

HAUN'S MILL MASSACRE

On October 30, 1838, segments of the Missouri militia attacked a settlement of Latter-day Saints at Jacob Haun's mill, located on Shoal Creek in eastern Caldwell County, Missouri. Because the attack was unprovoked in a time of truce, had no specific authorization, and was made by a vastly superior force with unusual brutality, it has come to be known as "The Haun's Mill Massacre." It was one incident in the conflict between the Missourians and the Latter-day Saints that resulted in the LDS expulsion from the state in 1839 (see MISSOURI CONFLICT).

Tensions had been building up ever since the Latter-day Saints began moving into Caldwell and Daviess counties in central Missouri in 1836. From August to October 1838, incidents of overt conflict had grown dramatically. Rumors abounded that the Mormons planned to "despoil" the Missourians and take their land. Specifically, some believed that the Haun's Mill's population threatened to spill over into non-Mormon Livingston County. Outbursts of violence led Governor Lilburn W. Boggs on October 27 to issue an "Extermination Order," demanding that the Latter-day Saints leave the state or be exterminated. It is uncertain whether this order was a catalyst for the attack, but it is clear that both the Latter-day Saints and the Missourians believed that their rights had been violated and their existence threatened.

Thirty to forty LDS families were at Haun's Mill when some 200 to 250 militia from Livingston, Daviess, and Carroll counties, acting under Colonel Thomas Jennings, marched against the village. Assuming that an earlier truce still held, the residents were surprised by the late afternoon attack. Church leader David Evans' call for "quarter" was ignored, and the villagers were forced to flee for safety. The Mormon women and children fled south across a stream into the woods, while the men gathered in the blacksmith shop, but found it a poor place for defense because the Missourians were able to fire through the widely spaced logs directly into the group huddled inside.

Seventeen Latter-day Saints and one friendly non-Mormon were killed. Another thirteen were wounded, including one woman and a seven-year-old boy. No Missouri militiamen were killed, though three were wounded. Certain deaths were particularly offensive to the Saints. Seventy-eight-



Millstone at the site of the Haun's Mill Massacre on October 30, 1838. Seventeen Mormon civilians were killed in the raid. Photographer: George E. Anderson (1907).

year-old Thomas McBride surrendered his musket to militiaman Jacob Rogers, who shot him, then hacked his body with a corn knife. William Reynolds discovered ten-year-old Sardius Smith hiding under the bellows and blew the top of the child's head off.

While women cared for the wounded, the men remained in hiding during the night. The dead were thrown into an unfinished well and lightly covered with dirt and straw. A few Missourians returned the next day, took plunder, and warned the remaining Saints to leave Missouri.

The 1838–39 Missouri judicial proceedings investigating the "Mormon War" largely ignored the events at Haun's Mill, but Latter-day Saints wrote numerous, bitter accounts. The Haun's Mill Massacre became embedded in the LDS psyche as an epitome of the cruel persecutions that they had endured.

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