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The Mormon Battalion

B. H. Roberts

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On July 16, 1846 approximately 543 latter-day saints volunteered to enlist to aid the U.S. campaign against Mexico. This group of saints was known as the Mormon Battalion, and earned a place in the history of the West. During its 2,000 mile march its men cleared a wagon road from Santa Fe to San Diego and helped secure California as United States territory. Members of the Battalion helped preserve a feeble peace in southern California before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended hostilities. They established a wagon road between the Gila and the Rio Grande, which influenced the U.S. government to make the Gadsden Purchase. They opened wagon roads that linked California with Salt Lake City via Carson and Cajon passes. A former member of the Battalion was arguably given credit for the discovery of gold in California, while others eventually participated in the gold rush and helped stimulate economic development in the Great Basin. These LDS former soldiers ultimately received favorable recognition both from their military commanders and from other non-Mormons for their industriousness and loyalty. And through it all, never fought a battle.

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