

Missouri State Archives: Finding Aid 5.1

Mormon War Papers, 1837-1841

[Full-text transcription of: Witness John Cleminson, a Mormon dissenter and Clerk of Caldwell County Circuit Court]

John Cleminson a witness, produced, sworn, and examined in behalf of the State, deposeth and saith. Some time in June ("last" crossed out) I attended two or three Danite meetings, and it was taught there as a part of the duty of the band, that they should support the presidency in all their designs right or wrong; that whatever they said was to be obeyed, and whoever opposed the presidency in what they said or desired done, Should be expeled the county or have their lives taken. The three composing the Presidency was at one of those meetings, and to Satisfy the people, Dr Avard called on Jos Smith Jr, who gave them a pledge, that if they led them into a difficulty, he would give them his head for a foot ball, and that it was the will of God these things should be so.- The teacher, and active agent of the Society was Dr Avard, and his teachings were approved of by the presidency- Dr Avard further taught as a part of their obligation, that if any one betrayed the secret designs of the society, they should be Killed and laid aside, and nothing said about it.- I heard Sidney Rigdon's sermon, commonly called the salt sermon, and its purport and design was about as other witnesses have state there before me. When process was filed against Joseph Smith Jr and others, in my office as clerk of Cald-well circuit court, for trespass, Jos Smith Jr told me not to issue that writ, that he did not in-tend to submit to it: that it was a vexatious thing and I had a right to judge whether a suit was vexatious or not: and that he would see me out in it Hiram Smith (who was not a defendent in that suit) also joined him in this promise If I would not issue the writ. This was previous to the last term of the Caldwell circuit court.- I considered myself not as a proper judge as to whether it was a vexatious suit or not. Jos Smith Jr said it was a vexatious thing, and that he would not suffer it to be issued; and I felt myself intimidated and in danger if I issued it. Knowing the regulation of the Danite band.

On the monday prior to the last Daviess expe-dition I heard Mr Rigdon say that those who had heretofore been backward in taking up arms in defending themselves, ought to or should be put upon

upon their horses with bayonets and pitch-forks
("and forced" crossed out) and Smith said forced into the front
of the battle, and that the property of those who
would not go into the war, should be consecrated
to the use of those who did. Mr Smith said their
beef, corn and potatoes they would take_

I went in the expedition to Daviess, in which
Gallatin was burnt, as I felt myself compelled to
go from the regulations which had been made.

It was generally understood that every move
-ment made in Daviess was under the direction &
supervision of the first presidency of whom
Jos Smith Jr & Hiram Smith were in Daviess

The following of the Def.th were in that expedition to
Daviess. viz: Jos Smith Jr. Hiram Smith. P.P
Pratt Lyman Wight Caleb Baldwin, Alanson
Ripley, _ John Buckhannon was not there, George
W. Harris was there, Darwin Chase was there, Elijah
Newman was not there, Isaac Morely was not there,
Moses Clawson I think was there, Alexz McRay was
there, John S Higbey I think was there Ebenezer Robinson
& and Daniel Pettigrew were there Edward
Partridge was there. David Frampton was not
there. Sheffield Daniels I think was not there.
Danil Carr was there. James H Rawlings was there
Maurice Phelps, I think was there.

Of the troops at Diahmon in this expedition Some
were sent on one expedition, and some on another
but all were there mutually to aid and assist
each other in all that they undertook or did on
that occasion- When we first went to Da
-viess. I understood the object to be to drive out the
mob If any should be collected there. but when we got there we found none. I
then learned the object was, from those who were
actively engaged in the matter to drive out all
the citizens of Daviess, and get possession of their
property. It was understood that they burnt
mormon houses, as well as the houses of the citizens;
the burning of the mormon houses was to bring the
Mormons into Diahmon as I understood it_ It
was said by some that the mormons were burn
-ing their own houses, and by others that the
mob were burning them, and so much was
said about it, that I did not know when I got
the truth_ I heard Demick B. Huntington
one of the Mormon troops say, that Mis-
[“ourians” crossed out]

sourians at Gallatin had taken the goods out of Stollings
[“the” crossed out] store, and piled them up, and set fire to the
store house, and had gone off for waggons to haul
off the goods but that our waggons had got there
first and had hauled them off.-I understood
that the goods were deposited with the Bishop of

the church at Diahmon as consecrated property to the church. A great deal of other property was brought into the mormon camps, but Know where it came from, but understood it to be consecrated property. It was frequently observed among the troops, that the time had come when the riches of the gentiles should be consecrated to the saints.- From the time of the return of the troops from Diahmon the town of Far West was kept under military rule, troops paraded, and disciplined every day. It was a generally prevailing understanding among the troops, and seemed to be so much so towards the last, that no other impressions prevailed, that they would oppose, either militia or mob, should they come out against them; for they considered them all mob at heart. this was about the time the militia arrived there- As to Hiram Smith personally, I have thought him to be a good meaning man, but in connexion with others under the order of the Daniete society. I thought, I had as much to fear from him as from others. As to the constitution testified of, by Dr Avard I never heard of it until he disclosed it when he was taken prisoner_ I did not attend the first meetings in which the Danite band was formed. I did not see Hiram Smith in the last expedition to Daviess have arms upon his person, but he constituted one of the consellers of Jos Smith Jr & it was not usual for any of the Presidency, composed of Prest Smith & his consellers to take any & go into the ranks When I arrived at Diahmon, I staid the first night at Lyman Wight's house & informed Wight that Genl Parks was coming out with the militia. Wight answered that he did not wish Parks to come out, & sent an express to him not to come, he remarked that they could settle the difficulties themselves. And further this deponent saith not

John Cleminson