
Missouri's 1838 Extermination Order and the Mormons' Forced Removal to Illinois

William G. Hartley

"If I am called here again, in case of a noncompliance of a treaty made," Major General John B. Clark of the Missouri State militia warned Latter-day Saints captives, "you need not expect any mercy, but extermination, for I am determined the governor's orders shall be executed." General Clark was implementing orders he had received from Missouri's Governor Lilburn W. Boggs, dated 27 October 1838, which stated: "Your orders are, therefore, to hasten your operations with all possible speed. The Mormons must be treated as enemies, and must be exterminated or driven from the state if necessary for the public peace."¹

Extermination, a powerful word, means to eradicate but also implies killing.² Governor Boggs's extermination order called for a nineteenth-century version of what in recent discussions of Serbian treatment of Kosovars is termed "ethnic cleansing." This article focuses on how the Latter-day Saint people complied with that extermination order and managed, with war-reduced resources and mostly during wintertime, to leave the state and seek safety in Quincy, Illinois, and other places of refuge.³

The "Mormon War" in Missouri

The Mormon troubles in upper Missouri are well documented and explained in several published histories.⁴ In a nutshell, what in Missouri annals is termed "the Mormon War" broke out in the summer and fall of 1838, resulting in shooting, house burning, pillaging of crops and livestock,

WILLIAM G. HARTLEY is a Associate Professor History and Research Historian, Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History, Brigham Young University.

a skirmish called the Battle of Crooked River on 24 October in which a handful lost their lives, and the Haun's Mill Massacre on 30 October in which some seventeen innocent Mormons were brutally shot to death and fourteen others wounded by more than two hundred Missouri vigilantes. Apparently, the massacre happened just before news of Governor Boggs's 27 October extermination order arrived.⁵ By month's end, some twenty-five hundred Missouri troops under Major General Samuel D. Lucas had marched to the Mormon headquarters city of Far West. Lucas read to Latter-day Saint negotiators the extermination order and set terms for the Saints' surrender, which took place on 1 November 1838.

People Removal: A Familiar Practice

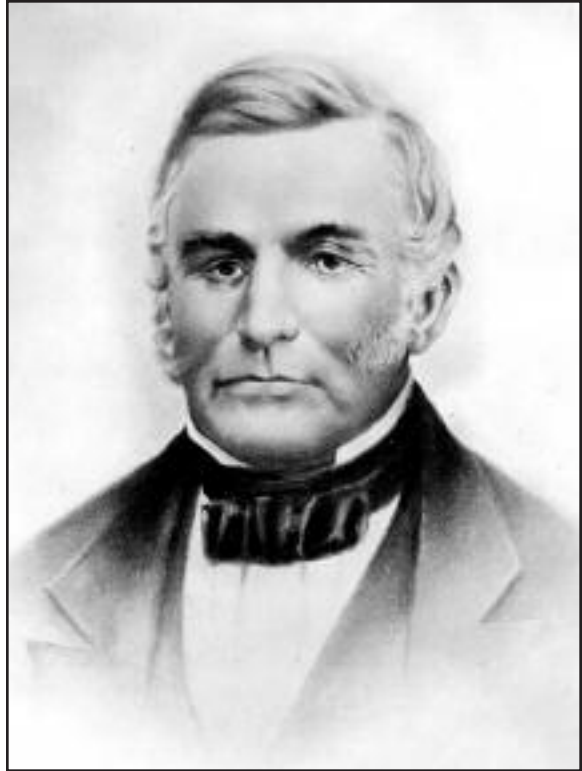
For the beleaguered Mormons, the concept of "remove or be exterminated" was not new. The federal government had spent the prior decade forcing Native Americans from their tribal lands and even from reservations to which they had been moved before. In 1830, President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Law, requiring the removal of all southern Indians to new lands west of the Mississippi. The law created Indian Territory in what is now Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Kansas—the forerunner of the reservation system. In 1832, Sauk Chief Black Hawk lost a war named for him, which resulted in ceding the eastern part of Iowa and in pledging never to live, hunt, fish, or plant on their previous homelands in Illinois. In 1832, the Creeks were forced to surrender all their lands in Alabama and were removed to Oklahoma. In 1833, the year Jackson County citizens drove the Mormons out, Georgia officials forced the Cherokee from their lands. In 1836, sixteen thousand Cherokee walked to Oklahoma from Georgia along the Trail of Tears, their eviction enforced by seven thousand federal troops. From 1837–38, the Chickasaw were forcibly removed from Mississippi and Alabama. Government-enforced tribal relocations continued during the next decade.⁶

Historian Richard L. Anderson concludes that Governor Boggs's extermination order in Missouri was a fourth use, not the first, of a "remove-or-be-exterminated" policy employed by an aggressive, northwestern Missouri, anti-Mormon political faction. By then, the Latter-day Saints had been forced from counties three times—from Jackson County in 1833, Clay County in 1836, and Carroll County just two weeks before. The governor merely made into state policy what had been county policy. He was a friend of faction leaders who, in practice, were an "expulsionist party." This party gave Mormons an extermination order for Carroll County on 22 September, whereupon the Mormons petitioned the governor, reporting they were

threatened with force and violence. They said their accusers had given them until 1 October to leave “and threatened, if not gone by that time, to exterminate them without regard to age or sex.” Governor Boggs’s order “only ratified the program and slogans of the first-settlers’ party of upper Missouri.” The words “remove or be exterminated” were, Anderson observed, “expulsion party passwords.”⁷

Anderson also affirmed that Governor Boggs’s order was a military order that was modified in the field but that technically lost its legal force when the military situation

ended by 1 December. Since the Mormon exodus took place from December to April, “civilians without any authority enforced an expulsion policy that did not originate with the governor in the first place.”⁸



Governor Lilburn W. Boggs
Photo courtesy of
LDS Church Archives

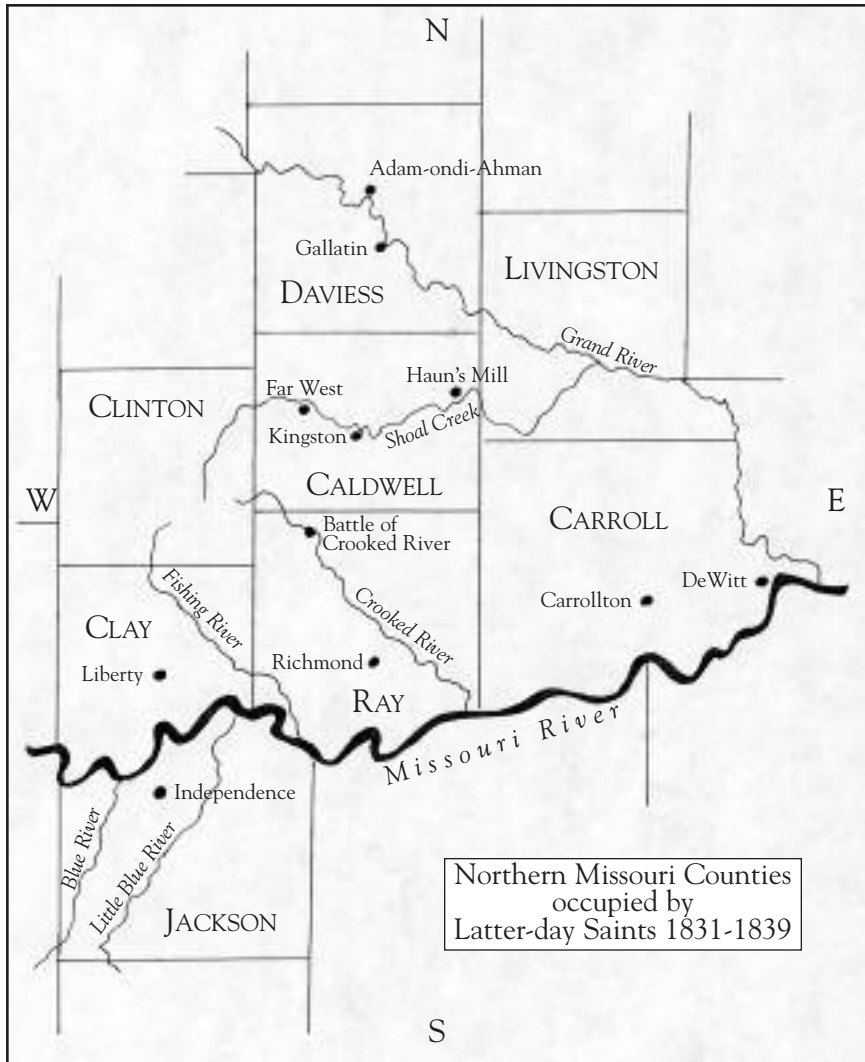
First Removals: Prisoners, Fugitives, and Daviess County Mormons

General Lucas, armed with the governor’s order, imposed four terms upon the conquered Mormons: take their leaders into custody; use their personal property to repay costs, debts, and damages Missourians suffered; confiscate all arms; and order the Mormons to leave the state.⁹ When General Clark replaced General Lucas a few days later, he intended to enforce all of General Lucas’s terms of capitulation. While lecturing the Mormon people, he promised them they would never again see their arrested leaders and then

advised the people “to scatter abroad, and never again organize yourselves with bishops, presidents, etc, lest you excite the jealousies of the people, and subject yourselves to the same calamities that have now come upon you.” On 10 November, General Clark received a final instruction from Governor Boggs, ordering Clark to “settle the matter” before he disbanded the troops. “If the Mormons are disposed voluntarily to leave the state, of course it would be advisable in you to promote that object in any way deemed proper.”¹⁰ This order dropped the term “exterminate.” Early snows and the deprivations the Mormons were suffering “induced me to modify the terms,” General Clark said, “and not require them to remove forthwith.” He gave permission for them to remain “until their convenience suited them in the spring.”¹¹

Within a month of the Missouri army’s arrival, three “removals” took place. First, when the troops arrived at Far West, Latter-day Saint leaders instructed Mormon militiamen who had been involved in the Battle of Crooked River to flee for their lives. So, by 1 November, dozens, perhaps as many as a hundred, had fled. Most escaped northward into Iowa Territory, their journeys made harrowing by lack of proper clothing, equipment, and food. Second, General Lucas’s soldiers arrested and marched about fifty men off to prisons about thirty miles south, including Church leaders Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Parley P. Pratt. Third, General Clark ordered all those living in neighboring Daviess County to leave that county—the fourth time Mormons were forced from a Missouri county.

One of General Clark’s units, commanded by General Robert Wilson, coerced several hundred Mormons living at Adam-ondi-Ahman and elsewhere in Daviess County to leave. On 10 November, he gave them ten days with protection, after which they would face “the just indignation of the citizens.” He issued permits allowing them to remove to Caldwell County (a Mormon “reservation,” one could say) and remain there “during the winter, or remove out of the state unmolested.” General Wilson warned them, however, that they “need not think to put in another crop—if you do, the mob will kill you.”¹² In “very cold” weather, Daviess County Saints deserted their houses and crops. They left behind flocks and herds because the “mob had relieved them from the trouble of taking care of them, or from the pain of seeing them starve to death—by stealing them.”¹³ Albert Perry Rockwood estimated that about three hundred families were in Daviess County as of 6 November, all of whom left within two weeks. Many went to Far West.¹⁴ Missouri authorities appointed a Mormon committee, including William Huntington, to do a one-time search for cattle in Daviess County and herd them to Far West. They received permits and had to wear white badges on their hats for protection.¹⁵ Huntington recorded that they “were to have



three winter months to collect our stock and grain and get it out” of Daviess county.¹⁶ The committee spent four weeks rounding up cattle, horses, sheep, wagons, and property. Huntington calculated that the Saints in Daviess County alone lost 29,465 bushels of corn because of the military takeover. After that month, Huntington said, his men “were ordered out of the county as our lives would not be safe.” He noted that “the Mob were in the habit of tying the brethren up to trees and Whip[ping] them even to death.” He fled when he heard that the militia intended “to kill all Mormons who were

not out of the county that day.” Soldiers captured Reynolds Cahoon, of the Adam-ondi-Ahman stake presidency, and ordered him to leave Missouri—not the next spring but “in the Course of the Winter.”¹⁷

Efforts to Rescind the Extermination Order

In December, after General Clark’s forces were disbanded, Latter-day Saint representatives petitioned the state legislature to pass a law “rescinding the order of the governor to drive us out of the state.” The petition said ten thousand to twelve thousand citizens of all ages and both sexes had been banished without trial and condemnation. Among the nine signers were Apostles Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball and Bishop Edward Partridge.¹⁸ In the legislature, a revocation bill was introduced and almost passed but then was tabled until a date well beyond the spring deadline the Mormons were facing. On 23 December, Judge Austin King wrote to Governor Boggs warning that “The Mormons appear to have taken new courage, and to be determined not to move. The citizens are equally determined they shall, for nothing but expulsion or the other alternative will satisfy this community.”¹⁹

Through cold days and nights in November and December, the Latter-day Saints maintained a hope they would not have to leave Missouri. They felt that right would prevail, that legal resources would return them to their property, and that divine intervention would keep them in Zion where their revelations said they were supposed to be. That’s why, on 25 November, Albert Perry Rockwood wrote to his relatives back east and urged them to come join him in Zion “as soon as the roads are passable in the Spring.”²⁰ Even among Missourians downstate, there was disbelief that the Mormon people could be exiled en masse. For example, the editor of the *Missouri Argus* argued incorrectly on 20 December:

They cannot be driven beyond the limits of the state—that is certain. To do so, would be to act with extreme cruelty. Public opinion has recoiled from a summary and forcible removal of our negro population;—much more likely will it be to revolt at the violent expulsion of two or three thousand souls, who have so many ties to connect them with us in a common brotherhood. If they choose to remain, we must be content. The day has gone by when masses of men can be outlawed, and driven from society to the wilderness, unprotected. . . . The refinement, the charity of our age, will not brook it.

Nevertheless, when the state government declined to reverse the extermination order, the Mormons had to face the reality of leaving by spring, which they hoped meant April.

When the year 1839 opened, the extermination order still stood “because private regulators were still at the ready” in place of state militia. The order essentially “dignified forced removal by unauthorized civilians.” Prisoners heard “there was no law for Mormons” because they were being exterminated. Ultimately, with or without a legal extermination order, it was a “shadow society that expelled the Mormons.”²¹

Individual Departures

As soon as Missouri troops forced the surrender of Far West, hundreds of Mormons individually left the war zone. On 19 November, Albert Rockwood reported that they had received “the Word of the Lord,” which said that all the honest in heart should “move out of the State for a short season untill the land be cleared for His Saints that they may come and possess it in peace and build up the Kingdom in righteousness.”²² Given Church counsel to leave the “Land of Promise,” many did so as soon as they could. It being so late in the year, those wanting to find housing and employment in urban centers had only two good options—St. Louis, Missouri, and Quincy, Illinois.

St. Louis, an “oasis of tolerance” for Mormons, drew those who could afford riverboat passage and those families who were physically unable to undertake two weeks of overland travel with wagons or on foot.²³ Many families went to Richmond and then took boats down the Missouri River to St. Louis and some to Quincy.²⁴ Orson Pratt and his family, for example, spent the winter in St. Louis and then met up with the Saints gathered in Quincy on 1 April 1839.²⁵ Quincy, about two hundred miles directly east of Far West, was reachable by two main east-west road routes. How many Saints went immediately in November and December to St. Louis or Quincy or went to live with friends or relatives in safer counties in Missouri or in Illinois or other states is not known. Their departures, of course, reduced the number of people jammed together in Far West, draining limited food and shelter resources.

Difficult Winter of Waiting

Those who did not or could not leave Missouri in November and December crowded together in Far West and nearby cluster settlements, sharing roofs, yards, outbuildings, clothing, and food. Hundreds of refugees stood in need of help because “we have been robbed of our corn, wheat, horses, cattle, cows, hogs, wearing apparel, houses and homes, and indeed, of all that renders life tolerable.”²⁶ Newlywed Joseph Holbrook said his wife



Joseph Holbrook
Photo courtesy of Maurine C. Ward

“had verry poor health” that fall and winter because of being exposed to “inclement weather by having to remove from place to place as our house had been burned and we were yet left to seek a home wherever our friends could accommodate us and for my safety.” The Saints, “in flourishing condition but a few months before,” he said, “were now destitute. I could have commanded some two thousand dollars but now I had only 1 yoke of old oxen and 2 cows left.”²⁷

Far West became a refugee camp, one that lacked sufficient housing and food for all the homeless people forced to winter there. Many who were not homeless had lost property

when in early November the Missouri victors took their share of Mormon spoils. On 6 November, Brigham Young wrote that the troops at Far West plundered “bedding, clothing, money, wearing apparel, and everything of value they could lay their hands upon. . . . The soldiers shot down our oxen, cows, hogs and fowls, at our own doors, taking part away, and leaving the rest to rot in the streets. The soldiers also turned their horses into our fields of corn.”²⁸ Two weeks later, according to Albert Rockwood, thefts were continuing: “Our houses are rifled and our sheep, hogs, and horses are driven off before our eyes by the Missourians, who enter our town in small companies, well armed; there is no law here for poor Mormons.”²⁹

Heavy snow fell on 7, 8, and 11 November. “It has been very cold for a month past,” Rockwood recorded on 19 November; “the ground is and has been frozen several inches for a number of weeks.” He added, facetiously, that the weather the day before was “pleasant”—but not warm enough to cause icicles to drop from the south eaves of the houses! “Our crops are mostly in the field; potatoes that are not dug have frozen solid; very little work has been done here for four weeks, as we have all been mostly employed in keeping the mobs from burning our houses.” He added that “we are captives in a defenseless condition, suffering the insults of our enemies daily by their

coming among us and taking who or what they please, and that too without any precept or authority.”

Among some seven thousand Saints staying in and near Far West, winter exposure took its toll. Tents, covered wagons off their wheels, and makeshift huts provided poor protection for many. Mary Ivers said that after the Missouri militia imposed its terms, “for six months I never lodged in a house.”³⁰ Lucy Mack Smith, the Prophet’s mother, allowed her yard to become a campground for the homeless:

There was an acre of ground in front of our house, completely covered with beds, lying in the open sun, where families were compelled to sleep, exposed to all kinds of weather; these were the last who came into the city, and as the houses were all full, they could not find a shelter. It was enough to make the heart ache to see the children, sick with colds, and crying around their mothers for food, whilst their parents were destitute of the means of making them comfortable.³¹

During November and December, Joseph C. Kingsbury and Caroline, his wife of two years, lived in a little cabin with meager provisions. Kingsbury said that families near them lodged in covered wagons and suffered greatly from freezing weather and Far West’s food shortage. Caroline was afflicted with dropsy, or painful swellings in parts of her body, and the cold intensified her pain.³² James Carroll and his family lived in an open frame structure. After nights when it snowed, he said, they sometimes awoke with their beds covered with snow.³³ For the housed as well as the exposed, the night before Christmas 1838 was “as cold a day as there was that winter,” according to William Huntington.

By December, all the Mormon prisoners except eleven were released and returned to help their families. Church leaders at Far West felt special obligations to help the families of the hundred or so fugitives and of those still in prison, including those of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Lyman Wight, and Parley P. Pratt.³⁴

Church Committee on Removal

By early December, it was clear someone must assume the role of hands-on leaders because Joseph Smith was not going to be released very soon. The high council for Missouri met on 13 December, filled vacancies in its ranks, and expressed themselves regarding the Church’s failures to plant the pre-millennial foundations in Jackson County, as prophesied, and about Joseph Smith as prophet. The men went on record that they did not think he was a fallen prophet. On 19 December, the high council approved two replacements for the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—John E. Page and John

Taylor—who were ordained that day by Apostles Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball.³⁵

With the inevitability of evacuation, the question of how so many people could move was of prime concern. By early January, authorities called and sent a number of men on missions throughout the United States to reassure members outside of Missouri that the Church was still operating—shoring up faith shaken by the Missouri setbacks—and to solicit funds and help for the Missouri refugees.³⁶

When 1839 opened, harassment continued, if not escalated. The *Boone's Lick Democrat* published a letter written by a Clay County resident to the Missouri General Assembly, complaining that Missourians in small companies were going up and down Caldwell County (the reservation), plundering Mormons “of all the means of sustenance (scanty as it was) left them, driving off their cattle, horses, hogs, etc. and rifling their houses and farms of everything thereon; taking beds, bedding, wardrobes,” leaving them “in a starving and naked condition.”³⁷

While most Latter-day Saints evacuated individually, using their own resources, many lacked wagons, teams, resources, and needed assistance. By mid-January, Brigham Young, the Church's senior authority in Far West, sought ways to help the needy. He proposed that Bishop Edward Partridge take charge of the matter, but, according to Young, the bishop said the poor should take care of themselves and he would take care of himself. “If you will not help out,” Young countered, “I will.”³⁸ At a public meeting held on 26 January, attenders discussed how the Saints could comply with the extermination order. Several thought the task seemingly impossible “in consequence of the extreme poverty of many,” and recommended the Church appeal to citizens of Upper Missouri, asking assistance for means to remove the citizens from the county. In response to that proposal, seven men were appointed to draft a resolution asking for help (Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, John Taylor, Alanson Ripley, Theodore Turley, John Smith, and Don C. Smith). These men were asked to find out how many families actually were destitute of means for removal and report their findings at the next meeting. Those present agreed that it was the duty of those who have, to assist those who have not.³⁹

On 29 January, Young introduced a resolution “that we this day enter into a covenant to stand by and assist each other to the utmost of our abilities in removing from this state, and that we will never desert the poor who are worthy, till they shall be out of the reach of the exterminating order of General Clark, acting for and in the name of the state.” It passed, as did a resolution creating a seven-member Committee on Removal to superintend the business of the migration “and to provide for those who have not the

means of moving.” William Huntington chaired the committee, whose other members were Charles Bird, Alanson Ripley, Theodore Turley, Daniel Shearer, Shadrach Roundy, and Jonathan H. Hale. Within two days, 380 men signed the covenant to

stand by and assist one another, to the utmost of our abilities, in removing from this state in compliance with the authority of the state; and we do hereby acknowledge ourselves firmly bound to the extent of all our available property, to be disposed of by a committee who shall be appointed for the purpose of providing means for the removing from this state of the poor and destitute who shall be considered worthy, till there shall not be one left who desires to remove from the state.⁴⁰

An unresolved question was whether the Saints should go where they could live together again or scatter. Albert Rockwood wrote on 30 January, “It is thought by some we shall not gather again in large bodies at present, still we do not know[.] [O]ur leader is gone, we have none to tell us what to do by direct Revelation.”⁴¹ Two days later, members already in Quincy held a conference and discussed an offer of land for sale in the vicinity of Montrose, Iowa. William Marks thought the Church should purchase the land if it was the will of the Lord that they should again gather together, but he doubted the wisdom of doing that again. Bishop Partridge felt the poor could be better served if scattered in various communities and not gathered in one place. Uncertain which policy to push, the conference voted against accepting the land offer.⁴² Quincy, however, became the immediate destination, even if temporary, for those going overland.

On 1 February, four men were added to the Committee on Removal (Elias Smith, Erastus Bingham, Stephen Markham, and James Newberry). Facing an “arduous task,” they visited among the Saints in Caldwell County, seeking money and promises of wagons and teams.⁴³ They collected donations of furniture, farm implements, and money from farm sales.⁴⁴ One man was sent on the road to Quincy to deposit corn for needy eastbound Saints. The committee decided to move the families of the prisoners first—and soon. On 6 February, committeeman Markham initiated the Church-assisted removals when he left Far West, taking Emma Smith and the children and a couple named Holmes. On 15 February, “after a journey of almost insupportable hardships,” Markham unloaded his passengers by the river, opposite Quincy, and headed back to Far West for another load.⁴⁵

From Far West, the committee sent agents eastward to deposit corn for the Latter-day Saints to use along the way, to contract for ferries, and to ensure security for the travelers.⁴⁶ The committee sent three men, Samuel Bent, Israel Barlow, and David Rogers, to locate possible settlement sites up the Mississippi River in Illinois.⁴⁷ The committee directed appeals for help

to the state government, to the press, to communities in and beyond Missouri, and to Latter-day Saints outside of Missouri. Missouri's legislature appropriated \$2,000 to aid citizens in Daviess and Caldwell Counties, including Mormons, but the non-Mormon committee administering the funds squandered them, and little real help reached the poor Saints.⁴⁸

In 1839, John P. Greene, Brigham Young's brother-in-law, published a pamphlet designed to arouse national sympathy for the Saints' plight. Regarding the situation at the time of the exodus, he wrote:

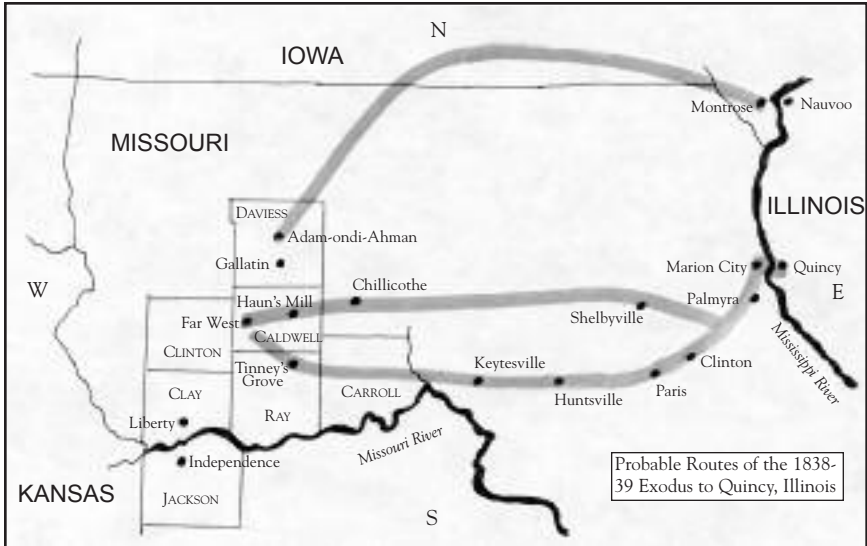
Many were stripped of clothing and bedding. Many sold all their household stuff to pay the immediate expenses of their journey. Many without cattle, horses, or waggons, had no means of conveyance. In this situation it was thought proper to make some general effort for the removal of the helpless families—a contribution was raised from among the Mormons who had means, and a committee appointed for its expenditure. It was through this charity among themselves that the destitute were enabled to remove to the state of Illinois.⁴⁹

Seeking Quincy

By the time Committeeman Markham was moving Emma Smith and her family toward Quincy in early February, the flow of Saints traveling on their own and using their own resources was well under way, even though spring had not yet arrived. They started the exodus early for several reasons.⁵⁰ Some saw no reason to delay the inevitable and, having the ways and means to do so, left. A belief grew that Joseph Smith would not be released from prison until the Saints had left the state, so he would be helped by their migrating sooner than planned. Also, in January, armed patrols were threatening the Mormons; so, on 26 January in a public meeting, the people agreed to remove immediately. Then, in late February, Far West experienced a period of good weather, favorable for making the journey. By February, too, individuals were running out of food and supplies and needed to go elsewhere to provide their basic needs. Lastly, it would take time to move so many people, especially when many had to wait for wagons to return for them after taking a first load of people. So, by January and especially during February, the mass exodus of the Latter-day Saints from Missouri was busily underway.

As early as 10 January, Albert Rockwood left Far West in company with another family. They covered two hundred miles and reached the Mississippi River in twelve days. In February, Rockwood wrote that "most of the Church cross the River & come to this place [Quincy]. The people here receive us Quite Friendly & think of us as an abused people."⁵¹

An 1840 Missouri map shows two road networks the Latter-day Saints could follow when going east to Quincy. One route ran east from Far West



with an arch northward, passing south of Chillicothe, through Macon and Shelbyville, then made a bend down to Oakdale, and then back up to Palmyra. Palmyra, twenty miles southwest of Quincy, was the last town the refugees passed before crossing the South and North Fabius Rivers to reach the Mississippi shoreline. Because that route was not well settled, some preferred it so they could avoid trouble with locals. The Committee on Removal deposited food along that route to help the needy. The Daniel Stillwell Thomas family followed that route and drew provisions along the way.

The second route, as taken by the Newel Knight family and others, was two dozen miles farther south and ran roughly parallel to the northern one—going from Tinney's Grove (twenty miles from Far West) to Keytesville, Huntsville, and Paris, then northwest to Palmyra, and then north to the Fabius River mud flats.⁵²

In February, armed men began to threaten Mormons in Far West, warning them to be out by the end of the month—not waiting for spring. Threats, coupled with a surprise break in the weather, spawned heavy traffic; however, once this new wave of refugees was on the road to Quincy, the weather worsened. On 22 February, a man arriving at Far West from Illinois counted 220 eastbound wagons along his route. At the end of February, the Thomas family said, more than a hundred families were camped opposite Quincy.

Lucy Mack Smith said they loaded up a wagon the committee had loaned her, but then the committee borrowed it back to move Sidney

Rigdon's family. She loaded another wagon, but it was taken for Emma and her family to use. Finally, Mother Smith obtained a wagon to haul her and three other families' baggage, and they left on 24 February. Rains turned the road to mud; then, six miles from the Mississippi, snow and hail fell, making the normally swampy river flats worse. Mother Smith's group waded six miles, camped without a tent, and, by morning, had six inches of snow covering their bedding.⁵³

Many, George Washington Gill Averett said, traveled "in Colde weather thinly clad and poorly furnished with provisions."⁵⁴ Mary Fielding Smith, her husband Hyrum in jail, traveled with an infant. She later recorded that "I suffered much on my journey."

Daniel and Martha Thomas left Far West on 14 February with one wagon and five children who had but one pair of shoes among them. Martha was eight months pregnant. The snow was six inches deep. Martha recalled, "To hear them [the children] crying at night with their feet cracked and bleeding was a grievous sight for a mother to bear. I would often grease them and put on clean stockings instead of making them wash them [feet] when going to bed." At the river, they stalled for two weeks. They gave up their wagon for use to bring others from Far West. Daniel rigged a tent out of forked stakes, poles, and quilts. "Our corn bread was frosen so hard I had to take the ax and break it and give it to the children to gnaw at, the bread



Nancy Jane Hammer
Photo courtesy of Alzina Egbert

looking like chunks of ice," Daniel said. When the river opened, the family crossed in two boats. Martha and the four children waited on the Quincy side, but husband and son did not come by sunset. Martha wrapped the four small children in bedclothes, and they huddled together to endure the night. She said she cried that night for the first time during the exodus. The family reunited the next day and moved into town. A few days later, Martha gave birth to a son whom they named Joseph, after the Prophet.⁵⁵

Nancy Hammer, whose husband had been killed in the Haun's Mill Massacre, moved her six children east in February. A blind horse pulled their small wagon. Son John remembered the cold and frost and the lack of firewood for fires. The children "were almost barefooted and some had to wrap their feet in clothes in order to keep them from freezing

and protect them from the sharp points of frozen ground, but often the blood from our feet marked the frozen earth." All but the two youngest children walked every step of the distance.

Caroline Skeen Butler's husband was a fugitive, so she had to move her four children, ages ranging from one to seven, by herself. She arranged for newlyweds Abraham and Martha Smoot to attach their team to her teamless wagon and for Abraham to drive the wagon. During their February trek, they "suffered fearfully." Caroline developed an eye infection, so Martha led her by hand for five or six days. Caroline and Martha took turns—one walking with the children while the other rode and then trading positions. Caroline and John reunited after a three months' absence—John heard about their arrival and rowed across the ice-blocked river in a canoe to meet them.

Newel and Lydia Knight left on 18 February. The snow reached their wagon hubs. At Huntsville, the teamster whom they had hired said his horses could not go on, so he left them without a team. A week later, a man volunteered his son to drive the Knights to the river. Brigham Young's family was stranded at Huntsville, too; so they put some of their goods into the Knights' wagon, and both families moved on. A few days later, the Knights' horses ran away, and the oxen could not haul the load. So they unloaded part of the Knights' and Youngs' baggage and left it in care of a friendly resident. When the families reached the Mississippi, Newel borrowed a wagon, drove west, and retrieved the goods they had left behind.⁵⁶

Eliza R Snow left Far West on 5 March. A night of rain changed to snow. Their tent froze stiffly, so they could only fold and pack it after holding it by the fire and thawing it. The sun melted the snow and turned the road into mud. Luman Shirliff's group of two dozen people slept on frozen ground and needed big bonfires at night to keep warm.

On 5 March, Bishop Partridge reported, ice had been running for three days so that no one could cross the Mississippi. Quincy, he said, was full of Mormons—even though Latter-day Saints were scattering out from there almost constantly.⁵⁷ Joseph Holbrook said a hundred men were along that western shoreline in mid-March. Lyman Wight, a prisoner, learned in late March that his wife and six children were in a tent on the bank of the Mississippi without food and clothing.⁵⁸ By 20 March, Parley P. Pratt, fresh out of prison, went with his family to Far West, and there he found only "a few of the poor and widows and the Committee who tarried behind to assist them in removing."⁵⁹ His comments show that by the first day of spring, near 21 March, the majority of the Missouri Saints had left Caldwell County.⁶⁰ Most, therefore, had traveled during wintertime.

When Mormons had contact with local Missourians, some of the non-

Mormons showed great compassion and charity, whereas others were rude and refused shelter, food, and even use of dead tree limbs for fuel.

Final Removals: The Extermination Order Fulfilled

While small caravans were crossing Missouri during those winter weeks, the Committee on Removal continued to find ways to move the needy from Far West. On 19 February, they sent Charles Bird to those outside of Far West and William Huntington within Far West to find out what families needed help to move and to solicit means to aid the needy. On 21 February, Markham returned—a six-day trip—from the river, so the committee met again. Bird reported seven families needing assistance, and Huntington identified thirty-two.⁶¹

When the committee met on 8 March, Alanson Ripley brought them word from Liberty Jail that Joseph Smith decided they should sell all their properties in Jackson County and all other property in Missouri. The committee voted to make an extra exertion to procure money for removing the poor by visiting those members who had money.⁶² At a Church conference in Quincy on 17 March, Elder Brigham Young spoke against scattering and urged them to settle together in clusters. He read a letter from the Committee on Removal requesting that teams and money be sent back to remove fifty families who needed help. Some \$50 was collected, and several teams were promised. Mrs. Warren Smith, whose husband and two sons had been killed at Haun's Mill, "sent her only team on this charitable mission."⁶³

David W. Rogers and Charles Bird went to Jackson County, paid back taxes on Mormon properties there, and advertised several plots for sale. When a mob challenged Rogers, he said he had a mission from God to aid the unfortunates. They left him alone. He sold all the land but six acres, raising about \$2,700 by mid-April.⁶⁴ He returned to Far West where, on 11 April, he met with the committee and reported on his land sales.⁶⁵ He then headed east, taking with him Parley P. Pratt's family, Brigham Young's wife, Mary Ann Angel's mother, and two other females. At the Mississippi, Rogers found the water was so high that they had to go down river several miles to find a place where a ferry could take them across.⁶⁶

On 14 April, the committee voted to send two women, a man, and another family with three teams that had recently arrived from Quincy. That same day, the committee moved thirty-six families to Tinney's Grove. They appointed a few men to chop wood for these families and assigned Theodore Turley to furnish them with meal and meat until they could be removed to Quincy. The next day, the committee made arrangements to move the last few remaining families from Far West.⁶⁷

Meanwhile, Heber C. Kimball had secreted himself at Far West, helping the committee. On 18 April, he ordered them to wind up their affairs and leave immediately, for their lives were in danger. That day, twelve non-Mormons went to Theodore Turley's place with loaded rifles to shoot him. They broke scores of clocks into match wood, broke tables, smashed windows, hit Turley with an iron pot, shot down cows while girls were milking them, and threatened they would kill the committee members if they did not leave town. The endangered men gathered what they could and left Far West within the hour. The mob, meanwhile, "plundered a thousand dollars' worth of property which had been left by the exiled brethren and sisters to help the poor to remove." A great portion of the committee's records and accounts were destroyed or taken. That same day, 18 April, Apostles Young, Orson Pratt, Woodruff, Taylor, and George A. Smith left Quincy to travel secretly to Far West to fulfill a revelation given 8 July 1838 that said they would leave for a mission from the Far West Temple site on 26 April.⁶⁸

On 20 April, the last Mormon settlers left Far West and traveled thirty miles and camped.

Thus had a whole people, variously estimated at from ten to fifteen thousand souls, been driven from houses and lands and reduced to poverty, and had removed to another State during one short winter and part of a spring. The sacrifice of property was immense—including houses, lands, cattle, sheep, hogs, agricultural implements, furniture, household utensils, clothing, money and grain. One of the most flourishing counties in the State and part of several others were reduced to desolation, or inhabited only by marauding gangs.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, traveling west by way of Huntsville, Keytesville, and Tinney's Grove, the Twelve met at the Far West temple site on 26 April, as prophesied, just after midnight. Alpheus Cutler, a master workman, rolled a large stone near the southeast corner, and seven Apostles dedicated the site: Young, Kimball, Orson Pratt, Page, and Taylor, as well as Wilford Woodruff and George A. Smith, who were ordained during that night meeting. Eighteen Latter-day Saints were present. After each Apostle prayed, the group sang "Adam-ondi-Ahman," Cutler put the stone in place, and the group left.⁷⁰

Through the darkness, the at-risk group went to Tinney's Grove and there added to its numbers the last families needing help to reach Quincy. At that point, Brigham Young felt that the covenant to move the poor Saints had been fulfilled:

We had entered into a covenant to see the poor Saints all moved out of Missouri to Illinois, that they might be delivered out of the hands of such vile persecutors, and we spared no pains to accomplish this object until the Lord gave us the

desires of our heart. We had the last company of the poor with us that could be removed. Bros. P. P. Pratt and Morris Phelps were in prison, and we had to leave them for a season. We sent a wagon after Bro Yokum, who had been so dreadfully mutilated in the Haun's Mill massacre that he could not be moved. The covenant was fulfilled. And so was Governor Boggs's extermination order.⁷¹

Extermination's Legacies

This large-scale forced removal of more than ten thousand Latter-day Saints was not without its short-term and long-term consequences, most of them for the victims:

First, the Mormons suffered severe property losses for which their attempts to receive compensation failed. Their losses were not just in Caldwell County but were compounded losses incurred during eight years of living in and being forced from several counties. Their petitions for redress, filed between 1839 and 1845, included a thousand claims. Losses in Caldwell alone, as listed in these petitions, included ten thousand acres of land and big losses of crops, livestock, tools, plows, wagons, bridles, harnesses, saws, axes, rifles, pistols, swords, fence rails, beds, blankets, quilts, tin plates, chairs, and tents. Affidavits said that the army under Clark destroyed large amounts of timber, lumber, cattle, and hogs—even the shooting of some animals for sport. The flip side of Mormon losses was that Missouri dodged having to compensate the victims, which saved the state hundreds of thousands of dollars.⁷²

Second, the Saints suffered physically. Some died of exposure while waiting to leave Missouri or soon afterwards, including the fathers of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. Many suffered ill health and weakness for months and even years. Sickness in Nauvoo, particularly during the deadly summer of 1841, undoubtedly found victims among those still suffering from physical debility caused by winter exposure at Far West and adverse conditions while they were trying to reach Quincy.

Third, the Saints suffered mental and emotional wounds in Missouri and during the final expulsion. In the petitions for redress and in autobiographical writings are notarized descriptions of harm, loss, and injustice. Those who were victims of arson, vandalism, theft, intimidations by armed marauders, beatings, house searches, unnecessary illnesses and deaths, and of family members arrested and taken away as prisoners had to handle an array of psychological responses—anger, horror, outrage, bitterness, and trauma. When Church leaders obtained for Nauvoo a city-state system that let them defend themselves and create courts and local police or militia systems they could trust, it was a deeply felt defensive response to wrongs done them in Missouri. Perceived wrongs suffered in Missouri caused the survivors to write

about them, thereby creating a rich literature that is a vital part of Mormon history.

Fourth, the exodus was a training experience that proved useful during even-larger Mormon removal from Nauvoo in 1846. Certainly Brigham Young learned a good deal about how to manage a large-scale movement of individuals and how to assist the poor who were unable to move using their own resources. When the Saints were making preparations to leave Nauvoo, leaders reintroduced the 1838 covenant to move the poor. That commitment became a foundation plank for decades in the Church's programs to help its poorer converts gather to Zion.

Fifth, the 1838 fugitives who fled into Iowa blazed a trail, known on early maps as the "Mormon Trace." It served during the next decade as a route for state and county roads in Putnam County, Missouri, and Appanoose County, Iowa.

Sixth, Adam-ondi-Ahman and Far West disappeared. Far West's houses and cabins were dismantled and used elsewhere for homes and buildings and probably firewood. Even the cemetery disappeared. As one Caldwell County history observed: "After the expulsion of the Mormons, most of the empty houses of Far West were removed to farms. Upon the removal of the county seat to Kingston which was founded in 1843, the town dwindled away."⁷³

Seventh, some ten thousand displaced people had to go somewhere else. They did, and their presence and labor contributed to the development of Adams and Hancock Counties, Illinois, and Lee County, Iowa, including farms, roads, livestock, settlements, services, commerce, and trade. Nauvoo was a direct result of the Mormon expulsion from Missouri.



*Mormon Marker in Washington Park
Quincy, Illinois.*

Photo by Alexander L. Baugh

Eighth, Quincy gained an enhanced reputation for charitable treatment of oppressed groups. Joseph Smith expressed his people's regard in a thank-you letter published in the *Quincy Whig* on 17 May 1839, in which he thanked the people of Quincy for taking a stand against the lawless outrages of Missouri mobbers. He proposed that "favours of this kind ought to be engraved on the rock, to last forever." A historical marker in Quincy's city square has fulfilled that wish, as have printed and audiovisual records of commemoration events held in Quincy in 1987, 1997, and 1999.⁷⁴ Lasting regard for Quincy has endured in written and oral forms among Mormon families who descend from the extermination victims who found brief refuge in Quincy.

1976 Postscript: Extermination Order Rescinded

Notably, the 1838 extermination order formally existed for almost 140 years. On 25 June 1976, Missouri Governor Christopher S. Bond signed an executive order rescinding it. At the ceremony, Governor Bond said that "Gov. Bogg's order clearly contravened the rights to life, liberty, property and religious freedom as guaranteed by the Constitution of the State of Missouri." His Executive Order reads:

Expressing on behalf of all Missourians our deep regret for the injustice and undue suffering which was caused by this 1838 order, I hereby rescind Executive Order Number 44 dated October 7, 1838, issued by Governor Lilburn W. Boggs.⁷⁵

Notes

1. Lilburn W. Boggs to John B. Clark, 27 October 1838, *Document Containing the Correspondence, Orders, &C in Relation to the Disturbances with the Mormons: And the Evidence Given Before the Hon. Austin A. King, Judge of the Fifth Judicial Circuit of the State of Missouri, at the court-House in Richmond, in a Criminal Court of Inquiry, Begun November 12, 1838, on the Trial of Joseph Smith, Jr., and Others, for High Treason and Other Crimes Against the State* (Missouri: Boon's Lick Democrat, 1841), 61.

2. Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828: "Literally, to drive from within the limits or borders. Hence, (1) To destroy utterly; to drive away; to extirpate; as, to exterminate a colony, a tribe or a nation; to exterminate inhabitants of a race of men (2) To eradicate; to root out; to extirpate; as to exterminate error, heresy, infidelity or atheism; to exterminate vice."

3. This paper is an adaptation of my article, "'Almost Too Intolerable a Burthen': The Winter Exodus from Missouri, 1838–1839," *Journal of Mormon History* 18 (Fall 1992): 6–40, providing a different perspective and new information.

4. Alexander L. Baugh, "A Call to Arms: The 1838 Mormon Defense of Northern Missouri," Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1996; Stephen LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1987);

Leland H. Gentry, "A History of the Latter-day Saints in Northern Missouri from 1836–1839," Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1965.

5. Baugh argues persuasively that the attackers had not heard about the extermination order; see Baugh, "A Call to Arms," 296–98.

6. Judith Nies, *Native American History: A Chronology of a Culture's Vast Achievements and Their Links to World Events* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996).

7. Richard L. Anderson, "Clarification of Boggs' 'Order' and Joseph Smith's Constitutionalism," *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint History: Missouri*, Arnold K. Garr and Clark V. Johnson, eds. (Provo, Utah: Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1994), 27–83.

8. *Ibid.*, 27.

9. *Ibid.*, 49.

10. *Ibid.*, 51–53, Lilburn Boggs to John Clark, 6 November 1838, document 67.

11. Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 6 November 1838; hereafter cited as Journal History.

12. Anderson, "Clarification," 57.

13. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, B. H. Roberts, ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976 reprint), 3:207; hereafter cited as *HC*.

14. Dean C. Jessee and David J. Whittaker, "The Last Months of Mormonism in Missouri: The Albert Perry Rockwood Journal," *BYU Studies* 28 (Winter 1988): 27.

15. Dated 9 November 1838 and signed by Brigadier General Robert Wilson, Huntington's permit read: "I permit Wm. Huntington to Remove from Davis to Caldwell county there to Remain during the Winter or to pass out of the state."

16. "Diaries of William Huntington," typescript copied by the BYU Library, 1953, in *Miscellaneous Mormon Diaries*, Vol. 16, BYU Library, 6.

17. Huntington, *Diaries*, 7; Reynolds Cahoon, Petition, in Clark V. Johnson, ed., *Mormon Redress Petitions* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1992), 151–52; Journal History, 10 November 1838.

18. Journal History, 10 December 1838.

19. Anderson, "Clarifications," 59.

20. Rockwood Journal, 30–31.

21. Anderson, "Clarifications," 59; *HC*, 3:430.

22. Rockwood Journal, 19 November 1838.

23. Stanley B. Kimball, "The Saints and St. Louis, 1831–1857: An Oasis of Tolerance," *Brigham Young University Studies* 13 (Summer 1973): 489–519.

24. Journal History, 18 April 1839.

25. Journal History, 1 April 1839.

26. John P. Greene, *Facts Relative to the Expulsion of the Mormons or Latter-day Saints from the State of Missouri, Under the "Exterminating Order"* (Cincinnati, Ohio: R. P. Brooks, 1839), 8.

27. "The Life of Joseph Holbrook, 1806–1871," typescript, 46, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

28. Journal History, 6 November 1832, 2.

29. Rockwood Journal, 25 November 1838.

30. Mary Ivers to parents, 2 [?] November 1844, Albert Brown Papers, copy on reel 10 in *Sources of Mormon History in Illinois, 1839–1848*, Stanley B. Kimball, comp. (Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville). See collection guide, 16.

31. Preston Nibley, ed., *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother* (Salt Lake City: Stevens & Wallis, 1945), 292.

32. Huntington, *Diaries*, 7; Lyndon W. Cook, *Joseph C. Kingsbury: A Biography*

(Provo, Utah: Grandin Book Company, 1985), 61.

33. James Carroll, Petition, in Johnson, *Missouri Redress Petitions*, 155; see biographical sketch in Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1983), 252.

34. Baugh, "A Call to Arms," 375.

35. Journal History, 13 and 19 December 1838.

36. Journal History, 28 December 1838 and 5 January 1839.

37. Copy in Journal History, 9 January 1838.

38. Journal History, 16 January 1839.

39. Journal History, 26 January 1839.

40. HC, 3:249–54, which includes names of those who pledged.

41. Rockwood, Journal, 34.

42. Journal History, 1 February 1839.

43. Ibid.

44. Huntington, Diaries, 8.

45. Journal History, 6 and 15 February 1839.

46. Brigham H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 1965), 1:510–11.

47. David Rogers Report, 1839, in *William Rogers and Elizabeth Bessie Ritchie with Their Ancestors and Descendants* (Salt Lake City: Leo R. Rogers, 1981), 230.

48. Journal History, 6 November 1838.

49. Greene, *Facts Relative to the Expulsion*, 40.

50. Hartley, "Almost Too Intolerable a Burthen," 6–40.

51. Rockwood, Journal, 34.

52. L. Augustus Mitchell, "Map of the States of Missouri and Iowa and the Indian Territory," 1840, Cartography Collection, National Archives, Suitland, Maryland.

53. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 294–97.

54. Hartley, 25, footnote 63.

55. Hartley, 31, footnote 79.

56. William G. Hartley, "They Are My Friends": *A History of the Joseph Knight Family, 1825–1850* (Provo, Utah: Grandin Book Company, 1986), 132.

57. Journal History, 5 March 1839.

58. Lyman Wight, 24 March 1839 "Petition to L. W. Boggs" [to be released from prison] in Greene, *Facts Relative to the Expulsion*, 8.

59. Journal History, 20 March 1839.

60. Hartley, "Almost Too Intolerable a Burthen," 25.

61. Ibid., 15 and 21 February 1839.

62. Ibid., 8 March 1839.

63. Ibid., 17 March 1839.

64. Ibid., 17 March 1839; 11 April 1839.

65. Ibid., 11 April 1839.

66. Ibid., 17 March 1839. The Journal History introduction to this report by David W. Rogers is mistakenly dated 1 February 1839, but its internal contents show it was written in or after late April 1839.

67. Ibid., 14–15 April 1839.

68. Ibid., 18 April 1839.

69. Ibid., 20 April 1839.

70. Ibid., 26 April 1839.

71. Ibid.

72. Kenneth W. Godfrey, "New Light on Old Difficulties: The Historical

Importance of the Missouri Affidavits," Arnold K. Garr and Clark V. Johnson, eds., *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: Missouri* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Department of Church History and Doctrine, 1994), 201–17.

73. Bertha Ellis Booth, *A Short History of Caldwell County* (Hamilton, Missouri: Hamilton Public Schools, 1936, reprinted by Missouri Mormon Frontier Foundation, 1998), 11.

74. Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Hyrum Smith to editors of the *Quincy Whig*, 17 May 1839, copied into *Journal History*, 17 May 1839.

75. Photocopy of order, filed 25 June 1976, copy in author's file; also, see transcript in *LDS Church News*, 3 July 1976, 4.