

Mormon Battalion Symposium and Encampment
Heritage Park, Salt Lake City, UT
July 22-24, 2010

A most rewarding Mormon Battalion Symposium and Living History Encampment was held at the “This is the Place Heritage Park” July 22-24, 2010 in Salt Lake City.

Co-sponsored by the California Pioneer Heritage Foundation and the Heritage Park, a robust 2 ½ day program was conducted that enabled participants, history buffs and Park visitors to more clearly understand not only the historical and cultural aspects of the Battalion members efforts, but also to assist “living historians” in their portrayal of the Battalion member’s service, including their equipment, medical care, clothing and camp life.

This event, held in conjunction with Salt Lake City’s annual Days of ‘47 activities at the “This is the Place Heritage Park,” allowed Battalion enthusiasts from San Diego, Orange County, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, Sacramento, Utah and as far away as Nebraska and Michigan to participate in seminars, discussions, and hands-on events where they drilled, ate, dressed and camped just as those they were representing, some 164 years previous. Representing San Diego at the Symposium were Darlene and Jody Hansen (Escondido South Stake) and Kathy and Randy Madsen (Penasquitos Stake).



Val John Halford kicks-off the Symposium in the Bowery at Heritage Park.

The Symposium was hosted and conducted by Mike Anderson, Val Halford and Jared Cornell, each well-known among Mormon Battalion scholars and/Mexican War history enthusiasts as experienced reenactors and experts on Mormon Battalion-era subjects. Topics discussed and displays presented were: 1840s Military medicine and weaponry by Brenda and Jared Cornell; 1840s textiles and Battalion clothing by Mike Anderson; Mexican War military accoutrements and the Battalion depicted in the Arts by Val John Halford; Value of Battalion writings and Women in the Battalion by Steve and Wendy Sorensen; Traveling the Battalion trail by Kevin and Denny Henson. A special presentation on the newly donated David

Pettegrew journal collection was presented by Brad Westwood and Eugene Shurts from the LDS Church History Department. David Pettegrew is significant in Battalion history as Brigham Young compared Pettegrew to “Helman” [sic] as a spiritual leader to the young Battalion soldiers. The 33 Encampment volunteers also participated in the Days of ‘47 Parade, marching in formation at the beginning of the Parade as Entry #3, covering the three mile parade route from North Temple St. to Liberty Park.

The idea for this symposium began back in 2009 when the California Pioneer Heritage Foundation, with Jody acting as event organizer, put on a half-day Battalion symposium as an adjunct to the annual Mormon Battalion Commemorative activities in Old Towne San Diego. With many attendees and participants coming from great distances, there was discussion that it would be make sense to have a several day event where more time could be spent on each topic. From that thought, Mike Anderson, Jared Cornell and Val John Halford, each a Symposium presenter and all from Utah, expanded the concept to greater heights in 2010 using the period-appropriate historic facilities at Salt Lake City's "This is the Place Heritage Park" and the Days of '47/Pioneer Day celebrations to enhance participation and exposure to the public.

The Encampment was staged on the fenced-in lawn at the Charles C. Rich home and consisted of white period canvas army A-frame tents housing the hearty participants, who slept under wool blankets (Kevin Henson brought his bison robe for warmth). Mornings began with reveille at 6:00 am and roll call at 6:30 am. Breakfast, lunch and supper were prepared in cast iron kettles and ovens by a dedicated and proficient cook: Sweetened oatmeal, fried potatoes, sausage, salted pork (thick bacon), buttered grits (hominy), white beans and ham hock over crushed hardtack, dried apples, fresh sliced squash, boiled beef and sliced cheddar cheese. Water with lemon slices ladled into our tin cups from a wood barrel was the beverage at the meals. Meals were dished out on participant's tin plates. Friday night dessert was a fresh apricot cobbler made in a Dutch oven. The period-appropriate meals were simple, but nourishing, tasty, plentiful and satisfying.



Captain Jared Cornell gives instructions to Battalion volunteers.

Encampment activities included drills, basic tactics, camp life and daily military routine. Jared Cornell conducted drills, close-order drills and maneuvers with the soldiers (each participant was dressed in period clothing with their own muskets and accoutrements). Participants became relatively proficient with basic marching drills after a few hours of practice, which is about what the original Battalion members would have received once they arrived in Fort Leavenworth and issued their equipment. "Soldiers" responded to

commands such as: order arms, shoulder arms, right shoulder shift, march by file, fix bayonets, etc. These maneuvers were put into action during the Days of '47 Parade in front of tens of thousands cheering and waving observers along the parade route and a television audience.

One of the most impressive and touching sights during our march in the Parade was the large number of children, youth and adults who held their right hands over their hearts in

salute and tribute to the ideals of liberty, patriotism and freedom symbolized by the American flag carried by the Battalion entourage. The drilling also came in handy later in the afternoon when the soldiers marched in a smaller parade at Heritage Park and were able to smartly negotiate turns around street corners in front of the hundreds of visitors lining the streets at the Park.

Prior to the Parade, a sunrise devotional was held at 7am Saturday morning in the Tabernacle. The Mormon Battalion Honor Guard presented the colors. Patriotic songs were sung by a 200-voice choir from the Salt Lake valley and the International Children's Choir. The keynote speaker, Elder Marlin K. Jensen, reminded the audience that Native Americans were already in the Salt Lake valley when the pioneers arrived. He encouraged us all to recognize and honor them along with our Pioneer ancestors.

Saturday afternoon sessions included demonstrations and discussions conducted by Jared Cornell and Mike Anderson on subjects including: what was carried in the knapsacks and haversacks; how to clean the musket; how to make paper cartridges; how the leather belts were kept white. Also we were able to mingle with visitors to the encampment and answer questions and share information about the Battalion.



Jody Hansen presents medals and certificates of appreciation to Symposium hosts.
From Left to Right: Denny Henson, Kevin Henson, Jody Hansen,
Val John Halford, Mike Anderson, Jared Cornell

One of the last events of the Symposium was conducted on Saturday afternoon. With the drummer (Brian Henson) beating "assembly" to the soldiers, all of the participants gathered together in the camp. Jody, acting in behalf of the California Pioneer Heritage Foundation, presented medals and certificates of appreciation to Mike, Jared, Val, Kevin and his wife Denny, acknowledging their work in

organizing the Symposium and for furthering the work of holding the Battalion veterans in honorable remembrance of their service and sacrifice. Jody also presented the group with a check from the Foundation to help underwrite the cost of putting on the Symposium.

The 2010 Mormon Battalion Symposium and Encampment was a great success and it is anticipated that the organizers will shortly be sending out CD's and possibly DVD's containing many of the lessons learned and presentations featured during the encampment. Additionally, this event has been a significant catalyst for future communications between represented or interested organizations and institutions: The California Pioneer Heritage Foundation, the Mormon Battalion Association, the Church

of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Church History Department), Fort Moore Garrison, the Sierra Nevada Mormon Pioneers, the California Trail Center (Elko, NV), and the Mormon Battalion Historic Site (San Diego, CA).