



A Call to Arms: The 1838 Mormon Defense of Northern Missouri (Dissertations in Latter-day Saint history)

Alexander L. Baugh

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"This 1996 dissertation demonstrates that the expulsion of the Latter-day Saints from Missouri in 1838–1839 was ""entirely unwarranted and illegal.""¹ Analyzing the history of the seven military episodes of this conflict, especially in terms of the traditional roles of local militias in the United States, Alexander L. Baugh shows that Latter-day Saints as United States citizens ""had every right to take up arms to defend themselves, particularly when local and state officials failed or refused to intervene in their behalf."² While there was wrong-doing especially on the part of some Mormon extremists, this study, contrary to other recent interpretations, places the balance of the responsibility for this antagonism heavily and decisively on the side of the Missourians. This study demonstrates that local vigilantes, county regulators, and a number of state officials (both civil and military), operated illegally against the Mormons in their attempts to force them to remove from selected regions, and finally the entire state altogether. When the Latter-day Saints' efforts to settle the difficulties by legal means failed, they were constrained to take matters into their own hands. Even then, however, the Mormons made every attempt to lawfully defend themselves by operating under the legally constituted militia of the county. Furthermore, the majority of the Mormon defenders who participated in the conflict did not have criminal intentions, nor should they be characterized as being a group of lawless miscreants. Theirs was a mission of community defense. Therefore, the 1838 contest must be examined from the standpoint of a defensive struggle on the part of the Mormons to maintain civil order and to protect their constitutional rights as citizens."



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