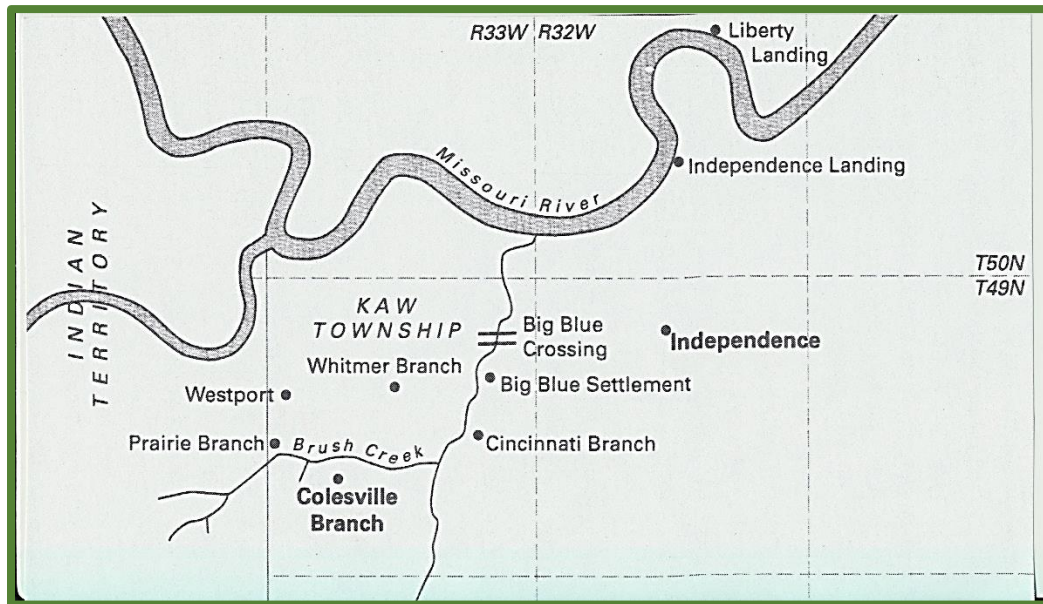


## Doctrine and Covenants Section 63

“And now behold, this is the will of the Lord your God concerning his saints, that they should assemble themselves together unto the Land of Zion, not in haste, lest there should be confusion, which bringeth pestilence.”

D & C 63:2



*Mormon Settlements in Jackson County, Missouri, 1831-1833  
In William G. Hartley book "Stand By My Servant Joseph", page 160*

## Life in Kaw Township Missouri in 1831

In June 1831, Joseph Smith instructed the Colesville Branch members to move to Missouri.

On July 20, 1831, Joseph was in Independence, Missouri and shared the revelation that where he was standing was “the land which I have appointed and consecrated for the gathering of the saints.”<sup>1</sup> In the next three weeks the Colesville Branch would arrive in Missouri, the land was dedicated and a symbolic foundation for Zion was laid, a temple site was dedicated, and the Prophet Joseph presided over the funeral of the first saint to die in Zion, Polly Peck.

Missouri was significantly different from New York and the other New England states in which the majority of the members of the church had previously lived.

**Missouri was a very new state, and very much the frontier.**

- Missouri became a state in 1821. It joined the Union as part of the “Missouri Compromise” which tried to balance the number of slave and free states. Owning

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<sup>1</sup> Doctrine & Covenants 57:1-3.

and selling slaves was legal in Missouri. "Slaves were considered real estate," according to one historian, quoting the laws of Missouri at the time.<sup>2</sup>

- Jackson County, Missouri was created in as a county 1826, and it included some land that belonged to the Osage Tribe until an 1825 treaty. Kaw Township where the Colesville Branch settles was even on the far western edge of this western-most county in Missouri. Newcomers to the state who wanted to preach religion to the native population [missionaries to the Lamanites] were not popular.
- In 1830 the total population of Kaw Township, which included Independence, was 2,823 people.<sup>3</sup>
- In 1828, there were 29 males who voted in the Kaw Township election. The influx of Saints from Ohio changed the voting dynamic in the area. By late 1832, there were 680 men who voted in Kaw Township.<sup>4</sup> Only free white male citizens who lived in the state of Missouri for at least one year could vote in elections.
- The city of Independence, Missouri was officially established on March 29, 1827. It was the furthest spot westward on the Missouri River that could be reached by steamboat, and a decade later it became a starting point for most traveling the Oregon Trail.<sup>5</sup>
- The clerk of the court in Independence in 1827 was Liliburn W. Boggs, the man who became the Governor of Missouri.<sup>6</sup> In 1838 Boggs issued an "extermination order" against the Mormons. The order directed that Mormons be treated as enemies and "must be exterminated or driven from the state, if necessary for the public good".
- From the book, *Kansas City, Missouri, It's History and People*, written 1908: "The country around Independence was soon settled with Mormons. Mills and shops were started by them in the town and a paper called the "Evening and Morning Star" was established by W.W. Phelps. The original settlers did not like their prosperous Mormon neighbors and trouble followed. They made many charges against the Mormons, the principal one of which was that they were abolitionists. The editor of the "Evening and Morning Star," organ of the "kings and priests of the most high God," was mobbed, tarred feathered and beaten for condemning slavery and for maligning and threatening the gentiles."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Carrie Westlake Whitney, *Kansas City Missouri, Its History and its People 1808-1908*, 1908, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. 1830 Census

<sup>4</sup> The Joseph Smith Papers. [http://josephsmithpapers.org/ Home>places>Kaw Township Missouri](http://josephsmithpapers.org/Home>places>Kaw%20Township%20Missouri). Accessed April 27, 2025.

<sup>5</sup> Whitney, *History of Kansas City*, 1908, p.35.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 40.

- Joseph Knight, Jr. wrote:  
*"We arrived in Jackson county, Missouri, 25 July 1831. We found one family named Joshua Lewis living there. Oliver Cowdery and Parly P. Pratt and one or two others had come before us preaching. As we came by water we had no tents, and my father and I slept in a hen coop two weeks til we got a shelter. . .When we got our houses I went to work by the day to get mill stones and iron, for we had eaten our grain whole for the want of mills. I built the first mill in Jackson Co., that was built in the church. Then I made the furniture and fixed up the first printing office in Independence, then put up the shelves and counters for the store."<sup>8</sup>*
- Living conditions were harsh and medical care almost non-existent in Kaw Township at that time. Mother Polly Knight passed away on August 7, 1831, just 12 days after arriving in Missouri. Her married daughter, Ester Knight Stringham died a few months later leaving 3 children and a husband; Polly's older sister's husband, Aaron Culver passed away that year as well.
- Parley Pratt stayed in Kaw Township with members of the Colesville Branch not long after they arrived in Missouri. Parly had been serving as a missionary in the western states, and for the fall and winter season, he stayed in Missouri to get well again. The autobiography of Parley Pratt records his time with the Colesville Branch in Missouri. [These comments from Parley Pratt were also quoted in the article for D & C Section 1 in the January Knight connections material.]

He wrote:

*"I was taken sick with the fever and the ague [probably malaria], owing to the exposures of the climate through which we had traveled. I suffered extremely for several months; being brought very low with fever, and with other afflictions.*

*I tarried mostly with a branch of the Church commonly called the Colesville branch. They had removed from Colesville in the state of New York, and settled on the borders of a fertile prairie, about twelve miles west of the village of Independence, and near the boundaries which divide the State of Missouri from the Indian Territory. They consisted about 60 souls, and were under the presidency of a faithful and zealous Elder by the name of Newel Knight."*

*The Colesville branch was among the first organized by Joseph Smith, and constituted the first settlers of the members of the Church in Missouri. They had arrived late in the summer [about August 4<sup>th</sup>] and cut some hay for their cattle, sowed a little grain, and prepared some ground for cultivation, and were engaged during the fall and winter in building log cabins, etc. The winter was cold, and for some time about 10 families lived in one log cabin, which was open and unfinished, while the frozen ground served as a floor. Our food consisted of beef and a little bread made of corn, which had been grated into coarse meal by rubbing the ears on a tin grater. This was*

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<sup>8</sup> William G. Hartley, *They are My Friends*, Appendix B, Joseph Knight, Jr., "Incidents of Church History," Grandin Book, 1986, p. 215-16

*rather an inconvenient way of living for a sick person, but it was for the gospel's sake, and all were cheerful and happy.*

*We enjoyed many happy seasons in our prayer and other meetings, and the Spirit of the Lord was poured out upon us, and even on the little children, insomuch that many of eight, ten and twelve years of age spake, and prayed, and prophesied in our meetings and in our family worship. There was a spirit of peace and union, and love and good will manifested in this little church in the wilderness, the memory of which will be ever dear to my heart.<sup>9</sup>*

Diane Mangum, April 2025

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<sup>9</sup> Parley P. Pratt, Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt, first edition published 1874. This comes from the reprinted 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, published by Deseret Book, Salt Lake City, 1972, pages 69-72.