

# The Election Day Battle at Gallatin

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The weather in Daviess County, Missouri, was exceedingly warm in July 1838. It had also been very dry for some time. By the first Monday of August, which was election day, the weather was still warmer, and at the county seat of Daviess County, Gallatin, it was very hot. On that day the heat caused by the emotions and tensions between the Mormons and gentiles in Missouri matched that of the weather and produced a short but fiery episode known as the Election Day Battle at Gallatin. This bloody fight was only portentous of more terribly dark and threatening events in Missouri—indeed, within two months the Mormon armies had burned Gallatin, and in less than three months Governor Boggs had issued the infamous extermination order which caused indescribable sufferings for the Mormon people and ultimately led to the expulsion of all the Saints from the state.

The student who begins to collect historical sources about the Election Day Battle to better understand both the event and its causes quickly learns that there are numerous accounts readily available. In fact, I compiled and reproduced a collection of eighteen separate accounts which were distributed to the participants of the Mormon History Association Conference in Missouri, April 1972.<sup>1</sup> These accounts, arranged as

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<sup>1</sup>Reed C. Durham, Jr., *Various Accounts of the Election-Day Battle at Gallatin, Missouri on August 6, 1839—Arranged in Chronological Order* (Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Institute of Religion, 1971).

much as was possible in chronological order, serve as the basic source of information for this article.

Before reviewing the details of the battle variously referred to in such colorful phrases as the "unhappy affray,"<sup>2</sup> the "unhallowed circumstance,"<sup>3</sup> the "Gallatin scrape,"<sup>4</sup> the "general scuffle,"<sup>5</sup> and the "great knock-down,"<sup>6</sup> a word should be given about the area of Missouri where the conflict took place and the Mormon and gentile migration there.<sup>7</sup>

Gallatin, Missouri, in Daviess County, is situated on the west bank of the Grand River in the northwestern part of Missouri and, according to many reports, this general area of land was very suitable for living and farming. One writer explains the natural advantages of this area as follows:

There is no county in the State to rank in advance of Daviess for agricultural advantages and grazing. The soil is from one to six feet deep, very rich, and productive—a soil that will not wear out. The formation of the surface of this country displays a natural drainage in its highest perfection. . . . The ascents and descents of the country are not so abrupt as to prevent the tillage of the entire surface of the land. The soil of the Grand River Valley, which runs diagonally through the county from northwest to southeast, is not surpassed by any other county in the Union. This county contains about two-thirds prairie and one-third timber lands; the timber being situated advantageous to the prairie, as if placed by human hands for the convenience of man.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>2</sup>John Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter-day Saints (Commonly Called Mormons)* (St. Louis: printed for the author, 1839), pp. 33-34. Also in Durham.

<sup>3</sup>Hyrum Smith, "Proceedings of Court Testimony—Trial of Joseph Smith—Municipal Court of the City of Nauvoo, Illinois, July 1st, 1843" *Times and Seasons*, 4 (1 July 1843):246. Also in Durham.

<sup>4</sup>John D. Lee and Levi Stewart, dictated manuscript, *Journal History* (6 August 1838). This manuscript was probably dictated to Thomas Bullock sometime between 1842 and 1845 at Nauvoo, Illinois. Also in Durham.

<sup>5</sup>Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1949) 3:56-59 hereafter cited as *HC*. It should be noted that the history for the date of 6 August 1838 was compiled and written in February 1845 by Thomas Bullock. (See Dean C. Jessee, "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History," *BYU Studies* 11 [Summer 1971]:466.) Also in Durham.

<sup>6</sup>Joseph H. McGee, *Story of the Grand River Country 1821-1905—Memoirs of Major Joseph H. McGee* (Gallatin: North Missourian Press, 1909). Also in Durham.

<sup>7</sup>An excellent treatment of this material is found in Leland Gentry, "A History of the Latter-day Saints in Northern Missouri From 1836 to 1839" Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1965, pp. 218-32.

<sup>8</sup>*Daviess County, Missouri: Its History, Description, and Resources* (St. Joseph, Missouri: Joseph Steam Printing Co., 1875), p. 1.

Another local resident wrote about this Grand River area:

Its banks and bottoms are lined with the finest timber available in northern Missouri. . . . tributaries and rivers permeate all parts of the county, furnishing the farmer with a superabundance of water and timber for irrigational purposes. It is a fact long since conceded that there is no county in northern Missouri so well supplied by nature with all the requirements of an agricultural county.<sup>9</sup>

It seems unfortunate that this beautiful country wasn't inhabited by white settlers before 1830. Certainly, a land with a "soil that will not wear out" and which was "so well supplied by nature" with "a superabundance of water" and "one-third timber lands" would seem to have been paradisaic to some of the settlers in the eastern and southern United States. However, the first known white man to have settled in these lands was John Splawn who came in January 1830. Subsequently, other settlers arrived and by the spring of 1832 a permanent settlement was established. The majority of these early pioneers came from the southern states, which fact later intensified the Mormon-gentile conflict in Missouri.

One of the very early pioneers who became influential in the development of Daviess County, and who also played a crucially strategic role in the Election Day Battle, was William Peniston. He migrated from Kentucky with his father's family in 1831, settling on the east bank of the Grand River, a site first known as Peniston Ford. The family established a mill which served the area. By 1836 the mill became the primary nucleus for another town known as Millport. Many other businesses were established at Millport, which made it one of the most important communities in Daviess County. Because of the importance of the town, William Peniston became one of the community's most prominent citizens; and when he later entered into politics he represented most adequately the voice of the true charter citizens of this northern Missouri county.

In 1837 another important settlement was established on the west bank of the Grand River and was named Gallatin after Albert Gallatin, one of the most distinguished statesmen

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<sup>9</sup>Joseph H. McGee, "History of Daviess County, Incidents and Reminiscences in its Early Settlement, etc.," manuscript written for the *North Missourian*, a Gallatin newspaper, Missouri State Historical Library, Columbia, Missouri.

and financiers in United States history.<sup>10</sup> Leland Gentry made this statement about the history of Gallatin:

Millport was soon rivaled by its neighbor, Gallatin. Settled in 1837, Gallatin was located on the western side of Grand River about three miles from Millport. Following Gallatin's appearance, the two settlements vied with each other for the honor of being the county seat. Since most of the trade came from the west side of the river, the contest was eventually decided in Gallatin's favor. From that point on, Millport gradually faded away.<sup>11</sup>

Because of the natural advantages of the land, because it was sparsely settled, and because they needed to find additional lands for settlement, the Mormons came into Daviess County. By permission of the Missouri Legislature the door was opened for Mormon migration into Caldwell County, northern Missouri. Because of the great numbers of Saints flooding that county, Joseph Smith himself appointed a Stake and an additional gathering place in Daviess County. The very sacred location of Adam-ondi-Ahman was revealed to the Prophet in 1838 and that year saw a rapid influx of Mormons into the county. Lyman Wight, who was the first known Latter-day Saint in Daviess County, and who had purchased property there, part of which was later revealed to be the site of Adam-ondi-Ahman, made this statement about the Mormon migration:

About June, Joseph Smith, together with many others of the principal men of the Church, came to my house, and taking a view of the large bottom in the bend of the river and the beautiful prairies on the bluffs, came to the conclusion that it would be a handsome situation for a town. We, therefore, commenced surveying and laying off town lots, and locating government lands for many miles north of

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<sup>10</sup>The reasons for naming the town after Albert Gallatin are not known. However, as any biographic reference of famous United States statesmen would reveal, Albert Gallatin (1761-1849) had distinguished himself sufficiently to have a town named after him. He served in both the United States Senate and the House of Representatives. He served as the Secretary of the United States Treasury longer than any other man in United States history. He became the hero of the Whiskey Rebellion in Western Pennsylvania. He was a United States representative and diplomat to Russia, France, Great Britain, and the Netherlands. He became the president of the National Bank of New York (later, the Gallatin Bank). He was one of the first founders and was the first president of the University of the City of New York in 1831. He was the "father of American ethnology," and was one of early America's great students of the American Indians.

<sup>11</sup>Gentry, pp. 220-21.

this place. This beautiful country with its flattering prospects *drew in floods of emigrants*. I had not less than thirty comers and goers through the day during the three summer months, and up to the last mentioned date (October 30), *there were upwards of two hundred houses* built in this town, and also, about forty families living in their wagons.<sup>12</sup> [Italics added]

His statements about "floods" of emigrants and about "upwards of two hundred houses" built by them takes on tremendous significance when they are contrasted with the fact that Gallatin, the county seat of Daviess County, only a few miles away from the rapidly growing Mormon community of Adam-ondi-Ahman, had only four houses and several saloons in 1838.<sup>13</sup> The contrast when viewed by the original citizens could only stir up some deep emotions.

When election day arrived on Monday, 6 August 1838, the polls were set up in a little frame house, twelve by fourteen feet in size, which stood on the southwest corner of the public square of Gallatin. Major Joseph McGee, one of the senior citizens of Gallatin, and also one of the non-Mormon eyewitnesses of the Election Day Battle, used part of the original house for his tailor shop. Adjacent to the house was a large pile of short oak logs which had been split and were being made into shingles. The only significance of the pile of logs to the event at hand is that the logs became weapons in the hands of several of the participants in the fray. John D. Lee commented on the logs:

. . . there was a lot of oak timber, which had been brought there to be riven into shakes or shingles, leaving the heart, taken from each shingle-block, lying there on the ground. These hearts were three square, four feet long, weighed about seven pounds, and made a very dangerous, yet handy weapon; and when used by an enraged man they were truly a class of instrument to be dreaded.<sup>14</sup>

As soon as the polls opened, Mormon citizens were there to exercise their political freedom by voting for those men in whom they had most confidence. And the gentiles, mostly

<sup>12</sup>Rollin J. Britton, *Early Days on the Grand River* (Columbia: Missouri State Historical Society, 1920), pp. 6-7.

<sup>13</sup>Britton, p. 8; "Gallatin was a new town, with about ten houses, three of which were saloons." (John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled* [St. Louis: Bryon, Brand, and Co., 1877], pp. 56-60.) Also in Durham.

<sup>14</sup>Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, pp. 56-60. Also in Durham.

of the original settler's stock, were there too. The majority of them were voting for the prominent citizen, William Peniston. Shortly, "the great knockdown between the Mormons and the Missourians" commenced. And as Joseph McGee reported, no knockdown he had ever before witnessed was on "so grand a scale."<sup>15</sup>

It appears that William Peniston started the whole affair. John Corrill wrote:

William Pennington [sic], a citizen and candidate, on seeing that the Mormons were not going for him, made a flaming speech on election day, in which he said, that the Mormons ought not to be suffered to vote.<sup>16</sup>

Sidney Rigdon's report was as follows:

In the early part of the day, at the election, Peniston made a speech; the object of which was, to excite the indignation of the people to such a degree, that he could get a sufficient number to join the mob, to keep the saints from voting, if they attempted it. In this speech, he used the most abusive language that he was master of; denouncing the saints in round terms, in a most ridiculous manner. Having his party ready, at the end of the speech, they began to throw threats, that none of the G--d d--n Mormons, to use their own language, should vote. These threatenings began to assume a very serious tone, very soon.<sup>17</sup>

Some of the "abusive language," in "round terms," given in a "most ridiculous manner" which Peniston gave in his talk was recorded by John D. Lee:

... Wm. P. Penniston [sic] was standing on some barrels holding a harangue to the people, his topic was "Mormonism." He said the leaders of the Church was a set of horse thieves, liars, counterfeiters, etc. He also said: "You know that they profess to heal the sick, cast out devils, etc. and you all know this is a damn lie," and thus he appealed to the people, adding: "If we suffer such men as those to vote, you will soon lose your suffrage."<sup>18</sup>

Joseph Smith also noted:

... William P. Peniston mounted a barrel, and harangued

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<sup>15</sup>McGee, *Grand River Country*. Also in Durham.

<sup>16</sup>Corrill, pp. 33-34. Also in Durham.

<sup>17</sup>Sidney Rigdon, *An Appeal to the American People: Being an Account of the Persecutions of the Church of Latter Day Saints; and of Barbarities Inflicted on Them by the Inhabitants of the State of Missouri* (Cincinnati: Shepard and Stearns, 1840), pp. 15-17. Also in Durham.

<sup>18</sup>Lee and Stewart. Also in Durham.

the electors for the purpose of exciting them against the "Mormons," saying, "The Mormon leaders are a set of horse thieves, liars, counterfeiters, and you know they profess to heal the sick, and cast out devils, and you all know that is a lie." He further said that the members of the Church were dupes, and not too good to take a false oath on any common occasion; that they would steal, and he did not consider property safe where they were; that he was opposed to their settling in Daviess county; and if they suffered the "Mormons" to vote, the people would soon lose their suffrage; . . .<sup>19</sup>

And John L. Butler added more information about the drinking on the occasion:

. . . Wm. Penniston [sic], one of the candidates, stood upon the head of a whiskey barrel, and made a very inflammatory speech against the saints, stating that he had headed a company to order the "Mormons" off of their farms and possessions, stating at the same time that he did not consider the "Mormons" had any more right to vote than the damned niggers. When he was through, he called on all hands to drink, which they did, for whiskey passed free, and they drank as freely. I at this time retired a little back from the crowd, rather behind the little grocery, near by, where they were voting. I heard the word G-- damn 'em! kill 'em G-- damn 'em!<sup>20</sup>

At this point, "feelings became somewhat excited on both sides, though there was but little said, until one of the Mormons and one of the other citizens got into a conversation, in which they gave each other the lie. . . .<sup>21</sup> One angry word brought on another,"<sup>22</sup> until finally:

. . . a drunken brute by the name of Richard Weldon, stepped up to a little Mormon preacher, by the name of Brown, and said:

"Are you a Mormon preacher, sir?"

"Yes, sir, I am."

"Do you Mormons believe in healing the sick by laying on of hands, speaking in tongues, and casting out devils?"

"We do," said Brown.

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<sup>19</sup>HC, 3:56-59. Also in Durham.

<sup>20</sup>John L. Butler, manuscript, Journal History (6 August 1838). There are no internal nor external clues for when the account was written. It was most likely placed in the Journal History by Andrew Jenson. Also in Durham.

<sup>21</sup>Corrill, pp. 33-34. Also in Durham.

<sup>22</sup>U.S., Congress, House, "The Petition of the Latter-Day Saints, commonly known as Mormons," *Document No. 22, 26th Cong., 2d sess., 1840*, pp. 5-6. Also in Durham.

Weldon then said, "You are a d--d liar. Joseph Smith is a d--d imposter."

With this, he attacked Brown, and beat him severely. Brown did not resent it, but tried to reason with him; but without effect. At this time a Mormon, by the name of Hyrum Nelson, attempted to pull Weldon off of Brown, when he was struck by half a dozen men on the head, shoulders and face. He was soon forced to the ground. Just then, Riley Stewart struck Weldon across the back of the head with a billet of oak lumber, and broke his skull. Weldon fell nearly on me, and appeared lifeless. The blood flowed freely from the wound. Immediately the fight became general.<sup>23</sup>

The little Mormon preacher, whom John D. Lee identified as a man named Brown, was the first Mormon attacked in the Election Day Battle. Sidney Rigdon told a little more about Brown. He said his name was Samuel Brown, "who was but just able to be about, after a very dangerous fit of sickness."<sup>24</sup> As Richard (Dick) Weldon began to accost Samuel Brown, Brother Brown tried to parry the blows while gradually retreating.<sup>25</sup> And then, as Lee reported, the fight became general; or as Lyman Wight said: "accordingly they commenced operations by fist and skull; this terminated in the loss of some teeth, some flesh, and some blood."<sup>26</sup> McGee's account said it simply: "men dropped on all sides."<sup>27</sup> But in John L. Butler's account, we find the most colorful and complete recording of the "teeth, flesh, and blood":

. . . I went to where the affray was and saw they had attacked the brethren with sticks, clapboards (or shakes) and anything they could use to fight with. They were all in a muss together, every one of the Missourians trying to get a lick at a "Mormon." It made me feel indignant to see from four to a dozen mobbers on a man and all damning 'em and G-- damning the "Mormon." . . . I turned around and ran a few steps to get a stick and I soon found one suitable, though rather large; it was the piece of the heart of an oak, which I thought I could handle with ease and convenience. Returning to the crowd many thoughts ran through my

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<sup>23</sup>Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, pp. 56-60. Also in Durham.

<sup>24</sup>Rigdon, pp. 15-17. Also in Durham.

<sup>25</sup>HC, 3:56-59. Also in Durham.

<sup>26</sup>Lyman Wight, "Proceedings of Court Testimony—Trial of Joseph Smith—Municipal Court of the City of Nauvoo, Illinois, July 1st, 1843," *Times and Seasons*, 4 (15 July 1843):265. Also in Durham.

<sup>27</sup>McGee, *Grand River Country*. Also in Durham.

mind. First I remembered that I never in my life struck a man in anger, had always lived in peace with all man and the stick I had to fight with was so large and heavy that I could sink it into every man's head, that I might chance to strike. I did not want to kill anyone, but merely to stop the affray and went in with the determination, to rescue my brethren from such miserable curs at all hazards, thinking when hefting my stick that I must temper my lick just so as not to kill. . . . When I got in reach of them, I commenced to call out aloud for peace and at the same time making my stick move to my own utter astonishment, tapping them as I thought light, but they fell as dead men, their heads often striking the ground first. I took great care to strike none except those who were fighting the brethren. When I first commenced there was some six or eight men on old Mr. Durphy, and a few steps further some ten or a dozen men on Brother Olmstead and Brother Nelson, but they were so thick around them that they could not do execution to advantage. I continued to knock down every man I could reach that was lifting a stick against the brethren. After getting through and seeing the brethren on their feet, I looked and saw some of the men lying on the ground as though they were dead, some with their friends holding them up and some standing leaning against the little grocery. While gazing on the scene Bro. Riley Stewart had in his hand (what the backwoodsman calls a knee) to place between weight poles on log cabins—a piece of timber about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet long, small at one end, and struck Dick Welding [sic] an over handed blow on the head, cutting the side of his head three or four inches in length, the skin pulling down. It looked liked he was certainly killed. I told Stewart he had better leave, for he had killed that man; he then started to run and got off some twenty or twenty-five paces, when some ten or a dozen men took after him, throwing sticks and stones at him and anything they could get, swearing they would kill him. I saw they would over-power him and called for him to come back, for we could do better business when together, and he took a little circuitous route to keep from meeting those pursuing him. At the crisis one of the mob drew a glittering dirk, the blade some six inches long, waving it in the air, and at the same time swearing it should drink Stewart's heart's blood. He started to meet Stewart, as he was returning back to the crowd. As he was several steps ahead of me, I sprang with all the power that was in me to overtake him before he met Stewart. Just as he and Stewart met, he made a blow at his neck or breast, but as Stewart was passing in a run, his dirk passed over his left shoulder close by his neck and struck in his right shoulder blade and bent the point of it

round as much as an inch. Just as he made his lick I reached forward as far as I could and hit him on the side of the head and fetched him helpless to the ground, and at the same instant received a blow from one behind me with the butt end of a loaded horse whip which took me right between the shoulders. I felt the jar only in my breast and had I not been stooping forward, as I was at the time I made my blow, he would have taken me on the head, no doubt, and perhaps fetched me down. While Stewart was running off, James Welding [sic], Dick's brother, came along and saw his brother lying in his gore; he bawled and swore that they had killed Dick. He stooped down and picked up a stone, swearing he would kill every "Mormon" in Daviess county before Saturday night. Just as the word came out of his mouth, Washington Voris, standing near him, hit him square in the mouth with a stone that would weigh near two pounds (I think) and straightened him out on the ground. He soon gathered up and as he rose with his mouth badly cut and bleeding, he put his hand on his face and began to cry, saying that he never saw people hit as hard as the "Mormons." They had killed Dick and mashed his mouth too, hoo, hoo; and off he ran bellowing in the brush. I will mention another occurrence which took place. Bro. Olmsted previous to the affray had purchased half a dozen earthen bowls and as many tea cups and saucers which he had tied up in a new cotton handkerchief and swung to his wrist. One of the mob struck at him when he raised his arm, the blow striking the bowls and saucers and broke them. He then commenced using them over their heads, and when the affray was over, I saw him empty out his broken earthenware on the ground in pieces not larger than a dollar and his handkerchief looked like it had been chewed by a cow. I have thought ever since that time that they had fun to pick the pieces of earthen ware from their heads, for they were pretty well filled. The whole scene was soon over; . . . I believe there was as many as 30 men with bloody heads and some of them badly hurt. I believe that I knocked down as many as six or eight myself. I never struck a man the second time, . . . .<sup>28</sup>

John Butler believed with all of his heart that God's spirit was upon him in the battle. In one source he said:

. . . and the Lord did strengthen my body far beyond the common strength of man, so much so that the enemy could not stand before me. It was the power of God that was with me to my own astonishment.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Butler. Also in Durham.

<sup>29</sup>John L. Butler, "A Short History of the Life of John Lowe Butler," manuscript written 20 May 1859, Historical Department of the Church.

In another source he wrote his feelings while he was in the act of knocking down the Missourians in the battle:

I really felt that they would soon embrace the gospel, and felt the spirit . . . to rest upon me with power. I felt like I was seven or eight feet high and my arms three or four feet long, for I certainly ran faster than I ever did before and could reach further and hit a man, and they could not reach me to harm me.

. . . to my mind . . . I was operated upon by a spirit to save them by knocking them down to keep them from killing the saints which would have sealed their damnation.<sup>30</sup>

Whether or not God was an active participant in the battle cannot be known. However, most of the accounts record that the victory was claimed by the Mormons in the knock-down, and that most of them voted before returning to their homes. But the excitement of this day did not terminate with the fight. There would still be false reports that would be sent to the brethren at Far West; there would be a Mormon army of some 150 to 200 men headed by Joseph and Hyrum Smith which would ride up to Daviess County to investigate the reports; and there would still be the whole Adam Black affidavit episode, and the subsequent trial of Joseph Smith and Lyman Wight. All of these exciting episodes in Mormon history were extensions of the August 6th fracas—episodes which we shall not explore or review here. Instead, now that the details of the Election Day Battle have been presented, some attention should be given to the causes of this preliminary clash between the Mormons and Missourians.

It is ineffective to isolate single causes of any event so emotionally tense as the Election Day Battle at Gallatin. An event of its nature must have been the result of many conditions, complexities, and pressures, which, in this case, took several years to foment in Missouri. But a few minutes with the right August heat, and all of the other causes together, inextricable though they may be, produced the emotional stage for this early bubbling over in Gallatin to occur. Having said this, may I cautiously suggest what to my thinking were some of the fundamental sources of the complexities which produced the battle.

Certainly, the numbers of Mormons flooding into the Mis-

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<sup>30</sup>Butler, in Journal History. Also in Durham.

souri lands at an explosive rate must have frightened the local settlers—or at least that rapid migration must have threatened their security. It should be remembered that the local residents were themselves relatively new citizens on these lands. Most of them had been in the country for only five or six years before the Mormons arrived. John Corrill, one-time Church Historian, wrote these pertinent words:

Feelings existed, as I observed before, between the Mormons and other citizens on account of their settling the new town of Adamondiaman, *and filling up the county so fast.*<sup>31</sup> [Italics added]

Even the general spirit of pride expressed by two Mormon ambassadors in their petition to the House of Representatives in Washington, D.C. must have been interpreted through Missourian eyes as threatening to their peace and security:

. . . the Mormons continued to increase in wealth and in numbers, until in the fall of the year 1838 they numbered, as near as they can estimate, about 15,000 souls. They now held, by purchases from the Government, of the settlers, and by pre-emption, almost all the lands in the county of Caldwell, and a portion of the lands in Davis and Carroll counties. The county of Caldwell was settled almost entirely by Mormons, and Mormons were rapidly filling up the counties of Davis and Carroll. When they first commenced settling in those counties, there were but few settlements, and the lands were for the most part wild and uncultivated. In the fall of 1838 large well improved farms had been made and stocked; lands had risen in value, and, in some instances, had been sold for from \$10 to \$25 per acre. The improvement and settlement had been such, that it was a common remark that the county of Caldwell would soon be the wealthiest in the State.<sup>32</sup>

And if every Mormon felt as Lyman Wight did about his Missourian neighbors, and if this were ultimately sensed by those neighbors, it is easy to see that Mormon increase in the land would only bring trouble. Here are his words:

I removed from Caldwell to Davies county, purchased a pre-emption right, for which I gave 750 dollars, gained another side thereof, put in a large crop and became acquainted with the citizens of Davies, who appeared very

<sup>31</sup>Corrill, pp. 33-34. Also in Durham.

<sup>32</sup>U.S., Congress, House, pp. 5-6. Also in Durham.

friendly. In the month of June or July there was a town laid off, partly on my pre-emption, and partly on lands belonging to Government—the emigration commenced flowing to this newly laid off town very rapidly. This excited a prejudice in the minds of some of the old citizens who were an ignorant set, and not very far advanced before the aborigines of the country in civilization or cultivated minds . . . .<sup>33</sup>

Some of the ardent Saints "were continually telling the Missourians, that the Lord had given them the whole Upper Missouri, and that the time was just at hand when all their lands would be given to the Saints by the Lord—and that the people of this nation would be utterly destroyed."<sup>34</sup> Certainly this was no way to win friends or influence people.

It may or may not be hyperbole to say that with every Mormon wagon load there was increasing distress, even pain, in the Missourian psyche. With every day, he who was once the senior citizen became more a member of the minority group. There had to be a stopping point to all of this. In northern Missouri, that point began at Gallatin.

Mormon political power increased as Mormon numbers increased. The Missourians knew this, and they also knew that if the Mormons voted together they could elect a candidate by sheer majority. Their concern and anxiety about political power was correlative with their concern over rapid population increase. The Missourians in Daviess County knew how the Mormons had totally controlled the elections in Caldwell County. Three thousand Mormons there elected the county clerk, two judges, the thirteen magistrates, and all of the county militia. As the Mormons spilled over into Daviess, what could those citizens expect? For one thing, they expected that the Mormon vote would naturally go contrary to the Missourian vote:

. . . there had been a man going round amongst us finding out who the Mormons was going to vote for and when they heard it made them mad, and they said that the Mormons should not vote because the Mormons did not vote to suit them. . . .<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Wight, p. 265. Also in Durham.

<sup>34</sup>James H. Hunt, *Mormonism: Embracing the Origin, Rise and Progress of the Sect* (St. Louis: Ustich and Davies, 1844), pp. 182-85. Also in Durham.

<sup>35</sup>Butler, in Journal History. Also in Durham.

For another thing, they expected that the Mormons would control the elections—"the two political parties were about equally divided in Daviess County, and . . . the Mormons held the balance of power, and would turn the scale whichever way they desired."<sup>36</sup>

With such expectations of the political power of the Mormons, the Missourians planned to prevent the Mormons from voting. All but one of the eighteen accounts of the Election Day Battle so witness. They planned to keep the Mormons from the polls by force if it became necessary. It was reported to John D. Lee

. . . that, at the approaching election, the Whigs were going to cast their votes, at the outside precincts, early in the day, and then rush in force to the town of Gallatin, the county-seat of Daviess county, and prevent the Mormons from voting. . . .<sup>37</sup>

Lee was also warned that "violence might be offered."<sup>38</sup> In addition he learned that the forced election of William Peniston was part of the plot.<sup>39</sup> Parley P. Pratt said of the Missourians: ". . . the robbers undertook to drive our people from the poll box, and threatened to kill whoever should attempt to vote."<sup>40</sup> Sidney Rigdon reported a great deal more information about this plot to prevent the Mormons from voting, and about Peniston's part in the plot with these words:

Not only was it threatened that they [the Saints] should not vote in Daviess county, but there were insinuations thrown out, that there would be a mob. . . . to prevent the people there from voting. . . . The election at last came on; and the Saints went to discharge what they considered not only a privilege but a duty also. One of the candidates for representative in Daviess county, was by the name of William Peniston, a very ignorant, ambitious creature, who was determined to carry his election if possible, and that at all hazards, whether the people were willing to elect him or not. Those who were not willing to vote for *him*, he determined by the force of mob law, to prevent from voting.

<sup>36</sup>Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, pp. 56-60. Also in Durham.

<sup>37</sup>Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, pp. 56-60. Also in Durham.

<sup>38</sup>Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, pp. 56-60. Also in Durham.

<sup>39</sup>Lee and Stewart; *HC*, 3:56-59. Also in Durham.

<sup>40</sup>Parley P. Pratt, *History of the Late Persecution Inflicted by the State of Missouri Upon the Mormons* (Mexico, New York: Oswego County Democrat, 1840), pp. 14-15. Also in Durham.

It may not however, be amiss here to give an account of this said Peniston's manoeuvres during the electioneering campaign. He was, at the time, the colonel of the militia in Daviess county, and had been the leader in the first mob which had been raised to prevent the saints from making settlements in Daviess county, in the first instance, of which mention has been made. When the electioneering campaign had fairly commenced, great exertions were made by the different candidates and their friends, to obtain the votes of the saints; each man, in his turn, making application. Peniston, like the rest, made application also. Mr. Wight, who was a man of influence among the saints, was the one to whom said Peniston made overtures. Mr. Wight, knowing that Peniston had always been an enemy to the saints, took the liberty to ask Peniston about his former hostilities, and his previous attempt to drive them from their homes; as well as many abusive things which he had said. Peniston declared that he never had any intention of driving them from their homes; he only tried to scare them, and if he could not, he intended to let them alone: and as to the many abusive things which he had said; he said "they were very wrong; he had been deceived by false reports, without being acquainted with the people; and, since he had become acquainted with them, he found that they were first rate citizens." And by many such sayings, he attempted to gain votes: but the saints, all the time knowing that he was a corrupt man, and every way disqualified for the office after which he was struggling, would not be induced to vote for him at all. This he fully understood before the election, and made his arrangements accordingly: having his satellites at the election, to aid him in executing his purpose, in preventing the saints from voting.<sup>41</sup>

Now, if the Mormons knew beforehand about the planned action to be taken by the Missourians on election day at the polls, as suggested by the above statements, it seems inconceivable that they wouldn't have consciously planned some retaliatory maneuver. Yet there is little, if any, evidence that they did this. To the contrary, various of the accounts reported that the brethren went to the polls unarmed—they were even grateful that the pile of logs was there to supply them with weapons. It is also clear that there were only a few Mormons on hand to get involved in the fracas. Given the available evidence, it cannot be supported that there was any planned action, offensive or defensive, on the part of the Mormons in the Election Day Battle.

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<sup>41</sup>Rigdon, pp. 15-17. Also in Durham.

However, since we are dealing with possible causative factors for this battle, there appears to be some strong evidence that a militant disposition had developed among the Mormons against the Missourians. If this is true, then this attitude would permeate all other relationships between Mormons and gentiles. Perhaps the battle at Gallatin would not have been as furious and bloody had it not had this overtone to it. Perhaps the ultimate consequences of this battle leading to the total expulsion of the Mormons would not have happened—at least, not as quickly as it did, were it not for this militant posture.

To defend the thesis of this aggressive and somewhat belligerent posture, we should look in retrospect at some significant events of Mormon history. In the formative years of the Church, persecutions by gentiles became serious enough to cause the Mormon migration to Ohio. Next, the Saints' immediate expectations of establishing the New Jerusalem in Jackson County, Missouri, were shattered quite brutally on 20 July 1833. That tragic event of the expulsion out of Zion must have been, for every Mormon who experienced it, too indelibly a part of him to easily forgive and forget. Then, too, precious scriptures—the word of God, supported and perpetuated their feelings about Missourians:

And inasmuch as mine enemies come against you to drive you from my goodly land, which I have consecrated to be the land of Zion, even from your own lands after these testimonies, which ye have brought before me against them, ye shall curse them;

And whomsoever ye curse, I will curse, and ye shall avenge me of mine enemies.

And my presence shall be with you even in avenging me of mine enemies, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me. (D&C 103:24-26)

Though some of the aggressive attitudes were aimed directly at the dissenters, it is clear that they embraced the Missourians also.

On 10 March 1838, on a Saturday at Far West, Joseph Smith penned what is known as the Political Motto of the Church. Careful reading of it reflects a mild belligerency toward more than just those who were bringing vexatious law-suits against the Saints—the dissenters. This motto clearly

reflects an attitude of woe to all enemies of the Saints, whether on religious, economic, or political battlefields. No loyal Latter-day Saint residing in Missouri could go unaffected by the general spirit of the motto:

The Constitution of our country formed by the Fathers of liberty. Peace and good order in society. Love to God, and good will to man. All good and wholesome laws, virtue and truth above all things, and aristocracy, live forever! *But woe to tyrants, mobs, aristocracy, anarchy, and toryism, and all those who invent or seek out unrighteous and vexatious lawsuits, under the pretext and color of law, or office, either religious or political.* Exalt the standard of Democracy! Down with that of priesthood, and let all the people say Amen! that the blood of our fathers may not cry from the ground against us. Sacred is the memory of that blood which bought for us our liberty.<sup>42</sup> [Italics added]

In June 1838, the Saints' militancy became more organized. John Corrill wrote about plans for the dissenters:

Secret meetings were held and plans contrived how to get rid of them. Some had one plan and some another, but there was backwardness in bringing it about, until President Rigdon delivered from the pulpit what I call the Salt Sermon. . . .<sup>43</sup>

The Salt Sermon was delivered by Sidney Rigdon on 17 June 1838. It is so named because of the text he used as his theme. With the text, probably taken from the Doctrine and Covenants 101:39-41, he pointed out what should and would happen to all the dissenters. The sermon was a "scathing denunciation of disloyalty among the members of the Church," and was inflammatory and threatening. Corrill, who was present when the sermon was delivered, remarked:

This scene I looked upon with horror, and considered it as proceeding from a mob spirit.<sup>44</sup>

The sermon breathed militancy; and it had its desired effect upon its hearers, because in only one day after the Salt Sermon, on 18 June 1838, eighty-four leading Mormon elders

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<sup>42</sup>HC, 3:29.

<sup>43</sup>Corrill, pp. 30-31. Also in Durham.

<sup>44</sup>Corrill, pp. 30-31. Also in Durham.

placed their signatures to a document known as the Note of Warning. Again, though it was primarily written to the dissenters, it was clearly a reflection of a growing aggressive emotion toward the Missourians. The spirit of the document revealed militancy:

. . . We have solemnly warned you, and that in the most determined manner, that if you did not cease that course of wanton abuse of the citizens of this county, that vengeance would overtake you sooner or later, and that when it did come it would be as furious as the mountain torrent and as terrible as the beating tempest; but you have affected to despise our warnings, and pass them off with a sneer or a grin or a threat, and pursue your former course; and vengeance sleepeth not, neither does it slumber; and unless you heed us this time, and attend to our request, it will overtake you at an hour when you do not expect it, and at a day when you do not look for it; and for you there shall be no escape; for there is but one decree for you, which is depart, depart, or a more fatal calamity shall befall you. . . . Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Lyman E. Johnson united with a gang of counterfeiters, thieves, liars, and blacklegs of the deepest dye, to deceive, cheat, and defraud the saints out of their property, by every art and stratagem [sic] which wickedness could invent; using the influence of the vilest persecutions to bring vexatious lawsuits, villainous persecutions, and even stealing not excepted. In the midst of this career, for fear the saints would seek redress at their hands, they breathed out threatenings of mobs, and actually made attempts with their gang to bring mobs upon them. . . .

And amongst the most monstrous of all your abominations, we have evidence (which, when called upon, we can produce) that letters sent to the post office in this place have been opened, read, and destroyed, and the persons to whom they were sent never obtained them; thus ruining the business of the place. We have evidence of a very strong character that you are, at this very time, engaged with a gang of counterfeiters, coiners, and blacklegs, as some of those characters have lately visited our city from Kirtland, and told what they came for; and we know, assuredly, that if we suffer you to continue, we may expect, and that speedily, to find a general system of stealing, counterfeiting, cheating, and burning of property, as in Kirtland—for so are your associates carrying on there at this time; and that, encouraged by you, by means of letters you send continually to them; and, to crown the whole, you have had the audacity to threaten us that, if we offered to disturb you, you would get up a mob from Clay and Ray counties. For the insult, if for nothing else, and for your threatening to shoot us if we

offered to molest [you], we will put you from the county of Caldwell, so help us God!<sup>45</sup>

The spirit of the document was interpreted as it was intended—the dissenters left immediately! David Whitmer wrote of this in 1887:

In the spring of 1838, the heads of the Church and many of the members had gone deep into error and blindness. I had been striving with them for a long time to show them the errors into which they were drifting, and for my labors I received only persecutions. . . . suffice it to say that my persecutions, for trying to show them their errors, became of such a nature that I had to leave the Latter Day Saints; and, as I rode on horseback out of Far West, in June, 1838, the voice of God from heaven spake to me. . . .<sup>46</sup>

David Whitmer also spoke of an organized force being established in the Church at this same time:

In June, 1838, at Far West, Mo., a secret organization was formed, Doctor Avard being put in as the leader of the band; a certain oath was to be administered to all the brethren to bind them to support the heads of the church in *everything they should teach*.<sup>47</sup>

Mark McKiernan suggested that though this aggressive spirit started from the arrival of the First Presidency in Far West (March 1838), the organized form of it came sometime in June 1838, with the "formation of a secret militant society for the enforcement of orthodoxy."<sup>48</sup> McKiernan further postulated that in July, "the direction of Smith's and Rigdon's militancy shifted from opposing dissenters to combating Gentile persecution."<sup>49</sup>

The secret band or "secret militant society" which both David Whitmer and Mark McKiernan wrote about was unquestionably the organization most familiarly known as the Danites. Klaus Hansen said that the Danites were originally organized "in self-defense against the depredations of the Mis-

<sup>45</sup>Ebenezer Robinson, "Items of Personal History . . .," *The Return* 1 (Davis City, Iowa, 1889):218-19.

<sup>46</sup>David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, Missouri: published by the author, 1887), p. 18.

<sup>47</sup>Whitmer, p. 18.

<sup>48</sup>F. Mark McKiernan, *The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness: Sidney Rigdon, Religious Reformer 1793-1876* (Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1971), pp. 87-88.

<sup>49</sup>McKiernan, pp. 87-88.

sourians," adding that they were "a secret military organization bound together by oaths and secret passwords."<sup>50</sup> Leland Gentry states that after the dissenters left,

. . . the Danites lost the rationale behind their existence. A new purpose had to be found in order to justify the organization's continuance. The warlike threats continually breathed against the Saints by their Missouri neighbors furnished the desired objective, namely, protection against mob violence.<sup>51</sup>

As if one formally organized group, such as the Danites, based upon near-enmity of their neighbors, wasn't enough, the Mormon leader established another military-oriented group called the Armies of Israel or the Host of Israel. As with the Danites its most important reason for being was to protect the Saints from mobs—and the only mobbers against them in Missouri were Missourians. The Host of Israel was established by Joseph Smith and it was believed that Joseph Smith was commander-in-chief.<sup>52</sup> John D. Lee wrote about both of these militant bodies, placing the date of their origins in the summer of 1838:

. . . In justice to truth I must state, that just before the general election of August, 1838, a general notice was given for all the brethren of Daviess county to meet at Adam-on-Diamond [sic]. Every man obeyed the call. At that meeting all the males over eighteen years of age, were organized into a military body, according to the law of the priesthood, and called "The Host of Israel." The first rank was a captain with ten men under him; next was a captain of fifty, that is he had five companies of ten; next, the captain of a hundred, or of ten captains and companies of ten. The entire membership of the Mormon Church was then organized in the same way. This, as I was informed, was the first organization of the military force of the Church. It was so organized at that time by command of God, as revealed through the Lord's Prophet, Joseph Smith. God commanded Joseph Smith to place the Host of Israel in a situation for defense against the enemies of God and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

At the same Conference another organization was perfected, or then first formed—it was called the "Danites." The members of this order were placed under the most

<sup>50</sup>Klaus J. Hansen, *Quest for Empire* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967), p. 57.

<sup>51</sup>Gentry, p. 321.

<sup>52</sup>Gentry, pp. 329-30.

sacred obligations that language could invent. They were sworn to stand by and sustain each other. *Sustain, protect, defend, and obey* the leaders of the Church, under any and *all circumstances unto death*; and to disobey the orders of the leaders of the Church, or divulge the name of a Danite to an outsider, or to make public any of the secrets of the order of Danites, was to be punished with death. And I can say of a truth, many have paid the penalty for failing to keep their covenants. They had signs and tokens for use and protection. The token of recognition was such it could be readily understood, and it served as a token of distress by which they could know each other from their enemies, although they were entire strangers to each other. When the sign was given it must be responded to and obeyed, even at the risk or certainty of death. The Danite that would refuse to respect the token, and comply with all its requirements, was stamped with dishonor, infamy, shame, disgrace, and his fate for cowardice and treachery was death.<sup>53</sup>

The organizational pattern of the army into companies of tens and fifties, as described by Lee, was the same as that found in the Danites' army. The two groups were so similar that even the Prophet Joseph Smith attempted to explain the difference between them in order to prevent any possible confusion.<sup>54</sup>

I have attempted to show evidence that an aggressive, belligerent, and militant spirit was being developed in the hearts of the Latter-day Saints in Missouri. The Political Motto, the Salt Sermon, the Note of Warning, and the flight of the dissenters all testify to it; but the fact that two formed organizations were actually created and operative in Missouri—two Mormon armies!—adds greater validity to that argument. Yet, with all of this, additional supporting evidence comes from the words of Sidney Rigdon given on Independence Day, 4 July 1838. His position was given while delivering an official address on that day, an address which reflected the attitudes of the Saints. (It is important to remember that this sermon was delivered only one month before the Gallatin affair.) The address is known as the Mormon Declaration of Independence. The following is an excerpt of the final words of his speech:

It is not because we cannot, if we were so disposed, enjoy the honors and flatteries of the world, but we have volun-

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<sup>53</sup>Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, pp. 56-60.

<sup>54</sup>HC, 3:181-82.

tarily offered them in sacrifice, and the riches of the world also, for a more durable substance. Our God has promised us a reward of eternal inheritance. . . . The promise is sure, and the reward is certain. It is because of this, that we have taken the spoiling of our goods. Our cheeks have been given to the smiters, and our heads to those who have plucked off the hair. We have not only when smitten on one cheek turned the other, but we have done it, again and again, until we are wearied of being smitten, and tired of being trampled upon. We have proved the world with kindness, we have suffered their abuse without cause, with patience, and have endured without resentment, *until this day, and still their persecution and violence does not cease. But from this day and this hour, we will suffer it no more.*

We take God and all the holy angels to witness this day, *that we warn all men in the name of Jesus Christ, to come on us no more forever;* for from this hour, we will bear it no more, our rights shall no more be trampled upon with impunity. The man or the set of men, who attempts it, does it at the expense of their lives. And *that mob that comes on us to disturb us, it shall be between us and them a war of extermination, for we will follow them, till the last drop of their blood is spilled, or else they will have to exterminate us: for we will carry the seat of war to their own houses, and their own families, and one party or the other shall be utterly destroyed.*—Remember it then all MEN!

We will never be the aggressors, we will infringe on the rights of no people; but shall stand for our own until death. We claim our own rights, and are willing that all others shall enjoy theirs.

No man shall be at liberty to come into our streets, to threaten us with mobs, for if he does, he shall atone for it before he leaves the place, neither shall he be at liberty, to vilify and slander any of us, for suffer it we will not in this place.

We therefore, take all men to record this day, that we proclaim our liberty on this day, as did our fathers. And we pledge this day to one another, our fortunes, our lives, and our sacred honors, to be delivered from the persecutions which we have had to endure for the last nine years, or nearly that. Neither will we indulge any man, or set of men, in instituting vexatious law suits against us, to cheat us out of our just rights, if they attempt it we say woe be unto them.

We this day then proclaim ourselves free, with a purpose and a determination, that never can be broken, "no never! NO NEVER!! NO NEVER!!!<sup>55</sup> [Italics added]

<sup>55</sup>"Oration Delivered by Mr. S. Rigdon, 4th Day of July, 1838, at Far West, Caldwell County, Missouri" (Far West: Elders' Journal Press, 1838), Historical Department of the Church.

The sermon was enthusiastically welcomed by the entire congregation; in fact, upon the conclusion of it they spontaneously shouted the "hosannah shout." "From every standpoint, the speech was an immediate success."<sup>56</sup> The skeptic who does not believe that either the message or the tone of this address reflected the official Church position or, at least, Joseph Smith's position, and that it only reflected Sidney Rigdon's point of view, must reorient his thinking when he reads the following words from Joseph Smith, given less than one month after the Gallatin Election Day Battle:

ELDERS' JOURNAL  
Joseph Smith, jr. Editor  
Far West, Mo., August, 1838

In this paper, we give the proceedings which were had on the fourth of July, at this place, in laying the corner stones of the temple, about to be built in this city.

The oration delivered on the occasion, is now published in pamphlet form: those of our friends wishing to have one, can get it, by calling on Ebenezer Robinson, by whom they were printed. We would recommend to all the saints to get one, to be had in their families, as it contains an outline of the suffering and persecutions of the Church from its rise. As also the fixed determinations of the saints, in relation to the persecutors, who are, and have been, continually, not only threatening us with mobs, but actually have been putting their threats into execution; with which we are absolutely determined no longer to bear, come life or come death, for to be mobed any more without taking vengeance, we will not. EDITOR.

Joseph Smith's editorial gave wholehearted endorsement of Sidney Rigdon's sermon; the Elders' Journal was the Church's official publication at this time. In addition to this editorial, and again, only one month after Sidney Rigdon's sermon, the Prophet wrote the following words:

There is great excitement at present among the Missourians, who are seeking if possible an occasion against us. They are continually chafing us, and provoking us to anger if possible, one sign of threatening after another, but we do not fear them, for the Lord God, the Eternal Father is our God, and Jesus the Mediator is our Savior, and in the great I Am is our strength and confidence.

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<sup>56</sup>Gentry, p. 209.

We have been driven time after time, and that without cause; and smitten again and again, and that without provocation; until we have proved the world with kindness, and the world has proved us, that we have no designs against any man or set of men, that we injure no man, that we are peaceable with all men, minding our own business, and our business only. We have suffered our rights and our liberties to be taken from us; we have not avenged ourselves of those wrongs; we have appealed to magistrates, to sheriffs, to judges, to government, and to the President of the United States, all in vain; yet we have yielded peaceably to all these things. We have not complained at the Great God, we murmured not, but peaceably left all, and retired into the back country, in the broad and wild prairies, in the barren and desolate plains, and there commenced anew; we made the desolate places to bud and blossom as the rose; and now the fiend-like race is disposed to give us no rest. There father the devil, is hourly calling upon them to be up and doing, and they, like willing and obedient children, need not the second admonition; but in the name of Jesus Christ the Son of the living God, we will endure it no longer, if the great God will arm us with courage, with strength and with power, to resist them in their persecutions. We will not act on the offensive, but always on the defensive; our rights and our liberties shall not be taken from us, and we peaceably submit to it, as we have done heretofore, but we will avenge ourselves of our enemies, inasmuch as they will not let us alone.<sup>57</sup>

With all of the evidence offered in the previous pages of an emotion of militancy overshadowing the Mormon people, it is not easy to disbelieve even William Swartzell's following account of the brethren just two days after the Gallatin affair:

. . . About six o'clock in the morning every man appeared under arms. We all marched out upon the prairie, where we formed a hollow square--the horsemen on one side, and the foot soldiers on the other, (the officers occupying the center of the square.) Brothers Smith, Rigdon, Cahoon, Eberly, White, Lot, and many other officers, were all in uniform. Sidney Rigdon drew his sword, and said, as near as I can recollect, these words--"We have been imposed upon and persecuted, ever since the rising of this Church--have been driven from Kirtland, Ohio, to Jackson county, Missouri; from Jackson to Clay county; from Ray to Caldwell county, and now we are in Daviess county. We are the people of God, and the only people that believe in His word. We fear God, our Almighty Protector; and we will

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<sup>57</sup>HC, 3:67-68.

be no more driven from this blessed land. Now, we, as the people of God, do declare—do declare and decree, by the great Jehovah, the eternal and omnipotent God, that sits upon his vast and everlasting throne, beyond that ethereal blue—[pointing his sword upwards]—*we WILL bathe our swords in the VITAL BLOOD of the Missourians, or DIE in the attempt!*<sup>58</sup> The whole company then shouted, and gave three cheers.<sup>58</sup>

And with the same evidence, it is not difficult to better understand the spirit, the emotion, of the brethren when they started to bash the heads of the Missourians at Gallatin. The following words should now be clearer:

To return to the election at Gallatin:—*The brethren all attended the election.* All things seemed to pass off quietly, until some of the Mormons went up to the polls to vote. *I was lying on the grass with McBrier and a number of others. . . .* When Stewart fell, the Mormons sprang to the pile of oak hearts, and each man, taking one for use, rushed into the crowd. The Mormons were yelling, "Save him!" and the settlers yelled, "Kill him; d--n him!" *The Sign of distress was given by the Danites, and all rushed forward, determined to save Stewart, or die with him. . . .* *The Danite sign of distress was again given by John L. Butler, one of the captains of the Host of Israel. . . .* Seeing the sign, I sprang to my feet and armed myself with one of the oak sticks. *I did this because I was a Danite, and my oaths that I had taken required immediate action on my part, in support of the one giving the sign. . . .* Captain Butler was then a stranger to me, and *until I saw him give the Danite sign of distress, I had believed him to be one of the Missouri ruffians, who were our enemies. . . .* The man then gave the sign, and I knew how to act.<sup>59</sup> [Italics added]

I did not want to kill anyone, but merely to stop the affray and went in with the determination, to rescue my brethren from *such miserable curs* at all hazards, thinking when hefting my stick that I must temper my lick just so as not to kill, and further *when I called out for the Danites a power rested upon me such as one I never felt before. . . .* After the fight was over, we gathered our men on some hewn house logs and *told the mob that we would fight them as long as blood run warm in our veins*, if they still persisted, but they begged for peace after they saw their men lying round. . . .<sup>60</sup> [Italics added]

<sup>58</sup> William Swartzell, *Mormonism Exposed* (Pekin, Ohio: published by the author, 1840), pp. 28-29.

<sup>59</sup> Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, pp. 56-60.

<sup>60</sup> Butler, in Journal History. Also in Durham.

The three fundamental sources or conditions and pressures which contributed as causes of the Election Day Battle—the rapid influx of Mormon people into northern Missouri, the settlers' fear of the political power of the Mormons, and the very real spirit of aggressiveness and militancy which developed in the Mormon psyche—do not represent all the causes and forces combining to produce that battle. However, these are the three most important causes. And with these causes in mind, the "great knock-down" and "unhappy affray," known in Mormon history as the Gallatin Election Day Battle, was the kind of thing which was apt to occur in small towns on frontiers, where life was made urgent and desperate by nature, and where people who were differently prepared socially were thrown together; when one group or the other had intense religious feelings, especially when those religious feelings took on strong political overtones; and whenever those people gathered together in the summertime at the election polls, especially when it was unbearably dry and hot.