THOMAS SHARP’S TURNING POINT:
BIRTH OF AN ANTI-MORMON

By Marshall Hamilton

Boosters of Warsaw, Illinois, had lots to brag about in 1840. The town of around 800 souls was about the same size it had been in 1825, when Hancock County had been formed from Pike County. Although the biggest town around was Carthage, the county seat, about twelve miles inland, many argued that Warsaw had the commercial advantages. After all, Warsaw stood on the eastern bank of the mighty Mississippi River, the Father of Waters. Just opposite, the Des Moines River flowed into the Mississippi. The Des Moines was not navigable, and its mouth had the unfortunate effect of causing rapids in the Mississippi. The Des Moines Rapids just north of Warsaw forced northbound riverboats to offload their cargoes at Warsaw, except in the months with the highest river levels.

And the frontier was growing—offering huge opportunities for trade and commerce. If Warsaw could establish itself as the town through which upper Mississippi freight would pass, it could grow to the importance of St. Louis or Cincinnati—and it would far outstrip the backwater town of Chicago, up in the uncivilized northeast corner of the state.

Many people had noticed the advantages of Warsaw. In 1840, the town boasted two steam sawmills, one steam flouring mill, thirteen stores, three hotels, two gunsmiths, three blacksmiths, four cooperers, two cabinet makers, one tannery, three tailors, a bakery, two bootmakers, two plasterers, two wagonmakers, a silversmith, three physicians, and a metal shop. More newcomers were coming. Among those who moved to Warsaw in 1840 were D. N. White, who opened Warsaw’s first newspaper and printing shop, and a young lawyer from Carlisle, Pennsylvania, named Thomas Coke Sharp.

The Missouri River branches off the Mississippi just above St. Louis, then heads in a westerly direction across the middle of the state of Missouri. Several years earlier, the Mormons had followed the Missouri River upstream to the site of their New Jerusalem, which they planned to build at Independence, Missouri. The Mormons were plagued by bad relations with their neighbors throughout their stay in Missouri.

In 1834 they had abandoned Independence in favor of frontier areas farther north. Finally they had formed their own county—Caldwell—but it became apparent to their neighbors that they might also gain the balance of political power in Daviess County. Their neighbors tried to keep them from exercising their political might, shots were exchanged, and Mormon leader Joseph Smith was arrested, tried, convicted of high treason, and sentenced to death. The designated executioner, General Alexander Doniphan, refused to carry out the sentence, and Smith was jailed to await a civil trial. Meanwhile, the Mormon people were told to leave Missouri under the terms of the “Extermination Order” issued by Missouri Governor Lilburn Boggs.

The folks in Warsaw, Quincy, and other towns in western Illinois thought that most Missourians were less civilized than they. After all, Missouri was closer to the frontier and farther from the more established east. Missouri settlers were leaving civilization behind. Besides, under the terms of the Missouri Compromise which allowed statehood to Missouri, slaveholders were allowed to bring slaves into Missouri, which Illinois did not allow.

The more cultured people in Illinois could understand that the Mormons would not be accepted by the roughnecks in Missouri. Tolerance and civility were scarce commodities on the western shore of the Mississippi. If the Mormons decided to flee their uncivilized oppressors in Missouri, the people of Illinois were happy to welcome the displaced families to their state.

And they did. The Mormons were given clothing and blankets to replace those they had been forced to leave behind. They were invited to settle near Quincy, but after their prophet Joseph Smith was allowed to escape custody, he came to Illinois and led the Mormons to a site 12 miles north of Warsaw, about 50 miles from Quincy. Isaac Galland, a local land speculator, arranged the sale on liberal credit terms of about 700 acres in Illinois and 20,000 acres of what was known as the Half-

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Breed Lands across the river in Iowa Territory. The Mormons began building a new city which they called Nauvoo and they designated Montrose, Iowa, in the Half-Breed Lands, as the city of Zarahemla.1

Most people in Warsaw received the Mormon immigration with sympathy and kind regard, including D. N. White, the editor of Warsaw's new newspaper, the Western World.

Each Wednesday the Western World came out in a 4-page edition. Page one usually carried reprints from other publications, perhaps the weekly New Yorker or other eastern periodicals, and poetry or agricultural news. Page two was devoted mostly to local and national political matters, including the upcoming presidential election, in which Whig William Henry Harrison was contending with Democrat Martin Van Buren. The Western World's masthead each week trumpeted the Whig ticket, and the editorial matter constantly promoted Whig issues such as a national bank and a protective tariff. Pages three and four carried market reports and other agricultural news, along with advertising for local merchants and mechanics. The newspaper office ran several house ads each week, many of them promoting patent medicines and publications available at the printing office.

The first issue of the Western World was published on 13 May 1840. Under the headline "Latest from the Mormons" was the following friendly notice:

It is known that these people, since their dispersion in Missouri, have collected in great numbers in and around Commerce in this state, on the Mississippi river. The name of Commerce, as we have heretofore stated, they have changed to Nauvoo, from the Hebrew or Egyptian, though of the signification of the term we are ignorant. They hold two great conferences every year,—in the spring and fall; and that appointed for the present spring took place last week, commencing on the 6th, and ending on the 9th of April. We learn that between 2000 and 3000 persons were present, and that considerable accessions were made to the church from the surrounding neighborhood. Our informant states that the number was 74, all received by baptism, and that at the same time thirty of the ablest men were ordained to preach [sic] the gospel.2

The Western World took little notice of the Mormons in Nauvoo, just 12 miles away, during the first months of the paper's existence. The few articles that appeared were generally favorable. Even a stealing incident, which foreshadowed serious charges of theft that would later be leveled against the Mormons, was handled in a way that can only be considered positive to the Church.

In July 1840, the newspaper reported that some residents of Hancock had begun to complain of "petty depredations...such as the loss of various small instruments of agriculture." Particularly aggrieved were some residents of Tully, Missouri, who complained of the loss of a variety of items. A depot of stolen goods identified as the Tully items was found on a farm not far from Warsaw. Tully residents staked out the depot, and took four Mormons prisoner who were found in the vicinity of the stolen items. They kidnapped the four, took them across the river into Missouri, and extracted confessions from three of them by tying them to trees and beating them.3

The Western World's reaction was swift and unambiguous—the editor was outraged that the Mormons had been "arrested" in such a way—he called it a "high-handed and daring violation of the rights and laws of this State." He also published, at length, the resolution of the Mormons calling on Governor Carlin of Illinois to seek extradition of the Missouri residents involved in the incident.4

Throughout White's tenure at the Western World, he treated the Mormons with sympathy. Regrettably for the Mormons, his stay in Warsaw was brief. Citing unspecified family health problems, White sold his paper to lawyer Thomas Sharp and James Gamble.5 Sharp took over as editor on 11 November 1840. White moved to Pittsburgh and bought the Pittsburgh Gazette newspaper.6

Sharp was born 25 September 1818 at Mount Holly, New Jersey. His father, Solomon Sharp, was a locally prominent Methodist minister.7 In 1835 Thomas moved to Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and entered Dickinson College which had recently changed affiliation from Presbyterian to Methodist. Two years later, he joined the law school in Carlisle conducted by Judge John Reed. He graduated in 1840.8 In September of that same year, he moved to Illinois for the first time and opened a law office in Warsaw.

Sharp came to be very closely identified with the anti-Mormon movement in Hancock County. After the departure of the Mormons, Sharp was elected the first mayor of the town of Warsaw. In 1856 he ran unsuccessfully for Congress from the fifth district of Illinois.9 In 1865 he was elected county judge from Hancock County, and served one four-year term.10 From that time until his death in 1894, Sharp was known as Judge Sharp. No doubt that nickname did not hurt his law practice, which he maintained until he suffered a stroke in 1890 at the age of 72. Although he spent the last four years of his life in a wheelchair, there is no evidence that he had been singled out for divine retribution in this life, contrary to what some overzealous writers of Mormon history have asserted.11

Sharp would later become a bitter critic of the Mormons, but in the first few months of his editorship showed no signs of the bitterness which would later cause the Mormon Nauvoo Wasp newspaper to refer to him as "Thom-ass" Sharp or "Long-nose" Sharp. Sharp's first issue was dated 11 November 1840. In his inaugural article, titled "Salutatory," he mentioned some of the goals he had set for himself as editor. His references to the Mormons were oblique, not pointed. This excerpt shows that if his anti-Mormonism was already forming, it had not yet solidified.

An editor of a public journal is expected to spread a table that shall please the tastes and gratify the appetites of all his patrons; to pamper the prejudices and wink at
the fanaticism of every sect and party. To do this, and yet be consistent, is impossible. Hence our aim shall be to please ourselves, pursuing an independent and unyielding course; on the one hand battling with tyranny in all its forms, whether in the trappings of royalty or in the more insidious garb of pretended democracy; and on the other upholding the high and lofty principles of republicanism and equal rights.

In our columns private character shall ever be held sacred; but we will never use our endeavors to elevate to office any man whose moral character we believe to be utterly corrupt and depraved; our doctrine is "PRINCIPLES AND MEN," believing that a "corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit," and that whenever the people repose confidence in a dishonest man they have no security, other than his own selfishness, that it will not be betrayed.

Sharp may well have been sincere in his intention to "wink at the fanaticism of every sect or party." He may well have felt that doing so would be sufficient notice of the Mormons. On the other hand, he may already have been planning to "battle with tyranny . . . of pretended democracy," believing that to be the appropriate response to Mormonism.

It is not clear what Sharp thought of the Mormons during the early part of his tenure. From 11 November 1840 until 19 May 1841, Sharp mentioned the Mormons only sparingly. He reported, without much editorial comment, on the awarding of the Nauvoo Charter by the legislature in late 1840. Here is the entire article from the 13 January 1841 issue:

The "Times and Seasons." of the 1st instant, states that General Bennet had just returned from Springfield, with a law embracing three Charters— one for the "City of Nauvoo," another for the "Nauvoo Legion," and a third for the "University of the City of Nauvoo," all of which are of the most liberal character. For the many favors already conferred upon them by our State Government, the Mormons express, in the most ardent language, their doubtlessly sincere gratitude.

In this report, Sharp refers to "General Bennet," who was John Cook Bennett, the Quartermaster General of the Illinois Militia, who had moved within the last few months to Nauvoo. The Mormons were largely devoid of leadership, many of the early leaders having already fallen away from the faith during the turmoil in Missouri and before.

Bennett was alleged to be an abortionist; clearly he was an opportunist who was more than willing to rush in to fill the vacuum at the top. The Mormons found themselves in such a weakened condition that Bennett seemed to some to be a godsend— after all, he was acquainted with the politicians in Springfield, the state capital, and he had a rather grand way of speaking, favoring the dramatic use of foreign words and phrases. Such diction seemed to lend importance to the communications of a small, impoverished group of exiles. And Bennett's skills were not all oratorical; he successfully pushed charters for the city, for a militia, and for a university through the state legislature. Such were Bennett's powers of persuasion that the three charters were never read in the legislative chambers— they were passed by a voice vote in their original form.

But despite Bennett's skills as a lobbyist, he was to prove a terrible plague to the Saints. Based on his early help, he was appointed Assistant President of the Church, with ecclesiastical as well as civic duties. He was elected mayor of Nauvoo and appointed major general in the Nauvoo Legion. Upon accepting his commission in the Legion, he gave up his post as quartermaster general of the state militia.

However, his devotion to the faith and to the Mormons themselves proved to be shallow. Within months after the founding of Nauvoo, common wisdom, as reported in the non-Mormon press, had it that Bennett was a non-believer, imposing himself upon the Mormons to get gain. Within eighteen months, Bennett had left the Church and published a lurid account of affairs at Nauvoo. Surprisingly enough, several years later Bennett was accepted back among a splinter group of Mormons who settled in Wisconsin after the exodus from Nauvoo.

One week after noting that the Nauvoo charter had been granted, Sharp reported on the Prophet Joseph Smith's call for new converts and other Church members to gather to Nauvoo. Later, such calls would provoke outrage and fear from Sharp because the growing political and economic power of the Mormons threatened to overwhelm the old citizens of Hancock County. But this proclamation was recorded objectively and calmly with an added note of admiration for what the Mormons had already been able to accomplish at Nauvoo. Here is Sharp's comment:

A proclamation has been recently issued by the President of the Church of Latter day Saints (Mormons) calling upon all who are converts to the new faith to take up their residence as soon as practicable at or in the vicinity of Nauvoo. This City having recently received a charter of the most liberal character, the Mormons have determined to make it the gathering place of the Saints throughout the earth.

Whatever may be thought of the tenets of this sect, it is certainly imposing spectacle to witness the moral power which in so short a period they have exerted . . . . Already, in obedience to this call, have hundreds left their homes in Europe, and thousands are now preparing to leave and take up their residence in a far distant land.

Sharp concluded his report on the Prophet's announcement by quoting, without comment and at some length from the proclamation itself. Clearly he did not yet feel the disdain and fear that later came to characterize his attitude toward the Saints.

In fact, for several months, Sharp's reporting on the Mormons was very evenhanded, perhaps even tending to favor the interests of the Mormons. In fact, he heard criticism during that
period that his paper was pro-Mormon.\textsuperscript{25} Such criticism was a serious charge, especially since virtually all of the newspaper's business came from non-Mormons.

After reporting the Prophet's proclamation calling for Mormons to gather at Nauvoo in late January, Sharp mentioned the Saints only twice before the semi-annual Mormon conference in April. One article discussed efforts to obtain compensation for Mormon losses in Missouri, and referred to the Nauvoo community as "that persecuted people,"\textsuperscript{26} with no apparent hint of irony.

The other article reported the organization of the city government of Nauvoo, which took place on 3 February 1841. There is faint criticism of John Bennett, who was installed as mayor on that occasion, but even Bennett, on balance, was treated positively:

His Honor appears rather bombastic notwithstanding severe criticisms which he adopts on the verbosity of modern literature. On the whole, however, the address is a creditable production, and appears to maintain throughout a high moral bearing.\textsuperscript{27}

At the April conference, the Saints intended to lay the cornerstone for their proposed Nauvoo Temple. The Nauvoo Legion would parade, and the day would be a grand spectacle. They expected the crowd to number about 7000, the largest gathering yet assembled in the state of Illinois.

In an apparent effort to obtain Thomas Sharp's allegiance, the Mormon leaders invited him to attend the festivities as an honored guest. A boy was assigned to care for Sharp's every need, and Sharp was seated on the reviewing platform in a prominent spot. Between conference sessions, he was treated to a turkey dinner at Joseph Smith's home. The cornerstone laying was on Tuesday, 6 April 1841. Not having much time to report on the event for his Wednesday, 7 April edition, Sharp limited his comments to the following:

THE MORMONS - The ceremony of laying the corner stone of the Temple at Nauvoo, passed over yesterday (6th) with great parade. The number assembled is variously estimated; we should think however about 7000 or 8000, some say as high as 12,000. The Nauvoo Legion consisting of 650 men, was in attendance, and, considering the short time they have had to prepare, made a very respectable appearance. Mr. Rigdon officiated at the laying of the chief corner stone, and addressed the assembly in a very energetic manner in a speech of about an hour's length. On the whole the exercises passed off with the utmost order, without accident or the slightest disturbance. Gen. Bennett commanded the legion, under the direction of the Prophet, and acquitted himself in a truly officer-like manner. - We have no time for further comments this week.\textsuperscript{28}

Thomas Sharp's 7 April article implied that more information on his impressions of the Nauvoo ceremony would follow in future issues. Later, the Mormons would suggest that Sharp was fearful when he saw the strength of the Saints and turned against them during his 6 April 1841 visit.\textsuperscript{29} However, there is scant evidence to support that view, and no evidence at all from Sharp himself. Sharp's comments of the day after conference suggest no ill will toward the Saints. In fact, for five issues after 7 April, the Western World did not even mention the Mormons.

No doubt part of the reason for ignoring the Church for that period was that the county was preoccupied with national events. There was very little local news in those issues of the paper, for William Henry Harrison, the new Whig president, was sworn into office on 4 March 1841. His inauguration was held outdoors on a blustery Washington day. Not wanting to diminish the macho mystique that had attached to him as "Old Tippecanoe," Harrison braved the elements without a hat. He developed pneumonia and died on 4 April 1841. So slow were the communications of the time that the first rumors of the president's death had not reached Warsaw in time for the 7 April issue. Rumors were reported a week later, but the complete story did not appear until 21 April, seventeen days after Harrison's death.\textsuperscript{30}

After the Western World reported the succession of John Tyler, and reprinted his inaugural address, the Nauvoo celebration was weeks in the past. Like any good newsman, Sharp recognized that old news is no news and did not refer back to the event.

If Sharp had in fact turned against the Mormons at the temple cornerstone meeting, there is little doubt that he would have been vindictive in his next references to the Church. However, such was not the case.

Once the national succession had been fully covered, the Western World celebrated its first birthday and the six-month mark of Thomas Sharp's ownership. In the 12 May 1841 edition he wrote an essay entitled "The New Volume" in which he reflected on the past year. One change he implemented at that time was to change the paper's name from the Western World to the Warsaw Signal. Sharp justified the change by saying that the Western World title was too grand for a paper of such limited circulation as his.

Thomas Sharp also reviewed his goals for the forthcoming year. Those goals were modest—-to remain a Whig paper (although Sharp never made any attempt to be as fervent a Whig as the original owner; within a year he would shift the paper to political neutrality) and to render the paper "interesting" to the readers.\textsuperscript{31} Sharp did achieve widespread interest and assured continued interest in his paper by developing a strong anti-Mormon theme, which would be fully developed within a month of his paper's first anniversary. The fact that Sharp did not even mention the Mormons in his essay on the new volume is further evidence that he had not yet become an anti-Mormon. The transformation did not take place for a few weeks after the cornerstone-laying.
published in his issue of 19 May 1841. Under the title of "Appointment" Sharp wrote:

We have no disposition to complain of the official acts of Judge Douglass, for whom, as a man and an officer, we maintain the highest regard, but there is one act of his which receives our unqualified disapprobation; and we speak advisedly when we say that it is frowned on with indignity by nine-tenths of the substantial citizens of the county—we speak of the appointment of Gen. BENNETT to be Master in Chancery. Whether from political motives or personal regard, it is certainly an act that has astonished the members of both parties, by its indiscretion. Bennett has but recently become an inhabitant of this state. He came here followed by evil report—he joins a sect and advocates a creed in which no one believes he has any faith—his true character is not known to our citizens, nor have they any confidence in him—under such circumstances we believe, and we are not alone in this belief, that Judge Douglass has committed an error in countenancing and encouraging such a man by the gift of a responsible office—an office involving the rights, and in certain instances the liberties of freemen. We, for one, say, let the citizens of this county remonstrate against the appointment.14

John Bennett's appointment, while decried by "gentiles," as the Mormons called their neighbors, was widely applauded at Nauvoo. The importance of Mayor Bennett in civic affairs, as the Mormons called their neighbors, was widely applauded

We understand that great dissatisfaction exists at Nauvoo, amongst those who have lately arrived from England. It is said that many have determined to leave—and that letters have been sent to England, warning their friends, who had designed to emigrate, of the sad state of things in the City of the Church. Mr. Rigdon, on the contrary, informed us last week, that, in general, the new comers were well satisfied. Be it as it may, it is certain that some have left both the City and the Church—not believing on the one hand, in the mission of the Prophet, and on the other, dissatisfied with the temporal government which is exercised over them.

But this is no concern of ours. While on the subject, however, we will notice an accusation which has been made against us—that of having, for political effect, flattered the Mormons. This is not true. – We have occasionally noticed their doings, but not with any such design. We believe they have the same rights as other religious bodies possess, and ought to be protected in the just and proper exercise of those rights. We do not believe in persevering for opinion's sake. But whenever they, as a people, step beyond the proper sphere of a religious denomination, and become a political body, as many of our citizens are beginning to apprehend will be the case, then this press stands pledged to take a stand against them. On religious questions it is and shall remain neutral; but it is bound to oppose the concentration of political power in a religious body, or in the hands of a few individuals.15

Again, this article seems to fall into the category of fair comment. Unfortunately, though, the Mormons of 1841 had too recent memories of the extermination order that had caused their expulsion from Missouri. They were unable to accept these articles, side by side in the county's major newspaper, as reflecting a reasonable opinion. After all, Sharp had derided the religious faith of one of the highest leaders of the Church. Then he seemed to have questioned a proclamation from the Prophet that all faithful Saints should gather to Nauvoo. If Sharp's opinion that conditions for immigrants to Nauvoo were less than ideal were to become widespread, and keep converts from gathering, Sharp would then be an instrument to thwart the success of the Lord's work on earth. In addition, Sharp, in his comment that it was a mistake to say that he flattered the Mormons, sounded ready to take a distinctly anti-Mormon point of view.

THE reaction in Nauvoo was surprisingly sudden and vehement. Thomas Sharp was seen as a threat to the future of the Church. Was he? Perhaps, but it seems that his anti-Mormon viewpoint was not yet fully formed. In the following issue of the Signal, published on 26 May Sharp did not pursue the issue; he failed to mention the Mormons at all.

Although there is no mention of the articles from the Warsaw Signal in Joseph Smith's official history, it is clear that those articles stirred up a hornet's nest in Nauvoo.16 Thomas Sharp seemed surprised by the vehemence of the Mormons' reaction, and his surprise was probably genuine. His article prompted a letter from Joseph Smith himself, which the Signal quoted in the 2 June 1841 issue.

NAUVOO, Ill., May 26, 1841
Sharp, Editor of the Warsaw Signal

SIR—You will discontinue my paper—its contents are calculated to pollute me, and to patronize the filthy sheet—that tissue of lies—that sink of iniquity—is disgraceful to any moral man.

Yours, with utter contempt,
JOSEPH SMITH.

P.S. Please publish the above in your contemptible paper.

J.S.

The Prophet's letter triggered an immediate sarcastic response from Sharp. As Joseph requested, the letter was published, but with the following head:

Highly Important!!
A New Revelation, from Joe Smith, the Mormon Prophet.
for the especial benefit of the Editor of the "WARSAW SIGNAL."
The Signal sought to explain the context of Joseph Smith's letter with these words:

In our paper of week before last, we took occasion to express an honest opinion in relation to the Mormons, and some of their leaders—an opinion which we believe is concurred in by nine-tenths of the community. No sooner, however, had our paper reached Nauvoo, than it caused the following highly important revelation to be forwarded us, from his holiness, the Prophet.

This is the first published sarcasm by Thomas Sharp against Joseph Smith. After this. Sharp routinely gave the Prophet the sarcastic title "His Holiness," but as we have seen, until this article Sharp had kept his appearance of objectivity. Continuing his bitter sarcasm toward the Prophet's letter, Sharp wrote a "Revelation" of his own, for the benefit of Joseph Smith, apparently taken from the Signal's Accounts Receivable files:

Now, as one good turn deserves another, we annex below, for the benefit of the aforesaid Prophet, a revelation from our books, in this wise:

WARSAW, ILL., June 2, 1841

JOSEPH SMITH, Prophet, &c., &c.,
To Sharp & Gamble, DR
To one year's subscription to "Western World, $3.00
Come, Josey, fork over, and for mercy's sake don't get a revelation that it is not to be paid. For if thou dost, we will send a prophet after thee mightier than thou.

With these opening salvos, Thomas Sharp was irrevocably converted from objective observer to combatant. Despite at least one attempt by Joseph Smith to calm the waters—he sent the money due for his subscription on Sunday, 6 June, when he passed near Warsaw under arrest on a warrant from Missouri on the old treason charges—once the sarcasm and bitterness surfaced, there was no turning back.

In stark contrast to the objective reporting on the Prophet's January 1841 proclamation urging Mormons to gather to Nauvoo, Sharp could not resist adding a harsh editorial comment when the Prophet reiterated his earlier advice:

READ AND PONDER—to those citizens if any there be—who apprehend no danger from a Mormon ascendancy in this county, we say, read the following proclamation and ponder well upon it. If the leader and head of the church can exercise such an all-powerful influence over his deluded followers, as to "instruct" them in their most weighty temporal concerns—if he can command them to settle where he pleases—if his will is to be their law, and he their God—what may—nay, what WILL—become of your dearest rights and most valued privileges, when that ascendancy is gained which the following proclamation is intended to effect:

TO THE SAINTS ABROAD

The First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, anxious to promote the prosperity of said church, feel it their duty to call upon the saints who reside out of this county, to MAKE PREPARATIONS TO COME IN, without delay. This is important, and should be attended to by all who feel an interest in the prosperity of this the corner stone of Zion. Here the temple must be raised, the university be built, and other edifices erected which are necessary for the great work of the last days; and which can only be done by a concentration of energy and enterprise. LET IT THERE-FORE BE UNDERSTOOD, that all the stakes, excepting those in this county, and in Lee county, Iowa, ARE DISCONTINUED, AND THE SAINTS INSTRUCTED TO SETTLE IN THIS COUNTY AS SOON AS CIRCUMSTANCES WILL PERMIT.

JOSEPH SMITH
Nauvoo, Hancock Co., Ill. May 24, 1841

Along with the crystallization of Sharp's fears about the political power of the growing number of Mormons in Hancock County, the Mormons kept stirring up the issue by attacking Sharp through their newspaper, the Times and Seasons. The reaction to one such attack, as published in the 9 June 1841 issue of the Signal, is not too different from the probable reaction of a modern reporter whose motives were questioned:

"The more we reflect on the subject, the more we are satisfied of the baseness of the motives which have induced the Editor (of the Warsaw Signal) to make an attack upon this community: a community that has never done him any harm, but ever treated him with hospitality and kindness."

We copy the above from the "Times and Seasons." It was written in reference to the editor of the Signal, and on reflection, it does make us feel right bad, that we have been so ungrateful to the Mormon brotherhood. Just think, reader!—after having been invited to Nauvoo, on the 6th of April, by the Mayor of the city—and after having gone there, impelled by curiosity, to see all that was to be seen—after having ridden to the Temple on that great day, in presence of assembled thousands, by the side of the Holy Prophet—after having an officer ordered to escort [sic] us to the stand when the great orator held forth—after sitting by his side during the discourse, and during the laying of the chief cornerstone, meaning the most prominent honors conferred on any stranger—after being invited in the presence of the congregation to dine with the Prophet—after dining with him on mince pies and sweet meats—after proceeding with him in the afternoon (although we tried our hardest to steal off and make for home)—after again visiting the Temple, and occupying a distinguished place at the laying of the remaining corner-stones—after supping with the Prophet, and eating heartily of his stall-fed turkey—after being caressed and having all manner of attentions paid us, in order to bribe us to flattery, and make a great noise over their splendid parade, in our editorials—and then after disappointing them—
how exceedingly ungrateful must we be, to make an attack upon such "kind" and " hospitable" people! How "infamous" must we be, in daring to say one word that does not meet their approbation!  

It's impossible to say to what extent Thomas Sharp's later anti-Mormon activities were prompted by this 1841 exchange. It is clear that until the Mormons overreacted to Sharp's comments about Bennett and about immigrants' problems, he publicly maintained a fair, even sympathetic posture toward the Church. Later, Sharp's anti-Mormonism grew in vehemence. After Bennett left the Church, the Signal published his letters purporting to expose "spiritual wifery" and other evils of the Church. It's still possible to say to what extent Thomas Sharp's later anti-Mormon activities were prompted by this 1841 exchange. It is clear that until the Mormons overreacted to Sharp's comments about Bennett and about immigrants' problems, he publicly maintained a fair, even sympathetic posture toward the Church. Later, Sharp's anti-Mormonism grew in vehemence. After Bennett left the Church, the Signal published his letters purporting to expose "spiritual wifery" and other evils of the Church.

5. For an excellent discussion of the circumstances surrounding the Mormons' settlement in Illinois, and their land purchases, see Robert Bruce Flanders, Nauvoo, Kingdom on the Mississippi (Urbana, Ill., 1965), pp. 39-44 et seq.


12. Thomas Gregry, History of Hancock County (Chicago, 1865), pp. 744-45 for detailed information about Sharp's life. See also Portrait and Biographical Record of Hancock, McDonough and Henderson Counties, Illinois (Chicago, 1894) and Biographical Review of Hancock Counties, Illinois (Chicago, 1907).

13. See George Leffingwell Reed, ed., Alumni Record, Dickinson College (Carlisle, Pa., 1905). 4. For a description of Judge Reed's law school and his connection with Dickinson College, see Rutron L. Laub, History of the Dickinson School of Law from 1834 to 1866, pamphlet published by the Cumberland County Historical Society (Carlisle, Pa., 1906).

14. See Election Returns, "General Representative Districts at a general Election Tuesday November 4th 1856," Illinois State Archives. Sharp lost to Jacob Cunningham Davis, a fellow Warsaw resident, and fellow defendant in the trial for the murder of Joseph Smith! Davis tallied 12,212 votes to Sharp's 8,182. Davis was elected as a Democrat; Sharp ran as a Republican, completing his transformation from Whig to Democrat to Republican. For additional information about Davis, see Benjamin, History of the American Congress 1774-1949 (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), and Dallin H. Oaks and Marvin S. Hill, The Carthage Conspiracy (Urbana, Ill., 1975).

15. See Executive Record 1865, Vol. 1, p. 29. 5. For example, see N.B. Lundwall, ed., The Fate of the Persecutors of the Prophet Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City, 1952).


18. See Executive Record 1865, Vol. 1, p. 29. 7. For example, see N.B. Lundwall, ed., The Fate of the Persecutors of the Prophet Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City, 1952).


20. "We understand," Warsaw Signal, 9 June 1841, p. 2; "We stated some weeks since," Warsaw Signal, 14 July 1841, p. 2.


22. See Warsaw Signal, 23 July 1842, pp. 1, 2, 4. Some of Bennett's letters were first published in the Sangamo Journal (Springfield, Ill.) and the Louisville Journal. His letters were compiled, with other information, into a book, The History of Illinois (Chicago, 1842).


24. The Western World (Warsaw, Ill.), 20 January 1841, p. 2. For the official text of the actual proclamation, see History of the Church, Vol. IV, pp. 267-73.


26. The Mormons," Western World (Warsaw, Ill.), 3 February 1842, p. 2. This article was published by Sharp but was apparently reprinted from the Sangamo Journal (Springfield, Ill.).


28. The Mormons," Western World (Warsaw, Ill.), 7 April 1841, p. 2. For descriptions of Sharp's visit to the cornerstone ceremony, see Arrington and Benton, p. 72, and Taylor, pp. 97-103.

29. See the record of Narton Jacobs (or Jacob), Mormon Collection, The Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California.

30. The Western World (Warsaw, Ill.), 14 April 1841; 21 April 1841.


34. See Smith, History of the Church, Vol. 4, chapter 19.

35. HIGHLY IMPORTANT!, Western World, 2 June 1841, p. 2.

36. JOE SMITH ARRESTED!, Western World, 9 June 1841, p. 2.

37. Read and ponder," Warsaw Signal, 9 June 1841, p. 2. For the official text of the resolution, which differs from the Western World version only in emphasis and in inconsequential differences in spelling and wording, see Smith, History of the Church, Vol. 4, p. 362.


40. "Unlike other Outrage," the Western World, 12 June 1844.

41. See generally, Oaks and Hill. A contemporaneous account which has been debunked in part, but which is not contradicted on this point, is William M. Daniels, A Correct Account of the Murder of General Joseph and Hyrum Smith at Carthage on the 27th Day of June, 1844, (Galena, Ill., 1844). Copy in possession of the author, original at the Newberry Library, Chicago. Oaks and Hill mention that originals also exist in the LDS Church Archives and the Wilford C. Wood Museum in Bountiful, Utah.

42. For example, see "Last Morung," Warsaw Signal, 24 July 1844, p. 2. "The Mormon Difficulties," Warsaw Signal, 31 July 1844, p. 2, and many other articles throughout the remainder of the Mormons stay in Nauvoo.
Once again, Grondahl successfully lampoons America’s favorite twilight zone, that stretch of hilarity between California and Colorado.

No, Elder, that’s not in the scriptures... You’re quoting from a ‘Star Trek’ episode.

“Jack here is our sales rep in Utah.”

Grondahl is editorial cartoonist for the Ogden Standard Examiner.

“The serpent beguiled me and I went out and got a job... I suggest you do too.”