

## Vienna Jacques: Eyewitness to the Jackson County Persecutions

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Tuesday, February 22, 1859 was a “clear & fine” day at the Church Historian’s Office in Salt Lake City. George A. Smith and Wilford Woodruff met in council while Robert L. Campbell “compil[ed] history.” Leo Hawkins was sick, John Jaques was “on index” and John L. Smith “cop[ied] history” as Richard Bentley copied a letter “from Jos S. to V. J.”<sup>1</sup> Although the recipient to Joseph Smith’s letter is unverified, “V. J.,” the initials most likely refers to Vienna Jacques, who visited the Historian’s Office that very day. Her purpose in coming to the office was probably two-fold—to provide the historians and staff additional information regarding the letter Joseph Smith had written to her twenty six-years earlier; and to clarify and correct a historical account published in the *Latter-Day Saints’ Millennial Star* regarding the tarring and feathering of Bishop Edward Partridge on the courthouse square in Independence, Missouri, on July 20, 1833. The printed account of the Partridge incident reads:

And when Bishop Partridge, who was without guile, and Elder Charles Allen, walked off, amid the horrid yells of an infuriated mob, coated like some un-named, unknown biped, and one of the sisters cried aloud, “while you, who have done this wicked deed, must suffer the vengeance of God, they, having endured persecution, can rejoice, for henceforth for them, is laid up a crown, eternal in the heavens”—surely there was a time of awful reflection, that man, unrestrained, like the brute beast, may torment the body; but God, in return, will punish the soul.<sup>2</sup>

Vienna, identifying herself as the sister who “cried aloud,” explained the situation from her perspective, pointing out that she did not say this to anyone, because she was alone.<sup>3</sup> Her statement is important because it corrects an error

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in the history of this event. And while it does not alter the historical record as we know it, her correction paints a clearer picture of what actually happened.

Vienna Jacques was born on June 10, 1787. According to the *Woman's Exponent*, she moved to Boston and became wealthy “in her self-reliant way, by patient toil and strict economy.” Although religiously inclined, Vienna was not able to find a Christian denomination that satisfied her. As she searched for a church that “characterized the primitive Church as recorded in the New Testament Scriptures,” she obtained a copy of the Book of Mormon. Later, she had a vision about the Book of Mormon and decided to ask God if it was true. After reading the book she received a divine confirmation and decided to travel to Kirtland, Ohio, where she was baptized in 1831.

Shortly thereafter she returned to Boston, where she remained for nearly two years, but in early 1833, she moved to Kirtland. Soon after her arrival, she was asked to consecrate all her wealth, some \$1,400, to the Church for the purpose of buying land for the Saints in Jackson County.<sup>4</sup> Her sacrifice was acknowledged in a March 8, 1833, revelation received by the Prophet Joseph Smith: “And again, verily I say unto you, it is my will that my handmaid Vienna Jaques should receive money to bear her expenses, and go up unto



Photograph of a portion of a mural painted by Missouri artist and muralist Thomas H. Benton (1889–1975) in 1936 in the House of Representatives lounge in the Missouri State Capitol, 2006. The scene is meant to depict the tarring and feathering of a Mormon, likely Edward Partridge. Photograph by Alexander L. Baugh.

the land of Zion . . . and receive an inheritance from the hand of the bishop” (D&C 90:28–30; see also vs. 31). The bishop referred to was Bishop Edward Partridge who had been “appointed . . . and ordained a bishop unto the church” (D&C 41:9) to watch over the members in Jackson County Missouri. Pursuant to the instructions given in the revelation, Vienna left Kirtland in May and arrived in Independence just before the hostilities against the Mormon community erupted.

In mid-July 1833, a citizens group met in Independence to discuss their grievances against the Mormons, determining that on July 20, they would collect at the courthouse to carry out their ultimatums. On that day, a committee representing the local population delivered their propositions to six Mormon leaders—Bishop Edward Partridge, A. Sidney Gilbert, John Corrill, Isaac Morley, John Whitmer, and W. W. Phelps—demanding (1) that no additional Mormons be allowed to settle in the county, (2) that Mormon residents living in the county sell their property and leave, (3) that the printing of the Mormon newspaper, *The Evening and the Morning Star*, cease operation, and (4) that the Mormon-owned storehouse close. The Mormon officials requested time to



Aerial view to the north showing the Jackson County Courthouse (built in 1933) and the Independence, Missouri, public square, 2000. Edward Partridge and Charles Allen were tarred and feathered by the local citizenry on July 20, 1833. The incident is believed to have taken place on the northwest section of the square. Photograph courtesy Intellectual Reserve.



Photograph of a painting by C. C. A. Christensen depicting the destruction of *The Evening and Morning Star* offices, ca. 1882–1884. Photograph courtesy Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

consider the orders, which was denied, whereupon the Missourians resorted to violence.<sup>5</sup>

They gathered at the Mormon printing establishment (which also served as W. W. Phelps's residence) located on Liberty Street, where "the press was thrown from the upper story, and the apparatus, book work, paper, type, &c., &c., scattered through the streets."<sup>6</sup> With the aid of a long tree which the mob put through two windows on the corner of the house, they "sprung" the corner, causing the house to collapse. The mob then pulled the remainder of the building down and pulled off the roof.<sup>7</sup> The crowd next moved on to the Mormon storehouse, where they succeeded in throwing a portion of the store goods into the street but stopped before finishing when A. Sidney Gilbert agreed to close it.<sup>8</sup> Afterwards, the rabble publically humiliated two of the Mormon men, Bishop Partridge and Charles Allen. Partridge recounted his experience: "I was taken from my house by the mob, George Timpson being their leader, who escorted me about a half a mile, to the court house, on the public square in Independence; and then and there, a few rods from said court house, surrounded by hundreds of the mob, I was stripped of my hat, coat, and vest, and daubed with tar from head to foot, and then had a quantity of feathers put upon me."<sup>9</sup>

These are a few of the events that were later recorded in what was originally called the Manuscript History of the Church. As early as 1832, Joseph Smith began keeping a personal history, but beginning in 1839, with the help of several different writers and scribes, the Manuscript History was begun.<sup>10</sup> The Prophet's attempts to compile an accurate, detailed, and up-to-date history proved to be difficult, primarily due to "long imprisonments, vexatious and long-continued law-suits, the treachery of some . . . clerks, the death of others, and . . . poverty . . . from continued plunder and driving."<sup>11</sup> As a result, his history was not completed until 1856, twelve years after his death.<sup>12</sup>

However, as portions of the Manuscript History of the Church were completed, selected sections appeared under the title "History of Joseph Smith" in the *Millennial Star*, published in Liverpool, England. It was from the account in the *Millennial Star* that Vienna Jacques read the narrative of the tarring and feathering of Bishop Partridge, which led her to indicate to the historians in the Church Historians office on that occasion that she was the woman who "cried aloud." However, she also gave a significant correction and addition, stating "that the history of Joseph Smith was incorrect . . . where it gives an account of Bishop Partridge being tarred & feathered." She reconstructed the event as follows:

At the time Bishop Partridge was tarred and feathered at Independence, the printing office was torn down, and the revelations were thrown into the streets, sister Jacques was picking some of them up, and while doing so, a mobber came a long and remarked to her, "Madam this is only a prelude to what you have to suffer," and said, "there goes your Bishop, tarred and feathered"; she looked and saw a figure passing, but did not recognize the Bishop and asked, where? The man replied, that he had first passed behind a house; she took two or three steps ~~or~~ and saw him going along, encircled in a bright light, surpassing the ~~light~~ <brightness> of the Sun; She exclaimed Glory to God! For he will receive a crown of glory for tar and feathers.

She did not make this exclamation to any person, as she was alone at the time.<sup>13</sup>

Following the expulsion of the Jackson County Saints in November 1833, Vienna Jacques moved with the main body of the Church to Clay County and later to Caldwell County. She married Daniel Shearer sometime before the 1839 exodus to Illinois, although little is known of their marriage. At the age of sixty, she made the overland journey to the Salt Lake Valley. Vienna died a faithful Latter-day Saint in Salt Lake City, Utah, on February 6, 1884. She was ninety-six years old, quite possibly the oldest eyewitness to the early Jackson County persecutions.<sup>14</sup>

## Notes

1. Historian's Office Journal, February 22, 1859, 172, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah. The entry contains only the initials of the Church historians and staff present on that occasion. George A. Smith's and Wilford Woodruff's names were easily identified by their initials. The others were identified from earlier entries in the journal. See the entries under April 23, 1858 and December 13, 1858. See also Joseph Smith Jr. to Vienna Jacques, September 4, 1833, Joseph Smith Papers, Church History Library, published in Dean C. Jesse, ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Utah: Deseret Book, 2002), 317–20.

2. "History of Joseph Smith," *Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star* 14, no. 31 (September 25, 1852): 486.

3. Vienna Jacques, Statement, Historian's Office Journal, 172.

4. George Hamlin, "In Memoriam," *Woman's Exponent*, 12, no. 19 (March 1, 1884): 152.

5. See 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, UT: Deseret Book, 1971), 1:372–76, 390–400, 410–15 (hereafter cited as *History of the Church*). See also T. Edgar Lyon, "Independence, Missouri, and the Mormons, 1827–1833," *BYU Studies* 13, no. 1 (Autumn 1972): 18.

6. Robert West, Testimony, as cited in Warren A. Jennings, "Factors in the Destruction of the Mormon Press in Missouri, 1833," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (Winter 1967): 71. See also "A History, of the Persecution, of the Church of Jesus Christ, of Latter Day Saints in Missouri," *Times and Seasons* 1, no. 2 (December 1839), 18.

7. Ronald E. Romig and John H. Siebert, "First Impressions: The Independence, Missouri, Printing Operation, 1832–1833," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 10 (1990): 63.

8. Bruce C. Westergren, ed., *From Historian to Dissident: The Book of John Whitmer* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Book, 1995), 106

9. "History of Joseph Smith," 486; also *History of the Church*, 1:390.

10. Dean C. Jessee, "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History," in *BYU Studies* 11, no. 4 (Summer 1971): 440.

11. Manuscript History of the Church, December 11, 1841, Church History Library.

12. Jessee, "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History," 464, 472.

13. Jacques, Statement, 172.

14. See Hamlin, "In Memoriam," 152; also *Deseret Evening News* (Salt Lake City, UT), February 7, 1884. Vienna Jacques's marriage to Daniel Shearer is supported by the information given by Shearer in his Missouri redress petition. See Clark V. Johnson, ed., *Mormon Redress Petitions: Documents of the 1833–1838 Missouri Conflict* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1992), 336.