Acknowledgments

The origins of this study can be traced to a 1980 local history piece written for the Hamilton, Ohio Journal-News by historian Jim Blount. Ed Michaels brought the article to our attention in early 1995; he had kept the clipping tucked away with his genealogical research notes and only unearthed it in 1994, the 150th anniversary of the murder of the founding prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Blount’s account, “Hamilton Marshal Killed Mormon’s Joseph Smith,” provided us with the first suggestion that the assassination of the Prophet Joseph was driven more by national political interests than disagreement over Mormon theology, economics, or even polygamy. As practicing Latter-day Saints, we intend this work to assist in a re-evaluation of the final months in the life of the first Mormon prophet.

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Butler County Historical Society, Hamilton, OH
Butler County Records Center, Hamilton, OH
Cincinnati Historical Society, Cincinnati, OH
Cincinnati Public Library, Cincinnati, OH
Family History Library, Salt Lake City, UT
Grand Lodges of Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, and Ohio
Grant County Public Library, Williamstown, KY
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Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, OH
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Smith History Room, Oxford Branch, Lane Public Library, Oxford, OH
Southern Illinois University Library, Edwardsville, IL
University of North Texas Libraries, Denton, TX
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In the next canvass, we shall be influenced by no party consideration . . . so the partizans in this county, who expect to divide the friends of humanity and equal rights, will find themselves mistaken—we care not a fig for Whig or Democrat; they are both alike to us, but we shall go for our friends, our tried friends, and the cause of human liberty, which is the cause of God. We are aware that “divide and conquer” is the watchword with many, but with us it cannot be done.

Joseph Smith, December 1841

I am a Whig, and I am a Clay man. I am made of Clay, and I am tending to Clay, and I am going to vote for Henry Clay; that’s the way I feel . . . But I won’t interfere with my people religiously, to affect their votes, though I might to elect Clay, for he ought to be president . . . I am a democrat myself. I am a Washington democrat, a Jefferson democrat, a Jackson democrat, and I voted for Harrison [in 1840], and I am going to vote for Clay [in 1844].

Joseph Smith, August 1843

Tell the people we have had Whig and Democrats [as] Presidents long enough. We want a President of the United States . . . There is oratory enough in the Church to carry me into the Presidential chair the first slide.

Joseph Smith, January 1844

[O]ur candidate for this high office, has been butchered . . . to prevent him from being elected.

John Taylor, “The Next President”

Times and Seasons, August 1844