

The Last Twenty Days of Joseph's Life

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10:57 AM

June 7- June 23, 1844

June 7th- In the back of Robert Foster's Medical practice they issue the first issue of the Nauvoo Expositor in a log cabin out back. They demand that there is a repeal of the Nauvoo charter (no more Nauvoo legion, court system, mayor etc.)

June 8th- Joseph calls an emergency meeting of the Nauvoo City Council. The chairman of the council was Hyrum. The issue was what are we going to do about the Nauvoo Expositor? There was a lot of discussion, 7.5 hours. It comes down to which is greater: freedom of religion or freedom of the press? WE don't like the idea of stopping a press or allowing them to slander our religion. No decision was made.

June 9th- Sunday. Joseph had planned to speak to the saints in one of the groves near the Nauvoo temple. Joseph was suffering from "lung fever" and therefore didn't speak but gave the opportunity to Hyrum.

June 10th- Joseph calls another emergency meeting to discuss the Nauvoo Expositor. Huge debate back and forth, it lasts another 6.5 hours before coming to a unanimous decision. They decide that the Expositor must be stopped. They don't decide to riot or anything, just that it cannot continue. After the meeting, Joseph calls in the local Sheriff John P. Green. He gets carried away. He goes and finds people to help him stop the Expositor. 300 men join up and are there by the time they reach the Nauvoo Expositor. They completely destroy the press, type and second edition of the newspaper. They go to Joseph's home and Joseph can hear the words of John P. Green tells Joseph that the Nauvoo Expositor will never publish again. Joseph gives them a cheer three times "Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah for the house of Israel." and tells them to go home.

June 11th- The owners of the Expositor come to work to find their printing shop ransacked. The owner's proprietors set the building on fire and ride to Carthage. A fire in the business district is trouble because you have buildings one next to another. A fire brigade is formed to put out the fire. The building burns to the ground and others are damaged. The conspirators have checked into the Hamilton hotel in Carthage and go immediately to a county judge to get a warrant for Joseph and Hyrum for inciting a riot which started a fire that destroyed the Nauvoo Expositor.

June 12th- A county sheriff comes to arrest Joseph in the early afternoon. Sheriff Bettisworth. The Sheriff had been married by Joseph so he at first think it's a social call until the arrest warrant is pulled out. Joseph had had 38 arrest warrants served upon him in his life. Joseph sees on the warrant that he can appear before any judge in Hancock County. He tells the sheriff that he will go to Aaron Johnson, the city judge. Aaron Johnson clears his docket and brings the case before him, Joseph testifies and says what happened. The sheriff testifies and takes full blame. Aaron Johnson's verdict is that Joseph and Hyrum are innocent.

June 13th- Sheriff Bettisworth comes again, and gives Joseph another arrest warrant for Joseph, Hyrum, and the entire city council. Same charges, same form, so he can again appear before any judge in Hancock County. Joseph elects to appear before Daniel H. Wells- non-member, justice of the peace, gave Joseph the 4 acres that the Nauvoo temple was built upon. Full trial goes on again. When Joseph is called upon to testify he gives the full account of the first vision and Daniel H. Wells becomes Joseph's last convert before he dies. Joseph is again acquitted, but he is now afraid. He calls in young men with access to a horse who are good horse riders and tells them to fan out throughout the US and tell them to come home. This is the only time that he goes to get the twelve home, not KSS not any other difficult time. By the time any of them find the quorum of the twelve Joseph is dead.

June 14th-17th are similar The morning of the 14th the fathers of the horse-riders come to Joseph and ask if there's anything they can do to help. If the man is under the age of 45 Joseph calls them on a mission to Carthage. Not all of these men accepted but 100 of them did and left immediately for Carthage. Their assignment was not to baptize or spread the gospel but to change public opinion of Joseph. They literally were heading into the lion's den. Men over 45 years of age the first question was "are you literate?" If so they were asked to send letters to Governor Thomas Ford of Illinois and the

President of the US because they are looking at a war on their hands. They want these people to come to Nauvoo to stop the war. They also write to congressmen, house of representatives and ask relatives and neighbors to do likewise. These men do so. Emma organizes women to form petitions to send to Governor Ford. Emma feels confident in Governor Ford because they have worked well together in benevolent endeavors in the past.

June 18th- Mail carriers are stopped and turned around. That's a federal offense. A line of aggression is formed against them. They flip their wagons and form a line and move forward. When Joseph hears that this has happened he puts on his Nauvoo Legion uniform and gives a speech across the street from the Mansion house. He announces that his sword will not be put in his sheath, and asks the Legion to defend the city to the death as he is prepared to do. Nauvoo is transformed instantly into a military zone. Joseph tells the men to hold a line and not let any one in and not break it except for two reasons. 1) If there is any news from the governor 2) If any member of the quorum of the twelve comes in. From the 18th-21st there are no breaks in the line. They were told to shoot but not kill. Not even returning missionaries were allowed in

June 22nd- the line is broken because a group of men announce themselves as messengers from Thomas Ford. Governor Ford has taken up his official residence in Carthage and staying in the Hamilton Hotel. They also announce that they are the Governor's posse. Joseph concludes not to meet the posse at the front door but to hide in the second story of his home. In an upstairs bedroom there was a closet there was a secret room and he could hide back there. Emma welcomes them and is pleased that the Governor is coming. Emma offers them refreshments... and then they hand Joseph's friends an arrest warrant for the same charges as before. One of Joseph's friends takes the warrant to Joseph. However, this warrant no longer has the clause of standing trial by any county judge. He has to appear before a judge in Carthage. Joseph tears up and says "There is no mercy, there is no mercy here." It's decided that Joseph will escape. Joseph goes out the back door down a ladder and moves towards the river. He's looking for Hyrum. As he works his way along it is reported that he is sobbing. He gets Hyrum and they decide to escape to Iowa. There is no extradition orders that are valid at this time. They find a young boy named George Black (related to Sister Black's husband :) who has a rowboat and takes them across the river to Iowa. The posse is disappointed and go back to Carthage empty-handed. Joseph's friends gather on the Iowa side of the Mississippi to discuss what they ought to do. Some of them say go to Carthage, we'll post bail and it will be taken care of in no time. They figure he's already been acquitted twice, why not again. Another group says that if he goes to Carthage there's no way he'll make it out alive. Finally Joseph concludes "I see my way dear" he said he had been prophesying for years that the saints would go to the Rocky Mountains. If he and Hyrum go first they will prepare a way for the Saints.

June 23rd - Carthage is teeming with militia leaders from surrounding counties. Joseph has sent men to get Orrin Porter Rockwell and they will all escape to the Rockies. Rockwell decides to go and talk to Emma about this. Emma was 5 months pregnant at the time and hears that Joseph is going to escape and that he will not come back. She requests to send a letter to Joseph. In the meantime Joseph and Hyrum have been making huge plans about how they're going to get to the Rockies. Rockwell brings the letter from Emma at this point. In the letter Emma says Joseph is a coward to escape from Nauvoo which will make Nauvoo like Far West and Hauns Mill. She has great confidence in Governor Ford and if he leaves then his friends will be hurt. Joseph says on this occasion "If my life is of no value to my friends, it is of none to myself, though I am void of offense towards God and all men."

June 24th- by 6am, Joseph and Hyrum are back in Nauvoo. They are going to hurry to Carthage so that hopefully they can go and hold trial before the Wolfhunters are awake. Hyrum goes to visit his wife Mary Fielding Smith. They read passages from Ether before he leaves. Hyrum's son Joseph F. is there playing marbles. Hyrum tells Joseph "Never forget me, I will die for the truth." Joseph Smith goes home and Emma is ecstatic that Joseph is home and that he's going to go for trial. Joseph tries to say goodbye and Emma won't hear it. Joseph says he wants to give Emma a blessing but doesn't have time. He tells her to write out a blessing and send it to him if he doesn't come back from Carthage and he will sign it. Emma did it, but the blessing was very short-sighted. Her blessing was to get through the day not the rest of her life. They now head out of town with 40 friends. As they move out of town they ride up the bluffs and Joseph looks back on Nauvoo and his comment is "These are the best people and this is the best place, little do they know the trials that shortly await them. I will give my life for Nauvoo."

