

INTRODUCTION TO HEADWEAR, CLOTHING, & FOOTWEAR

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Just a note before beginning, this is by no means the final say on clothing and equipment regarding the Mormon Battalion Volunteer Infantry that served during the Mexican War. This is simply a primer to help people coming into the hobby of reenacting, and give them a good direction to start their personal research. People that have been involved in the hobby for a while will probably find the information here simple and basic. That is okay. This is a basic guide and as new information becomes available some of this material may need to be updated. However, at the time of this writing, the material provided is based on the best information available to date. Remember to continue to do research on your own and always ask “why?” That is how dedicated reenactors progress individually and collectively. More and more sources are continuously coming to light. With that said, I hope the following information is a useful tool for you.

The Mormon Battalion enlistment period is a fascinating time to study and re-create. There were many different cultures, social classes, technologies, and ideas coming together and sometimes violently colliding. These forces became more complicated when members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were forced from their homes in the beautiful City of Nauvoo and its surrounding communities. These individuals were forced to flee across the Territory of Iowa to the western frontier of the United States, where few merchant stores and businesses could be found. These influences as well as others determined how they dressed.

As per regulations for Volunteers, the Mormon Battalion was not issued a uniform. Rather, they were given \$42 for their 12 month enlistment (which equals \$3.50 per month), to supply their own clothing.

In determining the type of clothing you would have had on hand when the call to enlist came, you must determine your occupation and class. Clothing worn by a tailor would differ greatly from clothing worn by a farmer, blacksmith, and so on. Three types of social class could be found at this time; upper class, middle class, and lower or working class. The lower or working class made up about 80 percent of the population, followed by the middle class at 18 percent, and upper class at 2 percent.

Keep in mind that the Mormons were thrifty by nature and typically wore their clothing until it turned to rags. Items would be repaired and patched until it became impossible to use the garment. Of course determining when the garment was no longer useful varied according to one's social class. Therefore, worn and patched clothing would be very appropriate for your impression.

While resting at Cedar Springs, Private James Scott, of Company E, described a typical day:

“... nothing new. Just go ahead seems to be the only word no rest. March, march is the daily task. Day break brings Reveille [sic] sick or well must go either, to roll call or it's the Doctor, next boys!, get your breakfast, & strike your tents with all possible speed, then left, left, all day over the road through dust, over the hills, & across valleys, some 12, 13, & 18 miles. Halt stack arms pitch tents. Run over all creation gathering Buffalo chips or a little brush & getting water, draw rations, cook supper, etc.; while this is going on, roll call comes on again. By the time the evening chores are finished dark is at hand, attend to evening duties, go to bed & sleep on the rough cold ground with only one blanket & thin tent to shelter from cold.”

– James Scott Diary, September 26, 1846

(Norma Ricketts, *The Mormon Battalion - U.S. Army of the West*, Utah State University Press, Logan, Utah, 1996, Page 59.)



Photo from LDS Film Shoot, 2009



Newly Equipped Mormon Battalion
Volunteer at Ft. Leavenworth



Mormon Battalion Volunteer
at the "End of the Trail"

NOTE: Items listed in Section I, under "B - Headwear, Clothing, & Footwear", will be given a rating system as to how common they probably were among the people that made up the Mormon Battalion. This is by no means a final say. Just a means for newcomers to determine how common an item may have been in the western territory in the mid-1800's.

**10-BEING VERY COMMON/UNIVERSAL
5-SOME WOULD HAVE BEEN SEEN
1-HARDLY ANY WOULD HAVE BEEN AROUND**

BAYONET SHOULDER BELT

CARTRIDGE BOX BELT

WAIST BELT & PLATE

CARTRIDGE BOX

MUSKET & SLING

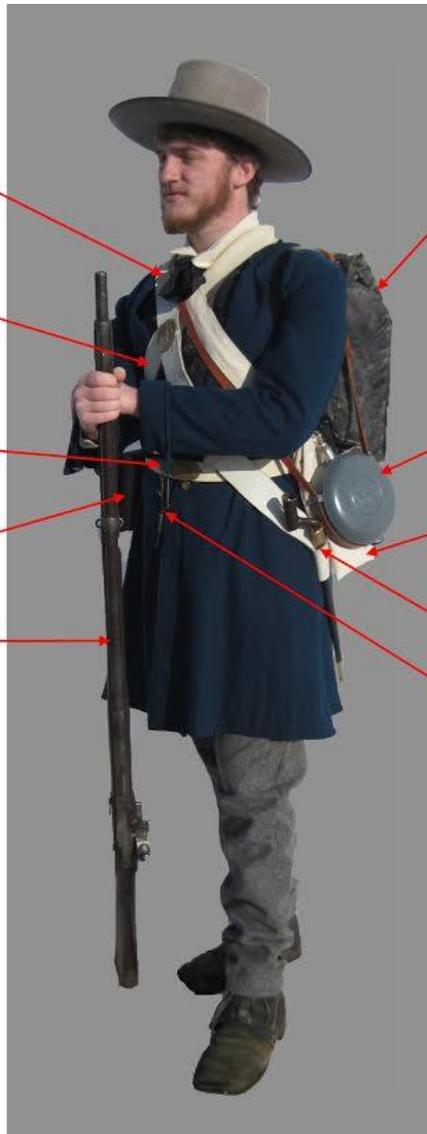
**KNAPSACK
(aka Blanket Bag)**

CANTEEN

HAVERSACK

BAYONET (in Scabbard)

BRUSH & PICK



Besides the clothing members of the Mormon Battalion provided themselves, either clothing they had on hand or clothing they purchased using the issued clothing allowance, this living historian also shows the equipment they were issued.

THE CREED OF LIVING HISTORY

"We are people to whom the past is forever speaking. We listen to it because we cannot help ourselves, for the past speaks to us with many voices. Far out of that dark nowhere which is the time before we were born, men who were flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone went through fire and storm to break a path to the future. We are part of the future they died for; they are part of the past that brought the future. What they did--the lives they lived, the sacrifices they made, the stories they told and the songs they sang and, finally, the deaths they died--make up a part of our own experience. We cannot cut ourselves off from it. It is as real to us as something that happened last week. It is a basic part of our heritage as Americans."

Bruce Catton, *America Goes to War*, p.68