

# US MORMON BATTALION

A Special Christmas Edition of the

# THE VALIANT



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## Commander's Christmas Message

Anne and I wish to extend a Very Merry Christmas and a Prosperous, Healthy, and Happy New Year to each of you. May we remember the Sacred birth of our savior, Jesus Christ, at this season. As I was reviewing the Battalion's experiences on December 24 and 25 in 1846, I found some of the following written in journals and records of the Mormon Battalion:

"Thursday December 24, Maricopa Wells, AZ - "A no traveling day to rest and wash clothes, camp was crowded with Indians...The soldiers were on less than half rations and starving, yet some had to leave food on the ground cause they were too weak to carry it ." US Army of the West by Norma Ricketts p105.

Bigler's journal account states: "...on the twenty fifth boys bought watermelons to have it to say they had watermelons to eat on Christmas day. That Morning, orders were given for the Battalion not to eat any corn, either public or private. What that was for, I do not know, unless the Colonel was afraid his men would make themselves sick by eating, for many had bought of the Indians corn to boil. It was of a quality that was easily cooked and when cooked had the flavor of young corn. They had gotten beans from Pimas to boil with their corn. (known as "Succotash") This was also forbidden, and orders were to leave the whole of it. " Gudde, Biglers Chronicle of the West p37.

Then on 25 December they marched 18-21 miles and camped. "There was not a lot of Christmas feasting, only what they had bought from the Maricopas' camp. It was pancakes, cold beans, and pumpkin sauce, topped off by the great-tasting watermelon. Which was not only a great treat but a rarity that they had never witnessed; fresh watermelon at Christmas!" The Saving Sacrifice of the Mormon Battalion from the Journals of Levi Ward Hancock, p182.

THEY, had a goal and were pursuing it under trying circumstances, and they succeeded!

WE, have a goal under more pleasant circumstances but still trying for our times; That of building a Museum for History and Memorabilia, Research and Teaching, and thus fulfilling Brigham Young's prophecy, made in 1855, "The Mormon Battalion will be held in honorable remembrance to the latest generation; and I will prophecy that the children of those who have been in the army in defense of their country will grow up and bless their fathers for what they did."

WE, too, shall reach our goal and keep these great men and women "in honorable remembrance". We can do it together with your help, Thank you! Merry Christmas to all, Commander and President.



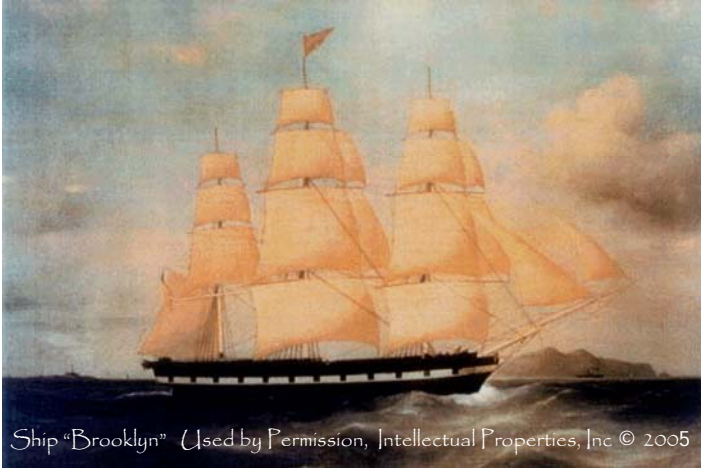
**Norman T. Erekson** & *Anne Erekson*

### Reprint of St Louis Daily Reveille, Letter from Civilian in Mormon Battalion Pay Department

— The single most important article I found in the Houston newspapers was a 19 June 1847 reprint of an article published in the 12 and 14 June 1847 daily and weekly issues of the St. Louis Daily Reveille newspaper. This article recounted part of a 1 February 1847 letter from Lewis Dent, Mormon Battalion civilian pay clerk (assistant to Mormon Battalion paymaster Major Jeremiah H. Cloud), to his brother, George Wrenshall Dent, in St. Louis....Lewis Dent,...."I remember, on one occasion, after having marched two days without water, while leisurely riding about a mile in the rear of the troops, to have espied, a short distance in advance, a soldier of the battalion. My attention was not attracted by his slow and uneasy step, for it was a time of general suffering, and such a thing was to be looked for; but when, in passing, he turned upon me his ghastly visage, I involuntarily checked my mule, shuddering at his horrid picture of human misery ! I was about to pass him, but my heart reproved me, and I offered him my mule. The poor fellow lifted his eyes to mine, but dropped them as suddenly; he was a Mormon and had been unused to favors. He made no further reply, but continued on his weary tramp, apparently careless whether each succeeding step was leading him to destruction or safety...."Original Letters discovered by Max Jamison, revealed 2004.

We all know the great sacrifices that the Mormon Battalion made. In many ways things are not so different now, the battles, the good people, the fight for religious liberty and remembrances at Christmas. Makes you think. Happy Christmas and the Best of New Year to all those of pleasant associations.

## The Ship "*Brooklyn*" Story For Christmas



The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints agreed in September 1845 that they would leave the United States to remove themselves from persecution. Orson Pratt wrote in New York on 8 November 1845: "Brethren awake! - be determined to get out from this evil nation next spring. We do not want one saint to be left in the United States after that time. Let every branch in the East, West, North, and South, be determined to flee out of Babylon, either by land or by sea, as soon as then. - Judgment is at the door; and it will be easier to go now, than to wait until it comes." Brigham Young had decided the Eastern Saints would travel by water and those in Nauvoo would travel by land, meeting each other in the West, where they would build a new nation under God.

Samuel Brannan had been given the task of chartering a ship, the *Brooklyn*, and taking as many as possible by way of Cape Horn to establish the initial colony. He completed his assignment by taking 238 persons, 70 men, 68 women and 100 children on a voyage of nearly 24,000 miles. They sailed 4 February 1846 and landed 31 July 1846 after stopping at Juan Fernandez Island and Hawaii. There were several deaths and two births, one in the Atlantic and one in the Pacific. They endured two horrible storms but survived to accomplish their goal.

When they reached Yerba Buena, later named San Francisco, there were only a few huts and about 30 people living there. As with the Saints reaching Winter Quarters, they immediately began building homes and shelters and soon the little village bustled with new growth and business. They started the first newspaper in San Francisco, *The California Star*, built the first schoolhouse, and had many other "firsts." By the beginning of 1847 there were nearly 100 new buildings in San Francisco. John Horner, traveled to San Jose and started farming the rich soil, having such great success he was later named California's First Farmer. Twenty men, under Brannan's guidance, traveled inland to the San Joaquin valley and established a farm location that Brannan called New Hope. Here they started farming wheat in anticipation of the Saints from Nauvoo reaching there later in the year.

Samuel Brannan traveled east to meet Brigham Young, to get Brigham's counsel, and find out why the delay in reaching California. Brannan found Brigham Young at Green River, Wyoming and here they related to each other the last year's experiences of both groups. Brigham said - under guidance from the Lord, Great Salt Lake Valley would be the stopping place for the Saints. Brannan tried to convince Brigham to come to California but Brigham replied "We have not the means." Brannan helped explore Tooele and Utah Valleys and taught the Saints how to make adobe brick. After a month in Great Salt Lake City, Brannan returned to California in disappointment. He met the first of the Mormon Battalion veterans coming over the Sierra Nevada's and told them of Brigham's plans. Those of the Battalion with family in Salt Lake went on, but most of the Battalion men returned to Sutter's Fort to work until spring. Brannan stopped at New Hope and informed his men that they could now go their own way, the Church would not be coming to California. The workers of New Hope returned to San Francisco or started new towns, like Stockton, Fremont, Benicia and Union City. The *Battalion* boys had married several *Brooklyn* ladies, built a grist mill and were working on a sawmill for Sutter when they discovered gold, 24 January 1848. History changed that day!

As the first party of Mormon Battalion veterans, *Brooklyn* passenger John Eagar, and Addison Pratt, came over the Sierra's in 1848, they engineered and built what is now called the Carson route. This became the highway for 100,000 gold rush emigrants coming into California and is still in use today as California Highway 88. Many of the *Brooklyn* Saints returned to Salt Lake City over this same route in '48 and '49 and later helped pioneer over 25 communities throughout the Intermountain West, truly builders of a nation!

At Christmas we remember the birth of the Savior and the sacrifices of his parents, people, and ultimately the sacrifice He made for each of us! We are grateful for our ancestors who believed in Him, and in the Prophet Joseph Smith, who restored the Gospel once again on the Earth. We strive to emulate them in our lives and we hope that the stories we share with you will awake a remembrance of the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem and inspire you to worthy and righteous goals as each of us create our own Latter-day history.



*Happy Christmas, Major Richard H. Bullock*





Flags of the Modern Battalion





HAPPY  
CHRISTMAS



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