

---

# Brigham Young's Response to the Burning of the Morley Settlement<sup>1</sup>

*Bill Shepard and H. Michael Marquardt*

## Introduction

**A**S SUMMER OF 1845 was winding down, the Mormons under the leadership of Brigham Young were using every available resource to complete the Temple so they could receive their endowments. They believed revelation stipulated they would be rejected as God's chosen people if they left Nauvoo before the Temple was completed.<sup>2</sup> Many factors, including the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, cumulative persecution, and repeal of the Nauvoo Charter, caused them to believe the Gentiles had rejected the Gospel.<sup>3</sup> The Mormons in Illinois and Iowa Territory increasingly tended to disengage from the non-Mormons and live within their theocratic society where their numerical superiority and the umbrella of the Nauvoo Legion provided security.<sup>4</sup>

Some five hundred Mormons lived in southwest Hancock County and northwest Adams County. Their isolation from Nauvoo left them open to attack as they were essentially surrounded by anti-Mormons. Patriarch Isaac Morley presided over the Mormons at the Lima Stake, which included a settlement at Lima and the Morley Settlement [Yelrome]. Other endangered Mormons lived in the Bear Creek area

---

1. The authors are grateful for the help of Joseph Johnstun and Bryon Andreasen.

2. A revelation received by Joseph Smith on January 19, 1841, *LDS Doctrine and Covenants*, 124:32, stipulated that the temple had to be completed or else the Mormons and their baptized dead would be rejected. The necessity of completing the temple was routinely emphasized. For example, the Twelve Apostles, in "Baptism for the Dead," *Times and Seasons* 3 (December 15, 1841): 625, said if the Temple was not completed, "We shall be rejected as a church with our dead." [emphasis retained.]

3. This belief is examined in William Shepard, "The Concept of a 'Rejected Gospel' in Mormon History, Part 1," *Journal of Mormon History* 34 (Spring 2008): 130–81 and H. Michael Marquardt, "The Nauvoo Council of Fifty Minutes," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 38 (Spring/Summer 2018): 174–75.

4. This reality was emphasized by Irene Hascall in a letter to her mother from Nauvoo on September 17, 1845, when she said the mob would not threaten Nauvoo as "it is too well armed." She matter-a-factly added, the Nauvoo Legion "strikes terror to their [the anti-Mormon's] hearts." "Letter of a Proselyte: The Hascall-Pomeroy Correspondence," of September 17, 1845, in *Utah Historical Quarterly* 25 (1975): 136–37.

and in scattered sites.<sup>5</sup> Levi Williams lived at Green Plains, only three miles from Lima. He was one of five men accused of murdering Joseph and Hyrum Smith and supervising the kidnappings of Mormons Daniel and Philander Avery in 1843. Historians Dallin Oaks and Marvin Hill called him “the leading actor” in opposing the Mormons. They explained he used his position as commander of the Fifty-Ninth Regiment of the Illinois militia to bully members of his command to harass the Mormons.<sup>6</sup> Thomas Sharp, the fiery anti-Mormon publisher of the *Warsaw Signal*,<sup>7</sup> lived some ten miles from the Mormons at Warsaw and used his newspaper to call for the forced removal of the Mormons. He was also an accused murderer of Joseph and Hyrum Smith.

Alleged stealing by a small group of Mormons in the Morley Settlement became the focal point of anti-Mormon anger in February 1845 when five Mormons were arrested and jailed at Quincy, Illinois.<sup>8</sup> Isaac Morley explained to church leaders the accused members were innocent because stolen property had been secreted in the settlement and was recovered by Quincy officials using a search warrant.<sup>9</sup> Morley was removed to Nauvoo out of fear he might be arrested, and Solomon Hancock became the presiding officer.<sup>10</sup> Isaac Morley informed Brigham Young and Heber Kimball on June 4 that Warren Snow and Domincus Carter from the settlement

---

5. Biographical information on Isaac Morley, history of the Lima Stake, kinship connections, and the destruction of the stake are found in William G. Hartley, *The 1845 Burning of Morley's Settlement and Murder of Edmund Durfee* (Salt Lake City: Primer Publications, 1999 reprint) and Danny I. Jorgensen, “The Morley Settlement in Illinois, 1839–1846: Tribe and Clan in a Nauvoo Mormon Community,” *The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 32 (Fall/Winter 2012): 149–70.

6. Dallin H. Oaks and Marvin S. Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy: The Trial of the Accused Assassins of Joseph Smith* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), 58–59.

7. Born in Mount Holly, New Jersey, to Methodist parents, Sharp studied law at Dickerson College, arrived at Warsaw in September 1840, and purchased the fledging newspaper *The Western World*. By the time he changed the newspaper's name to *The Warsaw Signal* in the spring of 1841, he was the emerging anti-Mormon spokesman. He was a master propagandist and, driven by his personal dislike of Joseph Smith, disseminated information designed to inflame the Mormon opposition. His conflict with Mormonism is best told in Marshall Hamilton, “Thomas Sharp's Turning Point: Birth of an Anti-Mormon,” *Sunstone* 13, no. 5 (October 1989): 16–22 and Marshall Hamilton, “From Assassination to Expulsion: Two Years of Distrust, Hostility, and Violence,” *BYU Studies* 32 (1992): 229–48.

8. See “The Mormons,” *Quincy Whig* 7 (February 19, 1845): 2.

9. See, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1902–32), 7:373. The citations used in this article from volume 7 are based upon the Manuscript History of Brigham Young, CR 100 102, Church History Library, Salt Lake City. For convenience, the printed *History of the Church* is cited unless there is a difference in wording.

10. Born in Springfield, Massachusetts in August 1793, Hancock was baptized in December 1830 and served in several hierarchical capacities before arriving in Adams County, Illinois, in spring of 1839. He received his endowment at Nauvoo in January 1846 and died in Pottawattamie County, Iowa, in December 1847. See Lyndon W. Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 77–78.

were in jail in Quincy for selling and passing counterfeit money. Kimball noted, "We saw Bishop [Joseph L.] Heywood and he said the[y] were guilty [were guilty]."<sup>11</sup>

A second flash-point was the August 11 election of Mormon ally Jacob B. Backenstos<sup>12</sup> to replace Sheriff Minor Deming who had recently resigned.<sup>13</sup> About three dozen Mormons voted at Warsaw and, according to the *Warsaw Signal*, became so disruptive that fistfights erupted and the Mormons were driven from Warsaw.<sup>14</sup>

The burning of two Mormon homes and outbuildings in the Morley Settlement on September 10, 1845, ignited a confrontation between the Mormons and anti-Mormons which threatened the endowments and organized withdrawal to the west. This article will evaluate the violence and peacemaking efforts which occurred during what came to be known as "The Mormon War." It will also examine the leadership of Brigham Young, which enabled the Mormons to remain a united people. Young would not allow immediate retaliation against the burners at the Morley Settlement because he wanted there to be no doubt who started the conflict. Instead, he laid the groundwork for a peaceful settlement when he made it known that the Mormons would leave the United States in the spring if aggressive actions ceased.

Young and his Council refused to let the Nauvoo Legion serve under the leadership of Governor Ford and initially rejected Sheriff Jacob Backenstos' request to allow elements of the Legion to serve as his posse. Young relented when it was apparent the anti-Mormons were the aggressors and moderate anti-Mormons would not serve under the sheriff. His release of the First Cohort of the Legion to serve under Backenstos as a posse was sufficient to halt the burnings but not enough to start a war. Nevertheless, Carthage was occupied by the sheriff and his posse, numerous non-Mormons abandoned their property, and the Mormons were condemned for plundering. Moreover, one house burner would be killed and the murder of two

---

11. Stanley B. Kimball, ed., *On the Potter's Wheel: The Diaries of Heber C. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1987), 119–20, June 4, 1845.

12. Jacob Backenstos was born in Dauphin County, Pennsylvania, in 1811 and in 1835 married Sarah Lavina Lee in Sangamon County, Illinois. He was appointed by Stephen A. Douglas, Illinois Secretary of State, clerk of court for Hancock County about 1841 and the Mormon vote elected him a Hancock County Representative in the Illinois Legislature on August 5, 1844. During the debate for the repeal of the Nauvoo Charter in the Illinois Legislature, Backenstos earned the undying hate of the anti-Mormons when he criticized them for the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, for planning to exterminate the Mormons, and for lying about the degree of Mormon theft. His electrifying speech was printed in the *Illinois State Register*, and portions were reprinted on the front page of the March 12, 1845, *Nauvoo Neighbor*. Backenstos' speech was reprinted in the Reorganized Church's *Journal of History* 7 (October 1914):439–52. His brother William married Clara M. Wasson, daughter of Emma Smith's sister Elizabeth in October 1843. See Omer (Greg) W. Whitman and James L. Varner, "Sheriff Jacob B. Backenstos: 'Defender of the Saints,'" *Journal of Mormon History* 29 (Spring 2003): 150–78.

13. Thomas Gregg, in *History of Hancock County, Illinois* (Chicago: Chas C. Chapman and Company, 1880), 339, said Backenstos received 2,334 votes and John Scott, who was supported by the anti-Mormons, received 750 votes.

14. The banishing of the Mormons from Warsaw was told with great satisfaction in "The Election — Great Doings in Warsaw," *Warsaw Signal* 2 (August 13, 1845): 1–2.

anti-Mormons would be blamed on the Mormons. After stability had been generally restored by volunteer elements of the Illinois Militia, Brigham Young cooperated with Governor Ford's representatives and delegates from area counties and agreed that the Mormons would leave if their enemies left them alone — an agreement he proposed at the start of the burnings. The resulting conflict flared hot in September and October and intermittently flickered until early 1846.

### Defining Decisions

A meeting of anti-Mormons in the schoolhouse on the property of Levi Williams at Green Plains on September 9 was interrupted by gunshots hitting the building. Governor Thomas Ford said that the anti-Mormons “fired a few shots at the house ... in such a way as to hurt none who attended the meeting.” He explained “the anti-Mormons suddenly breaking up their meeting, rode all over the country spreading the dire alarm, that the Mormons had commenced the work of massacre and death.”<sup>15</sup>

Buoyed by positive information from Mormon exploring parties among the Native Americans and exploration accounts in the inter-mountain west, Brigham Young convened the Council of Fifty on September 9 and led the conversation about a Mormon movement “to the west.” He said, “it is well understood by this council the views of Joseph [Smith] in regard to setting up the kingdom in some place where we can exalt the standard and enjoy liberty.” After noting, the “Temple is near finished” and “many of the brethren will no doubt receive their endowment this winter,” he indicated, “We have contemplated sending a company west next spring.” Members enthusiastically concurred with a westward movement and it was proposed “a thousand families” begin their journey by mid-April.<sup>16</sup>

### The Initial Burnings

Anti-Mormons, under the leadership of Levi Williams, burned two Mormon homes on September 10 at the Morley Settlement. When the Mormons did not

15. Thomas Ford, *A History of Illinois: From Its Commencement as a State in 1814 to 1847* (Chicago: S. C. Griggs & Co., 1854), 406.

16. Matthew J. Grow, Ronald K. Esplin, Mark Ashust-McGee, Gerrit J. Dickmaat and Jeffrey D. Mathas, eds., *Council of Fifty, Minutes, March 1844–January 1846*, (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2016), 471, 476, September 9, 1845. Removing the Mormons to a place of refuge outside the United States was not a new concept. See, for example, *History of the Church* 7:350, January 7, 1845, where sending a “company to California” was considered. Governor Thomas Ford, in a letter to Brigham Young, recounted Joseph Smith telling him in the summer of 1844, “he contemplated a removal [of the church] west.” Thomas Ford to Brigham Young, April 8, 1845, Brigham Young Office Files, CR 1234 1, Box 20, Folder 12, General Correspondence, Incoming, 1840-1877, Church History Library.

retaliate, they were joined by other anti-Mormons,<sup>17</sup> and proceeded to destroy the Morley Settlement and out-lying farms. Over one hundred Mormon homes, along with outbuildings, personal possessions, and harvested crops, were burned. Much of what was not burned was stolen. Tamma Minor remembered the enormity of the event thirty-six years later:

they [the mob] came back and shot off all their guns and ran [Mormons] all off and plundered made a fire burned houses, furniture, and clothing loom, yarn cloth and carpenter tools, the iron from the tools picked up and filled a barrel, everything all around burned to ashes the mob went from house to house a driving them out sick or well it made no difference till they burned every house in the town that was Mormon.<sup>18</sup>

Brigham Young's journal entry of Wednesday, September 10, contained the terse notation, "This evening news came from the Morley settlement that the mob were at work."<sup>19</sup> The scope of the crisis came into clearer focus the following morning with the arrival of additional information. Solomon Hancock reported, "the Mob are upon us at the Morley set[tlement] burning our buildings and threat[e]ning the lives of our men women and children." Hancock added, they "had many sick" and were "destitute of teams," but would act only in self-defense until directed otherwise.<sup>20</sup>

The following morning, John Taylor noted the Twelve Apostles "held a council and thought it advisable as we were going West in the Spring to keep all things as quiet as possible and not resent anything." He then explained why retaliation was rejected: "After the trouble we had had to finish the Temple to get our endowments, we thought it of more importance than to squabble with the mob about property, seeing that the houses were not of much importance, and no lives were taken. Thinking by these pacific measures that they would be likely not to molest us; and to show the surrounding country that we were orderly disposed people, and desirous of keeping

---

17. Robert Bruce Flanders, in *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), 327, estimated the number of anti-Mormon participants in the burnings was three hundred. Accounts indicate armed groups of under a dozen effectively intimidated Mormons and destroyed or confiscated their property.

18. "A Memorial" Written by Tamma [Durfee] Miner, March 13, 1881 —Written in Springfield, [Utah Territory], MS 16718, Folder 2, Church History Library.

19. Brigham Young Journal, September 10, 1845, Brigham Young Office Files, CR 1234 1, Box 71, Folder 4, Church History Library.

20. Solomon Hancock to Brigham Young, September 11, 1845, Brigham Young Office Files, CR 1234, Box 20, Folder 12 Church History Library. Perrigrine Sessions described the scope of the tragedy, "Although hundreds of the Saints were drove in from the surrounding cuntry destitute of a place to lay their heads or provisions to subsist upon having their crops of graine destroyed their beef and pork stolen and their furnature destroyed with their houses which increase the suffering of the Widow and the Fatherless and those that were as many were sick and dieing as it was a sickley season." Donna Toland Smart, ed., *The Life and Missionary Journals of Perrigrine Sessions, 1814–1893* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies and Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History, 2002), 88–89. Quoted without revision.

peace.”<sup>21</sup> The apostles also “agreed to dispatch a messenger to the Lima branch and counsel the brethren to propose to sell their property to the mob and bring their families and grain here.”<sup>22</sup> Apostle Willard Richards, referring to this meetings, said the “minutemen,” or members of the Nauvoo Legion, were put “in readiness for any emergency,” and a letter was sent to Sheriff Backenstos asking him to “quell the mob at Lima.”<sup>23</sup>

Solomon Hancock was directed by Brigham Young on September 12 to remove the children and grain to Nauvoo “as quickly as possible” and have the men remain and caretake the property. Hancock was informed the Mormons were relying on Sheriff Backenstos to “attend to the mob” and if the “Jack-Mormons,” so-called friends of the law, did not intervene it would be “the funeral processions of Illinois liberty.” Young asked, “What is a little property or a few lives compared with the properties and lives of a great people and the house [Temple] and ordinances [endowments] on which the salvation of the people depend.”<sup>24</sup> Young requested, “every man who has a team to go immediately to the Morley Settlement, and act in concert with President Solomon Hancock in removing the sick, the women, children, goods and grain to Nauvoo.” Concurrent with this, a committee of Morley settlers initiated peaceful overtures to neighboring non-Mormons and offered their land in exchange for items which would help facilitate their removal from Illinois.<sup>25</sup>

In his September 13 journal entry, John Taylor praised the Morley Settlement Mormons for following orders even though they “had it in their power to destroy their persecutors.” He also noted that Sheriff Backenstos met with the Apostles and asked “a company of the brethren” to serve under him “to suppress the mob.” The request was denied, and Backenstos was told to appeal to the “law abiding” non-Mormons and “see if there were any who were willing to sustain their own laws.”<sup>26</sup> A same-day letter from Solomon Hancock to Brigham Young described the damages by small groups of arsonists, ineffectual shooting at several Mormons, and the visits by anti-Mormon leaders Levi Williams and William H. Roosevelt. He said “proposals to sell” Mormon property had been made to local anti-Mormons, but there had been “no particular answer” and forebodingly added “we expect them to renew their work of destruction.” After saying, “the mob is determined to destroy us,” Hancock

21. “The John Taylor Nauvoo Journal: January 1845–September 1845”, Dean C. Jessee, ed., *Brigham Young University Studies* 23 (Summer 1983): 79, original in Church History Library, MS 7277.

22. *History of the Church* 7:440, September 11, 1845.

23. Willard Richards Journal, September 11, 1845, MS 1490, Church History Library. Hosea Stout noted the same day, “I received orders from General Rich in person to have the Cohort put in readiness to repel an attack in a minutes notice.” *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout 1844–1861* ed., Juanita Brooks (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1964), 1:62, September 12, 1845.

24. *History of the Church* 7:440–41, September 12, 1845.

25. *History of the Church* 7:441–42.

26. Jessee, *John Taylor Nauvoo Journal*, 89–90, September 13, 1845.

asked for continued guidance and said “we will do as you tell us.”<sup>27</sup> George W. Lang, a Mormon from Lima, informed Young he had been among the mob, and “Esq. Hill” told him “the intentions of the mob were to drive the out branches into Nauvoo, but no[t] to kill any body unless driven to it.”<sup>28</sup> The shots which hit near the Mormons apparently had been part of the anti-Mormon’s process of intimidation.

### Inability of Sheriff Backenstos to Stop the Burnings

Jacob Backenatos issued a broadside titled “Proclamation To the Citizens of Hancock County, Ill.” [Proclamation No. 1] that afternoon from Green Plains. He said he could see smoke “rising to the clouds and the flames are devouring four buildings, which have just been set on fire by the rioters.” He emphasized the human suffering caused by the burning of over sixty homes and the financial losses to a community that had not recovered from their Missouri losses. After quoting the criminal codes on arson and death by arson, Backenstos said the law required him to bring an end to the civil disturbance. He proclaimed:

Therefore I Jacob B. Backnstos, Sheriff of the County of Hancock and State of Illinois in the name of the people of said state and by the authority vested in me by virtue of my office, hereby solemnly command the said rioters and other peace breakers to desist forthwith, disperse and go to their homes, under the penalty of the laws. And I hereby call upon all the law abiding, citizens as a posse comatatus, of Hancock County to give their united aid in suppressing the rioters and maintain the supremacy of the law.<sup>29</sup>

Brigham Young’s journal entry on September 14 said Levi Williams sent word “that if we would agree to leave in the spring we might live in peace during the winter.”<sup>30</sup> This was presumably rejected because the Mormons thought the public was not sufficiently aware of the malevolence of the anti-Mormons, and a public agreement would have precluded any response against the burners. The apostles also

---

27. The original letter is in Brigham Young Office Files, CR 1234 1, Box 20, Folder 12. Portions of the letter were crossed through and wording changed.”

28. Brigham Young Journal, 57, September 13, 1845. The *History of the Church* 7:442 explained this differently: “Esquire Hill of Lima told him they did not design gathering in large bodies but go on as they had done and finish burning Yelrome, then attack some other place and drive the Mormons all into Nauvoo, they had further plans to move them from here by help from abroad.”

29. See Peter Crawley, *A Descriptive Biography of the Mormon Church, Volume One 1830–1847* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 1997), 316–17. The broadside was printed under the same title in the *Nauvoo Neighbor* 3 (September 10, 1845): 2. The *Neighbor* was running late. Four additional proclamations would be forthcoming and printed in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*. Proclamation No. 2, dated September 16, 1845, and Proclamation 3, dated September 17 were printed in the September 17 *Nauvoo Neighbor*. Proclamation No. 4, dated September 20, 1845, was printed in the September 24, *Nauvoo Neighbor*. The first four proclamations and Proclamation No. 5, dated September 25, 1845, were printed in the October 1, 1845, issue of the *Nauvoo Neighbor*.

30. Brigham Young Journal, 58, September 14, 1845, Church History Library.

decided to offer Nauvoo property for sale in eastern cities.<sup>31</sup> During a meeting that afternoon the hierarchy met with “all the quorums” and “called for all the teams to go again, and to continue going until they had brought in all the goods families & grain of the brethren.”<sup>32</sup> One hundred thirty-four wagons were assembled and started for the south, joining nine that had had gone with the previous call, making an amazing 145 wagons sent to the Morley’s Settlement area.<sup>33</sup>

At Quincy, Illinois, located just under fifty miles south of Nauvoo on the Mississippi River, citizens began to publicize their belief that the Mormons should leave Illinois. The burnings at the Morley Settlement resulted in the *Quincy Whig* editorializing that Mormon stealing justified the crime and alleging the Mormons could not live in peace because of their “bigoted, selfish, [and] illiberal notions.” The *Whig* concluded, the “difficulties will never cease, so long as the disturbing cause remains in the country.”<sup>34</sup>

The morning of September 15 found Sheriff Backenstos at his home in Carthage where he wrote Brigham Young about his failure to enlist any “law and order citizens” as a posse and asked Young to hold “two thousand well armed men in readiness for immediate service at any hour.” After saying, “Colonel Levi Williams had ordered out his brigade of militia,” he told Young “we must whip them.” Young told him to “wait a few days” to see if the old citizens “stepped-up” to enforce the law.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, he authorized elements of the Nauvoo Legion to reorganize and placed them on alert. The chain-of-command was Lieutenant General Brigham Young, Major General Charles C. Rich, and Brigadier General George Miller<sup>36</sup> over the First Co-

31. See, George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1995), 182, where William Clayton explained, “It was decided in the council to offer some of our best property in the City for sale to respectable merchants in Cincinnati[e]I, Phi[il]adelphia &. judging it better for the safety of the property to sell out to such men than to leave it to the destruction of the mob.”

32. Brigham Young Journal, 57, September 14, 1845, Church History Library.

33. Journal History of the Church, CR 100 137, Vol. 19, Church History Library, September 14, 1845, 1.

34. “Mormon Disturbance,” *Quincy Whig* 8 (September 17, 1845): 2.

35. Thomas Ford advised Brigham Young in a letter dated April 8, 1845, to “Do nothing which will allow your opponents to say that you have begun a war. Place them clearly in the wrong and keep them so.” *History of the Church* 7:397. Young’s reluctance to release elements of the Nauvoo Legion may reflect Ford’s advice.

36. Born in Orange County, Virginia, in November 1794, George Miller married Mary Catherine Fry before 1827, and they had four children. He was initiated into Masonry about 1819. Miller worked as a carpenter and associated jobs in the south before settling near Macomb, McDonough County, Illinois, in 1838. He encountered destitute Mormons the following year and settled them on his 300-acre farm. After being baptized by John Taylor in August 1839, he became an important bishop, President of the High Priests Quorum, Brigadier General in the Nauvoo Legion, and Trustee-in-Trust for the church. He rejected Young’s leadership in 1847 and joined Lyman Wight’s colony near Fredericksburg, Texas. By 1849, he had left Texas for Beaver Island, Michigan, where he became an important officer in James J. Strang’s Church. After Strang’s death he died at Meringo, Illinois, in June 1856. See Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 268–69.



hort and Brigadier General Hosea Stout over the Second Cohort.<sup>37</sup> Anti-Mormon intimidation caused Backenstos to leave his home at Carthage the morning of the 15th and seek help in the non-Mormon community elsewhere in Hancock County. He encountered “some of the mob” in the area the burnings were taking place, and they threatened his life. He then went to Warsaw where non-Mormon friends warned him anti-Mormons had threatened to kill him. He was sheltered by them over night.<sup>38</sup>

On the morning of September 16, a trusted Jack Mormon named Simon O. Fleming, owner of the Warsaw House, escorted Backenstos out of Warsaw and several miles onto the prairie. When Fleming started his return to Warsaw, he warned Backenstos to evade unknown individuals. After proceeding less than two miles towards Nauvoo in his single seat buggy, Backenstos encountered some twenty persons in wagons and on horseback. Backenstos said four horsemen “left the main body, apparently to strike a point in advance” of him. A wild chase ensued and when he was in danger of being overtaken, he encountered a party of homeless Mormons, escorted by hard cases Orrin Porter Rockwell and Return Jackson Redden watering their stock at Railroad Creek Shante. In short order, Rockwell and Redden were deputized and ordered by the sheriff to protect him. When one of his pursuers did not comply with Backenstos’ order to draw back and threateningly raised his rifle, the new deputies were told to use deadly force. Rockwell shot Franklin A. Worrall, a merchant from Carthage held in high esteem by the non-Mormon community, in the chest with a long rifle shot.<sup>39</sup>

The death of Worrell would be received with thanksgiving by the Mormons as he was a lieutenant in the Carthage Greys and commanded seven members when they fired blank charges at the mob immediately before the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. Hosea Stout exclaimed, “Thus fell one of that fiendish gang of desperadoes & one of the worst enemies we had.”<sup>40</sup> The *Quincy Whig* said Worrell was simply attempting to aid an unknown person in distress and “the murder was dic-

37. See *Journal History of the Church*, CR 100 137, Vol. 19, Church History Library, September 15, 1845 and *Brooks Diary of Hosea Stout*, 1:63, September 15, 1845.

38. See Jacob Backenstos, *Proclamation No. 2. To the citizens of Hancock County, Ill., and the surrounding county. Broadside*, Signed and dated, “J. B. Backenstos, Sheriff, Hancock County, Ill. Sept. 16<sup>th</sup>, A. D. 1845, half past 2 o’clock P. M.,” *Nauvoo Neighbor* 3 (September 17, 1845): 2–3 and “Trial of J. B. Backenstos,” *Peoria Free Press* (December 10, 1845): 2.

39. This account of Worrell’s death is from *History of the Church* 7:446–47 and Backenstos, *Proclamation No. 2, Nauvoo Neighbor* 3 (September 17, 1845): 2–3. An important commentary, favorable to Backenstos, on the killing of Worrell is that of Jack Mormon E. A. Bedell in “Montebello, September 17, 1845 — I. H. Ralston, Esq.,” *Nauvoo Neighbor* 3 (September 24, 1845): 3.

40. Brooks, *The Diary of Hosea Stout*, 1:64, September 16, 1845.

tated by malice and not by necessity.”<sup>41</sup> Thomas Sharp, in the *Warsaw Signal*, said Worrell was riding across the prairie with friends when “some Mormons concealed in the hazel rough ... fired upon him.” After emphasizing Worrell had taken no part in the house burning, he wrote under the enlarged and blackened heading, “MURDER OF ONE OF OUR BEST MEN.” Calling Worrell one “of the noblest spirits in our country,” Sharp said “his death has kindled and will kindle a flame that can never be quenched until every Mormon has left the vicinity. REVENGE, REVENGE, Fellow Citizens is now the word.”<sup>42</sup>

### Mormons Serve as Sheriff Backenstos’ Posse

The order in which important decisions were made on the sixteenth in Nauvoo is not clarified by existing sources. According to Willard Richards, upon learning Sheriff Backenstos had been driven out of Carthage, Brigham Young proposed to send “a company to prairie branch & surround [Levi] Williams and his company and destroy him.” After “some objections were made,” the issue was dropped. Young then “proposed to send the mob a delegation & agree to leave here in the spring if they will let us live in peace till spring.”<sup>43</sup> A proclamation was written to “Colonel Levi Williams and the mob party” and was signed by Young, six Apostles, Orson Spencer, Samuel Bent, Charles C. Rich, and Isaac Morley. Five Morley Settlement Mormons were designated to meet with Williams and inform him:

it is our intention to leave Nauvoo and the country next spring; provided, that yourselves and all others will cease all hostile operations, so as to give us the short but necessary time for our journey; and we want you to return an answer in writing, by our said committee, whether you will cease your destructive operations, and vexatious law suits, and give us the opportunity of carrying out our designs peaceably.<sup>44</sup>

The tone of the council meeting seemed to harden after Backenstos arrived in the early afternoon. George Miller said he emphasized “he must have help from Nauvoo, as he could not get it elsewhere; and he wanted men at that instant to bring

41. “The Trouble in Hancock County,” *Quincy Whig* 7 (October 1, 1845): 2. Governor Thomas Ford, in *History of Illinois*, 409, said, “It is believed that Backinstos expected to be pursued and attacked, and had previously stationed some men in ambush, to fire upon his pursuers.” This speculation was rejected by the jurors at Backenstos’ murder trial at Peoria in early December 1845 when the jury unanimously found him “not guilty” of murdering Worrell. See “Trial of J. B. Backenstos,” *Peoria Free Press* (December 10, 1845): 2.

42. “Murder of One of Our Best Men. To Arms! To Arms!!,” *Warsaw Signal* 2 (September 17, 1845), 2, emphasis retained.

43. Willard Richards Journal, September 16, 1845, Church History Library.

44. “Proclamation to Col. Levi Williams,” M277.73 P963 1845, Church History Library. See Crawley, *Descriptive Biography*, 318–19. Unsurprisingly, Williams did not respond to the proposition as he and his followers were called the “mob body.”

his family out of Carthage that night.”<sup>45</sup> He told of being driven from Carthage the previous morning “by the mob” and being harassed so severely that night at Warsaw “there was little probability of getting away.” This was followed by the even more dramatic account of events which took place that morning when he was “pursued by a number of the mob on horseback” who were determined to kill him. Backenstos’ account of mob aggression may have caused Young to change the rules of engagement as he directed church members to “put a stop to the mobs burning your property” by shooting the “first man who attempts.”<sup>46</sup> Brigham Young then wrote the Mormons at Ramus, twenty miles southeast of Nauvoo, “Our council to you is that if the mob come to disturb you, at the first aggression on yourselves or property give them the cold lead or obey the Sheriffs counsel.” Backenstos added to the directive:

Fellow citizens of Hancock county, of the Ramus or Macedonia precinct. I call upon you in the name of the people of the State of Illinois and by virtue of my office as Sheriff of Hancock county, command you in the name of the people of Said State, that you defend your lives and your property with force of arms against any and all persons who may molest you in the shape of a mob or by whatever name they may call themselves and to be in readiness and hold yourselves subject to my further orders.<sup>47</sup>

George Miller started for Carthage with Backenstos and over one hundred members of the mounted First Cohort about seven that evening. Hosea Stout wrote, “Just after dark Genl Miller went with a party of about one hundred men with the sheriff to take his family from Carthage to Nauvoo as she was in the hands of the mob party.”<sup>48</sup> Miller said, “On our approach to Carthage we were fired on, but they immediately fled before us.”<sup>49</sup> The posse charged into Carthage and assembled before Backenstos’ house. Miller said they saw “torches passing in various directions” and concluded the enemy intended to set fire to their houses and “lay it on the Mormons.” He said, “I sent men all over the village, and had every man arrested and brought before me.” He assured his captives “if a house was burned then or after my leaving, I would put the place to the sword without discrimination.”<sup>50</sup>

---

45. Wingfield Watson, ed., *Correspondence of Bishop George Miller With the Northern Islander* (Burlington, Wisconsin, 1916), 26. Watson reproduced Miller’s correspondence from James J. Strang’s newspaper *The Northern Islander* at Beaver Island, Michigan.

46. Brigham Young Journal, 61, September 16, 1845.

47. Manuscript History of Brigham Young, CR 100 102, September 16, 1845.

48. Brooks, *The Diary of Hosea Stout*, 1:64, September 16, 1845.

49. The shots were apparently fired as warnings by men on the approaches to Carthage and were not directed at the Mormons.

50. See Watson, *Correspondence of Bishop George Miller*, 27. Backenstos, in Proclamation No. 3, September 17, 1845, *Nauvoo Neighbor* 3 (September 24, 1845): 3, said upon entering Carthage residents were seen “running about with fire brands.” He confirmed that his force threatened to “put to the sword all those engaged in firing the place [Carthage].”

Wholesale abandonment of property took place as anti-Mormons learned of the “invasion” at Carthage. Many fled to other Illinois counties, and some left the state for Missouri and Iowa. A sizable group remained in place and hoped for the best. The anti-Mormons responded by banishing at least three high-profile Jack Mormons. Chauncy Robinson, the Carthage Postmaster and County Recorder fled Carthage with his family. Ethil Rose, the county treasurer and assessor, was “expelled” from Carthage and fled “to some secure place with his family for safety.” Edward A. Bedell, Postmaster and Justice of the Peace at Warsaw “fled to save his life.” He took refuge in Nauvoo.<sup>51</sup>

It is ironic that non-Mormons Orrin Rhodes and his stepson Phineas Wilcox, who was from St. Mary’s Precinct, arrived at Nauvoo at ten o’clock that night with a wagon load of wheat to be milled. Rhodes left Wilcox at the home of Mormon Ebenezer Jennings and proceeded to his mother’s some three miles from Nauvoo.<sup>52</sup>

Backenstos’ family was escorted to Nauvoo by six members of the posse, and the rest proceeded to the area of the burnings. George Miller reported that early on the 17th the posse was drawn to smoke from newly burnt buildings in the Bear Creek area. Commanding half the posse, Miller said they managed to approach within “a hundred paces” of the burners and demanded their surrender. When they fled on horseback “at full speed,” the posse had to navigate around a gully and then chased them for some three miles. One burner, riding a slow horse, was overtaken and killed and Miller said two others “crawled into a cornfield near at hand, and there died.”<sup>53</sup> Anson Call, who served under Miller, said the burners were surprised “while sitting on a woodpile eating melons. He alleged the burner who was killed “torched the firebrand to my father’s house the same morning.”<sup>54</sup> The only fatality turned out to be Samuel McBratney, a young Irish teamster from Warsaw. Thomas Sharp announced in the *Warsaw Signal* that the Mormons fired on the burners “without provocation.” He maintained after McBratney had been shot off his horse that he was “stabbed with a sword” and that his throat was cut “in a most revolting manner.”<sup>55</sup>

The morning of September 17 found Brigham Young addressing members of the Second Cohort at Nauvoo. Hosea Stout said he told them he “was composed” and “the late disturbance” had no “effect on him.” He reaffirmed the need for armed Mormon forces and told the assembled “when you shoot be sure & shoot right.” Young also demanded the beating of drums and the firing of guns in the city be stopped

51. Backenstos, Proclamation No. 3, September 17, 1845, *Nauvoo Neighbor* 3 (September 17, 1845): 3.

52. Hallwas and Launius, *Cultures in Conflict*, 278.

53. Watson, *Correspondence of Bishop George Miller*, 27-28. One burner may have been thrown from his horse and evaded the posse and another may have been wounded and was not found.

54. Ethan Call and Christine Shaffer Call, eds., *Anson Call and the Rocky Mountain Prophecy* (Salt Lake City: Call Publishing Co., 2002), 134-39.

55. “Another Brutal Murder,” *Warsaw Signal* 2 (September 18, 1845): 2.

and threatened retribution on those who did not obey.<sup>56</sup> Orrin Rhodes returned to Nauvoo the same day to reconnect with Phineas Wilcox. A later affidavit said he extensively searched for his stepson and could only determine he had visited the Temple where he was accused of being a spy and was led away by several Mormons to the Masonic Hall. He assumed he had been murdered.<sup>57</sup>

Backenstos' posse was on the move the morning of the 18th to join previously dispatched Mormon forces in the Green Plains area under the leadership of Stephen Markham, a colonel in the Nauvoo Legion. George Miller described locating some three hundred anti-Mormons outside Warsaw and understanding that they were expecting reinforcements. He influenced the sheriff to direct Brigham Young "to send two pieces of artillery and four hundred men" with which to prevent the anti-Mormons from being reinforced. Miller's goal was to attack the enemy "where they kept no guard" and "put them to the sword."<sup>58</sup> Later that day, Hosea Stout noted he had received and complied with orders to "raise 20 men well armed & equipped" to the Camp Creek area in northeast Hancock County because the "mob were about to commit their depredation[s] on that settlement." Howard Egan, a member of the Old Police, and twenty men were dispatched.<sup>59</sup> Ironically, anti-Mormon Alexander Daubenheyer left his home at Pontoosuc, in the Camp Creek area the same day to deliver supplies to anti-Mormons at or near Carthage. After his horse returned home "without a rider" on September 21, it was assumed he had been murdered by the Mormons and his body concealed.<sup>60</sup>

Brigham Young's journal entry of September 19 indicates he initially favored honoring Backenstos' request for the cannons and reinforcements. However, "after mature deliberation," he went to the parade ground to inform his officers "it would not answer for us to send according to that [Backenstos'] order." Concurrently, a messenger arrived from Miller telling him to hasten the delivery of reinforcements and, according to Young's journal, he told the officers, "if the sheriff and Gen. Miller were to give orders and be the chief counselors it was best for them to come back and stay here and we would go and fill their commands, [he] stated I knew Gen. Miller to be a good man only wanted his memory jogged and he would send no more orders, and that Backenstos would do as we said." In an apparent effort to curtail the aggressive and potentially irresponsible actions of Backenstos and Miller, Young told his officers "to take especial care of their men and not run into danger, [and] neither destroy any property." Realizing the consequences of a military clash in which anti-

---

56. Brooks, *The Diary of Hosea Stout*, 1:64-66, September 17, 1845.

57. Hallwas and Launius, *Cultures in Conflict*, 278-80.

58. Watson, *Correspondence of Bishop George Miller*, 28-29.

59. Brooks, *The Diary of Hosea Stout*, 1:67, September 18, 1845.

60. See "Mr. Hardy's Affidavit," about Daubenheyer's disappearance in *Quincy Whig* 8 (October 15, 1845): 2 and Hallwas and Launius, *Cultures in Conflict*, 279.

Mormons were killed, Young said if the anti-Mormons “wished to flee let them flee.” He also ordered all work be stopped “except that on the Temple” and specified if it was necessary the workmen should “car[r]y the sword in one hand while they work with the other.”<sup>61</sup>

Levi Williams, apparently realizing his forces were in danger, withdrew them to Missouri early on the nineteenth. With a decisive battle with the anti-Mormons averted and Warsaw abandoned, the victorious force returned to Carthage. Backenstos explained in Proclamation No. 4:

I entered the town of Carthage about the setting of the sun, as I had a large number of writs for the arrest of those accused of burning houses barns, and stacks of grain. I ordered my posse to surround the town and permit none to escape, but to bring every man to the Court House in order that I might arrest such persons as I had writs against and detain such other persons in custody as are accused by respectable persons until writs could be procured, that they might be dealt with according to law. All those against whom I had writs fled before I could have them surrounded except one Anthony Barkman.<sup>62</sup>

Mormon George Laub said Carthage was occupied for “ten or Twelve days.”<sup>63</sup> It was a bitter time for the few residents who remained. Backenstos, saying he had been authorized by Governor Ford to confiscate the muskets issued to the Carthage Greys, had his forces search homes, farms and personal property. Eyewitness Eudocia Baldwin Marsh remembered members of Backenstos’ posse coming to the family farm near Carthage to search for weapons. Aware of the posse’s intentions, her brothers had hidden muskets of the Carthage militia along with family rifles and shotguns in a cornfield where they were not discovered. She described the posse as scraggy-looking and being heavily armed with guns, swords, pistols, and bowie knives. No weapons were discovered but the family considered the posse to be thugs.<sup>64</sup> Jason H. Sherman, also an anti-Mormon eyewitness to the searching, said the posse “rummaged drawers and trunks” and “in some cases took private arms and other articles of property.” He said Backenstos left fifty men to occupy Carthage on September 20, and his force intermittently roamed Hancock County looking for lawbreakers. He bitterly said, “other [Mormon] parties ... were out plundering night and day, taking

---

61. Brigham Young Journal, 68, September 19, 1845. Hosea Stout recorded Young as saying, “Backenstos advises us not to meddle with any body[s] property but my counsel is to take enough property to sustain life ...” Brooks, *The Diary of Hosea Stout*, 1:67, September 19, 1845.

62. *Proclamation No. 4. To the Citizens of Hancock County, Ill., and The Surrounding County* was printed under that title in *Nauvoo Neighbor* 3 (September 24, 1845): 2.

63. Eugene England, ed., “George Laub’s Nauvoo Journal,” *BYU Studies* 18 (1978): 164.

64. Eudocia Baldwin Marsh, “Mormons in Hancock County: A Reminiscence,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 64 (Spring 1971): 60–61.

horses from stables before the eyes of their owners in some instances, and driving cattle from farms into Nauvoo.”<sup>65</sup>

### Intervention of Governor Thomas Ford and the Quest for Peace

Several sources agree that when Governor Thomas Ford learned of civil war in Hancock County, he determined he had to intervene with state militia. He determined, “neither party in Hancock could be trusted with the power to keep peace.” He wrote in his history, without providing a date, that he had designated Brigadier General John J. Hardin of the Illinois Militia, a prominent Whig of Jacksonville and former member of the Illinois Legislature, to head a delegation to restore peace in Hancock County and to facilitate the Mormon migration from Illinois. Hardin was ably assisted by Militia Major William B. Warren, a Whig clerk of the Illinois Supreme Court. United States Congressman Stephen Douglass, a Democrat, was an important part of the delegation as he was remembered by the Mormons for his favorable decisions when he was an Illinois Supreme Court judge. Democrat James H. McDougal, the Illinois Attorney General, was included in the delegation to guarantee the rights of all participants in the civil disturbance.<sup>66</sup>

Thomas Ford directed Backenstos in a letter dated September 21, “to surrender to [General] Hardin [when he arrived in Hancock County] and submit himself before Judge [Norman] Purple for the murder of Worrell.”<sup>67</sup> P[roctor] P. Newcomb, a Justice of the Peace from Augusta Township, issued an arrest warrant on the same day, based on the complaint of James M. Steward that alleged Jacob Backenstos “with unlawful Weapon [did] shoot or cause to be shot Franklin A. Worrell so that said Worrell did die of his wounds.”<sup>68</sup>

Brigham Young’s journal entry of September 22 would be the last for seventy-eight days. It reported that a delegation from McDonough County asked if the Mormons would “leave in the spring according to our proposition to [Levi] Williams.” The hierarchy said they would agree to leave if the “several counties” would aid “in assisting us to dispose of our property and to have all vexations Lawsuits stayed.”<sup>69</sup> Simultaneously, delegates from nine Illinois counties—excluding Hancock—gathered at Quincy and formulated proposals that urged the Mormons to leave Illinois

65. See Hallwas and Launius, *Cultures in Conflict*, 288-91. Governor Thomas Ford, in *History of Illinois*, 410, said “During the ascendancy of the sheriff and the absence of the anti-Mormons from their houses, the people who had been burnt out of their houses assembled in Nauvoo, from whence, with many others, they sallied forth and ravaged the country, stealing and plundering whatever was convenient to carry or drive away.”

66. See Ford, *History of Illinois*, 410.

67. See Oaks and Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy*, 196-97.

68. Box [33] Civil and Criminal Files, 1836-1860, Hancock County Court, Microfilm No. 152165, Item 1, LDS Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

69. Brigham Young Journal, 74-75, September 22, 1845, Church History Library.

and forwarded them to Brigham Young.<sup>70</sup> A September 22 meeting of citizens from Quincy, known as the Quincy Committee, urged acceptance of the Mormon proposal submitted to Levi Williams on September 16, which said the Mormons would leave in the spring if hostile actions against them ceased. They rejected the Mormon stipulation that they help them sell their property and stated they did not believe the Mormons to be “a persecuted people.” They bluntly added, “whatever grievances they [the Mormons] may suffer to be the legitimate consequences of their own conduct.” They also said they would “adopt a preliminary military organization, for future action” if the Mormons failed to leave in the spring and called for the prompt return of the “old citizens” and for Backenstos to resign from office.<sup>71</sup>

Brigham Young presented six members of the Quincy Committee with a written response on September 24 which was widely circulated among the non-Mormons. It said in part, “it is our desire, and ever has been, to live in peace with all men, so far as we can without sacrificing the right of worshipping God according to the dictates of our own conscience.” He reviewed persecutions the Mormons had endured and made it clear that they did not respond to the burnings in the Morley Settlement until ordered by the sheriff. The document thanked the people of Quincy for their “hospitality in former days which still causes our hearts to burn with joy” and said “Mormon prayers ask for blessing on their heads.” The response also affirmed the Mormons would “leave this county next spring, for some point so remote, that there will not need to be a difficulty with the people and ourselves.” Young asked non-Mormon cooperation in selling property and a halt in vexatious lawsuits and all forms of harassment.<sup>72</sup>

Thomas Sharp chose to print two extras on the 24th instead of the regular issue of the *Warsaw Signal*. He explained it was necessary “to submit to the public a candid and impartial statement of facts, that all may judge of the character of the banditti that now reign supreme in our county.” In justification of the burnings, Sharp explained “wrong upon wrong, and insult upon insult” had been poured out upon the innocent anti-Mormons until a few, because of Mormon stealing, were “rendered desperate” and started burning Mormon possessions. He called the Mormons “monsters in human shape,” condemned the murders of Franklin Worrell and Samuel McBratney, and incorrectly implied eighteen non-Mormons had been killed in the Camp Wood area. Sharp also rebuked anti-Mormons in neighboring counties for promising to “flock to our standard” and then going back on their word to help pun-

---

70. Hallwas and Launius, *Cultures in Conflict*, 302.

71. Minutes of this meeting were published in the October 1, 1845 *Quincy Whig*. Parts of the meeting are published in *History of the Church* 7:451–53.

72. See “Nauvoo, Sept 24, 1845,” *Quincy Whig* 8 (October 1, 1845): 2 and “To whom it may concern,” *Nauvoo Neighbor* 3 (October 1, 1845): 2–3.



ish the Mormons.<sup>73</sup> The second extra, printed at ten that evening, contained resolutions from McDonough County citizens condemning the Mormons and promising military support for the Hancock County anti-Mormons.<sup>74</sup>

The *Burlington Hawk-Eye* of September 25 opined that if any further “disturbances occur” between the warring parties, the Mormons will be driven “out of the Holy city and from the State, cost what it may.”<sup>75</sup> Jacob Backenstos, however, continued to take the side of the Mormons. Proclamation No. 5, dated September 25, said Mormons “from the infected area” told him horses have been stolen from them and “More than 200 head of cattle are missing.” He asserted most of the non-Mormons who reported items stolen had spoken out against the “mobbing and burning” and thereby were victimized by the “abusers of the Mormons.”<sup>76</sup> The complexity of the situation was highlighted when Governor Ford warned anti-Mormons from Iowa Territory and Missouri that they “would be chastised in a most summary manner” if they interfered in the affairs of Hancock County.<sup>77</sup>

Thomas Sharp, in his unfinished history, said Hardin’s force arrived at Carthage on the afternoon of September 28. Finding the courthouse occupied by Backenstos and about forty Mormons, Hardin demanded they “give up all the arms taken from the citizens and then to leave the town in half an hour.”<sup>78</sup> Governor Ford added, “all parties over four in number on either side were prohibited from assembling and marching over the country.”<sup>79</sup> Jason H. Sherman said upon the arrival of General Hardin’s force, “Backenstos was taken into custody, and giving his soldiers fifteen minutes to leave town—which they did not over stay.”<sup>80</sup> According to Illinois statute the coroner would assume the duties of sheriff if the sheriff is incapacitated “by death, resignation, removal or otherwise.”<sup>81</sup> Backenstos is documented on several oc-

73. “To the people abroad,” *Warsaw Signal Extra* (First Extra), September 24, 1845.

74. “Proceedings of a Meeting of the Citizens of McDonough County,” *Warsaw Signal Extra* (Second Extra), September 24, 1845.

75. “Late from the Mormon War,” *Burlington Hawk-Eye* 7 (September 25, 1845): 2.

76. Backenstos’ Proclamation No. 5 was printed, along with the first four Proclamations, in *Nauvoo Neighbor* 3 (October 1, 1845): 1–2.

77. See “A Proclamation by the Governor of the State of Illinois,” September 26, 1845,” *Warsaw Signal* 2 (October 15, 1845): 3 and “A Proclamation by the Governor of the State of Illinois,” *Nauvoo Neighbor* 3 (October 1, 1845): 2.

78. Roger D. Launius, “Anti-Mormonism in Illinois: Thomas C. Sharp’s Unfinished History of the Mormon War, 1845,” *Journal of Mormon History* 15 (1989): 39.

79. Ford, *History of Illinois*, 410.

80. See Hallwas and Launius, *Cultures in Conflict*, 291. See also “The Hancock Troubles,” *Quincy Whig* 8 (October 8, 1845): 2, which contained, “Backenstos, was at Carthage, and offered to surrender himself into the hands of Gen. Hardin.”

81. Chapter 99, “Sheriffs and Corners,” Section 18, Revised Statutes of the State of Illinois Adopted by the General Assembly of Said State, At its Regular Session, Held in the Years A. D. 1844–1845 (Springfield, IL: William Walters, 1845). See also *History of the Church* 7:491 where it mentions that Backenstos was “in the hands of the coroner who has permission either to take bail or select his own guard, at the expense of the state.”

casions as being in the custody of Mormon Henry W. Miller, who became coroner on August 11 in the same landslide Mormon vote that made Backenstos sheriff.

The challenges faced by Ford's Illinois volunteers were immense as both sides had similar litanies of blame for the other. The non-Mormon complaints about the Mormons had recently been set forth in a September 20, 1845, plea for neighboring counties to intervene and remove the odious occupation by Backenstos and his Mormon posse. A sampling of their complaints includes: non-Mormons were not protected by the law; Gentiles have been imprisoned illegally; Mormons issued vexatious writs against them, non-Mormons were denied the process of law; Mormon witnesses perjured themselves when testifying against the non-Mormons; and Mormons trampled on the non-Mormon's "beloved institutions."<sup>82</sup>

Edward Everett, a member of the Quincy Riflemen, remembered the apprehension his unit felt when they accompanied Governor Ford's delegates into Nauvoo on September 30: "Our company was placed in the advance with loaded rifles, and we entered the city with some expectation of meeting resistance from the Mormons who were well armed and organized."<sup>83</sup> Hosea Stout noted the militia entered Nauvoo "without leave or notice." He also noted he and others were approached by Jacob Backenstos and Stephen Douglas who asked for a meeting of the delegation and the Twelve. Brigham Young and members of his council met with the delegation at the parade ground near the Temple where General Hardin displayed his orders from the Governor.<sup>84</sup> After Young granted permission for the militia to search Nauvoo for the bodies of Phineas Wilcox and Alexander Daubenhayer, he was asked if he knew of "crimes having been committed in Nauvoo." Young said he "knew nothing of the kind," and sharply added that he "had reliable information that some hundred houses had been burned in the south part of the county and probably if he would go there, he would find the persons who had done it."<sup>85</sup> Hardin's troops searched the Masonic Hall and its stable, the Temple, and the Masonic Hall without success. Hosea Stout was so incensed that he said "it was his heart's desire and prayer" the obnoxious soldiers "may be speedily damned to the lowest degradation [*sic*] of Hell."<sup>86</sup>

Simultaneously, delegates from Adams, Brown, Henderson, McDonough, Pike, Schuyler, Warren, Marquette, and Knox Counties were meeting at Carthage. Collectively referred to as the Carthage Convention, the delegates unsurprisingly agreed

82. See Hallwas and Launius, *Cultures in Conflict*, 291-94

83. Edward Everett, *Narrative of Military Experience in Several Capacities* (Springfield, IL: State Journal Co., 1906), 185

84. Brooks, *Diary of Hosea Stout*, 1:77-78. The *History of the Church* 7:447, explained Hardin called the meeting in a manner Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball Willard Richards, John Taylor, George A Smith, and Amasa Lyman were "surrounded by his troops, four hundred in number."

85. *History of the Church* 7:448.

86. Brooks, *Diary of Hosea Stout*, 1:78, September 30, 1845.

the Mormons should leave. Hardin and his advisors mediated between them and the Mormons.<sup>87</sup>

On the evening of September 30 Thomas Sharp printed an extra which contained resolutions formulated by citizen groups from Adams, Henderson, and Warren Counties in Illinois and Clark County, Missouri. The resolutions agreed the Mormons were unfit neighbors, had to leave the area by spring, and offered varying levels, military support if the deadline were not met. One resolution passed at a public meeting in Churchville, Clark County, Missouri, advised Governor Ford to “take [ex-Missouri Governor] Lilburn W. Boggs as a pattern for his action in relation to the Mormons.”<sup>88</sup>

Brigham Young and his Council held a successful meeting with Governor Ford's delegation on October 1. The Mormon proposal of September 24, which stipulated the Mormons would leave by Spring, was discussed and was found to be acceptable. General Hardin and Stephen Douglas also endorsed the Mormon “proposed location at Vancouver's Island.”<sup>89</sup> That afternoon Hardin and associates sent a request from their camp two miles south of Nauvoo to Young and his council asking for written confirmation that the Mormons would leave in the spring.<sup>90</sup> A response, signed by Brigham Young that afternoon acknowledged, “we had commenced making arrangements to remove from the county, previous to the recent disturbances.” He outlined some of the organizational planning for the exodus and the need to sell or rent “some hundreds of farms and some two thousand or more houses for sale in the city and county.” Help from the non-Mormon community in disposing of their property was also requested. After saying “we shall not put in any more crops of any description,” Young added “if the testimonies are not sufficient to satisfy any people that we are in earnest, we will soon give them a sign that cannot be mistaken—we will all leave them.”<sup>91</sup>

Responding to Brigham Young and his Council by letter on October 2, Ford's delegation said they had met with delegates at Carthage and area anti-Mormons and told them the Mormons gave “every appearance of earnest determination” to leave in the spring. There was “a general acquiescence in it by citizens of other counties, and of this, so far as to agree to restrain and withhold all further violence, and that you be

---

87. Glen M. Leonard, *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, A People of Promise* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2002), 537.

88. Different headings were used for the resolutions. *Warsaw Signal Extra*, September 30, 12 o'clock P.M. 1845.

89. *History of the Church* 7:449.

90. “To First President and Council of the Church at Nauvoo,” *Nauvoo Neighbor* 3 (October 1, 1845): 2.

91. This October 1, 1845 letter was printed under title, “To Gen. John J. Hardin, W. B. Warren, S. A. Douglas, and J. A. McDougal,” in *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 6 (December 1, 1845): 190 and B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Provo, UT: Published by the Church, Brigham Young University Press, 1965), 2:512–13, emphasis retained in both.

permitted to depart in peace next spring." After saying, "it has become impossible for your church to remain in this country," the delegation specified:

After what has been said and written by yourselves, it will be confidently expected by us and the whole community, that you will remove from the state with your whole church, in the manner you have agreed in your statement to us.

Should you not do so, we are satisfied, however, much we may deprecate violence and bloodshed, that violent measures will be resorted to, to compel your removal, which will result in most disastrous consequences to yourselves and your opponents, and the end will be your expulsion from the state.<sup>92</sup>

General Hardin informed Governor Ford by letter on October 4 that despite intense searching for the body of Phineas Wilcox, it had not been found. The Governor was told a Mormon named Caleb Baldwin said Wilcox was recognized as being "with the mob that murdered Joseph Smith" and was last seen being escorted to the Masonic Hall. Hardin concluded, "I think he has been killed."<sup>93</sup>

The four representatives submitted a broadside to the Anti-Mormons on October 6 which began with the correspondence between them and the Mormons on October 1 and 2 and their conclusion that the Mormons would leave as scheduled "for a home west of the Rocky Mountains." The broadside announced that as "Order and quiet are again restored to your country," the large part of their volunteer force would be decommissioned but a portion would remain "until the Governor shall order them to be disbanded." The anti-Mormons were bluntly told:

Remember, whatever may be the aggression against you, the sympathy of the public may be forfeited. It cannot be denied that the burning of the houses of the Mormons in Hancock county, by which a large number of women and children have been rendered homeless and houseless, in the beginning of winter, was an act criminal in itself, and disgraceful to its perpetrators. And it should also be known, that it has led many persons to believe, that even if the Mormons are so bad as they are represented, they are no worse than those who burnt their houses.

Whether your cause is just or unjust, the acts of these incendiaries have thus lost for you something of the sympathy and good will of your fellow-citizens; and a resort to, or persistence in, such a course, under existing circumstances, will make you forfeit all the respect and sympathy of the community.

The broadside concluded with, "We trust and believe, for this lovely portion of our State, a brighter day is dawning, and we beseech all parties not to seek to hasten

92. *History of the Church* 7:450–51.

93. John J. Hardin to "His Excellency Thos. Ford, Governor," October 4, 1845, *Illinois State Register* (October 17, 1845): 2.

its approach by the torch of the incendiary, nor to disturb its dawn by the clash of arms.”<sup>94</sup>

It was probably because the State of Illinois was virtually insolvent that the volunteer militia force was reduced to one hundred men in two companies under Major William Warren to keep the peace as best they could. The *Quincy Whig* stated the Quincy Rifle Company would not be disbanded.<sup>95</sup> The reduced militia was spread too thinly to proactively patrol the county and often became involved only after criminal activity was reported. Both parties accused Major Warren and his volunteer militia of favoring the other side. The Mormons kept their guns close at hand<sup>96</sup>

### Final General Conference

The last General Conference at Nauvoo spanned October 5-8 in the Temple—the event signaled that the Temple was nearing completion, and the reception of endowments was near at hand.<sup>97</sup> Following lengthy voting to confirm priesthood holders, talks by the hierarchy stirred the thousands of Mormons with stories about persecution, rejection, and the challenges soon to be faced.<sup>98</sup>

The conference was disrupted on the morning of October 7 when elements of Major Warren's force rushed into Nauvoo and arrested and removed several men accused of stealing from the non-Mormons. As word spread that the militia was seen in the city, General Charles C. Rich reasoned they “likely had writs against the 12 [Twelve Apostles] and others” and “gave orders for every man at the Temple to go and get his arms and be prepared for the worst.” Hosea Stout said, “This created a great stir and conference was dispensed with till tomorrow.”<sup>99</sup> Thomas Bullock, a recorder of the conference, said “a man by the name of [Daniel] Smith [was arrested] for stealing goods below Warsaw, Thomas King, [Benjamin] Gardner, and Watson Barlow

94. See “Camp Carthage, Oct. 6, 1845—To the anti-Mormon citizens of Hancock and the surrounding counties,” *Nauvoo Neighbor* 3 (October 29, 1845): 1.

95. “The Hancock Troubles,” *Quincy Whig* 8 (October 8, 1845): 2.

96. Norton Jacobs quoted John Taylor as saying on October 5, 1845, “he should feel to rejoice when he got beyond the bounds of the Christians for he wo[u]ld not have to carry his six shooter in his pocket.” Ronald O. Barney, *One Side By Himself: the Life and Times of Lewis Barney, 1808–1894* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2001), 52. Perrigrine Sessions, referring to this period, said, “the labor on the Temple was almost oblige[d] to stop and the workmen many of them carried small armes [arms] with them all the time and all kept their muskets where the could put their hand on them a moments warning.” Smart, *Missionary Diaries of Perrigrine Sessions*, 89, quoted without revision.

97. Joseph Smith said, at the October 2, 1841 General Conference, “There shall be no more baptisms for the dead, until the ordinance can be attended to in the Lord's House; and the Church shall not hold another general conference, until they can meet in said house. For thus saith the Lord!” “Minutes of a Conference,” *Times and Seasons* 2 (October 15, 1841): 578, emphasis retained.

98. See *History of the Church* 7:456–77.

99. Brooks, *Diary of Hosea Stout*, 1:81.

for stealing cows.”<sup>100</sup> William Clayton said special prayers were offered that evening that the Lord would cause “the Governors troops to leave the country.”<sup>101</sup>

While the Mormons were dealing with the disruption of their conference, Backenstos was escorted to Quincy by “General Hardin and Staff” for his October 7 appearance before Judge Norman Purple concerning the murders of Worrell and McBratney. A reporter for the *Quincy Whig* considered testimony given for and against Backenstos and determined he would “probably be acquitted and thrown on the world with the unavenged blood of his victims yet red upon him.” He was “held to [a \$3,000] bail for his appearance at the Hancock Circuit Court to answer the [murder] charges.”<sup>102</sup>

Early on the morning of the eighth, Charles C. Rich told Hosea Stout some Mormons were “taking cattle &c. from our enemies and was raising thereby considerable excitement and wanted me to find out about it & have it Stopped.”<sup>103</sup> Later that morning, Brigham Young opened the conference “by denouncing such characters [Mormon thieves] in the most severe terms & took measures to [have] them all cut off from the Church.”<sup>104</sup> Hosea Stout noted that afternoon, he “learned that the mob party had found the man By the name of Debanair [*sic*] whom [General] Hardin Said was missing, was found found [*sic*] buried in the bottom of a ditch made for a Sod fence and they now swore that the Mormons in that Settlement should atone for it.”<sup>105</sup> The *Warsaw Signal* said Daubenheyer’s body was located in the Camp Creek area “about a quarter of a mile from the residence of a mormon [*sic*] by the name of Rice, at whose house a Mormon guard was stationed during the recent disturbances.”<sup>106</sup>

William Clayton’s journal entry of October 10 described the hierarchy attempting to come to grips with what he labeled “the present emergency.” Evidently, the rumor General Hardin “had pledged himself to the mob” and would “unroof every house in Nauvoo” unless Orrin Porter Rockwell and others were secured was thought to be factual. Also contributing to the Mormon stress level was the rumor, “Three hundred

100. Greg R. Knight, ed., *Thomas Bullock Nauvoo Journal* (Orem, UT: Grandin Book Co., 1994), 16-17. Norton Jacob said a Mr. Crawford recovered stolen property and that men named Garner and Smith were arrested. See Barney, *Norton Jacob’s Record*, 53.

101. Smith, *Journals of William Clayton*, 185, October 10, 1845.

102. “J. B. Backenstos,” *Quincy Whig* 8 (October 15, 1845): 2. See also Grow, et. al., *Council of Fifty Minutes*, 487n107.

103. Brooks, *The Diary of Hosea Stout*, 1:81.

104. Barney, *Norton Jacob’s Record*, 53. Thomas Bullock recorded that Brigham Young “warned the brethren not to receive any stolen goods into their house.” Knight, *Thomas Bullock Nauvoo Journal*, 24-25.

105. Brooks, *The Diary of Hosea Stout*, 1:81. Daubenheyer, who had been shot through the back of his head, was buried in the center of nearby Tull Cemetery. His headstone lists his birthdate as “March 13, 1773” but the date of his death is strangely listed as “Sept. 45.” Graphically engraved between these dates is the caption “Killed by the Mormons.”

106. “Murders During the Late Disturbance,” *Warsaw Signal* (October 15, 1845): 3.

of our enemies have volunteered to come with him from Quincy and they expect to be joined by others on the way." Clayton marveled, "There seems to be no disposition abroad but to massacre the whole body of this people and nothing but the power of God can save us of the cruel ravages of the bloodthirsty mob." He then recorded the realistic reaction by the hierarchy, "We concluded to plead with our heavenly father to preserve his people and the lives of his servants that the saints may finish the Temple and receive their endowment, and that the Lord will soften the hearts of the Governor [Ford] [General] Hardin, [W. B.] Warren and others like he did the heart of Pharaoh that we may have peace this winter and depart in peace."<sup>107</sup>

Alleged Mormon criminal activity was emphasized in the October 15 *Quincy Whig*. Affidavits swearing the Mormons stole cattle, pigs, corn, plows, bees, and myriad other items throughout Hancock and Adams Counties were featured. Included were a deposition by Orrin Rhodes about Phineas Wilcox's disappearance, a deposition of Dan L. Davis describing the mangled condition of Samuel McBratney's body, and Joseph Hardy's deposition about the disappearance of Andrew Daubenheyer.<sup>108</sup> The editor of the *Whig* explained, "the affidavits were printed to show the public instances of Mormon depredation[s]."<sup>109</sup>

In spite of the consistent public condemnation of the Mormons by the anti-Mormons, armed anti-Mormons burned two houses and three stables in the Morley Settlement on October 18. Three days later the house and outbuildings of "the widow Boss" were burned at the Settlement.<sup>110</sup> It was presumably John Taylor who cynically responded in the final issue of the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, "We understand that some 8 or 10 buildings have been burnt by the mob, in the south part of the county, but Maj. Warren said he probably would be there in a few days with the Governor's troops."<sup>111</sup> The *Nauvoo Neighbor* editorialized that the Mormons were leaving the United States "because we are compelled by mobocracy, on account of the weakness of the law and the stupidity or hypocrisy of its executors."<sup>112</sup>

Distrust of Warren's forces led the Mormons to begin strategically posting clusters of men on the approaches to Nauvoo on October 23 in an effort, according to Hosea Stout, "to guard the country round and protect it from the depredations of the men whom the governor had sent here to maintain the 'Supremacy of the

107. Smith, *Journals of William Clayton*, 185, October 10, 1845.

108. "Individual Affidavits," *Quincy Whig* 8 (October 15, 1845): 2. Orrin Rhodes' September 27, 1845 deposition was printed under the title "Murder of Phineas Wilcox," in *Warsaw Signal* 2 (October 15, 1845): 3.

109. Untitled statement, *Quincy Whig* 8 (October 15, 1845): 2.

110. *History of the Church* 7:488.

111. Untitled statement, *Nauvoo Neighbor* 3 (October 29, 1845): 3. Thomas Sharp said the renewed burnings injured the cause of the anti-Mormons because it might change the "feelings of our brethren of the surrounding counties." "More House Burnings," *Warsaw Signal* 2 (October 29, 1845): 2.

112. "To Our Patrons," *Nauvoo Neighbor* 3 (October 29, 1845): 2. The *Neighbor* was running late.

Law.”<sup>113</sup> The Mormon dissatisfaction with Governor Ford’s efforts to protect them was amplified in an October 23 letter sanctioned by the apostles from Mayor Orson Spencer to Governor Ford. After a litany of charges about the alleged deficiencies of and damage caused by Ford’s forces, Spencer asked, “Has Governor Ford become another Boggs?” He also informed the Governor, “The only difference between *your* troops and the mob is like the difference between a keg of arsenic and a keg of choice flour fatally flavored with arsenic.”<sup>114</sup>

A near tragedy played out that night in northern Hancock County a few miles from Pontoosuc at the cabin of Nathan Bigelow. The family had been told by armed anti-Mormons on October 22 that they would return on the 23rd and burn their house. Sixteen-year-old Hyrum Bigelow made it to Carthage and appealed to Major Warren for help, and that evening Lieutenant Charles W. Everett of the volunteers unwisely entered the home without knocking at 11 p.m. Nathan Bigelow, thinking he was a mobber, shot him twice. Everett survived the near fatal event, and Bigelow was not charged. Bigelow nearly died from the effects of poison administered to him by a neighbor that Christmas.<sup>115</sup>

Major Warren, Judge Purple and their aides were on their way to Nauvoo on October 25 when they encountered Hosea Stout and fourteen Mormons armed with side arms seven miles on the prairie from Nauvoo. Warren became furious because this violated General Hardin’s decree that no more than four persons would assemble in the countryside, and he considered the action to be a direct challenge to his authority. Stout noted Backenstos, “who was in the hands of H. W. Miller,” passed on their way to Nauvoo an hour later.<sup>116</sup> When Warren and Purple met later that day with Brigham Young, John Taylor, and others of the hierarchy in the Mansion House, there was an explosion of emotions. Warren said he would “put the county under martial law,” and Taylor thundered the Mormons had no confidence in him because “hundreds of murderers, robbers and house burners roam at large unwhipped of justice.” That evening the church leaders met and prayed, “the Lord would overrule the matter and remove from Warren’s heart the disposition to declare martial law.”<sup>117</sup>

A second conflict burst forth upon the Mormons on the twenty-fifth. This treat came in the form of Sheriff James L. Bradley of Rock Island, Illinois, who had been commissioned by the Rock Island Court to arrest a Mormon named Return Jackson Redden. On the previous Fourth of July several non-Mormon thieves journeyed

---

113. Brooks, *Diary of Hosea Stout*, 85–86, October 23, 1845.

114. *History of the Church* 7:504, emphasis retained.

115. This harrowing story and the aftermath is told in “Reminiscences of Mary Gibbs Bigelow,” in Carol Cornwell Madsen, *In Their Own Words: Women and the Story of Nauvoo* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 231–39. The shooting is mentioned in Smith, *Journals of William Clayton*, 189.

116. Brooks, *Diary of Hosea Stout*, 85–86, October 23 and 25, 1845.

117. *History of the Church* 7:487–88.



from the Nauvoo area to Rock Island where they fatally wounded a pioneer fur trader named George Davenport in a bungled robbery. At recent trials of the accused murderers, testimony was given which implicated Grant Redden and his sons, William and Return Jackson, in planning Davenport's robbery. Grant and William were arrested at their home opposite Nauvoo in Iowa, but Return Jackson seemed inaccessible in Nauvoo. The Rock Island Court reached out to Lyman E. Johnson, a member of the original Twelve Apostles who was practicing law at Keokuk, to aid in the arrest as he and the Reddens were from the Hiram, Ohio, area and were related. When the steamboat *Sarah Ann* docked at Nauvoo, Johnson decoyed Return Jackson to the dock under the pretense to talk about securing bail for his father and brother. When Bradley showed the warrant and attempted to arrest Return Jackson, a struggle took place between the sheriff and the would-be prisoner. Passengers from the *Sarah Ann* rushed to help the sheriff and were met by Mormons with missiles and clubs. Sheriff Bradley and Lyman Johnson were seriously injured in the melee, and Return Jackson remained at Nauvoo.<sup>118</sup>

At the request of the hierarchy, Nauvoo Mayor Orson Spencer composed a message to Governor Ford on October 26 that included depositions concerning the recent burnings to be personally delivered by George Miller and Mormon ally E. A. Bedell. Calling Ford "our honorable chief magistrate," the message explained martial law would "obstruct the ends of peace" and retard the "peaceful departure" of the Mormons in the spring. The Mormons requested Warren's troops be "speedily withdrawn."<sup>119</sup>

Mormon actions became more complex on October 27 when Abiather Williams, a suspected counterfeiter in Iowa, "swore out a writ against the Twelve for making bogus money" before an Iowa judge. Indictments were passed "by the Hancock County grand jury ... amidst great excitement." This began the process by which Young and the other apostles had to go into hiding to evade attempts to be served with warrants.<sup>120</sup> Backenstos' examination at Carthage before Judge Norman Purple for the murder of Franklin Worrell wrapped up the same day. Attending "in the hands of the Coroner," Backenstos was indicted by the grand jury to stand trial for the murder of Franklin Worrell. After his lawyers asked for a change of venue, his case was transferred to the Peoria, Illinois, Court to be held in five weeks. He posted

---

118. See William Shepard and H. Michael Marquardt, *Lost Apostles: Forgotten Members of Mormonism's Original Quorum of Twelve* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2014), 257–61.

119. *History of the Church* 7:489–90.

120. See Oaks and Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy*, 202; *History of the Church* 7:491, and Grow, et. al., *Council of Fifty Minutes*, 508–9.

a \$3,000 bail. The *Nauvoo Neighbor* noted the sheriff “is in good health and spirits” and “bears persecution with commendable forbearance.”<sup>121</sup>

Brigham Young and his council accepted an invitation to meet with Major Warren and members of his command with trepidation the afternoon of October 28 at Nauvoo but were delighted to learn Warren would not serve the writs he had in his possession on the Twelve Apostles for “treason.” According to William Clayton, Warren “considered it unjust to serve them” and that if the Twelve “were to be harassed with writs” the spring deadline for removal could not be met.<sup>122</sup> Warren apparently had also backed off his threat to place Hancock County under martial law and chose not to make an issue of demanding the arrest of Return Jackson Redden.<sup>123</sup> George Miller and E. A. Bedell met with Governor Ford that morning at Springfield after a brutally hard journey. Ford was friendly and, according to Miller, was sympathetic. He did not, however, agree to remove his forces from Hancock County.<sup>124</sup>

Ford responded to Orson Spencer’s October 23rd offensive letter with similar bluntness on October 30. He demanded Spencer tell him “When were the Mormon people exterminated” on his order? Spencer was lectured, “It is acknowledged on all hands that there are some thieves in your city as in all other cities. These your people say, you have no power to restrain and punish for want of a city government and court. If you cannot restrain them I can and will. This is not extermination or following in the footsteps of Governor Boggs.”<sup>125</sup> In a letter to George Miller of the same date, Ford stated:

At all events until I am better informed I will hold it to be my duty to continue a military force in Hancock, both to protect you from the attacks of your enemies, as well as to prevent stealing whether by the anti-Mormons on your credit; by the Mormons themselves; by interlopers who come to your city as a place of refuge or by those who have been burnt out and who may be tempted to take this method of indemnifying themselves for their losses; and if the civil law is not strong enough martial law must be

---

121. “Hancock Circuit Court,” *Nauvoo Neighbor* 3 (October 29, 1845): 3 and *History of the Church* 7:490–91. See legal maneuvering which made it impossible for Mormons or their allies to obtain justice at this time in Hancock County in Oaks and Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy*, 200–201.

122. Smith, *Journals of William Clayton*, 189–90, October 28, 1845.

123. The failed arrest attempt for Redden is amplified in Shepard and Marquardt, *Lost Apostles*, 260–61. The account of the meeting between Warren and the hierarchy in the *Warsaw Signal* was presented in a manner to make the Mormons look bad. Without citing the source of his information, Sharp said “they [the Apostles] seemed to be very passive and submissive, all except Taylor, who still avowed that he would not submit to arrest. Brigham Young, however, told Major W. not to mind that fool; for he would help to take him himself, if a writ was brought for him.” The Apostles, according to Sharp, said Redden “had gone to Michigan.” “Late Visit of Major Warren to Nauvoo,” *Warsaw Signal* 2 (November 5, 1845): 2.

124. *History of the Church* 7:492–93.

125. *History of the Church* 7:505.

resorted to, Because if these things are not put an end to, the surrounding counties will take up the guard and you may be driven in despite of the state, in the dead of winter.<sup>126</sup>

The *Times and Seasons* reviewed the impact of the burnings on the Mormons the following day. Anti-Mormons who destroyed and stole, as well as the “old citizens” who would not intervene to end the lawlessness, were severely rebuked. The victims of the persecution included “many feeble *persons*, thrown out into the scorching rays of the sun, or wet with the *dampening dews* of the evening, *died*, being persecuted to death in a CHRISTIAN land of law and order.” Anti-Mormon militia officers came in for special criticism for “filching and plundering,” and the editor wrote, perhaps with some degree of satisfaction, “some of the offenders paid for the aggression with their lives.” The article proclaimed the Mormons would “shake the dust from our garments, *suffering* wrong rather than do wrong, leaving this nation *alone in her glory*, while the residue of the world, points the finger of scorn, till the indignation and consumption decreed, makes a full end.”<sup>127</sup>

The Manuscript History of Brigham Young and its transposed form in volume 7 of the *History of the Church* indicated a 57-year-old Mormon elder named Joshua Smith, who was summoned to attend court at Carthage on November 4, was murdered by anti-Mormons. It is alleged that anti-Mormons discovered “a knife under his arm,” arrested him, and administered poison to him in jail that led to his death. The account said three Mormon physicians conducted a “post mortem examination” which confirmed he died from poisoning.<sup>128</sup> The authors found no confirmation that Joshua Smith was poisoned.

On November 16, Governor Ford’s advisor, Mason Brayman,<sup>129</sup> who had been appointed by the governor to prosecute offenders in Hancock County, wrote an unknown recipient [possibly Ford] about the continuing lawlessness in Hancock County. He itemized livestock allegedly stolen by Mormons and said, “They continue to send out spies, patrols, and armed companies, prowling about the prairies and interrupting travelers.” He also told about the burning of the home of a Mormon named William Rice on November 12 “on the road to Pontoosuc about twelve miles from here [north of Nauvoo].” He explained it was at Rice’s home that a group of

126. *History of the Church* 7:505, 507.

127. “Great Persecution of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in Illinois, *Times and Seasons* 6 (November 1, 1845): 1016–17, emphasis retained.

128. See *History of the Church* 7:514.

129. Mason Brayman was a trusted friend of Governor Ford and served as an intermediary between him and Joseph Smith and in a lesser role between Ford and Young. His influence is noted in Bill Shepard and H. Michael Marquardt, “Mortal Enemies: Mormons and Missourians 1839–1844,” *The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 36 (Spring/Summer 2016): 72–77.

Mormons during the burnings “voted to murder Daubenheyer.”<sup>130</sup> Historian David R. Crockett explained that two Mormon dwellings were burned at this time:

At about 12:30 a. m., a company of thirty [anti-Mormon] men came to the home and called for Brother Samuel Hicks, who got out of bed and asked what they wanted. They said they were the governor’s troops from Carthage and they had a warrant of arrest for William Rice who they believed was there. Brother Hicks told them that he was not there. They forced Hicks out of the house without anything but his shirt. His wife and children were sick with the flu. They ordered Joseph Swymler and his brother to carry out Brother Hick’s goods, and they set fire to the home before all the goods could be taken out. They then brought Brother Hicks back, who was very cold and sick, gave him many insults, and then left. Later they came back and burned Brother Rice’s home.<sup>131</sup>

Brayman’s letter also told of the murder of fifty-seven-year-old Edmund Durfee at the residence of Solomon Hancock in the Morley Settlement. Durfee had been an active Mormon since 1831 and was the father of thirteen children. His property was partially burned on September 10, and the process was repeated the following day when anti-Mormon shots hit near his children. The family had no choice but to join the exodus to Nauvoo. November 15 found Durfee and family members digging potatoes and gathering corn from his land and, like others whose homes had been burned, gathered at the unburned Solomon Hancock farm. About midnight, Durfee and others who had been sleeping in the barn awoke to a fire threatening their sleeping quarters. Brayman, who obtained his information from a son of Solomon Hancock, explained, “Last night a company of men set fire to a stack of straw near the barn. Persons sleeping in the barn came out, and while endeavoring to prevent the fire from reaching the barn were fired upon. They started to go to the House—a general volley was fired, killing Durfee on the Spot. No shots were fired by the Mormons.”<sup>132</sup>

As would be expected, there was great consternation among the Mormons about the burnings of the homes of Rice and Hicks and the murder of Durfee, but the hi-

130. See Hallwas and Launius, *Cultures in Conflict*, 295–96.

131. David R. Crockett, *Saints in Exile: A Day-By-Day Pioneer Experience* (Tucson, AZ: LDS-Gems Press, 1996), 52–53. See Swymler’s affidavit about the burning of Rice’s home in *History of the Church* 7:530. The *Warsaw Signal* of November 19 acknowledged “Daubenheyer’s body was found buried near the residence of Rice at whose house a guard was stationed during the recent disturbance.” It also acknowledged the “people in the neighborhood” considered him guilty of the murder and responded by burning his house.” Thomas Sharp rebuked “the few senseless men” for bringing “the whole cause in disgrace.” See “More House Burnings,” *Warsaw Signal* 2 (November 19, 1845): 2.

132. Mason Brayman to unknown recipient, November 16, 1845, Hallwas and Launius, *Cultures in Conflict*, 295–96. See the excellent account of events relative to Durfee’s murder in William G. Hartley, *The 1845 Burning of Morley’s Settlement*. See also *Nauvoo Neighbor Extra*, of November 19th titled “Murder and Arson — Edmund Durfee Shot — Two Houses Burned” and “Affidavit of James H. Woodland,” November 17, 1845, *History of the Church* 7:529–30.

erarchy wisely kept public focus on preparing for the endowments and the western exodus. The anti-Mormons collectively expressed remorse at the murder of Durfee, and in a series of county meetings passed resolutions of condemnation and emphasized anti-Mormon violence could upset the Mormon timetable for leaving. For example, a public meeting was held at the Warsaw Schoolhouse on November 17 and was publicized two days later in the *Warsaw Signal*. It expressed “disapprobation of recent acts of violence.” Resolutions denounced “illegal violence,” and promises were made to aid in “ferreting out” the murderers of Durfee and those who had burned William Rice’s home.<sup>133</sup> A second statement strongly denounced violent acts by the anti-Mormons and pledged they “would leave no stone unturned & spare no exertion, to ferret out and deliver to the hands of justice, the preparators—let them be whom they may!”<sup>134</sup>

In a masterstroke of Machiavellian duplicity, Thomas Sharp suggested Durfee may have “become obnoxious to the Saints—had threatened to make unpleasant revelations or opposed their policy in some way, so that they desired his death; and may it not be that they resolved to murder him in such a manner that the suspicion would fall on the Anties—thus creating prejudice against their enemies and sympathy for themselves.”<sup>135</sup> The *Quincy Whig* said Durfee was murdered because he was “generally detested” in the neighborhood because of his “outrageous acts.” Without elaborating on Durfee’s alleged “outrageous acts,” the Whig said “not the least blame can or should rest upon the anti-Mormons for the enormity of the act.”<sup>136</sup>

Solomon Hancock reported to the hierarchy on November 18 that he was convinced Major Warren and Mason Brayman “were doing all they can to ferret out and convict the guilty who have been engaged in lawless transactions.” He urged Mormon witnesses to attend a hearing in Carthage and testify against the alleged burners and murderers. Witnesses were dispatched with little expectation of positive results. The hierarchy also received a letter from Brayman which said three individuals had been arrested for the murder of Edmund Durfee.<sup>137</sup> Jacob Backenstos told Brigham Young and his council on the 21st that Warren was making every effort to punish the murderers of Durfee and the burners of Rice’s home. He said Warren even “chased one of them into Missouri and brought him back at the point of the pistol” and told the anti-Mormons “if they did not help to bring those murderers to justice he would withdraw his troops from the county and leave them in the hands of Backenstos.”<sup>138</sup>

133. “Public Meeting,” *Warsaw Signal* 2 (November 19, 1845): 2.

134. “Murder,” *Warsaw Signal* 2 (November 19, 1845): 2, emphasis retained.

135. “Murder of Durfee,” *Warsaw Signal* 2 (November 19, 1845): 2.

136. “Mormon Affair—Murder of Durfee, &c.,” *Quincy Whig* 8 (November 19, 1845): 2.

137. *History of the Church* 7:525–28.

138. *History of the Church* 7:530–31. William Clayton stated Backenstos told the Council [Major] “Warren has sworn he will have the men who murdered Durfee brought to justice.” Smith, *The Journals of William Clayton*,

Despite the best intentions of Warren and Brayman, the Mormon witnesses were not allowed to give testimony, and all the accused were freed.<sup>139</sup> Thomas Sharp acknowledged on November 26 that Warren arrested “twenty or thirty” suspects during the murder investigation of Edmond Durfee and explained they “were examined before C[harles] C. Stevens and John Banks Esq’s.” He said “they have all been released,” because “there was no evidence against them.”<sup>140</sup>

The murder trial of Jacob Backenstos began at Peoria on Tuesday, December 2, in a special session of the Peoria County Circuit Court presided over by Judge Norman Purple. A “correspondent of the [New York] Tribune” opined, “It is the general opinion that he will be acquitted, his Mormon friends’ swearing him through.”<sup>141</sup> In the December 10 *Warsaw Signal*, Thomas Sharp said that anti-Mormon witnesses against Backenstos had returned to Warsaw and reported “the most barefaced [Mormon] testimony” would prevent conviction.<sup>142</sup> The Mormons learned the same day of Backenstos’ acquittal.<sup>143</sup> The summarized minutes of the trial contained testimony which alleged Franklin Worrell knew he was pursuing Backenstos, had been identified as a burner of Mormon property, and had made threats against Backenstos. The minutes said, “The jury now returned to their room and in about 15 minutes had all signed their verdict, NOT GUILTY, with which they returned into court and in which they were unanimous upon the first vote.”<sup>144</sup>

### The Endowments

By the last week of November Brigham Young and members of the Anointed Quorum had begun the extensive process of modifying areas of the attic story of the Temple in preparation for the endowment. After the dedication of the attic, the religious ceremonies of washing, anointing, and endowment were finally performed in the Nauvoo Temple. Men and women were chosen to receive these ordinances of the long-promised endowment.<sup>145</sup>

---

191, November 21, 1845.

139. *History of the Church* 7:532.

140. “Murder of Durfee,” *Warsaw Signal* 2 (November 26, 1845): 2. Stephens was Justice of the Peace at Green Plains Precinct and Banks was Justice of the Peace at Rocky Run Precinct. Both were militia lieutenants who had served under Colonel Levi Williams.

141. “Trial of J. B. Backenstos for Murder,” *New York Daily Tribune* 5 (December 18, 1845): 2.

142. “Backenstos Trial,” *Warsaw Signal* 2 (December 2, 1845): 2.

143. *History of the Church* 7:541.

144. “Trial of Jacob B. Backenstos,” *Peoria Free Press* (December 10, 1845): 3, emphasis retained.

145. See Devery S. Anderson and Gary James Bergera, eds., *The Nauvoo Endowment Companies, 1845–1846: A Documentary History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2005).

## A Triumphal Continuation

Apostle Wilford Woodruff told the English Mormons at a Special General Conference at Manchester on December 14, 1845, their brethren at Nauvoo “are compelled, under the alternative of death and destruction, to emigrate and seek an asylum in the wilderness, beyond the Rocky Mountains.” He explained “Nauvoo has been a nursery, where the plants of the kingdom of God have been set; but in the course of time these plants went spreading, in order that they may arrive at full growth and proper maturity. And now when the Saints cannot remain any longer, they are willing to go.” Referring to the Mormon belief the Gentiles had rejected the Gospel and the Native Americans would now be the recipients, Woodruff said:

And now when the Saints cannot remain any longer, they are willing to go. This is necessary in order that the judgments of God might be poured out upon that guilty nation that is already drunk with the blood of the Saints. The church must come out of the midst of the Gentiles. Therefore we feel a satisfaction in this. We have built stakes, we are willing to sacrifice and leave them. We have had our prophets to be murdered without resistance and in no case has resistance been offered, save according to law and at the command thereof.... It is time to go where we can enjoy our rights, and no longer be hemmed in, but be placed where Jacob's nobles shall be of themselves and their governors shall proceed from the midst of them.—Jer. xxx. 21. I rejoice then, more than at any other time. Let America go ahead with her present measures, but let the Saints arise and go out of her midst. If we are called to make sacrifices, the Saints are the people that can make them.<sup>146</sup>

## Summary

The so-called Mormon War started after gunshots impacted the schoolhouse on the property of Levi Williams at Green Plains where anti-Mormons were meeting on the evening of September 9, 1845. This carefully orchestrated event was apparently crafted by Levi Williams to justify an attack on the Mormons in the Morley Settlement. The following day two Mormon homes were burned and, when there was no military response by the Mormons, most of the Mormon homes and property in and around the Morley Settlement were burned within days. It seems apparent that the anti-Mormons engaged in the burning were counseled to give the illusion that their actions were not personal as they often were polite and helped remove valuables before applying the torches. To justify the burnings, the *Warsaw Signal* and the *Quincy Whig* printed depositions alleging the Mormons stole obscene amounts

---

146. See “Special General Conference, Manchester, December 14th and 15th, 1845,” *Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star* 7 (January 1, 1846): 1–2.

of livestock and personal possessions from non-Mormons in Hancock and Adams County, Illinois, and several counties in Iowa and Missouri.<sup>147</sup>

It is ironic, that on September 9, 1845, the day anti-Mormons shot into the schoolhouse, the Mormons decided to voluntarily leave the United States. Historian Richard Bennett has aptly explained that the Mormons realized their religion “had become incompatible with frontier America” because they were a “theocratic state in a democratic republic.”<sup>148</sup> The decision to remove to the West was made for several reasons but the most important was the Temple was sufficiently complete for the Mormons to prepare for the administration of the endowments. Irene Hascall had written her parents two months previous, “The main and only cause of our tarrying so long, was to give the brethren those blessings in the Temple, for which they have labored so diligently and faithfully to build, and as soon as it was prepared, we labored incessantly almost night and day to wait on them until a few days prior to our departure.”<sup>149</sup>

The Mormons responded to the burnings by making it known they planned to leave in the spring and offered their lands and property for sale in the Morley Settlement area. The anti-Mormons looked with great trepidation for a Mormon military response and tried to convince the public the burnings were justified. The Mormons wisely allowed sufficient time for the public to understand they had not started the conflict and “legalized” their forces by allowing them to serve under Sheriff Backenstos.

Brigham Young deserves credit for steering a moderate course that allowed limited retaliation but averted a conflict which could have mushroomed into an unwinnable war with anti-Mormons from Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri. His competent use of authority left no doubt who was in charge and his strength of character enabled him to keep Jacob Backenstos and George Miller in subordinate rolls. The Morley Settlement Mormons demonstrated remarkable discipline in that they just did not wipe-out the initial house burners and instead followed council to remain peaceful.

Levi Williams knew within days of the initial burnings that the Mormons had pledged to leave the area by spring. His agenda shifted from conflict to facilitating

---

147. There were committed Mormon thieves whose stealing damaged the reputations of the Mormon community. Exhaustive research by the authors has identified fewer than three dozen in this group during the total Mormon period of settlement. Several Mormon sources document stealing of Mormon livestock and property in and around the Morley Settlement by the anti-Mormons at the time of the burnings. There are also non-Mormon accounts that Mormons stole from Anti-Mormons after they abandoned their property when Sheriff Backenstos' posse roamed the county. Only a few Mormons were identified in this capacity. See William Shepard's evaluation of Mormon stealing in, “Marshaled and Disciplined for War”: A Documentary Chronology of Conflict in Hancock County, Illinois 1839–1845,” *The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 33 (Fall/Winter 2013): 130–31.

148. Richard E. Bennett, *We'll Find the Place: The Mormon Exodus 1846–1848* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 6.

149. Irene Hascall to her parents, July 6 and 26 1845, cited in Bennett, *We'll Find the Place*, 20.



the Mormon exodus. It was in his best interest to halt all forms of violence and avoid a showdown battle with the Mormons. Both he and Young were unable to exert total control over all their followers. This is evidenced by the murders of Alexander Daubenheyer and Phineas Wilcox by Mormons, the murder of Edmund Durfee, the poisoning of Nathan Bigelow, and assorted house-burnings in the late part of the struggle by anti-Mormons. Brigham Young's accomplishments, however, are very impressive because he provided the stability which allowed his people to functionally complete the Temple, receive their endowments, and leave Nauvoo on their own terms.

BILL SHEPARD is a long-time member of the John Whitmer Historical Association and is past president for 2008–2009. With H. Michael Marquardt, he has written *Lost Apostles: Forgotten Members of Mormonism's Original Quorum of Twelve*, which was published by Signature Books in 2014.

H. MICHAEL MARQUARDT ([research@xmission.com](mailto:research@xmission.com)) is an independent historian and research consultant. He is on the editorial board of the *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal*. He is the compiler of *Early Patriarchal Blessings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Smith Pettit Foundation, 2007); *Later Patriarchal Blessings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Smith Pettit Foundation, 2012); author of *Joseph Smith's 1828–1843 Revelations* (Xulon Press, 2013) and co-author with William Shepard of *Lost Apostles: Forgotten Members of Mormonism's Original Quorum of Twelve* (Signature Books, 2014).