



CHAPTER 61

The Mormon Battalion

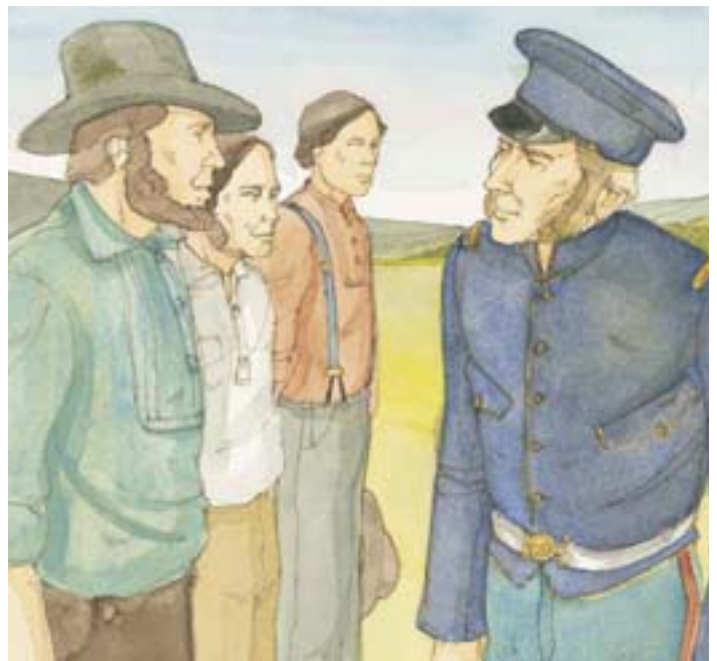
June 1846–July 1847



While the Saints were in Iowa, Captain James Allen of the United States Army came to see Brigham Young. Captain Allen said the president of the United States wanted 500 men from the Church to join the army to help in a war with Mexico.



Although this was a difficult time for the Saints and the men were needed for the trek west, Brigham Young encouraged them to go. The money they would be paid would help their families, the Saints who were poor, and the missionaries. Serving in the army would also show the loyalty of Church members to their country.



Captain Allen talked to the men, and 541 of them joined the army. They were called the Mormon Battalion.



Brigham Young told the men to be the best soldiers in the army. They should take the Bible and Book of Mormon with them. They must be neat, clean, and polite. They

should not swear or play cards. Brigham Young told the men to obey God's commandments. If they did, they would not have to fight.



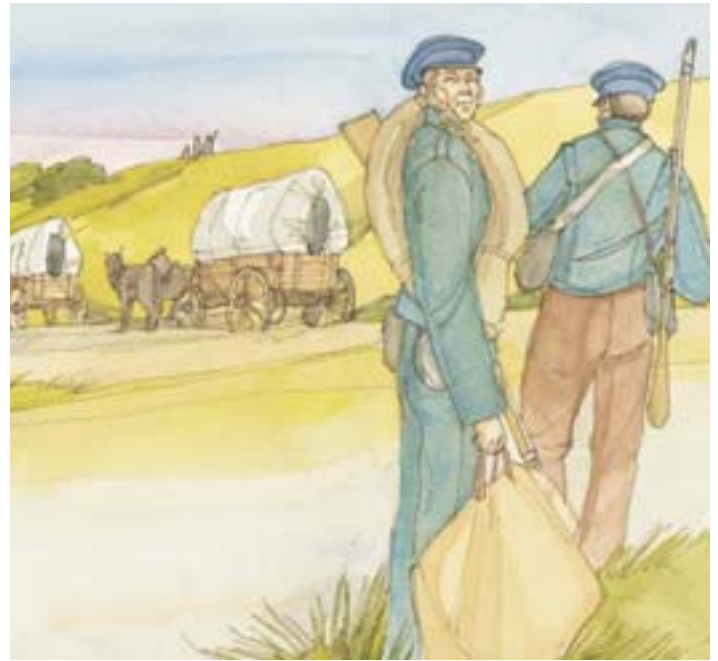
In July 1846 the men of the Mormon Battalion went with Captain Allen. It was hard for them to leave their wives and children at such a difficult time. But Brigham Young said their families would be taken care of while they were gone.



The Mormon Battalion went to Fort Leavenworth, where they received supplies. Then they traveled southwest toward California. The families of a few of the soldiers came with them.



It was very hard for the battalion to travel. The roads were very bad, and sometimes the wagons got stuck. It was hard to find water to drink. Sometimes there were no trees where the men could rest in the shade.



Some of the people got sick. The captain decided that the women and children, as well as the soldiers who were sick, should go to Colorado and stay in the town of Pueblo. They spent the winter there. The next summer they met up with the pioneers who were crossing the plains.



Most of the soldiers in the battalion kept marching. Sometimes they had to dig down into the sand to find water. They did not have enough food. Often there was no wood to make fires, so the men had to burn weeds.



The soldiers met Indians and other people who had food. The soldiers did not have money to buy food, so they traded some of their clothes to the Indians for food.



Eventually the Mormon Battalion came to some very steep mountains. The men had to tie ropes on the wagons and

pull them up the mountains. Then they let the wagons down the other side.



One day some wild bulls attacked the soldiers. The men fought the bulls and finally chased them away. Three of the soldiers were hurt.



At last, after marching more than 2,000 miles, the Mormon Battalion reached the Pacific Ocean on 29 January 1847.

The men were very tired, and their clothes were ragged. They were glad their long march had ended.



The men worked in California to finish their year of service in the army. Then they were allowed to go rejoin their families. As Brigham Young had promised, the men of the Mormon Battalion did not have to fight.



Some of the men stayed in California. Most of them went to the Rocky Mountains to be with their families and the other Saints who were arriving there. (See the map on page 234 for the route of the Mormon Battalion.)