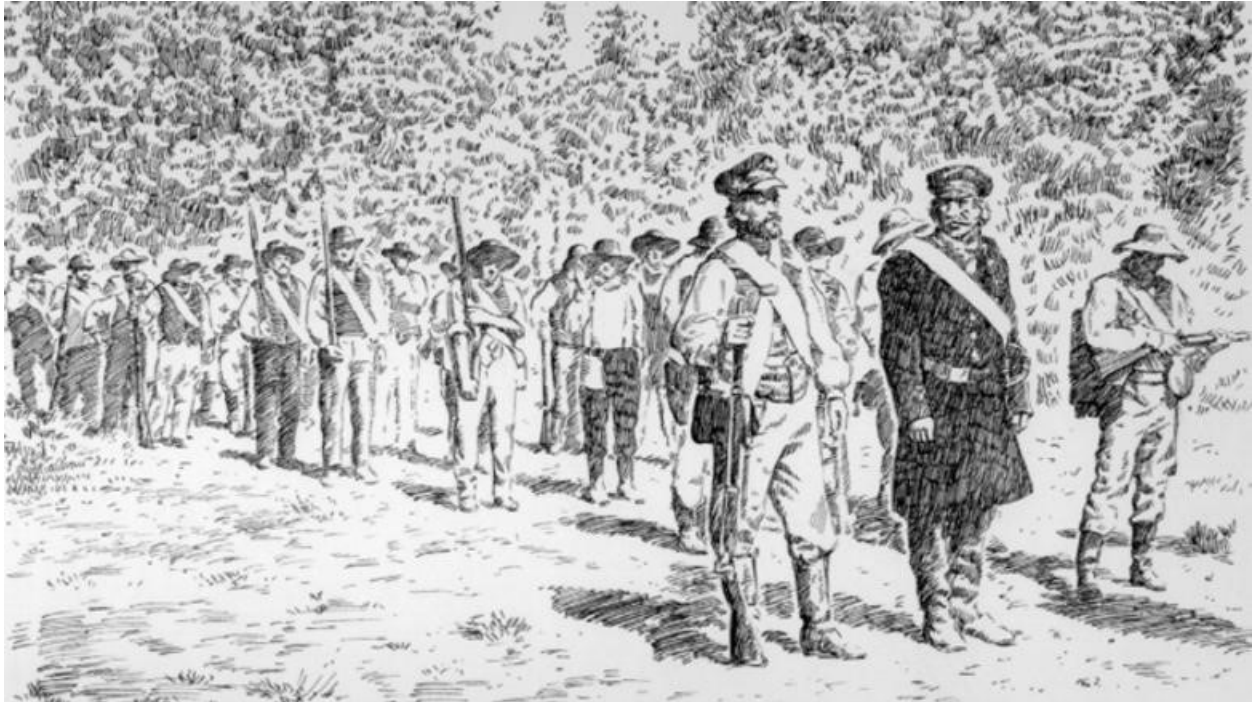


Time Line: Mormon Battalion, 1846–1848

20 December 2017



- All Events
- U.S. Westward Expansion
- Mormon Migration
- Mormon Battalion

1 January 1821

William Becknell opens a trade route between the Missouri River and the Mexican provincial capital of Santa Fe.

2 March 1836

Texas declares independence from Mexico. Four days later, the siege on the Alamo ends and San Antonio falls to Mexican forces. Texas wins its final battle for independence on April 21, 1836.

November 1844

A border dispute in Oregon Territory proves to be a major issue in the American presidential race. James K. Polk wins the election by appealing to those who want more land.

28 February 1845

U.S. Congress approves annexing Texas to the United States. James K. Polk becomes president of the United States four days later and pledges to protect Americans settling in Oregon and Texas.

26 January 1846

Brigham Young and the Twelve instruct Jesse C. Little to travel to Washington D.C. to seek assistance from the federal government to fund the move west.

4 February 1846

Brigham Young leads several wagons out of Nauvoo into Iowa Territory, marking the beginning of a mass migration west.

4 February 1846

The ship Brooklyn sets sail from New York bound for California. On board are 239 Mormon colonists under the leadership of Samuel Brannan.

April 1846

Mormon colonists leave Mississippi hoping to catch up to Brigham Young at the Platte River.

14 May 1846

The United States declares war on Mexico.

1 June 1846

Jesse C. Little writes a letter to President James K. Polk seeking assistance from the federal government for the move west.

5 June 1846

President James K. Polk authorizes 500 Mormons to be enlisted to help the United States in its war with Mexico.

26 June 1846

Captain James Allen and an escort of soldiers arrive at Mount Pisgah, Iowa, to begin enlisting a Mormon Battalion.

16 July 1846

Most of the Mormon Battalion are officially enlisted into the U.S. Army. James Allen assumes command as a lieutenant colonel. The first four companies depart Council Bluffs on July 20, 1846. At least 34 women and 44 children travel with the battalion.

22 July 1846

The fifth company, Company E, leaves Council Bluffs for Fort Leavenworth.

31 July 1846

Samuel Brannan and Mormon colonists aboard the ship Brooklyn arrive in Yerba Buena (later renamed San Francisco).

1 August 1846

The Mormon Battalion arrives at Fort Leavenworth and spends two weeks drilling and resupplying. James Allen dies from illness at Fort Leavenworth on August 23. Lieutenant Andrew Jackson Smith assumes command of the Mormon Battalion on August 30, 1846.

August 1846

Mississippi Company under John Brown realizes that they are ahead of Brigham Young on the trail. They winter at Fort Pueblo in present-day Colorado.

16 August 1846

General Stephen W. Kearny captures Santa Fe for the United States.

15 September 1846

Lieutenant Smith orders a sick detachment to Bent's Fort. They continue to Fort Pueblo. A second sick detachment leaves Santa Fe in mid-October, and the last leaves the main body of soldiers in mid-November. The groups winter together in Fort Pueblo.

9 October 1846

Lieutenant Smith and a contingent of the Mormon Battalion arrive at Santa Fe. Others arrive over the next three days.

13 October 1846

Lieutenant Colonel Philip St. George Cooke assumes command of the battalion, and they leave Santa Fe on October 19, 1846.

13 November 1846

The Mormon Battalion leaves the Rio Grande and begins blazing a new wagon road to California.

11 December 1846

Battalion members encounter wild bulls, resulting in “the battle of the bulls.” This is the only time the battalion members are ordered to use their weapons in self-defense.

16 December 1846

The battalion reaches Tucson and nearly engages in battle with a Mexican garrison.

22 December 1846

The Mormon Battalion reaches the Pima villages on the Gila River.

13 January 1847

Colonel John C. Frémont and General Andres Pico sign the Treaty of Cahuenga, ending military conflict in California.

29 January 1847

The Mormon Battalion arrives in San Diego. After a few days’ rest, they march to Mission San Luis Rey.

14 March 1847

Company B is assigned garrison duty in San Diego. All other companies march to Los Angeles, except about three dozen ill soldiers who remain at Mission San Luis Rey.

24 April 1847

Colonel Cooke orders Mormon soldiers to construct Fort Moore in Los Angeles. It is completed on July 4, 1847.

24 May 1847

Mississippi Saints and battalion soldiers leave Fort Pueblo to continue west. They arrive in the Salt Lake Valley five days after Brigham Young's vanguard company.

31 May 1847

Intent on a court-martial of Colonel John C. Frémont for insubordination, General Kearny leaves Monterey with a company of 64 soldiers, including Colonel Cooke and 15 members of the battalion. Jefferson Hunt assumes command in Los Angeles until the battalion's discharge.

16 July 1847

The Mormon Battalion is discharged from U.S. military service at Fort Moore in Los Angeles by Lieutenant Andrew Jackson Smith, former commander of the battalion. Four days later, about 80 battalion soldiers known as the "Mormon Volunteers" reenlist in the army.

23 July 1847

Mormon Battalion members who have not reenlisted travel north on the El Camino Real or along the Sierra Nevada foothills to northern California.

24 July 1847

Brigham Young enters the Salt Lake Valley.

23 August 1847

The 15 Mormon Battalion soldiers with General Kearny arrive at Fort Leavenworth. Upon discharge, they travel back to Winter Quarters.

26 August 1847

Battalion veterans leave Sutter's Fort for the Salt Lake Valley. Along the way, they learn that there are few provisions waiting for them. Some return to the Sacramento Valley and find work. Others push ahead.

October 1847

Members of the battalion who did not find their families in Utah travel further east, arriving at Winter Quarters in December 1847.

24 January 1848

John Sutter's partner, James Marshall, discovers gold at Coloma on the American River. Six Mormon Battalion veterans are present for the discovery.

2 February 1848

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ends the Mexican-American War.

14 March 1848

The reenlisted “Mormon Volunteers” are discharged. A few of them, under the leadership of Henry G. Boyle, travel the Spanish Trail east and then turn north, creating a wagon road between Salt Lake City and Los Angeles.

27 June 1848

Three Mormon scouts of the Holmes–Thompson company are murdered by Indians while traveling east through the Sierras at a site later named Tragedy Spring.

2 July 1848

The Holmes–Thompson company, comprising mostly Mormon Battalion veterans, leaves for the Salt Lake Valley from central California and blazes the Mormon-Carson Pass Emigrant Trail over the Sierra Nevada.

August 1848

Companies of men, women, and children who had sailed on the ship Brooklyn join Mormon Battalion veterans on their journey east from California to the Salt Lake Valley using the newly opened Carson route. They arrive in September and October 1848.

Learn More



[Four Things to Know about the Journey of the Mormon Battalion](#)

An Expedition of Faith and Sacrifice



[Mormon Battalion Bullet Pouch](#)

Museum Treasures



[What to Expect When You Visit the Mormon Battalion Center at San Diego](#)



Council Bluffs, Iowa



Mustering Grounds at Council Bluffs, Iowa

Council Bluffs received its name in 1804 from the Lewis and Clark expedition. Brigham Young and other pioneers from Nauvoo arrived here in June 1846. The Mormon Battalion was officially organized and departed from here July 20–22, 1846, under the leadership of James Allen.

Today missionaries at the Kanesville Tabernacle Visitors' Center tell the story of the Mormon Battalion. Historical markers near the visitors' center show where the official mustering into the army took place.

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas



Outfitting at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

Fort Leavenworth served as the outfitting post for the Army of the West. The Mormon Battalion arrived here on August 1, 1846, and stayed until August 13. The men received muskets and supplies but no uniforms. Instead, they were allowed to keep their cash clothing allowance. Many sent money back to their families in Iowa. Before resuming their march, Captain James Allen and others became ill. Allen died at Fort Leavenworth on August 23, 1846.

Today the Frontier Army Museum in Leavenworth includes artifacts and information about the Army of the West during the Mexican-American War.



Change of Command at Santa Fe, New Mexico

Santa Fe was the capital of the Mexican state of New Mexico and a major trade destination for goods traveling between the Missouri River and the Pacific Ocean. General Stephen W. Kearny captured Santa Fe for the United States on August 16, 1846. Lieutenant Andrew Jackson Smith took command of the Mormon Battalion on August 29 and sped toward Santa Fe using the Cimarron Cutoff of the Santa Fe Trail. Under forced march, half of the battalion arrived in Santa Fe on October 9. The rest of the group arrived by October 12. After a week of rest and resupply, Lieutenant Colonel Philip St. George Cooke commanded the Mormon Battalion to begin their march from Santa Fe to California on October 19, 1846.

Two markers stand near Santa Fe to honor the march of the battalion through the area.



Sick Detachments at Fort Pueblo, Colorado

Fort Pueblo was established in 1842 as a trading post connecting the Rocky Mountain fur trade with the Santa Fe Trail. During the march to California, three sick detachments of Mormon Battalion soldiers were ordered to Fort Pueblo to recuperate. Included in these detachments were nearly all of the women and children who accompanied the soldiers. The groups spent the winter of 1846–47 here with Saints from Mississippi. After the soldiers' honorable discharge, the Saints traveled together over the mountains and entered the Salt Lake Valley in July 1847, just a few days after Brigham Young.

Today a monument to the Mormon Battalion stands in Pueblo.





Pima Villages along the Gila River

The Pima and Maricopa peoples have lived near the Gila River for generations. After securing the Mexican town of Tucson, the Mormon Battalion marched to the Pima villages on the Gila River, crossing 70 miles of unforgiving desert. In three days the soldiers traveled at least 45 miles with no water. Finally, on December 22 the battalion reached the river. There they rested for a few days, traded with the people who lived there, and replenished their supplies.

Today historical markers in Tucson and on land belonging to the Gila River Indian Community commemorate the desert march and the generosity of the native peoples in helping the Mormon Battalion on their way.





BRICK MAKING

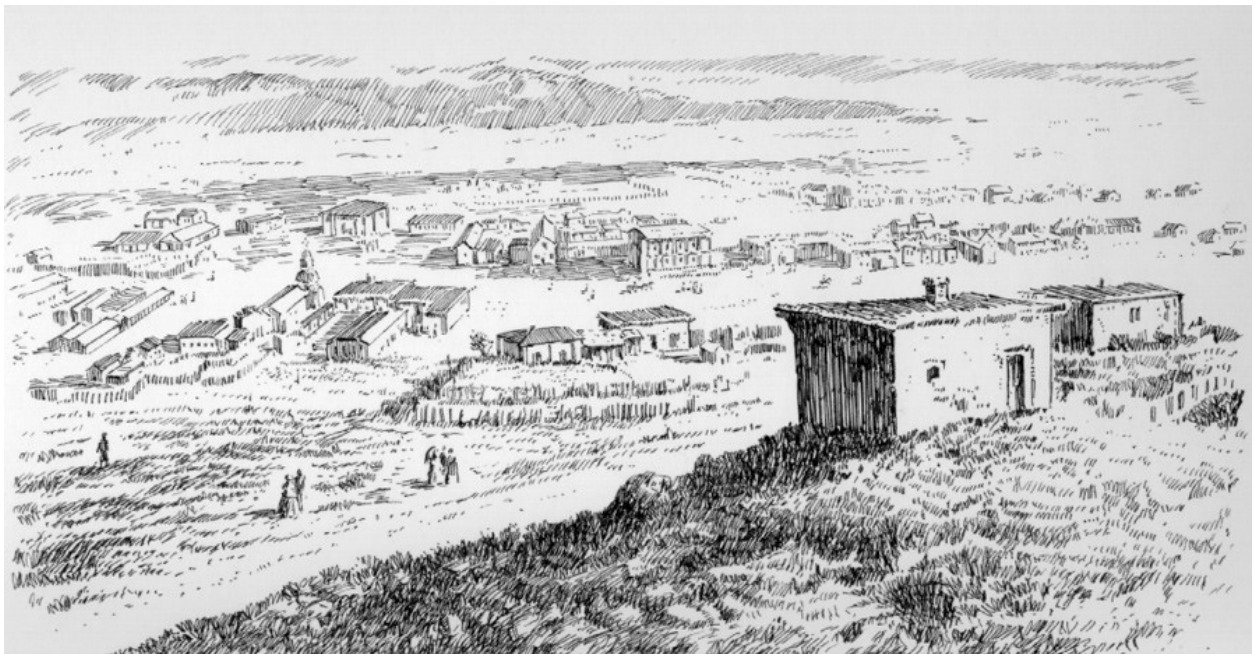
Some of the Missionaries were brick makers before they joined the Mission, so they built a kiln and started firing bricks. Juan Bautista hired a group of them to build the first backyard in San Diego, and even more bricks were fired. These bricks were used for chimneys and walkways, to face wells, and to build the first courtyards.



Garrison Duty at San Diego, California

San Diego is the oldest Franciscan Catholic mission along the southern California coast. By the 1840s a town had grown up around the mission. Members of the Mormon Battalion reached San Diego on January 29, 1847. The following day, Colonel Cooke wrote an official commendation to the soldiers at the end of their long march. Company B garrisoned at San Diego from March to July 1847. During that time, the soldiers worked in the community firing brick, tanning leather, and digging wells. They built the town's first school and courthouse.

Today the Mormon Battalion Visitors' Center stands across the street from Old Town San Diego State Historic Park. Missionaries lead visitors through an interactive trail experience. Afterwards, self-guided activities showcase the contributions that Mormon Battalion soldiers made to the development of California.



Building Fort Moore at Los Angeles, California

While Company B was ordered to San Diego, the rest of the Mormon Battalion marched north to Los Angeles, the largest port city in southern

California. There they helped build Fort Moore and guarded the Cajon Pass. Fifteen were detailed to escort General Kearny east to Fort Leavenworth. On July 16, 1847, the soldiers in Los Angeles were discharged. Four days later, about 80 men reenlisted for an additional six months of army service. The rest left Los Angeles to find their way east to the Salt Lake Valley and eventually to their families.

A monument to the Mormon Battalion built into a retaining wall on the historic location of Fort Moore was unveiled in 1958.







Gold Discovery along the American River

John Sutter hired several veterans of the Mormon Battalion to help build a sawmill along the American River near Coloma, California. In January 1848, some of these men were present when the mill's foreman, James Marshall, concluded that gold was present in the mill's tailrace. That year, a number of battalion veterans panned for gold before returning to their families in Utah.

Today the site where the California Gold Rush began is a state park. Visitors can try panning for gold in the American River and enjoy hikes and picnics along the woods near the river. Tours and special events occur throughout the year.



Return Routes to the Salt Lake Valley

Returning veterans of the Mormon Battalion used their trailblazing experience to develop new wagon roads between California and the Salt

Lake Valley. The northern route shown here later included Hastings Cutoff and became the preferred northern route across the Great Basin and the Sierra Nevada to arrive at the goldfields. Part of the return journey from Los Angeles expanded an existing pack-mule route known as the Old Spanish Trail. The rest of the southern route became the main highway that would connect Salt Lake City with southern California.

Today both the northern and southern California wagon roads are recognized as part of the history of National Historic Trails. A monument honoring the contribution of the Mormon Battalion to the growth of the state of Utah and the nation was erected on the grounds of the Utah State Capitol in 1927.