

## SAMUEL BOGART'S 1839 LETTER ABOUT THE MORMONS TO THE QUINCY POSTMASTER

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Included in the journals, diaries, autobiographies, and petitions of those members of the Church who experienced the persecutions and hostilities in northern Missouri in 1838-39, are the names of many of the state's leading civil and military authorities -- Governor Lilburn W. Boggs, Circuit Judge Austin A. King, and militia Generals John B. Clark, Hiram G. Parks, and Samuel D. Lucas. These names usually appear in a pejorative or negative context, simply because the Saints felt that in their capacity of public servants these men did not treat them fairly and equitably in carrying out the law, either in defense of their rights, or against their antagonists. What was true of higher officers was also frequently the case with officials of lower rank. One Missouri officer of lesser military station whose name appears from time to time in the source material is that of Samuel Bogart, an itinerant Methodist preacher and militia captain from Ray County. No one was more actively engaged against the Latter-day Saints during the Mormon War than he, and virtually every Mormon account which includes his name paints him as a disreputable and nefarious character. Joseph Smith's official history includes the following appraisal: "Captain Bogart[s] . . . zeal in the cause of oppression and injustice was unequaled . . . [His] delight has been to rob, murder, and spread devastation among the Saints."<sup>1</sup> To understand Bogart's actions and anti-Mormon sentiments, it is necessary to briefly review his involvement and activities during the 1838 Mormon-Missouri War.

When the disturbances broke out between Mormons and vigilante forces in Daviess County in early September 1838, Major General David R. Atchison, the

supreme commander of the state militia in northern Missouri, secured the services of eight mounted companies, consisting of approximately three hundred men, and rode to the scene. The companies he employed were under the direct commands of Brigadier-generals Alexander W. Doniphan from Clay County and Hiram G. Parks from Ray County. Bogart was a captain of one of the four companies under Parks. On September 18-19, Atchison succeeded in bringing about a temporary truce, but he left Parks and his men in the Grand River region to maintain the peace.<sup>2</sup>

However, the conflict soon shifted from Daviess to Carroll County. During the first week of October, fighting erupted between Latter-day Saint defenders and county regulators at the Mormon settlement of De Witt. Because of the seriousness of the situation, Parks left the Grand River region and proceeded to Carroll County, taking with him Captains Bogart and Houston and two of the four companies of Ray County militia.<sup>3</sup> It was soon after the arrival of the Ray County troops at De Witt on October 6 that Captain Bogart began to display his true colors. As soon as the state troops arrived on the scene, Mormon leaders sent word to Parks, requesting he take some sort of action to suppress the anti-Mormon forces in the county. However, by this time the greater part of the general's men had "mutinied and were mobocratic" with Bogart at their head.<sup>4</sup> Thus, with the majority of his militia siding with the local vigilantes, the Ray County general could do nothing. The end result was that on October 10, the Mormons surrendered to the county regulators and evacuated the community altogether.<sup>5</sup>

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Less than two weeks following the surrender at De Witt, Bogart began antagonizing the Mormons again. On October 23, the captain wrote a letter to General Atchison informing him that Bogart and his Ray County troops would police the line between Ray and Caldwell Counties in order to prevent any outbreak of hostilities. However, while conducting his patrol, the Ray commander and his men began harassing Mormon settlers and took three men prisoners. When word of Bogart's activities reached Far West, a contingency of Caldwell militia was called out, under the leadership of the Mormon apostle David W. Patten, to go and rescue the men. On October 25, the Mormon company came across Bogart's unit camped on Crooked River in the northern part of Ray County. Fighting broke out. The Mormons succeeded in routing the Ray militia, confiscating their supplies and animals, and recovering the prisoners, but they suffered three casualties, one of whom was Patten, the Mormon commander.<sup>6</sup>

During the military occupation of Far West after the Mormon surrender on November 1, Samuel Bogart continued his anti-Mormon activities and further solidified his unsavory reputation among the Latter-day Saints. Following the arrest of Joseph Smith and other church officials, the regional militia officers left Far West, taking the prisoners to appear before the civil magistrates, first in Independence, then later in Richmond. In the absence of the commanding officers, Captain Bogart was appointed to apprehend the remainder of those Mormons who were charged by the state with responsibility for or participation in the civil conflict. When the Richmond Court of Inquiry convened on November 12, a total of fifty-three Mormons had been arrested, with Bogart himself carrying out most of the arrests.<sup>7</sup>

One group of Mormons that Bogart had difficulty apprehending were those members of Patten's company who had fought against his troops at Crooked River. The reason he was less successful in rounding up these men was because a large number of them fled to Iowa and Illinois just prior to the Mormon surrender. It should be noted that at the time the conflict occurred between the Ray and Caldwell County troops, the Mormons believed Bogart and his men were vigilantes, not official militia. However, when they learned that the captain had operated with official orders, LDS Church leaders believed those who had taken part could face criminal charges for their involvement. To prevent prosecution, on October 31, the day before the Mormon surrender, Joseph Smith and other

Mormon leaders had encouraged those who had been in Patten's company to leave the state immediately.<sup>8</sup>

However, not all of the Crooked River participants chose to flee. Bogart and his men hunted down those who remained. One Mormon whom the captain was intent on capturing was Joseph Holbrook, who had assailed and seriously wounded Samuel Tarwater of the Ray militia. In order to escape arrest, Holbrook hid out in the hay loft at the home of Levi Hancock. Levi's son, Mosiah, later claimed that the refugee had to remain in their loft until he was able to get out of the state. Mosiah also reports that Bogart visited the home in search of Holbrook. "The men were heavily armed, and they searched the premises around before they came up to the house late at night," Mosiah wrote. The captain then came to the door and said, "I have a search warrant for Joseph Holbreck [sic]." Levi Hancock asked them to come in, but Bogart refused and left when he came to believe Holbrook was not there.<sup>9</sup> On another occasion, Brother Holbrook was nearly discovered by a search party but successfully avoided capture by dressing up as a sick woman confined to bed. He played the part so nicely, wrote Nancy Tracy, that "he was not detected although the house was searched well."<sup>10</sup> Another Mormon the militia commander was intent on capturing was Charles C. Rich. After the Mormon surrender, Rich intended to remain in Caldwell County until he could make arrangements to leave the state with his family. However, when the Missouri officer learned the Mormon leader was still in the region, he conducted an all-out search. This caused Rich to leave the state sooner than he anticipated. Charles Rich's wife Sarah wrote that Bogart "wished to kill him, [so] my husband and some others were compelled to flee for their lives."<sup>11</sup>

#### THE LETTER

On 22 April 1839, nearly six months after the Mormon capitulation, Sam Bogart wrote the postmaster in Quincy, Illinois. By this time, most of the Latter-day Saints had moved from Missouri. The majority of them had temporarily relocated in or near the Illinois river town. The letter, which is now in the LDS Church Archives in Salt Lake City, has essentially three elements. First, Bogart indicates his purpose in writing, then attempts to discredit the Mormons, explaining that the Mormons are guilty of treason and villainy. Next, he gives a brief account of the battle of Crooked River, citing the names of nine Mormon participants whom he hopes to bring to justice. He also indicates how many of his

company's horses were taken by the Mormons following the attack, and includes a description of a few of the animals. Finally, he makes mention of the April 15 escape of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Caleb Baldwin, Alexander McRae, and Lyman Wight as they were being transported to Boone County. The letter is reproduced below. Original spelling and punctuation have been preserved.

Elkhorn April 22, 1839

To the postmaster at Quincy Ill.

Sir Your name is un known to me but believing you will use your ade in feriting out & exposing all afendors of the civil laws of oure land, I take the liberty of solisiting the information you be able to give me of cirten Mormons who I am told ar settling in your country who have ben guilty of high misdemeniors & violations of law. The[y] as a body are the most [indiscernible word] set of faniacks<sup>12</sup> that ever disgraced God almighty. The[y] are cupible of every [indiscernible word] of viliany The[y] no doubt ar pretending to be intirely inosent and with those who ar not aquainted with thare conduct in Missouri the[y] may [indiscernible word] for a while but the clovenfoot will soon appear that the[y] had [committed] conspirice [and] treason against the state is an uncontroutable fact There own documents shous the who[le] conspir[a]cy--& ar now on file in court I [indiscernible word] the [indiscernible word] with the celebrated Dr. Sampson Avirt,<sup>13</sup> and received those documents & handed them over to Gen. John B. Clark I also seen the property of the citizens of Davis County filled up in what the [Mormons] cald the local storehous under the controle of Bishop Partrage<sup>14</sup> & in his lots & stable we found six horses that had ben stolen from my company on the morning of the twenty fifth of October 1839 [1838]--

They no doubt will try to induc the people to believ that when the[y] atacked me on Crooked River that I was heading a mob but the fact is [they] consider all Missouri mob[s] as the [indiscernible word] said by reference to Genl D Atchisson. Any gentleman can testify himself my company was under Genl orders which order is on file in court And if I have not ben ordered

out I was several miles in Ray County proper but [not] to cary out treasonable designs. Jo Smith & Sidney Rigdon orderd their band of Danits to make an atack on me which the[y] did And in that ingagement thare was Chief David Patton<sup>15</sup> & six outhers fell on the ground [with] several others mortally wounded. But I being thirty five strong was forced to leave the field with the los[s] of one man Killed & four wounded In that company of Mormons was the folowing individuals I (wish to no whare thay are) Charles Rich (he took comend after Patton fell, Daniel Avrey,<sup>16</sup> James Durfy,<sup>17</sup> John P. Greene, John Carhy,<sup>18</sup> George Morey he stole a large gray horse four years old this spring [and] has ben seen with the same in Illinoi [and] the horses [indiscernible word] fine [and] has a large head, James H. Rollings,<sup>19</sup> Frances Higby<sup>20</sup>--Elias Higby.<sup>21</sup> The[y] also took to Illinoi a horse the[y] stole from me He was a fine [indiscernible word] sorel [with] white hind legs [a] strip of white in his face four years old this spring [and] [indiscernible word] a little & when [indiscernible word] throws his four feet out He's a smooth clean limber horse Also one [indiscernible word] mair [indiscernible word] fine [and] one other sorel & 20 or thirty horses of other citizens. Any information you may feel disposed to give me will be thankfully received. I also have large demands on them & wish to no when the[y] are selling You will have occasion to keep your stables & smoke houses locked until you rid your [indiscernible word] of that class of beings It is rumured here that Joseph Smith & the four others prisoners however, made thare escape from the guard who ware guarding them to Columbia, Boon County I think the report is tru Please wright to me Direct the [letter of] yours to Far West Caldwell Co Mo I am with respect wary--

Samuel Bogart

Post M. Quincy

#### OTHER ACCOUNTS OF BOGART'S CHARACTER

Peter Hardman Burnett, a Clay County resident during the time of the Mormon conflict who went on to become California's first governor, wrote a few lines

about Samuel Bogart in his memoirs. His appraisal of the man was less than favorable. He described the militia captain as not being “a very discreet man, and his men [i.e. his militia company] were of much the same character.”<sup>12</sup> At least two documented incidents surrounding Bogart’s post-Mormon activities not only tend to support Burnett’s assessment, but also suggest why the Ray commander actively operated to bring about the removal of the Mormons from the region.

Soon after the expulsion of the Latter-day Saints from Missouri, Sam Bogart moved from Ray County and took up residence in Caldwell, west of Kingston, moving onto land that was probably once Mormon property. Perhaps one of the reasons why he wanted to expel the Mormons, then, was the prospect of securing a portion of their lands for himself once they were gone. Morris Phelps believed this was the case. When he learned Bogart was living in Caldwell County, Phelps wrote, “The Captain glutted his wanton disposition and appetite for the Mormons property.”<sup>13</sup>

With the Mormons gone, the captain also believed Caldwell County provided fertile ground for him to pursue his political aspirations -- something that was less likely to be achieved in Ray County, which was more populated and which already had political incumbents. Significantly, in November 1839, Bogart was elected to fill a vacancy as a judge in the Caldwell County court, although his appointment proved to be short-lived. On the day of his election, he became engaged in a bitter argument and shot and killed his opponent’s nephew (a man by the name of Beatty). This incident was reported to have been the first murder committed in the county. Bogart was able to make his escape without being apprehended and settled in Texas, where his family later joined him. He was subsequently indicted by a Caldwell grand jury for the murder but was never arrested.<sup>14</sup>

Non-Mormon sources and Bogart’s own actions following the Mormon War indicate that his derogatory reports of Mormon figures are less than reliable. Samuel Bogart played a key role in conflicts with Mormons in Missouri, regardless of his personal motivations, and his life and writings offer glimpses into the antagonisms he and others felt against the followers of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

#### NOTES

1. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 vols., 2d. ed. rev., edited by

B.H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932-51), 3:327-28.

2. See David R. Atchison to Lilburn W. Boggs, 12 September 1838, in *Document Containing the Correspondence, Orders, &C, in Relation to the Disturbances With the Mormons; and the Evidence Given Before the Hon. Austin A. King, Judge of the Fifth Judicial Circuit of the State of Missouri, at the Court-House in Richmond, in a Criminal Court of Inquiry, Begun November 12, 1838, on the Trial of Joseph Smith, Jr., and Others, for High Treason and Other Crimes Against the State* (Fayette, Missouri: Boon’s Lick Democrat, 1841), pp. 19-20; and Atchison to Boggs, 20 September 1838, in *Ibid*, p. 27-28.

3. See David R. Atchison to Lilburn W. Boggs, 5 October 1838 in *Ibid*, p. 35.

4. HC 3:158; see also Hiram G. Parks to David R. Atchison, 7 October 1838, in *Document*, pp. 37-38.

5. HC 3:158-59.

6. *Ibid*, pp. 169-71. For an interpretive discussion of the encounter see Alexander L. Baugh, “The Battle Between Mormon and Missouri Militia at Crooked River, in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: Missouri* (Provo: Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1994), pp. 85-103.

7. See *Document*, p. 97.

8. See Lorenzo Dow Young, “Lorenzo Dow Young’s Narrative,” *Fragments of Experience: Sixth Book of the Faith-Promoting Series* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1882), p. 52, reprinted in *Four Faith Promoting Classics*, Part 2 (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968), p. 52. At least two known groups escaped before the Mormon surrender. The largest group left around midnight on October 31, the evening before the fall and surrender of Far West. Hosea Stout reported some twenty-seven men in this group. (See *Ibid*, pp. 52-54; and Reed A. Stout, ed., “Autobiography of Hosea Stout 1810-1844, in *Utah Historical Quarterly* 30 [Fall 1962]:339-40.) Lorenzo D. Young was a member of this company. In 1894, over fifty years after the event took place, Young wrote a statement which is on file in the LDS Church Archives wherein he recalls the names of twenty-one of the twenty-seven individuals. (See Lorenzo D. Young, “Statement,” August 1894, manuscript, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.) A second group left on November 1, the day of the surrender. It was a smaller group, consist-

ing of only six or seven men. (See Dimick B. Huntington, "Reminiscences and Journal," manuscript, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah, pp. 16-17; and Solomon Wixom, "The Journal and Day Book of Solomon Wixom," typescript, fld. #5, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah, p. 12.)

9. Mosiah L. Hancock, "The Life Story of Mosiah Lyman Hancock," typescript, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, p. 8.

10. Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy, "Life History of Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy," typescript, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, p. 21.

11. Kenneth W. Godfrey, Audrey M. Godfrey, and Jill Mulvay Derr, "Sarah De Armon Pea Rich (1814-1893)," in *Women's Voices: An Untold History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1890* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1982), p. 100; also "Sarah De Armon Pea Rich," in *An Enduring Legacy* 5 (1982):203.

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13. Sampson Avard.

14. Edward Partridge.

15. David Patten.

16. Daviel Avery.

17. James Durphy.

18. John Carey.

19. James H. Rollins.

20. Frances Higbee.

21. Elias Higbee.

22. Peter H. Burnett, *An Old California Pioneer by Peter H. Burnett, First Governor of the State* (Oakland: Biobooks, 1946), p. 34.

23. Morris Phelps, "Reminiscences and Journal," typescript #3, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah, p. 4.

24. *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), pp. 166-67. Little is actually known about Bogart after he left Missouri. Local history exonerates him somewhat. One writer reported that after he fled to Texas, he supposedly sent for his family and paid all of his Missouri debts. It was also reported he became "a person of prominence and high respectability . . . and [was] a model citizen of the Great Southwest." (Bertha Booth, "A True Story About Captain Samuel Bogart," *The Richmond Missourian* [21 March 1938], p. 6.)