

The event portrayed in this vignette occurred during the history of the church. The setting is Missouri during the 1830's. The characters in each vignette are real people, except for the Missourians, Rath and Vern. These characters are fictional. The Narrator, Elijah Andrews (a reporter), is also fictional and used in telling the story. The remaining characters are portrayed in the correct historical setting. Actual names are used, with quotes in **boldface type**.

Mormon Missouri Vignette Number Five

Historical Synopsis: On October 30, 1838, the bloodiest event in the 1838 Mormon War in Missouri occurs. It happens on the banks of Shoal Creek in Caldwell County, Missouri, near a mill that was established by the Haun family. Approximately 30 Mormon families live in the immediate vicinity of Haun's Mill and the blacksmith shop. About 4:00 p.m. on this infamous day a militia of 240 men ride into the settlement of Haun's Mill. David Evans, a leader in the community, runs towards the militia, waving his hat and calling for peace. Alerted to the militia's approach, most of the Latter-day Saint women and children flee into the woods to the south, while most of the men head into the blacksmith shop. Unfortunately, the building is a particularly vulnerable structure as the widely spaced logs make it easy for the attackers to fire inside. The shop becomes a deathtrap, since the militia gives no quarter, firing about one hundred rifle and musket shots into the building. After the initial attack, several of those who are wounded or have surrendered are shot dead. Members of the militia enter the blacksmith shop and find ten-year-old Sardius Smith hiding under the blacksmith's bellows. William Reynolds puts his musket against the boy's skull and blows off the top of his head. Reynolds later explains, "Nits will make lice, and if he had lived he would have become a Mormon." Seventy-eight year old Thomas McBride surrenders his musket to militiaman Jacob Rogers, who then shoots McBride and hacks his body apart with a corn knife. Several other bodies are mutilated and clothing stolen, while many women are assaulted. Houses are robbed, wagons, tents and clothing are stolen, and horses and livestock are driven off, leaving the surviving women and children destitute. By the end of the skirmish seventeen Mormons are dead: Hiram Abbott, Elias Benner, John Byers, Alexander Campbell, Simon Cox, Josiah Fuller, Austin Hammer, John Lee, Benjamin Lewis, Thomas McBride (78), Charley Merrick (9), Levi Merrick, William Napier, George S. Richards, Sardius Smith (10), Warren Smith, and John York. Thirteen more have been injured, including a woman and nine-year-old child. A non-Mormon sympathizer is also killed. Three of the 250 militiamen are wounded, but none fatally. After the massacre, the dead are placed in an unfinished well and are covered with dirt and straw. The survivors and their wounded gather at Far West for protection. Although participants in the massacre boast of their acts for years, none of the Missouri attackers are ever brought to trial.

Cast of Characters: (actual historical persons are italicized).

- Elijah Andrews (reporter)- dressed "stylish 1830's".
- **Willard G. Smith** (11 year old Mormon boy)- dressed "pioneer style 1830's".
- Mormon woman: non-speaking part-dressed "pioneer style 1830's".

Eli: (Facing the youth group.) It is Tuesday October 30, 1838. I determine I should go to Far West, the big Mormon settlement. My hopes are to get an interview with Joseph Smith, the leader of the Mormons. I am still trying to make sense of events that have been occurring. I didn't think it could get much worse for this group of people called Mormons, but I was about to find out I am very wrong. Upon my arrival in Far West I hear the following account of an attack on an outlying country settlement by the name of Haun's Mill. ***Just imagine a lonely country road in the Eastern part of Caldwell County, Missouri...Picture, if you will, a quiet autumn day...All is quiet except for a quail calling from a nearby tree...the autumn leaves are brilliant with color...You can hear the sound of the mill wheel turning and the splashing of the water as it runs off the wheel and over the spillway of the small dam at the end of the millpond...The day has been warm and beautiful.*** A beautiful scene isn't it. *The beautiful scene was about to turn nightmarish.*

The things people were telling me were so horrible, so unimaginable that I sought out someone that was there. I needed just the facts. I found someone. He is just a boy, just eleven years old. My hope was that it would not seem so bad to hear it from the lips of a child. His family arrived in Haun's Mill just two days before. They had made their way from Kirtland, Ohio. The plan was to rest and then continue their journey to Far West. The fateful tragedy occurred before they moved on to Far West. My young friend's name is Willard G. Smith. He is just eleven years old. Willard was the first to return to the scene of conflict at Haun's Mill.

(Turning to an 11 year old boy)

Willard you are so brave to share this story with us. Can you tell us what happened?

Willard G. Smith: *With my two younger brothers, I was at the blacksmith shop with Father when without warning a large body of mounted men with faces blackened or painted like Indians rode up yelling and commenced shooting into the group...The men then shouted to their wives to take the children and run for their lives.*

We were surrounded on three sides by the mob...The men ran for the shop, taking the little boys with them. My two little brothers ran with Father...I ran around the corner of the shop and crawled into a pile of lumber, hiding as best I could.

Immediately, the mob began shooting at me and the splintered lumber flew all around. I crawled out and ran into an empty house on the slope near the pond. Here I found an old Revolutionary Soldier, Father McBride, who had been wounded and had crawled into a potato cellar under the floor of the house...

I made the old gentleman as comfortable as possible and as the bullets were flying thickly around us, I ran from this house into another one close by. Here I heard sobs. and lifting the valance around the bed, I found six little girls huddled in fear. As the bullets had followed me into this house, I said to the little girls: "Come we must get out of here or we will all be killed." So we ran to the millrace, which we crossed on a board reaching the woods on the other side of the pond with the mob shooting at us all the way.

After our race for life, the little girls scurried off like prairie chickens into the brush and tall corn. Knowing that my father and two brothers were in the shop with the mob still firing, I took shelter behind a large tree where I could watch the activities of the mob with comparative safety. Finally, they ceased firing, dismounted, and went into the shop where they finished killing any whom they thought were not dead. From there, they went into all the cabins and tents destroying or taking groceries and furnishings. Then after taking all the horses belonging to their victims, they rode off howling like Indians.

As soon as I was sure they had gone, I started for the shop and was the first person to enter this holocaust, stepping over the dead body of my Father in doing so. I looked around and found my brother Sardis dead with the entire top of his head shot away, and my brother Alma almost lifeless lying among a pile of dead where he had been thrown by the mobsters who, evidently, thought him dead. I picked up Alma from the dirt and was carrying him from the shop when I met my Mother who screamed: "They have killed my little Alma." I replied: "No mother, but Father and Sardis are dead." I begged her not to enter the shop but to help me with Alma."

...Women and children were lamenting loss of husbands, fathers, and children; dogs were howling...

Eli: How many people were killed?

Willard G. Smith: There were 17 members killed. There were thirteen people wounded including a woman and a little boy. We wounded some of the Missourians.

Eli: Thank you son. You are a very brave young man.

(Eli motions a woman to come and get the boy who puts her arms around him and walks away.)

(He turns and addresses the Youth Group): From others I learned when the Missourians showed up the people in the community tried to surrender waving a white flag. ***A 78 year old man by the name of Thomas McBride surrendered his musket to one of the Missouri militia men, who then shot him...Willard's ten-year-old brother, Sardius (was found by a Missourian) hiding under the bellows (in the blacksmith shop). The Missouri Militiaman blew the top of the child's head off. I am told women cared for the wounded; the men remained in hiding during the night. The dead were thrown into an unfinished well and lightly covered with dirt and straw.*** The brutality of this event could only be called a massacre. I title the article I write for the National Intelligencer with the heading, "Butchery of the Mormons."