"Journal of the Branch of the Church of Christ in Pontiac,... 1834": Hyrum Smith's Division of Zion's Camp

Craig K. Manscill

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol39/iss1/13

This Document is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in BYU Studies Quarterly by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
“Journal of the Branch of the Church of Christ in Pontiac, . . . 1834”: Hyrum Smith’s Division of Zion’s Camp

Craig K. Manscill

On April 21, 1834, Hyrum Smith and Lyman Wight set out from Kirtland, Ohio, for Pontiac, Michigan, to recruit volunteers for the march of Zion’s Camp. Their objective was to lead their recruits on a six-hundred-mile march to a prearranged rendezvous with Joseph Smith’s Kirtland division in Missouri. Typically, scholarly treatments of the march of Zion’s Camp have focused on the accounts of the Kirtland, Ohio, legion while overlooking the Hyrum Smith-Lyman Wight division of Zion’s Camp. Yet Hyrum’s group, when compared with Joseph’s command, demonstrated a similarly significant commitment to addressing the needs of their fellow Saints in Missouri. In addition, a study of the Smith-Wight division offers new and insightful details about the recruitment, organization, and march of this ecclesiastical militia.

Zion’s Camp arose as a result of an earlier conflict between the Latter-day Saints of Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, and the original settlers of the region. Members of the Church began migrating to Independence when it was designated as the center place of Zion in 1831 (D&C 57:1–4). The Saints were never accepted by the “old settlers,” who judged the Mormons to be self-righteous fanatics, abolitionists, and knaves laying claim to Jackson County as a land divinely chosen just for them.1 In return, the Saints viewed the original residents as irreligious, lazy, and immoral.

These differences provoked a violent confrontation between the two groups in Independence during the summer and fall of 1833, which eventuated in the forced expulsion of twelve hundred Saints from their homes and land at the hands of vigilante mobs the following winter. Crossing the Missouri River, the Saints found temporary refuge and sympathy from Missourians to the north, in Clay County.2 Church leaders petitioned Missouri governor, Daniel Dunklin, to remedy their losses, but the request for help did little good. However, R. W. Wells, the attorney general of Missouri, informed the legal counsel of the Church that Governor Dunklin pledged to use militia and state arms to restore the Mormons to their lands if they could raise a sufficient force to maintain the peace after their return. The communication further stated that these conditions were contingent upon a formal application to the governor, which he could accept at his
own discretion. This tenuous pledge gave the exiled Saints hope and was one of the primary reasons for the organization of Zion's Camp.

Early in January 1834, Church leaders in Clay County sent Parley P. Pratt and Lyman Wight to Kirtland to apprise the Prophet Joseph of the plight of the Missouri Saints. Fighting the harsh winter elements, these two volunteers began their journey on January 12 and traversed nearly a thousand miles in forty days, arriving in Kirtland on February 21, 1834. Three days later, the messengers reported to the newly organized Kirtland high council the devastation and expulsion of the Missouri Saints. Of their Kirtland brethren, they queried, “When, and how and by what means Zion was to be redeemed from her enemies?” The minutes of the high council meeting report the response:

Brother Joseph then arose, and said that he was going to Zion, to assist in redeeming it. He called for the voice of the Council to sanction his going, which was given without a dissenting voice. He then called for volunteers to go with him, when some thirty or forty volunteered to go, who were present at the Council. . . . Joseph Smith, Jun., was nominated to be the commander-in-chief of the armies of Israel, and the leader of those who volunteered to go and assist in the redemption of Zion; the nomination was seconded and carried by the vote of all present.

Later that day, the Prophet Joseph received the will of the Lord by way of a “revelation and commandment” about “how to act in the discharge of your duties concerning the salvation and redemption of your brethren, who have been scattered on the land of Zion” (D&C 103:1). To fulfill his charge, Joseph was instructed to take from “the strength of my house” between one and five hundred of “my young men and the middle aged” (D&C 103:22). The volunteers were to be enlisted from the various branches of Israel and gathered by four sets of missionary recruiters: Joseph Smith and Parley P. Pratt; Lyman Wight and Sidney Rigdon; Hyrum Smith and Frederick G. Williams; and Orson Hyde and Orson Pratt (D&C 103:30–40). This was the inception of Zion's Camp, one of the most unusual and important chapters in Church history.

The purpose of the volunteer enlists was to reclaim the lands of the dispossessed Saints in Jackson County. In addition, they were to render assistance to the Saints in the form of supplies and to show support to the suffering Church members harbored in Clay County. The recruits might be required to give more than supplies and assistance, however. One revelation to the Prophet Joseph detailed that the “redemption of Zion” and the avenging of the Lord’s enemies could require even the laying down of one's life for the sake of the Lord and Zion (D&C 101:15, 43, 58). As details of the camp began to take shape, it was decided to muster in two places: Kirtland, Ohio, and Pontiac, Michigan. Joseph Smith was to lead the Kirtland division,
Hyrum Smith
and his older brother, Hyrum Smith, with Lyman Wight were to head up the Pontiac section.

Over the next ten weeks, members of the Church and the recruiters set about obtaining volunteers, supplies, and the financial means to support the march of Zion's Camp. The recruiters' travels and the general Church's efforts covered most of the states in the northeastern part of the country. Although success varied among the recruiters, their total effort barely measured up to the number of recruits that the Lord had required in the revelation organizing the camp. At the designated time of mustering in Kirtland, approximately 120 volunteers gathered with Joseph and nearly $190 had been collected. Still, Joseph was not discouraged, and he pressed forward in his plans to redeem the Saints on the western border.

On April 14, 1834, while assembling his own division, Joseph directed Hyrum Smith and Lyman Wight to go west to gather additional recruits and lead them to Missouri. Since Hyrum and Lyman had served proselyting missions to Pontiac, Michigan, in 1831, they were acquainted with the Pontiac Saints and familiar with the route of travel from Pontiac to Independence. Instructed to move through Ohio and then swing north to the Saints of the Huron Branch in Pontiac, the missionary pair was "to gather up as many men as possible and bring them to the Allred Branch on the Salt River near Paris, Monroe County, Missouri," the rendezvous point. The first of June was the target date for arrival. The company reaching the rendezvous point first was to wait for the other before proceeding on to Jackson County.

The Church at Pontiac

The emergence and growth of the Church in Pontiac is credited to Almira Mack and Lucy Mack Smith. Lucy's brother Stephen Mack moved from Tunbridge, Vermont, to Detroit, Michigan, in 1807 and then settled in Pontiac, twenty-six miles north of Detroit in 1818. Almira Mack, the youngest of Stephen's twelve children, left Pontiac to visit her aunt Lucy in Manchester, New York, in May 1830. On hearing the message of the restoration, she received baptism into the Church. In 1831, Almira moved to Kirtland, Ohio, with the Smiths.

On June 7, 1831, Hyrum Smith, John Murdock, Lyman Wight, and John Corrill were commanded by revelation to journey to Missouri "by the way of Detroit." Almira Mack and Lucy Smith accompanied Hyrum on this mission as far as Pontiac in order to visit the Macks. The missionary efforts in Michigan proved fruitless for Hyrum and his companions. Leaving Lucy with the Mack family, the four missionaries left Michigan and traveled in a southwesterly direction, preaching as they journeyed toward Independence, Missouri.
Lucy remained in Pontiac for four weeks. She and Almira were enthusiastic about the new religion, and Lucy “never missed an opportunity to advance it.” Among others, Lucy introduced the gospel to her sister-in-law Temperance Mack. Lucy won the hearts of many, but not all. In one biting exchange with the minister of the local Congregational Church, the Reverend Isaac W. Ruggles, Lucy warned that “within three years her son Joseph would have a third of his church, including the deacon.” Two years later, the Prophet made good on Lucy’s promise when he dispatched Jared Carter and Joseph Wood to Pontiac for missionary service. They arrived January 7, 1833, and within several weeks the Reverend Ruggles lost his first deacon, Samuel Bent, and seventy members of his flock to the Saints. The Church achieved a stronghold in Pontiac with Samuel Bent presiding over the branch.

On April 21, 1834, Hyrum Smith and Lyman Wight began their recruiting mission to Pontiac, traveling with a team of horses and one light wagon. They left Kirtland, heading west while “visiting the churches and ascertaining what they would do for the brethren in Missouri.” (See their route on map on page 172). Their first stop was in Florence, Ohio, where they got recruits for Joseph’s division. After a short stay in Florence, they moved on to Pontiac, Michigan, where they called on the Saints of the Huron Branch.

Fifteen members of the Huron Branch responded to the call and volunteered to join the Camp of Zion: nine men, three women, and three children. With the exception of Charlotte Alvord, who traveled without husband or parents, the women and children joined the camp in order to be with their husbands and parents and to settle in Zion once the Saints were reestablished on their land. Adding Hyrum Smith and Lyman Wight from Kirtland, and Charles C. Rich, who joined the camp in Illinois, the number traveling with the camp was eighteen. The youngest in camp was nine-year-old George Fordham and the oldest was fifty-six-year-old Samuel Bent.

The March of the Pontiac Saints

The company, only a fraction the size of the Kirtland division, left Pontiac on May 5, 1834, the same day the Prophet Joseph Smith left Kirtland with the larger party of Zion’s Camp. Elijah Fordham recorded that the Pontiac camp traveled with “two light Wagons, two Span of horses, [and] One tent.” The small camp was formally organized on the second day of the march. Hyrum, aware of the revelation received on February 24, 1834, in Kirtland, knew how he should “act in the discharge” (D&C 103:1) of his duty as leader and organized the camp after the ancient pattern established by Moses for the camp of Israel (Ex. 13:21; Deut. 1:15). Hyrum Smith and
Route of Hyrum Smith's division of Zion's Camp
Samuel Bent were appointed moderators, and Lyman Wight was appointed steward over the provisions. The duties of tent pitchers, woodchoppers, teamsters, and water carriers were divided among the other men. Elijah Fordham, in addition to acting as a tent pitcher, accepted the duty to serve as company historian and keep the official journal.30 Prayers were to be held each morning and evening, and the Sabbath was to be observed with meetings and rest.

A significant feature of the trek was Hyrum Smith’s designation of campsite names for places where they rested during the first days of the march. A number of sites received biblical names such as Engedi, Ai, and Epah.31 These camp names often reflected events during the march or expressed sentiments about the day. For example, on May 8, one horse had thrown a shoe, it rained much of the night, the cooking took too long, and the horses wandered away from camp. Accordingly, the following morning, Hyrum dubbed the camp “Ai” with the explanation “for we sustained loss.”32 The name of the Old Testament city Ai means “heap or ruin.”33 In biblical times, the Israelites had burned the city, killed everyone, and made it into a heap (Josh. 8).

Elijah Fordham’s account of the Pontiac march rarely refers to the company’s private affairs and contains little evidence of any bickering; Joseph’s group, conversely, was plagued by dissent. In fact, according to the Pontiac journal, this march was executed with almost military precision. Lyman Wight’s previous military experience as a militia member during the War of 1812 and Hyrum Smith’s meticulous attention to detail undoubtedly helped to make the march more efficient.34 The makeup of the camp also had something to do with the ease of movement. The group was small and easily managed, and most members of the camp were well acquainted with each other due to their previous association in the Church.

The inherent hardship of trail travel was coupled with the monotonous routine of daily camp life. Over the course of the journey to Missouri, the group averaged between twenty and thirty miles a day in a southwest-erly direction. The march took thirty-eight days, including seven days of no travel. Teamsters rode in the two wagons, and everyone else walked the six-hundred-mile route. Lyman Wight walked the entire distance barefoot. Fourteen-year-old Lyman O. Littlefield later wrote that the “whole company walked almost the entire distance, as the teams were too heavily loaded to admit of our riding.” Littlefield pointed out that the travelers endured this discomfort with little complaining.35 Members of the camp from time to time also experienced ill health. The “ague,” a malaria-like malady, affected several along the trail. The sick were attended to with priesthood blessings, and all arrived safe and healthy in Missouri.
Despite the overall favorable circumstances of travel, nine days into the march, on May 13, a small altercation occurred. Camp members complained that Brother and Sister Houghton, one of two married couples on the trek, “had not done their [camp] duty,” and some grumbling and hard feelings were expressed. Hyrum warned them of the consequences of the dispute, and afterward everyone “felt humble” and forgave each other of ill feelings. The timely resolution to this problem reflects well on Hyrum’s leadership. Lyman O. Littlefield recalled years later that “our company had already learned to love and honor Hyrum Smith because of his dignified and upright course and correct teachings.”

While the company marched under the leadership of Hyrum Smith, Lyman Wight was often gone looking for recruits. On May 27, for example, Wight rode five miles out of his way to hold a meeting with persons who might be persuaded to join the expedition. These recruiting efforts were so persuasive that they nearly convinced Hosea Stout, who was not yet a member of the Church, to join the brigade. Stout, who joined the Church in 1838, later wrote, “The effect of their preaching was powerful on me & when I considered that they were going up to Zion to fight for their lost inheritances under the special directions of God it was all that I could do to refrain from going.” The Pontiac journal indicates that Wight’s recruitment excursions met with success, however, when an important recruit was obtained from the effort—Charles Coulson Rich. The twenty-four-year-old Rich, a two-year convert and future Apostle, joined the company at Pekin, Illinois, where he had lived for the previous ten years.

By June 2, the company had proceeded to within fifty miles of Quincy, Illinois, on the Mississippi River. Two days later, the party arrived at the junction of the Quincy Road and what Fordham called the Mormon Road, and they reached Quincy the following day. Fordham described this thriving commercial center as a considerable “place [of] about 70 houses, 2 Inns, 9 Stores, [and] an Open Square in the Center [which] looks well.” On the afternoon of June 5, the company ferried across the Mississippi, described as being “about a mile wide at this place, full of Islands and a strong current [and] water riley.” After the crossing, they traveled southwestward toward the prearranged rendezvous point on the Salt River. Three days later, on June 8, Hyrum’s company reached its destination and discovered that “the Brethren [Joseph’s company] had arrived the night before.”

Hyrum Smith’s company, combined with Joseph’s, totaled 205 male volunteers, plus eighteen women and children. At the Salt River,

Joseph completely reorganized the expedition into companies of ten men each. The camp elected the prophet, once more, as the commander-in-chief, but Lyman Wight was elected as the general of the camp [second in command to Joseph], on the basis of his War of 1812 experience. Joseph also chose
two companies of ten men each to serve as his “lifeguard.” His brother, Hyrum, became captain of this personal bodyguard, and until the conclusion of the expedition, members of this guard were always at Joseph’s side to protect him.44

The Results of Zion’s Camp

The unforeseen proceedings of Zion’s Camp after their arrival in Missouri ultimately led to the discharge of the volunteers on July 3, 1834. These events are familiar to students of Church history—the withdrawal of promised military support by Governor Dunklin,45 the June 16 confrontation at a meeting in Liberty of the Jackson County delegates and the Saints, and the aborted battle at Fishing River on June 19. Additionally, a cholera epidemic left fourteen dead, and the Saints failed to receive redress following their petitions to the Missouri state government. Finally, on June 22, the Fishing River revelation announced that Zion would not be redeemed at this time and that the volunteers of Zion’s Camp were no longer required “to fight the battles of Zion” (D&C 105:14).

Although it might appear to have been an aborted enterprise, the affirmative outcome of Zion’s Camp can be measured in a number of ways. The Prophet Joseph formalized the Church on the frontier by organizing a stake in Missouri with leaders and a high council. Furthermore, the venture helped Church members in Clay County and elsewhere in Missouri realize the concern of the Church for their welfare. But the primary effect of the expedition centered on its impact on the lives of its participants. For most of the members of the camp, the trek had been a test of their mettle by uncommon trial, a winnowing that forged the future leadership of the Church. Zion’s Camp was designed to “to prove them worthy in the flesh of the great calling whereunto they were called in the eternal councils.”46 Wilford Woodruff later proclaimed the enduring effects of Zion’s Camp:

We gained an experience that we never could have gained in any other way. We had the privilege of beholding the face of the prophet, and we had the privilege of travelling a thousand miles with him, and seeing the workings of the Spirit of God with him, and the revelations of Jesus Christ unto him and the fulfilment of those revelations. . . . Had I not gone up with Zion’s Camp I should not have been here to-day, and I presume that would have been the case with many others in this Territory.47

In the larger scheme of the venture, the story of the Pontiac, Michigan, company helps to complete the remarkable story of Zion’s Camp. The day-by-day account of the march from Michigan to the Salt River in Missouri is contained in the following pages. These thirty-eight journal entries, recorded by camp historian Elijah Fordham, provide noteworthy details about the recruitment, organization, and march of the camp. Secondarily,
Fordham’s description of the vast prairie of the American frontier and practical advice for the traveler, recorded with wit and wisdom, add fresh insight that situates Zion’s Camp in the context of American history.

Previously unpublished in complete form, the journal of the Pontiac Branch kept by Elijah Fordham is found in the Archives Division of the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah. This account has been transcribed with as little editing as possible to preserve the character of the text. Capitalization, grammar, and spelling have been retained. In the case where handwriting is illegible, where the page has been torn, or where words have been introduced for clarity, the wording has been bracketed [ ]. Strikeouts have been indicated as strikeouts. For clarity and ease of reading, modern punctuation and paragraph breaks have been included.
The Journal of the Branch in Pontiac, 1834


[May 7] Proceeded on our Journey. all well at 2 O’Clock. passed Grass Lake [Grass Lake, Michigan] on the Right. passed some very high sand hills [and] many marshes. Meacham Curtis got the Fever and Ague. paid 50 Cents per bushel for Oats. travelled 25 miles on a South of west course. pitched Tent a mile from Jacksensburgh [Jackson, Michigan] in a clean valley. some Rain. had an Invitation to Preach to the neighbours. at the first house Bros. Bent & Smith went to see them. [They] found the people gathering, [and] had to speak to them. [They] received it well. at the Tent had Singing. thank by Bro Fordham. retired to Rest. two of the Company did not bring any bedding. they slept cold. advise all that travel to Zion to take bedding clothes. Feet a little sore. otherwise all well. Called the place Engedi because it is a place of Rest and the Lord was there.

Thursday, May 8. proceeded on our journey. stopped at Jacksonsburg. got a poney’s shoes set for 50 Cents. 100 [lbs.] of flour $2.50. [The town has] about 25 houses, a tavern, and blacksmithshop. went on. passed many extensive marshes and Ridges of hard granite boulders. some good land,
some sand hills. passed through Spring Arbour [Spring Arbor, Michigan], a new place. travelled about 20 miles. stopped near hickory Ridge. Walnuts in abundance. some places ground most covered. camped in a pleasant hollow near a marsh. supped. Thank by Bro. Littlefield. rain in the night. horses strayed away. cooked cakes in a Spider & bake pan. slow work. takes too much time. we want a tin oven. Called the place Ai, for in it we sustained loss. all well and in good spirits. no trouble to travel. Thank by Bro. Smith.

set off 9 May. bad road in the morning. [At] hickory Ridges came to good land. passed land that had been farmed and ploughed plain to be seen. [It is] now grown up with timber. passed the village of Marshal [with] 35 houses, 2 blacksmith shops, a tavern only 3 years old, grist and Saw Mill. saw Calamazoo river [which is] about 2 Rods wide. Camped on Ancient Farms. all well. thank by Bro. Smith. Cold. froze an eighth of an inch in a basen. called the place the pleasant plains of Michigan. travelled about 20 miles. thank by Bro. Fordham.

Saturday, May 10th. went on our journey. hickory Ridges, Black Oak plains, Wite Oak Openings. some good land. Crossed Calamazoo River [which is] 8 Rods wide. drove through it. went 1 mile to Prairie Go Goac. passed through good land through Climax Prairie, 3 miles long. passed 2_ miles through good Country and Camped in a Delightful place, having travelled 25 miles. all well. thank by Bro. Wight.

Sunday, 11th May. Rested. Prayer by Bro. Hou[gh]ten. heard Instruction from Bros. Smith & Wight and partook of the Lord’s Supper. The Name of Places were all given by Bro. Smith. Called this place Ezengeber for in it we were blest of the Lord with much Instruction and the Holy Spirit.

Monday, May 12th. proceeded on. passed through Townsend Prairie, 3 miles. Oak openings through Prairie Roade about 4 miles through very extensive Black & White Oak Plains. level for miles. some marshes. good Road. forded Portage River at its Junction with Stiny Creek, [being] 4 Rods wide, and Camped here. all well and in good Spirits. travelled 30 miles. Thanks by Bro Hou[gh]ton. cold in the night. froze ice in the pail.

May 13, Tuesday. called the place Manhikel because it is a place of many waters. Prayer by Bro. Wight. went _ mile and waded across the River St. Joseph’s [which is] about 20 Rods wide. Oak Openings and plains. went down the River to Constantine [Michigan] a place of Rapid growth at the head of Navigation. [There are] about 20 houses [and] a good water power Grist & Saw Mill. Burr Oak plains and openings very level. White Pegion Prairie on the left. crossed Chicago Turnpike at Mottsille [Mottville, Michigan] on the St. Joseph’s River. went on down the River. Bro. James Dunn69 of the Pontiac Branch Joined our company. Crossed Anglaw Creek and camped. pleasant weather. all well. this was before called little Elkhart
Hyrum Smith’s Division of Zion’s Camp

[Indiana], Prayer by Bro. Smith. As some of the brethren had thoughts that Bro. & Sister Hou[gh]ton had not done their duty, and we had cast reflections and hints, we were astonished at the consequences when we were informed of them by Bro. Smith. We saw the Evil, felt humble, and readily confessed to each other and to God and with uplifted hands covenanted to forget and forgive all that had passed and do so no more. Bro. Wight closed by Prayer. cold night. froze _ inch. we are now 3 miles in Indiana. all Team in good order. Season backward. Prayer by Bro. Dunn. travelled 23 miles this day.

May 14. went on 10 miles, passed through the Village of Elkhart, on the River of the sam name, [with] 20 houses. Oak openings. land level. went down the St. Joseph’s River to the Village of Mashtenaway [Mishawaka, Indiana]. [In this village of 20 or 30] houses [they are] building larger Iron works [due to the] great quantities of Iron ore. came to the village of Big Bend [South Bend, Indiana] on the St. Joseph’s [with] 60 or 70 houses. went on to the Kankakee marsh and Camped having travelled 28 miles. all tired. Bro. Dunn Sick. hand laid on by Bro. Smith. Prayer by Bro. Bent. cold night. called the place Epah for the scarcity of Bread.


May 16th. Prayer by Bro. Hou[gh]ton. travelled 4 miles. came to the Village of Laport [La Porte, Indiana with] about 50 houses [and] a number of Stores &c. only 3 years old. very thriving. good prairie land all round. Mills &c about 5 miles off. timber scattered in the Prairie. passed through the Door of Door Prairie about 10 Rods wide, a Singular place. went on the Sioux Trail. passed Clyburn Tavern. several miles very bad Road through heavy Timber on the trail. crossed a large marsh where the water parts to go to Lake Michigan and Illinois River and camped having travelled 22 miles this day. Heard that the Potawatamies were collecting about 2 miles off for the purpose of Rejoicing and dancing on the Occasion of their Removing to Missouri. ther are a great many of them and [they] have been collecting some time. [Had] Supper. Singing [and] Prayer by Bro. Wight.

May 17th. great man[y] Prairie hens on the marsh making a noise like the bellowing of the Cattle of a Thousand hills. mild weather. vegetation. move forward. Prayer by Bro. Fordham. pursued our course toward hickory creek over marshes through clay barrens. wet & dry Prairies. here a great many snakes. saw the prairie rattlesnake called in Michigan the Massasauger [massasauga] having two rows of rattles in his tail. saw a kind of Jumping snake 1_ feet long. crossed several small brooks. travelled 23 miles.
came to Calamick creek which empties into Lake Michigan and camped on the Bank, having a good marsh near for fee [torn page] for the Horses. Prayer by Bro. Smith. went to rest. slept well [and] warm enough.

[interpolation on the top of the page written upside down reads: Hyrams Journal from Michigan to MO 1835]

May 18th, Sunday. Prayer by Bro Wight. rested this day. took of the Lord’s Supper. had a comfortable Season. truly the Lord is with us. all things go smoothly and we are rejoicing. Prayer by Bro. Hou[gh]ton.

May 19th. all well. cloudy with some rain. mild weather. called the place Onkaw. here we heard the Noisy Pelican or Sand hill Crane, the same as in Michigan. Prayer by Bro. Bent. proceeded on our Journey through Prairies & marshes. passed big Calamick creek on the Sioux trail. the largest Prairie being 400 miles long, travelled 30 miles & came to hickory creek and camped. very tired. Prayer by Bro. Smith.

May 20. Prayer by Bro. Wight. went d[own] hicker Creek 5 miles and crossed at a Saw mill and went in and crossed the O Plain [Des Plaines] River, a considerable [flow] of a stream several rods wide, & Camped having travelled 18 miles through Prairie with little points of timber. this morning the horses broke loose from their spancils and ran off with rapidity several miles over the the Prairie and af[ter] running till they appeared like specks on the horizon they would wait till we got within about a mile of them and then they would run again. and so they went until they were tired. and when the boys caught them they were lost and were going from Camp when, fortunately, they came to a trail that led to Camp.

May 21st. all well. rose early. breakfast before sunrise. Prayer by Bro. Smith. went 8 miles. crossed River Dupage at the Grist Mill and crossed 25 miles over a wet & Dry Prairie with many miry places to get to a place to camp. traveled 33 miles this day. all tired. Prayer by Bro. Bent.

May 22. had plenty of milk. quite refreshed. called the place Eminence and Glory for much Provision was there and the place was beautiful. the Man that lives here has 240 head of Cattle & 40 Calves and all things Comfortable. Prayer omitted this morning; one of the Neighbours came and kept talking. we proceeded on our journey over Delightful Prairies and groves of Timber. at noon forded the Illinois River a mile below the Village of Ottawa [Ottawa, Illinois]. a delightful Situation. took dinner. excellent land. went on to Vermilion River. camped. got milk for 6 Cts. a quart. this morning we got it for 6 Cts. a pail, [illegible word]. Prayer by Bro. Wight. very warm with showers today havig traveled 33 miles.

May 23. Prayer by Bro. Smith. went over over a 12 mile prairie [of] good land to Roberts Grove. got Dinner. went on. had a most tremendous
Shower. came to Crow Creek. Camped. wet and sore footed, having travelled 26 miles. rain in the night. this mornig saw plenty of Stone Coal. Prayer by Bro. Bent.

**May 24.** Prayer by Bro. Littlefield. proceeded on our Journey. all well. at noon came to a grove. Bro. Bent was taken with the Ague [but] was well enough to ride. went on our course to the willow Springs. came along timber land to a house. Camped. went in to get Milk and Water. found a Brother and Sister Earl very glad to see us. Prayer by Bro. Smith.

**May 25.** Prayer by Bro. Wight. went about 5 miles to Brother Rich at Pleasant grove Church. had meeting meeting morning & evening. the Church rejoiced to see us.

**26 May, Monday.** the Sisters Washed.

**May 27.** Bro. Wight held meeting 5 miles off.

**May 28.** Bro. Wight purchased a larger Wagon and a Yoke of Cattle in the place of the little wagon.

**May 29, Thursday.** took leave of the Brethren and went most to the Village of Pekin [Pekin, Illinois] on the Illinois River and broke one wheel of the big wagon. went to pekin. engaged a man to mend it. Pekin is a new place [that] has a large Steam Grist mill and a Steam Saw mill and about 15 houses. we crossed the Illinois and camped having traveled 10 miles.

**May 30.** waited till [al]most night for the wagon to be finished. got on about 10 miles and camped under the bluff on the Road to Canton [Illinois]. held meeting at a house. Bro. Smith & Wight spoke. Timber. bad roads.

**May 31.** set off. bad road. this region is infested with the Catterpillar & Grasshopper. the Woods look like winter with here and there a tree with leaves on, that they won’t eat, making a strange appearance. [On] Road to Lewistown [Illinois]. camped about 4 miles east of Canton. Prayer by Bro. Hou[gh]ton.

**June 1, Sunday.** had a prayer meeting and the Lord’s Supper. had a good Season. Bro. Colby Sick. all the rest well and in good spirits, as ever.

**June 2, Monday.** travelled through groves and prairies. forded Spoon River, a rapid Stream 3 rods wide at Barker’s ford. went on 5 miles towards Quincy, our course being between Canton on the Right and Lewistown. traveled 25 miles. Prayer by Bro. Smith. Bro. Colby yet sick.

**June 3.** went on from Barker’s Grove towards Quincy. traveled 15 miles, the length of a Prairie, along without a Road, a few rods from the Mormon Road and did not know it. got into the Mormon Road. forded Camp Creek. went in, forded Crooked Creek. this Creek can’t be forded in high water; it is a mad stream. Camped. Colby better. Aurelia [Houghton] Sick, having travelled 30 miles this day. heard from Bro. Joseph and his troops, about 300 of them, all smart and hearty looking fellows. heard from Jackson Co. they have burned all the houses and keep guard all the time.70 Prayer by Bro. Bent.
June 4. Prayer by Bro. Smith. Colby better. continued our course towards Quincy, Road from Quincy to Rushville. Prairie most of the way good. arrived at the Junction of the Mormon Road and the Quincy Road and Camped. Colby better. most well. Prayer by Bro. Charles Rich.

June 5. Prayer by Bro. Littlefield. went on to Quincy [Illinois] in a good, dry Prairie Road. Quincy is considerable of a place, about 70 houses, 2 Inns, 9 Stores, [and] an Open Square in the Center. looks well. got Lead for 6 Cts. a pound. Crossed the Mississippi, about a mile wide at this place, full of Islands and a strong current. water rily. a Steam Saw and Grist Mill here in Quincy. Camped on the Shore. Aurelia Sick yet. Colby well. all the rest well and in glad that we have got into Missouri. Prayer by Bro. Smith & Wight. traveled 20 miles this day. got the Axle of the wagon straitened. we crossed at Logsdens Ferry. advise all brethren to cross at his Ferry. he is Friendly.

June 6. Prayer by Bro. Wight. crossed the bottom lands. forded the North & South Fabius Rivers. passed through the Village of Palmyra [Missouri]. a thriving place of 100 houses, a goodly number of Stores, many houses of brick. passed on west to the 9 mile prairie on the Road to Salt river and Camped within four miles of the Church.

[June 7, no entry]

June 8, Sunday. Prayer by Bro. Rich. went on. forded West & South Salt River. Tremendous Rain, Thunder, & Lightning. arrived at Bro. James I. Ivy. found that the Brethren had arrived the night before and that we had camped only about 3 miles apart, after starting from different places through different countries and different hindrances. by the way, this being the place of meeting agreed upon without any time specified to meet in. It being agreed to wait for each other here. Surely the Lord is with us. this morning in going up the bank of the River the hammer of the tongue of Bro. Curtis’ Wagon drew out. the wagon run back into the River and upset and wet a great many of the things. Soused George and Bro. Curtis into the River. gathered all the things. went on. attended meeting at Camp. Prayer by Bro. Wight. pleasant weather. all well.

June 9. the Siste[rs] washed cloathes. moved to the general Camp & pitched Tent.

June 10th, was formed into companies. exercised forenoon & afternoon out on the Prairie. This day Consecrated all our Money and Lead for Zion’s Cause to Commissary Genera[l] Doctor Brown. this day appointed Bro. S. Bent, Steward, in the place of Bro. Wight, Resigned, and Bro. Jas. Dunn, Assistant.

June 11. made preparation for our Journey. fixed our Guns &c. kept them Loaded.

June 12th. formed our line of march. went about 13 miles. Camped on the Prairie. muddy water, but good Prairie.
Craig K. Manscill [craig_manscill@byu.edu] has been Associate Professor of Church History and Doctrine at Brigham Young University since 1999. He received his B.A. in English from Weber State College in 1978 and his M.A. in Humanities (1980) and Ph.D. in Sociology of the Family (1987) from Brigham Young University. Professor Manscill has directed BYU tours to many Church history sites.


7. The supplies, according to one historical account, included “clothing and other necessaries to carry to our brethren and sisters, who have been robbed and plundered of nearly all their effects.” The Camp also brought horses, wagons, firearms, and ammunition sufficient to make the journey and redeem the land in Jackson County by force. History of the Church, 2:63.

8. Bradley, Zion’s Camp, 27.


12. The name of the branch of the Church in Pontiac, Michigan, is often referred to as the Huron Branch. The Huron Branch was named after the Huron River flowing southeasterly into Lake Erie.


15. Almira Mack was the youngest daughter of Stephen and Temperance Bond Mack. Born at Tunbridge, Orange County, Vermont, in 1805 (the same year as her cousin, Joseph Smith), Almira was baptized by David Whitmer in 1830. She married William Scoby in 1831, and he died in Pontiac, Michigan, on December 4, 1833. She married Benjamin Covey in 1836. Almira followed the Saints through Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois and crossed the plains to Utah in 1848, dying in Salt Lake City in 1886. Almira is also known as “Alvira” and “Elmira.” Larry C. Porter, “A Study of the Origins of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the States of New York and Pennsylvania, 1816–1831” (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1971; Provo: BYU Studies, 2000), 261; Dean C. Jessee, ed., The Papers of Joseph Smith, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989–92) 2:337; Cumming and Cumming, Temperance Mack, 7; Pioneer Women of Faith and Fortitude, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1998), 1:685.
17. These four missionaries were part of a larger proselyting force that was jour-
neying to Missouri, preaching the word of God as they took their various courses of
travel. This was a significant mission for all. When they reached Missouri, they were
informed that Jackson County was the New Jerusalem and Zion (D&C 52:1–8; 57).
18. Pearson H. Corbett, Hyrum Smith—Patriarch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book,
1963), 87–91.
20. Temperance’s husband, Stephen Mack, died in 1826. Cumming and Cum-
ming, Temperance Mack, 6, 10–11.
22. The records for the Pontiac Congregational Church verify this event: “Febru-
ary 9 [1833] observed as a day of fasting and prayer on the occasion of the excommun-
cication of Deacon Bent for embracing the Mormon delusion.” Richard Lloyd Anderson,
“His Mother’s Manuscript: An Intimate View of Joseph Smith,” Brigham Young Uni-
versity Forum, January 27, 1976, typescript, 10, Special Collections and Manuscripts,
Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
23. Lucy Mack Smith, History of Joseph Smith, ed. Preston Nibley (Salt Lake City:
Bookcraft, 1979), 217.
24. A year later, Joseph Smith Jr., Joseph Smith Sr., Hyrum Smith, the Three Wit-
tesses to the Book of Mormon (Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, and David Whitmer),
Frederick G. Williams, and Robert Orton visited Pontiac. These Church leaders made a
great impression upon the local membership. John Cumming and Audrey Cumming,
25. Launius, Zion’s Camp, 94.
26. Milo Andrus and Nelson Higgins, among others, were from Florence, Ohio,
and were recruited by Hyrum Smith and Lyman Wight. They joined Joseph’s division
on May 11 at New Portage, Ohio. Ivan J. Barrett, Trumpeter of God: Fascinating True
Stories of the Great Missionary and Colonizer, Milo Andrus (Salt Lake City: Covenant
27. Historians have given different totals for the number of people who joined the
march from the Huron Branch. Launius claims nineteen people volunteered. Launius,
Zion’s Camp, 94. Bradley claims eighteen were recruited. Both authors include leaders
Hyrum Smith and Lyman Wight and also Charles C. Rich, who joined later, in the
number. These three brethren were not from the Huron Branch in Pontiac, although
they were in the march. James Dunn joined the march nine days after the start and was
from the Huron Branch. Dunn is not included in the initial list of camp members by
the camp historian but should be included as one of the nine men counted as volun-
teers from the Huron Branch. Camp historian Fordham has Dunn joining the camp
May 13, bringing the total men, women, and children to fifteen. If the three others not
from the Huron Branch are added, then the total is eighteen. Two lists mistakenly state
that toddlers John [Jr.] and Eunice Chidester marched with the Pontiac group; their
parents, John and Mary Chidester, marched with Joseph’s division. Bradley, Zion’s
Camp, 131; Milton V. Backman Jr., The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day
28. For more on the women and children of Zion’s Camp, see Andrea G. Radke, “We
Also Marched: The Women and Children of Zion’s Camp, 1834,” 147–65, in this issue.
29. Journal of the Branch of the Church of Christ in Pontiac, 1834, May 5; Archives
Division, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt
Lake City (hereafter LDS Church Archives). Smith and Wight arrived in Michigan with
one of the wagons. The second wagon may have been purchased from Hosea Stout. See Wayne Stout, *Hosea Stout, Utah's Pioneer Statesman* (Salt Lake City: by the author, 1953), 34.


31. Of the thirty-eight camp sites on the march from Pontiac, Michigan, to the Allred Branch on the Salt River in Missouri, names of nine camp sites were recorded in Fordham’s account.


34. On Lyman Wight’s military experience, see Philip C. Wightman, “The Life and Contributions of Lyman Wight” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1971), 8–9. Lyman’s first duty as a militia member was as part of a guard that escorted 1,236 prisoners of war on a march through New York State.


39. Charles Coulson Rich was born August 21, 1809, and was baptized April 1, 1832. After Zion’s Camp, he became president of the high priest quorum for Missouri in August 1837. On March 30, 1841, he became a counselor to William Marks in the Nauvoo Stake presidency, and from 1849 until his death on November 17, 1883, he served as an Apostle. In addition to these ecclesiastical offices, Rich was a general, leading the Church troops opposing the invasion of Utah by the United States Army in 1857–58. See Leonard J. Arrington, *Charles C. Rich: Mormon General and Western Frontiersman* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1974), 58, 68–69, 217–22; Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia: A Compilation of Biographical Sketches of Prominent Men and Women in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History, 1901–36), 1:102.

40. Elijah Fordham refers to the junction of the Quincy and Mormon roads. Since 1831, members and missionaries of the Church had traveled between Kirktland and Missouri, often passing through Quincy, Illinois.

41. Journal of the Branch of the Church of Christ, June 5.

42. Journal of the Branch of the Church of Christ, June 5.

43. Journal of the Branch of the Church of Christ, June 8.


49. On April 6, 1830, Joseph Smith Jr. and five others organized the Church of Christ (D&C 20:1). On May 3, 1834, the name was officially changed to the Church of the Latter-Days. However, it was not until April 26, 1838, in Far West, Missouri, that the Church’s name was changed by revelation (D&C 115:3) to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. See Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1830–1844* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 78, 157–58.

50. Michigan was a territory from 1805 until January 26, 1837, when it became the twenty-sixth state.

51. Samuel Bent was born July 19, 1778, and served as a colonel in the Massachusetts militia before joining the Church. He was baptized and ordained an elder by Jared Carter in 1833 in Pontiac, Michigan. After Zion’s Camp, he attended the School of the Prophets. He was whipped by a mob and held prisoner by General Lucas in Far West in 1838. He was president of the Garden Grove, Iowa, station, where he died August 16, 1846. Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:367–68.

52. Elijah Fordham was born in New York City on April 12, 1798. He was a lumber dealer and carpenter by profession. He married Jane Ann Fisher in 1822 and lived in Pontiac, Michigan, from 1831 to 1833. In 1833, while in New York City, he assisted the missionaries en route to Great Britain. He was miraculously healed by Joseph Smith in 1839 in Montrose, Iowa, and was appointed to the Iowa high council in 1839. He migrated to Utah in 1850 and died at Wellsville, Cache County, Utah. Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2:545.

53. Osman (also spelled Osmon or Ornan) Houghton was born October 1, 1806. His wife Aurelia was one of the few women of Zion’s Camp and traveled with her husband. Osman lived in Far West and was marched to Richmond, Missouri, to be held as a prisoner without charge during the 1838 persecutions and expulsion. Osman married Mary Curtis in 1845, after the death of Aurelia. He died August 18, 1847. See Susan Easton Black, *Membership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1848*, 50 vols. (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989), 23:996–97.

54. Meacham (also spelled Mecham) Curtis traveled with his wife, Sophronia, and his brother Lyman Curtis during Zion’s Camp.

55. Lyman Curtis was born January 21, 1812, in Massachusetts and was baptized in 1833 in Pontiac, Michigan. He married Charlotte Alvord, another of the volunteers from Pontiac, in February 1835. He was driven out of Far West and settled in Nauvoo. A member of the vanguard company of pioneers, he entered the Salt Lake Valley in 1847. In 1853 he served a mission to the Indians of southern Utah, and he died in Salem, Utah, on August 6, 1898. Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 4:689.


57. Alanson Colby was born in Vermont on May 9, 1811. According to Andrew Jenson,

he was converted to “Mormonism” in Michigan in 1834... Colby passed through the persecutions in Missouri with the rest of the saints, being expelled from that state in 1839. After he had made his own escape from Missouri he went back and helped another family to remove to Illinois. After
Hyrum Smith's Division of Zion's Camp

sharing in the troubles in Illinois, he migrated to the Great Salt Lake Valley in the fall of 1848. His death occurred February 19, 1875, in Utah. (Jenson, Biographical Encyclopedia, 4:688–89)

58. Aurelia Houghton was the wife of Osman Houghton.
59. Sophronia Curtis was the wife of Meacham Curtis.

60. Some accounts of Zion's Camp err by stating that Charlotte Alvord was the mother of the four boys. In fact, Charlotte was nineteen years old and not married at the time of the march. The three boys were: George Fordham, and Josiah and Lyman Littlefield, the two sons of Waldo Littlefield. The fourth "boy" mentioned is David Dort, who was actually forty-one years of age at the time of the march. See Radke, "We Also Marched," 157.

61. George Fordham was born April 21, 1825. He married Serene Elrick in 1853. He died October 22, 1922.

62. Lyman Omer Littlefield, the second son of Waldo Littlefield and Mercy Higgins, was born November 22, 1819, at Verona, Oneida County, New York. He married Adaline Hamblin. He was baptized in Clay County, Missouri, by Peter Whitmer and resided in Missouri and Illinois. Littlefield crossed the plains and eventually settled in Smithfield, Cache County, Utah. Lyman died September 1, 1893. Talbot, "Zion's Camp," 98; Littlefield, Reminiscences, 26.

63. David D. Dort was born January 6, 1793, at Surry, Cheshire County, New Hampshire. He was converted to the Church by Lucy Mack Smith in Pontiac, Michigan, in 1831. He married Mary and later Fanny Mack, both daughters of Stephen and Temperance Mack. He resided in Ohio and Missouri and was one of the first settlers in Nauvoo. He was on the high council at both Far West and Nauvoo. David died in Nauvoo, Illinois, on March 10, 1841. Jesse, Papers of Joseph Smith, 2:542.

64. Josiah Littlefield was the son of Waldo and Mercy Higgins Littlefield.

65. Hyrum Smith was born in Tunbridge, Vermont, on February 9, 1800. He married Jerusha Barden in 1826 while residing in Manchester, New York. One of the Eight Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, he was appointed Second Counselor in the First Presidency in 1837. He was imprisoned at Liberty, Missouri, with his brother Joseph and Lyman Wight in 1838–39. In Nauvoo he was appointed Patriarch and Assistant Church President in 1841. Hyrum was killed with his brother Joseph in Carthage, Illinois, in 1844. Jenson, Biographical Encyclopedia, 1:52.

66. Lyman Wight was born at Fairfield, New York, on May 9, 1796. He was affiliated with the Campbellites in Kirtland, Ohio, when he converted to Mormonism in 1830. He was among those driven from Jackson County, Missouri, in 1833 and was imprisoned at Liberty, Missouri, in 1838–39. A member of the Quorum of the Twelve from 1841 to 1848, he moved to Texas in 1845 and was excommunicated in 1848. He died at Mountain Valley, Texas, on March 31, 1858. Jenson, Biographical Encyclopedia, 1:93–96.

67. A spider is a cast-iron frying pan with a long handle.

68. The following is a contemporaneous description of the prairie in the White Pigeon area:

From Sturges Prairie to White Pigeon is 13 miles, the road very fine & quite level, there are but one [or] two log homes in this distant. the road runs thro the forest on the [illegible word] of the Indian trails, of course it is very winding, there cannot be anything more delightful than the ride from Sturgis P[rairie] to W. P. thou a winding road this [is] the most beautiful nature forest I have ever seen. No underbrush at all, & the trees stately & beautiful: the road is exceedingly circuitous & reminds me of the roads which are sometimes laid out by gentlemen in their parks tho no artificial improvement can
equal this most beautiful improvement of nature. White Pigeon is a pleasant little village (at which we arrived at past 7 o’clock Saturday evening) situate in the centre of a extensive & beautiful prairie 6 or 7000 acres. What is a prairie? It looks like a great ocean, for there is nothing to obstruct or intercept the view except here & there a house, a perfectly level plain without a tree or bush or stone encircled in the back ground with the dense & noble forest which looks like the frame of the picture. It is a picture & it is to me a most wonderful & impressive exhibition of the works of the creator. How exquisitely beautiful O Lord are all thy works. (Trip to Illinois, July 27, 1833, Charles Butler Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.)

69. James Dunn was born June 6, 1810, and was a member of the Mormon Battalion. The “Historical Notebook” records that he died at Nauvoo. See “Zion’s Camp,” Historical Notebook, 1864–1872, microfilm, holograph, 74, LDS Church Archives.

70. Historians James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard write, “Rumors of imminent Mormon invasions . . . during the last week of April brought a hasty mustering of Missourians. When no invasion materialized, the Missourians vented their anger by burning the remaining Mormon houses in Jackson County.” This was a further discouragement for the Saints in Liberty to return to their property and land. The word of the burning houses was passed on to Zion’s Camp. James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, The Story of the Latter-Day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 100.