Ohio, July 25, 1844; *Columbus Enquirer*, Columbus, Georgia, July 31, 1844; *Norwich Courier*, Norwich, Connecticut, July 31, 1844.

They have built up a considerable town in a very brief period. They claim a population in the city of about fifteen thousand, and we suppose they have at least ten thousand. The buildings are scattered over a wide space, extending along the river bank five or six miles, and back into the country three or four miles. With the exception of the growth of the city, there are but few other evidences of industry or enterprise among them. They appear to have but few workshops or manufactories of any kind, and a stranger is puzzled to determine how they obtain the means of subsistence. There is, at this time, a great scarcity of provisions among them, and the surrounding country is but little, if any better provided. These difficulties add greatly to the pressure of their condition. Their usual employment, in many instances, are suspended, and if the excitement continues long there will inevitably be a great amount of individual suffering.

There are a number of persons residing in the city who are not Mormons, or connected with the church. A strict police is kept up, during the night, guards patrol the city. The avenues to the city, during the night, are also guarded.

From the feeling evinced by the most active in the anti-Mormon ranks, we came to the conclusion that nothing out a dread of consequences would prevent further outbreaks. The flame has been smothered for a time, but the fire has not been quenched, and slight causes may make it burst forth more fiercely than before.

Gov. Ford has dismissed all the troops, and they have returned to their homes.

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St. Louis Republican, St. Louis, Missouri, July 3, 1844⁸²³

All our information tends to fix upon the people concerned in the death of the Smiths, the odium of perfidious, black hearted, cowardly murder—so wanton as to be without any justification—so inhuman and treacherous, as to find no parallel in savage life, under any circumstances. Gov. Ford declares his intention to seek out the murderers, and he owes it to his own honor and to that of the State, whose faith was most grossly violated, never to cease his exertions for this purpose. The Mormons, it will be seen were quiet and not disposed to commit any acts of aggression; their enemies, on the other hand, were evidently disposed to push them to extremities, and force them to leave the State. This feeling may be checked by the alacrity with which Gov. Ford's orders were being executed, but it will be some time before peace and order can be restored—the disgrace of past acts cannot be wiped out.

Troops were stationed at Warsaw and Carthage, as late as June 30, and great excitement prevailed. A descent on Nauvoo was feared. Gov. Ford established his headquarters at Quincy because he was afraid to trust

⁸²³ Reprinted in: *Hartford Daily Courant*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 10; *Albany Evening Journal*, Albany, New York, July 10, 1844; *North American and Daily Advertiser*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 13, 1844; *Bucks County Intelligencer*, Doylestown, Pennsylvania, July 13, 1844; *Rochester Daily Democrat*, Rochester, New York, July 15, 1844; *Hartford Daily Courant*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 15, 1844; *Long Island Democrat*, Long Island, New York, July 16, 1844; *Liberator*, Boston, Massachusetts, July 19, 1844; *Springfield Republican*, Springfield, Massachusetts, July 20, 1844.

either the troops or the citizens around Carthage and Warsaw.

MISSISSIPPI

Liberty Advocate, Liberty, Mississippi, July 13, 1844.

Tragical end of Joe Smith, the Mormon Prophet, and his Brother Hyrum—Great Excitement.

Since our last the exciting news has been received of the tragical death of Joe Smith and his brother Hyrum, who were killed in jail, at Carthage, Ill. by a mob on the 27th ult. In our paper of Thursday we expressed a hope, predicated upon information that the Prophet had surrendered himself, that the Mormon difficulties would end without bloodshed; but it would seem that the people had become so exasperated at Joe Smith's repeated acts of aggression and contempt of the laws, that they fell upon him and took his life in the most summary manner. There appears to be two or three different versions of the affair, all of which we give.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

New Hampshire Sentinel, Keene, New Hampshire, August 7, 1844.

The apprehensions of any immediate disturbances arising out of the perfidious murder of the two Smiths, appear to have subsided. The state of angry excitement between the Mormons and the inhabitants of the country in the vicinity of Nauvoo, was such for the space of a few days,

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that any accidental collision might have led to the most bloody hostilities. Fortunately this was prevented.

We have been favored with the perusal of a narrative of events containing some particulars which we have not seen published. It has been correctly stated that Joe Smith and other Mormons had surrendered themselves under a pledge from the Governor that they should be protected, and they were put in jail, under a guard, at Carthage, 18 miles from Nauvoo. Gov. Ford, with an escort of 60 men, had proceeded to Nauvoo. During his absence the jail was assailed by a body of 100 armed men. The guard fired over their heads, and injured no one. The assailants rushed up stairs and fired through the door at the prisoners. Hiram Smith was shot through the head, Joe was wounded, upon which he jumped from the window to the ground, where he was immediately despatched, having 13 balls fired through him.

It so happened that the messenger who was conveying the intelligence of this catastrophe to Nauvoo, was met by Gov. Ford, three miles from the city, on his return from his visit to that place. He made prisoner of the messenger and conveyed him back to Carthage. He there advised the inhabitants to evacuate the place, and immediately left it without giving notice where he was going. The inhabitants scattered in such haste that the military left even their guns, ammunition, &c, behind them. The military force of the Mormons, which is pretty well disciplined, was supposed to be about 2500 men, and it was apprehended that they would be excited to revenge by the treachery practiced upon their leader. Such was the panic that persons enough were not left at Carthage to lift the bodies of the Smiths into their coffins.

The Governor had previously given orders to the militia of Quincy, the nearest considerable town, about 80 miles distant, to be ready to march at a moment's warning. At sunrise, on the morning of June 29, the steamer "Boreas" arrived at Quincy with the news of what had occurred at Carthage, and of the danger which impended over the inhabitants of that vicinity, and the inhabitants were immediately aroused by the ringing of bells, and drums beating to arms. The whole military of the place turned out with a most praiseworthy spirit. Orders were issued for them to muster at 7 o'clock the same morning, on service, with four days' provisions, camp equipage, &c. At 8 o'clock, the Riflemen, 80 strong, the German Guards, and two other Companies, making in all 275 men, under the command of Major Flood, marched on board the Boreas, which was soon after on her way back to the theater of war. On reaching Warsaw, the commander hearing that Carthage was abandoned, resolved to encamp near the former place for its protection. Hearing that the Mormons were on their march, and expecting an attack, they doubled their guard and slept on their arms. But the prompt show of force and energy, had its effect upon the Mormons, and they abandoned the purpose of an attack. Efforts were made at Warsaw, by the inhabitants of the vicinity, to induce the Quincy volunteers to act the offensive, and to engage in a war of extermination against the Mormons. This they wisely declined doing, and adhered unanimously to the purpose of preserving the peace and not disturbing it. The troops after being three days on duty, and having exhausted their provisions, returned to Quincy, where in the mean time the Governor had arrived. After his retreat

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from Carthage, he rode until his horse failed him, and at length arrived at Columbus on foot. He there obtained another horse, and proceeded to Quincy, where he issued the proclamation which was published some weeks since, and called out the troops of nine counties. The Quincy troops, however, had already closed the campaign, and brought the war to an end. They reported themselves at headquarters, and the Governor addressed them in a complimentary speech and discharged them, after they had been on duty for a period of three days.

NEW YORK

***Evening Post, New York, New York, July 9, 1844*⁸²⁴**

The following extract of a letter of 27th June, gives some particulars concerning the manner of the death of Joe Smith, in the Carthage jail. The jail was strongly guarded when Smith, with four or five others, were enclosed. But on the morning of the 27th, Gov. Ford disbanded the troops.

Shortly after disbanding the McDonough troops, and the Governor's departure for Nauvoo, a large body of militia, say two hundred, resolved to wait on the prisoners in their room. Here was the beginning of trouble.

The faithful Greys could not consistently admit

⁸²⁴ Reprinted in: *Daily Times*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 10; *Hartford Daily Courant*, Hartford, Connecticut, July 10; *Rochester Daily Democrat*, Rochester, New York, July 11; *Ohio Repository*, Canton, Ohio, July 11; *Chenango Telegraph*, Chenango, New York, July 17, 1844.

visitors to prisoners accused of treason and other felonies. The militia took efficient means to convince the guard of their impotence, and the opposing forces joined issue. At the charge of the militia, the Greys fired, evincing a valor not surpassed nor even equaled by the renowned heroes of Thermopylae. Here two hundred men were incompetent to intimidate these valorous seven, who, true to their trust, discharged their pieces with deadly aim. The militia soon ascertained, either by roll call or particular inspection and inquire, that none were either killed or wounded and bethinking themselves that cartridge paper without ball therein is harmless, the militia formed seven parties of seven men each, and thus arranged, each division seized one of the guard, and thus the valorous seven were overcome, and yet a few militia say one hundred and fifty, were at leisure to enter and pay their respects to the prisoners. The door was forced, and Joe shot the foremost, named Wills, through the wrist. A general melee ensued, in which pistols spoke eloquently and forcibly. Five of the militia were wounded, though slightly. Joe Smith, endeavoring to escape, precipitated himself from the window, receiving while between the heaven and earth some half dozen shots, and five thereafter. Hyrum, I am told, and three others were killed within the prison.—This tragedy was enacted between the hours of four and five this afternoon, and I heard the announcement of the courier at Warsaw at eight.

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Tomkins Democrat, Ithaca, New York, July 18, 1844.

MURDER OF THE SMITHS, "SLAYING UNDER TRUST"

There is no longer room to doubt that Joe Smith and his brother Hyrum were deliberately murdered. The honor of the State of Illinois, already equivocal in pecuniary affairs, will have the stain of blood upon it, if the murders be not brought to condign punishment. The Smiths had voluntarily surrendered themselves for trial; the law, their custodian, should have been their protection and shield. They were prisoners, unarmed, incapable of resistance, when in contempt of human law and in defiance of the law of God, they were butchered by a gang of cowardly cutthroats, every one of whom is as worthy of the gallows as any pirate that ever swung. We say again that a foul blot will rest upon the character of the State of Illinois until the assassins have been brought to justice.

The conduct of the Mormons, since the catastrophe, has been deserving of the highest praise. They have kept strictly within the law, leaving their wrongs to be avenged by the constituted authorities of the State. The following resolutions passed by the City Council of Nauvoo, and sanctioned by a meeting of 8000 Mormons, speak for themselves.

Resolved, For the purpose of ensuring peace and promoting the welfare of the county of Hancock, and surrounding country, that we will rigidly sustain the laws, and the Governor of the State, so long as they, and he, sustain us in our Constitutional rights.

Resolved, secondly, that to carry the foregoing resolution into complete effect, that inasmuch as the Governor has taken from us the public arms, that we

solicit of him to do the same with all the rest of the public arms of the State.

Resolved, thirdly, To further secure the peace, friendship and happiness of the people, and allay the excitement that now exists; we will reprobate private revenge on the assassins of General Joseph Smith, and General Hyrum Smith, by any of the Latter Day Saints. That instead of an “appeal to arms,” we appeal to the majesty of the law, and will be content with whatever judgment it shall award and should the law fail, we leave the matter with God.

Atlas, New York, New York, July 14, 1844.

MURDER OF THE PROPHET JOE SMITH AND HIS BROTHER HYRUM

The law has been trampled on in Illinois. Lynch law has taken its place. The Mormon prophet and his brother have been murdered in prison. The facts are these, Gov. Ford of Illinois went to Nauvoo to demand the surrender of the persons engaged in the destruction of the press of the *Expositor*. They agreed to this, and to abide the result of trial. The Smiths surrendered, and arrived at Carthage on the 24th. On the 26th the governor quitted Carthage, leaving a guard of fifty over the prisoners. About the time of his leaving, only ten of the guard being in attendance, a lawless mob, with their faces painted and otherwise disguised, rushed into the prison, and butchered the Smiths, wounding also Richards, a prominent Mormon. We have not room for comment on this atrocious act. The murders escaped.

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Jamestown Journal, Jamestown, New York, July 19, 1844.

The news of the cowardly murder of Joseph and Hyrum Smith is confirmed by the Western mail this noon, although the various accounts differ somewhat as to the details.—These things are certain—that the two Smiths quietly surrendered themselves, to abide the decision of the judicial tribunals upon the charges against them, that the word of the Governor and the faith of the state were pledged that they should have protection from violence and a fair trial, and that they were brutally murdered by a mob. Illinois must avenge the murder signal, or it will forever remain a blot of infamy upon her.

Rochester Daily Advertiser, Rochester, New York, August 5, 1844.

A SKETCH OF NAUVOO AND ITS PEOPLE

An intelligent correspondent of the *New York Journal of Commerce*, writing from the West, has the following sketch of Nauvoo, the celebrated Mormon town:

“Leaving Quincy, we passed Keokuck in the night, as also the rapids; the latter town being at the foot of them. Early next morning, we reached Nauvoo, the celebrated Mormon town, near the head of the rapids on the Illinois side, two hundred and twelve miles above St. Louis. It is beautifully situated on elevated and rolling ground; part having been a high Prairie, and part timbered land. The site for a town is remarkably well chosen and is said to contain about 20,000 inhabitants; which, from appearances, I should be led to doubt. They purchased a whole township of land, of six miles square, over which

they have extended their corporation jurisdiction. The place is built over an extensive surface up and down the river, in a most straggling and irregular manner, with here and there a good looking house, and the stone temple on a rising hill in a half built state. The mass of 'the Latter Day Saints' seem miserably poor, but industrious. They export little or nothing from their own, but seem to consume, in some way, nearly all they produce. As I remarked before, their greatest evil is their gross ignorance, which has made them the dupes of a few designing knaves. The feeling of the common class of Western people toward them is more that of supreme contempt than anything else, on account of their ignorance and superstition. Occasionally a few thievish and bad stragglers fall in among them, for the purpose of stealing and committing depredations under the Mormon cloak. The people who live near, charge all these things upon the whole body of Mormons. Hence their habitual contempt has too often been warmed into feelings of hate and even revenge.

"I went ashore at Nauvoo, and conversed with several of the Mormons. I asked them if Gov. Ford had offered a reward for the apprehension of the murderers of Joseph and Hyrum Smith? They said no; 'that he was afraid to do so,' I asked them if they knew who the murderers were? They replied 'yes; that they could point every man out to the Governor, if he was disposed to have them arrested. They knew perfectly well who they were, 'I asked who they expected would succeed Joseph Smith, as chief prophet of the Mormons? They replied in the most simple manner, 'that they expected him to be called by the Lord. It was not the Mormons who made or appointed a prophet or leader, but the Lord, who would

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send them one, if one came at all.”⁸²⁵

New York Herald, New York, New York, August 14, 1844

[The following is part of a letter written by J. K. S. to James Gordon Bennett, editor of the *Herald*.]

The Mormon affair is truly the most extraordinary ever placed upon the page of our country's history. The finding of the golden bible by Joe Smith; their doctrines; their followers; their settlement at Kirtland; their outrageous conduct there, and their removal and settlement in Missouri; their high-handed and intolerable conduct, followed by an exterminating war by their neighbors; their settlement in Illinois; their crimes here committed; the massacre of Joe and Hyrum Smith by their enemies—all these things present themselves before us when we reflect upon the history of the Mormons. But, although they have been guilty of all the crimes and evil doings which we can imagine, that does not in any manner mitigate the criminal assassination by these offenders, while under arrest and in keeping of the civil officers. It is almost a parallel case to that of a savage enemy, under a flag of truce, decoying men into their camp, and then, like blood-hounds, falling upon and slaughtering them.

I have just been into the neighborhood of their city, and have conversed with men of high-standing who are

⁸²⁵ Reprinted in: *Hartford Times*, Hartford, Connecticut, August 10, 1844; *New Hampshire Sentinel*, Keene, New Hampshire, August 21, 1844; *Alexandria Gazette*, Alexandria, Virginia, August 7, 1844.

their strong opponents, and I am sorry to find that many, very many persons—I may say it is the prevailing sentiment in this vicinity—that the killing the Smiths was a good deed. I am utterly astonished, that enlightened people in this land of freedom and liberal laws, should so far disregard the very laws which they have made, under which they claim protection, and in which they place their highest confidence. The Salem witchcraft was the height of folly, but this not only equals it in folly, but is blackened with crime of the deepest dye. Where is the progress of civilization, humanity, philanthropy, and Christianity? In what is now going on in the middle of the nineteenth century; alas! there is great room for improvement. At the same rates of progress which we have made, from the days of the Salem witchcraft to the rise and decline and martyrdom of the Prophet Smith, how long will it take the world to become one continuous and extended city of Sodom. Oh, ye Sodomites of Illinois! that temple at Nauvoo shall long stand a monument of your crimes, as well as of their folly.

The Mormons can select no leader as yet. There is neither wisdom, goodness, nor piety enough with them to effect anything but distention, disunion and dispersion.

New York Herald, New York, New York, August 17, 1844.

Great Excitement in the Mormon Country (Correspondence of the *Herald*)

Warsaw, Illinois, July 31

James G. Bennett, Esq., [editor of the *Herald*.]

Sir:

What in the name of heaven are we all coming to?

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The people in this section are much excited against the Mormons—they are urged on by a few notorious blacklegs. A fellow by the name of Thomas J. Perkins once sold a farm to an English Mormon, and received his pay in [gold] sovereigns from the Mormon, and is trying to stir up the people against the Mormons that he may get possession of the property again without paying for it. Another, by the name of Weir, who ran away from Indiana some eighteen months since, and has been making every attempt to get up an excitement against them. If rigid measures are not taken to suppress these villains, there will be bloodshed—such as has never been known in America, in this section of the country—for it appears that the great aim is to rob, and drive them away out of the country.

There is no doubt of there being bad men among the Mormons, but that is no reason innocent men should be driven from their homes, which they have honestly paid for. Indeed, everything is in an unsettled state, and great excitement. Can't the United States Government do something, and put a stop to these things.

Yours respectfully,
M. R.

New York Daily Tribune, New York, New York, July 9, 1844⁸²⁶

WHAT IS TO BECOME OF MORMONISM.

In the intervals of excitement and inquiry regarding the

⁸²⁶ Reprinted in: *Daily Evening Transcript*, Boston, Massachusetts, July 11, 1844; *Indiana American*, Brookville, Indiana, July 26, 1844; *Long Island Democrat*, Long Island, New York, July 16, 1844.

Riots at Philadelphia, the question is eagerly asked on all hands. What will become of Mormonism now? Joe Smith is dead—probably butchered in cold blood, while a secure prisoner, and without power, even if he had the will, to offer provocation for violence: but Mormonism has not died with him. Gross and monstrous as are the delusions and perhaps abominations practiced in the name of that faith, yet it is a vital, living thing. Men and women, made of the same sort of flesh and blood; and actuated by similar sensations and passions, as Protestants, Catholics, Muhammadans, or whatsoever creed or worship the sun shines upon, do actually believe in this Mormonism—are content to live and die by it—to yield up worldly wealth, domestic ties, and the strong bonds of love of Native land, for it; and thus feeling and thus believing, to their dimmed and distorted spiritual vision Joe Smith is as much the Martyr-Hero as any whose shadow has ever fallen upon the world. The blood of Joe Smith, spilled by murderous hands, will be like the fabled dragon teeth sown broad cast, that everywhere sprang up armed men.

We would prefer to be mistaken; but we look for farther and bloodier histories from Nauvoo.—The conduct of the Mormon chiefs, since the murder of their Prophet, shows plainly enough that there are cool, stern, controlling, powerful minds among them; that they have learned, either from History of their own instincts, the great lesson, to bide their time; and that the cut-throat enthusiasm which thought to exterminate a City and a Creed, will be wretchedly deceived. It may be—it is indeed very likely that in a formal declared war the Mormons will at last get the worst of it and be destroyed; but what a series of horrors does not this conclusion

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presuppose!

New York Tribune, New York, New York, July 10, 1844⁸²⁷

We begin almost to fear that the terrible scene of cruelty, devastation of peaceful homes and indiscriminate hunting down of men, women and children, which disgraced Missouri a few years since during the expulsion of the Mormons from that State, are to be re-enacted in Illinois. The history of those deeds has never been, and probably never will be, written; but enough of their atrocities has been heard from casual recitals of eye and ear witnesses to make the soul sicken with horror at their contemplation. We are not the apologists of Joe Smith, or the mummeries of Mormonism; we are ready to admit that the existence of that sect, in the shape which it would seem Smith is bent on imparting to it, is fraught with danger, and should be looked to by the proper power; but in the name of common humanity we stand up for the lives and security of helpless women and innocent children. The Executives of Illinois and Missouri have had loud and fair warning, by the meetings in Carthage, Warsaw and St. Louis, of the dreadful scheme of arson and assassination that is going on to exterminate the Mormons; and if they permit this monstrous crime of the sacking of a city, the murder of men in cold blood, and the sacrifice of women and children to the demoniac fury of an inflamed mob, they will not, they cannot be held guiltless.

⁸²⁷ Reprinted in: *Poughkeepsie Journal and Eagle*, Poughkeepsie, New York, July 6, 1844.

There are other means by which the course of the Mormons, if unlawful or destructive of the rights of others, can be restrained and punished; but even if there be no immediate legal redress, are murder, rapine, desolation, the brand of civil war hurled among those who should be friends and neighbors—are these a suitable substitute for a little time and patience? Let the citizens of Illinois look to their votes when next they approach the ballot box, and examine well for whom and for what principles they are cast, and they can restore the Government of their State to hands that will remove their grievances and reassure them in their rights, much, much more speedily than they can rebuild one log hut sacrificed to brutal war, or atone for the blood of a single human victim.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Herald of Freedom, Concord, New Hampshire, July 12, 1844.

MURDER OF THE MORMONS

Smith the Mormon Prophet, and his brother, have been shot dead by the protestant Christians of the “far west.” The intelligence is that they had imprisoned the two brothers and they were attempting to get out, and were fired upon by the devout mob, and as the account says, they fell “pierced by a hundred bullets.” Religious vengeance always fires a good many shots and deals out a superabundance of death. I know nothing of the real character of “Jo Smith.” That he was a man once is undeniable, and therefore, his killing, is murder. His becoming a prophet would render it quite likely that he

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became bad enough. But I do not put the slightest confidence in the stories told of him by our political and religious presses.

They tell as bad stories of the abolitionists as they do of Smith. They are not entitled to any credit. Whatever they say of those who trouble their religion, should be received with entire distrust. Why, a Baptist minister out here in Marlborough, New Hampshire, of the name of Danforth, or Danford, (if I get the termination wrong, he will deny the whole—and his brotherhood for him), told a young woman, the other day, that the reason he did not go to hear Parker Pillsbury and me at a free anti-slavery meeting—was that we held to plurality of wives—or to having three or four wives a piece. I have no doubt the poor creature feels religiously bound to go about dispensing that piece of intelligence, in behalf of his baptistification. Maybe he believes it—and if he don't, it would make no odds in his solemn obligation to tell it. We “bang the churches,” as the Reverend brother intimated—as his reason for shutting a free anti-slavery meeting out of the Baptist Synagogue,—and therefore, to save the churches from being banged he will tell anything that comes handy.

That poor Jo Smith was not what he should be—is pretty evident from his religious pretensions. He could hardly have made those pretensions—or taken the sacred offices they involved, without becoming bad enough. And those are quite as bad, and from the same cause, who traduce him. They attack him for his religion, and in defence of theirs. He was killed out of jealousy for the Protestant, evangelical religion. He was killed because he was a Mormon, and had got up a new Bible, and took

upon himself pretensions and prerogatives, which out times attach to incumbents of older claim. Joe Smith: Who is he? We know Joe Smith: He found a Bible. So they religiously shot him. Horrible fanaticism and persecution. The press of the country will wink at it—and vindicate it,—for poor Joe wasn't popular with our protestant editors. I have only to denounce it as one of the religious barbarities of our time. As to the Mormons, I would say here, that though I know nothing of their religion, or character, I venture to guess they are both better—or at least as good, as those of the ruffians who killed them—or the other ruffians who virtually back them up in it Every new sect must have a better character than those it succeeds, or it couldn't rise at their expense.

It has to embody all the good that is afloat in the common idea, to start with. In turn it becomes as bad as the others.

OHIO

Ohio Repository, Canton, Ohio, July 11, 1844.

On the 26th Jo Smith, the Mormon Prophet, and Hyrum, his brother, were induced by Gov. Ford, to surrender themselves. They with others, did so, and were taken to Carthage and put in jail, to wait a trial for Treason. The next day, 27th, they were murdered as related below. It is shocking indeed.

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Scioto Gazette, Chilliote, Ohio, July 4, 1844.

It now appears that Smith and his associate, having given themselves up at the request of Gov. Ford, on the assurance that their safety should be provided for, were basely murdered in jail. The following, from the Cincinnati Gazette, of July 6, tells the shameful story:

***Cincinnati Chronicle, Cincinnati, Ohio, July 10, 1844*⁸²⁸**

DEATH OF JOSEPH SMITH, AND HIS BROTHER

A gentleman who was present at the time of the slaughter, informs the Cincinnati Chronicle as follows:

Jo and Hyrum Smith were confined in the debtor's apartment of the Carthage jail, and had been guarded by 50 or 60 soldiers, but all being quiet, the Governor, previous to going to Nauvoo, dismissed all except 8 or 10 of the guard.

There was no attempt made by any of the Mormons to rescue the prisoners, nor did Joe or his brother use or have any arms. The mob consisting of sixty men all disguised, rushed in through the guard, and first fired through the door of the jail wounding Jo, as is supposed, through the leg; whereupon he and his brother rushed for the window, and were in the act of jumping out, when Jo received three balls through his body, and fell out of the window upon the ground, when one of the mob immediately stabbed him two or three times with a sword. Hyrum, who fell inside of the building, received twelve or fifteen balls through his body.

⁸²⁸ Reprinted in *Rochester Daily Advertiser*, Rochester, New York, July 10, 1844.

Jo's body was taken to Nauvoo. The Mormons were exasperated, but were kept back in subjection by the leaders, and more particularly by Jo's mother, who seemed to have the most influence.

It is much to be regretted that the Prophet had not been allowed a trial, that the proofs, if they exist, of the atrocities charged against him, might have been placed fairly before the world. As it is, he will be 'regarded as a martyr to the cause of the new revelation, while a stain will rest on the people of that region, for having interposed between the law and the subject of it. This is a deplorable instance of the supremacy of Judge Lynch-calculated to aid the cause it would overthrow.

Cleveland Herald, Cleveland Ohio, July 15, 1844⁸²⁹

Mr. Taylor, the editor of the Nauvoo Neighbor, was so severely wounded by the mob that killed the Smiths, that it was thought on the 1st he could not survive. One of his lungs was perforated with a ball, and he was wounded in the fleshy part of the thigh with some four or five other balls. The burial of the two Smiths took place at Nauvoo on the evening of the 29th ult., without creating any excitement or turbulent appearance whatever among the Mormons.

Gov. Ford appears to have acted prudently, and has declared his intention of seeking out the murderers, and

⁸²⁹ Reprinted from: *Bucks County Intelligencer*, Doylestown, Pennsylvania, on July 15, 1844; *Rochester Daily Advertiser*, Rochester, New York, July 17, 1844; *Rochester Republican*, Rochester, New York, July 23, 1844.

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bringing them to justice. He should do so. He admits that the Mormons complied with all his requisitions—surrendered the public arms in their possession, and that the Nauvoo Legion, submitted to the command of Capt. Singleton, deputed by the Governor for that purpose that the Mormons were peaceable disposed! and that he pledged himself for the safety of the prisoners, and upon the assurance of that pledge, they surrendered. The Governor also obtained the pledge of honor from the officers and men under his command for the safety of the Smiths, and he intimates that the assassination of the Smiths was committed by a portion of these. Never was a more perfidious, black-hearted, and cowardly murder. The persecutors of Mormonism in Illinois can now divide laurels of infamy with those who hunted Smith and his followers from Missouri—a course of rapine, treachery and bloodshed that would disgrace even savage life.

Dayton Journal and Advertiser, Dayton, Ohio, July 9, 1844.

**NEWS FROM THE MORMONS JOE SMITH AND HIS
BROTHER KILLED AT CARTHAGE**

The intelligence from the Mormon troubles informs us of the violent death of Joe Smith, his brother Hiram, and his private secretary, Richards. There are various accounts given of the event, but the most probable, is that which we copy below from the *Cincinnati Chronicle*. There can be but little doubt that, Joe and those with him in prison, were murdered by a mob!

It is generally know, that Smith and his associates, after having resisted the legal authorities of the county, give themselves up to Governor Ford, and were

committed to the jail at Carthage the county seat of Hancock, which is about 18 miles below Nauvoo, on the river.

The first account was that a rescue had been attempted by the Mormons, and that Smith, and those with him, had fired upon the guards from the window, and mortally wounded four of their number, whereupon the others immediately fired upon and killed the Prophet and his associates in jail. It is stated also, that a son of Gov. Boggs, of Missouri, was concerned in the assault, and pierced the body of Smith with a bayonet after he was shot by the guard. None of these reports, however, are to be relied on. A few days will bring accurate intelligence.

Great alarm however prevailed at Warsaw and at Carthage. The steamboats were bringing the women and children to Quincy and other river towns. It was feared also, that Gov. Ford who with about 100 men was encamped 6 miles from Nauvoo may have been sacrificed by the Mormons. But a second account says he reached Carthage at daylight the next morning after the death of Smith, which occurred about 4 o'clock on Friday the 27th of June.

LATER INTELLIGENCE

The following is derived from a person who was at Carthage at the time of the slaughter.—It will be seen that it places the thing in a different light:

Jo and Hiram Smith were confined in the debtor's apartment of the Carthage jail, and had been guarded by 60 or 80 soldiers; but all being quiet, the Governor, previous to going to Nauvoo, dismissed all except 8 or 10 of the guard. There was no attempt made by any of the

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Mormons to rescue the prisoners, not did Jo or his brother use or have any arms. The mob, consisting of sixty men all disguised, rushed in through the guard, and first fired through the door of the jail wounding Jo, as is supposed, through the leg; whereupon he and his brother rushed for the window, and were in the act of jumping out, when Joe received three balls through his body, and fell out of the window upon the ground, when one of the mob immediately stabbed him two or three times with a sword. Hiram, who fell inside of the building, received twelve or fifteen balls through his body.

Jo's body was taken to Nauvoo. The Mormons were exasperated, but were kept in subjection by the leaders, and more particularly by Jo's mother, who seemed to have the most influence.

PENNSYLVANIA

Lewiston Republican, Lewiston, Pennsylvania, February 14, 1844.

A Prophecy.

The editor of the "Boston Investigator" (Infidel,) prophecies, "that Mormonism will ultimately become the predominant sect, and the Book itself will be incorporated in the Bible, and they in the church:" and this to take place in "fifty years."

Wise man— great Prophet, that,—very—

[Three weeks later, April 3, this same editor complained,]

MORMONISM.—This miserable delusion seems to be spreading. We learn that they commenced operations

in two places in Alabama, having succeeded in gaining 75 proselytes in one place, in an incredible short space of time, some twenty being seceders from the Methodist connection, 26 from the Baptist—the balance from non-professors.

Adam's Sentinel, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, May 13, 1844.

The Mormons

A friend has permitted us to copy the annexed extract from a letter from a gentleman of Ohio. The writer, we are assured, is a careful observer and a man of excellent judgment:

“The Mormons, I think, are a sect of people that in process of time will give our civil, religious and political institutions a shock, such as has never been witnessed in this country on any subject matter or thing. They are increasing with astonishing rapidity; their system is perfectly selfish and exclusive; they hold that they are the only true Church of Christ on this earth, that their preachers and apostles and members are divinely inspired, that their prophets are the only true prophets of God, that the New and Old Testaments are the sacred oracles of God, but the Catholics and Protestants are in gross error and have not the faith of the true Church and are all a pack of heretics. My opportunity this winter was most favorable for learning much about them. They hold that they can do miracles of all kinds, and receive regular revelations from Heaven, that all their revelations are in accordance with the New Testament, and that they are the only true expounders. My deliberate opinion about them in brief is that they have started a new system in imitation

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of Mahomet of old, and that they have the same object in view that he put successfully in practice, and that their object is the complete subversion of our government. They see what Mahomet did and they will try to follow his footsteps. It will take time to even attempt such a high-handed measure, nor do I think that they will be able ever to accomplish it, but I tell you much blood will be shed in putting them down. You have no conception of the strides they are making.

[The next week (20 May) that same paper emphasized those strides by reporting,]

One hundred and fifty Mormons, from England, arrived at St. Louis on the 23rd ultimo. This makes about three hundred that have passed that place within ten days on their way to Nauvoo, the Mormon Paradise.

Sixty Mormons, several of them from New Hampshire, took their departure from Boston on Tuesday afternoon, in the train for Albany, where they are to be joined by others of the brethren, making in all one hundred and twenty, and proceed to Nauvoo.

Morning Post, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, July 13, 1844.

MOBISM

The *St. Louis Gazette* in speaking of the late mob which caused the death of the Mormon impostors, says: "If deeds like these are to pass unpunished, the sooner the free Republican Government of which we boast becomes an absolute monarchy, the happier for us all. A single despot with his armed mercenaries, if he does oppress Us, will have the power to protect us against the oppression of

the ten thousand insensate and infuriate despots of THE MOB:

The Republican pronounces the deed unprovoked murder.

The Reporter says: The conduct of the mob at Carthage cannot be justified.

The Reveille says: Joe Smith has been “Lynched,” while under the protection of Governor Ford and the Laws: The New Era says: “It was cruel and cowardly to murder the unarmed prisoners when they had surrendered themselves and were in the custody of the laws.” In fact, the Press of St. Louis denounces this bloody deed, without a dissenting voice.

Saturday Courier, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 13, 1844.

We have intelligence from the Mormon region, which is somewhat startling.

By one of the accounts it appears that Joe and Hiram Smith, and a number of other Mormon leaders, had been arrested and were in jail at Carthage, confined on certain offences against the laws of the State.—The Carthage Greys, a volunteer company, were placed as a guard around the jail. About 6 o’clock on the evening of the 27th, an attempt was made by the Mormons on the outside to rescue the prisoners from the custody of the guard. A youth, about 19 years of age, (a Mormon) began the fray by shooting the sentinel at the door, wounding him severely in the shoulder. Simultaneously with this attempt, the Mormons on the inside of the jail, including the Smiths, presented pistols through the windows and doors of the jail and fired upon the guard, wounding, it is supposed, mortally, four “old citizens” of Hancock: This

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attempt on the part of the Mormons was the signal for certain and sure vengeance. The lives of Joe Smith and his brother Hiram, and Richards, Joe Smith's Secretary, were quickly taken, but we believe no others. Carthage was filled with Mormons, previous to the affray. The Mormons appeared to be collecting around the jail, for the purpose of attempting to rescue their leader.

Another account states that one of the Mormons attempted to escape from prison, when a general confusion ensued in the crowd around the jail. Joe and his Mormon fellow prisoners had provided themselves with pistols, and commenced firing upon the guard within. He then attempted to escape from a window, when a hundred balls entered his body, and he fell a lifeless corpse.

The *Cincinnati Gazette* gives the following statement on the authority of a traveler:—"He was left in prison, with Hiram, at Carthage, and a guard of 60 men placed over them by order of Gov. Ford.—The guard, excepting about eight, left their position at the jail, when a mob disguised in dress, and painted black in their faces, rushed into the jail, shot Hiram dead, and killed Joe."

Another account still says that "the Mormons had no arms in jail. The mob, consisting of 60 men all disguised, rushed in through the guard, and first fired through the door of the jail, wounding Joe, as is supposed, through the leg; whereupon he and his brother rushed for the window, and were in the act of jumping out, when Joe received three balls through his body, and fell out of the window upon the ground, when one of the mob immediately stabbed him two or three times with a sword. Hiram, who fell inside of the building, received twelve or fifteen balls through his body.

Joe's body was taken to Nauvoo. The Mormons were exasperated, but were kept in subjection by the leaders, and more particularly by Joe's mother, who seemed to have the most influence."

From passengers and officers of the Dove, we learn that, on yesterday, a messenger from Governor Ford arrived at Rushville, calling on the militia to march speedily to Carthage to resist an attack apprehended from the Mormons. He stated that about 4 o'clock on the 27th a mob of two hundred men, armed, painted, and disguised, came to Carthage, demanded the key of the jail, and took out Joe Smith, Hiram Smith, and William Richards, and shot them forthwith. They were fearful that the Mormons would retaliate this murder by burning Carthage and Warsaw.

SOUTH CAROLINA

***Winyah Observer*, Georgetown, South Carolina, July 13, 1844.**

Mormonism

We perceive that Joe Smith, the notorious Mormon prophet has been recently shot in prison at Carthage Illinois—Altho' opposed to murder in the abstract, we cannot but think that if it was a blessing to ancient Rome or modern France that Julius Caesar or Marat should be put to death, we cannot but think that the death of such a vile imposter and disgrace to humanity was one of the happiest events our sister state has known for years.

[Two weeks later, July 27, he wrote.]

Death of the Mormon Prophet—This arch-imposter

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has paid a dreadful penalty for his misdeeds. He and his brother were murdered in jail at Carthage, Illinois, by an infuriated mob. However guilty the Prophet or his brother may have been, the killing them was an act without justification; it was murder.

TENNESSEE

Jonesborough Whig, Jonesborough, Tennessee, July 17, 1844.

Some of the public Journals of the country, we are sorry to see, regret the death of that blasphemous wretch Joe Smith, the Mormon Prophet. Our deliberate judgement is, that he ought to have been dead ten years ago, and that those who at length have deprived him of his live, have done the cause of God, and of the country, good service.

Knoxville Register, Knoxville, Tennessee, July 17, 1844.

The affair has been a most tragic and disgraceful one. Smith was a designing, artful and unprincipled fellow, but the manner of his death and the circumstances connected with it, reflect nothing less than foul dishonor upon the actors in the terrible tragedy, and disgrace upon the people of the State. It can be looked upon in no other light than as a cold-blooded murder.—The Mormons are now without a leader and will doubtless become divided, and eventually extinct as a sect; unless some man of commanding influence, like their late prophet, should rise up among them and place himself at their head.—In such an event, the persecutions and violence to which they have been subjected, instead of destroying them and

depriving them of the power of doing further mischief, would have a direct tendency to add to their numbers and render them more dangerous and formidable.

***Weekly American Eagle*, Memphis, Tennessee, June 21; July 5, 1844.**

The outrages of that infernal hypocrite and gallows-villain, Joe Smith, have finally so incensed the people of Illinois residing near Nauvoo, that, ere this, there has probably been a bloody battle between the Mormons and the people.... Yesterday was the day appointed to make a general attack upon Nauvoo.

As has been the custom with our Democratic opponents, who always take sides with every outrageous and rebellious party, such as Dorrism, Repudiation, Mormonism, &c., we now expect to see their papers in mourning and their orators sadly eloquent over the fate of Joe Smith, who has always been good to them for some 1500 Mormon votes at least.

WASHINGTON, D.C.,

***National Intelligencer*, Washington, D.C.,
Globe, Washington, D.C., August 8, 1844.**

The editor of the *Globe* reprinted the following statement from the *National Intelligencer*:

It is not to be denied that for many years past there has been a great falling off in the moral tone of society—and particularly in that portion connected with the administration of the government. We have seen whole communities convulsed by reckless associations of

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individuals, taking the law into their own hands to the extreme of putting to death citizens of the country in the most summary and cruel manner, as lately in the case of the Mormon Joe Smith and his brother. [Then the editor of the *Globe* added several of his own evidences of political impropriety, including this observation:] We have seen a constitution established by the votes of two-thirds of the people of Rhode Island put down by force of arms, and supplanted by a government which, by its own showing, on two several occasions could not obtain the sanction of a majority of the voters qualified by its own act, and called on to decide the question at the polls. And we have seen this federal party, established by force in the government against the will of the majority of the people, throw into prison, for high treason, the person chosen as chief magistrate by a large majority of the popular suffrages to p reside over the government.

Globe, Washington D.C., November 19, 1844.

NAUVOO

Nauvoo—the city of the Latter-day Saints—the place where Mormonism is concentrated, is beautifully located on the east side of the Mississippi river below the first rapids, and therefore accessible to the largest class of steamboats on the “Father of Waters.” Its name is derived from two Hebrew words, somewhat distorted, which mean “beautiful rest.”

When the Mormons were driven from Missouri, after passing through a series of hardships of a very trying character, the present site of Nauvoo was selected by Sydney Rigdon for a town. Several land claims were

purchased of individuals, and, by uniting the different parcels, constituted a Mormon territory. The chartered limits include a plat four miles long by three in breadth—all laid out into squares and streets, at right angles and on a scale of convenience that is honorable to the taste of those who projected the plan. Those who have examined Nauvoo with any degree of care, acknowledge that it possesses the elements of the most beautiful city of the West.

When first taken possession of by the new owners, there were neither inhabitants nor dwellings, yet in the short space of three years, there were one thousand houses; and now the population is not far from sixteen thousand—rapidly increasing, too, notwithstanding the universal opinion of their enemies that the spell is broken and the Mormon community will soon be dissolved. In a word, Nauvoo is the largest city in the State of Illinois—and regarded in all respects one of the greatest curiosities of that part of the continent. Nauvoo is divided into four wards, and governed by a mayor, eight aldermen, and sixteen common councilmen—constituting the city government. Property is not held in common, as frequently represented. Many persons holding real estate in the city are not Mormons; yet their rights and interests are protected with as much care as they would be in Boston or New York. There is not a square in the whole city that has not a building upon it. The squares being about an acre large, the houses have the appearance of being spread over a prodigious extent of surface; all portions, therefore, not occupied by buildings, are cultivated. As the population increases, the gardens will be fewer in number and smaller in their dimensions.

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All the Mormons do not reside in the city; if they did, their number would increase the astonishment which already prevails. They extend both up and down the river for nearly thirty miles, as farmers. Quite a town is also growing up on the Missouri side, opposite Nauvoo. The ground plot of Nauvoo is shaped somewhat like an oxbow. The river embraces two sides of it, while the background rises magnificently about a mile from the Mississippi, giving the observer a vast field of vision over the most lovely rural scenery imaginable. At the summit, overlooking the whole landscape for nearly twenty-five miles in all direction, stands the Mormon temple—the largest structure in any of the western States. When completed, it is assumed that the entire cost will not vary much from four hundred thousand dollars. Nothing can be more original in architecture. Each of its huge pilasters rests upon a block of stone bearing in relief on its face the profile of a new moon, represented with a nose, eye, and mouth, as sometimes seen in almanacs. On the top, not far from fifty feet high, is an ideal representation of the rising sun, which is a monstrous, prominent stone face, the features of which are colossal and singularly expressive. Still higher are two enormously large hands, grasping two trumpets, crossed. These all stand out on the stone boldly. Their finish is admirable, and as complete as any of the best specimens of chiseling on the Girard College at Philadelphia. The interior is to be one vast apartment, about a hundred and twenty-eight feet by eighty, simply subdivided by three great veils, or rich crimson drapery, suspended from the ceiling overhead. Neither pews, stools, cushions, nor chairs, are to encumber the holy edifice. In the basement is the font of baptism; which,

when completed according to the design, will be a pretty exact imitation of the brazen laver in Solomon's temple. The tank is perhaps eight feet square, resting on the backs of twelve carved oxen. They are of noble dimensions, with large spreading horns, represented to be standing in water half way up to their knees. The execution of the twelve oxen evinces a degree of ingenuity, skill, and perseverance that would redound to the reputation of an artist in any community. When they are finally gilded, as intended, and the laver is made to resemble cast brass, together with the finishing up of the place in which this unique apparatus of the church is lodged—as a whole, that part of the temple will... [unreadable] officiating priests in their long robes of office lead on a solemn procession of worshipers through the somber avenues of the basement story, chanting as they go, the effect must be exceedingly imposing to those who may deplore the infatuation of a whole city of Mormon devotees.

Although estimated to cost so large a sum, the walls of the temple are gradually rising from day to day by the concurrent, unceasing labor of voluntary laborers. Every brother gives one day in ten to the undertaking. Thus there are always as many hands employed as can be conveniently on the work at the same time. The architect and different master-workmen are constantly at hand to direct the operations. Each day, therefore, ushers in a new set of operatives.

Some fine brick buildings are already raised on the different streets, and stores are continually going up. Even were the Mormons to abandon the city as it is asserted that they will, somebody will own the property—and a city it is, and a city it will continue to be, of importance,

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unconnected with the false religious tenets of its inhabitants. But the Mormons will never leave Nauvoo—no, never. Its associations are hallowed in their excited imaginations. They would relinquish life as soon as they would voluntarily, en masse, leave their glorious habitation, which to them is the gate of heaven.

WISCONSIN

***Milwaukee Sentinel*, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, July 13, 1844.**

DEATH OF JO SMITH.

The news of the death of this great prophet of Mormonism cannot fail to create an excitement wherever it is heard. His various acts for years past—his singular maneuvers—his energy of character—the unblushing effrontery with which he has urged his impious pretensions—and the success which he has hitherto met with in foisting his creed upon the ignorant and weak, and in gaining followers, has made him an object of public curiosity and wonder. The unparalleled success which he has met with—notwithstanding his corruption, licentiousness and villainy were to palpable to be denied—is of itself a wonder of no small magnitude. It may well startle the reflecting man when he considers that in the 19th century—an era noted for its universal intelligence and knowledge—in a country preeminent for its high tone of civilization and morals—an imposter, claiming authority from the Most High, can succeed in a few years in drawing thousands of followers to his cause—can build up a city of considerable size and disseminate his doctrines all over the civilized world. We think we are

correct when we assert that no imposter, no matter of what age or country, has, taking the circumstances into consideration, ever gathered as many followers in so short a time. Persecution, instead of having the tendency to crush the Mormons, has built them up more than any other one cause. Within the last year their numbers have increased rapidly. We hear of hundreds of deluded followers of the Prophet, from all over the country, being on their way to Nauvoo. There are said to be a large number of Mormons in England, and it is certain that considerable acquisitions to their numbers, have already arrived from that country. What is to be the final end of Mormonism time alone will determine—Whether another leader will be found capable of supplying the place of Smith, or whether the Mormons will disband and gradually decrease in numbers, until none are left, remains to be seen.

The fate of Smith will serve as a warning to ambitious men hereafter to be cautious how they attempt to subvert the laws of the country to carry out their own selfish ends. The person who sets himself up as superior to the laws of the country and deems himself above all authority, cannot be too severely punished. In this instance the full measure of justice has been meted out to a bold and hitherto successful defied of the law.

LATER ABOUT JO SMITH

We have received, since writing the above, information which materially changes the aspect of affairs. It appears, from information received that the death of Smith is nothing more or less than a gross murder! If we have been correctly informed the

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particulars are these. A company of Missourians, disguised, by some means passed the guard left to watch the prisoners, and on reaching the room where Smith and his comrades were confined, fired on them. They then attempted to escape, and succeeded in either getting onto an open roof, or into the open air, when other Missourians belonging to the same gang which attacked them from the inside, fired on them from the outside and they fell dead. This is nothing more or less than a gross murder, and the offenders should be punished severely if they can be found. No circumstances will justify the killing of a prisoner, while such prisoner is awaiting his trial by law. The excitement had somewhat abated when our informant left.—Smith had been buried in Nauvoo with all due solemnity. There is no danger of any outbreak on the part of the Mormons. On the contrary there was much consternation in Nauvoo, from fears entertained that further acts of violence would be committed by the surrounding inhabitants.

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Appendix

[This item was published as a pamphlet many times and under varying titles. This version follows the reprint in *Times and Seasons* Vol.V., No.10, May 15, 1844. pp.528-33.]

General Smith's Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government

Born in a land of liberty, and breathing an air uncorrupted with the sirocco of barbarous climes, I ever feel a double anxiety for the happiness of all men, both in time and in eternity. My cogitations, like Daniel's, have for a long time troubled me, when I viewed the condition of men throughout the world, and more especially in this boasted realm, where the Declaration of Independence "holds these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," but at the same time some two or three millions of people are held as slaves for life, because the spirit in them is covered with a darker skin than ours; and hundreds of our own kindred for an infraction, or supposed infraction of some over-wise statute, have to be incarcerated in dungeon glooms, or suffer the more moral penitentiary gravitation of mercy in a nut-shell, while the duelist, the debauchee, and the defaulter for millions, and other criminals, take the upper-most rooms at feasts, or, like the bird of passage find a more congenial clime by flight.

The wisdom which ought to characterize the freest, wisest, and most noble nation of the nineteenth century, should, like the sun in his meridian splendor, warm every object beneath its rays; and the main efforts of her officers, who are nothing more or less than the servants of the people, ought to be directed to

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ameliorate the condition of all, black or white, bond or free; for the best of books says, “God hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth.”

Our common country presents to all men the same advantages; the same facilities; the same prospects; the same honors, and the same rewards; and without hypocrisy, the Constitution when it says, “We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America,” meant just what it said, without reference to color or condition, *ad infinitum*. The aspirations and expectations of a virtuous people, environed with so wise, so liberal, so deep, so broad, and so high a charter of *equal rights*, as appears in said constitution, ought to be treated by those to whom the administration of the laws are intrusted, with as much sanctity, as the prayers of the Saints are treated in heaven, that love, confidence, and union, like the sun, moon, and stars, should bear witness,

(For ever singing as they shine,)
“The hand that made us is divine!”

Unity is power, and when I reflect on the importance of it to the stability of all governments, I am astounded at the silly moves of persons and parties, to foment discord in order to ride into power on the current of popular excitement; nor am I less surprised at the stretches of power, or restrictions of right, which too often appear as acts of legislators, to pave the way to some favorite political schemes, as destitute of intrinsic merit, as a wolf’s heart is of the milk of human kindness: a Frenchman would say, “*presque tout aimer richesses et pouvoir*.” (almost all men like wealth and power.)

I must dwell on this subject longer than others, for nearly one hundred years ago that golden patriot, Benjamin Franklin drew up a plan of union for the then colonies of Great Britain that *now* are such an independent nation, which among many wise provisions for obedient children under their father’s more rugged hand,—said thus: “they have power to make laws, and lay and levy such general duties, imports, or taxes, as to them shall appear most equal and just,—(considering the ability and other circumstances of the inhabitants in the several colonies,) and such as may be collected with the least

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inconvenience to the people; rather discouraging luxury, than loading industry with unnecessary burthens." Great Britain surely lacked the laudable humanity and fostering clemency to grant such a just plan of union—but the sentiment remains like the land that honored its birth as a pattern for wise men *to study the convenience of the people more than the comfort of the cabinet*.

And one of the most noble fathers of our freedom and country's glory: great in peace, great in the estimation of the world, and great in the hearts of his countrymen, the illustrious Washington, said in his first inaugural address to Congress "I hold the surest pledges that as, on one side, no local prejudices or attachments, no separate views or party animosities, will misdirect the comprehensive and equal eye which ought to watch over this great assemblage of communities and interests, so, on another, that the foundations of our national policy will be laid in the pure and immutable principles of private morality; and the pre-eminence of free government be exemplified by all the attributes which can win the affections of its citizens, and command the respect of the world." Verily, here shines the virtue and wisdom of a statesman in such lucid rays that had every succeeding Congress followed the rich instruction, in all their deliberations and enactments, for the benefit and convenience of the whole community and the communities of which it is composed, no sound of a rebellion in South Carolina; no rupture in Rhode Island; no mob in Missouri, expelling her citizens by executive authority; corruption in the ballot boxes; a border warfare between Ohio and Michigan; hard times and distress; outbreak upon outbreak in the principal cities; murder, robbery, and defalcations, scarcity of money, and a thousand other difficulties, would have torn asunder the bonds of the union; destroyed the confidence of man; and left the great body of the people to mourn over misfortunes in poverty, brought on by corrupt legislation in an hour of proud vanity, for self aggrandizement. The great Washington, soon after the foregoing faithful admonition for the common welfare of his nation, further advised Congress that "among the many interesting objects which will engage your attention, that of providing for the common defense will merit particular regard. To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace." As the Italian would say: "*Buono avviso*," (good advice.)

The elder Adams in his inaugural address, gives national pride such a grand turn of justification, that every honest citizen must look back upon the infancy of the United States with an approving smile and rejoice, that patriotism in the rulers, virtue in the people, and prosperity in the union, once crowned the expectations of hope; unveiled the sophistry of the hypocrite and silenced the

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folly of foes; Mr. Adams said, “If national pride is ever justifiable, or excusable, it is when it springs not from *power* or riches, grandeur or glory, but from conviction of national innocence, information, and benevolence.” There is no doubt such was actually the case with our young realm at the close of the last century; peace, prosperity, and union filled the country with religious toleration, temporal enjoyment and virtuous enterprise; and gradually, too, when the deadly winter of the “Stamp Act,” the “Tea Act,” and other *close communion* acts of royalty had choked the growth of freedom of speech, liberty of the press, and liberty of conscience, did light, liberty and loyalty flourish like the cedars of God.

The respected and venerable Thomas Jefferson, in his inaugural address made more than forty years ago, shows what a beautiful prospect an innocent, virtuous nation presents to the sage’s eye, where there is space for enterprise; hands for industry; heads for heroes, and hearts for moral greatness. He said, “A rising nation, spread over a wide and fruitful land, traversing all the seas with the rich productions of their industry, engaged in commerce with nations who feel power and forget right, advancing rapidly to destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye; when I contemplate these transcendent objects, and see the honor, the happiness, and the hopes of this beloved country committed to the issue and the auspices of this day, I shrink from the contemplation, and humble myself before the magnitude of the undertaking.” Such a prospect was truly soul stirring to a good man, but “since the fathers have fallen asleep,” wicked and designing men have unrobed the government of its glory, and the people, if not in dust and ashes, or in sack cloth, have to lament in poverty, her departed greatness, while demagogues build fires in the north and south, east and west, to keep up their spirits *till it is better times*; but year after year has left the people to *hope* till the very name of *Congress* or *State Legislature*, is as horrible to the sensitive friend of his country, as the house of “Blue Beard” is to children; or “Crockford’s” Hell of London, to meek men. When the people are secure and their rights properly respected, then the four main pillars of prosperity, viz: agriculture, manufactures, navigation, and commerce, need the fostering care of government, and in so goodly a country as ours, where the soil, the climate, the rivers, the lakes, and the sea coast; the productions, the timber, the minerals; and the inhabitants are so diversified, that a pleasing variety accommodates all tastes, trades and calculations, it certainly is the highest point of subversion to protect the whole northern and southern, eastern and western, center and circumference of the realm, by a judicious tariff. It is an old saying and a true

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one, “If you wish to be respected, respect yourselves.”

I will adopt in part the language of Mr. Madison’s inaugural address, “To cherish peace and friendly intercourse with all nations, having correspondent dispositions; to maintain sincere neutrality towards belligerent nations; to prefer in all cases amicable discussion and reasonable accommodation of intrigues and foreign partialities, so degrading to all countries, and so baneful to free ones; to foster a spirit of independence too just to invade the rights of others, too proud to surrender their own, too liberal to indulge unworthy prejudices ourselves, and too elevated not to look down upon them in others; to hold the union of the States as the basis of their peace and happiness; to support the constitution, which is the cement of the union, as well in its limitations as in its authorities; to respect the rights and authorities reserved to the states and to the people, as equally incorporated with, and essential to the success, of the general system; to avoid the slightest interference with the rights of conscience, or the functions of religion, so wisely exempted from civil jurisdiction; to preserve in their full energy, the other salutary provisions in behalf of private and personal rights, and of the freedom of the press; as far as intention aids in the fulfilment of duty, are consummations too big with benefits not to captivate the energies of all honest men to achieve them, when they can be brought to pass by reciprocation, friendly alliances, wise legislation, and honorable treaties.”

The government has once flourished under the guidance of trusty servants; and the Hon. Mr. Monroe, in his day, while speaking of the Constitution; says, “Our commerce has been wisely regulated with foreign nations, and between the states; new states have been admitted into our union; our territory has been enlarged by fair and honorable treaty, and with great advantages to the original states; the states respectively protected by the national government, under a mild paternal system against foreign dangers, and enjoying within their separate spheres, by a wise partition of power, a just proportion of the sovereignty, have improved their police, extended their settlements, and attained a strength and maturity which are the best proofs of wholesome law well administered. And if we look to the condition of individuals, what a proud spectacle does it exhibit? Who has been deprived of any right of person and property? Who restrained from offering his vows in the mode which he prefers to the Divine author of his being? It is well known that all these blessings have been enjoyed in their fullest extent; and I add, with peculiar satisfaction, that there has been no example of a capital punishment being inflicted on any one for the crime of high treason.” What a delightful picture of power, policy, and prosperity! Truly the wise man’s

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proverb is just: “Sedaukauh teromain goy, veh-ka-sade le-u-meem khahmaut.” Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.

But this is not all. The same honorable statesman, after having had about forty years experience in the government, under the full tide of successful experiment, gives the following commendatory assurance of the efficiency of the *magna charta* to answer its great end and aim: *To protect the people in their rights*. “Such, then, is the happy government under which we live; a government adequate to every purpose for which the social compact is formed; a government elective in all its branches, under which every citizen may, by his merit, obtain the highest trust recognized by the constitution; which contains within it no cause or discord; none to put at variance one portion of the community with another; a government which protects every citizen in the full enjoyment of his rights, and is able to protect the nation against injustice from foreign powers.”

Again, the younger Adams in the silver age of our country’s advancement to fame, in his inaugural address, (1825) thus candidly declares the majesty of the youthful republic, in its increasing greatness; “The year of jubilee since the first formation of our union has just elapsed—that of the declaration of Independence is at hand. The consummation of both was effected by this constitution. Since that period a population of four millions has multiplied to twelve. A territory, bounded by the Mississippi, has been extended from sea to sea. New states have been admitted to the union, in numbers nearly equal to those of the first confederation. Treaties of peace, amity and commerce, have been concluded with the principal dominions of the earth. The people of other nations, the inhabitants of regions acquired, not by conquest, but by compact, have been united with us in the participation of our rights and duties, of our burdens and blessings. The forest has fallen by the axe of our woodsmen; the soil has been made to teem by the tillage of our farmers; our commerce has whitened every ocean. The dominion of man over physical nature has been extended by the invention of our artists. Liberty and law have walked hand in hand. All the purposes of human association have been accomplished as effectively as under any other government on the globe, and at a cost little exceeding, in a whole generation, the expenditures of other nations in a single year.”

In continuation of such noble sentiments, General Jackson, upon his ascension to the great chair of the chief magistracy, said, “As long as our government is administered for the good of the people, and is regulated by their will; as long as it secures to us the rights of person and property, liberty of

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conscience, and of the press, it will be worth defending; and so long as it is worth defending, a patriotic militia will cover it with an impenetrable aegis.”

General Jackson’s administration may be denominated the *acme* of American glory, liberty, and prosperity; for the national debt, which in 1815, on account of the late war, was \$125,000,000, and lessened gradually, was paid up in his golden day; and preparations were made to distribute the surplus revenue among the several states; and that august patriot, to use his own words in his farewell address, retired leaving “a great people prosperous and happy, in the full enjoyment of liberty and peace, honored and respected by every nation in the world.”

At the age, then, of sixty years, our blooming republic began to decline under the withering touch of Martin Van Buren! Disappointed ambition; thirst for power, pride, corruption, party spirit, faction, patronage; perquisites, fame, tangling alliances, priest-craft, and spiritual wickedness in *high places*, struck hands, and reveled in midnight splendor. Trouble, vexation, perplexity, and contention, mingled with hope, fear, and murmuring, rumbled through the union and agitated the whole nation as would an earthquake at the center of the earth, heaving the sea beyond its bounds, and shaking the everlasting hills. So, in hopes of better times, while jealousy, hypocritical pretensions, and pompous ambition, were luxuriating on the ill-gotten spoils of the people, they rose in their majesty like a tornado, and swept through the land, till General Harrison appeared, as a star among the storm clouds, for better weather.

The calm came; and the language of that venerable patriot, in his inaugural address, while descanting upon the merits of the constitution and its framers, thus expressed himself. “There were in it, features which appeared not to be in harmony with their ideas of a simple representative democracy or republic. And knowing the tendency of power to increase itself, particularly when executed by a single individual, predictions were made that, at no very remote period, the government would terminate in virtual monarchy. It would not become me to say that the fears of these patriots have been already realized. But as I sincerely believe that the tendency of measures and of men’s opinions, for some years past, has been in that direction, it is, I conceive, strictly proper that I should take this occasion to repeat the assurances I have heretofore given, of my determination to arrest the progress of that tendency if it really exists, and restore the government to its pristine health and vigor.” This good man died before he had the opportunity of applying one balm to ease the pain of our groaning country, and I am willing the nation should be the judge, whether

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General Harrison, in his exalted station, upon the eve of his entrance into the world of spirits, *told the truth, or not*; with acting president Tyler's three years of perplexity, and pseudo Whig democrat reign, to heal the breaches, or show the wounds, *secundum artum*, (according to art). Subsequent events, all things considered, Van Buren's downfall, Harrison's exit, and Tyler's self-sufficient turn to the whole, go to shew, as a Chaldean might exclaim: "Beram etai elauh beshmayauh gauhah rauzeen:" (*Certainly there is a God in heaven to reveal secrets.*)

No honest man can doubt for a moment, but the glory of American liberty, is on the wane; and that calamity and confusion will sooner or later destroy the peace of the people. Speculators will urge a national bank as a savior of credit and comfort. A hireling pseudo priesthood will plausibly push abolition doctrines and doings, and "human rights," into Congress and into every other place, where conquest smells of fame, or opposition swells to popularity.—Democracy, Whiggery, and Cliquery, will attract their elements and foment divisions among the people, to accomplish fancied schemes and accumulate power, while poverty driven to despair, like hunger forcing its way through a wall, will break through the statutes of men, to save life, and mend the breach in prison glooms.

A still higher grade, of what the "nobility of nations" call "great men," will dally with all rights, in order to smuggle a fortune at "one fell swoop;" mortgage Texas, possess Oregon, and claim all the unsettled regions of the world for hunting and trapping; and should a humble, honest man, red, black, or white, exhibit a better title, these gentry have only to clothe the judge with richer ermine, and spangle the lawyer's finger with finer rings, to have the judgment of his peers, and the honor of his lords as a pattern of honesty, virtue, and humanity, while the motto hangs on his Nation's escutcheon: "*Every man has his price!*"

Now, oh! people! people! turn unto the Lord and live; and reform this nation. Frustrate the designs of wicked men. Reduce Congress at least one half. Two Senators from a state and two members to a million of population, will do more business than the army that now occupy the halls of the National Legislature. Pay them two dollars and their board per diem; (except Sundays,) that is more than the farmer gets, and he lives honestly. Curtail the offices of government in pay, number and power; for the Philistine lords have shorn our nation of its goodly locks in the lap of Delilah.

Petition your state legislatures to pardon every convict in their several

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penitentiaries; blessing them as they go, and saying to them, in the name of the Lord, *go thy way and sin no more*. Advise your legislators when they make laws for larceny, burglary or any felony, to make the penalty applicable to work upon the roads, public works, or any place where the culprit can be taught more wisdom and more virtue; and become more enlightened. Rigor and seclusion will never do as much to reform the propensities of man, as reason and friendship. Murder only can claim confinement or death. Let the penitentiaries be turned into seminaries of learning, where intelligence, like the angels of heaven, would banish such fragments of barbarism. Imprisonment for debt is a meaner practice than the savage tolerates with all his ferocity. “*Amor vincit omnia*.” Love conquers all.

Petition also, ye goodly inhabitants of the slave states, your legislators to abolish slavery by the year 1850, or now, and save the abolitionist from reproach and ruin, infamy and shame. Pray Congress to pay every man a reasonable price for his slaves out of the surplus revenue arising from the sale of public lands, and from the deduction of pay from the members of Congress. Break off the shackles from the poor black man, and hire them to labor like other human beings; for “an hour of virtuous liberty on earth, is worth a whole eternity of bondage!” Abolish the practice in the army and navy of trying men by court martial for desertion; if a soldier or marine runs away, send him his wages, with this instruction, that *his country will never trust him again; he has forfeited his honor*. Make HONOR the standard with all men: be sure that good is rendered for evil in all cases; and the whole nation, like a kingdom of kings and priests, will rise up with righteousness; and be respected as wise and worthy on earth; and as just and holy for heaven; by Jehovah, the author of perfection. More economy in the national and state governments, would make less taxes among the people; more equality through the cities, towns & country, would make less distinction among the people; and more honesty and familiarity in societies, would make less hypocrisy and flattery in all branches of the community; and open, frank, candid, decorum to all men, in this boasted land of liberty, would beget esteem, confidence, union, and love; and the neighbor from any state, or from any country, of whatever color, clime or tongue, could rejoice when he put his foot on the sacred soil of freedom, and exclaim: the very name of “*American*” is fraught with *friendship*! Oh! then, create confidence! Restore freedom!—break down slavery! Banish imprisonment for debt, and be in love, fellowship and peace with all the world! Remember that honesty is not subject to law: the law was made for transgressors: wherefore, a Dutchman might

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exclaim: “*Ein ehrlicher name ist besser als Reichthum.*” (a good name is better than riches.)

For the accommodation of the people of every state and territory, let Congress shew their wisdom by granting a national bank, with branches in each state and territory, where the capital stock shall be held by the nation for the mother bank: and by the states and territories, for the branches; and whose officers and directors shall be elected yearly by the people with wages at the rate of two dollars per day for services; which several banks shall never issue any more bills than the amount of capital stock in her vaults and the interest. The net gain of the mother bank shall be applied to the national revenue, and that of the branches to the states and territories’ revenues. And the bills shall be par throughout the nation, which will mercifully cure that fatal disorder known in cities as *brokerage*; and leave the people’s money in their own pockets.

Give every man his constitutional freedom, and the president full power to send an army to suppress mobs; and the states authority to repeal and impugn that relic of folly, which makes it necessary for the governor of a state to make the demand of the president for troops, in case of invasion or rebellion. The governor himself may be a mobber and, instead of being punished, as he should be, for murder and treason, he may destroy the very lives, rights, and property he should protect. Like the good Samaritan, send every lawyer as soon as he repents and obeys the ordinances of heaven, to preach the gospel to the destitute, without purse or scrip, pouring in the oil and the wine; a learned priesthood is certainly more honorable than an “*hireling clergy.*”

As to the contiguous territories to the United States, wisdom would direct no tangling alliance. Oregon belongs to this government honorably, and when we have the red man’s consent, let the union spread from the east to the west sea; and if Texas petitions Congress to be adopted among the sons of liberty, give her the right hand of fellowship; and refuse not the same friendly grip to Canada and Mexico; and when the right arm of freemen is stretched out in the character of a navy, for the protection of rights, commerce and honor, let the iron eyes of power, watch from Maine to Mexico, and from California to Columbia; thus may union be strengthened, and foreign speculation prevented from opposing broadside to broadside.

Seventy years have done much for this goodly land; they have burst the chains of oppression and monarchy; and multiplied its inhabitants from two to twenty millions; with a proportionate share of knowledge; keen enough to circumnavigate the globe; draw the lightning from the clouds; and cope with all

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the crowned heads of the world.

Then why? Oh! why! will a once flourishing people not arise, phoenix like, over the cinders of Martin Van Buren's power; and over the sinking fragments and smoking ruins of other catamount politicians; and over the windfalls of Benton, Calhoun, Clay, Wright, and a caravan of other equally unfortunate law doctors, and cheerfully help to spread a plaster and bind up the *burnt, bleeding wounds* of a sore but blessed country? The southern people are hospitable and noble: they will help to rid so *free* a country of every vestige of slavery, whenever they are assured of an equivalent for their property. The country will be full of money and confidence, when a national bank of twenty millions, and a state bank in every state, with a million or more, gives a tone to monetary matters, and make a circulating medium as valuable in the purses of a whole community, as in the coffers of a speculating banker or broker.

The people may have faults but they should never be trifled with. I think Mr. Pitt's quotation in the British Parliament of Mr. Prior's couplet for the husband and wife, to apply to the course which the king and ministry of England should pursue to the then colonies, of the *now* United States, might be a genuine rule of action for some of the *breath made* men in high places, to use towards the posterity of this noble, daring people:

"Be to her faults a little blind;
Be to her virtues very kind."

We have had democratic presidents; Whig presidents; a pseudo democratic Whig president; and now it is time to have a *president of the United States*; and let the people of the whole union, like the inflexible Romans, whenever they find a *promise* made by a candidate, that is not *practised* as an officer, hurl the miserable sycophant from his exaltation, as God did Nebuchadnezzar, to crop the grass of the field, with a beast's heart among the cattle.

Mr. Van Buren said in his inaugural address, that he went "into the presidential chair the inflexible and uncompromising opponent of every attempt, on the part of Congress, to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, against the wishes of the slave holding states; and also with a determination equally decided to resist the slightest interference with it in the states where it exists." Poor little Matty made this rhapsodical sweep with the fact before his eyes, that the state of New York, his native state, had abolished slavery, without a struggle or a groan. Great God, how independent! From henceforth slavery is tolerated

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where it exists; constitution or no constitution; people or no people; right or wrong; vox Matti; vox Diaboli: “the voice of Matty”—“the voice of the devil;” and peradventure, his great “Sub-Treasury” scheme was a piece of the same mind; but the man and his measures have such a striking resemblance to the anecdote of the Welshman and his cart-tongue, that when the constitution was so long that it allowed slavery at the capitol of a free people, it could not be cut off; but when it was so short that it needed a *Sub-Treasury*, to save the funds of the nation, it *could be spliced!* Oh, granny, what a long tail our puss has got! As a Greek might say, *hysteron proteron*; (the cart before the horse; but his mighty whisk through the great national fire, for the presidential chestnuts, *burnt the locks of his glory with the blaze of his folly!*

In the United States the people are the government; and their united voice is the only sovereign that should rule; the only power that should be obeyed; and the only gentlemen that should be honored; at home and abroad; on the land and on the sea. Wherefore, were I president of the United States, by the voice of a virtuous people, I would honor the old paths of the venerated fathers of freedom; I would walk in the tracks of the illustrious patriots, who carried the ark of the government upon their shoulders with an eye single to the glory of the people and when that people petitioned to abolish slavery in the slave states, I would use all honorable means to have their prayers granted; and give liberty to the captive; by giving the southern gentleman a reasonable equivalent for his property, that the whole nation might be free indeed! When the people petitioned for a national bank, I would use my best endeavors to have their prayers answered, and establish one on national principles to save taxes, and make them the controllers of the ways and means; and when the people petitioned to possess the territory of Oregon or any other contiguous territory; I would lend the influence of a chief magistrate to grant so reasonable a request, that they might extend the mighty efforts and enterprise of a free people from the east to the west sea; and make the wilderness blossom as the rose; and when a neighboring realm petitioned to join the union of the sons of liberty, my voice would be, *come*: yea, come Texas; come Mexico; come Canada; and come all the world—let us be brethren, let us be one great family, and let there be universal peace.

Abolish the cruel custom of prisons (except in certain cases,) penitentiaries, and court-martials for desertion; and let reason and friendship reign over the ruins of ignorance and barbarity; yea I would as the universal friend of man, open the prisons, open the eyes; open the ears and open the hearts of all people, to behold and enjoy freedom, unadulterated freedom; and God, who once

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cleansed the violence of the earth with a flood; whose Son laid down his life for the salvation of all his father gave him out of the world; and who has promised that he will come and purify the world again with fire in the last days, should be supplicated by me for the good of all people.

With the highest esteem,
I am a friend of virtue
and of the people,

JOSEPH SMITH

Nauvoo, Illinois, February 7, 1844.

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Index Limitations: This index is quite comprehensive but does not include:

- 1] Names of newspapers or authors cited in footnotes.
- 2] Names of persons or places mentioned within a quote. For example, the final chapter, “The Nation’s Observations and Obituaries of the Prophet Joseph Smith,” consists of 79 pages of quotes from newspapers from all over the United States. All mention Joseph Smith; most mention Carthage, Governor Ford, Nauvoo, etc. An index that tried to sort out those 79 pages would be superfluous and redundant, so that chapter is not included in this index.
- 3] Names of persons or places that appear frequently are included every time something significant is written about them, but not every time they are mentioned in passing. That includes such names as Missouri, Illinois, Nauvoo, Carthage, Joseph Smith, Thomas Ford, Robert F. Smith, and a few others.

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Smith, Joseph. *Founder and Prophet of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Joseph Smith, Jr., born December. 23, 1805. In the spring of 1820, when fourteen years old, Joseph received a visitation from God the Father and His son Jesus Christ. In September, 1823, Joseph was visited by the angel Moroni and told where to find the plates of Book of Mormon. Four years later Moroni gave him the plates and helped him translate them. Joseph received both the Aaronic and the Melchizedek priesthoods. In August, 1929, the Book of Mormon was published. On April 6, 1830, he and a few trusted friends organized the Church. In 1831 members of the new Church arrived in Jackson County, Missouri, and other Saints began to gather in Kirtland, Ohio. During the next few years he fully organized the Church, and its missionary program. In 1833 he and the Saints laid the corner stones of the Kirtland Temple, and dedicated the completed temple in 1836. In conjunction with the dedication, Joseph received, from heavenly messengers, all the necessary priesthood powers to perform the ordinances of the temple. A severe depression hit the country in 1837, and the Kirtland economy suffered with the rest of the nation. However, in Kirtland, apostates blamed Joseph personally for their troubles and in the early winter of 1838 he fled before an angry mob. He arrived in Missouri just before the mobs drove the Saints from Far West. Joseph was imprisoned in Liberty Jail and elsewhere until he escaped to Illinois. In May, 1839, he moved his family to Nauvoo, where he devoted himself to building the Church, the community, and a temple—until his enemies, both in and out of the Church, made it impossible to remain there. Then he devoted his energies to preparing the Church for his own death. On June 27, 1844, he and his brother Hyrum were murdered in Carthage jail.*

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