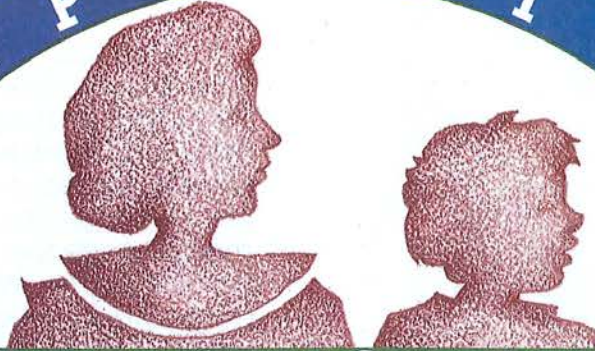


E X P L O R I N G



PERSECUTIONS IN MISSOURI

By Sherrie Johnson/Illustrated by Shauna Mooney Kawasaki

I, the Lord, have suffered the affliction to come upon them . . . in consequence of their transgressions (Doctrine and Covenants 101:2).

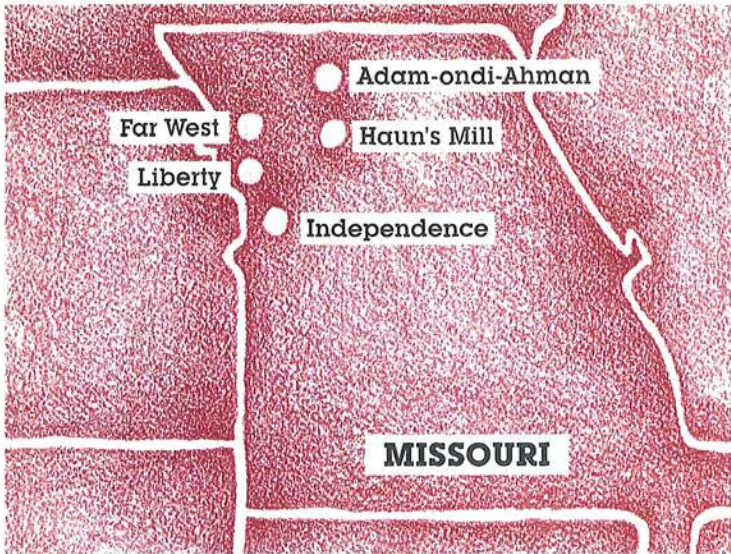
In 1831 most of the Latter-day Saints in the United States had gathered to two areas—Kirtland, Ohio, and Jackson County, Missouri. In 1833 the Saints in Jackson County were driven from their homes. They settled temporarily in Clay and Ray counties, where the local citizens helped the destitute members. But by 1836, tensions increased as the citizens of those counties became concerned about the number of Saints settling there. Two new counties, Caldwell and Daviess, were specifically created for the members to settle in, in hopes that by separating the Mormons from the non-Mormons, the troubles between the two groups would come to an end.

Then, in 1838, when the Kirtland Saints were driven out of their homes in Ohio, they headed for Missouri. The non-Mormons in Missouri became alarmed when they saw hundreds of additional Church members moving in weekly. The Mormons spoke with a different accent and had different customs as well as a different religion. Many Missourians feared that the large Latter-day Saint population would take political and economic control of their state. Slavery

was still being practiced in Missouri, and the people there, knowing that the Mormons opposed slavery, were afraid that they would vote to outlaw it.

Tensions also increased because the Lord had revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith that the New Jerusalem would be built in Missouri. As some Church members boasted about how Zion would be built in Missouri, the old settlers worried about what would happen to them and their homes. Some of them thought that the Mormons would drive them away, so they determined to drive the Saints away first.





During this time, problems grew within the Church. Some of the members, including four Apostles, were disobedient and used their leadership positions for personal gain. Some left the Church, then caused as many problems for the members as the mobs did. Elizabeth Barlow wrote, "We all felt more sorrowful at seeing Apostles leave the Church than we did over our trials and persecutions."^{**}

One Mormon, Sampson Avard, formed a group, called the Danites, to seek revenge on the Missourians. He told his followers that the First Presidency had given permission for the group to rob, lie to, or murder its enemies. Of course, no such permission had been given. In fact, Joseph Smith was working with state and local leaders to establish peace. But when the Danites attacked the nonmembers, it only gave them more reason to distrust the Saints.

By October 1838, persecutions had intensified until many thought that there would be civil war. After a battle between the Saints and the state militia at Crooked River, the governor of Missouri, Lilburn W. Boggs, blamed Church members for the confrontation and issued an extermination order. In part, the order said, "The Mormons must be treated as enemies, and must be exterminated or driven from the state, if necessary for the public good. Their outrages are beyond all description."

Joseph Smith counseled all the members living in Missouri to gather to either Far West or Adam-ondi-Ahman for protection. However, Jacob Haun, who was the leader of the settlement of Haun's Mill, didn't want to leave his property. He counseled the others living there to stay; they would defend themselves if necessary.

On October 30, a mob of about 240 men approached Haun's Mill with the intent of carrying out the governor's extermination order. While the men in the settlement sought protection in the blacksmith shop, the women and

children fled into the woods as the mob attacked. David Evans swung his hat at the mob and cried for peace, but the mob only shot at him. The mob also fired on the unarmed women and children.

Amanda Smith grabbed her two daughters and escaped across the millpond on a walkway. When the mob finally entered the blacksmith shop, seven-year-old Alma Smith saw them murder his father and brother. He himself was severely shot in the hip. His mother later found him, and through prayer and by following the instructions of the Spirit, he was healed. At least seventeen people were killed at Haun's Mill and thirteen others were wounded.

Things were getting more tense in Far West also. The state militia took over the city. In November 1838, many Church leaders were arrested and taken to prison. It was at this time that Joseph Smith and other brethren were taken to Liberty Jail, where they spent four difficult months. While they were there, the rest of the Saints got ready to leave Missouri and move to Illinois. As they prepared to leave their homes, Amanda Smith and many others were harassed by the mobs.

But the Lord was watching over them. One day Amanda had gone into a cornfield to pray. As she was leaving it, a voice spoke to her, a voice as plain as any she had ever heard. It repeated a verse from a hymn: "The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose / I will not, I cannot, desert to his foes; / That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, / I'll never, no never, no never forsake!" (*Hymns*, 1985, no. 85.)

From that moment Amanda had no more fears. Like the other Saints who remained faithful and obedient, she knew that the Lord would watch over her.

***All quotes are from the Institute Manual, *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, pages 181-209.**

