

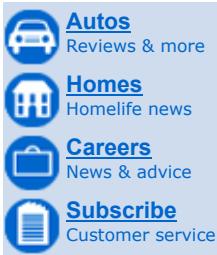
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MICHAEL SNEED



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Finally.

March 31, 2004

BY [MICHAEL SNEED](#) SUN-TIMES COLUMNIST

The State of Illinois is saying it's sorry for something that happened 160 years ago.

And it's all because Ald. **Ed Burke** (14th) is a closet historian.

Last week, a resolution was quietly passed by the Illinois Legislature seeking "the pardon and forgiveness" of the Mormon Church for persecution that led to the expulsion of 20,000 members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1844 from Nauvoo, and the 1844 vigilante murder of Mormon leader **Joseph Smith**.

The resolution reportedly stunned Mormon Church President **Gordon B. Hinckley**, who was so touched by the apology he "had tears in his eyes," said a source.

The official apology, which was introduced by state Reps. **Dan Burke** (D-Chicago) and **Jack Franks** (D-Woodstock), meant so much to the Mormon church a delegation from Illinois led by Lt. Gov. **Pat Quinn** has been invited to Salt Lake City to meet with Hinckley.

The delegation also includes Ald. Burke, his wife, Illinois Appellate Court Judge **Anne Burke**, **Dan Burke** (the alderman's brother) and Franks.

The thread that sewed closure to the 160-year-old Mormon tragedy began when the Burkes vacationed in Utah last year with their friends, **Elaine** and **Burt Gordon**.

They were introduced to Lt. Gov. **Olene Walker** and her husband, **Myron**, a great-grandson of a Nauvoo survivor who helped establish Salt Lake City, the Rome of the Mormon Church.

"We spent dinner getting a rundown on Nauvoo and the Mormon expulsion," said Judge Burke.

"My husband, who is besotted with history -- especially Chicago history -- was fascinated by Nauvoo and the way the Latter-day Saints were treated," she added.

As a result, Ald. Burke spoke with Rep. Burke, and a resolution was drafted in February.

When the Burkes returned to the Gordon home in February and reported on the draft of the resolution, they had no idea the reaction would be so emotional.

Walker, who had since been elected governor, immediately called Hinckley, who summoned the Burkes to his inner sanctum.

"It was amazing to see how personally he took the state's gesture," Judge Burke added. "He was moved to tears. Three generations have come and gone since the Mormon expulsion, but to them it's like it happened yesterday. Most have relatives who fled Nauvoo and they heard the story all their lives."

"When Nauvoo was settled it was the 10th-largest city in the United States," she said. "It was a thriving community that was forced out and left in the dead of night to ensure their safety."

"We thought it was about time to apologize."



And they will do so on April 7th -- one day after the 174th anniversary of the church's founding.

The Burkes are devout Catholics, with Judge Burke presiding over the National Review Board, which is examining allegations of sexual abuse by priests in the U.S.

Movie mania . . .

Here's a celluloid scoop. If you wanna see **George Clooney** and **Julia Roberts**, stick close to Winnetka next month. I'm told the film "Ocean's 12," the sequel to "Ocean's 11" (a remake of the **Frank Sinatra/Rat Pack film**), **will be shooting scenes there. Word is Clooney will be walking down Green Bay Road and Roberts will use the pay phone at the local Amoco station.**

It's a fan alert. Have fun.

Pssst!

Actor **Nicolas Cage**, star of "The Weather Man" being shot here . . . was at Gibsons Monday and then headed to the House of Blues, where he stayed until the wee hours and was spotted signing autographs.

Sneedlings . . .

Harvey's own The Dells, who were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of fame earlier this month, are being honored at Chicago City Hall today. . . . Today's birthdays: **Liz Claiborne**, 75; **Al Gore**, 56; **Richard Chamberlain**, 69; **Shirley Jones**, 70; **Rhea Perlman**, 56; **Christopher Walken**, 61, **Ewan McGregor**, 33, and **Ray Coffey**, ageless, priceless, and sometimes cantankerous. Love ya, Ray.

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