A Justice of the Peace in the Shadow of Carthage

George Rockwell, George W. Thatcher, and an 1849 Request for the Laws of Illinois

Revised illustrated edition • October 2026

Highlights

A small request opens a larger history. Rockwell's 1849 letter joins a Warsaw magistrate to a county clerk whose earlier connections reached directly into Joseph Smith's Nauvoo. [1, 2]

Their own records complicate the familiar labels. Thatcher joined the effort to protect Smith in 1843 and subscribed $2.50 toward Willard Richards's house. Rockwell's June 1844 letter described his work to obtain support for expelling the Saints. [3, 4, 5]

A later family account adds important evidence. A 1918 biography placed Rockwell with the troops responsible for the killings. It strengthens the evidence of association without establishing his precise actions inside or outside the jail. [6]

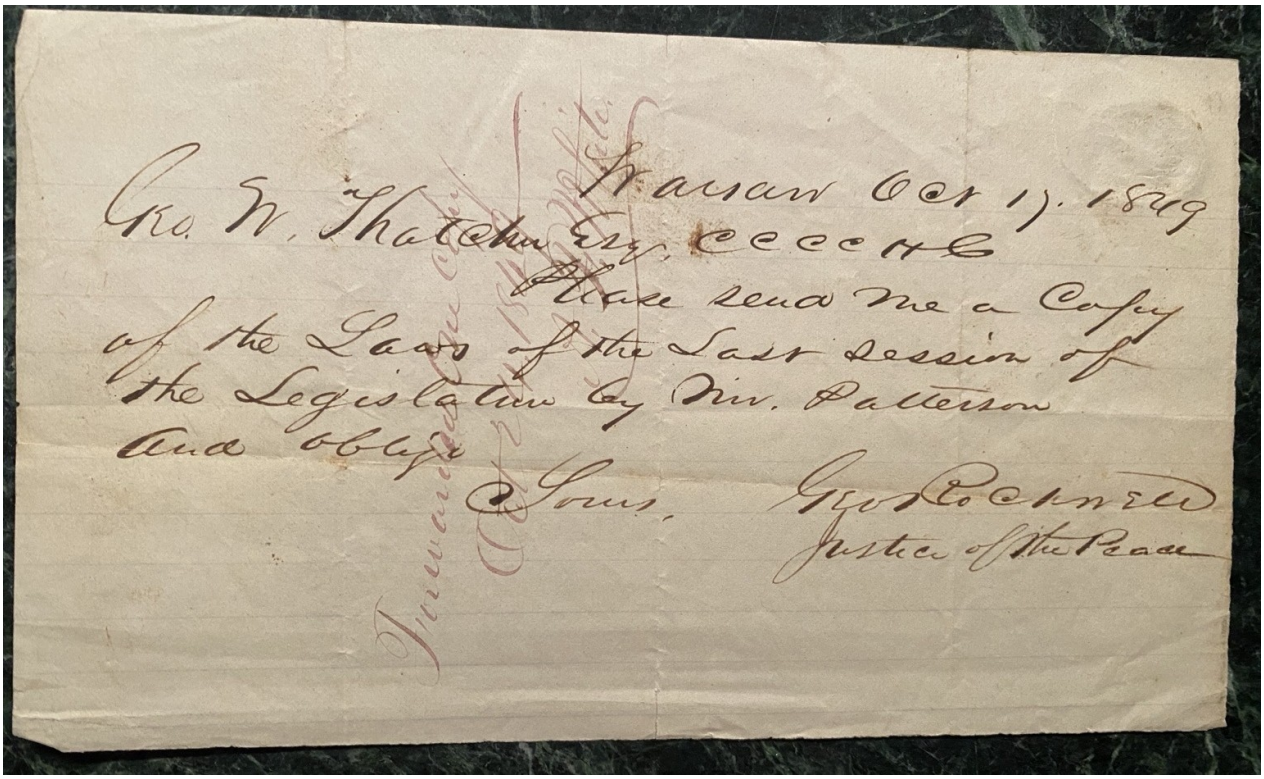
George Rockwell wanted the laws

Writing from Warsaw in October 1849, he asked George W. Thatcher to send him a copy of the acts passed at the legislature's last session. William Patterson could bring the volume. The request needed only a few lines, a courteous closing, and the title beneath Rockwell's name: "Justice of the Peace." [1]

Across the same sheet, in pale reddish ink and at right angles to his writing, someone recorded what appears to be the answer: "Forwarded One Copy." A request had apparently become a piece of completed office business. Neither writer explained why a law book mattered to him. Neither referred to the murders at Carthage or to the Saints who had left the county.

For the reader, those silences are the beginning of the story. These were not names without a past. One leads to a boat sent to protect Joseph Smith; the other to a horseback journey made to assemble opposition against his people. Their letter belongs to the quieter business of 1849, but its history begins before the county found even that measure of quiet. [3, 5]

The original document



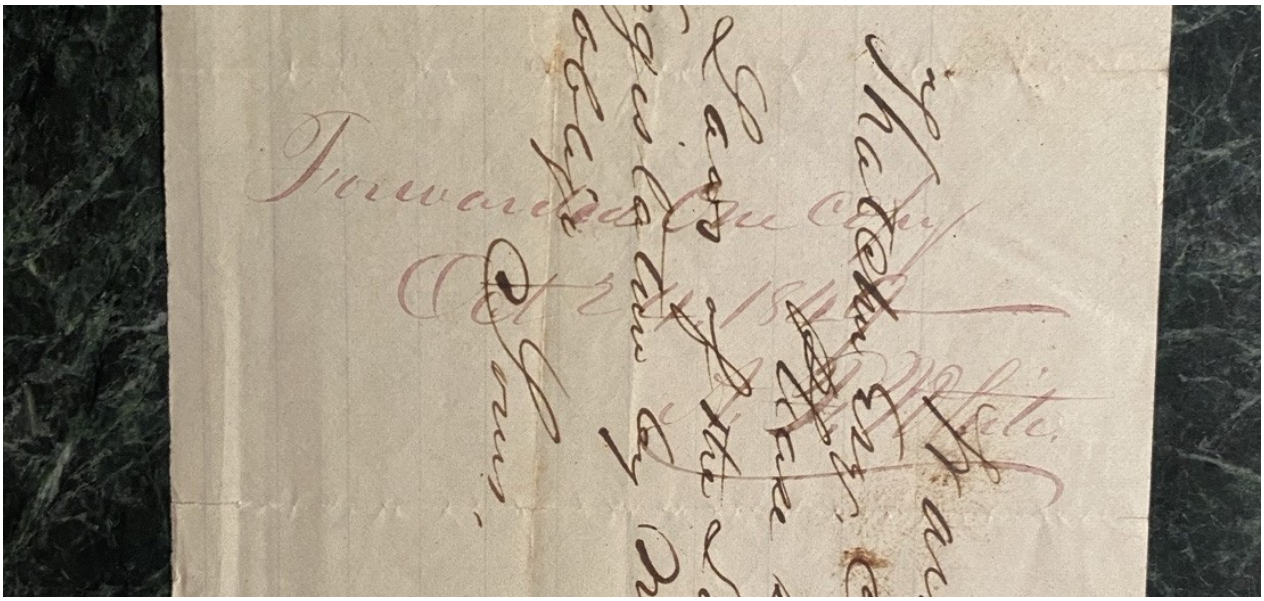
The original request, rotated upright from IMG_3636.jpeg. No handwriting has been reconstructed or removed. The reverse is reported blank. [1]

Faithful transcription

Warsaw Oct [17] .1849
Geo. W. Thatcher Esq [C C C C &c.?]
Please send me a Copy
of the Laws of the Last session of
the Legislature by Wm. Patterson
and oblige
Yours,
Geo Rockwell
Justice of the Peace

The unusual office abbreviation is preserved rather than silently expanded. It probably refers to Thatcher's county-clerk position. The day is most plausibly 17; brackets retain the remaining uncertainty. "By Wm. Patterson" supplies the means of delivery, not the name of an author. [1, 2]

The office's answer



The perpendicular endorsement turned for reading. The original request crosses the paler writing; the color difference has not been used to invent concealed strokes. [1]

Forwarded One Copy
[Oct. 24, 1849]
[signature not securely identified]

"Forwarded One Copy" is the strongest reading. The apparent date and autograph are less secure. The notation records dispatch if read correctly; it does not establish when Patterson collected the book or when Rockwell received it. Its hand remains unattributed. The doubtful signature does not alter the clear purpose of the letter. [1]

1. The book on the other end of the request

Rockwell was probably asking for the 1849 laws of the first session of the Sixteenth Illinois General Assembly. That session began at Springfield on January 1, 1849, and its laws appeared under the imprint of Charles H. Lanphier, public printer. The second session did not begin until October 22. On the most likely reading of the manuscript's October 17 date, that later session had not yet opened. [7]

This supplies a much firmer identification than a generic picture of an old law book. The likely title is *Laws of the State of Illinois, Passed at the First Session of the Sixteenth General Assembly*. It is not the same publication as the *Revised Statutes* of 1845. The specific copy that traveled through the county has not been located, but the wording and chronology point to an identifiable edition. [7]

For a justice of the peace, asking for recent laws was practical work. Old knowledge was not necessarily current knowledge. The state had adopted a new constitution in 1848, and public officers were administering affairs in its altered framework. The letter itself does not identify a pending lawsuit, an intended judgment, or a private grievance. Its simplicity is part of its value: here is Rockwell performing an ordinary act in an office he publicly claimed. [8, 1]

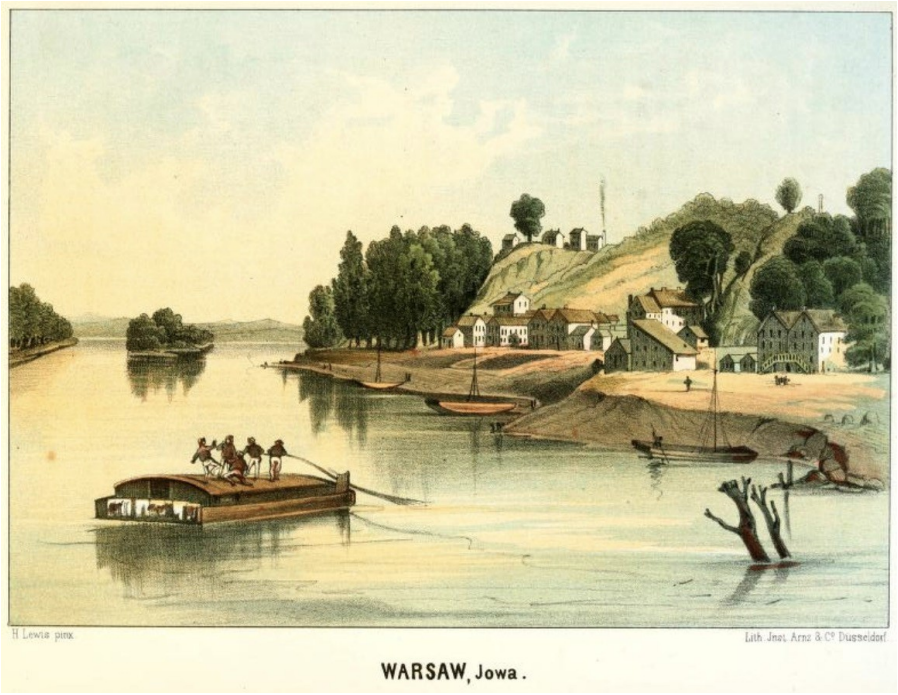
Patterson's place in that transaction is small but tangible. He was someone through whom Rockwell expected a volume could be sent. Nothing in the surviving words says that he wrote the laws, sold them, or held a particular county office. The two principals are securely identified; the carrier remains a name in a delivery instruction. That is enough to follow the paper without manufacturing a third biography.

2. Warsaw before the crisis

George Rockwell had come to Warsaw from Ridgefield, Connecticut, in 1836. He was about twenty years old. Later family accounts remember him first as a schoolteacher and then as a drug merchant; they date his retail business to 1840. In October of that year he married Catherine C. Westlake in Pike County, Illinois. The young migrant had become a husband and businessman in a Mississippi River town. [9, 10]

In 1841 he became Warsaw's postmaster. The business, the mails, and eventually the justice's office placed him repeatedly at the meeting point of private needs and public institutions. A later hostile writer would identify him simply as the Warsaw druggist. Yet that occupational label represents the everyday life behind the political accusation: customers, correspondence, property, and a household to maintain. [9, 11]

Warsaw was not merely a name opposite Nauvoo in an argument. It was a place where people established livelihoods and claimed standing as neighbors. The difficulty was that people disagreed bitterly over whose presence and whose authority threatened those livelihoods. Rockwell's own words eventually make his position unmistakable. But he entered the conflict with an existing life, not as an anonymous man suddenly appearing at a jail.



Henry Lewis's later view of Warsaw, published 1854–1858. The printed "Warsaw, Iowa" is a historical mislabel for Warsaw, Illinois. No building in the plate is asserted to be Rockwell's store. [12]

3. Thatcher aboard the rescue boat

George W. Thatcher's earlier record takes us in a different direction. In May 1842 he testified in the Nauvoo Legion proceedings against Amasa Bonney. That contemporary military-court document puts him inside the administrative world over which Joseph Smith presided. It is a closer connection than residence somewhere in the county or a later appearance on a list. [13]

The following June brought a much more urgent occasion for association. Smith had been arrested in northern Illinois, and his friends feared he might be carried into Missouri. Men at Nauvoo prepared to intercept an attempted removal by river. The *Maid of Iowa* became part of that effort. In the account incorporated into the church's history, men loaded firewood, received instructions about the river traffic, and departed on June 26, 1843. Thatcher's name appears among those aboard. [3]

The associated report and muster roll, preserved in a later copy, gives the expedition the texture of an actual undertaking. It accounts for powder, lead, cartridges, pistols, rifles, and other equipment. This was not a retrospective expression of sympathy invented after Smith's death. It was the remembered record of men who had assembled and traveled while his safety was in question. [14]

That act makes Thatcher an intriguing companion to Rockwell in the 1849 paper. It would be easy to put both men under one heading and allow a later accusation to explain their entire lives. The rescue expedition resists that treatment. Whatever Thatcher's reasons for joining, he had taken part in an effort intended to protect the man whose killing would later divide interpretations of his own conduct.

His presence aboard the boat is not proof that he shared Smith's religion. Political cooperation, personal friendship, resistance to Missouri's treatment of Smith, and military obligation need not have been identical things. The record establishes the action. Its importance is diminished, not enhanced, when a historian supplies a private motive for which the participant left no clear statement.

4. Two dollars and fifty cents for a future survivor

Another small document brings Thatcher closer to an individual member of Smith's circle. A subscription booklet for Willard Richards's house contains the entry "Geo W Thatcher—2.50." The manuscript image preserves the name and amount; the Joseph Smith Papers identifies Thatcher among the hands on that page. The record is a pledge of support, not by itself proof of a cash payment. [4]

Richards's work as a scribe and recorder had repeatedly displaced his own domestic arrangements. The house subscriptions gathered material, labor, and money. On the same page as Thatcher's modest sum, other men offered practical help with construction. The connection is intimate in scale: it concerns a home rather than an election, a regiment, or an indictment. [4]

Richards would survive the attack at Carthage. Thus one of the men later named in Backenstos's broad accusation had earlier put his name beside a contribution for a future survivor's house. There is no need to exaggerate the amount or transform it into proof of lifelong devotion. Its power lies in the fact that it happened at all. Thatcher's Nauvoo relationships had included ordinary cooperation with people who later stood at the center of the tragedy. [4, 11, 15]

The rescue roll and the house subscription belong together. One records a dangerous collective undertaking; the other a small personal undertaking. Together they make the earlier relationship substantial enough that any later change in Thatcher's position must be investigated rather than assumed.



Henry Lewis, *Nauvoe, Illinois*, published 1854–1858. This later view provides a setting for Thatcher's Nauvoo associations; it does not depict the rescue expedition or Richards's identified house. [16]

5. The clerk whose name kept appearing

By the time Rockwell wrote in 1849, Thatcher had spent years in county administration. The established tax-redemption research places his service as clerk of the Hancock County Commissioners' Court from 1843 to 1849. His name recurs on documents because the office stood between people paying money and people entitled to receive it. [2]

The tax papers are especially useful because they show how different kinds of relationship could coexist. A certificate holder might be politically hostile to someone seeking redemption. An agent might act for several owners. The clerk could receive and disburse funds without being the purchaser of every tract or endorsing every person's opinions. The three certificates dated April 19, 1845, establish money paid into Thatcher's hands in his official capacity. [2]

The same distinction matters in the Smith-murder proceedings. The Joseph Smith Papers attributes the main text of a March 17, 1845 venire to Thatcher's hand. A venire called prospective jurors; it was part of the machinery by which a court attempted to function. Writing that process is a documented act. It does not reveal whether the clerk privately desired conviction, acquittal, or avoidance of the case. [17]

His work also reached the Smith family's property affairs. A certificate of purchase in *Ivins v. Emma Smith and others* records an August 1845 transaction and a later certification by Thatcher on April 1, 1847. These are two dates in one documentary history, not interchangeable descriptions of when he acted. [18]

The clerk is therefore more than the recipient of Rockwell's favor. He is a recurring figure in the county's legal and financial life, moving through records involving Saints, former Saints, opponents, and people whose transactions reveal no religious allegiance at all. That background explains why a magistrate in Warsaw would look to him for a printed statement of the law.

6. June 13, 1844: opposition takes organized form

Rockwell's own political activity emerges plainly in the proceedings of a mass meeting at Carthage on June 13, 1844. The *Warsaw Signal* extra issued the next day preserves the meeting's date and its business. This contemporary record resolves the uncertainty created by a different date heading in the later printed church history. [19]

The meeting followed the destruction of the *Nauvoo Expositor* press. Its participants presented themselves as citizens seeking redress for abuses they associated with Smith's government. They appointed a committee representing the county's precincts. Rockwell was named for Warsaw. He also moved that constables in the several precincts remain ready to assist the officer holding the writs by summoning a posse. [19]

This was participation, not simply presence. Rockwell was helping turn a grievance into coordinated action. The language of writs and constables gave the undertaking the form of public procedure. Around it stood demands for armed preparation and resolutions threatening expulsion and extreme violence. The meeting reapproved the earlier Warsaw resolutions, whose threats extended beyond securing an ordinary hearing. [19]

That combination is central to the story of the justice's later request. Rockwell did not necessarily see a contradiction between legal language and force. In the meeting record, the two were joined. Officers were to execute process; citizens were to prepare; neighboring communities were to coordinate. The danger lay partly in who would define when legal remedies had failed and what they were then entitled to do.

For the Saints, this was not an abstract argument over procedure. A hostile body was discussing their removal while invoking the protection of law for itself. The meeting's proceedings are evidence of what the opposition said and organized. They are not independent proof of every accusation that opposition made against Nauvoo.

7. Three hundred miles, and a letter to his father

Nine days later, Rockwell wrote from Alton to Thomas H. Rockwell in Connecticut. In the published extract of his June 22 letter, he described two weeks of activity and more than three hundred miles of travel on horseback to obtain men and resources. He was proud of his exertions and confident of the cause. The object he described was to help expel the Saints from Illinois. [5]

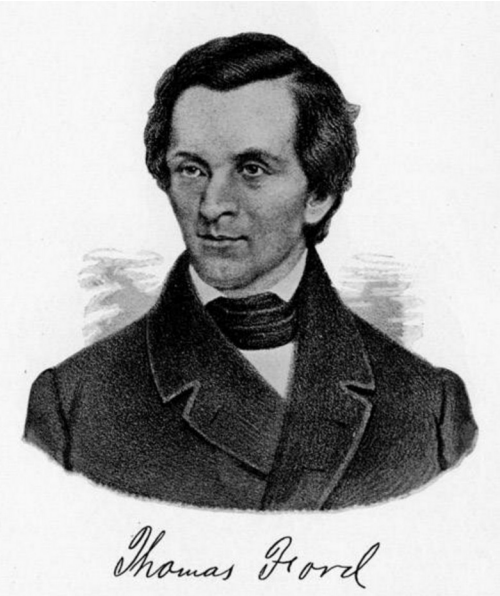
This letter makes it unnecessary to invent a commercial grievance as the source of his hostility. Whatever other considerations entered his thinking, Rockwell himself put removal at the center of the campaign he was serving. He was not merely being named by an enemy after the event. He was explaining his actions to his father while the confrontation was still unfolding.

The recipient matters. Thomas Hawley Rockwell was part of the Connecticut family from which George had come west. George's account crossed the distance between the old home and the new. A letter to a father could explain, persuade, or seek approval; it need not be free from self-presentation. Yet the distance also gave him room to say what he believed he was accomplishing. [10, 5]

Rockwell reported carrying an order from Governor Thomas Ford for state arms at Alton. The account connects him there with George T. M. Davis, the attorney and newspaper man who would soon travel into the Hancock crisis. Rockwell was serving as an intermediary between local agitation and resources outside the county. [5]

The governor's order and the son's letter should be read side by side, not merged. One belonged to the state's military response. The other explained what Rockwell hoped that response would accomplish. Possession of an order for arms does not make all his personal objectives the governor's

objectives. It does show the dangerous closeness of public authority and a campaign described by one of its organizers as a means of expulsion.



Governor Thomas Ford, in a later historical portrait. Rockwell's reported arms mission invoked state authority; the governor's authorization and Rockwell's expressed aims are different pieces of evidence. [20, 5]

8. A town frightened by what had happened

The Smith brothers were killed at Carthage on June 27, 1844. That night Warsaw residents feared an attack from Nauvoo. Families crossed the Mississippi into Missouri while men prepared for the consequences. The scene survives in Davis's 1844 account, a source already examined in the separate Davis project. [15]

Davis had been with Ford in Nauvoo. He left with Colonel Enoch C. March, crossed into Iowa, and traveled toward Keokuk. Delayed on the road and too late for the expected steamer, Davis heard a cannon from the direction of Warsaw and went downriver to learn what had occurred. His journey put him in the town around midnight, gathering news from men who had returned from the direction of Carthage. [15]

A Mr. Rockwell of Warsaw asked him to address the displaced families. The identification with George is strong, particularly in light of the earlier Alton connection. Davis's immediate value was that he had recently seen Nauvoo. He told the refugees that the Saints were overwhelmed by grief and that an immediate attack was unlikely. [15, 5]

The contrast is sharp. Before the killings, Rockwell had sought arms and assistance against Nauvoo. Afterward, he sought someone who could explain Nauvoo to frightened people. This does not establish a sudden change of principle. It records the practical problem that followed violence: the side that had mobilized could fear retaliation from the people it had threatened.

The scene is not an alibi covering Rockwell's entire day. Nor does it prove his presence at the jail. It locates an action attributed to him in the aftermath. The missing hours must remain missing rather than being filled by the emotional force of the story.

9. Two kinds of accusation—and a family's later statement

Backenstos eventually placed both Rockwell and Thatcher in a broad list of men he associated with anti-Mormon leadership and participation in the murders. The letter appears within the church

history's account of June 1844, but its references to the violence of 1845 show that it was written afterward. Its placement is not its date. [11]

The categories within the letter matter. It separately discusses the Carthage Greys, a jail-guard list, and Warsaw companies before giving the wider accusation containing the two men. Reading all those names as one muster roll would create evidence the source does not supply. Neither Rockwell's nor Thatcher's appearance in the broader list establishes a particular guard assignment.

A much later account changes the evidentiary balance for Rockwell without resolving every question. William E. Connelley's 1918 biography of Bertrand Rockwell states that Bertrand's father was with the troops responsible for killing Joseph and Hyrum Smith. This is not a hostile letter from Backenstos. It is a retrospective account published in a work celebrating the career of Rockwell's son. [6]

The statement deserves weight precisely because it comes from a different setting. It means that an association with the fatal force was not confined to an enemy's list. But Connelley names no eyewitness for the sentence and describes no individual movement or shot. Bertrand was an infant in June 1844. A family-associated account published seventy-four years later cannot be treated as his firsthand testimony.

Taken together, the evidence is stronger than a picture of Rockwell as an uninvolved merchant. His public organizing and advocacy of expulsion are documented; a later family account places him with the force associated with the deaths. A precise company assignment, entry into the jail, and personal shooting remain unproved by the sources examined. These are different conclusions, and the strength of the first should not be sacrificed by overstating the last. [19, 5, 6]

Thatcher's case remains different. His rescue expedition, Richards subscription, and official paperwork make his earlier connections unusually concrete. Backenstos's later accusation raises a serious question about subsequent alignment, but the evidence does not supply a dated confession of changed allegiance or an account of his actions during the assault. The shared 1849 letter does not make the two careers identical.

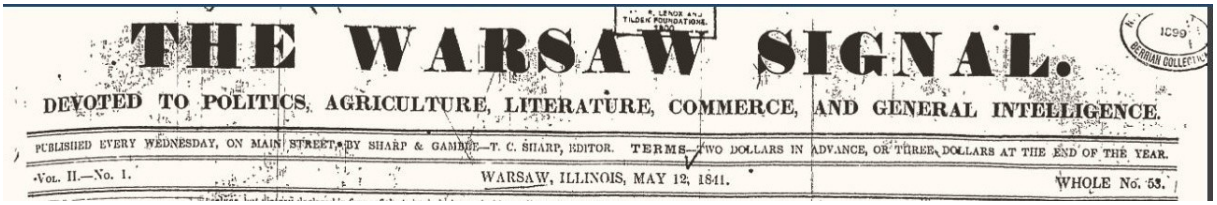
10. Two postmasters dispute the meaning of order

In October 1845, Rockwell's successor as Warsaw postmaster publicly disputed the respectable version of events being offered in his town. E. A. Bedell wrote to the *Quincy Morning Courier* in response to a *Warsaw Signal* extra of September 24. The *Nauvoo Neighbor* reprinted his letter on October 29. [21]

Bedell was careful about what he had and had not alleged. He denied saying that Rockwell headed the company that drove him out of Warsaw. He nevertheless accused him of having a hand in the affair. Bedell also challenged the account of Rockwell's own departure and said that he himself had been expelled at bayonet point. [21]

His argument was not merely a defense of Nauvoo. It was a claim about who could speak for Warsaw. He invoked his longer residence and rejected the suggestion that established citizens stood uniformly behind the violent faction. The public quarrel exposed a community divided within itself: old settlers against other old settlers, competing claimants to civic respectability, successive postmasters offering different versions of lawful behavior.

The surviving Bedell text does not settle everything that occurred. The complete *Signal* counterpart was not recovered in this revision, so its position is represented only where Bedell identifies the contention he answers. His qualified allegation is retained as an allegation. The value of the episode lies partly in showing that the language of order was disputed even among men holding office.



THE WARSAW SIGNAL.

DEVOTED TO POLITICS, AGRICULTURE, LITERATURE, COMMERCE, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

PUBLISHED EVERY WEDNESDAY, ON MAIN STREET, BY SHARP & GAMBLE.—T. C. SHARP, EDITOR. TERMS—TWO DOLLARS IN ADVANCE, OR THREE DOLLARS AT THE END OF THE YEAR.

Vol. II.—No. 1. WARSAW, ILLINOIS, MAY 12, 1841. WHOLE No. 53.

The *Warsaw Signal* masthead, May 12, 1841. It identifies the newspaper involved in the later controversy; this is not the September 1845 extra answered by Bedell. [22]

11. A law without sufficient protection

The same October 29 issue of the *Neighbor* printed a revealing extract from Ford. The governor acknowledged that public feeling was so hostile that the Saints could not expect common justice. He nevertheless stated that the state possessed no legal power to compel them to leave. Alongside that acknowledgment, he urged a negotiated departure because he believed recurring violence would otherwise continue. [23]

This is the wider setting that gives the 1849 law request its force. Illinois could have laws, courts, clerks, and magistrates while struggling to provide security to an unpopular population. Ford's words expose the gap between a legal right and the willingness of a community or state to sustain it. The governor's admission was not a law authorizing expulsion. It was an admission of the limits of protection as he understood them.

The organized migration from Nauvoo began in February 1846. Later fighting and the forced removal of remaining Saints followed in September. The two phases should not be reduced to a single peaceful departure or a single moment of expulsion. Families left under different immediate circumstances, but the accumulated violence shaped the conditions in which they made their decisions. [24]

By 1849, county business continued in a changed world. Property still required records. Officers still required books. The routine did not erase the crisis; it carried forward institutions and some of the same people after many of their former neighbors had gone.

12. The lives beyond the sheet

Rockwell remained a public figure. He again served as Warsaw postmaster in 1850–1851 and stood unsuccessfully as a Republican candidate for the Illinois House in 1858. In the Civil War he became a captain in the Seventh Missouri Cavalry. The official Army Register supplies an important correction to later biographical shorthand: he was mustered out at the expiration of his term on October 25, 1864, not in 1865. [9, 25]

He subsequently joined his son Bertrand's mercantile enterprise in Junction City, Kansas. The family's move unfolded in stages during 1865–1866. In old age he was a senior figure in a family business, a Mason, and a Presbyterian church supporter. He died at Junction City on January 13, 1896. These were substantial parts of his life, not an epilogue in which the earlier man simply vanished. [10, 6, 9]

The later career does not furnish a verdict on the earlier one. Union service cannot retroactively make advocacy of religious expulsion lawful. Nor does the record of that advocacy erase a later military or commercial career. The separate biography follows the whole life because the same person must be understood across both settings.

For this document's story, however, the ending belongs in Warsaw. Rockwell asked; Thatcher's office apparently responded; Patterson was to carry the book. The letter proves an official communication, not a private agreement about the murders or a friendship lasting through every political change.

What makes the paper valuable is the way it brings the larger history within reach. Its few lines connect a man who sought to mobilize opposition with a man who had once helped protect Joseph

Smith. The pale endorsement records a task apparently performed. The names around it remind us how difficult the county had found a much larger task: making the protection promised by law extend beyond the people who possessed the power to invoke it.

Documentary conclusions

The artifact. A request by George Rockwell, signing as justice of the peace, to George W. Thatcher at Warsaw in October 1849. The date is best read as October 17. The likely publication is the laws of the first session of the Sixteenth General Assembly, printed in 1849. The endorsement probably records forwarding, not delivery. [1, 7]

The relationship. This letter establishes official contact. Thatcher's other records independently connect him with the Nauvoo Legion, the 1843 protective expedition, Richards's house subscription, county tax administration, juror process, and an Emma Smith property record. It does not establish the two men's private discussions. [3, 4, 2, 17, 18]

Rockwell and the crisis. The June 13 meeting, June 22 letter, Davis account, Backenstos accusation, and 1918 family-associated biography represent different kinds of evidence. Together they establish active opposition and support a serious association with the crisis. They do not identify an individual shot or a verified jail-guard assignment. [19, 5, 15, 11, 6]

Editorial record and limits

This edition replaces the earlier drafts. It dates the Carthage meeting to June 13 from the contemporary extra; identifies the likely session-law edition; adds Thatcher's $2.50 subscription; incorporates Connelley's important later statement; and corrects Rockwell's military endpoint to October 25, 1864. The revisions affect the interpretation, not merely the formatting.

The uncertain portions of the 1849 handwriting remain bracketed. William Patterson has not been securely matched to an independent identity. No portrait has been accepted as a likeness of either principal without reliable attribution. The complete Rockwell letters and the original September 1845 newspaper counterpart were not obtained; published extracts and the surviving reply are identified as such. These are limits of the evidence used in this completed edition, not missing narrative chapters.

Sources and image credits

Bracketed numbers identify the sources below. Historical texts, later family accounts, institutional findings, and reused project research are distinguished. Links lead to the cited digital source or catalog.

[1] Original 1849 request and photograph. George Rockwell to George W. Thatcher, Warsaw, October [17], 1849, photograph IMG_3636.jpeg supplied for this project. Main text and pale perpendicular endorsement examined from the photograph. The reverse is reported blank. Images are rotations and crops, not reconstructions. Day, office abbreviation, endorsement date, and endorsement autograph remain uncertain to the extent marked in the transcription.

[2] Established Thatcher and county-administration research. Hancock_County_1845_Tax_Redemptions_Final_Report_REVISED_FOSTER_CERTIFICATE.pdf, especially "County Offices and the Role of George W. Thatcher," the Thatcher biographical section, and descriptions of the three April 19, 1845 certificates. Retrieved from the existing research library. Supports clerkship in 1843–1849, receipt and disbursement of redemption money, and Nauvoo Masonic associations. These records do not make Thatcher the purchaser of every property passing through his office.

[3] Thatcher in the 1843 protective expedition. Joseph Smith Papers, History, 1838–1856, volume E-1, p. 1655, incorporating Daniel M. Burbank's account of the Maid of Iowa expedition departing June 26, 1843. George W. Thatcher is named among the men aboard. The historical volume was compiled in 1855–1856; it is not a journal physically written on the departure date. Digital source

[4] Thatcher's $2.50 subscription for Willard Richards. Joseph Smith Papers, "Subscriptions for Willard Richards, 2 August 1843–12 March 1844," p. 12, Willard Richards Journals and Papers, CHL. The manuscript image was visually examined: "Geo W Thatcher—2.50." The page metadata identifies Thatcher among the hands. The entry is a

subscription; no assumption of cash payment or exact individual pledge date is made. The historical introduction explains the house-building project. Digital source

[5] Rockwell's letter of June 22, 1844. George Rockwell, Alton, to Thomas H. Rockwell, June 22, 1844, cited as held by the Kansas State Historical Society; extract in Robert S. Wicks and Fred R. Foister, Junius and Joseph: Presidential Politics and the Assassination of the First Mormon Prophet (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2005), p. 152 and note 25. The previously examined printed extract and source note are reused; a complete original-image collation was not obtained. The passage establishes reported travel, organizing, an expulsion objective, the arms mission, and connection with Davis. The page also cites "Authentic Information," Alton Telegraph, June 29, 1844. Digital source

[6] The 1918 account of Bertrand and its statement about Carthage. William E. Connelley, A Standard History of Kansas and Kansans (Chicago: Lewis, 1918), vol. IV, pp. 2103–2105, "Bertrand Rockwell"; historical text transcribed at KSGenWeb. The family sketch expressly places George with the troops responsible for the Smith brothers' deaths. This is a late, family-associated biographical representation, not an eyewitness statement by Bertrand or proof of an individual shot. Also supports the distinction between the two captains, the younger man's postwar journey, the company's officers, Catherine's family, and Bertrand's 1896 clubhouse gift. Digital source

[7] The likely session-law edition. Western Illinois University Libraries, "Laws of Illinois 1840–1849," bibliographic entries for the first and second sessions of the Sixteenth General Assembly. First session began January 1, 1849; its laws were printed at Springfield by Charles H. Lanphier in 1849. Second session commenced October 22. Identification of the first-session edition is a chronological inference from the manuscript, not identification of a surviving copy owned by Rockwell. Digital source

[8] Illinois's 1848 constitution. Illinois State Archives, "Second Illinois Constitution (1848)," 100 Most Valuable Documents. Ratified March 6, 1848; effective April 1. Used for the changed constitutional setting, not as proof of a specific lawsuit prompting Rockwell's request. Digital source

[9] George Rockwell: documented biographical outline. Papers of Abraham Lincoln, "Rockwell, George," person RO48899. Supports birth and death, 1836 Warsaw arrival, marriage, postal terms, 1858 candidacy, 1860 census valuations, Lexington provost-marshal association, and Kansas move. Underlying citations include Illinois marriage records, postmaster appointments, 1850 and 1860 censuses, Chicago Daily Press and Tribune, November 1, 1858, p. 2, col. 4; Warsaw City Bulletin, November 4, 1858, p. 2, col. 1; Quincy Journal, January 15, 1896, p. 4, col. 1; Junction City Tribune, January 16, 1896, p. 4, col. 2; and Highland Cemetery marker. Its broad military endpoint is superseded here by the official register. These underlying newspaper issues were not newly collated. Digital source

[10] The 1912 family and business account. "George Arthur Rockwell," Kansas: A Cyclopedia of State History (Chicago: Standard Publishing Co., 1912), vol. III, part 1, pp. 308–311; public-domain historical text transcribed by KSGenWeb. The opening family sketch concerns George (1815–1896); subsequent commercial, Masonic, Episcopal, and family details often concern his son George Arthur. This edition distinguishes the generations. The father's 1865 military discharge date is corrected from the official register. The text's inconsistent business-founding language is resolved in favor of the explicit 1865 chronology, corroborated in Connelley. Digital source

[11] Backenstos's retrospective accusation. History of the Church, vol. 7, pp. 142–145, letter attributed to Jacob B. Backenstos. Distinguishes the Carthage Greys, a guard list, Warsaw companies, and a broader accusatory list naming George Rockwell and George W. Thatcher. Internal references to deaths and violence in 1845 show that the letter postdates the June 1844 narrative in which it was inserted. Exact original date and recipient are unverified. Used as an accusation with differentiated categories, not a conviction or an eyewitness account of every named person. Digital source

[12] Warsaw historical illustration. Henry Lewis, Warsaw, Iowa, color lithograph, Arnz & Co., Düsseldorf, 1854–1858. Saint Louis Art Museum, object 37455, Museum Purchase 145:1949; public domain. Reproduction reused from the existing illustrated Avery and Hancock election-circular projects. Those projects identify the scene as Warsaw, Illinois, despite the plate's "Iowa." No event, store, or precise crossing is identified from the view. Digital source

[13] Thatcher in a contemporary Nauvoo Legion proceeding. Joseph Smith Papers, "Court-Martial against Amasa Bonney, 28 May 1842," p. 5, presented as viewer page 6. Thatcher's testimony supplies a contemporary military connection to Nauvoo, distinct from later recollections of the rescue expedition. Digital source

[14] The expedition's report and equipment record. Joseph Smith Papers, "Report from Jonathan Dunham and Muster Roll, 25–26 June 1843," pp. 1–2. Survives in a circa-1854 copy in Albert P. Rockwood's communication to George A. Smith, Joseph Smith History Documents, CHL. The second page lists ammunition and equipment. Used to describe the undertaking, not to assign each listed weapon to Thatcher. Digital source

[15] Davis's 1844 account of the Warsaw alarm. George T. M. Davis, An Authentic Account of the Massacre of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet, and Hyrum Smith, His Brother (St. Louis: Chambers & Knapp, 1844), especially pp. 24–27. Reuses the source audit in George_T_M_Davis_Attorney_Project_Register.md and the established illustrated Davis biography. The requester is "Mr. Rockwell" in the original account; the identification with George is

strong but is not presented as a full-name autograph. The 1844 narrative controls over the altered sequence in Davis's 1891 autobiography. Digital source

[16] Nauvoo historical illustration. Henry Lewis, Nauvoe, Illinois, color lithograph, Arnz & Co., Düsseldorf, 1854–1858. Saint Louis Art Museum, object 37452, Museum Purchase 143:1949; public domain. Reproduction reused from After_the_Saints_Left_Democrats_of_Hancock_County.pdf. The image is a later published view, not a photograph of an 1843 or 1849 event. Digital source

[17] Thatcher's hand in juror process. Joseph Smith Papers, "Venire Facias, 17 March 1845," source note and transcript. The main document is attributed to Thatcher's hand. A venire calls prospective jurors; clerical participation is not evidence of approval of an offense or of a particular prosecution theory. Digital source

[18] Thatcher's certification in an Emma Smith property record. Joseph Smith Papers, "Certificate of Purchase, 16 August 1845 [Ivins v. E. Smith et al.]," p. 2. The underlying purchase is dated August 16, 1845; Thatcher's certification is April 1, 1847. The two actions are distinguished in the text. Digital source

[19] The contemporary meeting date and Rockwell's motion. Warsaw Signal, extra, June 14, 1844, two leaves, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, call number a2688630; Internet Archive identifier warsawsignalextr00wars. The contemporary text and catalog date the Carthage meeting to June 13. They name Rockwell on the precinct committee and record his constable-posse motion. This resolves the earlier draft's "mid-June" and supersedes the June 11 heading in History of the Church, vol. 7, chapter 10. Machine-readable text was checked against the catalog; no newly acquired high-resolution facsimile is reproduced here. Digital source

[20] Thomas Ford portrait. Historical portrait of Thomas Ford reproduced in an Illinois state publication of 1899; public-domain reproduction reused from the Avery project, credited there to Wikimedia Commons. It is not an image created during the June 1844 crisis. Digital source

[21] Bedell's letter and its qualification. E. A. Bedell to the editors, Quincy, October 7, 1845, from the Quincy Morning Courier, reprinted in Nauvoo Neighbor, October 29, 1845, p. 1. Responds to a Warsaw Signal extra of September 24. Bedell denies having said Rockwell headed the expelling party while alleging he had a hand in it. The accessible letter was examined in full; the complete opposing extra was not acquired. Claims about the expulsion remain attributed. Digital source

[22] Warsaw Signal masthead. Warsaw Signal, May 12, 1841, masthead, Warsaw Public Library digital archives; image reused from the established Hancock election-circular report. Included as an identification of the newspaper, not an image of either the June 1844 or September 1845 extra. Digital source

[23] Ford on legal power and practical protection. "Copy of a part of a despatch from the Governor," Nauvoo Neighbor, October 29, 1845, p. 1, cols. 1–2, printed alongside the October 1845 Hardin–Warren–Douglas–McDougall correspondence. Ford denies a state legal power to compel departure while encouraging accommodation through removal. This is his historical statement, not advice about present law. Digital source

[24] The Saints' departure from Nauvoo. "Departure from Nauvoo," Church History Topics, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Distinguishes the organized migration beginning in February 1846 from the September fighting and expulsion of remaining Saints. Digital source

[25] Official confirmation of October 25, 1864 muster-out. Adjutant General's Office, Official Army Register of the Volunteer Force of the United States Army for the Years 1861, '62, '63, '64, '65, part VII (Washington, 1867), Missouri Cavalry, "Seventh Regiment," p. 28. Lists Captain George Rockwell under officers mustered out on expiration of term, October 25, 1864. The entry and surrounding regimental section were examined in the digital text. This takes precedence over later 1865/end-of-war shorthand. The individual's service is not extended to the regiment's later consolidation. Digital source