

THE SEARCH FOR GOD'S COUNTRY:  
A RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF NORTHWEST MISSOURI IN THE  
NINETEENTH CENTURY

A THESIS PRESENTED TO  
THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES  
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTERS OF ARTS

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MARYVILLE, MISSOURI  
NOVEMBER 2017

Abstract

Despite being a rural and relatively isolated region, northwest Missouri holds a historically significant religious past. In the nineteenth century, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Protestant denominations, and Catholics established thriving, frontier communities throughout northwest Missouri's river valleys and plains. Although each faith held distinctive beliefs, western migration and conflicts shaped their experience. Fertile soil, river access, and unsettled land attracted settlers from the United States and Europe. Although the immigrants came seeking a new start, they brought with them pre-existing disputes. Mormons settled near the Missouri River and Grand River to escape economic strife and religious persecution. As Joseph Smith's followers endeavored to find a new Zion, disputes with non-Mormons led to the church's expulsion from the state. Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and other Protestant faiths brought the traditions of the Second Great Awakening to the Platte Purchase Region. Protestant churches and communities thrived until slavery and the Civil War created discord with congregations. Catholic religious orders and lay immigrants also settled throughout the Platte Purchase Region. The clergy and settlers worked together to develop the region despite internal and external strife. Global industrialization, expansion of democracy, and the Age of Exploration pushed immigrants out of Europe and transformed religion in the United States. Collectively, each factor developed the religious history of northwest Missouri.

## Acknowledgements

While it takes a village to raise a child, it has taken a community to help complete this thesis. I owe a great deal of gratitude to all those who supported and inspired me as I completed my thesis and degree. First and foremost, thank you to my wife, Katie, and our children for their love and endurance. Thank you to my parents and grandparents who took me to museums and told me tales of days gone by. Their stories inspired me to appreciate and learn more about local history. Researching local history presented significant challenges, but with the help of individuals like Miss Amy Kretzer and Mrs. Kristy Johnson of the Central High School Library in St. Joseph, Sister Mary Rehmann, CHM, and others the task became enjoyable. I owe my development as a historian and writer to the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at Northwest Missouri State University. Thank you to Dr. Joel Benson and Dr. Dawn Gilley for setting a high standard for me. I am also indebted to Dr. Robert Voss for his support and guidance throughout the thesis process. Finally, I would like to dedicate this work to the two individuals who inspired my career and graduate work: my high school history teachers. Miss Deborah Barnhart and Mr. William Luce motivated me to achieve a master's degree in history when I was a student at Savannah R-III High School. To this day, their passion and joy for teaching history drives me in my classroom. Thank you.

- Joseph. S. Barbosa

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## Introduction

Americans have continually looked for a territory to call their own; a land that holds great promise for generations to come. For thousands of nineteenth-century pioneers, their search for God's county brought them across the vast Mississippi River and up the wide Missouri. The settlers found the river valleys of northwest Missouri the ideal place to homestead and cultivate their religious traditions. The arrival of Christian sects such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Protestant denominations, and Catholics transformed northwest Missouri from a frontier territory to a developing region with a thriving economy and established religious institutions. The transformation was far from simplistic as each faith experienced successes and strife. While the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints built thriving communities near sacred sites in northwest Missouri, suspicion, politics, and fear associated with their religion drove them from the state. When Missouri annexed the Platte Purchase Region in 1836, Presbyterian, Methodists, Baptists, and other Protestant branches established new congregations, but divisions over slavery and unrest related to the Civil War brought conflicts to their churches. Catholic religious orders and lay immigrants helped to develop the Platte Purchase by establishing churches, schools, hospitals, and communities. Throughout the nineteenth century, Mormons, Protestants, and Catholics migrated to northwest Missouri for the region's economic prospects and religious opportunities. However, expansion of the frontier brought internal and external conflict which affected the area's development.

Northwest Missouri's geographic location, abundant natural resources, and availability of land enticed pioneers to settle the region. The northwest corner of the state

is a broad area which stretches from the Missouri River Valley to the south and west and the Iowa state line to the north. The region's eastern boundary exceeds not further than the Chariton River in central Missouri. Access to rivers allowed humans to hunt, travel, and farm the area for centuries. Native Americans first traveled through upper Missouri River Valley in route to the sacred Black Hills and described northwest Missouri as the "road to paradise."<sup>1</sup> By the eighteenth century, Catholic missionaries from France and Spain brought Christianity to the region. When France lost its Canadian holdings in the Seven Years War, 1756-1783, French Canadians immigrated to the Louisiana Territory seeking furs and religious freedom. Traders built cities reflective of their heritage along the Missouri and Mississippi such as St. Louis, St. Charles, and St. Joseph.<sup>2</sup> Following the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and Missouri's admittance into the Union in 1821, the United States federal government settled bands of the Sioux, Sac and Fox, Missouri, Omaha, Oto, Yankton, Santee, Medawah-Kanton, Sissiton, and Wahapakoota between the state's original western border and the Missouri River. In the 1830s, Mormon, Protestant, and Catholic settlers began arriving and developing the area.<sup>3</sup>

The opening of the Missouri Territory for settlement pulled different Christian denominations to northwest Missouri. In 1830, Joseph Smith and leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints migrated to Jackson County, Missouri in search of a new Zion. Mormons, or Saints as they call themselves, attempted to create a thriving community, but the new faith's communal society and abolitionist opinions created

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1. Duane G. Meyer, *The Heritage of Missouri* (Springfield, Missouri: Emden Press, 1993), 180.

2. Meyer, *The Heritage of Missouri*, 48.

3. Meyer, *The Heritage of Missouri*, 182.

tensions in the slaveholding region. Throughout the 1830s, an anti-Mormon mentality forced Mormon settlers to relocate north of the Missouri River. Following the Panic of 1837, an influx of Mormons amplified the anxieties in the Grand River Valley. In summer of 1838, strife led to the Missouri Mormon War. Although a minor military conflict, the unrest convinced Missouri Governor Lilburn Boggs to force the Mormons out of the state. Following the Civil War, branches of Smith's faith slowly returned to parts of Missouri.<sup>4</sup>

As the Mormons exited Missouri, the state's borders expanded and new religious communities formed. Missourians lobbied Congress to expand the state's western border to include an Indian territory known as the Platte Region. The region contained excellent soil, good timber, and the Missouri, Platte, Nodaway, Tarkio, Nishnabotta, and the Hundred-and-Two rivers.<sup>5</sup> In 1836, Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri secured legislation which removed the Native Americans and opened the Platte Region's two million acres for white settlement. Pioneers from Missouri, Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, and elsewhere populated Platte, Buchanan, Andrew, Holt, Nodaway, and Atchison counties. The Second Great Awakening profoundly influenced Protestant settlers who brought with them their ideas, opinions, and disputes surrounding Christianity. By the 1840s, frontiersmen organized Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian congregations in the region; however, slavery divided churches into the local and national levels. As the

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4. Meyer, *The Heritage of Missouri*, 200-203.

5 Scholars, The Missouri Department of Transportation, and the Missouri Department of Conservation to the One-Hundred-and-Two River in different ways. Road signs label the tributary to the Platte River as both "102 River" and "One-Hundred-and-Two River." In a January 21, 2016 article, Jennifer Ditlevson Haglund of the *Maryville Daily Forum* interviews local scholars in an attempt the unravel the origins of the river's name. None of the academics could pinpoint the name or an official spelling. I have chosen to use the term One-Hundred-and-Two River because it is the spelling used signs in my home county.

Missouri-Kansas Border War escalated, congregations fractured. During the 1850s and 1860s, regional loyalties separated churches, and houses of worships became targets of military operations. The ongoing strife did not prevent Protestants from embracing democratic values and organizing new churches based on political loyalties.<sup>6</sup>

Conflicts in Europe and the United States led to increased Catholic migration throughout the nineteenth century. Revolutions in France and Germany, as well as strife in Ireland, increased Catholic immigration to the United States. Jesuit missionaries and French Canadians first brought Catholicism to the Missouri River Valley, but their congregations remained small in numbers. Following the American Civil War, Missouri's Catholic population grew. The laity took advantage of available land and growing markets in the Platte Purchase Region. The faithful were in desperate need of religious orders to operate churches, schools, and other services not yet found on the frontier. Benedictines from Switzerland, school sisters from France, and Jesuits from Belgium ventured to northwest Missouri to minister to French, German, and Irish communities. Religious orders established the Convent and Academy of the Sacred Heart in St. Joseph, Conception Abbey in Nodaway County, and numerous churches and missions that served homesteading families. Analysis of nineteenth-century experiences reflects broader trends and must be assessed to understand the evolution of religious history.<sup>7</sup>

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6. Robert J. Willoughby, *Robidoux's Town: A Nineteenth-Century History of St. Joseph, MO* (Westphalia, MO: Westphalia Publishing, 1997), 86-88.

7. *The Catholic Directory, 1900* (Milwaukee: M.H. Wiltzius & Co., 1900), 480, accessed March 1, 2017, <https://books.google.com/books?id=Yr8vAQAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=catholic+directory&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjQ7MXmz5jRAhUD6YMKHZaLA8Q4FBD0AQgjMAI#v=onepage&q=%22St.%20Joseph%2C%20MO%22&f=false>.

Academics have primarily investigated national patterns in America's religious history and have not evaluated how such trends impacted northwest Missouri. Comprehensive works such as Sydney E. Ahlstrom's *A Religious History of the American People* have analyzed the effects immigration, conflict, and migration had on America's religious history. He challenges readers to apply religious plurality to the present day.<sup>8</sup> Lynn Bridgers' *The American Religious Experience: A Concise History* also emphasizes religious conflicts within American's immigrant tradition. As the demographics of the United States evolved, minority faiths such as Catholics and Mormons became targets of persecution.<sup>9</sup> No matter the size of the religion's population, all faiths migrated west. Bret E. Carroll examines religious resettlement patterns in *The Routledge Historical Atlas of Religion in America*. Carroll's text and maps support the claim that strife and westward expansion affected the development of American religion. Neither Carroll, Bridgers, nor Ahlstrom adequately examined how migration and strife created the spiritual makeup of northwest Missouri despite the presence of both elements.<sup>10</sup>

More focused works evaluate the implications of spiritual movements. Nathan O. Hatch's excellent book *The Democratization of American Christianity* examines how the Second Great Awakening brought American values such as democracy and education into mainstream Protestant denominations. Hatch successfully appraises the progression

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8. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), xxii.

9. Lynn Bridgers, *The American Religious Experience: A Concise History* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), 2-3.

10. Bret E. Carroll, *The Routledge Historical Atlas of Religion in America* (New York: Routledge, 2000), Carroll, *The Routledge Historical Atlas of Religion in America*, 7-9.

of Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists but was limited in his analysis of local churches. The book's focus does provide insight into Christianity's progress into the Ohio, Mississippi, and Missouri river valleys. Hatch, Carroll, Bridgers, and Ahlstrom provide the outline for national religious norms. Other historians link spiritual trends to secular unrest.<sup>11</sup>

When historians appraise religion and strife, they often focus on the central themes like conflict or the Second Great Awakening. In *The Politics of Faith During the Civil War*, Timothy Wesley asserts political involvement by Protestant pastors was not an accident but an intentional democratic evolution of American churches. Across the country, pastors rallied the faithful with political sermons, and society valued the commentary.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, Richard Carwardine's essay "Methodists, Politics, and the Coming of the American Civil War" argues that ministers in border states chose to be apolitical to keep congregations and communities together.<sup>13</sup>

Few academics have adequately analyzed northwest Missouri's historical significance or the implications of conflict and religion in the area. Duane Meyer's comprehensive book, *Heritage of Missouri*, assesses state history from pre-Columbian times through the twentieth century. He explicitly discusses the settlement and development of Missouri in relation to religion, commerce, education, geography, and politics as well as briefly documenting the impact of Mormons, Protestants, and Catholics

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11. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 3-5.

12. Timothy L. Wesley, *The Politics of Faith During the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2013), 2-4.

13. Richard Carwardine, "Methodists, Politics, and the Coming of the American Civil War," *Church History* 69, no. 3 (September 2000), 578-579.

in the state. The *Heritage of Missouri* attempts to preserve the past by noting the region's historical significance, but there is minimal critical analysis.<sup>14</sup>

Only a few trained historians have documented religion in the northwest Missouri. *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*, by historian Stephen C. LeSueur, not only preserves the saga of Mormons but connects their story to the Second Great Awakening, westward migration, settlement of Missouri, the slave debate, and emphasized conflict. LeSueur's assessment of military history and societal divisions makes his work an excellent resource for the evaluation of the conflict. LeSueur, a former professor at Brigham Young University, is sympathetic to the Mormon story, but fails to consider Smith's aggression in the war which limits the book's argument.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, Brandon Kinney's *The Mormon War: Zion and the Missouri Extermination Order of 1838* emphasizes the legal ramifications of the war. Kinney, an author and lawyer, finds the actions of Mormons and Missourians alike to be unlawful.<sup>16</sup> Conflict is a significant issue for Michael D. Jenkins who also assesses religions role in the development of northwest Missouri. His masters' thesis "The German-Lutherans of Holt County: The Survival of an Old Lutheran Community in Northwest Missouri: A Thesis," examines how wars in Germany under Frederick William III led to the settlement of Holt County and establishments of Lutheran churches in the Platte Purchase. Jenkins successfully tests the

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14. Meyer, *The Heritage of Missouri*, 180-182.

15. Stephen C. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1987), 2-5.

16. Brandon G. Kinney, *The Mormon War: Zion and the Missouri Extermination Order of 1838* (Yardley Pennsylvania: Westholme Publishing, 2011), 4-7.

correlation between faith and migration by using professional texts in coordination with personal interviews and amateur works.<sup>17</sup>

To evaluate religious history on the local level, historians must consult church records, community histories, and documents from religious institutions. Researchers must be cautious when utilizing local works, as some texts overemphasize a personal connection to the subject rather than a historical argument. Nevertheless, parochial works provide insight to the people who formed the community. For example, *Faith, Family, Friends: Seven Dolors Catholic Church* gives an account of the Catholic immigrant community of Hirrlingen, Missouri. The church's parishioners, who authored the book, have used church records and family genealogy to create the commemorative text. Several primary source documents, including the accounts of original pioneers, church buildings, and church records, are present.<sup>18</sup> The desire to preserve and romanticize the past hinders the academic depth of *Mississippi Vista, 1849-1949 Brothers of the Christian Schools*. The Christian Brothers used personal writing to describe the history of their schools in St. Joseph, Missouri, but style and prose were designed to promote their order's accomplishments. Still, with the proper context, such works will connect the migration and conflict to regional religious history.<sup>19</sup>

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17. Michael D. Jenkins, "The German-Lutherans of Holt County: The Survival of an Old Lutheran Community in Northwest Missouri: A Thesis" (master's thesis, Northwest Missouri State University, 2003), 4-5.

18. Seven Dolors Catholic Church & Altar Society, *Faith, Family, Friends: Seven Dolors Catholic Church* (Conception, MO: Seven Dolors Catholic Church & Altar Society, 2016), 3.

19. Brother Hubert Gerard, Ed., *Mississippi Vista, 1849-1949, The Brothers of Christian Schools* (Winona Minnesota: St. Mary's Press, 1948), 167.

Nineteenth-century histories documented churches to demonstrate how congregations were a part of the broader community instead of connecting religion to national history. The *History of Buchanan County, Missouri 1881* presents a summative account. Unlike Duane Meyer's scholarly work on Missouri's past, *History of Buchanan County, Missouri 1881* preserves details of the community. Names of pastors, locations of church buildings, and significant events of religious communities are noted, but critical analysis is insufficient. Works like *History of Buchanan County, Missouri 1881* glorify the early generations and soften friction within a community. Nineteenth-century texts tend to also limit the impact the Civil War had on communities and churches.<sup>20</sup>

A scholarly investigation into the collective religious history of northwest Missouri provides an understanding of society and culture. Members of the considered communities reflect the formation, development, and demographics of the population. An evaluation of religious institutions administrates how immigration developed northwest Missouri, what regional characteristics were most appealing to the settlers and the impact American and international disputes had in the region. The relationship between religion and conflict must be understood if a society is to overcome detachment toward a particular faith. Charles Reagan Wilson, Harry S. Stout, and Randall M. Miller have encouraged further investigations into the matter in their collection *Religion and the American Civil War*. Although the book includes an excellent selection of scholarly articles, more academic assessments are needed. Until the turn of the twenty-first

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20. Seward W. Lilly, *History of Buchanan County, Missouri 1881*. St. Joseph, MO: Union Historical Company, 1881), 488-492.

century, few scholars emphasized the correlation between faith and the Civil War.<sup>21</sup> *Religion and the American Civil War* contends that organized religion directly affected the origins and fighting, but other scholars question to what extent churches embraced politics. Marcus McArthur's essay, "Treason in the Pulpit: The Problem of Apolitical Preaching in Civil War Missouri," argues that border states ministers adopted a neutral stance to protect their churches and their posts. An appreciation for how the war impacted northwest Missouri furthers the debate between Wesley and Carwardine by testing their theories regarding political preachers. The comparison enhances the understanding of the region's past within the context of national history.<sup>22</sup>

By examining religious past from multiple angles, the current world is better understood. Sydney Ahlstrom believes historians must evaluate America's religious story in relation to world history, secular movements, diversity, and social context. Such guidelines provide a broad understanding of religion and people of faith. According to Ahlstrom, United States' spiritual past reflects the morality and values of the American people.<sup>23</sup> An extensive approach provides context to current events. Historians in *Bleeding Kansas, Bleeding Missouri* compare the saga to religious violence in the Middle East. Michael Fellman's essay, "'I Came Not to Bring Peace, but a Sword': The Christian War God and the War of All against All on the Kansas and Missouri Border," appraises the correlation between the Christian Crusades, President George W. Bush's War on

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21. Charles Reagan Wilson, Harry S. Stout and Randall M. Miller, eds. *Religion and the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 2-3.

22. Marcus McArthur, "Treason in the Pulpit: The Problem of Apolitical Preaching in Civil War Missouri," *Journal of Church and State*, 53, no. 4 (July 2011): 545-546.

23. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, xxi.

Terrorism, and the American Civil War. Fellman insists the bond between war and religion has been a constant in both world and American history. Therefore, an evaluation of northwest Missouri's spiritual past creates a new historical perspective by linking the national and international themes to local narratives.<sup>24</sup>

Accounts by pioneers reveal part of the religious history of northwest Missouri. Each historical document provides a valuable perspective, but like secondary sources, the origins of primary source materials impact their content. Knowing who the author is and when they wrote the document gives the source more authenticity. When researching religious history, some primary source documents available often have evangelical motives. The writings of Joseph Smith are excellent examples of personal thoughts and spiritual intent. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints used Smith's "Letter from Liberty Jail" to spread the church's message. Historians can use the letter's historical value to provide insight into the state of Smith's church following years of persecution and the Mormon War in Missouri.<sup>25</sup> The context of newspapers and legal documents receive the same rational approach. Missouri Governor Lilburn Boggs, a native of Jackson County, issued an executive order to remove all Mormons from the state. His command was an official document but understanding his past provides context for his actions.<sup>26</sup> The Catholic directories from the nineteenth century also provide insight into

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24. Michael Fellman, "‘I Came Not to Bring Peace, but a Sword’: The Christian War God and the War of All against All on the Kansas and Missouri Border," in *Bleeding Kansas, Bleeding Missouri: The Long Civil War on the Border* ed. Jonathan Earle, and Diane Mutti Burke (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2013), 11.

25. Joseph Smith, "Liberty Jail Letter," March 20, 1839, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints).

26. Office of the Governor of Missouri, Executive Order: Extermination of the Mormons, Governor L. Boggs, October 27, 1838, accessed March 1, 2017, <https://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/resources/findingaids/miscMormonRecords/eo>.

the development of the region. The resource documents religious orders and churches across the country. Statistical data in the directories provide context for population growth within local dioceses.<sup>27</sup> Protestant churches have adequate records, but they are not as accessible as Catholic and Mormon history. The accounts are often within the individual churches or in family records. However, the popularity of genealogy and commemoration of significant anniversaries has encouraged documentation. For instance, when Bethel Baptist Church celebrated its 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2015, churchgoers strived to document their past by conducting interviews and organizing minutes from church meetings. No matter the origins, the context of the sources must be understood for the documents to be advantageous.<sup>28</sup>

Archives also provide a plethora of primary sources. The Andrew County Museum and Historical Society, Conception Abbey Seminary College, and the collection of various Catholic religious orders have a plethora of journals, books, and genealogy tools available. Online archives also aid in the investigation. The Missouri State Historical Society has a range of resources including digital copies of pro-Union paper *The Morning Herald* published in St. Joseph, Missouri. Perspectives and details regarding community churches and the Civil War enhance the debate surrounding border state pastors. Such primary sources can also complete the regional histories by uncovering new information which enhances the historical significance.<sup>29</sup>

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27. *The Catholic Directory, 1900*, 379-481.

28. Jena Sauber, "County Church Marks Almost Two Centuries," *St. Joseph News-Press*, August 22, 2016, accessed June 28, 2017, [http://www.newspressnow.com/life/religion/country-church-marks-almost-two-centuries/article\\_037dc4d1-ac61-5554-9a29-0854d0759cc5.html](http://www.newspressnow.com/life/religion/country-church-marks-almost-two-centuries/article_037dc4d1-ac61-5554-9a29-0854d0759cc5.html).

29. Letter to the Editor, "Communications for the Morning Herald: Rev. Mr. Rush." *The Morning Herald* (St. Joseph, MO), February 14, 1862, accessed March 1, 2017, <http://digital.shsmo.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/stjoemh/id/14/rec/8>.

The need for a religious history of northwest Missouri is vital because churches and communities that once thrived are vanishing. A variety of factors led to the rise and fall of religious participation in society. For rural communities, lack of economic opportunities made rural towns disappear. Residents who continue to remain struggle to preserve the past and, more importantly, know the region's historical value. The demise of religious institutions extends into cities as well. In 1900, St. Joseph, Missouri had eight Catholic schools operated by five religious orders.<sup>30</sup> Today, only four schools remain open, and just one religious order operates a church in the city. Despite the decline of religious institutions, their legacy remains. The issues associated with nineteenth-century conflict are incredibly relevant to the deliberations of today. As in the 1800s, twenty-first-century Americans divided themselves over immigration, societal values, and the connection between religion and conflict.<sup>31</sup>

The migration of Mormons, Protestants, and Catholics to northwest Missouri led to regional growth and local conflicts. Spiritual frontiersmen developed the frontier into a civilization representative of themselves. The saga of the pioneers who transformed the land deserves analysis and preservation.

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30. *The Catholic Directory, 1900*, 480.

31. *The 2017 Diocesan Directory* (Kansas City: *The Catholic Key*, 2017), 49-51.

## Chapter 1

### In Search of Zion: Mormon Migration in 1830s Missouri

Missouri's abundant and fertile terrain provided thousands of pioneers the opportunity to escape wars, economic strife, and persecutions in the nineteenth century. Such prospects were only accessible if individuals abandoned their lives in the east and ventured west. The promise of a new beginning in an uncultivated land appealed to Joseph Smith's followers as they fled persecution and economic strife in search for a new Zion. Migration was a constant for Smith's Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. From a meager beginning in upstate New York to thriving communities in northwest Missouri, the Mormons, or Saints as they call themselves, consistently sought new opportunities to practice their faith and achieve economic prosperity.<sup>1</sup> Outsiders viewed Mormon beliefs, practices, and centralized community as peculiar and even threatening. During the 1830s, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints migrated to northwest Missouri for spiritual and economic prosperity, but religious, political, and social discord prompted Missourians to relocate and ultimately removed the Saints following the Missouri Mormon War in 1838.

Joseph Smith organized the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints during a changing spiritual and economic period in American history. Following the American Revolution, a renewed interest in Christianity spread from New England seminaries to

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1. Historians, authors and early additions of *The Morning and Evening Star* have used both Saints and Mormons to describe the early members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. The author of this paper uses both terms interchangeably to reflect the historiography of Joseph Smith's Church. Likewise, the author refers to non-Mormons as either Gentiles or by the state in which they live, such as Missourians.

the frontier. The energetic, compelling, and democratic nature of the Second Great Awakening swelled the ranks of Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian congregations. By 1825, preachers traveled the Erie Canal to spread religious messages while industrialists utilized the waterway to expand the economy. Goods and people moved back and forth from the Great Lakes to Albany and down the Hudson River to New York City. The increased trade and travel brought industrialization to towns along the canal. Dynamic preachers like Charles Grandison Finney proclaimed moral and evangelical messages at revivals. Finney found great success throughout upstate New York, where an array of movements including Shakerism, abolitionism, and Mormonism emerged. Western New York experienced such intense spiritual activities, the area became known as the “burned-over-district.”<sup>2</sup>

The economic and spiritual shifts in western New York impacted Joseph Smith and his family. His parents, Joseph, Sr. and Lucy, attempted to model the Protestant Work Ethic only to find themselves on the brink of poverty after a failed investment in ginseng. During these trying economic times, Joseph Jr. sought spiritual comfort from a variety of Christian denominations, but he found the evangelical movements to be a vain struggle among clergymen and the faithful to claim more souls to their respective congregations. Smith turned to folklore and mysticism for enlightenment before he founded his new faith.<sup>3</sup>

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2. Bret E. Carroll, *The Routledge Historical Atlas of Religion in America* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 62-63.

3. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale Press, 1989), 113-114.

According to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, in September of 1823, Smith had his first revelation. While praying, an angel named Moroni appeared to Smith and instructed the eighteen-year-old to seek out sacred relics buried nearby. Smith traveled to an isolated spot near Manchester, New York where he discovered golden plates known as the Urim and Thummin.<sup>4</sup> Using the tools provided by Moroni, Smith deciphered the script found on the plates, and in 1827, he published his six-hundred-page gospel known as the Book of Mormon. The text provided a new understanding of Christianity and offered an alternate history of North America.<sup>5</sup> After publishing the text, Smith and five of his followers established the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in Fayette, New York. The emphasis on missionary work allowed Mormonism successfully to spread. Within four years of the church's founding, nearly a thousand people had accepted Smith as a prophet. The church's growing numbers, distinctive theology, and location in western New York State set the Mormons apart from mainstream evangelicals who viewed Smith's doctrines as contradictory and menacing. By 1831, growing concerns led to hostilities.<sup>6</sup>

In 1830, Smith's actions gained the attention of New York authorities who arrested and charged Smith with disorderly conduct on two separate occasions. Although acquitted twice, a dissatisfied mob pursued Smith. The mob's actions were enough for Smith to seek a new headquarters for his church. Smith encouraged the Mormons to relocate to the Lake Erie town of Kirkland, Ohio where their religion prospered. As in

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4. The Book of Mormon, Ed. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2006).

5. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 115.

6. Carroll, *The Routledge Historical Atlas*, 80-81.

New York, the Saints in Ohio formed a close-knit community centered around their faith. Under Smith's leadership, the Saints erected a temple, established sacred rituals based on Hebrew traditions, and structured a communal economy to promote the financial needs of the members. Despite the prosperity in Kirkland, the Mormons continued to seek a land of their own.<sup>7</sup>

Spirituality and necessity inspired Joseph Smith's interest in Missouri. Smith believed the Native Americans were the lost tribe of Israel, and he wanted to carry his church's message to Indians living west of the Missouri state line.<sup>8</sup> As early as the winter of 1830-31, missionaries ventured across the Mississippi River to convert tribes in Kansas and the upper Missouri River Valley. The missionaries informed Smith of the region's bounty and potential. The news arrived at an ideal time. As additional Saints from New York reached Kirkland, the church struggled to acquire adequate land and housing. Church leaders responded by sending an expedition to the frontier community of Independence, Missouri. In the 1830s, Independence was a small yet significant community near the state's western border. The town, located just south of the Missouri River and east of the convergence of the Missouri and Kansas Rivers, was a regional trade center and the county seat of Jackson County. Joseph Smith and approximately thirty elders traveled by riverboat to St. Louis and hiked through the Missouri River Valley to Independence.<sup>9</sup> The journey became a spiritual pilgrimage for Smith who

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7. Brandon G. Kinney, *The Mormon War: Zion and the Missouri Extermination Order of 1838*, (Yardley Pennsylvania: Westholme Publishing, 2011), 22-28.

8. "Our Heritage: A Brief History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints" Ed. by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, March 18, 2014, accessed October 1, 2016, [https://www.lds.org/manual/our-heritage-a-brief-history-of-the-church-of-jesus-christ-of-latter-day-saints/chapter-four-establishing-zion-in-missouri?lang=eng\\_](https://www.lds.org/manual/our-heritage-a-brief-history-of-the-church-of-jesus-christ-of-latter-day-saints/chapter-four-establishing-zion-in-missouri?lang=eng_)

9. Duane G. Meyer, *The Heritage of Missouri* (Springfield, Missouri: Emden Press, 1993), 200.

believed Jackson County was the site of Christ's second coming. Since he viewed the Native Americans and his followers as God's chosen people, the prophet proclaimed the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints' destiny was to settle in the new promised land. The relatively isolated region provided the Mormons an opportunity to practice their faith and build a prosperous Zion.<sup>10</sup>

In Missouri, the Mormons found economic prospects and evidence of political strife. The Missouri and Mississippi Rivers were vital trade and transportation routes making cities like St. Louis and Independence centers of commerce and migration. Following the annexation of the Louisiana Territory by the United States, agriculture became the territory's primary industry. Like the Native Americans before them, the first pioneers settled throughout numerous river valleys taking advantage of fertile soil and the benefits of water access. River access allowed farmers to export grain and livestock to larger markets down river.<sup>11</sup> The influx of settlers, a national aspiration to settle the West, the desire for representation in Congress, and ongoing land disputes encouraged the citizens of Missouri to apply for statehood. Achieving admittance into the Union was far from simple, as abolitionists and slave supporters in Missouri and Washington strived to expand their respective ideals. The national debate over slavery stalled Missouri's admittance until 1820 when Henry Clay, the famed Democratic-Republican of Kentucky, created the Missouri Compromise. To appease both opinions, the Compromise allowed citizens to keep slaves while Maine joined the Union as a free state. Illinois Senator Jesse B. Thomas amended the legislation making Missouri's southern border the new

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10. Brandon G. Kinney, *The Mormon War: Zion and the Missouri Extermination Order of 1838*, (Yardley Pennsylvania: Westholme Publishing, 2011), 29.

11. Meyer, *The Heritage of Missouri*, 188-190.

Mason-Dixon Line. Any new state admitted after the Compromise and north of the state's southern border was to be free. Missourians generally liked the compromise, but the legislation failed to resolve the divide over slavery.<sup>12</sup>

The ongoing strife did not hinder Joseph Smith and the Saints from establishing a thriving community. Smith purchased land a half mile from the Jackson County Courthouse Square for a new temple and organized an elaborate dedication ceremony. The prophet then placed Bishop Edmond Partridge in charge of the new settlement, instructing him to purchase land near the city for Mormon homesteads. Partridge also invested in land near Indian territories in Kansas and the Platte Region.<sup>13</sup> Although pleased by the land, Smith noted distinctive contrasts between Mormons and Missourians. He described the Gentiles, or non-Mormons as they were known to the Saints, as far behind the modern world. Nevertheless, Smith broadcasted the promise of Missouri, and hundreds of his followers left Ohio for the frontier. By 1833, just two years after Smith laid the cornerstone of the new temple, twelve hundred Saints lived in Jackson County, equaling a third of the county's population. The influx dramatically changed the demographics of Jackson County and created tension between Mormons and Gentiles.<sup>14</sup>

The Missourians already established in Jackson County viewed the Saints as distinctive and eventually as a threat. Unlike the county's first homesteaders who came to farm and trade, the Mormons were spiritual migrants. The members of Smith's first

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12. Meyer, *The Heritage of Missouri*, 146-151

13. "Our Heritage: A Brief History."

14. Meyer, *The Heritage of Missouri*, 201.

expedition arrived without tents or farming implements.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the Mormons acquired vast tracts of land to established their centralized community. The new property and expanding population gave the church an economic advantage in the agrarian society. The Saints also had different backgrounds than their new neighbors. By and large, Mormons were northern abolitionists, and their promised land was next to Missouri's leading slaveholding region.<sup>16</sup> Nearby Clay, Lafayette, Saline, Cooper, Howard, Boone, and Callaway counties relied heavily on slave labor. Known as Missouri's Little Dixie, over 2,000 slaves resided in the region in 1830. The bondsmen cleared fields, cultivated crops, and produced rope. To those who advocated for slavery, the idea of emancipation meant the loss of an investment, limited economic growth, and a negative cultural shift.<sup>17</sup>

The Mormon's actions toward Native Americans also gained the Saints advocacies. The United States government relocated tribes to the west and northwest of Jackson County in Kansas and the Platte Region respectfully. The removal allowed for more white settlement but substantially disenfranchised the tribes. *The Evening and Morning Star* implored the Saints to set aside a portion of their harvest for the benefit of the neighboring tribes. The request shocked Gentile settlers who feared the Native Americans. Like much of the nation, Missourians wanted Native Americans to adopt western ideas but live segregated lives. An alliance between Saints and Indians threatened the status quo on the frontier.<sup>18</sup>

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15. "Our Heritage: A Brief History."

16. Meyer, *The Heritage of Missouri*, 201-202

17. R. Douglas Hurt, *Agriculture and Slavery in Missouri's Little Dixie* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri, 1992), 307 and 273-275.

Mormon opinions created more anxiety when the July 1833 edition of *The Evening and Morning Star* published an article entitled “Free People of Color.” The piece sought to educate free, black Mormons about laws regarding slavery and religious freedom in Missouri and the United States before they ventured to Jackson County.<sup>19</sup> Locals, appalled by the publication and the expanding Mormon presence, mobilized. Slaveholders, farmers, lawyers, and Protestant ministers rallied against the Saints.<sup>20</sup> Five-hundred individuals, including officers of the law, gathered on the courthouse square in Independence and signed an ultimatum addressed to local Mormon leaders. The Gentiles demanded the Saints leave the county, stop printing *The Evening and Morning Star*, and agree to sell their land. If the Mormon leaders refused, the letter stated, the Saints would forfeit their property by force.<sup>21</sup> Church leadership in Missouri and Ohio believed the document had no legal backing, and the Mormons refused to surrender their holy land and livelihoods.<sup>22</sup>

The Saints’ response exacerbated the mob mentality in Jackson County. Throughout the summer and fall of 1833, Gentile vigilantes burned crops, shot at houses,

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18. *The Evening and Morning Star*, “The Elders in the Land of Zion to the Church of Christ Scattered Abroad,” July 1832, accessed June 5, 2017, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/NCMP1820-1846/id/28104>.

19. *The Evening and Morning Star*, “Free People of Color,” July 1833, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/NCMP1820-1846/id/28104>.

20. Kinney, *The Mormon War: Zion and the Missouri Extermination Order of 1838*, 34.

21. “Mob Manifesto” (July 1833), in *The History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, accessed June 18, 2017, <https://books.google.com/books?id=QXLZAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA374&lpg=PA374&dq=mob+manifesto+jackson+county+1833&source=bl&ots=ARSDV2oKoS&sig=IEFfkpQ13bX4rBkIv4zwpkqNFSs&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiZicD17crUAhVH82MKHTgFDWoQ6AEISzAI#v=onepage&q=mob%20manifesto%20jackson%20county%201833&f=false>.

22. Meyer, *The Heritage of Missouri*, 201-202.

vandalized businesses, and assaulted families. Gang destroyed *The Evening and Morning Star*'s press before tarring Bishop Partridge and other church leaders. The church in Kirkland lobbied Missouri Governor Daniel Dunklin to intervene on the Saints' behalf. Dunkin was sympathetic to the appeal and viewed the mob as unlawful. The governor assured Mormon officials their property and legal rights were safe. With Dunkin's public support, the Saints remained in the county.<sup>23</sup>

Lieutenant Governor Lilburn Boggs maliciously assess the situation for Governor Dunkin. Boggs, farmer, merchant, slave owner, and signee of the "Mob Manifesto," escalated the situation by mustering the Jackson County Militia. Throughout the fall of 1833, Mormons and Missourians clashed. Gentiles destroyed Mormon cabins, attacked men, and ran women and children into the woods. In November, the constant assaults and growing power of the mob forced the entire Mormon community north of the Missouri River into Clay County. The unrest in Jackson County was just the beginning of turmoil between Mormons and Missourians. Even though the mob drove the Saints from their homes, the Mormons were determined to remain in the state. As news of violence spread, the church gained new supporters.<sup>24</sup>

Three years of exile in Clay County yielded a new start for the Saints. Clay County officials in Liberty, Missouri empathized with the Mormon's grievances. U.S. Senator David A. Atchison and Judge Elisha Cameron formed a committee to investigate a new settlement location for the Saints in northwest Missouri. Clay County State Representative Alexander Doniphan took the Mormon case to the state legislature. He

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23. *The Evening and Morning Star*, "To His Excellency Daniel Dunklin, Governor of the State of Missouri," December 1833, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/NCMP1820-1846/id/28104>.

24. Kinney, *The Mormon War: Zion and the Missouri Extermination Order of 1838*, 41-42

advocated for the creation of a new county to be a haven for Mormon settlers. Local and state officials wanted to limit the Mormon influence while settling northwest Missouri and restoring peace. In 1836, the collective efforts of Missourians and Mormons led to the creation of Caldwell County. The timing was impeccable as Clay County residents called for the Mormons to leave the Liberty area. Located to the northeast of Clay County, Caldwell appeared to be another promised land for the Saints. The region boasted an abundance of wild game, water sources, fertile soil, and woodlands. Even though the Mormons resettled, Missourians remained suspicious of the Saints. To encourage non-Mormon settlement the legislature created Daviess County due north of Caldwell. As the Saints arrived in Caldwell, twenty non-Mormon families sold their farms, and some migrated to Daviess County.<sup>25</sup>

When the first Mormon settlers moved to Caldwell County, there were only a few simple log cabins scattered throughout the countryside, but within five years, the area's population boomed. Mormons gathered at Jacob Haun's Mill on Shoal Creek in the eastern part of the county to process lumber and grain. Far West, located in the country's western half, became the county seat and the central economic hub of the region. Saints meticulously planned the city in hopes of rapid growth. By the summer of 1838, Far West was home to two thousand Saints. Commerce thrived with multiple dry-goods stores, groceries, blacksmiths, a printing press, and hotels. Throughout the countryside, the Mormons established farms and smaller communities. The new start gave the faithful hope. The community was determined to use their work ethic to make the frontier into a

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25. Stephen C. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1987), 22-25.

stable society. Caldwell County's economic growth was in stark contrast to financial issues in the east.<sup>26</sup>

The Panic of 1837 created an economic depression and devastated the Mormon's communal system, but furthered the development of Caldwell County. International trade and Jacksonian banking policies created distrust of banks and paper money. The devaluation of paper banknotes caused investors to lose the value of their deposits. Businesses and banks from London to New York to New Orleans failed.<sup>27</sup> The Mormon-operated Safety Society Bank struggled after land values dramatically deflated near Kirkland. Matters worsened when businesses in Buffalo and Cleveland refused to accept the Safety Society Bank notes for payment of Mormon debt. The economic decline forced the Mormon steam mill and mercantile firms to collapse. The fiscal strife associated the community with corrupt and illegal financial practices. Investors filed civil suits against Smith for damages in Ohio. The economic losses and legal troubles made some Saints question Smith's leadership, but a vote of the faithful confirmed him as church president and prophet.<sup>28</sup> While some left the church, the Mormons who remained loyal to Smith fled the chaos of Kirkland and relocated to Caldwell County. The Saints hoped for a new start, but the migration to Missouri did not change the status quo. Just as Mormon migration brought their faith with them, the Saints' reputation stuck with them as well.<sup>29</sup>

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26. Meyer, *The Heritage of Missouri*, 203.

27. Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 502-503.

28. Kinney, *The Mormon War: Zion and the Missouri Extermination Order of 1838*, 74-76.

29. Kinney, *The Mormon War: Zion and the Missouri Extermination Order of 1838*, 78-81.

Fleeing a gang in Ohio, Joseph Smith and his family arrived in Far West in 1838. Although a wanted man in the east, Caldwell County gave the prophet a hero's welcome. Smith and his fellow church leaders established a new headquarters and organized a communal economy in Far West. Although Caldwell County was a new start, Mormons did not forget previous unrest. The forced migration and loss of property in Independence encouraged close followers of Smith to call for a Mormon military force. Smith authorized Sydney Rigdon to organize a church army known as the Danites. Rigdon represented a growing faction of Saints who wanted to regain lost property in Jackson County by force. Smith disagreed, but he saw the need to put down rebellions within the Mormon ranks and to protect the church's expanding population from further persecution. Between the spring and fall of 1838, Far West's population doubled to three thousand people with more Saints expected.<sup>30</sup> By October, northwest Missouri became home to well over five-thousand Saints with more expected. Missourians who had hoped to limit the Mormons presence were disappointed. Smith longed to increase the ranks and influence of his faithful, and he had the chance to do so in Missouri.<sup>31</sup>

The church struggled to obtain land in Caldwell County for new refugees and sought land in Ray, Livingston, Clinton, Carroll, and Daviess counties. Like the rest of Northwest Missouri, these counties held economic potential for the Saints. The Missouri River was the southern boundary of Ray and Carroll counties offering trade and travel prospects in addition to fertile bottomland. Settlers established towns like Gallatin,

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30. The population of Far West, Missouri has been debated. Historians, church officials, and primary sources provide differing accounts. Most estimate the population to be between 3,000 and 4,000 Saints in Far West and more in the surrounding area. LeSueur estimated the region's population at 5,000.

31. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*, 29.

Millport, Utica, Grindstone Fork, and DeWitt along the fertile Grand River Valley in Daviess, Livingston, and Carroll counties.<sup>32</sup> In Carroll County, Saints invested in the newly plotted town of DeWitt near the convergence of the Grand and Missouri River. DeWitt was a promising trade center, and the Mormons purchased half of the town's original lots. In Livingston, Ray, and Clinton counties, most Mormons settled on farms.<sup>33</sup>

As in New York, Ohio, and Clay County, Missourians initially welcomed the Saints to the region but soon clashed with their Gentile neighbors. For residents already established in Daviess, the expanding population meant more customers, tax revenue, and votes. Mormon settlers received credit at Jacob Stolling's store in Gallatin, the Daviess county seat, and a local judge, Josiah Morin, allowed Mormon settlers to stay on his property near Millport while securing homesteads. Daviess County drew more Saints when Joseph Smith proclaimed land near the Grand River was the biblical location where Adam and Eve relocated after being banished from the Garden of Eden. In May of 1838, Saints plotted Adam-ondi-Ahman, and the faithful flocked to claim a piece of the sacred site. Mormons were not the first Christian sect to arrive in the region. Traveling pastors visited settlers in the state's northern frontier. Methodist circuit riders came to Millport so much that locals called it the Methodist Campground. Carroll and Ray counties had established Cumberland Presbyterian churches. Local Protestant ministers did not trust the Mormon theology or political opinions. Reverend Cornelius Gilliam, an ordained Baptist minister and former slave catcher from Florida, preached and fought against the Mormon expansion.<sup>34</sup>

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32. Kinney, *The Mormon War: Zion and the Missouri Extermination Order of 1838*, 125.

33. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*, 21-25.

The opposition from mainstream ministers did not deter the Saints from rejoicing in their new homeland. On July 4, 1838, the community held a massive festival celebrating their prosperity and faith. Thousands of Mormons and Gentiles watched Danites parade through Far West. The festivities included pro-Mormon speeches and culminated with the dedication of a cornerstone for a new temple. Throughout July and early August, Mormons from as far away as Canada and England arrived at Far West bringing news of the church's success abroad. Smith settled Canadian families on homesteads in Caldwell, Daviess, and Carroll counties. Smith's vision of a new Zion in the West appeared to be a reality, but the Saints did not reap the land's promise for long.<sup>35</sup>

As more Mormons arrived in northwest Missouri, an impending conflict loomed. August 6, 1838 was election day and the start of nearly three months of unrest in northwest Missouri. The Saints valued the vote and used their unity and numbers to secure the election of Mormon candidates to public office. However, national politics and the Saints' reputation interfered with the democratic process.<sup>36</sup> Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren reshaped the Democratic Party and the presidency into a dominant political force. In response to Jackson's vast power, an opposition party known as the Whigs formed to limit the president's authority.<sup>37</sup> In Daviess County, Whigs desperately vied for the Saints' support, as they made up approximately one-third of the county's

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34. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*, 25-30.

35. Kinney, *The Mormon War: Zion and the Missouri Extermination Order of 1838*, 88-91.

36. Kathleen Flake, "Joseph Smith's Letter from Liberty Jail: A Study in Canonization," *Journal of Religion* 92, no. 4 (October 2012): 520.

37. Jon Meacham, *American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House* (New York: Random House, 2008), 143.

eligible voters.<sup>38</sup> William Penniston was the Whig candidate for the Missouri State Legislature from Daviess County. Following his unsuccessful attempt to secure the Mormon vote, he encouraged non-Mormons to prevent these outsiders from participating in the election by comparing the abolitionist Saints to slaves and criminals.<sup>39</sup> The Mormons were aware of Penniston since he led the anti-Mormon movement in Clay County and slandered the Saints' reputation in Daviess County.<sup>40</sup>

The election drew a significant crowd because it was the first time residents voted for local officials in the county. As the spirits flowed in hopes of securing a few more votes, Penniston further denounced the Mormons, claiming they were counterfeiters and horse thieves, and a brawl broke out as Missourians attempted to block Mormon voters. Combatants used whips, clubs, and knives as nearly seventy Gentiles and thirty Saints clashed as Penniston fled from the center of town. When the “Gallatin Election Day Battle” ended, both sides sought retaliation. The election day conflicts exacerbated distrust and fears across northwest Missouri. Although a brief confrontation, the Gallatin scuffle and subsequent encounters created a de facto state of civil war which compelled gentile Missourians to call for Mormon extermination.<sup>41</sup>

The “Gallatin Election Day Battle” prompted Mormons and Missourians to prepare for war. Already exiles from New York, Ohio, Independence, and Liberty, the

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38. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*, 59.

39. Spencer W. McBride, "When Joseph Smith Met Martin Van Buren: Mormonism and the Politics of Religious Liberty in Nineteenth-Century America," *American Society of Church History* 85, no. 1 (2016): 151-152.

40. Kinney, *The Mormon War: Zion and the Missouri Extermination Order of 1838*, 91.

41. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*, 62-63.

Saints were ready to defend their property. Approximately 150 armed Danites rode to Adam-ondi-Ahman where Mormons assembled defensive fortifications while Joseph Smith sought a legal resolution. He issued an affidavit calling for peace and presented the document to the citizens of Daviess County. Smith asked all citizens to sign the accord, enter negotiations and allow the Saints to live in peace. In an attempt to make the article legally binding, the Danites went to the home of newly elected Judge Adam Black. Black, a rumored ally of Penniston, disapproved of the affidavit, but the overwhelming Mormon force persuaded him to sign. Judge Black's signature satisfied Smith, and the Danites returned to Far West. The presence of an armed force reflected the mood of the Saints, but by openly preparing for a fight, they exposed themselves to more persecution.<sup>42</sup>

The actions of a Mormon force compelled Black and Missourians to lobby the new the Governor of Missouri, Lilburn Boggs, to intervene. Judge Black gave a sworn statement accusing the Mormons of threatening his family and property.<sup>43</sup> An ex-Mormon, John Sapp, provided an affidavit which accused Smith, the Danites, and other church leaders of treasonous activities. Sapp even alleged Mormon missionaries had created a military alliance with Native Americans.<sup>44</sup> Citizens of Brunswick, Missouri, a town northwest of DeWitt, corroborated Sapp's alliance claim in a letter to Governor

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42. Kinney, *The Mormon War: Zion and the Missouri Extermination Order of 1838*, 95-97.

43. Adam Black, "Sworn Statement of Adam Black of Daviess County, Missouri," (August 28, 1838), in the Missouri State Archives: Mormon Papers, accessed June 17, 2017, [https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/fulltext/f10\\_f01.pdf](https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/fulltext/f10_f01.pdf).

44. Joseph Dickson, "Letter from Joseph Dickson, Clerk of Circuit of Carroll County in Carrollton, Missouri to Governor Boggs, Jefferson City, MO" (September 6, 1838), in the Missouri State Archives: Mormon Papers, accessed June 17, 2017, [https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/fulltext/f12\\_f01-02.pdf](https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/fulltext/f12_f01-02.pdf).

Boggs. The Brunswick letter, signed by future Confederate General Sterling Price, described how everyone from elected officials to public school teachers had taken defensive measures in preparation for an attack.<sup>45</sup> The array of testimonies provided ample justification for the state to intervene and Governor Bogg's already unfavorable opinion of the Mormons.<sup>46</sup>

On August 30, 1838, Governor Boggs used the fear in northwest Missouri to justify military preparation. B.M. Lisle, Adjutant General of the State Militia, ordered county commanders to mobilize the state militia. Lisle mustered seven divisions, totaling twenty-seven hundred men, "as a precautionary measure."<sup>47</sup> Federal law mandated that states keep a well-trained militia, but except for a few commanding officers such as Generals Alexander Doniphan and David Atchison, the Missouri force was a primitive, undisciplined group armed with hunting rifles. Most of the troops sympathized with anti-Mormon actions in Gallatin and Independence.<sup>48</sup> While the troops prepared for battle, they did not engage the Saints just yet. Instead, fears of Mormon retaliation resulted in an armed, local response. Twenty-nine citizens of Ray County signed a petition dated September 10 to General Atchison, Commander of the Third Division of the Missouri Militia. The petition, which Atchison forwarded to the governor's office, requested the

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45. Daniel Ashby, James Keyte, and Sterling Price, "Letter from Daniel Ashby, James Keyte, and Sterling Price of Brunswick, MO to Governor Boggs in Jefferson City, MO" (September 1, 1838), in the Missouri State Archives: Mormon Papers, accessed June 17, 2017, [https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/fulltext/f11\\_f01-02.pdf](https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/fulltext/f11_f01-02.pdf).

46. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*, 95-96.

47. B.M. Lisle, "Letter from B.M. Lisle Adjutant General in Jefferson City, MO to General David R. Atchison, 3rd Division of the Missouri Militia in Richmond, MO" (August 30, 1838) in the Missouri State Archives: Mormon Papers, accessed June 17, 2017, [https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/fulltext/f15\\_f01-04.pdf](https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/fulltext/f15_f01-04.pdf).

48. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*, 90-91.

state forces to “suppress this insurrection, and save effusion of blood...”<sup>49</sup> Boggs received a letter from Daviess and Livingston County residents describing the Saints as satanic rebels. Livingston County obtained forty-five rifles, two hundred pounds of lead, and kegs of gunpowder from Richmond to defend the county in what residents called “a war of extermination.”<sup>50</sup> On September 12, Atchison assessed the situation and reported to Governor Boggs that upwards of two thousand Mormons mobilized in the region. In response, Atchison deployed his divisions from Clay and Ray.<sup>51</sup> The general’s report persuaded Jefferson City to place the bulk of the militia under Atchison’s command to suppress the Saints. Fear and distrust created a de facto state of war in Missouri.<sup>52</sup>

Throughout August, September, and October of 1838, conflicts regularly occurred across northwest Missouri. In Carroll County, tensions provoked local citizens to call for Mormon expulsion from DeWitt. Acting on their own accord, Carroll County residents notified the Saints of a looming attack, but the threats did not appear to shake the Mormon inhabitants who remained in their homes.<sup>53</sup> Nearly two months of skirmishes

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49. Austin A. King, “Petition of Citizens of Ray County to General David R. Atchison, of the 3rd Division of the Missouri State Militia,” (September 10, 1838), in the Missouri State Archives: Mormon Papers, accessed June 17, 2017, [https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/fulltext/f22\\_f01-02.pdf](https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/fulltext/f22_f01-02.pdf).

50. R. Wilson, “Letter from Citizens of Daviess and Livingston Counties to Governor Boggs, Jefferson City, MO” (September 12, 1838), in the Missouri State Archives: Mormon Papers, accessed June 17, 2017, [https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/fulltext/f13\\_f01-02.pdf](https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/fulltext/f13_f01-02.pdf).

51. David R. Atchison, “Letter from David R. Atchison from Headquarters, 3rd Division of Missouri Militia in Richmond, MO to Governor Boggs, Jefferson City, MO” (September 12, 1838), in the Missouri State Archives: Mormon Papers, accessed June 17, 2017, [https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/fulltext/f14\\_f01-02.pdf](https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/fulltext/f14_f01-02.pdf).

52. B.M. Lisle, “Letter from B.M. Lisle, Adjutant General, in Jefferson City, MO to Militia Commanders in northwest Missouri” (September 18, 1838), in the Missouri State Archives: Mormon Papers, accessed June 17, 2017, [https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/fulltext/f18\\_f01-03.pdf](https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/fulltext/f18_f01-03.pdf).

left DeWitt in dismay and in need of supplies. Joseph Smith and reinforcements unsuccessfully repelled the Missourians but evacuated the Saints to Far West on October 10.<sup>54</sup> Daviess County residences also pressured capitulation. The only mill in the county, located at Millport, refused to process Mormon grain, generating a food shortage.<sup>55</sup> Outraged, Smith and the Danites launched an aggressive campaign as a snowstorm blanketed northwest Missouri. Four hundred Saints disarmed Daviess County farmers before assaulting Gallatin, Millport, and Grindstone Fork.<sup>56</sup> The Danites burned Jacob Stallings' Gallatin store, seized much-needed provisions, and attempted to force the Gentiles from the region. Daviess County Sheriff William Morgan was helpless. Like other Daviess residents, Morgan moved his family to Livingston County for protection.<sup>57</sup> The constant reports of unrest persuaded General Atchison to call for Mormon expulsion. Through much of October, Boggs had not ordered an official attack. Instead, sheriffs and locals took up arms creating a state civil war. The continued turbulence and his motives compelled the governor to take drastic measures.<sup>58</sup>

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53. John W. Price and William K Logan, "The Report of the Committee of Chariton County" (October 5, 1838), in the Missouri State Archives: Mormon Papers, accessed June 17, 2017, [https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/fulltext/f31\\_f01.pdf](https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/fulltext/f31_f01.pdf).

54. Kinney, *The Mormon War: Zion and the Missouri Extermination Order of 1838*, 120-129.

55. Kinney, *The Mormon War: Zion and the Missouri Extermination Order of 1838*, 118-119.

56. Kinney, *The Mormon War: Zion and the Missouri Extermination Order of 1838*, 136-137.

57. William Morgan, "An Affidavit from William Morgan Sheriff of Daviess County, MO to Gov. Boggs, Jefferson City, MO" (October 21, 1838), in the Missouri State Archives: Mormon Papers, accessed June 17, 2017, [https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/fulltext/f37\\_f01-02.pdf](https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/fulltext/f37_f01-02.pdf).

58. David R. Atchison, "Letter from General David R. Atchison, 3rd Division of the Missouri Militia in Liberty, MO to Governor Boggs, Jefferson City, MO" (October 22, 1838), in the Missouri State Archives: Mormon Papers, accessed June 17, 2017, [https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/fulltext/f39\\_f01-02.pdf](https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/fulltext/f39_f01-02.pdf).

After nearly three months of insurrections across the region, including a clash between Ray County Militia and Danites at the Battle of Crooked River, on October 27, 1838, Boggs decreed the Mormons to be nemeses of the state in his infamous “Extermination Order.” The document stated, “The Mormons must be treated as enemies and must be exterminated or driven from the State if necessary for the public peace.”<sup>59</sup> Boggs commanded a thousand militia troops to the north of Daviess County to prevent an escape attempt while four hundred more men gathered in Ray County. The aggressive measure formally escalated the war and intensified fear within the Mormon community. A small band of Saints gathered at Haun's Mill for protection. Smith attempted to evacuate the settlement, but the Mormons misunderstood his message and remained in the settlement. Militia forces engaged the occupants resulting in the death of seventeen Saints, including women, children, and Joseph Smith’s nephew. The massacre at Haun’s Mill represents the extreme of Mormon War. The militia, supported by the rhetoric and action of Governor Boggs, acted with little respect for the life of their opponents. The events of Haun’s Mill and the executive order prompted defiant responses.<sup>60</sup>

Following Bogg’s executive order, General Atchison resigned his command leaving General Samuel Lucas in charge of the Clay County and Jackson County militias. Lucas, a former leader of the Jackson County mob, disobeyed orders to march to Ray County and moved his force to Far West. By nightfall of October 31, eighteen hundred militiamen camped one mile south of Far West in preparation for an assault. As the

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59. Lilburn Boggs, “The Extermination Order,” (October 27, 2017), in the Missouri State Archives: Mormon Papers, accessed June 17, 2017, [https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/miscMormRecs/eo/18381027\\_ExtermOrder.pdf](https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/miscMormRecs/eo/18381027_ExtermOrder.pdf).

60. Kinney, *The Mormon War: Zion and the Missouri Extermination Order of 1838*, 162-164.

Missourians made camp, the Saints erected breastwork stretching three-quarters of a mile to defend their flank. Blacksmiths worked throughout the night forging spears for hand-to-hand combat while women prepared supplies in case the Missourians fired the town.<sup>61</sup> As Lucas prepared an assault, he offered terms of surrender to the Saints. He demanded the arrest of church leaders, payment for damages caused by the Danites, the surrender of arms, and a speedy exit from the state under armed guard. Lucas gave the Mormons one hour to respond. As the Saints deliberated, Lucas deployed his men and a cannon to the south and east of the city. In hopes to secure a peaceful outcome, Joseph Smith ordered his forces to lay down their weapons and turn over stolen property from Daviess County. Smith's choice to surrender was necessary and showed compassion for his followers. An assault on the town meant devastating losses of lives and property, especially with the previous actions of Missourians. At the same time, terms of surrender provided a peaceful escape. The Saints had overcome internal and external strife before, and Smith's actions implied the faithful could relocate yet again.<sup>62</sup>

Surrender did not bring an end to the Saint's suffering. General Lucas allowed the militia to ransack Far West in an attempt to prove his forces' superiority and to drive out the Mormons. Lucas hastily arranged for courts-marshals which found Smith and church leaders guilty and sentenced him to death. General Alexander Doniphan, citing the lack of a fair trial, blocked the order and sent the captured leaders to Liberty Jail in Clay County where they spent the winter of 1838-1839.<sup>63</sup> As Smith sat in jail, the militia

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61. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*, 159-162.

62. Kinney, *The Mormon War: Zion and the Missouri Extermination Order of 1838*, 166-171.

63. Flake, "Joseph Smith's Letter from Liberty Jail," 515.

placed the population of Far West under armed guard. General John B. Clark relieved Lucas who had created a dire situation in Far West. Clark provided rations to the city and promised to let the Mormons stay in their homes until spring with the understanding they do not attempt to plant crops. The Mormons welcomed Clark's leadership, but violent clashes continued.<sup>64</sup> An unfortunate party of Saints arrived in northwest Missouri only days after Smith's surrender. The group camped near Shoal Creek in Daviess County until state militia troops attacked and killed twenty Mormons. The loss of life, property, and leadership made the defeat in Missouri surpass damages in New York and Ohio. Remarkably, the downfall did not eliminate the church.<sup>65</sup>

Reports of the Missouri Mormon War circulated throughout the state and country. The state legislature sponsored an investigation into the matter but ultimately supported Governor Boggs' actions. A joint committee concluded that the Saints had committed murders and acts of treason against the state. To resolve the situation the legislature authorized a grant of \$2,000 to be used for Mormon relocation purposes and allocated a sum of \$200,000 to pay the cost of the state militia. Brigham Young, on behalf the imprisoned Smith, used the funds to buy land 160 miles east of Caldwell County in nearby Quincy, Illinois. Young chose northwest Illinois for its relative location, low land costs, and the town's sympathy for the Mormons.<sup>66</sup> As soon as the news of Quincy reached Missouri, the Saints headed east. By February of 1839, the bulk of the community had relocated, including Joseph Smith's wife Emma and their young

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64. Kinney, *The Mormon War: Zion and the Missouri Extermination Order of 1838*, 176-177.

65. S.M. Smith, "Letter From S. M. Smith, Kirkland, Ohio to Governor Boggs, Jefferson City, MO" (March 31, 1839), in the Missouri State Archives: Mormon Papers, accessed June 17, 2017, [https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/fulltext/f04\\_f01-02.pdf](https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/fulltext/f04_f01-02.pdf).

66. Kinney, *The Mormon War: Zion and the Missouri Extermination Order of 1838*, 184-185.

children. Emma informed her husband that their family had safely exited Missouri but under adverse conditions. Like other Saints, Emma failed to secure the bulk of the family's belongings and the winter march caused their children to become sick.<sup>67</sup>

In Liberty Jail, Smith and four other Saints endured four long months of cramped quarters, no legal services, and poisoned food. The jail was a primitive two-room structure with low ceilings which captives stand. The prisoners were secluded from legal counsel and were offered poisoned food by guards. Out of this suffering came a clear understanding of Smith's dedication to God, his faith, and his followers.<sup>68</sup> In March of 1839, Smith wrote to the faithful living in Illinois. He viewed his time in captivity as time served "...for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake and for the saint taken and held by the power of the mobocracy under the exterminating reign of his excellency Governor Lilburn W. Boggs...."<sup>69</sup> Joseph Smith meant for the letter to inspire the faithful and to assure them that he would return to their promised land in Missouri. In April of 1839, while being extradited to Boone County for a new trial, Smith and his comrades escaped and fled to Illinois to yet again create a new promised land. Although outside of Missouri, Mormons sought reparations for the state's actions.<sup>70</sup>

After being reunited with his family and fifteen thousand Saints in Illinois, Smith turned to the federal government in Washington for justice. Church leaders assessed the community's financial losses in Missouri to be between \$1.5 and \$2 million.

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67. Emma Smith, "Letter to Joseph Smith," March 7, 1839, *Personal Writing of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints).

68. Flake, "Joseph Smith's Letter from Liberty Jail," 516.

69. Joseph Smith, "Liberty Jail Letter," March 20, 1839, *Personal Writing of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints).

70. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*, 242-243.

Congressman John Reynolds of Illinois was empathetic to the Mormon claims and arranged for Smith to meet with President Martin Van Buren. Van Buren did not sympathize with the Saints, insisting it was state's right to deal with internal affairs. Furthermore, Van Buren believed any intervention on behalf of the Mormons would lose him much needed support in Missouri in the 1840 election. The country already blamed the president and the Democratic Party for economic issues following the Panic of 1837.<sup>71</sup>

With no support from the executive branch, Smith turned to the Senate Committee on the Judiciary. In January and February of 1840, the Saints presented affidavits documenting the loss of life and property. While the congressional delegation from Illinois was supportive, Missouri's senators defended their state's actions. Democratic Senators Thomas Hart Benton and L. F. Linn successfully defended the actions of their home state against the Mormon's compelling arguments. Like Van Buren, the Missourians argued the federal government should not interfere in the state's internal matters. In response to the Democratic Party's actions, Mormons in Illinois voted for Whig presidential candidate, William Henry Harrison in 1840. Although Harrison won the presidency, he lost the electoral vote in Illinois. With this defeat, the Saints shifted their attention from reprobation but remained committed to creating a promised land.<sup>72</sup>

The saga of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in the 1820s and 1830s was a story of forced migration. Vigilantes and legal authorities pushed Mormons

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71. McBride, "When Joseph Smith Met Martin Van Buren," 153-155.

72. McBride, "When Joseph Smith Met Martin Van Buren," 153-156.

across the Mississippi because of their faith, actions, and opinions. Even though Missouri was a new Zion, the Saints continued to clash with their neighbors. The patterns continued in Illinois, as the Mormons continued to look for a promised land. The centralized church structure, communal economy, and beliefs regarding Jackson and Daviess counties continued to pull the faithful despite constant challenges. The Mormon experience exemplified the conflict and migration which created the religious history of northwest Missouri.

Religious freedom, the free market, and the right to vote are pillars of American democracy. Such liberties allowed the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints to emerge and thrive. Regretfully, state and federal governments regularly denied such rights, and the masses of Mormons suffered. Northwest Missouri was a chance for the Saints to find spiritual and economic prosperity, but it turned into a frontier of aversion and violence. Nevertheless, Joseph Smith's church embodied fundamental American ideals such as the perseverance to start over in a new land and the willingness to defend one's home and rights. The Saints' ordeal was not isolated. It reflected norms of nineteenth-century American religious history.

## Chapter 2

### God's Houses in Pieces: The Division of Nineteenth-Century Protestantism in the Platte Purchase

As the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints departed from northwest Missouri, immigrants from the upper south arrived in the newly annexed Indian Territory known as the Platte Purchase Region. Like the Native Americans before them, the Protestant settlers viewed the region as a bountiful land with great spiritual potential. Once the federal government removed the native population, pioneers sought economic opportunities in Platte, Buchanan, Andrew, Holt, Nodaway, and Atchison counties. Protestant clergymen and laity alike formed Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Disciples of Christ, and Lutherans congregations in the tradition of the Second Great Awakening, but disparity over slavery and regional allegiances tore denominations apart. Tensions escalated on the Missouri-Kansas border as bushwhackers and a vigilantly mentality provoked violence affecting communities across the region. Each county experienced the effects of the Civil War on local churches to different degrees, but congregations in Andrew and Buchanan counties witnessed occupation, closers, and violence during the 1850s and 1860s. Protestant pioneers brought nineteenth-century spiritual movements and republican values to the Platte Purchase Region, but the turbulence of the antebellum and Civil War eras directly affected congregations.

The evangelical and democratic nature of the Second Great Awakening took Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists from minority status to powerful influences across the United States. Though the energetic and zealous rhetoric turned Joseph Smith away from mainstream Protestantism, thousands of Americans embraced the spiritual

renewal as a part of American culture. The Second Great Awakening installed republican values of education, civic duty, and self-government into middle-class citizens. Ministers encouraged evangelization and political activism. The wave of evangelization emphasized a return to Christianity were the laity took on key leadership roles. At the same time, the prestige of pastors expanded, especially in rural areas.<sup>1</sup>

Americans viewed ministers as the intellectual and spiritual leaders of communities, and pastors used their elevated status to spread their message. With limited opportunities for education on the frontier, pastors served not only as spiritual guides but as educators. Sunday Schools, often conducted by ministers and their wives, taught morals as well as reading and writing skills. Churchgoers looked to pastors for advice and context on political issues as well. Parishioners and pastors alike applied their interpretation of Christian morals to political topics making slavery a spiritual matter. Ministers embraced political stances and congregations reflected the evolution and partition of American society.<sup>2</sup>

Following the American Revolution, political preaching was dominantly an attribute of northern ministers who used their pulpits to intensify the national debate over westward expansion and slavery. New land acquired in the Mexican-American War, and controversial legislation such as the Fugitive Slave Act and the Kansas-Nebraska Act enhanced the regional divide. Pastors in the South noted the role northern ministers took in abolitionist activities and believed political rhetoric was not appropriate. Southern

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1. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 431-432.

2. Timothy L. Wesley, *The Politics of Faith During the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2013), 2-4.

ministers regularly used stories, scripture, and metaphors in their sermons to promoting the expansion of slavery. While the bond between politics and the pulpit escalated divisions in the United States, Protestantism flourished on the frontier.<sup>3</sup>

Both lay and ordained pastors held massive camp revivals and empowered local leadership as the Second Great Awakening moved from New England seminaries to beyond the Appalachian Mountains. Rivals at Andover and Yale inspired a generation of evangelical ministers. Methodist and Presbyterian leaders sent charismatic preachers to convert the frontier. Methodist Bishop Francis Asbury assigned seven circuit riders to Kentucky and Tennessee in 1782. Within eighteen years, the traveling pastors converted over two-thousand individuals.<sup>4</sup> Presbyterians used established churches in western Pennsylvanian to sponsor new representative presbyteries and synods throughout the Ohio River Valley. In 1784, Reverend David Rice organized the first Presbyterian church in Kentucky, and by 1802, Rice led a synod of three presbyteries stretching the length of the state.<sup>5</sup> In contrast to Methodist and Presbyterians, Baptist churches did not require ordained leadership or a defined doctrine other than the Bible to spread their faith. The practice of lay ministers and local leadership allowed congregations to form in homes, at crossroads, and in towns across the West. Though each Protestant denomination was unique, they embraced similar tactics to spread Christianity. Massive revival meetings, like ones held at Cane Ridge and Gasper River in Kentucky, brought thousands together for a spiritual, social, and emotional experience. Isolated life on the

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3. Wesley, *The Politics of Faith During the Civil War*, 27-28.

4. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 432.

5. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 432-433.

frontier was primitive, and religion provided the chance to interact with individuals outside of one's immediate family. Such an interaction left a profound impact on frontiersmen as they ventured toward the Platte Purchase Region.<sup>6</sup>

Before Christianity came to northwest Missouri, spiritual beliefs and the federal government brought Native Americans to the Platte Region. Tribes knew the Missouri River Valley north of the convergence of the Kansas and Missouri rivers as a hallowed trail to paradise. Natives traveled through the valley reroute to the sacred Black Hills of the Dakotas. The inviolability left the region's native population relatively small as tribes came and went from the area. During the Andrew Jackson Administration, the region's sparse population and the American people's demands for Indian removal encouraged Congress to establish the Platte Region as an Indian Territory. By the 1830s, the federal government dispersed bands of Sioux, Iowa, Sac and Fox, and other tribes onto two million acres between the Missouri River and the original western border of Missouri.<sup>7</sup>

Native Americans were not the only ones interested in the Platte Purchase Region. Mormon missionaries and French traders came to minister and trade with the tribes respectfully. The federal government also assigned Indian agents to the region. Although appointed to work with the natives, agents often took advantage the tribes' vulnerability. Major John Dougherty, an Indian agent in the Platte Region, sold alcohol to the tribes, and then describing them as "...a poor, drunken, miserable set of beings..." who were in a "...constant broils with their white neighbors."<sup>8</sup> Similar to the Mormon

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6. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 433-436.

7. Duane G. Meyer, *The Heritage of Missouri* (Springfield, Missouri: Emden Press, 1993), 180-181.

experience, the negative perception associated with Native American hindered any chance at equality in nineteenth-century Missouri. For Protestant and eventually Catholic settlers, northwest Missouri's physical features and economic potion became the main attraction.<sup>9</sup>

The Platte Region's landscape made it ideal for settlement and commerce. In contrast to his views on Native Americans, John Dougherty praised the region's natural resources as he lobbied for annexation and white settlement. He wrote, the Platte Region "is well timbered, interspersed with fine, rich prairies, and abounds with numerous large, bold running streams...."<sup>10</sup> In addition to the Missouri River Valley, the Platte, Nodaway, Tarkio, Nishnabotta, and the Hundred-and-Two river valleys included tree covered bluffs, fertile bottomland, and abundant wildlife. For farmers and merchants in nearby Clinton, DeKalb, and Gentry countries, routes to the Missouri River through the Indian land were faster than hauling supplies south to Clay County ports. White settlement and the transportation of goods in the region both occurred despite federal law making such actions illegal. The desire to expand trade and gain new property prompted the government to again forced a spiritual people from their land.<sup>11</sup>

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8. A Letter From John Dougherty to L. F. Linn, January 26, 1835, in National Historical Company, *History of Clay and Platte Counties, Missouri* (St. Louis: National Historical Company, 1885), 546-547.

9. A Letter From John Dougherty to L. F. Linn, January 26, 1835, in National Historical Company, *History of Clay and Platte Counties, Missouri* (St. Louis: National Historical Company, 1885), 546-547.

10. John Dougherty to L. F. Linn, January 26, 1835, in the *History of Clay and Platte Counties, Missouri*, 546-547.

11. Meyer, *The Heritage of Missouri*, 180-181.

The annexation and settlement of the Platte Region reflected the nineteenth-century politics. Residents of northwest Missouri, including Dougherty, lobbied Jefferson City and Congress to expand the state's borders. In January of 1835, Senator L. F. Linn perused annexation. Linn echoed Dougherty's thoughts when he wrote Missouriians sought the Platte Region to restrict the "annoying Indian population, and for the purpose of having points on the river to receive their supplies and ship their productions...."<sup>12</sup> General Andrew Hughes promoted annexation efforts at a Clay County militia muster in the summer of 1835. Following Hughes' persuasive remarks, key regional leaders like David R. Atchison and Andrew Doniphan organized a committee to secure the territory's acquisition. The same year, Senator Thomas Hart Benton joined Linn in the request to expand the state's western border but encountered three critical issues. First, most Congressmen did not favor extending the borders of the largest state in Union at that time. Next, treaties signed by the federal government gave the Platte Purchase to the tribes for perpetuity. Finally, the acquisition of land for Missouri meant the expansion of slavery and challenged the Missouri Compromise of 1820. Benton capitalized on the politics of the day to overcome the obstacles. He used the national desire for expansion, his immense political clout, and connections to the Jackson and Van Buren administrations to perused Congress.<sup>13</sup> In the fall of 1836, Superintendent of Indian Affairs William Clark presented new treaties to tribal leaders at Fort Leavenworth. Although Native American leaders attempted to negotiate the site of

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12. L. F. Linn to H. Ellsworth, Eq., January 23, 1835, in the *History of Clay and Platte Counties, Missouri* (St. Louis: National Historical Company, 1885), 545.

13. National Historical Company, *History of Clay and Platte Counties, Missouri* (St. Louis: National Historical Company, 1885), 549-550.

new Indians lands in Missouri, the government ultimately reassigned the natives to locations in Iowa and Kansas. In signing the treaty, the natives sold their claim to the Platte Region for money and merchandise. By 1837, the former Indian Territory was open for white settlement.<sup>14</sup>

As commercial centers formed across the Platte Purchase, locals established mainstream Protestant churches. The most southern county, Platte, experienced the initial population boom along the Missouri River. In western Platte County, Joseph Moore, a former cavalry officer from Fort Leavenworth, purchased the future site of Weston for a barrel of whiskey. Moore's 1837 transaction turned into a small trading post into a thriving economic center. By 1850, nearly 5,000 people lived and worked in the city's shops, mills, factories, brewery, or two distilleries. Others, including slaves, processed hemp, hides, and timber. Steamships transported the city's products to markets downstream. Weston's growth led to the creation of Presbyterian, Christian (Despises of Christ), Catholic, Baptist, and Methodist congregations in the city between 1837 and 1853.<sup>15</sup>

Upriver, an experienced frontiersman named Joseph Robidoux operated a trading post near Black Snake Creek in what became Buchanan County. The isolated post offered provisions to both Native Americans and trappers, but Robidoux saw the potential for population growth. In 1843, Robidoux plotted a seven by ten block town that became St. Joseph. Land speculators, wholesalers, riverboat pilots, and artisans

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14. The Platte Purchase Treaty between the United States and the Sac and Fox Indians, September 17, 1836, in the *History of Clay and Platte Counties, Missouri*, 550-552.

15. Bertha I. Bless, *Weston: The Queen of the Platte Purchase* (Weston: Weston Chronical, 1969), 3-6 and 35-35.

turned the eastern bend on the Missouri into the central hub of the Platte Purchase and a destination for westward migration. Like Weston, St. Joseph became home to every mainstream Christian denomination before the Civil War began. At first, congregations met in homes, business, or rented rooms for services. As the population and commerce expanded, churchgoers financed the construction of free-standing church building.<sup>16</sup>

Due north from St. Joseph in Andrew County, smaller trade centers next to water sources became the site of frontier churches. Settlers from Kentucky and Tennessee homestead near the Missouri, Platte, Nodaway, and One-Hundred-and-Two rivers. A group of Presbyterians used the tree covered hills on Hackberry Ridge, east of the Missouri River, to build homes and farms. The community worshiped on homesteads until the county seat, Savannah, was plotted in 1841.<sup>17</sup> Like their homesteads, pioneers often built churches near water sources. The founders of Bethel Baptist Church held services in each other's homes from 1840 until 1850 when they built a sanctuary near the One-Hundred-and-Two River.<sup>18</sup> On a natural waterfall in Platte River, the community of Rochester boasted water mills, hotels, saloons, a wagon factory, a stagecoach stop, and a single church building used by different Protestant churches.<sup>19</sup> West of Rochester, pioneers in need of a place to bury their dead, established a cemetery on a hill

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16. Robert J. Willoughby, *Robidoux's Town: A Nineteenth-Century History of St. Joseph, MO* (Westphalia, MO: Westphalia Publishing, 1997), 21-27.

17. Walter H. Clark, *The History of the Platte Presbytery in Northwest Missouri* (Kansas City: Tirrnan-Draft Printing Company, 1910), 14.

18. Jena Sauber, "Country church marks almost two centuries," *St. Joseph News-Press* (St. Joseph, MO) August 22, 2015, [http://www.newspressnow.com/life/religion/country-church-marks-almost-two-centuries/article\\_037dc4d1-ac61-5554-9a29-0854d0759cc5.html](http://www.newspressnow.com/life/religion/country-church-marks-almost-two-centuries/article_037dc4d1-ac61-5554-9a29-0854d0759cc5.html).

19. J.R. Sigrist, "Early Day Rochester," in *One Hundred Years of Helena: All Because of the Railroad, 1878-1978* ed. by Lorine Grider and Helena Centennial Book Staff (Helena, MO: Helena Centennial Book Committee 1978), 316-317.

overlooking Long Branch Creek. Later in 1844, locals organized Long Branch Christian Church across the road from the cemetery.<sup>20</sup>

The northern half of the Platte Purchase followed similar spiritual and economic partners even though the counties had smaller populations. The three most southern counties benefited from their proximity to the Missouri River. In the 1860 Census, Buchanan County's population was 23,861, compared to Platte County's 18,350 and Andrew County's 11,850. In contrast, Holt County held 6,550 residents while Nodaway was home to 5,232 individuals, but Atchison County only had 4,649 inhabitants.<sup>21</sup> Unlike Platte and Buchanan, points north lacked a major population and commerce centers in the mid-nineteenth-century. The residents of Holt County farmed near mills, trading posts, or river landings. The Nichols family homestead and operated a mill on Nichols Creek in the county's southeast corner. The family led efforts to organize a church for a colony of southerners living in the vicinity. Thirteen individuals formed Nichols Grove Missionary Baptist Church and Cemetery in 1840 on land donated by the Francis Nichols.<sup>22</sup> In northwest Holt County, Hemme's Landing, a dominantly Lutheran community, formed on the Missouri River. Rich bottomland and plentiful timbers were a welcomed site for Lutheran families fleeing a weak economy, nationalistic rhetoric, and religious persecutions in Hanover, Germany. Although the first German Lutheran came

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20. Andrew County Historical Society, *Andrew County: A Community* (Savannah, MO: Andrew County Museum and Historical Society, 1980), 200.

21. US Census Bureau, "1860 Missouri Census Table," 1870, "Civil War on the Western Border," The Kansas City Public Library, 2017, accessed June 28, 2017, <http://www.civilwaronthewesternborder.org/content/1860-missouri-census-table>.

22. National Historical Company, *The History of Holt and Atchison Counties, Missouri* (St. Joseph, MO: National Historical Company, 1882), 438-438.

to Holt County in 1840, the community did not found St. John's German Evangelical Lutheran Church near Hamme's landing until 1860. Similar norms occurred in Atchison and Nodaway, but their population was much smaller. Less than thirty years after annexation, most the Platte Purchase Region was settled. While the larger population brought economic opportunities, increased migration brought hostilities. Slavery and regional loyalties fractioned American churches on the national and local levels.<sup>23</sup>

Conflict and migration are at the center of Presbyterian history in America. During the seventeenth-century, the monarchs of the House of Hanover involuntarily recollected Scotch-Irish Presbyterians to the English colonies in the New World.<sup>24</sup> The Second Great Awakening brought more growth and discord for American Presbyterians. Frontier Presbyterian ministers embraced the mass revivalism to the dismay of traditionalists. Progressive clergymen sponsored camp meetings and encouraged mass conversions. Such events took the church's popularity into the Ohio and Missouri river valleys. The populace practices allowed predestination doctrines to fade and democratic ideals to prosper in the church already known for representative government. The new practices, regional loyalties, and rapid expansion created a lack of unity with the denomination. Between 1803 and 1809, nearly half of all Presbyterians ministers and laity in Kentucky ignored conservative, eastern leadership. In 1813, the division led the

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23. Michael Jenkins, "The German-Lutherans of Holt County: The Survival of an Old Lutheran Community in Northwest Missouri," (master's thesis, Northwest Missouri State University, 2003), 12-14.

24. Bret E. Carroll, *The Routledge Historical Atlas of Religion in America* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 38-39.

frontier minister David Rice to create an independent Cumberland Presbytery. Rice's separation foreshadowed future internal divides.<sup>25</sup>

In the 1820s and 1830s, the Presbyterian General Assembly, the governing body of the Presbyterian Church in America, became increasingly divided over politics. The majority of the General Assembly deemed domestic political preaching as harmful and divisive especially concerning the expansion of slavery. Although pastors were directed to avoid such rhetoric, northern church leaders advocated for the abolishment of slavery as their southern counterparts argued for its preservation.<sup>26</sup> The strife culminated in 1837 when Presbyterian church separated into New School and Old School sects. New School congregation embraced revivals and camp meetings found on the frontier and placed less emphasis on the sacramental services. In contrast, the Old School distrusted the latest evangelical practices and preferred a more conventional approach linked to the origins of the Presbyterianism.<sup>27</sup> Each subgroup split yet again along regional lines as the United States moved closer to the Civil War.<sup>28</sup>

In the border states like Missouri, Presbyterian Churches reflected national growth, democratic values, and political divisions. New School Presbyterians from Kentucky were some of the original settlers to homestead in the Platte Purchase Region. In 1842, Presbyterian ministers held Buchanan County's first camp meeting which

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25. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 60-61.

26. Wesley, *The Politics of Faith During the Civil War*, 28-29.

27. Lynn Bridgers, *The American Religious Experience: A Concise History* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), 19.

28. Wesley, *The Politics of Faith During the Civil War*, 78-79.

resulted in the organization of Walnut Grove Church near Easton.<sup>29</sup> In St. Joseph, six women met with Reverend Thomas Reeve in a tavern to create the first Protestant congregation in the city in 1843. Reeve's New School Church, known as the Presbyterians Society of St. Joseph, grew to 106 members by 1851.<sup>30</sup> In Andrew County, most of the first Presbyterians migrants, including Reverend Elijah A. Carson, homesteaded along Hackberry Ridge.<sup>31</sup> Carson, an experienced, ordained home missionary from Tennessee, organized the first permanent Presbyterian church not only in Andrew County but within the Platte Purchase Region in 1841.<sup>32</sup> Following his inaugural sermon, twenty-four individuals adopted a charter for the new church. The charter's signees, which included men and women, noted the need for a Christian church in the region and accepted the authority of the New School Presbyterian leadership. The charter also allowed the congregation to name themselves.<sup>33</sup> Originally known as Pisgah, the church met in homes along Hackberry Ridge before relocating to Savannah where the regional differences became evident.<sup>34</sup> Savannah was first called Union before the southern immigrants renamed the community after Savannah, Georgia. Likewise, the

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29. Christian Ludwig Rutt, *The Daily News' History of Buchanan County and St. Joseph, MO* (St. Joseph, MO: L. Hardman, 1898), 183.

30. Willoughby, *Robidoux's Town: A Nineteenth-Century History of St. Joseph, MO*, 87- 88.

31. Clark, *The History of the Platte Presbytery in Northwest Missouri*, 13.

32. Jena Sauber, *Untitled*, 2016, photo of Reverend Elijah A. Carson's Memorial, St. Joseph News-Press, accessed June 27, 2017, [http://www.newspressnow.com/life/religion/oldest-church-in-andrew-county-to-celebrate-years/article\\_478838f1-03f3-5ea8-9464-6fe1c500bccd.html](http://www.newspressnow.com/life/religion/oldest-church-in-andrew-county-to-celebrate-years/article_478838f1-03f3-5ea8-9464-6fe1c500bccd.html).

33. "Untitled: A Charter for Formation of a Presbyterian Church in Andrew County," August 7, 1841 in Walter H. Clark, *The History of the Platte Presbytery in Northwest Missouri* (Kansas City: Tirrnan-Draft Printing Company, 1910), 15.

34. Clark, *The History of the Platte Presbytery in Northwest Missouri*, 15.

Presbyterians renamed their church after the town.<sup>35</sup> The debate over slavery fragmented Carson's church. By 1853, southern parishioners and Reverend Carson left the congregation as well as Presbytery of the Platte. Although he remained in the Andrew County, Carson joined the Southern Presbytery of Upper Missouri.<sup>36</sup>

Old School churches took longer to form, but as the Platte Purchase Region's population grew, new congregations emerged. Not using mass meeting hindered the expansion of Old School churches. The sect tended to wait for members to arrive rather than seek mass conversions. Two Old School Presbyterian congregations formed at Round Springs and Flags Springs in northern Andrew County. In 1849, forty-five members of the two churches agreed to unite and organize the Old School Presbyterian Church in Savannah under the leadership of Kentucky native Reverend Charles Stewart.<sup>37</sup> The Old School Presbyterians organized the First Presbyterian Church of St. Joseph in 1854. The more traditional sect maintained a small population until the 1860s.<sup>38</sup>

Like the Presbyterians, the Methodist church originated in the British Isles, but westward migration, the Second Great Awakening, and slavery transformed the denomination in the nineteenth century. Founded by John Wesley in England, Methodist Episcopal classes or societies encouraged prayer, personal discipline, and lay leadership.<sup>39</sup> Between the American Revolution and the Civil War, circuit riders

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35. Goodspeed Publishing Co., *History of Andrew and DeKalb Counties, Missouri* (St. Louis: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1888), 147.

36. Clark, *The History of the Platte Presbytery in Northwest Missouri*, 14-15.

37. Clark, *The History of the Platte Presbytery in Northwest Missouri*, 16-18.

38. Willoughby, *Robidoux's Town: A Nineteenth-Century History of St. Joseph, MO*, 87- 88.

39. Carroll, *The Routledge Historical Atlas of Religion in America*, 44-45.

expanded Methodist congregations from fifty to 20,000.<sup>40</sup> However, the growth during the Second Great Awakening succumbed to regional divides. Throughout the South, Methodist pastors and churchgoers owned approximately 223,000 slaves to the distaste of their northern brethren. In the 1840s, clergy and laymen in the North left the church's General Conference to form antislavery branches of the denomination. In 1844, the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church met in New York City to address the lack of unity. The regional divide over slavery and church structure resulted in overwhelming support for a schism. In May of 1845, the Methodist Episcopal Church South held its first general conference in Louisville, Kentucky. Three years later, the General Conference or Northern General Conference met without southern delegates. The breakup forced the faithful in the Platte Purchase to choose sides as they forged homes in the West.<sup>41</sup>

From humble begins, Methodists in Buchanan County both flourished and fractioned. In 1838, the first Methodist services in the country were held southeast of St. Joseph in Agency Township. In the northern part of the county, circuit rides attended small congregations throughout the 1840s.<sup>42</sup> In 1843, Reverend Edward Robinson rode the St. Joseph and Savannah circuit. David Heaton, a carpenter and undertaker, allowed Methodists in St. Joseph to use his former store for Sunday services. As the church organized, the General Conference's action tested the faithful's loyalties, but southern migration made the decision clear. Reverend Robinson and his flock sent delegates to the

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40. Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 179-180.

41. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*. 661-663.

42. Willoughby, *Robidoux's Town: A Nineteenth-Century History of St. Joseph, MO*, 182 and 88.

southern convention in Louisville. In turn, abolitionist broke away and in 1849, Reverend A. J. Armstrong led a small Methodist Episcopal Church North in St. Joseph.<sup>43</sup> In contrast, southern immigrants allowed the M. E. Church South to expand to a new sanctuary in 1847 and again in 1858 with the name Francis Street Methodist Church South.<sup>44</sup>

The national schism split Methodist congregation in Andrew and Nodaway counties as well. Andrew County Methodists organized a church in Savannah in 1841 but fragmented into north and south congregations in 1844.<sup>45</sup> In Maryville, the Nodaway county seat, Benjamin Baxter and Reuben Aldridge pastored the Methodists until the schism. Baxter went on to serve the Southern congregation, while Aldridge ministered to abolitionists. Methodists in southwest Nodaway County town of Skidmore accepted the General Conference's separation plan in 1846. The southern members continued to hold regular service, but northern sympathizers in the area went without a Methodist church until 1880.<sup>46</sup>

The history of the Baptist church in America also consists of division and rapid growth in the first half of the nineteenth-century. During the English Reformation, a group of Separatists broke with nearly a thousand-year tradition of infant baptism in favor of adults freely accepting the Christian faith and choosing when to be baptized. The culture and faith of Baptist societies and conventions spread across the eastern

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43. Rutt, *The Daily News' History of Buchanan County and St. Joseph, MO*, 188.

44. Willoughby, *Robidoux's Town: A Nineteenth-Century History of St. Joseph, MO*, 88.

45. Goodspeed Publishing Co., *History of Andrew and DeKalb Counties, Missouri*, 255-256.

46. National Historical Company, *The History of Nodaway County, Missouri* (St. Joseph, MO: National Historical Company, 1882), 248 and 285.

seaboard following the American Revolution. The Baptist church embraced democracy when organizing their congregations. Individuals founded local Baptist churches throughout the frontier, but disputes in the 1840s over missionary efforts and slavery lead to breaches within the national Baptist leadership. Northerners sent money to missions in the upper Mississippi River Valley and blocked slaveholding ministers from becoming sanctioned missionaries. In response, the Virginia Baptist Association called for a convention of all southern Baptist societies. The meeting led to the creation of the Southern Baptist Conference in 1845. The Southern organization supported the establishment of churches throughout the South only to have the turbulence of the Civil War left their society in disarray.<sup>47</sup>

The Baptist congregations in northwest Missouri experienced significant growth in the 1840s and 1850s. Increased immigration from Kentucky and other southern states swelled the ranks of Baptist churches. In Buchanan County, Baptist congregations existed in DeKalb, Mt. Pleasant, Sugar Creek, Walnut Grove, and Taos.<sup>48</sup> Dillon Creek Baptist Church, located north of St. Joseph, sponsored the St. Joseph's first Baptist organization in 1845 with Elder William Worley as pastor.<sup>49</sup> In 1850, membership reached one thousand making the church the largest Protestant faith in the city.<sup>50</sup> After holding services in the Buchanan County Courthouse for eight years, the First Baptist

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47. Bridgers, *The American Religious Experience: A Concise History*, 157-164.

48. Seward W. Lilly, *History of Buchanan County, Missouri 1881* (St. Joseph, MO: Union Historical Company, 1881), 379-380.

49. Rutt, *The Daily News' History of Buchanan County and St. Joseph, MO*, 190.

50. Willoughby, *Robidoux's Town: A Nineteenth-Century History of St. Joseph, MO*, 88-89.

Church moved into a two-story church building in downtown St. Joseph in 1853.<sup>51</sup>

Nicholas Grove Baptist in Holt County grew from thirteen members to 150 by 1860. The expansion allowed the church to build a new brick structure. There is little evidence to suggest that Baptists in northwest Missouri fractioned before the Civil War. The Southern Baptist Conference dominated much of the state and pioneers formed congregation with like-minded individuals.<sup>52</sup>

The frontiersmen handled the antebellum divisions within their church without physical turmoil. The freedom to choose a faith and political stance created a peaceful resolution for the time being but foreshadowed future turbulence. Like the Missouri Compromise, the separation of Protestant denominations created a peaceful accord, but the truce was only temporary. The nation and Missourians had to resolve the slave debate. To do so communities and churches encountered further partitions in addition to violence and military occupation.

The institution of slavery existed in Missouri long before it divided Protestantism. In the 1720s, the lack of a sufficient labor force prompted French colonists to import African slaves to work in lead mines while Spanish colonists used slave labor primarily for agriculture. The Chouteaus, a politically connected family of French traders, brought slaves to work in their Jackson County warehouses. Joseph Robidoux also owned slaves on his property in St. Joseph. Bondsmen in Independence took hides purchased from Native Americans to make whips and sold them to pioneers migrating west. Slave

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51. Missouri River Heritage Association, *The Heritage of Buchanan County, Missouri* Vol. 1 (Dallas: Curtis Media Corporation, 1986), 104.

52. National Historical Company, *The History of Holt and Atchison Counties, Missouri*, 438-439.

owners in Clay and Platte counties used slaves like much of the South. The soil and climate were ideal for growing hemp and tobacco which brought higher profits than grains. Slave owners invested in bondsmen to achieve financial prosperity. The limitation or elimination of slavery meant significant financial loss for those already invested. Advocates of the institution went to great extents to defend and expand the practice.<sup>53</sup>

The expansion crisis escalated when Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854. The law allowed residents of the two territories to decide if slavery was permissible by popular vote. As abolitionists and pro-slavery advocates ascended on Kansas, guerilla warfare ensued.<sup>54</sup> The Border War, also known as Bleeding Kansas, put neighbors against neighbor. Throughout eastern Kansas and western Missouri, armed bands of paramilitaries robbed, burned, attacked, killed, and even tortured their opponents. Infamous raiders like William Quantrill and Jesse James stayed south of the Platte Purchase Region before the Civil War, yet the mob mentality consumed the region. The Border War mentally hindered Protestant congregations throughout the Platte Purchase.<sup>55</sup>

Throughout the 1850s, a vigilant mentality led to assaults on pastors in northwest Missouri. Minister's elevated status in society made them targets for opposition.

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53. Kristen K. Epps, "Before the Border War: Slavery and the Settlement of the Western Frontier, 1825-1845," in *Bleeding Kansas, Bleeding Missouri: The Long Civil War on the Border* ed. Jonathan Earle, and Diane Mutti Burke (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2013), 31-38.

54. Jonathan Earle and Diane Mutti Burke, eds., *Bleeding Kansas, Bleeding Missouri: The Long Civil War on the Border* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2013), 3-7.

55. Michael Fellman, "I Came Not to Bring Peace, but a Sword': The Christian War God and the War of All against All on the Kansas and Missouri Border," in *Bleeding Kansas, Bleeding Missouri: The Long Civil War on the Border* ed. Jonathan Earle, and Diane Mutti Burke (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2013), 1-13.

Paramilitaries harassed and assaulted clergy to limit their influence. Elder George S. Park attempted in vain to establish a Presbyterian church in the southern Platte County town of Parkville. In addition to his role as a spiritual leader, Park operated a local newspaper where he lauded his slaveholding status. In 1855, Jayhawkers raided Park's office, threw his press into the Missouri River, and forced him from the town he founded. A Presbyterian minister from Weston encouraged Park to seek refuge in St. Louis. Without Park's leadership, attempts to establish a local church stalled until after the war.<sup>56</sup> Slave owners in Rochester advocated violence in order to defend their property rights to the dismay of local pacifists and abolitionists. Tensions escalated in 1856 when a Methodist circuit rider known as Reverend Sellers delivered a pointed political sermon favoring the abolishment of slavery. Sellers' stance earned him the reputation as a dissident which promoted a mob to form. The illegal gathering seized Sellers despite attempts to rescue him. The crowd tarred the pastor, placed him on his horse, and ran him out of town.<sup>57</sup> In Holt County, Reverend William Fulton abounded his Old School Presbyterian Church of Oregon in 1860 as well. Although he had served the church since 1853, Fulton fled to the South. His departure left the congregation without a regular pastor until after the Civil War.<sup>58</sup>

Since congregations formed based on regional loyalties, church buildings became easy targets for mobs. In western Buchanan County, Southern Methodists "fortified" their church in DeKalb to protect the building from bushwhackers.<sup>59</sup> In Holt County, an

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56. Clark, *The History of the Platte Presbytery in Northwest Missouri*, 51.

57. Goodspeed Publishing Co., *History of Andrew and DeKalb Counties, Missouri*, 219-220.

58. National Historical Company, *The History of Holt and Atchison Counties, Missouri*, 875 and 326-328.

unknown band of northern partisans allegedly burned Nichols Grove Baptist Church in 1860. By attaching a church, mobs sent a message to the entire flock. The assault achieved its goal. Fearing further assaults, southern families in the Nichols Grove community fled the region. Regretfully, Border War was just the beginning of unrest for Protestants.<sup>60</sup>

After the South's secession, vigilantes continued to harass pastors. Reverend Charles Morris was a northern Methodist minister in Platte and Buchanan counties. Morris regularly used the pulpit to advocate for the Union and abolition which angered southern sympathizers. In August of 1864, a mob formed to seize Morris at his home in rural Buchanan County. Men surrounded and fired upon Morris's house, but the pastor refused to surrender and returned fire. The mob responded by lighting the house on fire. As Morris attempted to escape, he was shot and killed. Morris's son organized a band of Union men to retaliate. The pro-Union mob damaged the property of Morris's suspected opponents.<sup>61</sup>

Despite being targets of violence in border states, nationally pastors became vital parts of the war effort. Northern and southern ministers alike served as regional advocates. Southerners firmly believed the Bible endorsed the institution of slavery making the act was permissible. Lay and ordained Southern pastors asserted a denial of scripture's stance on slavery was to contradict God's holy word. Christian abolitionists struggled to use the Biblical reasoning around the South's argument. Pastors, like New

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59. Missouri River Heritage Association, *The Heritage of Buchanan County, Missouri* Vol. 1, 102.

60. Irene L. Costello, *Gateway to Holt County: Via Nodaway Township, 1836 -1992* (Oregon, MO: Irene L. Costello, 1993), 50-51.

61. National Historical Company, *History of Clay and Platte Counties, Missouri*, 733.

School Presbyterian Albert Barnes, countered by citing life in the 1800s differed significantly from Biblical times.<sup>62</sup> When the South formally seceded from the Union, ministers proclaimed God favored their particular cause. Southern pastors broke from apolitical stances and advocated for the success of the Confederacy. In the North, President Abraham Lincoln believed clergymen were critical to victory. Preachers who spoke out against the Union were subject to retribution. National church conferences encouraged ministers to support the war effort. In the North, the Old School Presbyterian General Conference issued the Gardiner Springs Resolution calling for a wartime pledge of denomination's loyalty to the Union. The New School leadership ordered all ministers to advocate for the Union's victory. The Civil War pushed pastors and parishioners away from northwest Missouri as federal troops ascended on the region.<sup>63</sup>

The mobilization of Union and Confederate forces brought an abrupt transition for pastors and churches. Following the Confederacy's secession, Reverend Elias Finely abandoned the Missionary Baptist Church he founded in northwest Atchison County and relocated to the sympathetic South.<sup>64</sup> The influx of Union troops intensified the situation. To secure Missouri's vital trade ports and communication lines, federal units descended upon the state. From 1861 to 1865, Union soldiers from Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, and Illinois occupied cities and often used church buildings for temporary barracks. When Union troops arrived in St. Joseph in December of 1861, the First Baptist Church postponed services as Union forces requisitioned the building.<sup>65</sup> Northern units abused

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62. Mark A. Noll, "The Bible and Slavery," in *Religion and the American Civil War* ed. Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 43-44.

63. Wesley, *The Politics of Faith During the Civil War*, 120-123 and 78-79.

64. National Historical Company, *The History of Holt and Atchison Counties, Missouri*, 875.

the Rock Port Methodist Episcopal Church South in Atchison County so much that church goers abandoned the mistreated building after the war.<sup>66</sup>

Residents in St. Joseph learned to cope with occupation even though churches and pastors continued to suffer. The 16<sup>th</sup> Illinois Regiment built fortification on Prospect Hill in St. Joseph's north end overlooking the town and the Missouri River Valley. The unit included the famed preacher Reverend Richard Haney. Although Haney came to St. Joseph as a regimental chaplain, the Reverend presided over the Methodist Episcopal Church North from 1861 to 1863. Haney's distinguished reputation as a minister did not help the church. In 1863, debt forced the congregation to sell its building and rent different locations for services.<sup>67</sup> Federal forces also compelled leadership changes for southern churches. In 1860, Reverend William Rush became pastor of Francis Street Methodist Episcopal South. Reverend Rush's pointed sermons gained the attention of Union officials.<sup>68</sup> General Benjamin Loan, the regional military commander, barred Rush from the pulpit in 1862.<sup>69</sup> Loan's actions were in line with his martial law he put in place to restore order to the Missouri-Kansas Border.<sup>70</sup> Loan was not the only officer to notice the influence of ministers on the war effort. Reverend John Moorhead ministered to Methodist E. North on the Oregon Circuit starting in 1863. Union Colonel Clough

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65. Missouri River Heritage Association, *The Heritage of Buchanan County, Missouri* Vol. 1, 104.

66. National Historical Company, *The History of Holt and Atchison Counties, Missouri*, 657-8.

67. Lilly, *History of Buchanan County, Missouri 1881*, 482.

68. Lilly, *History of Buchanan County, Missouri 1881*, 482 and 486.

69. Rutt, *The Daily News' History of Buchanan County and St. Joseph, MO*, 188.

70. "Military: General Orders," *The Morning Herald* (St. Joseph, MO), August 27, 1862, <http://digital.shsmo.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/stjoemh/id/814>.

gave Moorhead the duty of organizing Union Leagues in northwest Missouri. Moorhead traveled through Holt, Andrew, Buchanan, Caldwell, Clinton, and DeKalb counties appealing to Union sympathizers.<sup>71</sup>

In Platte County, Union forces target Platte City and its churches not once but twice. The county sent dozens of regiments to fight for the Confederacy, and Union officers planned to make an example of the county seat. In December of 1861, the 18<sup>th</sup> Missouri Infantry of U.S. Volunteers from Linn County arrived in Platte County after guarding the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad. Under the command of a Colonel Morgan, the regiment burned down the Platte County Courthouse, the Methodist Episcopal South Church, and the Presbyterian church. Despite the destruction of the town, Platte County continued to support the Southern cause. Rebel scouts and bushwhackers harassed Union troops and loyal citizens. To suppress the unrest, units from Kansas and Colorado targeted rebel sympathizers throughout the county. In 1864, notorious Union officers, Colonels Ford and Jensen, scorched Camden Point before turning their men loose on Platte City. Troops yet again burned the county seat including the buildings used by M.E. Church South and the Presbyterian church. Even after the second round of destruction, Platte County citizens continued to volunteer to fight for the Confederacy. Not all communities maintained the same resolve. The unrest of the Civil War pushed residents to northwest Missouri to new churches and regions.<sup>72</sup>

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71. National Historical Company, *The History of Nodaway County, Missouri*, 620.

72. National Historical Company, *History of Clay and Platte Counties, Missouri*, 685, 724, and 806.

Throughout the war years, new Presbyterian churches formed in the Platte Region while others that once thrived dissolved. Presbyterians near Flag Springs left the Old School Savannah church to form a new community connected to the Cumberland sect. Elder Sylvester S. Manley of Pennsylvania helped organize Union Presbyterian Church to the west of Flag Springs in an area known as Empire Prairie. The congregation choose the name Union in June of 1861 to represent its member's loyalties.<sup>73</sup> In 1863, Pro-Union citizens of St. Joseph organized Westminster Presbyterian. Under the leadership of Reverend B.B. Parsons of Illinois, the church expanded its membership and built a Gothic style chapel.<sup>74</sup> Reverend Jesse Allen's Cumberland Presbyterian Church in southwest Nodaway County thrived with the assistance of his cousin Mrs. M. Marlin, but the congregation's success stalled in 1861. Regional unrest pushed the faithful from the region and disbanded Allen's church.<sup>75</sup> The Old School Presbytery of Upper Missouri saw fourteen out of twenty-four congregations dissolved between 1859 and 1869. New School churches in the Lexington, Missouri Presbytery suffered even more. In 1859, twenty-one churches registered with the presbytery. Following the war, only four remained including Savannah and Weston.<sup>76</sup>

Four years of fighting resulted in smaller memberships for local Methodist congregations. In the 1850s, families left the area for more peaceful or sympathetic locations. When the war began, men left their homes to serve their respective cause.

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73. Goodspeed Publishing Co., *History of Andrew and DeKalb Counties, Missouri*, 67-70 and 215.

74. Lilly, *History of Buchanan County, Missouri 1881*, 478.

75. National Historical Company, *The History of Nodaway County, Missouri*, 198.

76. Clark, *The History of the Platte Presbytery in Northwest Missouri*, 67.

Such departures forced Guilford M.E. Church South in Nodaway County to suspended services during the war years.<sup>77</sup> Both northern and southern families left Andrew County impacting attendance at Northern and Southern Methodist services in Savannah. The internal division and confrontational rhetoric lead some to leave the Methodists church all together.<sup>78</sup>

Other Protestant congregations in the Platte Purchase experienced the challenges of the Civil War even though they were smaller denominations and did not fraction like Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists. The Lutheran population in the Platte Purchase was relatively small before the Civil War except for Holt County. Even though Lutherans fled military subscription in Germany, settlers were willing to serve their new country. German immigrants tended to favor the Union, and members of St. John's German Evangelical Lutheran Church joined Northern regiments.<sup>79</sup>

Christian Churches, known as the Disciples of Christ, also embraced democratic ideals and suffered Civil War era divisions in northwest Missouri. Like the Baptists, the Disciples believed in lay leadership. The First Christian Church in St. Joseph relied on lay leadership from the 1840s through the 1850s including Elder J. J. Wyatt. Wyatt provided leadership and sermons until M. E. Lard became pastor in 1859. Lard resigned from the small congregation once the Civil War started, and Wyatt resumed the post

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77. National Historical Company, *The History of Nodaway County, Missouri*, 320.

78. Goodspeed Publishing Co., *History of Andrew and DeKalb Counties, Missouri*, 255.

79. Jenkins, "The German-Lutherans of Holt County: The Survival of an Old Lutheran Community in Northwest Missouri," 15-16.

throughout the war.<sup>80</sup> The First Christian Church of Maryville disbanded as a fight broke out but reorganized in 1865.<sup>81</sup>

In Savannah, the Elder Prince L. Hudgens was a respected community leader, pastor of the First Christian Church and an advocate for rebellion. Hudgens organized a secession rally in his church at the same time as a Union rally commenced a block away on the courthouse square. The pastor's passionate rhetoric and local sentiments inspired a mob to run the Union organizers out of town before raising the Palmetto flag over the courthouse. Not all church goers appreciated Hudgens' Southern attitudes. As the war escalated, the congregation splintered. Hudgens left the ministry, and the congregation discontinued services until after the war. Ironically, when Union troops occupied Andrew County, they utilized the abandoned First Christian Church as a temporary headquarters. The troops camped on the church lawn and used the former sanctuary as a stable to prevent bushwalkers from steal horses.<sup>82</sup> The vigilantly threat in Andrew County was a major concern. A group known as the Midnight Riders or Midnight Rangers were responsible for deaths and property damage. In Rochester Township, the group allegedly burned Long Branch Christian Church.<sup>83</sup>

Amongst the nineteenth-century turbulence, evidence of ecumenicalism existed throughout the Platte Purchase. As congregations grew, the need for new land and building brought the faithful together. By 1847, expanding memberships of the

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80. Lilly, *History of Buchanan County, Missouri 1881*, 492.

81. National Historical Company, *The History of Nodaway County*, 290.

82. Goodspeed Publishing Co., *History of Andrew and DeKalb Counties, Missouri*, 203.

83. Andrew County Historical Society, *Andrew County: A Community*, 200.

Methodist Church South prompted Joseph Robidoux, a Catholic, to donate a lot in St. Joseph for the construction of a new building.<sup>84</sup> The Old School First Presbyterian Church expanded during the Civil War by using New School practices. Under the leadership of Reverends A.C.V. Scheck, John G. Fackler, and Aaron P. Forman, a ten-week revival meeting occurred in the winter of 1862-1863. People flocked to the meetings for comfort during the challenges of war.<sup>85</sup> Savannah's two separate Methodist congregations shared a single sanctuary from 1855 and continued to do so through the Civil War. The New School Presbyterians in Savannah lent their building to local Baptists from 1849 to 1858. Following the war, August Schuster purchased and remodeled the structure as a Catholic church for the county's meager Catholic population.<sup>86</sup>

The South's defeat did not hinder religion's social power, but rather the faithful looked to their faith for hope. Pastors across the South interpreted the Civil War as time of redemption arguing the massive losses and defeat was meant to cleanse the South of its sins.<sup>87</sup> The Confederacy's defeat did encourage immigration from the Old South. Seeking spiritual comfort in their new home, pioneers swelled the ranks and number of the Southern Methodist churches in the Platte Purchase. Four new congregations formed in St. Joseph after the war.<sup>88</sup> By 1873, Tenth Street M. E. Church boasted 200 members

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84. Willoughby, *Robidoux's Town: A Nineteenth-Century History of St. Joseph, MO*, 88.

85. Clark, *The History of the Platte Presbytery in Northwest Missouri*, 47-48.

86. Goodspeed Publishing Co., *History of Andrew and DeKalb Counties, Missouri*, 254-255 and 262.

87. Paul Harvey "'Yankee Faith' and Southern Redemption: White Southern Baptist Minister, 1850-1890," in *Religion and the American Civil War* ed. Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 167-69.

88. Rutt, *The Daily News' History of Buchanan County and St. Joseph, MO*, 188-189.

in regular attendance, and 190 enrolled in the Sunday School. In 1872, Frederick Avenue Chapel had 120 in their Sunday school.<sup>89</sup> Rev. A.M. Bedford organized Bedford Chapel as a Southern Methodist church in rural Andrew County. Bedford fought with Confederate forces at Pea Ridge and Corinth. His saga earned him great respect throughout the county.<sup>90</sup>

The relationship between the American Civil War and Protestant churches represented the democratization of Christianity. Gone were the days of unified denomination and in its place came the individual choice regarding the understanding of God. The laity no longer relied on an ordain leaders. Instead, individuals were empowered to take charge of their faith. The personal connection to such elements created an extreme level of loyalty culminating in Civil War strife within churches. However, faith persevered. After assaults, occupation, and changing attitudes toward religion, churches established by frontiersmen remain in existence as a testament to the time and their congregations. Protestant ideology survived in the Platte Purchase because the laity was committed to preserving it no matter the obstacle.

Protestant churches in the Platte Purchase Region emerged out of the Second Great Awakening and a desire to settle the west. However, the turbulence of the Civil War altered religious history. No matter the stance taken on slavery and secession, the divisions forever changed religion in northwest Missouri. Even in peace, conflict and expansion continued to define the development of religious history.

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89. Lilly, *History of Buchanan County, Missouri 1881*, 484-485.

90. "History of Bedford Chapel," Abandon Churches Achieves in the Andrew County Museum Collections (Savannah, MO).

## Chapter Three

### Voices in the Wilderness: The Formation of Catholicism in Northwest Missouri

Like Mormon missionaries and Protestant circuit riders, Catholics also came to northwest Missouri in the 1800s. The Platte Purchase Region's economic and land opportunities allowed Catholic immigrants to form communities centered around their shared beliefs. However, frontier dioceses had limited resources to serve the faithful. Church leaders turned to religious orders like the Jesuits, Madams of the Sacred Heart, Benedictines, and other societies to minister throughout the Missouri River Valley. Like other immigrants, religious orders had fled the turmoil of Europe for new prospects on the frontier. Together, the clergy and laity established schools, churches, and other services transforming the Platte Purchase Region into a flourishing, western civilization. Forming new religious institutions in the wilderness was far from easy. Catholics experienced distinctive challenges, including political intervention, wars in the United States and Europe, and disputes with church leadership. Catholic religious orders and lay immigrants overcame nineteenth-century strife to establish Catholic institutions and communities in northwest Missouri.

Unlike Protestants and Mormons who migrated from east to west, the first Catholics to arrive in what is now the United States came via Mexico and Canada before reaching on the eastern seaboard. The north and south routes of migration correlate with Spanish, French, and English colonization in North America and reflect each European country's zeal toward Catholicism.<sup>1</sup> Following the *Reconquista*, Franciscan friars joined

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1. Juliana Barr, "How Do You Get from Jamestown to Santa Fe? A Colonial Sun Belt," *The Journal of Southern History* 73, no. 3 (August, 2017): 554-566.

Spanish conquistadores in New Mexico. By 1581, friars had successfully documented native traditions, married soldiers to native women, and subjugated the Pueblos near Santa Fe.<sup>2</sup> Dominicans, Augustinians, and Jesuits from Spain joined the Franciscans and expanded the Catholic influence from Puerto Rico to San Francisco. Further north, French Jesuits assimilated Catholic teachings into pre-existing native beliefs along the St. Lawrence River, Great Lakes, and Mississippi River. Following the forfeiture of Canada to Great Britain in 1760, French Catholics from Acadia or Nova Scotia journeyed to New Orleans in search a new economic start and the freedom to practice their faith. The immigrants, known a Cajuns or French Canadians, trapped and traded furs throughout the Mississippi and Missouri valleys. The descendants of the Cajun immigrants became the first Catholics to make northwest Missouri their home and encouraged further immigration to the region.<sup>3</sup>

In the British colonies, the Society of Jesus and lay English Catholics established communities despite opposition. The influential Calvert family founded Maryland in 1634 as a haven for English Catholics. The colony's law favored Catholicism over other faiths even though Catholics never reached more than twenty-five percent of the population in the eighteenth century. By the American Revolution, the Protestant controlled legislature revoked pro-Catholic statutes.<sup>4</sup> Members of the Society of Jesus served the sparse populace. Since 1535, St. Ignatius Loyola's order had attempted to

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2. Ramon A. Gutierrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 44-47.

3. Bret E. Carroll, *The Routledge Historical Atlas of Religion in America* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 24-27.

4. Carroll, *The Routledge Historical Atlas of Religion in America* 52-53.

repel Protestantism and spread Catholic teaching to foreign lands. The Society's zeal and success gained the Jesuits significant influence over secular affairs in Europe. Both lay and ordained rulers viewed the order's power as a threat and acted against the Society. To limit its members' influences, Catholic Church officials suppressed the order in 1773.<sup>5</sup> The suppression did not stop Jesuits in America from their mission work. With the support of lay Catholics, the Jesuits created missions in rural Pennsylvania. The order served German settlers in communities like Reading before focusing on Native American evangelization.<sup>6</sup>

The Jesuits influence shaped the Catholic Church in the United States following the Revolution. In 1815, the first Catholic diocese in the United States of America formed in Baltimore. While the Roman Curia was preoccupied with European affairs, American clergy elected a Jesuit priest named John Carroll as the country's first bishop. A friend of George Washington and the cousin of Charles Carroll, the sole Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence, Bishop Carroll encouraged the United States' 150,000 Catholics to embrace democratic values. Carroll contracted Benjamin Latrobe, the architect of the U. S. Capitol Building, to design a cathedral in Baltimore. Latrobe's neoclassical style reflected the Catholic tradition and republican values. Embracing democratic ideas did not always align with Catholic teachings and led to conflict within the church.<sup>7</sup>

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5. Hiram M. Chittendon, and Alfred Richardson, *Life, Letters, and Travels of Father Pierre-Jean DeSmet, S.J. 1801-1873* (New York: Francis F. Harper, 1905), 1-2.

6. Carroll, *The Routledge Historical Atlas of Religion in America*, 52-53.

7. Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007),197.

The traditional church structure of Europe was not practical in the United States, and Catholic clergy had to adapt. The faithful were few in number and dispersed across the frontier. Communities rarely had a resident priest or a house of worship. Bishop Carroll did not have enough resources to serve the expanding nation. With only thirty priests in the entire United States in 1815, clergy adopted new practices. Priests served multiple churches and stations on the frontier similar to Methodist circuit riders. With the absence of regular access to the sacraments, clergymen distributed prayer books so the faithful could practice their faith without a priest. The Protestant majority in America was skeptical of Catholic clergy and created problems for Catholic leadership. State legislatures feared papal influence in the new republic and required the ownership of churches to be in the hands of the laity and not the church hierarchy. Even so, this law empowered laymen but created conflict between the faithful and bishops. The strife did not hinder the overall growth of the church in America, and immigrants, including members of religious orders, took Catholicism to the frontier.<sup>8</sup>

The Society of Jesus provided education and the sacraments to the Missouri River Valley. During the 1820s, Jesuits from France and Belgium, including Fr. Peter John De Smet, left the comforts of Europe for life as a frontier missionary.<sup>9</sup> The glories and excitement of the Napoleonic Wars had attracted young De Smet before he entered the seminary in his native Belgium.<sup>10</sup> After arriving in Whitemarsh, Maryland, Bishop

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8. Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848*, 199.

9. Fr. Eugene Laveille, *The Life of Father De Smet, S.J. (1801-1873): Apostle of the Rocky Mountains* (Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publisher, INC., 2000), 25.

10. Robert Carriker, *Father Peter John De Smet: Jesuit in the West* (Norman, OK: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 3-4.

Dubourg of New Orleans recruited the Jesuit order to Missouri. In 1823, Dubourg offered the Jesuits a well-established farm near the Missouri River town of Florissant, if the Society sent members to the region. Twelve Jesuits, including De Smet, and their African servants ventured down the Ohio and up the Mississippi to the St. Louis area. At each stop along the Ohio, local Catholics implored the clergymen to stay and serve as parish priests, but the Jesuits continued to Florissant. De Smet ministered to Native Americans and area churches, opened St. Louis University, and served as chaplain to the Madams of the Sacred Heart.<sup>11</sup>

Eastern Missouri was just the beginning of Jesuit ministry in the Missouri River Valley. By 1836, Jesuit missionaries regularly visited Osage, Iowa, Kickapoo, and Potawatomi tribes. De Smet and others operated St. Mary's Mission at Sugar Creek in Kansas and St. Joseph's Mission near the current location of Council Bluffs, Iowa. From these posts, Jesuits also served Catholics in northwest Missouri.<sup>12</sup>

The Society of Jesus was the first Catholic organization to serve the Platte Purchase Region. In route to Iowa, Fr. De Smet stopped at the Black Snake Hills Trading Post, where, in 1838, he offered the first mass in what became St. Joseph, Missouri. Natives and fur traders regularly visited the post operated by Joseph Robidoux who, along with Pierre Chouteau, traded furs for the American Fur Company.<sup>13</sup> Robidoux welcomed DeSmet and showed the Jesuit around the Robidoux farm. The river landing near Black Snake Creek was an ideal site for a city. Robidoux hoped to encourage

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11. Laveille, *The Life of Father De Smet, S.J.*, 30-37

12. Laveille, *The Life of Father De Smet, S.J.*, 78-82.

13. Mother Flavia Augustine, "Cultural and Religious Effects of the Convent of the Sacred Heart of St. Joseph, Missouri," (master's thesis, Creighton University, 1952), 26-27.

French families to settle here and had plans to erect a chapel.<sup>14</sup> In Platte County, population growth led to the founding of a Catholic parish in 1842. Jesuit priests posted at missions to Kansas offered mass in Weston's Holy Trinity Church. With a scattered Catholic population and few priests, Holy Trinity parish encompassed eighty miles surrounding the Missouri River Valley. Although Jesuits helped to bring Catholicism to northwest Missouri, the order did not stay to cultivate it. Instead, the Society took charge of evangelization of Native Americans. The fate of northwest Missouri's Catholic population rested with church leadership in St. Louis, lay immigrants, and religious orders.<sup>15</sup>

Due to limited resources, the Archdiocese of St. Louis struggled to assist Catholics elsewhere in Missouri. When Rome created the archdiocese in 1847, it encompassed the entire state of Missouri. The massive territory and growing population posed a significant challenge for Archbishop Peter Kenrick who had less than ninety clergymen. By 1850, fifteen churches and four institutions of higher learning existed in St. Louis County, but diocesan priests attended only a few of the posts. Kenrick relied on Jesuits, the Society of the Sacred Heart, the Sisters of St. Joseph, and other orders to run Catholic institutions. In western Missouri, the Catholic population spread itself throughout the frontier, compelling priests to serve vast regions and multiple stations. Reverend T. Scanlan lived in St. Joseph, Missouri but ministered to Catholics at English Grove in Holt County as well. Reverend F. Ruthkowski's territory included Weston and

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14. Chittendon, and Richardson, *Life, Letters, and Travels of Father Pierre-Jean DeSmet, S.J. 1801-1873*, 151.

15. Holy Trinity Catholic Church, "Parish History," Holy Catholic Church, 2012, accessed April 1, 2017, <https://holytrinitycatholic.org/parish-history>.

Parkville in southern Platte County and a small German settlement on the Third Fork of the Platte River in northeast Buchanan County. Reverend P. Ward's charge was even larger and included only one Catholic church building. From Liberty in Clay County, Fr. Ward traveled north to Far West in Caldwell County and east to Ray and Carroll counties. As more pioneers settled northwest Missouri, the region's population growth created demand for more Catholic establishments and clergy. Although the Platte Purchase Region had been a part of Missouri since 1836, there were no Catholic schools or hospitals in the region. Kenrick again turned to religious orders in St. Louis and elsewhere to support northwest Missouri.<sup>16</sup>

The Society of the Sacred Heart established educational opportunities in France and Missouri. Following the French Revolution's extensive political and social changes, conservative families preferred their daughters receive a Catholic education which emphasized traditional values. To meet the demand, St. Madeline Sophie Barat formed the Society of the Sacred Heart in 1800. The Madams, or Ladies of the Sacred Heart, opened schools and convents across France which gained an excellent reputation for the quality of education provided. St. Phillippine Duchesne, an original member of the order, longed to expand the Society to foreign lands. In 1816, St. Phillippine's desire came to fruition when Bishop Dubourg of the Dioceses of Louisiana implored the Madams to expand to the central United States. Two years later, five Ladies of the Sacred Heart landed at New Orleans. The academic traditions established in France continued to flourish in America. By 1828, St. Phillippine organized two religious communities in

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16. Fielding Lucas, Jr, ed., *The Metropolitan Catholic Almanac and Laity's Directory, A.D. 1850* (Baltimore: Fielding Lucas, Jr., 1849), 165-167, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112004045891;view=1up;seq=172>.

Louisiana and three in the St. Louis area, including a school at Florissant. Duchesne went on to operate Native American missions in Kansas and Nebraska. As the Ladies traveled along the Missouri River, Catholic settlers beseeched the order to serve their towns. The expanding presence of the Society also caught the attention of Catholics living in St. Joseph, Missouri.<sup>17</sup>

Joseph Robidoux's humble trading post had morphed into a center of westward migration and commerce. The discovery of gold in California and the annexation of western territories made northwest Missouri the crossroads of expansion. Steamboat traffic regularly brought supplies and people to the city. From the river landing, pioneers outfitted wagon trains for the Oregon, California, and Santa Fe trails. The economic prosperity brought significant population growth to the city, but few academic resources were present. If parents wanted their children to receive a formal education, they sent their pupils east. Affluent, Catholic residents saw the need for female education in the community and implored the Ladies of the Sacred Heart to open one.<sup>18</sup>

Residents of St. Joseph recruited the Madams of the Sacred Heart to open a school in the community. In the early 1850s, twenty Catholic families lived within the city, and more lived in rural areas. The Madams regularly passed through the town in route to Indian missions, and the local priest, Fr. T. Scanlan, made a point to meet with the sisters as they waited for riverboats. When Reverend Mother Cuttus, a superior vicar for the order, stopped in the city in 1852, Fr. Scanlan begged her to send teachers to the

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17. Mother Flavia Augustine, "Cultural and Religious Effects of the Convent of the Sacred Heart of St. Joseph, Missouri," 2, 3, 24, and 25.

18. Mother Flavia Augustine, "Cultural and Religious Effects of the Convent of the Sacred Heart of St. Joseph, Missouri," 33.

community. Catholic laity also petitioned the order. Amanda Musick Corby, the wife of successful businessman John Corby, and Sylvanie Robidoux Beauvais, the daughter of Joseph Robidoux, attended Sacred Heart institutions in eastern Missouri. Together with Mrs. Corby's sister-in-law, Zielda Forsee, the alumni wrote the Society's leadership in St. Louis. The combined efforts resulted in the arrival of four Ladies of the Sacred Heart in March of 1853. As the Madams disembarked from the riverboat, a joyful crowd greeted them. Residents carried the sisters' luggage to the former residence of Sylvanie Robidoux Beauvais who offered the house to the Society rent free. With fifteen rooms, four fireplaces, and hardwood floors, the home was sophisticated for its frontier location. Locals regularly brought food to the Madams as they prepared to open a convent and school.<sup>19</sup>

The demand for education and the reputation of the Society of the Sacred Heart allowed the order to prosper. Until 1860, there was no public school system in St. Joseph, and trained teachers were rare on the frontier. On June 12, 1853, less than three months after arriving in the city, the Ladies held the first day of classes. Eager for education, sixty students registered. By the end of the year, the demand led to the creation of a boarding school. Catholic families were not the only ones to enroll their daughters at the school. Protestant students outnumbered the Catholic students in the early years. The Society was determined to provide the best education possible and sought legal recognition for the Convent and Academy of the Sacred Heart. In December of 1855, the State of Missouri incorporated the St. Joseph establishment. The initial success of the convent gained the attention of frontier bishops in Kansas and Iowa who

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19. Mother Flavia Augustine, "Cultural and Religious Effects of the Convent of the Sacred Heart of St. Joseph, Missouri," 39-43.

attempted to recruit the order elsewhere. However, the Society remained committed to serving the growing population of St. Joseph.<sup>20</sup>

By 1856, the increased enrollment allowed the Madams to expand their ministries. The order purchased land on top of a bluff at what was the city's eastern edge. The new structure included an expanded convent, a chapel, classrooms, a dormitory for boarding students, and a free school for the less-fortunate children in St. Joseph. When completed in 1858, the structure and the Society attracted students from the Rocky Mountains to the Appalachian Mountains. Young ladies studied literature, religion, philosophy, geography, physical science, arithmetic, French, and Latin. The Madams left a profound impact on girls who attended the school. Young women regularly entered the order. On occasion, Protestant students even asked to convert to Catholicism. News of the conversion motivated Protestants to form their own school in the community. The rift had minimal impact on the Society. In 1863, after most of the Protestants had exited the Convent, the enrollment was 143 girls. The Madams continued to offer a quality education on the frontier, but the need for more educational institutions persisted.<sup>21</sup>

As the Madams of the Sacred Heart attended to the educational needs of young women in St. Joseph, the Brothers of Christian Schools attempted to educate young men in the 1850s. St. John Baptist de La Salle saw a need to transform education and make it accessible to France's poor in 1680. The affluent Frenchman founded a new order which

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20. Mother Flavia Augustine, "Cultural and Religious Effects of the Convent of the Sacred Heart of St. Joseph, Missouri," 44-45.

21. Mother Flavia Augustine, "Cultural and Religious Effects of the Convent of the Sacred Heart of St. Joseph, Missouri," 47-48 and 93.

emphasized teacher training, instruction in French rather than Latin, organized students into classes based on ability, and provided education to at-risk youth. In the 1840s, the orders sent Brothers to North America to operate schools in Canada and eventually United States.<sup>22</sup> By 1850, the Brothers had established a house in St. Louis.<sup>23</sup> Father Scanlon and his assistant, Father James Powers, arranged for the order to operate a commercial college in St. Joseph. Construction of the Academy of Christian Brothers was underway in the summer of 1859, and all parties anticipated its opening. However, the unrest of the Civil War halted such plans.<sup>24</sup>

Northwest Missouri's Catholics were not exempt from the turbulence of the Civil War and had to overcome the war's disruptions. The Catholic population in the Platte Purchase was significantly smaller and less developed than Protestants in 1861. While Catholic churches did not experience the same degree of unrest, church sponsored institutions did suffer because of the war. As the war began, an unidentified mob ransacked the Catholic church in Maryville.<sup>25</sup> In St. Joseph, the Christian Brothers stalled plans to open a school, as Union and Confederate forces sought to control the town. Union troops used the Brother's building as a barracks which prevented the order from occupying it until after the war.<sup>26</sup> Following the Civil War, the Christian Brothers

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22. Christian Brothers Conference, "Saint John Baptist de La Salle," *Christian Brothers Conference*, 2017, <https://www.lasallian.info/about/history/saint-john-baptist-de-la-salle/>.

23. Lucas, Jr, ed., *The Metropolitan Catholic Almanac and Laity's Directory, A.D. 1850*, 170.

24. Brother Hubert Gerard, Ed., *Mississippi Vista, 1849-1949, The Brothers of Christian Schools* (Winona Minnesota: St. Mary's Press, 1948), 167.

25. National Historical Company, *The History of Nodaway County, Missouri* (St. Joseph, MO: National Historical Company, 1882), 294.

26. Missouri River Heritage Association, *The Heritage of Buchanan County, Missouri*, Vol. 2 (Dallas: Curtis Media Corporation, 1986), 34-35.

and the community resolved to open the school. Once Union forces departed from St. Joseph, two Brothers came to the city only to find their school building in great disrepair. Lay Catholics organized fairs to raise the necessary funds to restore the school. Their efforts allowed the college to open in the fall of 1867, and one-hundred-thirty students completed the first academic year. The business school earned an excellent reputation for its commercial training, and local employers sought out graduates of the institution.<sup>27</sup>

Demand for Catholic education also existed outside of the city. Rural families in the Platte Purchase preferred their sons to be educated by the Brothers as well. The order expanded the college to include a boarding school in 1869. Students from across northwest Missouri, neighboring states, and as far away as Santa Fe, New Mexico studied at the St. Joseph school. The growing demand brought more Brothers to the city and expanded the curriculum to include liberal arts courses. The school offered classes in Greek, Latin, and music, in addition to classes on shorthand and the telegraph. The new academic offerings and development of the West allowed the attendance at Christian Brother's College to grow steadily. Enrollment reached one-hundred-fifty-one in 1878, and exceeded two-hundred students in the 1880s.<sup>28</sup> The college was just the beginning. Like the Madams of the Sacred Heart, the Christian Brothers expanded their services to benefit the greater community.<sup>29</sup>

The growth of St. Joseph's economy created a demand for trained educators to teach the working class's children. Brother Noah, the school's first director, identified

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27. Brother Hubert Gerard, *Mississippi Vista, 1849-1949, The Brothers of Christian Schools*, 167.

28. Brother Hubert Gerard, *Mississippi Vista, 1849-1949, The Brothers of Christian Schools*, 168-169.

29. Brother Hubert Gerard, *Mississippi Vista, 1849-1949, The Brothers of Christian Schools*, 170.

the need educate underprivileged Irish children in the railroad neighborhood called Patee Town. The order used profits from the college to establish St. Patrick's School, also known as Patee Town School. When construction of St. Patrick's school was completed in 1868, members of St. Patrick's Church used the facility for mass. The story of the Christian Brothers and the Society of the Sacred Heart reflect the bond between laity and religious as well as the resources religious orders provide to a community.<sup>30</sup>

Following the American Civil War, increased westward migration expanded the Catholic presence in northwest Missouri. In St. Joseph, immigrants formed communities and neighborhoods based on national origins and centered around Catholic churches. North of downtown, French Canadians settled the French Bottoms. Although the community had its own church, St. Roch's, there was no resident priest. Irishmen lived near St. Patrick's Church and School in Patee Town while Germans immigrants built Immaculate Conception Church at the city's western edge. The growth prompted the Vatican to create the Diocese of St. Joseph in 1868. Pope Pius IX appointed Reverend John. J. Hogan as Bishop for a vast area. The Missouri River acted as a western and southern border for the new Diocese while the Chariton River and the Iowa state line formed the remaining sides. Hogan had ministered to much of the region before his appointment, but now he was tasked with assigning nineteen priests to thirty-one churches, stations, and chapels. By 1871, half of the diocese's religious houses were

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30. Brother Hubert Gerard, *Mississippi Vista, 1849-1949, The Brothers of Christian Schools*, 169.

within the Platte Purchase Region, and St. Joseph had the region's largest Catholic population.<sup>31</sup>

The young Diocese of St. Joseph relied heavily on religious orders to serve St. Joseph's Catholic population and provided much needed resources to the community. Education for seminarians and youth were vital to preserve the faith. Without funds to establish a seminary, Hogan entrusted the instruction of future priests to Christian Brothers College.<sup>32</sup> The Bishop then turned his attention to providing services to the community. Hogan recruited the Sisters or Daughters of Charity from Baltimore to serve the less fortunate. With John Corby's financial assistance, four sisters opened St. Joseph's Hospital in April of 1869. Less than a year after their arrival, Bishop Hogan implored the order to do more. The society established a school for girls on the first floor of the hospital building.<sup>33</sup> Despite the new school, demand for education continued to grow. Hogan implored the Ladies of the Sacred Heart to open a parochial school at the Cathedral of St. Joseph. In the 1870s, the Madams averaged ninety students at Cathedral School.<sup>34</sup> In 1871, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet arrived in the community to operate a school and convent at Immaculate Conception Church.<sup>35</sup> Like the other Catholic orders in Hogan's diocese, the Bishop implored the Sisters of St. Joseph their

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31. D. & J. Sadlier, ed., *Sadlier's Catholic Directory, Almanac, and Ordo A.D. 1871* (New York: D. & J. Sadlier & Company, 1871), 283, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89064466766;view=1up;seq=306>.

32. Brother Hubert Gerard, *Mississippi Vista, 1849-1949, The Brothers of Christian Schools*, 168.

33. Dr. Denis Gallo (Provincial Archivist for the Daughters of Charity) via email, January 2017.

34. Sadlier, ed., *Sadlier's Catholic Directory, Almanac, and Ordo A.D. 1871*, 284, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89064466766;view=1up;seq=306>.

35. Sister Jane Behlmann, (Provincial Archivist for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet) via email, January 2017.

ministry. By the turn of the twentieth century, the school sisters taught girls at St. Patrick's School and operated St. Mary's Orphanage for boys in the city. The religious order significantly expanded local services and helped the city progress. Outside of St. Joseph, Catholic institutions had similar effects on local development.<sup>36</sup>

In rural parts of the Platte Purchase, priests and religious were rare, but the desire for Catholic institutions was not. Without the support from church authorities, laity took it upon themselves to organize communities. In 1839, families from Hirrlingen, Germany, including Jacob and Marie Kessler, settled near the three branches of the Platte River. The Kesslers found prosperity on the Platte Purchase's abundant farmland and wrote to family and friends in Germany. By 1856, eight other families, the Wiedmaiers, Zugs, Fishers, Pankaus, Sailes, Wallers, Weiperts, and Wendas, arrived in Missouri and formed the community of New Hirrlingen. Keeping with Catholic tradition, Joseph and Marie Kessler donated five acres near the Third Fork of the Platte River to Archbishop Peter Kenrick of St. Louis in 1847. The pioneers constructed a log church and cemetery on the property.<sup>37</sup> Despite the region's settlement, Bishop Kenrick did not send a resident priest. Instead, Reverend F. Ruthkowski said mass for the congregation on a rotation with his other posts in western Missouri.<sup>38</sup> When a fire destroyed the church, Catholics living south of the Third Fork built St. Joseph Church in Easton circa 1854. Most of the

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36. M.H. Wiltzius, *The Catholic Directory, 1900* (Milwaukee: M.H. Wiltzius & Co., 1900), 481, <https://books.google.com/books?id=Yr8vAQAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=catholic+directory&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj7MXmz5jRAhUD6YMKHZaLA8Q4FBD0AQgjMAI#v=onepage&q=Maryville&f=false>.https.

37. Seven Dolores Catholic Church & Altar Society, *Faith, Family, Friends: Seven Dolores Catholic Church* (Conception, MO: Seven Dolores Catholic Church & Altar Society, 2016), 1.

38. Lucas, Jr, ed., *The Metropolitan Catholic Almanac and Laity's Directory, A.D. 1850*, 170.

settlers from Hirrlingen, Germany, however, lived north of the Third Fork and built a new church near their homesteads. Joseph Wiedmaier transferred part of his land to Bishop John Hogan of the Diocese of St. Joseph. Parishioners paid for the construction of a new church building and a house for a potential pastor. Originally named St. Francis of Assisi, the church was renamed St. Martin in 1881 in honor of the church in Hirrlingen, Germany. The next year, the dioceses elevated the community from a mission to a parish.<sup>39</sup>

The elevation to parish status did not benefit the community but prompted lay leadership to improve their church. St. Martin's Parish still did not have a resident pastor or school. Instead, the priest stationed at St. Joseph's in Easton served St. Martin's as well as missions at Rochester in Andrew County and Stewartsville in DeKalb County.<sup>40</sup> After four decades of living in New Hirrlingen, the faithful directly appealed to Bishop Hogan for a resident pastor. A document entitled "The Articles of Consideration by the Trustees to the Congregation of St. Martin's Church of Hirrligen, Buchanan County, MO" established an elected church council. Parishioners empowered the committee to petition Hogan for a resident priest and negotiate the pastor's salary. The articles also authorized the trustees of the church to levy a tax on parishioners according to each family's tax receipts. If parishioners did not disclose their receipts, the family forfeited its membership.<sup>41</sup> The petition was relatively successful. By 1885, the diocese stationed

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39. Seven Dolours Catholic Church & Altar Society, *Faith, Family, Friends: Seven Dolours Catholic Church*, 2.

40. D. & J. Sadlier, ed., *Sadlier's Catholic Directory, Almanac, and Ordo A.D. 1874* (New York: D. & J. Sadlier & Company, 1874), 321, accessed June 28, 2017, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89064466782;view=1up;seq=335>.

41. "The Articles of Consideration by the Trustees to the Congregation of St. Martin's Church of Hirrligen, Buchanan County, MO." Trustees of St. Martin's Catholic Church. January 27, 1884.

Reverend C. Schaaff at St. Martin's, but also charged him with serving Easton.<sup>42</sup> New Hirrlingen community remained determined to pass on their faith. Families took it upon themselves to construct a parish school in 1886-1887. Without a religious order, lay teachers taught at the school.<sup>43</sup> By 1900, there was one lay teacher and thirty-five students. Around the same time, the church took a new name: Seven Dolors. New Hirrlingen represents the challenges of frontier Catholicism. Without the leadership of a priest or religious, the faithful organized themselves. Catholic congregations throughout the Platte Purchase had to take the initiative to exist.<sup>44</sup>

With little diocesan support and small populations, Catholics in Andrew County relied on their communities to maintain churches. Mr. A. Schuster of Savannah purchased a former Presbyterian church building and remodeled it for Catholic services. With the absence of a resident pastor or diocesan oversight, Schuster, a local merchant and politician, remained the owner of the property into the 1880s.<sup>45</sup> Eventually, the Catholic population in Andrew County grew, and the community raised funds for a new sanctuary. By the spring of 1898, parishioners and Protestants alike subsidized and built St. Rose of Lima Church in Savannah.<sup>46</sup> The establishment of the church did not change

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42. D. & J. Sadlier, ed., *Sadlier's Catholic Directory, Almanac, and Ordo A.D. 1885* (New York: D. & J. Sadlier & Company, 1885), 228-229, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112110805071;view=1up;seq=246>.

43. Seven Dolors Catholic Church & Altar Society, *Faith, Family, Friends: Seven Dolors Catholic Church*, 2.

44. Sadlier, ed., *Sadlier's Catholic Directory, Almanac, and Ordo A.D. 1885*, 229.

45. Goodspeed Publishing Co., *History of Andrew and DeKalb Counties, Missouri* (St. Louis: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1888), 254, 262, 168, and 158.

46. Savannah Reporter, "St. Rose Church Dedicated," *Savannah Reporter* (Savannah, MO), April 22, 1898.

much for local Catholics. A traveling priest only offered mass at the new sanctuary once a month in 1900. Bishop Hogan begged religious orders to serve rural parts of his diocese, but societies outside St. Joseph encountered significant obstacles.<sup>47</sup>

The Sisters of the Humility of Mary came to northwest Missouri to find acceptance and educate children. In 1854, Father John Joseph Begal and three lay women committed themselves to serve the children of Dommartin, France. The group founded a new order but secular French society presented new difficulties. In the 1860s, the government of Napoleon III began restricting the Sisters of the Humility of Mary and other Catholic organizations. With the support of Catholic Church leadership, elected officials limited who received teaching certificates and dictated how the church prayed for Napoleon's army. Begal and the Sisters of Humility opposed the regulations and accepted an invitation to relocate to the United States in 1864. After establishing a new motherhouse in New Bedford, Pennsylvania, the need for religious orders in Missouri drew a group of Sisters westward. Franciscan priests in Chillicothe first invited the order to operate a school in the central Missouri town. The request evolved into the establishment of five schools across the region.<sup>48</sup>

The need for teachers presented a significant challenge for the Sisters of the Humility of Mary, but the independent spirit of the order allowed them to embrace frontier life. In the summer of 1870, four sisters met with Bishop Hogan. The bishop requested the nuns first open a school to serve German and Irish families in Easton.

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47. M.H. Wiltzius, *The Catholic Directory, 1900*, 481.

48. Sr. Bernadine Pieper, *Footprints: The Story of the Sisters of Humility of Mary, Part I* (Ottumwa, Iowa: Ottumwa Printing Co., 1978), 52-60 and 91-92.

While the parish was small, the need for an education in the town did exist. Protestant families even enrolled their children. By fall 1870, three more sisters arrived in Missouri and began a school in Chillicothe. However, lack of support from the local priest forced the nuns to leave Chillicothe. Determined to serve, the Sisters of Humility relocated in Liberty where they received ample support from the community. Local Catholics sold raffle tickets and held a festival to build a new school. The town praised the Sisters of Humility for not only supporting the Catholics in Liberty but also for providing a quality education to all students regardless of their creed. Despite being few, Bishop Hogan called the order to open yet another school. At the convergence of the Nodaway River and Missouri River in Andrew County, Irish settlers built a village on a twelve-mile long island. Although the size of Nodaway Island changed with the course of the Missouri River, the settlement included St. Patrick's Church and a public school where two Sisters of Humility taught. The orders answered the call to serve, but the small society struggled to promote religious life on the frontier.<sup>49</sup>

The Sisters of Humility of Mary felt the toil of frontier life. In 1875, the order opened yet another school in Carrollton. As soon as the congregation accepted novices, they were assigned teaching posts. Bishop Hogan requested the society expand their numbers but not until their current members received formal teacher training. At the same time, Hogan invited the Sisters of Humility to open another school in Cameron. The mounting requests stifled the spiritual life of the order as well. The dispersal of its members across northwest Missouri made it challenging to develop a supportive religious

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49. Pieper, *Footprints: The Story of the Sisters of Humility of Mary, Part I*, 100-103, 113-116, 125-135.

community dispersed across five northwestern Missouri counties. As priests served multiple stations, the sacraments were not readily available. The physical conditions were not ideal either. Their schools relied on natural lighting, and in the dark days of winter, the Sisters could not hold classes. The circumstances caused some of the nuns to become ill, and funds to support the order were limited. In 1877, Mother Mary Maujean traveled by train to Ottumwa, Iowa to solicit funds from local parishes. Catholic clergy in Iowa invited the order to relocate and operate a single school for boys in Ottumwa. With a chance to build community and centralize the order, the Sisters happy accepted. With the reluctant blessing of Bishop Hogan, the Sisters of Humility of Mary sold their property and left Missouri for better spiritual and physical prospects.<sup>50</sup>

The Diocese of St. Joseph turned to other religious orders to fill the void of the Sisters of Humility of Mary. The Society of the Precious Blood supported the community in Liberty while the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis came to Chillicothe. In Carrollton, three different orders of religious teachers staffed the school in the nineteenth century. After the Sisters of Humility of Mary departed from Easton, the community no longer had a parochial school. The Irish on Nodaway Island ultimately relocated as erosion dissolved the island. For Catholicism to exist in rural northwest Missouri, increased migration and a sizable religious order were needed.<sup>51</sup>

For Catholic immigrants, challenges extended beyond the frontier. Irish immigrants faced significant discrimination in the United States and sought a new start in the Midwest. Throughout the 1840s, thousands of Irishmen left their home to escape

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50. Pieper, *Footprints: The Story of the Sisters of Humility of Mary, Part I*, 152-153.

51. Pieper, *Footprints: The Story of the Sisters of Humility of Mary, Part I*, 154-155.

poverty, starvation, and religious persecution, but life was not much better in America. Overcrowded slums and a lack of good paying jobs pushed the immigrants west where railroad expansion needed more labor. In Reading, Pennsylvania, German and Irish Catholics also experienced social unrest. Each group wanted their own church with a priest who shared their cultural identity. The rift in Reading worsened in 1854, when thousands of builders, ironworkers, and railroad men lost their jobs. The economic downturn resulted in labor riots that destroyed property across the city. A group of Catholic building contractors, some of whom had lost property in the riots, met to resolve the situation. Leading members of the Catholic community, including Anthony Felix, Owen O'Reilly, and Fr. James Powers, derived a plan to relocate families from Reading to the West.<sup>52</sup> Together, they formed the Reading Land Association and secured \$20,000 in pledges to move impoverished families. The association, also called the Reading Land Company, had a logical plan for its age. The West's size and opportunity held the solution to eastern turmoil, but the task was far from easy.<sup>53</sup>

Powers, Felix, and O'Reilly traveled throughout the Midwest in search of good land for their Catholic colony. When sites in Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas did not appeal to the group, the three leaders ventured to the Platte Purchase Region.<sup>54</sup> In St. Joseph, Missouri, Jeff Thompson, a land agent, arranged for the group to acquire acreage in Nodaway and Gentry counties near the Platte River. Thompson instructed the party to

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52. Fr. James Powers is the same individual who worked with Bishop Hogan to recruit religious orders to the Diocese of St. Joseph.

53. Edward E. Malone, O.S.B., *A History of Conception Colony, Abbey, and Schools* (Elkhorn, NE: Michealean Press, 1971), 9, 12, 17, and 19.

54. Malone, O.S.B., *A History of Conception Colony, Abbey, and Schools*, 24.

register their claim with the United States Land Office in Plattsburg, Missouri. When the group arrived at the Clinton county seat, the office appeared abandoned, so they traveled to Washington, D.C. to secure their land. However, the Plattsburg land office was not closed and continued to document land claims. After the group had arrived in Washington, the Plattsburg office granted the same property to another party. With multiple claims, the Reading Land Association turned to the United States Senate to resolve the matter. The Senate affirmed the company's legally owned twenty-thousand acres of land in northwest Missouri.<sup>55</sup> James Birch, the land registrar in Plattsburg, gained a reputation for favoring Southern immigration and poor management of the Land Office. He allegedly closed the office in an attempt to prevent northern immigration into Missouri.<sup>56</sup> Although Birch's attempt failed, regional divisions hindered the Reading Land Company's plans. The outbreak of the Civil War discouraged immigration to Missouri. Few families left Reading as violence consumed border states, but following the war, the area grew into a thriving community.<sup>57</sup>

The Reading Land Company created a prosperous Catholic community. Farmers capitalized on the fertile soil by planting fruit trees which became quite profitable. In 1860, Fr. Powers and William Brady plotted the town of Conception on forty acres. Settlers placed their Catholic faith at the center of their community by naming the first town in honor of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. Conception's first structures included a communal building and a chapel. By 1867, the town included a general store,

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55. National Historical Company, *The History of Nodaway County, Missouri*, 224-226.

56. Malone, O.S.B., *A History of Conception Colony, Abbey, and Schools*, 25-26.

57. National Historical Company, *The History of Nodaway County, Missouri*, 224-226.

blacksmith shop, drug store, saloon, shoe store, a 25 x 40 foot Catholic church, and some of the most “elegant dwellings” in the region.<sup>58</sup> Catholic immigrants escaped unrest and found prosperity, but the growing population in the Conception Colony and throughout northwest Missouri desperately needed more priests.<sup>59</sup>

Fr. James Powers resolved to recruit a religious order to serve the Conception Colony and northwest Missouri, but the task was far from easy. A community of Irish Trappist monks in Dubuque, Iowa rejected Powers' pleas, but American Cassinese Benedictines considered Powers' proposal in 1865. However, Bishop Kenrick of St. Louis, who oversaw the entire state of Missouri in 1865, blocked the order from relocating to Nodaway County.<sup>60</sup> Following the formation of the Diocese of St. Joseph, Fr. Powers was stationed at the Cathedral of St. Joseph and turned to Bishop Hogan for assistance.<sup>61</sup> Hogan agreed a religious order was needed and wrote the monks of St. Meinrad's Abbey in Indiana. Upon receiving the petition, the monks referred the request to the Benedictines of Engelberg Abbey in the Swiss Alps.<sup>62</sup>

The appeal arrived in Switzerland in 1872 as nationalist tensions escalated across Europe. Catholic institutions in Germany and Switzerland became targets of government intervention. The fears of suppression at Engelberg Abbey led the community to send two priests to Missouri with orders to form a community in case the Benedictines needed

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58. National Historical Company, *The History of Nodaway County, Missouri*, 227.

59. National Historical Company, *The History of Nodaway County, Missouri*, 228.

60. The Monks of Conception Abbey, “History,” *Conception Abbey*, 2017, <https://www.conceptionabbey.org/monastery/history/>.

61. Sadlier, ed., *Sadlier's Catholic Directory, Almanac, and Ordo A.D. 1871*, 283.

62. Malone, O.S.B., *A History of Conception Colony, Abbey, and Schools*, 48.

to relocate.<sup>63</sup> In 1874, Farther Frowin Conrad, O.S.B. and Fr. Adelhelm Odermatt, O.S.B. arrived in northwest Missouri and began serving St. Mary's in Maryville and St. Columba's in Conception respectively. At that time, St. Columba also sponsored two missions in Gentry County. From humble beginnings, the Benedictines provided a broad network of resources for northwest Missouri.<sup>64</sup>

Under the leadership of Fr. Frowin, the Benedictines in Nodaway County created a new monastic community. In 1880, Fr. Frowin convinced his superiors in Engelberg to establish a new monastery at Conception. In 1881, the monastery received status as an abbey, and Frowin was elected abbot by his fellow monks of what was known as New Engelberg Abbey. Fr. Beda Mahler, O.S.B., of St. Meinrad's Abbey designed a monastery and church for his fellow Benedictines. The structure included a two-wing monastery connected to a large sanctuary with two massive towers. Abbott Frowin requested the church take on a Romanesque style.<sup>65</sup> Monks and locals raised \$250,000 to construct the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception at the Abbey. The monastic community prospered, but opinions about its role in northwest Missouri differed among the clergy.<sup>66</sup>

Abbot Frowin and Bishop Hogan had contrasting visions for the Abbey's role in the region. Frowin wanted to develop the community into a place of solitude and spirituality. He did not desire the Benedictines to leave the monastery regularly. In

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63. Malone, O.S.B., *A History of Conception Colony, Abbey, and Schools*, 49.

64. Sadlier, ed., *Sadlier's Catholic Directory, Almanac, and Ordo A.D. 1874*, 321.

65. Malone, O.S.B., *A History of Conception Colony, Abbey, and Schools*, 115-221.

66. National Historical Company, *The History of Nodaway County, Missouri*, 228.

contrast, Hogan desperately needed priests to serve northwest Missouri churches. The Bishop sent Fr. Powers to persuade Frowin to take on a missionary role.<sup>67</sup> The two came to a solution. Frowin increased the numbers of his monastery while providing needed resources to the diocese. By 1882, the community included twenty-five monks and priests. The Benedictines operated a seminary and high school on the monastery grounds which changed its name to Conception Abbey. The community boasted two libraries: one for the order and the other served the public. The collections included rare books that date back to the sixteenth century. As the Benedictines expanded their services, it became apparent more clergy were needed.<sup>68</sup>

Frowin appealed to the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration at Maria Richenbach, Switzerland to serve northwest Missouri. In 1874, four sisters journeyed from the Swiss Alps to teach frontier families living north of Conception at Clyde. While the Benedictine fathers tended to the spiritual needs of the Sisters, the nuns established a self-sustaining farm which provided meat, milk, and eggs for their community.<sup>69</sup> At first, the Sisters taught in a small public school, but as they grew in numbers so did their ministries.<sup>70</sup> By 1900, St. Scholastica's Convent in Clyde was the Motherhouse of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration with sixty-five sisters and fifteen more in training.<sup>71</sup>

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67. The Monks of Conception Abbey, "History."

68. National Historical Company, *The History of Nodaway County, Missouri*, 228.

69. Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, "History" *Benedictine Sisters*, 2017, ACCESSED <http://www.clydemonastery.org/subsectioncontent.php?secid=4&subsecid=15>.

70. National Historical Company, *The History of Nodaway County, Missouri*, 229.

71. M.H. Wiltzius, *The Catholic Directory, 1900*, 482.

Collectively the Benedictine monks and nuns supported churches and schools throughout northwest Missouri. In 1900, the *Catholic Directory* noted the Benedictine fathers served the Benedictine Sisters at Clyde, St. Benedict's in Burlington Junction and St. Joseph's in Parnell, Seven Dolours in Gentry County, and St. Rose of Lima in Savannah. The Sisters operated St. Joseph's Academy, St. James' Industrial School for Orphan Girls, and taught in three other area schools in Nodaway County.<sup>72</sup> The Benedictines also helped Bishop Hogan establish St. Mary's Church and School in St. Joseph's north end. The bond between religious, laity, and the dioceses proved beneficial for all parties involved.<sup>73</sup>

Other Catholic religious orders were also present in the Platte Purchase. Starting in 1894, Franciscan Sisters sponsored a convent and hospital in Maryville. Originally known as St. Joseph's, the hospital was one of three medical institutions sponsored by a Catholic order in the diocese.<sup>74</sup> In St. Joseph, the expansion of the streetcar service to the east caused a shift in the town's Catholic population. The Society of the Precious Blood sent priests and sisters to serve St. Francis Xavier Church and School. Like the religious orders, the Franciscans and Society of the Precious Blood came to meet the need of the ever expanding region.<sup>75</sup>

The Catholic Church in northwest Missouri grew from a frontier mission with minimal resources into an established diocese with active religious communities. By

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72. M.H. Wiltzius, *The Catholic Directory, 1900*, 481-482.

73. Missouri River Heritage Association, *The Heritage of Buchanan County, Missouri* Vol. 1 (Dallas: Curtis Media Corporation, 1986), 117-118.

74. M.H. Wiltzius, *The Catholic Directory, 1900*, 482.

75. Missouri River Heritage Association, *The Heritage of Buchanan County, Missouri* Vol. 1 (Dallas: Curtis Media Corporation, 1986), 117-118.

1900, the Diocese of St. Joseph included two orphanages, three hospitals, seven academies and colleges, and fourteen parish schools with 1,771 students in attendance. Credit for the transformation must go to Bishop Hogan, the laity, and religious orders. Hogan effectively recruited religious societies to serve the diocese, and the parishioners financially supported the missionary of religious orders. Communities that did not maintain an order failed to expand. Although Archbishop Kenrick, Bishop Hogan, and Fr. Powers recruited orders to Missouri, the labor and services were provided by the orders themselves. Without the societies, frontier communities did not have essential services like hospitals and schools. The best scenario occurred when a bond between the laity, the order, and the dioceses existed. With the three groups united behind a common cause, they achieved their financial, spiritual, and academic goals.<sup>76</sup>

An array of factors from revolutionary attitudes, productive farmland, and missionary zeal brought the Catholic Church to the Platte Purchase Region. Like other Christian sects, Catholic pioneers saw the region's economic appeal and overcame internal and external strife to settle here. The area's Catholic history stands out because of the correlation between the laity and religious orders. Their collective voice developed the wilderness into a new home.

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76. M.H. Wiltzius, *The Catholic Directory, 1900*, 483.

## Conclusion

America's religious history is the saga of contradictions and shared experiences. Pioneers wanted the West to be a land of new opportunities and new beginnings while maintaining pre-existing cultural norms. The frontiersmen utilized democracy, education, and religion to develop new communities. In doing so, the settlers transplanted the preexisting conflicts. Movement and opposition created a shared experience and unique religious history. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Protestant denominations, and Catholics endured forms of religious persecution and witnessed similar economic, social, and political issues as they developed northwest Missouri.

Religious persecution and divisions did not always originate in the region but brought each faith to Missouri. Wars, oppressive government, and weak economic situations in Germany, France, and Ireland pushed immigrants to the United States. Gentiles removed Joseph Smith from New York and Ohio before Governor Boggs expelled Mormons from Missouri. Regional divisions closed some Protestant churches and created multiple Methodist and Presbyterian congregations in the same city. Unrest spared no faith. Mormons, southern sympathizers, and the Sisters of the Humility of Mary fled the struggles for better prospects. The departure hindered the future of communities like Far West, Nicholas Grove, and Easton, yet pioneers preserved to cultivate a land of their own.

Members of each religion appreciated the economic opportunities that came with northwest Missouri's locale and physical features. The state's relative location to the Ohio, Mississippi, and Missouri rivers made it accessible to immigrants including Joseph Smith's first expedition and the Ladies of the Sacred Heart who traveled via riverboat.

No matter the faith, settlers were directly linked to farming. Northwest Missouri's river valleys were ideal for an agriculture-based economy. Farmers needed river landings to import supplies and export products; thus Independence, St. Joseph, and Weston became prominent shipping centers. In smaller communities, businesses served the needs of farmers as well. Far West, Conception, and nearly every town in the region had blacksmiths to forge and repair tools and equipment. Mills were the other necessity for farmers to process grain. The small hamlets and frontier towns like Haun's Mill, Nichols Grove, and Rochester had at least one mill. Religious communities formed near waterways and trade centers as well. As the local population grew, so did the number and variety of churches. The first church building used by Bethel Baptist was next to the One-Hundred-and-Two River, and Mormon built settlements throughout the Grand River Valley.

The values and norms of nineteenth-century American society impacted the development of Mormon, Protestant, and Catholic communities. All groups valued education. Literacy was vital to Mormons and Protestants as they actively sought converts. The Book of Mormon and *The Evening and Morning Star* were powerful tools that united the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and empowered their missionaries. By the same accord, the ability to read the Bible was fundamental to Protestant theology. In the United States, the emphasis on reading empowered the masses to participate in society as well as led churches. With a limited number of ministers on the frontier, untrained Protestants became lay ministers. While the Catholic Church did not advocate that the laity read the Bible, Catholics did value education. Religious orders sponsored schools that emphasized liberal arts education and theology.

Republican values empowered individuals to be active in their communities and churches. Men and women organized, funded, and took leadership roles in Protestant churches. Women regularly taught Sunday School and signed church charters alongside their husbands. Although the Catholic Church had a less democratic structure, the laity embraced the idea of self-governance. The community of New Hirlingen and Abbott Frowin negotiated with Bishop Hogan rather than submit to him. Both religious institutions sponsored schools to not only pass on their faith but to invest in the future of their community. The Saints practiced and supported democracy when it suited them. Church leaders valued the vote but also took justice in their hands at the same time. Mormon leadership did implore federal, state, and local authorities to protect their rights and property.

Political factors and regional loyalties also impacted the religious history of northwest Missouri. The national debate regarding slavery forced individuals and churches to take a stance. No matter the opinion, slavery created violence and obstacles for each faith. Missourians in Jackson and Clay counties invested in slaves, while the abolitionist Saints threatened the status quo. During the Border Wars, mobs assaulted pastors and burned Protestant churches in Platte, Buchanan, Andrew, and Holt counties because of regional loyalties. As the Civil War escalated, congregations lost men and pastors to military service and whole families fled out of fear. For those who stayed, the Civil War years were not secure. Occupying Union forces requisitioned Christian Brothers College in St. Joseph and Protestant churches for barracks. Fear of violence limited population growth as well. Migration to Conception Colony stalled until after the South surrendered.

Although all three Christian denominations migrated west to escape strife, each one experienced internal conflict. Slavery, politics, religious practices, and Civil War era turbulence divided Presbyterians and Methodists at the national and local levels. The First Christian Church in Savannah was partitioned when their pastor advocated for the South and did not reunite until 1868. For Catholics and Mormons, internal unrest was not related to the Civil War but evolved around church leadership. During the Panic of 1837, disgruntled Saints questioned Joseph Smith's leadership as the church-run mill, Safety Society Bank, and other economic ventures failed. Strife within the Catholic Church placed religious orders against church leadership. Bishop Kenrick of St. Louis blocked a group of Benedictines from establishing a monastery in Missouri. Bishop Hogan had good intentions for Sisters of the Humility of Mary and the Monks of Conception Abbey, but he and the orders had conflicting ideas about their roles in the region. The ability to overcome internal discord allowed for more growth and prosperity.

Analysis of northwest Missouri's nineteenth-century religious history points to opportunities for further research. With the absence of a significant battle or massive destruction, northwest Missouri's Civil War heritage is not well known. Assessments of the Border Wars tend to avoid events in the region even though guerrilla warfare and vigilantism existed throughout the Platte Purchase Region. Furthermore, military units formed in Andrew, Buchanan, and Platte counties participated in significant battles such as Lexington and Wilson's Creek in Missouri. Examination of such groups and their members would allow historians to better understand the implications of the war as well as the actual reach of the conflict. Resources such as the *History of Buchanan County, Missouri 1881* provide timelines and brief biographies of individuals involved in Civil

War era activities. Although such sources offer little comprehensive analysis, the documents lay the groundwork for further research.

Religious history reflects the development of frontier communities. The National Historical Company's collection and works by the Goodspeed Publishing Company provide historians the who, what, and when. Historians need to use this necessary information to expand northwest Missouri's historical scope. The individuals and groups who founded towns, schools, and institutions originated beyond the region. Their origin stories can unite local events to patterns in national and international history. In doing so, communities will gain a broader historical significance. For example, historians have overlooked the relationship between colonization and European revolutions in Missouri history. Connecting the two historical themes can expand the understanding of the past and provide a better appreciation for the ramifications of current events.

The religious history of northwest Missouri did not end in 1900 but continued to evolve. Following the Civil War, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and their splinter sects returned to the state. The Saints went from enemies of the state to being tolerated like any other faith. Protestants and Catholic churches evolved over the decades. Churches founded by pioneers across the region still exist today, but population changes and cultural shifts have diminished the congregations. As churches celebrate over a hundred years in existence, their members and historians must note not only what has happened in the past, but how their story can allow them to endure into the future. Northwest Missouri's Catholic schools also deserve further assessment, as most of its institutes remained open well into the 1900s. However, the Second Vatican Council and evolving social norms altered the status quo of religious orders and Catholic

dioceses. There is no longer a Catholic bishop in St. Joseph and no religious orders operate parochial schools in the Platte Purchase Region.

Northwest Missouri's religious history is a small but essential part of American's spiritual past because of western migration and conflict. The movement of people and ideas shaped the United States and expanded preexisting strife. The Mormons migrated west as they searched for freedom and prosperity amid constant persecutions such as the Missouri Mormon War of 1838. Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Disciples of Christ, and Lutherans organized frontier churches only to have their congregations succumb to unrest and violence related to the Civil War. Catholic religious orders and laymen left Europe to cultivate the frontier despite internal and external disputes. Members of each faith sought financial stability and underwent the strife of the nineteenth century to achieve it. While their success varied, each faith impacted the cultural development of northwest Missouri.

Although isolated and disappearing, rural, religious communities hold remarkable historical significance. Each church's history provides insight into social, political, and economic trends which affected the community's origins and links it to world history. Locals must endeavor to know, preserve, and use their history to inspire the future of God's country.

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