

Hyrum Smith 200th Birthday Celebration Script by Vivian Adams
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You want a little story, do you? Well, it seems James Campbell was the bravest man in Jackson County. The illustrious Reverend gathered up his mob and 53 rifles to fire into a little party of unsuspecting Mormons who ran for the few guns they had. Surprised when the Mormons returned fire, Campbell's comrades scattered in a flash. But the brave Campbell decided to stay and tussle it out.

Old Brother Brace, a Mormon to the core, who had fought under Washington, took a shot at Campbell, but his musket misfired. Campbell shot back, but he missed. Since Campbell could load faster than the old man, the old gentleman thought he had no alternative but to run towards him, yelling like ten thousand Indians and waving the butt end of his gun.

To save himself, Campbell wheeled his horse and plied the whip. This gave the old veteran a chance to reload. He then fired his piece, and killed Campbell's horse as it was jumping over a fence, which left the horse hanging there upon the logs. But Campbell in his terror did not know whether he was running on his feet or riding his horse. So he ran across the country with all the power he possessed, whipping behind him, as he supposed, his horse, and crying, "Get up, or the Mormons will kill us! Get up, or the Mormons will kill us!"¹

This is how we lived--on the edge of extinction. We had a work commissioned by God, and all hell broke out against us. We had the courage to face that work in ways we could scarcely have imagined. So with the Prophet, so with the Saints.

Yes, I am sorry about that horse, but he has gone where good horses go. His master has whipped himself hell bent into another place.

Rise of the Church

Now, I am as acquainted with the rise of the Church as any man. I was born into the most fortunate of families. Though we had faced difficulties, by 1820 we had acquired a farm and planned to build a comfortable white frame house. Six brothers wrestled on the hearth and in the fields, teased their sisters and untied their mother's apron strings. Our father was our first schoolteacher. He was tall, six feet, two inches, loved music and a good story. He was kind and affectionate. Our mother was scarce five feet, hardly tall enough to get hold of a fellow's ear. But she did.²

When Joseph said he had seen the Father and the Son we knew his testimony was true.

We knew of Moroni, the hill, and the plates. This truth became the crown of our home.

I was one of the Eight witnesses to Book of Mormon. I have two hands and two eyes. I saw the plates with my eyes and I handled them with my hands. I hefted them, felt them.

I turned as many of the leaves as Joseph had translated. I saw the engravings. All of it had the appearance of ancient work. I saw the breastplates, how they were made, front and back and the openings for ties. They were also of gold, but not so fine a gold as the plates, for they were pure.³

Every stratagem was used to get the plates, to destroy the manuscript, or to stop the printing of the book. One can scarcely imagine the interest Satan had in such literature. Joseph had to continually move the plates. On one occasion while sitting in my house with my wife and her two sisters, Don Carlos rushed into the room and touched me on the shoulder. At this signal I knew Joseph needed a chest for them with lock and key. I sprang from the table, got the chest, dumped its contents on the floor, and was out the door. Said my wife to her two astonished sisters, "When Hyrum gets an idea, he moves."⁴

I was a member of the Palmyra school board that hired Oliver Cowdrey, who then became scribe to Joseph. Martin Harris, Joseph and I contracted with E.B. Grandin to pay for the printing of the book.⁵ Half was to be paid by Martin, the rest by Joseph and me. I carried the first 24 pages to the printer under my vest with my coat buttoned over it. At night I took them back the same way. The printer's manuscript was in my house, and Oliver acted as my companion and bodyguard, though I should say I could take on more men than he.⁶

Before the book was printed my brothers and I became preachers of the word.⁷ When the Church was organized, we took missions to the surrounding states and converted many. We took as many copies of the book as we could carry. Tired of walking, I bought a horse, saddle, bridle from Elder Charles C. Rich, price \$53.75. I paid ten dollars in cash and the rest with thirty-five copies of the Book of Mormon.⁸ Elder Rich had the better bargain.

Missouri Persecution

The Church, being driven from pillar to post, came to Missouri only to learn it was the devil's home residence, and he greeted us with the hospitality only he could give. The great state of Missouri did exile and expel at the point of bayonet some 14,000 inhabitants from the state and did murder a large number of men women and children in cold blood simply because they were Mormon.

Here it was that Joseph and I were cast into prison for the gospel's sake. When the plan to shoot us in the public square at Far West was thwarted, we were told we would be marched to Liberty and executed there. With difficulty we were permitted to return to our homes to secure some clothing. The guards that went with me ordered my wife to get some clothes within two minutes or I should go without. My wife and my children clung weeping to my arms and the skins of my garments. I was not permitted to speak, on pain of death, but was hurried away with the repeated thrust of a bayonet, "Move it! Move it!"

As we marched, we were compelled to sleep on the frozen ground, having no covering. We suffered extremely from the cold and became ill. We were exhibited all the way

along the road to Richmond and then to Liberty, as men exhibit elephants or dromedaries, or sea hogs. "Come, Come, See Old Joe Smith! Look upon the Mormon Prophets! Prophecy! Prophecy!" -- this though we were not permitted to speak. The crowds came and did all but examine our teeth like an old horse.⁹

Thus gaped upon and in chains, two gentlemen approached undetected in the line that flowed before us. They looked us directly in the eye. "How do you do?" they said. Our spirits were lifted for one was Brigham and the other Heber. We knew they would lead a ravaged and driven people out of the state.¹⁰

Our accusers had become so fond of us, they sat upon our jury, took shifts guarding us day and night. In their spare moments they rode to Far West, pillaged our homes and mobbed our families. My wife and babes were terrorized by these fiends who carted off my worldly goods and threw a mattress on my newborn son who I had never seen. Nor were the Missourians our only oppressors. Persons who had ever pretended the greatest friendship toward me ransacked my house and carried away many valuables. I cannot help but mention Lyman and Oliver Cowdrey, who, while I lay in prison, took from me a great many things and who, through fraud and force, took from me 160 acres of land.¹¹

While in the prison I was afflicted by the vile food, the nauseous cell, and the chains with which we were repeatedly clamped, yet I was harrowed with anxiety over my family, and the children who lay so near to my heart. Having no news as to their safety or whereabouts I traipsed the floor hour by hour. When I had paper, my hands and my fingers were so stiff I could scarcely write.¹²

In April, after another series of illegal and abusive proceedings, even the governor became sick of the affair and we were allowed to escape. When our families saw us coming from the ferry into Quincy, we were pale and haggard, our hair long and our beards full and shaggy.

We frightened our children, having the appearance of the mob, rather than civilized men, yet we were at last in the arms of those we loved.¹³

Testimony

Once we came into Nauvoo we built houses, and had sons, who wrestled one another or bounced on our boots, and daughters who sat with the needle at their mother's knees. But the Devil was not dead. He had followed us from Missouri. On one occasion two officers from that great state came to arrest Joseph, and asked a young boy flying a kite in the streets where Joseph and Hyrum were. "Oh," said he, answering with his faithful little heart, "You see that cloud in the sky? They have ridden up there on Old Charley, and I am flying their dinner up to them on this kite."¹⁴

It was never my desire to suffer endless harassment at the hands of men whom I have never harmed, nor to see my family destitute and deprived of home and protection. It was never my desire to be driven from state to state in search of refuge in an unrelenting

storm of persecution. It was my desire to be true to all that I knew was just and good and according to the revelations of God.

I had determined in the face of the Missouri bayonet that I would die, rather than deny the things, which my eyes had seen, and which I had handled, and of which I had borne testimony. I was as enabled to bear as strong a testimony when nothing but death presented itself, as ever I did in life, and I yet felt a determination to do the will of God in spite of persecutions, imprisonment or death.¹⁵

When we went to Carthage, we well supposed that we would not return. Before leaving, Joseph called together those nearest to him and prayed over all his work.¹⁶ In the jail we placed the pictures of our families on the mantle for the comfort their faces would give us to the last.¹⁷

I have not said much here this evening about Joseph, this I regret. I would have you understand that there were prophets before, but Joseph had the spirit and the power of all the prophets.¹⁸ The work he founded is verily true. Joseph asked Willard and John to come with him to the jail. That I should go with him was my choice, for I would not leave him. That we were willing to live and die for this work has left our enemies astonished and disappointed.

Now, my dear children, you belong to me. Hold out your hands. Do you see the veins through which your blood flows? This is the blood of the prophets, and the martyrs of God.

That you may remember and be true is the prayer of your father, Hyrum Smith.

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