

**LETTER FROM DR. THOMAS BARNES,  
PHYSICIAN OF CARTHAGE, ILLINOIS**

*Included with the letter of Dr. Barnes is the following page, marked with an "A." The firm handwriting, compared to the shaky writing of the letter, indicates that it was written at a much early date, but when and to whom is not known. A few paragraphs of that page set the stage for the letter of 1897, included herein:*

We were living in Carthage Illinois when the Mormons were driven from Missouri. If you recollect reading the history of that miserable people, they were driven from Missouri in consequence of their many misdeeds; and they settled at Nauvoo in Hancock County, Illinois. I lived in Carthage the County seat of that county. Nauvoo was some 18 miles distant.

When they first came into our country, we thought they had been badly treated, in fact we thought they were a persecuted people.

We received them with warm hearts and open arms. We gave them shelter we fed them, we clothed and took care of them. And when they got warmed they were as the viper, they bit us. I cannot describe to you the many iniquities they did commit. They murdered many of our best citizens and there was nothing (eight ox team to a diaper) that they would not steal, that they could lay their hands on if they could carry it away. The law could not reach them, because they could and would, have witnesses to prove what ever was necessary to benefit their side of the case. The result was that our lives and property was at the mercy of the worst set of outlaws that ever congregated together.

~~~~~

Ukiah City, Mendocino County, California  
November 1st 1897.

To Mrs. Miranda Haskett, My oldest child, now over sixty years old.

You asked me some days ago if I would please write down some of my recollections of the Mormons as they were, and what they did in Illinois.

I had a good opportunity to know a great deal of what they professed and what they did then. I was living in Carthage, the county seat of Hancock County, the county where a large majority of the Mormon population settled. I was living there before they came to that part of the country, and continued to live there till long after they left there for Salt Lake. I was well acquainted with the Smith family, Jo, Hiram and Bill. I believe I have seen the old patriarch their father as he was called. I knew Brigham Young, and most of the rest of the twelve apostles. I knew Sidney Rigdon, and I think I knew nearly all their prominent men. I was quite well acquainted with Daniel H. Wells, who joined them after they came to Nauvoo, and who came to be one of their very prominent men and the Major General of the Nauvoo Legion. . .

Well they came to our community from the state of Missouri, from which State they had been driven away, as I believe by violence. Many of them were quite poor and professed to be good people, and were persecuted for their religion. Our people believed they had been badly treated and that they had a right to their own religious belief, hence we received them into our houses with open arms and warm hearts. We received them into our houses, gave them employment, divided our substance and treated them as though they had been persecuted and abused saints, as they professed to be. With such treatment they became to be familiar with our domestic affairs and our circumstances.

This state of affairs went on for a time, till their leaders began to have influence, with polititions and the viper had got warm in our bosoms. They soon got the offices in their own hands and then such a hellish system of thieving and murder never was committed in our wide extended country before.

I have often said there was nothing that they could get hold of from a babies diaper to an ox team but what they would and did steal, and when they once got an article in their possession, they could prove title to it. If a gentile as they called the old citizens, could prove title to the thing stolen by ten or twenty witnesses, the mormon could get twice as many witness to prove that

the property was his. Their argument was this, The cattle of a thousand hills was the Lords, and they was his Saints, hence they were theirs. This was not only their theory but they tried to carry it out in practice.

Shall I tell you one instance as your grandfather told me, that occurred at his home on his farm near Carthage where Jo and Hyrum Smith was killed.

One bright moon shiney night he heard the sound of horses feete near his house. he got up and looked out and saw a number of men horseback near his barn, he saw some of the party go in to his barn yard, where there was a number of horses. They went and selected such as they wanted, and took them off while he stood in the shade of his house out of the thieves sight. You may ask me why did not GrandPa go out and stop them. Your grand father acted wisely to not let himself be seen. This is only one instance put of many. Really it was not safe to claim that our lives or property was our own.

I might tell you of a great many cases of theft but I think it is not necessary to enumerate. There was nothing probably more common than stealing by the Mormons from the old citizens. . . It was a common saying with the people in that county. That Jo Smith said that, dead men tell no tails. It was common saying that when persons were traced to Nawvoo and could not be found afterward that they made catfish bate. You remember Nawvoo is on the Missipi river.

Now Mirand I suppose you would like me to tell you something about the killing of the Smiths and what led to it.

Some person made complaint under oath before a justice of the Peace charging Jo Smith with some grave offence, I do not now remember what the offence was. A Warrent was issued by the Justice of the Peace, and given to a constable to serve. I met the constable on his way to Nawvoo to serve the writ, I told him I would go with him, which I did. He served the writ on the accused without any trouble. As was usual in such casaes, when a grave charge is made against a prominent person, almost every person in the vicinity would soon know it.

The city authorities was granted by their **char-**  
**ter** as they supposed unlimited authority.

They issued a writ of habious corpus I believe that is what they call the writ, and took the accused out of the constables hands and set him at liberty. While this proceeding was going on, in conversation with Mr. Smith he said to me he was not guilty of that or any other crime. He said, let them charge me with any crime, I do not care what it is. I can prove that I was not there and did not do it. . . . Well the constable returned to Carthage and made his return of his warrent.

That fact that the Municipal authorities of Nawvoo had set the authorities of the State at defiance, and taken a man charged with crime out of the hands of an officer of the law, caused great excitment all over that part of the State.

Public meetings were held, inflamitory speeches were made in more than one place in the county. The Geovener was petitioned to send the Military of the State to enforce obedience to the law. The geovener sent some two or three companies of the State troops into the county. A part of the malish [militia] rendisvoosed at Carthage and a part at Warsaw. It was arranged that on a certain day they wre to march to Nawvoo. They all professed to be ready and anxious to fight, if need be kill, and drive the Mormons out of the county. In the mean time Smith had surrendered himself to the officers of the law. The Geovner disbanded the soldiers that was at Carthage and sent word to them at Warsaw, who was then on the march for Nawvoo.

When they got the disbanding order many of them were indignant at the Geovner, resigned their offices and formed themselves into a mob determined to have satisfaction of the Smiths any way whether by authority of law or by violence. The men that was willing to set all laws aside and have the life of the Smiths at any cost formed a new company and started to Carthage where the Smiths Jo and Hiram, John Taylor, the Editor of the Mormon paper, and Williard Richards privet secretary to Jo Smith were. Joseph Smith was premusably in the hands of the constabule and the others his friends wre with him to in charge of an officer.

The under sherriff and jailor lived in the jail. The jail was a two story stone house. The lower story and part of the upper story was occupied by the jailor and his family. The jail proper was in the north end of the building upstairs divided off into cells. The front room up stairs was kind of a family room. At the head of the

stairs there was two doors one entering into the family room and the other entering into the jail proper.

I have tried to be a little particular in describing the house so as to give you an idea of the way the mob got to their victims.

I said this new company or mob as they really were had some understanding of some of the citizens of our town. I want you to know, and believe, my daughter, that I had nothing to do with the murder of the Smiths, or any other person and during all the excitement I never did any thing to any one that I would not under like circumstances they should do to me.

I said I thought some of our citizens, citizens of Carthage I mean was privy to the whole matter one of them, a prominent man and a man of influence came to me just before the cowardly murder was committed and asked me to go out on the road toward Nawvoo and see what was going on out that way. I went, and John Wilson an old citizen and Doctor Morrison a prominent Physician went with me.

~~~~~

Source: A typecarbon of two letters of Doctor Barnes, plus the page marked "A" are found in the Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah, MSS A 99. The originals are located at the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.