

Joseph Smith's Kidnapping

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May 6, 1842 - 9 men received the endowment.

Independence, Missouri - Lilburn W. Boggs, living close to town square. While in his study an unknown assailant shoots him and he is hit by lots of shrapnel. Most people say that the assailant was Orrin Porter Rockwell. He was at this time in Independence delivering their son. When they get there his wife decides to divorce him and stay in Independence with her mother. One theory is that he comes out of the saloon and decides to shoot Governor Boggs. Orrin Porter Rockwell's comment when asked if he shot Governor Boggs he said that if he had shot him he would have been dead. Some people say it was political opponents. Finally John C. Bennett writes a letter saying that Orrin Rockwell would have done it to fulfill Joseph's prophecy that Boggs would die a violent death. Joseph is accused with the murder attempt. The laws of the land didn't allow for extradition. The Missourians put a bill out with a reward for bringing Joseph to trial in Missouri. Joseph no longer feels that he can stay in Illinois and goes to Iowa Territory. He finally concludes that he can hide on an island about 100 yards from Nauvoo. It's a good hiding place because every state claimed that their borders end at the Mississippi- islands there were no man's land. Rumors start to fly about where Joseph is. Some said he'd gone to Wisconsin, others to Washington D.C., others that he'd gone to Europe. The General Authorities encourage him to go to trial and they will testify on his behalf. Joseph agrees but he won't go to trial in Missouri or Iowa, only in Illinois if there is a judge that cannot be bought off. They find Nathaniel Pope in Springfield, Illinois. The case is "The State of Missouri vs Joseph Smith". Boggs is so ill that he cannot come to do his case. Joseph testifies that he has never prophesied that Boggs would die a violent death. The judge rules in Joseph's behalf. The Latter-Day Saints are thrilled. They think their problems in Missouri are over. The Missourians go home and say that they cannot get a fair trial in Illinois. They tell Boggs that the only way to get justice was to kidnap Joseph and bring him to Missouri. Sheriff Reynolds is called in to see Boggs. He's sent to kidnap Joseph. Reynolds says he wants the money that was offered as a reward, and to be Governor. He stops in Carthage, Illinois and is listening to people and starts hearing things about Joseph Smith - he has 40 bodyguards, the head of the Nauvoo Legion (the standing army of the US was 8500 men, the Nauvoo Legion had between 4-5 thousand men), the young boys in town were part of the Whittling/Whistling Brigade and follow him around with knives, whittling on wood and whistling to alert the women of the town to close their doors. The sheriff decides he cannot do this alone. Talks to the sheriff of Carthage - Sheriff Wilson says he'll help him out for half the money. They decide to disguise themselves as Mormon Missionaries. They come into Nauvoo but don't get a look at Joseph Smith. Emma at the time receives a letter from a nephew named Lorenzo Watson to say that he had joined the church. In the same letter she learns that her parents have died. She also learns that her sister has moved to Dixon, Illinois and Emma is invited to come visit and renew friendship. This is the first communication since joining the church. Joseph is pretty excited too, and he concludes that they're going to take the buggy and go! He left behind all the protection of Nauvoo. The sheriffs hear that they have left and follow them up to Dixon, because he is the most vulnerable. The two sheriffs come out as friends and then jump off horses and one puts a gun to his head and another to his throat and tie him with rope and put him in the wagon. The family runs out and Joseph shouts to Emma - take everyone back inside, I'll be alright. Just before his father died in 1840 he asked for a blessing and he was promised that the Lord would permit him to live to fulfill all the work that he needed to, he was confident that he would be ok. William Clayton was visiting Joseph at the time. William didn't come out to help save Joseph, even though all the women and children did. He goes and gets on a horse and rides to Nauvoo to tell the city. When he gets there Hyrum is holding a meeting of the Freemasons. Hyrum jumps up in the middle of the meeting and says they have 5 minutes to go home, get all their weapons and ammunition to meet back at the lodge. Within 5 minutes they return FULLY armed (one man even brought a cannon). Hyrum announces that his brother has been kidnapped and that he thinks that it is an all out war. He asks if any man there would be willing to give his life to save Joseph. They block off the river, no one crosses the river to Iowa or Missouri. He says he needs \$700-\$800, Brigham Young says he will finance the whole thing. He passes around his hat and says he'll pay back whatever money

the men have on them. 40 men are sent up to Dixon on the Great River Road.

The kidnappers are very proud of themselves. They go to the main center of Dixon and show their prize. They decide that they want to cross the river where they don't have to pay so much. So they go down the Great River Road. They stop in a tavern and show off Joseph along the way. The kidnappers and the 40 men going up to Dixon collide and Joseph is found. The 40 men want to hang the kidnappers and Joseph diffuses the situation and says to let them free. Joseph says he's hungry and to have the women in town to basically throw a huge street party. Joseph has the kidnappers riding horses coming in next to him. The kidnappers are jeered, spit upon etc. Emma is home and insists that the two kidnappers sit through dinner at his home. At the end he turns to the sheriff and says that he has hosted them as long as they had hosted him but that he no longer wants to host them and if they wanted to spare their lives then they should leave the town post haste. Boggs tells Reynolds that he has screwed up and that he will not let him have a cent of the money and that he cannot have the political power. Reynolds says he's going back and he wants Joseph dead. Reynolds is now planning carefully, he's going to take as many people with him as possible. He knows he can't take them in the spring because they are all farming, nor the summer, he can leave right after fall when the harvest is in. In 1843 at the end of the harvest he goes to the town square of Independence and says who's with me. Reynolds tells the men to meet him in Carthage. Reynolds starts across the state to all the little towns to get more followers. By the time he reaches the Mississippi he has 1800 men. They all took upon themselves the name of Joe the Wolf hunter. Joseph starts issuing edicts that people ought to be so careful, stay in groups, obey curfew etc. Joseph says that his life is in more danger from a fool in Nauvoo than all of his combined enemies in Carthage.