

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 Six

Historical Synopsis: Far West becomes the focal point as anti-Mormon militias gather around Far West to prepare for an attack. The Saints in Far West are out-numbered five to one. They barricade the city with wagons and timber around the perimeter in an attempt to protect themselves. Neither side is eager to begin the battle. On October 31, 1838 General Lucas for the Missourians sends out a flag of truce, which is met by the leading officer for the Saints, Colonel Hinkle. Colonel Hinkle secretly and subversively agrees to all of the demands made by General Lucas including surrendering the city and turning over Joseph Smith and other Mormon leaders for trial and punishment. Hinkle also agrees that Mormon property is to be confiscated by the militia to pay for damages and the Saints are to surrender their arms and leave the state. Joseph Smith and the other leaders are told by Hinkle that General Lucas would like to talk to them in a peace conference. They are shocked when Hinkle turns them over to Lucas as prisoners. A secret and illegal court-martial is held during the night. The prisoners receive a sentence to be executed the next morning on the public square in Far West. General Alexander Doniphan receives the order and heroically refuses to comply calling it "cold blooded murder." Lucas seems to lose some of his nerve, and takes the prisoners to jail in Richmond, Missouri. Joseph Smith and the other leaders are held in chains in the Richmond jail. For two horrible weeks the prisoners receive much abuse from the guards. One night after hours of obscene jests, bragging, blasphemies and filthy language from the guards, the majesty of the Prophet Joseph Smith is witnessed, as he stands in chains and rebukes the guards. The quailing guards drop their weapons, fall to their knees, and crouch at the feet of Joseph Smith and beg for his pardon. All the evidence is stacked against the church leaders in a 13-day sham trial. When the prisoners submit a list of defense witnesses, the witnesses are either jailed or driven from the county. Alexander Doniphan acts as counsel for the saints and reports that, "if a cohort of angels were to come down, and declare [the prisoners] were innocent, it would all be the same for he (the Judge) had determined from the beginning to cast [them] into prison." After the trial ends Joseph Smith and others are placed in Liberty Jail.

Meanwhile in Far West, General John B. Clark, the designated commanding officer arrives in Far West. He says he will not force the Saints out of Missouri in winter but forces them to live on parched corn. The Mormon militia expects compensation from the Saints. Saints are forced to sign over their lands to the Missourians. The troops at Far West plunder everything they can lay their hands upon, taking anything of value. With no help from the government and conditions growing desperate thousands of Saints are forced to leave Missouri in the dead of winter seeking shelter anywhere they can seek refuge. Most settle across the Missouri border near the Illinois town of Quincy. It would be spring before Joseph Smith and others would find their way to join the Saints in Illinois. Thus ends a tragic chapter in Missouri church history.

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

- Elijah Andrews (reporter) - dressed "stylish 1830's".
- **Colonel Hinkle** - *Mormon militia man (turns on Joseph Smith)- dressed "frontier militia style 1830's) with rifle.*
- Group of Missouri soldiers (may also be used as the guards)-they handcuff the prisoners-dressed as 1830's frontier military militia, with rifles.

- **Joseph Smith** - dressed 1830's style (try to copy Joseph Smith style as much as possible).
- **Sydney Rigdon** - dressed "pioneer style 1830's"-imprisoned with Joseph Smith.
- **Lyman Wight** - dressed "pioneer style 1830's" imprisoned with Joseph Smith.
- **Parley P. Pratt** - "pioneer style 1830's"-imprisoned with Joseph Smith.
- **George W. Robinson** - "pioneer style 1830's"-imprisoned with Joseph Smith.
- **General Lucas** (Missourian) - dressed "Missouri military general 1830's, with rifle.
- Group of Far West Mormons.
- Missouri Guard 1 - dressed as frontier military militia 1830's, with rifle.
- Missouri Guard 2 - dressed as frontier military militia 1830's, with rifle.
- Missouri Guard 3 - dressed as frontier military militia 1830's, with rifle.
- Missouri Guard 4 - dressed as frontier military militia 1830's, with rifle.
- Missouri Guard 5 - dressed as frontier military militia 1830's, with rifle. (Guards may also be used as Missouri militiamen).
- **Nathan Tanner** (Far West Mormon) - dressed "pioneer 1830's".
- **General John B. Clark** (Missourian) - dressed "Missouri military general 1830's, with rifle.

Eli: (Facing the youth group) I am at Far West. Word came that the Prophet Joseph Smith wanted no more bloodshed. Colonel Hinkle, a friend to the Mormons, found Joseph Smith and told him if he would agree to a meeting with General Lucas, a peaceful agreement could be worked out. It is not surprising, but people are very excited to think that a peaceful solution might be found. The Prophet has agreed to a meeting. The Prophet wants no more bloodshed.

(Eli turns back.)

Look, there is Colonel Hinkle of whom I spoke. Oh yes! (Excited.) It is the man I have hoped to see and have heard so much, there he is, the man called a prophet by his people, Joseph Smith!

(Watching the group of men, then turns back to the youth group.)

Looks like there are several men with Joseph Smith. One, I know is his brother Hyrum. I recognize one as Sidney Rigdon. You remember, he is the one that gave the speech on the 4th of July. And I believe the others are Lyman Wight, Parley P. Pratt, and George W. Robinson. I have to get closer; this should be a good story.

(Eli walks over to where the others are standing.)

(Joseph Smith and others walk up to Colonel Hinkle. All the men, except Joseph and Hyrum carried weapons.)

Colonel Hinkle: General Lucas has promised peace if you will put down your arms and speak with him.

Prophet Joseph Smith: You know, there is nothing we desire more, than to have peace.

(The men go with Colonel Hinkle and march some distance where Colonel Hinkle is waiting. The men lay down their weapons.)

(As soon as the men put down their arms General Lucas and his men surround them. Each man is grabbed and his hands tied. They all look startled. They all struggle a bit.)

Sidney Rigdon: What? Why Colonel Hinkle, how dare you? You have betrayed us. This was a dastardly trick!

General Lucas: Joseph Smith, finally I have you! You will get what you deserve. You will be tried and found guilty.

Lyman Wight: Guilty of what? We were told if we came peacefully and talked with you, we could find a peace between you and our people. This is an underhanded trick! These are trumped up charges. We laid down our arms in a show of peace not submission! (He turns to Colonel Hinkle) I thought you were our friend!!

(Colonel Hinkle looks away.)

General Lucas: We are taking you into custody.

(General Lucas walks over to his men and appears to be discussing something.)

Prophet Joseph Smith: Be strong men. We must pray.
(The Mormons struggle to their knees and start to pray. The guards at first seem surprised. But then, the guards pull them to their feet and push them.)

Guard: March!

Eli: I can't believe what just happened. I cannot believe authorities would act so underhandedly. It reminds me of another story in the New Testament. You know the one I mean, the name in that story was Judas.

(pause).

The next morning I find a crowd gathered in Far West to get word of their Prophet.

(A group of Mormons has appeared and Eli walks over. General Lucas marches in with several of his men.)

General Lucas: (Speaks directly to his men): Bring in the prisoners.

(The soldiers leave and march in with Joseph and the other men. Joseph Smith is pushed forward.)

General Lucas: (Looking directly at Joseph, Smith.) You have been court-martialed and found guilty. I will make sure you will be shot!

(A loud gasp and some cries go up from the Mormons.)

Sidney Rigdon: What trial? There was no public trial. What kind of trial is it, if it is conducted in secret? When was this trial conducted, last night with only you in attendance?

General Lucas: My orders will be followed. I am the commander in charge here, and my orders will be obeyed. I have sent the following orders to General Doniphan.

(General Lucas waves a piece of paper and then reads from it):

'Brigadier-General Doniphan:

'Sir:--You will take Joseph Smith and the other prisoners into the public square of Far West, and shoot them at 9 o'clock to-morrow morning.

**Samuel D. Lucas
Major-General**

Commanding'

(A Missouri soldier runs in.)

Missouri soldier: This just came in sir, from General Doniphan. I am to read it to you:

"Major-General Samuel D. Lucas: I have received your order to shoot the man Joseph Smith, his brother Hyrum Smith, and four others on the town square of Far West in the morning. ***'It is cold-blooded murder. I will not obey your order. My brigade shall march for Liberty tomorrow morning, at 8 o'clock; and if you execute these men, I will hold you responsible before an earthly tribunal, so help me God.'***" Signed,

Brigadier-General Doniphan"

General Lucas: (appears shocked): How dare he, how dare he disobey my orders? I will have General Doniphan court-marshaled and shot. How dare he?

(General Lucas turns to the youth group.) ***As for your leader, his doom is sealed.***

(General Lucas turns back to the soldiers.)

Take them away! Take them to prison! Have the militia take over this town. Search every house for any weapons and confiscate them. Also, take what you need from the houses. Take enough to care for all the soldiers stationed in Far West. Here is a list of others to be arrested. Arrest them immediately. No one is to come into this city and no one is to leave Far West

except to leave the state. Far West has surrendered to me. I am in command here.

(General Lucas turns and faces the Mormons and in a loud voice.)

Citizens of Far West prepare to leave the state of Missouri or meet with the same fate as your leader.

(The prisoners are marched away.)

Eli: (Pauses a moment as they are taken away. Then he continues.) Joseph Smith and the others are imprisoned in Richmond. There is to be a public trial. General Lucas is still vowing they will be shot. As for me, I hope to get an interview with the Prophet Joseph Smith. I ride to Richmond. The men have been there for about two weeks.

(One guard is standing as sentry, the other guards are grouped together and are guarding the prisoners. All the prisoners are sitting down. They are all bound. Eli walks up to a guard.)

Eli: (Bowing to the guard.) Good day, my name is Elijah Andrews. I have a few personal items that are to be delivered to the prisoners. May I take these to them? You can search them of course, (as he speaks he tries to peer in at the group of guards and prisoners.)

Guard: Go away. No visitors.

(The group of prisoners and guards move closer to the youth group.)

Eli: (Eli turns to the youth group.) Of course I am not surprised to be turned away, but not before I witness obscene jests, oaths, dreadful blasphemies and the filthy language of the guards. (Eli shakes his head as in disbelief.) What a course people these Missourians, even in uniform.

(The guards are boasting very loudly. They are also chewing, spitting and laughing very loudly.)

(Eli stops turns back and watches the scene unfold before him.)

Guard 1: Well, well, we dun ketch'd ourselves sum live vermin'. Ole' Joe Smith hisself. Lookit at 'em, all dun up, like some namby- pamby. We gotcha' now Joe. Wher's ya horns Joe?

Guard 2: Gosh durnnit. Let's has sum' fun with th' Mormonites. I got muh head bang' up rit good in Gallatin. I wanna retu'n th' fav'r an' knock a few heads aroun'.

Guard 3: I jus tired of 'em prancin' a high flu' tin' lik' an' actin' lik' thay all holy an' somethin' . How'd ya like 'em callin' this place Ziuun? It's Missoura! An' dun't ya fergit it.

Guard 4: Ya shoudda see'd 'em beggin fer mercy ov'r at th' Mill. Tha blacksmith shop wuz a reg'lar deathtrap, it wuz lik' a shootin' ducks inna barr'l. I shoot tha youngin' too , ya knw'd *"Nits will make lice, and if he 'ad lived he 'ad become a Mormon.* I git me thes' boots fur nuttin' offa 'em dead Mormons ov'r thar'.

Guard 5: I wuz inna raidin' party. I git me a cu'ple head of cattle an' harses too. An' cum ta thin' of it, nice lookin' li'l fillies those young Mormon girls.. gosh durnnit I jus' had me a li'l fun an' i... (stops suddenly when hears the noise of Joseph Smith standing up)

Prophet Joseph Smith: (rises and faces the guards and points at them):
Silence, ye fiends of the infernal pit! In the name of Jesus Christ I rebuke you and command you to be still; I will not live another minute and hear such language. Cease such talk, or you or I die this instant!

(All the guards stand as if frozen then drop their weapon, two guards drop to the floor. A couple guards silently slink away and sit down. The others crouch at the feet of Joseph Smith as if begging for mercy.)

(Long silence.)

Eli: (slowly turns to the youth group) I believe I have just witnessed one of the most powerful speeches ever delivered in the history of mankind. At the risk of his life, I just watched an imprisoned man, bound in chains, stand and rebuke those who held him hostage at gunpoint. I cannot help but marvel at the majesty of the man Joseph Smith.

(Eli pauses for a moment.)

The guards remained silent as if unable to utter a sound. Not another word was heard until a change of guards occurred.

Let's head back to Far West. Far West has been forced to surrender and is being held hostage.

(Eli takes a few steps. A table has been set up with a soldier sitting at the table. There are piles of paper is sitting on the table. A few Mormons are lined up, looking very despondent.)

There, look a table has been set out on the public square. I wonder what is going on.

(Eli walks closer and watches for a moment.)

Every Mormon has been forced to deed away all their land and property. They were given no choice. They received nothing in return.

(Eli pauses a moment and then walks up to one of the Mormons moving away from the group at the table.)

Excuse me my name is Elijah Andrews. Would you mind telling me your name?

Nathan Tanner: Good day, sir. My name is Nathan Tanner.

Eli: Where you forced to give up the deed to your property?

Nathan Tanner: Yes, I was forced to sign. I was given nothing in return for my farm and land.

Eli: Nathan what happened when you were forced to sign over your lands to the Missourians?

Nathan Tanner: *I signed the deed, but I balked when the guards ordered me to raise my hand and swear I was acting on my free volition. I raised my hand and sarcastically said, "I raised my hand and waved it over the bayonets and said it looks like a free voluntary act and deed at the point of the bayonet." One of the guards then knocked me senseless and I was dragged back into a compound. A little later, four gruff looking men rode across the square to me and one of them accosted me and said, "How do you feel Mormon, as much like fight as ushel?" I retorted, "I feel about the same." The Missourian [then] cocked his rifle and invited me to come ahead [and fight.] I just boiled over and shouted, "You poor pusillanimous coward curs that will draw fire arms on a bare-handed man. Git down off from your horses and down your arms and come at me two at a time and see if I don't thrash the ground with you." The Missourian [then] back[ed] off, and said, "I brought my arms to fight with." I told him, "Yes, you need them."*

Eli: Thank you for telling me. Would you mind if I use your story in my newspaper report?

Nathan Tanner: No, sir. Everything I said was the truth and people should know what they are doing to us.

(Eli again turns and walks a few steps toward the youth group. He is writing in a small notebook as he walks. Eli faces the youth group.)

Eli: Living in Far West after the surrender and the arrest of their leaders was difficult for the Mormon people. General John B. Clark was designated by the governor to come and be the commanding officer of Far West. He was the final authority in Far West. No one was allowed to leave the city, except to leave the state. Everyone was starving, but tried to exist on parched corn. I really had nowhere else to go. The Mormons treated me better than the Missourians, and even though they were starving, they shared what little they had with me. I wasn't sure what was going on outside of Far West, but I did witness what

happened in Far West. I reported to my paper the speech General John B. Clark made to the citizens of Far West on November 6, 1838.

General John B. Clark: Winter has come upon us, I will not force you out of the state in the depths of winter, even though you were commanded to leave. For this lenity you are indebted to my clemency. I do not say you shall go now, but you must NOT think of staying here another season, or of putting in crops...As for your leaders, do not once think—do not imagine for a moment—do not let it enter your mind that they will be delivered, or that you will see their faces again, for their fate is fixed—their die is cast—their doom is sealed.

Eli: In mid-November a thirteen-day trial began, presided by circuit judge Austin A. King. The evidence was stacked against the Church leaders. When the prisoners submitted a list of defense witnesses, the witnesses were systematically jailed or driven from the county. I did finally get an interview from Alexander Doniphan, counsel for the Saints. Most notably, he told me, **“If a cohort of angels were to come down and declare [the Mormons] were innocent, it would all be the same; for the judge has determined from the beginning to cast [the Mormons] into prison.”** At the end of the trial, Judge King bound Joseph Smith and five others over for further prosecution and ordered them placed in Liberty Jail in Clay County. Parley P. Pratt and several others were to remain confined in Richmond and most of the other prisoners were released.

(Eli pauses a moment.)

I was finally allowed to travel to Liberty. I wanted to see the jail in which the prisoners were being held. The claim is that it is impossible to escape from Liberty Jail. Liberty Jail is really a dungeon. Prisoners are placed in the basement of the stone structure. It has a rough stone floor and is of a height that the prisoner cannot stand fully erect. It is a cold cramped confinement. There is one opening, a trap door, which opens to the main level.

(Eli shakes his head.)

The Mormon prisoners were not given beds or even cots upon which to sleep, but given some straw, which was rarely if ever, changed. The food given to the prisoners was coarse and sometimes contaminated, so filthy that one could not eat it until driven by extreme hunger. People have told me that on at least four occasions, the prisoners had poison administered to them in their food. They were violently ill that for days and alternated between vomiting and a kind of delirium, not really caring whether they lived or died.

(Eli pauses for a moment.)

I received word that a grand jury found the prisoners guilty of, “murder, burglary, arson, larceny, theft, and stealing.” They were to be held until spring for a trial. None of the Mormons were going to be allowed to stay until spring. There will be no one left to witness for these men.

(Eli pauses.)

I journeyed back to Far West. ***I contemplated, with sadness, the change that had taken place in such a brief period. Many residences were deserted and desolate. My feet, as I stepped towards the thresholds where once I met with friendly greetings, awoke no responsive echoes.***

The surrender of Far West occurred in November and even though they were told they could stay until spring, the Missourians clamored for the instant removal of the Mormons. And it was not just the Mormons in Far West but also all Mormons in Missouri. They were all being forced to leave in winter. The old and young, the sick and feeble, delicate women, and babies, almost without food and clothing, all were compelled to abandon their homes...Valuable farms were traded for a yoke of oxen, an old wagon, or anything that would furnish the means of transportation. Many of the poorer Mormons were compelled to walk. The chilly blasts of winter howled around them and added to their discomfort.

That winter from 10 to 12 thousand Mormon men, women and children still hounded and pursued by their merciless oppressors, all fled from Missouri, leaving in their places their bloody footprints on the snow of their frozen pathway. Crossing the icy Mississippi, they cast themselves, homeless, plundered, and penniless on the hospitable shores of Illinois. The main body of the Mormons was now beyond the reach of the Missourians.

Their pitiable condition and the tragic story of their wrongs awoke widespread sympathy... This inhumane treatment seemed to create the beginning of a change in Missouri; public opinion was turning against Governor Boggs. I am sure that was why he petitioned for a change of venue of the trial of Joseph Smith and the others. The Governor had the prisoners removed from Liberty Jail to be taken to Boone County for trial. Some say the prisoners overpowered the guards and made their escape. But most, along with myself, believe they were allowed to escape. It certainly saved Governor Boggs from an embarrassing situation. He had lost too much political power in the state and needed to change public opinion. It was an easy solution for him.

So, for the fifth time in less than ten years many of these Mormons left their homes and had to start over, again. Although the last several months in Far West were marred by financial disaster, bitter persecution, and expulsion from Missouri most of the members I interviewed did not lose sight of their divine destiny. Nothing would stop them.

Let me quote from a letter Joseph Smith wrote to his the people at Far West, ***“As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream, [we will not be stopped, nothing will] hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints.”***

It would seem the Mormons lost everything but their faith
(Eli starts to walk away, stops, and then turns back.)

What’s that you ask, “Where am I going?” Well, it seems I will toss my lot in with these people. I’ve already sent my letter of resignation to my editor in Washington D.C. I hear the Mormons plan to open a printing office and publish a newspaper in their new place, wherever that may be. I hope they will have a job for a reporter.

(Eli waves goodbye and walks away.)