

The events 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 One

Historical Synopsis: Sisters, Mary Elizabeth (15 years old) and Caroline Rollins (13 years old) live in Independence, Missouri in 1833. These young women are witnesses as an angry mob destroys the home and printing press of William W. Phelps. W. W. Phelps is working on publishing the Book of Commandments for the Saints when the attack occurs. The mobs are determined to destroy the home of W.W. Phelps and everything in it including the valuable printing press. The mobs also want to destroy the printed pages of the Book of Commandments. The newly printed pages of the Book of Commandments are saved by the heroic actions of Mary Elizabeth and Caroline Rollins in the face of formidable danger to themselves.

The Eastern reporter, Eli Andrews (a fictional character) comes to Independence to cover the story unfolding concerning the antagonism between the Saints and Missourians. He interviews the young Rollins sisters. He also interviews several Mormon men; Philo Dibble, Knewel Knight and Parley P. Pratt, to cover the story of the Mormons are being forced out of Independence, Jackson County, Missouri.

Cast of characters: (actual historical persons are *italicized*).

- Missourian one: "Rath"- dressed "rough frontier style 1830's".
- Missourian two: "Vern"- dressed "rough frontier style 1830's".
- Eastern reporter: "Elijah Andrews"- dressed "stylish 1830's", (functions as a narrator).
- **Mary Elizabeth Rollins**-15 year old girl - dressed "*pioneer style 1830's*".
- **Caroline Rollins**-13 year old girl - dressed "*pioneer style 1830's*".
- **Philo Dibble**: *injured by Missouri mob- dressed "pioneer style 1830's"*.
- **Knewel Knight** - dressed "*pioneer style 1830's*".
- **Parley P. Pratt** - dressed "*pioneer style 1830's*".

(Two rough looking Missourians, Rath and Vern, ride up on horses, coming toward the youth group. The two are dressed as frontiersmen [coonskin caps etc.] and are unshaven. They are chewing on what would appear to be tobacco, and spit often. They both have guns.)

Rath (Missourian One): "Hold up Vern, w'uld ya lookit a'tha'....they lookit like a whole dang parcel of Mormonites like tha ones tha' we jes' run outta' town.

Vern (Missourian Two): "Dang gummit. How wud ya know thay Mormonites? They ain't with tha rest of 'em. Maybe thay with tha' youn' report'r from tha East we jes run inta. He wuz lookin' fer 'em. Said he wuz gonna do a story on

Mormonites. I told 'em he bettur hurry cuz thar ain't gonna be any of 'em left in these parts iff'n we can hepit.

Rath: Lookit at 'em, thay jus' lookit too clean. (points to the youth group) Luuks like thay take a bath ev'r' Saturday nigh' jus' like thos' Mormonites..., jus' too clean! Thay ain't ev'n chewin' any tobacee. Wooowee, 'ave ya ever' see such bright teeth...ain't natural, (leaning forward)...down righ' scary. Very strange...lookit (pointing to the group) Vern, thar' ain't no womun folk among 'em.

Vern: Lookit close, Rath. Tha' ain't dress' in long petticoats, bonnits an' such, but some of 'em sure do lookit lik' womun folk ta me. (pauses and looks close at the group) Hee hee, good lookin' womun folk at tha'. (Smiles at a girl in the group and tips his hat). Mam'. (turns back to Rath) Why dun't ya jus' ask 'em if thay Mormonites?

Rath: "Hey whadda ya all duin' 'ere? Whadda doin' in Missoura? Ya ain't some of 'em Mormonites er ya? Iff'n' ya are Mormonites.... ya shud be runnin' tha othur way (pointing behind the group) with tha res' of 'em we dun' run outta town last nigh'... Go! Git goin'!"

(Both men stare at the group of teenagers for a few moments.)

Vern: Well Rath, I thin' thay all be fureign'rs, thay cun't eve' understan' ya. Thay jus stan' thar an' stare at' us. (turns) But lookit ov'r thar,(pointing). I thin' it's tha' Easturn report'r guy. He seems ta be talkin' ta two youn' gurls...Hey ya dun't thin' thay be tha two we chase through tha' cornfield do ya?

Rath: I dunno, but thos' two girls mus' be plum loco ta run into a burnin' pile of pap'rs and grab a bunch of ole' pap'rs and run with 'em. Made no sense ta me. But all tha Mormonites er' plum loco. Thay's crazy religus', Yankees, an' Injun luvvers. Thay believe inna a gold'n bible, an' ole' Joe Smith tha' sees anguls an' thin's. Thay takin' all our land. Jus' not good, thay all crazy!

Vern: Come on Rath, we gotta tell tha othurs we gotta bunch of fureign'rs on our han's.

(The two Missourians ride away.)

(Reporter dressed in 1830's period clothing and two young girls; ages 15 and 13 years old. The reporter is dressed nicely for the era. The two girls are dressed in typical period clothing. The reporter is busy talking to the two girls)

Eli (reporter): Excuse me, how do you do? Let me introduce myself. I am Mr. Elijah Andrews, (he bows) but please call me Eli. I am a reporter for the Washington D.C. newspaper The "National Intelligencer." I have traveled a

significant distance to find if the rumors we are hearing in the east about the Mormons and the Missourians are true. First, may I get your names?

Mary Elizabeth Rollins: (both do little curtsies.) Good day, how do you do? My name is Mary Elizabeth Rollins, and this is my sister Caroline. I am fifteen years old, and my sister is thirteen.

Eli: You are both Mormons correct?

Mary Elizabeth Rollins: Yes, we are both members of the restored church. We moved to Zion or Independence as it is called. We moved here under the direction of our Prophet Joseph Smith.

Eli: Have you lived here long?

Caroline Rollins: Going on two years now.

Eli: Does your Prophet live here?

Mary Elizabeth Rollins: No he is in Kirtland, Ohio. Many members live there too. But the Prophet has asked many of us to settle in Zion.

Eli: I have heard that the Missourians have written a secret constitution against the Mormons. I also understand it is signed by many notable Missourians living in Jackson County. It is my understanding that this constitution is written for the sole purpose of ridding Jackson County of Mormons...(pausing) by force if necessary. Is this true?

Mary Elizabeth Rollins: Sadly, it is true. I heard my Uncle and others talking. It has five conditions to which we must agree. First, no Mormons can move and settle in the county. Second, the Mormons already here must pledge to move out of the county as soon as possible. Third, our newspaper The Evening and Morning Star, must no longer be published. Fourth, the Mormon leaders must use their influence to make the members comply with these restrictions and finally if members fail to comply they will be dealt with severely. Our leaders asked for some time before agreeing with these conditions. They asked for ten days. They wanted to get word to the Prophet in Kirtland Ohio. But instead of 10 days they were granted 15 minutes to make a decision. The only decision that was acceptable to the Missourians was to agree. Our leaders tried to resolve the issue peacefully, but it was to no avail.

Eli: What happened then?

Caroline Rollins: It was very frightening.

Eli: Are you talking about the trouble that occurred last night? I was told you witnessed what happened at the Phelps home. Is this true?

Mary Elizabeth Rollins: Yes. ***We were on our way home.*** We live close to the Phelps family with our Uncle. Brother Phelps is the Editor of our newspaper, *The Evening and Morning Star Newspaper*. It is the only newspaper in these parts. The printing office is in the second story above his home. We saw a large group of men heading to the Phelps' home. They were shouting, carrying torches and guns. They were frightfully angry.

Eli: Why did you not run the other way?

Mary Elizabeth Rollins: We turned and ran. We ***ducked behind a split rail fence*** some distance away. Just then I saw ***Sister Phelps and her sick baby come [out of their home] and get into their wagon. Brother Phelps was helping them and encouraging them to hurry and get away as quickly as possible. Brother Phelps then ran*** around to the back of his home. The men ran into his home. They had not seen my sister or me. We stayed very quiet hoping they would not notice us. The men started breaking everything and throwing furniture into the yard. Some of them rushed upstairs and threw the printing press out the window. It broke apart in many pieces when it hit the ground. They were destroying everything they could get their hands on.

Eli: Did they destroy the house and everything in it?

Caroline Rollins: Oh, yes. They were destroying everything.

Eli: Were you afraid?

Mary Elizabeth Rollins: Of course, but we dared not move and draw attention to ourselves. My sister was crying.

Caroline: I was not!

Mary Elizabeth Rollins: Well, I know I felt like crying. I wasn't sure what to do. There was no one nearby that could help us. We watched the men throw armful after armful of paper out the second story window of the Phelps home. The men on the ground were trying to gather it all up and start a large bonfire. I could see they planned to burn the papers. I then remembered the conversation Brother Phelps had with my uncle.

Eli: And what was that?

Mary Elizabeth Rollins: Brother Phelps told my uncle that he had received a handwritten book from the Prophet Joseph Smith. The book contained a collection of his revelations. The book had been carefully carried from Kirtland

Ohio to Brother Phelps. Brother Phelps was instructed to be particularly careful with the book. It was extremely sacred. Brother Phelps was asked to print these revelations and bind them in a book. The book was to be a Book of Commandments. It was for the Saints. It was to help us and give us revelation. I knew those papers must be the new Book of Commandments. I turned to Caroline and said ***we must save those papers.***

Caroline Rollins: When my sister said that we needed to save the papers I thought she must be crazy. I just looked at her and shook my head. I was scared. The men were so angry and they were shouting horrible things. They were destroying and burning everything. ***I told her***, if we tried to do that, ***they would kill us.***

Mary Elizabeth Rollins: I was afraid we might be killed. But I knew we must try and save the Book of Commandments. We had to try. We did not have time to go find anyone else; we were the only ones around. The papers were starting to burn; we were running out of time. I turned to my sister and said let's go. We grabbed each other and gave each other a quick hug. We ran to the side of the house where they were piling the papers. We each grabbed as much as we could carry. We started running toward the back of the house. Some men began running after us and shouting to the others. ***We darted through the fence and ran deep into the cornfield*** by the house.

Caroline Rollins: I was scared; my heart was beating so hard. Both Mary Elizabeth and I are fast runners and we ran as fast as we could far into the field.

Mary Elizabeth Rollins: After running quite some distance into the cornfield, ***we threw down the papers and lay on top of them. The corn was from five to six feet high and very thick.*** We were holding each other's hands and praying that they would not find us. They hunted considerable for us. They came so close we could hear them tromping through the rows of corn looking for us. They were shouting and saying we better give ourselves up. We could hear them swearing and saying they would kill us when they found us.

Caroline Rollins: They came so close we ***held our breath afraid they would hear us breathing.*** We could see their boots but they did not spot us. We dared not move. Finally, they moved away from us and we could not hear them any longer. We stayed on the ground until the only sound we could hear was crickets chirping. It seemed we were in the cornfield for a long time.

Mary Elizabeth Rollins: Finally, we carefully stood up and looked around. No one was in sight. We made our way to an old log stable. We cautiously looked in and found Sister Phelps and her children. We gave the papers to her, knowing she would give them to Brother Phelps. Later Brother Phelps came to thank us. He told us we saved the only copies of what was to be the new Book of Commandments. We were promised he would give us a copy of the new book.

Eli: Do you have any idea what is going to happen to your people?

Mary Elizabeth Rollins: I heard my Uncle talking to the Elders. It seems we must leave this county. We are going to settle in counties just north of here, I think.

Eli: Thank you for talking to me. You are both supremely brave. It was so nice to make your acquaintance. (Does a small bow to the girls.) I think your Uncle is coming this way (points off into the distance).

Caroline Rollins: We have to go. (Both girls wave to someone off in the distance.)

Eli: May I escort you to your uncle?

Mary Elizabeth and Caroline Rollins: No thank you, we will be fine. It has been nice to make your acquaintance. Good-bye. (Both do a little curtsey.)

(Both girls run off.)

(Eli turns toward the Youth Group, and gives the following narration)

Eli: I thought I had come to the western edge of the United States to write a story about a new group of believers trying to build a better place for themselves. Little did I know I would witness such violence before I could return to Washington to write my newspaper article. It seems there is something more important going on here.

(Eli pauses walks forward a few steps and then continues speaking to the youth group.)

It was July when I interviewed the Rollins girls. The Mormons petitioned Governor Dunklin of Missouri for help. But even I could see that many of the court officials were either sympathetic to the mob or a part of them. In October, a mob of at least 50 men demolished homes of the Mormons. The church members fled into the woods to escape. Men were caught and whipped. It was the action of a mob out of control. By November, a mob went into a small Mormon settlement on the Big Blue River. And even though very ill, a Mr. Bennett was dragged out of his house and beaten. Some of the Mormons attempted to defend the settlement and there was gunfire between the parties. One Missourian was wounded in the thigh. The Missourians then threatened to kill every Mormon. Things turned very ugly. Two days later, the mob rode to the Whitmer settlement. The mobbers outnumbered the Mormons by more than two to one and had three times as many firearms. There was a skirmish between the Missourians and the Mormons. Two of the mobbers were killed. The mob made a disorganized retreat. The Mormons did not have a chance. Andrew Barber, a Mormon, was mortally wounded and became the first Mormon in this ugliness to

be killed. Another Mormon, Philo Dibble was shot in the abdomen and was attended to by a surgeon who pronounced him dead.

(Eli pauses, continues as if a little awed.)

However, as strange as it sounds, he was not dead. He was alive. I went in search of Mr. Dibble so I could interview him. It is an incredible story. But you can hear it for yourself. Let me introduce Mr. Philo Dibble. Mr. Dibble would you please tell your story to this group of people? (Eli points to the youth group.)

(While Eli is speaking Philo Dibble walks up from the side of the group to stand beside Eli.):

Philo Dibble: I was declared dead and *after the surgeon had left me, Brother Newel Knight came to see me, and sat down on the side of my bed. He laid his right hand on my head, but never spoke. I felt the Spirit resting upon me at the crown of my head before his hand touched me, and I knew immediately that I was going to be healed... I immediately arose and discharged three quarts of blood or more, with some pieces of my clothes that had been driven into my body by the bullets. I then dressed myself, ...From that time, not a drop of blood came from me and I never afterwards felt the slightest pain or inconvenience from my wounds, except that I was somewhat weak from the loss of blood. The next day I walked around the field, and the day following I mounted a horse and rode eight miles, and went three miles on foot.*

Eli: Thank you Mr. Dibble. (Eli turns toward the youth group)

Unbelievable. (Pauses.) Things went from bad to worse. Rumors spread faster than spilt milk. Armed men began to crowd into Independence. Lieutenant Governor Boggs called out the state militia. Colonel Pitcher demanded the Mormons give up their arms and turn over all men engaged in the battle above the Blue River. They were to be tried for murder. The Mormons surrendered their firearms, but the mob again turned their anger loose upon the Mormons. The Missourians had turned into a lawless group. They burst into houses frightening the women and children. The Mormons were warned to get out of the county or their houses would be torn down and told they would be massacred by nightfall.

Again I want you to hear what happened first hand. This is Mr. Newel Knight one of the Mormons. (Eli points to the man closest to him.)

Knewel Knight: (Knewel Knight and Parley P. Pratt walk to Eli's side as he is introduced.) *[We were] thus homeless and without means of taking much to sustain [ourselves]... [All the Saints] were forced to flee before the mob... at night, those who went to the river camped in the rain which poured down in torrents; [I saw] the frail mother, the helpless infant, the sick and the dying, all alike without the means to shelter themselves from the storm.* One could not imagine such tragedy, let alone witness it.

Eli: Let me now introduce Mr. Parley P. Pratt. (Points to the other man standing beside him.)

Parley P. Pratt: It was a person's worst nightmare. ***In short, every member of the society was driven from the county, and fields of corn were plundered and destroyed. Stacks of wheat were burned—household goods plundered, and improvements and every kind of property lost, and at length no less than two hundred and three houses burned.*** (Sadly shakes his head.)

Eli: The Mormons began fleeing from their Missouri enemies on November 5th and 6th. More than a thousand Mormons were driven from their homes in Jackson County during the early winter of 1833. It was very cold, the weather having already turned. The Mormon's did not have time to pack their belongings or take the necessities with them. One company of 190, comprised of women and children and three decrepit men were driven 30 miles over a burned prairie with light snow. They left bloodstains on the snow from their lacerated feet. It was the most pitiful sight. By November 7th, the banks of the Missouri were lined with the Mormon exiles. It was a disorganized group of parents, children, and spouses looking for family members. Babies were crying, children calling for their parents and parents calling for their children. It was so very sad. I do not think I will be able to find the words that could describe the utter grief of the scene.

(Eli again pauses, and then continues.)

Little did I know this would be just the beginning of a long tragic story, (walks away).