
Missouri Redress Petitions

D&C 123:13–14

In the winter of 1839 while imprisoned in Liberty Jail, the Prophet Joseph Smith instructed the Latter-day Saints who had been forced to abandon their homes in the state of Missouri to write affidavits detailing property losses and abuses and atrocities suffered due to the government-sanctioned extermination order:

And again, we would suggest for your consideration the propriety of all the saints gathering up a knowledge of all the facts, and sufferings and abuses put upon them by the people of this State. ...We should waste and wear out our lives in bringing to light all the hidden things of darkness, wherein we know them, ... these should then be attended to with great earnestness. (D&C 123:13–14)

With a desire to comply with the prophet's request, hundreds of Latter-day Saints appeared before justices of the peace, clerks of the court, and notaries public in the Territory of Iowa and ten counties in Illinois to express their grievances against the state of Missouri. Before these government officials, the Saints swore out affidavits that what they said or had written was true. Their petitions reveal that militia and mobbers alike pressed the Saints to denounce their belief in the Book of Mormon and their faith in the Restoration in exchange for promises of relief and safety.

Although the Missouri redress petitions were submitted to US government officials, they were never acted upon. Latter-day Saints who had lost property and suffered abuse from the extermination order did not receive relief or financial remuneration from the government.

The following are a few of the petitions:

Newel Knight

Illinois, Quincy May 15, 1839

A bill of damages against the state of Missouri for being driven from it

First for moving in to the state \$175.00

For property lost in the State \$1,500

For moving out of the State \$100

I certify the above to be just and true according to the best of my knowledge.

[Sworn to before C. M. Woods, C.C., Adams County, Illinois, 15 May 1839]¹

Johnston F. Lane

I here present you with a bill of damages against the State of Missouri

In the first place the expenses of moving there and having to leave and having by the authority of the Governor to be deprived of citizenship, \$1,200

And being exposed myself and family to the cold stormy weather of November 1838 and many other inconveniences and sufferings \$200.

Quincy Adams County, Ill. 1st November 1839

[Sworn to before C. M. Woods, C.C., Adams County, Illinois, 1 November 1839]²

Asahel Perry

Illinois, Quincy May 11, 1839

¹ Clark V. Johnson, *Mormon Redress Petitions: Documents of the 1833–1838 Missouri Conflict* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1992), 261–262.

² Johnson, *Mormon Redress Petitions*, 262.

The state of Missouri for lost property and damages due in consequence
of being driven from the state by a mob

First for moving to the state \$800

For loss of time and damages in the state \$50

For loss of land privilege \$500

For being driven from the state \$500

Property lost in the State \$1,500

I certify the above to be just and true according to the best of my
knowledge.

[Sworn to before C. M. Woods, C.C., Adams County, Illinois, 11 May
1839]³

³ Johnson, *Mormon Redress Petitions*, 314.