State of Illinois versus William Welch

Keeping the peace in Hancock County in 1843

Original documents and the story of the people behind an 1843 peace proceeding

Highlights

- August 17–18, 1843: Joshua D. Stewart sought protection from a feared shooting or other personal injury. William Welch was required to give $200 security to keep the peace. [D2, D3, D6, D8]
- Four witnesses undertook $50 obligations to attend circuit court. The packet contains eight apparent autographs, one execution by mark, and one official named without an autograph. [D2–D9]
- John J. Hicok connects the case to temple-committee business and the Smith murder investigation. His documented role in that investigation was grand-jury clerk. [6–9]
- The probable constable, Vincent M. Conrad, can be followed through temple records and a long Iowa life. Newly supplied Hicok family letters add his own observations and religious views. The circuit court's final disposition remains unlocated. [16–19, 53, 58–61, 73; D3]

How to read this edition

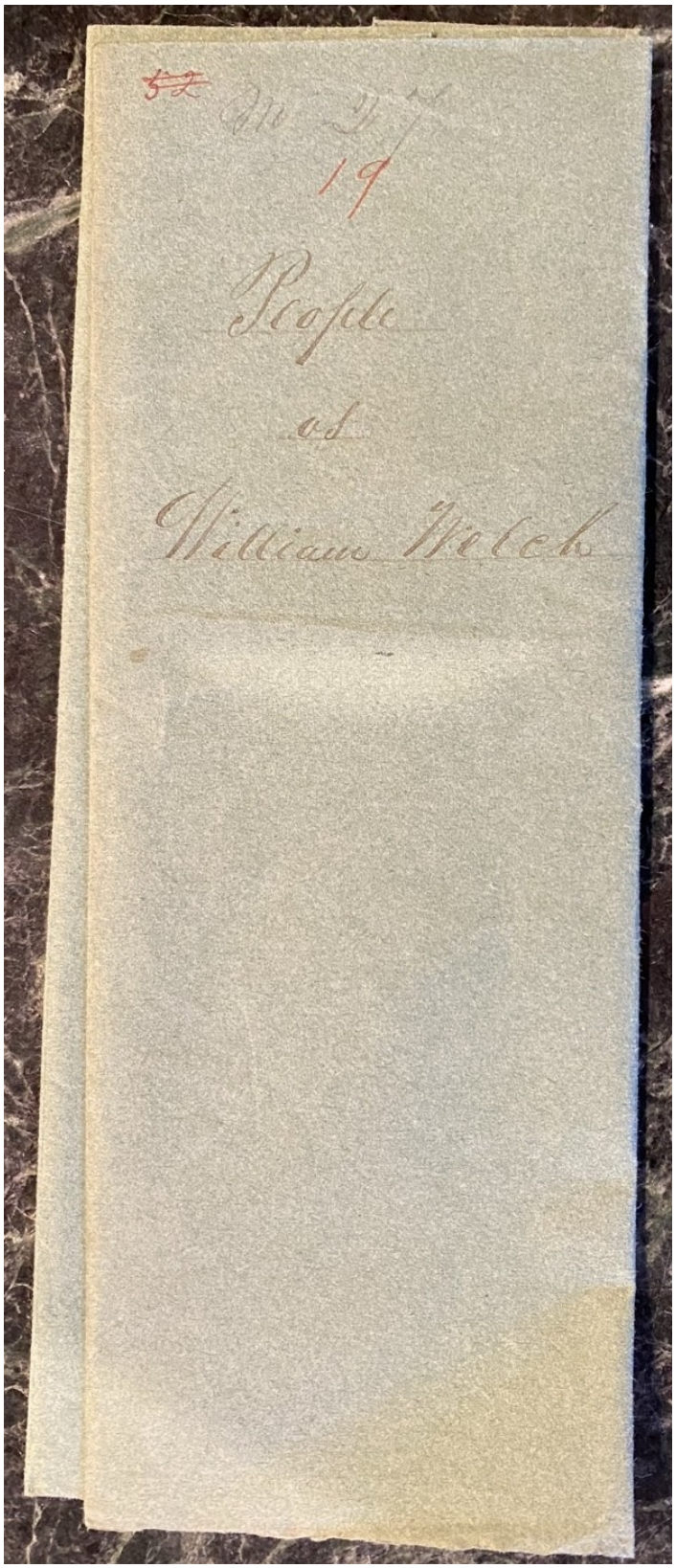
The nine photographs appear first. Each photographed side is followed immediately by its transcription, including wrappers and endorsements. Document labels D1 through D9 connect the narrative and name census to these pairs. The case belongs to 1843; the surrounding Nauvoo story reaches into 1842 and the aftermath of 1844.

Spelling, abbreviated names, grammatical irregularities, and conflicting dates are retained. Square brackets contain editorial descriptions or uncertain readings; a question mark signals doubt. Angle brackets identify words inserted between lines. Superscripts are set inline, and some line wrapping and column placement are reset for readability. Faint writing showing through from the opposite side is not counted twice. The photographs have been rotated and cropped outside the paper without reconstructing any handwriting.

The story begins on page 20. Historical illustrations, two annotated Andreas maps, biographies, a chronology, a one-page case-name census, and linked source notes help readers follow the people and places. Completed reading edition dated October 19, 2026.

D1 Case wrapper

IMG_3690.jpeg | Undated



D1 Transcription of the case wrapper

Corresponds to the photograph on the immediately preceding page

[Upper markings]
[52? — crossed out in red]
No [27? — faint pencil]
19 [red]

People

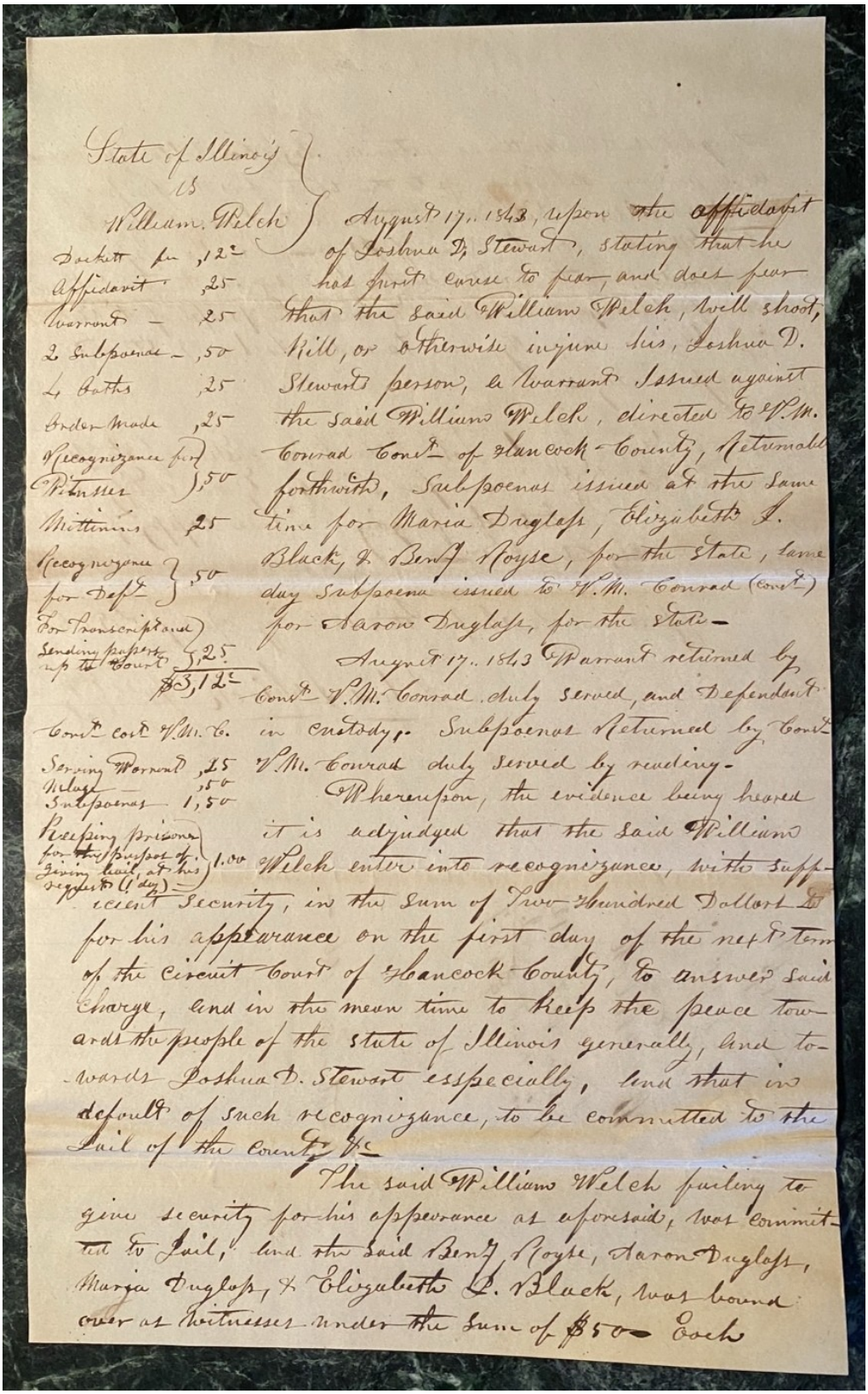
vs

William Welch

The numerical markings are retained as visible filing notations. Their dates and functions are not established. The wrapper contains no hearing date or disposition.

D2 Docket transcript first side

IMG_3691.jpeg | Proceedings of August 17, 1843



State of Illinois
vs
William Welch

Docket fee ,12½
Affidavit ,25
Warrant — ,25
2 Subpoenas — ,50
4 Oaths ,25
Order Made ,25
Recognizance for Witness ,50
Mittimus ,25
Recognizance for Defts ,50
For Transcript and Sending papers up to the Court ,25
$3,12½

Cont. cost W.M. C.
Serving Warrant ,25
Mileage ,50
Subpoenas 1,50
Keeping Prisoner for the purpose of giving bail at his request (1 day) 1.00

August 17. 1843, upon the affidavit of Joshua D. Stewart, stating that he had great cause to fear, and does fear that the said William Welch, will shoot, kill, or otherwise injure his, Joshua D. Stewarts person, a Warrant issued against the said William Welch, directed to W.M. Conrad Const. of Hancock County, Returnable forthwith, Subpoenas issued at the same time for Maria Douglass, Elizabeth L. Black, & Benj. Royse, for the State, same day Subpoena issued to W.M. Conrad (Const.) for Aaron Douglass, for the State.

August 17. 1843 Warrant returned by Const. W.M. Conrad duly served, and Defendant in custody. Subpoenas Returned by Const. W.M. Conrad duly served by reading.

Whereupon, the evidence being heard it is adjudged that the said William Welch enter into recognizance, with sufficient Security, in the Sum of Five Hundred Dollars for his appearance on the first day of the next Term of the Circuit Court of Hancock County, to answer said charge, and in the mean time to keep the peace towards the people of the state of Illinois generally, and towards Joshua D. Stewart especially, and that in default of such recognizance, to be committed to the Jail of the County &c.

The said William Welch failing to give security for his appearance as aforesaid, was committed to Jail, and the said Benj. Royse, Aaron Douglass, Maria Douglass, & Elizabeth L. Black, was bound over as Witnesses under the Sum of $50 Each

D2 Transcription of the docket first side

Corresponds to the photograph on the immediately preceding page

State of Illinois
vs
William Welch

August 17.. 1843, upon the affidavit of Joshua D. Stewart, stating that he has just cause to fear and does fear that the said William Welch, will shoot, Kill, or otherwise injure his, Joshua D. Stewart person, a Warrant Issued against the said William Welch, directed to V.M. Conrad Const. of Hancock County, Returnable forthwith, Subpoenas issued at the Same time for Maria Duglass, Elizabeth [J.?] Black, & Benj Royse, for the State, Same day Subpoena issued to V.M. Conrad (const.) for Aaron Duglass, for the State —

August 17.. 1843 Warrant returned by Const. V.M. Conrad duly served, and Defendant in custody; Subpoenas Returned by Const. V.M. Conrad duly Served by reading—

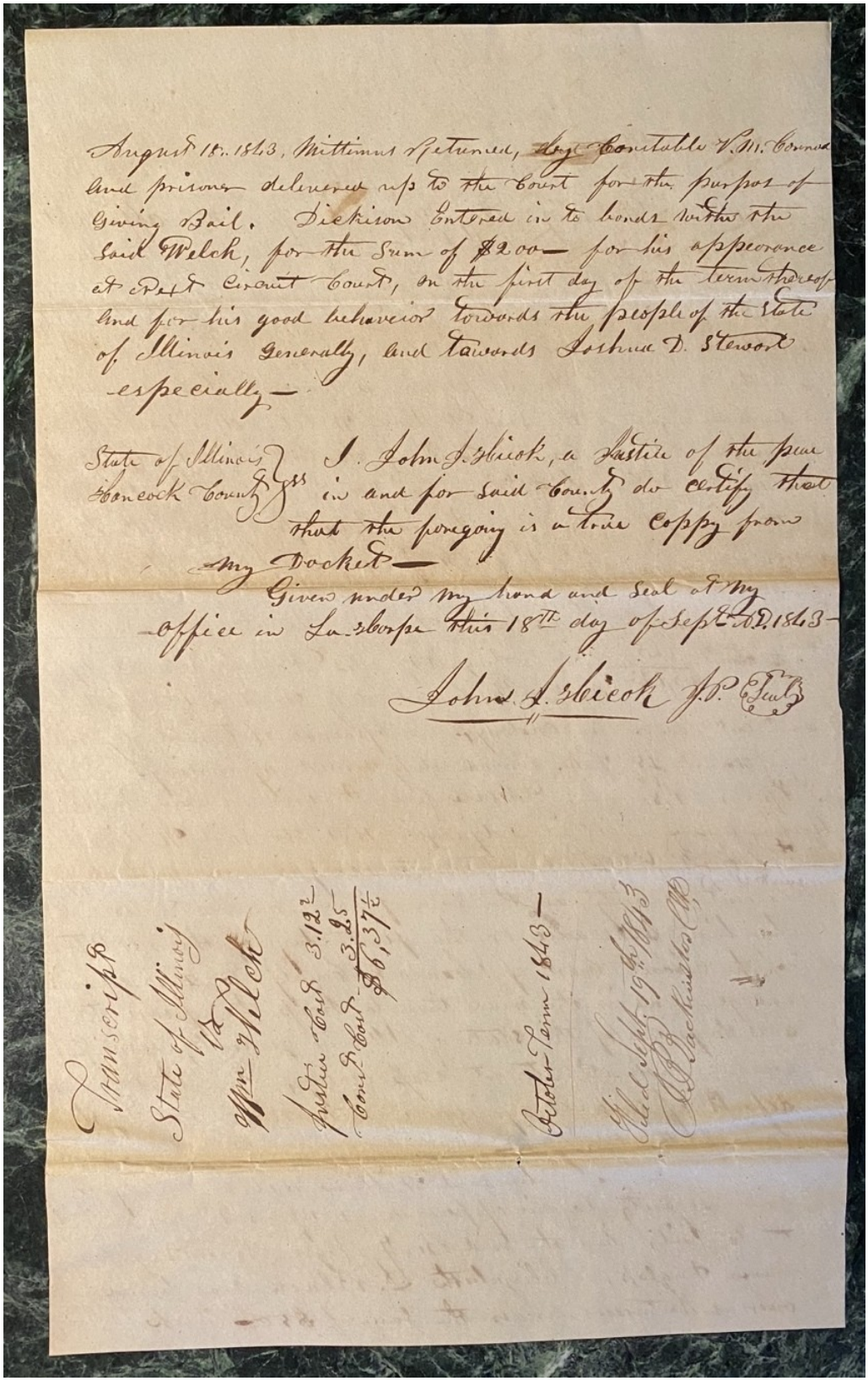
Whereupon, the evidence being heard it is adjudged that the said William Welch enter into recognizance, with sufficient Security, in the Sum of Two-hundred Dollars [to? — canceled] for his appearance on the first day of the next Term of the Circuit Court of Hancock County, to answer said charge, and in the mean time to Keep the peace toward the people of the State of Illinois generally, and towards Joshua D. Stewart especially, and that in default of such recognizance, to be committed to the Jail of the County &c

The said William Welch failing to give security for his appearance as aforesaid, was committed to Jail; and the said Benj Royse, Aaron Duglass, Maria Duglass, & Elizabeth [J.?] Black, was bound over as Witnesses under the Sum of $50— Each

Justice costs in left margin	Fee	Const. Cost V.M.C.	Fee
Docket fee	,12½	Serving Warrant	,25
affidavit	,25	Milage —	,50
Warrant —	,25	3 Subpoenas	1,50
2 Subpoena —	,50	Keeping prisoner for the purpose of Giving bail at his request (1 day)	1.00
4 Oaths	,25		
Order Made	,25		
Recognizance for Witnesses	,50		
Mittimus	,25		
Recognizance for Deft	,50		
For Transcript and Sending papers up to Court	,25		
[Written justice total]	$3,12½		

D3 Docket continuation and filing

IMG_3692.jpeg | August 18 and September 18–19, 1843



August 18. 1843, Mittimus returned, by Constable W. Mc. Connel and prisoner delivered up to the Court for the purpos of Giving Bail. Decision Entered in to bonds with the said Welch, for the Sum of $200— for his appearance at Dec Circuit Court, on the first day of the term thereof and for his good behavior towards the people of the State of Illinois Generally, and towards Joshua D. Steward especially—

State of Illinois } ss I John L. Hancock, a Justice of the peace
Hancock County } in and for said County do Certify
that the foregoing is a true Copy from
my Docket—
Given under my hand and seal of my
office in La Harpe this 18th day of Sept A.D. 1843—

John L. Hancock J.P. (Seal)

Transcript
State of Illinois
vs
Wm Welch
Justice Cost 3.12½
Const Cost 3.25
$6.37½

October Term 1843—

Filed Sept 19th 1843
Jackson Mc Connel Clk

D3 Transcription of the docket continuation

Corresponds to the photograph on the immediately preceding page

August 18. 1843, Mittimus Returned, by Constable V.M. Conrad
and prisoner delivered up to the Court for the purpose of
Giving Bail. Dickison Entered in to bond with the
Said Welch, for the Sum of $200— for his appearance
at next Circuit Court, on the first day of the term thereof
and for his good behavior towards the people of the State
of Illinois Generally, and towards Joshua D. Stewart
especially—

State of Illinois } ss
Hancock County }

I John J. Hicok, a Justice of the peace
in and for Said County do certify that
that the foregoing is a true Coppy from
my Docket—
Given under my hand and Seal at my
office in La-Harpe this 18th day of Sept A.D.1843—
John J. Hicok J.P. [drawn seal containing “Seal”]

[Exterior endorsement written across the lower panel]
Transcript
State of Illinois
vs
Wm Welch

Justice Cost 3.12½
Const. Cost — 3.25
$6,37½

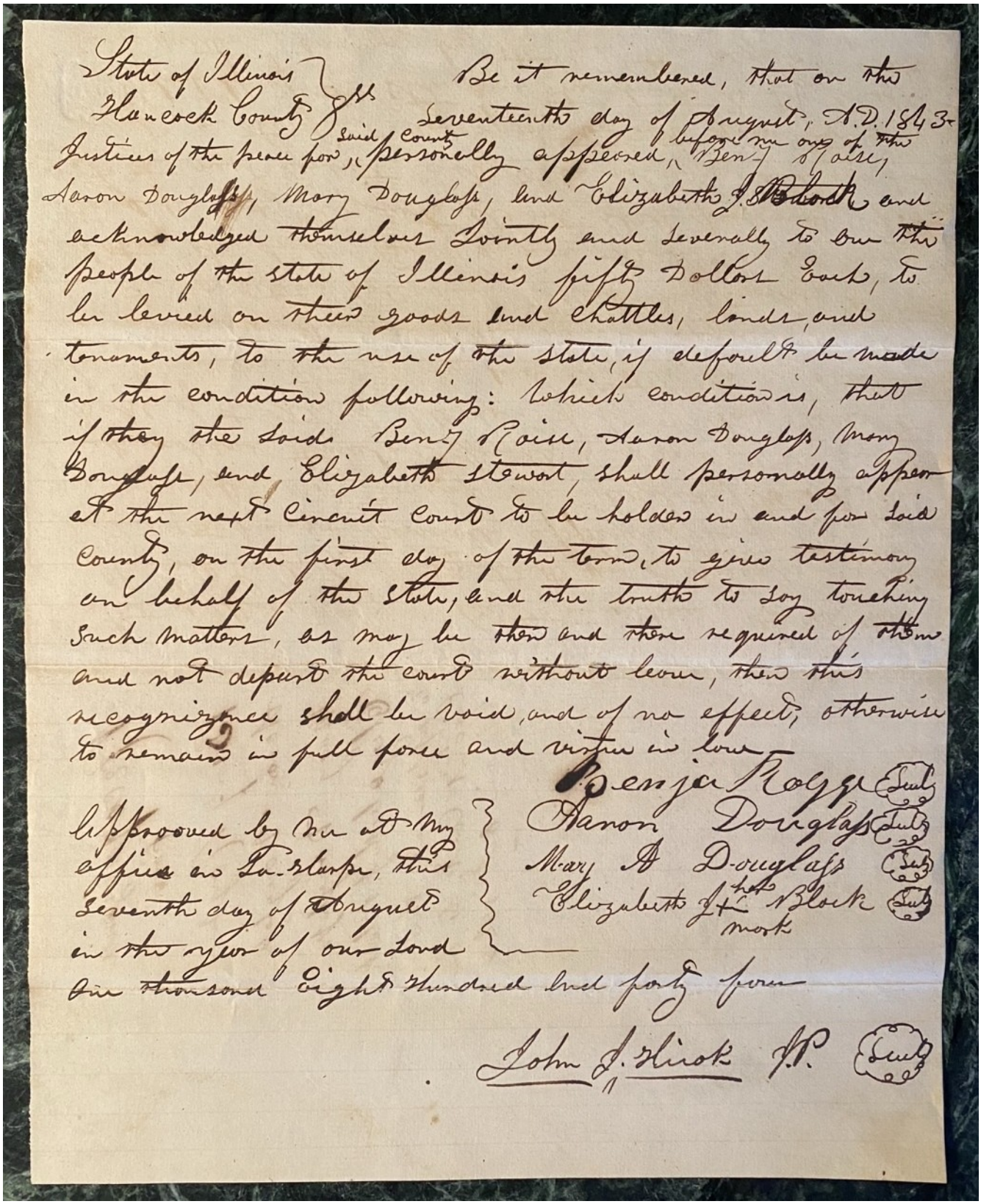
October Term 1843—

Filed Sept. 19th 1843
J B Backenstos Clk

The repeated “that” and the spelling “Coppy” are in the manuscript. Dickison is named here without a surname; compare D8.

D4 Witness recognizance

IMG_3693.jpeg | Opens August 17, 1843 with conflicting approval date



State of Illinois } Be it remembered, that on the
Hancock County } ss. Seventeenth day of August, A.D. 1843 before me one of the
Justices of the peace for said County, personally appeared, Benj Ross,
Aaron Douglass, Mary Douglass, and Elizabeth J. Stewart and
acknowledged themselves severally and severally to owe the
people of the state of Illinois fifty Dollars each, to
be levied on their goods and chattles, lands, and
tenaments, to the use of the state, if default be made
in the condition following: Which condition is, that
if they the said Benj Ross, Aaron Douglass, Mary
Douglass, and Elizabeth Stewart, shall personally appear
at the next Circuit Court to be holden in and for said
County, on the first day of the term, to give testimony
on behalf of the State, and the truth to say touching
such matters, as may be then and there required of them
and not depart the court without leave, then this
recognizance shall be void, and of no effect; otherwise
to remain in full force and virtue in law.

Benja Ross (Seal)
Aaron Douglass (Seal)
Mary A Douglass (Seal)
Elizabeth J. Stewart (Seal)

Approved by me at My
office in Carthage, this
Seventeenth day of August
in the year of our Lord
one thousand eight Hundred and forty four

John J. Hicks J.P. (Seal)

D4 Transcription of the witness recognizance

Corresponds to the photograph on the immediately preceding page

State of Illinois } ss
Hancock County }

Be it remembered, that on this
Seventeenth day of August, A.D.1843
<before me one of the>
Justices of the peace for <said county>, personally appeared, Benj [Rois?],
Aaron Douglass, Mary Douglass, and Elizabeth J. Black [overwritten], and
acknowledged themselves Jointly and severally to owe the
people of the state of Illinois fifty Dollars Each, to
be levied on their goods and chattles, lands and
tenements, to the use of the state, if default be made
in the condition following: which condition is, that
if they the said Benj [Rois?], Aaron Douglass, Mary
Douglass, and Elizabeth Stewart shall personally appear
at the next Circuit Court to be holden in and for said
County, on the first day of the term, to give testimony
on behalf of the state, and the truth to Say touching
Such matters, as may be then and there required of them
and not depart the court without leave, then this
recognizance shall be void, and of no effect, otherwise
to remain in full force and virtue in law—

Benja Royse [Seal]
Aaron Douglass [Seal]
Mary A Douglass [Seal]
Elizabeth J. [her + mark] Black [Seal]

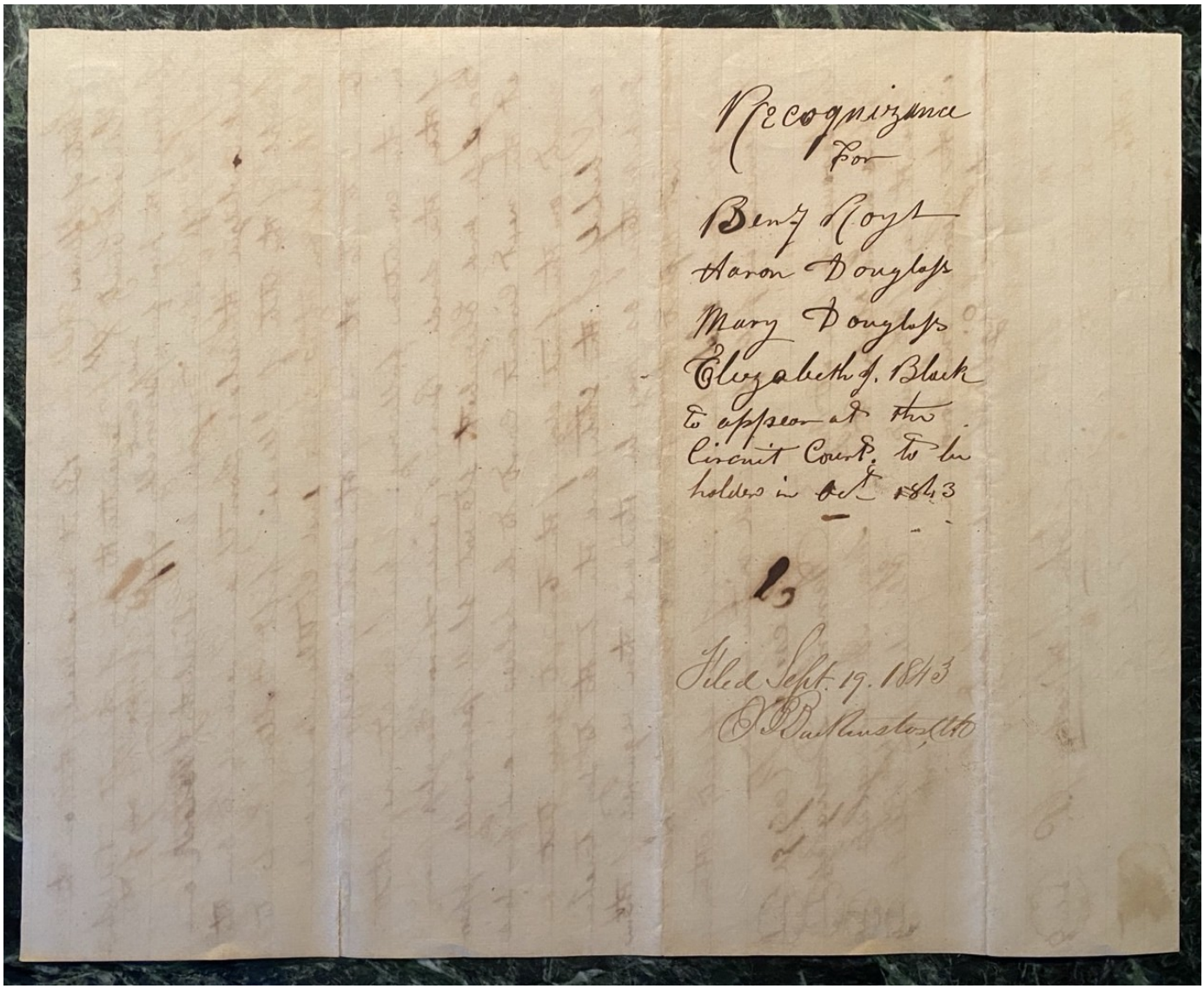
Approved by me at my }
office in La-Harpe, this }
Seventh day of August }
in the year of our Lord }
One thousand Eight Hundred and forty four

John J. Hicok J.P. [Seal]

The approval's "Seventh" and "forty four" conflict with the opening and September 1843 filing. "Elizabeth Stewart" is written in the condition; the execution and reverse say Black. [Seal] represents a drawn scroll enclosing that word.

D5 Witness recognizance reverse

IMG_3694.jpeg | Filed September 19, 1843



D5 Transcription of the witness recognizance reverse

Corresponds to the photograph on the immediately preceding page

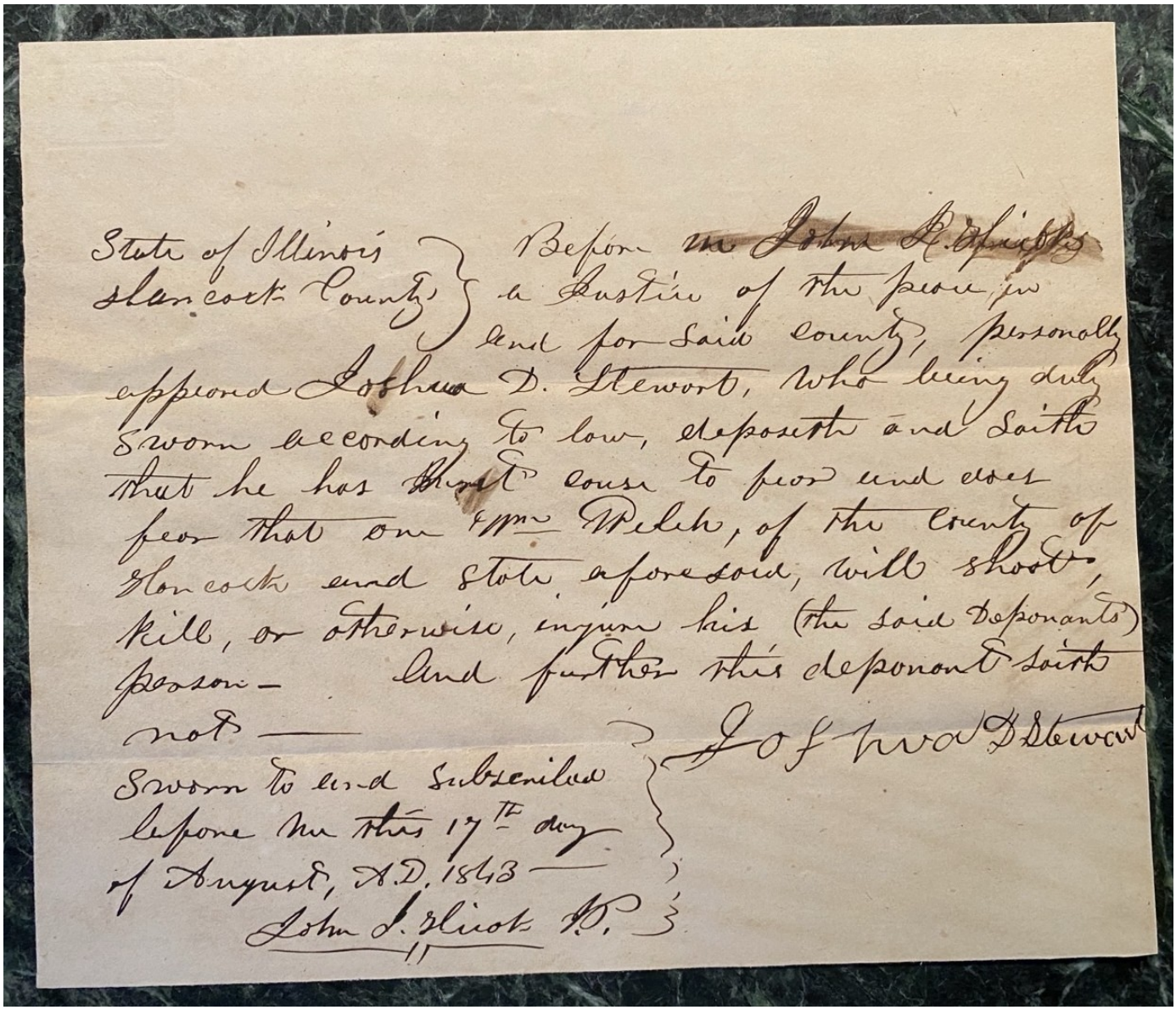
Recognizance
For
Benj Roys
Aaron Douglass
Mary Douglass
Elizabeth J. Black
to appear at the
Circuit Court to be
holden in Octr 1843
—
[ink mark or possible notation not securely legible]

Filed Sept.19.1843
J B Backenstos Clk

The independent writing is on the right folding panel. The pale reversed lettering elsewhere shows through from the front. The dark mark below the term is not assigned a number in this transcription.

D6 Joshua D Stewart affidavit

IMG_3695.jpeg | Sworn August 17, 1843



State of Illinois } Before me John L. Elliot
Hancock County } a Justice of the peace in
and for said county, personally
appeared Joshua D. Stewart, who being duly
Sworn according to law, deposeth and saith
that he has good cause to fear and does
fear that one Wm Welch, of the County of
Hancock and State aforesaid, will shoot,
kill, or otherwise injure his (the said deponants)
person — and further this deponent saith
not —

Joshua D Stewart

Sworn to and subscribed
before me this 17th day
of August, A.D. 1843 —
John L. Elliot J.P.

D6 Transcription of the Stewart affidavit

Corresponds to the photograph on the immediately preceding page

State of Illinois }
Hancock County }

Before me John J. Hicok [name blotted]
a Justice of the peace, in
and for Said county, personally
appeared Joshua D. Stewart, who being duly
Sworn according to law, deposeth and Saith
that he has Just cause to fear and does
fear that one Wm Welch, of the county of
Hancock and state aforesaid, will shoot,
kill, or otherwise injure his (the said Deponants)
person— and further this deponant Saith
not—

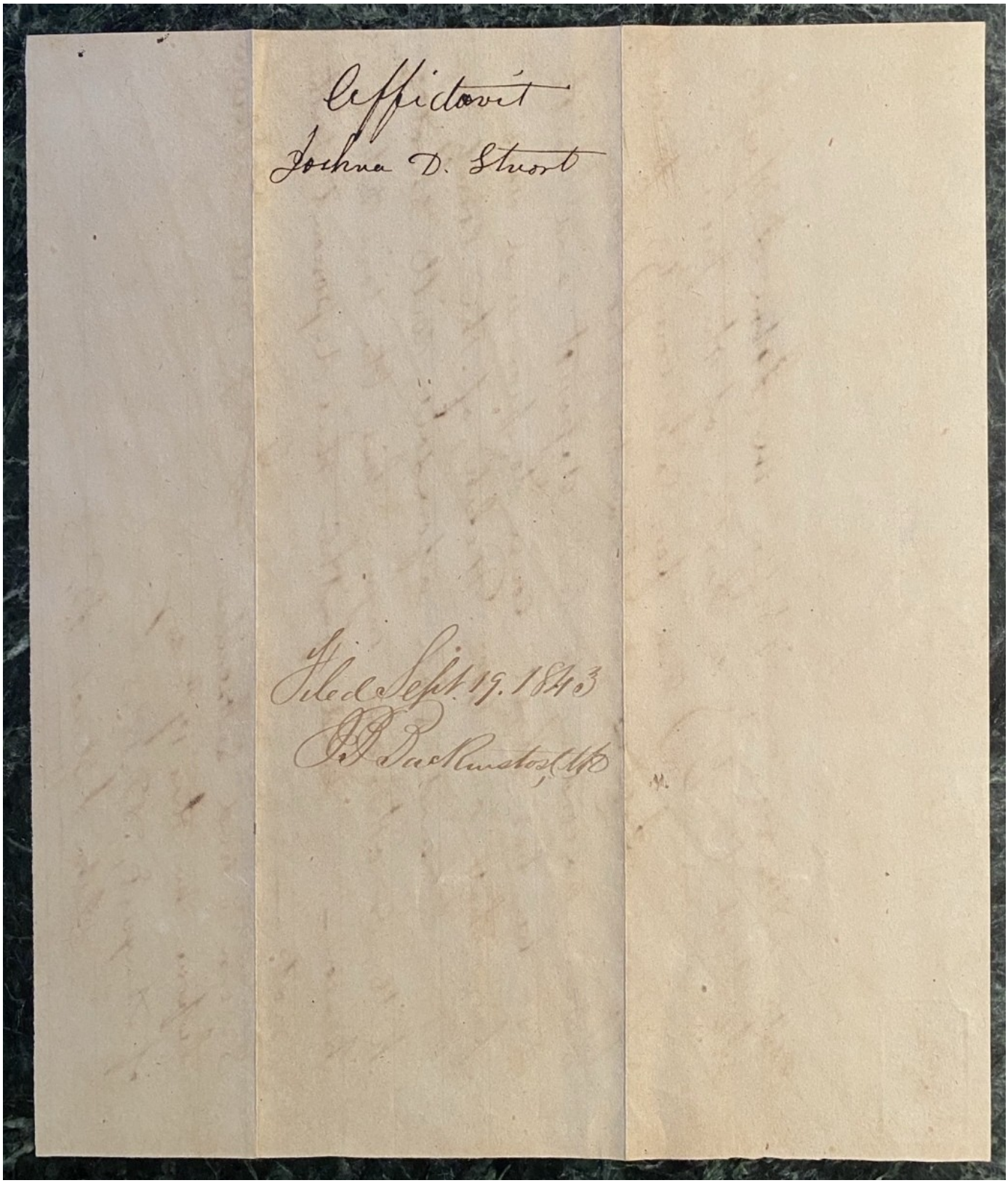
Joshua D Stewart

Sworn to and Subscribed }
before me this 17th day }
of August, A.D.1843— }
John J. Hicok J.P. }

“Just” is blotted but legible in context and comparison with the docket. No apostrophe is confidently visible in “Deponants.” This affidavit states feared injury; it does not report a completed shooting.

D7 Affidavit reverse

IMG_3696.jpeg | Filed September 19, 1843



D7 Transcription of the affidavit reverse

Corresponds to the photograph on the immediately preceding page

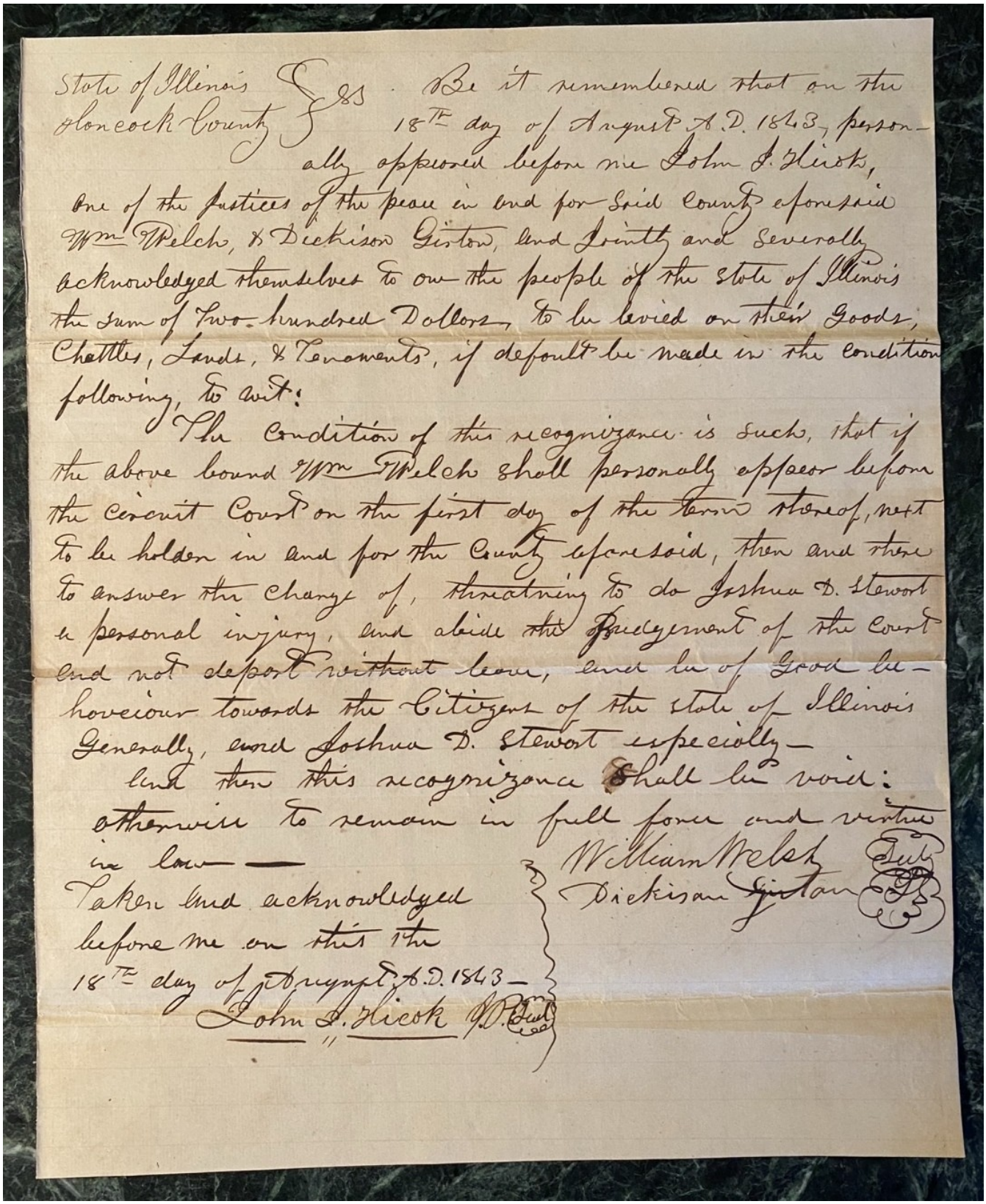
Affidavit
Joshua D. Stewart

Filed Sept.19.1843
J B Backenstos Clk

The endorsement occupies the central folding panel. Other faint lettering shows through from the affidavit on the opposite side.

D8 William Welch recognizance

IMG_3697.jpeg | Acknowledged August 18, 1843



State of Illinois } ss. Be it remembered that on the
Hancock County } 18th day of August A.D. 1843, personally appeared before me John L. Hicok, one of the Justices of the peace in and for said County aforesaid Wm Welch, & Dickison Gistow, and Jointly and Severally acknowledged themselves to owe the people of the state of Illinois the sum of Two hundred Dollars, to be levied on their Goods, Chattles, Lands, & Tenements, if default be made in the condition following, to wit:

The condition of this recognizance is such, that if the above bound Wm Welch shall personally appear before the Circuit Court on the first day of the term thereof, next to be holden in and for the County aforesaid, then and there to answer the charge of, threatning to do Joshua D. Stewart a personal injury, and abide the judgement of the Court and not depart without leave, and be of Good behaviour towards the Citizens of the state of Illinois Generally, and Joshua D. Stewart especially—

And then this recognizance shall be void: otherwise to remain in full force and virtue in law ——

William Welch [seal]
Dickison Gistow [seal]

Taken and acknowledged
before me on this 18th
18th day of August A.D. 1843—
John L. Hicok J.P. [seal]

D8 Transcription of the Welch recognizance

Corresponds to the photograph on the immediately preceding page

State of Illinois } ss
Hancock County }

Be it remembered that on the
18th day of August, A.D. 1843, person-
ally appeared before me John J. Hicok,
one of the Justices of the peace in and for Said County aforesaid
Wm Welch, & Dickison [Giton?], and Jointly and Severally
acknowledged themselves to owe the people of the State of Illinois
the Sum of Two-hundred Dollars, to be levied on their Goods,
Chattles, Lands, & Tenements, if default be made in the conditions
following, to wit:
The condition of this recognizance is such, that if
the above bound Wm Welch shall personally appear before
the Circuit Court on the first day of the term thereof, next
to be holden in and for the County aforesaid, then and there
to answer the charge of, threatning to do Joshua D. Stewart
a personal injury, and abide the Judgment of the Court
and not depart without leave, and be of Good be-
haviour towards the Citizens of the State of Illinois
Generally, and Joshua D. Stewart especially—
and then this recognizance Shall be void:
otherwise to remain in full force and virtue
in law——

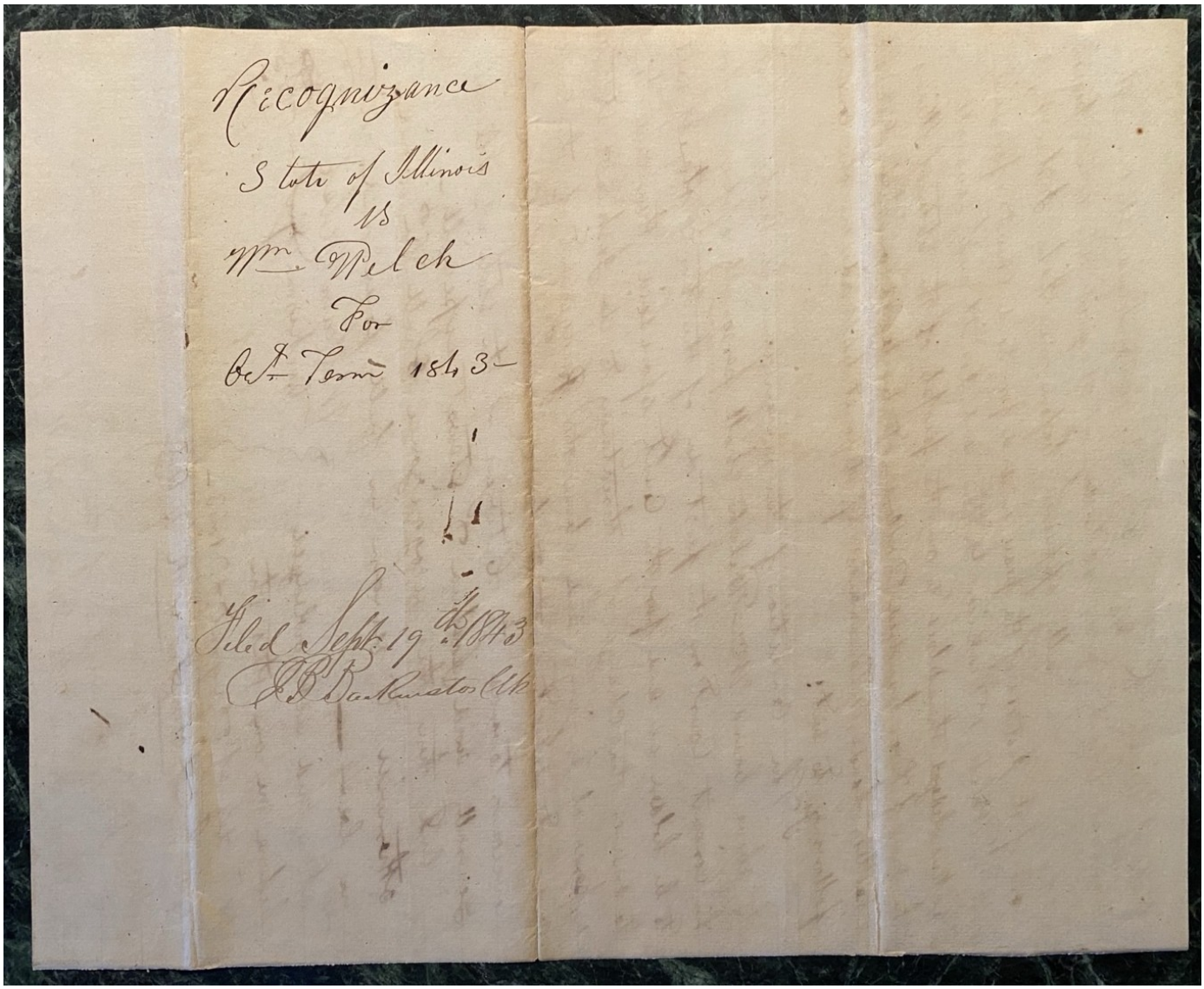
William Welch [drawn seal containing “Seal”]
Dickison [Giton?] [drawn seal, lettering uncertain]

Taken and acknowledged
before me on this the
18th day of August A.D. 1843—
John J. Hicok J.P. [drawn seal containing “Seal”]

The surety’s surname may be Giton or Gitton; the given name reads Dickison. “threatning” is retained. The S in “Shall” is overwritten. The surety’s seal may contain L S. No recoverable canceled word is supplied beneath the blot.

D9 Welch recognizance reverse

IMG_3698.jpeg | Filed September 19, 1843



D9 Transcription of the Welch recognizance reverse

Corresponds to the photograph on the immediately preceding page

Recognizance
State of Illinois
vs
Wm Welch
For
Oct. Term 1843—

Filed Sept. 19th 1843
J B Backenstos Clk

The dark traces between the title and filing are not securely legible text. Pale lettering across the remaining panels shows through from the front. This side contains no circuit disposition.

A promise to keep the peace

While the temple was rising

On August 17, 1843, Joshua D. Stewart put a fear into writing. William Welch, he swore, might “shoot, kill, or otherwise injure” him. Stewart wanted the law to intervene before that happened. His short affidavit began a proceeding that would involve four witnesses, a constable, two men signing a promise backed by two hundred dollars, and a justice whose own business reached into the construction of the Nauvoo Temple. [D2–D8; 6]

Four days earlier, Joseph Smith had spoken in Nauvoo about death and the endurance of family relationships. His August 13 sermon remembered Elias Higbee, a temple committee member who had died on June 8. Higbee had accompanied Smith to Washington to seek redress for the Saints’ losses in Missouri; he had then helped direct the work of building their temple in Illinois. Now, near the construction site, the congregation heard Smith teach about parents and children being joined through the sealing power. The man they remembered had helped build for a future he would not live to see. [3]

The temple was still a work in progress. Its cornerstones had been laid in April 1841, and the congregation attending the April 1843 conference had met on a temporary floor within unfinished walls. For the Saints, the building joined a sacred purpose to the practical demands of construction: stone had to be prepared and lifted, timber obtained, workers supported, and work continued through illness and shortages. In August 1843, the completed temple familiar from later pictures still belonged to the future. [2]

The Nauvoo Neighbor of August 16 brings that growing city closer. John Hatfield advertised bedsteads and other household furniture. A lime burner accepted country produce or store goods in exchange. Land was offered four and a half miles from the temple, with inquiries directed to a subscriber on the La Harpe road. Families needed places to live and the means to furnish them; the temple served as a landmark even in an advertisement for land. [1]

La Harpe also belonged to Stewart’s story. John J. Hicok, the justice before whom he swore his complaint, maintained his office there. The surviving papers do not locate the threatened encounter, but they place its participants within Hancock County’s public life. Following this case carries us outward from Nauvoo into the same county’s offices and obligations, then brings us back to people connected with the Saints’ city. [D3, D6]

Hancock County: three places in the story

Editorial locators on an 1874 atlas map



PLACES IN THE 1843 CASE

A Nauvoo
In the Mississippi River bend

B La Harpe
In northeastern Hancock County

C Carthage
The county seat

Rings locate the atlas's printed place names. The roads and railways shown reflect the map's later date.

A. T. Andreas, atlas of Hancock County (Chicago, 1874), p. 8. County map compiled and drawn by A. C. Howell, C.E.

Nauvoo, La Harpe, and Carthage on Andreas's 1874 county map. The markers locate places in the 1843 story; the roads and railways belong to the later atlas date. Map compiled and drawn by A. C. Howell, C.E.; printed p. 8. [43]

A name beneath an oath

Stewart's affidavit gives his fear a legal form. It identifies Welch as a man of Hancock County and declares that Stewart has just cause to expect harm. Stewart signs his name beneath the complaint; Hicok records the oath. Those acts matter because they turn a private apprehension into a request on which a public officer can act. What started the dispute remains outside the surviving account. The affidavit provides no conversation to reconstruct and no explanation from Welch. [D6]

Stewart himself may have belonged to Nauvoo's community, although the identification is still open. A city property list names a Joshua Stewart living on William Pool's lot, Lot 2 in Block 62 of the Hotchkiss Addition. Horses, cattle, and other personal property appear in the assessment. If this is our complainant, it places him among the people making a life in Nauvoo. The missing middle initial D prevents us from assigning that address to him with confidence. [13]

A further possibility appears in a memorial to Congress dated November 28, 1843. Among its signers is Joshua Stewart. The memorial seeks redress for the Saints' Missouri losses and describes its petitioners as belonging to the Society of Latter Day Saints. This is substantial evidence of the signer's alignment with the community. Whether he is the man who complained against Welch still requires a firmer connection between the two signatures. [14]

That distinction leaves room for a fuller life to emerge. The memorial may eventually connect Stewart's individual request for protection with a community's larger appeal for justice. It does not yet establish his baptism or the religious cause of his quarrel. Even Daniel H. Wells, another signer of the memorial, would

not be baptized until 1846. Friendship, shared grievances, and formal membership could follow different courses through a person’s life. [14]

For August 17, the essential fact is simpler and secure: Joshua D. Stewart believed he needed protection from a named man and placed that belief under oath. Hicok acted the same day. Before following the warrant, we can meet the justice who received the complaint, for his name connects this modest court file to work already under way near the temple. [D2, D6; 6]

The justice’s interest in Nauvoo

In December 1841, Hicok had written from La Harpe to his brother Nathaniel in Pennsylvania. Excerpts preserved in a later bookseller’s catalogue describe scarce money, plentiful produce, newcomers, and building in Nauvoo. Then Hicok makes the subject personal: “I have a small interest in the Mormon City and am there considerable of the time.” He knew the city through repeated contact. [25]

The same letter mentions a pamphlet attributed to the dissenter William Harris that Hicok intended to send his brother. The catalogue identifies it with the critical Mormonism Portrayed. That identification is plausible, but the quoted letter supplies no title and does not tell us how fully Hicok accepted the writer’s views. His interest in the Saints included both the opportunities around their city and writing critical of their movement. The surviving excerpts do not settle his religious allegiance. [25, 40]

Property records make his business interest more tangible. A city assessment around late 1841 and early 1842 names J. J. Hickock with $350 in stock in trade and $130 in real property associated with part of Lot 12, Block 3. The entry does not identify his merchandise. It does establish that someone using this form of his name had trading inventory in the city he described to Nathaniel. [26, 27]

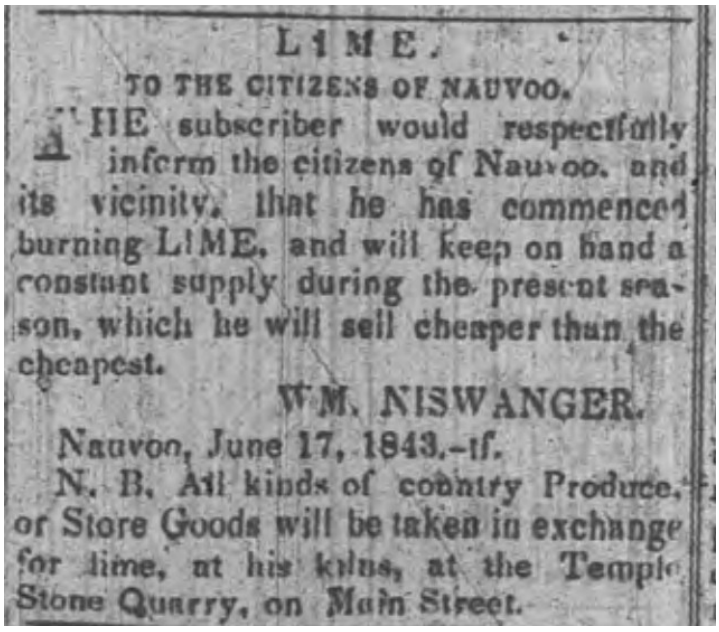
On June 14, 1842, Hicok conveyed his interest in a portion of Lot 12, Block 3, Kimball’s Addition, to Alpheus Cutler, Reynolds Cahoon, and Elias Higbee. The deed expressly identifies them as the committee building the temple and states a consideration of $1,200. The tract contained fifty-seven square rods. James Reynolds and Francis M. Higbee witnessed the instrument, and Reynolds acknowledged it. Here the justice’s connection to temple business rests on a specific transaction. [6]

The map reproduced in this study places the larger lot immediately south of Ripley Street, with the temple block to the north. Hicok’s land was close to the work that occupied the committee. It was a separate tract from the temple site itself. The map helps locate that relationship; its later buildings cannot tell us what stood on the smaller parcel in 1842. [43, 44]

On the following day, Joseph Smith’s store daybook entered a paid order for $100.88 to Reynolds and Hicok under the Temple Committee account. The adjacent date and surnames make the entry worth following, but the book does not identify what the order purchased or connect it expressly with the $1,200 deed. The two amounts must remain separate until another record explains them. [28]

By May 1843, the same parcel appeared in two more deeds to Cutler individually. On May 2, the committee members and their wives, Lois, Thirza, and Sarah, quitclaimed their interests to him. On May 3, Ira S. Miles and Mary K. Miles gave him a warranty deed with the same boundaries. Both were recorded May 10 and both recited $1,200. This sequence suggests an effort to bring different interests into one title, although the underlying arrangement is still unknown. It does not document three separate cash payments of that amount. [42]

The committee’s work extended through such property arrangements. In May 1842 it had asked that Stephen Hale receive an inexpensive lot charged to its account; that October it authorized Elder Ira S. Miles to collect temple funds. These records help explain why land and personal accounts appear alongside building materials in the temple’s history. Hicok’s tract has not been identified as a workshop, store, residence, or donation. Its established place in the story is as property conveyed to the committee and later brought into Cutler’s individual title. [33, 45; 6, 42]



LIME.

TO THE CITIZENS OF NAUVOO.

THE subscriber would respectfully inform the citizens of Nauvoo, and its vicinity, that he has commenced burning LIME, and will keep on hand a constant supply during the present season, which he will sell cheaper than the cheapest.

WM. NISWANGER.

Nauvoo, June 17, 1843.–tf.

N. B. All kinds of country Produce, or Store Goods will be taken in exchange for lime, at his kilns, at the Temple Stone Quarry, on Main Street.

Produce for building materials. Wm. Niswanger offered lime in exchange for produce or store goods at his kilns at the Temple Stone Quarry. This advertisement appeared in the Nauvoo Neighbor on August 16, 1843, the day before Stewart's complaint. The advertisement itself is dated June 17. Digital reproduction: BYU Studies. [1, 57]

The warrant goes out

On August 17, this same justice issued a warrant for William Welch. It went to V. M. Conrad, a Hancock County constable, and was returnable "forthwith." Hicok also issued subpoenas for witnesses. The docket first names Maria Duglass, Elizabeth Black, and Benjamin Royse; Aaron Duglass was summoned separately. By the return recorded that day, Conrad had Welch in custody and the subpoenas had been served by reading them. [D2]

Conrad supplied the connection between the justice's written commands and the people required to respond. The packet records his service and later his custody of Welch, but gives only his initials. He was probably Vincent M. Conrad, a man independently associated with Nauvoo and Hancock County. A Nauvoo property list names Vincent Conrad, a later postal list gives Vincent M., and an Iowa biography places that man in Hancock County from 1840 to 1846. An original record explicitly connecting the full name to this constable's office is still needed. [16–18; D2, D3]

The probable identification opens a more varied personal history. The Iowa account describes earlier hotel and grocery work in Cleveland and Detroit, followed by years in Hancock County and a move to Iowa in 1846. Later came farming, supplying emigrants, merchandising, and local offices. It portrays a man whose livelihood and responsibilities changed as he moved. These details belong to the Vincent Conrad candidate; the court packet establishes the officer's work on this particular day. [18]

A specific religious connection lies ahead. A published temple register lists Vincent M. Conrad as a Seventy, endowed on January 8, 1846, and records his sealing to Electa Cotton Bradway on January 30, with Brigham Young officiating. The compilation supplies more than a general Church label, although the original register and the constable's identity still need confirmation. If those links are established, the officer who served Welch's warrant can be followed into the temple more than two years later. [53]

The immediate business in August was to bring Welch before the justice and obtain evidence. The paperwork moved quickly: oath, warrant, subpoenas, return, and hearing all appear under one day. For the people named in the process, the accusation had become a present obligation to answer or appear. [D2, D6]

A promise backed by two hundred dollars

At the point where the hearing should become most vivid, the docket contracts into a few words: “the evidence being heard.” Hicok considered evidence, then entered his order. The photographs preserve no witness’s account of the threat and no statement of Welch’s defense. That gap leaves the cause of the dispute hidden, while the justice’s response remains plainly visible. [D2]

Welch was required to enter a recognizance for two hundred dollars, with sufficient security. A recognizance was a formal obligation acknowledged before the court. Here it bound his future conduct: he was to appear on the first day of the next circuit court term, answer the charge, and meanwhile keep the peace toward Illinois residents generally and Stewart especially. The state’s broad concern with public peace thus carried one person’s name at its center. [D2, D8]

Illinois law provided a way to act before a feared injury occurred. An act approved in 1827, printed in the state’s 1833 Revised Laws, allowed a justice to examine sworn evidence of threats and require security for peace and good behavior. Failure to furnish that security could lead to commitment to the county jail. The next circuit court could examine the witnesses and renew or dismiss the recognizances. Stewart’s complaint fitted a procedure designed to interrupt danger rather than wait for its consequences. [4]

For Welch, the order carried immediate practical force. He needed acceptable security as well as his own undertaking. The docket says he failed to provide it and was committed to jail. A fear expressed under oath had led, within the same day’s record, to a hearing, a condition governing his conduct, and custody when that condition could not yet be met. [D2]

This was an order arising from alleged threats, not a surviving finding that Welch had shot or injured Stewart. Nor do the papers contain a final circuit-court judgment. They show how the justice managed the interval before that court could take up the matter. During the interval, Welch’s liberty depended on furnishing the security Hicok required. [D2, D8; 4]

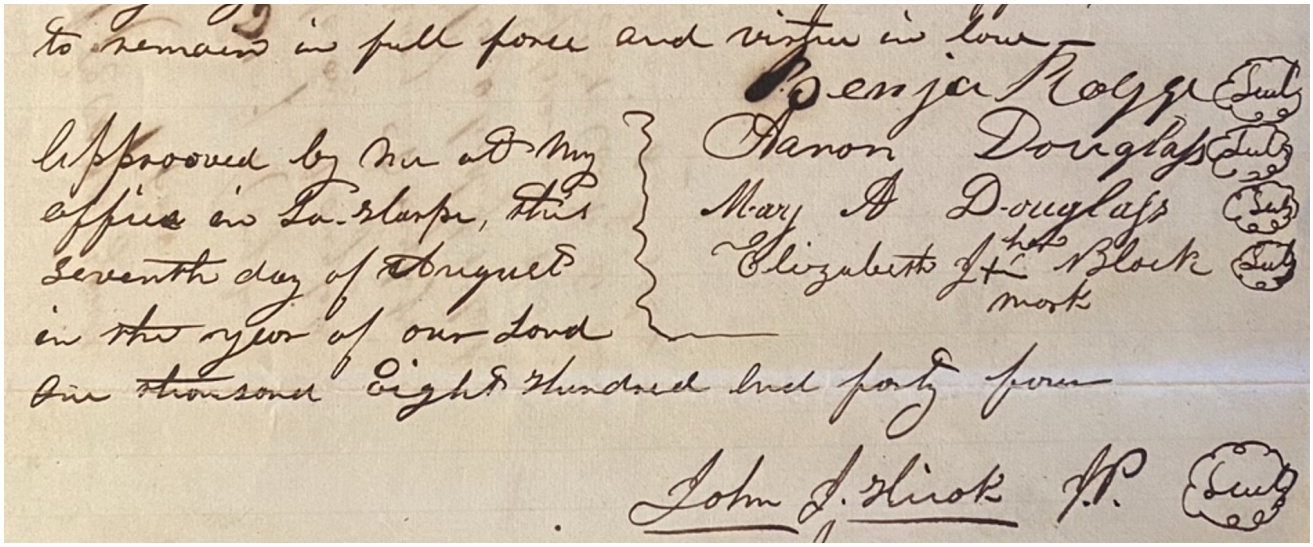
Mary’s signature, Elizabeth’s mark

The four witnesses undertook responsibilities of their own. Benjamin Royse, Aaron Douglass, Mary A. Douglass, and Elizabeth J. Black were each bound for fifty dollars to appear at circuit court, testify for the state, and remain until permitted to leave. Their recognizance carried the hearing forward into the next term. These sums were conditional obligations to attend, not payments for testimony or fines imposed on the witnesses. [D4, D5]

Royse and Aaron Douglass signed, as did Mary. Elizabeth executed the document with a cross identified as her mark. The form gathered four people into a single obligation, but its execution lets us distinguish how each appeared on the paper. Mary’s fuller signature, especially, restores something lost when a docket reduces a person to a shorter or differently spelled name. [D4]

Mary signed as Mary A Douglass. Elsewhere in the witness papers she is Mary Douglass, while the docket calls one witness Maria Duglass. Their place in the same four-person group strongly suggests one woman whose name was recorded differently. Her relationship to Aaron remains unknown. Keeping her own signature in view allows her to enter this history as a named witness without first assigning her an unproved role as someone’s wife or daughter. [D2, D4, D5]

Elizabeth’s entries contain another variation. Black appears over disturbed writing in the opening list, but a later clause calls her Elizabeth Stewart. The execution and reverse endorsement return to Black. The inconsistency is preserved in the transcription. It may be a drafting error; it provides no secure family connection to Joshua Stewart. Her mark likewise tells us how she executed this document, without establishing the limits of her education throughout her life. [D4, D5]



Four witnesses, four executions of the bond. Benjamin Royse, Aaron Douglass, and Mary A. Douglass signed; Elizabeth J. Black made her mark. Hicok's approval appears below. This detail preserves the conflicting written date as well as the names. [D4]

Even the date needs comparison across the papers. The witness obligation opens on August 17, 1843, but the approval says August 7 and writes the year as eighteen hundred and forty-four. The docket and September 1843 filing place the document with these proceedings. Reading the original beside its transcription makes the discrepancy visible while allowing the larger sequence to hold together. [D2, D4, D5]

Royse may also have a place in the county's earlier history. Thomas Gregg's account lists a Benjamin Royse among the settlers of 1830. The match is possible, not established. It offers a reminder that the people appearing around Nauvoo could have roots in the county extending well before the temple project. Whatever their earlier lives, these four witnesses now shared a definite obligation: they were expected at the next court term. [22; D4]

A second signature changes the situation

The constable's fee account adds a revealing detail to Welch's commitment. Conrad charged for keeping the prisoner one day so that he could give bail, at the prisoner's request. On August 18, the docket records the return of the mittimus—the commitment warrant—and Welch's delivery back to court for that purpose. The papers identify the custody and its purpose, although they do not identify where he was held. [D2, D3]

A second man then joined Welch. Hicok's docket calls him Dickison; the recognizance supplies a surname provisionally read as Giton, perhaps Gitton. Beneath the formal wording are two signatures: William Welch and Dickison's uncertainly read full name. The latter's biography remains elusive, but his action is clear. He became Welch's surety, undertaking the obligation with him. [D3, D8]

Together they acknowledged a two-hundred-dollar obligation whose conditions concerned Welch's appearance and behavior. If the conditions were not fulfilled, the bond contemplated recovery against property: goods, lands, and tenements. Welch was to attend circuit court, abide its judgment, remain until permitted to leave, and behave peaceably, especially toward Stewart. Keeping those promises would make the obligation void. [D8]

The distinction between an obligation and a cash payment is essential here. The packet records no two hundred dollars deposited with the justice and no two-hundred-dollar fine paid. The security was the enforceable undertaking supported by Welch and his surety. Its purpose was to give the court assurance

that Welch would do what the recognizance required. The separate witness obligations operated on the same conditional principle, with attendance and testimony as their terms. [D4, D8]

The change from August 17 to August 18 was therefore the arrival of acceptable security. It tells us that another person was willing to answer with Welch. It does not tell us whether Dickison was a relative, employer, neighbor, or friend, nor does the first day's difficulty establish that Welch was destitute. A second signature accomplished something the first day's proceeding had not: it supplied the required assurance. [D2, D3, D8]

The smaller sums in the fee columns belong to a different account. The justice's charges totaled $3.12½ and the constable's $3.25, together $6.37½. Issuing and serving process, administering oaths, taking obligations, keeping the prisoner, and preparing the transcript all appear as work with an assigned cost. These fees record the machinery of the proceeding; they should be read separately from the much larger sums placed behind the promises to appear and keep the peace. [D2, D3]

The larger fears of that summer

Three days after Welch signed his recognizance, Willard Richards prepared a letter on Joseph Smith's behalf to Governor Thomas Ford. Dated August 21, it forwarded communications concerning a possible incursion from Missouri into Illinois. Smith conveyed the warning while expressing doubt that the threatened action would occur. The letter placed a possible danger before the state's governor, just as Stewart had placed his personal fear before a local justice. [5; D6]

The Nauvoo newspaper had also reported uneasiness closer to home. Its August 16 issue said that some disappointed citizens at Carthage had threatened to obstruct elected men from taking office. The editors hoped the report was untrue while explaining why they credited it. This was the paper's contemporary account of political tension, appearing alongside the household and property advertisements. [1]

No surviving document connects Welch's threat with either of those warnings. It would change the case to supply a religious or political motive that its own papers do not give. The connection is in how people sought security. A growing city and an individual resident both looked to public authority when words raised the possibility of violence. The petitions differed greatly in scale, but each asked officials to act before a feared event became an accomplished fact. [5; D6]

The people in the Welch file also resist an easy division into two opposing camps. Hicok had business with the temple committee; Conrad may yet prove to have received temple ordinances; Stewart may be connected with a memorial for the Saints. None of those relationships, by itself, explains this quarrel. Following the actual acts of these individuals allows the county's history to retain its human variety. [6, 14, 20, 21]

September's endorsements

On September 18, Hicok certified at La Harpe that the transcript was a true copy of his docket. On September 19, the papers were filed for the October 1843 circuit term. The name beneath the filing dates is J B Backenstos, clerk. Through those endorsements, the complaint, witness obligations, and Welch's recognizance passed into the next stage of the county's court business. [D3, D5, D7, D9]

Jacob B. Backenstos is a securely identified figure whose life extends far beyond these signatures. Born in Pennsylvania in 1811, he served as Hancock County circuit clerk from 1843 to 1845. He was a friend of Joseph Smith and the Saints, belonged to the Nauvoo Masonic Lodge, and served in the Nauvoo Legion. His religious background was Lutheran Reformed, and he never joined the Church. Those several connections help explain why an important ally of the Saints need not have been a fellow member. [11]

Earlier that year, Backenstos and Stephen A. Douglas had supplied an affidavit in Joseph Smith's extradition proceedings. They reported seeing Smith review the Nauvoo Legion on May 7, 1842. The

affidavit belongs to another case, but it shows Backenstos participating in the legal efforts surrounding Nauvoo's leader months before the Welch documents reached his office. [12]

Readers of the August 16 Neighbor could already encounter Backenstos's name beneath court notices directing parties to the coming October term at Carthage. His endorsements on the Welch papers belong to that same routine of summoning people, receiving documents, and preparing matters for court. The county's legal business reached Nauvoo through the newspaper as well as through a constable's service. [1; D3, D5, D7, D9]

Backenstos would become more conspicuous as sheriff during the renewed conflict of 1845–1846 and his defense of the Saints. In this case his documented role is quieter: he received and filed the papers. Hicok had heard the complaint; Conrad had served process and held Welch; Dickison had supplied security; the witnesses had undertaken to return. The clerk's signatures preserved those acts for a court that still had work to do. [11; D2–D9]

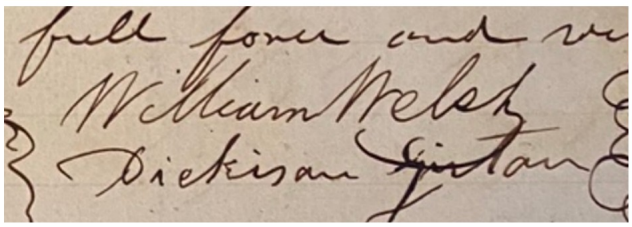
Another courtroom, and a story still open

The photographs do not contain the October court's decision. Whether it renewed the security, dismissed the recognizances, or took another step remains to be found in the circuit records. The filing dates establish where the matter was headed; they do not supply its ending. At that point, the account of Stewart's complaint stops. [D1–D9; 4, 19]

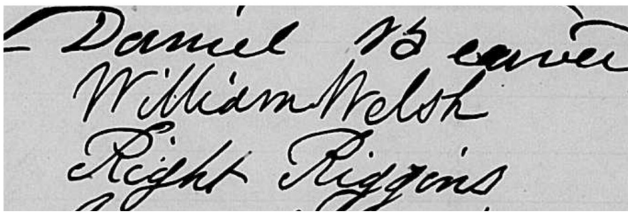
Another courtroom offers a probable glimpse of Welch the following spring. On May 22–23, 1844, a William Welsh served on the circuit-court jury in Dana v. Brink and signed a verdict awarding Charles Dana $75. His autograph is strongly compatible with the signature on Welch's August recognizance. The name, county, close dates, and handwriting support a strong probable identification, though they do not complete his family history. [47; D8]

The Dana litigation arose from physician William Brink's treatment of Margaret Dana during her October 1842 pregnancy. Joseph Smith had heard the original action in Nauvoo in March 1843; the jury on which Welsh served belonged to the later circuit appeal. If the identification is correct, the man required to find security for his own conduct had subsequently helped decide another family's complaint. That later service is a new episode in his probable life, not a missing verdict in his peace case. [47]

18 August 1843 · recognizance



23 May 1844 · jury verdict



Original signature details; displayed at independent enlargement scales. [D8; 47]

A probable second appearance. The 1843 peace recognizance and the 1844 Dana jury verdict carry strongly compatible Welch/Welsh signatures. The comparison supports a probable identification; it does not reveal the outcome of the earlier case. [D8; 47]

Hicok's trail leads into a still more familiar history. After Joseph and Hyrum Smith were killed on June 27, 1844, he served as clerk of the grand jury investigating the murders. He and James Reynolds signed a surviving memorandum of testimony. At the 1845 trial, Reynolds explained that prosecutor Murray McConnel had taken the original record and that he and Hicok afterward reconstructed a memorandum.

The first-person accounts in it are the testimony they recorded, not Hicok describing his own participation in the attack. [7–9, 30]

The published Backenstos list examined for this study does not name Hicok among its identified Carthage Greys, leaders, or active participants. Its unnamed Douglass, described as a schoolmaster at Pontusuc, has not been connected with Aaron Douglass, Welch's witness. These limits matter because the names open a path into the murder investigation without making either man a proven participant in the killings. Hicok's established role was to help record evidence. [7–10]

Looking back from those later events, it is easy to hurry past August 1843. The Welch papers ask us to pause. They preserve a man's appeal for protection, an accused man's obligation to behave peaceably, four witnesses expected to return, and another person's willingness to become responsible with him. The temple and the great events of Church history remain close, but these particular acts deserve attention in their own right. [D2–D9]

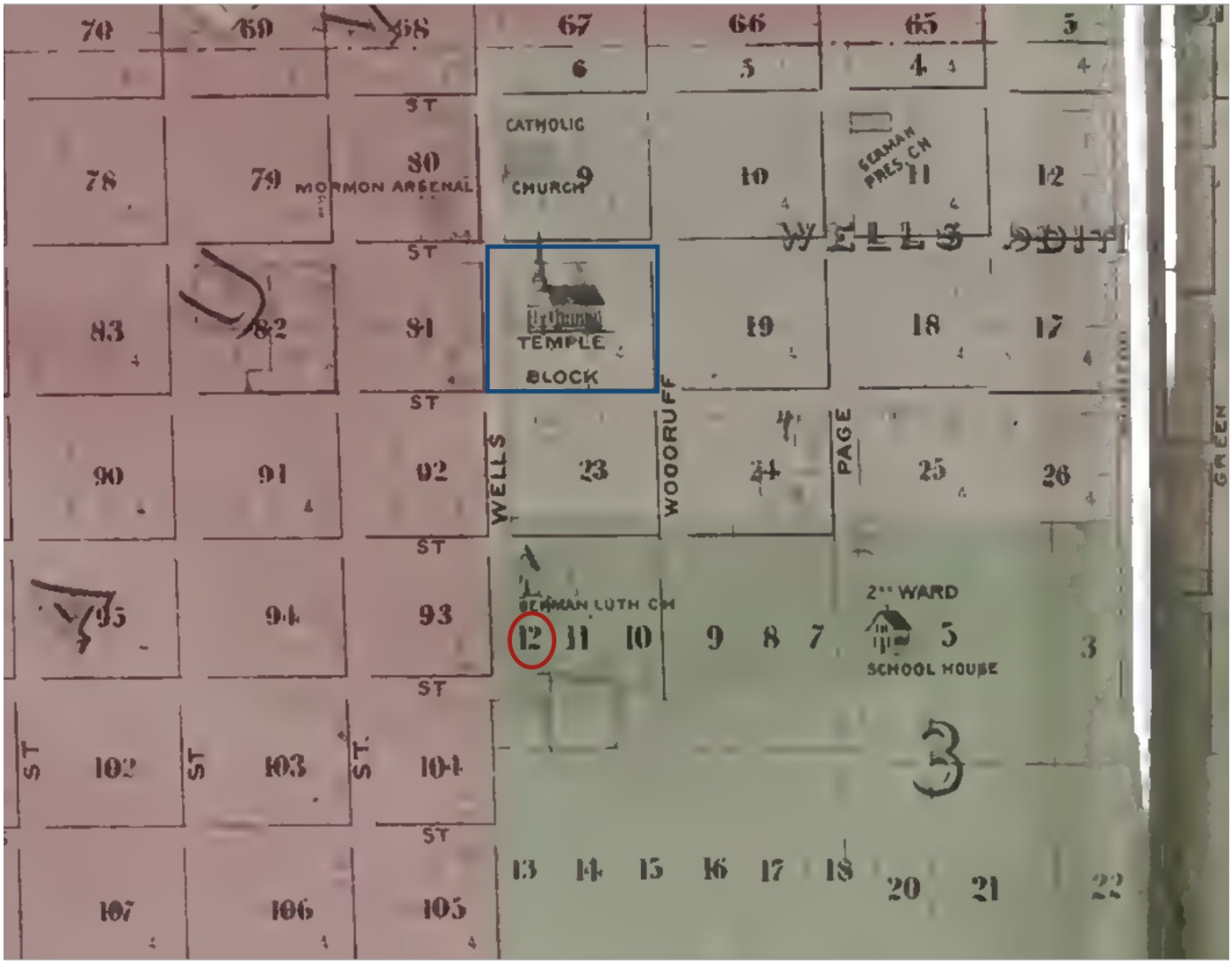
We can leave the file where its last endorsements place it: ready for the October term. Stewart's fear has been heard, Welch has furnished security, and the witnesses' names have been carried forward. The next discovery may be a brief court entry, another recognizance, or testimony that finally explains the dispute. For now, the signatures give us people to follow, and the coming court term gives us somewhere to look. [D3, D5, D7–D9; 19]

Where Hicok’s Nauvoo property lay

The red circle locates Lot 12 in Block 3 of Kimball’s First Addition, immediately south of Ripley Street. Hicok conveyed a defined portion of that lot. The blue outline marks the separate temple block in Wells’s Addition. The two tracts were close to one another within Nauvoo. [6, 27, 43, 44]

○ Lot 12, Block 3: printed lot number circled □ Temple block outlined

Editorial markers on Andreas's 1874 Nauvoo plat, pp. 136-137. North is toward the top.



Source: A. T. Andreas, An Illustrated Historical Atlas of Hancock County, Illinois (1874), Nauvoo plat, pp. 136–137. Original map reproduced with editorial markers. [43]

Reading the map: this is an 1874 atlas, thirty-one years after the Welch proceeding. Its later church and school labels do not establish what stood on Hicok’s land in 1842–1843. The red circle identifies a printed lot number; it does not draw the fifty-seven-square-rod parcel or establish a modern street address. The three matching deed descriptions are examined in the study that follows. [6, 42, 43]

John J Hicok: a life around Nauvoo

A letter from La Harpe

In December 1841, John J. Hicok wrote home to Pennsylvania. His brother Nathaniel lived at Canton in Bradford County, far from the Illinois town where John dated his letter. Business conditions occupied part of the news: cash was scarce, produce plentiful, and prices low. But the growing city of Nauvoo also claimed his attention. He told Nathaniel that he had an interest there and spent a considerable part of his time in the city. The justice whose name appears so formally on the Welch papers was also a brother trying to explain his surroundings to someone at home. [25]

That letter gives us a useful place to begin his story. Hicok belonged to the county around Nauvoo, with an office in La Harpe and business interests drawing him toward the Saints' city. Within the next two years he would deal with the temple committee, perform a marriage, and hear Joshua Stewart's plea for protection. Later, his pen would help preserve testimony about the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. Each episode puts him in a different relationship with the people of Hancock County. [D2–D8; 6–9, 23, 25]

Readers will meet several spellings of his name. Hicok follows the apparent signatures in this packet; tax lists, deeds, histories, and trial accounts also use Hickok, Hickcock, Hickock, and Hicock. These variations belong to the records. Another nearby man, Luther W. Hickok, was a physician in Burlington, Iowa. He has his own place in the Joseph Smith Papers and has not been identified as John's relative. [D3, D4, D6, D8; 7, 8, 39]

An interest in the growing city

The city's assessors give substance to Hicok's description of his interest in Nauvoo. A property list made around late 1841 and early 1842 records J. J. Hickock with $350 in stock in trade and $130 in real property associated with part of Lot 12, Block 3. His merchandise is unnamed, but trading inventory belongs to the practical life of a growing town. The entry lets us place him among people with an economic stake in its development. [26]

A further tax list associates J. J. Hickcock with part of the north half of Lot 12 in Block 3 of Kimball's First Addition. The location matters because the same lot and block recur in a deed to the temple committee. The assessments and deed do not describe every portion in the same way, and an assessed value need not equal a sale price. They nevertheless draw together the letter's personal statement, a trading interest, and a particular piece of Nauvoo land. [6, 26, 27]

On June 14, 1842, Hicok conveyed his right, title, and interest in a portion of that lot to Alpheus Cutler, Reynolds Cahoon, and Elias Higbee. The deed expressly calls them the committee for building the temple and recites $1,200. James Reynolds and Francis M. Higbee witnessed it; Reynolds took the acknowledgment. The surviving registry page is a clerk's recorded copy of the transaction. It gives Hicok a direct place in temple business, though it does not explain how the parties settled the price. [6]

The men receiving the land

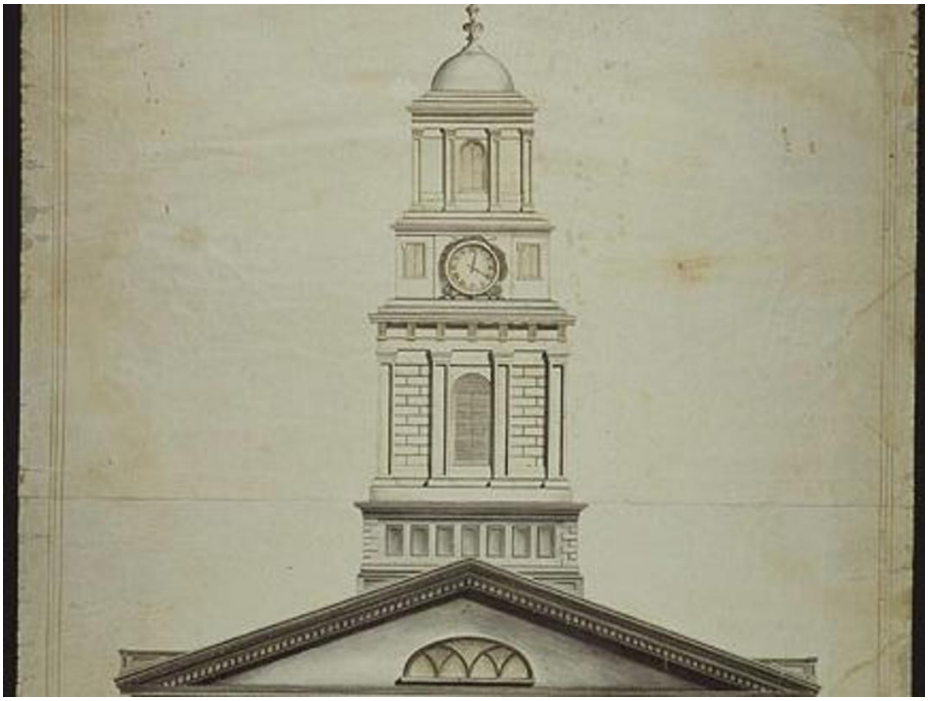
The three men named as purchasers had already devoted years to the Church. Alpheus Cutler was a New Hampshire-born stonemason who had moved through New York before David W. Patten baptized him in January 1833. He worked on the Kirtland Temple, settled in Missouri, and reached Commerce by the summer of 1839. By the time of Hicok's deed he had also undertaken a Wisconsin lumber mission. Land, labor, and materials were part of the religious work that had carried him from place to place. [50]

Reynolds Cahoon's path began in New York and continued in Ohio. Parley P. Pratt baptized him in November 1830. Cahoon served missions, helped build the Kirtland Temple, and passed through Missouri before the family's Illinois years. His wife, Thirza Stiles Cahoon, had shared the long sequence of moves.

Both would appear in the later deed transferring their interests in Hicok's parcel to Cutler. After Nauvoo, Cahoon would travel through Winter Quarters and reach Utah in 1848. [42, 50]

Elias Higbee brought another history to the committee. Baptized in 1832, he had experienced the Saints' expulsion from Jackson County and later accompanied Joseph Smith to Washington to seek redress for Missouri losses. He helped direct temple construction from 1840 until his death on June 8, 1843. His widow, Sarah, had joined him in the May deed only weeks before he died. Joseph Smith's funeral sermon for him on August 13 fell four days before Stewart's complaint against Welch. Thus a name in Hicok's land transaction connects directly with the loss remembered in Nauvoo at the opening of this case. [3, 42, 50]

These men's documented Church lives help explain the committee's purpose. They do not establish Hicok's beliefs. For him, the deed records a transaction with people whose daily business and religious commitments were closely joined. [6, 50]



The temple as a plan. Detail from William Weeks's early front elevation, identified by the Church History Museum as an 1841 rendering. This ink drawing shows a proposed design; the tower was not standing in this form when the Welch proceedings began in August 1843. Courtesy Church Archives. [55]

The lot south of the temple

The Andreas map reproduced in this edition gives the property a recognizable setting. The larger Lot 12 lies on the western side of Block 3 in Kimball's First Addition, immediately south of Ripley Street. The temple block is to the north. Hicok's tract was a city property near the temple, within the developing Nauvoo landscape. The 1874 atlas is later than the transaction, so its building labels cannot identify what occupied the land in 1842. [27, 43]

The temple itself stood on a different tract: the four lots of Block 20 in Wells's Addition, bounded by Knight, Mulholland, Wells, and Woodruff streets. Daniel H. and Eliza Robison Wells conveyed that temple block in February 1843. Hicok's deed concerns land outside it. This distinction answers the first part of the property question: his sale was connected to the committee, but his land did not form part of the temple site. [43, 44]

Why, then, did the committee want it? Its duties required more than supervising stonework. Building depended on funds, materials, goods, labor, credits, and orders. A May 1842 order asked Joseph Smith to provide Stephen Hale with an inexpensive lot and charge the price to the committee. Land could enter the

committee's arrangements without becoming part of the temple grounds. That example establishes a practice; it does not identify the intended use of Hicok's particular tract. [33, 45]

The store account for the day after Hicok's deed adds an intriguing detail. On June 15, 1842, Joseph Smith's daybook recorded $100.88 paid on an order to Reynolds and Hicok under the Temple Committee account. The surnames and timing fit the men in the deed, but the entry gives no first names and no explanation of the purchase. It cannot yet be called an installment on the land price. James Reynolds will recur beside Hicok again in the murder-investigation papers. [6, 8, 28]

Following the land into 1843

The next spring, the same boundaries appeared in two more instruments. On May 2, 1843, Cutler, Cahoon, Higbee, and their wives Lois, Thirza, and Sarah quitclaimed their respective interests to Cutler individually. On May 3, Ira S. Miles and Mary K. Miles gave Cutler a warranty deed for the same parcel. Both were recorded on May 10. Miles also belonged to the committee's wider work: it had authorized him, as an elder, to collect temple funds in October 1842. [42, 45]

The sequence suggests that different interests were being gathered into Cutler's title. The legal instruments themselves do not explain the arrangement. Their repeated $1,200 recitals cannot be added together as proof of separate cash payments. The deed comparison in the evidence section preserves what each instrument actually conveyed and warranted. [6, 42]

No examined record calls Hicok's tract a house, shop, quarry, lumber yard, or place to lodge workers. A tax entry describing Cutler's store and buildings concerns a different lot in another block. That useful discovery prevents us from placing a store on this land simply because Cutler acquired it. The committee's own ledgers and daybook are the best identified sources for learning what the parties intended. [33, 46]

The sale also leaves a question about generosity. Hicok's deed states a price; it does not call the transfer a donation. Yet a price alone need not reveal the whole financial story. In the separate Wells temple-block transaction, a later entry explicitly credited $600 of the stated price as a donation. No corresponding entry has been found for Hicok. The land's connection to temple finance is secure; a gift by its seller remains unproved. [6, 44]

Was Hicok one of the Saints?

Hicok's own words now answer part of the question. Writing to Nathaniel in a letter headed January 23, 1841, he said that he took a great deal of interest in religion, "altho I subscribe to none." He questioned religious claims while insisting on practical kindness toward the poor, widows, the fatherless, and the sick. This is a statement of his position at that moment, before the temple-committee deed and the Welch hearing. It does not establish his affiliation for the rest of his life. [73]

The December 1841 letter adds another side of his interest. Hicok intended to send Nathaniel a pamphlet attributed to William Harris, a critic of the Church. Grunder identifies it as Mormonism Portrayed, published in Warsaw in 1841. The catalogue's excerpts do not supply the title or establish how much of its argument Hicok accepted. They show that critical writing formed part of the news he wished to share with his brother. A complete reading of the original letter may reveal more of his own judgment. [25, 40]

The letters and business records show different parts of the same life. He could question religion, discuss the Saints' growing settlement, and enter transactions with the men building their temple. No securely identified conversion or baptism has emerged. His January statement gives us a firmer starting point than assigning him a faith from his neighbors or customers. [6, 25–28, 31, 73]

Marriage, protection, and the work of a justice

Early in 1843, Hicok performed a ceremony with a very different purpose from the Welch hearing. A later biography of Isaac Soule reports that the justice married Soule and Eunice Ricker on February 1. The account does not say where the ceremony took place. It gives Hicok another part in the county's daily life:

he was an officer to whom people could turn when beginning a marriage, as well as when asking the law for protection. [23]

In August, Stewart came before him with a sworn fear of personal injury. The docket records action within that day: a warrant, subpoenas, a hearing, a security order, and commitment when Welch failed to furnish acceptable security. The next day brought the surety and a new recognizance. Hicok administered oaths and completed the papers that would carry the matter to circuit court. His September certificate expressly places his office in La Harpe. [D2–D8]

The papers preserve the limits of this authority as well as its exercise. Hicok could require security; the circuit court would have the next opportunity to examine the matter. We do not have the testimony that persuaded him or Welch's response. Nor do the forms reveal his private opinion of either man. They show a local officer carrying a complaint through the procedure available to him. [D2, D3, D8; 4]

The witness bond contains the conflicting date and the Black–Stewart name variation that readers can see in the paired pages. Those imperfections remind us that official records were made by people. They need to be preserved and compared, without turning a mistake in one form into a judgment about everything Hicok did. His original docket, if located, would let us see this case amid the other business of his office. [D2–D5]

The pen after Carthage

The deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith on June 27, 1844, would bring Hicok into a proceeding of far greater public consequence. Thomas Gregg's county history names John J. Hickok among the October 1844 grand jurors. Testimony at the May 1845 murder trial identifies him as the grand jury's clerk. His established connection with the killings is therefore a part in their legal investigation. [7, 30]

A surviving four-page memorandum bears the signatures of Hicok and James Reynolds. It records accounts of the events surrounding the attack, including statements by William Daniels and Benjamin Brackenbury. The first-person passages belong to the witnesses whose testimony was being preserved. Hicok's signature identifies a recorder of that evidence; it does not turn their accounts into his own admission of accompanying the attackers. [8]

At the trial, Reynolds explained why the written record had become a problem. Murray McConnel had taken the original record, and Reynolds and Hicok later reconstructed a memorandum. That history makes the custody and recollection of the testimony part of the story. The Joseph Smith Papers provisionally dates the surviving memorandum around October 27, 1844, but notes a May Term heading that may place its preparation closer to the 1845 trial. [8, 9]

The Backenstos account examined for this edition includes a Carthage Greys roll and names alleged leaders and active participants. Hicok was not located in those sections. That finding does not settle every accusation that might survive elsewhere. It does mean that this particular list cannot presently sustain an allegation that he helped kill the Smith brothers. His role as clerk is supported by affirmative evidence and deserves attention in its own right. [7–10]

For a Latter-day Saint reader, this is a consequential place to find the justice from the Welch file. He had dealt with men directing the temple, heard a county resident's fear of violence, and then helped preserve testimony after the Church's leaders were killed. The surviving record of that last task became part of the dispute over what witnesses had said. His pen stood within the effort to establish an account of the murders. [6–9; D2–D8]

A family trail toward California

An Illinois marriage index offers the next specific family lead: John J. Hicock and Mary C. Rodehader, Hancock County, January 1, 1850, volume 2, page 1, license 1520. The original entry remains unread, and an indexed date can be a marriage or license date. A family compilation spells the bride's surname

Rodehaver. These are details to resolve in a particular record, rather than a reason to abandon a promising connection. [24, 29]

The proposed later life is that of John Johnson Hicok in California. Jane Wohlschlegel Webb’s account of a family-letter collection, published by Joyce M. Tice, connects him with Nathaniel H. Hickok in Pennsylvania. The brother and address independently supplied by the 1841 letter make this more useful than a shared surname. The collection also inventories an incomplete letter from Marysville and a Sacramento letter dated November 11, 1877. Their complete texts could connect the Illinois and California lives directly. Until then, that identification remains provisional. [24, 25]

The California man can be followed through a period county history. In 1891, Justus H. Rogers described the family of Clarence C. Hicok, naming his father John J. Clarence was born at Marysville on November 14, 1854; his parents moved to Grand Island about two years later. Elsewhere Rogers places J. J. Hicok in county politics and the organizations of agricultural life. These details suggest how much of the proposed later biography lies beyond Nauvoo. [36]

He chaired a Republican county convention in July 1865. In 1871 he ran for county judge and lost to F. L. Hatch. Two years later he was an officer and master of the Sycamore Grange; in April 1874 he organized a grange at Newville. The title Judge, sometimes used in local accounts, cannot erase the recorded election defeat or establish that he held that particular office. The evidence does show sustained involvement in public affairs. [36]

Other entries bring work and household into view. A directory published in 1875 lists J. J. Hicok as an attorney at Grand Island. Rogers reports that his dwelling burned in August 1878 and places him in the chair at a Republican mass convention the following July. A derivative death index gives April 17, 1891, at Grand Island, describing a married farmer aged seventy-seven years, five months, and twenty-one days. The directory and death entry still need comparison with their originals. [36, 37]

The family compilation names four sons—Clarence Cleaon, Harla Hillard, Lora Leon, and Walton Willmer—and reports a voter registration identifying John Johnson Hicok as Pennsylvania-born. It also supplies leads for Nathaniel’s wife, Luthera Brown, and their sister Ann or Anne Hickok Holcomb. The proposed older Nathaniel as the family’s father is explicitly tentative. No precise birth date or parents are assigned to the Illinois justice on that basis. [24]

If the original marriage, census, and letters complete the identification, the biography will follow a man from Pennsylvania family ties to Illinois trade and justice work, then to California law, farming, and politics. For now, the evidence notes preserve the exact California references and the records needed to test them. His documented Illinois years already give us a person deeply involved in the ordinary transactions and extraordinary events of Hancock County. [24, 25, 29, 36–38]

The family letters bring him closer

Two letters preserved by the owner of the Welch papers bring John’s family into clearer view. Both are directed to Nathaniel H. Hicok at Canton, Bradford County, Pennsylvania. The earlier appears to have been mailed from La Harpe in September 1840. John reported better health and growing satisfaction with Illinois: the longer he stayed, the better he liked it. He described black prairie soil, the work of breaking it with cattle, corn planted in the sod, and timber moving toward the region by river. The comparisons with Pennsylvania farmland gave his brother familiar measures for an unfamiliar place. [73]

In that same letter, John turned to the Mormons at Commerce and estimated their population at between three and four thousand. His figure is a contemporary observer’s estimate, not a census. It places the Saints within his account of the country he was learning to call home. A separately signed message to a sister shares the sheet; its religious counsel should not be silently assigned to John. The contributor’s initials remain uncertain. [73]

The letter headed January 23, 1841 makes the family conversation more personal. Nathaniel had written about belief; John replied that they differed, but hoped their disagreement would not disturb “the bonds of friendship.” His questions about scripture sit beside an insistence that Christian conduct should mean helping people in need. The formal handwriting on the court papers now belongs to a man who could argue with a brother and still want their affection to survive the argument. [73]

These two letters are distinct from the December 16, 1841 letter described in Grunder’s catalogue. That later letter remains the source for the reported Nauvoo business interest and proposed Harris pamphlet. The September and January letters supply family context here; their full transcriptions and separate histories belong to later studies. [25, 73]

The people in the packet

The signatures and official entries begin these lives at a particular moment in August 1843. The profiles follow their origins, livelihoods, families, and connections with Nauvoo wherever other records allow. A probable or possible identification remains qualified throughout; an occupation established in one town is not automatically assigned to another. John J. Hicok’s extended biography precedes this section.

William Welch

William Welch’s own voice is missing, but his signature survives. On August 17, 1843, he was brought before Hicok after Joshua Stewart swore that he feared being shot, killed, or otherwise injured. Welch could not immediately furnish the required security and remained in custody. The next day another man joined him in the recognizance. That second signature changed his immediate situation, although the papers never tell us whether the men were relatives, friends, neighbors, or business associates. His age, occupation, and account of the quarrel remain unknown. [D2, D3, D6, D8]

The next spring offers a striking probable continuation. A William Welsh sat on the Hancock circuit jury in Dana v. Brink on May 22–23, 1844, and signed the verdict awarding Charles Dana $75. Comparison of the original autograph with Welch’s 1843 bond shows strongly compatible handwriting. The shared name, county, and close dates make this a strong probable identification, though the record still needs an independent household or legal-document link. [47; D8]

The Dana case brought another family’s difficulty into court. It concerned physician William Brink’s treatment of Margaret Dana during her October 1842 pregnancy. Joseph Smith had heard the original action in Nauvoo in March 1843; the jury on which Welsh served heard the later circuit appeal. If this is the same man, Welch moved within a year from answering a complaint about his own conduct to helping decide a dispute arising in Nauvoo. His jury service does not tell us how the earlier peace proceeding ended. [47]

Byron Welch served on the same jury, providing a possible family connection. A public Nauvoo Community Project profile identifies Andrew Byron Welch, born in Tennessee in 1814, in an 1840 Hancock household entered as A. B. Welch. That gives us a specific local candidate for the co-juror. His identification with the juror is not yet established. [47, 65]

The proposed family can be followed further. The profile identifies Andrew Byron’s parents as James Flemming Welch and Elizabeth Lollar Perkins and reports his 1835 Hancock marriage to Elizabeth Adaline Owen. A modern family tree also gives those parents a son, William Carol Welch, born in 1823. This is a lead to test against deeds, probate, and the defendant’s signature; it does not establish the defendant’s parents, birthplace, or occupation. The family tree contains conflicting vital information, making the original records especially necessary. [65]

For now, Welch’s strongest connection with Nauvoo’s people is the probable Dana jury service: a place among local men judging a dispute involving a Nauvoo family. His trade or business has not been

identified. The exact-name William Welch in the public Nauvoo database was a child who died in December 1842 and cannot be this defendant. [47, 48]

Joshua D Stewart

Joshua D. Stewart is the person whose decision set the case in motion. He put his name beneath a sworn statement that he feared William Welch would shoot, kill, or injure him, and asked Hicok for protection. We do not possess the conversation or encounter that preceded the oath. What survives is his choice to seek help through a local justice before the injury he feared occurred. His signed middle initial D is an important clue in distinguishing him from other Joshua Stewarts. [D6]

A Nauvoo property entry may bring us closer to his everyday surroundings. It names a Joshua Stewart living on William Pool's lot, Lot 2, Block 62, in the Hotchkiss Addition. The assessor entered $20 in horses, $6 in cattle, and $8 in other personal property. These are values, not numbers of animals. If this is the complainant, the entry connects him to a particular property and its owner. It does not establish rent, employment by Pool, a farming occupation, or Stewart's ownership of the lot. The missing D still matters in joining the assessment to his affidavit. [13]

A Joshua Stewart also signed the memorial to Congress dated November 28, 1843, seeking redress for the Saints' Missouri losses. Its petitioners expressly presented themselves as belonging to the Society of Latter Day Saints. For that signer, the memorial is meaningful evidence of alignment with the community and its appeal for justice. The affidavit and memorial signatures have been compared, but a common identity remains unproved. [14]

If the two references belong to one man, they would place his private appeal for protection beside a public appeal made with the Saints. We cannot yet establish whether he lived in Missouri, determine whether he joined the Church, or follow him through a mission or temple ordinance. The memorial is not a baptism record: Daniel H. Wells also signed it and joined the Church in 1846. Its positive evidence of association should remain part of the biography while those further questions stay open. [14, 52]

One possible trace follows the assessed Joshua beyond 1843. A Second Ward delinquent-tax list, dated about January 1845, names Joshua Steward [Stewart] and marks the entry "M. Way." The notation appears to mean that he had moved away, but gives no destination. Like the assessment, it omits the middle initial D. It may continue the story of the Nauvoo resident; it cannot yet carry our complainant out of the county. The unconnected marriage leads remain in the notes. [15, 48, 49, 52, 78]

Vincent M Conrad

The constable turned Hicok's written commands into action. He served the warrant and subpoenas, kept Welch in custody, and returned him to court when security could be given. The justice names him repeatedly as V. M. Conrad, but the packet contains no independent Conrad signature. His work is clear even while the expansion of his initials needs a further record. [D2, D3]

He was probably Vincent M. Conrad. A Nauvoo assessment names Vincent Conrad, an 1845 city postal list gives Vincent M., and a biography published during the later Iowa man's lifetime places him in Hancock County from 1840 to 1846. The agreement in name, time, and place supports a probable identification. An appointment, constable's bond, or signed return giving the full name would supply the independent connection. The fuller life below belongs to this strongly plausible candidate. [16–18]

From New York to the Great Lakes

The History of Cass County, Iowa, published in 1884, places Conrad's birth in Tioga County, New York, and calls him the sixth of nine children of Joshua and Eva Conrad. It prints his mother's maiden name as Rothfund. Its birth date, September 15, 1815, differs from the September 15, 1812 date in the published temple register. Neither year has been established here from an original birth record. The middle-name expansions Matthew and Mills also disagree, so Vincent M. is the working form used in this edition. [18, 20, 53]

The same lifetime biography describes a young man learning to make a living through customers and trade. After schooling in New York, he worked as a hotel and store clerk. In 1831 he went to Cleveland and spent a year clerking in a hotel. Detroit followed, where he alternated between a grocery business of his own and hotel employment until moving to Hancock County in 1840. The hotel and grocery work belongs to those earlier places; no source yet identifies a shop or hotel that he operated in Nauvoo. [18]

Nauvoo's assessment brings him into view on a smaller scale. The entry naming Vincent Conrad associates him with three-quarters of an acre valued at $25 and notes his residence there. It gives no trade or public-office title. The city's unclaimed-mail list subsequently printed Vincent M. Conrad among the names for letters on hand at the end of June 1845. Together these records help locate the candidate within Nauvoo's everyday population. [16, 17]

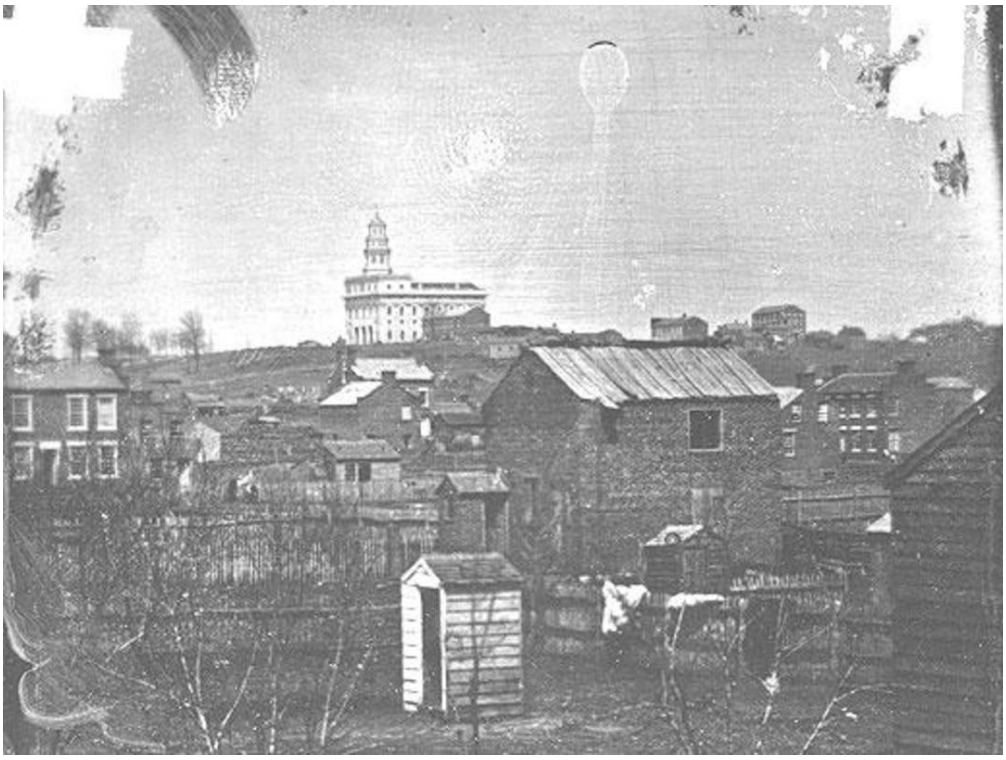
The office belongs to the county story as well as the city's. Nauvoo had its own ward constables, chosen through the city council. The July 1843 newspaper also advertised a constable candidate for Commerce Precinct, Benjamin W. Rolfe. Neither record supplies Conrad's appointment, but together they warn against identifying every local constable as a municipal officer. In the Welch packet, V. M. Conrad is acting as a Hancock County constable under Hicok's process. His election date and precinct remain unverified. [74; D2, D3]

Conrad and Electa in the temple records

The most specific Church evidence appears in January 1846. Lisle G. Brown's published temple register lists Vincent as a Seventy and reports his endowment on January 8. The woman Brown identifies as Electa Cotton Bradway received her endowment that day as well. Their marriage sealing followed on January 30, with Brigham Young officiating. These are the clearest documented religious events currently connected with the candidate's life. They do not establish when he joined the Church or identify a mission. [20, 21, 53]

For a modern reader, Seventy needs its historical setting. Men holding that priesthood office were then organized into numerous local quorums and were associated with preaching the gospel. Conrad's recorded office indicates participation in that religious organization; it does not identify him as a General Authority. No numbered quorum, personal conversion account, baptism date, missionary assignment, or patriarchal blessing has yet been verified for him. [53, 69]

The record names also deserve care. Brown's footnotes give Vincent M. Conrad and Electra C. Conrad as the endowment-source forms. His expanded names and maiden name come through later genealogical identification. The endowment information was taken from a 1974 compilation; the sealing information from a compilation made under Joseph F. Smith about 1869–1870. The event dates are in 1846, but the underlying 1846 manuscripts have not yet been inspected for this edition. [53]



Nauvoo and its temple, about 1846. The completed temple rises above houses, outbuildings, fences, and young trees. This view belongs to the period of the Conrad temple entries, about three years after the Welch case began. Copy photograph of a daguerreotype attributed to Lucian R. Foster, Charles W. Carter Collection, Church Archives. Reproduced in the museum's supplied orientation. [56]

A move to Iowa and a family question

The 1884 biography states that Conrad remained in Hancock County until 1846, then moved to Van Buren County, Iowa, and afterward to Dubuque, where he prospected and mined for lead. It reports that he married Mary J. Eighmey in Van Buren County in 1846. Mary was a sister of C. H. Eighmey, whom the book identifies as cashier of Dubuque's First National Bank in 1884. This is a family connection to a Dubuque banker, although the original marriage entry has not yet been examined. [18]

The county account does not explain how that marriage relates to Electa's temple record. No documented death, divorce, separation, or other transition has been recovered. The original 1850 census adds another unresolved household: Mrs. Conrad, thirty-six; Mary Jane, twenty-one; and Orson, two. The first two were recorded as women born in New York and Orson as a boy born in Iowa. Vincent is not named in those three lines, and the census supplies no relationships. The older woman cannot be identified as Electa from this entry alone. [18, 53, 54]

Electa deserves a biography of her own when the connecting evidence can be found. An original Cleveland directory published in 1888 lists Electa C. Conrad, widow of Vincent, at 47 Ontario. A cemetery transcription points to the interment of an Electa C. Conrad, aged eighty-six, in Cleveland on March 3, 1893. The names make these useful leads, but the identification with Nauvoo's Electa remains unproved. The directory's widow designation also conflicts with the Iowa Conrad's survival until 1892. It cannot settle the marriage history. [60, 68]

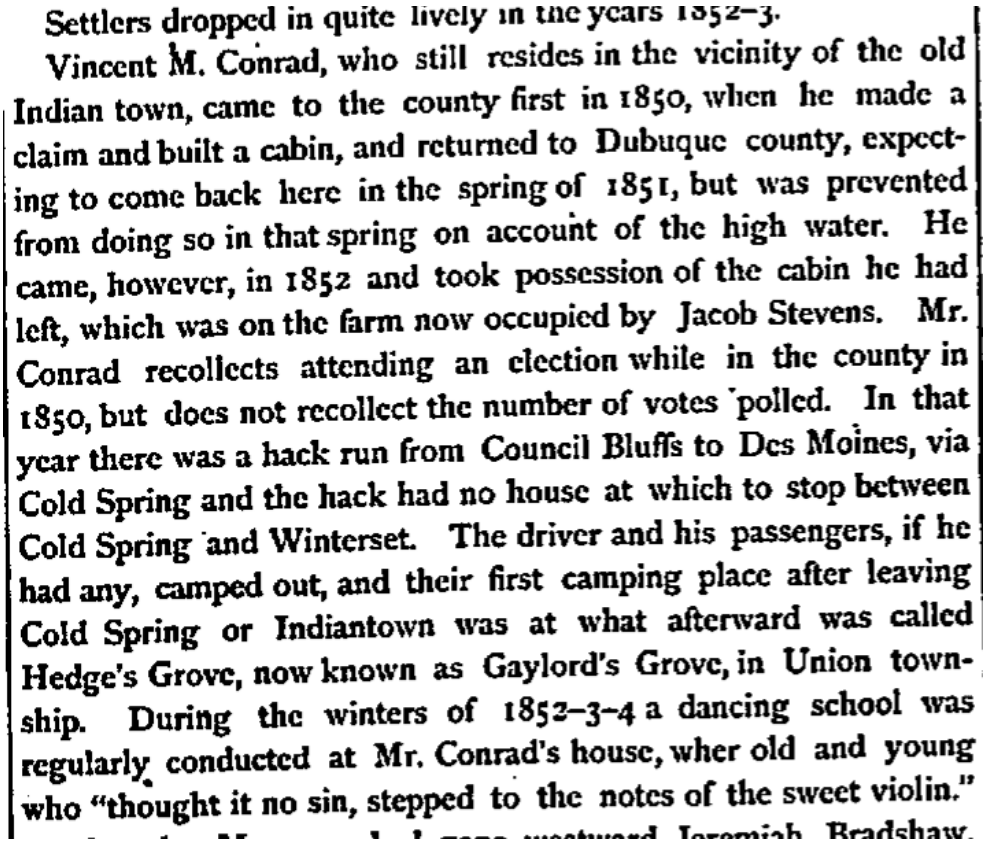
A cabin and a place for neighbors to gather

In the spring of 1850, according to the county biography, Conrad left Dubuque with horses, a wagon, household goods, his wife, and one child, intending to make a permanent home in what became Cass County. He built a fifteen-by-thirty-two-foot log cabin. Provisions ran short that autumn, and the family returned to Dubuque for the winter. High water prevented their planned return in 1851. They finally came back with an ox team in 1852. [18]

A newspaper history printed in 1876 preserves the same sequence of a claim in 1850, delay, and return in 1852. It expressly attributes to Conrad a memory of attending an election during his first year there, although he could no longer remember how many votes were cast. Both accounts look backward. They show settlement as a repeated effort interrupted by supplies and water conditions, rather than a single untroubled arrival. [18, 58]

During his absence, the county history says, Conrad left a man named Weeks in charge of the place. It identifies Weeks as a Mormon who continued west after the Conrads returned. No first name is supplied, so he cannot safely be identified with a particular Nauvoo resident. Conrad first farmed, then provided accommodations for emigrants and newcomers and sold merchandise at Indiantown. In 1859 he returned to farming, continuing until the autumn of 1883, when he rented out his farm in section 9 of Cass Township. [18]

His house also had a place in local social life. The 1876 history describes a dancing school held there during the winters of 1852–1854, with old and young gathering to dance to a violin. The passage does not identify Conrad as the teacher or musician. What it gives us is a home that served as a gathering place, alongside the record of farming, lodging, and trade. [58]



Settlers dropped in quite lively in the years 1852–3.

Vincent M. Conrad, who still resides in the vicinity of the old Indian town, came to the county first in 1850, when he made a claim and built a cabin, and returned to Dubuque county, expecting to come back here in the spring of 1851, but was prevented from doing so in that spring on account of the high water. He came, however, in 1852 and took possession of the cabin he had left, which was on the farm now occupied by Jacob Stevens. Mr. Conrad recollects attending an election while in the county in 1850, but does not recollect the number of votes polled. In that year there was a hack run from Council Bluffs to Des Moines, via Cold Spring and the hack had no house at which to stop between Cold Spring and Winterset. The driver and his passengers, if he had any, camped out, and their first camping place after leaving Cold Spring or Indiantown was at what afterward was called Hedge's Grove, now known as Gaylord's Grove, in Union township. During the winters of 1852–3–4 a dancing school was regularly conducted at Mr. Conrad's house, wher old and young who "thought it no sin, stepped to the notes of the sweet violin."

Conrad's early Cass County years recalled in 1876. The paragraph attributes an election memory to him and describes a dancing school at his house. This is a retrospective newspaper account, published while he was living. Atlantic Telegraph, September 27, 1876, p. 1. [58]

Public service and a growing household

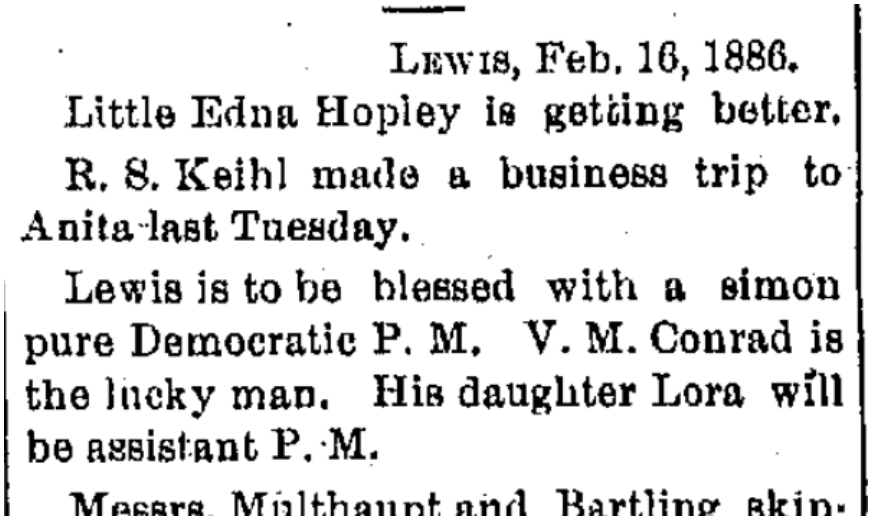
When Cass County organized its government in the spring of 1853, Conrad became its first recorder. The county history describes a $2,500 official bond filed in April, with Levi M. Mills and C. E. Woodward as sureties, and credits him with recording the county's first deed. He left that office before the year ended. The bond offers a later parallel to the Welch papers: Conrad's own public work also depended upon other men undertaking an obligation on his behalf. The two bonds served different purposes. [18]

Local responsibilities remained part of his life. By 1884 he was serving as both a justice of the peace and mayor of Lewis. He had been a school subdirector and spent nine years as secretary of the Cass Township school board. His obituary later credited him with twenty years as a township justice and school-board work during much of that period. These retrospective totals need not describe uninterrupted service, but they show how strongly local recordkeeping and administration figured in his neighbors' memory. [18, 60]

His fraternal affiliations are specific. The county history identifies him with Lewis Lodge No. 140 of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows and as a charter member of its Rebecca Degree Lodge. It says he held all elective offices in both. The obituary also remembers faithful attendance and experience in Odd Fellow leadership. These sources establish Odd Fellowship; a Masonic affiliation has not been found. [18, 60]

The household was large. In 1884 the biography named nine living children: Orson, Mary, Lemon, Nettie, Alice, Fred, Clara, Vincent M. Jr., and Laura. It also recorded a daughter, Emeline, who died on September 2, 1854, only twelve days old. That brief notice places an infant's death amid the years otherwise remembered for settling, working, and community gatherings. [18]

On February 16, 1886, the Atlantic Daily Telegraph announced Conrad as Lewis's new Democratic postmaster and named his daughter Lora as the intended assistant. The newspaper's Lora differs from the biography's Laura. This small item gives her a prospective public role beyond a name among the children. His obituary later confirms Conrad's postal service during the Cleveland administration and describes his active part in Democratic politics. Her subsequent tenure has not been separately verified. [59, 60]



LEWIS, Feb. 16, 1886.

Little Edna Hopley is getting better.

R. S. Keihl made a business trip to Anita last Tuesday.

Lewis is to be blessed with a simon pure Democratic P. M. V. M. Conrad is the lucky man. His daughter Lora will be assistant P. M.

Messrs. Multhaupt and Bartling skin-

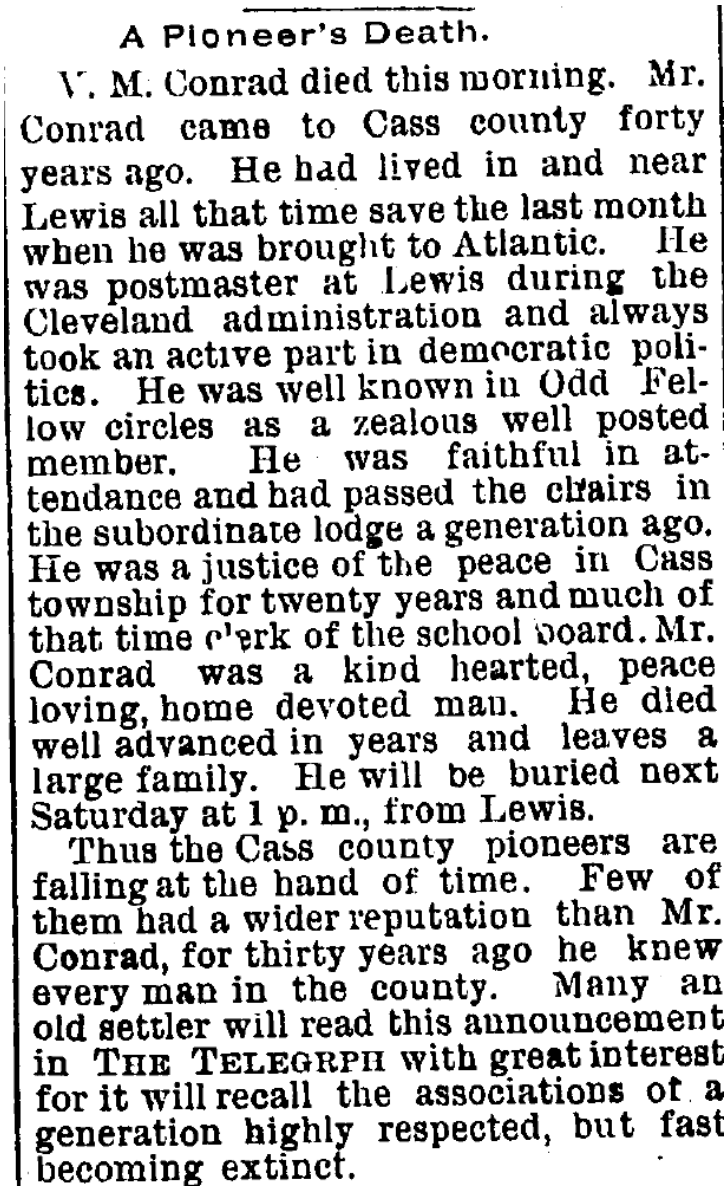
A daughter named in the town's postal work. The Lewis column announces V. M. Conrad's appointment and Lora's intended assistance. Atlantic Daily Telegraph, February 16, 1886, p. 3; original printed spelling retained. [59]

The man remembered in 1892

Conrad died on December 8, 1892. The Telegraph announced his death that day and said he had been brought to Atlantic about a month earlier, after decades in and near Lewis. It remembered an experienced local officer, an active Odd Fellow, and a man whose acquaintance once extended throughout the county. Its personal judgment was affectionate: "a kind hearted, peace loving, home devoted man." A funeral was announced for the following Saturday at one o'clock, from Lewis. The notice does not give a cause of death. [60]

A probate notice published on May 24, 1893, announced an August 29 hearing at the Atlantic courthouse concerning an instrument offered as Vincent M. Conrad's will. It does not disclose the will's contents or establish that it was admitted to probate. The will and estate file may name heirs and property more precisely, and may help explain the unresolved family connections. [61]

If the constable identification is confirmed, the man carrying Hicok's warrant in 1843 can be followed from earlier Great Lakes trade, through temple participation with Electa, into a long Iowa life of family, business, and civic service. The records establish those different settings more clearly than they reveal his private beliefs. The 1884 history's description elsewhere of him as probably the first Gentile claimant is a later writer's label; it supplies no date or record of a change in Church membership. [18, 53, 58–61]



A Pioneer's Death.

V. M. Conrad died this morning. Mr. Conrad came to Cass county forty years ago. He had lived in and near Lewis all that time save the last month when he was brought to Atlantic. He was postmaster at Lewis during the Cleveland administration and always took an active part in democratic politics. He was well known in Odd Fellow circles as a zealous well posted member. He was faithful in attendance and had passed the chairs in the subordinate lodge a generation ago. He was a justice of the peace in Cass township for twenty years and much of that time clerk of the school board. Mr. Conrad was a kind hearted, peace loving, home devoted man. He died well advanced in years and leaves a large family. He will be buried next Saturday at 1 p. m., from Lewis.

Thus the Cass county pioneers are falling at the hand of time. Few of them had a wider reputation than Mr. Conrad, for thirty years ago he knew every man in the county. Many an old settler will read this announcement in THE TELEGRPH with great interest for it will recall the associations of a generation highly respected, but fast becoming extinct.

"A Pioneer's Death." The December 8, 1892 announcement supplies Conrad's death date and a contemporary assessment of his character and public service. Atlantic Daily Telegraph, p. 2. [60]

Benjamin Royse

Benjamin Royse's signature is the clearest guide to his name. Benja Royse appears beside Aaron and Mary Douglass and Elizabeth Black's mark, while the docket and reverse use shorter or variant forms. He was summoned for the state and required to return to circuit court. The record does not say what he had seen or heard. [D2, D4, D5]

He may have known Hancock County before the Saints began building Nauvoo. Thomas Gregg's 1880 history lists a Benjamin Royse among the settlers of 1830. A connection with the witness would give him roots in an earlier chapter of the county's settlement, but the list supplies too little to complete the identification. A land record, household, or second signature could make the link. [22]

The Nauvoo Community Project offers a possible family with Eleanor Lofton as wife and an 1840 Hancock household indexed as Benj Rice. Its public census transcription describes eight people and two employed in agriculture. It does not assign a particular trade to the case witness. The oldest men in the household were thirty to thirty-nine, which conflicts with the profile's 1787 birth date. An older Royse pedigree gives that exact birthday to Martin B. Royse and places Benjamin's birth about 1800. This raises a specific possibility of a date transferred between relatives; neither birth date has been proved for the witness. [48, 62]

The proposed Eleanor's census trail continues from Hancock County in 1850 through Pontoosuc in 1880, with North Carolina consistently given as her birthplace. In the database's 1860 transcription she holds $1,600 in real estate and $600 in personal estate; in 1880 she is a seventy-four-year-old widow. These linked records offer a possible family history remaining in the county long after the Nauvoo exodus. They have been read here as database transcriptions; their original images and the connection to the witness still need verification. [63]

A wedding offers a possible continuation of the family story. The Nauvoo Community Project identifies Samantha Royse as a daughter of the proposed Benjamin–Eleanor couple. The January 31, 1844 Nauvoo Neighbor independently announced that Thomas C. Gardner and Semantha Royce had married on January 28, with I. C. Howd officiating. It described the couple as residents of the county. If the family link is confirmed, Benjamin's appearance as a witness would be followed only months later by a daughter's wedding reported in Nauvoo's newspaper. The notice itself names no parents and makes no statement of Church membership. [64, 75]

For the present, an early Hancock settler and a household connected with agriculture are reasonable research candidates. His own place of origin, business, religious membership, and attitude toward the Saints remain unproved. The brief signature on the witness bond is the secure point to which the family evidence must eventually connect. [22, 48, 62–64; D4]

Aaron Douglass

Aaron Douglass entered the proceeding after Hicok had already named three witnesses. A separate subpoena brought him into the same case, and his signature then joined theirs on the promise to attend circuit court. That sequence gives him an individual part in the story. It does not disclose who suggested his name or what he was expected to say. The docket's Duglass and the bond's Douglass are preserved in the transcriptions. [D2, D4, D5]

His signature appears near Mary A. Douglass's, inviting the natural question of whether they were husband and wife or otherwise related. The papers give no answer. They do show two people of the same surname making separate commitments as witnesses. Their relationship, home, work, and religious affiliation have not been securely recovered. [D4, D5; 48, 49, 70]

A surname can also lead us toward the wrong story. A later Backenstos account mentions a Douglass who taught school at Pontusuc in connection with the murder accusations, but gives no evidence identifying him as Aaron. He should not acquire that occupation or accusation merely because his surname fits. Aaron's established place here is as a witness whose testimony mattered enough for Hicok to summon him separately. [10, 70; D4]

Mary A Douglass

Mary A. Douglass's signature restores a detail the docket loses. The witness there is called Maria Duglass, while the bond and its reverse call her Mary Douglass. Beneath the bond she supplies the fuller form Mary A Douglass. Their position in the same four-person witness group supports treating these entries as one probable person while preserving each spelling in the transcription. [D2, D4, D5]

Mary's obligation was the same fifty dollars required of each of the other witnesses. The legal papers therefore preserve more than a passing mention of her name: they record an expectation that she would

appear and give evidence. We cannot reconstruct her testimony, yet her autograph lets her stand in the account as a participant in her own right. The packet does not define her relationship to Aaron. [D4]

Her earlier and later life remain elusive. The same-name children found in the public Nauvoo database supply no independent link to this signature, and the packet records no age. Until a household or another connected record can be established, her biography rests on this particular act: she signed an obligation to return to court in a matter concerning a neighbor's fear of violence. [48, 70; D4]

Elizabeth J Black

Elizabeth J. Black left a cross on the witness bond, identified as her mark. The writing around it gives her name and the same obligation borne by the other witnesses. It is evidence of her participation in the proceeding, even though she executed the paper differently from the people whose autographs appear above hers. A mark alone cannot tell us the limits of her education or her ability to read at other times. [D4]

Her name is unusually difficult to follow through the form. Black appears over disturbed writing near the beginning, one later clause calls her Elizabeth Stewart, and both the execution and reverse return to Black. That discrepancy may eventually help identify another record, but it is not proof of a maiden name, a marriage, or kinship with Joshua Stewart. [D4, D5]

Elizabeth's participation survives even though her family story does not. The infant Elizabeth Black in a Nauvoo database cannot explain this adult legal role, and a much later marriage-index entry supplies no secure connection. Mary's autograph and Elizabeth's mark deserve equal attention: both women were expected to give evidence, and both undertook the same obligation. Their different ways of executing the paper tell us how they participated in this proceeding, without supplying a complete account of their education, families, or faith. [48, 49, 70; D4]

Dickison whose surname may read Giton

On the first day, Welch had not furnished acceptable security. On the second, Dickison joined him in the two-hundred-dollar recognizance. That change gives this elusive man a decisive part in the surviving episode. Whatever his relationship to Welch, he was willing to undertake an enforceable obligation with him. The papers do not explain his motive or record two hundred dollars changing hands. [D2, D3, D8]

The docket gives only Dickison; the bond's surname remains provisionally read Giton or Gitton. A promising regional candidate is Dickinson Garten, also associated with the spelling Girton. A genealogical compilation places his marriage to Tabitha Bagby in Hancock County in 1837, while an 1885 county history independently names Dickenson and Clara Green Girton as Paulina Girton's parents. These references give the search a local family to test. They do not yet prove that this father was Welch's surety. Until a connected signature or record is found, the action remains clearer than the name: he stood behind Welch's promise to appear and keep the peace. [D3, D8; 79]

Jacob B Backenstos

Jacob B. Backenstos signed four filing endorsements on the Welch papers, placing them on file on September 19, 1843, for the October term. That routine helped preserve the acts of everyone who had appeared before Hicok. No surviving entry places Backenstos at the earlier hearing. [D3, D5, D7, D9]

Pennsylvania origins and an Illinois public career

Backenstos was born on October 8, 1811, in Lower Paxton Township, Dauphin County, Pennsylvania, a son of Jacob Backenstos and Margaretha Theis. His religious background was Lutheran Reformed. He married Sarah Lavina Lee in Sangamon County, Illinois, in 1835. He appears as a postmaster there in 1840 and was living in Hancock County by 1841. The Joseph Smith Papers also identifies him as a merchant and land speculator, although a specific Nauvoo business has not been established in this research. His public appointments are easier to follow than his commercial dealings. [11, 66]

By March 1842 he held a place in the Nauvoo Legion as an aide-de-camp, and he also belonged to the Nauvoo Masonic Lodge. These ties put him among the city's military and fraternal associates. His friendship with Joseph Smith and the Saints was real, but the Joseph Smith Papers biography states that he never joined the Church. The distinction matters in a county where religious membership, political alliance, and personal friendship could overlap without being identical. [11]

His friendship with the Saints was already expressed in another legal setting. In January 1843, he and Stephen A. Douglas swore that they had seen Joseph Smith reviewing the Nauvoo Legion on May 7, 1842. That affidavit supported the account of Smith's whereabouts in the extradition proceedings. Backenstos could thus appear in Church history as both a county officer and a witness contributing to Smith's defense. [12]

A family relationship drew the Backenstoses still closer to the Smith household. Jacob's brother William married Clara M. Wasson, Emma Smith's niece, at the Nauvoo Mansion on October 3, 1843, with Joseph Smith officiating. This was shortly after the Welch papers were filed. The journal and marriage register identify William as the bridegroom, keeping the brothers distinct. The wedding gives Jacob a documented family connection with Emma's relatives while leaving his own religious affiliation unchanged. [66, 71]

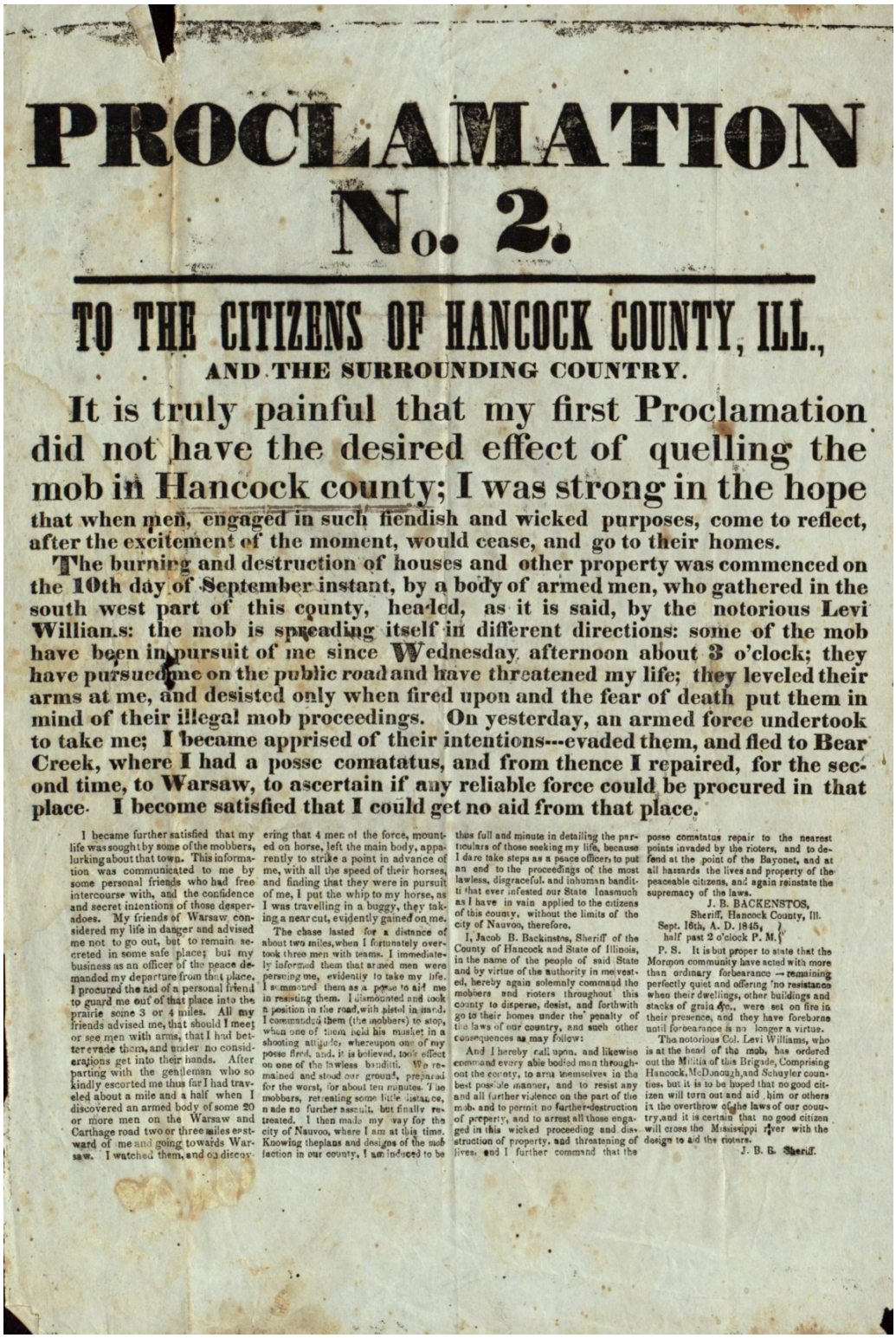
His name was also circulating among voters before the Welch case. In July 1843 the Nauvoo Neighbor printed a request from "Many Voters" at Fountain Green to announce Colonel J. B. Backenstos for clerk of the county commissioners' court. This was a candidacy notice for a specifically named office, not proof of election to it. It shows him seeking support in the county's political life shortly before his filing endorsements appear on these papers. [76]

Clerk legislator and sheriff

Hancock voters elected Backenstos to the Illinois House of Representatives in August 1844. He served as a Democrat during the session ending in March 1845, and became sheriff in 1845. The public career that had required him to receive and preserve legal papers now placed him amid the county's escalating conflict over the Saints. [11, 66]

His own words survive in a printed proclamation issued on September 16, 1845. He described house burning in the southwestern part of the county, threats to his life, and an attempt to find reliable assistance at Warsaw. According to his account, four mounted men pursued him on the road; he overtook three men with teams, summoned their aid, and took a stand. One of his pursuers raised a musket, and a member of his posse fired. This is Backenstos's public account of the confrontation, issued the same afternoon. [67]

At its close he ordered the rioters to disperse, called on able-bodied men to resist further destruction, and directed his posse to defend threatened residents. He described the Saints' earlier restraint as "more than ordinary forbearance." The proclamation shows what he publicly claimed as a sheriff's duty: protecting people and property and restoring the authority of the law. Its description also explains why his service brought him into close cooperation with Nauvoo's leaders. [67]



PROCLAMATION
No. 2.

TO THE CITIZENS OF HANCOCK COUNTY, ILL.,
AND THE SURROUNDING COUNTRY.

It is truly painful that my first Proclamation did not have the desired effect of quelling the mob in Hancock county; I was strong in the hope that when men, engaged in such fiendish and wicked purposes, come to reflect, after the excitement of the moment, would cease, and go to their homes.

The burning and destruction of houses and other property was commenced on the 10th day of September instant, by a body of armed men, who gathered in the south west part of this county, headed, as it is said, by the notorious Levi Williams: the mob is spreading itself in different directions: some of the mob have been in pursuit of me since Wednesday afternoon about 3 o'clock; they have pursued me on the public road and have threatened my life; they leveled their arms at me, and desisted only when fired upon and the fear of death put them in mind of their illegal mob proceedings. On yesterday, an armed force undertook to take me; I became apprised of their intentions---evaded them, and fled to Bear Creek, where I had a posse comatatus, and from thence I repaired, for the second time, to Warsaw, to ascertain if any reliable force could be procured in that place. I become satisfied that I could get no aid from that place.

I became further satisfied that my life was sought by some of the mobbers, lurking about that town. This information was communicated to me by some personal friends who had free intercourse with, and the confidence and secret intentions of those desperadoes. My friends of Warsaw, considered my life in danger and advised me not to go out, but to remain secreted in some safe place; but my business as an officer of the peace demanded my departure from that place. I procured the aid of a personal friend to guard me out of that place into the prairie some 3 or 4 miles. All my friends advised me, that should I meet or see men with arms, that I had better evade them, and under no considerations get into their hands. After parting with the gentleman who so kindly escorted me thus far I had traveled about a mile and a half when I discovered an armed body of some 20 or more men on the Warsaw and Carthage road two or three miles eastward of me and going towards Warsaw. I watched them, and on discovering that 4 men of the force, mounted on horse, left the main body, apparently to strike a point in advance of me, with all the speed of their horses, and finding that they were in pursuit of me, I put the whip to my horse, as I was travelling in a buggy, they taking a near cut, evidently gained on me.

The chase lasted for a distance of about two miles, when I fortunately overtook three men with teams. I immediately informed them that armed men were persuing me, evidently to take my life. I summoned them as a posse to aid me in resisting them. I dismounted and took a position in the road, with pistol in hand. I commanded them (the mobbers) to stop, when one of them held his musket in a shooting attitude, whereupon one of my posse fired, and, it is believed, took effect on one of the lawless banditti. We remained and stood our ground, prepared for the worst, for about ten minutes. The mobbers, retreating some little distance, made no further assault, but finally retreated. I then made my way for the city of Nauvoo, where I am at this time. Knowing the plans and designs of the mob faction in our county, I am induced to be thus full and minute in detailing the particulars of those seeking my life, because I dare take steps as a peace officer, to put an end to the proceedings of the most lawless, disgraceful, and inhuman banditti that ever infested our State. Inasmuch as I have in vain applied to the citizens of this county, without the limits of the city of Nauvoo, therefore,

I, Jacob B. Backinstos, Sheriff of the County of Hancock and State of Illinois, in the name of the people of said State and by virtue of the authority in me vested, hereby again solemnly command the mobbers and rioters throughout this county to disperse, desist, and forthwith go to their homes under the penalty of the laws of our country, and such other consequences as may follow:

And I hereby call upon, and likewise command every able bodied man throughout the county, to arm themselves in the best possible manner, and to resist any and all further violence on the part of the mob, and to permit no further destruction of property, and to arrest all those engaged in this wicked proceeding and destruction of property, and threatening of lives, and I further command that the posse comatatus repair to the nearest points invaded by the rioters, and to defend at the point of the Bayonet, and at all hazards the lives and property of the peaceable citizens, and again reinstate the supremacy of the laws.

J. B. BACKENSTOS,
Sheriff, Hancock County, Ill.
Sept. 16th, A. D. 1845, }
half past 2 o'clock P. M.}

P. S. It is but proper to state that the Mormon community have acted with more than ordinary forbearance — remaining perfectly quiet and offering no resistance when their dwellings, other buildings and stacks of grain &c., were set on fire in their presence, and they have forebarne until forbearance is no longer a virtue.

The notorious Col. Levi Williams, who is at the head of the mob, has ordered out the Militia of this Brigade, Comprising Hancock, McDonough, and Schuyler counties, but it is to be hoped that no good citizen will turn out and aid him or others in the overthrow of the laws of our country, and it is certain that no good citizen will cross the Mississippi river with the design to aid the rioters.

J. B. B. Sheriff.

Backenstos's second proclamation, September 16, 1845. The sheriff describes pursuit and armed resistance, then calls for protection of threatened residents. The facsimile preserves his contemporary public account. Public domain, courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University. [67]

The road confrontation later became a criminal case. The man shot was Franklin A. Worrell; published historical research identifies the shooter as Orrin Porter Rockwell. Backenstos was tried at Peoria that December and acquitted. Rockwell was acquitted at Galena in August 1846, after Backenstos testified that he had acted under the sheriff's orders. These later events should not be confused with the unrelated Welch peace proceeding that Backenstos had filed two years earlier. [67]

A letter to Brigham Young brings the later sheriff into more personal view. On October 23, 1845, Jonathan H. Hale wrote from Carthage about the trial of men charged in the destruction of the Nauvoo Expositor and the surrounding tension. Backenstos added his own message. He reported the acquittal, recommended sending additional reliable men, and asked whether James Arlington Bennet was a true friend. He also expected the grand jury to return an indictment against himself. These were his expressed concerns as he corresponded with the Saints' leader. [51]

His request to hear from Young "soon & often" gives the connection an immediacy that an office list cannot supply. By then he was defending both his conduct as sheriff and the people with whom his official duties had brought him into alliance. The letter and proclamation allow him to speak in the story through contemporary documents, with their claims attributed to him. [51, 67]

Army service and Oregon

The Mexican War carried him far from Hancock County. In May 1846 he received a captain's commission in the United States Mounted Riflemen under Persifor F. Smith. He took part in Winfield Scott's advance from Veracruz to Mexico City and earned brevet promotions for service in the 1847 campaign, including Contreras, Churubusco, and Chapultepec, where he was wounded. His lieutenant-colonel brevet was confirmed in 1849 with rank dated from September 13, 1847. [66, 72]

The promotion campaign adds another documented connection. A January 4, 1849 recommendation to President James K. Polk carries endorsements from Stephen A. Douglas and other Illinois congressmen. Abraham Lincoln also added a carefully qualified request that Backenstos not be overlooked if the military reports justified promotion, expressly acknowledging that he did not know the facts himself. This shows support for official consideration, without establishing personal friendship or Lincoln's firsthand knowledge of Backenstos's service. [72]

Backenstos was in Oregon City, Oregon Territory, by late 1849 and resigned from the army on June 30, 1851. By 1857 he had moved to Portland. He died on September 25 that year, drowning in the Willamette River; the Papers of Abraham Lincoln biography identifies his death as suicide. No explanation of his state of mind has been established here. His forty-five-year life had crossed Pennsylvania, Illinois, Mexico, and Oregon, with the Hancock clerkship forming one part of a much wider public career. [11, 66]

The case beside contemporary Nauvoo

The dates align two views of Hancock County. Entries in the same row or week do not by themselves establish a causal connection.

Date	The case and its people	Nauvoo context
June 14, 1842	Hicok conveys property to the temple committee for a stated $1,200. [6]	The committee is engaged in building the temple.
August 13, 1843	The Welch complaint is still four days away.	Joseph Smith delivers a funeral discourse for committee member Elias Higbee. [3]
August 16, 1843	No Welch report was located in this issue.	Nauvoo Neighbor publishes political commentary and advertisements for ordinary goods and property. [1]
August 17, 1843	Stewart swears his affidavit; warrant and subpoenas are served; evidence is heard; Welch is ordered to furnish $200 security and initially cannot. Four witnesses are bound at $50 each. [D2, D4, D6]	The temple remains under construction. [2]
August 18, 1843	Welch returns for bail; Dickison [Giton?] enters the recognizance with him. [D3, D8]	
August 21, 1843		Richards prepares Smith’s communication to Governor Ford about reports of a possible Missouri incursion. [5]
September 18 –19, 1843	Hicok certifies the docket at La Harpe on the 18th; Backenstos files the papers on the 19th. [D3, D5, D7, D9]	
October term 1843	The recognizances require circuit-court attendance. The resulting order has not been located. [D2–D9; 19]	
October 1844 and May 1845	Hicok appears in the murder investigation’s recordkeeping; his role is discussed at the later trial. [7–9]	The deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith on June 27, 1844 have transformed the county’s situation.

The case record in plain language

The legal path preserved in these papers

The affidavit initiated the complaint; the warrant and subpoenas brought the defendant and witnesses before Hicok. The docket records his decision, the recognizances state future obligations, and the September endorsements carry the proceeding toward circuit court. [D2–D9]

Term in the papers	Meaning here
Affidavit	A statement sworn before an authorized officer; here it records Stewart's fear of injury.
Recognizance	An acknowledged obligation whose stated amount could become enforceable if its conditions were not met.
Surety or security	Another person or acceptable guarantee supporting the obligation; Dickison enters it with Welch.
Mittimus	A written commitment directing custody. Its return and Welch's delivery back to court are recorded on August 18.
Bound over as witnesses	Required under an obligation to appear and testify at the next court, not adjudged guilty of an offense.
Jurat and filing endorsement	The jurat records that the oath was taken. A filing endorsement records receipt; it does not determine the merits.

These definitions follow the manuscripts and period statute. The endorsements identify the October 1843 term without giving its first calendar day. [4; D3–D9]

Three different kinds of money

Entry	Amount	What the record establishes
Welch recognizance	$200	Contingent obligation supported by a surety; no cash payment or fine is documented.
Witness recognizances	$50 each	Four attendance obligations; no payment by or to a witness is shown.
Justice costs	$3.12½	Itemized charges recorded in the docket.
Constable costs	$3.25	Service, mileage, and one day keeping the prisoner.
Combined recorded costs	$6.37½	Sum of the two cost accounts; no receipt settles who paid.

The fractions are literal half cents: $3.12½ is $3.125 and $6.37½ is $6.375. No modern-dollar conversion is needed to distinguish the security obligations from the recorded fees. [D2, D3]

What can be concluded about the dispute

The papers establish Stewart's sworn fear, a hearing, Hicok's security order, custody, and the following day's recognizance. They omit the cause of the quarrel, the testimony, and Welch's answer. No religious or political motive is stated, and neither principal's Church affiliation is established. The officers' wider Nauvoo connections provide context without determining the character of this dispute. [D2–D9; 6, 11]

Records that could reopen the story

The reading edition closes with the events the surviving papers establish. The following specific records could resolve its remaining questions; none is needed to invent an ending for the case.

1 Locate the circuit court order

Search Hancock Circuit Court Record volume D at the October 1843 term, then later terms if continued. Use People or State of Illinois against Welch or Welsh, and check the criminal and recognizance indexes. Associated loose files may contain a renewal, dismissal, discharge, forfeiture, or witness examination. Compare the wrapper's number with the archive's numbering scheme. The IRAD series and accession numbers are listed in note 32; no final Welch order has been inspected. [19, 32]

2 Resolve the surname of the surety

Compare the bond with other recognizances written by Hicok and with signatures of the regional Dickinson Girton or Garten candidate. The reported Hancock marriage is record 173, July 27, 1837, cited to FHL film 1532140. That original and a connected deed or bond are stronger next steps than further broad surname searches. [D3, D8; 79]

3 Link the constable to his full name

Find a Hancock appointment, election return, constable's bond, or signed return naming Vincent M. Conrad. Compare the underlying temple manuscripts and Seventies records with the conflicting birth and middle-name information. The 1893 probate notice also gives an estate lead for heirs, property, and the unresolved family chronology. [16–18, 53, 61, 68, 69]

4 Test the Stewart and Royse candidates

Inspect the Adams County Stewart–Brown marriage indexed for March 30, 1843. For Royse, obtain the original 1840 household, test the possible transfer of Martin Royse's birthday, and follow Eleanor's property and census records. Samantha Royce's marriage to Thomas Gardner supplies another family test. Each link to the case remains provisional. [13–15, 22, 48, 49, 62–64]

5 Recover the women as individuals

Circuit witness records may supply residences or relationships for Mary A. Douglass and Elizabeth J. Black. Compare marriage, census, Church, and probate material after establishing a local link. The Black/Stewart discrepancy is a clue, not proof of a family relationship. [D2, D4, D5]

6 Follow Welch and Hicok through the new links

Use the May 1844 jury records and signed deeds to test the Andrew Byron and William Carol Welch leads. For Hicok, follow the temple committee accounts, original family records, and the December 1841 letter. The California Bible and 1906 biography leads concern Lora Leon Hicok, a proposed son, and must not be described as John's own Bible or autobiography. [24, 25, 29, 33, 38, 42, 47, 65, 81]

The practical stopping point

The focused closing pass checked additional family leads and the live Daughters of Utah Pioneers catalogue. It found no new secure identification or Church membership and no circuit disposition. Several catalogue namesakes were born after the case. A published DUP index does list Joshua Stewart, but the underlying passages remain unread and cannot identify the complainant. The remaining work centers on particular manuscript records, restricted or unretrieved sources, and that publication lead. This is a practical close to the present reading edition, not a claim that every online image or family history has been exhausted. [78–81]

Evidence behind the Hicok biography

These details preserve the deed comparison and the specific records still needed to complete the story.

Hicok parcel: the matching descriptions

All three deeds begin on the west line of Lot 12, forty-three feet south of its northwest corner, run south eleven rods and six and a half feet to the southwest corner, east five rods, north the same distance, and west to the beginning. The 1842 Hicok deed states an area of fifty-seven square rods. The map locates the larger lot, not the precise survey footprint. The assessment of part of the north half must be compared with these boundaries rather than assumed to describe an identical interest. [6, 26, 27, 42, 43]

Date and parties	Stated amount	Nature of the instrument
June 14, 1842 John J. Hicok to Cutler, Cahoon, and Higbee as temple committee	$1,200	Conveys Hicok’s right, title, and interest; warranty limited to claims through him. [6]
May 2, 1843 Cutler, Cahoon, Higbee, and their wives Lois, Thirza, and Sarah to Alpheus Cutler	$1,200	Quitclaims their respective interests to Cutler individually. [42]
May 3, 1843 Ira S. Miles and Mary K. Miles to Alpheus Cutler	$1,200	Conveys the same described parcel with a broader warranty against all claims. [42]

These instruments are consistent with an effort to settle or consolidate different title interests, but that is an interpretation of their sequence. The deeds do not explain the underlying arrangement. Their repeated consideration should not be added together as proof that separate cash payments of $1,200 occurred. Credits, obligations, actual disbursements, and the respective interests require the associated accounts or earlier title papers. [6, 42]

The committee accounts still to be read

The identified Nauvoo Temple Building Committee Records include Ledger A, 1841–1842; Ledger B, 1842–1845; and Daybook B, 1841–1843. Entries for Hicok, Reynolds, Cutler, and Miles need to be followed through their counterentries. These volumes have been identified through explicit Joseph Smith Papers references but were not fully examined for this edition. They are distinct from the tithing and store daybooks and from Trustee-in-Trust Ledger A. [33]

Andreas’s available text, index, La Harpe subscribers, township map and history, and town plat were checked with surname variants. Gregg’s history supplies the October 1844 grand-jury identification on page 328. No fuller Hicok family biography was located in those searches. The available Andreas scan lacks printed pages 129–134, and its small map labels are not completely searchable. [30, 43]

Church membership: what the searches establish

The completed name searches did not identify the justice or an established close relative in the consulted Nauvoo Community Project records, the tested Hicok-family entries in the temple endowment index, the Church History Biographical Database, or the relevant Winter Quarters index pages. Jarvis Lewis Hickok belongs to an unconnected candidate family, and his public profile does not itself document baptism. Note 34 preserves the exact search scope. [34]

The unexamined sources include Susan Easton Black’s fifty-volume membership compilation, individual Early Church Information File cards, and the access-controlled Nauvoo Seventies G–O images. Their

catalogue descriptions do not disclose unread entries. The Church History Library's guide explains that Nauvoo membership records are sparse, incomplete, and lack a comprehensive index. A positive match in a compilation must be followed to its underlying evidence. [31, 35]

Original records for the California identification

The Native Daughters of the Golden West index identifies J. J. Hicok, volume 32, page 166, and Lora Leon Hicok, page 165. Guinn's 1906 Sacramento Valley biography is indexed under Lora L. or Lora I. Hicok, page 869. The DAR Bible lead is explicitly the family of Lora Leon Hicok and Margaret Emma Fortna, collection CA:S4:V9, page 216. The latter two are family leads through the proposed son, not records authored by the Illinois justice. Their underlying texts remain unread. The original 1850 Illinois marriage and a connected census household remain useful tests of the California identification. [24, 25, 29, 38, 81]

A land-patent index names John Johnson Hicok under June 1, 1869, Township 14 North, Range 1 East, section 33, Mount Diablo meridian, accession CACAAA032922. It describes military scrip or warrant authority. That mechanism does not establish Hicok's personal military service. The original patent and its supporting file remain research targets. [41]

Name census for the nine photographs

Ten identifiable case roles are represented. “Signed” identifies an apparent autograph in the photographed packet; Elizabeth Black executed by mark. Names copied in the docket are not counted as additional signatures. D numbers refer to the paired source pages.

Name and signature status	Role	Signature source	Church and community finding
William Welch (signed)	Defendant	D8	Probably William Welsh, Dana v. Brink juror in 1844. Church affiliation unresolved.
Joshua D. Stewart (signed)	Complainant	D6	Possible Nauvoo memorial signer. Substantial affiliation lead; identity and membership unresolved.
V. M. Conrad	Constable	None in packet	Probably Vincent M. Conrad, listed as a Seventy in 1846 temple records; later Iowa public service. Office link provisional.
John J. Hicok (signed)	Justice of the peace	D3, D4, D6, D8	La Harpe office; temple-committee business; murder grand-jury clerk. See extended study.
Jacob B. Backenstos (signed as J B)	Circuit clerk	D3, D5, D7, D9	Friendly nonmember; Nauvoo Legion and Masonic Lodge documented.
Benjamin Royse (signed as Benja)	Witness	D4	Possible 1830 Hancock pioneer; Royse household and Gardner marriage leads remain provisional. Affiliation unresolved.
Aaron Douglass (signed)	Witness	D4	Docket Duglass. Church, family, and political connections unresolved.
Mary A. Douglass (signed)	Witness	D4	Mary in bond; probably Maria Duglass in docket. Family and affiliation unresolved.
Elizabeth J. Black (signed by mark)	Witness	D4	Also Elizabeth Stewart in one clause. Identity and affiliation unresolved.
Dickison [Giton?] (signed)	Welch’s surety	D8	Possible Dickinson Girton/Garten; identity and affiliations unproved.

Name forms: Wm = William; Benj or Benja is rendered Benjamin in the narrative; Hicok has historical variants Hickok, Hickcock, and Hickock. Maria Duglass is retained literally in D2. Elizabeth’s docket initial is uncertain; “Elizabeth Stewart” is accounted for as a variant in D4 rather than silently added as an eleventh person.

Counts: eight apparent autograph signers, one person executing by mark, and one named official without an autograph. The State of Illinois is a party, not a personal name. No unnamed spouse or relative has been added. Full profiles discuss the limits of church, Masonic, militia, and attitude classifications.

Source notes and further reading

D1–D9 refer to the nine owner-supplied photographs reproduced and transcribed near the beginning of this edition: IMG_3690 through IMG_3698, in numerical order. The papers are the primary evidence for the Welch proceeding. Their earlier archival custody and the wrapper's numerical system are not established by the photographs.

Numbered references below support the historical setting and identifications. Manuscripts and contemporary printed records are distinguished from later histories, editorial biographies, and derivative indexes. Links lead to the specific record or the identified digitized volume.

1 Nauvoo on the day before the complaint

Nauvoo Neighbor, August 16, 1843, vol. 1, no. 16. The contemporary advertisements and the paper's account of the election supply the opening setting. The political commentary is treated as the newspaper's perspective.

Read the complete issue transcription

2 Temple construction

Don F. Colvin, Nauvoo Temple A Story of Faith, chapter A Six Year Building Program, BYU Religious Studies Center. Used for the construction setting, without importing the completed temple's appearance into August 1843.

Temple building chronology

3 The sermon for Elias Higbee

Joseph Smith, discourse, August 13, 1843, as reported by Willard Richards and William Clayton. The Joseph Smith Papers provides the original manuscripts, transcriptions, and historical introduction. Higbee died June 8; the funeral discourse was delivered August 13.

Richards account and introduction • Clayton account

4 The Illinois peace security procedure

An Act to Regulate the Apprehension of Offenders, and for Other Purposes, approved January 6, 1827, section 1, in The Revised Laws of Illinois (1833), pp. 219–220; approval printed p. 224. Original page scans were inspected. The language explains the recognizances and the circuit court's power to renew or dismiss them.

Digitized statute volume • Printed page 219 • Printed page 220

5 Joseph Smith writes to Governor Ford

Letter to Thomas Ford, August 21, 1843, with copied enclosures, Joseph Smith Papers. Richards prepared the communication on Smith's behalf; the historical introduction reports its transmission on August 22. No connection to the Welch dispute is asserted.

Letter and context

6 Hicok and the temple committee

Nauvoo Registry of Deeds, Deed Record Book A, pp. 76–77, deed no. 84, June 14, 1842. Hicok to Alpheus Cutler, Reynolds Cahoon, and Elias Higbee, stated consideration $1,200, part of Lot 12, Block 3, Kimball's Addition. Both manuscript images were inspected. The registry contains a recorded copy of the deed, not Hicok's original autograph.

Deed description page 76 • Witnesses and acknowledgment page 77

7 Hicok identified as grand jury clerk

Onias C. Skinner, Account of Trial, May 24–28, 1845, State of Illinois v. Williams et al., manuscript p. 74, Joseph Smith Papers. William Smith's testimony identifies John J. Hancock, editorially corrected to Hicok, as clerk to the grand jury. This witness is not here equated with Joseph Smith's brother.

Original trial account page 74

8 The signed memorandum

Memorandum of Testimony, catalogued circa October 27, 1844, State of Illinois v. Williams et al., four pages, Joseph Smith Papers; original in the Chicago History Museum collection. Hicok and James Reynolds sign. The editors note an original May Term heading and the possibility of preparation nearer the May 1845 trial. First-person passages are recorded testimony by others.

Memorandum and signature page

9 Why a memorandum was reconstructed

Account of Trial, May 24–28, 1845, as published in Trial of the Persons Indicted, p. 26, Joseph Smith Papers. Reynolds explains the original record's removal by Murray McConnel and his subsequent reconstruction with Hicok.

Printed trial account page 26

10 The published Backenstos list

History of the Church, vol. 7, chapter 12, pp. 142–145, reproduced by BYU Studies. The complete Greys roll and named leaders or active participants were checked. Hicok was not identified in those sections. This is a later account printed within a June 1844 narrative; references to subsequent events prevent dating the letter simply from its placement. The following Richards list is distinct.

Backenstos list and surrounding text

11 Jacob B Backenstos

Joseph Smith Papers biographical entry and cited records. Supports his 1811–1857 life dates, circuit clerk and sheriff service, friendship with the Saints, nonmembership in the Church, Lutheran Reformed background, Nauvoo Legion service, and Nauvoo Masonic Lodge membership.

Biography and underlying references

12 Backenstos in the January 1843 proceedings

Jacob B. Backenstos and Stephen A. Douglas, affidavit, January 4, 1843, Extradition of Joseph Smith for Accessory to Assault, copied in the transcript of proceedings, pp. 27–28. They report seeing Smith review the Nauvoo Legion on May 7, 1842.

Affidavit in the Joseph Smith Papers

13 Joshua Stewart in a Nauvoo property record

List of Property in Nauvoo Second Ward, 1843, manuscript p. 12, Joseph Smith Papers. Inscribed circa November 1843–November 1844. The original says Lives on W. Pools Lot; JSP identifies William Pool. It names Lot 2, Block 62 and values of $20 in horses, $6 in cattle, and $8 in other personal property. These are assessed values, not numbers of animals. No middle D links him conclusively to the complainant.

Original property list

14 Joshua Stewart in the congressional memorial

Memorial to the United States Senate and House of Representatives, dated November 28, 1843, pp. 1, 3, 34, Joseph Smith Papers; National Archives original. Page 1 describes petitioners as belonging to the Latter Day Saints; page 34 has Joshua Stewart, without D. Original signatures were compared without establishing a secure match to the complainant. Page 3 includes Daniel H. Wells, whose JSP biography dates baptism August 9, 1846. The memorial is positive affiliation evidence, not an independent baptism record or proof of the exact day Joshua signed.

Memorial opening • Joshua signature • Wells signature • Wells biography

15 Joshua Steward or Stewart in delinquent taxes

List of Delinquent Taxes for Personal Property, Nauvoo Second Ward for 1843, circa January 1845, p. 1, Joseph Smith Papers. Entry includes seventeen cents and M. Way. Identification with the complainant is unresolved; the notation is not a securely dated migration record.

Original tax list

16 Vincent Conrad in Nauvoo property records

List of Property in Nauvoo Second Ward, 1843, manuscript p. 15, Joseph Smith Papers; inscription dated approximately November 1843–November 1844. Names Vincent Conrad, three-quarters of an acre valued at $25, with a residence notation but no constable title. It contributes to the probable identification, not an independent office match. The 1842 assessment also has a Conrad entry, but supplies no first name.

Conrad property entry

17 Vincent M Conrad in the postal list

Nauvoo Neighbor, July 9, 1845, p. 4, col. 2. The unclaimed-mail list, effective June 30, contains Conrad Vincent M. A postal listing does not alone establish exact residence.

Newspaper transcription

18 The Iowa Conrad candidate

History of Cass County, Iowa (Springfield, Ill.: Continental Historical Company, 1884), pp. 355–356, recorder account and lifetime biography of V. M. Conrad. Original page images establish Hancock residence from 1840 until 1846, correcting OCR that repeats 1840. Supports New York origins, parents Joshua and Eva (Rothfund), Cleveland hotel work, Detroit grocery and hotel work, Dubuque lead mining, the reported 1846 Mary J. Eighmey marriage, Indiantown lodging and merchandise, farm, children, county offices, and Odd Fellows affiliation. The recorder narrative says he left before the end of 1853. The birth year is 1815. The separate p. 245 description, probably the first Gentile claimant, is a later author's label and does not document a religious transition.

Digitized county history text • Original page 355 • Original page 356

19 The next court record

Hancock Circuit Court Record, volume D, October 1843 term. A different proceeding, Docket Entry, Motion, October 20, 1843, is identified by the Joseph Smith Papers as vol. D, p. 56. FamilySearch catalog 82628 describes the court-record series; access attempts did not yield its images. FHL film 947,496 is a catalogue lead for volume D, not a Welch disposition.

October 1843 example locating volume D • FamilySearch court-record catalogue

20 Conrad in an endowment index

Nauvoo Temple endowment name index, Conrad entries. Vincent Mills Conrad is listed for January 8, 1846, with a September 15, 1812 birth. This is a derivative transcription; the underlying register image was not examined, and the linkage to the constable remains provisional.

Conrad index entries

21 Conrad in a sealing database

University of Virginia, Nauvoo Community Project, sealings before February 1846. Lists Vincent Conrad and Electa Cotton Bradway, January 30, 1846. Used as an index lead; no original ordinance image or constable appointment was obtained.

Nauvoo sealings database

22 Benjamin Royse in the pioneer list

Thomas Gregg, History of Hancock County, Illinois (1880), p. 467, early-settler list: Benjamin Royse, 1830. The original scan was checked. The entry does not establish that this is the 1843 witness.

Digitized county history

23 Hicok performs a marriage in 1843

Portrait and Biographical Record of Hancock, McDonough and Henderson Counties, Illinois (1894), p. 204, Isaac Soule biography. Reports the February 1, 1843 marriage of Soule and Eunice Ricker by John Hicok, justice of the peace. The original page was inspected. It does not explicitly state the ceremony's location.

Digitized biographical volume

24 The Hicok family and California research trail

Jane Wohlschlegel Webb, introduction and transcriptions of the Nathaniel Hickok letters, published by Joyce M. Tice at the History Center on Main Street (2005); Rick Grunder, Mormon List Sixty Six, item 11, pp. 23–24; Justus H. Rogers, Colusa County (1891), p. 420. These sources point toward the Nathaniel Hickok family and a later California life. Identity qualifications and any subsequently verified records are discussed in the extended Hicok study.

Hickok family letters and notes • 1841 letter catalogue entry • 1891 Colusa County history

25 The December 1841 letter in the Grunder catalogue

Rick Grunder, Mormon List Sixty-Six, January 2010, item 11, printed pp. 23–24. Original letter described as John J. Hicok, La Harpe, December 16, 1841, to brother Nathaniel H. Hickok, Canton, Bradford County, Pennsylvania. The complete illustrated catalogue was recovered and these pages inspected. It supplies a partial transcription and an angled photograph, not a readable image of every written side. The preceding catalogue item is a different letter by J. D.; its language is not attributed to Hicok.

Archived illustrated catalogue • Catalogue listing and preview

26 Hicok in the 1841 Nauvoo property assessment

List of Property in the City of Nauvoo, 1841, compiled circa November 1841–January 22, 1842, pp. 62–63, Joseph Smith Papers. J. J. Hickock has $350 stock in trade and $130 real-property valuation. Original image checked. An assessment is not a membership register or a complete account of a business.

Property list and manuscript image

27 Hicok in the Third Ward taxable lots

List of Taxable Lots in Nauvoo Third Ward, circa November 1842, p. 13, James Sloan handwriting, Joseph Smith Papers. J. J. Hickcock is assigned part of the north half of Lot 12, Block 3, Kimball's first addition. The original image was checked. Compare actual boundaries with the June deed before equating the portions.

Third Ward lot list

28 A Temple Committee payment order to Reynolds and Hicok

Joseph Smith's Store Daybook A, January–July 1842, p. 260, Wednesday, June 15, Temple Committee account: paid order to Reynolds and Hicok, $100.88. Original manuscript image and account heading inspected. Neither given name appears; the Joseph Smith Papers brackets the second surname with Hitchcock. Connecting this pair to John J. Hicok and James Reynolds is plausible from the adjacent deed, not an independent full-name identification. The entry gives no purpose and does not state that it paid part of the June 14 deed consideration.

Daybook page 260

29 John J Hicock and Mary C Rodehader in the marriage index

Illinois State Archives, Illinois Statewide Marriage Index, 1763–1900. Returned entry: HICOCK, JOHN J; RODEHADER, MARY C; 1850-01-01; Hancock; volume 002; page 0001; license 00001520. The official response was retained. Original register not inspected; the guide says indexed dates may represent marriage or license dates. Rodehaver is an alternative in family notes.

Official Illinois marriage search • Official guide to the index

30 Andreas atlas and Gregg county history

A. T. Andreas, An Illustrated Historical Atlas of Hancock County, Illinois (1874), title and index, La Harpe subscribers p. 17, township p. 38, and town plat p. 42, alongside a full available-text variant search. The available digitized copy lacks printed pp. 129–134. Thomas Gregg, History of Hancock County, Illinois (1880), p. 328, October 1844 grand-jury list naming John J. Hickok. These locations were visually checked; no additional family biography was located by the searches described in the study.

Andreas atlas • Gregg history

31 How early Church membership can be established

Church History Library, Baptism and Confirmation Information in Early Records, especially Nauvoo, Illinois. Explains that Nauvoo membership records are sparse and incomplete and no comprehensive index exists. Identifies the 1830–1848 membership compilation as principally secondary and tertiary, useful as a starting point. This guide supports the interpretation of search limits, not an individual conclusion about Hicok.

Official baptism and membership research guide

32 Hancock County record series in IRAD

Illinois State Archives, Illinois Regional Archives Depository local government records search, Hancock County holdings at Western Illinois University. Circuit Court Case Files 1829–1858, accession 2/0102/23; Circuit Court Record 1829–1922, 2/0061/32; record index 1830–1964, 2/0061/36; Circuit Clerk Miscellaneous Files 1827–1864, 2/0102/24. These are catalogue holdings, not examined Welch case records.

Official IRAD records search

33 Temple finance and the next account books

Joseph Smith Papers, Nauvoo Temple Committee glossary and Tithing Daybook B historical introduction, for the general financial setting. Notice, October 11, 1842 explicitly cites the committee's Ledger A, 1841–1842, and Ledger B, 1842–1845; Letter to Hands in the Stone Shop, December 21, 1842 cites its Daybook B, 1841–1843. Collection: Nauvoo Temple Building Committee Records, 1841–1852, CHL, CR 3429. Those committee books were identified but not fully searched. They are distinct from the tithing and store daybooks and from Trustee-in-Trust Ledger A despite that ledger's misleading later spine label.

Committee responsibilities • Tithing accounting context • Notice identifying committee ledgers • Letter identifying committee daybook • Distinct trustee ledger

34 Completed searches for Church and family connections

Search scope: Nauvoo Community Project, seven Hicok-family spellings and all 38 phonetic matches, with additional Rodehader/Rodehaver/Rodenhaver searches; Jarvis Lewis Hickok profile 183455 and its vital and parent fields; complete Nauvoo Temple Endowment Name Index H page; Church History Biographical Database, six exact variants and all 328 broader Hicok phonetic matches, plus Rodehaver/Rodehader results; Winter Quarters Wards name index, Jennifer L. Lund and Janice Fletcher, 1998, CR 100 392, printed pp. 6–7, original public scans viewed. No secure match to the justice or identified close family was found. These collections are not comprehensive membership lists.

Nauvoo Community Project search • Jarvis Lewis Hickok profile • Nauvoo endowment H index • Church History Biographical Database • Winter Quarters index catalogue

35 Identified membership records still requiring examination

Susan Easton Black, Membership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1848, fifty volumes, 1984–1988, Church History Library M270 E13m v. 1–50: catalogue metadata read, volumes not examined. Individual Early Church Information File cards and the Nauvoo Seventies G–O images likewise were not inspected. Their inclusion here records concrete next sources, not negative name-search results. See the research guide in note 31 for the limits of compiled membership data.

Black compilation catalogue • Early Church Information File collection • Nauvoo Seventies catalogue

36 The California Hicok in a period county history

Justus H. Rogers, Colusa County: Its History Traced from a State of Nature through the Early Period of Settlement and Development to the Present Day (Orland, California, 1891), pp. 106, 126–127, 134–135, 138, 168, 173, and 420. The complete digitized text was read at the relevant passages with their year headings. These support the convention, election, Grange, fire, and Clarence biography entries. The California man's identity with the Illinois justice remains provisional pending original family links; the book explicitly reports defeat in the 1871 county-judge election.

Complete digitized history

37 California occupation and death entries

Henry G. Langley, Pacific Coast Business Directory for 1876–78 (San Francisco, 1875), Grand Island entry, consulted through a modern transcription: J. J. Hicok, attorney at law. Original page not inspected. Colusa County California Pre-1905 Deaths, derivative compilation, PDF p. 3: J. J. Hicok, April 17, 1891, age 77 years, 5 months, 21 days, married farmer, death at Grand Island; nativity field blank. Original civil register not examined. An exact birth date is not supplied by the entry.

Directory transcription and publication details • Death-record compilation

38 Specific original records for the family and migration

Located but unread originals: Native Daughters of the Golden West Pioneer Biographical Records, J. J. Hicok, vol. 32, p. 166, and Lora Leon Hicok, p. 165; James Miller Guinn, History of the State of California and Biographical Record of the Sacramento Valley, California (1906), Lora L. or Lora I. Hicok in the consulted indexes, p. 869; Lora Leon Hicok family Bible, DAR GRC CA:S4:V9, p. 216. The 1850 Hancock census household also remains unidentified; the county historical society catalogues a complete 298-page transcript and index, shelf C-5. Public indexes and catalogue descriptions locate these sources but do not establish their contents.

Pioneer biographical-record index • Guinn volume biographical index • Guinn book catalogue • Family Bible index • Hancock census transcript catalogue • Alternate Guinn biographical index

39 Distinguishing Luther W Hickok

Joseph Smith Papers, biographical directory entry for Luther W. Hickok, Burlington, Iowa, physician, associated with the Jeremiah Smith habeas corpus matter in 1844. This is a different named individual from John J. Hicok, the La Harpe justice. No relationship between them has been established in this research.

Luther W Hickok biography

40 The pamphlet identified by Grunder

William Harris, Mormonism Portrayed; Its Errors, and Absurdities Exposed, and the Spirit and Designs of Its Authors, Made Manifest (Warsaw, Illinois: Sharp and Gamble, 1841). The original title page and introduction were inspected. The title page also credits emendations by a citizen. Grunder's identification of this title as the pamphlet mentioned by Hicok remains a bibliographic inference because the quoted letter does not name it. The pamphlet's arguments are not automatically attributed to Hicok.

Digitized original pamphlet

41 California land patent lead

Colusa County land-patent index, entry for HICOK JOHN JOHNSON, June 1, 1869, Mount Diablo meridian, Township 14 North, Range 1 East, section 33, accession CACAAA032922, military scrip or warrant authority. Index lead only; original patent and underlying file not inspected. A scrip-based acquisition is not proof of the purchaser's military service.

Colusa County patent index

42 Complementary deeds to Alpheus Cutler, May 1843

Nauvoo Deed Record Book A, no. 139, pp. 145–146: Ira S. Miles and Mary K. Miles to Alpheus Cutler, May 3, 1843, warranty deed. No. 140, pp. 146–147: Cutler, Cahoon, Higbee, and wives Lois, Thirza, and Sarah to Cutler, May 2, 1843, quitclaim. Both recite $1,200 and were recorded May 10. All three manuscript pages were visually checked. Bounds match Hicok's June 1842 instrument; intended use and payment mechanics are unstated.

Miles deed, page 145 • Continuation and quitclaim, page 146 • Quitclaim conclusion, page 147

43 The Andreas map and the 1842 plat comparison

A. T. Andreas, An Illustrated Historical Atlas of Hancock County, Illinois (Chicago, 1874), Nauvoo plat, printed pp. 136–137, BYU copy digitized by Internet Archive. The reproduced excerpt retains the original map, with editorial vector markers on the printed Lot 12 in Kimball's Block 3 and the temple block. It is a locator, not a survey of the deed parcel. Compared with Joseph Smith Papers, Nauvoo Plats, Blocks, and Lots, August 31, 1842, a modern historical reconstruction. The atlas's later buildings do not establish 1842 uses. The county locator also reproduces printed p. 8, Map of Hancock County, Illinois, compiled and drawn by A. C. Howell, C.E.; markers locate Nauvoo, La Harpe, and Carthage without drawing travel routes. Roads and railways reflect 1874.

Andreas atlas and map • Reconstructed 1842 plat

44 The separate Wells temple-block transaction

Deed from Daniel H. and Eliza Robison Wells, February 4, 1843, Joseph Smith Papers, original and historical introduction. Covers the four lots of Block 20 in Wells's Addition, with a stated $1,100 consideration. The introduction identifies a subsequent $600 forgiveness credited as a donation on February 8 and leaves payment of the balance uncertain. This separate transaction identifies the temple site and illustrates why account evidence matters; it does not establish a donation by Hicok.

Wells deed and documented credit

45 A committee land order and Ira S Miles's appointment

Pay Order from Temple Committee for Stephen Hale, May 26, 1842, and Authorization, Nauvoo Temple Committee to Ira S. Miles, October 11, 1842, Joseph Smith Papers. The first requests a low-priced lot for Hale charged to the committee; the second appoints Elder Miles to collect temple funds. Neither explains the Hicok tract's use. Ira Simonds Miles is the identified Miles, not a conjectured expansion of his middle initial.

Hale land order • Miles fundraising authorization

46 Cutler's assessed property and limits of the use search

Lists of Property in Nauvoo Third Ward, 1842, p. 1, and 1843, p. 4; Fourth Ward, 1843, p. 2, Joseph Smith Papers. The targeted Third Ward entries did not identify the Hicok parcel's use. The Fourth Ward manuscript, visually checked, describes Cutler's store and buildings on east part of Lot 1, Block 93, Wells tract, assessed at $500. This is distinct property. Blank land fields are not evidence that Cutler held no real estate.

Third Ward 1842 • Third Ward 1843 • Fourth Ward store and buildings

47 William Welsh on the Dana v Brink jury

Docket Entry, Jury Impaneled, May 22, 1844, Hancock County Circuit Court Record D, p. 113; Verdict, May 23, 1844, Dana v. Brink, Joseph Smith Papers. Original images were inspected beside Welch's August 1843 recognizance. The verdict includes William Welsh's actual autograph, unlike the first five names copied by Timothy Gridley Jr. Name, county, date, and compatible handwriting support a strong probable identification. FHL scan filenames identify films 947496 and 1521365 respectively. The case introduction distinguishes the 1844 circuit appeal from Smith's March 1843 hearing.

May 22 jury docket • May 23 signed verdict • Dana v Brink case introduction

48 Participant searches in the Nauvoo Community Project

Actual public database searches and relevant profile fields were read, rather than treating web-search absence as a database search. Benjamin Royse, profile 90730, and research log updated October 13, 2023, contain an unresolved conflict between a 1787 birth and an 1840 age category of 30–39. Other searched profiles include William Welch 116415, Joshua Laurence Stewart 118073, Elizabeth Black 97595, and Mary Douglass 20663 and 162198. These are modern research compilations; original census and ordinance images were not obtained. Inclusion is not membership proof.

Benjamin Royse candidate • Royse research log • William Welch child • Joshua Laurence Stewart • Elizabeth Black child • Nauvoo Community Project

49 Further marriage-index leads for the participants

Illinois State Archives, Statewide Marriage Index, actual returned entries: Joshua Stewart and Elizabeth Brown, March 30, 1843, Adams County, no volume/page/license displayed; Aaron Douglas and Ellen Parker, February 24, 1859, Tazewell County, vol. A, p. 368, license 3398; Samuel Hoke and Mrs. Elizabeth Black, June 18, 1869, Hancock County, vol. 4, p. 54, license 3253. These are unconnected candidates, not marriages assigned to the case participants. Original registers remain unread; indexed dates may represent a marriage or license.

Official marriage search • Index interpretation guide

50 The personal histories of the temple committee members

Joseph Smith Papers biographical directory entries for Alpheus Cutler, Reynolds Cahoon, and Elias Higbee, with their cited contemporary records. Used for the brief backgrounds explaining the people named in Hicok's deed: conversion, migrations, missions, temple work, spouses, and Higbee's redress mission and death. These Church histories belong to those individuals; they do not establish the seller's membership.

Alpheus Cutler • Reynolds Cahoon • Elias Higbee

51 Backenstos writes to Brigham Young, October 1845

Jonathan H. Hale, letter to Brigham Young, with a message by Jacob B. Backenstos, October 23, 1845, Carthage, three pages, Brigham Young Office Files, Church History Library; Joseph Smith Papers. The first two original pages were visually read. Hale describes the court proceedings and tension; Backenstos reports acquittals, discusses additional men and James Arlington Bennet, anticipates an indictment, and asks to hear from Young. Their assessments are attributed to the writers.

Hale's letter • Backenstos's message

52 Further Joshua Stewart identity and Church searches

Actual index images examined: Ronald George Watt, Iowa Branch Index: 1839–1859 (1991), pp. 166–170, Stewart/Steward/Stuart/Stweart span; Lund and Fletcher, Winter Quarters Wards name index (1998), pp. 10–12. No Joshua match was found in those spans. Published redress affidavits P–Z (Church collection), M–Z (National Archives), Later Petitions, and Undated Petitions supplied other Stewarts, not this complainant. Public Teachers' Quorum research excerpts likewise did not identify him. These are bounded searches in incomplete compilations. No original patriarchal blessing or closed historical blessing index was examined. An unlinked marriage abstract names Joshua Stewart and Melissa Pidcock/Pedcock, Crawford County, Missouri, July 8, 1838: Woodruff (1969), p. 16, citing First Marriage Book p. 51. The original register remains unread; neither spouse is assigned to the Nauvoo complainant.

Iowa Branch Index catalogue • Winter Quarters index catalogue • Redress affidavits P–Z • Teachers' Quorum excerpts • Crawford marriage abstract

53 Vincent M Conrad in the published temple register

Lisle G. Brown, Nauvoo Sealings, Adoptions, and Anointings: A Comprehensive Register of Persons Receiving LDS Temple Ordinances, 1841–1846 (Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2006), p. 66, notes 303–304; page image and source key examined. Lists Vincent Matthew Conrad, born September 15, 1812, Seventy, endowed January 8, 1846; Electa Cotton Bradway, endowed the same day, sealed January 30 by Brigham Young. Footnotes preserve the endowment names Vincent M. Conrad and Electra C. Conrad. NTER is the 1974 Temple Records Index Bureau compilation. SAL, the sealing source, is Sealings and Adoptions, 1846–1857, compiled under Joseph F. Smith about 1869–1870, FHL film 183373, with a separate marriage index on 183374. Neither compilation nor the underlying 1846 manuscript was directly read here. Brown's expanded names come through later genealogical identification. The April 15, 1830 civil-marriage date, from Black, remains unverified. Matthew differs from Mills in note 20; the Iowa biography gives 1815. Church History Topics supplies the historical setting of local Seventy quorums. The constable identification remains probable.

Published register, page 66 • Full published register • Seventy in its historical setting

54 The Conrad census and possible extended family

Original 1850 U.S. census, Pottawattamie County, Iowa, District 21, p. 151 back, household 1403, November 29, NARA M432 roll 188, Internet Archive leaf 306, visually examined. Names Mrs Conrad, 36, Mary Jane, 21, and Orson, 2; Vincent is absent. There is no relationship column. The modern BYU Indiantown list adds Vincent as a household heading and identifies the women; those are editorial assertions. NCP profiles 19180 and 23784 identify Sarah Heller Conrad Bunnell and Caroline Conrad Mitchell as daughters of Joshua and Eva Rathvon/Rathfon, matching the probable Vincent's parent names in substance. Their Church migration records are independent, but no original record expressly connects them as his sisters. Sarah traveled in James C. Snow's 1852 company; Caroline in Heber C. Kimball's 1848 company. Caroline's NCP research log also includes a marriage belonging to a different Caroline; it is excluded here. These are family leads, not an established genealogy of the constable.

Original 1850 census household • Modern Indiantown compilation • Sarah Heller Conrad • Caroline Conrad • Sarah research profile • Caroline research profile

55 William Weeks's early temple design

William Weeks, front elevation of the Nauvoo Temple, ink on paper, identified as an 1841 rendering in the Church History Museum exhibition Early Images of Historic Nauvoo. The reproduced web image is a detail of the tower and upper facade, not the complete architectural sheet. Courtesy Church Archives; William Weeks Nauvoo architectural drawings, circa 1841–1846, legacy collection MS 11500. The design changed during construction; it is not an image of the building's August 1843 stage.

Museum description and image • Architectural drawings catalogue

56 The early photograph of Nauvoo and its temple

Temple on the Hill, circa 1846, copy photograph of a daguerreotype attributed to Lucian R. Foster, Charles W. Carter Collection, Church Archives. Reproduced from the Church History Museum's public exhibition image, retaining its supplied orientation. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and T. Jeffery Cottle, The City of Joseph in Focus: The Use and Abuse of Historic Photographs, BYU Studies 32, nos. 1–2 (1992), figure 4 and discussion, supplies the qualified attribution and copy history. The photograph is later than the case; visible buildings are not assigned to its participants. The museum web reproduction is modest resolution. The same underlying historical photograph is separately labelled public domain on Wikimedia Commons; no separate archive permission is asserted.

Museum image and description • Photographic identification study • Historical photograph rights record

57 The original lime advertisement

Nauvoo Neighbor, August 16, 1843, vol. 1, no. 16, printed p. 4, col. 3: Wm. Niswanger's Lime advertisement, itself dated June 17, 1843. Original PDF supplied by BYU Studies; the illustration is a direct clipped rendering, with no reconstructed lettering. Printed p. 4 is the PDF's third page because the preceding two newspaper pages share one digital page. The same issue's pork and hog quotations belong to a St. Louis table dated May 9, not an August Nauvoo livestock-sale advertisement. The lime advertisement supplies community context and does not identify the cause of the Welch dispute.

Original newspaper issue • Issue transcription

58 Conrad remembers early Cass County

Atlantic Telegraph (Atlantic, Iowa), September 27, 1876, p. 1, county-history installment, paragraph beginning Vincent M. Conrad. Original newspaper page and clipping visually examined. Describes the 1850 claim, delay from high water, 1852 return, an election recollection expressly attributed to Conrad, and a dancing school at his house during the winters of 1852–1854. The dancing passage belongs to the historical narrator, not a verbatim statement assigned to Conrad. It identifies neither the teacher nor the musician. The public PDF contains the single newspaper page.

Original newspaper page

59 Conrad and Lora in the Lewis post office

Atlantic Daily Telegraph, February 16, 1886, p. 3, Lewis column dated February 16. Original page and clipping visually examined; the dateline is 16, not the OCR's 10. Announces V. M. Conrad as the new Democratic postmaster and his daughter Lora as the intended assistant. The spelling is Lora; the 1884 biography lists Laura. The announcement does not independently document her later tenure. Vincent's subsequent service is confirmed by the 1892 obituary.

Original newspaper page

60 Conrad dies on December 8 1892

A Pioneer's Death, Atlantic Daily Telegraph, December 8, 1892, p. 2. Original page and clipping visually examined. The statement that he died this morning supplies the date. Says he had been brought to Atlantic about a month earlier, after decades in and near Lewis; recalls his postal, Democratic, Odd Fellow, justice, and school-board work. Announces a funeral for the following Saturday, December 10, at 1 p.m. from Lewis, without proving its completion or naming a cemetery. It gives no exact age, cause of death, wife's name, list of children, or religious affiliation. Its affectionate character assessment is attributed to the obituary writer.

Original obituary page

61 The Conrad will offered for probate

Notice of Probate of Will, Atlantic Weekly Telegraph, May 24, 1893, p. 12; notice dated May 22, signed for District Court Clerk Ambrose Pellett by Deputy W. H. McConvill. Original page and clipping visually examined. Announces an August 29, 1893, 9 a.m. hearing in Atlantic concerning an instrument purporting to be Vincent M. Conrad's will. The will, admission order, and estate file have not been inspected. Cass County's public genealogy site lists a District Court Will Index, 1878–March 1931; the Conrad case or volume has not yet been identified in it.

Original probate notice page • Cass County wills and probate index

62 The Royse age and birth date conflict

Nauvoo Community Project, Benjamin Royse, person 90730, public vital and census data and research log. The vital fields cite FamilySearch Family Tree K19D-8VV. The linked 1840 Hancock census transcription, p. 200, line 18, Benj Rice, contains eight people, including two men aged 30–39, no older male, and two employed in agriculture. The original image was not examined in this pass. An older online Royce/Royse pedigree gives June 9, 1787 to Martin B. Royse (entry 200), while Benjamin (entry 206) is assigned about 1800, Kentucky?, and a November 4, 1824 Washington County, Indiana marriage to Nelly Lofton. This suggests a possible transfer of a relative's date, but establishes neither a corrected birth nor the witness's genealogy.

Benjamin candidate • Research log • Older Royse pedigree • 1840 census image lead

63 Eleanor Royse and the proposed family afterward

Nauvoo Community Project, Eleanor Lofton, person 90731, public census transcriptions read in full; original images remain unexamined. 1850 Hancock, p. 392 front, November 11, line 37, dwelling 1779/family 1781: Eleanor Royce, 44, North Carolina. 1860 Pontoosuc, p. 361, July 12, line 3, dwelling 2610/family 2521: Elenora Roys, 55, North Carolina, $1,600 real estate and $600 personal estate. 1870 Pontoosuc, p. 256 back, July 18, line 20, dwelling 43/family 42: Ellen Royse, 65, North Carolina. 1880 Pontoosuc, ED 76, p. 220D, June 5, line 38, dwelling 83/family 84: Eleanor Royse, 74, widow, relationship Mother, North Carolina. These are linked database records, not a proved family of the case witness.

Eleanor candidate • 1850 original image lead • 1860 original image lead • 1870 original image lead • 1880 original image lead

64 The Royse and Gardner marriage lead

Susan Easton Black, Nauvoo Neighbor annotations, marriages, gives Thomas C. Gardner and Semantha Royce, January 28, 1844, with I. C. Howd officiating. The issue has now been identified: January 31, 1844, p. 3, col. 5; its BYU transcription was read (see note 75). NCP profiles 38916 and 38917 link Samantha to the proposed Benjamin–Eleanor family and Thomas to Moses Isaac Gardner and Polly Ann Pierson. The Church History Biographical Database places the proposed parents in Isaac Bullock's 1852 company. The newspaper names no parents, and the family links to the witness remain provisional; they cannot establish his religious membership.

Newspaper marriage annotations • Samantha Royse candidate • Thomas Gardner candidate • Moses Isaac Gardner • Polly Ann Pierson

65 A possible family behind the Welch jurors

Nauvoo Community Project, Andrew Byron Welch, person 168320, public vital, parent, spouse, and census records, with the public research log. Links A. B. Welch, Hancock County, 1840, p. 222, to a Tennessee birth July 2, 1814; parents James Flemming Welch and Elizabeth Lollar Perkins; and a May 26, 1835 Hancock marriage to Elizabeth Adaline Owen. The family links and reported 1835 marriage rely on modern Family Tree material. The vital fields also cite Local Gleanings, Central (Rolla) Missouri Herald, February 7, 1895, p. 1, col. 1; that original notice has not been examined here. James Flemming Welch is NCP 113271. A separate modern FamilySearch family page lists William Carol Welch, 1823–1846, as another child. Its conflicting parental vital information is not adopted. Neither Andrew Byron's identification with the juror nor William Carol's identification with the defendant is proved. These leads require original deeds, probate, census, and signature comparison.

Andrew Byron candidate • Andrew Byron research log • James Flemming candidate • Modern Welch family lead

66 Backenstos family public work and army service

Joseph Smith Papers biographies of Jacob B. Backenstos and William Backenstos, and Papers of Abraham Lincoln, Jacob B. Backenstos (BA01210), with their cited original records. Used for origins, parents, 1835 marriage, postmaster service, public offices, army career, Oregon, and death. The JSP dates Jacob's marriage December 15, 1835; PAL cites a December 10 index entry. The narrative uses the agreed year. William, Jacob's brother, married Clara M. Wasson, Emma Smith's niece, on October 3, 1843; the brothers are kept distinct. PAL cites Heitman's army register, volume 1, p. 179, for service and the Daily Illinois State Journal, November 21, 1857, p. 2, col. 1, among sources for the later biography. Those underlying army and death sources have not been newly inspected here.

Jacob Backenstos biography • William Backenstos biography • Papers of Abraham Lincoln biography

67 Backenstos speaks as sheriff in September 1845

Jacob B. Backenstos, Proclamation No. 2, to the citizens of Hancock County and surrounding country, September 16, 1845, half past 2 p.m., broadside, 41 by 28.5 cm, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, BYU; Vault-Q 094 N226 1845 no. 5, CONTENTdm item 4978, page 4215. Original facsimile downloaded and visually read. Backenstos's pursuit, shooting, and public-order claims are attributed to him. Peter Crawley, A Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church, volume 1, entry 276, supplies identification of Worrell and Rockwell and the later acquittals, with its citations. The broadside itself does not name the shooter or identify the man shot. The image is described by BYU as public domain, courtesy its Special Collections.

Original proclamation record • Original proclamation PDF • Crawley bibliography entry 276

68 Electa in Cleveland as an unresolved identity

The Cleveland Directory for the Year Ending July 1889 (Cleveland, 1888), p. 160, lower right column, original image visually examined: Electa C. Conrad, widow of Vincent, residence 47 Ontario. This is a possible identification with Nauvoo's Electa, not an established continuation of her life. The widow

designation conflicts with the Iowa Vincent's survival until 1892. Cuyahoga County USGenWeb cemetery transcription gives Erie Street Cemetery, volume 2, p. 69, interment 16011, March 3, 1893, Electa C. Conrad, age 86. That is the interment date; the death-date fields are blank. The original cemetery register has not been inspected. These records do not establish the identity of Nauvoo's Electa or explain the couple's later marital history or the 1850 Mrs. Conrad household.

Original Cleveland directory page • Cemetery transcription lead

69 Conrad Church records to inspect next

Church History Library, Nauvoo Seventies List, three volumes, compiled by Nauvoo Restoration Incorporated from CR 499; call M270 N314 199-?, A–F volume. Public catalogue metadata was read, but controlled scans were not accessed. The Seventies autobiographies catalogue is another named lead. The Iowa Branch Index, 1839–1859, Conrad span, pp. 40–41, supplied Samuel and Mary Conrad's family, not Vincent; it covers only surviving branch records and cannot establish absence from the Church. Sample pages in Far West and Nauvoo elders' certificates, CR 100 402, yielded no Vincent entry; this was not a complete search. No original baptism, mission, blessing, or numbered Seventy quorum has been verified for Vincent. Modern Sarah Heller and Caroline Conrad parentage claims remain unsupported by an original sibling bridge; see note 54.

Nauvoo Seventies List catalogue • Seventies autobiographies catalogue • Early baptism and confirmation research guide

70 Further namesakes and the limits of identification

Public name and variant searches did not securely identify the Douglass witnesses, Elizabeth J. Black, or Dickison's surname. The D8 photograph was again inspected at full resolution without a confident improvement on Giton/Gitton. Jane Patton, Remembrances of a Pioneer (1904), pp. 6–7, mentions an Aaron Douglass in a Fountain County, Indiana family, but supplies no Hancock or Nauvoo bridge; that family is not assigned to the witness. An 1840 Crawford County, Missouri index lists Joshua Stewart in Courtois Township, p. 7, a possible follow-up to the unlinked marriage in note 52. Its connection to Joshua D. Stewart remains unproved. These are bounded searches and leads, not evidence that further personal records do not exist.

Patton memoir • Crawford County census index

71 The Backenstos and Wasson wedding

Joseph Smith, Journal, October 3, 1843, book 3, p. [115], kept by Willard Richards; and Nauvoo Marriage Record, p. 16, Joseph Smith Papers. Both original images visually examined. The journal records the evening wedding of William Backenstos and Clara Wasson at the Nauvoo Mansion, with Smith officiating. The marriage register distinguishes the October 3 wedding from its November 2, 1843 recording. JSP annotation identifies Clara as the daughter of Benjamin Wasson and Elizabeth Hale and as Emma Smith's niece. This marriage belongs to Jacob's brother William.

Original journal and annotation • Original marriage register

72 A recommendation for military promotion

Sidney Breese to President James K. Polk, January 4, 1849, with endorsements by Stephen A. Douglas, John A. McClernand, William A. Richardson, Thomas J. Turner, Orlando B. Ficklin, John Wentworth, Robert Smith, and Abraham Lincoln; Papers of Abraham Lincoln, D206866. The scholarly transcription and editorial notes were read. Lincoln's endorsement is explicitly conditional on the military reports and disclaims personal knowledge of the facts. Editorial note 6 dates Senate confirmation of the lieutenant-colonel brevet to March 2, 1849, with rank from September 13, 1847. Original: National Archives, RG 107, Entry 18, Box 180, four-page autograph letter and endorsements. The endorsement does not establish friendship with Lincoln. Letter endorsements and chronology

73 Two newly supplied Hicok family letters

Owner’s original letters, photographs IMG_0717–IMG_0720 and IMG_0721–IMG_0725, supplied October 18, 2026. Read directly from the photographs in this conversation. The first set has a heading read as La Harpe, January 23, 1841; the exterior date appears to differ and requires full collation in the separate letter study. The second set has an exterior marking read provisionally as September 19, 1840. Both address Nathaniel H. Hicok at Canton, Bradford County, Pennsylvania. Quotations here are limited to clearly readable passages. The second set includes a separately signed message to a sister; the initials and identity of that writer are not established. These are not the December 16, 1841 letter catalogued by Grunder. Complete transcriptions and treatment of uncertain readings are reserved for the separate letter reports requested by the owner.

74 City constables and the county election notices

Joseph Smith Papers, Nauvoo City Officers, constable entries and notes 121–127, based on city council minutes; Nauvoo Neighbor, July 19, 1843, candidate notices. The city chart identifies ward offices; the newspaper announces Benjamin W. Rolfe for constable of Commerce Precinct. Neither identifies Vincent Conrad as an elected or appointed constable. These sources explain why the offices must be distinguished; the Welch docket itself is the evidence for V. M. Conrad’s county service.

City officer records • July election notices

75 The Gardner and Royce wedding in its newspaper issue

Nauvoo Neighbor, January 31, 1844, p. 3, col. 5, marriage notices; BYU Studies transcription. The announcement names Thomas C. Gardner and Semantha Royce, married on the 28th by I. C. Howd, Esq., and describes them as of the county. It does not identify parents, the place of the ceremony, or religious membership. This improves the earlier abstract reference without proving the proposed relationship to Benjamin Royse.

Newspaper marriage notice

76 Backenstos announced as a candidate

Nauvoo Neighbor, July 19, 1843, candidate notices; BYU Studies transcription. The request to announce Col. J. B. Backenstos for clerk of the county commissioners’ court is signed Many Voters and dated Fountain Green Precinct, June 24, 1843. The office named in this advertisement is not silently substituted for the circuit clerkship shown by the Welch filing endorsements.

Candidate announcement

77 A Royse guardianship lead kept separate

McDonough County Illinois Genealogy, H–Z Guardian Cases, case 0393, 1857: index rows associate Benjamin Royse with Susan Calista Royse and, separately, Lucretia Royse and Marcus Rice. Only the public index was read; the underlying file was not obtained. The entry is in a neighboring county and has not been linked to the Hancock witness or the proposed Eleanor Lofton family. No death date, child, marriage, or migration is assigned to the witness from this entry.

Guardianship index

78 Joshua Stewart and the later tax list

Joseph Smith Papers, List of Delinquent Taxes for Personal Property, Nauvoo Second Ward for 1843, circa January 1845, p. [1]. Public transcription read October 19, 2026: Joshua Steward [Stewart], tax 17, notation M. Way; allowance dated February 3, 1845. “Moved away” is an interpretation, not an expanded

manuscript quotation. No destination or middle initial is supplied; identity with the complainant remains unproved. The image was not newly collated.

Tax-list transcription

79 The Girton and Garten family candidate

Gregory Cooke, Cookie Crumbs Ancestry, Dickinson Garten, cites a July 27, 1837 Hancock marriage to Tabitha Bagby, record 173, FHL film 1532140. Its birth and death claims are derivative and are not assigned to the surety. History of McDonough County (1885), Hire Township chapter, pp. 823–824, in the ILGenWeb transcription, names Paulina Girton as daughter of Dickenson and Clara (Green) Girton. The uncommon given name and regional setting justify investigation but do not establish identity. The earlier supplement's 1845 political endorser is likewise not securely linked to the surety.

Garten compilation • County-history transcription

80 Daughters of Utah Pioneers checks

Live ISDUP Pioneer History catalogue searched October 19, 2026. Conrad returned six entries, none Vincent or Electa. Hicok, Hickok, Hickcock, Aaron Douglas/Douglass, Benjamin Royse/Royce, Girton, Garten, and Joshua Steward returned no records. Joshua Stewart returned Isaiah Joshua Stewart (born 1869); William Welch returned William Wallace Welch (born 1867); Mary Douglas/Douglass returned Mary Louisa Cooper Douglass (born 1847). Those dates exclude the listed candidates from the 1843 roles. Elizabeth Black returned six extended-surname entries, not an exact Black. These are bounded catalogue results, not proof of nonmembership. The published Pioneer Pathways consolidated index separately lists Joshua Stewart at volume 1, pp. 112, 197, and volume 7, p. 374. Those passages have not been read; no identity is inferred. Searches in the Heart Throbs and Chronicles of Courage index text supplied no verified participant match. No histories were purchased.

Live pioneer-history catalogue • Pioneer Pathways index • Heart Throbs index • Chronicles of Courage index

81 California references and the limits of this closing pass

The Family Bible Preservation Project index specifies Lora Leon Hicok (1856–1925) and Margaret Emma Fortna, married 1882, DAR GRC CA:S4:V9, p. 216. The linked DAR search returned access forbidden in this session; the Bible itself was not read. California biography indexes confirm the Lora entry on Guinn's p. 869 but did not supply its text. Further focused public searches did not recover Conrad's appointment, the Welch disposition, or an independent family bridge for the obscure witnesses. The Cass County probate-index page and the attempted FamilySearch catalogue route were not retrievable in this session. These access failures are not negative searches of the underlying holdings. Earlier Electa directory leads from 1872–73 and 1886 remain unverified transcriptions and have not been promoted into the narrative.

Bible index • Guinn biography index