

# Two Rare Missouri Documents



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Peter Crawley

Few contemporary Mormon imprints exist that deal with the Missouri phase of Mormon history, and those that do are invariably great rarities. Photographs of two such imprints are reprinted here, each of particular importance to the history of the Latter-day Saints. The first is an extra issue of the Church newspaper of the time.

The Evening and the Morning Star. Extra. Kirtland, Ohio, February, 1834. Broadsheet 31.7 x 24.2 cm. In three columns.

This broadsheet reprints a circular that was originally printed in Missouri, most likely at the office of the Liberty *Upper Missouri Enquirer*, late in December 1833 or early in January 1834. No copy of the original is known to have survived. It is known that a copy was sent by the elders in Missouri along with the 10 April 1834 petition to the President of the United States, and, fortunately, another copy was mailed to Oliver Cowdery, who was editing *The Evening and the Morning Star* in Kirtland, Ohio. He immediately issued the February 1834 *Star Extra* that contains the text of the Missouri circular, together with two of his own comments. Parley Pratt, Newell Knight, and John Carrill [Corrill] signed the circular over the date 12 December 1833. An examination of the text shows that it largely agrees—at a number of points word for word—with the corresponding part of Parley P. Pratt's *History of the Late Persecution* (Detroit, 1839). Since it is unlikely that Pratt, a mature writer by 1839, would copy another's writing, this suggests that Parley Pratt actually wrote the circular and incorporated parts of it in his later work.

The importance of the circular is that it is the earliest comprehensive account of the Mormon expulsion from Jackson County. It is also a bibliographical milestone, marking the entrance into print of Parley P. Pratt, one of Mormonism's most gifted writers.

Only two copies of the *Extra* are known to be extant. One is bound with a complete file of *The Evening and the Morning Star* in the LDS Church Historical Department, and the other is bound with the file of the *Star* originally owned by Newell K. Whitney and now in the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University.

The second item reproduced here is more widely known:

Oration delivered by Mr. S. Rigdon, on the 4th of July, 1838, at Far West, Caldwell Country, Missouri. [One-line quotation.] Far West: Printed at the Journal Office. 1838. 12 pp. 18.7 cm.

The celebration of the Fourth of July in Far West in 1838 signaled the beginning of the end of the Mormon community in Missouri. Forming in a long procession at 10:00 A.M., the Far West Saints marched to the accompaniment of Dimick Huntington's band to the excavation for the new temple, where the four cornerstones of the temple were laid by the Church leaders. Then Sidney Rigdon mounted the speakers' stand and delivered the day's oration, which was enthusiastically received by the crowd. Subsequently Rigdon's oration was printed in pamphlet form on the Mormon press in Far West and reprinted in some of the local Missouri newspapers.

Six years later, Jedediah M. Grant acknowledged that Rigdon's oration "was the main auxiliary that fanned into flame the burning wrath of the mobocratic portions of the Missourians."<sup>1</sup> The oration was certainly inflammatory; but more important, it was put into print to be read and reread, galvanizing both Mormons and Missourians.

Grant lays the responsibility for the oration squarely on Rigdon. But it is clear from the reminiscences of Ebenezer Robinson, the printer of the pamphlet, and the comments of Joseph Smith in the Far West periodical *Elders' Journal* that the oration had Joseph Smith's approval.

Bibliographically, Rigdon's oration is exciting inasmuch as it is the only "book" printed by the Mormon press at Far West. It is also a rarity, found in only four institutional libraries: The Chicago Historical Society, Harvard University Library, LDS Church Historical Department, and the Brigham Young University Library.

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1. Jedediah M. Grant, *A Collection of Facts Relative to the Course Taken by Elder Sidney Rigdon in the States of Ohio, Missouri, Illinois and Pennsylvania*. (Philadelphia: Brown, Bricking and Guilbert, Printers, 1844), p. 11.