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MISSOURI PERSECUTIONS: THE PETITION OF ISAAC LEANY

Clark V. Johnson

As an outgrowth of the Mormon War in Missouri, Joseph Smith spent the winter of 1838-39 confined in the jail at Liberty, Missouri. While there he asked the Saints to prepare affidavits to secure redress from the federal government for their losses caused by their recent maltreatment at the hands of mobocrats.1 Beginning in December 1839 the Mormons commenced recording these Missouri experiences and swearing to their authenticity before civil authorities in two counties in Iowa and ten counties in Illinois.2 These officials were justices of the peace, clerks of the circuit court, and notary publics, who possessed the seals of their respective offices. The Mormons presented these legal documents to the federal government on at least three different occasions in a concerted attempt to obtain reparation for their sufferings in Missouri.

Presently researchers have discovered 823 petitions signed by 683 petitioners. There are 223 petitions located in the National Archives, 571 in the Library–Archives of the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 50 in the Journal History of the Church, and 44 published in the History of the Church. Among the petitions in the National Archives and the LDS Church Archives are several documents that are not really petitions but are letters of explanation, inquiry, intent, and reference. Also, approximately 190 people wrote two or more petitions, and there are 48 duplicates. Most of these are found among the 44 printed in the History of the Church, the originals being housed in the LDS Church.

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1Joseph Smith received three revelations during his internment at Liberty, Missouri. These revelations are published in the Doctrine and Covenants as section 121, dated 20 March 1839, and sections 122 and 123, dated March 1839. In section 123:1-4 the Lord instructed Joseph to have the Saints record all their grievances against Missouri, to organize a committee, and to present the information to the government. (Doctrine and Covenants [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981].)

2See Missouri Petitions, National Archives and LDS Church Archives.

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Archives. The fact that some are duplicated and that some are not even petitions accounts for the discrepancy between the number of documents and the petitions.

The document presented here appears to have been signed by Isaac Leany on 20 April 1838 at Quincy, Illinois. Although it was not notarized, the document was sent to Washington, D.C. Describing the events in Missouri from the Gallatin Election fracas on 6 August 1838 to the LDS expulsion from Missouri, it focuses on the 30 October 1838 attack at Haun’s Mill, in which Leany was shot “four times through the body.” It also lists the names of 21 of the mobbers, 15 of the men and boys killed at Haun’s Mill, and 13 of those wounded during the massacre.

This document clearly exhibits the handwriting of more than one individual, suggesting that Laney dictated part, or perhaps all, of the statement. For one of the scribes, it is not clear whether the S’s are intended to be capitalized. For the sake of consistency, I have rendered all of these in the lower case, except at the beginning of clauses and proper nouns. In all other instances, I have attempted to preserve the original spelling and punctuation, including insertions and deletions.

Concerning his inadequacy in composing the petition, Laney said, “I shall endeavor according to the best of my understanding to give full satisfaction, but I am unlearned & you must excuse my awkwardness & watch for my meaning & not for my imperfections.”

It is well know[n] that there has bin a great difficulty existing between the Misouriens & the people called Mormons, and I am well aware that there is many false reports respecting the matter, now in circulation, I shall f now endeavor to become clear of all prejudice & give to the community a fare account of the barbarous slaughter that taken place on the 30th day of Oct 1838 at Hawns Mille on Shoal creek, I was an eye witness to the murder that was thare commited I was one that escaped being murdered or wounded but it was through difficulties, thare was but three or four besides myself that stood to see the result of the matter that escaped being killed or wounded, in order order to set forth the matter to the satisfaction of the inquiring what mind I must first show x gave rise to so horrid a scene, firstly it was a jealous notion in the Misouriens, that the mormons had some eavl disine in gaethering themselves together Secondly they thought that the mormons would be apt to all vote the same.

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1 Isaac Leany (also spelled Laney) was born in Simpson County, Kentucky, 19 December 1815 and died 31 October 1875 at Salt Lake City (Frank Eshcom, Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah [Salt Lake City: Utah Pioneers Book Publishing Co., 1913], pp. 95, 995).
ticket and many other other notions that were false & groundless, and when the election came round the some of the Misouriens publickly declared that the Mormons should not be entitled to a vote, for they were not entitled to a vote in Jackson county & they should not be there, this was in Daviess county, the Mormons contended that they were a free people that they supported the government & was in subjection to the laws of that country & that they had an equal right to vote, this soon bred a contention between the too parts & soon come to blows, it is well known that the Misouriens was the aggressors, that they first began to enunt, and also first began to strike with unlawful weapons, the Misouriens soon got tyred of there fun for the Mormons proved too jolly for them as soon as the fray was over and the Mormons left the ground without voting in order to keep down further disturbance, this was at Gallitont the county seat of Davess county, the news soon came to Far West Caldwell county that there had bin a fray in Gallitont with the Mormons & Misouriens & that too of the Mormons was killed & also that the Misouriens would not suffer the Mormons to barry there dead this raised a considerable excitement with the Mormons & about one hundred men went from Fare West to Gallitont to see about what was going on & to barry the dead and to see if they could not settle the feerce [?], they found that the report was false about there being any killed, the Mormons then endeavored to settle the matter without any further disturbance, they went to Adam Black a justice of the peace & ast him if he was willing to stop the fuss and all live together in peace he said he was, they then ast him to sign his name to an article that they had drawn to that affect & he refused, they had heard that he had swore that he would raise a company against them & that they should not be allowed to live in peace amongst them, so the Mormons pressed on Black to sign his name to the article which was equally as binding on themselves as it was on Black or the Misouriens, he set [?] refused to sign there paper but said that he would right one him self & sign it he acordingly done so, and both pa[r]tys signed the article.

It is commonly reported that Joseph Smyth lead this company to Davess county this report is maybe true he went along but not as a leader he went along in order to use his influence to keep down further difficultys, but the Misouriens determed to not be at peace with the Mormons they voiced it a broad that Smyth had brought a great company of men & had compelled Squier black to sign his name to a certin paper, making out that there was something dreadfull therein contained.

Now my friend the truth was but little regarded by the Misouriens but any thing was said & done to raise an excitement against the Mormons, ther were many things that transpired which I shall not mention, because I expect to be breaf in my account & only mention the leading items & heads of things that transpired.

We will next notice the scrape that taken place at Dewit, the Mormons purchased a town plot in Carroll County at the mouth of grand River, 65 miles East of far West & had made a considerable progress in improving the place the citizens of caroll became displease to see the great emigration from the East to that place So they rose up in open rebellion against the laws of the land & under took a mob the Mormons from ther homes & from there land, the Mormons was desirous to have the matter fully envestigated & the difficulty settled without the shedin of blood they sent a request to Ketsville Chariton County desiring them to come and see wher the rong Misouriens was indecipherable guethered and made there threts until at lenth the militia was called out, but before this the too pa[r]ty had a little engagement or rather the scouters of these too parts

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got engaged & some blood was shed & some lives was lost, so the militia came and placed them selves between the too parties; jeneral Parks was commander the business of the militia was to enquire into the cause to remove the difficulty & put down unlawful conduct, the fact was easy ascertained that the Misouriens was in falt, that they reguardless of laws had embodied themselves to drive the innocent from there homes the militia new that the Misouriens had taken an unlawful step, but being filled with the same spirit even the spirit of mobocracy they was not as ready to go to work as perhaps they would have bin had they might (?) of found the mormons the ones to go to work upon, and insted of going to work & disperse the mob & putting down such conduct the jeneral came to the mormons see the [indecipherable] & telling them that he could not do any thing for them, that it was out of his power to help them that he told (?) for said he if they should get in an engagement that the greater part of his men would fight against them & that he should be under the necessity of withdrawing his men amediately to keep them from joining the mob, this was of quite encouraging to the mob to see the militia as they was calld so ready to join them, so the mob increased in number very fast, bidng defance to the law regardless of republicanism trampling on the libertys our fathers & so dearly bought. as soon as the mob thought there number sufficient for the mormons they sent the mormons word that if they was not gone by such a time which was verry short that they would come upon them & masacree them, the time rolled round and the mormons was not gone, the mob them set an other tie which was very short for them to be gone in, the mormons saw that perhaps there was ten to one & that they could not stay in peace & that if they undertook to sta[y] the result would would be evil that there was over [indecipherable]y a band of lawless mobs that the result would be in the shedding of blood, accordingly the time rolled & the mob came against them & the mormons under took to compermise the matter with the the conditions of the compermise was to that the mormons should all be gone / in the space of twelve hours with there families & by complying with these conditions they would not come against them nor molest them any more the mob agreeed to pay them for there land which they never done, the mormons bundled up & left there in the twelve hours being compelled to leave a great deal of there property not being able in so short a time to get teams & to guthere there stock, there was one poore woman that was some what afflicted being exposed in moving died by the way, the mob being over joyed in the success that they had in driving the mormons the great victory they had gained in driving these deluded impostors & false teachers as they called them, that they guthereed themselves togather to speak of the noble deed that they had done it was a joyful time with them in deed not realizing the scandle & disgrace that they had brought upon themselves & there country & not realizein that these people had as good a right by land & settle on it an (?) & worship god as they pleased so far as they did not enfringe on others rights, so some of them not recollecting ther name at presant made a speech on the subject & said we have gained the victory we have succeeded in driving the mormons from this place, now the land is just coming in market in Daviess County & they will go & settle there & a hoolt it enter the land & get such thare that it will be impossible to get them out from there & now is our time to stop them so let us take the cannon and follow them before they get too strong a holt thare we have helped you drive them from here now come on boys & help us to drive them from Daviess or they will take the country in a short time, so they guthereed up the canon & all the force that they could & went
on to Daviess & located themselves at mill port they took too of the mormons prinsers company

as they went, this [indecipherable] was headed by Lawyers & priests there was Sashel Woods a notable prysbyterian priesct that was a head leader amongst them this man who professes to be a follower of Christ & one that calls on sinners to repent just see what a sample he has given to the world & his followers, I shall more fully treat on the conduct of this man hereafter now my friend you know that it is commonly reported that the mormons is altogether in fault I would have you to clear your self of prejudice & notice how the mormons hav bin treated for these thing is true and this is the way

[indecipherable] was treated you that they [indecipherable] need not suppose that because I am a mormon that I have not told the truth about the matter, & now my reader this is not all the ill treatment that we the mormons have resewed, I did not expect when I commenced wrighting to have wrote so much on the subject but seeing that I could not gave full satisfaction first

without x showing the leading cause, I only expected to wright a few things, but seeing that a few things will not tell the story I shall endeavor according to the best of my to give full satisfaction my understanding, x but I am unlurned & you must excuse x awkerdness & watch for my meaning & not for my imperfections for I wright this in order that the world may know the truth of what has taken place in these our days-days

[indecipherable] there is one thing that I forgot to mention which transpired before the f mob made there / attempt to drive the mormons from Dewit, that is concern-

ing the threats & attempt the mob ma[d]e on Daviess coun there was about three or four hundred mob came to Davis count[y] & went to driving off the mormons cattle & hogs & took beegums [wagons?] & many other articles & threatened to massacre them if they did not leave the county the militia was c[a]lled out & the mob was dispersed, they then went immediately to Dewit and as I stated before that the mormons sent to Kietsville chariton county to get them to come and investigate the matter, they also sent to the govenor & the govenors orders was to them you have got your selves in to difficultys & I cannot help you, you will have to fight your own battle & help your selves, so we see that the govenor was not ready to hear the cries of the innocent but was ready to see the mob plunder & steal & enfringe on the rights of the a people whoos charectors have bin empeached & misrepresented to the world, it is well known that this same governor was a mob carrctor / in the jackson county tys fuss, there was men here from plattsburg & from Daviess & from the different coun x round about & they were all engaged in the driving the mormons from Dewit carroll county, & this is why they could say to the carroll boys we have helped you now come & help us. Now my fellow travloros to eternity, I have no dout but you have heared the matter in quite a different light, but I expect to stand before the bare of an im-

partial x eve[n] the bar of the god of Abraham Isaac & Jacob thare to give an account for the deeds done in the boddy. And realizeing this I can clearly & boldly say that this is the way the mormons has bin treated yea & if this was the worst I should have but little grou[n]ds for complaining to what I have & it is beacuse of the religion which they hold too that they are so persecuted the laws of the land guaranteees to everyman to worship god according to the dictates of there own conscience so far as they do not in fringe on other mens rights, & if the mormons has in from on any ones rights, why

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not take them to the law & punish them according to the crime committed, & if they have stol or robbed or murdered punish them & let the innocent go clear, but instid of this the laws of the land was laid down & mob laws ruled & this kind of law wants neither judge nor jewry, but all that the mob laws of Misourie required was to suspiotion a man to be a mormon & then a pile of black hickrys & this law was put in force against a great many of the mormons & some that was not mormons, on suspition fared the same fate, many of the mormons was cruelly whipped there houses burned & there property stold, & had to put up with many vexations, which I shall more fully treat on hereafter.

As I before stated the mob guethered there force & there canon and went to mill port & there began to prepare to make an attack on the mormons in Daviess they increased in number very fast, they had generely called the mormons cowards because they would suffer themselves imposed upon & abused without resenting, now the mo was collecting dayly at millport & makeing prepareation to burn rob murder & driv the mormons from Daviess whilst the mob was preparing themselves with guns there was a circumstance took place which puts me in mind of an old story which I have often heard told upon the mormons, when the mormons was in jackson county, it was reported that they had a large stone Fort & that the mormons was taking to it a wagon load of coffins which they said was to bury there dead in, & the wagon broke down & the coffins bursted open & they were filled with guns whic[h] they was taking & burrying in there forts & in this way there guns was discovered, This report was false, but this circumstanc which was similar was true one of the mob by the name of john comer was taking a his [?] wagon load of guns to millport and his wagon broke down & he took out his guns which was in boxes insted of coffins & drug them into a thicket & hid them & went to get assistance about fixing his waggon & / whilst he was gone some of the mormons discovered his loading, & it being in there settlement got a company of mormons to watch the wagon & guns until their owner should come & see what was there calculation at length there came too men john comer and a nether man with him, the mormons informed them that they had found a wagon & some boxes of guns out in the thicket close by & that they wanted to get them to hall them to Farewest for them, these men discovered that the mormons was in earnest they accordingly obeyed there request the mormons kept these men & guns a few days untin the jinera came with the militia & they gave up the guns & prisoners to them, there was 44., united states yawguns [?] there was many that taken place from time to time which I sh[u] [?] shall not mention but leave it for was them to set forth who are more capable & who are eye witnesses to the outrages that has bin c[o]mmitted

I shall now precede to give an account of the bloody but[chery that taken place at a th blackmys shop at Hawns mille on Shoal creek on the 30th day of Oct., 1838, the mob party increased from time to time & committed outrages after outrages until at lenth the mormons not willing to bare it no longer they said to the jeneral what must they do was they not to have no protection must they stand and see there property stolen there familys abused there houses burned there cattle drove off & nothing to be done for them, then jeneral Donathan said to them go & defend your selves & drive the mob from Daviess county drive them to hell, breathing out an oath against
them. the mormons then went out supposing that they was legally utherized, & finding that the mob had burned six or seven of there houses & was carryng on at a great hand stealing & driving off there stock. So the mormons went to work determined to rout them or dy in the attempt, they soon got the mob in the notion of leaving Daviess county so a great portion of them fled in to Livingston a joining county & told that the mormons was burning there houses stealing & plundering & it was soon blown to the four winds that the mormons was doing every thing x was bad now the citzen[s] of livingston & the mob that had left Daviess began to steal cattle from the mormons that lived in the neighbourhood of Hawns mille & also to go threw the neighbourhood & take there guns from them, they came twice & drove off cattle & an other time they came & took several guns they also as we heard said that they would burn our mill down, & we new that they was not too good to do it, & nowing that it was our only chance to get on going, for we dare not to go to there milles so about thirty of us went to guard them from burning it down & while we was guarding the mill we held a council to now what plan we should fall upon to accomplish a treaty or to come on some conditions of peace it was voted that a letter should be written & sent to them immediately desiring th to k[n]ow what there determinations was, for they had imboddyed themselves several days before we had & we heared thay was coming on us, we had appointed to take them the letter & just before he started they came a mesage from them desiring too or three of our leading men to go & meet the too or three of there leading men & see if they compermise the matter, this was the verry thing that we wanted, So in the presance of there mesinger we elected thre men to go compermise with them, we also in the presance of there mesinger unanimously g agreed to abide the treaty that our men should make with them our thre men then started fourth with to the place that they desired them to come to & thare they met with twelve or fourtee[n] armed men, so the too partys began to counsell the matter & soon found that the difficulty that was between them was easy removed, that it was in consequence of false reports that had occasioned them to guether themselves to guether, they had heared that the mormons intended to come & burn dow there houses, they settled the difficulty without much trouble, the Misouerens was not willing to countenance such conduct as this stealing party was gilty of, nor be called of that party so they would not associat with them, but agreed to use there enfluce to get them to come & compermise with us also & we was useing every effort that lay in our power to get on feasible terms with them when we thought that we had got the difficultys settled with the greater part of them & was likely to succeed in getting it About the time that the Church commenced moving from the state there was a Committe appointed to receive donations in cash & property and put into waggans teems & for the purpose of Removeing the poor they had bin very busily employed for about two months & had got the poor all away except between thirty & forty families & arrangements going on as fast as they could be entered into when out came from Davie county a company of men armed with Wm Bouman at their head came into Far west and there told their busines & there was told by Wm Slade & a man by the name of Glues neither of them belonging to the Church that the Committe were doing all they could the mormons were doing all of them getting away fast as they could but all would not do they came over to the Committe house & there gave us our orders & that was that we must all be out of the county by the next Fridy night which was giving us six days for to do that—that requird a month & then what was to done the Comittee amediately commenced hiring teems & sending the families to

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Ginney's grove with as little of their affects as they could get along with & live & amediately there came in a heyey rain & fifteen families then withoaut any manner of a shelter & such a storm it was the creeks raised so high that they became impasable & the roads intolerable & in the attempt to obey the Commands of a mob there was one yoke of oxen drownd & then we had to give up and Run the Risk of their threats but the Lord blocked up their way of coming to us as well as ours of getting out then the time passed on for about 8 or 10 dayes long & the Committe had got the principle part of the poor out & this said Bogart raised a Company of men & came to the committee house a place this comitie had to do their Buisness & there they commenced operations Breaking in the windows of the house—tables shacks & evry thing they could lay their hands on & then there was only two of the Committe left Vis Daniel Shearer & Elias Smith & drive them from their Buisness & they were obliged to leave the town & take with them what they could & leave the Rest of the property to the mob for in the lane of a couple of men that had just mooved inte the place & what the names of this last mob was Whitiker, Odle, Raglin, Bogart & /

in the intermediate time between these two mobs there were a number of teems came up from Illinois for purpose of taking away families & while staying over night there was one for of their horses stole belonging to a man by the name of Burton & a week after two of our people went back for the purpose of transacting some buisness & found one of those horses in the possession of a man by the name of Kerns the very man that we suspected had stole the span & we found afterwards to our satisfaction that he then (?) Kerns had traded the other one away for an indian poney & then sold the poney to one of our people Sam Parker

while I was liveing near Hawns mills on sho- Shoal Creek Mo & about the 25 or 26 of October 1838 I was informed that a company mob of twenty in number under Nehemiah Cumstock had been to the mill and leveled pieces at those present demand ing all the guns one man gave up his rifle another who had his gun in hand refused and started off two of the mob followed and snaped their guns at him twice or three times each one of these men I was told was Hiram Cumstock the other name I never learned though the man whom they were trying to shoot made his way off and gave word to the neighbor who met the next day at the mill to hear the story from the different families who informed us that the mob had sworn the burning of the neighbourhood and mill with the other hard threats such as killing Hiram Abbot who would not give up his gun we also learned that there was another company of men lying below us at house of Mr. Mc Crosky & knowing that either of those compani was far superior to ours in numbers some of the neighbours wanted to leave their homes and run off but haveing only about seven waggons to twenty three or four families we had to stay and defend our selves and as I recollect it was on the twentieth of the month we concluded to offer them terms of peace but before our messengers state had started there came one from the company below us with a request that we would send three men to the house of Oliver Walker to make a treaty send

with three men which they would to the same house David Evans Jacob Myers seignior and Anthony Blackburn was chosen to meet them and on going to Walkers they met ten men with each a rifle instead of three without arms however peace

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prevailed and a treaty was soon made and agreed a pon I suppose to the satisfaction next day of both sides and on two of our men went back again those two were Evans and 
ames Ames they was told that the other company had sent a messenger to Cumstock and his company with word of the treaty between us and them and also told them that we wanted to treat with them they said that Cumstocks company was not only mad with us but mad them with them for making any kind of a treaty with us Evans sent them word that he wanted nothing but peace and would not fight them without offering them terms of peace I cannot tell whether or not they got the word or not but well I remember that on the thirtyeth of October about three o clock in the afternoon Cumstocks whole army of two hundred and fifty men came upon us our company was about thirtyseven in number being joined by a company of families traveling to the other side of that County and the adjoining Counties stope there to get grinding at the mill Cumstocks company formed a kind of broken line at the distance of about seventyfive yards situating their horses in front for a kind of breastwork commenced a out fire with a passing a word meantime Capt Evans advanced toward them and called aloud for quarters untill they fired I suppose between fifty and a hundred rounds with out any answer then we could do nomore than fire a few shots while the women and children made their escape to fire [?] the mob still advancing came within about four or five rods when I made my escape by flight being shot four times through the body and once across each arm being about the last man off the ground now I am well aware that this is an incredible story to tell that a man being shot four times through body made his escape by flight but I have the scars to show ten in number one ball entering my body through the inside corner of my left shoulder blade came out just a a below about two and a half or three inches below my collar bone and as far as three inches on the right of the middle of my breast another entered through the muscle under the hind part of my left arm and passed through my body and came out under the middle of my right arm another passed through the my left hip on the inside or through the upper end of my hip bone another through my right hip hit the bone just about the joint glanced out through the skin and rolled down my drawers leg in to my boot these four balls made eight visible wounds with two others one across each arm are all the wounds in my flesh I cannot tell how many bullet holes was in my clothing there was twentyseven in my flesh I and to my story haveing made my own escape and hid my self I listened at them shooting the wound which could not escape I was informed that one of these murderers followed old father McBride in his retreat and and cut him down with an old sythe while he was pleading for mercy this was seen by Mrs Ames and two other ladies who were secreted under the creek bank Warren Smith and his Son was also shot a second time being unable to retreat after their first wounds Jacob Fouts and Wm Champlin feined their selves dead and lay still untill their pockets were robbed and after they supposed the wounded all were all dead they rob they rob the houses took the horses from the mill and out of the stables and two wagons from the mill and off they went for the night but on the first or second of Nov they returned and camped at the mill robbed that plundered the neighbourhood taking off such things as they pleased mob law being established and the [?] in this band of robbers murderers A thieves was Wm Man & [?] Esq N. Cumstock Esq Howard Maupin Jesse Maupin James and Stephan Reynolds called
Runnels Hiram Cumstock a young man named Glase Erasmus Severe Jacob Rodgers Robert White George Miller Sardis Smith Elijah Trosper [Prosper] these men came on painted black trimmed of with red rags and ribbands st[e]aming like so many demons enough to disgrace a heathen forest much more a land of liberty after some spent in this manner captain went to Richmond to draw pay for his service I was told that instead of pay they gave him a cursing and threatened him with justice throwing the murder and robery in his teeth and orders to return the stolen property them± [?] this made Cumstock mad and on his way home he passed the mill and stuck up an advertisement stating that the stolen property should be brought to his house and could be had by paying him for taking care of it some of the property was got and I have seen some of the horses that was worked near to death and rode nearly down but some of the best of them could not be found for asmall reward and one of the mob was going round trying to buy the chance of such they being about the best that was taken

the names of the murdered
Benjamin Lewis
John York
John Lee
John Byers
Wm Napier
Warren Smith
Austin Hammer
Simon Cox
Levi Merick
Elias Benner
George Richards
-----Campbell
Josiah Fuller
Thomas McBride
Sardis Smith a little boy

wounded
Tarlton Lewis
Jacob Fouts
Jacob Myers
Jacob Hawn
Jacob Potts
Isaac Leany
W'm Yocum
Nathan Night
----- Walker
Charles Jimison
Alma Smith a little
Mary Steadwell | boy

this I will support in any court of justice

th
April the 20
1839
Quincy
Illinois

Isaac
Leany

Hiram Abbot
Charles Merick a little
mortally wounded

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