
A Relic of the Mormon Missouri Period: The Haun's Mill Stone at Breckenridge, Missouri

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For many years, the small town of Breckenridge, Missouri, situated in eastern Caldwell County, has been the custodian of a mill stone from the early Mormon settlement of Haun's Mill. Historical sources indicate that the stone was first discovered by George Edward Anderson, a Latter-day Saint photographer from Springville, Utah, and at least two other Caldwell residents. In 1907-1908, Anderson went on a photographic mission to photograph early LDS Church history in the Midwest and the East. From 10-26 May 1907, he toured the northern Missouri countryside, taking pictures of historic Mormon sites in Ray, Caldwell, and Daviess counties. During this time, the Mormon photographer spent four days, May 22-26, in eastern Caldwell County with the express purpose of taking photos at Haun's Mill. On 23 May, accompanied by George M. McLallen from nearby Braymer, and his son James, Anderson succeeded in taking several photographs at the mill site. After taking a photo of the landscape from the hill situated on the south of Shoal Creek, Anderson reported: "Crossed the creek and located one of the old millstones, which we worked out of the ground and [then moved it] down to the edge of the creek and made two or three negatives of it, putting an inscription on one side."¹

The mill stone apparently remained at the mill site until 1914 when some citizens from Breckenridge moved the stone to the city park. A 1915 photo in the Community of Christ Archives shows the stone lying flat on two raised blocks. Protruding through the center of the stone is a pole, about four feet in height, with a marker attached at the top. The marker reads, "A MILL-STONE FROM HAUN'S MILL WHERE EIGHTEEN MORMONS

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WERE KILLED IN A BATTLE AND THROWN IN A WELL. OCT. 30 1838.” The marker was inaccurate on two points. Seventeen Mormons died in the attack, fourteen of whom were buried in an empty well.² It is not known how long the stone was displayed in this manner. However, in 1941, the city set the mill stone in concrete.³ More recently, on 7 August 1987, the stone was again reset in another cement block with a description that reads, “MILLSTONE FROM HAUN’S MILL 1834-1845.”

During the past year, Breckenridge citizens and community officials worked to make improvements to the city park. As part of those improvements, members of the Missouri Mormon Frontier Foundation, in a cooperative effort with the city, sponsored the placement of a new descriptive marker for the mill stone. Dedication of the renovated park and the new marker took place on 26 May 2001.⁴ The inscription reads:

Mill Stone believed to be From Haun’s Mill (1836-1845)

This relic represents a tragic episode in American religious history. A testament to an enduring need for greater understanding and tolerance between peoples of differing ideologies, including religious beliefs and cultural backgrounds. As a result of miscommunication and feelings of powerlessness to effect change in the wake of what they saw as offensive Mormon military actions in Daviess County, Livingston County Regulators and other volunteers, brutally attacked the nearby Mormon settlement of Haun’s Mill, on Shoal Creek, 30 October 1838, killing 17 persons, 14 of whom were hastily interred in a partially completed well on the site.

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The inscription is impressive, providing the observer with a more accurate view of the historical context of the time and why the attack and subsequent massacre occurred. However, it should be noted that the 1836 date inscribed on the marker may not be accurate. Evidence indicates that Jacob Haun, for whom the settlement was named, established his mill on Shoal Creek in 1835, although it was possibly as early as 1834.⁵ Why 1836 is the date given on the new marker is not known, although it is probably assumed that Haun did not construct the mill until late 1836 when the general Mormon occupation of Caldwell County began, thereby necessitating the construction of such an operation. Regardless, the Haun’s Mill stone at Breckenridge is a “must see” for those interested in examining a genuine Mormon relic from an important, albeit tragic, episode of the Mormon-Missouri period.



*Haun's mill stone and old marker
at Breckenridge, Missouri.
Photo courtesy of Community of Christ Archives,
Independence, Missouri*



*Breckenridge commemorative envelope
and stamp cancellation, 26 May 2001.*



*Hau's mill stone and marker in the Breckenridge City Park, 22 September 2001
Photo by Alexander L. Baugh*



*Hau's mill stone description, 22 September 2001.
Photo by Alexander L. Baugh*

Notes

1. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, T. Jeffrey Cottle, and Ted D. Stoddard, eds., *Church History in Black and White: George Edward Anderson's Photographic Mission to Latter-day Saint Historical Sites* (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1995), 97. Anderson and the McLallen's may have also been assisted by H. Elmer Parker and Levi Nicholas, whom Anderson indicates furnished him the "paint and brush" to mark the stone. *Ibid.* Two images (front and back) of the millstone are given in the book. *Ibid.*, 100. The inscription made by Anderson and the others no longer appears on the stone.

2. For a brief description of the massacre, see Alexander L. Baugh, "Haun's Mill Massacre," in Arnold K. Garr, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard O. Cowan, eds., *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 473-74.

3. Pearl G. Wilcox, *The Latter Day Saints on the Missouri Frontier* (Independence, Missouri: n.p. 1972), 338. Wilcox cites an article in the *Breckenridge Bulletin* (Breckenridge, Missouri), 26 June 1941, as the source for her information.

4. See "Breckenridge opens new city park, dedicates historic millstone," *Chillicothe Constitution-Tribune* (Chillicothe, Missouri), 14 June 2001; and "Haun's Mill Mill Stone in Breckenridge, Missouri Park," *Missouri Mormon Frontier Foundation Newsletter*, no. 26 (February-May 2001): 2-4.

5. *History of Caldwell and Livingston Counties, Missouri, Written and Compiled From the Most Authentic Official and Private Sources, Including a History of Their Townships and Villages, Together With a Condensed History of Missouri; a Reliable and Detailed History of Caldwell and Livingston Counties—Their Pioneer Record, Resources, Biographical Sketches of Prominent Citizens; General and Local Statistics of Great Value; Incidents and Reminiscences* (St. Louis: National Historical Company, 1886), 100, 477. In Walter Williams, ed., *A History of Northwest Missouri*, vol 1 (Chicago and New York: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1915), 377, the author states that Jacob Haun came to Caldwell County in 1832, although this is likely an error.