

THE MORMON BATTALION



WHAT IT WAS & HOW IT STARTED

In May 1846, while the Latter-day Saint pioneers were mid-exodus from Illinois and camping in Iowa, the United States declared war on Mexico.

THE REQUEST

At the request of Brigham Young's representative, President James K. Polk authorized the recruitment of 500 Mormon men to join the "Army of the West." 496 men were enlisted for one year.



THE DECISION

Brigham Young recognized the hand of God in the request. He called for volunteers, framing it as a way to provide temporal salvation for the migration and prove the Saints' loyalty to the U.S.



THE INCENTIVE

The enlistment provided a clothing allowance (\$42 per man) and other pay. This was used by the men to buy supplies for their march. The men sent part of this money back to their families, and helped to buy supplies for the trek to the Salt Lake, or to allow families of the Battalion soldiers to stay in Iowa until their return.



WHERE THEY TRAVELED

The Battalion completed one of the longest infantry marches in U.S. history over 2,000 miles.

Starting Point: Council Bluffs, Iowa (July 16, 1846).

The Route: They marched through Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, down the Santa Fe Trail to New Mexico, across the deserts of Arizona, and finally reached the Pacific Coast at Mission San Luis Rey, California (January 27, 1847).

After 6 weeks Company B went to San Diego, and the 4 other companies marched to Los Angeles to garrison the area and build Fort Moore.

After discharge, most stayed in California, to work for 1 year and buy supplies, then continued to Salt Lake.



MAJOR EVENTS (THE ONE-YEAR ENLISTMENT)

Contrary to expectations, the Battalion never saw combat in war. Their "battles" were against geography & nature.



THE THREE DETACHMENTS

Early in the march, many women, and children became too slow to keep up, later some men were sick. They were sent to Pueblo, Colorado, to winter (these groups eventually entered the Salt Lake Valley just after Brigham Young).



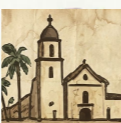
BLAZING NEW ROUTES

They left the established trails and blazed a new "wagon road" through the trackless Southwest.



THE "BATTLE OF THE BULLS"

In December 1846 (near the San Pedro River, AZ), the Battalion was attacked by a herd of wild, stampeding bulls. It was the only "fighting" they did during the march; a few men were injured, and several bulls were killed.



THE CAPTURE OF TUCSON

They approached the Mexican garrison at Tucson. The Mexican soldiers retreated without a fight, allowing the Battalion to pass through peacefully.



DISCOVERY OF GOLD

After being discharged July 16, 1847, several veterans went to work for John Sutter. They were present at Sutter's Mill when gold was discovered, sparking the California Gold Rush.



MAJOR PLAYERS



BRIGHAM YOUNG

The prophet who supported the recruitment and promised the men that "not one would fall by the hands of the nation's foe."



CAPTAIN JAMES ALLEN

The original U.S. officer who recruited them; he was well-liked but died shortly after the march began.



LT. COL. PHILIP S. COOKE

The strict, professional commander who led them from Santa Fe. Though initially harsh, he grew to deeply respect the men's discipline and endurance.



JEFFERSON HUNT

Mormon camp leader who acted as a bridge between the religious leaders and military the command.



THE WOMEN

35 women (mostly wives of soldiers) traveled with the unit, 20 hired as laundresses; 5 women completed the over 2,000-mile trek.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS & BENEFITS



BLAZING THE TRAIL

They created "Cooke's Wagon Road, which became the primary southern route for gold seekers and emigrants.



AMERICAN EXPANSION

Their successful march proved a southern stagecoach and railroad route was viable, directly influencing The US Gadsden Purchase of southern Arizona and New Mexico. Also a stepping stone to the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo which brought all or parts of nine states into the United States.



ECONOMIC SALVATION

Their wages provided the critical capital needed for their families to survive the winter of 1846-47 and fund the move to Utah.



CIVIC BUILDING

In San Diego they dug wells, built the first courthouse in San Diego, and fired the bricks for many of the city's early structures. In Los Angeles, they built Ft. Moore, a large Army fortress built of stone, dirt and logs



TAKEAWAYS: LESSONS FOR TODAY

What can we learn from the soldiers?



FAITH OVER FRICTION They marched for a government that had failed to protect them in Illinois and Missouri. Their sacrifice teaches forgiveness and patriotism even when it is difficult.



RESILIENCE They often strained water through their teeth to avoid swallowing mud and insects. They proved that human endurance is vastly expanded when tied to a higher purpose.



OBEDIENCE WITH A PROMISE Brigham Young promised they wouldn't see death in war if they were faithful, obeyed their leaders, and read their scriptures. Despite being in a war zone, his prophecy held.



COMMUNITY SUPPORT They didn't keep all their pay for themselves; they sent some of it back to help their families, which also helped the Church.



LEAVING IMPROVEMENTS Col. Cooke noted they dug wells and made roads that the future traveler will enjoy. Our current hard work often benefits people we will never meet.