

## James Henry Rollins

1816-1899

*This sketch of the life of James Henry Rollins was dictated by him to his daughter, Mary Osborn, and was later re-written in 1924 by his youngest daughter, Idah M. Rollins Hamblin, with the assistance of Melissa R. Lee Heyborn.*

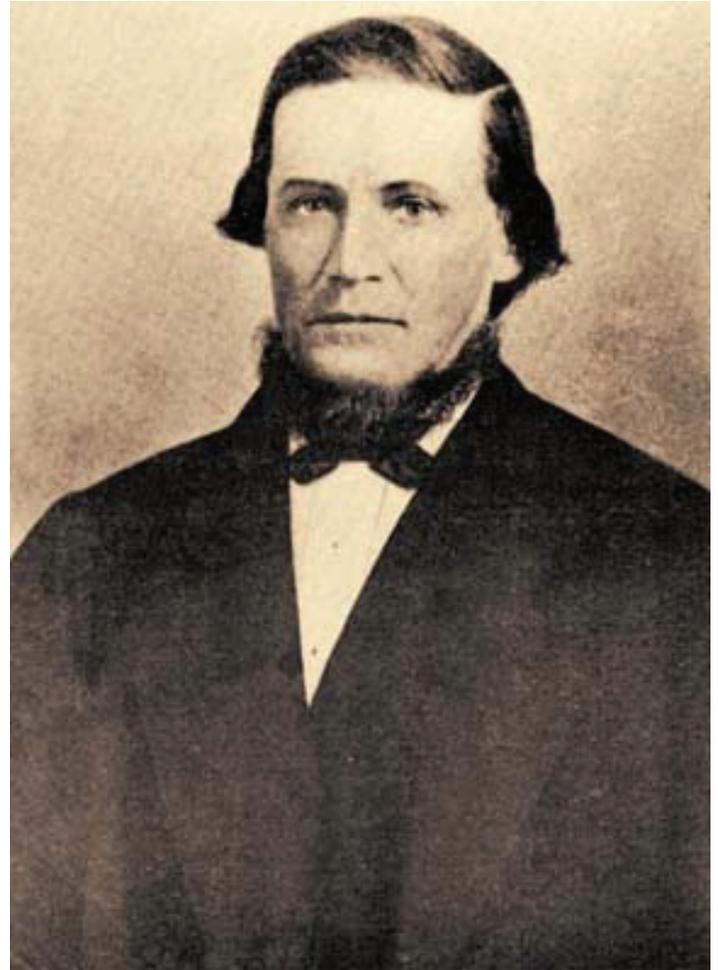
James Henry Rollins was born May 27th, 1816, in Lima, Livingston County, New York, the son of John Porter Rollins, born in Rutland, New Hampshire, about 1794, and Keziah Keturah Van Benthuyzen, born May 15, 1796, in Albany, New York.

The Rollins lived in Vermont and New Hampshire. There were three brothers who emigrated to America and settled in the Eastern States a while, then two of the brothers went south. Their names were James, John Porter and Henry Rollins. My father, John Porter, was interested in cattle and sheep, and he was going on a trip to Canada with a large boat load of cattle, when a storm came up and wrecked the boat, and he went with the load to the bottom of Lake Erie, about the year 1820 or 1821.

My mother was left a widow with three small children, myself and two sisters younger than me, Mary Elizabeth and Caroline. My mother's sister, Elizabeth Van Benthuyzen then the wife of Sidney A. Gilbert, took me to raise as their own. They moved from New York to Mentor, Ohio, in 1825, and a year after that moved to Kirtland, Ohio, at which place my Uncle Sidney went into the mercantile business with Orson [Newel K.] Whitney, and I did chores for them, and as soon as I was old enough was employed in their store as clerk.

I continued working thus until Oliver Cowdery and Parley P. Pratt, and some other brethren came to Kirtland and brought the Book of Mormon in the fall of 1830. These brethren were on their road to find the Center Stake of Zion. They preached the Gospel to my uncle and aunt and the Whitneys and several others, and they were converted and joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I did not join them, as I did not thoroughly understand it, but read the Book of Mormon through, and I had to read at night by firelight, as candles were very scarce at that time, and I lay on the floor on my back with my head to the fire and read at nights, the only time I had to read.

Brothers Cowdery and Pratt put some elders in



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James H. Rollins". The signature is written in dark ink on a light background. There is a horizontal line drawn under the signature.

charge and they were afraid to denounce the actions of individuals who were at that time operated upon by different kinds of spirits such as receiving revelations on parchment, and professing to receive them from heaven; others lying like they were dead, in meetings, on coming to rushing to the river and going through the form of baptism in the flowing ice until they had to be taken out, as was the case with Burr Riggs. After seeing all these, I pleaded with the Lord to show me if this spirit which was operating on certain individuals was His spirit. After much praying I was shown in a dream or vision Joseph and Hyrum. I saw them standing side by side through a wall which seemingly was transparent and was the color of amber. The light which enveloped

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them and me was not as the light of the sun, but such as penetrated me from head to foot. They beckoned me to follow them to the door, which opened to the north. They appeared as though they were waiting for me, and they received me in a very pleasing manner as I entered. After a very short time they bade me to follow them, which I did. They crossed a very long hall running east and west, the end of which I could not see; then entering a door which opened to the south, we three entered; they showing and pointing out the beauties of the place. I cannot describe the beautiful things I beheld. Nothing on earth can compare with the things I seen in my dream. They then passed to another door to the south; they opened it and entered, if I entered myself all remembrance was taken from me of that place. I never could think of anything I seen if I entered. After this I was shown by a guide, which was at my side. He showed me many things which has transpired since, and are being literally fulfilled to the very letter. My guide also showed me a liquid billow of fire, on either side of me; as it rolled along it consumed everything upon the earth, the extent or the length thereof either was I could not discern. I asked my guide as I stood over this fire which had no flame, what it was; he said, it was what is to come and the destruction which was to roll over the earth to cleanse it, and make it pure. He then took me back and showed me many things which I would have to pass through. He told me to hold fast the Iron Rod, which, at that time, I did not know the meaning of, or neither did he explain it to me.

The adversary, previous to this had tried hard and was determined to crush me. I plead with the Lord to help me, and said, "Oh Lord, take it away. I want none of it, don't let it follow me." It immediately vanished and my spirit was taken from my body at least for 10 hours before it returned.

And all these things shown me has surely been an anchor and solace to me in the many trials and tribulations which I have passed through. I am now 80 years of age, and am having this written from what I can remember, thinking perhaps some of my children and descendants would like to read them what I have passed away.



**Newell K. Whitney Store  
Kirtland, Ohio**

### **My first acquaintance with the Prophet Joseph Smith**

As early as February, 1831, I first met Joseph Smith in my Uncle Sidney Gilbert's house. This was the first day he arrived in Kirtland, and while he was in the house conversing with my uncle and aunt, I being at the front gate, saw a wagon turn over as it was coming down the slippery hill, and heard a woman and 2 or 3 children screaming. This was Joseph's family. I ran in and told Joseph and Uncle about it, and Joseph ran to assist them without his hat. My first impression was, that if any of the occupants were hurt seriously that Joseph could heal them, but none of them were hurt. Joseph and my uncle returned to the house. He asked my uncle if I was his son. He said, "No, I was his wife's nephew," "Well," he said, "the Lord has shown him great things." I truly had seen Joseph and Hyrum in my vision in December 1830.

After the turning over of the wagon Joseph and his wife, Emma, came to my uncle's house for the purpose of finding a house to suit her. Soon after this, more or all of the Smith family arrived in Kirtland. From this time on I became personally acquainted with the Smith family. Joseph Sen., his wife, Lucy Smith, Hyrum, Samuel, William, Don Carlos, and Lucy Smith, the youngest daughter, also Jenkins Salsberry and wife. All these I saw almost daily while I remained in Kirtland. I first saw Father Joseph Smith's wife, Lucy, and Don Carlos, on Sunday, the next day after they arrived at a meeting held at

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Isaac Morley's house. They were so very much fatigued from their journey, and during the meeting Don Carlos fell asleep in his chair, and after several had spoken he awoke and arose and bore as strong a testimony as I ever heard, of the truth of the work. Samuel H. Smith was a man of few words and was very industrious and hard working. William Smith afterwards came to the store and asked for me to go with him on his shooting expedition up and down the river. They often consented to let me go with him. Don Carlos and myself were great chums and were quite attached to each other. In a short time I took leave of the Smiths to prepare to start westward. Joseph went to Kirtland in the spring of 1831, and the first conference of the L.D.S. Church was held in that place. During the summer of 1831 many Elders were sent westward to Missouri, according to a revelation given June 1831, Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon and Sidney Gilbert with his wife accompanying him, she being the first Mormon woman that went to Independence. I accompanied them, at the first of October we prepared to start, as we had to go from Kirtland across the western reserve to the Ohio River, which we did in wagons; taking the families of W.W. Phelps, Isaac Morley and several other families; also my mother's family, two sisters and myself. We were delayed when we got to Arrow Rock, one hundred miles below Independence, on account of the great flow of ice. The steamer turned back, and we remained there with W.W. Phelps for at least 5 weeks, when the wagons came from Independence, where we arrived about the 1st of January, 1832. Joseph Smith the Prophet came to Independence about the last of April, or the first of May. He came to my uncle's house and saluted my uncle and aunt, and then he came to me, and said, "Henry, I want to baptize you if possible before I leave." I was then working in my uncle's store and asked him if I could go with him to the Whitmore settlement, that he wanted to baptize me. My uncle said he could not spare me that day for the majority of the people came in on Saturday to do their trading, and he had no other help that he could depend on but me. When Joseph returned from the Whitmore settlement, he authorized Oliver Cowdery to baptize me instead of Him, which he did not get to do. I was finally baptized by John Carroll on the 1st of June 1832, about 1 1/2 miles west of the Temple block.

I will say good-bye to the Prophet as he has started on his journey down the river, the exact date of his starting I do not remember.

### Camp of Israel

I will now pass on from May, 1832, to June 1st, 1834, at which time came the first Herald of the Camp of Israel. The two men, namely, Amasa Lyman and Almon Babbitt came to the Hill farm which was occupied by Sidney Gilbert. They told of the near approach of the [Zion's] Camp, and of their escape from the mob at Fishing River. In a day or two after this the Camp arrived. Joseph the Prophet and his brother William, with Dr. F. G. Williams and several others stayed at our place, but the majority of the Camp went down Bush Creek, some three-fourths of a mile from us to the farm of John Burk, where many were stricken with cholera and died. There were five [who] died at our house, namely, William Weeden, a Brother Judd, Jessie Smith, a cousin of Joseph's and Sidney Gilbert, and Phebe Murdock. During this time of sickness I was sent by the Prophet and Dr. Williams to Liberty for medicine, and by Joseph to Brother Partridge's, Morley's and other places, with dispatches, of word to other brethren who lived at a distance from the Camp of Israel about the cholera and the brethren dying, as I had a pony and could go during the time of this terrible scourge. George A. Smith and Jesse Smith, both of them about my own age, we three were out in the road trying to get a ball out of a pistol which had got wet at Fishing River. We were all three quite merry and were laughing a great deal, when Jesse made the remark, "We had not ought to be out here making so much noise, while there are so many of our brethren sick and dying in the house. We don't know how soon some of us may be taken." We then opened the gate and went in at the east door of the house. In a short time after entering the house this noble boy was struck with the cholera. Joseph and his brethren worked over him, and with all they could do for him it availed them nothing and he died lying on the floor of our largest room. We wrapped him up in his bed-clothes and carried him and the other brethren what had died, and put them in graves that had been dug for them. We carried them through a terrible thunderstorm; we laid them in their graves without any coffins and covered them with

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mother earth. Joseph took the death of this noble boy very hard, as he undoubtedly had been entrusted with his care by the boy's parents. At this time Joseph was reprimanded by the Lord for trying to stay His Hand, and I think the Lord told him at this time that He would smite him if he tried more to stay his decree of afflictions as promised.

About this time the Camp disbanded, and I bid good-bye to Joseph and his brethren as they took their departure for Kirtland and its vicinity.

I next met the Prophet, his father, mother, and brothers in Far West, Caldwell County, Missouri, where the Saints had gone to build up and settle in this county. I think the Smiths left Kirtland almost daily, and father Smith and family and Joseph and Hyrum were on the square after they arrived in Far West. Difficulties were encountered by the Prophet and Sidney Rigdon in obtaining the Presidency of the Church, as John Whitmer was the President and had been presiding during Joseph's absence. Oliver Cowdery, John Whitmer and W.W. Phelps were opposed to Joseph taking the Presidency, and when Joseph arrived there was dissatisfaction among some of those who wished to rule, and have their own way, independent of the Prophet, but failed to accomplish their designs in all matters. As time went on the Prophet and his brethren had considerable trouble from those that dissented and took sides against him and remained antagonistic until Boggs' army entered Far West and took Joseph and Hyrum and many others prisoners.

I will now return to what happened before Boggs' army came in as short a manner as possible. Difficulties had commenced in Daviess County on the day of election which was at my place of business, and in a bowery by the side of the house. About 12 or 1 o'clock Warren, a Democrat, who was a great friend to our people, in helping them to corn, bacon, etc., when the people first went to settle the country. At this time, William Pennington, the Whig candidate, got angry at this, and jumped on an empty barrel and made a great commotion and excitement. About this time, Dick Waldon struck Shoemaker Brown, one of our brethren, over the head with a three foot board. This caused a great stir among those present. John Butler and Price Nelson knocked down 3 or 4 of the opposite parties which caused an uproar, and

broke up the election, and broke me up also. Soon after this transaction our brethren who had settled on Grand River were being driven in by a mob, partly to Diamon from other settlements. About this time it seemed that something must be done to protect (Adam-on-di-Ahman), and the brethren, Joseph and Hyrum, with David Patten's hundred men equipped themselves at Far West for Adam-on-di-Ahman. But before starting for Di-Ahman, 10 young men were chosen and were well equipped. Their names are as follows: Jess E. Hunder, Darwin Chase, Chauncey L. Higbee, Joel Miles, Elisha and Elijah Everett (twins) Frank Higbee, James H. Rollins, Benson Williams Durith and sometimes Ira Miles were with us. We were taken by the Prophet and his brother to the west side of Adam-On-di-Ahman. They there gave us instructions and orders which were to go to Millport as speedily as possible, to see if the mob were there in force, as had been reported. But they had heard of our coming and had left with a cannon which they had threatened to blow up Adam-on-di-Ahman with. We saw no one as we entered Millport, but a woman sticking her head out of a window. On returning toward Di-Ahman, we met several men going to Millport armed with a hundred rounds of ammunition on each man. We did not harm them. Finding that the mob had left Millport with the cannon and was making their stop at the Methodist Campground, 25 miles distance. We returned and reported what we had seen and done, then Joseph and Hyrum and David Patten's hundred traveled swiftly through their campground where we found the cannon in a very mysterious way. It was buried near the house and was discovered by Stephen Hale, the butt of the cannon had been uncovered by an old sow rooting the dirt away. Our men hunted under the house for balls and powder. We found sacks of powder there; also a cart was provided to carry the cannon, and it was taken to Di-Ahman that same day that we left Di-Ahman in the morning.

In a few days after this, we returned to Far West and were kept constantly on the move, to watch the movement of the mob. About this time a mob collected west of Far West on Crooked River. As soon as the news was heard of their collecting many of our brethren with David Patten at their head went to surprise the mob. At this time David Patten was shot and some others

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killed and wounded. David Patten died. The next day after this the mob gathered at Hayn's [Hawn's] mill and pounced on our brethren, killing 18 of them. Among these was a young man by the name of Oliver Cox, who was my wife's foster brother. When he was leaving home the girls cried and did not want him to go, but he said, "Never mind, girls, if I die, I will have my boots on, and I will not be shot in the back." And he was not, he was shot in the abdomen, and when he called for water, as he did not die immediately, the water would run out of the place where he was shot, and the mob drug him all over the shop for his boots as they were new ones.

He was thrown in the well with the rest that was killed there and covered with mother earth. There were several others wounded at this time. On this same day, Col. George M. Hinkle ordered 50 men to go and relieve, or guard them, but only our ten volunteered to go. We were determined to go and help our brethren. As we rode across the Square, the Prophet came out of George Robertson's house, where David Patten and O'Banion lay dead. He came out without hat or coat and stopped us and asked us where we were going. We told him we were going to Hayn's [Hawn's] Mill to assist the brethren there. He told us that we were his men, and that we must not go. If we did go against his will there would not be one of us left to tell the tale tomorrow morning. He was very pale and said he, "Go put your horses up and help us to bury these two brethren." And we did just as he told us. This, my children, was a sad day for us as a people. And soon after this it was noised around that Governor Boggs was raising the militia of the state to come against us. Preparations were made by our people to defend themselves. We tore down many log houses and made breastworks of them. This was continually going on. Boggs' army appeared on Goose Creek with five thousand men. I was on guard most of the night, which was a little rainy and very dark. The captain of the guard told me he would go home to get something to eat and would return in a short time. But he did not return; he buried his own sword and did not appear among us any more. The next day, as we were all gathered at the breastworks, we seen four men approaching us from the army with a white flag. Two of us boys were ordered to go and meet them with a flag of truce, namely James H. Rollins and Chauncey L. Higbee. A considerable fuss was made

by Hinkle to get a piece of white cloth. At length, one man tore off his shirt flap, and tied it on a stick, and we both started, armed with our pistols, and knives, myself carrying the flag. We went and met the men who were coming up from the army; they were to-wit, a Mr. Huggins, a Mr. Gingell and two of the Pomeroy brothers. They talked very saucy to us because we met them with arms, they having none. I told them that we did not know what kind of men we were to meet. They asked many questions regarding the people that were in Far West, Sister Adam Lightner and family, John Clemison's family to come out of town and they would kill all the rest. I told them that Mrs. Lightner was my sister, and she did not want to go and leave the town, and I said I would stand by her regardless of life or death. Soon after this the army came up near our breast-works which was west of the town, nearly half a mile. Here they formed themselves into a hollow square. Col. Hinkle had given up the town to General Clark, and others of the army, and we were ordered first to march out to the army and give up our arms. We marched out, playing with the band, Washington's death march. We marched into the hollow square. At this time I saw, as I turned around, two of the Jackson County mob whom I knew, namely Tom Wilson and William Baker. They jumped the barricade with the horses. I then threw my drum from my shoulders and gave it a kick which rolled it into the square and followed these men up into town, where I found them before John M. Burk's tavern talking with two women, namely Mrs. George Harris and my aunt Elizabeth Gilbert. I charged them severely for talking to such men as they were our enemies, and had come to destroy us as a people. They said to me, "Why Henry, we will not hurt them. We did not come to destroy the women; but wanted the men to be subject to the law." These men went riding over the town after this, while the brethren were giving up their arms in the square, and prisoners were being taken out of their number that were in the square. Joseph and Hyrum were taken prisoners and threatened by many of the officers of the army to be shot or hung, but General Donaphan and Atchison who were at the head of the Liberty Grays, said they would leave the army entirely if such proceedings were carried out. It was finally decided to spare their lives at that time, and they were taken with 40 or 50 of

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our brethren to the Richmond jail. Joseph and Hyrum, Lyman Wight, Darwin Chase, and some others were put in jail, there not being room for the others. They were put in the court house with a hundred men to guard them--that was inside the court house.

About this time the Lightner brothers came up with a wagon, a prairie schooner, and they took Clemison and family, and Adam Lightner and my sister, his wife, and family into this wagon. I was assisting them in loading their bedding and they plead with me to go with them, and take my young wife along, whom I had married on the previous September 4, 1838. They finally persuaded me to go and they secreted me in the bottom of the wagon lying with my face downward, and they threw bedding on top of me, and when they left I was in this position and remained thus until we had passed safely through the army, and for several miles distance, when I was relieved of this tiresome position. We camped some 15 miles distance from Far West that night in the open prairie, and made our beds on the ground, and when we awoke in the morning there was 2 or 3 inches of snow above us. We got our breakfast early and pressed on our journey towards Richmond, passing through that place without stopping. We arrived at Pomeroy ferry about 4 o'clock in the afternoon. The women and children were taken in the yowl, and the wagon and team were taken in the ferry boat. The ice being very bad, floating down in great chunks. The boat with the women and children in were ready to start. The ferry-man wanted Mr. Lightner to get in the boat and leave me to go over another time. Mr. Lightner said to him, "Mr. Harwood, I want you to understand that when I go, he goes, and if he stays, I stay also." Consequently when the small boat came back, we both went, and arrived at the landing where the wagon was waiting to take us on the Abner Lightner's, near Lancaster, Missouri. I remained at Lightner's house some 5 days with the others that were with us, and as I was reading the family Bible along in the room, there came a knock at the door. I bid them come in. A man stepped in the room and asked if Mr. Rollins was there. I told him I was the man. His name was Raglin, whom I knew very well in Daviess County. He said to me, "Can you pay me for a horse that you bought of me." I told him that he knew very well that I had nothing; that my partner, Slade, in Far West, had all

my property, and he (Slade) would pay it. At this time, two other men rapped at the door inquiring for me. As they entered they said they had been sent for me from Richmond. I asked them what they wanted me for, and if they had any papers. They said, "No, they were under martial law, and I was wanted for a witness against others. I asked them if they would allow me to enter another room to put on a clean shirt. The men watched outside. They then ordered me to get on to one of the horses behind one of them. It was snowing very hard at the time. We went to the river where the ferry boats were lying awaiting their return. We crossed the river among the flowing ice. The ferryman, Mr. Harwood, grinning at me, by whose means I was traced to Lightner's house. I then mounted as before behind one of the soldiers, and arriving at Richmond court house, when General Clark appeared at the door, the men saying, "here is the man you sent us for." He said, "You get down off the horse, and go in the bull pen where sure enough there I found some 40 or 50 of our brethren, such as Bishop Partridge, Isaac Morley, James and Isaac Allred, and many others that I will not mention here, that were old men, and many of my former 10.

I was called the next morning when court had convened and the state prosecutor read the charges which were treason, murder, arson, larceny, burglary. He asked me if I was guilty of any of these. I told him, "No, sir, I am not guilty of none of them." About 11 o'clock the Prophet Joseph and Hyrum were brought into the court department which was situated on the same floor where we were kept. A pole was stretched across to keep us back from Judge King and his court. I stood, close to the pole, at the back of Joseph and Hyrum, and the lawyers Donaphan and Atchison. A man was brought in as witness against me, by the name of Odell, who testified that I had burned his house. I spoke openly, as I stood behind Joseph and Hyrum, that he was a curly headed liar. Joseph turned his head toward me and said, "Shaw, Henry, don't say anything." This saying caused some consternation in the court room. What was done about it, I don't remember. We were kept prisoners for several weeks. At last it was agreed that we could bail each other out, one of the brethren bailing another. Sometimes one would go bail for three or four of the brethren until they were all bailed out but myself. Isaac Allred having

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agreed to bail me out previous to this, but did not. I got one of the guards to go with me to find him. I asked him about it and he said he couldn't as he had already bailed out four or five of the men. I was then taken back and put under guard until evening. Someone came and told me that my young wife had come to see me, so I was allowed to go and see her, and if any one appeared as an angel, she sure did to me. She had ridden on a horse from Lexington, 35 miles. She was dressed in a black silk dress and looked very beautiful. And the warden said to her, and took the name of the Lord, and said, if as beautiful women as you are has a husband in jail you sure shall see him. She had been left at Lightners among strangers all this time. Donaphan and Atchison, the lawyers, took me to Gudgels Hotel to see her. They said I should stay there with my wife that night. They put us in room 6 by 8 with 2 guards inside the room with their heads against the door. I was taken very sick in the night and my wife was obliged to relieve my pain. The guard was determined to not let her go out, when my brother-in-law, Mr. Carr, said, "O let her go." He was one of the mob. The next morning at breakfast they set me and my wife at the head of the table. All eyes were turned upon us. About 10 o'clock in the day I succeeded in obtaining bail. My bail was fixed for all these crimes and I was signed by the notorious Beaugard Methodist preacher, Nathaniel Carr, my brother-in-law. Soon after this was settled, I obtained a horse, saddle, and bridle, and started with my wife on the same horse for Far West, 36 miles distance. It was quite cold, and we had to ride and run alternately to get warm until we arrived, wearied at Far West in the night safely. We had not been home long, Beaugard appeared in Far West and exacted my step-father's hotel, my father-in-law's hundred acres of land, and 40 acres of my own land, at least a thousand dollars worth of other property for security for the five hundred dollars for my bail, or he would take me back to prison. Some of the land that he wanted lay 3 miles from Haun's Mill. I had not heard whether my wife's father would consent to Beaugard's requirements or not.

About this time, my wife's brother, William Walker, brought a horse, saddle, and bridle and portman-teau, and told me to take the horse and skip. Beaugard, that evening, took me up stairs and told me if I didn't produce those men to go my security the next day, he

would take me back to prison. That night I saddled up the horse and mother gave me \$16 to start with. C. L. Higbee and myself started together. The young people of Far West had gathered at a house half a mile out of town to bid us good-bye. We left them and rode 25 miles that night and came to a deserted house. After feeding our horses some corn that was in the crib, we laid down and remained there until daylight and pressed on our journey, and at sunset that day we crossed the mouth of the Grand River, 100 miles from Far West, when we put up at a house on the south side of Grand River, where we stayed all night. Next morning we started on our journey towards Quincy. We stopped again that night and put up at a hotel, when we learned that the Mississippi River was full of ice, and were not able to cross. A great many of our people were there. C L. Higbee parted with me here. This is the fifth day of our journey. I followed down the river alone obtained a crossing down the river at Clarksville, and the same day I crossed the Illinois River 20 miles from the city of Alton. I crossed that river and got to Alton at 9 o'clock that night having rode the same horse 350 miles in 5 days.

Source:

<https://www.boap.org/LDS/Early-Saints/JRollins.html>

Following a Court of Inquiry held November 12-29, 1838, before Circuit Court Judge Austin King, James Henry Rollins was indicted for arson and treason. However, the charging documents misspell his name as: James H. Rawlins. Judge King ordered indictments against 60 defendants including 43 counts of treason, 35 counts of arson, 17 counts of burglary, 15 counts of riot, 4 counts of larceny, 5 counts of murder, 2 counts of obstruction, and 1 count of receiving stolen property for a total of 112 indictments. 49 defendants were released after posting bail from \$500 to \$1,000. These men were then told to gather their families and leave Missouri. Eleven defendants were held without bail. In the end, not one defendant was convicted of any crimes.

Source:

www.LawEnforcementServices.biz  
Missouri Mormon War and the Law.pdf  
by Les Langford