

The Missouri Redress Petitions: A Reappraisal of Mormon Persecutions in Missouri

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On 10 January 1840, Philindia Myrick, who had recently fled from Missouri after Governor Lilburn W. Boggs issued the Extermination Order, filed an affidavit with Robert L. Hill, clerk of the circuit court for Jersey County, Illinois, recounting her experience during the Haun's Mill Massacre. She wrote:

The mob came [upon us] in the after part of the day with Mr Cumstock at thare hed and Commenst fireing on helpless men womens and children and thare was fifteen killed and was burried in one hole the next day and others wounded sum mortally and amung whom was my husband Levi N. Myrick instantly killed and also a child of mine mortaly wounded who died about 4 weeks after.¹

So begins one of the most violent stories ever told concerning religious persecution on the U.S. frontier. Philindia Myrick's affidavit is representative of the declarations made by other Mormons who had been driven from Missouri during the fall and winter of 1838–39. These documents provide a detailed account of Mormon persecution in Missouri as recorded by those who suffered through the experience. They also reflect the cultural, economic, social, and spiritual activities of the Mormons who were present on the Missouri frontier in the 1830s.

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints began settling western Missouri in 1831 during the Jacksonian era, at a time when small Utopian religious communities dotted the land west of the Allegheny Mountains. Their prophet-leader, Joseph Smith, dedicated several sites in Jackson County for the future use of the Church, and with determination the Mormons began to build their homes on the Missouri frontier.² As early as April 1832, troubles arose between the Mormons and their Missouri neighbors, and in 1833 mobs drove the Mormons from Jackson County.³ Most of the exiles settled in Clay County, but some moved north and east to the counties of Ray, Clinton, LaFayette, Carroll, Chariton, Randolph, and Monroe, and

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to areas that later came to be known as Daviess and Caldwell counties.⁴ Here the Saints remained long enough to build homes and plant crops. Then in 1836, mobs again began to gather in response to continuing Mormon migration from eastern states and to agitation by Jackson County residents.⁵

During this time, 1836–37, the citizens of Clay County undertook action to relocate the Mormons in some unsettled part of Missouri.⁶ Finally the Mormons moved to an area that eventually became known as Caldwell County.⁷ Again they built homes, farms, and businesses. However, they knew little rest, for during the summer and fall of 1838 mobs once more came against them. The Missourians felt threatened by the continual influx of Mormons and saw in the presence of their new neighbors a threat to their society. Mormon religious customs, which united Church members socially, economically, and politically, irritated the Missourians. These differences made the mobs more vindictive, and the violence escalated into the so-called Mormon War, which culminated in the expulsion of the Mormons from the state.

ORIGIN OF THE PETITIONS

As an outgrowth of the Mormon War, Joseph Smith spent the winter of 1838–39 confined in the Liberty, Missouri, jail. While imprisoned, he sent word to the Saints to prepare affidavits of their recent experiences at the hands of mobocrats, with the design of securing redress from the federal government for the losses they had experienced in Missouri.⁸ Beginning in December 1839, members of the Church commenced recording their Missouri experiences and swearing to their authenticity before civil authorities. These officials included justices of the peace, clerks of the circuit court, and notaries public in two counties in Iowa and ten counties in Illinois. This article is based on a study of 823 petitions from 683 petitioners, most of which are located in the following collections:

- (1) A register prepared by Thomas Bullock, who acted as Joseph Smith's scribe during the later Nauvoo period. The register is five pages long and contains the names and amounts each petitioner hoped to receive as compensation from the federal government. On the final page, Bullock summarizes the claims, which totaled \$2,381,984.51, and writes in parentheses "(491 bills)." This notation represents an error of ten bills, for there are actually only 481 names listed on the register.⁹
- (2) A register included in the *Journal History of the Church* listing 482 names of people who swore affidavits against the state of Missouri. Though generally similar to Bullock's list, this register omits some of the petitioners on the Bullock register and gives eleven additional names that Bullock does not include.
- (3) Eighteen files in the LDS Church Archives containing 670 documents arranged alphabetically. A comparison of these documents and the registers

shows that there are 208 petitions whose signers are not listed on either register. On the other hand, the registers list thirty-six names for whom there are no petitions.

(4) The collection found in the National Archives which includes 223 petitions.¹⁰

In addition to these main collections, Joseph Smith's *History of the Church* quotes forty-four petitions; the Journal History of the Church records fifty; and the Joseph Smith Collection has five. Among the petitions in the National Archives and the LDS Church Archives are also several letters that are not really petitions for redress. I have designated them as letters of explanation, inquiry, intent, and reference. One hundred ninety people wrote two or more petitions. There are forty-eight duplicates, most of which are found in the *History of the Church*. The originals of almost all of those published in the *History of the Church* can be found in the LDS Church Archives. This fact accounts for the discrepancy between the total number of documents and the actual number of the petitions in this present study.

The Mormons presented these legal documents to the federal government on at least three different occasions in a concerted attempt to obtain reparation for their sufferings in Missouri.¹¹ Church leaders made the first appeal in 1839–40. Joseph Smith himself led a delegation consisting of Elias Higbee, Robert Foster, Sidney Rigdon, and Orrin Porter Rockwell. While they were en route to Washington, Sidney Rigdon became ill, and Robert Foster and Orrin Porter Rockwell stayed behind to care for him while Joseph Smith and Elias Higbee continued their journey. Rockwell, Rigdon, and Foster later joined Joseph Smith and Higbee in Washington.¹² This committee made every effort to get the Mormon cause before the U.S. Congress. Joseph Smith not only interviewed President Martin Van Buren, but also discussed the Mormon experience in Missouri with other national leaders as well. Even after he returned to Nauvoo, the Prophet kept up an almost constant correspondence with the Illinois congressional delegation, and he also asked other Church leaders, such as Elias Higbee and, later, Orson Hyde, to keep the Mormon cause before the Congress and the public. Letters he wrote and received during the final years of his life, 1840–44, indicate that he never gave up trying to obtain the Saints' legal rights from the federal government.¹³

A second formal appeal was made in 1842. It is not clear who led the second delegation; however, Elias Higbee, Elias Smith, and John Taylor signed the general petition used as an introduction to the individual petitions which were submitted to Congress at that time.¹⁴ The third appeal, made in 1844, was different in that instead of submitting individual petitions Church leaders sent a single petition fifty feet long rolled together like a scroll. After a four-page introduction

summarizing the sufferings of the Latter-day Saints in Missouri, 3,419 people attached their names.¹⁵

It is possible that the Church intended to make another appeal to the federal government since thirteen of the petitions found in the LDS Church Archives are dated 1845. These petitions, signed by individuals, are similar to those prepared in 1839 and 1841 and are scattered throughout the collection.

The affidavits carried to Washington in 1839–40 contain bills or simple statements of property losses in Missouri. Elias Higbee apparently brought these bills back to Nauvoo when he returned from Washington in 1840.¹⁶ No one retrieved the 1842 petitions, and the Judiciary Committee ordered them placed in the National Archives once they had finished with them.¹⁷ Perhaps the petitions were left in Washington purposely since the Saints continued to lobby Congress until 1846, trying to secure their rights. It appears that these petitions formed the basis for efforts made by Orson Pratt, Orson Hyde, Jesse C. Little, and others as they continually sought to place the Mormon cause before the members of Congress and the president of the United States.¹⁸

In comparing the National Archives collection with the collection in the LDS Church Archives, one can see that the latter collection deals with monetary losses whereas the National Archives collection describes the individual suffering and the personal atrocities perpetrated by the mobs of Missouri upon the Latter-day Saints. The three appeals formally made to the U.S. Congress may be summarized in the following way: In the 1839–40 appeal, the Saints wrote simple bills enumerating their losses of goods and property in hope of obtaining financial redress. While money was a part of the 1842 effort, the majority of the petitions described the abuses, whippings, suffering, starvation, and other depredations the petitioners had suffered in Missouri. The 1843 appeal was quantitative, aimed at demonstrating to Congress that these mobbings affected more than just a handful of people.

CONTENTS OF THE PETITIONS

The earliest petitions begin with the mobbings in Jackson County, and the latest end with the persecution caused by Governor Boggs's Extermination Order. In addition, these documents give insights about the petitioners themselves. Of the 703 petitioners who personally filed affidavits, there were seventy-six women and 627 men. Twenty-five men and eleven women were illiterate. Twenty-nine had witnessed the Haun's Mill Massacre or arrived shortly after the event; seventeen claimed personal knowledge of the events and sufferings at DeWitt; eleven were at the Gallatin election; three described the events at Crooked River;

and twenty-three were at Adam-ondi-Ahman. One hundred and six men and three women claimed that they were taken prisoner by the Missouri militia or mobs, and twenty-one Mormons were reported killed.

These documents range from a few lines, such as the petitions sworn by Daniel Cathcart and Stephen Blackman, or a page, such as those sworn by Nahum Curtis and Albern Allen, to long narratives such as those prepared by Joseph Smith, Parley P. Pratt, and John P. Greene. To facilitate further study, I have cataloged the petitions into three groups: "Bills of Damage," "General Petitions," and "Event or Place Petitions." "Bills of Damage" are documents that make claims against the state of Missouri for property lost. The "General Petitions" give sweeping narratives of the Mormon suffering in Missouri but do not give much detail, even though they list specific places and events. The "Event or Place Petitions" most often describe vividly the experiences individuals had at certain times and places in Missouri.

Bills of Damage

Simons Curtis claimed the smallest amount, sixty-three cents,¹⁹ and Edmond Nelson filed the largest claim, \$5,000 for loss of property and \$500,000 for loss of citizenship.²⁰ Some might question Nelson's motives for his obviously exaggerated figure, but it may have been his way of showing the frustration and disgust he felt at the violation of his human rights in Missouri. The brief petitions of Daniel Cathcart and Steven Blackman serve as examples of the kind of information contained in the bills of damage petitions:

State of Missouri Dr. to Daniel Cathcart For damages Sustained by loss of property in Davis Co by being driven from the state \$200 sickness by exposure \$500 [signed] Daniel Cathcart Sworn to before me the sixth day of May AD 1839, C. M. Woods, clerk, circuit court, Adams Co., Illinois.²¹

State of Missouri Dr to Stephen Blackman, For damage and loss of property by burning and being driven from the State \$150. For damage by loss of Son there is no earthly consideration can compensate [Signed] Stephen Blackman. Sworn to before me this sixth day of May AD 1839, C. M. Woods, clerk, circuit court, Adams Co., Illinois.²²

Most of the bills contain only two or three lines, but others are more extensive, such as the one sworn by Nahum Curtis, who gave an elaborate account of the land and personal property he lost in Missouri:

An account that I Nahum Curtis have against the State of Missouri in
Consequence of Mobocracy:

To expenses moveing from the State of Michigan to the state of Missouri	\$50.00
To eight weeks that it took me to go with my family from Michigan to Missouri at \$1 per day	\$48.00
To Eight weeks time each for my Two boys	\$96.00
To Loss on Land which I sustained in consequence of being driven from Missouri	\$1520.00
To Loss of time for myself and son in time of waring against the Mob six months each at one dollar per Day	\$312.00
To Loss on Corn potatoes & oates and hay	\$150.00
To Loss of ploughs	\$5.00
To Loss on Cattle and Hogs	\$55.00
To one horse Taken by the Militia	\$50.00
To Loss of wagon in Consequence of mob Stealing it from me	\$20.00
To Expenses Moving from Missouri to Illinois	\$25.00
To wagon & team Moveing me to Illinois	\$40.00
To Money and property given to help the poor	\$50.00
To teams to help the poor out of the state of Missouri to Keep them from being killed by mob	\$40.00
Total	\$2461.00

As an appendix to this bill Curtis wrote a few lines about his personal suffering:

I Shall not put any price upon my sufferings as your honorable body will Consider that I was a fellow Sufferer with the Rest and when you Judge what others ought to have you will consider that I had ought to have an equal proportion with the rest.²³

Of the 190 petitioners who wrote more than one petition, the first petition generally claimed monies, properties, abuses, etc., suffered in Missouri while the second petition usually gave a detailed account of what happened in an event or at a place. Of the 703 petitions, ninety-eight made no monetary claim against Missouri. The remaining 605 claimed a total of \$2,275,789, for an average of \$3,761. Claims for land came to \$197,911; for improvements and property, defined as livestock, houses, personal property, etc., the claims totaled \$197,127. Joseph and Hyrum Smith each claimed \$100,000 and gave no breakdown of expenditures.²⁴ Many petitioners gave more detailed information concerning the property that they owned.

Two hundred thirty-two petitioners stated that they purchased a total of 6,501 acres of land for \$55,046, an average of less than nine dollars per acre. They each claimed an average of \$237.27 for land. Nine dollars per acre for land in Missouri in 1839 was not extremely high. Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Elias Higbee, in their 1839 petition, stated that the price for land ranged from ten dollars per acre for undeveloped prairie land to \$425 per acre, depending on the location

and the type and number of improvements. Some of the land purchased by the Saints was called "congress land," which could be bought originally at \$1.25 per acre; however, some of the Mormons paid between five dollars and \$415 per acre for congress land and received preemption certificates which gave a settler the right to purchase the lands when the federal government placed them on the market. Few Mormons actually possessed deeds to the lands they farmed. In the meantime, they settled the land, tilled the ground, and built houses and barns, thus increasing the value of the property. The petitions indicate that most of them owned at least one town lot and forty acres. A few owned eighty acres. Only a very few who had lived in Missouri for several years owned several hundred acres. Probably the reason they owned so little property was the recency of arrival in Missouri. Of 176 petitioners who indicated the year they arrived in Missouri, fifty-eight had come between 1831 and 1836, and 126 had entered the state between 1837 and 1839. One claimant arrived in 1839. Thus, the majority of the petitioners arrived just in time to be expelled, and several indicated that they were detained by mobs while on their way to Far West.

Another example of a bill of damage petition was sworn to by Albern Allen, who apparently did not experience any particular personal brutality but was forced to sign away his property. Allen's petition was dated 7 January 1840 and sworn before William Laughlin, a justice of the peace for Adams County, Illinois. Allen claimed a total of eighty acres. His petition is unique in that it defines his property in the precise terms used by the county clerk who recorded the property in the county records. He had land duplicates or deeds of intent in Caldwell County, which he yielded to the mobbers, verifying that he owned the "N.E. 1/4 of S.W. 1/4 of section 32 Township No 56 Range 28 North of the base line and west of the 5th principal Meridean also the N W. 1/4 of the South E 1/4 Section 32 Township 56 range 29 North of the base line of the 5th principal Meridian." The petition also stated that he was "taken prisoner" and forced to "sign away his land" before being compelled to leave the state.²⁵ Allen's petition is typical of many that claimed the settlers had been forced to sign over their lands to the Missouri militia at Far West.

General Petitions

Parley P. Pratt wrote the most extensive petition, consisting of sixty-four printed pages. This petition begins with a review of the suffering of the Saints in Jackson County and ends with the Missourians driving them from the state in 1838-39. Included also are some of Pratt's experiences in Missouri prisons. Even though Pratt published it in Detroit in 1839, this petition was not sworn until 15 January 1842 at

Nauvoo before Justice of the Peace John Johnson.²⁶ Pratt's petition is representative of the general petitions which are best described as long narratives, holographic or printed, that report the plight of the Mormons in Missouri but do not contain the details given by the individual petitioners. Included among the general petitions are a twenty-eight page document dated 27 January 1840 and signed by Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Elias Higbee;²⁷ a twenty-four page document dated 10 January 1842 and signed by Elias Higbee, John Taylor, and Elias Smith;²⁸ and the fifty-foot scroll dated 28 November 1843 and signed by 3,419 people.²⁹ All of these documents described the suffering of the Mormons in Missouri and were used to introduce the individual claims.

Event or Place Petitions

Smith Humphrey's petition, sworn before Joseph Orr, justice of the peace for Adams County, Illinois, on 8 January 1840, illustrates the event or place category. Humphrey declared that he purchased a farm near the town of DeWitt in the summer of 1838 and planned on settling there. He claimed to have been an eyewitness to much that happened in and around DeWitt on 19 August 1838, stating that he was taken prisoner by a force of about one hundred men commanded by a Colonel Jones. During the time he was a prisoner, they threatened his life and declared that they were going to "drive them [Mormons] from that county." Humphrey further swore that in the first days of October of the same year he arose early one morning and found that his "stables had been set on fire by some unknown hand during the night." His declaration continues, "I was met by a party of 12 armed men commanded by Captain Hiram Standly who took me a prisoner back to my own house & there compelled me to remove my goods from my house by their help in the presance of my self & family Set fire to & burned my two blocks of houses." When he was driven from his home, his wife was "sick with the ague," and the mobbers forced him to move his family to DeWitt, where they remained until 11 October. According to Humphrey, the mob harassed him constantly "by night & by day," and they fired into the town. The people of DeWitt petitioned local county officers for help but received none. Finally, sick and starving, they abandoned DeWitt and moved to Caldwell County where they arrived on 13 October 1838. Humphrey wrote that "one woman died on the road."³⁰

Philindia Myrick, Nancy Cary, and Christiana Benner, together with other women, wrote testimonials concerning the deaths of their husbands. Christiana Benner claimed \$5,150 in property and then stated that "my husband was killed at Haun's Mill by a mob who robbed

me of my goods and land and have left me destitute of a companion or means of support.’’³¹ At least one woman wrote of the personal abuse she suffered at the hands of a mob. Ruth Naper, who survived the Haun’s Mill Massacre, wrote concerning an attempted assault upon her:

After a few days there came back a large company of armed men and took possession of Haun’s mill and they also crowded into our house and crowded me and my children away from the fire without my consent they lodged there and one night one of them came to my bed and laid his hand upon me which so frightened me that I made quite a noise and crept over the back side of my children, and he offered not further insult at the time. This company camped in the neighborhood between one and two weeks.³²

Although none of the petitioners directly mentioned rape, Elijah Reed witnessed the attempted abuse of a Mrs. Jimison. To escape from the mob, Reed had fled to the Jimisons’ home, where the following experience occurred on 29 October 1838:

In the night of that Day, a Company of men Came to the House & Demanded admittance & threatened to Brake Down the Door Mr J got up and opened the Door meantime I hid under the Bed the men Came in and said they were Soldiers & he must go with them his wife asked where they said to the Malitia Camp above Richmond he Dressed himself & he & one of the men went for a horse at the Stable when they had got a little from the house the man fired a gun & said that the Dmd rascal had ran from him he then returned to the house & they began to abuse Mrs Jimison wanting to sleep with her But she begged & cried for them to Desist & they Did so I lay under the Bed During this time they soon left the house & we supposed they had killed him.³³

An affidavit sworn by Hyrum Smith, published in the *History of the Church*, states that one woman had been raped repeatedly by mobbers.³⁴ Parley P. Pratt, in his petition sworn at Nauvoo, states that he knew of one woman who had been raped but adds that “delicacy at present forbids my mentioning the name.”³⁵

Seventy-three petitions indicate that Mormons were whipped, beaten, or abused by the mobs. Charles Hulet described the beating of his son.³⁶ Perry Keyes described how thirty men beat his father “with there gunns and ramrods.” He also describes how a mob attacked him:

I was on the Prairie hunting horses a company of men under command of Controll whiped me untill I was scarsely able to stand Controll and one of his men by the name of Yocum held me while one of the others by the name of John Youngs whipped me he gave me 23 lashes with a cowhide and all this for my relegeon for I am a member of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints commonly called Mormons.

Keyes added that a mob had “also whipped Barnett Cole and Liman Leonard most shamefully.”³⁷

Truman Brace described his experience with a mob of fifty men on the prairie who caught him hauling a load of wood. Two rode up and demanded that Brace identify himself. According to Brace, "One of them named Young asked me if I believed the book of Mormon; I told them that 'I did.' " They then ordered him to leave the county. In response to this demand, "I told them I had neither team or means to take me and my family away." Young then threatened to shoot Brace, but the other dissuaded him, and the rest of the mob rode up. Young commenced beating Brace, first with an ox goad which he broke and then with a rawhide whip. Brace said that Young "cut my Hat nearly all to pieces." This whipping apparently occurred not too far from Brace's home as his wife and daughter witnessed his plight and "entreated the mob to spare his life." Brace finally made his way into his house, but the mob followed him inside where they kicked him in the mouth and the abuse continued "in my own House."³⁸

Tarlton Lewis, a convert to Mormonism of more than two years, "was born in South Carolina, was raised in Kentucky, and lived in Illinois about four years" before moving to Missouri in the fall of 1837. He located himself "within about one mile of Haun's Mill" and was wounded at the massacre. Of his experience at Haun's Mill he wrote:

I looked and saw a number of armed men rushing out of the woods on Horseback at the distance of twenty or thirty rods off. Their number I judged to be between two hundred and two hundred and fifty. Two of our brethren made signs and cried for quarter, but their intreaties were not heeded The company began to fire upon us instantly.

Lewis and other Mormon men took shelter in the nearby blacksmith shop. The women and children fled to the woods or crossed the millrace where they found shelter in the brush and trees on the far side. The blacksmith shop, instead of a shelter, soon became a death trap. Lewis wrote, "I staid there until six or eight had fallen around me being shot down by balls, which came through the Cracks. Six of us left the shop about the same time and were the last that left it." Of the six who fled the blacksmith shop, Lewis wrote that they were "all either killed or wounded in the attempt to make our escape. I was shot through the shoulder." The day following the massacre, the survivors, mostly women, buried their dead. Lewis stated that "there were fifteen killed" and "ten or eleven men, two boys and one woman wounded." The mobbers continued their harassment of the survivors as they visited the settlement repeatedly during the weeks that followed. Lewis wrote:

While I was confined with my wound, companies of six or eight came to my house three or four times enquiring for arms [and] threatning to take me a prisoner and carry me off. Twice they examined my wounds to see if I were able to be moved but concluded that I was not.³⁹

Nathan Knight, also a victim of the Haun's Mill incident, estimated the mob forces to be at least three hundred men, all mounted on horses. He said they were commanded "to halt and form a line of battle" and "immediately commenced firing as they came into line." Knight swore that the mobbers frequently screamed out, "Kill all, spare none, give no quarters." He described the plight of the women and children as "wholly destitute of any presence of mind," saying they were "screaming murder &c &c." With bullets "flying in every direction," he "saw many of his friends lay bleeding in their gore." He further testified that he "cried for quarters," to which mobbers replied, "We have no time to quarter you, but God damn you we will have you presently." Though severely wounded, Knight "raised to his feet and through their thickest fire made his way several rods over a hill and thus made his escape." For six weeks he hovered between life and death, and although he recovered somewhat from his wounds he remained a cripple the rest of his life.⁴⁰

Knight's affidavit does not give the number of those wounded or dead, but Moses Kelly claimed that the mob continued firing until "there were seventeen or eighteen killed and some eight or ten wounded."⁴¹ David Demming, who was upstream on Shoal Creek working and away from Haun's Mill at the time of the massacre, returned to the small settlement to find "14 of my brethren . . . killed" and noted that three or four others died a few days later.⁴²

One of the most descriptive petitions regarding personal abuse suffered at the hands of mobocrats was sworn by William Seely. Seely claimed that in March 1838 he moved his family to Missouri and stopped in Daviess County, where he purchased congress land for two hundred dollars. On 10 October a mob came to his home and forced him to leave his property and move to Caldwell County, Missouri. On 24 October 1838, he went to Bunkham's Strip to see "one Mr. Pinkham on business." While at Pinkham's,

He was stripped and searched to see if he had any arms, by which he lost a Jack-knife, the only weapon, offensive or defensive which he had about him; the armed men he believes were fifteen in number, two of whom caught him by the collar, thrust him out of doors, dragged him over a pannel of fence so vehemently as to do him bodily injury while at the same time a third one facilitated his course by the application of his foot to the rear of his body When over he was asked if he was a mormon, to which he replied that he was.

At this point his captors threatened him with death, and he was forced to go with them. Soon they joined Captain Samuel Bogart's company consisting of about seventy men. According to Seely, "Question then arose what shall we do with the prisoner, many said at once, 'put him to death.' " This was the cry of those "volunteers who joined Bogart's

company, many of whom were not liable to duty by Law, but who volunteered to give a martial covering to the bloody deeds which they sought to perpetrate.’’

The following day, when Seely’s friends came to his rescue, Seely said that Bogart’s men fired upon the approaching Mormons and that ‘‘one man fell.’’ The mobbers then forced Seely to stand

in front of Bogart’s Company So as to be Exposed to the fire of both sides, about 12 feet from Bogarts line. At the word ‘‘fire’’ by Bogart this affiant attempted to escape but was shot in the left shoulder by some one of Bogarts men, which prostrated him to the Earth, and he was supposed to be dead, but his friends took him and carried him to his family where after four months tedious confinement he in a measure recovered of his wounds.⁴³

It should be apparent that even though the event or place petitions do not always specify monetary losses, they provide detailed accounts of the events that drove the Mormons from county to county in Missouri and finally from the state.

A careful examination of all the petitions shows that even though they come from five separate collections they tell essentially the same sobering story. When compiled for analysis, they not only give a panorama of the Mormon experience of persecution in Missouri, but also supply information on Mormon wealth, migration to Missouri, and personal property (such as chairs, tables, bedroom furniture, farming implements, livestock, land, and horses), showing, for example, that the average price for house timber was \$354.

Individually, most of these affidavits do not have much significance. Collectively, however, they not only describe Mormon life in Missouri but also tell a unified story of murder, rape, beating, thievery, and general lawlessness perpetrated upon the Saints while they were in Missouri. They make clear that the abuses which the Mormons suffered were not the result of spontaneous uprisings led by drunken town rabble (although there were clearly opportunists among the mobbers) but that these uprisings carried the sanction of the local and state governments. The petitions imply that the mobbing had a twofold objective: first, to drive all the Mormons into Caldwell County; and second, to drive them from the state. Both objectives were achieved. The petitions also indicate—at least from the petitioners’ point of view—that religious differences were central to the conflict. Time and time again mobbers asked the Mormons if they were followers of Joseph Smith, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or believers in the Book of Mormon.

As for the petitioners themselves, it is clear that they felt they were driven from Missouri because of their religious beliefs. It appears that they could have spared themselves great abuse and suffering if they

had denied their faith, given up their membership in the Church, or denounced the Book of Mormon. They could have kept their homes and remained in Missouri in peace. Why did they persist in their belief? For them the answer must have been a deep, inner spiritual conviction that what they believed was right.

Although this study has not attempted to examine both sides of the Mormon persecutions in Missouri, it has graphically substantiated, from legally sworn documents, the suffering and abuse committed by one people upon another largely because of their differences of opinion regarding religious beliefs. Simply stated, the Missouri redress petitions tell the story of a people wrongfully deprived of their rights as free men and women under the constitutions of the state of Missouri and the United States.

NOTES

¹Missouri Redress Petitions, United States National Archives, collection no. HR27A-G10, boxes 141 and 142 (hereafter cited as National Archives). Unless otherwise indicated, National Archives citations are to photocopies of the National Archives collection in the Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. There are fourteen folders in this collection. For the Myrick affidavit, see folder 12:31-32. The petitions quoted in this study have been kept in their original form as much as possible, with spelling and punctuation unchanged.

²Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed. rev., 7 vols. (reprint; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1964), 1:191-202 (hereafter cited as *History of the Church*).

³H. Roger Grant has pointed out that although several utopian communities settled in Missouri during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Mormons were the only such group to have such intense difficulties with their Missouri neighbors (see H. Roger Grant, "Missouri's Utopian Communities," *Missouri Historical Review* 66 [October 1971]: 27, 48).

⁴Pearl Wilcox, *The Latter-Day Saints on the Missouri Frontier* (Independence: Herald House, 1972), 159. The Missouri Redress Petitions state that the Mormons lived in the counties listed (see National Archives and also Missouri Claims, Library-Archives, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah [hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives]).

⁵See Maurice L. Draper, "A Commentary on the Missouri Redress Petitions: New Evidence of the Mormon Side of the Missouri Conflict in 1834 and 1838" (Paper presented at the Mormon History Association Symposium, Rexburg, Idaho, 2 May 1981).

⁶"A History, of the Persecution, of the Church of Jesus Christ, of Latter Day Saints in Missouri," *Times and Seasons* 1 (February 1849): 49-51.

⁷Caldwell County was created by the Missouri legislature for the Mormons (see Grant, "Missouri's Utopian Communities," 22).

⁸The Lord instructed Joseph Smith to have the Saints assemble all their grievances against Missouri, to organize a committee, and to present the information to the government (D&C 123:1-4, part of one of the three revelations received by Joseph during his internment at Liberty).

⁹Missouri Claims, folder 1.

¹⁰Paul C. Richards discovered part of this collection in 1968 and published an analysis of it in 1973 (see Paul C. Richards, "Missouri Persecutions: Petitions for Redress," *Brigham Young University Studies* 13 [Summer 1973]: 520-43).

¹¹Richards, "Missouri Persecutions," 520, 522, 524.

¹²*History of the Church* 4:13, 19, 21, 48.

¹³Clark V. Johnson, "The Mormons before Congress, 1839-1846," unpublished paper.

¹⁴Richards, "Missouri Persecutions," 522-23.

¹⁵National Archives, folder 5; see also Richards, "Missouri Persecutions," 520, 524. While working with this collection at the National Archives in 1980, I noted that these pages have been separated and when placed on a table make a stack approximately one to one-and-a-half inches tall.

¹⁶Richards, "Missouri Persecutions," 522-23.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸Johnson, "The Mormons before Congress."

¹⁹Curtis paid thirty-eight cents to a gun keeper and twenty-five cents to a justice of the peace to redeem his gun (*History of the Church* 4:67–68).

²⁰Edmond Nelson, LDS Church Archives (folder numbers for the petitions in the LDS Church Archives are not needed; they are arranged alphabetically).

²¹Daniel Cathcart, LDS Church Archives.

²²Stephen Blackman, LDS Church Archives.

²³Nahum Curtis, LDS Church Archives.

²⁴*History of the Church* 3:327. Other sources indicate that Joseph paid out in excess of fifty thousand dollars in lawyers' fees in Missouri.

²⁵Albern Allen, National Archives, folder 11:50.

²⁶Parley P. Pratt, National Archives, folder 2.

²⁷Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Elias Higbee, National Archives, folder 4.

²⁸Elias Higbee, John Taylor, and Elias Smith, National Archives, folder 5.

²⁹National Archives, folder 6.

³⁰Smith Humphrey, National Archives, folder 11:10.

³¹Christiana Benner, LDS Church Archives.

³²Ruth Naper, National Archives, folder 8:36.

³³Elijah Reed, National Archives, folder 10:34–45. *Jimison* is also spelled *Jameson*. Charles Jameson escaped from the mob that night, survived the Haun's Mill Massacre, and swore his own petition on 20 January 1849, before J. C. Young, a justice of the peace for Madison County, Illinois.

³⁴*History of the Church* 3:422.

³⁵*History of the Church* 3:428. Pratt writes: "They also named one or two individual females of our society, whom they had forcibly bound, and twenty or thirty of them, one after another, committed rape upon them. One of these females was a daughter of a respectable family with whom I have been long acquainted, and with whom I have since conversed and learned that it was truly the case."

³⁶Charles Hulet, National Archives, folder 11:22–23.

³⁷Perry Keyes, National Archives, folder 11:17.

³⁸Truman Brace, National Archives, folder 9:24–25.

³⁹Tarlton Lewis, National Archives, folder 8:39–40.

⁴⁰Nathan K. Knight, National Archives, folder 8:25–27.

⁴¹Moses Kelly, National Archives, folder 11:44.

⁴²David C. Deming, National Archives, folder 11:29.

⁴³William Seely, National Archives, folder 14:11–14; Seely's petition is written in the third person.