The Frontier State
1818–1848

THEODORE CALVIN PEASE

With a new Introduction by
Robert W. Johannsen

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS
Urbana and Chicago
XIX. THE MORMON WAR

OF ALL the settlements inspired by peculiar ideas or beliefs that grew up on the fertile soil of the Military Tract, the most ambitious, the most tragic, the one most abiding in its effects on the nation, if not on the state, was the community of Latter Day Saints or Mormons at Nauvoo. The religion revealed by Joseph Smith drew converts from the old and new world until almost in a night a city of perhaps fifteen thousand people grew up in Illinois as the capital of an even larger community, and after thus overtopping Alton, and for a time even Chicago, passed away as suddenly as it rose. Today only a village of scarce a thousand can recall to the student of the past the passions, the ambitions, and the tragedies of the holy city of the Mormons in Illinois.

Of the Mormon belief itself it is difficult to write with the balanced detachment of the historical student. The story of the miraculous golden plates, protected by the direct intervention of angels from improper approach in their hiding place on the hill at Palmyra, New York, which had seen the overthrow of the Nephites by the barbarian invaders, is too much for this age of incredulity to accept; the evidence of the eleven witnesses who testified to the existence of the plates would hardly survive the cross-examination of a court of law. The Book of Mormon, which Smith claimed he had translated from the plates by direct divine assistance, is a book of tedious histories, each of which seems to the careless reader much like the rest. It contains blunders in grammar which, if we accept Joseph Smith's account of the translation, must be laid to the charge of the divine power that word by word gave him the English equivalents of the characters on the plates. The evidence that the book is really an historical novel written by the Reverend Solomon Spaulding is unsatisfactory; in any case from a literary point of view the book is incapable of conferring honor on its author. Had Mormonism begun and ended with the book on the golden plates, it would have made little noise in the world.

Doctrinally Mormonism has little that is distinctive. Its theology is usually referred to Sidney Rigdon, a Campbellite preacher, who, as an early convert, may have devised its creed. Mormonism based itself on a literal interpretation of the word of God; it adopted from the Old Testament what is least spiritual in the stories of the patriarchs and neglected what is finest in the New. The problem of how God can be man that perplexed early christian theology and that was but partially solved by the doctrine of the two natures, Mormonism met in easier fashion—its God was a God with passions like men, with physical parts, the God who turned his hinder parts to Moses, a God who might delight in blood, a God from whom frail men might expect not mercy but sympathy. In place of the authority of an infallible church, speaking with the weight of eighteen christian centuries, or by the application to a holy book of reason sent from God, Mormonism substituted a religion of revelation to Joseph Smith by a God who could announce the names of the trustees of the Nauvoo House and prescribe that his servant Joseph Smith and his seed should forever receive free board there.

To the revelation Smith ever turned to keep his followers in order. There were revelations commanding that this man should tarry here and that man should go there, revelations admonishing, reproving, and praising his followers by name. By revelation God commanded the building of the Temple, and by revelation he ordained also the discipline of the Mormon faith. By revelation Smith held under control the followers who had swallowed greedily the marvel of the dead races of the past and of the golden plates. The church services were ceremonious; the sacraments were rites to preserve
the faithful from the devil and to comfort their souls with the assurance of salvation for some specific performance. Mormonism, always prefiguring its teaching with a reflection on the dissensions and differences of opinion on matters of faith of the Christian denominations, proffered a certainty and counted its converts by ten thousands.

The influence of Smith's character on the development of Mormonism cannot be overestimated. Though educated only by his own efforts and not highly intellectual, he was possessed of a vigorous will in a powerful body; and he ruled his followers with absolute sway. He had efficient adjutants in his brothers, notably Hyrum Smith, and in his father and mother. The family traced its descent from a long line of Puritan ancestors and pointed with pride to its record in Indian wars and the Revolution; although in its New York home its reputation had not been of special distinction, on the larger stage on which it was called to play it seconded with reasonably good support Joseph Smith's performance in the rôle of prophet.⁴

But although he was able to gather to the standard of his religion a hundred thousand converts, at first chiefly New Englanders and New Yorkers already having strong religious traditions, Smith had certain limitations in his character that fatally hindered him from organizing them into an irresistible phalanx. He could dominate his humbler followers, but there his power stopped. He had not the imagination necessary to comprehend or to harmonize with the men outside his faith with whom he had to deal; neither was he a judge of the character and ability of the men that he gathered around him. Hence, perhaps because of the moral weaknesses of his religious dispensations — though Smith to the last retained his grasp on the church — the history of Mormonism is the history of the succession of one trusted leader after another; and Smith, not understanding or grasping the forces of the American frontier, led his followers repeatedly to failure and death in his effort to build up a theocracy in the American backwoods. In so doing he arrayed against himself and his followers all the strongest elements in every community where he sought to establish himself. The Christian churches were outraged by his denunciation of them; the powerful proslavery party and its sympathizers were incensed at his antislavery teaching; and the democracy of the frontier was alarmed at his autocracy and at his insidious interference in local politics. The opposition was intensified by the provincialism of the frontier, impatient of anything different from itself and ready to enforce conformity even outside the law.

Joseph Smith was eighteen years old when in 1823 celestial visitants first announced his mission to him and showed him the plates, and twenty-two when the golden plates were finally given to him. On the sixth of April, 1830, the church was founded. Then followed a series of persecutions, the church seeking a home now at Kirtland, Ohio, now in Missouri. Whether the fault was theirs or their opponents', whether the causes of their unpopularity were their antislavery sympathies, their Spanish proclivities, their denunciation of the churches, or their belief that the wealth of the gentiles belonged to the Saints, they finally in 1838 were driven out of Missouri, with the loss of their property and of many lives, and took refuge in Illinois.³

In Illinois they encountered a favorable reception. Their doctrines had previously awakened passing curiosity, and their earlier persecution at the hands of the people of Missouri had called forth occasional comments from the newspapers. The outburst of 1839 provoked indignant comment from the Illinois papers, especially those of Whig political affiliations, possibly with a view to attracting to the Whig standard a considerable body of voters.⁵


²Times and Seasons, March 1, April 1, 1842.
³Chicago Democrat, December 5, 17, 1833; February 18, 1834; Chicago American, July 23, October 3, 1839, June 11, 1842; Peoria Register, May 18, July 27, 1839; Sangamo Journal, January 19, 1839; Illinois State Register, November 9, 1838.
Mormonism at first throw in Illinois. On October 5, 1839, Commerce, the site of Nauvoo, was adopted as a “stake” of the church. The plat of the city, it was said later, was bought of a Connecticut firm for $52,500, on long time. A remarkable charter was secured from the legislature with little trouble, the member reporting it merely saying that the document had an extraordinary militia clause which he believed harmless. At Nauvoo a stringent temperance ordinance was passed, if not enforced, and a university was founded, which had sufficient vitality at least to bestow the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws on James Gordon Bennett, editor of the New York Herald. Missionaries were sent far and wide in the old as well as in the new world and communities of Saints grew up in other places than Nauvoo; though even as early as 1841, it is ominous to notice the appearance against them of charges of immorality, polygamy, and of harboring thieves.

The beginning of the troubles of the Mormons in Illinois was their interference as a body in politics. Both parties had courted them, the whigs more openly than the democrats. In the presidential election of 1840, the Mormons voted for all the Harrison electors except Abraham Lincoln, substituting the name of one democratic elector for his, as they alleged out of complacency to the democrats. Lincoln was too good a politician, however, not to congratulate the Mormons warmly on the passage of their charters which apparently neither party opposed.

Though the Mormons voted for Stuart in 1841, the democrats, for some reason, won the race for the favor of the prophet. On January 1, 1842, Times and Seasons, the official newspaper of the Mormons, published a proclamation declaring that the Mormons had voted for Harrison as a gallant soldier but that he was now dead and there was no obligation on them to support his friends. “Douglas,” Smith said, “is a Master Spirit, and his friends are our friends—we are willing to cast our banners on the air, and fight by his side in the cause of humanity, and equal rights—the cause of liberty and the law. Snyder, and Moore, are his friends—they are ours.” The Sangamo Journal commented that if this pronouncement did not set the citizens of the state to thinking it did not know what would. The democratic papers were taken a little back at this zealous missionary work for their candidate, the Register refraining from publishing the address in full.

With Smith thus openly arrayed on the side of his opponent, Duncan in the campaign of 1842 for the governorship naturally took an anti-Mormon stand. He attacked the loose provisions of the Mormon charters, which, by allowing laws to be passed so long as they were not counter to the state or federal constitutions, permitted the city council a power of legislation almost concurrent with that of the state. He pointed out the evil legislation which had been passed under this arrangement, such as the ordinance providing heavy fine and imprisonment for any person speaking lightly of the established religion. He called attention to the violence of the Mormons in Missouri and to the charge that they were more or less openly engaged in plots against their old enemies there. Suddenly a series of exposures by a man hitherto among the most prominent of the Mormon leaders threw the whole state into excitement and centered the climax of the campaign on the Mormon issue.

General John C. Bennett, after a more or less checkered career in the west, had joined the Mormons at about the time of their arrival in Illinois. Educated in medicine, he had become, for some reason, quartermaster-general of Illinois militia; and it soon became generally understood among the
Mormons that he was a military genius of the first rank. He had had a large share in the political negotiations by which the Nauvoo charter was secured, and he was generally believed to have acted as a political go-between on other occasions. He commanded the "Nauvoo Legion" into which the militia of the city was organized and wrote communications to the Times and Seasons signed "Joab." For some reason he quarreled with Smith and was cast out of the church in 1842, the Mormons discovering that his character was scabrous in the extreme. The tone of his exposures indicates that there was nothing inherently improbable in the charge, though it is a little strange that his iniquity was not sooner found out.9

Undoubtedly Bennett was able to tell many things regarding the aims, methods, and morals of the Mormon leaders; but his exposures appear unreliable. It is possible that men like the Smiths, who were prone to use their spiritual authority for their pecuniary advantage, did not refrain from using it to win over women devotees who took their fancy; but it is difficult to believe that the elaborate societies and orders for debauchery which Bennett detailed existed outside his own evil imagination. It is doubtful if the doctrine of "spiritual wifery" existed at so early a date; indeed, the Mormons claimed that the doctrine was Bennett's own invention. Too much weight, however, should not be given to the denials of Bennett's charges as to the injuries inflicted or attempted to be inflicted on Orson Pratt, Sidney Rigdon, and Nancy Rigdon. Certainly in spite of the Mormon denials there was a Danite band with which Bennett had been threatened; but as a whole, except where Bennett's charges can be verified from other sources, they are to be discounted, if for no other reason because he claimed that he had originally joined the Mormons in order to expose them.9

8 Times and Seasons, January 1, June 1, 1841; August 1, 1841, November 15, 1844; Wasp, October 1, 1842.
9 Times and Seasons, April 15, August 1, September 15, 1842; Wasp, September 3, 1842; Chicago American, July 7, 1842; Bennett, History of the Saints, 5.
realized this difficulty and that they made repeated efforts to attract capital which might furnish employment to the floods of mechanics who, bringing little more than their strength and their skill, flocked in as a result of the preaching of the faith in the Old World and in the eastern cities of the United States. Skilled labor for varieties of industries was ready at hand; and Joseph Smith and his successors issued appeal after appeal to Latter Day Saints living elsewhere who possessed a few thousand dollars to come to Nauvoo and invest it in manufacturing that would supply an economic basis for the vast political and theocratic structure that Smith aspired to build up in Illinois. Repeated warnings against the immediate immigration of persons without capital had to be issued. One or two communications to the Mormon papers rebuking English immigrants for grumbling indicated that some of the newcomers did not find Nauvoo a land flowing with milk and honey and that they were inclined to denounce as oppressors the little group of well-to-do men in the community whose capital was so precious to Smith.

There was more than one possible solution to the problem. In spite of the fact that much of the work on the Temple and the other public structures was done by men donating their labor one day in every ten, there are indications that the work was used to feed and clothe the men employed on it. Farmers of the Mormon faith around Nauvoo were urged in payment of tithes to bring produce for the support of the men laboring on the Temple; and the sisters were urged to prepare articles of clothing for the persons engaged on it. On several occasions payment of the tithes was demanded in produce, money, or building material; and guns and old watches were pronounced unacceptable. Possibly in this way materials and subsistence for the workers on the Temple were obtained, and a certain amount of unemployment taken care of.

A precocious trade organization in the city that grew up may have been one result of this. The shoemakers planned at one time to have a common shop supplied by their work;

Indications are not lacking that the leaders of the Saints

18 Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 524-525; Nauvoo Neighbor, January 10, 1844.
THE FRONTIER STATE

associations of carriage builders announced themselves ready to receive orders; at one time a trades council was held to consider the building of a factory on a mutual stock subscription. But many of the Mormon men who emigrated to the city of promise scattered to the nearby towns and to gentile farms to find work, while Mormon girls proved a blessing to overworked housewives of the Military Tract or in some instances met an evil fate in the little river towns. To this necessary scattering of their coreligionists some Mormons were inclined to lay the fact that the church was not strong enough to withstand the assaults of its foes. Had certain well-to-do men in the east, it was said, come to Nauvoo with their money as they had been adjured to do, there would have been sufficient numbers of the people in the town and the county to have defied all enemies and to have controlled the state politically.

It was not surprising that aside from any partisan motives for wishing ill to the Mormons the fact that this predominance in the state was the ideal of the Saints was enough to stir up against them a local opposition that deepened and became more bitter till the final expulsion of the Mormons. In part this antagonism may be ascribed to the jealousy of Warsaw at the development of its rival up the river; but the causes of it were more deep rooted; and by 1843 hostility to the Mormons in the state was open enough to have become a serious issue. On August 19, 1843, an anti-Mormon meeting held at Carthage adopted resolutions condemning in vigorous language the régime at Nauvoo, and denouncing the violence, the defiance of law, and the thievery that flourished there and pledged the convention to offer resistance. Furthermore, Missouri was assured that if another warrant was issued against Smith the people of Carthage would do all in their power to see it executed.14

Events moved rapidly. For some reason, instead of throwing his support to one presidential candidate or the other in

14 Alton Telegraph, September 25, 1843.

THE MORMON WAR

1844, Smith decided to announce himself as a candidate. What he can possibly have hoped to gain from his candidacy is hard to see, unless it was to demonstrate that he held the balance of power in the nation as he already held it in the state. At all events he began newspaper agitation in support of his aspirations and sent out Mormon emissaries to electioneer for him. Meanwhile another secession from the church was imminent. On June 7, 1844, there appeared at Nauvoo the first number of the Expositor, a paper supported by a group of men of whom the most prominent were William and Wilson Law, F. M. and C. L. Highbee, and Robert D. and Charles A. Foster. The Laws and Robert Foster had been cut off from the church in the preceding April.15 The Nauvoo Neighbor promptly found a string of accusations to bring against the various members of the group; but in view of the fact that the Laws were well-to-do members of the community, the defection was, to say the least, a serious one.16 The Expositor in the single number that was permitted to issue went straight to the mark. It accused the Smiths of embezzling church funds, of enticing immigrants too hastily in order to sell them property at exorbitant prices and of then leaving others to provide them with work to support themselves. It denounced the activity of the church in politics and the high-handed procedures in freeing by writ of habeas corpus, issuing from the municipal court, persons arrested by the United States marshal. More damaging still, it again accused the Smiths of the deliberate seduction of women and the secret practice of plural marriage. The authorities at Nauvoo to meet the attack had no other recourse than a council order to suppress the paper as a nuisance, and accordingly the press was totally destroyed.

The crisis was at hand. The anti-Mormons gathered at Warsaw and passed resolutions for the extermination of the Mormon leaders. They resolved that if the governor would not order out the militia to secure the execution of a warrant

15 Times and Seasons, April 15, 1845.
16 Nauvoo Neighbor, June 26, 1844.
they would rely on the rallying of the *posse comitatus* with assistance from other counties and from Missouri and Iowa. Throughout the county and in neighboring districts in Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri, men were gathering under arms. A bolder man than Joseph Smith might have lost his nerve in the emergency. For a time he appears to have thought of fleeing to the wilderness. From this resolution he was dissuaded; and with Hyrum, he surrendered to arrest at Carthage, June 24, on a charge of rioting. Next day a warrant charging them with treason was prepared and served. Leaving the Smiths in the jail at Carthage, Governor Ford, who had arrived on the scene with state troops and taken command of the militia that had mustered, disbanded all the forces but three companies and, leaving two at Carthage, marched with the third to Nauvoo to urge a surrender of the state arms still there. Meanwhile, on June 27, the Smiths were set upon and murdered in the Carthage jail. Ford, who returned from Nauvoo before the news of the murder reached that place, inclined to believe that it was a plot to procure his own assassination there, as a preliminary to a state war on the Mormons. Feeling he could trust neither Mormon nor anti-Mormon, he returned to Quincy to watch the excitement gradually quiet itself.

So perished Joseph Smith and his brother, Hyrum, at the hands of a mob, which was too panic-stricken at the Mormons' theocratic schemes to show mercy or allow fair fight. By this shedding of blood the anti-Mormons probably believed the freedom of Illinois and the dissolution of the dangerous power had been purchased. The *Alton Telegraph* commenting two years before on a keen analysis of Mormonism by that insatiable student of ideas, Jonathan Baldwin Turner, had pronounced the opinion that Smith's empire would not long survive him. But from among all the hands stretched out to grasp at a fraction of the sway enjoyed by Smith one man seized the reins more firmly than Smith himself had ever held them, proving that while he lacked the qualities of imagination and boldness needed to found a new religion, he had the strength of will and ruthlessness of purpose to dominate it for his own uses.

At the time of his death Smith governed the church as a member of the first presidency, of which Hyrum and Sidney Rigdon were the other members. Rigdon at once hastened from Pittsburg to Nauvoo to endeavor to assert his constitutional right as surviving member of the first presidency to lead the church. But he was not the man to obtain power that Brigham Young had marked out for himself. Violent in speech, irresolute in action, continually grasping at an authority denied him by the stronger willed men who surrounded him, he stood helpless, while Young, controlling the people like a second Joseph, carried through a complete usurpation in the name of another part of the hierarchy—that of the "Twelve."

Secession movements from all sides had first to be checked. James J. Strang professed to have received from Smith a revelation June 18, commanding him to establish a "stake" at Voree; and he was promptly cut off from the church, a number of followers going with him. According to other accounts William Law attempted to establish a Mormon settlement at Rock Island. The return of the "Twelve" and the personal influence of Young finally brought unity out of confusion.

On August 8 a meeting of the church was held. Young put the question to the people whether they wished a guardian, a prophet, a spokesman; but no one answered. Young then defined the position of the "Twelve," claiming for them the power to regulate the church. Amasa Lyman and Sidney Rigdon, he admitted, had been councilors in the first presidency, but if either wished to act as spokesman for Joseph, he must go behind the veil where Joseph was. Doubtless the double entendre was not lost on the men to whom it was addressed.

---

17 *Times and Seasons*, August 1, 1845; *Nauvoo Neighbor*, June 26, 1844.
18 *Times and Seasons*, July 7, 1844.
19 *Chicago Democrat*, September 18, 1844; *Times and Seasons*, September 2, 1844.
Rigdon refused to have his name voted for as spokesman or guardian, and all voted to sustain the "Twelve." Notice of this decision was duly published with the remark that "the elders abroad will best exhibit their wisdom to all men by remaining silent on those things they are ignorant of." The presence of a firm hand had been apparent in the proclamation already issued by Young to the effect that the branches abroad must be tithed as soon as organized. A day of closer organization of the church was at hand.

Rigdon could not refrain from one more snatch at the power passing from his grasp. It was said that Joseph Smith before his death had received a revelation designating Rigdon as a prophet, seer, and revelator. On the night of the second of September, according to his enemies, claiming to have the "keys" above the "Twelve," he ordained certain men to be prophets, priests, and kings. His enemies heard of his proceeding almost at once and acted promptly. First they apparently bullied him into surrender with threats of physical violence and on September 8 called a meeting to try him. Young adjured those who were for Joseph and Hyrum Smith, the Book of Mormon, the Temple, and the "Twelve" to stand forth; those who were for Rigdon or Lyman Wight or James Emmett might also stand forth, for they were known. William Marks bravely defended the right of Rigdon as a member of the first presidency to receive the oracles from Smith and to give them to the church. Rigdon was overwhelmed by his enemies with ridicule and invective, however, and he and his followers were cast out.

Further opposition had to be met from the Smith family. For the time Young quieted Mother Smith's insistence on the rights of the young son of the prophet by promises that in due time his rights would be recognized, but that for the present she must remember that by pushing his claim she would expose him to danger. William Smith, the younger brother of the prophet, was persistent in his protest; and, after it became apparent that he could not be kept quiet, he was ridiculed in the Mormon papers and finally bullied into keeping silence while he was at Nauvoo. In the autumn of 1845 he was cut off from the church. He openly charged that the "Twelve" were leading the church out into the wilderness to have the absolute sway of it, that they disregarded the claims of the Smiths and of the infant Joseph and even treated them with derision; he denied the spiritual wife doctrine to the charge of Young and the "Twelve," claiming that they had first taught it at Boston. A conference in Cincinnati in January of 1846 reiterated William Smith's attacks on the "Twelve," and pronounced in favor of the right of little Joseph. Thus the schism began among the Mormons that has continued to our own day.

Meanwhile the necessity of removal from Illinois was doubtless becoming increasingly apparent to the leaders of the party at Nauvoo. The legislature of 1845 had repealed their charter, leaving them without any government adequate for the city. In these circumstances for the purpose of keeping strangers in order they had to take up certain uncouth practices of which the mildest was "whittling out of town."  

The fetish of the "Twelve" was the completion of the Temple at Nauvoo. Probably this policy was dictated partly by the fact that according to them, Sidney Rigdon had tried to draw the people away to Pittsburg and to scatter the church, prophesying that the Temple would never be completed. To save their faces the Nauvoo Mormons were compelled to wait until the Temple was completed so that the people could receive in it their promised endowments. On May 28, 1845, the Nauvoo Neighbor announced that the capstone was in place. In April of 1846 the Temple was dedicated, admission to the ceremony costing one dollar.

20 Times and Seasons, August 15, September 2, 1844.
21 Alton Telegraph, September 21, 1844; Times and Seasons, September 15, 1844; Nauvoo Neighbor, October 2, December 15, 1844.
22 Times and Seasons, November 1, 1845; Nauvoo Neighbor, June 11, 1845; Warsaw Signal, October 29, 1845; see also Lee, The Mormon Menace, 207.
23 Warsaw Signal, October 29, 1845; broadside in Chicago Historical Society.
Since early in 1845 the leaders had been considering the idea of removal to some more remote site where the church could be governed without exciting the hostility of the gentiles. The pine region, Wisconsin, Texas, the country west of Missouri, and Oregon were mentioned as possible locations. The delay of departure caused in a year and a half two armed conflicts between the Mormons and their opponents that have gone down in the history of the state as the "Mormon Wars."

Early in the spring of 1845 attacks on the Mormons and on the dangerous political tendency of their settlement at Nauvoo, controlled in its voting strength by the will of a few men, began to appear in such papers as the *Warsaw Signal*. The anti-Mormons denied apparently with some truth that their propaganda was a whig device to control the district by driving out the Mormon allies of the democrats; on the contrary, they alleged that the movement comprised the old settlers in Hancock of both parties. The old charges against the Mormons of harboring thieves, of counterfeiting, and of general lawlessness were reiterated. But the *Nauvoo Neighbor* of January 22, 1845, declared that the thievery was that of a gang in Iowa, unconnected with the Mormons, who carried their stolen property through Nauvoo.

In the fall of 1845 the anti-Mormons initiated a regular campaign designed to drive the Mormons out of the county. Early in September a mob one or two hundred strong began burning the houses of Mormons in the country, requiring them to move their household goods to Nauvoo. Jacob B. Backenstos, the sheriff of the county, was a Mormon sympathizer, or at what the time was called a "jack-Mormon," a man put in office by Mormon votes. In the spring the feeling against him in the county had run high because of a speech he was alleged to have made in the legislature; and the Carthage Grays had ordered him out of the county, charging among other things against him that he had engineered the deal to cast the Mormon vote for Hoge in the congressional election of 1843; indeed, it was said that Hoge's recent defeat for a renomination had been due to public dissatisfaction with the appointment of Backenstos, at his instance, as superintendent of the lead mines. Whatever his political affiliations were, there can be no doubt that Backenstos did his duty in the riots of the fall of 1845, even though the motive from which he did it may not have been disinterested.

When apprised of the activity of the rioters, Backenstos on September 13 attempted to raise a posse at Warsaw for the purpose of stopping the disorder. Failing to get any assistance from the old settlers, he ordered the Mormons in Nauvoo to hold themselves in readiness; in a second proclamation of September 16 he stated that Colonel Levi Williams, the leader of the rioters, had called out the militia of Hancock, McDonough, and Schuyler counties, and he warned men against obeying the call. On the same day he called out a force of mounted men to rescue his own family and others from the territory terrorized by the mob. Proceeding against the mob, he encountered them at their work of burning houses and put them to rout with the loss of two of their number killed and others wounded. The Mormons in their turn fell to plundering, and a state force under Hardin had to be sent to disperse them.

Meanwhile meetings held in nearby counties, notably at Quincy, at Mendon, and an important one held on October 1 at Carthage, at which eight or nine counties were represented, resolved that the only solution was the breaking up of the Mormon settlement in Hancock. The Nauvoo common council offered to remove in the spring in case the gentiles would assist them in selling or renting their property and would refrain from vexatious lawsuits. These terms were accepted by the

---

28 *Times and Seasons*, September 15, 1844; *Hancock Eagle*, April 24, 1845; *Nauvoo Neighbor*, February 15, 26, 1845; *Warsaw Signal*, January 15, May 14, 1845; *Alton Telegraph*, June 28, 1845.

29 *Illinois State Register*, April 24, 1845; *Sangamo Journal*, April 1, 17, 1845; *Nauvoo Neighbor*, April 23, September 24, 1845; *Warsaw Signal*, September 17, 1845.

30 *Nauvoo Neighbor*, September 17, 1845; *Warsaw Signal*, September 17, 1845.
anti-Mormons on condition that an armed force should occupy Nauvoo during the winter to prevent continuance of the alleged depredations of the Mormons on the property of the old settlers. 29 The Mormons at the time were said to be almost in military control of the county and were accused of driving away the cattle and harvesting the crops of their opponents. It was the uncompromising attitude of the people of the neighboring counties that compelled them to give way. 30 The next session of the circuit court found several true bills against Mormons, but all except one against Backenstos for a murder connected with the reducing of the county to order were nolprossed. On this remaining bill Backenstos was acquitted. 31 Meanwhile attempts to serve warrants in Nauvoo as late as October 25 had been defeated by a show of force on the part of the Mormons. The Mormon county commissioners, according to their opponents, attempted to have the expenses of Backenstos' posse charged to the county exchequer. 32 The Mormons feared a renewal of disorder when the militia guard under Major Warren stationed in Nauvoo during the winter was withdrawn the first of May. In answer to protests against its withdrawal Ford answered that the force was an expense to the state and was not large enough to prevent violence if either side were inclined to use it. The Mormons, whose progress in removing was not so great as it should have been at the time, were warned that it was out of the power of the governor to protect them at Nauvoo, since the people of the state would not fight for them. Although Ford disclaimed any responsibility on the part of himself or the state for the agreement made the preceding fall by which the Mormons had promised to emigrate, he told them plainly that there was nothing else for them to do. The Mormons asserted that they were departing as fast as possible and that the only cause of

29 Quincy Whip, October 1, 1845; Sangamo Journal, October 2, 1845; Nauvoo Neighbor, October 25, 1845.
30 Chicago Democrat, October 4, 1845.
31 Nauvoo Neighbor, October 29, 1845; Illinois State Register, December 19, 1845.
32 Warsaw Signal, October 29, 1845; January 8, 1846.

the uproar against them was the fear on the part of the whigs that they might cast a few votes. They asserted that at a meeting they had declared their intention not to vote again in Illinois. On May 15 the Hancock Eagle, ostensibly a "new citizen" paper, though Mormon in sympathy, declared that about fourteen hundred teams had crossed the river and that about twelve thousand souls had already left the state. Major Warren, who had received orders the day after his men disbanded to muster them in again, assured the anti-Mormons that the Mormons were leaving as fast as possible and that regulations were in force sufficient to guard against any disorder on their part. 33

Within a few days, however, bands of anti-Mormons were again at work driving isolated Mormons in the county off their property. Early in June the anti-Mormons, alleging that the Mormons to the number of several hundred were planning to stay at Nauvoo, using it as a base from which to commit depredation on the old settlers, proposed to march a force to Nauvoo as a demonstration; to this end they applied for aid to the counties represented in the Carthage convention. The result, according to the new settlers in Nauvoo, was a desperate rush on the part of the few remaining Mormons to get over the river. The new citizens who were already moving in had held a public meeting on May 29 to determine the question of establishing a city government. The anti-Mormons, however, affected to believe that the Mormon leaders were still dominating the policy of the town. They affirmed that the committee of new citizens had been put down by Backenstos, who had raised a force of five hundred men. On June 9 the new citizens, according to the Hancock Eagle, passed conciliatory resolutions; but the advance of the hostile army next day led the opinion to be expressed that the prosperity of the town was what was really aimed at. By June 13 an anti-Mormon force of about four hundred was encamped before the town, and

33 Alton Telegraph, May 2, 9, 1846; Hancock Eagle, April 10, 17, May 8, 15, 1846.
about three hundred new citizens were mustered to defend it. The anti-Mormons insisted that they be admitted to the town to force the remaining Mormons to leave, but the new citizens repulsed them, and forced them to retreat. By the middle of July the Warsaw Signal declared that an open state of war between Mormon and anti-Mormon forces existed in the county.24

In the summer the trouble broke forth with redoubled force. The anti-Mormons assembled in arms with the intention, as the Hancock Eagle professed to believe, of plundering Nauvoo and the new citizens and of murdering those who had been forward in the suppression of lawlessness. The Nauvoo party, whether directed by Mormons or new citizens, late in August summoned a posse to serve warrants against members of the opposite party accused of acts of violence. A few days earlier a similar posse was summoned to serve writs in Nauvoo. The anti-Mormons professed to believe that the Mormons were actually in control in Nauvoo directing the policy of its newspaper and that with three thousand Mormons in town and three thousand more within easy reach in Iowa they controlled and terrorized the new citizens, while they sent out parties to stir up confusion in the county by deeds of violence.25

The anti-Mormon army once more marched on Nauvoo to force the withdrawal of the Mormons. They were intolerant in the terms of departure that they insisted on; they rejected terms negotiated by James W. Singleton, one of their officers, who thereupon resigned his command. After several other attempts at negotiation, in which the anti-Mormons insisted on unconditional surrender, they undertook to force their way in. A battle occurred which resolved itself into an artillery engagement without decisive result, from which the anti-Mormons withdrew to await an additional supply of cannon balls, with seven men wounded and their supply of ammunition exhausted.26

Meanwhile the two parties entered into negotiations through the intervention of a committee of citizens from Quincy. The anti-Mormons tried to secure the surrender to civil authority of all who had resisted them, but finally were content with the withdrawal of the Mormons from the city and their agreement to surrender their arms to the Quincy committee, to be returned to them after they had crossed the river. Five of the Mormons were to be allowed to remain to dispose of the church property. On marching into Nauvoo on these terms, Thomas S. Brockman, the commander of the county forces, at once gave the Mormons five days to leave, requiring the "jack-Mormons," such as Backenos and William Pickett, to leave at once. In addition Brockman forced a number of the new citizens, estimated by the Warsaw Signal, October 20, as not over thirty families, to leave Nauvoo. Unfriendly papers such as the State Register asserted that a reign of terror marked by plunder and violence was proceeding in Nauvoo.27

The opinion even of democrats in Illinois was turned against the anti-Mormons on account of their high-handed proceedings in Nauvoo, whig papers like the Chicago Journal and democratic papers like the State Register similarly condemning them. Ford once more marched with militia into the county, only to find that anti-Mormon opinion was strongly against him. The local papers treated with derision the marching and counter-marching of his forces; and the anti-Mormon women presented him with a petticoat, which his loyal troops decreed should be carried outside the camp and burned by three Negroes.28

24 Hancock Eagle, May 25, June 5, 13, July 13, 1846; Warsaw Signal, June 24, July 16, extra, 1846; broadside of the New Settlers' committee, June 15, 1846, in Chicago Historical Society.
25 Belleville Advocate, August 27, 1846; Hancock Eagle, extra, August 21, 1846; broadside of August 29, 1846, in Chicago Historical Society.
26 Quincy Whig, September 2, December 2, 1846; Warsaw Signal, extra, September 14, 1846; circular to the public by James W. Singleton, September, 1846, in Chicago Historical Society.
27 Warsaw Signal, October 27, 1846; Quincy Herald, October 16, 1846; Quincy Whig, September 25, 1846.
28 Chicago Journal, September 30, 1846; Quincy Whig, November 4, 1846; Warsaw Signal, November 14, 1846.
THE FRONTIER STATE

From first to last the party rivalries of whigs and democrats had complicated the problem of the Mormon disorder. Thus in 1844 despite Ford's denials the whigs insisted that his course toward the rioters was designed to curry favor with the Mormons and to secure their votes for the democratic candidates. In reply the democratic papers accused the whigs of trying to stir up a civil war in the state, although themselves welcoming the Mormon support. In 1845 the Sangamo Journal affected to believe that the State Register was attempting to combine the Mormon vote with that of northern Illinois to outbalance the south. Even in 1846 the democrats were charged with encouraging the retention of enough Mormon votes in the county to secure the triumph of the democratic candidates, though the democrats denied that the Mormon vote had been necessary for the triumph of their candidate.

So after having for six years played a leading rôle in the life of Illinois, the Mormons disappeared from its history save as the state in future years had to bear its part in the solution of the problem of Mormonism in Utah. After full allowance is made for the violence and perhaps the greed of the opponents of the Mormons in Illinois, it must be admitted that they saw clearly how terrible an ex encrescence on the political life of the state the Mormon community would be, once it had attained full growth. Because legal means would not protect them from the danger they used violence. The machinery of state government was then, it must be remembered, but a slight affair; and to enforce the will of public opinion, the resort to private war, though to be deplored, was inevitable.

The slavery question in Illinois remained in a state of quiescence for at least a decade after the decision of the convention struggle. The black laws remained and even increased in severity; the shameful kidnapping of free blacks out of the state went on in defiance of legislation, aided in some sections by a proslavery public opinion which was prone to soothe itself with the excuse of the kidnappers that they recovered runaway slaves for their masters and therefore were merely vindicators of a just property right. On the other hand the underground railroad had its obscure beginnings as the escaping Negroes found sympathy and assistance at an increasing number of doors; there were always communities in the state where the slave was safe from his hunters. Little interest in the antislavery movement was publicly evidenced. In 1831 a Presbyterian layman of Bond county—that source of much propaganda in early Illinois—William M. Stewart by name, put forth a vigorous protest against the toleration of slavery by the churches. On January 9, 1831, an antislavery meeting at Shoal Creek, Bond county, made a vigorous protest against buying, selling, or holding slaves, declaring that the participation of its members in these things was a disgrace to the Presbyterian church. Along with the protest came the establishment of a local colonization society.

During the next year or two the colonization movement attracted more notice, especially as it came to be contrasted favorably with abolition. The increased activity of the abolitionists and the gag rules began to bring the subject of slavery under wider discussion. The Sangamo Journal, Alton Spectator, and Chicago American were all strongly anti-aboli-

29 Sangamo Journal, August 22, 1844; Alton Telegraph, August 24, 1844; Illinois State Register, October 11, November 3, 1844; Chicago Democrat, August 23, 1844.
40 April 17, July 24, 1845.
41 Sangamo Journal, January 1, March 12, 1846.
42 A few members, many of them relatives of Joseph Smith, refused to follow Young and remained in Illinois where their descendants are still to be found in Hancock county. Here they continue to worship in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

XX. THE SLAVERY QUESTION

THE slavery question in Illinois remained in a state of quiescence for at least a decade after the decision of the convention struggle. The black laws remained and even increased in severity; the shameful kidnapping of free blacks out of the state went on in defiance of legislation, aided in some sections by a proslavery public opinion which was prone to soothe itself with the excuse of the kidnappers that they recovered runaway slaves for their masters and therefore were merely vindicators of a just property right. On the other hand the underground railroad had its obscure beginnings as the escaping Negroes found sympathy and assistance at an increasing number of doors; there were always communities in the state where the slave was safe from his hunters. Little interest in the antislavery movement was publicly evidenced. In 1831 a Presbyterian layman of Bond county—that source of much propaganda in early Illinois—William M. Stewart by name, put forth a vigorous protest against the toleration of slavery by the churches. On January 9, 1831, an antislavery meeting at Shoal Creek, Bond county, made a vigorous protest against buying, selling, or holding slaves, declaring that the participation of its members in these things was a disgrace to the Presbyterian church. Along with the protest came the establishment of a local colonization society.

During the next year or two the colonization movement attracted more notice, especially as it came to be contrasted favorably with abolition. The increased activity of the abolitionists and the gag rules began to bring the subject of slavery under wider discussion. The Sangamo Journal, Alton Spectator, and Chicago American were all strongly anti-aboli-