

ABSTRACT

“It was By Reason of Being Mormons that We were Kept at Arms Length”:
Mormonism, Freemasonry, and Conflicting Interests on the Illinois Frontier

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Following the creation of a Masonic lodge in Nauvoo, Illinois, in March 1842, Mormons living in the area enthusiastically joined the fraternity. Despite the eagerness with which Mormons affiliated with the society, many non-Mormon Masons in Illinois viewed the Mormons with suspicion and contempt and justified the distrust they had for the Mormon Masons because the Mormons violated some Masonic principles within their lodge. While the Mormon Masons were guilty of some of the charges brought up against them, these trivial complaints did not warrant the continued antagonism that the Mormon Masons experienced at the hands of other Illinois Masons. Therefore, this thesis argues that anti-Mormonism was the driving force behind the resentment that many Illinois Masons expressed for the Mormon Masons during the first half of the 1840s.

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Mormonism, Freemasonry, and Conflicting Interests on the Illinois Frontier

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

On March 15, 1842, Joseph Smith, the first prophet of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Sidney Rigdon, one of Smith's counselor's in the Church's First Presidency, were initiated as Entered Apprentice Masons in a Masonic lodge in Nauvoo, Illinois.¹ The next day, they received the degrees of Fellow Craft and Master Mason.² Following the examples of their leaders, hundreds of Mormons living in and around Nauvoo advanced through the Masonic degrees between April 1842 and the mass westward migration of the Mormons in the spring of 1846. Mormon presence in the fraternity was not generally accepted, however, for Mormon Masons experienced antagonism and mistrust from fellow Illinois Masons. In an attempt to understand this Masonic anti-Mormonism, three questions will be the driving force of this thesis: What did Masonic anti-Mormonism look like? How did Mormon Masons respond? What does Masonic anti-Mormonism reveal about frontier Illinois society and American culture?

Brief History of Early Mormonism

Joseph Smith Jr. was born in Sharon, Vermont, on December 23, 1805. After his family moved to upstate New York, Smith recalled that “there was in the place where we

¹ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, March 15, 1842, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah (Church History Library hereafter cited as CHL).

² Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, March 16, 1842, CHL.

lived an unusual excitement on the subject of religion.”³ It was during this time of great religious fervor, termed the Second Great Awakening, that Smith announced that he had seen God and Jesus Christ in a vision. He later reported that an angel, named Moroni, appeared to him giving him instructions of how to translate an ancient record from golden plates, which he published in March 1830 as *The Book of Mormon*. The following month, on April 6, Smith officially organized what came to be known as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.⁴

In 1831 Joseph Smith and his New York followers moved to Kirtland, Ohio, to join a group of converts there because two of Smith’s revelations had commanded them to “assemble together at the Ohio” in order to “escape the power of the enemy,” which had created a secret plan “to bring to pass even your destruction.”⁵ Soon thereafter, Mormons gathered in both Kirtland and Jackson County, Missouri, because another

³ Joseph Smith, History, 1838–1856, vol. A-1, p. [1], CHL.

⁴ Initially, the Church was called the “Church of Christ.” Later, in 1834, it changed to “The Church of the Latter Day Saints.” In 1838, a revelation declared that the Church should be named “the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.” Articles and Covenants, April 10, 1830, in Revelation Book 1, p. 53, in Robin Scott Jensen, Robert J. Woodford, and Steven C. Harper, eds., *Manuscript Revelation Books*, facsimile edition, first volume of the Revelations and Translations series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2009), 77 (*Manuscript Revelation Books* hereafter cited as *JSP*, MRB); *The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Containing Revelations Given to Joseph Smith, the Prophet, with Some Additions by His Successors in the Presidency of the Church* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2013), 20:1 (*Doctrine and Covenants* hereafter cited as D&C); “Communicated,” *The Evening and the Morning Star* (Independence, MO), May 1834, 160; Revelation, April 26, 1838, in Joseph Smith, Journal, March–September 1838, p. 33, in Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, vol. 1 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2008), 258.

⁵ Revelation, December 30, 1830, in Revelation Book 1, p. 49, in *JSP*, MRB:69 [D&C 37:3]; Revelation, January 2, 1831, in Revelation Book 1, pp. 50–52, in *JSP*, MRB:71, 73, 75 [D&C 38:13, 18–19].

revelation designated Missouri as the land “for the gathering of the Saints,” “& the place for the City of Zion,” with the town of Independence as its center.⁶

Everywhere they gathered, the Mormons experienced persecution. By the summer of 1833, older citizens in Jackson County, Missouri, felt threatened economically and politically by the growing Mormon population to the point that they destroyed the Mormon printing press and forced Church leaders to sign agreements that all Mormons would leave the county. These old settlers eventually used violence and bloodshed to force the Mormons to leave the county.⁷

The Mormons’ stay in Kirtland lasted longer than that of their counterparts in Missouri. Their crowning achievement was the construction and dedication of their first temple. By the beginning of 1838, however, internal dissent and external opposition led most Mormons to abandon their Ohio homes and join their fellow Mormon converts in Northern Missouri.⁸

After being forced out of Jackson County in the winter of 1833, repeated attempts by the Mormons to establish their Zion in Missouri, led Missouri State Governor Lilburn

⁶ Revelation, July 20, 1831, in Revelation Book 1, p. 93, in *JSP*, MRB:159 [D&C 57:1–3].

⁷ For more on the Mormon experience in Jackson County, Missouri, see Warren A. Jennings, “Factors in the Destruction of the Mormon Press in Missouri, 1833,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (1967): 57–76; Warren A. Jennings, “The Expulsion of the Mormons from Jackson County, Missouri,” *Missouri Historical Review* 64, no. 1 (1969): 41–63; Ronald E. Romig and John H. Siebert, “Jackson County, 1831–1833: A Look at the Development of Zion,” *Restoration Studies* 3 (1986): 286–304; Ronald E. Romig and John H. Siebert, “First Impressions: The Independence, Missouri, Printing Operation, 1832–33,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 10 (1990): 51–66.

⁸ For more on the Mormon experience in Ohio, see Milton V. Backman Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830–1838* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983); and Mark Lyman Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People: The Historical Setting of Joseph Smith’s Ohio Revelations* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2009).

W. Boggs, in October 1838, to force them out of the state.⁹ That winter, the Mormons temporarily fled to Quincy, Illinois, and the surrounding areas.¹⁰ They eventually gathered in Commerce, Illinois, which they renamed Nauvoo, where they established a thriving city, complete with their second temple.¹¹ It was during their stay in Illinois that over one thousand Mormons affiliated with or advanced through the Masonic degrees. Persecution continued, however; and in June 1844, Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were assassinated. Less than two years later, in the spring of 1846, the Mormons left Nauvoo, under the leadership of Brigham Young, and headed west.¹²

Historiography

Much has been written about the connection between Freemasonry and Mormonism. The abundant secondary literature focuses on several themes, one of which

⁹ Governor Boggs issued an executive order on October 27, 1838, which stated that “the mormons must be treated as enemies, and must be exterminated or driven from the State if necessary for the public peace.” Lilburn W. Boggs, Jefferson City, MO, to John B. Clark, Fayette, MO, October 27, 1838, Mormon War Papers, Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City, Missouri. For more on the difficulties experienced by the Mormons in Missouri, see Stephen C. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990); Alexander L. Baugh, “A Call to Arms: The 1838 Mormon Defense of Northern Missouri” (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1996), also available as Alexander L. Baugh, *A Call to Arms: The 1838 Mormon Defense of Northern Missouri* (Provo, UT: Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History; BYU Studies, 2000); Thomas M. Spencer, *The Missouri Mormon Experience* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2010); and Leland Homer Gentry and Todd Compton, *Fire and Sword: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Northern Missouri, 1836–39* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2011).

¹⁰ For more on the Mormons flight from Missouri to Illinois, see William G. Hartley, “‘Almost Too Intolerable a Burthen’: The Winter Exodus from Missouri, 1838–39,” *Journal of Mormon History* 18, no. 2 (1992): 6–40.

¹¹ An article in the Nauvoo newspaper the *Times and Seasons* explained that “the name of our city (Nauvoo,) is of Hebrew origin, and signifies a beautiful situation, or place, carrying with it, also, the idea of rest; and is truly descriptive of this most delightful situation.” “A Proclamation, to the Saints Scattered Abroad,” *Times and Seasons* (Nauvoo, IL), January 15, 1841, 2:273–277.

¹² For more on the Mormon experience in Illinois, see Robert Bruce Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975); and Glen M. Leonard, *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, a People of Promise* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2002).

uses Masonry to explain Mormon origins. In *The Refiner's Fire*, John Brooke discusses the impact of hermeticism on Mormonism and uses Freemasonry as the means to explain the transmission of hermetic ideas.¹³ Clyde R. Forsberg Jr., in his revisionist history titled *Equal Rites*, places Masonry at the center of early Mormonism, arguing that Masonry shaped every aspect of this new religious tradition.¹⁴ Several works concern anti-Masonic sounding verses in the Book of Mormon.¹⁵ Many scholars have offered their conclusions about the connections between Masonry and Mormonism because of similarities between Masonic ritual and the Mormon temple endowment ceremony, an ecclesiastical rite that Joseph Smith introduced to nine Mormons in his red brick store in Nauvoo only fifty

¹³ John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644–1844* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

¹⁴ Clyde R. Forsberg, *Equal Rites: The Book of Mormon, Masonry, Gender, and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

¹⁵ Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 128–31; Dan Vogel, "Mormonism's 'Anti-Masonick Bible,'" *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 9 (1989): 17–30; Daniel C. Peterson, "Notes on 'Gadianton Masonry,'" in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company; Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1990), 174–224; Daniel C. Peterson, "Notes and Communications: 'Secret Combinations' Revisited," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1, no. 1 (1992): 184–88; Dan Vogel, "Echoes of Anti-Masonry: A Rejoinder to Critics of the Anti-Masonic Thesis," in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, ed. Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 275–320.

days after becoming a Mason.¹⁶ Some writers even extend discussions of Masonry and Mormonism beyond Illinois and into Utah.¹⁷

Mervin B. Hogan is the most prolific writer on the connection between Masonry and Mormonism. Beginning in the 1950s, he wrote dozens of articles and several books about Freemasonry and Mormonism and has been regarded by many as an expert on the subject simply, it seems, because of the sheer quantity of his publications. Hogan's corpus of writings discusses many different aspects of the connection between Masonry and Mormonism. Several of his studies trace the involvement of some of the personalities who joined or were affiliated with Nauvoo Lodge, such as Joseph Smith, Abraham Jonas, James Adams, John C. Bennett, Jonathan Nye, and Meredith Helm.¹⁸ Some of Hogan's

¹⁶ Kenneth W. Godfrey, "Joseph Smith and the Masons," *Journal of the Illinois Historical Society* 64, no. 1 (Spring 1971): 79–90; David John Buerger, "The Development of the Mormon Temple Endowment Ceremony," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20 (Winter 1987): 33–76; Armand L. Mauss, "Culture, Charisma, and Change: Reflections on Mormon Temple Worship," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20 (Winter 1987): 77–86; Michael W. Homer, "'Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry': The Relationship between Freemasonry and Mormonism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27 (Fall 1994): 1–113; Samuel Morris Brown, *In Heaven as it is On Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 170–202; Michael W. Homer, *Joseph's Temples: The Dynamic Relationship Between Freemasonry and Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2014).

¹⁷ Mervin B. Hogan, *The Origin and Growth of Utah Masonry and Its Conflict with Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Campus Graphics, 1978); Michael W. Homer, "Masonry and Mormonism in Utah, 1847–1984," *Journal of Mormon History* 18 (Fall 1992): 57–96.

¹⁸ Mervin B. Hogan, *Joseph Smith and Freemasonry* (Salt Lake City, 1983); Mervin B. Hogan, *Joseph Smith: Man and Mason* (Salt Lake City, 1983); Mervin B. Hogan, *Joseph Smith's Embrace of Freemasonry* (Salt Lake City, 1988); Mervin B. Hogan, "The Confrontation of Grand Master Abraham Jonas and John Cook Bennett at Nauvoo," (paper presented before The Society of Blue Friars, Washington D.C., February 22, 1976); Mervin B. Hogan, *Grand Master Abraham Jonas of Illinois* (Salt Lake City, 1983); Mervin B. Hogan, *James Adams and the Founding of the Grand Lodge of Illinois* (Salt Lake City, 1983); Mervin B. Hogan, "Secretary John Cook Bennett of Nauvoo Lodge" *Philalethes* 23, no. 4 (August 1970): 82–83; Mervin B. Hogan, *John Cook Bennett and Pickaway Lodge No. 23* (Salt Lake City, 1983); Mervin B. Hogan, *The Involvement of John Cook Bennett with Mormonism and Freemasonry at Nauvoo* (Salt Lake City: Mervin B. Hogan, 1983); Mervin B. Hogan, *John C. Bennett: Unprincipled Profligate Cowan* (Salt Lake City, 1985); Mervin B. Hogan, *Grand Master Jonathan Nye and Nauvoo Lodge* (Salt Lake City, 1983); Mervin B. Hogan, *Grand Master Jonathan Nye of Vermont* (Salt Lake City, 1983); Mervin B. Hogan, *Dr. Meredith Helm: Illinois' Second Grand Master* (Salt Lake City, 1983).

works discuss specific historical events, like the laying of the cornerstone and dedication of a Masonic temple in Nauvoo.¹⁹ In other writings, Hogan analyzes the relationship between Freemasonry and Mormonism.²⁰

The perceived authority vested in Hogan as an expert on the connection between Masonry and Mormonism has caused many to use his publications uncritically, most of which were self-published or published through small Masonic presses. While Hogan's position as a Mormon and Mason no doubt provided him with useful insights not available to outsiders, his work should be scrutinized by academics to identify the accuracy and worth of his writings.

Two of Hogan's most widely cited publications are documentary transcriptions of the two minute books of Nauvoo Lodge. These record books document the creation, development, and duration of the lodge. The first minute book (hereafter referred to as Minute Book 1) contains meeting minutes from December 29, 1841, to May 6, 1842. The second minute book (hereafter referred to as Minute Book 2) contains meeting minutes from December 29, 1841, to September 15, 1845. In the 1970s, Hogan published a transcription of Minute Book 1 called *The Founding Minutes of Nauvoo Lodge* and a

¹⁹ Mervin B. Hogan, *The Erection and Dedication of the Nauvoo Masonic Temple* (Salt Lake City, 1976); Mervin B. Hogan, *The Dedication of the Nauvoo Masonic Temple and the Strange Question of Dr. Goforth* (Salt Lake City, 1983).

²⁰ Mervin B. Hogan, "The Cryptic Cable Tow Between Mormonism and Freemasonry," (paper presented before Arizona Research Lodge No. 1, F. & A. M., Masonic Temple, Phoenix, Arizona, February 24, 1970); Mervin B. Hogan, "The Milieu of Mormonism and Freemasonry at Nauvoo: An Interpretation," *Transactions: American Lodge of Research, Free and Accepted Masons* 13 (1976): 188–202; Mervin B. Hogan, *What of Mormonism and Freemasonry?* (Salt Lake City, 1976); Mervin B. Hogan, *Mormonism and Freemasonry Under Covert Masonic Influences* (Salt Lake City, 1978); Mervin B. Hogan, *Documenting and Publishing the Historical Relationship of Mormonism and Freemasonry* (Salt Lake City, 1982); Mervin B. Hogan, *The Temple Mormon and the Masonic Lodge* (Salt Lake City, 1986); Mervin B. Hogan, *Freemasonry: Mormonism's Scorned Presence* (Salt Lake City, 1989).

partial transcription of Minute Book 2 entitled *The Official Minutes of Nauvoo Lodge*.²¹ Unfortunately, in his *Official Minutes*, Hogan decided to only reproduce the portion of the record that coincided with the entries that are in Minute Book 1. Thus, of the 570 manuscript pages within Minute Book 2, Hogan reproduced forty-six, or slightly over eight percent. Within many of his other publications, Hogan does quote portions of or alludes to information found in Minute Book 2 that did not appear in his truncated transcription of Minute Book 2. Regrettably, instead of using the original records, scholars frequently cite these quotations or quote from *Founding Minutes* and *Official Minutes* in their works regarding Masonry and Mormonism. While Hogan's publications are most useful in presenting information, they nevertheless lack critical analysis of the topics discussed and most are poorly annotated.²²

The above is just a sampling of the extensive historiography concerning Masonry and Mormonism. A noticeable gap in this scholarship concerns Masonic anti-Mormonism, the persecution of Mormon Masons by other Illinois Freemasons. While some of the above literature examines issues that Mormon Masons had with the Grand Lodge of Illinois, none provide an extensive analysis of Masonic anti-Mormonism covering the entire period from 1841 to 1846.²³ Discussions of Masonic anti-Mormonism

²¹ Mervin B. Hogan, *The Founding Minutes of Nauvoo Lodge* (Des Moines, IA: Research Lodge No. 2, [1971]); Mervin B. Hogan, *The Official Minutes of Nauvoo Lodge* (Des Moines, IA: Research Lodge No. 2, [1975]).

²² Alphonse Cerza, after reading one of Hogan's publications, suggested to Hogan that he include a bibliography "to show the basis for your observations here and there." Alphonse Cerza, Riverside, IL, to Mervin B. Hogan, Salt Lake City, UT, April 8, 1975, Mervin B. Hogan, Freemasonry research files, 1973–1985, CHL.

²³ A grand lodge presides over a group of subordinate Masonic lodges located within a specific jurisdiction. Albert G. Mackey, *A Lexicon of Freemasonry; Containing a Definition of All its Communicable Terms, Notices of its History, Traditions, and Antiquities, and an Account of All the Rites*

are even absent from studies concerning nineteenth-century anti-Mormonism, such as Kenneth H. Winn's *Exiles in a Land of Liberty* and J. Spencer Fluhman's "*A Peculiar People*."²⁴ Therefore, this thesis seeks to fill that void by discussing the Masonic anti-Mormonism that occurred on the Illinois frontier in the 1840s and how Mormon Masons responded to it.

Methodology

The chief primary sources used in this study can be lumped into two categories: documents specifically related to Mormon involvement in Freemasonry and documents concerning Masonry in Illinois. The two main manuscript sources for information about Nauvoo Masonry are the minute books of Nauvoo Lodge. Instead of relying on Hogan's transcriptions of Minute Book 1 and Minute Book 2, I consulted the originals. Other manuscript sources include letters and journal entries of various Mormons who affiliated with Masonry. Published sources regarding Mormon involvement in Freemasonry include four Illinois newspapers: the *Wasp*, *Nauvoo Neighbor*, *Times and Seasons*, and *Sangamo Journal*.

In regards to Illinois Masonry, two published sources provide valuable information concerning Masonic anti-Mormonism. First are the *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*. Each year after the meetings of the grand lodge concluded, the proceedings of each gathering were published. In 1891, members of the grand body

and Mysteries of the Ancient World (London: Richard Griffin and Company, 1860), s.v. "Grand Lodges, Jurisdiction of."

²⁴ Kenneth H. Winn, *Exiles in a Land of Liberty: Mormons in America, 1830–1846* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); J. Spencer Fluhman, "*A Peculiar People*": *Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

resolved to have the proceedings from 1840 through 1850 reprinted in a single volume.²⁵ This work, *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, provides important insight into the decisions and conduct of the Grand Lodge of Illinois concerning the various Mormon lodges.²⁶ The second published source presenting information about Illinois Masonry is John C. Reynolds's *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois*.²⁷ In writing this history, Reynolds, historian and deputy grand secretary of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, gathered and used the proceedings of the grand lodge, as well as the records of constituent lodges under the authority of the grand body. The indispensable nature of the record comes from the many places in which Reynolds liberally quoted from and, in some instances, quoted in full the documents that he had gathered.

Argument

This thesis details the creation and duration of Nauvoo Lodge and other Masonic lodges in Illinois that were largely made up of Mormons (although Nauvoo Lodge is the primary focus) and conflict that erupted between Illinois Masons and Mormon Masons during the first half of the 1840s. This narrowly focused study is fundamentally about anti-Mormonism. While Illinois Masons claimed that their distrust of the Mormon Masons was due to Mormon violations of established Masonic regulations, these petty grievances, some of which other contemporary Illinois lodges also committed but were

²⁵ *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of the State of Illinois, Free and Accepted Masons* (Freeport, IL: Journal Power Press and Bindery, 1891), 119–20.

²⁶ *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, From Its Organization in 1840 to 1850 Inclusive* (Freeport, IL: Journal Print, 1892).

²⁷ John C. Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois, Ancient, Free, and Accepted Masons: From the Organization of the First Lodge Within the Present Limits of the State, Up to and Including 1850* (Springfield, IL: H. G. Reynolds, Jr., Masonic Trowel Office, 1869).

pardoned for, do not justify or explain the continued antagonism of Illinois Masons toward their Mormon counterparts.²⁸ A more fundamental issue was at play. Therefore, this thesis argues that the mistrust and criticism that Illinois Masons heaped on the Mormons who established and joined Nauvoo Lodge and the other predominantly Mormon lodges was because of the religious beliefs and practices of the Mormon Masons. This study of Masonic anti-Mormonism highlights the tension that existed in nineteenth-century America over the democratic nature of American religion, as well as the instability of frontier America.

Chapter Two shows how some non-Mormon Masons in Illinois exhibited suspicion and contempt for Mormon involvement in Freemasonry even before the Mormons had their own lodge by refusing to endorse the Mormons' petition that would have allowed them to establish a lodge in Nauvoo. Not all members of the fraternity were suspicious of Mormon affiliation in their organization because a few prominent Masons helped the Mormons obtain a dispensation to create Nauvoo Lodge. The Masonic anti-Mormonism of some Illinois Masons was not publicly expressed until allegations surfaced that John C. Bennett, a Mormon convert and Master Mason, had been expelled from a Masonic lodge he had affiliated with in Ohio. It was never proved that Bennett had been expelled, but that did not matter. The allegations acted as a stimulus, allowing for further expressions of the reservations that some Illinois Masons had for Mormon

²⁸ James Bilderback compares the Masonic violations committed by Nauvoo Lodge with those of other Illinois lodges and the lack of punishment issued against these lodges by the Grand Lodge of Illinois, suggesting that "One might readily conclude that the Grand Lodge was exceedingly lenient with its constituent lodges except in the case where public prejudice influenced all reason." James C. Bilderback, "Masonry and Mormonism: Nauvoo, Illinois, 1841–1847" (master's thesis, State University of Iowa, 1937), 76–84.

participation in Freemasonry. Illinois Masons took advantage of the charges against Bennett, using them as a legitimate reason to vocalize their objections.

Not only was Bennett expelled from Nauvoo Lodge, he was also excommunicated from the Church and stripped of the various civic responsibilities he had taken on after moving to Nauvoo. Following his departure from the Mormon city, Bennett wrote and published letters in an Illinois newspaper in which he accused the Mormons of a variety of transgressions, including a few targeted at the work of the Mormon Masons. Bennett, who had once been the reason that some Illinois Masons used to openly question Mormon involvement in Freemasonry, now provided the ammunition for Masonic anti-Mormonism. Chapter Three looks at Bennett's accusations against Nauvoo Lodge and analyses the lodge's two extant minute books to determine the veracity of Bennett's claims. More importantly, it argues that Bennett, the Mormons, and non-Mormon Masons in the state looked to Nauvoo Lodge's minute books as authoritative records to determine whether the Mormons' relationship with the fraternity warranted preservation. Bennett appealed to the records in an attempt to vilify the Mormons. Mormon Masons tried to preserve their relationship with Freemasonry by withholding their records and non-Mormon Masons demanded that the records of Nauvoo Lodge be brought before the Grand Lodge of Illinois to be inspected.

Only a few short months after the establishment of Nauvoo Lodge, the Grand Lodge of Illinois suspended the lodge's dispensation on account of purported violations of established Masonic regulations that were occurring in the work of the lodge. An investigation revealed that violations had been happening, but not to the point that the suspension should be sustained. Therefore, Mormon Masons soon renewed their efforts

in making Masons in Nauvoo Lodge. Chapter Four discusses how Masonic anti-Mormonism continued even after the suspension was lifted. Non-Mormon Masons actively worked in preventing Mormon Masons from obtaining charters for their lodges and in getting their dispensations revoked. Despite these efforts, Nauvoo Masons continued to work as a lodge, even without the authorization of the Grand Lodge of Illinois. From this point forward until the Mormons fled Illinois in the spring of 1846, Mormon Masons disregarded the authority of the grand body, while Illinois Masons continued to display their expressions of anti-Mormonism. The tension between these two groups reveals the instability of the social order of the nineteenth-century American frontier. Mormon Masons' unwillingness to abide by the social conventions of Freemasonry alarmed Illinois Masons. If the Mormons could not accept the rules of a fraternity, how or why would they be willing to comply with the accepted rules of the frontier society at large? Therefore, the behavior of Mormon Masons in ignoring and challenging the authority of the Grand Lodge of Illinois also threatened the stability of their frontier society.

CHAPTER TWO

John C. Bennett and the Beginnings of Masonic Anti-Mormonism

Introduction

Mormonism's foray into Freemasonry officially began on March 15, 1842, with the establishment of a Masonic lodge in Nauvoo, Illinois.¹ In trying to capture the feeling of that event, Willard Richards, scribe to the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, penned a favorable account of the events of that day in Smith's journal. Richards's words not only describe the proceedings of the day, but also suggest Mormon approval of Freemasonry. He wrote: "A Large number of people assembled on the occasion, the day was exceedingly fine, all things were done in order, and universal satisfaction manifested."² Richards's favorable appraisal reflects the broad acceptance of Freemasonry by Mormons. Indeed, the fraternity saw widespread support from the Mormons, with over one thousand men affiliating with or advancing through the Masonic degrees in Illinois in the 1840s.³

¹ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, March 15, 1842, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah (Church History Library hereafter cited as CHL).

² Joseph Smith, Journal, March 15, 1842, in Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Richard Lloyd Anderson, eds., *Journals, Volume 2: December 1841–April 1843*, vol. 2 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2011), 45 (*Journals, Volume 2* hereafter cited as *JSP*, J2).

³ According to Mervin B. Hogan's calculations, 1,529 men affiliated with or advanced through the Masonic degrees in Nauvoo Lodge between December 1841 and April 1846. See "Complete Membership Roster of Nauvoo Lodge from December 29, 1841 to April 8, 1846," and "Addendum," in Mervin B. Hogan, *The Official Minutes of Nauvoo Lodge* (Des Moines, IA: Research Lodge No. 2, [1975]), 48–81. Nauvoo Lodge was not the only Masonic lodge that Mormon men joined. There were four other Masonic lodges in the area that mostly consisted of Mormons. These lodges were Helm Lodge and Nye Lodge, both located in Nauvoo, Rising Sun Lodge, in Montrose, Iowa Territory, and Keokuk Lodge, in Keokuk, Iowa Territory. Calculating the total number of Mormon men who affiliated with these five lodges is problematic

Mormon attitudes and enthusiasm for Freemasonry can be juxtaposed against the suspicions and contempt that some non-Mormon Masons in Illinois had for the Mormons. As Mormon Masons petitioned for the creation of a Masonic lodge in Nauvoo, Masons from the town of Quincy, who would prove to be the frontrunners in expressing concern over Mormon participation in the fraternity, refused to give the Mormons the needed recommendation to establish a lodge. The Mormons found support from a few prominent Illinois Masons, however, who helped them secure a dispensation to create a lodge in Nauvoo.

The distrust that some Illinois Masons had for the Mormons found outward expression when accusations surfaced regarding Mormon convert and Master Mason John C. Bennett. The allegations centered on Bennett's supposed expulsion from a Masonic lodge in Ohio. While it was never confirmed that Bennett was an expelled Mason, the charges against him fueled the anti-Mormon sentiment of some Illinois Masons and served as a catalyst for further expressions of non-Mormon Masons' suspicions of the Mormons. Even though the Mormons eventually expelled Bennett from their own lodge, Masonic anti-Mormonism continued. This illustrates that complaints against Bennett's status as a Mason were simply an excuse that Illinois Masons used to openly express their anxiety over Mormon involvement with their fraternity.

because no known records survive for Helm Lodge, Nye Lodge, Rising Sun Lodge, or Keokuk Lodge, and because some of the men who joined Nauvoo Lodge later demitted and joined either Helm Lodge or Nye Lodge. Therefore, to count those men as members of Nauvoo Lodge and then as members of Helm Lodge or Nye Lodge would be to count them twice.

Freemasonry in Illinois

Freemasonry, ““a beautiful system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols,””⁴ is a fraternal organization that uses ritual and oaths to cultivate brotherhood between its members. As New York State Governor and long time Mason DeWitt Clinton described in 1825, Freemasonry is a society based on “pure morality,” and encourages all “that is good, and kind, and charitable,” and disapproves of “all that is vicious, and cruel, and oppressive.”⁵ As a candidate progresses or advances from a lower degree to a higher one he increases in knowledge communicated by rituals.

The modern fraternal organization known as Freemasonry had its beginnings in 1717 in England when the members of four Masonic lodges gathered together and created the Grand Lodge of London. The establishment of this grand lodge marked the transition from operative to speculative Freemasonry, the transformation of the organization from a guild to a fraternity.⁶ Prior to this shift, Masonic guilds focused on the practice of building, where most of the members of the society were actual

⁴ George Oliver, *Signs and Symbols Illustrated and Explained, in a Course of Twelve Lectures on Freemasonry* (Grimsby: Bro. Skelton, 1826), 105.

⁵ Clinton described Masonry in this way in an address he gave on September 29, 1825, during a Masonic installation ceremony in which Stephen Van Rensselaer became Grand Master, or presiding officer, of the Grand Lodge of New York. Van Rensselaer succeeded Clinton as grand master. “Masonic Installation,” *Niles' Weekly Register*, October 15, 1825, 109.

⁶ Margaret C. Jacob and Steven C. Bullock look to the 1717 creation of the Grand Lodge of London as the beginning of modern Freemasonry. See Margaret C. Jacob, *The Origins of Freemasonry: Facts and Fictions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 11–12; and Steven C. Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730–1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 9–12, 15. David Stevenson provides an alternate interpretation in that he downplays the impact and importance of the establishment of the Grand Lodge of London, calling it “almost an irrelevance in the long process of development of the movement” because the founding of the grand lodge only involved four lodges in London. Instead, Stevenson sees the beginnings of modern Freemasonry in Scottish lodges in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. David Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry: Scotland's Century, 1590–1710* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 3–9.

stonemasons. As was common in many European countries for centuries, guilds existed to protect, supervise, and provide a social life for masons and other artisans.⁷ In the case of masons, when the Grand Lodge of London was formed, non-craftsmen took charge of lodge leadership and thereafter the organization became “a fraternity dedicated to morality and wisdom that would be open to all men.”⁸

After the formation of the Grand Lodge of London in 1717, it took a little over a decade for Freemasonry to make its way across the Atlantic to colonial America. In June 1730, the Grand Lodge of London appointed one Daniel Coxe as the provincial grand master for the American colonies of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York. Coxe soon traveled to America but apparently did not establish the provincial lodge he had been given authority to create. Around the same time but without the sanction of the Grand Lodge of London, St. John's Lodge in Philadelphia began to meet.⁹ In April 1733, the Grand Lodge of London appointed Bostonian Henry Price as provincial grand master of New England and the surrounding areas. Three months later, Price established a provincial grand lodge in Boston as well as a subordinate lodge. By 1738, lodges also existed in Savannah, New York, Charleston, and Cape Fear, North Carolina. Despite the fraternity's expansion, the development of Masonic lodges in colonial America in the

⁷ Jacob, *Origins of Freemasonry*, 11. For a discussion of medieval European guilds, see Steven Epstein, *Wage Labor and Guilds in Medieval Europe* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

⁸ Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 12.

⁹ Steven C. Bullock writes that St. John's Lodge was “almost certainly America's first organized Masonic group.” Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 46.

1730s and 1740s was slow, haphazard, and sporadic, while the 1750s and 1760s saw accelerated growth.¹⁰

Although the Grand Lodge of London had originally envisioned that grand lodges in Britain's North American colonies would function as subordinate provincial lodges with their authority stemming from the London grand lodge, in the end, things did not work out that way. Prior to the American Revolution, most Masonic grand lodges in Britain's North American colonies had worked as provincial lodges. Following the Revolution, however, each of the newly formed states in the United States transitioned to or created independent state grand lodges.¹¹

Before the establishment of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, Freemasonry made its way to what would later become the state of Illinois through the structure of state grand lodges.¹² From 1805 to 1822, the subordinate Masonic lodges created in Illinois received their dispensations and charters from state grand lodges in Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, and Indiana. When the Grand Lodge of Illinois was formed in December 1822,¹³ nine functioning lodges existed in Illinois.¹⁴ The newly established

¹⁰ Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 46–48; Dorothy Ann Lipson, *Freemasonry in Federalist Connecticut* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 49.

¹¹ Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 46–47, 114–121; Lipson, *Freemasonry in Federalist Connecticut*, 47.

¹² Illinois did not achieve statehood until 1818.

¹³ Delegates from eight subordinate lodges in Illinois formed the Grand Lodge of Illinois during a convention held on December 9–10, 1822, in Vandalia, Illinois. John C. Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois, Ancient, Free, and Accepted Masons: From the Organization of the First Lodge Within the Present Limits of the State, Up to and Including 1850* (Springfield, IL: H. G. Reynolds, Jr., Masonic Trowel Office, 1869), 73–77; John Corson Smith, *History of Freemasonry in Illinois, 1804–1829* (Chicago: Rogers and Smith, 1903), 58–63.

¹⁴ The first Masonic lodge formed in what later became Illinois was Western Star Lodge in the town of Kaskaskia. Opened in 1805, Western Star Lodge remained the only Masonic lodge in Illinois until

grand lodge operated from December 1822 to at least January 1827,¹⁵ during which it chartered seven new subordinate lodges.¹⁶

About the time that the first Grand Lodge of Illinois stopped operating, a wave of Antimasonry was sweeping the United States. The Antimasonic movement arose from the abduction of William Morgan, a stonecutter and disaffected Mason from Batavia, New York, who attempted to publish a manuscript exposing Masonic rituals. One evening in September 1826, while Morgan was imprisoned on trumped-up charges in a jail in Canandaigua, New York, an unidentified individual paid Morgan's bail, and the prisoner was discharged into the custody of a group of strangers. They forced Morgan into a carriage, and he was never seen again. While an investigation into Morgan's disappearance was thwarted by the efforts of Masons who covered up the crime, their actions produced serious long-term consequences for the fraternity, including a substantial loss of public favor, the abandonment of the fraternity by thousands of

1815 when Lawrence Lodge, located in Shawneetown, became the second. A third lodge, Libanus Lodge in Edwardsville, was formed in 1819, followed by the creation of a fourth, Olive Branch Lodge, in Alton in 1821. The number of Masonic lodges in Illinois jumped to nine in 1822, with the formation of five new lodges: Vandalia Lodge in Vandalia, Union Lodge in Jonesboro, Eden Lodge in Covington, Hiram Lodge in Brownsville, and Albion Lodge in Albion. Two other lodges, Temple Lodge in Belleville and Sangamon Lodge in Springfield, were created in 1820 and 1822, respectively, but neither affiliated with the Grand Lodge of Illinois. Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 7, 12–13, 15–18, 38–39, 46–47, 49–53, 55–59, 61–62, 64–65, 67–69, 72, 126; Smith, *History of Freemasonry in Illinois*, 165; Everett R. Turnbull, *The Rise and Progress of Freemasonry in Illinois, 1783–1952* ([Harrisburg, IL?]: Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of the State of Illinois, 1952), 8–62.

¹⁵ The last known meetings of the first Grand Lodge of Illinois occurred on January 1, 3, and 23, 1827. Meeting minutes from Strangers Union Lodge, however, dated June 11, 1829, suggest that the Grand Lodge of Illinois may have continued to operate as late as June 1829. Smith, *History of Freemasonry in Illinois*, 126–29, 164.

¹⁶ The seven lodges chartered by the Grand Lodge of Illinois from December 1822 to January 1827 consisted of Palestine Lodge in Palestine, Greene Lodge in Carrollton, Illion Lodge in Carlyle, Frontier Lodge in Lewistown, Strangers Union Lodge in Fever River (later Galena), LaFayette Lodge in Atlas, and Cincinnatus Lodge in Shawneetown. Smith, *History of Freemasonry in Illinois*, 165; Turnbull, *Rise and Progress of Freemasonry in Illinois*, 74–83.

Masons, and the shutting down of hundreds of American Masonic lodges. The resulting Antimasonic crusade eventually turned into a political movement, leading to the Antimasonic Party, the first third party in American history. Following the American Civil War, the fraternity recovered its pre-Antimasonic movement numbers, but never regained the prestige it had once commanded.¹⁷ While it is easy to assume that the Antimasonic movement, which swept the United States in the 1820s and 1830s, was the reason for the demise of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, William Preston Vaughn suggests that the “weak and struggling grand lodge” collapsed because of “internal problems,” rather than from organized Antimasonry.¹⁸

Even though the Grand Lodge of Illinois crumbled in the late 1820s, between 1835 and 1839, Freemasonry began to reemerge in Illinois as nine subordinate lodges were organized through the authority of the grand lodges of Kentucky and Missouri.¹⁹ This revitalization and resurgence of Freemasonry in Illinois paved the way for the

¹⁷ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 266–69; Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 277–307. For more on Antimasonry, see William Preston Vaughn, *The Antimasonic Party in the United States, 1826–1843* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1983); and Paul Goodman, *Towards a Christian Republic: Antimasonry and the Great Transition in New England, 1826–1836* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

¹⁸ John C. Reynolds believed Antimasonry to be the cause for the collapse of the Grand Lodge of Illinois in the late 1820s. In his history of Freemasonry in Illinois, he wrote that “Fiery persecutions came, brother was arrayed against brother, foul-mouthed slander stalked abroad; enmity was engendered in the hearts of the people, and if those who held firmly to the teachings of the Fraternity held any meetings whatever, it was done so secretly, and in such manner, that the outside world knew nothing of it.” Unfortunately, Reynolds did not provide source material to substantiate his claims. Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 104; Vaughn, *Antimasonic Party*, 169.

¹⁹ The nine lodges established in Illinois between 1835 and 1839 were Bodley Lodge in Quincy, Franklin Lodge in Alton, Harmony Lodge in Jacksonville, Equality Lodge in Equality, Temperance Lodge in Vandalia, Columbus Lodge in Columbus, Far West Lodge in Galena, Springfield Lodge in Springfield, and Mount Moriah Lodge in Hillsboro. Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 104–31; Turnbull, *Rise and Progress of Freemasonry in Illinois*, 84–103, 116–19.

establishment of a second Grand Lodge of Illinois in April 1840.²⁰ Under these circumstances, Mormon Masons petitioned for and secured a dispensation in October 1841 to form a Masonic lodge in Nauvoo, Illinois.

Establishment of Nauvoo Lodge

Men who joined fraternal societies in the early American republic benefited in many ways.²¹ While the historical record is unclear for what purposes the Mormons decided to establish a Masonic lodge in Nauvoo, it is likely that Mormon motives for participating in the fraternity included hopes of cultivating a respectable social reputation among fellow Illinois citizens. Mormons, who fled to Illinois after they had been forced out of the state of Missouri during the winter of 1838–39,²² had recently been unsuccessful in obtaining redress from the federal government for the wrongs they

²⁰ *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, From Its Organization in 1840 to 1850 Inclusive* (Freeport, Ill.: Journal Print, 1892), 3–6; Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 132–35; Turnbull, *Rise and Progress of Freemasonry in Illinois*, 112–14.

²¹ In his *Social Order of a Frontier Community*, historian Don Harrison Doyle lists the many benefits that participation in a voluntary society like Freemasonry provided men in the early American republic. Joining such a society increased a man's opportunities to move up the social ladder, exposed him to a network of business and social contacts, provided him with organizational skills in group leadership and public speaking, encouraged him to deal honestly in all his economic endeavors, and taught him personal and group discipline. Membership in a fraternal society could even vouch for a man's good character and reputation when he and his family moved from one community to another, giving the man access to new business and social contacts. Don Harrison Doyle, *The Social Order of a Frontier Community: Jacksonville, Illinois, 1825–70* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 182–87, 190–92.

²² On the difficulties the Mormons experienced in Missouri, the Mormon War in Missouri, and the eventual Mormon expulsion and exodus from that state, see Stephen C. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990); William G. Hartley, "'Almost Too Intolerable a Burthen': The Winter Exodus from Missouri, 1838–39," *Journal of Mormon History* 18, no. 2 (1992): 6–40; Alexander L. Baugh, "A Call to Arms: The 1838 Mormon Defense of Northern Missouri" (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1996), also available as Alexander L. Baugh, *A Call to Arms: The 1838 Mormon Defense of Northern Missouri* (Provo, UT: Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History; BYU Studies, 2000); Thomas M. Spencer, *The Missouri Mormon Experience* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2010); and Leland Homer Gentry and Todd Compton, *Fire and Sword: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Northern Missouri, 1836–39* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2011).

suffered during their time in Missouri.²³ Therefore, participation in Freemasonry, it seems, was one way the Mormons sought to avoid further persecution and prevent another involuntary Mormon exodus.²⁴ Mormon involvement in the Masonic fraternity was probably also used, as Samuel Morris Brown maintains, as a way to prepare Mormon men to receive an ecclesiastical ritual, called the temple endowment, that Joseph Smith first introduced on May 4, 1842.²⁵

Aside from what they saw as incentives for becoming Masons, the Mormons may have received encouragement from a prominent Illinois Mason to join the fraternity. Several unsubstantiated secondary sources suggest that James Adams—a probate judge in Sangamon County, Mormon convert, and deputy grand master of the Grand Lodge of Illinois²⁶—persuaded the Mormons to petition to establish a Masonic lodge in Nauvoo.²⁷

²³ On Mormon attempts at obtaining redress from the federal government for the loss of property and wrongs they experienced in Missouri, see Clark V. Johnson, *Mormon Redress Petitions: Documents of the 1833–1838 Missouri Conflict* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1992); Glen M. Leonard, *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, A People of Promise* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company; Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2002), 275–76; and Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 391–98.

²⁴ Kenneth W. Godfrey, “Joseph Smith and the Masons,” *Journal of the Illinois Historical Society* 64, no. 1 (Spring 1971): 79; Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 313.

²⁵ In describing the relationship between Freemasonry and Mormonism, Brown argues that Joseph Smith “studied, amplified, and revised—translated—the symbolic systems of Masonry” and used them “as a natural vehicle to frame and express” the temple endowment. Samuel Morris Brown, *In Heaven as it is On Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 172, 186–87. For more on the temple endowment, see Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 448–452.

²⁶ Adams became probate judge in August 1825 and remained in the position until 1843. *History of Sangamon County, Illinois; Together with Sketches of its Cities, Villages and Townships, Educational, Religious, Civil, Military, and Political History; Portraits of Prominent Persons, and Biographies of Representative Citizens* (Chicago: Inter-state Publishing Company, 1881), 74, 251, 273, 282. He was baptized into the Church by 1840. Kent L. Walgren, “James Adams: Early Springfield Mormon and Freemason,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 75, no. 2 (1982): 127. He served as deputy grand master of the Grand Lodge of Illinois from April 1840 to October 1841. Initially elected on April 6, 1840, he was reelected on October 20, 1840. Meredith Helm, elected on October 5, 1841, succeeded Adams as deputy grand master. *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 5, 8, 24.

²⁷ Walgren, “James Adams,” 131, particularly footnote 44.

Whatever their purpose and motivation, in June 1841, a small group of Mormons in Nauvoo, Illinois, who had been initiated into Freemasonry prior to their conversions to Mormonism, wrote to the members of Bodley Lodge, the nearest Masonic lodge to Nauvoo, located in Quincy, Illinois, requesting a recommendation to establish a lodge in Nauvoo. At their meeting on June 23, 1841, the brethren of Bodley Lodge read and denied the request of the Mormon Masons, thinking it “prudent” to reject the petition because the Mormons “were unknown to this Lodge as Masons.”²⁸

The refusal by the membership of Bodley Lodge to provide the Nauvoo Masons with a recommendation represents a broader trend of distrust and disdain that many Illinois citizens had developed for the Mormons. Initially, when Mormon exiles fled Missouri under the extermination order of Governor Lilburn W. Boggs during the winter of 1838–39, many Mormons found refuge in Quincy, Illinois, where hospitable and friendly Quincy residents received them.²⁹ Later, after their leaders identified a new gathering place, Mormon refugees began settling in and around Commerce, Illinois (later renamed Nauvoo), and Montrose, Iowa Territory. Soon, however, the sympathy that the Mormons had earned from some of the state’s inhabitants faded. The burgeoning Mormon population of Nauvoo and the surrounding areas and the perceived economic and political threat that the Mormon presence in Illinois presented alarmed many non-Mormons. Beginning in January 1841, Thomas Sharp, editor of the *Warsaw Signal*, took

²⁸ Bodley Masonic Lodge Minute Book, June 23, 1841, quoted in Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 152.

²⁹ Susan Easton Black, “Quincy—A City of Refuge,” in *A City of Refuge: Quincy, Illinois*, ed. Susan Easton Black and Richard E. Bennett (Salt Lake City: Millennial Press, 2000), 67–81; Richard E. Bennett, “Quincy the Home of Our Adoption”: A Study of the Mormons in Quincy, Illinois 1838–1840,” in *A City of Refuge: Quincy, Illinois*, ed. Susan Easton Black and Richard E. Bennett (Salt Lake City: Millennial Press, 2000), 88–95.

the lead in the anti-Mormon campaign. He published numerous articles in his newspaper in which he ridiculed or attacked the Mormons and he even helped form an anti-Mormon political party.³⁰ The actions of the Quincy Masons in declining to validate a request from the Nauvoo Masons were simply part of the larger anti-Mormon movement of the broader Illinois community.

While the membership of Bodley Lodge refused to provide the Mormon Masons with a recommendation, Columbus Lodge gave the Nauvoo Masons the necessary endorsement. Columbus Lodge, located in Columbus, Illinois, was the home lodge of Abraham Jonas, a Jewish Mason, past grand master of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky, and current grand master of the Grand Lodge of Illinois.³¹ On October 15, Jonas issued a recess dispensation to the Nauvoo Masons.³² The granting of a recess dispensation to Nauvoo Lodge was a strategic maneuver by Jonas, for the annual meetings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois had only recently concluded on October 5, during which a dispensation

³⁰ Dallin H. Oaks and Marvin S. Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy: The Trial of the Accused Assassins of Joseph Smith* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 11; Kenneth H. Winn, *Exiles in a Land of Liberty: Mormons in America, 1830–1846* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 160; Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 160, 303–306.

³¹ Jonas joined Miami Lodge No. 46 in Miami, Ohio, in 1823. He was initiated as an Entered Apprentice on August 12, passed as a Fellow Craft on September 2, and raised as a Master Mason on October 7. Wayne C. Temple, “Abraham Jonas: One of Lincoln’s ‘Most Valued [Masonic] Friends,’” *Transactions of the Illinois Lodge of Research* 14 (2005): 16. H. B. Grant, *Doings of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky, Free and Accepted Masons, and Historical Data of its Subordinates, with Sketches of Past Grand Masters and Numerous Tables Statistical, 1800–1900* (Louisville, KY: Masonic Home Book and Job Office, 1900), 146; Temple, “Abraham Jonas,” 16. Jonas served as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Illinois from April 1840 to October 1842. Initially elected on April 6, 1840, he was reelected on October 20, 1840, and again on October 5, 1841. Meredith Helm, elected on October 4, 1842, succeeded Jonas as Grand Master. *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 5, 8, 24, 55.

³² Dispensation, Abraham Jonas to [Nauvoo Masonic Lodge], Columbus, Illinois, October 15, 1841, in Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, pp. 1–2, CHL. A second copy of the dispensation can be found in Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, pp. 1–2, CHL. It is unknown if the original dispensation is extant.

was given to Masons in Chicago.³³ Perhaps fearing that a proposal to grant a dispensation to the Mormons Masons would have been rejected by the attendees at the meetings of the grand lodge, Jonas waited until after the annual session of the Grand Lodge of Illinois concluded for the year to provide the Mormon Masons with a dispensation.³⁴

The dispensation that Jonas provided to the Nauvoo Masons appointed George Miller, a Mormon bishop and Master Mason, the first Worshipful Master of the new lodge called “Nauvoo Lodge, Under Dispensation.”³⁵ The document authorized and empowered Miller “to congregate a sufficient number of worthy brethren at some convenient place . . . and then and there, with convenient dispatch, to form and open a lodge after the manner of Ancient Masons.”³⁶ Accordingly, on December 29, 1841, Miller gathered seventeen Master Masons from Nauvoo at the office of Hyrum Smith,

³³ *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 19–28.

³⁴ In the dispensation he gave to the Mormon Masons, Jonas explained that since “lodges of masons in the recess of the Grand Lodge of the State of Illinois can be formed under its jurisdiction by special dispensation only,” he therefore granted the dispensation to the Mormon Masons. Dispensation, Abraham Jonas to [Nauvoo Masonic Lodge], Columbus, Illinois, October 15, 1841, in *Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1*, p. 1, CHL.

³⁵ A Joseph Smith revelation, dated January 19, 1841, appointed Miller to be a bishop. Revelation, January 19, 1841, in “The Book of the Law of the Lord,” p. 4, CHL. Miller’s appointment as bishop can also be found in every edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* (Mormon scripture containing many of Joseph Smith’s revelations, as well as a few revelations from Smith’s successors) from 1844 to the current 2013 printing. See, for example, *The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Containing Revelations Given to Joseph Smith, the Prophet, with Some Additions by His Successors in the Presidency of the Church* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2013), 124:20–21. Sometime around the fall and winter of 1819, Miller was “advanced to the highest degree in ancient Free Masonry.” George Miller, “The Life of George Miller, Written By Himself,” in H. W. Mills, “De Tal Palo Tal Astilla,” *Annual Publications, Historical Society of Southern California* 10, no. 3 (1917): 91. Jonas specified the name of the lodge in the dispensation. Dispensation, Abraham Jonas to [Nauvoo Masonic Lodge], Columbus, Illinois, October 15, 1841, in *Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1*, p. 1, CHL.

³⁶ Dispensation, Abraham Jonas to [Nauvoo Masonic Lodge], Columbus, Illinois, October 15, 1841, in *Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1*, p. 1, CHL.

during which the group accepted the dispensation given them by Grand Master Jonas.³⁷

The Mormon Masons present at this gathering selected a three-member committee to draft by-laws to govern the new lodge. The next day, when the Committee on By-Laws presented their drafted code of regulations, the lodge membership unanimously accepted them.³⁸

Aside from gathering on January 3, 1842, Nauvoo Lodge held regular meetings on January 6, 20, and February 3 and 17, the first and third Thursdays of those months, as specified by the lodge's by-laws.³⁹ Nauvoo Lodge did not meet again until March 15, 1842, when Grand Master Jonas traveled to Nauvoo and officially installed the new lodge,⁴⁰ bestowing its officers with the necessary authority “to discharge their functions.”⁴¹ That evening, through the authority of a special dispensation that Jonas presented to the lodge earlier in the day,⁴² Joseph Smith, the first Mormon prophet, and

³⁷ The seventeen men that Miller congregated were Hiram Smith, William Vanauddall, Joshua Smith, Newel K. Whitney, William Felshaw, Austin Cowles, Lucius N. Scovil, Charles Allen, John Smith, Lyman Leonard, Hiram Clark, Samuel Rolfe, David Pettegrew, Christopher Williams, John Patten, John C. Bennett, and Heber C. Kimball. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, December 29, 1841, CHL.

³⁸ The committee who drafted the by-laws consisted of John C. Bennett, Heber C. Kimball, and George Miller. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, December 29 and 30, 1841, CHL.

³⁹ Section one of Nauvoo Lodge's by-laws stipulated that the lodge meet “on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of every month, commencing at 6 o'clock, P. M.” “By-Laws of Nauvoo Lodge, under dispensation,” in Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, December 30, 1841, CHL. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, January 3, 6, 20, February 3 and 17, 1842, CHL.

⁴⁰ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, March 15, 1842, CHL.

⁴¹ Albert G. Mackey, *A Lexicon of Freemasonry; Containing a Definition of All its Communicable Terms, Notices of its History, Traditions, and Antiquities, and an Account of All the Rites and Mysteries of the Ancient World* (London: Richard Griffin and Company, 1860), s.v. “Installation.”

⁴² Dispensation, Abraham Jonas to [Nauvoo Masonic Lodge], Nauvoo, [IL], March 15, 1842, Letters Regarding Freemasonry in Nauvoo, 1842, CHL. Additional copies of the dispensation can be found in Minute Book 1 and Minute Book 2. See Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, March 15, 1842, CHL; and Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, March 15, 1842, CHL.

Sidney Rigdon, a counselor to Smith in the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, were initiated Entered Apprentice Masons. The next day, Smith and Rigdon were passed as Fellow Craft Masons, and raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason.⁴³

With the lodge installed and authorized to begin initiating, passing, and raising brethren through the Masonic degrees, the brethren of Nauvoo Lodge set to work. While holding a meeting on March 17, the first initiations (besides those of Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon) did not occur until April 7.⁴⁴ To accommodate the number of petitions for initiation that the lodge had already received,⁴⁵ it was decided at the lodge's April 8 gathering that "the lodge meet from day to day until press of business is disposed of."⁴⁶ Thus, the lodge began meeting almost everyday, holding 103 meetings between April 7 and August 11.⁴⁷ During these meetings, the brethren of Nauvoo Lodge allowed for three

⁴³ Within a Blue Lodge, there are three degrees a man may achieve: Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason. When discussing advancement between these Masonic degrees, specific language is used; an applicant is "entered" or "initiated" as an Entered Apprentice, "passed" as a Fellow Craft," and "raised" as a Master Mason. Mackey, *Lexicon of Freemasonry*, s.vv. "Blue Masonry," "Entered," "Initiation," "Passed," "Raised." Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, March 15 and 16, 1842, CHL; Joseph Smith, Journal, March 15 and 16, 1842, in *JSP*, J2:45. Some scholars argue that Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were made Masons at sight. Regardless of the rapidity of Smith's and Rigdon's advancement through the Masonic degrees, I do not use this anachronistic terminology because neither Smith nor his contemporaries used that language.

⁴⁴ Willard Richards, Brigham Young, and David S. Hollister were initiated as Entered Apprentice Masons on April 7. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, April 7, 1842, CHL.

⁴⁵ On the number of petitions received and the convoluted nature of the reception of petitions by Nauvoo Lodge, see Chapter Three herein, especially pp. 52–54.

⁴⁶ Following the installation of Nauvoo Lodge on March 15 and 16, the lodge held meetings on March 17 and April 7 before resolving to meet daily. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, March 17, April 7 and 8, 1842, CHL.

⁴⁷ The only days Nauvoo Lodge did not hold meetings during this stretch of time were Sundays and May 4, July 4, July 16, July 18, July 19, and August 6. For eighty-three of the meetings, the lodge met twice per day, and for five of the meetings, the lodge met three times per day. For the other fifteen gatherings, the lodge membership only met once per day.

initiations, three passings, and three raisings to occur (with one exception),⁴⁸ meaning that up to nine degree advancements happened per day.⁴⁹

The members of Bodley Lodge were not alone in being suspicious of the Mormon Masons. As Nauvoo Lodge swiftly made Masons from April to August, other Masons in the surrounding community began expressing distrust for the Nauvoo Masons over a controversy that developed regarding Mormon convert and Master Mason John C. Bennett.

John C. Bennett

John C. Bennett was a productive yet controversial nineteenth-century figure, who involved himself in many different enterprises. He worked as a physician, wrote several essays about tomatoes, and popularized the idea that tomatoes contained healthful qualities. Throughout his life Bennett attempted to establish educational institutions in Ohio, Virginia, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Wisconsin, and even peddled diplomas, including medical, law, divinity, and arts and sciences degrees. Near the end of his life, Bennett promoted fancy poultry raising and created two breeds of chickens: the Plymouth Rocks and the Brahmas. Religiously, Bennett worked as an itinerant Methodist minister, joined the Christian Disciples for a time, and affiliated with and was later excommunicated from two branches of Mormonism. Bennett is most known for his anti-Mormon lectures and published exposé on Mormonism. For his participation and

⁴⁸ On one occasion, the lodge brethren allowed three initiations, three passings, and four raisings, for a total of ten degree advancements. See Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, April 13, 1842, CHL.

⁴⁹ Nine degree advancements occurred during sixty-three of the meetings of Nauvoo Lodge between April 7 and August 11, while eight degree advancements occurred during nineteen of the meetings. The number of degree advancements during the other twenty meetings varied between zero and seven.

involvement in various initiatives throughout his life, Bennett's biographer described Bennett as “a multidimensional, entrepreneurial-spirited, eccentric human being,” who acted as “a booster for whatever cause captured his imagination.”⁵⁰

Bennett, who moved to Nauvoo in 1840 and was baptized a Mormon in September of that year, quickly became a prominent member of the community and was influential in the establishment of Nauvoo Lodge. After helping write Nauvoo's charter and securing its approval by the Illinois state legislature,⁵¹ Bennett was elected mayor of the city and major general of the Nauvoo Legion, a unit of the Illinois state militia, and he served as chancellor of the University of the City of Nauvoo and assistant president in the Church's First Presidency.⁵² Bennett had been one of the Mormon Masons in Nauvoo who wrote to Bodley Lodge in June 1841 to secure the needed recommendation to establish a lodge.⁵³ According to Ebenezer Robinson, Bennett had been one of the main reasons that Mormons in Nauvoo even considered joining the Masons, for “the church had strenuously opposed secret societies, such as Freemasons, Knights of Pithias, and all that class of secret societies . . . but after Dr. Bennett came into the church a great change of sentiment seemed to take place.”⁵⁴ After the Nauvoo Masons acquired the dispensation

⁵⁰ Andrew F. Smith, *The Sainly Scoundrel: The Life and Times of Dr. John Cook Bennett* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997). See page 187 for quote.

⁵¹ Smith, *Sainly Scoundrel*, 58–59; Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 98–105.

⁵² Smith, *Sainly Scoundrel*, 54–72; “Volume 2 Introduction: Nauvoo Journals, December 1841–April 1843,” in *JSP*, J2:xxvii.

⁵³ The portion of Bodley Lodge's June 23, 1841, meeting quoted in John C. Reynolds's history of the Grand Lodge of Illinois indicates that the petition received by Bodley Lodge came from Bennett “and others” from Nauvoo. Bodley Masonic Lodge Minute Book, June 23, 1841, quoted in Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 152.

⁵⁴ Ebenezer Robinson, “Items of Personal History of the Editor,” *Return* 2, no. 6 (June 1890): 287.

to establish Nauvoo Lodge, Bennett was elected secretary and kept the lodge's first minute book.⁵⁵

Years before he associated with the Mormons, Bennett had joined the Masons. His Masonic affiliation dates back to 1826, when he was initiated as an Entered Apprentice Mason in Belmont Lodge No. 16 in St. Clairsville, Ohio.⁵⁶ While there is no known record indicating when or where Bennett received the degrees of Fellow Craft and Master Mason, it is presumed that he was passed and raised in Belmont Lodge, because on October 22, 1828, when he joined Pickaway Lodge No. 23 in Circleville, Ohio, he had already attained full membership in the fraternity.⁵⁷ Shortly after affiliating with Pickaway Lodge, Bennett was elected Senior Deacon.⁵⁸ He continued meeting with that lodge until August 12, 1829, when he “presented his petition praying over his signature to take out his diploma, which was granted by complying with the By-Laws,” meaning that Bennett wished to relieve himself from the obligations of regularly attending meetings

⁵⁵ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, December 29, 1841, CHL.

⁵⁶ James J. Tyler, “John Cook Bennett, Colorful Freemason of the Early Nineteenth Century,” in *1947 Proceedings of the M. W. Grand Lodge of the Most Ancient and Honorable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of Ohio* (Cincinnati: M. W. Grand Lodge of the Most Ancient and Honorable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of Ohio, 1947), 140. Also available as James J. Tyler, *John Cook Bennett, Colorful Freemason of the Early Nineteenth Century* (n.p.: Reprinted from the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Ohio, 1947).

⁵⁷ *History of Pickaway Lodge No. 23 Free and Accepted Masons* (Circleville, OH: Pickaway Lodge, 1975), 60. Mervin B. Hogan, *John Cook Bennett and Pickaway Lodge No. 23* (Salt Lake City, 1983), 8. Andrew F. Smith suggests that Bennett may have joined Pickaway Lodge at the urging of his uncle, Dr. Eustus Webb [Dr. Erastus Webb], who had been a long-time member of that lodge. Smith, *Saintly Scoundrel*, 5.

⁵⁸ *History of Pickaway Lodge No. 23* lists Bennett as Senior Deacon for 1828. *History of Pickaway Lodge*, 52. As Senior Deacon, Bennett's duties, in conjunction with the Junior Deacon, would have included attending to the needs of the lodge's Worshipful Master and wardens, stepping in as proxies in their absence to receive candidates into the various degrees, and introducing and accommodating lodge visitors. Thomas Smith Webb, *The Freemason's Monitor; or Illustrations of Masonry: In Two Parts*, new and improved ed. (Salem, MA: Cushing and Appleton, 1818), 100–101.

and paying membership dues in that lodge. In granting his request and giving him a diploma, Pickaway Lodge attested that Bennett was “a true and trusty brother” in good standing with their lodge.⁵⁹ By December 1830, Bennett had joined Friendship Lodge No. 89 in Barnesville, Ohio,⁶⁰ and in January 1831, he acted as representative for his new lodge in Columbus at the annual meetings of the Grand Lodge of Ohio. At the session of the grand lodge, Bennett was appointed to the Committee on Accounts and elected as grand chaplain for 1831.⁶¹ It appears that Bennett did not associate with Friendship Lodge for long because around May 1831, he moved thirty miles east of Barnesville to Wheeling, Virginia (now West Virginia).⁶² After leaving Barnesville, it seems that Bennett did not affiliate with any other Masonic lodges until he joined Nauvoo Lodge, perhaps due in part to the Antimasonic movement,⁶³ because on December 30, 1841, when Bennett reported to Nauvoo Lodge where he hailed from, he listed Friendship Lodge.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Hogan, *John Cook Bennett and Pickaway Lodge No. 23*, 8; Tyler, “John Cook Bennett,” 140; Albert G. Mackey, *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences: Comprising the Whole Range of Arts, Sciences and Literature as Connected with the Institution* (Philadelphia: McClure Publishing, 1917), s.v. “Certificate.”

⁶⁰ Tyler, “John Cook Bennett,” 140.

⁶¹ Grand Chaplains are in charge of “offering up prayer at the communications of the Grand Lodge, and conducting its devotional exercises on public occasions.” Mackey, *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, s.v. “Chaplain, Grand.” The published proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Ohio for 1831 erroneously identify the representative of Friendship Lodge as “John C. Burnett.” Other mentions of the delegate from Friendship Lodge, however, refer to “Brother Bennett,” “J. C. Bennett,” and “John C. Bennett.” *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of the Most Ancient and Honorable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of Ohio, at its Several Grand Communications, From 1808 to 1847, Inclusive* (Columbus, OH: Follett, Foster and Company, 1857), 222, 224–28, 298, 655.

⁶² Smith, *Saintly Scoundrel*, 10.

⁶³ For the effects of the Antimasonic movement in Ohio, see Vaughn, *Antimasonic Party*, 153–60.

⁶⁴ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, December 30, 1841, CHL.

Bennett took an active role in the leadership of Nauvoo Lodge. Not only was he the lodge's first secretary and keeper of the lodge's first minute book, he also served on the three-member committee that drafted the lodge's governing by-laws⁶⁵ and on the Committee of Investigation, which was established “to inquire into the character of all applicants.”⁶⁶ He even served as grand marshal during the installation ceremonies of Nauvoo Lodge on March 15, 1842.⁶⁷

Shortly after Nauvoo Lodge began rapidly making Masons, a controversy developed regarding the supposed expulsion of Bennett from a Masonic lodge in Ohio, a dispute which fueled anti-Mormon sentiment in many Illinois Masons. The state's non-Mormon Masons feared that the respectability and reputation of their fraternity could be brought into question if they allowed the Mormons to taint their organization with expelled Masons. With some Illinois Masons already wary of Mormon involvement in Freemasonry, this new information about Bennett provided Illinois Masons with evidence to publicly and legitimately express their concerns regarding the Mormon Masons, allowing them to openly question the value of Mormon participation in the fraternity.

In a May 4, 1842, letter, Grand Master Abraham Jonas informed Nauvoo Lodge's Worshipful Master George Miller of rumors that “many irregularities are taking place in your lodge.” Since the brethren of Nauvoo Lodge were “regarded by some, with some

⁶⁵ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, December 29, 1841, CHL. The two other members of the committee who helped Bennett draft the by-laws were Heber C. Kimball and George Miller.

⁶⁶ Bennett served on the Committee of Investigation with Heber C. Kimball and Newel K. Whitney. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, December 30, 1841, CHL.

⁶⁷ The duty of a Grand Marshal is “to regulate processions and other public solemnities.” Mackey, *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, s.v. “Marshal.” Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, February 17, and March 15, 1842, CHL.

mistrust,” Jonas looked to Miller to correct any misconduct by the members of his lodge. Jonas explained that on the evening of May 3, he received a letter from a “most valued and esteemed Brother,” in which the correspondent asserted that the establishment of a Masonic lodge among the Mormons in Nauvoo would “work only evil” for the Masonic cause. The informant warned Jonas that if James Adams or John C. Bennett were involved in the creation of a lodge at Nauvoo, “it is the more to be regretted,” because Adams’s character “is very far from being enviable,”⁶⁸ and because Bennett was “any thing but a good and true Mason,” for he purportedly had been expelled from a Masonic lodge in Fairfield, Ohio. (It was later discovered that the lodge in question was Pickaway Lodge in Circleville, Ohio). Jonas’s informer explained that he received this information from a Dr. (Joseph) King from Decatur, Illinois, who had lived in Ohio at the time of Bennett’s supposed expulsion and had been a member of the Masonic lodge in question. “It grieves me to suppose the facts must be true,” Jonas lamented, for “I had taken much interest in your Lodge.”⁶⁹

Meredith Helm, member of Springfield Lodge and Jonas’s likely correspondent from the letter quoted above, wrote to Joseph King a month earlier on April 7, 1842, inquiring about John C. Bennett.⁷⁰ King, raised as a Master Mason in Pickaway Lodge in

⁶⁸ In regards to Adams’s controversial character and his negative reputation in Springfield, see Walgren, “James Adams,” 123–27.

⁶⁹ Abraham Jonas, Columbus, [IL], to George Miller, Nauvoo, [IL], 4 May 1842, copy, Letters pertaining to Freemasonry in Nauvoo, 1842, CHL.

⁷⁰ It is unknown if this April 7, 1842, letter is extant. King refers to it in his reply to Helm. See Joseph King, Decatur, [IL], to Meredith Helm, Springfield, IL, May 17, 1842, Letters pertaining to Freemasonry in Nauvoo, 1842, CHL.

Circleville, Ohio, on June 22, 1831,⁷¹ and current senior warden of Macon Lodge, located in Decatur, Illinois,⁷² responded to Helm on May 17 that while he was not personally acquainted with Bennett, he knew that Bennett's "General Character was none of the best." King recalled that shortly after he took the Master Mason's degree, a Brother Patterson raised charges in Pickaway Lodge against Bennett. After receiving Helm's letter and talking with Patterson, King reported to Helm that Patterson distinctly remembered making charges against Bennett and that Bennett had been expelled.⁷³

An examination of the minute book of Pickaway Lodge, a source that the Mormon Masons never had access to, confirms the recollection of King and Patterson that Patterson had made charges against Bennett, but shows that the Ohio lodge did not take any decisive action in expelling Bennett. On February 18, 1834, four and a half years after Bennett had relinquished ties with Pickaway Lodge, George Patterson filed charges in Pickaway Lodge against John C. Bennett. The charges included "lying," "attempting to vend Diplomas," "putting certain names to a petition to the Legislature without their knowledge or consent," "attempting . . . to impose on a brother by trying to get him to petition to the Legislature for a similar act" while ultimately "laying a scheme to blast his character," "Gambling & Preaching," "endeavoring to get plats of a city reported by him to be a plat of the capital of Michigan, afterwards intimating it not to be settled as a

⁷¹ *History of Pickaway Lodge*, 71.

⁷² On July 1, 1841, when the brethren of Macon Lodge received their dispensation, Joseph King was named senior warden of the new lodge. King retained the position on October 20, 1841, when the members of the lodge elected him senior warden. During the lodge's next election, held on December 17, 1842, Charles H. Pringle succeeded King as senior warden. Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 157, 181; *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 31, 75.

⁷³ Joseph King, Decatur, [IL], to Meredith Helm, Springville, IL, May 17, 1842, Letters pertaining to Freemasonry in Nauvoo, 1842, CHL.

capital for Michigan, and professing to offer it to the Governor of Upper Canada,” “professing to be an officer of the U.S. Army while he was not and thus contradicting his ministerial character,” and “other unmasonic conduct.” The brethren of the lodge appointed a committee to inform Bennett of the charges made against him. The committee reported on March 19 that Bennett planned to be away from Circleville for some time. Subsequently, the membership of Pickaway Lodge resolved that Bennett’s case be handed over to the Standing Committee. There is no other mention of Bennett in the minute book of Pickaway Lodge.⁷⁴

After learning of Bennett's possible expulsion from a Masonic Lodge in Ohio, the Mormon Masons began investigating the accusations. At a special meeting of Nauvoo Lodge on May 7, Willard Richards, Mormon apostle and scribe to Joseph Smith who was acting as lodge secretary in place of Bennett, read Jonas’s May 4 letter to the lodge.⁷⁵ After Richards read the letter, Bennett, who was present at this gathering, “denied the charge in toto, and was ready for trial,” but such action was postponed when the lodge brethren decided that George Miller should first reply to Jonas’s letter.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Hogan, *John Cook Bennett and Pickaway Lodge No. 23*, 9–11. A listing of the membership of Pickaway Lodge from 1813 to June 30, 1975, contains a note indicating that “Members who have been expelled for unmasonic conduct have been omitted [from the list] because Masonry looks upon such persons as unworthy and do not recognize them as belonging to the Fraternity.” Bennett is mentioned on the list as having affiliated with Pickaway Lodge on October 22, 1828, indicating that he had never been expelled. *History of Pickaway Lodge*, 59, 60.

⁷⁵ Richards was ordained an apostle on April 14, 1840, while serving a mission in Preston, England. Willard Richards, Journal, April 14, 1840, Willard Richards journals, 1836–1853, CHL. Joseph Smith appointed Willard Richards as his scribe on December 13, 1841. Joseph Smith, Journal, December 13, 1841, in *JSP*, J2:11.

⁷⁶ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, May 7, 1842, CHL.

It was not until May 19 that a lodge member preferred formal charges against Bennett. During the lodge's 6pm meeting, Master Mason Thomas Grover⁷⁷ presented a written and signed note explaining ““that Dr John C. Bennett has palmed himself upon the Masonic Brethren in the organization of Nauvoo lodge U. D. as a regular mason in good standing, when I have reason to believe that he is an expelled mason from a lodge in Fairfield Ohio, or from Fairfield lodge Ohio.”” The lodge brethren resolved that Bennett should appear before the lodge to plead his case at their next regular meeting on June 2.⁷⁸

The lodge leadership postponed the resolution of Bennett's case several more times. During a June 2 meeting, the case was pushed back to June 16 because the lodge had “no evidence appearing to substantiate the charge.”⁷⁹ On June 16, the day that “John C. Bennet[t] made his defence for the last time,”⁸⁰ after reading several letters relating to Bennett's case, a majority of the brethren present were satisfied that Bennett was an expelled Mason. The membership of Nauvoo Lodge did not take action against Bennett, however, “in consequence of his presenting various documents from men of high standing in society in the neighborhood dated about the time bro Patterson says [Bennett] was expelled—showing the high estimation in which he was held by those gentlemen.” Bennett even argued that had he been expelled from Pickaway Lodge, he had never been informed of it. For these reasons, the Nauvoo Masons resolved to postpone Bennett's

⁷⁷ Grover was initiated as an Entered Apprentice on April 29, passed as a Fellow Craft on May 2, and raised as a Master Mason on May 3. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, April 29, May 2 and 3, 1842, CHL.

⁷⁸ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, May 19, 1842, CHL.

⁷⁹ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, June 2, 1842, CHL.

⁸⁰ Joseph Smith, Journal, June 16, 1842, in *JSP*, J2:67.

case once again and to write to Pickaway Lodge, requesting a copy of their minutes in regards to the expulsion of Bennett from their lodge.⁸¹

In the meantime, on the morning of June 21, Bennett left Nauvoo, headed for Springfield, Illinois. Fearing that Bennett “might endeavor to take advantage of the excited feeling prevalent against us, and by that means deceive the Fraternity at Springfield,” the brethren of Nauvoo Lodge sent a messenger to Springfield to talk with Meredith Helm and “inform him of these things so that they might be prepared for [Bennett] and treat him as he ought to be treated.” The Nauvoo Masons also sent a letter to Abraham Jonas to give him “a knowledge of some things further in relation to this matter.”⁸² Days later, hoping to discredit Bennett and dissuade Illinois Masons from believing what Bennett might say concerning the Mormon Masons, George Miller published a notice in two of Nauvoo’s newspapers. In the notice, Miller stated that Bennett was an expelled Mason and that he had imposed himself on the Mormon Masons, saying that he was a Mason in good standing. Miller closed with a plea to newspaper editors who were friendly to Freemasonry to republish the piece.⁸³

On July 7, the membership of Nauvoo Lodge made a “Final decision on Bennetts case.”⁸⁴ Although the Mormon Masons had not yet received a reply from Pickaway

⁸¹ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, June 16, 1842, CHL. See also Willard Richards, [Nauvoo, IL], to Abraham Jonas, June 17, 1842, Letters pertaining to Freemasonry in Nauvoo, 1842, CHL.

⁸² [Nauvoo Masonic Lodge], Nauvoo, [IL], to Abraham Jonas, June 21, 1842, Letters pertaining to Freemasonry in Nauvoo, 1842, CHL.

⁸³ George Miller, “Notice,” *The Wasp* (Nauvoo, IL), June 25, 1842, [3]; George Miller, “Notice,” *Times and Seasons* (Nauvoo, IL), July 1, 1842, 3:842–43.

⁸⁴ Nauvoo Lodge held two meetings on July 7, 1842. It was during the 6pm gathering that the lodge membership discussed Bennett’s fate. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2 Excerpt, July 7, 1842, Letters pertaining to Freemasonry in Nauvoo, 1842, CHL.

Lodge regarding whether Bennett had actually been expelled, the Nauvoo Masons deemed it unnecessary to wait any longer. Therefore, they declared that Bennett “is an expelled mason, and that his name be stricken from the rolls; and that this lodge regards him as totally unworthy the fellowship, or regard, of all good and honorable men, or masons.”⁸⁵

Finally, on August 8, Nauvoo Lodge officially expelled John C. Bennett.⁸⁶ William Clayton, lodge secretary *pro tempore*, read the charges against Bennett, which included seduction, adultery, lying, perjury, embezzlement, and having illicit sexual intercourse with a fellow Master Mason’s wife.⁸⁷ After “satisfactory evidence” had been presented to the lodge “in each and every case,” the lodge membership unanimously agreed that Bennett was guilty of every charge. They then passed a resolution concluding that Bennett “be expelled from this lodge and from all the privileges of Masonry, he being considered one of the most base and infamous adulterers, liars, and a general plunderer of female chastity.” The brethren of Nauvoo Lodge further acknowledged that Bennett was “dishonest and not worthy to be trusted, that he is perjured and not worthy of credit, and that he has broken his solemn obligation as a Master mason.” Consequently,

⁸⁵ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, July 7, 1842, CHL.

⁸⁶ Nauvoo Lodge held two meetings on August 8, 1842. Bennett’s expulsion occurred during the 4pm session. The expulsion would have happened at the lodge’s August 4 meeting had enough of the Nauvoo Masons been present (section seven of the lodge’s by-laws required the approval of two-thirds of the lodge membership in order to expel a member). Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, August 4, 1842, CHL; “By-Laws of Nauvoo Lodge, under dispensation,” in Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, December 30, 1841, CHL.

⁸⁷ On July 7, 1842, after withdrawing their fellowship from Bennett, the members of Nauvoo Lodge appointed Clayton as lodge secretary *pro tempore*. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, July 7, 1842, CHL.

the brethren of the lodge authorized Clayton “immediately to communicate this action of the Lodge to all the Lodges under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of this State.”⁸⁸

Conclusion

Despite the actions of the members of Nauvoo Lodge in investigating the accusations against John C. Bennett and their efforts in actually expelling him from their own lodge, non-Mormon Masons in Illinois still viewed the Mormon Masons with suspicion and contempt. While many Illinois Masons had concerns over the establishment of a Masonic lodge among the Mormons, the fears of most did not manifest themselves until Illinois Masons found a legitimate reason to openly question Mormon engagement with Freemasonry. The surfacing of charges in May 1842 that Bennett had supposedly been expelled from a Masonic lodge in Ohio provided Illinois Masons with the excuse they needed and also acted as a catalyst for further displays of Masonic anti-Mormonism.

As will be shown in chapters three and four, Illinois Masons’ concerns over Bennett would soon fade, but the Masonic anti-Mormonism that found expression in the allegations against Bennett would continue. In an ironic twist, Bennett soon began to contribute to and fuel the anti-Mormon sentiment of Illinois Masons. Whereas Bennett’s former actions had once provided Illinois Masons with reason to question Mormon involvement in Freemasonry, Bennett soon turned against the Mormons and began publishing information about supposed Masonic violations that had occurred and were occurring in Nauvoo Lodge.

⁸⁸ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, August 8, 1842, CHL.

CHAPTER THREE

Irregularities in the Work of Nauvoo Lodge

Introduction

John C. Bennett's time in the limelight in Nauvoo, Illinois, among the Mormons did not last long. Less than two years after his baptism, he apostatized and became a bitter opponent of the Mormons.¹ In late June or early July 1842, after having been excommunicated from the Church, and having resigned or been stripped of most of his civic responsibilities, Bennett left Nauvoo, and in the following months, he wrote seven letters that were published in the *Sangamo Journal*, a Whig newspaper in Springfield, Illinois.² In these letters Bennett accused Joseph Smith and other Mormons of various wrongdoings, a few of which centered on supposed "irregularities" (violations of

¹ In his efforts to attack the Mormons, Bennett wrote and published inflammatory letters accusing the Mormons of committing many offensive misdeeds (see below for a discussion of Bennett's accusations against Nauvoo Lodge), published an exposé on Mormonism, and gave anti-Mormon lectures. Andrew F. Smith, *The Sainly Scoundrel: The Life and Times of Dr. John Cook Bennett* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), 98-141; John Cook Bennett, *The History of the Saints; or, an Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism* (Boston: Leland and Whiting, 1842).

² Church leaders withdrew "the hand of fellowship" from John C. Bennett on May 11, 1842. Consequently, Bennett forfeited his position as assistant president in the Church's First Presidency. Joseph Smith et al., "Notice," May 11, 1842, Joseph Smith collection, 1827-1844, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah (Church History Library hereafter cited as CHL); Joseph Smith et al., "Notice," *Times and Seasons* (Nauvoo, IL), June 15, 1842, 3:830. Bennett resigned as Mayor on May 17, 1842. "New Election of Mayor, and Vice Mayor, of the City of Nauvoo," *The Wasp* (Nauvoo, IL), May 21, 1842, [3]; "Affidavit of Hyrum Smith," *Times and Seasons* (Nauvoo, IL), August 1, 1842, 3:870-872. He was likely cashiered from the Nauvoo Legion during a court martial held on June 30, 1842. Joseph Smith, Journal, June 30, 1842, in Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Richard Lloyd Anderson, eds., *Journals, Volume 2: December 1841-April 1843*, vol. 2 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2011), 73, especially footnote 293. The Nauvoo City Council did not discharge Bennett as chancellor of the University of the City of Nauvoo until August 20, 1842. Nauvoo City Council Minute Book, August 20, 1842, 99. For Bennett's letters, see the July 8, 15, 22, August 19, and September 2, 1842, issues of the *Sangamo Journal*.

established Masonic regulations) in the work of Nauvoo Lodge. As the lodge's first secretary, Bennett was intimately familiar with the records of the lodge, and, after losing favor with Joseph Smith and the Mormons, he decided to use the lodge records against his adversaries to extinguish any political capital the Mormons may have gained by becoming Masons. In this sense, the minute books of Nauvoo Lodge became authoritative records that Bennett used to slander the Mormons.

In another way, the records of Nauvoo Lodge also became authoritative documents in that they provided the key to establishing whether the Mormon Masons had been honest in the work they performed as Masons in Nauvoo Lodge. Along with Bennett, the Mormons and non-Mormon Freemasons accepted the position that the minute books of the lodge could indict the Mormon Masons. Hence, Bennett, the Mormons, and the non-Mormon Freemasons focused on the records as a way to ascertain the Mormons' sincerity. In doing this, the three groups implicitly acknowledged the importance of affiliation with Freemasonry because the documents could prove whether a relationship with the Mormons was worth preserving or whether that relationship needed to be questioned. Thus, both the minute books and the Mormons' questionable relationship with Freemasonry contributed to the power struggle among Bennett, the Mormons, and the non-Mormon Freemasons in Nauvoo, Illinois, in the 1840s.

This case study analyzes the veracity of Bennett's claims concerning the proceedings of Nauvoo Lodge and, through examination of the lodge's two extant minute books, discusses changes made to the lodge's records that Bennett did not identify in his letters, thus revealing important insights and implications regarding Nauvoo Freemasonry not identified in other contemporaneous sources. More significantly, this study illustrates

how the concerns that Illinois Masons once had over Bennett's rumored expulsion from a Masonic lodge in Ohio faded quickly, yet provided the needed excuse for the expression of Masonic anti-Mormonism. The real issue was never over Bennett's questionable status as a Mason, rather it was about whether Mormon affiliation with Masonry would prove detrimental to the fraternity. Whereas Bennett's actions had once been used as the needed excuse for Illinois Masons to express their animosity and suspicion for Mormon Masons, now Bennett provided the ammunition for the expression of Masonic anti-Mormonism.

The Minute Books of Nauvoo Lodge

In order to contextualize Bennett's accusations regarding Nauvoo Lodge, it is necessary to first understand the character and provenance of the lodge's two extant minute books and their later publication in the 1970s. Nauvoo Lodge's first minute book, Minute Book 1, is a forty-four-page manuscript, which contains a copy of the dispensation authorizing the creation of the lodge; the institution's by-laws; meeting minutes spanning from December 29, 1841, to May 6, 1842; and a two-page list of signatures of those initiated. John C. Bennett, as first secretary of Nauvoo Lodge, inscribed the entries in this record. Sometime between May 6, 1842, the date of the last entry Bennett scribed into Minute Book 1 and the last day that he acted as lodge secretary,³ and June 24, 1843, the day Minute Book 1 was deposited in the cornerstone of the soon-to-be-built Masonic temple in Nauvoo,⁴ the forty-four pages of Minute Book 1

³ Even though he no longer acted in the capacity as lodge secretary, Bennett did attend four more lodge meetings. See Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, May 7, 26, June 2, and 16, 1842, CHL.

⁴ There is no mention in Minute Book 2 or the report of the cornerstone laying that was published in the *Nauvoo Neighbor* that Minute Book 1 and other items were deposited into the cornerstone during the cornerstone laying. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, June 24, 1843, CHL; "Free Masons," *Nauvoo Neighbor*, June 28, 1843, [3].

were ripped or cut away from the book's spine.⁵ Later, the pages were folded before being deposited into the cornerstone.⁶ In 1954, 111 years after Minute Book 1 was placed in the cornerstone of the Masonic temple in Nauvoo, Wilford Wood, Mormon furrier and member of the Church's Historic Sites Committee,⁷ bought the building,⁸ extracted the cornerstone in a public ceremony on June 24, and discovered a sealed copper box.⁹ Days later, on July 1, when Wood delivered the unopened box to Church president David O. McKay, a group of men, including Wood, McKay, and others, opened the box and discovered Minute Book 1.¹⁰ While McKay and his counselors in the First Presidency initially resolved that the contents of the cornerstone should be photocopied and the

⁵ Physical evidence corroborates the conclusion that the pages of Minute Book 1 were torn or cut out of a book: aside from the outside edges of the pages being gilded, the inside edges have tears that are consistent with each other and progressively get worse.

⁶ Along with Minute Book 1, other items were deposited in the cornerstone of the Masonic temple inside a copper box on June 24, 1843. The other contents included: a broadside containing two Masonic hymns sung at the cornerstone laying; a broadside published by the *Nauvoo Neighbor* on June 24, 1843, containing facsimiles and a history of metal plates purportedly found in a mound near Kinderhook, Illinois (Kinderhook plates); leaves from the *Times and Seasons* from March 1 and 15, 1842, containing facsimiles from the *Book of Abraham*; a copy of the May 16, 1842, issue of the *Times and Seasons*; and a copy of the *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois* from 1842. A list of the contents of the cornerstone can be found in David O. McKay's journal. See David O. McKay, Journal, July 1, 1954, David Oman McKay papers, 1897–1983, J. Willard Marriott Library, Special Collections, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.

⁷ David O. McKay, Journal, July 1, 1954, David Oman McKay papers, 1897–1983, J. Willard Marriott Library, Special Collections, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah; *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), s.v. "Wood, Wilford C."

⁸ Hostilities against the Mormons in the 1840s eventually led them to flee Illinois. The mass westward migration of the Mormons from Nauvoo began in February 1846. As they prepared to leave Illinois, Church leaders assigned trustees to sell church property, which included the Masonic temple. The building and lot were bought and sold numerous times and eventually were purchased by Henry Mulch. It was from Mulch's granddaughter, Arlene, that Wood purchased the Masonic temple in May 1954. James B. Allen, "Nauvoo's Masonic Hall," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 10 (1990): 48–49.

⁹ David O. McKay, Journal, June 24, July 1, 1954, David Oman McKay papers, 1897–1983, J. Willard Marriott Library, Special Collections, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.

¹⁰ David O. McKay, Journal, July 1, 1954, David Oman McKay papers, 1897–1983, J. Willard Marriott Library, Special Collections, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.

originals returned to the cornerstone in Nauvoo, it was later decided that photocopies should be placed back in the cornerstone of the Masonic temple and the originals deposited in the archives of the Church of Jesus Christ in Salt Lake City, Utah, where they remain today.¹¹

Sometime after Bennett began recording meeting minutes of Nauvoo Lodge in Minute Book 1, William Clayton, an English convert to Mormonism and clerk to Joseph Smith,¹² began copying the contents of that record into a second book, Minute Book 2.¹³ The almost 600-page Minute Book 2 contains a copy of the dispensation authorizing the formation of Nauvoo Lodge; the organization's by-laws; meeting minutes from December 29, 1841, to September 15, 1845; and sixteen pages of signatures of those initiated. While Clayton penned the majority of Minute Book 2, three other scribes—John A. Forgeus, Thomas Bullock, and Hosea Stout—also copied minute entries into this record. It is unclear how Minute Book 2 moved from Nauvoo to the Great Basin, but it is

¹¹ David O. McKay, to Lowell Horton et al., July 2, 1954, in David O. McKay, Journal, July 1, 1954, David Oman McKay papers, 1897–1983, J. Willard Marriott Library, Special Collections, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah; David O. McKay, Journal, July 1, 2, 6, 15, August 17, and 20, 1954, David Oman McKay papers, 1897–1983, J. Willard Marriott Library, Special Collections, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah. For a copy of the photocopied contents from the cornerstone, see Wilford C. Wood, [A collection of Masonry and Mormonism], located at the CHL.

¹² Clayton began clerking for Joseph Smith on February 10, 1842. He continued in that capacity until Smith was murdered in June 1844. William Clayton, Journal, February 10, 1842, in George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1995), 90; Dean C. Jessee, "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History," *BYU Studies* 11, no. 4 (Summer 1971): 456.

¹³ Clayton was raised to the degree of Master Mason on April 23, 1842, and probably did not begin copying minutes from Minute Book 1 into Minute Book 2 until after he obtained full membership in Nauvoo Lodge as a Master Mason. As Clayton copied the contents of Minute Book 1 into Minute Book 2, Bennett continued to record meeting minutes for the lodge in Minute Book 1. The last entry Bennett scribed, May 6, 1842, is the last day that he acted as lodge secretary, although he did attend lodge meetings held on May 7 and 26, and June 2 and 16. Since Bennett's signature appears in Minute Book 2, Clayton must have begun his copying work for Nauvoo Lodge sometime between when he attained full membership in the lodge and Bennett's last day as acting secretary. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, May 6, 1842; Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, April 23, May 6, 7, 26, June 2, and 16, 1842, CHL.

likely that the record remained in the custody of church historians and that it was not until April 1857, and perhaps as early as April 1855, that church historians listed Minute Book 2 on their office inventories.¹⁴

The accessibility of Minute Book 1 and Minute Book 2 increased in the 1970s through the efforts of Mervin B. Hogan, a Utah native, mechanical engineer, Mormon, Freemason, and the most prolific author on the connection between Freemasonry and Mormonism.¹⁵ In 1971, Hogan published *The Founding Minutes of Nauvoo Lodge*, a transcription of Minute Book 1.¹⁶ Four years later, he published *The Official Minutes of Nauvoo Lodge*, a transcription of Minute Book 2.¹⁷ While these publications are useful, they nevertheless contain several errors. For example, in his *Founding Minutes*, Hogan misidentified a section of handwriting, left out a page, placed two pages of signatures at the end of his transcription when they appeared earlier in the original record, unknowingly provided inaccurate information about the location of the original

¹⁴ An April 1, 1857, inventory listing the historical records, furniture, and other items owned by the Church Historian's Office, in the handwriting of clerk Robert L. Campbell, lists "Nauvoo Masonic Record" as one of the items in custody of church historians. On an inventory from two years earlier, dated April 4, 1855, Campbell did not originally list a Masonic record as part of the holdings of the Historian's Office, but another clerk later added "Masonic Record" to that catalog. Another inventory, in the handwriting of Leo Hawkins from March 19, 1858, also identifies "Nauvoo Masonic Record" as part of the holdings of the Historian's Office. Historian's Office, "Inventory," April 4, 1855, Catalogs and Inventories, 1846–1904, CHL; Historian's Office, "Inventory," April 1, 1857, Catalogs and Inventories, 1846–1904, CHL; Historian's Office, "Inventory," March 19, 1858, Catalogs and Inventories, 1846–1904, CHL.

¹⁵ While Masonic lodges in Utah allowed few Mormons admission to their lodges until 1984, Michael W. Homer suggests that Hogan was able to join Wasatch Lodge No. 1 in 1941 because he was not an active, church-going Mormon at the time. Michael W. Homer, "'Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry': The Relationship between Freemasonry and Mormonism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27, no. 3 (Fall 1994): 86.

¹⁶ Mervin B. Hogan, *The Founding Minutes of Nauvoo Lodge* (Des Moines, IA: Research Lodge No. 2, [1971]).

¹⁷ Mervin B. Hogan, *The Official Minutes of Nauvoo Lodge* (Des Moines, IA: Research Lodge No. 2, [1975]).

manuscript, and did not provide provenance information.¹⁸ Unfortunately, Hogan's *Official Minutes* is only a partial transcription of Minute Book 2. Since Minute Book 2 contains a copy of all the minute entries recorded in Minute Book 1, Hogan decided that he would only reproduce that portion of the record, and claimed "To include more of the record would result in prohibitive publication costs and add almost negligibly in topic interest or value."¹⁹ While accurately identifying the location of the original,²⁰ Hogan did not provide provenance information for Minute Book 2.

Bennett's Accusations Against Nauvoo Lodge

Of Bennett's seven vitriolic letters published in the *Sangamo Journal* in the summer of 1842, three contained accusations against the workings of Nauvoo Lodge. In his first letter Bennett declared that he would "expose [Joseph Smith's] actings and

¹⁸ Hogan's handwriting misidentification occurred when he described the two pages of signatures, which he assumed contained holographic signatures. While most of the signatures on these two pages are holographic, William Clayton penned thirty-one of the seventy-nine signatures on the second page of signatures. For Hogan's analysis of the signature pages, see Hogan, *Founding Minutes*, 2. The page Hogan left out of his *Founding Minutes*, in the handwriting of William Clayton, lists Lucius N. Scovil, Samuel Rolfe, and Aaron Johnson as the three-member building committee for the Masonic temple that was to be built in Nauvoo, with William Weeks as the principle architect for the project. The page also contains a paragraph explaining that Joseph Smith did not attend the cornerstone laying ceremony on June 24, 1843, because "The Governor of Missouri has again demanded Joseph Smith, and a writ has been issued by Gov. Ford to have him taken." Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, p. [i]. Hogan mistakenly explained that the manuscript records he reproduced in *Founding Minutes* (Minute Book 1) were housed in the archives of the Grand Lodge of Illinois in Rushville, Illinois. He perpetuated this error in his *Official Minutes* in describing how he learned about Nauvoo Lodge's original minute book (Minute Book 1). According to Hogan, Paul R. Stephens, past grand master and, at the time, grand secretary of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, provided Hogan with a copy of the original record that Hogan assumed was located in the archives of the Grand Lodge of Illinois. Actually, as Stephens explained to Hogan in a letter in October 1969, the Grand Lodge of Illinois only had a photocopy. Hogan, *Founding Minutes*, 1; Hogan, *Official Minutes*, 2; Paul R. Stephens, Rushville, Illinois, to Mervin B. Hogan, October 28, 1969, Mervin B. Hogan papers, 1833–1996, J. Willard Marriott Library, Special Collections, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.

¹⁹ Hogan, *Official Minutes*, 6.

²⁰ In April 1973, Hogan learned about the existence of Nauvoo Lodge's second minute book (Minute Book 2), housed in the archives of the Church of Jesus Christ in Salt Lake City, Utah. Hogan, *Official Minutes*, 3.

doings in Nauvoo Lodge, U. D.,” and charged that Smith and five others were initiated, passed, and raised through the three Masonic degrees in Nauvoo Lodge prior to the lodge’s official installation by Abraham Jonas on March 15, 1842—a violation of Masonic procedure—and that Smith and four of those five were again advanced through the various degrees after the lodge was installed.²¹

In his third letter, Bennett reiterated his initial claim about Joseph Smith and others advancing through the Masonic degrees both before and after the lodge was installed, only this time he included the names of the other brethren, identifying them as Job Snyder [John Snider], Brigham Young, Peter Haws, Willard Richards, and Adara Lyman [Amasa Lyman]. Then, Bennett claimed that the lodge’s minute book, which supposedly documented and supported Bennett’s claim, “was sealed up, and a new one commenced,—the second was sealed up, and a third commenced,—and then a new record book procured and such parts copied as they were willing should go out to the Grand Lodge, and such only.” At this point, Bennett confidently demanded that “the original book be produced and these facts will appear,” for the lodge’s first minute book, he explained, had been kept by him, and if it were brought forth, he could “show all the facts unless the leaves have been torn out.” An examination of the minute book, Bennett professed, would also show that the suspension of a Mr. Stoddard “for blackballing Mr. Sessions,” and a complaint from Henry G. Sherwood and Samuel H. Smith against Robert D. Foster “never appeared upon record.”²²

²¹ “Astounding Mormon Disclosures! Letter from Gen. Bennett,” *Sangamo Journal* (Springfield, IL), July 8, 1842, [2].

²² “Gen. Bennett’s Third Letter,” *Sangamo Journal* (Springfield, IL), July 15, 1842, [2].

Bennett's last allegations regarding Nauvoo Lodge appeared in his fourth letter, in which he charged that "sixty three persons were balloted for *in one ballot*—and three entered, three passed, and *four* raised, in one day, and the records made to appear as though only *three* were raised by ante-dating one." He also claimed that a Mr. Hollister, from Hannibal, Missouri, had spent six or seven days in Nauvoo and while there had presented a petition to Nauvoo Lodge for initiation and was entered, passed, and raised through the three degrees. These irregularities, Bennett declared, could all be seen by examining the lodge's minute book, and with all of these accusations on the table, Bennett demanded that Nauvoo Lodge's dispensation "should be immediately withdrawn, and a charter refused," and George Miller, the lodge's Worshipful Master, and Joseph Smith expelled.²³

In his scholarly biography of John C. Bennett, food historian Andrew F. Smith analyzes the claims Bennett made against Joseph Smith and the Mormons.²⁴ After reviewing Bennett's allegations against Joseph Smith and the workings of Nauvoo Lodge, Smith acknowledges the existence of the lodge's two extant minute books, and reports that the February 3, 1842, entry in Minute Book 1 recorded that the petitions for sixty men were balloted for "in a single ballot," and that this information was omitted from the same entry in Minute Book 2.²⁵ While Smith is correct in saying that the

²³ "Gen. Bennett's 4th Letter," *Sangamo Journal* (Springfield, IL), July 22, 1842, [2].

²⁴ For Andrew F. Smith's examination of Bennett's various claims against Joseph Smith and the Mormons, including those made against Nauvoo Lodge, see Andrew F. Smith, *The Sainly Scoundrel: The Life and Times of Dr. John Cook Bennett* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 98–105. It should be noted that Smith used Hogan's *Founding Minutes* and *Official Minutes*, and not the original minute books, to analyze Bennett's claims against Nauvoo Lodge. Smith, *Sainly Scoundrel*, 217n12.

²⁵ Smith, *Sainly Scoundrel*, 102.

balloting which occurred on February 3, 1842, was omitted when Minute Book 1 was copied into Minute Book 2, his charge that the membership of the lodge voted on the petitions of sixty men that day is inaccurate. Minute Book 1, as well as Hogan's transcription of that manuscript, shows that the lodge membership voted on forty-one petitions on February 3.²⁶

As he continues with his analysis, Andrew Smith writes that Minute Book 1 "sustains the charge that Smith and Young were entered prior to the Nauvoo Lodge's installation but does not indicate anyone was passed and raised prior to March 15, 1842."²⁷ Again, however, Andrew Smith is mistaken. Neither Minute Book 1 nor Hogan's *Founding Minutes* support the claim that Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, or anyone else was initiated prior to March 15, 1842. In fact, both of these records show that Joseph Smith and Sidney Ridgon were the first persons initiated into the lodge and that those initiations occurred on March 15.²⁸ The last issue that Andrew Smith addresses is Bennett's claim that a complaint against Robert D. Foster never appeared in the lodge's minute book, a conclusion that Smith corroborates.²⁹ In this he is correct.³⁰

²⁶ See Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, February 3, 1842, CHL; Hogan, *Founding Minutes*, 10.

²⁷ Smith, *Saintly Scoundrel*, 102.

²⁸ See Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, March 15, 1842, CHL; Hogan, *Founding Minutes*, 12.

²⁹ Smith, *Saintly Scoundrel*, 103.

³⁰ Andrew Smith is correct that neither Minute Book 1 nor Minute Book 2 contain accusations made against Robert D. Foster during the time that Bennett was a member of Nauvoo Lodge. There is, however, an entry in Joseph Smith's journal that discusses an undocumented meeting of Nauvoo Lodge that occurred on May 20, 1842. In this entry, Joseph Smith's scribe Willard Richards recorded that Samuel H. Smith, Joseph Smith's younger brother, preferred charged against Foster for "abusing" Henry G. Sherwood and for speaking "abusive language" to Samuel H. Smith. According to Richards, "The Masonic Breth[r]en met at 1 o'clock P.M. when the charges were substantatd [substantiated] confession made by

Andrew Smith did not address three of Bennett's accusations against Nauvoo Lodge in his biography of Bennett. One of the allegations was that Nauvoo Lodge suspended a Mr. Stoddard and that the suspension was not recorded. Bennett's complaint was correct in that there is no record of a suspension of a Mr. Stoddard in Minute Book 1 or Minute Book 2. However, it is unknown if a suspension actually did occur off the book.

A second complaint that Smith did not consider was Bennett's claim that the lodge initiated three, passed three, and raised four, for a total of ten degree advancements, all in one day and that the record was changed by antedating one raising and making it appear as if only three had been raised. Bennett was partially correct in his allegation, for during Nauvoo Lodge's three gatherings on April 13, 1842, Minute Book 1 and Minute Book 2 show that the lodge brethren initiated three, passed three, and raised four. Neither record, however, shows any indication that one of the four raisings was antedated.³¹

The last accusation that Bennett made that Smith did not discuss regarded a Mr. Hollister from Hannibal. Bennett asserted that Hollister visited Nauvoo for the short period of six or seven days, and during that time, he purportedly preferred a petition for initiation into Nauvoo Lodge and was subsequently entered, passed, and raised. Bennett reported that the advancement of Hollister through the three Masonic degrees "was done by the direction of George Miller, the Master, by Joe's directions, and was affected by

Foster. forgiveness granted. Joseph speaking a at considerable length. to accomplish the decision." Joseph Smith, Journal, May 20, 1842, in *JSP*, J2:61. In Minute Book 2, Clayton copied the minutes for two gatherings of Nauvoo Lodge that occurred on May 20, 1842, one at 8am and one at 5pm. Neither entry discusses accusations against Foster. See Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, May 20, 1842, CHL.

³¹ See Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, April 13, 1842, CHL; Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, April 13, 1842, CHL.

ante-dating and interlining the Old Record, as can be seen by examination.”³² There is no evidence in Minute Book 1 or Minute Book 2 to substantiate this claim. Neither minute book reports the visitation or advancement of a Mr. Hollister in the lodge.

This examination of Bennett’s claims against the workings of Nauvoo Lodge reveals that Bennett was correct in some cases and wrong in others. However, Bennett’s accusations against the lodge are significant regardless of their accuracy. By publicly making charges against Joseph Smith and the brethren of Nauvoo Lodge, Bennett highlighted the fact that there were irregularities in the work of the lodge, which put an added measure of scrutiny and mistrust on Nauvoo Lodge, Joseph Smith, and the Mormons.

Comparison of the Minute Books of Nauvoo Lodge

A textual comparison of the corresponding portions of Minute Book 1 and Minute Book 2 shows that other irregularities in the work of Nauvoo Lodge, aside from those pointed out by Bennett, did occur and that portions of the lodge’s two minute books were altered in an attempt to obfuscate these acts. It also reveals that William Clayton used his authority as scribe to make small and subtle changes in Minute Book 2.

The dispensation that Abraham Jonas issued to John C. Bennett and the other Nauvoo Masons in October 1841 authorized George Miller “to congregate a sufficient number of worthy brethren at some convenient place in the ‘City of Nauvoo’ . . . and then and there, with convenient dispatch, to form and open a lodge after the manner of Ancient Masons.” Appointing Miller to be the first Worshipful Master of Nauvoo Lodge, the dispensation granted Miller and the other newly selected officers to advance worthy

³² “Gen. Bennett’s 4th Letter,” *Sangamo Journal* (Springfield, IL), July 22, 1842, [2].

brethren through the degrees of Masonry as soon as the lodge was “duly formed and opened.”³³ Accordingly, on December 29, 1841, Miller and seventeen other Master Masons gathered at the office of Hyrum Smith and created Nauvoo Lodge.³⁴

On December 30, the brethren of the newly established lodge held another meeting, during which they began accepting petitions from potential initiates. In Minute Book 1 under date of December 30, 1841, John C. Bennett recorded the names of forty-two men, who had submitted petitions to join the lodge, noting their age, occupation, and place of residence.³⁵ A month later on February 3, 1842, Bennett noted the lodge’s reception of nine more petitions from men who wished to be initiated, and wrote that the Committee of Investigation, established “to inquire into the character of all applicants,”³⁶ reported favorably on and the lodge membership voted in favor of forty-one of the forty-two petitions which had been presented at the lodge’s December 30 meeting.³⁷ On February 17, the lodge accepted another six petitions for membership, and the Committee of Investigation reported favorably on one more application for initiation, which the lodge membership voted on and accepted.³⁸ The lodge did not meet again until March 15, when Abraham Jonas officially installed the lodge. Hence, by the time Jonas traveled to

³³ Dispensation, Abraham Jonas to [Nauvoo Masonic Lodge], Columbus, Illinois, October 15, 1841, in Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, pp. 1–2, CHL.

³⁴ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, December 29, 1841, CHL; Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, December 29, 1841, CHL.

³⁵ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, December 30, 1841, CHL.

³⁶ John C. Bennett and two others (Heber C. Kimball and Newel K. Whitney) constituted the three-member Committee of Investigation. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, December 30, 1841, CHL.

³⁷ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, February 3, 1842, CHL.

³⁸ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, February 17, 1842, CHL.

Nauvoo for the installation, fifty-seven men had petitioned to join Nauvoo Lodge, and forty-two of those petitions had already been favorably reported on by the Committee of Investigation and voted upon and cleared by the lodge membership.

The most significant alterations to Nauvoo Lodge's minute books had to do with the acceptance of petitions and examination of those applications by the Committee of Investigation. In the preface to his *Official Minutes*, Mervin Hogan speculated that upon granting a dispensation to Nauvoo Lodge, Abraham Jonas "must have encouraged [the officers of the lodge] to set to work directly and receive petitions for the degrees of Masonry from all the men in the vicinity who had an interest in becoming Masons," and that the "enthusiastic vigor and accomplishment of the Nauvoo Brethren in their fruitful implementation of [Jonas's] instructions must have appreciably exceeded [the Grand Master's] most sanguine hopes."³⁹ Hogan continued to postulate, perhaps accurately, that during Jonas's visit to Nauvoo in March 1842, the Grand Master must have reviewed the work that the lodge had performed up to that point and counseled the officers and brethren of Nauvoo Lodge to obtain a new minute book and recopy the record, changing it to make it appear as if no petitions had been received prior to the lodge's March 17 meeting.⁴⁰ A thorough comparison of Minute Book 1 and Minute Book 2 supports this idea. Of the fifty-seven petitions received by the lodge before it was installed, Bennett postdated forty-four of them in Minute Book 1 to make it appear as if those applications

³⁹ Hogan, *Official Minutes*, 3.

⁴⁰ Along with the request to obtain a new minute book, Hogan asserted that Jonas would have given the "inevitable demand" to burn the original minute book (Minute Book 1). Hogan even conjectured that the Nauvoo Masons disregarded Jonas's order because "the Mormons are a record-keeping people," and because "the durable and substantial ledger had doubtless been expensive." Hogan, *Official Minutes*, 4-5.

had been presented at lodge meetings between March 17 and June 2, 1842. For example, Bennett recorded in Minute Book 1 that the lodge received petitions from Jacob B. Backenstos, Reynolds Cahoon, and William F. Cahoon on December 30, 1841, and that the Committee of Investigation reported favorably on their petitions on February 3, 1842. Later on in Minute Book 1, Bennett postdated the receiving of these men's petitions to March 17, and the report of the status of their applications to April 7. Continuing with this same example, when Clayton copied the contents of Minute Book 1 into Minute Book 2, he reported that the petitions of Backenstos, Cahoon, and Cahoon were presented to the lodge on March 17 and that the Committee of Investigation reported on these applications on April 7, with the earlier dates for these events being omitted from the record.⁴¹ Of the remaining thirteen petitions presented to the lodge before its official installation, Clayton recorded in Minute Book 2 that the reception and balloting of three of the applications occurred between January 21, 1843, and February 1, 1844.⁴² Ten petitions were never postdated.⁴³

A minor irregularity in the work of Nauvoo Lodge evident in Minute Book 1 that Clayton remedied in Minute Book 2 was the signing of minute entries by the Worshipful Master. At the end of the first six entries in Minute Book 1, from December 29, 1841, to February 3, 1842, Bennett signed the minutes as secretary, but the Worshipful Master, or the person acting in his stead, did not. In Minute Book 2, however, after Clayton copied the first few entries, he obtained the signature of the individuals for the various meetings

⁴¹ See Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, March 17, and April 7, 1842, CHL.

⁴² These were the petitions of Truman Gillett, Jr., Orson Pratt, and Joseph Young.

⁴³ Of these ten petitions, two, those of Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, did not need to be postdated because Smith and Rigdon were entered on March 15, 1842, and passed and raised the next day.

who had acted as Worshipful Master, correcting the error.⁴⁴ The February 17, 1842, entry in Minute Book 1 lacked signatures from both the secretary and the Worshipful Master so Clayton wrote out Bennett's name, as if Bennett had signed it himself, and obtained a signature from the person who acted as Worshipful Master that day.⁴⁵

Another minor modification of the minute books of Nauvoo Lodge involves the placement of the signatures of those raised as Master Masons. As indicated by minute entries in both Minute Book 1 and Minute Book 2, after a man was raised as a Master Mason, he signed the by-laws of the lodge. John C. Bennett, Heber C. Kimball, and George Miller, appointed as a committee to draft the lodge's governing regulations, presented their proposed by-laws to their fellow Nauvoo Masons on December 30, 1841, which the lodge membership unanimously accepted.⁴⁶ Bennett included the by-laws as part of the minute entry for that day, and by so doing, he left no space for newly raised Master Masons to append their signatures to the lodge's code. On the two pages later on in Minute Book 1 where Master Masons actually penned their autographs, Bennett demonstrated his realization of this mistake. The position where Bennett copied the twenty-third and final section of the by-laws in Minute Book 1 occurred at the bottom of a page, forcing Bennett to write the final portion of that regulation ("by giving one month's previous notice, at a stated meeting") on the next page. That same incomplete phrase appears at the top of the first page of signatures in Minute Book 1. When Clayton

⁴⁴ Compare corresponding entries in Minute Book 1 and Minute Book 2 for December 29, 30, 1841, January 3, 6, 20, and February 3, 1842.

⁴⁵ See entries for February 17, 1842, in Minute Book 1 and Minute Book 2.

⁴⁶ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, December 29, and 30, 1841, CHL.

transferred the contents of Minute Book 1 into Minute Book 2, he resolved the issue by reserving several blank pages for signatures before continuing with his copying work.

When copying minutes from Minute Book 1 into Minute Book 2, Clayton also made other changes to the record that cleaned up the manuscript. In a few instances where Bennett deleted text in Minute Book 1, whether because of mistakes or conscious revisions, Clayton omitted those deletions from Minute Book 2. When section eight of the lodge's by-laws was originally written, for example, it read: "Should any member disclose to any person other than Ancient York Masons, in good standing, any of the proceedings or transactions of this lodge, improper to be made public, he shall be suspended, expelled, or otherwise dealt with, at the discretion of the lodge; and should a visiting brother be guilty of a like offense, he shall be forever interdicted visiting this lodge."⁴⁷ On March 15, 1842, Abraham Jonas suggested deleting the portion of section eight of the by-laws concerning visitors ("and should a visiting brother be guilty of a like offense, he shall be forever interdicted visiting this lodge").⁴⁸ Subsequently, the brethren of Nauvoo Lodge accepted the suggestion of their Grand Master. Bennett crossed out that portion of the code in Minute Book 1, and Clayton omitted that redaction from Minute Book 2. In other cases, Clayton incorporated interlinear insertions from Minute Book 1 into the main body of the text in Minute Book 2.⁴⁹

As scribe for Nauvoo Lodge, Clayton felt authorized to make slight changes to the lodge's records as he saw fit. This is evident in the way that he rephrased some of the

⁴⁷ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, December 30, 1841, CHL.

⁴⁸ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, March 15, 1842, CHL.

⁴⁹ Compare, for example, corresponding entries for March 17, or April 7, 1842, in Minute Book 1 and Minute Book 2.

things Bennett wrote in Minute Book 1. While some of these modifications reflect a desire for minute entries to follow the same formulaic pattern, others serve to add clarification. For the lodge's February 3, 1842, meeting, Bennett closed the entry by stating that "The lodge then closed in due form," whereas Clayton reworded it to read that "No further business appearing the [lodge] closed in due form." When Joseph Smith was raised as a Master Mason on March 16, 1842, Bennett wrote, "the ballot was found clear, and he was duly raised to said degree." Clayton clarified Bennett's words to read, "The ballot was found clear, and he was thereupon duly raised to the sublime degree of a Master mason." On April 12, Bennett recorded that "The lodge called to refreshment," while Clayton revised that to report "The Lodge then called from labor to refreshment." For the May 6, 1842, gathering of the lodge, Bennett related that three men—A. Thayer, Moses Wade, and a man with the last name King—attended the lodge as visiting brethren. While Clayton logged the same information, he reported the presence of the visitors immediately after listing the lodge membership present at the meeting. Bennett, on the other hand, had recorded this information about the lodge's visitors amidst lodge business farther down in the minute entry. While none of these changes significantly alter the meaning of the record, they nevertheless display the agency that Clayton felt he had as scribe in transferring minutes from Minute Book 1 into Minute Book 2.

Suspension of Nauvoo Lodge

As Bennett wrote and published about the irregularities that had occurred in Nauvoo Lodge and as the Mormon Masons investigated Bennett's supposed expulsion from Pickaway Lodge and expelled him from their own lodge, the members of Bodley Lodge gathered correspondence and other documentation regarding the actions of

Nauvoo Lodge and prepared to send that information to the Grand Lodge of Illinois. During a lodge meeting on May 2, 1842, Quincy Masons read a letter from Nauvoo Lodge in which the Mormon Masons invited the membership of Bodley Lodge to join them in Nauvoo on June 24 to celebrate St. John's Day.⁵⁰ In response, the Quincy Masons declined the offer, "on account of the great distance, and of our present pecuniary exigence," and informed the Nauvoo Masons that "Bodley Lodge regrets that anything, extraneous from pure Masonry, should be coupled with this communication, it having been, throughout all the ages, the peculiar characteristic of Masonry, that she has sent forth her pure flame of living light, before the world, uncontaminated by political doings, and untinged by religious distinctions."⁵¹ The Nauvoo Masons received the missive from Bodley Lodge on May 7, read it during their lodge meeting, and replied.⁵² The closeness with which the brethren of Bodley Lodge scrutinized the actions of Nauvoo Lodge contributed to accusations against the Mormon Masons.

Despite Bennett's allegations of irregularities in the work of Nauvoo Lodge, Nauvoo Masons continued to gather and advance worthy brethren through the various Masonic degrees until August 11, 1842. Immediately following the August 11 entry in Minute Book 2, an injunction issued by Abraham Jonas on Nauvoo Lodge was copied into the record. In the document, dated July 30, 1842, Jonas explained that he had been informed by "sundry authentic sources, but more particularly by a communication from

⁵⁰ A month and a half earlier, on March 16, the brethren of Nauvoo Lodge resolved to invite the brethren of Columbus Lodge and Bodley Lodge to meet with them on June 24. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, March 16, 1842, CHL.

⁵¹ Bodley Masonic Lodge Minute Book, May 2, 1842, quoted in Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 174.

⁵² Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, May 7, 1842, CHL.

Bodley Lodge No 1 that great irregularities have taken place in the work of said Nauvoo Lodge and that many of the Land marks of ancient masonry have been repeatedly violated to the injury of the Masonic Institution in general, and more particularly of the craft of the state of Illinois.” Consequently, Jonas suspended the work of the lodge until the next annual meetings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, which were to meet in October 1842. Additionally, Jonas commanded the officers and brethren of Nauvoo Lodge “to discontinue all Meetings as a Lodge—and no longer perform any work as such, until the minutes and proceedings of said Lodge shall be fully examined and investigated.” To allow the grand lodge “more fully to examine” the proceedings of Nauvoo Lodge, “and judge fairly and understandingly of their case,” Jonas told the Mormon Masons to have representatives from their lodge attend the meetings of the grand lodge and to bring with them their minute book.⁵³

Conclusion

Amid rumors of his moral misconduct and his supposed expulsion from a Masonic lodge in Ohio in the 1830s, Bennett realized that his exit from Nauvoo was imminent, and he looked for ways to disparage his accusers. His accusations against Nauvoo Lodge were only a few of the total number of charges he made against the Mormons in the summer and fall of 1842, but he nevertheless effectively used his previous position as lodge secretary and his familiarity with the institution’s minute books to further damage the image and reputation of the Mormons. Even though some of his claims were exaggerated and others false or unsubstantiated, Bennett nevertheless

⁵³ Injunction, Abraham Jonas to [Nauvoo Masonic Lodge], July 30, 1842, in Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, p. 133.

used the minutes of Nauvoo Lodge as authoritative records to vilify the Mormons. His accusations placed the lodge under public scrutiny, which contributed to the July 1842 suspension of Nauvoo Lodge's dispensation, and provided non-Mormons in the surrounding communities and state with more reason to be suspicious of the Church and its adherents.

Aside from Bennett, Nauvoo Lodge's records were authoritative for two other competing groups: the Mormons and non-Mormon Freemasons. Since Bennett, the Mormons, and the non-Mormon Masons saw that the minute books could be used to indict the Mormon Masons, each group focused on the minutes as a way to determine whether the Mormons were honest. Not only did Bennett, Clayton and the Mormons, and the non-Mormon Freemasons in Illinois recognize the importance of Nauvoo Lodge's records, but they all also realized the importance of affiliation in Freemasonry, for turning to the records of the lodge would determine, if Bennett's accusations about irregularities were correct, whether the Mormons' relationship with Masonry warranted preservation. Thus, Bennett tried to use the minute books to damage the reputation of the Mormons, while Clayton and the Mormons attempted to maintain their relationship with Freemasonry by concealing their records. At the same time, Illinois Masons requested that the Mormon Masons bring their records to the meetings of the grand lodge and then eagerly anticipated what Nauvoo Lodge's minute books would reveal.

This case study illustrates a portion of the power struggle that existed in Illinois in the 1840s, and highlights competing interests on the antebellum frontier. Due in part to the accusations of John C. Bennett against the brethren of Nauvoo Lodge, Mormon participation in Freemasonry generated the suspicion of some Illinois Masons, who

questioned the value of preserving the Mormons' relationship with their fraternity. More significantly, this tension illuminates an interesting shift in American Freemasonry, which at the time was still recovering from the devastating effects of an Antimasonic wave that had swept the United States in the 1820s and 1830s. By the 1840s, American Freemasons worked to rebuild their organization and recover some of the respectability that their society had previously enjoyed. While the acceptance of Mormons into the Masonic fraternity in Illinois was mixed from the beginning, John C. Bennett's allegations against the workings of Nauvoo Lodge gave non-Mormon Masons cause to be suspicious of the Mormons. During the Antimasonic movement in the 1820s and 1830s, the Masons were scorned and seen as threatening, but in the 1840s in the state of Illinois, Masons joined other Americans in casting suspicion on the religion and actions of the Mormons, thus contributing to the hostilities and violence Mormons experienced.

CHAPTER FOUR

Mormon Resistance to Masonic Anti-Mormonism

Introduction

The injunction that Grand Master Abraham Jonas issued on Nauvoo Lodge in July 1842 effectively halted the work of the lodge. Previous to the ban, Mormon Masons had been actively gathering six days a week, whereas post-injunction, the work stood still. As the 1842 meetings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois approached, during which charges preferred against Nauvoo Lodge would be investigated, Nauvoo Lodge's Worshipful Master George Miller wrote to Grand Master Abraham Jonas. "I was astounded when the injunction was served on us," Miller explained, "knowing that no real cause existed that would justify such like proceedings." He expressed that he and his fellow Nauvoo Masons had "abundant reason to believe . . . that the main grounds of objection are on account of our religious tenets." Miller acknowledged two complaints that had surfaced against the work of Nauvoo Lodge: first, the brethren of the lodge "made too many masons," and second, Miller had published a public notice regarding Bennett's expulsion from Nauvoo Lodge. Concerning the first objection, Miller contended that he had "yet to learn that it would be a departure from the Ancient Land marks & usages of the order." Regarding the second grievance, he justified his action by explaining that he had done so as "a caution to Lodges that [Bennett] may not impose upon others as he has upon us." In concluding his letter, Miller lamented over the prejudice he felt had crept into the Masonic fraternity in Illinois:

It is a matter of regret to me that we ever obtained a dispensation. Seeing that those whose bosoms Should burn with the most kind and fraternal feelings known to our natures . . . frozen down by narrow prejudice even below Zero . . . it really fills me with regret And that course of conduct in the order that used to fill my bosom with indiscribable emotions, and make me proud of my associations, feeling that sterling worth virtue and integrity were only fully appreciated by the brethren of the fraternity. And now an apparent degeneracy from those God like principals that used to predominate amongst the members of the order, it leaves feelings on my mind more easily felt than described.¹

The sentiments expressed by Miller in this letter to Grand Master Jonas are reflective of the attitudes of many Mormon Masons at this time. Having opened a lodge and established a relationship with Freemasonry, Mormons sought, in part, to shield themselves from further religious persecution. Illinois Masons, however, felt threatened by the increasing number of Mormon Masons and their disregard for the authority of the Grand Lodge of Illinois. As Illinois Masons questioned Mormon involvement in the fraternity, tension between the two groups increased.

Even though the suspension of Nauvoo Lodge's dispensation would be lifted in November 1842, and Mormon Masons would work unrestricted for almost a year, Masonic anti-Mormonism did not cease. An attempt by Mormon Masons to secure a charter for Nauvoo Lodge, as well as charters for other lodges in the area that consisted mostly of Mormon Masons, would be thwarted by Quincy Masons. Not only were the Mormon Masons denied a charter, but their dispensation was revoked. This, however, did not deter them. From that point forward, Nauvoo Masons gathered and made Masons despite having lost the sanction of the Grand Lodge of Illinois. This pattern of disregard by Mormon Masons for the rules of their fraternity and expressions of Masonic anti-

¹ George Miller, Nauvoo, [IL], to Abraham Jonas, September 29, 1842, Letters pertaining to Freemasonry in Nauvoo, 1842, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah (Church History Library hereafter cited as CHL).

Mormonism would continue until the beginning of 1846 when Mormon involvement in Illinois Freemasonry ended as the Mormons left Illinois.

The defiant actions of Mormon Masons in the face of prejudice and anti-Mormonism from Illinois Masons highlight the fragility of the social fabric of nineteenth-century frontier America. Historian Don Harrison Doyle, in his book on the social order of the Illinois community of Jacksonville, describes how the town's associations, including churches, political parties, and voluntary associations such as Freemasonry, instilled social discipline in the community. As people "accepted certain rules of order in dozens of small societies," they developed a willingness to abide by the rules of the larger community, helping "an extraordinarily mobile and discordant people to live together with a certain stability and order."² In the eyes of Illinois Masons, the disregard that Mormon Masons had for the established rules and regulations of Freemasonry not only threatened the respectability of the fraternity, but also the social order of the community. Thus, the disrespect of Mormon Masons toward the authority of the Grand Lodge of Illinois cultivated the idea within Illinois Masons that Mormons' attitudes toward and disregard for the rules of Freemasonry would transfer over to other aspects of their lives, threatening the stability of their frontier community.

² Don Harrison Doyle, *The Social Order of a Frontier Community: Jacksonville, Illinois, 1825–70* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 192–93.

Annual Meetings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, 1842

The 1842 meetings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois occurred on October 3–5 at the Grand Masonic Hall in Jacksonville, Illinois.³ In obedience to the injunction that Abraham Jonas issued to Nauvoo Lodge back in July, the Mormon Masons sent representatives from their lodge to attend the assembly.⁴ At these meetings, the three-member Committee on Returns and Work of Lodges held significant authority in determining the fate of Nauvoo Lodge. The members of this committee, appointed by the grand master, reviewed the returns and records of subordinate lodges and reported whether the work of those lodges appeared to comply with the constitution and by-laws of the grand lodge, and the ancient landmarks of Freemasonry.⁵

On October 4, after the Committee on Returns and Work of Lodges examined various documents relating to the supposed irregularities performed by Mormon Masons in Nauvoo Lodge,⁶ the majority of the committee, consisting of Meredith Helm, newly

³ The constitution of the Grand Lodge of Illinois stipulated that the “Grand Lodge shall hold annual communications.” “Constitution and By-Laws of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons,” in *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, From Its Organization in 1840 to 1850 Inclusive* (Freeport, IL: Journal Print, 1892), 33. For the entire proceedings of the 1842 annual meetings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, see *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 49–79.

⁴ Injunction, Abraham Jonas to [Nauvoo Masonic Lodge], July 30, 1842, in Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, p. 133. Henry G. Sherwood and Lucius N. Scovil attended the 1842 meetings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois as representatives from Nauvoo Lodge. *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 51.

⁵ See section seventeen of the by-laws of the Grand Lodge of Illinois. “Constitution and By-Laws of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons,” in *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 37.

⁶ In addition to the return that the representatives of Nauvoo Lodge brought with them to the meetings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, the Committee on Returns and Work of Lodges also examined “a number of letters in relation to Nauvoo Lodge U. D.,” presented by Abraham Jonas, and a letter from Bodley Lodge “in relation to a correspondence between it and Nauvoo Lodge U. D.” *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 52–53.

elected grand master⁷ who had earlier demonstrated his suspicions for the Mormon Masons regarding the controversy that developed over John C. Bennett, and Joseph N. Ralston, newly elected junior grand warden⁸ and member of Bodley Lodge,⁹ reported their findings. They first acknowledged that the representatives from Nauvoo Lodge neglected to bring with them their minute book.¹⁰ The by-laws of the Grand Lodge of Illinois did not require each subordinate lodge to bring their minute book to the annual meetings of the grand body, but instead asked them to present an abstract, signed by the Worshipful Master and secretary of the lodge, listing the officers and members of their lodge, the names and associated dates of those initiated, admitted, removed, suspended, or expelled, and any deaths of members and rejections of candidates.¹¹ In the Injunction served on Nauvoo Lodge, however, Abraham Jonas demanded that the Mormon Masons deliver their record books to the meetings of the grand lodge in 1842 in order that they could be inspected.¹² Notwithstanding the neglect of the Mormon Masons, the committee continued: “from the report, as well as the transcript of the proceedings of the lodge exhibited, the work appears to conform to the requirements of this Grand Lodge.” This seemingly good news was overshadowed by the next assessment from the committee, for

⁷ *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 55.

⁸ *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 55.

⁹ On the 1840 and 1841 abstract returns of Bodley Lodge, Ralston is listed as a past master, meaning he had previously served as the worshipful master of a subordinate lodge. *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 13, 29.

¹⁰ *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 58.

¹¹ See section five of the by-laws of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, in *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 35.

¹² Injunction, Abraham Jonas to [Nauvoo Masonic Lodge], July 30, 1842, in Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, p. 133.

they stated that “documentary and other evidence” gave them reason to believe that the brethren of Nauvoo Lodge had departed from “the intention and ancient landmarks of our institution” and that they had done so “to an inexcusable extent.” The only way to accurately evaluate the situation, the committee concluded, was through “a careful inspection of the original records, and thorough investigation of the whole proceedings.”

Such a course your committee believe is due as well to the brethren of Nauvoo Lodge as to this Grand Lodge, and the craft generally, and should our fears prove groundless, as the committee still hope they will, none will be more benefited by the investigation than the lodge under consideration, but should they in any considerable degree be realized the sooner the facts are ascertained the better.¹³

In light of their findings, the majority of the Committee on Returns and Work of Lodges offered two resolutions. First, they resolved that the injunction suspending the work of Nauvoo Lodge should continue until the Grand Lodge of Illinois met again in October 1843, and second, that the grand lodge commission a special committee “to examine the original minutes of Nauvoo Lodge, and diligently enquire into any irregularity or misconduct alleged to have been committed by said lodge, and report the facts at the next regular communication of this Grand Lodge.”¹⁴

Next, the sole remaining member of the Committee on Returns and Work of Lodges offered the minority report. Henry Prather, newly appointed junior grand deacon¹⁵ and junior warden of Macon Lodge in Decatur, Illinois,¹⁶ after examining the

¹³ *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 58.

¹⁴ *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 59.

¹⁵ *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 55.

¹⁶ On October 20, 1841, the brethren of Macon Lodge elected Henry Prather junior warden. During the lodge’s next election, held on December 17, 1842, lodge members voted Prather worshipful master. John C. Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois, Ancient, Free, and Accepted Masons: From the Organization of the First Lodge Within the Present Limits of the State, Up to and*

return and other documents pertaining to Nauvoo Lodge, concluded that “there appears no evidence by which the committee can establish any irregularity or departure from the original landmarks of the order, but having reasons to apprehend that irregularity can be established, we would respectfully concur with the majority in recommending the adoption of the resolutions the majority have reported.”¹⁷

Following the reports of the Committee on Returns and Work of Lodges, Abraham Jonas, now a past grand master, offered an alternative resolution. He proposed that an appointed special committee should immediately travel to Nauvoo to “diligently enquire into any irregularity or misconduct alleged to have been committed by said lodge, and to examine persons and papers connected with the subject.” After the investigation, Jonas continued, the committee would report to the grand master, who then would either command that the suspension on Nauvoo Lodge’s dispensation continue until the 1843 meetings of the grand lodge or lift the suspension and allow the work of the Mormon Masons to continue.¹⁸ With a vote of ten to one, the members of the grand lodge accepted the amended resolution and subsequently appointed Jonathan Nye, past grand master of the Grand Lodge of Vermont,¹⁹ William B. Warren, grand secretary and secretary of

Including 1850 (Springfield, IL: H. G. Reynolds, Jr., Masonic Trowel Office, 1869), 157, 181; *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 75.

¹⁷ *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 59.

¹⁸ *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 59–60.

¹⁹ Nye served as grand master of the Grand Lodge of Vermont from October 9, 1815 to October 6, 1818. *Records of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of Vermont, From 1794 to 1846 Inclusive* (Burlington, VT: Free Press Association, 1879), 170, 191, 198, 207, 210.

Harmony Lodge, in Jacksonville, Illinois,²⁰ and Hiram Rogers, past master of Bodley Lodge,²¹ members of the special committee to travel to Nauvoo.²²

Reminiscent accounts about the 1842 meetings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois made in the 1850s by Henry G. Sherwood and Lucius N. Scovil, Nauvoo Lodge's representatives at that gathering, provide added detail not included in the official published proceedings.²³ Sherwood recalled that after members of the grand body decided to continue the suspension on Nauvoo Lodge, Abraham Jonas "made a flaming speech," in which he argued in favor of the Mormon Masons. Jonas asserted that their books and papers "were the fairest . . . that had been brought from any Lodge to the Grand Lodge," and that when he installed Nauvoo Lodge, he "found the people as peaceable, quiet and genteel as any people he was ever among in his life." Jonas also apparently remarked that if the Nauvoo Masons were not Mormons, their lodge "would stand the highest of any Lodge, that had come to that Grand Lodge."²⁴

After Jonas spoke, Quincy Mason Joseph N. Ralston proclaimed that the grand lodge would gladly "do justice" to the Mormon Masons, "notwithstanding their supposed delusions." In reply, Sherwood expressed his long-held opinion that "it was by reason of

²⁰ *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 55, 73.

²¹ The members of Bodley Lodge elected Hiram Rogers worshipful master on December 27, 1841. Harrison Dills replaced Rogers as worshipful master on June 3, 1842. Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 152, 174; *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 73.

²² *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 62.

²³ Henry G. Sherwood, Statement, ca. 1854, Joseph Smith history documents, 1839–1860, CHL; Lucius N. Scovil, Statement, ca. 1854–1856, Joseph Smith history documents, 1839–1860, CHL. The content and wording of the two statements closely resemble each other. Since Scovil likely used Sherwood's statement as a template for his own, I rely on Sherwood's account.

²⁴ Henry G. Sherwood, Statement, ca. 1854, Joseph Smith history documents, 1839–1860, CHL.

being Mormons that we were kept at arms length.” He then referred to the refusal by Bodley Lodge to endorse the Nauvoo Masons to the grand lodge back in June 1841, reiterating the claim that Quincy Masons had done so on account of ““an unacquaintance with us as masons and other things.”” “Other things,” Sherwood supposed, “meant Mormonism.” Hiram Rogers of Bodley Lodge responded that other things was not a reference to Mormonism but to John C. Bennett, “whom they knew to be an expelled member.” When Nauvoo Lodge’s two delegates inquired about the source of the “reliable information” referred to in the injunction that was used to suspend their lodge, they were told that the evidence came ““from the Quincy Lodge, who got it from the Hannibal Lodge, who obtained it from J. C. Bennett.””²⁵

The exchange detailed by Sherwood and Scovil highlights the prejudice that many Illinois Masons had for the Mormons, for they trusted information from “an expelled member in preference to G. M. Jonas” in suspending Nauvoo Lodge.²⁶ Furthermore, by citing Bennett’s supposed expulsion from a Masonic lodge in Ohio as part of the reason for refusing to recommend the Nauvoo Masons to the grand lodge, the Quincy Masons confused the timeline of events. As Michael W. Homer maintains, “it is unlikely that anyone in Bodley Lodge believed or suspected that Bennett was an expelled Mason as early as 1841”²⁷ because concerns regarding Bennett did not surface until April and May 1842. This shows that Bennett’s status as a Mason was not a legitimate concern for

²⁵ Henry G. Sherwood, Statement, ca. 1854, Joseph Smith history documents, 1839–1860, CHL.

²⁶ Henry G. Sherwood, Statement, ca. 1854, Joseph Smith history documents, 1839–1860, CHL.

²⁷ Michael W. Homer, *Joseph’s Temples: The Dynamic Relationship Between Freemasonry and Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2014), 163n94.

Illinois Masons but rather an excuse they used to question Mormon involvement in the fraternity.

Sometime after October 5, the close of the meetings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, and before November 2, the day Grand Master Meredith Helm made a decision concerning the suspension on Nauvoo Lodge, the special committee traveled to Nauvoo. After performing “a careful and laborious examination of both persons and papers,” the committee reported to the grand master that they found the “principal charges” against Nauvoo Lodge “groundless and without proof to sustain them.” Other irregularities had occurred, however, that “strike at once at the vital principles of our order, and the correction of which should not be passed over in silence.” These charges included “the practice of balloting for more than one applicant at one and the same time,” and allowing “an applicant of at least doubtful character” to be initiated on “promise of reformation and restitution.” While finding “much to regret, much to deplore,” in the actions of the Mormon Masons, the committee nevertheless did not believe that “the good of the fraternity required that the injunction should be perpetual, but on the contrary that justice should be tempered with mercy.” They therefore resolved that the injunction on Nauvoo Lodge be removed.²⁸

Within a month of commissioning the special committee to investigate the purported irregularities in the work of Nauvoo Lodge, Grand Master Meredith Helm made a decision regarding the Mormon Masons. After considering the report of the special investigating committee, Helm removed the injunction from Nauvoo Lodge, informing the Mormon Masons of his decision in a letter dated November 2, 1842. In the

²⁸ *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 70–71.

missive, Helm wrote that the “high moral character, general intelligence and great masonic experience” of the members of the special committee “entitle their opinions and recommendations to my entire confidence, and should remove from the minds of all, any fears respecting the motives and designs” of the Nauvoo Masons. Therefore, Helm removed the injunction, authorized the continuation of Nauvoo Lodge’s dispensation, and empowered the Mormon Masons to reconvene the work of their lodge until the next annual meetings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois in October 1843.²⁹ With no concrete condemnatory evidence worthy of severing the Mormon relationship with Freemasonry, Grand Master Helm extended mercy to the brethren of Nauvoo Lodge, overlooking the petty, insignificant irregularities that had occurred within the lodge.

Annual Meetings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, 1843

With the suspension lifted, the Mormon Masons wasted no time in reopening their lodge. On November 5, a notice appeared in the *Wasp*, a Nauvoo newspaper, stating that a special meeting of Nauvoo Lodge would be held Thursday, November 10, and requested that all members of the lodge attend.³⁰ Accordingly, Nauvoo Masons gathered on the designated evening and held their first lodge meeting since August 11.³¹ Shortly

²⁹ Removal of Injunction, Meredith Helm to [Nauvoo Masonic Lodge], November 2, 1842, Letters pertaining to Freemasonry in Nauvoo, 1842, CHL. About one fourth of Helm’s holographic letter is missing. A complete manuscript copy of the letter can be found in Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, pp. 134–135, CHL. See also *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 71–72.

³⁰ “Masonic Notice,” *The Wasp* (Nauvoo, IL), November 5, 1842, [3].

³¹ The purpose of this meeting was to elect new lodge officers. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, November 10, 1842, CHL.

thereafter, on November 21, the work of making Masons in Nauvoo Lodge commenced anew.³²

From November 1842 to September 1843, charges of irregularities against the Nauvoo Masons ceased, an opportunity that the Mormon Masons took advantage of as they held meetings and advanced more men through the degrees of Masonry. Previously, between April and August 1842, the brethren of Nauvoo Lodge advanced men through the degrees of Masonry at a staggering rate. During this four-month period, they held 103 meetings and initiated 283³³ men as Entered Apprentice Masons.³⁴ Had the Mormons maintained a similar pace from November 1842 to September 1843, the period between the removal of the injunction and the upcoming meetings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois in October 1843, they would have held about 260 meetings and initiated over 700 men as Entered Apprentice Masons. That, however, was not the case because the speed with which the Mormons made Masons slowed significantly. During the ten-month period from November 10, 1842, to September 26, 1843, brethren of Nauvoo Lodge held 122 meetings,³⁵ a dramatic decrease from the 103 meetings that had occurred previously over the four-month span from April to August 1842. A decrease in the number of gatherings

³² Following the removal of the injunction, Nauvoo Lodge held meetings on November 10, 17, 18, and 19. The first initiations, however, did not occur until November 21. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, November 10, 17, 18, 19, and 21, 1842, CHL.

³³ The initiations of Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, which happened on March 15, 1842, are not included in this figure.

³⁴ During the meetings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois in October 1842, representatives of Nauvoo Lodge presented an abstract return of the work performed in their lodge between March 15, 1842, the day Abraham Jonas installed the lodge, and August 11, 1842, the last meeting held by the lodge before receiving the injunction. The abstract reported that 285 men had been initiated as Entered Apprentice Masons. *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 78.

³⁵ For two of the meetings, the lodge met twice per day. For the other 120 gatherings, the lodge only met once per day.

resulted in a smaller number of initiations. Whereas 283 men were initiated between April and August 1842, only 183³⁶ were initiated between November 1842, and September 1843. Even with the drop in the number of initiations and the cutback in the frequency of lodge meetings, the making of Masons in Nauvoo Lodge still greatly exceeded the work performed in other Illinois lodges. In October 1842, the eleven subordinate lodges that reported abstract returns to the Grand Lodge of Illinois (excluding Nauvoo Lodge) only reported a combined forty-five initiations.³⁷ In October 1843, twenty-one lodges reported a combined sixty-nine initiations.³⁸ Compared to their earlier efforts, the rate at which the Nauvoo Masons held meetings and made Masons slowed between November 1842 and September 1843, however their efforts still greatly exceeded the combined efforts of the other Masonic lodges in Illinois.

Not only did the Mormon Masons expand the size of their lodge membership from November 1842 to September 1843, but they also made plans for the construction of a Masonic temple and held a cornerstone laying ceremony. Prior to the building of the Masonic temple in Nauvoo, the Mormon Masons held their meetings in various venues. The initial meetings of Nauvoo Lodge, held on December 29 and 30, 1841, occurred at

³⁶ This figure is my own calculation.

³⁷ The following lodges reported the attached number of initiations on their abstract returns in October 1842: Bodley Lodge, two; Harmony Lodge, one; Springfield Lodge, six; Columbus Lodge, none; Macon Lodge, two; Juliet Lodge, none; Rushville Lodge, eleven; Western Star Lodge, sixteen; Cass Lodge, four; St. John's, one; Warren Lodge, none. *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 73–78.

³⁸ The following lodges reported the attached number of initiations on their abstract returns in October 1843: Bodley Lodge, five; Equality Lodge, three; Harmony Lodge, none; Springfield Lodge, six; Columbus Lodge, none; Friendship Lodge, five; Macon Lodge, one; Rushville Lodge, seven; Juliet Lodge, none; Rising Sun Lodge, none; St. John's Lodge, one; Warren Lodge, two; Temperance Lodge, six; Macomb Lodge, six; LaFayette Lodge, two; Clinton Lodge, six; Hancock Lodge, seven; Warsaw Lodge, seven; Milwaukee Lodge, three; Cass Lodge, two; Pekin Lodge, none. *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 101–111.

Hyrum Smith's office.³⁹ Many of the gatherings of the lodge in 1842 convened in an upper room of Joseph Smith's red brick store.⁴⁰ Possibly beginning as early as January 1843, the lodge held meetings on the upper floor of Henry Miller's home.⁴¹ Soon thereafter, on February 16, 1843, lodge members discussed and unanimously approved the building of a Masonic temple to better accommodate the needs of Nauvoo Lodge and appointed a three-member committee to superintend the construction of the edifice.⁴² In June, the brethren of the lodge began making arrangements for the cornerstone laying of their new building which was to occur on June 24 during the lodge's celebration of St. John's Day. To prepare for the festivities, members of Nauvoo Lodge invited neighboring lodges to join the celebration, this time not inviting the antagonistic Masons of Bodley Lodge,⁴³ and appointed a committee of arrangements who made preparations for the occasion.⁴⁴ With all the arrangements in place, Nauvoo Masons and their guests met on

³⁹ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, December 29 and 30, 1841, CHL.

⁴⁰ At their meeting on December 5, 1842, Nauvoo Masons asked Joseph Smith how much compensation he wanted in exchange for allowing them to use a room in his store to meet in. Smith replied that he wanted \$20 per month. The lodge membership then asked the secretary to provide Smith with back pay since they had been meeting there for the past year. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, December 5, 1842, CHL.

⁴¹ On January 5, 1843, the lodge membership appointed a three-member committee "to enquire into the expediency of Allowing Bro Henry Miller pay for preparing his room [for] the use of the Lodge." Two weeks later, on January 19, the committee reported that they felt Miller "was entitled to fifteen Dollars." Presumably, the brethren of Nauvoo Lodge began holding meetings at Miller's home shortly thereafter. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, January 5 and 19, 1843, CHL.

⁴² The three-member building committee consisted of Lucius N. Scovil, Samuel Rolfe, and Aaron Johnson. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, February 16, 1843, CHL.

⁴³ On June 15, 1843, the brethren of Nauvoo Lodge resolved to invite the members of Warsaw Lodge, Carthage Lodge, Keokuk Lodge, LaHarpe Lodge, Rising Sun Lodge, and Helm Lodge to join in their celebration of St. John's Day and witness the laying of the cornerstone of the Masonic temple in Nauvoo. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, June 15, 1843, CHL.

⁴⁴ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, June 15 and 19, 1843, CHL.

June 24 for the cornerstone laying. For the celebration, Masonic participants formed a procession and marched to Main Street where they witnessed the laying of the cornerstone by Worshipful Master Hyrum Smith and listened to a fellow brother sing a Masonic hymn. Following the song, the group marched to a grove in the city where they heard an address from Mormon apostle⁴⁵ and Master Mason⁴⁶ John Taylor. Afterward, the participants enjoyed “an excellent dinner.”⁴⁷

Despite the successes that the Nauvoo Masons enjoyed in expanding their membership and in preparing for the construction of a Masonic temple, Masonic anti-Mormonism, which seems to have abated for a time, flared up again. As the annual meetings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois for 1843 approached, the brethren of Nauvoo Lodge hoped to obtain a charter. This effort, however, would be stymied in part by the brethren of Bodley Lodge. On September 29, 1843, just days before the annual meetings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois,⁴⁸ the Quincy Masons unanimously passed two resolutions concerning the granting of a charter to Nauvoo Lodge. In their first resolution, they requested that the members and delegates of the grand lodge “carefully examine into and consider well on the propriety of granting a charter to Nauvoo Lodge, U. D,” following which they expressed their “decided conviction that said dispensation should never have

⁴⁵ Taylor was ordained an apostle on December 19, 1838, in Far West, Missouri. “The Conference Minutes and Record Book of Christ’s Church of Latter Day Saints,” Minute Book 2, December 19, 1838, CHL.

⁴⁶ Taylor was initiated as an Entered Apprentice on April 22, passed as a Fellow Craft on April 29, and raised as a Master Mason on April 30, 1842. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, April 22, 29 and 30, 1842, CHL.

⁴⁷ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, June 24, 1843, CHL; “Free Masons,” *Nauvoo Neighbor*, June 28, 1843, [3].

⁴⁸ The Grand Lodge of Illinois held its annual meetings for 1843 on October 2–4. See *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 81–100.

been granted, and from what we have seen and heard from sources to be relied on, that it would be unwise to grant a charter or continue a dispensation longer among that people.” A second resolution went even further, stating that “the delegates from this Lodge to the Grand Lodge be instructed to vote against the granting of charter to any Lodge in Nauvoo, and use all their endeavors to procure a withdrawal of the dispensations now granted.”⁴⁹

At the opening of the annual meetings of the grand lodge in October 1843, Grand Master Meredith Helm delivered a speech. As part of his message, Helm addressed the actions of the Grand Lodge of Illinois in regards to the Mormon Masons. He explained that after the special committee visited Nauvoo in November 1842 to investigate the alleged irregularities that had occurred in the work of Nauvoo Lodge, the committee reported to him and recommended the continuation of the lodge’s dispensation. Hence, Helm lifted the suspension on Nauvoo Lodge. Now that a year had passed, the authority of Nauvoo Lodge’s dispensation ceased,⁵⁰ and as the Mormon Masons sought a charter, their request was brought before the grand lodge for consideration. Having explained all of this, Helm then acknowledged that “This subject has heretofore excited no little discussion both in and out of this body, and the action of the Grand Lodge in reference to it has been made the object of much animadversion, criticism and remark.” He even mentioned that he had received “Several communications from eminent and honored

⁴⁹ Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 203.

⁵⁰ The removal of the injunction that Helm issued to the brethren of Nauvoo Lodge on November 2, 1842, continued the dispensation of the Mormon Masons and authorized them to resume their work as a lodge until the meetings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois in October 1843. Removal of Injunction, Meredith Helm to [Nauvoo Masonic Lodge], November 2, 1842, Letters pertaining to Freemasonry in Nauvoo, 1842, CHL.

names in Masonry . . . calling in question the correctness of the course pursued by you in relation to this subject, and strongly protesting against the prudence and propriety of allowing a Masonic Lodge to exist in Nauvoo,” illustrating the Masonic anti-Mormon sentiment that some Illinois Masons continued to harbor for the Mormon Masons. “I call your attention to these facts,” Helm explained, “solely for the purpose of suggesting that justice to our Nauvoo brethren, courtesy and respect for those who object to our past conduct towards them, and a proper regard for the good opinion and the welfare of the Fraternity at large, alike require that every step of your proceedings in this matter should be marked by the utmost care, caution and deliberation.” In determining whether to issue a charter to the Nauvoo Masons, Helm urged that the decision of the grand lodge members “be entirely satisfied that it is right and proper; over-stepping no ancient landmark, and altogether congenial with the spirit, and conformable to the universally acknowledged principles of our order.”⁵¹

As had occurred the previous year, the Committee on Returns and Work of Lodges wielded considerable authority in determining the fate of Nauvoo Lodge. After reviewing the abstract presented by the representative of Nauvoo Lodge, the committee reported that the document appeared “in some measure correct, but in many instances there appears irregularities, and matters to your committee inexplicable.”⁵² For the second year in a row, the Nauvoo Masons defiantly ignored the instructions of the Grand

⁵¹ *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 85.

⁵² *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 95.

Lodge and did not bring their minute book with them to the meetings of the grand body,⁵³ a surprising discovery due to “the severe lesson the said lodge was taught at the last Grand Communication.” Next, the committee explained the “greatest irregularity” they noticed in the work of Nauvoo Lodge. They wrote:

there appears a disposition to accumulate and gather members without regard to character, and to push them on through the 2nd and 3d degree before they can be possibly skilled in the 1st or 2nd. Your committee are aware that there is no by-law of this Grand Lodge to prevent this; nor are they sure that any length of probation would in all cases ensure skill; but they feel certain that the ancient landmarks of the order require that the lodge should know that the candidate is well skilled in one degree, before he is advanced to another. Your committee will not doubt but there are many worthy and skilful brethren in Nauvoo Lodge; brethren who would under other circumstances be an ornament to the institution of Masonry; but they are assured that their influence is entirely lost and obscured by the conduct of others less worthy; nay, of those who entirely disregard the ties that should bind us together as a sacred band of friends and brothers.⁵⁴

Irregularities in the work of Nauvoo Lodge were not the only issues facing Mormon Masons at these meetings. The Committee on Returns and Work of Lodges also reported irregularities in the activities of the four other predominantly Mormon Masonic lodges located in and around Nauvoo. In August 1842, demitted Masons from Nauvoo Lodge formed Rising Sun Lodge, located in Montrose, Iowa Territory,⁵⁵ which later

⁵³ When Helm lifted the suspension on Nauvoo Lodge’s dispensation in November 1842, he required the Mormon Masons to send their “legal representatives” to the October 1843 meetings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois “with a copy of their proceedings in virtue of the Authority herein contained.” Removal of Injunction, Meredith Helm to [Nauvoo Masonic Lodge], November 2, 1842, Letters pertaining to Freemasonry in Nauvoo, 1842, CHL.

⁵⁴ *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 95.

⁵⁵ Joseph Smith, Journal, August 6, 1842, in Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Richard Lloyd Anderson, eds., *Journals, Volume 2: December 1841–April 1843*, vol. 2 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2011), 80; Wilford Woodruff, Journal, August 6, 1842, Wilford Woodruff journals and papers, 1828–1898, CHL.

received a charter in October 1842.⁵⁶ In 1843, three other lodges with large Mormon memberships—Keokuk Lodge in Keokuk, Iowa Territory,⁵⁷ and Helm Lodge⁵⁸ and Nye Lodge,⁵⁹ both located in Nauvoo—⁶⁰were formed.⁶¹ After examining the work of these four lodges, the Committee on Returns and Work of Lodges also reported more issues. Concerning Keokuk Lodge, the committee stated that the work of that lodge was “very irregular and highly censurable, in that, in as many as six instances, petitions have been presented and acted on in a shorter period than one lunar month.” In regards to Rising Sun Lodge, the committee reported that the work of that lodge appeared “irregular, and the return is altogether informal, and dues unpaid.” The committee found the work of Helm Lodge “irregular in receiving and acting on four petitions in one day; and improvident in passing and raising to the 3d degree, often times within two days after initiation, as appears from the abstract alone; for no records have been presented, and dues in part unpaid.” Speaking of the returns of Nye Lodge, the committee stated that

⁵⁶ *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 56.

⁵⁷ On December 28, 1842, Grand Master Meredith Helm issued a recess dispensation to Masons in Keokuk, Iowa Territory, to form a Masonic lodge. About two weeks later, on January 17, 1843, Past Grand Master Jonathan Nye installed Keokuk Lodge. *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 120.

⁵⁸ Nauvoo Lodge’s minute book entry for April 28, 1843, discusses inviting the brethren of Helm Lodge to join them in procession, an indication that Helm Lodge had been organized by this date. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, April 28, 1843, CHL.

⁵⁹ Nye Lodge was organized sometime before July 3, 1843, because Nathaniel Case, a member of Nye Lodge, attended the July 3 meeting of Nauvoo Lodge. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, July 3, 1843, CHL.

⁶⁰ The membership of Nauvoo Lodge was split to create Helm Lodge and Nye Lodge. On the division of Nauvoo Lodge see Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, November 19, 23, and December 20, 1842, CHL.

⁶¹ In his opening message to the Grand Lodge of Illinois in October 1843, Grand Master Meredith Helm reported that he had granted several recess dispensations for the creation of new lodges, which included lodges in Nauvoo, and Keokuk, Iowa Territory. *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 85.

they “are objectionable in the same points that those of Helm Lodge are, viz: In receiving petitions on one day, and initiating on the next, in as many as six instances. And also in pushing the candidate through the 2nd and 3d degree, before he can possibly be skilled in the preceding degree.”⁶²

Faced with recommending a course of action in regards to the various irregularities that had occurred in the five Mormon lodges, the Committee on Returns and Work of Lodges noted that they probably would have extended mercy had irregularities been the only issues. However, “from facts that have been communicated to your committee through various channels, and particularly through Masons of eminence who have visited the lodge at Nauvoo, your committee have good reason to believe that [the Nauvoo Masons] put on their best dress when they appear before this Grand Lodge.” The committee then recommended several resolutions. First, they resolved to suspend the charter of Rising Sun Lodge. Next, because of “the disrespect and contempt” that Nauvoo Lodge and Helm Lodge had “shown in refusing to present the records of their Work to this Grand Lodge,” the committee resolved that their dispensations be revoked and charters denied. Similarly, the committee resolved to revoke the dispensations of Keokuk Lodge and Nye Lodge and deny them charters.⁶³ Unlike the meetings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois in October 1842, when the membership of the grand body extended a level of mercy and understanding toward the Nauvoo Masons, this time around the members of the grand lodge acted in a calculated and decisive manner on the case of the Mormon Masons, attempting to rid their fraternity of Mormon involvement.

⁶² *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 89, 95–96.

⁶³ *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 95–96.

Clandestine Masons

In response to the decisions of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, the Mormons continued to make Masons, acting contrary to and independent of the authority of the grand body. On November 2, 1843, when the brethren of Nauvoo Lodge held their first meeting since the annual session of the grand lodge, Hyrum Smith, worshipful master of Nauvoo Lodge⁶⁴ and older brother of Joseph Smith, stood before his fellow Masons and spoke about “the ungenerous and in his estimation the unmasonic treatment of the Grand Lodge towards us as a Lodge, and considered that we should be justified masonically by the Grand Lodge of the United States in resuming our work untill we had the privilege of presenting a memorial and appeal from the dicision [decision] of the Grand Lodge of Illinois to an higher tribunal.”⁶⁵ Following Smith’s remarks, lodge members unanimously approved continuing the advancement of worthy men into the various degrees of Masonry in Nauvoo Lodge. Then, Smith urged his fellow Masons “to union and fellowship and steadfastness in the Masonic knowledge & works.” He also expressed how he thought that the Grand Lodge of Illinois “ought to make amends to this Lodge for the injury done us to our characters as men and masons without any just cause or provocation whatever; inasmuch as it is a fact generally known that our work outshines that of many others and our love and zeal for the institution is manifest to every unprejudiced mind.”⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Smith was elected Worshipful Master of Nauvoo Lodge on November 10, 1842. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, November 10, 1842, CHL.

⁶⁵ Interestingly, the United States does not have, and never has had, a national grand lodge that governs all state grand lodges.

⁶⁶ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, November 2, 1843, CHL.

Soon thereafter, newly elected Grand Master Alexander Dunlap⁶⁷ learned that the Nauvoo Masons continued to meet as a lodge despite losing their dispensation. The grand master therefore ordered Josiah B. Conyers, Worshipful Master of Bodley Lodge,⁶⁸ to travel to Nauvoo, confiscate the dispensation, Masonic jewels, and records of Nauvoo Lodge, and forbid the Mormons from gathering anymore as Masons. During Nauvoo Lodge's meeting on January 4, 1844, lodge secretary William Clayton read a letter from Conyers conveying this information, followed by the reading of a second letter, from Nauvoo Lodge to Grand Master Dunlap, written in reaction to the missive from Conyers. In this letter, the Mormon Masons explained to Dunlap that they intended to appeal the revocation of their dispensation at the next annual meeting of the Grand Lodge of Illinois and refused to surrender their dispensation, jewels, and books.⁶⁹ Despite the efforts of Grand Master Dunlap and other Masons throughout the state to shut down Nauvoo Lodge and end Mormon involvement in Freemasonry, the Nauvoo Masons, who claimed they had done nothing wrong, defiantly and determinedly proceeded to work as a lodge.

The Mormons' spirited resistance to the resolutions of the Grand Lodge of Illinois persisted as the brethren of Nauvoo Lodge openly prepared for and then dedicated their Masonic temple. As the date for the ceremony approached, a notice appeared in the *Nauvoo Neighbor* declaring "to the Masonic world," that April 5 was the day set for the occasion and that "All worthy Brethren of the Fraternity, who feel interested in the cause,

⁶⁷ Dunlap served as grand master of the Grand Lodge of Illinois from October 1843 to October 1844. *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 91, 123.

⁶⁸ Conyers was elected Worshipful Master of Bodley Lodge on December 29, 1843. Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 203; *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 101.

⁶⁹ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, January 4, 1844, CHL.

are requested to participate with us in the ceremonies of dedication.”⁷⁰ On the appointed day, a procession marched to the location of the new building, where Worshipful Master Hyrum Smith performed the dedication. Afterwards, Erastus Snow, Hyrum Smith, Joseph Smith, and visiting brother William G. Goforth, addressed the participants. The dedication ceremonies closed with a performance of the Nauvoo Brass Band. Concerning the events of the day, lodge secretary William Clayton wrote that “During the whole of the ceremony the most perfect harmony, and universal good feeling prevailed.” Even while a discussion concerning “the oppression and illtreatment of the Grand Lodge” toward the Mormon Masons elicited “a feeling of holy indignation,” however, Clayton remarked, “an universal expression of forgiveness was evidently in the breast of all present and especially should our oppressors take of[f] the iron yoke and treat us as members of the family of mankind, as members of the most noble of moral institutions and as brethren of the same noble fraternity.”⁷¹ The Mormon Masons refused to abide by the wishes of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, yet they held out hope that the anti-Mormonism they experienced at the hands of other Illinois Masons would soon cease.

That the Nauvoo Masons continued to meet, make Masons, and publicly prepare for and dedicate their Masonic temple in Nauvoo did not go unnoticed by Illinois Masons. Days before the building dedication, the brethren of Bodley Lodge discussed, much to their chagrin, that the Mormons were moving forward with the building of their

⁷⁰ “Masonic Notice,” *Nauvoo Neighbor*, March 13, 1844, [3]. The notice was subsequently reprinted on March 20, March 27, and April 3. The April 3 issue of the *Neighbor* also included an article entitled “Dedication,” which provided a reminder of the Masonic temple dedication on the fifth and printed the lyrics of several Masonic songs that were to be sung during the dedication ceremonies. “Dedication,” *Nauvoo Neighbor*, April 3, 1844, [2].

⁷¹ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, April 5, 1844, CHL.

Masonic temple despite having lost their dispensation. At this meeting on April 1, a Brother Freeman reported that he had learned that the Mormon Masons continued to initiate and advance men through the various degrees of Masonry, noting that the brethren of Warsaw Lodge had already informed the officers of the Grand Lodge of Illinois of these infractions. Having discussed this matter, the Quincy Masons resolved for their secretary to notify the grand lodge that the Nauvoo Masons continued to work as a lodge, that they had printed a notice in a public newspaper announcing that they would be dedicating their Masonic temple on April 5, and that the Mormon Masons worked under the pretense that they had not received official notice that their dispensation had been revoked and their charter denied.⁷²

The displeasure that some Illinois Masons had for the Mormon Masons and their blatant disregard for the authority of the Grand Lodge of Illinois is shown in the investigation and discipline of a Mason from St. Clair Lodge in Belleville, Illinois, for participating in the dedication of Nauvoo Lodge's Masonic temple. The man in question was William G. Goforth.⁷³ On June 11, 1844, members of St. Clair Lodge received a letter from the secretary of the grand lodge informing them that one of their members had participated in the Masonic procession that accompanied the dedication of the Mormon Masons' new building. Consequently, the Belleville Masons assigned a three-member

⁷² Bodley Masonic Lodge Minute Book, April 1, 1844, quoted in Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 244.

⁷³ Goforth was the only visiting brother from Belleville who attended the dedication ceremonies of the Masonic temple in Nauvoo. After engaging in the dedication services, Goforth, using the pen name Sissimus, wrote a letter that was published in the *Nauvoo Neighbor* describing his experience. A manuscript copy of the letter identifies Goforth as the author. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, April 5, 1844, CHL; Sissimus, "To the Editor of the Neighbor," *Nauvoo Neighbor*, May 1, 1844, [2]; William G. Goforth, letter, April 10, 1844, CHL.

committee to investigate the matter.⁷⁴ One month later on July 9, the appointed committee reported their findings. First, they established that the man in question (the report does not identify Goforth by name) held “communion with clandestine Masons,” and second, that he knew that the Mormon Masons operated without the sanction of the Grand Lodge of Illinois before he participated in the procession during the dedication ceremonies in Nauvoo. Since Goforth’s actions were “a flagrant violation of the principles of the Institution,” the committee concluded that the case of the brother in question should be dealt with by “rigor and severity” and “according to Masonic usages in the Fraternity.”⁷⁵ Consequently, “The sentence, as assessed, was then carried into execution.”⁷⁶

The culmination of Masonic anti-Mormonism is embodied in the efforts of members of a Masonic lodge in Warsaw, Illinois, to protect some of the men indicted for murdering Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum. By this time, not only did external antagonism contribute to the growing anti-Mormon sentiment in Illinois, but so too did internal dissent from within the Church.⁷⁷ The resulting animosity that many Illinois citizens had developed for the Mormons turned to violence in June 1844. After the Nauvoo City Council destroyed the printing press of an opposition newspaper, called the

⁷⁴ St. Clair Masonic Lodge Minute Book, June 11, 1844, quoted in Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 254.

⁷⁵ St. Clair Masonic Lodge Minute Book, July 9, 1844, quoted in Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 255–57.

⁷⁶ No particulars are given regarding the discipline of Goforth although the punishment could not have been too severe because he represented St. Clair Lodge at the meetings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois in October 1844. Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 257; *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 117.

⁷⁷ Oaks and Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy*, 13; Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 341–62.

Nauvoo Expositor, run by Mormon dissenters, Joseph and Hyrum Smith were imprisoned. On June 27, an armed mob stormed the county jail in Carthage, Illinois, where Joseph and Hyrum were being held, and shot and killed the brothers.⁷⁸

Of the over two-hundred men involved in the vigilante mob that murdered the Smith brothers,⁷⁹ nine were indicted in October 1844 for the crimes, but only five were brought to trial.⁸⁰ The five tried for the killings, all prominent Warsaw citizens, were Mark Aldrich, land speculator and a major in the Illinois militia; Jacob C. Davis, Illinois state senator and a captain in the Illinois militia; William N. Grover, lawyer and a Warsaw militia captain; Thomas C. Sharp, editor of the anti-Mormon *Warsaw Signal*; and Levi Williams, farmer, cooper, and a colonel in the Illinois militia.⁸¹ Of the five, Aldrich was the only one who was a Mason prior to the assassination of the Smiths.⁸² As a member of Warsaw Lodge, Aldrich served as secretary, treasurer, steward, senior deacon, and later would be elected Worshipful Master.⁸³ Previous to his involvement in

⁷⁸ Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 362–98; Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 537–50.

⁷⁹ Debra Jo Marsh argues that more than two hundred men participated in the mob that assassinated the Smiths. To date, she has produced the most comprehensive listing of the individuals who participated in the mob. For this information, she relies on a list created by Hancock County sheriff Jacob B. Backenstos. Debra Jo Marsh, “Respectable Assassins: A Collective Biography and Socio-Economic Study of the Carthage Mob” (master’s thesis, University of Utah, 2009), 1n1, 21–30; Jacob B. Backenstos, report, circa March 1846, Joseph Smith history documents, 1839–1860, CHL.

⁸⁰ The four men that were indicted but never tried were John Wills or Wells, William Voras or Vorhees, and two men only known by their last names: Gallaher, and Allen. Oaks and Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy*, 51–53.

⁸¹ Oaks and Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy*, 53–59.

⁸² Davis did petition for admission to Nauvoo Lodge but was never initiated. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 1, December 30, 1841, February 3, March 17, and April 7, 1842, CHL; Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, March 17 and April 7, 1842, CHL.

⁸³ Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 218, 219, 254, 315; *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 110, 153, 237.

Warsaw Lodge, he reportedly had “held an honorable standing in the Fraternity for upwards of twenty years.”⁸⁴ Soon, three of the others indicted for the murders of the Smiths would become Masons and join Aldrich as members of Warsaw Lodge.

Only a few short months after the assassinations of the Smith brothers, in what appears to be a calculated effort to safeguard themselves, Jacob C. Davis, Thomas C. Sharp, and Levi Williams joined Warsaw Lodge.⁸⁵ They were not the only mob participants to seek refuge within the Masonic fraternity. Four (and possibly six) others joined Warsaw Lodge after participating in the mob that killed the Smiths.⁸⁶ These men had good reason to believe that the brethren of Warsaw Lodge would provide them with protection because two (and possibly three) of the members of the lodge, aside from Aldrich, though not officially charged with the crime, had also participated in the mob that killed the Smiths.⁸⁷ Thus, these men would have shared a collective interest in protecting each other. Plus, as Dallin H. Oaks and Marvin S. Hill point out, “many of the most influential men in the county and state at this time were Masons.”⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 352.

⁸⁵ Davis was initiated on October 21, 1844, passed on November 4, 1844, and raised on November 18, 1844. Sharp and Williams were both initiated on December 16, 1844. Sharp was passed on January 9, 1845. There is no record of him receiving the Master Mason’s degree. Williams was passed on December 28, 1844, and raised on March 17, 1845. Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 350.

⁸⁶ The four unindicted mob participants who later joined Warsaw Lodge were George Rockwell, Calvin Cole, Charles Hay, and Lyman Prentice. The other two possibilities are E. F. Chittenden and W. W. Chittenden. Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 315; *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 237–238, 350; Marsh, “Respectable Assassins,” 30; Jacob B. Backenstos, report, circa March 1846, Joseph Smith history documents, 1839–1860, CHL.

⁸⁷ John Montague and Henry Stephens were the two members of Warsaw Lodge who also participated in the assassination of the Smiths. Abraham J. Chittenden is the third possible participant. Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 218–219; *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 110; Marsh, “Respectable Assassins,” 30; Jacob B. Backenstos, report, circa March 1846, Joseph Smith history documents, 1839–1860, CHL.

⁸⁸ Oaks and Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy*, 66.

While the trial of Aldrich, Davis, Grover, Sharp, and Williams ended with the acquittal of all five men,⁸⁹ the actions of the brethren of Warsaw Lodge in allowing men under indictment to join their lodge soon came under the scrutiny of the Grand Lodge of Illinois. At the annual meetings of the grand lodge in October 1845, a two-member committee, consisting of Levi Lusk from Rushville and John H. Holton from Quincy, was appointed to investigate as to whether the lodge membership had actually allowed Davis, Sharp, and Williams to be initiated into the lodge when they were under indictment.⁹⁰

Levi Lusk, then the grand secretary of the Grand Lodge of Illinois,⁹¹ wrote to the brethren of Warsaw Lodge in March 1846, inquiring as to whether the lodge had conferred any of the Masonic degrees upon men who were under indictment. Days later, John Montague, a past master of Warsaw Lodge,⁹² replied to Lusk, acknowledging that the brethren of Warsaw Lodge had indeed conferred Masonic degrees on Davis, Sharp, and Williams while they were under indictment.⁹³ Montague explained, however, that the lodge membership believed at the time that they “were not violating any of the ancient landmarks of the institution” because the three in question “were worthy members of society, and respected by their fellow citizens,” with the only objection being the pending indictments. In fact, Montague wrote that the reputations of Davis, Sharp, and Williams

⁸⁹ Oaks and Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy*, 75–209; Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 410–17.

⁹⁰ *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 178, 224–25.

⁹¹ *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 173.

⁹² *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 110, 153, 237.

⁹³ Masonic historian Joseph Morcombe considered the actions of Warsaw Lodge in conferring Masonic degrees on indicted men “a proceeding certainly as grossly un-Masonic as any which formed the basis of accusations against the Mormon Masons.” Joseph E. Morcombe, “Masonry and Mormonism: A Record and a Study of Events in Illinois and Iowa Transpiring Between the Years 1840 and 1846,” *New Age* 2 (June 1905): 526.

“had not been at all impaired by the indictment, but, on the contrary, they were regarded with greater consideration than before, from the fact that they had been particularly selected as the victims of Mormon vengeance.” Montague concluded that “The action of the Lodge in the case referred to, was not without due deliberation.” If they had erred, they were not aware that they had done so.⁹⁴

When the investigating committee reported to Grand Master William F. Walker,⁹⁵ they suggested that it was not necessary for him to punish the brethren of Warsaw Lodge to the full extent of his power because “although the lodge erred, and greatly erred, yet they conceive the error was an error of the head and not of the heart; that all the harm has been done in the case that can be done; the men have been since tried by the laws of their country and a jury of their peers, and acquitted.” Subsequently, Grand Master Walker adopted the resolution of the committee, thinking that “attention having been called to the subject of caution and circumspection in all proceedings, and especially in the introduction of members into the Masonic family, a great end had been answered, and with this it would be well to let the lodge off.”⁹⁶ Since Davis, Sharp, and Williams had been acquitted, along with Aldrich and Grover, for the murders of the Smith brothers, the grand master concluded that inflicting any further punishment on the brethren of Warsaw Lodge for initiating indicted men into their lodge was unnecessary.

Following the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Mormon Masons persisted in defying the authority of the Grand Lodge of Illinois by continuing to meet and make

⁹⁴ Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 350–52.

⁹⁵ *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 169.

⁹⁶ *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 336–37.

Masons, while Masons throughout the state continued to express their resentment for the Mormon Masons. At the October 1844 meetings of the grand lodge, Illinois Masons withdrew the hand of fellowship from Nauvoo, Helm, and Nye lodges and declared clandestine all Masons involved with those lodges. The grand lodge even suspended the above named lodges “from all the privileges of Masonry within the jurisdiction of this Grand Lodge,” and requested that their sister grand lodges “deny them the same privileges.”⁹⁷ Shortly thereafter, because of “the oppressive and tyrinnical treatment” of the grand lodge toward Nauvoo Lodge and the other Mormon lodges in the area, Nauvoo Masons entertained the idea of forming their own grand lodge.⁹⁸ In April 1845, William G. Goforth informed his Mormon friends in Nauvoo “of hostile actions on the part of the Grand Lodge of Illinois against the Lodge at Nauvoo.”⁹⁹ Consequently, Brigham Young and other Mormon apostles counseled Lucius N. Scovil, worshipful master of Nauvoo Lodge,¹⁰⁰ to suspend the work of making Masons, urging them to gather “only as times shall permit.”¹⁰¹ This counsel from the apostles did not slow the work of Nauvoo Lodge. In fact, members of the lodge met almost daily from April 24, 1845, to September 15, 1845, holding 124 meetings during that span of time.

⁹⁷ *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 130.

⁹⁸ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, December 19, 1844, and January 2, 1845, CHL.

⁹⁹ George A. Smith, *Memoirs of George A. Smith*, circa 1860–1882, George A. Smith papers, 1834–1877, p. 287, CHL.

¹⁰⁰ After the death of Hyrum Smith, Nauvoo Masons elected Scovil as worshipful master of Nauvoo Lodge. Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, December 5, 1844, CHL.

¹⁰¹ George A. Smith, *Memoirs of George A. Smith*, circa 1860–1882, George A. Smith papers, 1834–1877, p. 287, CHL; Heber C. Kimball, *Journal*, April 10, 1845, Heber C. Kimball Papers, 1837–1866, CHL.

Despite the efforts of some Illinois Masons to rid their fraternity of Mormon involvement, Nauvoo Masons persisted in gathering and making Masons until the 1846 Mormon exodus from Illinois. While the last official minute entry in Minute Book 2 is dated September 15, 1845,¹⁰² rough draft minutes indicate that Nauvoo Masons held at least an additional thirty-five meetings from November 4, 1845, to February 7, 1846.¹⁰³ Additionally, evidence from a listing of the men who petitioned for and were initiated, passed, and raised in Nauvoo Lodge suggests that Mormon Masons held at least three more gatherings on March 14, 30, and April 8, 1846, before ceasing to meet as a lodge.¹⁰⁴ Mormon commitment to the Masonic fraternity in Illinois continued right up until the Mormons departed Nauvoo and headed west.

Conclusion

The suspension of Nauvoo Lodge's dispensation implemented by an injunction in July 1842 was lifted when a special investigating committee appointed by the officers of the Grand Lodge of Illinois found no real reason to continue the ban. Shortly thereafter, Mormon Masons began again to gather and make Masons at a rate that greatly outpaced the rest of the lodges in the state combined. Even though expressions of Masonic anti-Mormonism seemed to have ended, they would soon begin again. Efforts by members of Nauvoo Lodge to obtain a charter were blocked by Quincy Masons. Mormon Masons, from predominantly Mormon lodges in and around Nauvoo even had their dispensations

¹⁰² Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Minute Book 2, September 15, 1845, CHL.

¹⁰³ Nauvoo Masonic Lodge Rough Draft Minutes, CHL. These minute entries, written on various sheets of paper, some loose, others secured together in booklet form, are sandwiched in between the pages of Minute Book 2.

¹⁰⁴ This listing, like the rough draft minutes, is sandwiched in between pages of Minute Book 2.

revoked by the Grand Lodge of Illinois. Despite losing the blessing of the grand body, Mormon Masons continued meeting and making Masons in direct defiance of the authority of the grand lodge. The continued efforts of some Illinois Masons to find fault in the actions of Mormon Masons and the insubordinate attitudes and actions of Mormon Masons illustrates the delicacy of nineteenth-century frontier society. For Illinois Masons, the defiant attitudes and actions of Mormons Masons presented a problem for the community at large. Since Mormon Masons did not comply with the rules of the Masonic fraternity, Illinois Masons feared that those attitudes would bleed over into other parts of their lives, effectively threatening the frontier social order. Finding this unacceptable, Illinois Masons took it upon themselves to sever Mormon involvement with Freemasonry.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

Masonic anti-Mormonism began in 1841 when a group of Mormons, who had affiliated with Masonry prior to converting to Mormonism, petitioned the nearby Bodley Lodge in Quincy, Illinois, for a recommendation to open a lodge in Nauvoo. The Quincy Masons, who would later prove to be very suspicious of Mormon involvement in Freemasonry, denied the request. Not all Illinois Masons opposed a Mormon lodge. James Adams apparently encouraged the Mormons to pursue opening a lodge and Abraham Jonas facilitated the establishment of a lodge in Nauvoo when others objected. Many Illinois Masons were nervous about Mormon participation in their fraternity but they did not openly express their anxieties until they felt they had a legitimate excuse. They found that reason when word spread that John C. Bennett, a Mormon convert, Master Mason, and the secretary of Nauvoo Lodge, was an expelled Mason. If the allegations against Bennett were true, Illinois Masons would have plausible evidence that Mormon presence was detrimental to the high ideals of the order. While it was never proved that Bennett had been expelled, the charges against him acted as a catalyst for the public expression of Masonic anti-Mormonism.

Even after Nauvoo Masons expelled Bennett from their own lodge, anti-Mormon sentiment from Illinois Masons did not end. Bennett, who was excommunicated from the Church and stripped of all his civil duties, soon added fuel to the Masonic anti-Mormon fire. After leaving Nauvoo, Bennett published several letters making accusations about Joseph Smith and the Mormons, a few of which centered on the workings of Nauvoo

Lodge. Since Bennett had been the secretary of the lodge and had kept the lodge's minute book, he was familiar with all the proceedings of the lodge. Thus, he was able to use his previous position within Nauvoo Lodge to accuse the Mormon Masons of violating various Masonic regulations. Whereas allegations against Bennett had been the excuse that many Illinois Masons used to openly question Mormon participation in Freemasonry, now Bennett supplied the ammunition for continued Masonic anti-Mormonism. A comparison of Nauvoo Lodge's two extant minute books reveals that some of Bennett's claims against the Mormon Masons were true, while others were false. However, he effectively used the lodge's record books to damage the image of the Mormons. Knowing that their records would substantiate some of Bennett's claims, Mormon Masons attempted to maintain their relationship with Freemasonry by concealing their records. Illinois Masons also looked to the records to see if Mormon participation in the fraternity merited preservation by ordering the Nauvoo Masons to deliver their records to the meetings of the grand lodge for inspection.

Partly due to Bennett's claims, the grand master of the Grand Lodge of Illinois suspended Nauvoo Lodge's dispensation. After a thorough investigation, the grand master lifted the ban and Nauvoo Masons began anew to function as a lodge. However, Masonic anti-Mormonism would continue. As Nauvoo Masons petitioned for a charter, Quincy Masons worked to prevent them from obtaining one. Not only did the Mormon Masons not obtain charters for their lodges, but their dispensations were also revoked. These setbacks notwithstanding, Mormon Masons moved forward in working as a lodge, contrary to the authority of the Grand Lodge of Illinois. The disregard of Mormon Masons to the wishes of the grand lodge gave rise to more Masonic anti-Mormonism.

This tension illustrates the fragile dynamics of frontier America. As Mormon Masons ignored the demands of the grand lodge, Illinois Masons became suspicious of how that would translate to the larger society. Would Mormons who were unwilling to obey the rules of the Masonic fraternity be able to conform to the accepted rules of frontier Illinois? As Mormon Masons continued to discount the wishes and authority of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, they weakened the already unstable social order by proving that they would only comply when it was convenient or beneficial for them.

When the Mormons left Illinois in the spring of 1846, less than two years passed before another Masonic lodge was established in Nauvoo. At the meetings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois in October 1847, an application from a Daniel W. Pressel and others was presented. These Nauvoo Masons sought a dispensation to open a lodge in Nauvoo, and just as Mormon Masons had done back in 1841, Pressel and the other petitioners requested a recommendation from Bodley Lodge to open the proposed lodge. This time around, however, the Quincy Masons responded enthusiastically to the request and “duly recommended” the Nauvoo Masons. The grand lodge committee assigned to report on the petition of Pressel and the others from Nauvoo noted that “a dispensation may safely be granted to them,” and that “none of the objections exist now to granting such dispensation, which might well have been urged heretofore against the same, and therefore recommend that this Grand Lodge grant such dispensation, according to said petition.” Without the threat of Mormon Masons invading the fraternity and openly defying the authority of the grand lodge, a dispensation was issued to Pressel and the

other Nauvoo Masons;¹ the new lodge received a charter a year later.² Initially, the new lodge in Nauvoo was to be called Mount Moriah Lodge.³ That name, however, was given to another lodge that opened that same year in Hillsboro, Illinois, and a more telling name, Reclamation Lodge, was given to the lodge in Nauvoo.⁴

¹ *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, From Its Organization in 1840 to 1850 Inclusive* (Freeport, Ill.: Journal Print, 1892), 409, 412; John C. Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois, Ancient, Free, and Accepted Masons: From the Organization of the First Lodge Within the Present Limits of the State, Up to and Including 1850* (Springfield, Ill.: H. G. Reynolds, Jr., Masonic Trowel Office, 1869), 421.

² Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 451.

³ *Reprint of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 409.

⁴ Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois*, 448.

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