

Zion's Camp in Illinois, 1834



● Settlement/Camp

Chapter 4 Zion's Camp

1834

During June of 1834, a group called Zion's Camp¹ commenced a march of over a thousand miles from both Kirtland, Ohio, and Pontiac, Michigan, toward Jackson County, Missouri. The formation of Zion's Camp was commanded by the Lord in a revelation (see D&C 103) and consisted of volunteers recruited by the Prophet Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, and others to work with the Missouri state militia to restore property taken by a mob in Jackson County the previous year.

When Zion's Camp was at full strength, it included over two hundred men and several women and children. The average age of the camp's recruits was twenty-nine, with the youngest being sixteen and the oldest seventy-nine. They marched an average of thirty-five miles per day in poor conditions due to humidity, heavy spring rains, and inadequate supplies. There were two divisions of Zion's Camp. Hyrum Smith led a group that departed from Michigan and traveled through northern Illinois, and Joseph Smith led another group that left from Ohio and journeyed through central Illinois. The two divisions were to meet at a set rendezvous—the Allred Settlement on the Salt River in Missouri.² A date was not predetermined, but each leader agreed that the first to arrive would wait for the other division.

Both divisions encountered obstacles in their travels across Illinois. It is not one of the Plains States, but much of its landscape is flat. Ninety percent of



Hyrum and Joseph Smith, leaders of the two divisions of Zion's Camp

Courtesy of Church Archives

Illinois's fifty-six thousand square miles is known as the Central Plains; the other ten percent, at the southern tip of the state, is referred to as the Shawnee Hills and Gulf Coastal Plains area. Water forms many natural barriers. In fact, "about 500 rivers and streams drain Illinois. The Mississippi River forms the entire western border of the state. . . . The Illinois River, which is 273 miles (439 kilometers) long, is the largest river entirely within the state. With its branches, it drains about half of Illinois. The Sangamon River flows past Springfield to join the Illinois."³ The many river crossings posed a challenge for Zion's Camp, because funds were required for ferrying across the rivers. Crossing rivers often brought the camp into contact with larger pop-

ulations of people, something the members of the camp tried to avoid because they wanted to travel as inconspicuously as possible.

Joseph Smith's Division

The first recruits of Zion's Camp commenced their journey on May 1 from Kirtland. A mere twenty recruits were prepared to leave. While Joseph Smith rallied more volunteers, the initial group marched fifty miles south to New Portage, Ohio. Three days later, eighty more volunteers assembled. Heber C. Kimball said, "I took leave of my wife and children and friends, not knowing whether I would see them again in the flesh."⁴ George A. Smith, a nephew to Joseph Smith and one of the youngest participants, recalled the Prophet's departing message to the men: "He impressed upon them the necessity of being humble, exercising faith and patience and living in obedience to the commands of the almighty. . . . He bore testimony of the truth of the work which God had revealed through him, and promised the brethren that if they all should live as they should before the Lord, keeping his commandments, . . . they should all safely return."⁵

As commander-in-chief of the camp, Joseph Smith led the remaining volunteers to join their brethren on May 6 in New Portage, where the Prophet organized the group. He divided it into companies of tens and fifties and

instructed each group to elect a captain, who was to assign each man his responsibilities. One recruit, Joseph Holbrook, reported that the camp was organized “according to the ancient order of Isreal [sic].”⁶ The men also consolidated their money into a general fund, which was managed by Frederick G. Williams, second counselor in the First Presidency of the Church, who was appointed paymaster.

Fifteen days out from New Portage, on May 24, Joseph Smith’s division of Zion’s Camp approached the eastern border of Illinois at the Wabash River. The river was too wide and deep to ford, making it necessary to ferry across, but a regular ferry was not available. The leaders obtained boats at the village of Clinton, Indiana, for five and a half dollars. George A. Smith noted that while his company was waiting to cross, the Prophet took occasion to instruct them in prayer. The Prophet called their attention to the fact that many in the camp took unseemly positions when praying and told them that a person should cultivate a modest and graceful demeanor when praying. “When we kneel to pray,” Joseph advised the men, “we should kneel in a graceful manner such as would not cause an expression of disgust [sic] to the mind of a spectator.”⁷ The crossing was accomplished in a short time. That evening they camped in Edgar County, Illinois, about one and a half miles from the Indiana border.

For the first time since leaving Kirtland, no Sabbath meetings were held. Camp members spent their time washing, baking, and preparing for the journey early Monday morning. Since the time the camp crossed the Ohio-Indiana border, Missouri spies were a constant concern for Joseph Smith. As time passed, these spies became more bold in their efforts to prevent the camp from reaching its destination. A Jackson County spy came into camp on Sunday, May 25. Even though the man was disguised, Joseph remembered seeing him in Jackson County wearing an old sealskin cap. The man was uncouth and beligerent. As he rode off into the prairie, he boasted that the camp would never get across the Mississippi River.⁸

When Joseph Smith’s party emerged from the wet, marshy lands of western Indiana, they were unprepared for the scenery opening up before them. They paused in awe and wonder at the tableland that stretched west beyond their view. The expansiveness of the area overwhelmed them. They called it a “large prairie.” It was not only the breadth of the land that impressed them but also the serenity and beauty of its grass and flowers. Twenty-year-old Moses Martin was moved to write, “We beheld the beautiful coat of grass wave its head with the gentle breeze. This mingled with an innumerable variety of the most splendid flowers. The heads of grass each in its turn, made its gentle obeisance as the western gale . . . passed by. Oh, said I, if the poet that spoke of the wests gales and waters from the spicy planes were here, he would be lost in admiration.”⁹

On Monday the twenty-sixth, they traveled through Paris, the county seat for Edgar County, and across a sixteen-mile prairie. On the open prairies of eastern Illinois, the camp suffered because of the scarcity of good drinking water. When the camp made their accustomed noontime stop, the only water available to them was a slough, a depression in the ground filled with stagnant water and generally surrounded by trees and underbrush. Several of the men hesitated to drink, wondering if the intensity of their thirst merited drinking such water. It was not only warm to the touch but was filled with very small living animals they called “wigglers.” But their thirst won over their hesitation, and the men carefully strained the water through their teeth, spitting out the pollywogs (wigglers).¹⁰ It was a most unsatisfactory drink, but it saved the life of many animals.

During the afternoon, they had to pull their wagons through several small creeks. Joseph wrote they were grateful for good water at the well of Mr. William Wayne; at last they could satisfy their thirst. As they continued, they crossed the Embarrass River. That night they camped on a branch of the river about a mile west. There were rattlesnakes, but Joseph counseled they should not be killed but rather moved across the creek for the safety of both man and snake.

Elder Parley P. Pratt, who had traversed this same area several times as a missionary, had been appointed by Joseph Smith to recruit members for the camp along the way. Journal entries from Pratt suggest that Latter-day Saints lived all along the routes taken by Zion’s Camp and were not just confined to areas around the two Church centers, Kirtland and Jackson County. He records the results of successful missionary labors among people in congregations close to the Zion’s Camp route. Pratt invited men in these various congregations to join the camp.¹¹ Consequently, Pratt spent very little time with Zion’s Camp. At times he was miles ahead, recruiting members from established branches of the Church. A light buggy was furnished for Pratt to convey recruits back to camp. On May 27, 1834, he had traveled most of the night to reach camp. Rising early the next morning, Pratt ate breakfast, changed horses, and started out to recruit more men. By noon he had become weary. Picking out a broad, level high ground so he could have a view of people approaching, Pratt turned his horse loose to feed. No sign of human habitation could be seen. The stillness and beauty of the area were breathtaking. Giving in to the weariness of his body, he sank down into the downy softness of the grass. Within a few seconds, he was overpowered by a deep sleep. He lay in quiet repose until he was suddenly awakened. Pratt explained the strangeness of the incident: “I had only slept a few moments . . . when a voice, more loud and shrill than I had ever before heard, fell on my ear, and thrilled through every part of my system; it said: ‘Parley, it is time to be up and on your journey.’ In the twinkling of an eye I was

perfectly aroused; I sprang to my feet so suddenly that I could not at first recollect where I was, or what was before me to perform." The experience was so unusual that Pratt, upon returning to the camp, told Joseph Smith of his experience. The Prophet Joseph "bore testimony that it was the angel of the Lord who went before the camp, who found me overpowered with sleep, and thus awoke me."¹² Wilford Woodruff also recorded that he knew angels were their companions, "for we saw them."¹³

Oliver B. Huntington recorded in his diary an unusual spiritual experience related to him by Heber C. Kimball: "While the camp of Zion was on the way to Missouri in 1834, Joseph was some ways ahead of the company when there was seen talking with him by the roadside a man, a stranger. When the company came up there was no person with him. In camp that night, Heber asked the Prophet who the man was. Joseph replied that it was the beloved Disciple John, who was then on his way to the ten tribes in the north."¹⁴

They arrived at the Okaw branch on the Kaskaskia River on May 27. Here they found log canoes, which they lashed together, using them to carry baggage across the water. The horses swam, pulling the wagons, but the men had to use ropes tied to the wagons to help the horses. Not far from there, George A. Smith uncovered a spring of fresh water and named it Mormon Spring. Fresh water was precious.¹⁵ Heber C. Kimball wrote about another challenge they faced—the lack of food. They lived mostly on "johnny cake" or "corn dodger," and sometimes they had to live on less.

On May 28, the camp continued to follow the same northwest direction and camped near a small stream in Decatur Township, Macon County.¹⁶ That evening, Nathan Tanner's horse died, and he had to purchase another one. Spare horses were frequently used to fill partial teams, but the spare horses had not recovered sufficiently to be put in the harness; therefore, it was necessary to buy another horse. It was not easy to purchase a horse in the sparsely populated area east of Springfield. Camp members visited the closest homesteads, and this task consumed precious time. Some of the men in the camp became restless because of the delay and voiced their displeasure to all who remained in camp. A few of the more impatient ones commenced the day's march without permission. The Prophet Joseph Smith, concerned for the men's safety, sent word for them to return. When the men arrived back to the base camp, Joseph Smith took time to instruct them, indicating the dangers involved in being separated. He concluded by saying that they would "be in danger of being killed by an enemy, and none of us be the wiser for it."¹⁷

Taking advantage of the down time, the Prophet suggested "a sham battle," a means of practice for the camp. The company was divided into three parts. Those led by Roger Orton and Frederick G. Williams were to attack that part led

by the Prophet. Joseph noted the proficiency of the attackers and the successful defense of the camp. During this sham battle, Heber C. Kimball received a serious wound to his hand while grasping another man's sword. Joseph cautioned the men to be more careful in the future.¹⁸

Near sundown, they camped in a small grove of trees east of Springfield, Illinois, in Sangamon County. Early in the evening, the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote a letter to the Church leaders in Clay County, Missouri. He requested that messengers bring him information about their condition as soon as possible. On May 30, Frederick G. Williams and Almon W. Babbitt went ahead of the camp to Springfield to mail the letter.

Passing through Springfield, the camp continued about three miles until they reached Spring Creek, where they stayed the night.¹⁹ While camped on Spring Creek, the Prophet Joseph received the first news of Hyrum's division, which was coming from Michigan. The messenger, an unnamed member of the Church residing in the area, brought the good news of Hyrum's company. The courier reported that Hyrum's group had passed fifty miles to the north the day before. The messenger reported, "He [Hyrum] has a fine company, and they all look mighty *pert*." The Prophet asked the messenger to accompany his camp to Missouri, but the man declined. Before the camp moved, the messenger returned, being very apologetic for having declined the Prophet's invitation to accompany the camp. The messenger explained that business matters prevented him from joining them. The man asked the Prophet, "Will a hundred dollars do you any good?" Joseph replied, "Yes, it will, for we are short of money." The man promptly mounted his horse and rode away. Within the hour, he returned and handed Joseph Smith a hundred dollars and said, "I am mighty sorry I cannot go with you. Here is a hundred dollars, and if I had had a few days' notice I could have got more."²⁰ That night they camped on a small stream of water, about one mile from Jacksonville, Morgan County, Illinois.²¹

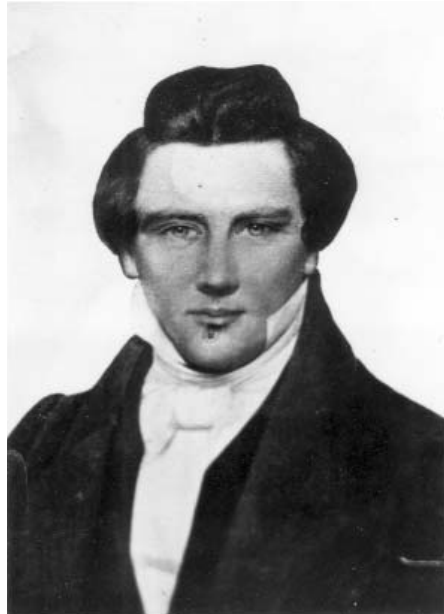
Sunday, June 1, the camp settled about a mile from Jacksonville. Frederick G. Williams announced to the people of Jacksonville that there would be preaching on the Sabbath. George A. Smith noted that two to three hundred of the local inhabitants came to hear. The Prophet (who was called "Squire Cook" by the men of the camp that day) spoke, professing to be a liberal free thinker.²² The crowd listened to his remarks with great attention, and many noted he was one of the greatest reasoners they had ever heard. Elder John Carter, a former Baptist preacher spoke next, delivering a very eloquent discourse on "practical piety." Elder Joseph Young spoke on the principle of free salvation, followed by Brigham Young, who set forth baptism as necessary for salvation. Several men selected to preach were given assignments to present the tenets of their former religion that were in conformity to the restored gospel. There were speakers

who represented Baptist, Campbellite, Reformed Methodist, Restorationer, and Unionist teachings. The result of this day of preaching and the assignments from the Prophet was the gospel being preached in its fulness. At the close of the meeting, the sacrament was administered, and all professing Christians of every denomination present were invited to partake. There was some confusion among the visiting neighbors. They had suspected the speakers had been “Mormons” and asked many questions while being very civil. But none could learn the names of the brethren, their profession, business, or destination.²³ Nevertheless, the visitors to the camp enjoyed the day’s sermons.

At the close of the afternoon meeting, Fredrick G. Williams accompanied the local residents back to their homes in Jacksonville. Williams later reported that all the comments from the citizenry were favorable; all expressed satisfaction with their treatment and the “entertainment.” They were impressed with the orderliness and friendliness of the camp. One gentleman commented that he could not ascertain who they were, where they were going, or what their business was, and concluded by saying, “I believe them to be a fine set of fellows, or a pack of damned knaves, and I can’t tell for my life which.”²⁴

Early Monday morning, June 2, the camp moved through Jacksonville. Interest in the camp, caused by the large group of people who had attended the Sunday services, swelled the ranks of the curious onlookers who lined the streets. A festive air prevailed. This unusually large number of men, teams, and wagons raised the curiosity of people in the village. This inquisitiveness was typical of frontier towns along the Zion’s Camp route. Wilford Woodruff wrote of the Jacksonville experience: “They undertook to count us; and I heard one man say . . . he had counted a little rising of five hundred. . . . This thing was attempted many times in villages and towns as we passed through, but the people were never able to ascertain our number.”²⁵

Throughout the course of their travel, the camp kept three closely guarded secrets: their destination, the number in the camp, and the identity of the Prophet Joseph Smith. When Zion’s Camp participants were asked questions concerning these three



Joseph Smith

Courtesy of Church Archives

particulars, they gave evasive answers. The camp felt it would be to their advantage to maintain a low profile as much as circumstances would permit. Joseph Smith devised ways to confuse people in towns and at ferry stations regarding their true number by having the men change positions between walking and riding.

At the Illinois River crossing, the Missourians increased the pressure against the camp by making threats. Joseph Smith received word that they would not be allowed to cross over the river. It was with concern that the camp approached the Phillip's Ferry crossing. However, the ferryman charged them eight dollars and took them across without incident. They then camped on the west bank of the river.²⁶

Before breaking camp the morning of June 3, the Prophet Joseph Smith, accompanied by several men, went to a large mound²⁷ located approximately one mile below the Phillip's Ferry crossing. It was of unusual size and lay within the proximity of a number of smaller mounds. Heber C. Kimball and Wilford Woodruff recorded in their journals that the mound was one hundred feet high and three hundred feet above the level of the river. The height of the mound enabled the men to look over the tops of the trees and view the surrounding area. At the crest of the mound, human bones were strewn around the base of what appeared to be a three-tiered altar. Heber C. Kimball wrote that the arrangement of the stones resembled the "ancient order."²⁸

The men were curious about the area, the mounds, and particularly about the scattered bones. When one or two feet of earth had been removed, the men found the skeleton of a large man. Journal accounts state that the bones were all there and in a good state of preservation. Buried in the backbone between the ribs of the man was a stone arrowhead, which Burr Riggs took. Examining the skeleton more closely, they noted that one of the thigh bones had been broken. Returning to their camp, the men loaded their belongings, hitched their teams, and moved toward Pittsfield, Pike County, Illinois. They reached Pittsfield by noon, a distance of nine miles. About that time, the history of the man whose bones had been uncovered that morning was revealed to the Prophet. He was a Lamanite named Zeph. Joseph Smith related to the men, in detail, information he had received by vision.²⁹ This being their last day in Illinois, they traveled through Atlas, which Heber described as "a very beautiful little town" and noted they were one mile from "the Snye," where they camped for the night.³⁰

On the morning of Wednesday, June 3, Luke Johnson was sent into the nearby settlements in Pike County to monitor the opinions of the people regarding the presence of the camp. Johnson was to gather any information about threats made against the camp and movements of the enemy. It was after midnight when Johnson returned; guards immediately took him to Joseph Smith's tent, where he reported. During the day, Johnson had visited several influential

men in Pike County. One of the men was the local Baptist minister, who was using the prestige of his office to stop the progress of the camp. The minister, accompanied by Johnson, visited the local magistrate; the reverend hoped there was a law that could be used to detain the Mormons. The minister reported to the local official that the men had guns “like an army,” which indicated that the minister had visited the camp. He reported that the camp had pitched their tents by the roadside and placed guards, who would allow no one to pass into the camp at night. The minister concluded his plea to the magistrate by saying these men were Mormons and were going to kill the people in Jackson County. The magistrate replied, “‘If you were traveling, and did not wish to put up at public houses, or there were none in the country, would you not camp by the road side in a tent? And if you were afraid that your horses and property would be stolen in a strange country, would you not watch and keep guards?’ ‘Why, yes,’ said the priest; ‘but they are Mormons!’ ‘Well, I can’t hear but they mind their own business, and if you and this stranger [meaning Luke S. Johnson] will mind your own business, everything will be right.’”³¹

The minister, not knowing that Johnson was a Mormon, gave him his dinner. He also gave him letters of introduction to men in Jackson County. It is not known what the letters contained, but they were handed over to Joseph Smith when Johnson reported. Johnson also reported to Joseph Smith that the minister said he had received word from a man that morning “that four hundred men were in readiness on the Missouri side, with ten hours’ notice, to use up all the camp, and he was on his way to give them the notice.”³² This became the first written evidence of the Missourian resistance to the camp.

Near midnight, the camp heard several guns fired west of the camp; these shots were answered by shots fired east of the camp. Joseph Smith responded by ordering a double guard placed around the camp for the remainder of the night. Each man was alerted to be ready to defend himself. Heber C. Kimball noted the seriousness of the situation: “There was a great excitement in the country through which we had passed, and also ahead of us; the mob threatened to stop us. Guns were fired in almost all directions through the night. Brother Joseph did not sleep much, if any, but was through the camp pretty much during the night.”³³

June 4 found the brethren camped on the banks of the Mississippi River. It would take them two days to ferry across the river. While waiting, some of the men hunted or fished. Joseph was pleased, no doubt, to have time to write to Emma, who was waiting in Kirtland. He wrote, “Gazing upon a country the fertility, the splendor, and the goodness so indescribable, all serve to pass away time unnoticed, and in short, were it not every now and then our thoughts linger with inexpressible anxiety for our wives and our children our kindred according to the flesh that are entwined around our hearts; and also our

brethren and friends; our whole journey would be as a dream, and this would be the happiest period of all our lives.”³⁴

His closing in this letter is especially poignant, in light of the fact that they would enter Missouri the next day: “Tell Father Smith and all the family, and brother Oliver to be comforted and look forward to the day when the trials and tribulations of that life will be at an end, and we all enjoy the fruits of our labour if we hold out faithful to the end, which I pray may be the happy lot of us all. . . . From yours in the bonds of affliction.”³⁵

Early Thursday morning, June 5, the camp leaders hired local ferrymen and began ferrying horses, wagons, and belongings across the Mississippi River. The ferry took the men across the river to the village of Louisiana, Missouri. The ferrying occupied the entire day.³⁶ Joseph Smith’s Christian soldiers who were not standing guard or engaged in assisting the ferrymen labored at hunting and fishing. Some retired into the solitude of a grove of trees to kneel in prayer. Milo Andrus recorded that after his “company had crossed the Mississippi River, we went into the dense forest as a company and there offered up to the Lord our fervent prayers, that He would spare our lives, and permit us to return to our families. We felt that it would be so.”³⁷

Once Joseph Smith’s division entered Missouri, the next major stop was the Salt River near the Allred settlement. There, on June 8, Joseph’s division met up with Hyrum Smith’s division, which had been traveling from Pontiac, Michigan.

Hyrum Smith’s Division

On April 21, Hyrum Smith and Lyman Wight had traveled northwest from Kirtland to Pontiac to seek more recruits for Zion’s Camp. They were to lead their group of volunteers to the rendezvous point at the Salt River in eastern Missouri. Smith and Wight visited branches of the Church in northern Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois, and eventually recruited more than twenty volunteers, over half of them from Pontiac.

This group of stalwarts, though small in number, were faithful and determined. Rain, freezing temperatures, poor roads, and sickness did not deter them from their goal. They left Pontiac on May 5, 1834, with two wagons, each pulled by a team of horses to carry their supplies. After several days of travel through Michigan and Indiana, the division arrived at the northeastern border of Illinois on Saturday, May 17, near present-day Lynwood, Illinois. The camp observed the Sabbath on the eighteenth and resumed travel the next day. The division camped at Hickory Creek, Frankfort, Will County, Illinois, that evening. Elijah Fordham,³⁸ the camp historian, wrote of trouble that came in the morning: “This morning the horses broke loose . . . and ran off with rapidity several miles over the Prairie and af[t]er running till they appeared like specks on the

horison they would wait till we got within about a mile of them and then they would run again. and so they went untill they were tired.”³⁹ Finding the horses in the prairie grass, which was four to five feet tall, proved difficult.

Following the banks of Hickory Creek was a reliable way for them to guide themselves through the prairie. Once the area near the creek became heavily wooded, it was easier for the camp to travel along the prairie. It was an advantage to the camp that Hyrum and Lyman were familiar with the route. Three years earlier both had proselytized along this same route while traveling to Independence, Missouri (see D&C 52).

At last, a sawmill owned by Lysander Denny appeared as a landmark that the leaders had been anticipating.⁴⁰ It was easier to cross the creek below the mill and dam. Leaving the area of the mill, they turned southwest, away from the creek onto the prairie. Reaching the fork of the Sauk Trail, they turned south. The north trail along Hickory Creek would have led them to Juliet (now Joliet). There was little to see there in 1834 since it “had a *name*, but not many *habitations*.”⁴¹ Following the trail made the journey easier, and they did not need to break a trail through the native grasses. They found the O’Plain River to be an exceptionally wide stream; however, it was not difficult to cross at the ford. From there, they continued over the low grassland and past “a slough of cane brakes.”⁴²

On May 21, after eight miles of walking, they reached the Du Page River in northeastern Illinois, and they crossed the river at the gristmill.⁴³ The area was heavily wooded, except for a few small clearings where crops had been planted around an occasional cabin. Since they were walking near the Chicago-Ottawa Trail, they would have seen occasional travelers.⁴⁴

After crossing the Du Page, the camp traveled on the north side of the Illinois River. A little north of the river, the land flattened into broad prairies broken by the small trees and brush that grew along creek beds. Fordham noted there were “many miry places,” making travel difficult. Under a thin layer of soil, deep layers of limestone held the water in marshes fed by springs. The horizon was hidden by woods. In places the travelers were on top of blufflike hills that inclined sharply down to the river, which was hidden among the trees. The early start enabled the camp to travel a total of thirty-three miles. Fordham noted they were “all tired.”⁴⁵

They named their May twenty-second campsite “Eminence and Glory” because of its beauty and their much provision. There was “plenty of milk” for breakfast (purchased for six cents a pail), and the camp was “quite refreshed.”⁴⁶ William Hoge,⁴⁷ the man who lived there, had “240 head of Cattle & 40 Calves and all things Comfortable.”⁴⁸

The company traveled southwest across the Illinois plains. Occasionally, the Illinois River could be seen to the south. By noon, on May twenty-second,

the camp was a mile below the village of Ottawa, “a delightful Situation,” located at the mouth of the Fox River. Here they forded the Illinois River. The camp continued its journey, crossed the Vermilion River, and stopped to camp for the evening. It had been a very warm spring day with showers. They had traveled thirty-three miles.

Hyrum Smith offered the morning prayer on May 23. That morning they crossed a prairie of twelve miles of good land. They had dinner at Roberts Grove, and they began traveling anew shortly thereafter. Fordham recorded there was a “tremendous Shower” in the afternoon, which caused them to camp “wet and sore footed,” at Crow Creek, having walked twenty-six miles.⁴⁹ To add to their discomfort, it rained that night.

All members of the camp were in good health as they began the day’s travel on May 24, but by noon Samuel Bent was “taken [ill] with the Ague,” a form of malaria. When he was “well enough to ride,” Bent and the camp continued their journey to willow springs and “came along timber land to a house.” This would be the campsite for the night. A pleasant surprise greeted them there. The house belonged to Asa and Minerva Earl, members of the Pleasant Grove branch, who were “very glad to see us.”⁵⁰ Here they obtained milk and water. This must have been a joy-filled time for the camp. The next day, Sunday, May 25, they traveled only five miles to the home of future Apostle Charles C.



Zion's Camp

Courtesy of Church Archives



Rich. At the Pleasant Grove church, there was a meeting in the morning and evening. "The Church rejoiced to see us," Fordham recorded.

On Monday, the sisters were hard at work doing the laundry for the camp. Tuesday Brother Wight held a meeting five miles from their campsite, preaching to those he had met three years earlier as a missionary. Wight also obtained a larger wagon and a yoke of cattle to replace the smaller wagon they had been using.⁵¹ Hosea Stout,⁵² who was associated with the members of the Pleasant Grove branch but was not a member until 1838, gave Wight the yoke of cattle. Stout recorded, "The effect of their preaching was powerful on me . . . and it was all that I could do to refrain from going. Elder [Benjamin] Jones and I let them have one yoke of oxen."⁵³

On May 29, Fordham wrote they "took leave of the Brethren and went most to the Village of Pekin [Illinois] on the Illinois River." Charles C. Rich, a member of the Pleasant Grove branch, joined the camp. Rich was only the second person to join the division en route to Missouri. At Pekin, Illinois, a wheel on the new wagon came off, and they lost a day waiting for repairs. On June 1, the camp observed the Sabbath, holding a meeting to partake of the sacrament. The following day the division forded the Spoon River at Barker's Ford and traveled twenty-five miles toward Quincy, Illinois.

On June 4, the company continued toward Quincy, Illinois. They "arrived at the Junction of the Mormon Road and the Quincy Road"⁵⁴ and camped there. Fordham's journal is the only one that mentions a place called Mormon Road near Quincy. The *History of Hancock County* identifies Mormon Road as a grassy track through the southeast section of the county known as the Mormon Trail, which "entered the county from Schuyler, and crossed the prairie between Plymouth and Augusta, in the direction of Quincy."⁵⁵ This section of road likely received its name from the Mormons who traveled to Independence, Missouri, prior to 1834.

The division arrived at Quincy, Adams County, Illinois, on June 5, 1834. At this time, Quincy was a mere village containing seventy houses, two inns, and nine stores. The company crossed the Mississippi River on the ferry with little difficulty. Elijah Fordham recorded in his journal that the river was muddy and full of islands. Hyrum's company traveled without incident twenty miles during the day and was happy to camp within the state of Missouri. The joy of the group came in part because their six-hundred-mile journey was almost over.⁵⁶

Joseph's and Hyrum's companies met at the appointed place—on the Salt River at the Allred settlement, on June 8. Joseph's company had arrived the day before. At that time, they reorganized the two divisions into one camp. While they were at Salt River, Joseph Smith sent Orson Hyde and Parley P. Pratt to Jefferson City, the state capital, to learn if governor Daniel Dunklin would "fulfill the proposition which he had previously made to the brethren" to provide a military escort

that would help the Mormons reclaim their lands in Jackson County.⁵⁷ Unfortunately, the governor did not keep his promise. Dunklin told Hyde and Pratt that if he committed state troops to help them it might plunge the whole state into “civil war and bloodshed.”⁵⁸ Disappointed and angered that the governor would not help them, the participants of Zion’s Camp decided to press forward and redeem their property in Jackson County without the support of state troops.

While Zion’s Camp was traveling toward Jackson County, Judge John J. Ryland of Clay County organized a meeting on June 16 between the Latter-day Saints and the old residents of Jackson County to try to peacefully reconcile their land disputes. These old settlers offered to purchase all of the property in Jackson County that was owned by the Latter-day Saints at a price determined by three disinterested arbiters on the condition that the Saints would promise never to settle in the county again. The non-Mormon citizens also offered an alternate proposal, which stipulated that the Latter-day Saints could buy all of the property owned by the non-Mormons in the county under the same financial terms. However, neither one of these proposals was realistic for the Latter-day Saints. The old settlers owned much more property than the Saints could afford to purchase. Furthermore, the Saints, in all good conscience, could not agree to never resettle in Jackson County because it is the land of Zion and a place to which they were destined to return. Therefore, the Mormons rejected the proposal.

In the meantime, Zion’s Camp continued its march toward Jackson County. On June 19, they camped “on an elevated piece of land between Little Fishing and Big Fishing rivers.” At that time, five ruffians rode into camp, shouting that the Mormons would “see hell before morning.”⁵⁹ They boasted that over three hundred men were on the other side of the Missouri River making preparations to attack the Mormons. While this was going on, a tremendous storm began to develop. According to Wilford Woodruff, “when the five men entered the camp there was not a cloud to be seen in the whole heavens, but as the men left the camp there was a small cloud like a black spot appeared in the north west, and it began to unroll itself like a scroll, and in a few minutes the whole heavens were covered with a pall as black as ink.” Elder Woodruff continued, “A sudden storm . . . soon broke upon us with wind, rain, thunder and lightning and hail. Our beds were soon afloat and our tents blown down over our heads. We all fled into a Baptist meetinghouse. As the Prophet Joseph came in shaking the water from his hat and clothing he said, ‘Boys, there is some meaning to this. God is in this storm.’”⁶⁰ Joseph Smith declared, “The earth trembled and quaked, the rain fell in torrents, and, united, it seemed as if the mandate of vengeance had gone forth from the God of battles, to protect His servants from the destruction of their enemies, for the hail fell on them and not on us, . . . our enemies had holes made in their hats, . . . even the breaking of

their rifle stocks, and the fleeing of their horses through fear and pain.” The Prophet continued, “In the morning the water in Big Fishing river was about forty feet deep, where, the previous evening, it was no more than to the ankles, and our enemies swore that the water rose thirty feet in thirty minutes in Little Fishing river.” The enemy also “reported that one of their men was killed by lightning, and that another had his hand torn off by his horse drawing his hand between the logs of a corn crib. . . . They declared that if that was the way God fought for the Mormons, they might as well go about their business.”⁶¹ As a result, the mob dispersed in confusion.

The next day Colonel John Sconce and two associates of the Ray County militia rode into Zion's Camp to learn of the Saints' intentions. The Prophet Joseph Smith said, “I see that there is an Almighty power that protects this people,”⁶² referring to the previous day's intense storm, which left the enemies of the Church in disarray. The Prophet explained that the only purpose of Zion's Camp was to help their brethren resettle on their lands and that their intent was not to injure anyone. He added, “The evil reports circulated about us were false, and got up by our enemies to procure our destruction.”⁶³ Sconce and his companions were so affected by the stories of the unjust trials and suffering of the Saints that they promised to use their influence to offset negative feelings toward the Mormons.

On June 22, Joseph Smith received a revelation that said that “in consequence of the transgressions” of the Missouri Saints, it was expedient that the “elders should wait for a little season for the redemption of Zion” (D&C 105:9). Thereafter, Zion's Camp was soon disbanded.

On June 25, Joseph Smith divided Zion's Camp into several small groups to demonstrate the Saints' peaceful intent to the Missourians. Then, on July 3, Joseph Smith authorized Lyman Wight to formally discharge “every man of the Camp who had proved himself faithful.”⁶⁴ Wight recorded that the Prophet “said that he was now willing to return home, that he was fully satisfied that he had done the will of God, and that the Lord had accepted our sacrifice and offering, even as he had Abraham's when he offered his son Isaac; and in his benediction asked the heavenly Father to bless us with eternal life and salvation.”⁶⁵ It had been an arduous journey. Before they departed for home, cholera ravaged the camp. Approximately seventy camp members suffered from the illness, and at least fourteen died.⁶⁶

Return of Zion's Camp to Kirtland

The camp dispersed after being released by the Prophet. Some people remained in Missouri in accordance with the Fishing River revelation (see D&C 105:20), and some went back to the mission field. However, most of them returned to their families in the East. Heber C. Kimball and his companions left on June 30 and arrived at Kirtland on July 26.⁶⁷

On July 9, Joseph and Hyrum and fourteen others started for Kirtland from Jackson County. By the seventeenth, they crossed the Mississippi River back into Illinois. On the eighteenth, they crossed the Illinois River near Apple Creek. On the nineteenth, they “put up [for the night] at a large farm house.” The next day, they traveled near Springfield and went there for provisions. George A. Smith recorded their crossing the Sangamon River passing through Rochester, where they received a gift of milk and bacon.⁶⁸

On the twenty-first, they again used the “log canoes” to cross the Okaw River. The horses forded the river, and they continued to the edge of the prairie. Tuesday, July 22, was a day of trial. Once the sun arose, hords of “green-headed flies’ . . . attacked the horses. The men had to run along side the animals and ‘whip the flies’ to protect the horses.”⁶⁹ Fortunately the flies did not bite after the party reached the woods. The party rested on the Embarrass River in an island of timber before resuming travel by night to avoid the flies. They arrived at Paris, Edgar County, at two o’clock in the morning. It was necessary to leave the Prophet’s horse, Marc Anthony, with some brethren, because of its poor condition. Soon thereafter, their journey took them out of Illinois. Joseph Smith and those traveling with him arrived in Kirtland in early August to the relief of the Saints in Kirtland, who had worried about reports that the Prophet had been killed in Missouri.

Many wondered why the Lord would require Zion’s Camp to march approximately one thousand miles with the intent of reclaiming Zion only to have them turn around and march back to Kirtland without redeeming their properties. This question was answered six months later in February 1835, when Joseph Smith organized the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the First Quorum of the Seventy. “God did not want you to fight,” the Prophet stated. “He could not organize His kingdom with twelve men to open the Gospel door to the nations of the earth . . . unless He took them from a body of men who had offered their lives, and who had made as great a sacrifice as did Abraham.”⁷⁰ Joseph Smith then called nine faithful members of Zion’s Camp to serve in the original Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. In addition, he filled the entire First Quorum of the Seventy with those who marched in Zion’s Camp.

The march of Zion’s Camp to Missouri through Illinois, then, was a significant event in the history of the Church. In addition, it made its mark in the history of Illinois. Several community and county histories make mention of the march.

Zion’s Camp was neither the beginning nor the end of the Saints’ travels through northern and central Illinois—the routes of Zion’s Camp became familiar territory for years to come. If Zion’s Camp accomplished only one thing, it was the establishment of a Mormon thoroughfare in Illinois.

Notes

1. For a discussion of Zion's Camp, see Warren A. Jennings, "The Army of Israel Marches into Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review* 62 (January 1968): 108. For a detailed treatment, see Roger D. Launius, *Zion's Camp Expedition to Missouri, 1834* (Independence, MO: Herald House, 1984); James L. Bradley, *Zion's Camp: Prelude to the Civil War* (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1990); David F. Boone, "Zion's Camp: A Study in Obedience, Then and Now," in *The Heavens Are Open: The 1992 Sperry Symposium on the Doctrine and Covenants and Church History* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 59–82.

2. It should be noted that some accounts of Zion's Camp as reported by historians mention July 6 as the meeting date for the two camps. We accept the dates of the journals of George A. Smith and Elijah Fordham. No date was set for the meeting; only the place was agreed upon. Whichever company arrived first was to wait until the other arrived.

3. *The World Book Encyclopedia* (Chicago: World Book, 2005), 10:64, 66.

4. Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 3rd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1945), 40.

5. George A. Smith, "My Journal," *Instructor*, February 1946, 77.

6. Joseph Holbrook, "Journal, 1806–1885," 15, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

7. George A. Smith Journal, May 24, Church Archives.

8. Wilford Woodruff Journal, May 25, Church Archives.

9. Moses Martin Journal 1834, May 26, Church Archives.

10. George A. Smith, "My Journal," *Instructor*, March 1946, 117.

11. Brothers Parley P. Pratt and Amasa Lyman returned to the camp that evening, having been sent to the Eugene branch in Indiana. They brought about a dozen men with them.

12. Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt Jr. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1961), 115.

13. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1965), 2:73.

14. Oliver B. Huntington Diary, Church Archives.

15. George A. Smith recorded, "The day was exceedingly hot and we suffered much from thirst and were compelled to drink water from sloughs which were filled with living creatures. Here I learned to strain wigglers with my teeth" ("My Journal," *Instructor*, March 1946, 117).

16. Looking at a modern map showing Lake Decatur, it is obvious this lake was artificially created in more recent times. Older maps confirm various routes in the area now covered by this body of water.

17. Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:74.

18. Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:74–75.

19. Spring Creek is to the west of Springfield and has its origin in Morgan County, southwest of Springfield.

20. Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:77; emphasis in original.

21. Reuben McBride Diary, Church Archives, May 31. Reuben states simply, "May 31, [camped] one mile from [sic] Jacksonville, held meeting, a good many attended."

22. While traveling, it was not uncommon for the brethren to use names other than their own to prevent strangers from identifying them. The names of the leaders of the Church were familiar to many of the enemies of the Church.

23. Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:78.

24. George A. Smith, "My Journal," *Instructor*, April 1946, 183.

25. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 45.

26. Moses Martin Journal 1834, June 1, Church Archives.

27. For further explanation on Zelph, see Donald Q. Cannon, "Zelph," in *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, ed. Arnold K. Garr, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard O. Cowan (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 1395.

28. Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1888), 46.

29. Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:79–80.

30. Heber C. Kimball, "Extracts from Heber C. Kimball's Journal," *Times and Seasons*, February 1, 1845, 788.

31. Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:81.

32. Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:82.

33. Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:82.

34. Gracia N. Jones, *Priceless Gifts* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 1998), 38.

35. Jones, *Priceless Gifts*, 38.

36. George A. Smith, "My Journal," 186.

37. Kate B. Carter, ed., *Our Pioneer Heritage* (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1971), 14:234.

38. To read the journal account of Elijah Fordham, see Craig K. Manscill, "Journal of the Branch of the Church of Christ in Pontiac, . . . 1834?: Hyrum Smith's Division of Zion's Camp" *BYU Studies* 39, no. 1 (2000): 167–76.

39. Manscill, "Journal of . . . Hyrum Smith's Division," 180.

40. Augustus Maue, *History of Will County, Illinois* (Topeka-Indianapolis: Historical Publishing, 1928), 2:208–9: "The Dennys settled in the Hickory Creek timber . . . Allen near Mokena, and Lysander on the Creek, where he built a saw-mill." Page 209: "The first mill was built by a Matthew Van Horne, about 1835–36, and was originally a saw-mill only, but a run of stones was afterward added, for grinding corn. A saw-mill was built prior to this by Denny, but it was a saw-mill only." The Denny mill was located in section 18 of Frankfort Township near the line with New Lenox Township. It fits the description of the mill referred to by Fordham. Lysan Denny was married to Martha P., widow of Sterling Fisk. The wedding was performed at Nauvoo, by Isaac Higbee. A number of missionaries record in their Journals, staying in this home, e.g. Arza Adams (see *Hancock County, Illinois Marriage Records*, May 2, 1840).

41. Hopkins Rowell to George H. Woodruff, quoted in Maue, *Will County*, 309; emphasis in original. In this letter, Rowell recalls a journey through Joliet area in 1834. Joliet, in July 1834, was not known; in July 1835, it was "a city in embryo." The original name for Joliet was Juliet, and a nearby community was named Romeoville.

42. Parrish Register of the Christ Episcopal Church, Joliet, Illinois, 1838–1856, ed., D. Andrew Bale, 67.

43. Manscill, "Journal of . . . Hyrum Smith's Division," 180.

44. *Illinois Place Names*, 343. First called Dresden by the settlers, the name would later be changed to Channanon, as the area had been called by the natives. This name meant "three rivers." The settlement is above but near the juncture of the DuPage, DesPlaines and Kankakee rivers, after which is called the Illinois River (see *DeLorme Atlas and Gazetteer of Illinois* [Freeport, IL: DeLorme Mapping, 1991], 36).

45. Manscill, "Journal of . . . Hyrum Smith's Division," 180.

46. Manscill, "Journal of . . . Hyrum Smith's Division," 180.

47. William Hoge had come to Grundy County, Illinois, in 1830, and had purchased a section and a half of land. Hoge is noted in county histories for being very successful in raising corn and cattle. During the Sac War (Black Hawk), his property was not disturbed, and he was able to increase his holdings. In 1834 Hoge was building a log schoolhouse for the benefit of his family of nine children.

48. Manscill, "Journal of . . . Hyrum Smith's Division," 180.

49. Manscill, "Journal of . . . Hyrum Smith's Division," 180.

50. Manscill, "Journal of . . . Hyrum Smith's Division," 181. Asa Colton Earl was born in 1810, the son of Joseph T. and Dorcus (Wixom) Earl. He married Minerva Rich, daughter of Joseph and Nancy (O'Neal) Rich, earlier in 1834. Asa was baptized by Minerva's brother, Charles C. Rich. Minerva had been baptized in 1832. This couple lived in Tazewell County until at least December of 1836, as Charles records visiting them at that time. They became the parents of three children. Minerva died in 1841 at Whiteside, Fulton County, Illinois. Asa remarried in 1843 to Nancy Allred, with the ceremony being performed by Charles C. Rich. Asa and his family went west with the Saints (see Personal Ancestral File, Marriage Records of Tazewell County, Illinois).

51. See Manscill, "Journal of . . . Hyrum Smith's Division," 181.

52. Manscill, "Journal of . . . Hyrum Smith's Division," 181. Allen Joseph Stout wrote of Hosea, "In spite of Hosea's conversion, but lack of courage to be baptized . . . he returned to Stout's Grove and commenced preaching the doctrine . . . to his astonished relatives. Two years later Hosea was still hesitating when Hyrum Smith and Lyman Wight passed through Stouts Grove on their way to join the main body of Zion's Camp." Hosea was born in 1810, the son of Joseph and Anna Stout. His mother died when he was nine. He first met Morris Phelps in a settlement called "Willow Springs" (Dillon), about three miles from Springfield. He served in the Black Hawk War and later taught school at Ox Bow prairie. He returned to Horn Creek and worked for his brother-in-law, Benjamin Jones. The family migrated to Missouri (see Stout Family Biographies, comp., Wayne Dunham Stout, Church Archives). The *History of McLean County* records, "The third teacher [in Danvers Township] was Hosey Stout. He soon went off to Nauvoo and joined Joseph Smiths Mormon Band and after Smiths death went off to Utah. He became one of the Twelve Apostles under Brigham Young. He continued in Mormonism participating in all their peculiarities and is said to be living with several wives." The history was incorrect in identifying Stout as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve (*History of McLean County, Illinois* [Chicago: Wm. LeBaron Jr. & Co., 1879], 568–69).

53. Hosea Stout, *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout, 1844–1861*, ed. Juanita Brooks (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, n.d.), xiv.

54. Manscill, "Journal of . . . Hyrum Smith's Division," 182.

55. T. H. Gregg, *History of Hancock County, Illinois* (Chicago: Chas. C. Chapman, 1880), 507.
56. Manscill, "Journal of . . . Hyrum Smith's Division," 182.
57. Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:88–89.
58. Pratt, *Autobiography*, 115.
59. Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:103.
60. Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:104n8.
61. Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:105.
62. Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:106.
63. Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:106.
64. Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:123.
65. *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (Lamoni, IA: Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1897), 1:515–16.
66. See Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:119–20.
67. Stanley B. Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 33.
68. George A. Smith, "My Journal," *Instructor*, July 1946, 321.
69. Smith, "My Journal," *Instructor*, July 1946, 321–22.
70. Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:182.