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## HISTORY OF JOSEPH SMITH.

JUNE, 1844.

Some persons have supposed that I ought to have had them sent to some distant and friendly part of the State, for confinement and trial; and that I ought to have searched them for concealed arms; but these surmises and suppositions are readily disposed of, by the fact, that they were not my prisoners; but were the prisoners of the constable and jailer, under the direction of the justice of the peace. And also by the fact, that by law they could be tried in no other county than Hancock.

The jail in which they were confined, is a considerable stone building; containing a residence for the jailer, cells for the close and secure confinement of the prisoners, and one larger room not so strong, but more airy and comfortable than the cells. They were put into the cells by the jailer; but upon their remonstrance and request, and by my advice, they were transferred to the larger room; and there they remained until the final catastrophe. Neither they nor I seriously apprehended an attack on the jail through the guard stationed to protect it. Nor did I apprehend the least danger on their part of an attempt to escape. For I was very sure that any such attempt would have been the signal of their immediate death. Indeed, if they had escaped, it would have been fortunate for the purposes of those who were anxious for the expulsion of the Mormon population. For the great body of that people would most assuredly have followed their prophet and principal leaders, as they did in their flight from Missouri.

I learned afterwards that the leaders of the anti-Mormons did much to stimulate their followers to the murder of the Smiths in jail, by alleging that the Governor intended to favor their escape. If this had been true, and could have been well carried out, it would have been the best way of getting rid of the Mormons. These leaders of the Mormons would never have dared to return, and they would have been followed in their flight by all their Church. *I had such a plan in my mind*, but I had never breathed it to a living soul, and was thus thwarted in ridding the State of the Mormons two years before they actually left, by the insane frenzy of the anti-Mormons.

Joe Smith, when he escaped from Missouri, had no difficulty in again collecting his sect about him at Nauvoo; and so the Twelve Apostles, after they had been at the head of affairs long enough to establish their authority and influence as leaders, had no difficulty in getting nearly the whole body of Mormons to follow them into the wilderness two years after the death of their pretended prophet.

The force assembled at Carthage amounted to about twelve or thirteen hundred men, and it was calculated that four or five hundred more were assembled at Warsaw. Nearly all that portion resident in Hancock were anxious to be marched into Nauvoo.

This measure was supposed to be necessary to search for counterfeit money and the apparatus to make it, and also to strike a salutary terror into the Mormon people by an exhibition of the force of the State, and thereby prevent future outrages, murders, robberies, burnings, and the like, apprehended as the effect of Mormon vengeance, on those who had taken a part against them.

On my part, at one time, this arrangement was agreed to. The morning of the 27th day of June was appointed for the march, and Golden's Point, near the Mississippi River, and about equi-distant from Nauvoo and Warsaw, was selected as the place of rendezvous.

I had determined to prevail on the justice to bring out his prisoners, and take them along. A council of officers, however, determined that this would be highly inexpedient and dangerous, and offered such substantial reasons for their opinions as induced me to change my resolution.

Two or three days' preparations had been made for this expedition. I observed that some of the people became more and more excited and inflammatory the further the preparations were advanced. Occasional threats came to my ears of destroying the city and murdering or expelling the inhabitants.

I had no objection to ease the terrors of the people by such a display of force, and was most anxious also to search for the alleged apparatus for making counterfeit money; and,

in fact, to inquire into all the charges against that people, if I could have been assured of my command against mutiny and insubordination. But I gradually learned, to my entire satisfaction, that there was a plan to get the troops into Nauvoo, and there to begin the war, probably by some of our own party, or some of the seceding Mormons, taking advantage of the night, to fire on our own force, and then laying it on the Mormons.

I was satisfied that there were those amongst us fully capable of such an act, hoping that in the alarm, bustle and confusion of a militia camp, the truth could not be discovered, and that it might lead to the desired collision.

I had many objections to be made the dupe of any such or similar artifice. I was openly and boldly opposed to any attack on the city, unless it should become necessary, to arrest prisoners legally charged and demanded. Indeed, if any one will reflect upon the number of women, inoffensive and young persons, and innocent children, which must be contained in such a city of twelve or fifteen thousand inhabitants, it would seem to me his heart would relent and rebel against such violent resolutions. Nothing but the most blinded and obdurate fury could incite a person, even if he had the power, to the willingness of driving such persons, bare and houseless, on to the prairies, to starve, suffer, and even steal, as they must have done, for subsistence. No one who has children of his own would think of it for a moment.

Besides this, if we had been ever so much disposed to commit such an act of wickedness, we evidently had not the power to do it. I was well assured that the Mormons, at a short notice, could muster as many as two or three thousand well armed men. We had not more than seventeen hundred, with three pieces of cannon, and about twelve hundred stand of small arms. We had provisions for two days only, and would be compelled to disband at the end of that time. To think of beginning a war under such circumstances was a plain absurdity.

If the Mormons had succeeded in repulsing our attack, as most likely would have been the case, the country must necessarily be given up to their ravages until a new force could be assembled, and provisions made for its subsistence. Or if we should have succeeded in driving them from their city, they would have scattered; and, being justly incensed at our barbarity, and suffering with privation and hunger, would have spread desolation all over the country, without any possibility, on our part, with the force we then had, of preventing it. Again, they would have had the advantage of being able to subsist their force in the field by plundering their enemies.

All these considerations were duly urged by me upon the attention of a council of officers, convened on the morning of the 27th of June. I also urged upon the council, that such wanton and unprovoked barbarity on their part would turn the sympathy of the people of the surrounding counties in favor of the Mormons, and therefore it would be impossible to raise a volunteer militia force to protect such a people against them.

Many of the officers admitted that there might be danger of collision. But such was the blind fury prevailing at the time, though not showing itself by much visible excitement, that a small majority of the council adhered to the first resolution of marching into Nauvoo; most of the officers of the Schuyler and McDonough militia voting against it, and most of those of the county of Hancock voting in its favor.

A very responsible duty now devolved upon me, to determine whether I would, as commander-in-chief, be governed by the advice of this majority. I had no hesitation in deciding that I would not; but on the contrary, I ordered the troops to be disbanded, both at Carthage and Warsaw, with the exception of three companies, two of which were retained as a guard to the jail, and the other was retained to accompany me to Nauvoo.

The officers insisted much in council upon the necessity of marching to that place to search for apparatus to make counterfeit money, and more particularly to terrify the Mormons from attempting any open or secret measures of vengeance against the citizens of the county, who had taken a part against them or their leaders.

To ease their terrors on this head, I proposed to them that I would myself proceed to the city, accompanied by a small force, make the proposed search, and deliver an address to the Mormons, and tell them plainly what degree of excitement and hatred prevailed against them in the minds of the whole people, and that if any open or secret violence should be committed on the persons or property of those who had taken part against them, that no one would doubt but that it had been perpetrated by them, and that it would be sure and certain means of the destruction of their city and the extermination of their people.

I ordered two companies, under the command of Capt. R. F. Smith, of the Carthage Greys to guard the jail. In selecting these companies, and particularly the company of the Carthage Greys for this service, I have been subjected to some censure. It has been said that this company had already been guilty of mutiny, and had been ordered to be arrested whilst

in the encampment at Carthage, and that they and their officers were the deadly enemies of the prisoners. Indeed it would have been difficult to find friends of the prisoners under my command, unless I had called in the Mormons as a guard, and this I was satisfied would have led to the immediate war and the sure death of the prisoners.

It is true that this company had behaved badly towards the brigadier-general in command, on the occasion when the prisoners were shown along the line of the McDonough militia. This company had been ordered as a guard. They were under the belief that the prisoners, who were arrested for a capital offence, were shown to the troops in a kind of triumph, and that they had been called on as a triumphal escort to grace the procession. They also entertained a very bad feeling towards the brigadier-general who commanded their service on the occasion.

The truth is, however, that this company was never ordered to be arrested; that the Smiths were not shown to the McDonough troops as a mark of honor and triumph, but were shown to them at the urgent request of the troops themselves, to gratify their curiosity in beholding persons who had made themselves so notorious in the country.

When the Carthage Greys ascertained what was the true motive in showing the prisoners to the troops, they were perfectly satisfied. All due atonement was made on their part for their conduct to the brigadier-general, and they cheerfully returned to their duty.

Although I knew that this company were the enemies of the Smiths, yet I had confidence in their loyalty and integrity; because their captain was universally spoken of as a most respectable citizen and honorable man. The company itself was an old independent company, well armed, uniformed and drilled; and the members of it were the elite of the militia of the county.

I relied upon this company especially because it was an independent company, for a long time instructed and practised in military discipline and subordination. I also had their word and honor, officers and men, to do their duty according to law.

Besides all this, the officers and most of the men resided in Carthage, in the near vicinity of Nauvoo, and, as I thought, must know that they would make themselves and their property convenient and conspicuous marks of Mormon vengeance, in case they were guilty of treachery.

I had at first intended to select a guard from the county of McDonough, but the militia of that county were very much dissatisfied to remain; their crops were suffering at home; they were in a perfect fever to be discharged, and I was destitute of provisions to supply them for more than a few days. They were far from home, where they could not supply themselves, whilst the Carthage company could board at their own houses, and would be put to little inconvenience in comparison.

What gave me greater confidence in the selection of this company as a prudent measure was, that the selection was first suggested and urged by the brigadier-general in command, who was well known to be utterly hostile to all mobocracy and violence towards the prisoners, and who was openly charged by the violent party with being on the side of the Mormons.

At any rate, I knew that the jail would have to be guarded as long as the prisoners were confined; that an imprisonment for treason might last the whole summer and the greater part of the autumn before a trial could be had in the circuit court; that it would be utterly impossible in the circumstances of the country to keep a force there from a foreign county for so long a time; and that a time must surely come when the duty of guarding the jail would necessarily devolve on the citizens of the county.

It is true, also, that at this time I had not believed or suspected that any attack was to be made upon the prisoners in jail. It is true that I was aware that a great deal of hatred existed against them, and that there were those who would do them an injury if they could. I had heard of some threats being made, but none of an attack upon the prisoners whilst in jail. These threats seemed to be made by individuals not acting in concert. They were no more than the bluster which might have been expected, and furnished no indication of numbers combining for this or any other purpose.

I must here be permitted to say, also, that frequent appeals had been made to me to make a clean and thorough work of the matter by exterminating the Mormons or expelling them from the State. An opinion seemed generally to prevail that the sanction of executive authority would legalize the act; and all persons of any influence, authority, or note, who conversed with me on the subject, frequently and repeatedly stated their total unwillingness to act without my direction, or in any mode except according to law.

This was a circumstance well calculated to conceal from me the secret machinations on foot. I had constantly contended against violent measures, and so had the brigadier-general in command; and I am convinced that unusual pains were taken to conceal from both of us the secret measures resolved upon. It has been said, however, that some person named Wix-

LIAMS, in a public speech at Carthage, called for volunteers to murder the Smiths; and that I ought to have had him arrested. Whether such a speech was really made or not is yet unknown to me.

Having ordered the guard, and left General Deming in command in Carthage, and discharged the residue of the militia, I immediately departed for Nauvoo, eighteen miles distant, accompanied by Col. Buckmaster, quartermaster-general, and Capt. Dunn's company of dragoons.

After we had proceeded four miles, Colonel Buckmaster intimated to me a suspicion that an attack would be made upon the jail. He stated the matter as a mere suspicion, arising from having seen two persons converse together at Carthage with some air of mystery. I myself entertained no suspicion of such an attack; at any rate, none before the next day in the afternoon, because it was notorious that we had departed from Carthage with the declared intention of being absent at least two days. I could not believe that any person would attack the jail whilst we were in Nauvoo, and thereby expose my life and the life of my companions to the sudden vengeance of the Mormons, upon hearing of the death of their leaders. Nevertheless, acting upon the principle of providing against mere possibilities, I sent back one of the company with a special order to Capt. Smith to guard the jail strictly, and at the peril of his life, until my return.

We proceeded on our journey four miles further. By this time I had convinced myself that no attack would be made on the jail that day or night. I supposed that a regard for my safety and the safety of my companions would prevent an attack until those to be engaged in it could be assured of our departure from Nauvoo. I still think that this ought to have appeared to me to be a reasonable supposition.

I therefore determined at this point to omit making the search for counterfeit money at Nauvoo, and defer an examination of all the other abominations charged on that people, in order to return to Carthage that same night, that I might be on the ground in person in time to prevent an attack upon the jail, if any had been meditated. To this end we called a halt; the baggage wagons were ordered to remain where they were until towards evening, and then return to Carthage.

Having made these arrangements, we proceeded on our march and arrived at Nauvoo about four o'clock of the afternoon of the 27th day of June. As soon as notice could be given, a crowd of the citizens assembled to hear an address which I proposed to deliver to them. The number present has been variously estimated from one to five thousand.

In this address I stated to them how, and in what their functionaries had violated the laws. Also the many scandalous reports in circulation against them, and that these reports, whether true or false, were generally believed by the people. I distinctly stated to them the amount of hatred and prejudice which prevailed everywhere against them, and the causes of it, at length.

I also told them, plainly and emphatically, that if any vengeance should be attempted openly or secretly against the persons or property of the citizens who had taken part against their leaders, that the public hatred and excitement was such, that thousands would assemble for the total destruction of their city and the extermination of their people; and that no power in the State would be able to prevent it.

During this address some impatience and resentment were manifested by the Mormons at the recital of the various reports enumerated concerning them, which they strenuously and indignantly denied to be true. They claimed to be a law abiding people, and insisted that as they looked to the law alone for their protection, so were they careful themselves to observe its provisions.

Upon the conclusion of this address, I proposed to take a vote on the question, whether they would strictly observe the laws even in opposition to their Prophet and leaders. The vote was unanimous in favor of this proposition.

The anti-Mormons contended that such a vote from the Mormons signified nothing; and truly the subsequent history of that people showed clearly that they were loudest in their professions of attachment to the law whenever they were guilty of the greatest extravagancies; and, in fact, that they were so ignorant and stupid about matters of law that they had no means of judging of the legality of their conduct, only as they were instructed by their spiritual leaders.

A short time before sundown we departed on our return to Carthage. When we had proceeded two miles we met two individuals, one of them a Mormon, who informed us that the Smiths had been assassinated in jail, about five or six o'clock of that day. The intelligence seemed to strike every one with a kind of dumbness. As to myself it was perfectly astounding, and I anticipated the very worst consequences from it.

The Mormons had been represented to me as a lawless, infatuated and fanatical people, not governed by the ordinary motives which influence the rest of mankind. If so, most likely an exterminating war would ensue and the whole land would be covered with desolation.