

On the Road with Zion's Camp: A Photographic Essay of the 1834 Missouri Expedition

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For the past several years I have visited early Mormon history sites, including the more well known sites in Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Wyoming, and Utah, and elsewhere as well. I have taken literally thousands of photographs at many LDS Church history sites and other places of historical interest—implementing many of these images into class lectures and presentations. The use of images in the classroom provides a rich resource in teaching students about the Mormon past.

A course in early Mormon history always includes a discussion on Zion's Camp and discussions recounting the experiences and adventures of the expedition can be found in any number of Mormon historical texts that cover the period. There are secondary articles on the subject as well. The general facts include the following. During the early part of November 1833, the Mormon population living in Jackson County, Missouri, was expelled by the local citizens. Most of the Mormon refugees found temporary homes in Clay County to the north, although some settled in other regions. Determined to help the displaced Church members, in February 1834, Joseph Smith called for a volunteer force to travel to Missouri to provide relief and to help them reclaim their homes and property (see D&C 103:30-35). During the first week of May 1834, the main company that made up Zion's Camp left Kirtland, Ohio, em-

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barking on a 900-mile journey whose goal was to “redeem Zion.” After arriving in Missouri, Zion’s Camp failed to receive the support of Missouri governor Daniel Dunklin, who had promised additional military assistance. Without state cooperation and support, Zion’s Camp could not act and was forced to disband.

In recent years Mormon historians have successfully documented and published the general route and course of travel of Zion’s Camp from Ohio to Missouri. Although this information was readily available, there was a lack of visual support and documentation. I became determined to travel and retrace the 900-mile route myself—in a car of course—to obtain photographic documentation. The endeavor was truly rewarding; it provided me with my own “on-site” experience and an appreciation for the “spirit of place.” And while many of the places have changed dramatically over the past 170 years, many remain essentially the same. With this in mind, I offer the following historical photographic essay with the intent to provide the reader with a vicarious visual experience of the present-day sites and scenes of the Zion’s Camp expedition.

The Photographs

Image 1. The first members of Zion’s Camp left Kirtland on May 1, 1834. Their first major encampment was at New Portage, now Barberton, Ohio, situated about fifty miles southwest of Kirtland. Joseph Smith and a number



Image 1. Old barn in Streetsboro, Portage County, Ohio.

of others did not leave Kirtland until May 5. That evening he and his company spent the night in a barn belonging to a Mr. Ford in Streetsboro, Portage County, Ohio.¹ The following day, his party joined the Camp members at New Portage. The barn seen in this image is located in Streetsboro. Even though it postdates Zion's Camp, it is reminiscent of the fact that the young Prophet-leader stayed in this area on the first night of his journey.



Image 2. Commemorative park in Barberton, Summit County, Ohio.

Image 2. On May 6, Joseph Smith formally organized the Camp, which at that time numbered about 170 members.² The average age of the group was twenty-nine, about the same age as the Mormon Prophet. The youngest member was sixteen; the oldest seventy-nine.³ Image 2 shows a sign in Barberton, Summit County, Ohio, which notes the years during which the community was known as New Portage. The monument in the background describes some other major events in the town's history.

Image 3. This photograph shows a preserved section of the Ohio & Erie Canal, situated just south of New Portage, now Barberton, Ohio. From New Portage, Zion's Camp likely headed south and may have followed the Ohio & Erie Canal before taking a more westerly direction. The canal ran south all the way from Cleveland to Portsmouth, Ohio, connecting Lake Erie with the Ohio River. Construction on the canal began in 1825. Beginning in 1827, the

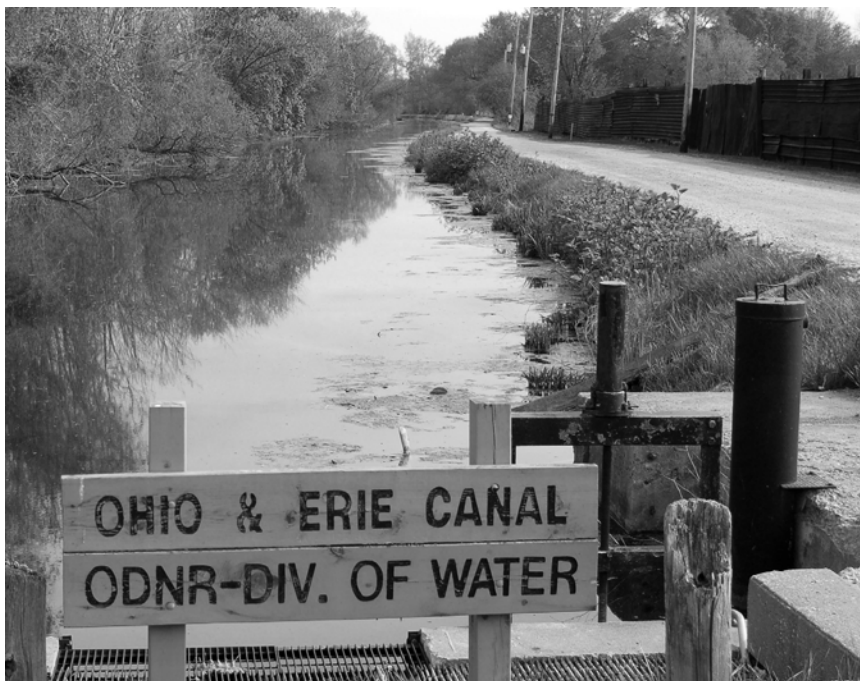


Image 3. Preserved section of the Ohio & Erie Canal, near Barberton, Summit County, Ohio.

first section of the canal was completed from Akron to Cleveland. Use of the canal peaked during the period ranging from the 1830s to the 1860s, when western expansion of the railroads led to a marked decline in the viability of canal systems. However, even with competition from the railroad, the Ohio & Erie Canal remained in use until 1913.

Image 4. On Friday, May 16, the members of Zion's Camp passed by the town of Enon, Clark County, Ohio. It was near here that the Prophet felt depressed in spirit and commented that they were near a site where there had been much bloodshed. According to Joseph Smith's published history, he said on this occasion, "that whenever a man of God is in a place where many have been killed, he will feel lonesome and unpleasant, and his spirits will sink."⁷⁴ Interestingly, a Native American burial site known as the Adena Mound, one of many such sites in the general region, is close to where Joseph had those depressing feelings. The community of Enon, which owns the mound, has identified and preserved the site. This canonical mound is the second largest of many other such burial sites in Ohio. Interpretive signage at the Enon site



Image 4: The Adena Mound, Enon, Clark County, Ohio.

gives the remarkable detail that the mound was used for over two millennia during a period extending from roughly 1200 BCE to 1000 CE.

Image 5. On May 17, the Camp reached Richmond, Wayne County, Indiana, immediately west of the Ohio-Indiana border. Here they picked up the National Road and followed it to a point some twenty miles west of Indianapolis. Joseph, Brigham Young, and the others in Joseph's division likely walked along what is now U.S. 40 and Main Street in Richmond. Locals claim that at that time, it was indeed the route of the historic National Road. While in the Richmond area, Joseph Smith wrote a personal letter to his wife, Emma, one of only two known surviving letters written by the Mormon leader during Zion's Camp. The extant letter is dated and postmarked May 19. However, Dean C. Jessee notes that the date was originally May 18, but for some reason a 9 was written over the number 8.⁵

Image 6. On May 19 the Camp left Richmond, Indiana, heading west on the National Road. Just west of Richmond, they crossed the Whitewater River Gorge. A bridge was constructed over the river sometime in the 1830s, but it is uncertain whether it was completed at the time of Zion's Camp. According to locals, the 1830s bridge (and other subsequent bridges) crossed the Whitewater River very close to the site shown in image 6. The group followed the National Road for several days until reaching a point some twenty miles west



Image 5. Main Street, Richmond, Wayne County, Indiana.



Image 6: Whitewater River Gorge, Wayne County, Indiana.

of Indianapolis. They probably did not follow the National Road contiguously during this time. Poor road conditions such as mud, potholes, road construction, and other factors forced them to detour on occasion.⁶

Image 7. The state of Indiana currently promotes a highway tour that approximates the route of the historic National Road, the nation's first federally

funded interstate road. It ran for 824 miles from Maryland to the western Illinois border. Signs placed along U.S. 40 in Indiana keep travelers informed that they are following this historic route. There are some well-preserved homes and buildings of historic interest along the road, but most postdate the Zion's Camp expedition. About twenty-five miles east of Indianapolis, between the little towns of Raysville and Ogden, a section of the original National Road has been identified and preserved for several miles. A portion of that stretch of historic highway is seen in Image 7 and inset.



Image 7. Preserved section of the National Road east of Indianapolis located between Raysville and Ogden, Henry County, Indiana.

Image 8. As Zion's Camp moved west toward Indianapolis, spies were observing their movements. Moreover, rumors, stories, and threats from Missouri were surfacing in the Indianapolis region. As Camp members approached the city on May 21, the Prophet instructed them to break up into smaller groups or travel as individuals so as to dilute the collective body and hopefully temper the curiosity of the citizenry. The plan was effective. No problems surfaced as they moved through the city and crossed the White River. Camp members used a bridge that had been under construction since 1831. A state park at the site notes that a replacement bridge, seen in Image 8, is



Image 8. Bridge over the White River, Indianapolis, Indianapolis, County, Indiana.



Image 9: The Wabash River near Clinton, Park County, Indiana. Near here Joseph Smith instructed the members of Zion's Camp regarding principles of appropriate prayer.

situated where the National Road bridge crossed the White River at the time Zion's Camp came through.

Image 9. About twenty miles west of Indianapolis, Joseph Smith and his division of Zion's Camp left the National Road which was bearing south toward Terre Haute. At this juncture, the Camp followed a more northerly route toward the Illinois border. On May 23 they camped near Big Walnut Creek, approximately four miles outside of Greencastle, Indiana. The next day the group arrived at Clinton, Indiana, and the Wabash River. They camped in the area for two nights because of the time required to ferry the Camp across river. During this time the Mormon leader found it necessary to counsel the Camp to "cultivate through life a modest and graceful demeanor, avoiding vulgarity." He also instructed them in the proper manner of kneeling for prayer (many members of the expedition had assumed unseemly positions). "When we kneel we should be in a graceful manner, such as could not cause a disgusting impression to arise in the mind of any spectator."⁷

Image 10. After crossing the Wabash, the Camp left Indiana and entered the state of Illinois. They traveled through the little town of Paris and continued west across a prairie of some sixteen miles. This area created a "great curiosity to a number of the group." The stark flatness of the terrain extending for so great a distance was evidently a feature of considerable interest to them. Continuing on, the Camp subsequently crossed the Embarras River and camped for the night on a branch of that river. While there, several of the men found three prairie rattlesnakes and prepared to kill them. The Prophet



Image 10. The Embarras River, Coles, County, Illinois, where Joseph Smith taught against the unnecessary killing of wildlife or animals.

strongly admonished them not to kill the snakes or any other animal unless it was necessary to preserve themselves from hunger. Following the counsel of their leader, the men carried the snakes on sticks across the creek and let them go.⁸ The Embarrass River, at the approximate site where this occurred, is seen in Image 10.

Image 11. Leaving the Embarrass River, the group continued west, camping on the Okaw River on May 27. Here, the Prophet Joseph Smith testified that they had the companionship of angels.⁹ Several days later, while camping on the Sangamon River near Decatur, Illinois, members of the Camp divided up into several teams for the purpose of having a sham battle for diversion as well as training. During the exercise, Heber C. Kimball was injured after grasping another person's sword, cutting the skin from the palm of his hand. The Prophet "cautioned the men to be careful in the future." Later that day, Joseph chastised the cook for giving him (Joseph) better food than that which some of the other members of the Camp had received. He wanted others to



Image 11. The Sangamon River, west of Decatur, Macon County, Illinois, where Heber C. Kimball was injured in a sham battle.

fare as well as he did.¹⁰

Very near the Sangamon River camp site is the Lincoln Trail Homestead State Park, the site of the first home Abraham Lincoln lived in after moving to Illinois sometime in early 1830. That home, which no longer stands,

was situated near the bank of the Sangamon River. After residing there for about a year, Lincoln left his father and stepmother's household to be on his own. Consequently, he missed any interface with Zion's Camp by about three years.¹¹ His father, Thomas Lincoln, and the rest of the family also moved from the Sangamon River home site before the coming of Zion's Camp. The Lincolns relocated from that home in Macon County to Coles County, some forty miles to the southeast.¹² Had they not done so, they would almost certainly have been present when Joseph Smith's division of Zion's Camp passed through in 1834.¹³

Images 12 and 13. In the latter part of May 1834, Zion's Camp marched west past Springfield, Illinois, to the banks of a river about a mile east of Jacksonville. On Sunday, June 1, members of the Camp invited citizens in the area to attend a worship service with them. On this occasion Joseph Smith preached a nondenominational sermon using the name Squire Cook. Because of safety concerns, he and the Saints did not feel they could identify themselves as Mormons.¹⁴

About twenty-five miles west of Jacksonville, Zion's Camp came to the Phillip's Ferry crossing on the Illinois River and began ferrying across to the west side, where they camped. While there, several of the men climbed a prominent hill nearby where they later uncovered some human remains.



Image 12. The Illinois River from the east side near Oxville, Morgan County, Illinois, with the "Zelph Mound" pictured in the center.



Image 13. Naples-Russell Mound #8, near Valley City, Pike County, Illinois—the “Zelph Mound.”



Image 14. Church Hollow Road (300th Avenue), near Valley City, Pike County, Illinois, likely a surviving segment of the original Zion’s Camp route.

Several surviving accounts report that Joseph Smith identified the remains as being those of a Lamanite warrior named Zelph.¹⁵ (Details from the various accounts frequently vary, so it is difficult to know what actually transpired and what Joseph taught with certainty.) The hill has been identified in modern times as the Naples-Russell Mound #8, Pike County, Illinois.¹⁶ Scholars have written that the hill “is a typical prehistoric Middle Woodland mortuary complex of the Hopewell culture.”¹⁷ The middle mound in Image 12 is the “Zelph Mound,” as seen from about a mile east of the Illinois River. Image 13 shows the actual mound in close-up detail.

Image 14. Just north of the Zelph mound, near the west bank of the Illinois River, an unpaved road, traditionally known as Church Hollow Road, runs immediately north of the Zelph mound. Locals say that laws resulting from the events of September 11, 2001, have required that the name of this and other roads be changed to numerical designations—in this case 300th Avenue. Winding between burial mounds, the road's location has remained intact over the years. If Zion's Camp continued its journey to Valley City and Griggsville using this route, it would be one of only a few of the surviving segments of the original route used by Zion's Camp.¹⁸

Image 15. Beyond the Zelph mound, Joseph Smith's division of Zion's Camp passed through the town of Pittsfield, Illinois. It is thought that while here on June 3, Joseph prophesied to Camp members that a scourge would fall



Image 15. The Mississippi River looking east from Louisiana, Pike County, Missouri to Pike, Pike County, Illinois.

upon them if they did not repent of their rebelliousness.¹⁹ From Pittsfield, the company passed on to Atlas and Pike, Illinois, where the Mississippi River separates the states of Illinois and Missouri. The view in Image 15 looks east from Louisiana, Missouri, to Pike, Illinois, where Zion's Camp crossed the river.

Image 16. On June 6, after spending several days crossing the Mississippi River into the state of Missouri, Joseph's division of Zion's Camp continued west to Spencerburg, where they camped for the night. From June 7-11, they bivouacked at the Salt River Branch, otherwise known as the Allred Settlement in Monroe County (named after the founder, James Allred). While here, Joseph's division waited for the arrival of a smaller group led by Hyrum Smith and Lyman Wight who had come from Michigan. This second company arrived on June 8. From that point on, Zion's Camp proceeded as the combined company of the two groups, numbering about 207 men, eleven women, and eleven children.²⁰

While situated at the Salt River, Camp members were able to rest, worship, obtain supplies, and repair equipment. It was at this time that Orson Hyde and Parley P. Pratt were sent to meet with Governor Daniel Dunklin in Jefferson City to discuss a possible course of action. On June 10 the Prophet was again elected commander-in-chief. He also selected sub-commanders and reorganized the Camp into companies of ten.²¹



Image 16. An arm of Mark Twain Lake created by the Clarence Cannon Dam on the Salt River, Monroe County, Missouri.

According to Max H. Parkin, the Salt River Branch was centered near the intersections of State Roads 154 and 107 (also County Road E). Parkin concludes that the Allred Settlement may have been the largest Mormon branch during the Missouri period of Church history (1831-39).²² Various properties of those who made up that branch are now bordered or covered by the waters of Mark Twain Lake, created by the Clarence Cannon Dam on the Salt River. While most of the lake is in Monroe County, the dam itself is in Ralls County, adjacent to Monroe to the east.

Image 17. Continuing west from the Salt River Branch, Zion's Camp suffered considerably from the heat and humidity of northern Missouri. On June 17, after traveling many miles without a good source of water, Zion's Camp stopped for the night on the flat prairie rather than by a river. This they did for protection, thinking that they would be able to see an advancing enemy from



Image 17. The prairie campsite near Norborne, Carrollton County, Missouri.

far off.²⁴ Image 17 shows the approximate area of this campsite, located near State Road 10, about two miles east of Norborne in Carroll County.

Image 18. On June 18, the Camp spent the night on the outskirts of Richmond, Ray County, Missouri, somewhere near the present intersection of State Roads 10 and 13. After a period of many hours in the heat without water, the Prophet Joseph Smith put a spade in the ground and dug a small hole, which soon filled with water. Some members of the group thought this to be a miracle of the same caliber as when Moses smote the rock and water came out.²⁵



Image 18. The outskirts of Richmond, Ray County, Missouri, where Joseph Smith miraculously provided water for Zion's Camp.



Image 19. The west branch of the Fishing River, or Big Fishing River, Clay County, Missouri.

Image 19. The men and women of Zion's Camp arrived at Fishing River, Clay County, Missouri on Thursday, June 19, and camped between the east and west forks of the river. At the time, an armed force of Missourians, primarily from Jackson County, had positioned themselves nearby intending to attack the Mormon company. However, that evening a tremendous storm arose. Lightning, thunder, and torrential rain and hail pelted the area, flooding rivers and streams, including both the east and west branches of Fishing River, creating a barrier between Zion's Camp and the Missourians. Members of the Camp found refuge in an old Baptist log meetinghouse.²⁶ Upon entering the building Joseph Smith pronounced the violent storm to be divine intervention in saving them from a potentially devastating battle.²⁷ In 1971, an elderly resident of Prathersville, Missouri showed James Bradley the site where the old church once stood. After locating what was thought to be the foundation, Bradley concluded that the size of the structure would have been approximately sixty by forty feet.²⁸

Image 20. Following the great storm, Zion's Camp moved to a second Clay County campsite on land owned by Church member John Cooper. They stayed there from June 20-23. On June 22, Joseph Smith received what is known as the Fishing River revelation, now Section 105 of the Doctrine and Covenants. In the revelation, Zion's Camp was told that the redemption of Zion would not take place at that time. Furthermore, the men were told that it would not be necessary to fight; they should return to their homes in the East



Image 20. Site of John Cooper's farm, Clay County, Missouri.

(see D&C 105:9, 13-14, 20-22). The view in Image 20 looks to the northeast from the intersection of Golden Avenue and Milwaukee Street near Excelsior Springs, Ray County, Missouri, showing land that was once part of the John Cooper farm.²⁹

Image 21. On June 24, members of the Camp marched to the home of A. Sidney Gilbert, located a few miles east of Liberty, Missouri, and camped on the on the bank of Rush Creek, in George Burkett's field.³⁰ That same day, many began feeling ill, being stricken with cholera, including Joseph and Hyrum Smith. John Carter, a former Baptist minister who had preached with Joseph Smith in Jacksonville, Illinois, was the first to die as a result of disease. Thirteen camp members died at Rush Creek. Two other Latter-day Saints, including A. Sidney Gilbert and young Phebe Murdock, six year-old daughter of John and Julia Clapp Murdock, also contracted cholera and subsequently died. The site of the Burkett property is unknown, but the burial site of at least some of the cholera victims has been identified. In 1958 the remains of three cholera victims, including one female, were discovered about two hundred feet east of



Image 21. Site of the Rush Creek cholera outbreak, Clay County, Missouri.

Rush Creek by Boyd W. Park, a farmer who owned the property. The site is still privately owned and not accessible to the public.³¹

Image 22. On July 3, 1834, members of Zion's Camp assembled at the home of Michael Arthur, a friendly non-Mormon who had assisted the Mormons following their expulsion from Jackson County. He had hired a number of Mormons to work for him, including John Whitmer and Lyman Wight. Arthur lived about four miles south of Liberty. Joseph Smith called for the

meeting at Arthur's property to formally discharge the Camp which marked the official end of the expedition. The Prophet's history records the following under the date of July 3: "I authorized General Lyman Wight to give a discharge to every man of the Camp who had proved himself faithful, certifying that fact and giving him leave to return home."³²



Image 22. Site of the Michael Arthur home where Zion's Camp was discharged on July 3, 1834.

Notes

1. Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols., (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 2:63 (hereafter cited as *History of the Church*).

2. *History of the Church*, 2:64.

3. John M. Beck and Dennis A. Wright, "Zion's Camp," in Arnold K. Garr, Donald Q. Cannon, Richard O. Cowan, eds., *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 1399.

4. *History of the Church*, 2:66. See also LaMar C. Berrett, Keith W. Perkins, and Donald Q. Cannon, eds., *Sacred Places: Ohio and Illinois* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 83.

5. The entire text of the letter is included in Dean C. Jessee, *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 340-41. See also n1.

6. See, for example, James L. Bradley, *The Eternal Perspective of Zion's Camp* (Logan, Utah: James L. Bradley, 2004), 88.

7. Cited in Roger D. Launius, *Zion's Camp: Expedition to Missouri* (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1984), 79.
8. *History of the Church*, 2:71.
9. Berrett, et al., *Sacred Places: Ohio and Illinois*, 250.
10. *History of the Church*, 2:74-75.
11. David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 36-37.
12. Interpretive marker, Lincoln Trail Homestead State Park, Macon County, Illinois.
13. Berrett, et al., *Sacred Places: Ohio and Illinois*, 251.
14. *History of the Church*, 2:77-78.
15. *History of the Church*, 2:79-80. See also, for example, Wilford Woodruff's account in Susan Staker, ed., *Waiting for World's End: The Diaries of Wilford Woodruff* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 3-4. For a review and synthesis of the various accounts, see Kenneth Godfrey, "The Zeph Story," *BYU Studies* 29, no. 2 (Spring 1989), 31-56; Donald Q. Cannon, "Zeph Revisited," in H. Dean Garrett, ed., *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: Illinois* (Provo: Brigham Young University, Department of Church History and Doctrine, 1995), 97-111; and Kenneth W. Godfrey, "What is the Significance of Zeph in the Study of Book of Mormon Geography?" *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8, no. 2 (1999): 71-79.
16. Bradley, *The Eternal Perspective of Zion's Camp*, 323-24. The modern name derives from a combination of the nearby town of Naples, Illinois, and a man named Russell, the property owner in 1974.
17. Stanley B. Kimball, cited in Godfrey, "The Zeph Story," 31. The Zeph mound is situated within the boundaries of the Ray Norbut State Fish and Wildlife Area of Pike County. At present there is a challenge maintaining an appropriate interface between interested visitors and the respect that should be afforded a site sacred to the Native American social organization known as "Hopewell." There is a trail from below as well as one coming in from the top of Church Hollow Road. In recent years, signs restricting final access to the summit (a distance of about ten yards) have been placed where the two trails meet.
18. Stanley B. Kimball, "Zion's Camp March from Ohio to Missouri, 1834," *Ensign* 9, no. 4 (April 1979), 47.
19. *History of the Church*, 2:80. See also James Bradley, *The Eternal Perspective of Zion's Camp*, 146-49. In 1839, several years after the coming of Zion's Camp, another refugee site known as Mormontown was established just outside of Pittsfield. Less than a decade later the site was abandoned. An old sign that marked the site for many years was restored in 1998 and later replaced with an attractive metal sign in 2005. Appreciation is expressed to Dr. Melvin Martin who championed that cause and brought it to fruition.
20. Milton V. Backman Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830-1838* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 185. See also Andrea G. Radke, "We Also Marched: The Women of Zion's Camp, 1834," *BYU Studies* 39, no. 1 (2000): 147-65.
21. LaMar C. Berrett and Max H. Parkin, eds., *Sacred Places: Missouri* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2004), 585-86.
22. Berrett and Parkin, *Sacred Places: Missouri*, 540.
23. See Berrett and Parkin, *Sacred Places: Missouri*, 540-45.
24. *History of the Church*, 2:100-01.
25. "Autobiography of Levi Hancock," cited in Berrett and Parkin, *Sacred Places: Missouri*, 589.
26. Berrett and Parkin, *Sacred Places: Missouri*, 206-07.
27. Berrett and Parkin, *Sacred Places: Missouri*, 590.
28. Bradley, *The Eternal Perspective of Zion's Camp*, 245.

29. Berrett and Parkin, *Sacred Places: Missouri*, 209.

30. *History of the Church*, 2:112.

31. Berrett and Parkin, *Sacred Places: Missouri*, 198-201.

32. *History of the Church*, 2:123. The Mormon leader also used the occasion to officially organize the Missouri Stake and high council, appointing David Whitmer as president, with William W. Phelps and John Whitmer as assistant presidents.