The Martyrdom

Date    Significant Event
24 Mar. 1844 Joseph Smith revealed to Saints a conspiracy against him
6 Apr. 1844 Joseph Smith thwarted designs of conspirators at general conference
7 June 1844 Conspirators published the first and only edition of Nauvoo Expositor
10 June 1844 Nauvoo city council ordered destruction of Expositor
18 June 1844 Joseph Smith placed Nauvoo under martial law
22 June 1844 Governor Ford insisted Joseph and Hyrum Smith go to Carthage to answer charges against them
24 June 1844 Joseph and Hyrum went to Carthage
27 June 1844 Joseph and Hyrum murdered in Carthage by a mob

Even when he began his ministry, the Prophet Joseph Smith knew he might have to die for his religion. While Joseph was translating the Book of Mormon the Lord promised him eternal life if he was “firm in keeping the commandments ... even if you should be slain” (D&C 5:22). A month later the Lord again spoke of possible violent death. “And even if they do unto you even as they have done unto me, blessed are ye, for you shall dwell with me in glory” (D&C 6:30). The Prophet also received some important assurances, however, regarding his earthly mission. Several years later in Liberty Jail the Lord promised him: “Thy days are known, and thy years shall not be numbered less; therefore, fear not what man can do, for God shall be with you forever and ever” (D&C 122:9).

In 1840 his father’s dying blessing promised him, “You shall even live to finish your work.” At this Joseph cried out, weeping, ‘Oh! my father, shall I?’ ‘Yes,’ said his father, ‘you shall live to lay out the plan of all the work which God has given you to do.’”1 Joseph Smith, heeding the Spirit’s promptings, valiantly completed his mission, suffered martyrdom, and qualified for a glorious reward; thus these prophecies were fulfilled.

Forebodings of Death

As the Prophet continued his ministry during the Nauvoo period, he increasingly felt the forebodings of the Spirit that his ministry on earth was nearing its end. He expressed these feelings to those closest to him and occasionally spoke of them to the Saints in general. To a large congregation in the uncompleted Nauvoo Temple on 22 January 1843, Joseph spoke of the power of the priesthood being used to establish the kingdom of God in the latter days. He explained that the temple endowment would “prepare the disciples for their mission into the world.” Referring to his own role, Joseph declared, “I understand my mission and business. God Almighty is my shield, and what can man do if God is my friend. I shall not be sacrificed until my time comes. Then I shall be offered freely.”2

One of the most pointed and poignant of Joseph Smith’s martyrdom prophecies was made to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the spring of 1844. Orson Hyde remembered the account: “We were in council with Brother Joseph almost every day for weeks. Says Brother Joseph in one of those councils, there is something going to happen; I don’t know what it is, but the Lord bids me to hasten and give you your endowment before the temple is finished. He conducted us through every ordinance of the holy priesthood, and when he had gone through with all the ordinances he rejoiced very much, and said, now if they kill me you have got all the keys and all the ordinances and you can confer them upon others, and the hosts of Satan will not be able to tear down the kingdom as fast as you will be able to build it up.”3

Like everyone, the Prophet wanted to live. He wanted to enjoy the company of his wife, play with his children, speak to the Saints, and enjoy the fellowship of good people. Despite knowing that he would probably soon die, he was a man who loved life. He met often with the Saints, and some of his greatest sermons were delivered within weeks of his martyrdom.
Conspiracy against the Prophet

In stark contrast to the righteousness of most of the Saints who lived in prosperous Nauvoo was the spreading apostasy in their midst. William Law, second counselor to Joseph Smith, and his brother Wilson led the conspiracy against the Prophet. Throughout the early months of 1844 their followers gradually grew to approximately two hundred people. Other leaders included the brothers Robert and Charles Foster, Chauncey and Francis Higbee, and two influential non-Mormons—Sylvester Emmons, a member of the Nauvoo city council, and Joseph H. Jackson, a notorious criminal.

On Sunday, 24 March 1844, Joseph Smith spoke at the temple about the conspiracy, having just learned of it from an informant. He revealed who some of his enemies were and added that “the lies that Higbee has hatched up as a foundation to work upon, he says that I had men's heads cut off in Missouri and that I had a sword run through the hearts of the people that I wanted to kill and put out of the way. I won't swear out a warrant against them for I don't fear any of them. They would not scare off an old setting hen.”

At the April general conference, the conspirators sought the downfall of the Prophet. Confident that the majority of the Saints would oppose the principle of plural marriage, they planned to bring up the subject at the business session of the conference. They were also prepared to argue that Joseph Smith was a fallen prophet because few if any revelations had been published and circulated among Church members in the previous months. In an effort to thwart the conspirators, the Prophet testified at the beginning of the conference that he was not a fallen prophet, that he had never felt nearer to God than at that time, and that he would show the people before the conference closed that God was with him. The next day he addressed the conference for two hours in what became known as the King Follett Discourse. On that occasion, the faithful witnessed the majesty of their Prophet.

The Expositor Affair

Leaders of the conspiracy were exposed in the Times and Seasons and were excommunicated from the Church. Thwarted in their plans, the dissenters decided to publish an opposition newspaper. The first and only issue of their paper, which was called the Nauvoo Expositor, appeared on 7 June 1844. Throughout the paper they accused Joseph Smith of teaching vicious principles, practicing whoredoms, advocating so-called spiritual wifery, grasping for political power, preaching that there were many gods, speaking blasphemously of God, and promoting an inquisition.

The city council met in long sessions on Saturday, 8 June and again the following Monday. They suspended one of their members, the non-Mormon Sylvester Emmons, who was the editor of the Expositor, and discussed the identity of the publishers and their intent. Using the famous English jurist William Blackstone as their legal authority and having examined various municipal codes, the council ruled that the newspaper was a public nuisance in that it slandered individuals in the city. Moreover, they reasoned that if nothing were done to stop the libelous paper, the anti-Mormons would be aroused to mob action.

Joseph Smith, as mayor, ordered the city marshal, John Greene, to destroy the press, scatter the type, and
burn any remaining newspapers. The order was carried out within hours. The city council acted legally to abate a public nuisance, although the legal opinion of the time allowed only the destruction of the published issues of the offending paper. The demolition of the press was a violation of property rights.

After the destruction of the press, the publishers rushed to Carthage and obtained a warrant against the Nauvoo city council on charge of riot for the action. On 13 and 14 June, however, Joseph Smith and the other council members were released following a habeas corpus hearing before the Nauvoo municipal court. This further aroused the public. Also, even though Illinois had experienced twenty similar destructions of printing presses over the previous two decades without such a reaction, the enemies of the Church proclaimed the Expositor incident a violation of freedom of the press.

These actions prompted citizens’ groups in Hancock County to call for the removal of the Saints from Illinois. Thomas Sharp vehemently expressed the feelings of many of the enemies of the Church when he editorialized in the Warsaw Signal: “War and extermination is inevitable! Citizens ARISE, ONE and ALL!!—Can you stand by, and suffer such INFERNAL DEVILS! to ROB men of their property and RIGHTS, without avenging them. We have no time for comment, every man will make his own. LET IT BE MADE WITH POWDER AND BALL!!!”

The situation was so dangerous that Joseph Smith wrote Governor Ford apprising him of the circumstances and including many affidavits to explain the threats against the Saints. Hyrum Smith wrote Brigham Young that the Twelve and all other elders on political missions should return at once to Nauvoo. Hyrum stated, “You know we are not frightened, but think it best to be well prepared and be ready for the onset.”

Joseph mobilized his guards and the Nauvoo Legion, and on 18 June placed the city under martial law. Meanwhile, Hancock County citizens asked Governor Ford to mobilize the state militia and bring the Nauvoo offenders to justice. The excitement was so intense that Ford published an open letter urging calmness and then went to Carthage to neutralize a situation that threatened civil war.

In counsel with his brethren, Joseph Smith read a letter from the governor that seemed to show no mercy toward them, and they considered what should be

The Nauvoo Expositor, published on 7 June 1844, attempted to rally anti-Mormons against the Church in Nauvoo. The suppression of the paper, the destruction of the press, and the accidental razing of the building brought legal charges against Nauvoo mayor Joseph Smith, which resulted in his going to Carthage.
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done next. In the course of the deliberations, Joseph's face brightened, and he declared, “The way is open. It is clear to my mind what to do. All they want is Hyrum and myself; then tell everybody to go about their business, and not to collect in groups, but to scatter about. … We will cross the river tonight, and go away to the West.”

Stephen Markham, a close friend of the Prophet Joseph Smith, was present in the all-night council and heard Joseph Smith say that “it was the voice of the Spirit for him to go to the West among the Natives and take Hyrum and several others along with him and look out a place for the Church.”

Late in the evening of 22 June 1844, Joseph and Hyrum tearfully bade farewell to their families and, together with Willard Richards and Orrin Porter Rockwell, crossed the Mississippi River in a skiff. The boat was so leaky and the river so high that it took most of the night to get to the other side. Early in the morning a posse arrived in Nauvoo to arrest Joseph and Hyrum but did not find them. The posse returned to Carthage after threatening the citizens with an invasion of troops if Joseph and Hyrum did not give themselves up. That same morning some of the brethren who had gone to see Joseph argued that mobs would drive the Saints from their homes despite his departure. Joseph replied, “If my life is of no value to my friends it is of none to myself.” Joseph and Hyrum then made plans to return to Nauvoo and to submit to arrest the next day.

Joseph and Hyrum Go to Carthage

Upon returning to Nauvoo, Hyrum performed the marriage ceremony of his daughter Lovina to Lorin Walker. This small measure of joy preceded the sorrow that would soon come. Joseph wanted to speak to the Saints once more, but there was not enough time. He went home to his family, fully aware that it would probably be his last evening with them.

At 6:30 a.m. on Monday, 24 June, Joseph, Hyrum, John Taylor, and fifteen other members of the Nauvoo city council set out on horseback for Carthage, accompanied by Willard Richards and a number of other friends. It had rained for weeks, but this morning was sunny and beautiful. Pausing at the temple site, the Prophet looked on the sacred edifice, then on the city, and remarked, “This is the loveliest place and the best people under the heavens; little do they know the trials that await them.”

To the assembled Saints, he said, “If I do not go there [to Carthage], the result will be the destruction of this city and its inhabitants; and I cannot think of my dear brothers and sisters and their children suffering the scenes of Missouri again in Nauvoo; no, it is better for your brother, Joseph, to die for his brothers and sisters, for I am willing to die for them. My work is finished.”

At about ten o'clock the group arrived at a farm four miles west of Carthage, where they met a company of sixty mounted Illinois militia. Captain Dunn presented an order from Governor Ford for all the state arms in the possession of the Nauvoo Legion to be surrendered. At Dunn's request, Joseph Smith agreed to return to Nauvoo to forestall any resistance. Joseph then sent a note explaining his delay to the governor in Carthage. Before returning to Nauvoo, Joseph prophesied, “I am going like a lamb to the slaughter, but I am calm as a summer's morning. I have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward all men. If they take my life I shall die an innocent man, and my blood shall cry from the ground for vengeance, and it shall be said of me 'He was murdered in cold blood!'”

Upon returning to Nauvoo, Joseph directed that three small cannons and about two hundred firearms be turned over to the militia. This action revived agonizing memories of the Mormon disarmament that had preceded the Missouri massacre. The Prophet also had another opportunity to bid farewell to his family. He left for Carthage at 6:00 p.m.

Five minutes before midnight on 24 June, Captain Dunn and his company of sixty mounted men of the Augusta militia rode into Carthage with Joseph and Hyrum Smith and the members of the Nauvoo city council as voluntary captives. Joseph and Hyrum were
weary from flight, hiding out, and the threat of assassination. Nevertheless the brothers were imposing figures as they rode into town—the Prophet, age thirty-eight, and Hyrum, forty-four—both tall men who towered over most of the others.

Carthage was in a riotous state. Mobs of irate townsmen and farmers from throughout western Illinois had been clamoring for the arrest of the Mormon prophet. They were now eager to see the captives. Among the mob were more than fourteen hundred unruly militia, including the local Carthage Greys. Crowds had been roaming the town all day, drinking and brawling. They wanted to get their hands on the Smith brothers. Through Captain Dunn's efforts, the prisoners were safely placed in the Hamilton House hotel. The Greys still clamored to see Joseph Smith. Finally Governor Ford put his head out the window and calmed the crowd by announcing that Mr. Smith would be paraded before the troops the next day.

Early the next morning Joseph and his brethren surrendered to constable David Bettisworth on the original charge of riot. Almost immediately Joseph and Hyrum were charged with treason against the state of Illinois for declaring martial law in Nauvoo. At 8:30 that morning the governor ordered the troops to the public ground, where he addressed them. He told them that the prisoners were dangerous men and perhaps guilty, but that they were now in the hands of the law, and the law must take its course. These remarks only incited the soldiers to greater rage. Joseph and Hyrum were then paraded before the troops, where they endured many vulgar insults and death threats.

At four o'clock that afternoon a preliminary hearing was held before Robert F. Smith, a justice of the peace who was also captain of the Carthage Greys and active in the anti-Mormon party. Each member of the Nauvoo city council was released on five-hundred-dollar bonds and ordered to appear at the next term of the circuit court. Most of the accused men then left for Nauvoo, but Joseph and Hyrum remained for an interview with Governor Ford. That evening a constable appeared with a mittimus (a commitment to prison) signed by Judge Smith to hold Joseph and Hyrum in jail until they could be tried for treason, a capital offense. Joseph and his lawyers protested that the mittimus was illegal, since there had been no mention of that charge at their hearing. Their complaints were taken to the governor, but he said he could not interrupt a civil officer in the discharge of his duty.

Judge Smith, as captain of the Greys, sent his soldiers to carry out the mittimus he had issued as justice of the peace. Joseph and Hyrum were hustled to Carthage Jail amidst a great rabble in the streets. Eight of their friends went with them, including John Taylor and Willard Richards. Dan Jones with his walking stick and Stephen Markham with his hickory cane, which he called the “rascal beater,” walked on either side of the Prophet and his brother, warding off the drunken crowd. As it turned out, the stone jail was the safest place in town. Several of Joseph and Hyrum’s friends were permitted to stay with them.

The next day, 26 June, a hearing was held on the charge of treason. The defendants had no witnesses present; since treason was a non-bailable charge, they were required to remain in custody until another hearing could be held on 29 June. Some of the brethren met with Governor Ford and told him that if he went to Nauvoo, Joseph and Hyrum would not be safe in Carthage. Ford promised that he would take Joseph and Hyrum with him. Joseph spent the afternoon dictating to his scribe, Willard Richards, while Dan Jones and Stephen Markham whittled at the warped door to their room in the jail with a penknife so it could be latched securely to prepare against possible attack.

That night Willard Richards, John Taylor, and Dan
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Jones remained with Joseph and Hyrum in jail. They prayed together and read from the Book of Mormon. Joseph bore his testimony to the guards. Much later, Joseph was lying on the floor next to riverboat captain Dan Jones. “Joseph whispered to Dan Jones, ‘are you afraid to die?’ Dan said, ‘Has that time come, think you? Engaged in such a cause I do not think that death would have many terrors.’ Joseph replied, ‘You will yet see Wales [Jones’s native land], and fulfill the mission appointed you before you die.’”17 Elder Jones later fulfilled the prophecy, serving a great mission in Wales.

About midnight several men surrounded the jail and started up the stairs to the prisoners’ room. One of the brethren grabbed a weapon that had been smuggled into their room during the day. Members of the mob, standing near the door, heard them moving and hesitated. “The Prophet with a ‘Prophet’s voice’ called out ‘Come on ye assassins we are ready for you, and would as willingly die now as at daylight.’”18 The mob retreated.

The Tragedy at Carthage

Dan Jones (1811–62) was born in Flintshire, Wales, and later emigrated to America, where he joined the Church. In fulfillment of a prophetic promise given him by the Prophet in the Carthage Jail, Dan served a mission in Wales from 1845 to 1849. He wrote and translated Church publications for the Welsh and assisted in bringing over two thousand converts into the Church.

He was called a second time to Wales in 1852 and became mission president in 1854, where he again performed a great work among the people of his native land.

The next morning, Thursday, 27 June, “Joseph requested Dan Jones to descend and inquire of the guard the cause of the disturbance in the night. Frank Worrell, the officer of the guard, who was one of the Carthage Greys, in a very bitter spirit said, ‘We have had too much trouble to bring Old Joe here to let him ever escape alive, and unless you want to die with him you had better leave before sundown; … and you’ll see that I can prophesy better than Old Joe. . .’”

“Joseph directed Jones to go to Governor Ford and inform him what he had been told by the officer of the guard. While Jones was going to Governor Ford’s quarters, he saw an assemblage of men, and heard one of them, who was apparently a leader, making a speech, saying that, ‘Our troops will be discharged this morning in obedience to orders, and for a sham we will leave the town; but when the Governor and the McDonough troops have left for Nauvoo this afternoon, we will return and kill those men, if we have to tear the jail down.’ This sentiment was applauded by three cheers from the crowd.

“Captain Jones went to the Governor, told him what had occurred in the night, what the officer of the guard had said, and what he had heard while coming to see him, and earnestly solicited him to avert the danger.

“His Excellency replied, ‘You are unnecessarily alarmed for the safety of your friends, sir, the people are not that cruel.’

“Irritated by such a remark, Jones urged the necessity of placing better men to guard them than professed assassins. . .

“… Jones remarked, ‘If you do not do this, I have but one more desire, . .

“… ‘that the Almighty will preserve my life to a proper time and place, that I may testify that you have

The jail was begun in 1839 and completed two years later at a cost of $4,105. It was used for about twenty-five years. Later it was used as a private residence and became one of the nicest homes in Carthage. Under the direction of President Joseph F. Smith, the Church purchased the building and property in 1903 for $4,000. In 1938 the Church restored the building.
been timely warned of their danger.’ …

‘… Jones’ life was threatened, and Chauncey L. Higbee said to him in the street, ‘We are determined to kill Joe and Hyrum, and you had better go away to save yourself.’”19

That morning Joseph wrote to Emma, “I am very much resigned to my lot, knowing I am justified, and have done the best that could be done. Give my love to the children and all my friends. … May God bless you all.”20 The Prophet also sent a letter to the well-known lawyer Orville H. Browning asking him to come and defend him. Soon afterward, Joseph’s friends, with the exception of Willard Richards and John Taylor, were forced to leave the jail.

Contrary to his promise, Governor Ford left that morning for Nauvoo without Joseph and Hyrum, taking instead Captain Dunn’s Dragoons from McDonough County, the only troops that had demonstrated neutrality in the affair. En route, he sent an order to all other troops at Carthage and Warsaw to disband, except for a company of the Carthage Greys to guard the jail. The Greys were Joseph’s most hostile Greys and could not be depended upon to protect him. They were part of a conspiracy to feign defense of the prisoners when enemies of the Prophet would later storm the jail.

In Nauvoo, Ford delivered an insulting speech. He said, “A great crime has been done by destroying the Expositor press and placing the city under martial law, and a severe atonement must be made, so prepare your minds for the emergency. Another cause of excitement is the fact of your having so many firearms. The public are afraid that you are going to use them against government. I know there is a great prejudice against you on account of your peculiar religion, but you ought to be praying Saints, not military Saints.”21

Meanwhile, Colonel Levi Williams of the Warsaw militia read to his men the governor’s orders to disband. Thomas Sharp then addressed the men and called for them to march east to Carthage. Shouts followed for volunteers to kill the Smiths. Some of the men disguised themselves by smearing their faces with mud mixed with gunpowder and started for Carthage.

At the jail, the four brethren sweltered in the sultry afternoon heat. Joseph gave Hyrum a single-shot pistol and prepared to defend himself with the six-shooter smuggled in that morning by Cyrus Wheelock. Gravely depressed, the brethren asked John Taylor to sing a popular song titled “A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief,” about a suffering stranger who revealed himself at last as the Savior. Joseph asked John to sing it again, which he did. In view of their circumstances, one of the verses seems especially poignant:

In pris’n I saw him next—condemned
To meet a traitor’s doom at morn;
The tide of lying tongues I stemmed,
And honored him ’mid shame and scorn.

Willard Richards (1804–54) was ordained an Apostle in 1840 and served as one of the personal secretaries to Joseph Smith. He was also appointed as historian in 1842 and general Church recorder in 1845. From his experiences in Carthage he wrote the moving account “Two Minutes in Jail.” He became second counselor to President Brigham Young in 1847 and served in that position until his death.
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My friendship’s utmost zeal to try,
He asked, if I for him would die;
The flesh was weak, my blood ran chill,
But my free spirit cried, “I will!”

At 4:00 p.m. the guard at the jail was changed. Frank Worrell, who had threatened Joseph Smith earlier that morning, was then in charge. A few minutes after five, a mob of about one hundred men with blackened faces arrived in town and headed for the jail. The prisoners heard a scuffle downstairs followed by a shout for surrender and three or four shots. The Prophet and the others rushed to the door to fight off the assailants who had ascended the stairs and poked their guns through the half-closed door. John Taylor and Willard Richards attempted to deflect the muskets with their canes. A bullet fired through the panel of the door struck Hyrum in the left side of his face, and he fell, saying, “I am a dead man!” Joseph, leaning over Hyrum, exclaimed, “Oh dear, brother Hyrum!” John Taylor said the look of sorrow he saw on Joseph’s face was forever imprinted on his mind. Joseph then stepped to the door, reached around the door casing, and discharged his six-shooter into the crowded hall. Only three of the six chambers fired, wounding three assailants.

The shots delayed the assassins only a moment. John Taylor attempted to jump out of the window but was hit by gunfire. A shot through the window from below hit the watch in his vest pocket, stopping it at 5:16 and knocking him back into the room. He fell to the floor and was shot again in his left wrist and below his left knee. Rolling to get under the bed, he was hit again from the stairway, the bullet tearing away his flesh at the left hip. His blood was splattered on the floor and the wall. “Joseph, seeing there was no safety in the room,” tried the same escape. Instantly the mob fired on him, and he fell mortally wounded through the open window, exclaiming, “Oh Lord, my God!” The mob on the stairs rushed outside to assure themselves that Joseph Smith was dead.

Willard Richards alone remained unscathed, having only had a bullet graze his ear. Earlier Joseph had prophesied in Willard’s presence that one day he would stand while bullets whizzed around him and would escape unharmed. Only then did Willard fully understand what Joseph had meant. He dragged the terribly wounded John Taylor into the next room, deposited him on straw, and covered him with an old filthy mattress. The straw, Elder Taylor believed, saved his life by helping stop his bleeding. Meanwhile, Willard, expecting to be killed at any moment, was surprised when the mob fled and left him alone with his dead and wounded comrades.

Samuel Smith, brother to the Prophet, heard about death threats to his brothers and hurried to Carthage. He arrived in Carthage that evening physically exhausted, having been chased by the mobbers. Through the exertion and fatigue of a life-and-death chase, Samuel contracted a fever that led to his death on 30 July. At Carthage, Samuel helped Elder Richards move the bodies of his martyred brothers to the Hamilton House. After a coroner’s inquiry, Willard Richards wrote to the Saints at Nauvoo, “Joseph and Hyrum are dead.”

Mobbers fled to Warsaw, their hometown, and then, fearing retaliation from the Mormons, continued across the river into Missouri. Governor Ford heard about the
assassinations shortly after he left Nauvoo to return to Carthage. When he arrived he urged the few remaining citizens to evacuate the town and had county records moved to Quincy for safety. None of this was necessary. When the Saints heard of the deaths of their beloved leaders, they were overwhelmed with grief rather than desire for revenge.

On the morning of 28 June 1844 the bodies of the slain leaders were gently placed on two different wagons, covered with branches to shade them from the hot summer sun, and driven to Nauvoo by Willard Richards, Samuel Smith, and Artois Hamilton. The wagons left Carthage about 8:00 a.m. and arrived in Nauvoo about 3:00 p.m. and were met by a great assemblage. The bodies lay in state the following day in the Mansion House while thousands of people silently filed past the coffins. The shock of the deaths was devastating to the families of the martyrs. Joseph and Hyrum were buried in secret in the basement of the Nauvoo House so that those who wanted to collect a reward offered for Joseph’s head could not find the remains. A public funeral was held, and caskets filled with sand were buried in the Nauvoo Cemetery. For weeks the Saints sorrowed deeply over the tragedy at Carthage.

**Greatness of Joseph Smith**

Elder John Taylor, who miraculously survived Carthage, wrote an account of the event and a eulogy to the Prophet, which are found in Doctrine and Covenants 135. “Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it” (v. 3). He added that the names of Joseph and Hyrum Smith “will be classed among the martyrs of religion; and the reader in every nation will be reminded that the Book of Mormon, and this book of Doctrine and Covenants of the church, cost the best blood of the nineteenth century to bring them forth for the salvation of a ruined world” (v. 6). The martyrdom, he said, fulfilled an important spiritual purpose: Joseph “lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people; and like most of the Lord’s anointed in ancient times, has sealed his mission and his works with his own blood; and so has his brother Hyrum. In life they were not divided, and in death they were not separated!” (v. 3).

While Joseph Smith lived only thirty-eight and a half years, his accomplishments in the service of mankind are incalculable. In addition to translating the Book of Mormon, he received hundreds of revelations, many of which are published in the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price. He unfolded eternal principles in a legacy of letters, sermons, poetry, and other inspired writings that fills volumes. He established the restored Church of Jesus Christ on the earth, founded a city, and superintended the building of two temples. He introduced vicarious ordinance work for the dead and restored temple ordinances by which worthy families could be sealed by the priesthood for eternity. He ran for the presidency of the United States, served as a judge, mayor of Nauvoo, and lieutenant general of the Nauvoo Legion.

Josiah Quincy, a prominent New England citizen who later became the mayor of Boston, visited Joseph Smith two months before the Martyrdom. Many years later he wrote about the people who had most impressed him during his life. Regarding Joseph Smith, he wrote, “It is by no means improbable that some future textbook, for the use of generations yet unborn, will contain a question something like this: What historical American of the nineteenth century has exerted the most powerful influence upon the destinies of his countrymen? And it is by no means impossible that the answer to that interrogatory may be thus written: Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet.”

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John Taylor’s pocket watch, Hyrum Smith’s Book of Mormon, John S. Fullmer took this single-barrel pistol into the jail, but it was never used by the prisoners. The Prophet used this six-shooter, called a “pepper-box,” to defend himself and his fellow prisoners. Stephen Markham’s “Rascal Beater” cane used by John Taylor to deflect the rifle barrels of the mob.

Endnotes
5. See Wilford Woodruff Journals, 6 Apr. 1844.
8. History of the Church, 6:487.
12. Letter from Stephen Markham to Wilford Woodruff at Fort Supply, Wyoming, 20 June 1856, LDS Historical Department, Salt Lake City, p. 1; spelling standardized.
13. History of the Church, 6:547–49.
16. History of the Church, 6:555; see also Doctrine and Covenants 135:4.
17. History of the Church, 6:601.
20. History of the Church, 6:605.
22. History of the Church, 6:615; or Hymns, no. 29.