

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 Two**

Historical Synopsis: In 1836, two counties are created for the Mormons in Missouri, Clay and Caldwell counties. By 1838, Far West in Caldwell County has become the headquarters of the church. The Prophet Joseph Smith has left Kirtland, Ohio and has settled in Far West. More Mormons are arriving daily. At the 1838 Fourth of July Celebration Sidney Rigdon, as a spokesman for the First Presidency, gives an oration. Many historians have felt Rigdon's speech may have contributed to the growing difficulties between the Saints and the Missourians.

Cast of characters: (actual historical persons are in italics).

- Elijah Andrews (reporter)- dressed "stylish 1830's".
- **Sidney Rigdon**- dressed "*pioneer style 1830's*".
- Mormon Woman-dressed "*pioneer style 1830's*".
- Mormon Crowd at 4<sup>th</sup> July celebration.
- Rath: (Missourian One).
- Vern: (Missourian Two).

(Eli walks up to the group.)

Eli (speaking to youth group): Hello again. Let me get you up to date. I traveled back to Washington to write my story about the Mormons in Missouri. My editor was not as excited about the story as I had become. But I wanted to write their story. I thought people in the East needed to know what was going on in Missouri. After all this is the nineteenth century. We have a constitution that disallows these injustices. But my editor did not seem to think our readers were that interested in Missouri. He thought most people still considered it a lawless territory on the edge of civilization bordering the Indian Territory. He allowed me to write a short story. I was quite proud of it. It was entitled "Intolerance," Let me read part of it to you: (Eli pulls out a paper.)

***...We protest against the...intolerance towards these people...We have no right to interfere with the religious creeds of our neighbors; ...Had individuals of this sect, or even the whole body of it committed legal offences, the civil tribunals of our country could have given sufficient redress; but to proceed against them as a religious body, not discriminating between the innocent and the guilty, must be considered persecution in the most odious sense of the word, and a disregard of the provisions of our Constitution.*** Pretty good writing, don't you think?

(Eli puts away the paper from which he read.)

For a time, we heard very little from Missouri. What little I did hear, it seemed the Mormons had found a friend in a lawyer by the name of Alexander W. Doniphan. He had spoken out against the vigilante attacks that had occurred

against the Mormons. He was a member of the Missouri General Assembly and in 1836 introduced a bill that would organize two new counties in Missouri for the Mormons, Caldwell and Daviess. These were to be safe havens for the Mormons. This seemed a workable solution for all parties involved. I assumed the trouble was over.

But peace was not to be. Once again I began to hear reports of trouble. I became concerned when I read in newspapers that Mormons were leaving Ohio and were heading for Missouri. I knew two counties in Missouri would not be large enough for all the Mormons. The numbers were too large. More Mormons were arriving every day. I knew the Missourians would not be happy with the increasing numbers of northerners to their state. Politically, religiously and in every way I could think of the Mormons and the Missourians were so far apart they might as well come from different parts of our solar system. The reporter in me smelled trouble brewing.

It was hard, my editor was not happy, but I finally got permission to return to Missouri. There was going to be a big story and I wanted to be there. I did not go to Independence, Missouri, but to a place called Far West. It was north of Independence. Far West was located in the Mormon county of Caldwell County. It had become a booming frontier town of about 4,000 people and more Mormons were arriving daily. It had become the headquarters for the Mormons.

I arrived just in time to help the Mormons celebrate the 4<sup>th</sup> of July in the year 1838. A man by the name of Sidney Rigdon had become a prominent member of this religion. He was spokesman for them and a counselor to the President Joseph Smith. Let's join the celebration.

(Eli walks up to a group of Mormons listening to the speaker Sidney Rigdon.)

Excuse me, (bows to the group of people). My name is Elijah Andrews. I am from out of town. Could you please tell me what is going on today?

Mormon Woman: We are celebrating the birthday of our country. Elder Sidney Rigdon, over yonder, (pointing to the speaker) is delivering our 4<sup>th</sup> of July speech.

Eli: Is the Prophet Joseph Smith here?

Mormon Woman: I haven't seen him. He lives in Far West now, but I do not know if he is here today. We are all hoping to see him. Elder Rigdon is his counselor and a mighty fine speaker. He is delivering his speech now.

(All turn to listen to the speaker, Sidney Rigdon.)

**Sidney Rigdon: *We have been taught from our cradles, to reverence the fathers of the Revolution...Our country and its institutions are written on the tablet of our hearts, as with the blood of the heroes who offered their lives in sacrifice, to redeem us from oppression...Protected by its laws and***

***defended by its powers, the oppressed and persecuted saint can worship under his own vine...and none can molest or make afraid...***

(Crowd cheers)

**Sidney Rigdon continues: *Our government is known throughout the civilized world, as the standard of freedom...So powerful has been its influence that the hand of the oppressor...has been lightened, tyrants have been made to tremble, and oppressors of mankind, have been filled with fear...And it is eight years, two months, and twenty eight days, since this church of the last days was organized...consisting of six members only...The first attack made upon it, by its enemies, was by false representation and foul slander...Misrepresentation followed misrepresentation, falsehood after falsehood, followed each other in rapid succession...They united to all this power, that of mobs, driving men, women, and children, from their houses, dragging them out in the dead hours of the night, out of their beds, whipping tarring and feathering, and otherwise shamefully treating them.***

(At this point we see the two Missourians, Vern and Rath walk up to where they can hear Sidney Rigdon speaking. They try to act inconspicuous, smiling and tipping their hats to everyone.)

Vern: (nudges Rath.) See, I wuz righ'. Thay giv'n speeches and talkin' bad 'bout us.

Rath: Quiet Vern. Tha' ain't th' guy Joe Smith. I though' we gonna see ole' Joe Smith hisself. Who is tha' guy?

Vern: I hea'd his name wuz Rigdon. But tha's (pointing to the Mormons) listenin' to 'em like he's impurtan'. Thay seem ta like 'em, who'er he is.

**Sidney Rigdon continues: *...we have assembled ourselves together in this remote land, to prepare for that which is coming on earth, and we have this day laid the corner stones of this temple of God...to complete it, and to rear up to the name of our God in this city, "Far West," a house, which shall be a house of prayer, a house of learning, a house of order, and a house of God...***

Rath: Wha's with tha temple thay buildin'?

Vern: Jus' lookit 'round ya, lookit at how many of 'em thar be. What we's hearin' is righ'. Thar is jus' mor' an' mor' of 'em. Nex' thin' ya knows thay be a electin' who thay wan' ta run everythin' aroun' thes' here parts. We gonna becum run ov'r by tha Mormonites in everythin'. Nex' thin' we knows thay be cuntrollin' tha entir' state of Missoura.

**Sidney Rigdon: ...we have suffered their abuse without cause, with patience, and have endured without resentment, until this day, and still their persecutions and violence does not cease. But from this day and this hour, we will suffer it no more.**

**We take God and all the holy angels to witness this day, that we warn all men in the name of Jesus Christ...from this hour...our rights shall no more be trampled on with impunity. The man or the set of men, who attempts, does it at the expense of their lives. And that mob that come on us to disturb us; It shall be between us and them a war of extermination...till the last drop of their blood is spilled, or else they will have to exterminate us; for we will carry the seat of war to their own houses, and their own families, and one party or the other shall be utterly destroyed. ---Remember it then all MEN.**

Vern: Thos' fightin' words iff'n I ev'r hear' fighin' words!

Rath: Cum on Vern, we gotta git back and tell tha othurs. We aint 'avin Mormons thinkin' thay kin run everythin'.

Eli: I listened to Sidney Rigdon's speech and I worried. It sounded to me like the Mormons were not going to turn the other cheek any more. I couldn't say as I blamed them. They had already gone through so much as a people. But I knew it meant trouble ahead for these people calling themselves saints.

(Eli pauses.)

Trouble was, I knew there was an election coming up in August. It was to be north of here in the little settlement of Gallatin. The Mormons considered it their patriotic duty and privilege to vote in every election. The Missourians had their own agenda. They wanted their own man elected. I was also sure the Missourians would not want the Mormons to vote, since they would not be voting for their man.