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“The Redemption of Zion Must Needs Come by Power”
Insights into the Camp of Israel Expedition, 1834

Matthew C. Godfrey

The story of the Camp of Israel, better known as Zion’s Camp, has been told multiple times by multiple historians in multiple settings.¹ The tale of Joseph Smith leading a group of over two hundred individuals to Missouri to reclaim Mormon lands lost after Jackson County mobs forced the Saints from the county has assumed almost mythical status, capturing the attention of many members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, especially in the last fifty years. Articles in Church periodicals regularly appear, and Sunday School manuals for the Church devote large parts of lessons to the camp.² Yet details about some aspects of the camp are still somewhat murky, especially in terms of its membership, its funding, its provisioning, and its intentions. This article will point out insights into these things that those of us working on the Joseph Smith Papers have discovered as we have examined documents pertaining to the camp. Such insights include how camp members funded much of the expedition themselves, the fact that the camp appeared to have adequate food and other provisions, and indications that Missouri Governor Daniel Dunklin’s refusal to call up the state militia to assist the expedition was more complicated than has previously been depicted. This article also examines pertinent sources generally used by scholars to reconstruct the history of the camp, pointing out issues that some of these sources have, while also showing that Zion’s Camp was not a contemporary name of the expedition. Even though it appears the history of the Camp of Israel has been well told, historians can still glean many new details from the available sources.
Overview

The Camp of Israel had its roots in the violence that ejected Church members from Jackson County, Missouri, in the fall of 1833. A July 1831 revelation had first designated Jackson County as the location of the City of Zion, the New Jerusalem that the Saints would construct and gather to in preparation for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. From that time to the summer of 1833, over a thousand members had gathered to Jackson County. Such a large influx of members irritated some of the non-Mormon residents of the county, who were concerned about the political power of such a group and especially were offended when William W. Phelps published an article in the Church’s periodical The Evening and the Morning Star. This editorial, entitled “Free People of Color,” was taken as encouragement from the Church of the migration of free blacks into Missouri, which was a slave state. In July 1833, Jackson County citizens came together and destroyed the Church’s printing office, scattered goods from the Church’s storehouse, and tarred and feathered Edward Partridge, the bishop in Missouri, and Charles Allen, a member of the Church. They also demanded that the Saints remove themselves from the county by April 1834. Although Church leaders initially agreed to these demands, they announced in October 1833 that they planned to stay. In response, Jackson County citizens organized in late October, and additional violence commenced against Church members and their property. Ultimately, members were forced to flee into surrounding counties, the majority of them going to Clay County.

After the flight, Church leaders petitioned Joseph Smith for advice, Smith dictated a revelation in December 1833 that presented a parable of a lord who had lost his vineyard to his enemies. In the parable, the lord instructs a servant to gather up the strength of his house and reclaim the vineyard. Copies of this parable were distributed to Church members and sent as well to Missouri Governor Daniel Dunklin. In January 1834, the Missouri saints sent Parley P. Pratt and Lyman Wight to Kirtland, Ohio, to inform Joseph Smith and other Church leaders of their plight. At the February high council meeting where Pratt and Wight spoke, Joseph Smith declared his intent of “going to Zion to assist in redeeming it” and then “called for volunteers to go with him.” That same day, a February 1834 revelation stated that Joseph Smith was the servant in the December 1833 parable and instructed Smith to recruit up to five hundred men to go to the aid of Church members who had been expelled from Jackson County. The group would settle on land purchased in the
county and vicinity and provide protection against any “enemies” that sought to drive the Saints from the “goodly land.”

To fulfill these instructions, Joseph Smith and a contingent of men from Kirtland, Ohio, departed in May 1834; another contingent was recruited in Pontiac, Michigan Territory, by Hyrum Smith and Lyman Wight and joined the Kirtland group in June 1834 at the Allred settlement in Missouri. The camp totaled approximately 205 men and around twenty-five women and children. It entered Missouri in June 1834 but was disbanded at the end of June after a revelation stated that it was not yet time for Zion’s redemption. An outbreak of cholera hastened the camp’s dispersal and ended up killing thirteen participants and two other Church members. Joseph Smith led the expedition as the “Commander in Chief of the Armies of Israel.” By the first of August 1834, he and many camp members had returned to Kirtland.

Contemporary Records and Later Narratives

There appear to be few contemporary accounts of the expedition; the official journal of the camp, kept by Frederick G. Williams, was lost at some point, and few camp members appear to have kept journals of the trip that have survived. Joseph Smith wrote two letters to Emma Smith while on the expedition, and there are also other documents prepared by Smith and others after arriving in Missouri in June 1834. In addition, several newspaper accounts of the camp exist. These provide details about the expedition and about how individuals and communities perceived the camp. Minutes of hearings held before the Kirtland high council in August 1834 also give pertinent information about the expedition. These hearings were held because of charges Sylvester Smith made against Joseph Smith for committing improprieties while leading the expedition. Sylvester Smith was tried before the Kirtland high council for his membership because of these accusations, so the minutes focus on his conduct in the camp and do not provide a day-by-day account of the journey, although there are some interesting details. Moreover, several members of the expedition prepared reminiscences at some point about their experiences, but most of these came years after the camp disbanded.

The details that provide the framework for most historical discussions of the Camp of Israel generally come from three main sources: a record dictated by Heber C. Kimball to William Clayton, one given in the manuscript history of the Church and later published in B. H. Roberts’s *History of the Church*, and one provided by George A. Smith.
The Kimball account was apparently produced sometime in 1840; the manuscript history account, written by Willard Richards, sometime in 1843 (although Thomas Bullock then edited it in 1845); and the Smith account sometime between 1857 and 1875. Kimball’s account provides information about the camp’s organization and provisioning, while also giving dates as to when the camp entered states and towns. However, some details are incorrect, such as giving the name of one individual who talked to Joseph Smith about the camp’s intentions as “Colonel Searcy,” rather than John Sconce. In addition, Kimball’s record was written not long after the Saints had been driven out of Missouri in 1838 and 1839 and seems to be influenced by those events, including the issuance of the “Extermination Order” by Missouri Governor Lilburn W. Boggs in 1838. For instance, Kimball noted his feelings of trepidation as he left Kirtland with the Camp of Israel in May 1834, stating that he was “not expecting to ever see” his family “again as myself and brethren were threatened both in that country [Ohio] and in Missouri by the enemies, that they would destroy us and exterminate us from the land.” Although Jackson County citizens certainly used violence to drive the Saints from the county, there is little contemporary evidence that, in 1834, residents of Missouri wanted to exterminate all Church members from Missouri. Historians should be aware of how events that had transpired in Missouri may have affected Kimball’s recounting of the expedition.

When Kimball’s account was published in 1845 in the *Times and Seasons*, some changes and additions were made to it. For example, after recounting the storm at Fishing River that saved the expedition from an attack by a mob, the history states that the camp met with several Missouri church members and “received much information concerning the situation of the brethren who had been driven from Jackson county, and the fixed determination of our enemies to drive or exterminate them from that county.” This paragraph is not present in the manuscript version of Kimball’s account, and it is not clear whether Clayton was responsible for the additions or whether Kimball requested that they be made.

Three years after Kimball produced his account, Willard Richards wrote an account of the Camp of Israel in Joseph Smith’s manuscript history. One of the useful features of this version is that it integrates letters written by Missouri church leaders to Governor Daniel Dunklin and other Missouri authorities into the record, thereby providing not just a history of the Camp of Israel, but a history of what Missouri
leaders were doing as the camp marched towards Jackson County. As with the rest of the manuscript history, the account of the Camp of Israel is presented in Joseph Smith’s voice, but it does not appear that he had much involvement in its composition. In 1845, after Smith’s death, this account was heavily edited by Thomas Bullock and Richards, with the help of George A. Smith, one of the participants in the camp. On August 21, 1845, for example, the Church Historian’s Office journal notes that Bullock and Richards were “examining the camp journey” in the history. “G. A. Smith was present part of the time” when this occurred. On August 25, 1845, the journal records that Bullock worked with Smith “to revise Zions Camp journey.” It was around this time that Smith himself first put together “a series of notes” about the camp that he provided to Richards.

Some ten to thirty years after composing these notes—which he acknowledged he put together “from memory”—Smith used them to arrange a day-by-day narrative of the Camp of Israel expedition. Smith acknowledged that he did not keep a journal on the expedition. Regardless, his narrative contains numerous details not present in other accounts, including the manuscript history and Kimball’s narrative. Although many of these details contain much human-interest material, historians should be wary of using them, especially if details are not corroborated by other accounts, given the amount of time that passed before Smith wrote down his report. For example, Smith stated that on May 31, 1834, as the camp traveled between Springfield and Jacksonville, Illinois, a man gave him $100 for the expedition’s use. Financial accounts of the camp do not include a record of any such donation, making such a detail suspect. Smith also states that Cornelius Gilliam, the sheriff of Clay County, entered the Camp of Israel on June 22, 1834. According to Smith’s account, the only notable thing about Gilliam’s appearance was that Joseph Smith “made himself known” to Gilliam, “which he had not done to any but our own camp from the time we left Kirtland.” Contemporary records, however, show that Gilliam actually entered the camp on June 21, 1834, and that camp leaders gained much intelligence from him of the hostility of Missouri residents toward the camp. Joseph Smith also provided to Gilliam a statement declaring the camp’s peaceful intentions in hopes of alleviating some of this hostility. Although Smith’s record is an interesting account, it should be used with caution by historians and vetted against more contemporary sources—as should the other reminiscent versions of the camp.
The Name of the Camp

Most Church members and scholars today use the name “Zion’s Camp” to refer to the Camp of Israel. However, records indicate that “Zion’s Camp” was not a contemporary name; instead, the “Camp of Israel” was generally used. This name stemmed from the February 1834 revelation instructing Joseph Smith to form the camp. That revelation declared that Smith was to lead the expedition “like as Moses led the children of Israel.” When Joseph Smith announced his intentions of forming the expedition, the Kirtland high council nominated him as the “Commander in Chief of the Armies of Israel.” Accordingly, when Smith wrote a letter to his wife Emma while on the expedition, he stated that he was in the “Camp of Israel in Indiana State town of Richmond.” Likewise, Orson Hyde titled a financial account he prepared in August 1834 of Joseph Smith’s contributions to the camp “Joseph Smith Junr. in a/c with the Camp of Israel.” Some contemporary records use a different title—Frederick G. Williams’s discharge, for example, calls the group “the Army of the Lords house,” while Nathan B. Baldwin’s discharge gives the title as the “army of Zion”—but no contemporary sources have been located that call the expedition “Zion’s Camp.”

However, associating those who marched with the Camp of Israel with Zion occurred relatively quickly. In February 1835, Joseph Smith convened a meeting in Kirtland, Ohio, to ordain “those who went to Zion, with a determination to lay down their lives” to the ministry. The individuals “who went to Zion” were then recognized by the congregation in attendance. Thereafter, those who participated in the Camp of Israel received blessings from Joseph Smith and other Church leaders, and some of these blessings were designated as “Zion blessings.” In addition, those who went on the expedition were sometimes referred to in 1835 as “sons of Zion.”

The specific use of Zion in naming those who had gone with the Camp of Israel suggests that the expedition may have been referred to as “Zion’s Camp” fairly early after its conclusion. However, there are few clear references to that exact term until 1840, when Heber C. Kimball called the expedition the “camp of Zion” in his history of the expedition. Wilford Woodruff also referred to the expedition as “Zion’s Camp” in an 1845 letter published in the Times and Seasons, and an 1845 entry in the Church Historian’s Office journal used the title “Zions camp” as well. After the Saints departed Nauvoo for the Great Basin in 1846 and 1847 in what was called the Camp of Israel, the name “Zion’s Camp” seems to have been applied more frequently to the Missouri expedition.
to distinguish it from this westward migration. By the 1850s, Church leaders were using the name “Zion's Camp” in their discourses, and it appears to have been in regular use thereafter.

**Organization and Funding**

Documents published for the first time in the Joseph Smith Papers shed light on the organization and funding of the Camp of Israel, topics which a few reminiscences address. Heber C. Kimball, for example, gave the following description: “We made regulations for travelling and appointed a paymaster whose name was Frederic G. Williams, and put all of our monies into a general fund. Some of the brethren had considerable, and some had little or none, yet all became equal. . . . [W]e were divided into companies of 12 each and captains appointed over each company.” Likewise, Nathan Baldwin remembered consecrating money to a general fund, being divided into companies of twelve men each, and having specific duties assigned to individuals within those companies. “I was one of the two to supply water,” he explained, and “others had their duties appointed, some to pitch and strike tent[s], some to provide wood, and others to attend horses.”

Shedding more light on the camp’s organization are two documents available on the Joseph Smith Papers website that will be published in 2016 in volume four of the Documents series. These are two financial accounts compiled by Orson Hyde in August 1834 to submit as evidence in the Kirtland high council’s trial of Sylvester Smith. When Hyde submitted the records to the high council, he stated that they were “taken from documents kept during the journey by brother F. G. Williams.” Williams, in turn, told the council “that the account exhibited was correctly taken from his accounts.”

The accounts provide significant information about the camp. First, they confirm that camp members really did pool their money in a general fund. The accounts show donations by approximately 170 members, some of whom, like John Tanner, contributed as much as $170 while others, such as Allen Avery, contributed only four cents. Interestingly, the account lists only one female member of the expedition as donating money: Jane Clark, who, according to scholars, was a single woman about whom little else is known. Clark is listed as contributing $50 to the general fund, an amount that exceeded the majority of donations of other members. Other individuals are listed as donating nothing. Although some undoubtedly had nothing to contribute, others did not donate because, as Joseph Holbrook later remembered, they were traveling with
their families and those with families were not asked to contribute anything to the general fund. Instead, they were to take care of their families’ needs by themselves. In all, the accounts show that camp members donated $1,659.59 to the camp’s general fund, supplementing the approximately $330 that other Church members donated. In addition, Joseph Smith contributed $644.28 to the expedition in cash—obtained from Martin Harris, sales of the Book of Mormon, and subscriptions to The Evening and the Morning Star—and in other property, such as horses, a watch, and the use of harnesses and wagons. Smith’s contributions appear to have been kept separate from the camp’s general fund.

The accounts also provide the only contemporary record of who was on the expedition and who served in the role of captains of individual companies. One of the accounts lists twenty-eight men as captains, but it does not list how many men were in a company. Some reminiscences state that there were ten men per company, although, as noted above, both Heber C. Kimball and Nathan Baldwin remembered twelve as the number. Joseph Smith stated in a June 1834 letter to his wife Emma that the camp was “divided into messes of 12 or 13.” If there were really twenty-eight captains who each led twelve men, the number of the camp would have been 336 men. However, it appears this number is high, as on June 4, 1834—before uniting with the contingent of approximately twenty individuals coming from Michigan Territory—Joseph Smith gave the total number of men in the camp as 170, although Parley P. Pratt and others were still recruiting along the way. Scholars have generally estimated that there were probably about 230 individuals in the camp (including women and children), suggesting that not all of the twenty-eight captains were serving at once but that some captains may have been replaced throughout the journey. However, Joseph Holbrook remembered that there were not only captains over the smaller groups, but also “a captain of fifty and over each hundred, a captain, according to the ancient order of Israel.” This could account for twenty-eight captains and still place the number of men in the camp at around 250. The financial accounts themselves list only 177 individuals, indicating that not all participants are represented in those documents. Particularly, it does not appear that those recruited in Michigan Territory are on the list, nor are women and children (outside of Jane Clark) mentioned. Since 177 corresponds closely to the number of the camp given by Joseph Smith on June 4, 1834, this may mean that the list is a representation of those individuals who departed from Kirtland. Whatever the case, this is the only extant contemporary listing of participants, providing scholars with an excellent beginning point to reconstruct camp membership.
Some histories emphasize that the Camp of Israel was ill-provisioned, especially in terms of food. George A. Smith, for example, later remembered experiencing frequent hunger along the journey, including one occasion where, he said, he was so “weary, hungry and sleepy that I dreamt while walking along the road of seeing a beautiful stream of water by a pleasant shade and a nice loaf of bread and a bottle of milk laid out on a cloth by the side of the spring.”58 Based on these accounts, some historians have concluded that “feeding the camp was one of the most persistent problems” and that participants “were often required to eat limited portions of coarse bread, rancid butter, cornmeal mush, strong honey, raw pork, rotten ham, and maggot-infested bacon and cheese.”59 Yet other accounts seem to indicate that obtaining sufficient food was not a problem. Heber C. Kimball, for example, noted that there were times when the camp’s provisions were “scanty,” but “generally,” he stated, the camp had a “very good” living, as expedition members “purchased our own flour, and baked our own bread and cooked our own victuals.”60 Likewise, Joseph Smith intimated to Emma in his June 4 letter that the camp had plenty of food. “We buy necessaries such as butter, sugar and honey, so that we live as well as heart can wish,” Smith declared, while also explaining that they had been able to purchase flour, bacon, and milk along the way.61 According to the camp’s financial accounts, captains were given periodic distributions of money from the general fund, presumably to be used for food and other provisions. The amount distributed in this way was approximately $1,110, or about $5 per camp participant for what was about a two-month journey. This was not a lot of money, and some accounts discuss relying on contributions from individuals and families along the way for milk and other necessities.62 Given food prices at the time, and with these other contributions, it appears that the camp probably had a sufficient, if rather lean, amount of food.63 Whether or not there was sufficient food may have depended on where the camp was and what access it had to established settlements; the expectations of camp members as to how much food should be provided may have influenced their recollections of provisioning as well.

Objectives and Goals

Looking closely at other contemporary records surrounding the Camp of Israel provides other insights. For example, the objectives of the Camp of Israel have sometimes been mischaracterized. Some histories focus on the expedition’s efforts to bring supplies to Church members in Clay County;64 others state rather vaguely that the camp would “help reinstate the Missouri Saints on the Jackson County lands from
which mobs had driven them." However, the expedition's goals were more specific than this and had their roots in correspondence between Church leaders and Missouri authorities from late 1833 and early 1834. According to Missouri Attorney General Robert Wells, in late 1833, Missouri Governor Daniel Dunklin initially showed some inclination to call up the state militia to protect Church members driven from their land. That Dunklin would have considered using the militia is not surprising. In the antebellum era of United States history, volunteer militias were often used to quell civil disturbances. Under the Militia Act of 1792, the president of the United States could “call out the militia in case of invasion or insurrection, but only on the request of the governors or legislatures of the states.” If a state militia was insufficient to suppress a threat, the president could also “call forth and employ such numbers of the militia of any other state or states most convenient thereto.”

Governors also had the ability to call up the militia of their respective states when they believed it necessary to preserve peace. Accordingly, in the 1830s and 1840s, militias were used to put down mobs in Boston, Massachusetts; Brooklyn, New York; Hoboken, New Jersey; Ellsworth, Maine; Louisville, Kentucky; New Orleans, Louisiana; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Even so, militias were seldom used when mobs attacked black neighborhoods, abolitionists, or other groups deemed beyond the pale of white communities.

Dunklin, who had been born in South Carolina, was an attorney from Potosi in eastern Missouri. A Jacksonian Democrat, he had served as lieutenant governor of Missouri from 1828 to 1832 before being elected governor in 1832 with Lilburn W. Boggs, a resident of Independence, as his lieutenant governor. Dunklin won the election with the support of Missouri’s rural areas; St. Louis voted against him. He was an “ardent states’ rights advocate” who “expressed an almost overwhelming fear of national encroachment upon state sovereignty,” although he was also “a man of modest and retiring disposition.”

In February 1834, Dunklin ordered a militia to guard Mormon witnesses who wanted to testify before a Jackson County grand jury about the depravations they had suffered. At that time, Dunklin also told state militia captain David R. Atchison that some Church members might “seek the opportunity . . . to return in safety to their late homes in Jackson County” under the militia’s guard. If so, Dunklin continued, Atchison and the militia should comply with their requests. Perhaps because stiff opposition to the Saints still existed in Jackson County, no Saints appeared to seek this protection, and by April 1834, Dunklin
told Missouri church leaders that “the laws, both civil and Military, seem deficient in affording your society proper protection.”74 Church members still held out hope, however, that, at some point, Dunklin would provide a military force to escort them back to their lands.75

Dunklin’s seeming willingness to call out the militia was key in the formation of the Camp of Israel’s goals, which were clearly outlined in a May 10, 1834, letter Oliver Cowdery and Sidney Rigdon wrote to Church members throughout the United States. The group was to march to Missouri and wait for Governor Dunklin to muster a portion of the state militia. Together, the state militia, the Camp of Israel expedition, and the Saints who had been dispossessed of their lands would enter Jackson County and regain the lost land. After the militia was discharged, the volunteers recruited by Joseph Smith would remain and protect Church members from any future attacks, while also helping to plant crops for harvest. They would carry with them “a small supply of money” with which “to purchase food till grain can be raised.” In no circumstances were Church members to use aggression, but those going to Missouri were told to carry “sufficient weapons to defend yourselves in case of an attack.”76

The defensive nature of the Camp of Israel—and the fact that they were only to protect Saints who had been restored to their land by the state militia—was emphasized by a letter that Missouri church leaders sent to Governor Dunklin in late April. According to this letter, the Church was sending “a number of our brethren, perhaps 2 or 3 hundred,” who would “remove to Jackson Co in the course of the ensuing summer” but would use force only if faced with “another unparalleled attack from the mob.” The camp was necessary, the letter continued, because Dunklin had told them that he could not call “up a military force to protect our people in that county without transcending his powers.” Calling up the militia as a guard was within the governor’s power; keeping that militia mustered solely for the protection of Church members was not.77

It is possible that Joseph Smith believed that the Camp of Israel would become part of the Missouri state militia after Dunklin mustered it. However, the fact that few in the Camp of Israel were actually residents of Missouri was a bone of contention with many Missourians as the expedition approached. A group of citizens from Lafayette County, Missouri, which adjoins Jackson County, for example, sent several resolutions to Joseph Smith expressing their displeasure with the “foreign troops who call themselves Mormons” that were marching to Missouri. If the “Original Mormons”—meaning those who were Missouri residents—took up arms against Jackson County, the resolutions
declared, Lafayette County citizens would not interfere. However, “so soon as those foreign mormons enter the County of Jackson,” they would “interfer[e] and if practicable prevent it.”78 It is difficult to believe that Joseph Smith would not be aware of the impropriety of residents from another state joining a different state’s militia, especially given the strong feelings of western Missouri residents against the “foreign” members of the Camp of Israel.

Despite the pronouncements by Church leaders, including Joseph Smith, of the Camp of Israel’s defensive intentions, the armed expedition provoked fear, uncertainty, and contempt among observers. Some believed that the expedition was coming to exact revenge on Jackson County citizens. “The Mormon war in Missouri is about to be renewed,” the Painesville Telegraph in Ohio reported, stating that the camp intended “to ‘expel the infidels from the holy land.’”79 Another Ohio newspaper similarly stated that the expedition was on “a crusade to recover the holy land.”80 In Missouri, one resident claimed that the “object” of the camp “was to butcher a portion of our citizens.”81 Dunklin, meanwhile, called the expedition illegal. “The Mormons have no right to march to Jackson county in arms, unless by the order or permission of the commander-in-chief,” he declared. “Men must not ‘levy war’ in taking possession of their rights, any more than others should in opposing them in taking possession.”82 Although some observers seemed to regard Church members as within their rights to provide reinforcements to the Saints in Missouri, especially given their treatment at the hand of Jackson County residents, others clearly saw the camp’s march as an unlawful venture.

Daniel Dunklin and the Camp of Israel

Because Dunklin’s call-up of the state militia was an essential component to placing the Saints back on their land, Joseph Smith and other camp participants were disappointed when the governor apparently refused to keep what they considered his “promise.” According to George A. Smith, Joseph Smith sent Parley P. Pratt and Orson Hyde to visit the governor in Jefferson City, Missouri, on June 12, 1834. When they returned to the Camp of Israel a couple of days later, they “reported that the governor, Daniel Dunklin, refused to fulfill his promise of reinstating the brethren on their lands in Jackson County.”83 According to Pratt’s later recollection in the mid-1850s, the governor told them that he did not “dare” call out the militia “for fear of deluging the whole country in civil war and bloodshed.”84 However, the situation was more complicated
than that. Charles C. Rich noted in his contemporary journal that after Pratt returned from visiting Dunklin, the expedition “stoped and held a Council.” It then “Decided that we should go on armed and equipped,” suggesting that perhaps Pratt’s news was not as negative as has been depicted—or at least not negative enough to change the camp’s intentions. Moreover, in August 1834, William W. Phelps wrote to Dunklin, indicating that he believed the governor had been “ready” to “guard” the Saints into Jackson County upon their request, which apparently had not come. Edward Partridge provided more details, recalling that a council of Church leaders met “after the arrival of the brethren from the east” and decided “that it would not be wisdom to ask the Governor to set them back at that time,” given “the great wrath of the people, south of the river.” These accounts suggest that Phelps and Partridge may not have been aware of Pratt and Hyde’s visit to the governor. However, Charles C. Rich recorded that the camp met Partridge on June 15, after Pratt and Hyde had returned from Jefferson City. It is unlikely that Partridge would not have been informed of what had transpired with the governor.

What actually happened, then? Did Hyde and Pratt make a formal request of the governor or did they merely try to get a feeling for what his position would be on calling up the state militia? And what were Dunklin’s true feelings about using the militia? Although we may never know the answer to the first two questions, contemporary sources provide some illumination of the third. It appears that Dunklin was interested in using the militia only as a last resort and that he wanted to see how negotiations between a committee of Jackson County citizens and Missouri church leaders played out first. On June 6, 1834, Dunklin had written a letter to John Thornton, a prominent Democrat and attorney in Clay County who had served as speaker of the Missouri House of Representatives from 1828 to 1830. Thornton was working with Alexander Doniphan, David R. Atchison, and Amos Rees—atorneys hired as legal counsel for the Missouri saints—to effect a compromise between Church members and other residents of Jackson County. Because Thornton had “manifested a deep interest in a peaceable compromise of this important affair,” Dunklin appointed him “an aid to the commander-in-chief” and asked him to “keep a close correspondence” with both Missouri church leaders and other Jackson County residents about a compromise.

Dunklin also stated in his letter to Thornton that “a more clear, and indisputable right does not exist, than that [of] the Mormon people, who were expelled from their homes in Jackson county, to return and live on their lands.” For Dunklin, there were four possible solutions to
the problem. The Saints could sell their lands in Jackson County and settle elsewhere; Jackson County citizens could be required to obey the laws and let Church members return to their lands; or both sides could agree “to take separate territory” in Jackson County “and confine their members within their respective limits, with the exception of the public right of egress and regress upon the highway.” If none of these options were acceptable, Dunklin continued, “the simple question of legal right would have to settle it,” and that would probably mean calling up the state militia to restore Church members to their lands. Clearly, Dunklin saw this as the last option, although Joseph Smith and others in the Camp of Israel seemed to see it as the only option.90

As the situation played out, negotiations between the two sides broke down, but Dunklin still did not use the militia. Perhaps Church leaders did not request it after this time, but in 1835, Smith and other Church leaders still held to the possibility that the governor would fulfill his “promise.”91 It is also possible that Dunklin’s feelings about the Church and those living in Jackson County prevented him from making a call-up. In an August 1834 letter, Dunklin stated that he had “no regard for the Mormons, as a separate people” and had “an utter contempt for them as a religious sect,” but he had “much regard for the people of Jackson county, both personally and politically,” especially since “many of them” were his “personal friends”—including Lilburn Boggs, his lieutenant governor. Although Dunklin insisted that such considerations were “secondary” to his duties as governor, it is difficult to believe that these views did not influence how he handled the Mormon situation.92 Because Jackson County residents came under some criticism for their actions against the Mormons, including from some Missouri newspapers,93 Dunklin could not ignore the problem entirely, but he apparently did not feel strongly enough about the matter to take decisive action. Whatever the case, Dunklin’s decision of whether or not to call out the state militia was clearly more complicated than Parley P. Pratt and George A. Smith indicated.

If the militia would not escort the Saints back to their land, the Camp of Israel would be unable to fulfill its objective of guarding Church members once their property was restored. Essentially, Dunklin’s hope to see negotiations through to the end negated what the Camp of Israel could do, especially since Joseph Smith was unwilling to see the camp go on the offensive. As Smith told a delegation of citizens from Clay County, Missouri, on June 21, 1834, “It is not our intentions to commence hostilities against any man or boddy of men; it is not our intention to
injure any man’s person or property, except in defending ourselves.”

Despite these peaceful pronouncements, newspaper and other reports that the expedition intended to enter Jackson County by force had enraged many Jackson County citizens, as well as those of adjoining counties. One individual commented that if the camp crossed the Missouri River into Jackson County, there would be “a battle, and probably much blood shed.” Given these realities, Joseph Smith believed that his only option was to disband the Camp of Israel “till every effort for an adjustment of differences between us and the people of Jackson has been made on our part.” Following a revelation directing him to disband the camp, he did so.

**Conclusion**

The Camp of Israel highlights the importance that Smith placed on the redemption of Zion in 1834. Although numerous historians have written about the expedition, examining little-used sources as well as already well-known documents can illuminate many aspects of the camp, including its name, its organization, its funding, its objectives, and why it ultimately disbanded without taking any action for the Missouri saints. The insights presented in this paper, together with others forthcoming in *Documents, Volume 4* of the Joseph Smith Papers, will hopefully help direct scholars to additional understanding as they explore the history of the expedition.

Matthew C. Godfrey is the managing historian of the Joseph Smith Papers and coeditor of volumes in the Documents series. He holds a PhD in American and public history from Washington State University and is the author of *Religion, Politics, and Sugar: The Mormon Church, the Federal Government, and the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company, 1907–1921* (2007), which was a co-winner of the Mormon History Association’s Smith-Petit Award for Best First Book.


2. Doctrine and Covenants and Church History: Gospel Doctrine Teacher’s Manual (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999), 150–56. ^


6. Eber D. Howe, Mormonism Unvailed [sic]: or, a Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, from Its Rise to the Present Time (Painesville, Ohio: By the author, 1834), 155; Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams to Church Brethren, January 22, 1834, in Joseph Smith Letterbook, 1:79–81. ^

7. Kirtland Council Minute Book, February 24, 1834, MS 3432, CHL. ^


13. Much of the research for this section was conducted by Mitchell Schaefer, an intern with the Joseph Smith Papers in 2013.

14. George A. Smith, History, 43. A couple of exceptions to this are the diaries of Moses Martin and Wilford Woodruff, both of which appear to have been kept while the two were on the expedition. Charles C. Rich, who was with the Michigan contingent of the camp, also appears to have kept a contemporary journal. “1834 Journal of Moses Martin,” MS 1986, CHL; Wilford Woodruff, Journal and Papers, 1831–98, MS 1352, CHL; “Original Manuscript Diary of the Mormon Journey to Zion’s Camp, Missouri,” CHL.

15. Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, May 18, 1834, Joseph Smith materials, Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence, Missouri; Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, June 4, 1834, in Joseph Smith Letterbook, 2:56–59; Joseph Smith and others, Declaration, June 21, 1834, MS 155, Joseph Smith Collection; Resolutions of Committee from Lafayette County, Missouri, June 23, 1834, MS 155, Joseph Smith Collection; Joseph Smith to John Thornton, Alexander Doniphan, and David R. Atchison, June 25, 1834, in Manuscript History of the Church, vol. A-1, 505–6. All of these documents are included in the forthcoming Documents, Volume 4, of the Joseph Smith Papers.


17. For these minutes, see Kirtland Council Minute Book, August 11, 23, 28–29, 1834. All of these are included in the forthcoming Documents, Volume 4, of the Joseph Smith Papers.

18. See, for example, Baldwin, reminiscence; Holbrook, reminiscence; Joseph B. Noble, reminiscence, MS 1031 1, CHL; Reuben McBride, reminiscence, MS 8197, CHL; William F. Cahoon, A Brief Biographical Sketch of William Farrington Cahoon, MS 8433, CHL; “A short sketch of the Life of Harrison Burgess,” MS 893, CHL; Levi Hancock, autobiography, 138–47, MS 2711, CHL.


22. Kimball, “Journal and Record of Heber Chase Kimball,” 7. One definition of *exterminate* in Webster’s 1828 dictionary is “to drive away,” and it is possible Kimball was using the word in that context, rather than using it to mean “to destroy utterly.” *Noah Webster's 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language*, s.v. “exterminate,” available online at http://1828.mshaffer.com/d/word/exterminate.


26. George A. Smith, History, 43.

27. George A. Smith, History, 43.


29. Account with the Church of Christ, c. August 11–29, 1834, MS 155, Joseph Smith Collection; Account with the Camp of Israel, c. August 11–29, 1834, MS 155, Joseph Smith Collection.


31. Smith and others, Declaration, June 21, 1834.


34. Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, May 18, 1834, Joseph Smith materials, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

35. Account with the Camp of Israel, c. August 11–29, 1834.

36. Frederick G. Williams Papers, MS 782, CHL.

37. Nathan B. Baldwin, Account of Zion’s Camp, 1882, p. 14, MS 499, CHL.


39. See, for example, Kirtland Council Minute Book, February 14–15 and March 1, 1835; Blessing for Burr Riggs, June 7, 1835, in Patriarchal Blessings, 1:26–27, CHL. For more information on Zion blessings, see Benjamin E. Park, “‘Thou

40. See, for example, Kirtland Council Minute Book, August 17, 1835; Blessing for Burr Riggs, June 7, 1835.


44. See, for example, Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–86), 2:10 (October 23, 1853).


49. Radke, “We Also Marched,” 150–51. The account does show that Sophia Howe donated $7.60 and that $100 came from Boston, Massachusetts, likely from either Mary (Polly) Vose or Ruth Vose, but these individuals were not members of the camp. Account with the Church of Christ, c. August 11–29, 1834; Wilford Woodruff, in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:101 (January 10, 1858); Wilford Woodruff, “The History and Travels of Zion’s Camp,” 3, MS 1193, CHL; Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 381–82, 386.

50. Joseph Holbrook, Autobiography, c. 1860, p. 34, MS 12158, CHL.

51. The small amount donated by the Church as a whole may have been one reason why the Camp of Israel was not able to meet its objectives. The June 1834 revelation that disbanded the camp stated that a lack of obedience from “the church abroad” in terms of supporting the Camp of Israel financially was a cause of the expedition’s failure. Revelation, 22 June 1834, in Jensen, Woodford, and Harper, *Revelations and Translations, Volume 1*, 374–75. Joseph Smith elaborated on this lack of support in his June 1834 letter to Emma Smith. “It is our prayer day and night that God will open the heart of the Churches to pour in men and means to assist us, for the redemption and upbuilding of Zion,” Smith declared. “We want the Elders in Kirtland to use every exertion to influence the Church to come speedily to our relief.” Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, June 4, 1834, in Joseph Smith Letterbook, 2:57.

52. Account with the Church of Christ, c. August 11–29, 1834; Account with the Camp of Israel, c. August 11–29, 1834.


55. Probably the best list of camp members was compiled by James L. Bradley, who did a considerable amount of research to produce the list. Bradley argues that there were 210 men in the camp, 11 women, and 7 children, for a total of 228. Bradley, Zion's Camp, 267.


57. Bradley lists approximately thirty individuals that do not appear on the financial account. The list on the financial account, however, has two individuals not included on Bradley’s list (David Boyes and Alden Burdick). Bradley, Zion’s Camp, 269–75; Account with the Church of Christ, c. August 11–29, 1834.

58. George A. Smith, History, 15.

59. Church History in the Fulness of Times: The History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2000), 144.


61. Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, June 4, 1834, in Joseph Smith Letterbook, 2:57.

62. See, for example, George A. Smith, History, 7.

63. Smith informed Emma that the prices along the way were as follows: “flour by the hundred $1.50, bacon from 4½ to 6 dollar per Hundred butter from 6 to 8 cents pr pound, honey from 3 to 4 shilling the gallon, new milk from 4 to 6 ct per gallon.” Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, June 4, 1834, in Joseph Smith Letterbook, 2:57.

64. See, for example, Manuscript History, vol. A-1, 477, CHL; Jenson, “Zion’s Camp,” The Historical Record 7 (June 1888): 578.


69. Reinders, “Militia and Public Order in Nineteenth-Century America,” 89–90; see also “Act more effectually to provide for the National Defence,” 271–72.

71. Robert W. Wells to Alexander Doniphan and David R. Atchison, November 21, 1833, copy in William W. Phelps, Collection of Missouri Documents, CHL; John F. Ryland to David R. Atchison, February 19, 1834, in “Mormon Difficulties,” *Missouri Intelligencer and Boon’s Lick Advertiser* (Columbia), March 8, 1834, [1]. ^


73. See, for example, William W. Phelps to Dear Brethren, February 27, 1834, in *Evening and the Morning Star* 2 (March 1834): 139. ^

74. Daniel Dunklin to William W. Phelps and others, April 20, 1834, MS 657, W. W. Phelps Collection of Missouri Documents. ^

75. As late as June 5, 1834, Missouri Church leaders were telling Dunklin that “the time is just at hand when our society will be glad to avail themselves of the protection of a military guard.” Sidney Gilbert and others to Daniel Dunklin, June 5, 1834, MS 657, W. W. Phelps Collection of Missouri Documents. ^

76. Sidney Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery to “Dear Brethren,” May 10, 1834, broadsheet, CHL. ^

77. Algernon S. Gilbert and others to Daniel Dunklin, April 24, 1834, MS 657, W. W. Phelps Collection of Missouri Documents. ^

78. Committee from Lafayette County, Missouri, Resolutions, June 23, 1834, MS 155, Joseph Smith Collection, CHL. ^


82. Daniel Dunklin to Col. J. Thornton, June 6, 1834, in *Evening and the Morning Star* 2 (July 1834): 176. ^


86. William W. Phelps to Daniel Dunklin, August 1, 1834, MS 657, W. W. Phelps Collection of Missouri Documents. ^

87. Edward Partridge, “A History, of the Persecution,” 1839–1840, in Karen Lynn Davidson, Richard L. Jensen, and David J. Whittaker, eds., *Histories, Volume 2: Assigned Histories, 1831–1847*, vol. 2 of the Histories series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2009), 226. The council referred to may have been one held by members of the Camp of Israel on June 22, 1834, during which Joseph Smith dictated a revelation telling the camp it was no longer necessary for them to redeem Zion. Or the council could have been one held some distance from the expedition’s campsite on June 21. John Whitmer noted in his daybook that he attended a “counsel” on June 21 before leaving to
meet with the Camp of Israel on June 22, but he did not provide any information about the items discussed at that council. Revelation, 22 June 1834 [D&C 105], in Jensen, Woodford, and Harper, *Revelations and Translations, Volume 1*, 374–79; John Whitmer, Daybook, June 21 and 22, 1834, MS 1159, CHL; William Farrington Cahoon, A Brief Biographical Sketch of William Farrington Cahoon, 3, MS 8433, CHL.


89. Dunklin to Thornton, June 6, 1834.

90. Dunklin to Thornton, June 6, 1834.

91. Joseph Smith and others to Church Officers, August 31, 1835, in Davidson, Jensen, and Whittaker, *Histories, Volume 2*, 88. Even as they held out hope for help from the governor, Joseph Smith was stating that Zion’s redemption would not come before September 11, 1836. Joseph Smith to Lyman Wight and others, August 16, 1834, Joseph Smith Letterbook, 1:84–87.


94. Smith and others, Declaration, June 21, 1834.


96. Joseph Smith to Thornton, Doniphan, and Atchison, June 25, 1834.