

## **The Mormon Battalion Experience – as told by Zadock Knapp Judd, Company E**

...[W]hen our company got within four or five days travel of Sarpee's Point, or near where Winter Quarters was afterwards located, we met brethren right from the Church authorities, as they were several days ahead of us, with a request that all who could possibly be spared should enlist as soldiers in the government service to serve as such for the term of one year. This was quite a hard pill to swallow--to leave wives and children on the wild prairie, destitute and almost helpless, having nothing to rely on only the kindness of neighbors, and go to fight the battles of a government that had allowed some of its citizens to drive us from our homes, but the word came from the right source and seemed to bring the spirit of conviction of its truth with it and there was quite a number of our company volunteered, myself and brother among them.

We were now requested to hurry on as fast as possible and join the main company which had been enrolled on the 16th of July [1846] but our company did not get there until the 20th. Our number made up all that was lacking and we were organized and numbered with the Mormon Battalion and we commenced drawing rations of flour and bacon.

We were allowed to go to an Indian trading post, which was there on the bank of the Missouri River and each one draw a blanket to be paid for out of our pay, which was to be eight dollars per month. We were also allowed I think it was \$3.50 per month for clothing money, which was paid to us in advance for the year. This gave us a nice little sum of money for poor folks to own. The main part of this money was sent back to wives or children or relatives who had been left dependant and helpless in a wild country.

As yet we had no cooking utensils. We were organized in messes of six men to cook, eat and sleep in one tent. Our rations were abundant--about eighteen ounces of flour per day, four ounces of pork, sugar and coffee plentiful. We drew our rations for the mess of six men in one bulk. Now as we had no cooking utensils a lump of dough was mixed by pouring water in the sack which had been opened and the flour hollowed out to hold the water.

Now when the dough was properly mixed, each man would get a stick similar to a common walking cane, go to the sack and get a lump of dough, pull it out in a long string and wrap it around and around the stick and then hold it to the fire until it was considered baked; then eat. The pork we did not use much of. In this way we traveled down the Missouri River for Fort Leavenworth; happy and cheerful, singing and dancing.

One day one of the boys rather an eccentric character, had procured an odd kind of hat with a feather in it, similar to an officer's uniform. He went ahead of the company several miles and about noon called at a farmhouse and asked for his dinner, stating he was the colonel of the Mormon Battalion.

Of course he was given his dinner and the farmer thought himself quite highly honored to have such a guest. When the company came to the farmhouse quite a number of the boys stopped for a drink of water. The man was telling them that our colonel had stopped there and got his dinner. Some of the boys inquired how he looked and what kind of a man he was and from the description given the boys recognized the comrade with a feather in his hat, and had a hearty laugh about it.

After the company had camped for the night the man with a feather in his hat came walking back into camp. The boys saw him coming and knowing what he had done, began to hail him and holler: "Here comes the colonel." The news soon spread through the entire camp and so much yelling and

cheering brought the Colonel Allen from his quarters to enquire what was the matter. On being told the circumstance he also had a hearty laugh over it.

In due time we arrived at Fort Leavenworth. Here we were armed with flintlock musket. It was said to carry an ounce ball one mile. Its weight was twelve or fifteen pounds. Its accouterments were a large cartridge box with heavy leather belt two and one fourth inches wide to carry over the left shoulder, a similar belt with bayonet and scabbard attached to carry over the right shoulder and then a waist belt correspondingly wide and heavy all white leather, and we were required to keep them clean.

Our muskets had to be cleaned often. Also a knap-sack in which to carry our clothing and any other little necessities. It was so arranged that a strap came in front of each shoulder and under the arm with a long strap to reach around our bedding.

With all these straps in front and the filled knap-sack behind, we were nearly covered from neck to waist. We were required to carry all these fixtures, our clothing and bedding and a few rounds of ammunition and then a canteen in which would hold three pints of water, and then a small cotton sack called a hover-sack, in which to carry our dinner and sometimes a day or two rations. These also were made to swing over our shoulders.

But to ease up on us a little the officers allowed each company to club together and buy a four mule team and wagon, in which to haul our knap-sacks and bedding, each man to bear an equal share of the expense. This was a great relief for a while, but when hard times came on, wagon broke down or teams gave out, we had to shoulder our knap-sacks and bedding.

Here in Fort Leavenworth we were given cooking utensils, a camp kettle, frying pan and coffee pot. Here we drew our clothing money for the entire years, \$42.00, which as I have said was mostly sent back to needy friends and relatives.

Here our commander, Colonel [James] Allen, laid in a supply of provisions to last the Battalion one year, but by a mishap it was sent the wrong road. After a few days rest and a little drilling and learning to use our guns and properly form ourselves into ranks and getting baggage, wagons ready we took up the line of march. Our Colonel being unwell at the time was not able to go with us, but it was expected he would overtake us in a few days. The next news we heard of him, he was dead. That cast a gloom over the entire company. What could we do? Our provisions were not within our reach, our Captains were not yet commissioned; it was said we could not draw rations, so a council of officers was held and it was decided to send to Fort Leavenworth and ask for a commissioned officer to come and take command.

Accordingly a commissioned officer was sent. His name was [Lieutenant Andrew Jackson] Smith. Colonel Smith took command until we arrived at Santa Fe and with the Colonel and staff came a doctor whose name was [George B. Sanderson] Sanders. His principal medicine was quinine. The doctor and his quinine played quite a conspicuous part on our journey. Every morning at a stated hour the fifes and drums would play a certain tune that was the sick call. If anything was ailing, any of the men, if they had taken cold or had blistered feet through walking in poor shoes or anything else, they would go at the sick call and the orderly sergeant would go with them and when all the sick were gathered the orderly sergeant would march them to the doctor's quarters, and after a slight examination the doctor would give each one a nice little paper containing a dose of calomel. All were treated alike. They were told to take it with water before eating breakfast. The men fearing to be salivated (?) would often bury it before getting back to camp. After a while the doctor found out the men did not take the calomel. After that they had to take it in his presence. During the time men

were on the sick list they were excused from guard duty, but had to carry their gun and knap-sack. We were on the march every day; all fresh and not much used to walking and it was hard on many of us.

There were several good fiddlers among us and some one had managed to get his fiddle stowed away in a captain's wagon and after a hard day's march, the fiddle was brought out and a lively dance would commence and would continue for the entire evening. There were no girls but many of the boys would take the girls side and do the dance all right. The boys did say it was the best way to rest and they felt better than they would to sit down and sit still.

We were on the route for Santa Fe, nearly one thousand miles distant. Several companies of cavalry were on the same route and maybe passed us. They could out travel us, but before we got to Santa Fe, we passed them. When nearing Santa Fe we overtook a company that had a good supply of provisions and ours was getting quite low. Our colonel asked to borrow a few sacks of flour. The captain at first refused. Our colonel told him we must have it if he had to call out his men and take it. We got the flour all right.

When within five or six days march of Santa Fe a message or dispatch was sent to us from General Kearney who was then in Santa Fe, saying we must hurry. All that were not in Santa Fe by such a date could not cross the mountains for California. We were considerably jaded and at our present speed of travel we could not make it, so it was decided to take the best men for traveling and the best teams and push through and let the others come as fast as they could. Accordingly a few of the best of each company were selected and pushed ahead, I with others, and we arrived there in time to save disobeying orders of General Kearney.

From Santa Fe to California was considered a very hard trip so we were picked over and divided again. The most able bodied men to go through to California, the sick, the crippled and worn out and the laundresses, four women from each company to turn to Bent's Fort and there spend the winter. I was again selected to go ahead. After resting a few days and getting some fresh teams and some clothing (for here was our first pay day for service and considerable money was sent back to needy relatives and friends) we made ready for a start. We were told we would get to California in sixty days, but we were on the road one hundred and twenty days. So our commissary laid a supply of provisions for that time (sixty days) but it was scant, for provisions were scarce then at Santa Fe; two ounces per day flour less than common. There was no wagon road and no one that could be found knew the country, so three men, professed mountaineers were employed as guides or pilots. One would go what he supposed was three day's travel from us and look out the best route for a wagon road and then return and lead the company that distance, and by that time another pilot would have explored the country and returned, and by so doing we always had a guide that knew the country.

After traveling about twenty-five days a bearing was taken with instruments. It was found we were a long ways from California. We had until now been eating our provisions as though we would get to California, where there was more, in sixty days, but it was now decided it would take a much longer time, so our rations were reduced one-fourth less. This began to tell hard on the men, yet we kept pushing ahead until another fifteen or twenty days and then another reckoning was made and found we would yet have to travel a long distance, so our rations were reduced again to one half and we were a long ways from any place where more provisions could be had. Our best and only show was to push ahead and we did.

About now we came to some half-breeds, Indians and Spanish. From them a few of us as individuals could trade for a little dried meat, which we then called very very good. We were now getting quite hungry and we learned from these people it was but three days travel to a Spanish town where we

could get provisions. It was off from our route but a good wagon road to it. Copper ore had been hauled on the road many years. Our colonel said; "Let us go down and get provisions. It was going right among our enemies but we were all willing to go to get something to eat."

So next morning we started on the copper mine road for the Spanish town all rejoicing. After traveling three or four miles the colonel ordered his bugler to call a halt. All hands wondered what was the matter. After a moment's breath the colonel turned to his staff, officers and pilots and said: "Gentlemen, I started for California and damned if I ain't going there. Pilot, you hunt a road for the wagons on the course we have been traveling and go ahead and find a camp ground." So we turned our course about right angle and started for California.

We afterwards learned that the Spaniards had been closely watching us and they expected we would go down to that town and had therefore, collected a large force of their soldiers at that point, and no doubt if we had not turned our course we should have had hard fighting to do and perhaps many of us would have lost our lives, but the Lord controlled the colonel's mind and we came out safe.

I should here mention a promise or prediction made by President Brigham Young before we started, that if we would be faithful, do our duty, remember our prayers, we would never be called to face the enemy in battle. This was verified in every instance during our service.

I well remember the awe, the grandeur and amazement I felt when first I beheld the Pacific Ocean. Seeing such a vast body of water spread out farther than the eye could reach and hear the roar of the waves, created a reverence within me for the greater creator of all things, whose power and might are far beyond our comprehension. If I could but shape my thoughts and put them on paper, I would like to describe the country.

It was now mid-winter; January, [1847]; warm and pleasant--scarcely a mark of frost--which was certainly a blessing to us in our ragged and scanty condition. Flocks of wild geese could be seen any time of the day; herds of horses and cattle, nice and fat, all over the plains, which were covered with a rich growth of vegetation, mostly wild oats, not the pesky kind that infests our fields here but the regular oats, and a tolerable fair grain. This was somewhat cheering, but we were tired and hungry.

We were first located in an old missionary building near San Diego, where we remained but a short time. We were then moved to another missionary station called San Luis Ray, larger and more commodious, but every room was thoroughly infested with body lice. We were, all soon covered with them and with all our cleaning rooms and washing and boiling our clothes we could not get rid of them, while we stayed in that place. Every day it was common to go out, find a warm sun-shiny place, strip ourselves and hunt and kill lice. It was said the Indians used to eat them.

While here five pounds of good fat beef was given for each man's daily rations, but all this did not stop hunger until we got some bread to go with it. After laying here for a long time, eating nothing but fresh beef, we were suddenly called by General [Stephen W.] Kearny to march to Pueblo, Los Angeles. This forced march of four days was very severe on us. We were called to defend and assist General Kearny against [John C.] Fremont and his company who were our enemies or mobocrats right from Missouri. We never saw the enemy but we were marched to the outside of town and camped in our tents on the bank of a nice stream of water. In a few days we were moved to the bench which overlooked the town. Here we were required to build a place of defense by throwing up a bank of earth and making a ditch wide and deep enough so a horseman could not easily ride over it, but the job was not completed by us.

Our time of discharge was now drawing nigh. We were allowed to buy horses or mules or anything for our outfit for home. Good horses could be bought for from three dollars to five dollars; beeves from two dollars to three dollars per head.

In the meantime it was considered our discharge was going to leave the country too weak and we earnestly requested to enlist again and a few did enlist again and were sent to San Diego to strengthen that place, but I thought we had done all we were sent to do and I wanted to get home or back to the Church. So my brother Hyrum and I, with a number of others of the same mind, (from forty to one hundred men), prepared ourselves for the journey towards home.

We traveled up the west coast until we came to Sutter's Fort, about east of San Francisco. From here we started over the mountains on the wagon road. When we arrived at the Truckee River we met Samuel Brannan and others, just from Salt Lake, bringing word from the Quorum of the Twelve, which was then the ruling authority of the Church, advising all who had not provisions enough to last them until the next harvest to return to California unless they expected to go right on through to Winter Quarters for provisions were scarce at Salt Lake.

Therefore, I, with a number of others returned to California. I went to San Francisco and looked for work at the tailoring business. I remained there a few days but not finding work that suited, I went to Monterey. Here I found a chance to work in a tailor shop. I worked there a few weeks. In the meantime many of my comrades had stopped at Sutter's and were digging a millrace for Sutter. In digging the race gold was discovered in great abundance.

While my companions were digging the millrace for Sutter in which gold was discovered, I was wandering around the country trying to find work in a tailor shop. When the report reached me, I was in Monterey, California, about one hundred and fifty miles away. When the report of so much gold being found reached the people, they were anxious to go there. One man offered to furnish provisions, wagon and team, if men would go and work in the mines and give him a portion of what they found. This company I joined, with the understanding that when my companions were ready to go home, I should go with them. We were soon on the road traveling for the mines.

I had a horse to ride, while others rode in the wagon. An intimate friend of mine took turns with me in riding the horse. One would ride while one walked. We would keep near the wagon, so we could get our provisions at mealtime.

In our second day's travel we came to a ranch at which I had left a horse a year previous. We got that horse so each of us had one to ride. We traveled on in this way until we came near the mines.

We came to where the road forked, one leading to the mines, the other to where my companions were. I let my friend ride the horse to the mines, with the understanding that I would be up in a few days and get the horse; but when I went after the horse my friend had turned him out and could not find him, so I bade good-bye to friend, horse and mines and turned back to the camp of my companions.

They were calculating to go back home, which place was in Utah at that time.

They had got a wagon which was about one day's distance. They proposed to me, that if I would go and get the wagon, I should be allowed wages for my time at the rate of one hundred dollars per day, which should be allowed on my share of the outfit they were getting up for our journey homeward. I got the wagon and brought it safe to them.

I must tell you why wages were counted one hundred dollars per day. A man would take his little Indian basket or common milk pan, go to the place where gold was found, fill it with dirt containing gold, take it to the river, sink it up until the dirt was all washed away, then empty the contents of the pan on to a plate, or any tight dish, fill his pan with dirt and gold again and go through the same process of washing the dirt away, and emptying it on to the pile in the plate. When a quantity of this kind had accumulated, it was put into a smaller dish and a spoonful or two of quicksilver (mercury) added to it. The quicksilver would gather all the gold and the refuse was then thrown away. Quicksilver and gold were then put into a little buckskin sack, the sack was twisted up and wrung and the quicksilver would run through like water through cloth, leaving all the gold in the buckskin sack, and the quicksilver could be used again for an indefinite number of times. In this way a man would gather a hundred dollars worth of gold, or more, in a day.

This man Sutter had two small brass cannon that he proposed to sell. It was proposed that the Battalion boys buy these cannon, and take them to Utah as a present to the authorities there. The cannon were bought, each boy paying a small pinch of gold to make up the price, which was about seventy-five dollars apiece. They were loaded into the wagon ready for transportation when all were ready to go.

It was decided that we would make a wagon road over the California Mountains, which would shorten the distance a few day's travel on a new route.

None were to go further than a little valley until all were there, for we must travel together in order to help each other work the road and be a protection against the Indians. A few of the boys went there before the others were ready. Two of them became impatient and anxious to be doing some good, concluded that they would go ahead and look up the intended route, saying that they would be back in the course of a few days, but they never returned.

When the company was ready it started following on their trail. After traveling a day or two, we came to a place where they had camped and near by where their fire had been was a pile of fresh dirt. This looked a little suspicious and a shovel was brought and in digging into this pile of fresh dirt, we found that our companions had been killed and buried by the Indians. We covered them up and put a few stones over their graves and cut their names, Daniel Browelt and John Cox, on a large tree near by. We journeyed on a few miles farther that day and camped. And when all was dark in the night, it was proposed that we load and fire one of the cannon to frighten the Indians, if any were near. We did not know how much it frightened the Indians, but it frightened our stock and they ran and scattered, so it took us nearly all of the next day to find them.

After traveling from here, we saw several parties of Indians, some of whom were wearing the cloths our comrades had worn. We did not molest them but traveled on in peace, occasionally stopping to do a little roadwork. We made good progress on our journey and left behind us a good road, until we got nearly across the mountains. In coming down a canyon we came to large rocks, which were impassible with the wagons. They were from eight to ten feet high.

We had no hammers nor drill with which we could do anything with the stone. It seemed almost an impossibility to go farther. Finally someone suggested that we build a fire on the rocks, and as there were plenty of dry logs and brush near, there was soon a good fire blazing on each rock that lay in our way. When the fire had died down and cooled off a little, we found that as far as the heat had penetrated, the rocks were all broken in small pieces which were soon removed with pick and shovel and another fire built with the same result.

After building three or four fires, we found that the rocks were not much in our way, and we soon had a good wagon road right over them, and we were within a short distance of the old wagon road on Truckee River.

While crossing over the mountains, the wagon that I was interested in broke down and was left by the roadside. We got all of our effects out of the wagon and put them on pack animals.

We now had no more roadwork to do and concluded that we would divide into two companies, pack animals and wagons. I was with the company of pack animals and we could make better headway than the wagons, so we traveled ahead and left them.

Nothing worthy of note happened on our journey until our arrival in Salt Lake Valley, September, 1848. Here I found my good old stepmother, Jane Stoddard Judd. She, with her family, had arrived the year before.

The first night after I came home she made a bed for me on the floor with several heavy quilts folded, but I had been so used to sleeping on the hard board that I could not go to sleep until after midnight. In order to rest, I had to take the top quilt off and roll myself up in it. Then sleep soon overcame me and I had a comfortable night's rest.