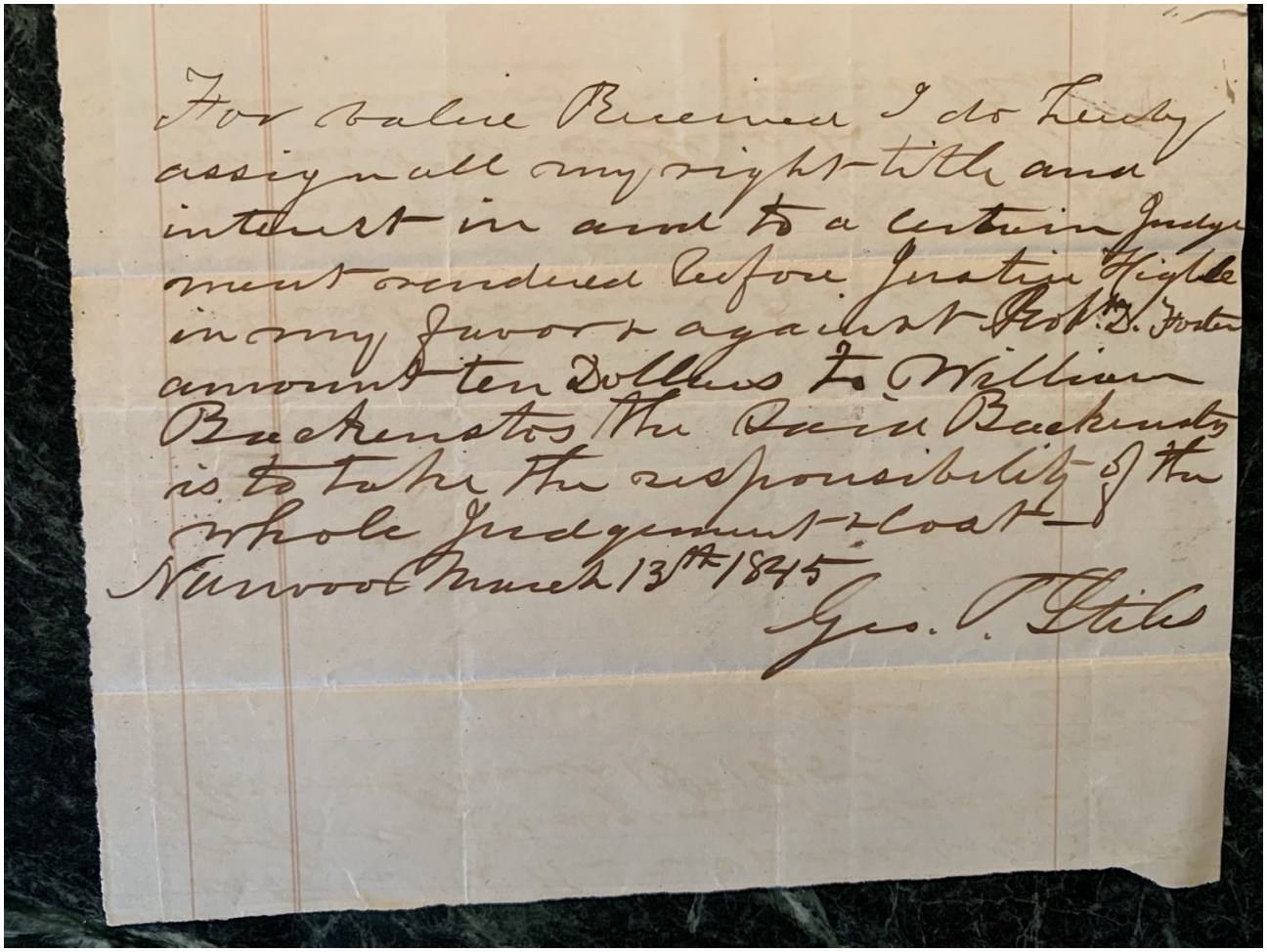
George P Stiles versus William Backenstos Judgment

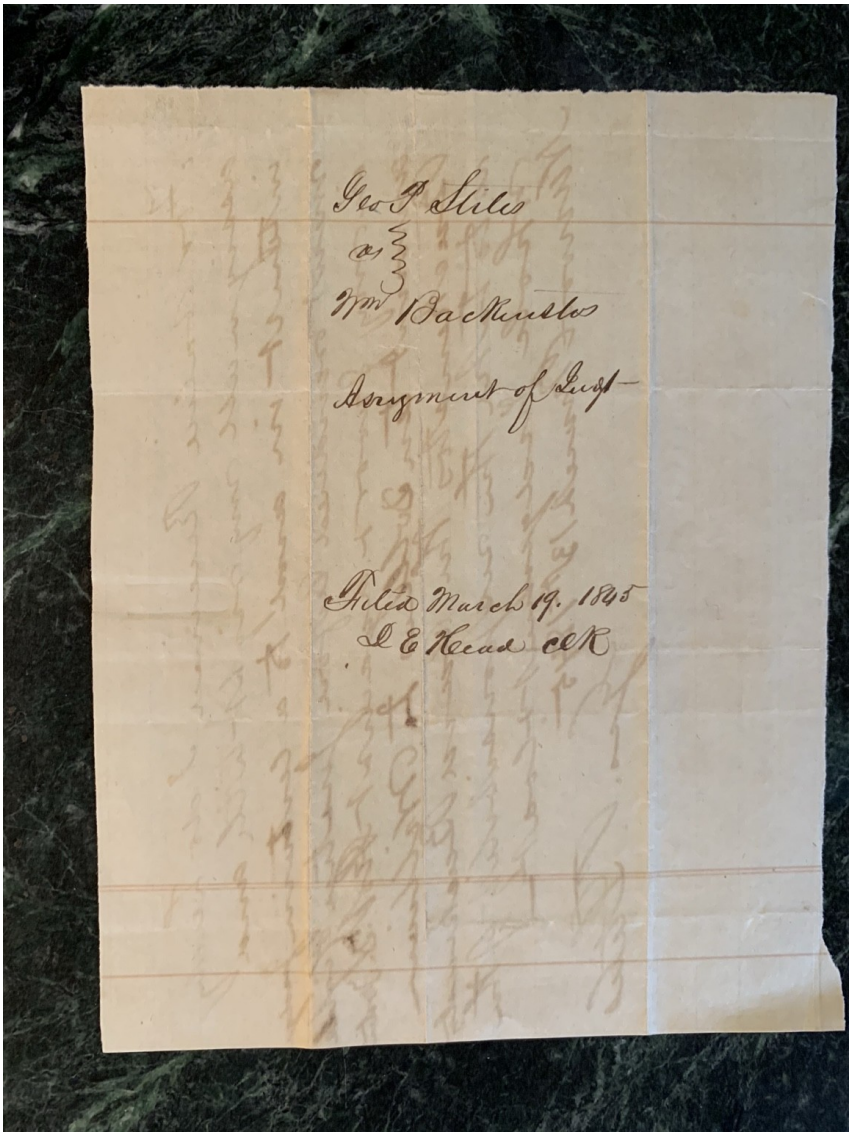
Ten Dollars and Unfinished Business in Nauvoo

An illustrated case narrative and biographical study • Expanded research edition • 12 October 2026

The original assignment


For value Received I do hereby assign all my right title and interest in and to a certain Judgment rendered before Justice Higbee in my favor & against Robt. D. Foster amount ten Dollars To William Backenstos the said Backenstos is to take the responsibility of the whole Judgement & Cost
Nauvoo March 13th 1845
Geo. P. Stiles

Front. Assignment signed Geo. P. Stiles, Nauvoo, March 13, 1845. Photograph supplied by the owner; rotated for reading.



Reverse. Docket and filing endorsement dated March 19, 1845. Photograph supplied by the owner; rotated for reading.

Transcription of the manuscript

Lineation, spelling, and abbreviations are retained as closely as the photographs permit. Raised letters are printed on the baseline. Flourishes are not reproduced. The docket brace is represented by }. This is a reading from the manuscript images, not a reproduction of the supplied typescript.

Front

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Reverse

Geo P Stiles
vs }
Wm Backenstos

Assignment of Judgt—

Filed March 19. 1845
D E Head clk

The lawyer behind the signature

On March 13, 1845, George P. Stiles signed away his interest in a ten-dollar judgment against Robert D. Foster. William Backenstos received the claim. Six days later, clerk D. E. Head recorded its filing. The paper is brief; the relationships behind it reach into Nauvoo's legal profession, its civic institutions, and the bitter divisions of 1844.

Stiles is the central figure of this account. He was a working attorney before he became a Latter-day Saint, served Nauvoo during its greatest legal crisis, and later held a federal judgeship in Utah. His career allows the reader to follow one man through several different relationships with Mormon society. The assignment provides an unusually personal point of entry: here the lawyer was also a creditor.

The Joseph Smith Papers dates his birth to July 18, 1816, in Watertown, Jefferson County, New York, and identifies his parents as John Stiles and Persis Cole. That chronology makes him twenty-eight when he signed the assignment. His early legal education and the circumstances of his move west still require investigation. [2]

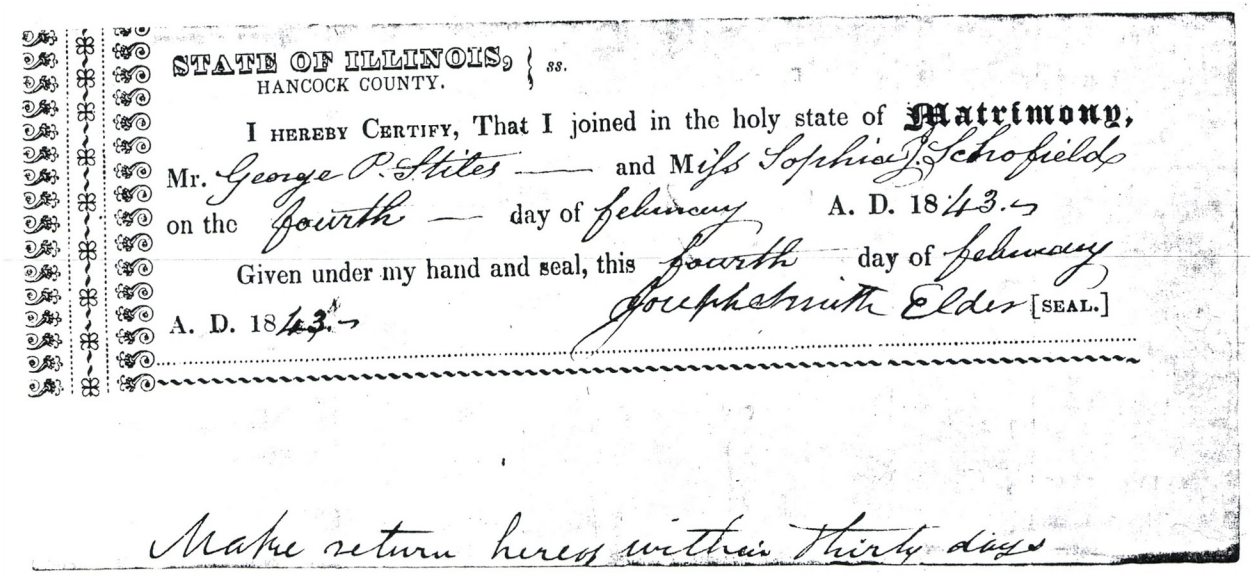
One such record places him at Carthage in February 1842. The minutes of Nauvoo's Masonic lodge report a petition from George P. Stiles, an attorney at law, giving his age as twenty-four. The age does not quite agree with the 1816 birth date, a small discrepancy to retain rather than conceal. More consequentially, the entry shows that his professional identity preceded his best-known work in Nauvoo. [3]

On April 13, 1842, he was initiated as an Entered Apprentice in the Nauvoo lodge. The minutes misname him George W. Stiles; their editors identify him as George P. Stiles. Jacob B. Backenstos was initiated

on the same occasion. This was Jacob, not William, the recipient of the later judgment. The distinction matters: a documented association with one brother cannot silently become an association with the other. Joseph and Hyrum Smith appear among the men participating in that lodge meeting. The record places Stiles within an important social institution without proving what any individual friendship meant. [4]

A household and an office

A marriage record brings him closer. On February 4, 1843, Joseph Smith joined Stiles and Sophia J. Schofield in marriage. The surviving certificate carries Smith's signature. This is a personal encounter, not merely another courtroom appearance, and it helps explain how a lawyer could become woven into Nauvoo's community before his religious affiliation was formally recorded. [5]



STATE OF ILLINOIS, } ss.
HANCOCK COUNTY.

I HEREBY CERTIFY, That I joined in the holy state of Matrimony,
Mr. George P. Stiles —— and Miss Sophia J. Schofield
on the Fourth —— day of February A. D. 1843.
Given under my hand and seal, this Fourth day of February
A. D. 1843. Joseph Smith Elder [SEAL.]

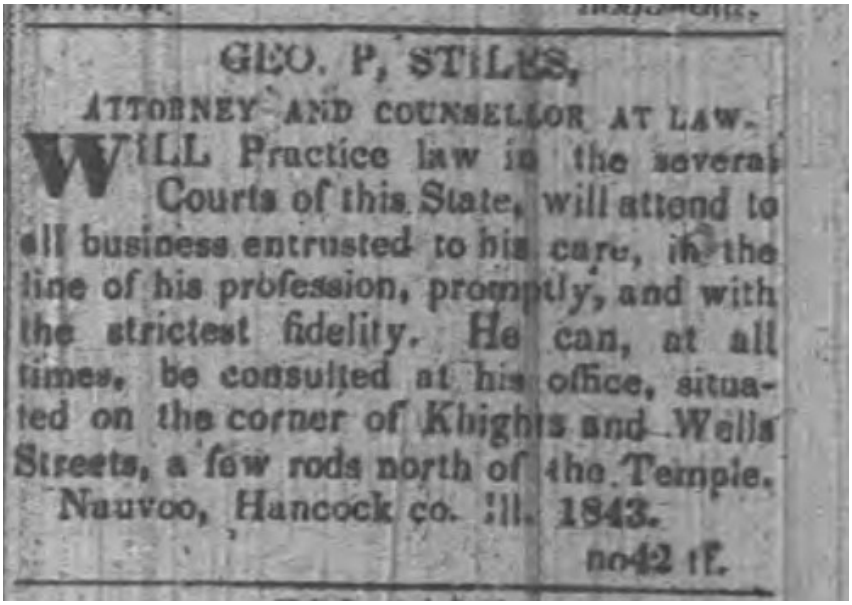
Make return hereof within thirty days.

Marriage certificate for George P. Stiles and Sophia J. Schofield, February 4, 1843. Joseph Smith Papers, document 11902; photocopy at the Church History Library of an original in private possession. [5]

Sophia was not his first recorded bride. On November 7, 1841, Stiles had married Julian Mackemer in Hancock County. The Joseph Smith Papers cites the county marriage register, volume A-1, page 46, for that entry; Sophia's marriage appears on page 62 of the same volume. These are specific public-record references, although the earlier register image has not yet been independently inspected. [2, 25]

What became of Julian remains unresolved. No death entry, obituary, probate proceeding, or divorce decree identifying her has been located in this search. A name search across all 38 web pages of the published Huntington cemetery record found no Stiles, Styles, Mackemer variant searched, or Julian entry. That is a limited negative result: the Nauvoo sexton's book is not a complete register of deaths throughout Hancock County. The two marriage dates give us a focused period to investigate, November 1841 to February 1843, but do not establish a date or manner of separation. Julian should remain in the biography without being described as deceased or divorced. [25, 26]

Stiles made his services visible. An advertisement in the first issue of the Nauvoo Neighbor, dated May 3, 1843, located his office at the corner of Knights and Wells streets, a short distance north of the temple. It offered legal service in the state courts and promised "strictest fidelity." Such wording was advertising, not an independent assessment of his character. It nevertheless shows how he wanted prospective clients to understand him: as an available, dependable professional. [6]



GEO. P, STILES,

ATTORNEY AND COUNSELLOR AT LAW.

WILL Practice law in the several Courts of this State, will attend to all business entrusted to his care, in the line of his profession, promptly, and with the strictest fidelity. He can, at all times, be consulted at his office, situated on the corner of Knights and Wells Streets, a few rods north of the Temple.

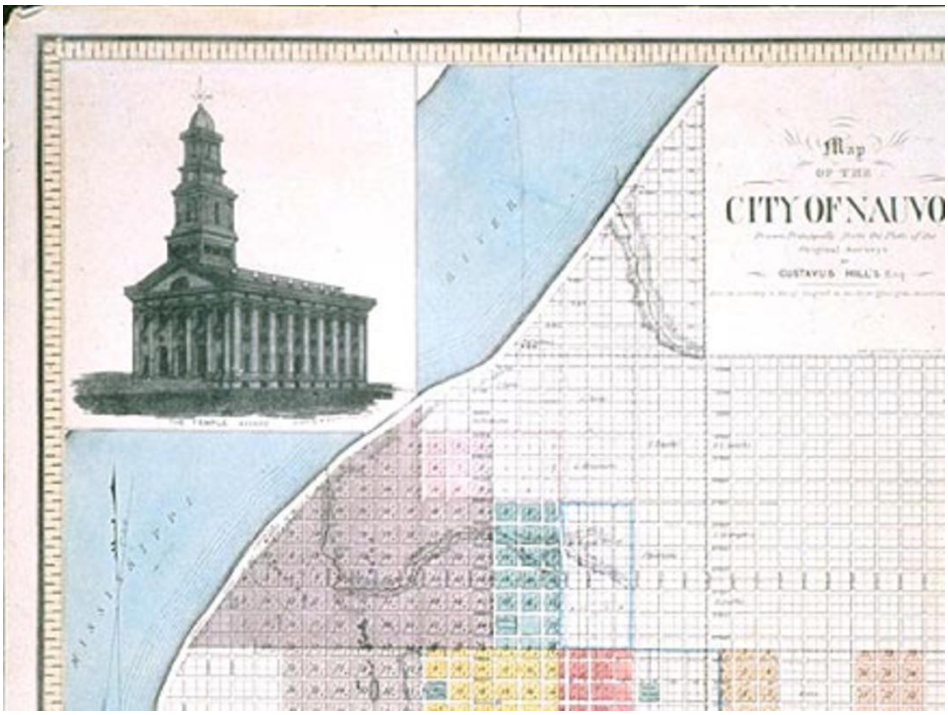
Nauvoo, Hancock co. Ill. 1843.

no42 tf.

George P. Stiles's advertisement, Nauvoo Neighbor, May 3, 1843, p. 4. Detail rendered from the BYU Studies newspaper scan. [6]

Finding the lawyer in the city

The advertisement gives readers a place to look: Knights and Wells streets, just north of the temple. Its promise of prompt, faithful attention was the public language of a lawyer seeking clients. The office makes Stiles part of the city's everyday geography, rather than a name encountered only in the council chamber. [6]



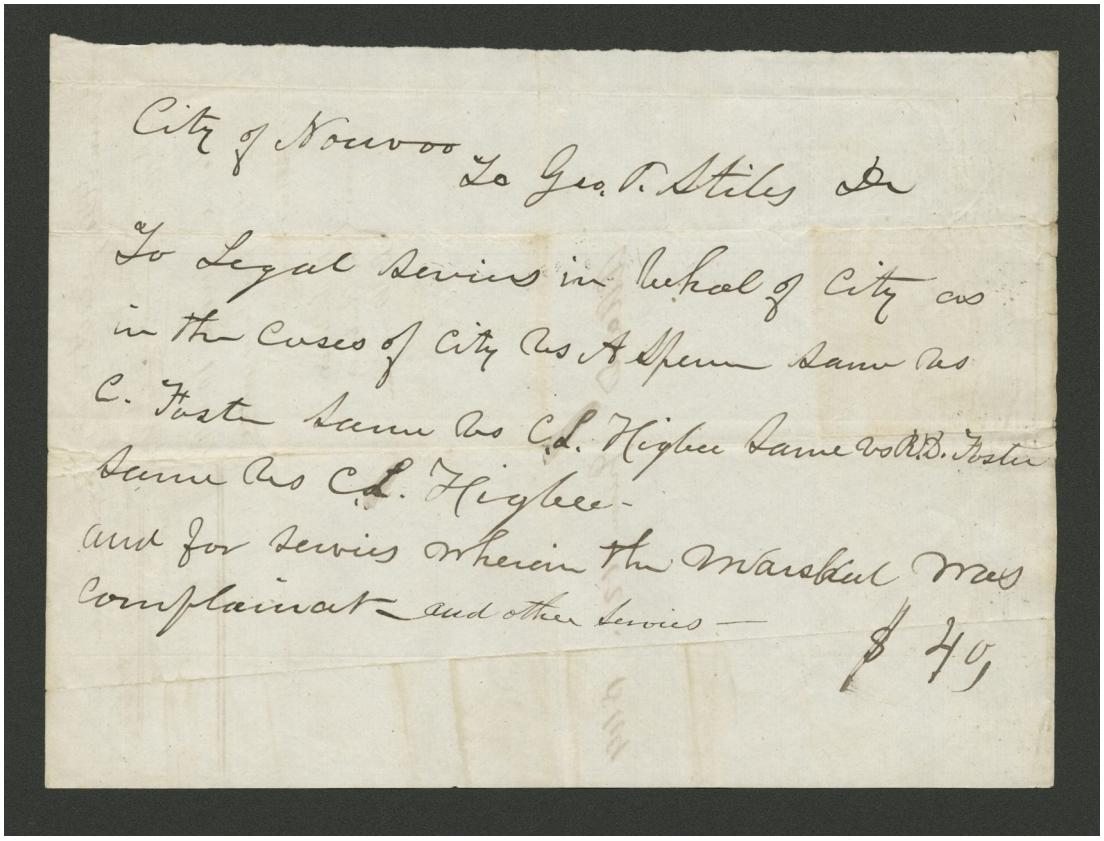
Detail of the 1844 Nauvoo map, Gustavus Hills, draftsman, and J. Childs, lithographer. Church History Museum online exhibition. The temple image represents an early design. This online detail is reproduced without speculative property markers. [36]

In August, the office associated with Stiles and Chauncey L. Higbee served as a polling place. Joseph Smith appeared there but was directed to the proper precinct for his residence. This ordinary electoral

episode situates the lawyers in a civic neighborhood and records an association that would later acquire a different meaning. By the following spring Stiles was handling city cases against Chauncey. Professional proximity had not guaranteed lasting alignment. [7, 8]

The city attorney who had to be paid

Stiles's surviving bill to Nauvoo brings the financial side of his work into view. Around June 8, 1844, he charged the city forty dollars for legal services. His list included proceedings against Augustine Spencer, Charles Foster, Chauncey L. Higbee, and Robert D. Foster, as well as other work. The Joseph Smith Papers identifies the handwriting as Stiles's. This is a particularly useful companion to the 1845 assignment: in both, legal activity had become a receivable. The municipal bill and the private ten-dollar judgment are separate obligations. [8]


City of Nauvoo To Geo. P. Stiles Dr

To Legal Servis in behalf of City as in the Cases of City vs A Spencer Same as C. Foster Same as C.L. Higbee Same vs R.D. Foster Same as C.L. Higbee-

and for Servis Wherein the Marshal was Complainant— and other Servis— $40

Stiles's forty-dollar claim for legal services, circa June 8, 1844. Nauvoo city records, Church History Library; image courtesy of the Joseph Smith Papers, document 14956. [8]

Compensation was also a council issue. Stiles had been selected city attorney on April 13, 1844. During the June 8 discussion he objected to the adequacy of an annual salary of fifty dollars. Joseph Smith proposed one hundred dollars with fees, while Hyrum Smith wanted the duties more clearly defined. The exchange shows a lawyer negotiating the terms of a public office as its demands increased. It does not tell us whether Stiles was prosperous, but it prevents the biography from treating legal service as costless devotion. [9]

His practice was broader than the famous controversies. A March 1844 newspaper notice named him solicitor in Alfred Brown's divorce proceeding against Hester Ann Eliza Brown. Later Iowa advertising would again place him in domestic litigation. These less celebrated clients matter. They remind us that a lawyer's calendar included private disputes that left little trace in the histories of religious conflict. [10, 19]

What ten dollars meant in his working world

The judgment was one quarter of Stiles's forty-dollar municipal bill and one fifth of the fifty-dollar annual salary discussed for his city office in June 1844. These comparisons place it within his professional accounts without establishing his total income or proving that the judgment arose from legal fees. The first Nauvoo Neighbor advertised a one-dollar charge for a single insertion of a one-square advertisement: ten dollars equaled ten such insertions before discounts or repeat rates. [1, 6, 8, 9]

Stiles and the crisis of 1844

Robert D. Foster was no stranger to Stiles's professional world. In April 1844, Stiles acted as city attorney in proceedings against him before William Marks. In May, he prepared a warrant in a separate assault matter involving Jonas Killmer. These cases establish direct legal contact with the man named as debtor in the assignment. They do not identify the cause of the ten-dollar judgment, which was stated to be in Stiles's own favor. A fee dispute is possible; so are other explanations. None should yet be written as the answer. [11]

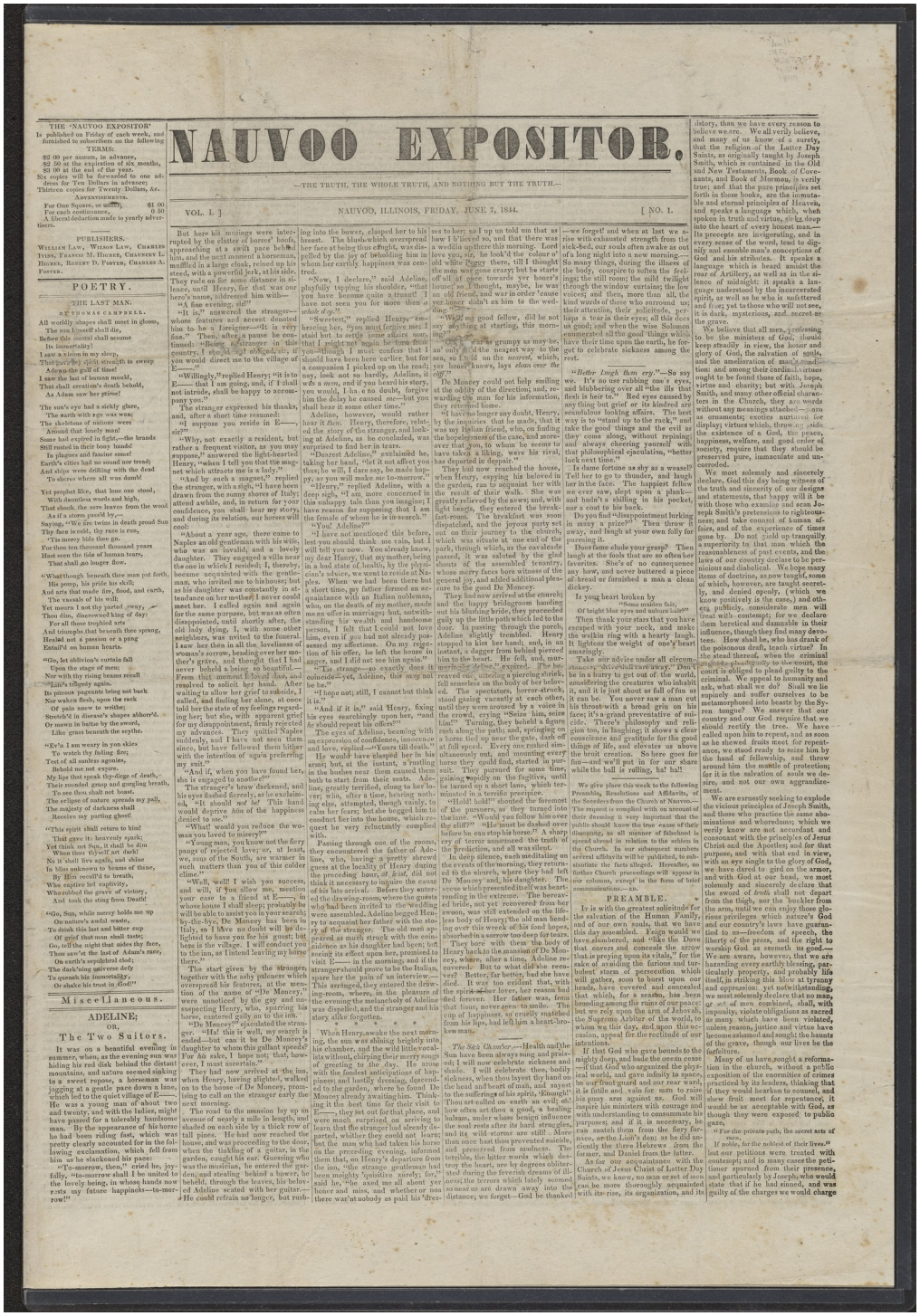
Why Stiles called the Expositor a nuisance

In June 1844, Stiles helped turn the city's anger at the Nauvoo Expositor into legislation. He and William W. Phelps were assigned to prepare an ordinance against libels; the council adopted it on June 10. The measure penalized certain defamatory publications and was distinct from the resolution directed at the Expositor's establishment. [9, 27]

Willard Richards's council minutes preserve Stiles's reasoning: a nuisance disturbed a community's peace, and alleged falsehoods could stigmatize the community as a whole. He cited Chitty's Blackstone on private wrongs and endorsed suppression: "I would go in for suppressing all further publicat[ion]s of the kind." This was an argument for stopping publication, not merely seeking damages afterward. [12]

The authority he invoked deserves close attention. The cited passage's editorial note discussed destroying a libelous print or paper affecting an individual, while identifying delivery to a magistrate as the safer course. Moving from that proposition to suppressing a newspaper establishment required an additional legal step. Stiles's recorded remarks do not themselves explain why destroying the printing machinery followed from it. The explicit proposal to smash the press in the next speech belongs to Hyrum Smith. These are Richards's minutes, not a verbatim transcript or a statement of Stiles's private motives. [12]

The council's resulting resolution declared both the printing establishment and papers a public nuisance and instructed the mayor to remove them without delay. This document establishes the collective action. It should be read alongside Stiles's remarks, rather than used to assign every argument made that day to him. His importance in the story is substantial enough: the attorney who ordinarily sought remedies through courts also supported using municipal authority to stop a hostile publication. [28]



NAUVOO EXPOSITOR.

—THE TRUTH, THE WHOLE TRUTH, AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH.—

VOL. I.] NAUVOO, ILLINOIS, FRIDAY, JUNE 7, 1844. [NO. 1.

THE 'NAUVOO EXPOSITOR'
Is published on Friday of each week, and furnished to subscribers on the following
TERMS:
$2 00 per annum, in advance,
$2 50 at the expiration of six months,
$3 00 at the end of the year.
Six copies will be forwarded to one address for Ten Dollars in advance;
Thirteen copies for Twenty Dollars, &c.

ADVERTISEMENTS.
For One Square, or less, $1 00
For each continuance, 0 50
A liberal deduction made to yearly advertisers.

PUBLISHERS.
WILLIAM LAW, WILSON LAW, CHARLES IVINS, FRANCIS M. HIGBEE, CHAUNCEY L. HIGBEE, ROBERT D. FOSTER, CHARLES A. FOSTER.

POETRY.

THE LAST MAN.
BY THOMAS CAMPBELL.

All worldly shapes shall meet in gloom,
The sun himself shall die,
Before this mortal shall assume
Its immortality!
I saw a vision in my sleep,
That gave my spirit strength to sweep
Adown the gulf of time!
I saw the last of human mould,
That shall creation's death behold,
As Adam saw her prime!

The sun's eye had a sickly glare,
The earth with age was wan;
The skeletons of nations were
Around that lonely man!
Some had expired in fight,—the brands
Still rusted in their bony hands!
In plagues and famine some!
Earth's cities had no sound nor tread;
And ships were drifting with the dead
To shores where all was dumb!

Yet prophet like, that lone one stood,
With dauntless words and high,
That shook the sere leaves from the wood
As if a storm passed by,—
Saying, "We live twice in death proud Sun
Thy face is cold, thy race is run,
'Tis mercy bids thee go.
For thou ten thousand thousand years
Hast seen the tide of human tears,
That shall no longer flow.

"What though beneath thee man put forth,
His pomp, his pride his skill;
And arts that made fire, flood, and earth,
The vassals of his will:
Yet mourn I not thy parted sway,
Thou dim, discrowned king of day:
For all those trophied arts
And triumphs that beneath thee sprang,
Healed not a passion or a pang
Entail'd on human hearts.

"Go, bat oblivion's curtain fall
Upon the stage of men:
Nor with thy rising beams recall
Life's tragedy again.
Its pitcous pageants bring not back
Nor waken flesh, upon the rack
Of pain anew to writhe;
Stretch'd in disease's shapes abhorr'd.
Or mown in battle by the sword,
Like grass beneath the scythe.

"Ev'n I am weary in yon skies
To watch thy fading fire;
Test of all sunless agonies,
Behold me not expire.
My lips that speak thy dirge of death,
Their rounded grasp and gurgling breath,
To see thou shalt not boast.
The eclipse of nature spreads my pall,
The majesty of darkness shall
Receive my parting ghost!

"This spirit shall return to him!
That gave its heavenly spark;
Yet think not Sun, it shall be dim
When thou thyself art dark!
No it shall live again, and shine
In bliss unknown to beams of thine,
By Him recall'd to breath,
Who captive led captivity,
Who robbed the grave of victory,
And took the sting from Death!

"Go, Sun, while mercy holds me up
On nature's awful waste,
To drink this last and bitter cup
Of grief that man shall taste;
Go, tell the night that sides thy face,
Thou saw'st the last of Adam's race,
On earth's sepulchral clod;
The dark'ning universe defy
To quench his immortality,
Or shake his trust in God!"

Miscellaneous.

ADELINE;
OR,
The Two Suitors.

It was on a beautiful evening in summer, when, as the evening sun was hiding his red disk behind the distant mountains, and nature seemed sinking to a sweet repose, a horseman was jogging at a gentle pace down a lane, which led to the quiet village of E——. He was a young man of about two and twenty, and with the ladies, might have passed for a tolerably handsome man. By the appearance of his horse he had been riding fast, which was pretty clearly accounted for in the following exclamation, which fell from him as he slackened his pace:

"To-morrow, then," cried he, joyfully, "to-morrow shall I be united to the lovely being, in whose hands now rests my future happiness—to-morrow!"

But here his musings were interrupted by the clatter of horses' hoofs, approaching at a swift pace behind him, and the next moment a horseman, muffled in a large cloak, reined up his steed, with a powerful jerk, at his side. They rode on for some distance in silence, until Henry, for that was our hero's name, addressed him with—

"A fine evening, sir?"

"It is," answered the stranger—whose features and accent denoted him to be a foreigner—"it is very fine." Then, after a pause he continued: "Being a stranger in this country, I should be much obliged, sir, if you would direct me to the village of E——."

"Willingly," replied Henry; "it is to E—— that I am going, and, if I shall not intrude, shall be happy to accompany you."

The stranger expressed his thanks, and, after a short time resumed:

"I suppose you reside in E——sir?"

"Why, not exactly a resident, but rather a frequent visitor, as you may suppose," answered the light-hearted Henry, "when I tell you that the magnet which attracts me is a lady."

"And by such a magnet," replied the stranger, with a sigh, "I have been drawn from the sunny shores of Italy; attend awhile, and, in return for your confidence, you shall hear my story, and during its relation, our horses will cool:

"About a year ago, there came to Naples an old gentleman with his wife, who was an invalid, and a lovely daughter. They engaged a villa near the one in which I resided; I, thereby, became acquainted with the gentleman, who invited me to his house; but as his daughter was constantly in attendance on her mother, I never could meet her. I called again and again for the same purpose, but was as often disappointed, until shortly after, the old lady dying, I, with some other neighbors, was invited to the funeral. I saw her then in all the loveliness of woman's sorrow, bending over her mother's grave, and thought that I had never beheld a being so beautiful.—From that moment I loved her, and resolved to solicit her hand. After waiting to allow her grief to subside, I called, and finding her alone, at once told her the state of my feelings regarding her; but she, with apparent grief for my disappointment, firmly rejected my advances. They quitted Naples suddenly, and I have not seen them since, but have followed them hither with the intention of again preferring my suit."

"And if, when you have found her, she is engaged to another?"

The stranger's brow darkened, and his eyes flashed fiercely, as he exclaimed, "It should not be! This hand would deprive *him* of the happiness denied to *me*."

"What would you reduce the woman you loved to misery?"

"Young man, you know not the fiery pangs of rejected love; or, at least, we, sons of the South, are warmer in such matters than you of this colder clime."

"Well, well! I wish you success, and will, if you please see, mention your case to a friend at E——, in whose house I shall sleep; probably he will be able to assist you in your search; by-the-bye, De Moncey has been in Italy, so I have no doubt will be delighted to have you for his guest; but here is the village. I will conduct you to the inn, as I intend leaving my horse there."

The start given by the stranger, together with the ashy paleness which overspread his features, at the mention of the name of "De Moncey," were unnoticed by the gay and unsuspecting Henry, who, spurring his horse, cantered gaily on to the inn.

"De Moncey?" ejaculated the stranger. "Ha! this it well, my search is ended—but can it be De Moncey's daughter to whom this gallant speeds? For his sake, I hope not; that, however, I must ascertain."

They had now arrived at the inn, when Henry, having alighted, walked on to the house of De Moncey, promising to call on the stranger early the next morning.

The road to the mansion lay up an avenue of nearly a mile in length, and shaded on each side by a thick row of tall pines. He had now reached the house, and was proceeding to the door, when the tinkling of a guitar, in the garden, caught his ear. Guessing who was the musician, he entered the garden, and stealing behind a bower, he beheld, through the leaves, his beloved Adeline seated with her guitar.—He could refrain no longer, but rushing into the bower, clasped her to his breast. The blush which overspread her face at being thus caught, was dispelled by the ray of beholding him in whom her earthly happiness was centred.

"Now, I declare," said Adeline, playfully tapping his shoulder, "that you have become quite a truant! I am sure I have not seen you for more than a whole day."

"Sweetest," replied Henry, embracing her, "you must forgive me; I staid but to settle some affairs now, that I might not again be torn from you—though I must confess that I should have been here earlier, but for a companion I picked up on the road; he may, look not so hardly, Adeline, it was a man, and if you heard his story, you would, I ha e no doubt, forgive him the delay he caused me—but you shall hear it some other time."

Adeline, however, would rather hear it then. Henry, therefore, related the story of the stranger, and looking at Adeline, as he concluded, was surprised to find her in tears.

"Dearest Adeline," exclaimed he, taking her hand, "let it not affect you thus; be well, I dare say, be made happy, as you will make *me* to-morrow."

"Henry," replied Adeline, with a deep sigh, "I am more concerned in this unhappy tale than you imagine; I have reason for supposing that I am the female of whom he is in search."

"You! Adeline?"

"I have not mentioned this before, lest you should think me vain, but I will tell you now. You already know, my dear Henry, that my mother, being in a bad state of health, by the physician's advice, we went to reside at Naples. When we had been there but a short time, my father formed an acquaintance with an Italian nobleman, who, on the death of my mother, made me an offer in marriage; but, notwithstanding his wealth and handsome person, I felt that I could not love him, even if *you* had not already possessed my affections. On my rejection of his offer, he left the house in anger, and I did not see him again."

"'Tis strange—so exactly does it coincide—yet, Adeline, this *may* not be he."

"I hope not; still, I cannot but think it is."

"And if it is," said Henry, fixing his eyes searchingly upon her, "and he should repeat his offer?"

The eyes of Adeline, beaming with an expression of confidence, innocence and love, replied—"Comes the old death."

He would have clasped her in his arms, but, at the instant, a rustling in the bushes near them caused them both to start from their seats. Adeline, greatly terrified, clung to her lover; who, after a time, hearing nothing else, attempted, though vainly, to calm her fears; but she begged him to conduct her into the house, which request he very reluctantly complied with.

Passing through one of the rooms, they encountered the old man-servant, who, having a pretty shrewd guess at the locality of Henry during the present hour, *or at least*, did not think it necessary to inquire the cause of his late arrival. Before they entered the drawing-room, where the guests who had been invited to the wedding were assembled, Adeline begged Henry to acquaint her father with the story of the stranger. The old man appeared as much struck with the coincidence as his daughter had been; but seeing in a short space her promised lover, in the morning, and if the stranger should prove to be the Italian, spare her the pain of an interview.—This arranged, they entered the drawing-room, where, in the pleasure of the evening the melancholy of Adeline was dispelled, and the stranger and his story alike forgotten.

* * * * *

When Henry awoke the next morning, the sun was shining brightly into his chamber, and the wild little vocalists without, chirping their merry songs of greeting to the day. He arose with the fondest anticipations of happiness and hastily dressing, descended to the garden, where he found De Moncey already awaiting him. Thinking it the best time for their visit to E——, they set out for that place, and were much surprised on arriving to learn that the stranger had already departed, whither they could not learn; but the man who had taken his horse on the preceding evening, informed them that, on Henry's departure from the inn, "the strange gentleman had been mighty 'quisitive sirrely; for," said he, "he axed me all about ye honor and mine, and whether or noa there war'nt nobody as paid his 'dresses to her; so I up un told un that as how I b'lieved so, and that there was a weddin up there this morning. Lord love you, sir, he look'd the colour of old white Peggy there, till I thought the mon war gone crazy! but he starts off all at once towards ye honor's house; so I thought, maybe, he was an old friend, and war in order 'cause ye honor didn't ax him to the wedding."

"Well, my good fellow, did he not say anything at starting, this morning?"

"Oh, he war grumpy as may be, an' only said the neagest way to the sea, so I told un the *nearest*, which ye honor knows, lays *clean over the ridge*."

De Moncey could not help smiling at the oddity of the direction; and, rewarding the man for his information, they returned home.

"I have no longer any doubt, Henry, by the inquiries that he made, that it was my Italian friend, who, on finding the hopelessness of the case, and moreover that you, to whom he seems to have taken a liking, were his rival, has departed in despair."

They had now reached the house, when Henry, enjoying his beloved in the garden, ran to acquaint her with the result of their walk. She was greatly relieved by the news; and, with light hearts, they entered the breakfast-room. The breakfast was soon dispatched, and the joyous party set out on their journey to the church, which was situate at one end of the park, through which, as the cavalcade passed, it was saluted by the glad shouts of the assembled tenantry, whose merry faces bore witness of the general joy, and added additional pleasure to the good De Moncey.

They had now arrived at the church; and the happy bridegroom handing out his blushing bride, they proceeded gaily up the little path which led to the door. In passing through the porch, Adeline slightly trembled. Henry stopped to kiss her hand; and, in an instant, a dagger from behind pierced him to the heart. He fell, and, murmuring "Adeline," expired. The bereaved one, uttering a piercing shriek, fell senseless on the body of her beloved. The spectators, horror-struck, stood gazing vacantly at each other, until they were aroused by a voice in the crowd, crying "Seize him, seize him!" Turning, they beheld a figure rush along the path; and, springing on a horse tied up near the gate, dash off at full speed. Every one rushed simultaneously out, and mounting every horse they could find, started in pursuit. They pursued for some time, gaining rapidly on the fugitive, until he turned up a short lane, which terminated in a terrific precipice.

"Hold! hold!" shouted the foremost of the pursuers, as they turned into the lane. "Would you follow him over the cliff?" "He must be dashed over before he can stop his horse." A sharp cry of terror announced the truth of the predictions, and all was silent.

In deep silence, each meditating on the events of the morning, they returned to the church, where they had left De Moncey and, his daughter. The scene which presented itself was heartrending in the extreme. The bereaved bride, not yet recovered from her swoon, was still extended on the lifeless body of Henry; the old man bending over the wreck of his fond hopes, absorbed in a sorrow too deep for tears.

They bore with them the body of Henry back to the mansion of De Moncey, where, after a time, Adeline recovered. But to what did she recover? Better, far better, had she have died. It was too evident that, with the spirit of her lover, her reason had fled forever. Her father was, from that hour, never seen to smile. The cup of happiness so cruelly snatched from his lips, had left him a heart-broken man.

* * * * *

The Sick Chamber.—Health and the Sun have been always sung and praised; I will now celebrate sickness and shade. I will celebrate thee, bodily pain, whose hot breath layest thy hand on the head and heart of man, and sayest to the sufferings of his spirit, 'thought!' his gray arm against us. God will inspire his ministers with courage and with understanding to consummate his purposes; and if it is necessary, he can snatch them from the fiery furnace, or the Lion's den; as he did anciently the three Hebrews *from the former*, and Daniel from the latter.

As for our acquaintance with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, we know, no man or set of men can be more thoroughly acquainted with its rise, its organization, and its history, than we have every reason to believe we are. We all verily believe, and many of us know of a surety, that the religion of the Latter Day Saints, as originally taught by Joseph Smith, which is contained in the Old and New Testaments, Book of Covenants, and Book of Mormon, is verily true; and that the pure principles set forth in those books, are the immutable and eternal principles of Heaven, and speaks a language which, when spoken in truth and virtue, sinks deep into the heart of every honest man.—Its precepts are invigorating, and in every sense of the word, tend to dignify and ennoble man's conceptions of God and his attributes. It speaks a language which is heard amidst the roar of Artillery, as well as in the silence of midnight: it speaks a language understood by the incarcerated spirit, as well as he who is unfettered and free; yet to those who will not see, it is dark, mysterious, and secret as the grave.

We believe that all men, professing to be the ministers of God, should keep steadily in view, the honor and glory of God, the salvation of souls, and the amelioration of man's condition: and among their cardinal virtues ought to be found those of faith, hope, virtue and charity, but with Joseph Smith, and many other official characters in the Church, they are words without any meanings attached—mere as ornaments; exotics nurtured for display; virtues which, throwing aside the existence of a God, the peace, happiness, welfare, and good order of society, require that they should be preserved pure, immaculate and uncorroded.

We must solemnly and sincerely declare, God this day being witness of the truth and sincerity of our designs and statements, that happy will it be with those who examine and scan Joseph Smith's pretensions to righteousness; and take counsel of human affairs, and of the experience of times gone by. Do not such yield up tranquility a superiority to that man which the reasonableness of past events, and the laws of our country declare to be pernicious and diabolical. We hope many items of doctrine, as now taught, some of which, however, are taught secretly, and denied openly, (which we know positively is the case,) and others, publicly, considerate men will treat with contempt; for we declare them heretical and damnable in their influence, though they find many devotees. How shall he, who has drank of the poisonous draft, teach virtue? In the stead thereof, when the criminal code is unjustly to be executed, the court is obliged to plead guilty to the criminal. We appeal to humanity and ask, what shall we do? Shall we lie supinely and suffer ourselves to be metamorphosed into beasts by the Syren tongue? We answer that our country and our God require that we should rectify the tree. We have called upon him to repent, and as soon as he shewed fruits meet for repentance, we stood ready to seize him by the hand of fellowship, and throw around him the mantle of protection; for it is the salvation of souls we desire, and not our own aggrandizement.

We are earnestly seeking to explode the vicious principles of Joseph Smith, and reprobate the same abominations and whoredoms; which we verily know are not accordant and consistent with the principles of Jesus Christ and the Apostles; and for that purpose, and with that end in view, with an eye single to the glory of God, we have dared to gird on the armor, and with God at our head, we meet solemnly and sincerely declare that the sword of *truth* shall not depart from the thighs, nor the buckler from the arm, until we can enjoy those glorious privileges which appertain to God and our country's laws have guaranteed to us—freedom of speech, the liberty of the press, and the right to worship God as seemeth us good.—We are aware, however, that we are hazarding every earthly blessing, particularly property, and probably life itself, in striking this blow at tyranny and oppression: yet notwithstanding, we most solemnly declare that no man, or set of men combined, shall, with impunity, violate obligations as sacred as many which have been violated, unless reason, justice and virtue have become ashamed and sought the haunts of the grave, though our lives be the forfeiture.

Many of us have sought a reformation in the church, without a public exposition of the enormities of crimes practiced by its leaders, thinking that if they would hearken to counsel, and shew fruit meet for repentance, it would be as acceptable with God, as though they were exposed to public gaze,

* * * For the private path, the secret acts of men,

If noble, for the noblest of their lives,**

but our petitions were treated with contempt; and in many cases the petitioner spurned from their presence, and particularly by Joseph, who would state that if he had sinned, and was guilty of the charges we would charge

PREAMBLE.

It is with the greatest solicitude for the welfare of the Human Family, and of our own souls, that we have this day assembled. Feign would we have slumbered, and "like the Dove that covers and conceals the arrow that is preying upon its vitals," for the sake of avoiding the furious and turbulent storm of persecution which we shall, assuredly, bring upon our heads, have covered and concealed that which, for a season, has been brooding among the ruins of our peace, but we rely upon the arm of Jehovah, the Supreme Arbiter of the world, to whom we this day, and upon this occasion, appeal for the rectitude of our intentions.

If that God who gave bounds to the mighty deep, and bade the ocean cease —if that God who organized the physical world, and gave infinity to space, be our front guard and our rear ward, it is futile and vain for man to resist his puny arm against us. God will inspire his ministers with courage and with understanding to consummate his purposes; and if it is necessary, he can snatch them from the fiery furnace, or the Lion's den; as he did anciently the three Hebrews *from the former*, and Daniel from the latter.

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—we forget! and when at last we arise with exhausted strength from the sick-bed, our souls often awake as out of a long night into a new morning.—So many things, during the illness of the body, conspire to soften the feelings; the still room; the mild twilight through the window curtains; the low voice; still more than all the kind words of those who surround us; their attention, their solicitude, perhaps a tear in their eyes; all this does us good; and when the wise Solomon enumerated all the good things which have their time upon the earth, he forgot to celebrate sickness among the rest.

"Better laugh than cry."—So say we. It's no use rubbing one's eyes, and blubbering over all the ills that flesh is heir to." Red eyes caused by any thing but grief or its kindred are scandalous looking affairs. The best way is to "stand up to the rack," and take the good things and the evil as they come along, without repining; and always cheering yourself with that philosophical ejaculation, "better luck next time."

Is dame fortune as shy as a weasel? Tell her to go to thunder, and laugh her in the face. The happiest fellow we ever saw, slept upon a plank—and hadn't a shilling in his pocket, nor a coat to his back.

Do you find "disappointment lurking in many a prize?" Then throw it away, and laugh at your own folly for pursuing it.

Does fame elude your grasp? Then laugh at the fools that are so often her favorites. She's of no consequence any how, and never buttered a piece of bread or furnished a man a clean dickey.

Is young heart broken by

"Some maiden fair,
Of bright blue eyes and auburn hair"

Then thank your stars that you have escaped with your neck, and make the welkin ring with a hearty laugh. It lightens the weight of one's heart amazingly.

Take our advice under all circumstances—"never shed your tears." Don't be in a hurry to get out of the world, considering the creatures who inhabit it, and it is just about as full of fun as it can be. You never saw a man cut his throat with a broad grin on his face; it's a grand preventative of suicide. There's philosophy and religion too, in laughing; it shows a clear conscience and gratitude for the good things of life, and elevates us above the brute creation. So here goes for fun—and we'll put in for our share while the ball is rolling, ha! ha!!

We give place this week to the following Preamble, Resolutions and Affidavits, of the Seceders from the Church of Nauvoo.—The request is complied with on account of their deeming it very important that the public should know the true cause of their dissenting, as all manner of falsehood is spread abroad in relation to the schism in the Church. In our subsequent numbers several affidavits will be published, to substantiate the facts alleged. Hereafter, no further Church proceedings will appear in our columns, except in the form of brief communications.—ED.

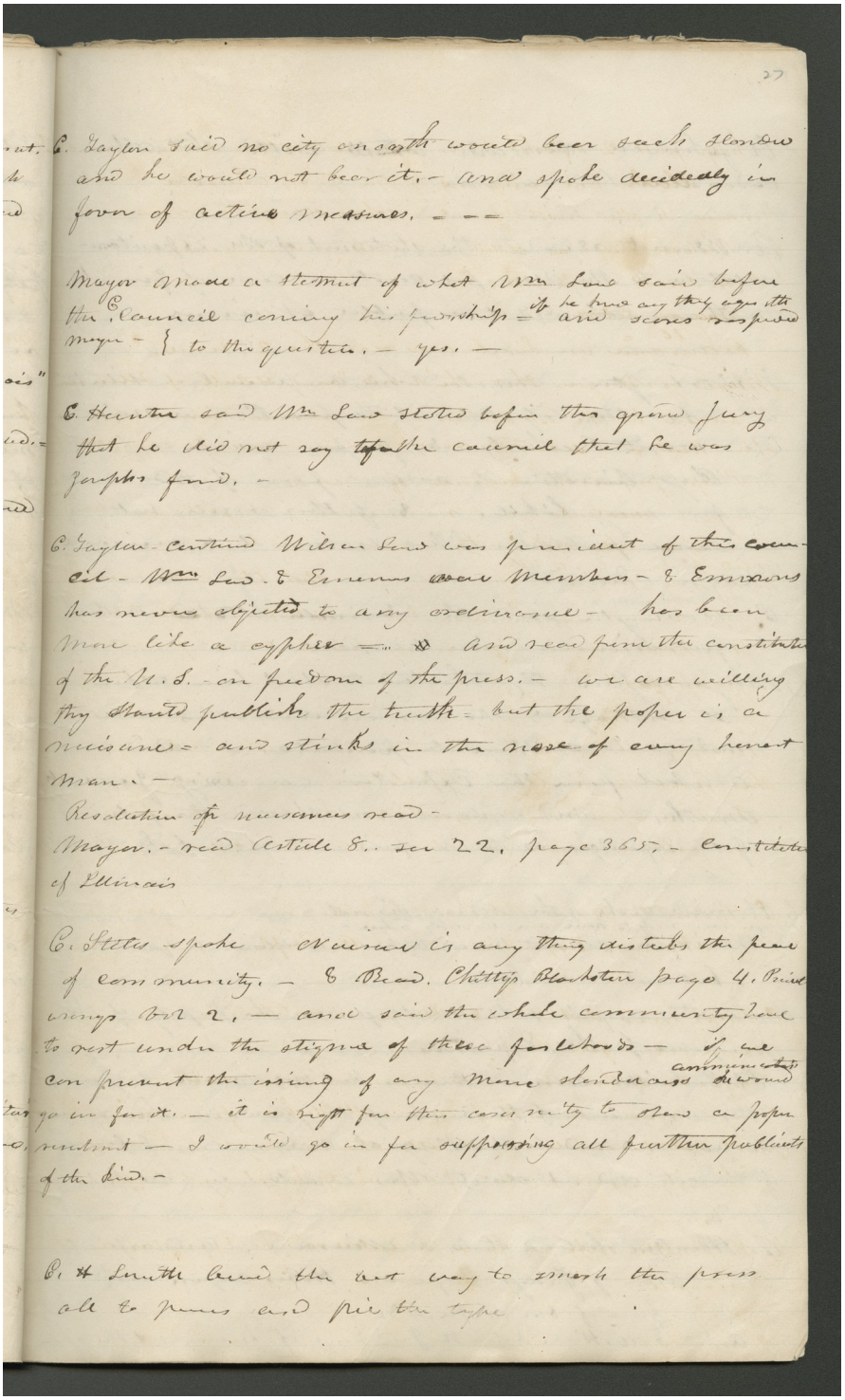
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Nauvoo Expositor, June 7, 1844, front page. Joseph Smith Papers facsimile. Its allegations remain the publishers' claims. [37]



27

C. Taylor said no city on earth would bear such slander and he would not bear it. — and spoke decidedly in favor of active measures. — —

Mayor made a statement of what Wm Law said before the Council coming his worships = if he have any thing upon the mind and desires to speak upon the subject — } to the question. — yes. —

C. Hunter said Mr Law states before the grand Jury that he did not say to the council that he was perfectly satisfied. —

C. Taylor continued Wilson Law was president of the council — Wm Law & Emmons were members — & Emmons has never objected to any ordinance — has been more like a cypher — & read from the constitution of the U. S. — on freedom of the press. — we are willing they should publish the truth — but the paper is a nuisance = and stinks in the nose of every honest man. —

Resolution of nuisances read —

Mayor. — read Article 8. sec 22. page 365. — Constitution of Illinois

C. Stiles spoke — whatever is any thing disturbs the peace of community. — & Read. Chitty's Blackstone page 4. Point comp Book 2. — and said the whole community have to rest under the stigma of these falsehoods — if we can prevent the issuing of any more slanderous communications we will go in for it. — it is right for this community to have a paper — I would go in for suppressing all further publications of the kind. —

C. H. Smith said the best way to smash the press all to pieces and pie the type

Council rough minutes, June 10, 1844, manuscript page 27, in Willard Richards's handwriting. Stiles's nuisance argument appears near the bottom; Hyrum Smith's following proposal is a separate speech. Joseph Smith Papers. [12]

His defense work continued after the destruction of the press. In the June 17 hearing before Daniel H. Wells, Stiles appeared for Joseph Smith and the other defendants. The published account records an unsuccessful preliminary defense motion, followed by testimony and their discharge. The sequence is worth retaining: advocacy involved argument, resistance, and adaptation. It was not an uninterrupted series of effortless victories. This local proceeding was one stage in a widening crisis, not a final settlement of every legal issue. [13]

The chronology of Stiles's church membership complicates an easy label. The biographical record dates his baptism by Brigham Young to August 26, 1844, after Joseph Smith's death. His documented legal service, Masonic activity, and marriage ceremony therefore preceded that recorded baptism. The sequence is one of the strongest reasons to tell his story at length: institutional work and personal affiliation developed on different timetables. [2]

Foster and Backenstos enter the private account

Foster had once occupied a respected place in the same community. Born in England in 1811, he practiced medicine and accompanied Joseph Smith's party on its journey to Washington in 1839–1840. In Nauvoo he held civic and institutional responsibilities, including service as a justice of the peace and a university regent. His later opposition cannot be understood fully unless that earlier participation remains visible. [14]

By April 1844 Foster had been excommunicated; he subsequently associated with William Law's religious movement and the Expositor. This transformation gives the assignment its human tension. Stiles's debtor was a former insider who had become an opponent of the city's dominant leadership. Yet the paper says nothing about religious loyalty. Its language concerns rights, a judgment, and costs. The historian must keep that silence intact even while explaining why the names would have carried weight locally. [14]

William Backenstos supplies a different connection. Born in Pennsylvania in 1813, he served as Hancock County sheriff after his election in 1842. In October 1843 he married Clara Wasson, and by late 1844 he lived in Nauvoo. His later occupations included merchant and painter. The assignment shows him taking an interest in the collection of a judgment; it does not explain whether he bought it as an investment, accepted it in payment, or acted under another arrangement. [15]

His surname requires particular care. Accounts of the region also feature Jacob B. Backenstos, the brother whose Masonic initiation coincided with Stiles's. The name on this assignment is William. Their biographies and actions must remain distinct, especially when later violence and law enforcement enter the broader Nauvoo narrative.

Which Justice Higbee

Isaac Higbee is the leading candidate for the unnamed justice. Born in 1797, he joined the church in 1832, lived in Missouri before moving to Illinois, and served as a Nauvoo bishop. He was elected a justice of the peace in 1843. His offices placed him at the intersection of religious community and local civil justice. [16]

There is also a striking parallel case. In Niswanger v. Wight and Jett, a debt proceeding moved from Robert D. Foster to Isaac Higbee in 1843. Stiles wrote a subpoena in the case. The judgment subsequently passed through several assignments and reached William Backenstos in September 1845. That file does not solve the present case, but it independently places these men within a shared world of small-court proceedings and transferable judgments. The resemblance makes Isaac a promising research lead rather than a conclusively identified signer of the missing judgment. [17]

Elias Higbee died on June 8, 1843. His death before the assignment does not by itself exclude an earlier judgment. Francis M. Higbee and Chauncey L. Higbee are also distinct individuals and should not be merged with Isaac through a shared surname. Until a docket, transcript, or original judgment names the justice, the transcription should continue to read simply "Justice Higbee." [18]

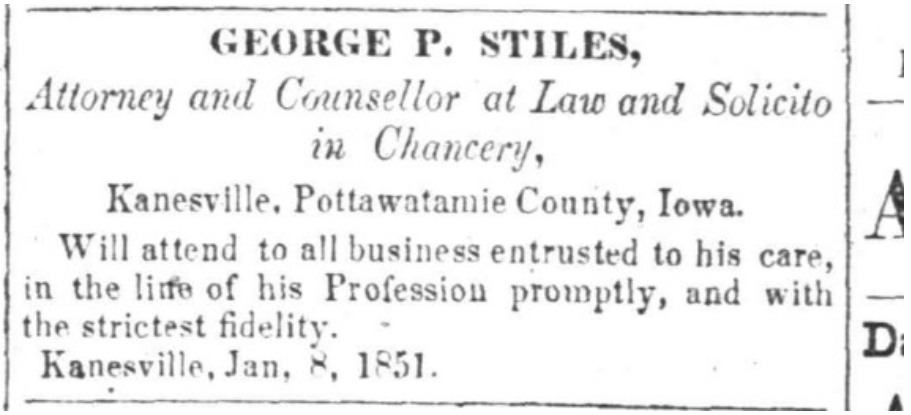
The clerk and the second life of the paper

The filing endorsement is read as D. E. Head, clerk. David E. Head, born in Kentucky in 1818, had worked as a deputy clerk before becoming Hancock County circuit clerk in 1844. He held that office until 1856. His career supplies a plausible and well-supported identification for the initials on the reverse. [20]

Head's notation marks a different moment from Stiles's signature. On March 13 the paper recorded a transfer; on March 19 it entered a filing system. The reverse heading, placing Stiles against Backenstos, may reflect its use in a proceeding or an administrative convention. It is tempting to turn that "vs" into a complete lawsuit, but the surviving sheet does not permit that reconstruction. A case index or associated file is needed to explain the docket's form. [1]

Beyond Nauvoo

The later Stiles should be introduced without allowing his eventual disagreements to determine the meaning of every earlier act. By 1851 he was advertising as an attorney and solicitor in Kanesville, Iowa. A notice in the Frontier Guardian named him solicitor for Mary E. Ludington in a divorce action against Elam Ludington. As with the earlier Brown notice, the published allegations belong to the litigation, not to established findings. The record shows professional continuity across migration. [19]



GEORGE P. STILES,

Attorney and Counsellor at Law and Solicito in Chancery,

Kanesville, Pottawatamie County, Iowa.

Will attend to all business entrusted to his care, in the line of his Profession promptly, and with the strictest fidelity.

Kanesville, Jan, 8, 1851.

George P. Stiles's advertisement, Frontier Guardian, Kanesville, August 8, 1851, p. 4. The advertisement itself is dated January 8, 1851. Detail rendered from the BYU Studies newspaper scan. [19]

The Iowa advertisement echoes the Nauvoo notice's promise of prompt attention and fidelity while adding the designation solicitor in chancery. Read together, the two notices show how Stiles continued to present his professional services after moving west. The January 8 date printed within the Iowa advertisement belongs to the notice; this reproduction comes from the August 8 issue. [6, 19]

Stiles became Council Bluffs city attorney in 1853 and received a federal appointment as an associate justice in Utah Territory in 1854. He had moved from representing a Mormon city to exercising authority derived from the United States government within a Mormon-majority territory. That change of institutional position supplies a substantial later chapter, but it should be narrated through the disputes themselves rather than explained as an inevitable personal reversal. [2, 21]

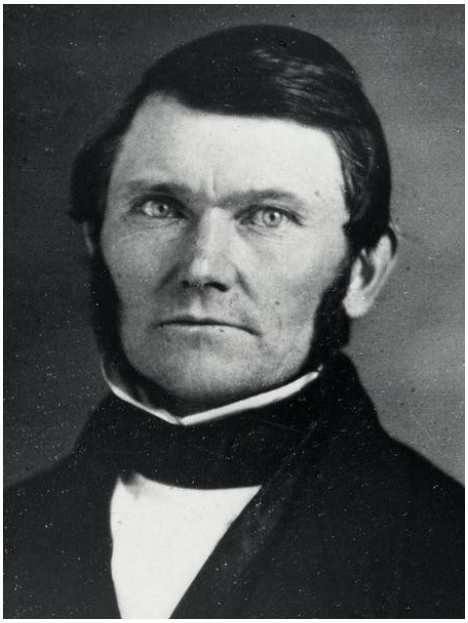
A judge on the western road

Stiles's judicial work carried him beyond Salt Lake City. A Deseret News departure notice, reprinted in the St. Louis Luminary on July 14, 1855, named him with Orson Hyde and U.S. marshal Joseph L. Heywood on official business toward Carson Valley. Their work concerned organizing Carson County and holding courts. Three kinds of authority traveled together: a probate judge, a federal judge, and a federal marshal. The notice's relative departure date is not converted here into an exact date without the original issue. [38]

A later Luminary report, published September 8, relayed traveler Howard Egan's news that he had seen Hyde, Heywood, and Stiles in Sacramento, all well. This is a contemporary report of Egan's observation, not Stiles's diary. It places him within a western circuit of roads, courts, and circulating news, broadening the picture of a man too easily confined to Nauvoo and Salt Lake in retrospect. [39]

Woodruff: civic cooperation and a disciplinary hearing

Early in 1856, Stiles still worked within Utah's civic circle. Woodruff's January 9 journal places him among speakers at a Fillmore meeting about mail and stage connections between the Missouri River and Sacramento. At a Salt Lake meeting on January 26, Stiles spoke again; Woodruff served as a secretary. These entries show shared public work, although they do not establish an intimate friendship. Their later confrontation occurred within a community in which the two already knew one another's public roles. [29]



Wilford Woodruff, circa 1849, photographic copy. Church History Library, PH 6821, item 1; reproduced by the Joseph Smith Papers. [40]

On December 22, 1856, Woodruff attended a Seventies meeting with Orson Hyde, Lorenzo Snow, and Franklin D. Richards. His journal identifies the charge against Stiles as adultery and records an emphatic denial. Woodruff judged the testimony strong; that assessment belongs to him. [22]

A separate report of Woodruff's discourse on the same date supplies the accusations: he said one woman had confessed intercourse with Stiles and another claimed to have witnessed him having intercourse with a woman. The excerpt does not name the women or provide their full testimony. It records Woodruff's presentation of their claims, not independently established facts. [22]

Woodruff then challenged Stiles to affirm his innocence, warning of divine punishment for a false denial. His journal says, "He did not deny it nor acknowledge it," and records his expulsion. That reported silence followed an earlier denial; it was not a recorded confession. The journal is a contemporary participant's account, not formal trial minutes located in this research. Woodruff's autobiography, compiled about 1865–1866, repeats the episode retrospectively and is not an independent second witness. [22]

The raid on the law office

A week later, the conflict reached the material world of books and papers. Hosea Stout's private diary, dated December 30, 1856, reports that the previous night the law library of Stiles and Thomas S. Williams had been broken into. Books and papers were removed; books, shingles, and laths were placed in a nearby privy and burned. Stout does not identify the raiders or claim to have watched them. His entry is contemporary evidence that the incident was reported on December 30, with the raid placed on December 29. It does not inventory which documents burned. [23]

Catharine V. Waite supplied a more elaborate account a decade later. In the 1867 edition consulted here, she accused James Ferguson, Hiram B. Clawson, and others of removing court records to a safe in Brigham Young's office, tearing private papers, and burning other materials. She said Stiles was absent and later believed the records had burned. Waite also reported that he made an affidavit in Washington in spring 1857. This is a retrospective, openly antagonistic published account; her narrative is neither an eyewitness deposition nor a substitute for the affidavit itself, which has not been inspected. Its names and details remain attributed claims. [30]

The distinction between burned law books, private papers, and official court records matters. Neither Stout's brief entry nor Waite's later account warrants the statement that all federal court records were destroyed. Nor do these accounts establish who ordered the raid or prove that the excommunication caused it. The sequence is clear; the full chain of responsibility is not.

A contemporary public report offers an important counterpoint. The Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian of July 3, 1858, summarizing Governor Alfred Cumming's May 2 letter to Secretary of State Lewis Cass, reported that the territorial records and library remained intact. This is contemporary newspaper transmission of an official report, not a later reminiscence. It weighs against sweeping claims that the official records were destroyed. It does not supply an item-by-item account of Stiles's and Williams's private possessions or undo the evidence of a raid and burning. The original dispatch and any accompanying inventories remain priority records to inspect. [35]

A separate federal record provides another boundary. U.S. attorney Alexander Wilson reported that Ferguson was indicted on December 15, 1858, for allegedly threatening Stiles during the February 1857 court term. Wilson's account of the ensuing proceedings records a jury acquittal on January 11, 1859. His November 15, 1859 letter defended his own conduct as prosecutor and was printed by the Senate in 1860. This is an official contemporary account with its own argumentative purpose. The prosecution concerned intimidation in court, not a judgment establishing guilt for the December 1856 raid. [31]

A published statement in Stiles's name

An endorsement printed by Catharine V. Waite offers a qualified opportunity to hear Stiles's political voice. Following James M. Crane's January 17, 1859 letter advocating a separate Nevada territory, Waite reproduced a statement signed in print by Stiles as a former Utah associate justice. He endorsed Crane's account of western Utah and supported its immediate territorial organization. The signed original has not been located. This statement concerns territorial government, not an answer to the adultery charge. [30]

The contrast with Nauvoo is suggestive. In 1844 Stiles supported municipal action against a hostile newspaper; this later attributed statement supported reorganizing authority in western Utah. The records show positions taken in different circumstances. They do not establish a private admission that his earlier legal reasoning had been mistaken.

Stiles's life continued outside Utah. Biographical references place him in Ohio by 1860, record Civil War military service, and identify him as mayor of Cardington in 1867. He later worked in Washington and died in Texas in 1885. These changes deserve further development from military, municipal, family, and

federal personnel records. At present they establish the breadth of his career more securely than they establish its personal texture. [2, 21]

A family remembered imperfectly

The 1895 Stiles genealogy supplies family leads that require caution. Its entry names a wife, J. K. Hollister, and reports her death on March 9, 1884, aged fifty-six. It lists children John M., Gertrude, George P., and A. H.; it associates Gertrude with the surname Scheble and Belton, Texas, and the younger George with legal work in Cardington. These are the compiler's reported details, not independently verified identities. J. K. Hollister must not be silently equated with Julian Mackemer or Sophia Schofield. [41]

The entry also gives an 1814 birth year, calls Stiles a chief justice, and treats his identification with a lieutenant of the 31st Ohio as probable. Those discrepancies limit its authority. Its value is as a guide to death notices, marriage records, military files, and descendants' papers. The reported Belton family connection suggests where to seek accounts of his final years; it does not establish why he went there. Julian's fate remains a separate unanswered question. [41]

Returning to the ten dollars

The surviving assignment catches Stiles between the familiar Nauvoo crisis and the less familiar life that followed. His signature joins an adverse party, a purchaser or recipient of the claim, an unnamed justice, and a county clerk. The instrument gives each a different role. That specificity is the story's strength: men often remembered as allies or antagonists also inhabited a world of payment, procedure, and unfinished accounts.

The most productive narrative question is therefore concrete: what brought these particular men together over this particular judgment? A full answer may lie in a court file. Even before that file is found, Stiles's documented work allows readers to understand why he belonged in the room. He offered legal services, charged for them, argued for clients and institutions, and eventually encountered the force of institutions himself. The ten-dollar paper preserves one small transaction within that much larger life.

The sequence at a glance

Date	Event
November 7, 1841	Recorded marriage to Julian Mackemer. [25]
February 4, 1843	Marriage to Sophia J. Schofield. [5]
June 10, 1844	Expositor debate. [12]
March 13 and 19, 1845	Assignment signed, then filed. [1]
1855	Carson Valley business and Sacramento reports. [38, 39]
December 22, 1856	Adultery hearing and excommunication recorded by Woodruff. [22]
December 29, 1856	Office raid dated from Stout's next-day entry. [23]
January 11, 1859	Ferguson acquitted in separate intimidation prosecution. [31]
September 1885	Stiles dies in Belton, Texas. [2, 41]

Principal findings

- The face records an assignment by Stiles to Backenstos of a judgment against Foster. The reverse's "vs" heading does not, by itself, establish the nature of a separate lawsuit between Stiles and Backenstos.
- Isaac Higbee, a Nauvoo justice of the peace, is the strongest present candidate for "Justice Higbee." The document supplies no first name, and the judgment could predate the assignment.
- Stiles's marriage certificate, Masonic record, advertisements, municipal bill, and council remarks offer direct evidence for a fuller biography.
- The original cause of the ten-dollar judgment, its date, the price paid for the assignment, and the eventual collection remain unresolved.

What the words establish

Stiles held the stated judgment against Foster and transferred his interest to William Backenstos. "For Value Received" acknowledges consideration but does not disclose its amount. Ten dollars describes the judgment, not necessarily the transfer price. The responsibility clause addresses the judgment and costs without explaining the parties' private arrangements. The instrument is dated March 13; the filing endorsement is dated March 19. Neither date identifies when Justice Higbee rendered the original judgment. [1]

The reverse abbreviation is read as "Judgt," meaning judgment. The face reads "right title and," and "rendered before." Capitalization and the exact form of abbreviated superscripts should be checked against the physical original before a diplomatic edition is published. No handwriting authentication is claimed.

Archival search results and remaining objectives

This search has advanced the questions below without treating catalog references as inspected case files. Searches included Stiles/Styles and Julian/Julia/Juliana with Mackemer variants. A missing result in an online edition is not proof that no record survives.

Original ten-dollar judgment: related Joseph Smith Papers case calendars and online searches have not identified it. The next direct records are Hancock circuit-court party indexes, case files, judgment and execution dockets, and surviving justice-of-the-peace transcripts. Search Stiles against Foster as well as Stiles against Backenstos; a date before March 13, 1845 remains possible. The parallel Niswanger case is a lead, not a match. [17, 24]

Julian Mackemer: the precise marriage-register references are volume A-1, pages 46 and 62, FHL microfilm 954177. Inspect the original entries and returns, then circuit-court chancery indexes and divorce decrees under both spouses' names. Check probate, cemetery, church, and newspaper records, including places outside Nauvoo. The Huntington transcription search was negative; a systematic search of every contemporary newspaper death column remains outstanding. Neither death nor divorce has been established. [25, 26]

Woodruff and excommunication: journal, discourse report, and later autobiographical account have been compared. The remaining targets are Seventies council minutes, any preserved statements by the women, and Stiles's own response. No full witness depositions or independent church trial file were located. The online Stiles portrait is excluded because its original provenance and date have not been established. The later printed Nevada endorsement does not supply his response to the adultery charge. [22]

Burning and federal disputes: Stout's diary, Waite's retrospective account, Wilson's official correspondence, and a contemporary newspaper summary of Cumming's report have been examined. Obtain Stiles's reported 1857 affidavit and an inventory or recovery report before deciding what

happened to the official records. A newly located lead is Governor Alfred Cumming's letter to Lewis Cass, May 2, 1858, in the Alfred Cumming Papers at Duke; the original has not been inspected here. [23, 30–32]

Professional and later family life: searches for bar admission, Council Bluffs municipal service, military service, and Cardington officeholding yielded additional leads but not all original records. The Senate executive journal, volume 9, pages 361 and 373, is the specific appointment lead. A Cardington library compilation identifies a lieutenant George P. Stiles in Company E, 31st Ohio Volunteer Infantry; verify against the official roster, service and pension files before expanding the military story. The library page alternates James and John for a purported son, a reason not to build a family reconstruction from it alone. Council minutes, census households, and Treasury personnel records remain uninspected. [33, 34]

These are record-retrieval objectives, not requests already sent to repositories. No archivist correspondence or paid record order has been initiated.

Source notes

Online sources consulted October 2026. The Joseph Smith Papers supplies both documentary editions and editorial biographies; these are distinguished below. Newspaper notices and diaries are contemporary testimony, not automatic confirmation of every allegation they contain. URLs lead to the cited document or edition.

[1] Owner-supplied manuscript photographs. George P. Stiles assignment to William Backenstos, March 13, 1845; reverse filed March 19, 1845. Images IMG_0709 and IMG_0710. Original cause of action not yet identified.

[2] George Philander Stiles. Joseph Smith Papers, biographical directory. Birth, parents, marriages, baptism, and broad career chronology.
https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/person/george-philander-stiles

[3] Nauvoo lodge minutes February 3 1842. Contemporary minutes, Bennett copy; digitized extract at B. H. Roberts Foundation. Petition lists Carthage, occupation, and age.
https://bhroberts.org/records/yXnsPd-kRLbjj/february_3rd_1842_nauvoo_lodge_meeting_minutes

[4] Nauvoo lodge minutes April 13 1842. Joseph Smith Papers, documentary edition, page 1. Stiles and Jacob B. Backenstos initiated.
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