

Two Iowa Postmasters View Nauvoo: Anti-Mormon Letters to the Governor of Missouri

edited by WARREN A. JENNINGS*

On the evening of May 6, 1842, Lilburn W. Boggs retired to the study of his home in Independence, Missouri. He was engaged once again as a merchant after having served a tempestuous four years as Governor of Missouri (1836-1840). During that term he had incurred the unwavering hostility of the Mormons because of his "exterminating order," an act of extremism which had resulted in their expulsion from the state in the winter of 1838-39. The life of a businessman proving dull, he had decided to seek again the excitement of politics and had spent the day campaigning for a seat in the State Senate. Boggs was engrossed in reading a newspaper when shots rang out. The ex-Governor slumped forward in his chair with blood flowing from wounds in his head and neck. Physicians were summoned but the prognosis was pessimistic; Boggs was not expected to live. For days he faltered between life and death until he rallied and passed the crisis.¹

An immediate search was made for the would-be assassin who had fired through a window and fled. Initially the community was at a loss for a suspect; guilt did "not seem to rest on any person."² As facts began to be collected a search was

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¹Accounts of this incident may be found in Harold Schindler, *Orrin Porter Rockwell: Man of God, Son of Thunder* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1966), pp. 74-76; Lyman L. Palmer, *History of Napa and Lake Counties, California* (San Francisco; n. p., 1881), pp. 380-81; William M. Boggs, "A Short Biographical Sketch of Lilburn W. Boggs," *Missouri Historical Review* 4 (January 1910): 107-09; Monte B. McLaws, "The Attempted Assassination of Missouri's Ex-Governor, Lilburn W. Boggs," *Missouri Historical Review* 60 (October 1965): 50-54; and *Jeffersonian Republican* (Jefferson City), 14 May 1842.

²Letter from Boggs' brother-in-law, dated May 7, *St. Louis Republican*, 12 May 1842.

made for a man named Tompkins, a silversmith. Tompkins was able to clear himself: a citizens committee designed "to ferret out the assassin," headed by Samuel D. Lucas, "fully acquitted and exculpated [the silversmith] from all suspicion."³ A week after the assassination attempt, the committee wrote the incumbent Governor of Missouri, Thomas Reynolds, that "no suspicion rests upon any one."⁴ However, some were speculating already that a Mormon might be involved.⁵ As time passed the Boggs family and others in the community became convinced—or convinced themselves—that Orrin P. Rockwell, who reportedly had been visiting relatives in western Missouri at the time, had fired the shot and that he was acting under orders from Joseph Smith. For a number of reasons—some public and others private—an effort was made to implicate Smith. Extensive pressure was exerted upon Reynolds to have Smith extradited from Illinois.

Few of Reynolds' papers have survived, but among these is a series of letters from two Iowa postmasters. These give some impression of the influences operating upon Reynolds—and thus some insight into the forces shaping the decision-making process of all public officials. They also disclose some of the personal motives of two prominent anti-Mormon agitators. One should be reluctant to accept as fact all statements within these letters. Obviously, they contain much that was mere rumor. They do indicate something of the extent of malevolence and prejudice that the Mormons faced in the areas surrounding Nauvoo. The letters are in the Missouri Archives, Manuscript Division, the State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

LETTER 1

Montrose May 14th 1842

To His Excely
Governor Reynolds

Sir

We have just rec^d via St Louis information the Ex Gov^r Boggs of your State was murdered in his

³*Jeffersonian Republican*, 21 May 1842. This issue also noted that "the assassins are now supposed to be three in number. The attempted murder of Gov. Boggs, has been succeeded by several daring acts of burglary and arson, which has produced great excitement at Independence."

⁴May 13, 1842, "Thomas Reynolds Letters," Missouri Archives, State Historical Society Manuscript Collection, Columbia, Missouri.

⁵*Boon's Lick Times* (Fayette), 14 May 1842.

own house on the 9th [sic] last & that suspicion was [one word illegible] that the awful deed had been committed by a follower of the wretched imposter *Joe* Smith.⁶

If it is true that Gov Boggs has been murdered & that it is not satisfactorily known who committed the murder, then I should not entertain a doubt that it was done by some of Joe's minions at his instigation. He has sworn Vengeance publicly against Gov Boggs ever since he settled in this neighborhood. A friend of mine was present to day when the news was made known to *Joe*—he exclaimed in that [sic] it was to good to be true; but he hoped to God it was so.

Almost every Mormon here rejoices over it & I have heard many of them say that he ought to have been killed long ago; and one leading Mormon remarked that he had no doubt but a Mormon had done it. . . .

Their city Nauvoo is directly opposite this. We look upon them as a *Banditti*; called together by their leaders for the purpose of forming a more perfect organization, to carry out their swindling & treasonable plans.

I have heard the leaders publicly encourage their people to steal from Missourians.

. . . .

D. W. Kilbourne P. M.⁷

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⁶According to Smith, the first news of the attack upon Boggs reached Nauvoo on May 14. Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Period I: History of Joseph Smith the Prophet, by Himself*, ed. Bingham H. Roberts, 5 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1960): 8; hereinafter cited as "HJS."

⁷David Wells Kilbourne (1803-1876) had a persistent history as an adversary of the Mormons. Born in Connecticut and a former school teacher, he had become a land speculator affiliated with the New York Land Company which had an interest in the Half-Breed Tract in Iowa—as did the Mormons. Kilbourne had platted the town of Montrose in 1837, ran a general store with his brother Edward in the abandoned fort at that place, and was a Justice of the Peace. He wrote a number of polemics against the Mormons, especially for the *Burlington Hawk-Eye and Patriot*. Some of these were reproduced in John Cook Bennett, *The History of the Saints; or, an Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism* (Boston: Leland & Whiting, 1842), pp. 89-93 and 99-103. Other accounts of encounters between the Mormons and the Kilbournes may be found in *St. Louis New Era*, 2 October 1841; *Times and Seasons* (Nauvoo), 2: 562 & 3: 559; and "HJS," 3: 61; 4: 416-17 & 444; and 5: 44 & 61. A lengthy, anti-Mormon exposition of these difficulties can be found in the handwritten biography of D. W. Kilbourne by his son, George E. Kilbourne in "C. F. Davis Collection—Keokuk, Iowa Memoranda," 2: 427ff, Microfilm collection of "Sources of Mormon History in Illinois, 1839-1848," Library of Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville. A biographical sketch is contained in *Annals of Iowa*, 3rd series, 15 (April 1926): 311-13.

LETTER 2

Keokuk Iowa Tty July 12th 1842

His Excellency Gov Reynolds

Sir

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Genl Bennet,⁸ late a *Mormon leader*, now a *dissenter* goes to you as he tells me for the purpose of giving information touching the attempted assassination of Ex Gov Boggs—It is not doubted here in the least but that the information which he intends to convey to you is literally correct, /i.e./ that he knows who the person is that shot Boggs, and that he /Bennet/ can prove Smith's agency in the matter sufficiently clear to satisfy any person of his participation in the matter. Bennet accuses a fellow by the name of Rockwood or Rockwell⁹ & from some circumstances I suspected him the very day the news reached & I wrote the Post Master of Independence Missouri for a description of the person, who was seen lurking around there about the time the affair took place.¹⁰ It is certain that immediately preceeding the news reaching here of the attempted assassination, Smith stated that he had it revealed to him of God himself *that Boggs would not die in his bed*. If he had not had some knowledge of the contemplated murder, what grounds would he have had for such remarks—None of us are willing to admit that he holds communion with the Diety, without admitting it we are compelled to believe him to be by, proxy, the author of that most foul deed. Ever since he was compelled to leave your State he has denounced the Citizens with heaviest imprecations. Could Treason be made out of words, in the United States, he has certainly been guilty of treason toward Missouri but such is not the case. Nearly his whole conversation & thoughts are taken up by planning the destruction of Missouri and unless checked, depend upon it, he will some day and that before long give your State more trouble than you are aware of or once think of. If his society was composed of men of moral honesty you would

⁸John C. Bennett had been expelled from the Church on or before June 25. He went to Iowa where he made contact with those hostile to the Mormons.

⁹Albert Perry Rockwood is being confused with Orrin Porter Rockwell, a mistake others were making at the time. See *St. Louis Republican*, 12 July 1842 *Missouri Whig* (Palmyra), 23 July 1842.

¹⁰This description was of Tompkins. *Jeffersonian Republican*, 14 May 1842.

know how to meet them, but a majority of them are renegades. Now, Sir do not think this idle speculation, for if you do you will be deceived, grossly deceived.

I know that the Mormons can never seriously affect this soon but they will one day give her a great deal of trouble. A person unacquainted with them knows nothing of the reverential awe with which they receive and obey Smith's mandates & from the mouths of a majority of them is constantly hearty imprecations against & plans for the destruction of your State.

Smith's word is law & his prophecies, revelation among them and could you attend one of their military parades (and you could not miss one any day in the year [Sundays excepted] for their city is constantly a military encampment) you would be satisfied that my remarks are not groundless.

Now, Sir, it is in your power to break up this horde of villany and murder by removing its head or leader. Is not Smith a refugee from your State? And does not justice to her citizens require you to demand from Illinois his immediate surrender? Rest assured your call would be recd with loudest cheers from this quarter & from the adjoining counties on the opposite side of the Mississippi. You can form no idea of the accession that is daily being made to their numbers by the arrival of Foreigners & other persons from different parts of the United States, all filled with hatred to Missouri. There are some good meaning persons among them, I have no doubt, but a large majority of them are villains of the darkest dyes and are as enthusiastic as they are worthless.

I expect to be a Citizen of Missouri shortly & would be glad to see the vile traducer of your State & black assassin of one of her ex Governors brought to Justice.

You will pardon me from intruding myself on you a second time,¹¹ I take a warmer interest in this matter than I should do, perhaps. . . . *I wish the above to be considered as confidential.*

. . . .

L. B. Fleak P. M.¹²
at Keokuk I. T.

. . . .

¹¹Fleak's first letter was not among the others and is probably no longer extant.

¹²Laban Bramble Fleak (1808-1890) was born in Ohio, taught school, and manned a schooner on Lake Erie in the early 1830's where he possibly first

LETTER 3

Keokuk I. T. Augt 8th 1842

His Excellency Gov Reynolds

Dear Sir

I have just this hour recd intelligence from *Nauvoo* that the Mormon Prophet Joseph Smith has this day been arrested on your requisition.¹³ He sent down for one of our attorneys¹⁴ & it was from him that I obtained the above information. The amount of it will be this Smith will be rescued by those devils which surround him & there will be another *war* more bloody than those villians say theirs was in Mo

Nothing can save Smith this time, nine tenths of our Citizens will support the Sheriff although he belongs to another State. The news of his arrest had not been here one hour before every Mormon in Our Town had left for *Nauvoo* I shall be with the Sheriff¹⁵ this evening and on my return again I will write you & from this time until he is safely conveyed into your State you may expect a note from me every Mail.

You could have done nothing else that would have given the people of this Country & of Illinois the satisfaction that this requisition has given them.

. . . .

L. B. Fleak

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learned of the Mormons. He moved to Keokuk in March 1840 where he initially opened a grocery store. Later he rented a building, the Keokuk Hotel, which he subsequently bought from Isaac Galland. See the 154 page handwritten life (probably autobiographical) of Fleak in "C. F. Davis Collection," 1: 325ff. Fleak was the first postmaster at Keokuk. *Table of Post Offices in the United States, on the Thirty-First of January, 1842* (Washington: n. p., 1842), p. 102. This office would have been a political appointment.

¹³Smith had been arrested on requisition of the Governor of Illinois, Thomas Carlin, who was responding to a request by Reynolds. Reynolds had acted on an affidavit sworn by Boggs on July 20. "HJS," 5: 67 and *Nauvoo Wasp*, 13 August 1842. Fleak later claimed that Boggs sent a personal emissary to him whose name he subsequently forgot. After consultation it was decided that the emissary should go to Nauvoo and pass himself off as a friend of the Mormons. Purportedly he became a member of the Church and was so successful in his deception that he became a trusted friend of the Prophet. "C. F. Davis Collection," 1: 455ff.

¹⁴"Lawyer" Powers. "HJS," 5: 89-95.

¹⁵James M. Pitman, the Deputy Sheriff of Adams County, Illinois.

LETTER 4

[Enclosure]

Montrose Iowa
Aug 12 th 1842

Friend Fleak

It is next to impossible to get correct news from across the river. The Sheriff returned from Quincy yesterday & demanded Joe of the Marshall of Nauvoo into whose hands he had committed him for safe keeping; but he was not forthcoming, the Marshall Saint had let him go.

The fact is the Mormons defy all the force that can be brought against them & swear in their strength that Joe Shall not be taken to Mo. Does not his conduct show the despot guilt [sic]? They are all in a great stew—Every old Rifle, Pistol, Cutlass, Knife etc among them is being put in order.

If Joe does not appear I suppose the next step will be to offer a reward for him as a fugitive from justice—as he has now escaped from an officer of justice.

If that is done I'll be bound justice will overtake him.

Will Mo now give up the chase? Will Gov Boggs be willing to rest & let a man who would murder him any moment go "unwhipped of Justice"?—for the good of the country & the peace of Society I hope not.

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D. W. Kilbourne

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LETTER 5

Keokuk I. T. Augt. 14, 1842

His Excellency Gov Reynolds

Sir

Enclosed you will find a letter from the Post Master at Montrose 12 miles above this place & opposite the Mormon City, it contains all the information that can be had up to that time.

Smith is now shulking around in this Territory and will probably stay here until a requisition on our Gov. drives him somewhere else. He was in our Town at 12 OClock last night

consulting one of our Attorneys¹⁶—The Cause of his being given up to the Marshall of the City of Nauvoo was this, they have an ordinance in their City which prohibits any persons being taken away from theirs without a hearing, & the Sheriff who arrested him having no counsel was obliged to go to Quincy to procure it. In his absence Smith procured an examination, before a *Mormon Mayor* & of course was liberated.

The Mormons say that Smith shall not be taken to Missouri, that they will fight & all this. We had a sample of that in your State.¹⁷ I will write as often as I can obtain any information.

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L. B. Fleak

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LETTER 6

Keokuk I. T. Sept 6th 1842

His Excellency Thos Reynolds

Sir

Yours of the 20th ult for Mr Ford¹⁸ came duly to hand—last night, & I am sorry to say that the letter was not handed me until Mr. Ford was on his return to Missouri

However I do not know that I could have been of any material service to him, for those renegades look upon me with suspicion

Nothing short of a *reward* or a regiment of Militia will get him from his hiding place. A reward will, I think make or

¹⁶Smith had not gone into Keokuk. William Walker had crossed to Iowa on Smith's horse, "Joe Duncan," with a message from Emma Smith to Powers. This is the cause for the confusion. "HJS," 5: 91.

¹⁷During the winter of 1836 Fleak had moved to Richmond, Missouri, where he opened a jewelry store. A year later he helped found a town, Buffalo City, on the Crooked River in Ray County where he opened a general store. For a variety of reasons the town never prospered. Fleak later claimed that when word came to him of the Battle of Crooked River, he called out the militia and was elected Captain of the local company. "C. F. Davis Collection," 1: 341ff. The payroll records of those militia units employed against the Mormons at Far West show that Fleak served as a private in Captain David Snowden's company from October 30 to November 8, 1838, for which he received \$9.91 $\frac{2}{3}$. Missouri Archives, State Historical Society Manuscript Collection.

¹⁸On July 22 Reynolds commissioned Sheriff Edward R. Ford to carry writs to Carlin for Smith and Rockwell's extradition and receive the prisoners. On August 20 similar writs were issued to the Territorial Governor on the possibility that Smith might cross into Iowa. "Records of the States of the United States, a Microfilm Record; Missouri, Register of Civil Proceedings," p. 175.

find a "Judas" among them.¹⁹ They laugh at the idea of his being removed by a hundred men, in short they say that "Brother Joseph" shall never be taken to Missouri. Our Sheriff
Smith

is on the alert but I do not think he/will make his appearance, soon, again on our side of the River. He was in our Town about two weeks ago, late at night. I do most sincerely hope that you will be the means of bringing the renegade to justice. I am as well satisfied, as is this whole community, that Rockwell, by the order of Smith, is the person that attempted the assassination of Boggs as I am that there is such a place as Paris.

You have not much to expect from Gov Carlin, he is about half Mormon himself or at least appears so from his sycophancy, when he meets those Smiths.

Should Smith make his appearance again in our Town he will be arrested, as every thing is in readiness to convey him accross the Desmoines River²⁰ & in the mean time should any thing occur that would be important to be known by you I will advise you of it immediately. Be good enough to command me at all times.

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L. B. Fleak

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LETTER 7

Keokuk I. T. Oct 5th 1842

Gov Reynolds

Dr Sir

I am this moment in receipt of your favour of the 23rd Ultimo & mailed on the 26th and also in receipt of the enclosed letter from my half brother who left here this morning.

I hope that my brother has not been misinformed. The Town that he dates his letter at is immediately opposite Nau-

¹⁹Perhaps it was Fleak's suggestion which was responsible for Reynolds' offering a reward of \$600.00 for the apprehension and delivery of Smith and Rockwell to Joseph H. Reynolds, Sheriff of Jackson County. Buel Leopard and Floyd C. Shoemaker, eds., *The Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of the State of Missouri*, 1 (Columbia: State Historical Society of Missouri, 1922), 524-25.

²⁰The boundary between northeastern Missouri and southeastern Iowa.

voo—Since writing the above another respectable man has arrived at my house with the same report that my brother sends me—he obtained his information from one of the leaders of the Church. In fact he told me that he had seen a letter from Jo. stating that there would be no chance for him longer to escape, that the officers were there in Nauvoo &c. In this same package I send you another letter that I had written before I was in receipt of either yours or my brothers' letters. It is a fact that Smith ordered the Mormons back to Nauvoo that had started—The person of whom they were purchasing told me not 10 minutes since.²¹ Success to the enterprise.

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L. B. Fleak

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P. S. I will write you again tomorrow night

LETTER 8

[Enclosure]

Keokuk I. T. Oct 5th 1842

His Excellency Thomas Reynolds

Sir

Your reward for Smith & Rockwell is making a great stir among the "brethren" at the "City of Nauvoo" Smith it is said has fortified himself in some sort of a *den*; this I do not vouch for, & Rockwell has left the Country.²² I am informed that the Gov of Illinois has added \$400 more to your reward and I at this time know of no less than three persons that are on the alert determined to arrest him if possible. There will be some *Judas'* among themselves I think.²³ I am in hopes to have it in my power to announce to you the capture of Smith by a week from this evening. Yesterday was a day that was set for about 50 of them to come down to our Town to select lots, but by an order from the *Prophet* they all remaind at home. This information I have from one of the Mormons & I have no doubt but it is correct—

²¹James Remick. See Robert Bruce Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), p. 142 and "HJS," 5: 162, 165 & 334.

²²Smith had a variety of hiding places. By this time Rockwell had left for the East. Schindler, *Rockwell*, p. 86.

²³Smith came to fear the possibility. See "HJS," 6: 152.

The intention of the three persons above alluded to, is to seize Smith some night in his own house perhaps, gag him, & carry him on board a small boat and bring him down to my house & keep him securely in a room in the 3rd story until the arrival of our regular St Louis Packets, one of which leaves here every night in the week except Monday night. I am the agent for all those Packets & when once on board there will be no further difficulty. If the enterprise succeeds I am entitled to one fourth of the Reward which I will take pleasure in bestowing on the State of Missouri. One of those three is now in Nauvoo and has been there for 2 days since which time I have heard nothing from him, but I have no doubt but that he is making all the discoveries that can be make, without creating suspicion. They are all careful, resolute fellows & will do nothing without the utmost caution, & if they should, accidentally be detected it will take the half of Nauvoo to arrest them, for all is planned, either for victory or defeat

Thus I have given you the Outlines of the plan & it is needless to say to you that it is in confidence. In the course of two months our Town will be overrun with those cutthroats as one of the principal owners in the Town has sold his interest to them.

I shall leave here with my effects in the Month of March for Missouri or sooner if I can get my business shaped so that I can leave without too great a loss. I am selling goods here & think of locating in some County seat in the South western part of Missouri should I find a location to suit me. I have now on hands about 70 head of Cattle that I shall send off this fall to Van Buren County.

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L. B. Fleak

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LETTER 9

[Enclosure]

Montrose Oct 5th 1842

Dr Brother

I have that Jo Smith is taken again. Some say the Mormons have themselves taken him for the purpose of getting the reward but others that the Officers from Quincy have taken him. He has gone to Carthage to day & is to have a trial

tomorrow. The Mormons think the Judge will set him at liberty
I shall go to Carthage this evening if I can get over the River

In haste

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H. B. Whetset [?]

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LETTER 10

Keokuk I. T. Oct 7th 1842

Gov Reynolds

Dear Sir

I hasten to correct the information which I gave your per last nights Boat respecting the supposed arrest of Jo Smith.

Smith is *not* arrested as was reported, this I have from my brother (the same that addressed me the note that I enclosed to you) and I know it can be relied upon. The note before me from him is dated at Nauvoo & was written the morning *after* the other was written. What can be the object of the Mormons in reporting his arrest I cannot conjecture, they must have something in view. I shall be in Nauvoo tomorrow—and should anything transpire worthy of notice I will again write you. In the meantime the plan proposed in my note of the 5th Ins will be vigorously prosecuted

The Reward has had one salutary effect—it has stopped their settling in our Town & those that had come down have returned to Nauvoo

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L. B. Fleak

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LETTER 11

Keokuk I. T. Dec 4/42

Gov Reynolds

Dear Sir

All of our efforts to seize the renegade Smith, have proved fruitless and we have been compelled though with reluctance to abandon the project. He keeps constantly around him as body guard of some 12 to 14 enthusiastic

fanaticks²⁴ which renders a secret approach impossible, and with the River frozen over as it now is,²⁵ even if we were to get him it would be impossible to get away with him, for one halloo from him [sic] call a thousand men to his rescue.

The only possible way to get him is through the newly elected Governor.²⁶ He may do something but Carlin never would if he were to continue Gov 20 years, he is about half Mormon himself—

His house has been Smith's Hotel, when in Quincy for the past two years.

Depend upon it, those fanaticks will one day give your State a great deal of trouble, their whole thought is how they they [sic] shall injure or destroy Missouri & the first thing taught their new members is to despise Missouri. They have now purchased the principal part of Keokuk & are coming into it very fast, which puts a body of them within 3 miles of the Missouri line. I shall leave here in March for Missouri.

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L. B. Fleak

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LETTER 12

Keokuk I. T. March 1/43

Gov Reynolds

Sir

I once more intrude on your patience the perusal of a note. It is currently reported here that another requisition has been sent to Illinois for the delivery of Joe Smith to the authority of your State. The requisition is said to be founded on the indictment of 1838. I hope it is true. I think that requisition will stick if such a one has been issued in spite of the whole fraternity of Mormon Judges Counsellors Sheriffs &c; of Illinois. I know Smith fears it for I am informed that he has ordered the Mormons to leave our County and concentrate at Nauvoo, at any rate they are *all all* [sic] about leaving our Town. I would advise you to keep on your *guard* at all times for they have indirectly threatened your life in case you

²⁴His life guard.

²⁵The Mississippi River froze on November 19 and remained so until after March 1, 1843. "HJS," 5: 292.

²⁶Thomas Ford, who was inaugurated as Governor of Illinois on December 8.

pursue this villain further, you have seen how successful their attempts were on Ex Gov Boggs so I beg of you be on your guard at all times. They are determined to give some of you trouble before long if I may judge by their assertions. They are becoming very numerous, hundreds of new recruits are weekly arriving & this same Temple that they are now building is in my opinion intended for a fortress. The strength of the place is proof of the fact.

I am happy to say that I shall be ready to leave this accursed Mormon Country by the Middle of May or the first of June next and I intend permanently settling myself near the South Western County of your State. I shall take with me from 100 to 120 head of Good Cattle. I am told that the above named section of country is a fine grazing country. I want a situation where I can sell goods. If you can give me any information about that country & have time & inclination to do it I will take it as an especial favour, which shall at some future period be duly reciprocated if an opportunity ever offers.

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L. B. Fleak

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P. S. Rockwell, Smiths tool is in Wisconsin Territory in the pine country near the Falls of St. Croix

LBF

LETTER 13

Keokuk Iowa March 20th

His Excellency Thos Reynolds

1843

Dear Sir

I have just read with pleasure of the arrest of that notorious Rockwell and I will say to you that it has created no small excitement among the Mormons.²⁷ I am now more than ever satisfied of the guilt of Joe & I know he fears that Rockwell will turn traitor. If the right method is pursued I am satisfied that he will do so for we all know that a midnight assassin will stop at nothing in a general way. Those villians at Nauvoo have ascertained by some means

²⁷Rockwell was arrested at the St. Louis steamboat landing on March 4. He spent several months in jail in Jackson County but was finally released when a grand jury refused to indict him, probably for lack of evidence.

that I was watching them closely and they deceived me egregiously in regard to the location of Rockwell. What I wrote you a short time ago respecting his being in the *Pinery* in Wisconsin was told me in a very careless manner by one of the leaders & I supposed it to be true, but I am now convinced that it was done purposely to deceive me. I fear some difficulties with them but my house is pretty fair arsenal and if they interfere with me I shall give them the best show possible. I intend leaving the infernal Mormon region in one month more

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L. B. Fleak

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P. S. You will pardon me for troubling you with so many unasked for notes—whether welcome or not. I am determined to keep you constantly advised of any movement that I see amongst them.

LETTER 14

Keokuk I. T. Augt 3rd 1843

His Excellency Gov Reynolds

Dear Sir, Herewith I send you a copy of an affidavit that is now in my office, although there is nothing definite in it, yet you may rely upon it that if those Mormons do not give you trouble on your Western & northern line this Fall, it will be because they cannot get enough of the Indians to fall in with their diabolical schemes. They have numbers of emissaries among the Indians at this time who represent to the Indians that they are Englishmen. They are also scattering *English Medals* among the Indians, & represent to them that Smith holds a commission under the British government. This may all look like a hoax to you, but the time *will* come when it will not be felt as a *hoax*. Hitchcock²⁸ the deponent has long been acquainted with the Pottawattomies, speaks their tongue as fluently as he does the English language. He is well known here and has been known, always, as a man of undoubted veracity. I myself know that those chiefs (as they calld [sic] themselves) were there at the time he mentions in his affidavit & I also know that they returned at the time that

²⁸Emanuel Hitchcock was a farmer in Lee County according to the *United States Census of 1840*.

he says they told him they would & that they brought their own interpreter with them this last time.²⁹ The following is a true copy of the Affidavit, many of the expressions are awkward but he says it is a literal translation of their conversation so far as it goes.

Territory of Iowa } ss —Personally appeared before the un-
Lee County

dersigned a Justice of the Peace for Lee County, Iowa Territory E Hitchcock who being duly sworn according to Law, deposeth & sayth "That about the first of April last,³⁰ three Pottawattomie chiefs, the oldest was *Waugh-be-ke-she*, the next oldest *Apa-guch-a-ba* & the youngest *Na-am-wat*³¹ came to Montrose and enquired of the deponent for the *British Captain*, that talks with the Great Spirit A Mormon took them across the River to Nauvoo about 10 o-Clock A. M. & about 2 O Clock P. M. Joe Smith (the Prophet so called) sent a request for the deponent to come to Nauvoo which the deponent complied with, when the deponent arrived at Smith's, said Chiefs were before Smith's house surrounded by about one hundred Mormons. After the lapse of some minutes, Smith ordered the deponent & Chiefs to appear before him in his rooms. This was before the deponent began the interpretation. The house of Smith was then cleared and no one allowed to enter the room but *Hiram Smith*, Joe's Brother & three other Mormons. The Chiefs requested the deponent to tell the Brittish Capt (Joe Smith) that many of his men were among them on Kansas River and had told them that that great white streak seen in the West two & a half moons past,³² signified the great white prophet (Brittish Capn Joe Smith,) that talked with the Great Spirit and that *he Smith would tell them how to settle all of their abuses of the whites and how to get redress for their wrongs*. The Chiefs then said that ten tribes had already smoked the pipe of Peace & were then ready to receive & obey his (Smiths') orders. The Chiefs also requested Smith to send

²⁹On July 2, 1843 Smith had held an interview with several *Pottawattamie* Chiefs. "HJS," 5: 479-81.

³⁰The first meeting with the Pottawattamie Chiefs had occurred on April 18, 1843. "HJS," 5: 365.

³¹The identity of these three chiefs is unknown, at least under these names.

³²The great comet of 1843 which was visible from late February to early April. See *American Journal of Sciences and Arts* 44 (April 1843): 412-17; *American Almanac and Repository of Useful Knowledge for the Year 1844*, pp. 94-101 and "HJS," 5: 301. The *St. Louis Republican*, 18 March 1843, mentions a "long luminary streak now visible each evening in southwestern sky."

some of his *big* men home with them. They then showed Smith two *Brittish medals* to prove to him that they were true friends as they said. All the reply that Smith made to them, through the deponent was "my hands are tied, by holding a Commission under the United States" but he said to them that he wished the *ten* tribes to stick closely together. Hiram Smith told the deponent to say to them that they should not *send* any one with them but if brother *Dunham*³³ was willing to go with them he *might* go. The next morning about sunrise the Chiefs came back to Montrose, when this deponent asked them when they would return to Nauvoo, they replied when corn comes knee high. The Chiefs earnestly requested this deponent to keep their talk a secret & further the deponent saith not.

Signed Emanuel Hitchcock

Sworn to & subscribed before me on this 27th day of July 1843

Signed J[ames]. A. Clark J. P.

The above is a true copy of the affidavit & with my knowledge of those fanatics together with the fact of the return of those chiefs at the time specified and other circumstances, I do fully believe that there will be an attempt made on the frontiers of Missouri this very Fall. I have read a letter from Capt Allen of Fort Rackoon,³⁴ some 250 miles up the Desmoines River He states that there had been one or two hundred Pottawattomies encamped in that vicinity & that the Sac & Fox Indians had furnished them with some 80 to 100 horses, he says in his letter that he does not apprehend any difficulty, but at the same time he will be on the alert, always in readiness and keep his eye closely on any whites that may be passing. It is not my wish to create any unnecessary alarm, but I do think that the inhabitants on the border of the State should know what facts there are in the case, That the Mormons have a fixed hatred against Missouri you are well aware. One of the principal articles of their creed is the destruction of Missouri. No Mormon has prayed yet I expect without calling for the vengeance of

³³On July 14, 1843 Jonathan Dunham left on an excursion among the Sac and Pottawattamie Indians. "HJS," 5: 541-49.

³⁴Captain James Allen was commander of Company 1, First Dragoons which was stationed at Fort Raccoon. This post was on the site of present day Des Moines, Iowa. Allen was the officer who recruited the "Mormon Battalion" for service during the Mexican War.

Heaven on Missouri. Well I claim to be a Missourian & glory in the name & I hope the Mormons will make their intended invasion, then the extermination of their [sic] would take place beyond a doubt. I said I was a Missourian; I am not by birth, but by adoption. I have resided in the State for several years & intend being there shortly again, as soon at least as I finish closing my business which will be in two or three months.

I am now offering to pay the reward for Smith that you offered, provided he is delivered to me in Clark Co Mo five miles from this place. There is nothing on earth would give me more pleasure than to make my appearance at Jefferson City with Joe in *tow* However I have no hopes of success as he keeps a body guard near him all the while. I send you a paper to day containing Hiram Smiths Testimony as given before the Municipal Court of Nauvoo at Smiths last exparte examination.³⁵

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L. B. Fleak³⁶

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On the morning of February 9, 1844, Governor Reynolds shot himself through the forehead. In a note explaining his motive for committing suicide, he wrote that he had tried to carry out his duties "but this has not protected me for the last twelve months from the slanders and abuse of my enemies, which has rendered my life a burden to me."³⁷ For several months Reynolds "had been in a very bad state of health"³⁸ and in a despondent mood. Some of his contemporaries speculated that an aggravating factor had been the criticism Reynolds had received for not being able to return Smith to Missouri for trial.³⁹ This speculation has continued to the present.⁴⁰

³⁵*Nauvoo Neighbor*, 12 July 1843.

³⁶Fleak never moved to Missouri. He was still at Keokuk and still seeking political preferment in February 1850 when he was appointed by Austin A. King, Governor of Missouri, as a commissioner "to receive oaths and to take dispositions and affidavits to be read in [Missouri]." "Register of Civil Proceedings," p. 524. That same year he moved to a farm near Fairfield, Iowa, where he remained until his death. His obituary noted that "he was an active participant in the movement which resulted in driving the Mormons from Nauvoo." *Fairfield Ledger*, 12 March 1890.

³⁷*Jefferson Inquirer* (Jefferson City), 15 February 1844.

³⁸*Boon's Lick Times*, 17 February 1844.

³⁹*Quincy Whig*, 21 February 1844.

⁴⁰George R. Gayler, "Attempts by the State of Missouri to Extradite Joseph Smith, 1841-1843," *Missouri Historical Review* 58 (October 1963): 36.