

Guest Editor's Prologue

Truman G. Madsen*

"A Melancholy Task" is the phrase with which B. H. Roberts repeatedly characterized the tracing of Mormon history through the tangled Missouri period, when utopian aspirations and fresh fervor met the crunch of tradition, opposition, and expulsion.

Yet the Missouri period which had really begun before the body of the Saints departed Kirtland, Ohio, and extended into their later movements into Illinois and Utah is both tragic and triumphal. Moreover, the state and many of its locations loom large in the Mormon future. Something of the temper of that friendlier day is seen in a witticism of the late President Harry S. Truman: "When the Mormons return, they tell me I can stay."

Our researches and team efforts in Missouri are producing material for another year and perhaps two. This is so even though a full *BYU Studies* issue has already been published on events, issues, and implications of Missouri history. (See *BYU Studies*, vol. 13, no. 1 [Autumn 1972]).

In this issue our Missouri revisited reports include personalities, documents, sites, recollections, doctrinal developments, and an original letter.

Perhaps the most famous Missouri defender of the Mormon cause was Alexander W. Doniphan, whose resistance to military venom saved the lives of leading Mormons at the risk of his own. Through the researches of Gregory Maynard we see a close-up of the man before and after his entrance into the Mormon drama. It turns out that Doniphan was trained in the law as well as the military, in legislation as well as

*Dr. Madsen, director of the Institute of Mormon Studies, is professor of philosophy at Brigham Young University. He also holds the Richard L. Evans Chair of Christian Understanding.

in battle, and these disciplines merged in a personality deeply impelled toward peacemaking. The portrait also shows how often community animosity arose not out of fact, but out of rumor fed by suspicion.

If, as several recent studies suggest, the undergirding doctrinal insights of Mormonism were planted in New York and nurtured in Ohio soil, they blossomed in Missouri. Gordon Irving shows how the Bible and biblical texts figured in the formation of the Mormon kerygma, and the early merging of the new and the old, the discovered and the recovered. There is some evidence (which suggests yet another project) that in the wake of the publication of the Book of Mormon and other revelations it came as a surprise to the Mormon leaders that there was so much in the Bible that anticipated, commended, and sustained the central dispensation theory of history and doctrinal insights of this last dispensation.

For some years Stanley B. Kimball has been tracing the strands on a center of capital importance in Mormon history often neglected: the city of St. Louis. Kimball shows that the cosmopolitan complexion of St. Louis provided much sustenance to the Church—for example, sanctuary and asylum, and even a somewhat fair-minded press. From 1830 on, it was also a center of conversion which steadily grew into one of the early (the sixteenth) stakes. Kimball's treatment of the history of the Church in St. Louis might well serve as a model to Church historians worldwide.

Paul C. Richards, a research fellow with the Institute of Mormon Studies, has uncovered a cache of documents from the National Archives—original, contemporary, and detailed accounts of the actual sufferings which the Saints recorded and presented as a memorial to the U. S. Senate. As would be expected, the documents underscore the multiplicity and complexity of issues and acts and tend to temper the judgment either that the whole of Missouri was involved, or that the attacks and drivings, atrocious though they were, were always atrocities, or that the Mormons were utterly without friends.

Through the cooperation of Reorganization Historian, Mark McKiernan, we publish here also an original letter of Eliza R. Snow which, in turn, contains a copy of an original letter of her brother, Lorenzo Snow. Together they recreate a sense of living reality, almost as immediate and luminous as a head-

line story in a newspaper. One can here measure the inner turmoil that attended the external pressures.

Leland Gentry presents a study of Adam-ondi-Ahman as a stake, a model or miniature plat of Zion, as a city, a refuge, a temple site, a community committed to the law of consecration, and as a place where both the Patriarch Adam and the colony of Nephites erected altars. He offers considerable evidence for differentiating between the altar, designated by the Prophet as built by Adam, and a "tower" designated as erected by the Nephites. He concludes with a chart which illustrates the perplexities that point to this "two-altar" view of the city. Continued work on the historiography of these accounts is indicated.

Further researches are under way and there will be yet another full issue of *BYU Studies* on the history of the Church in the Missouri period.