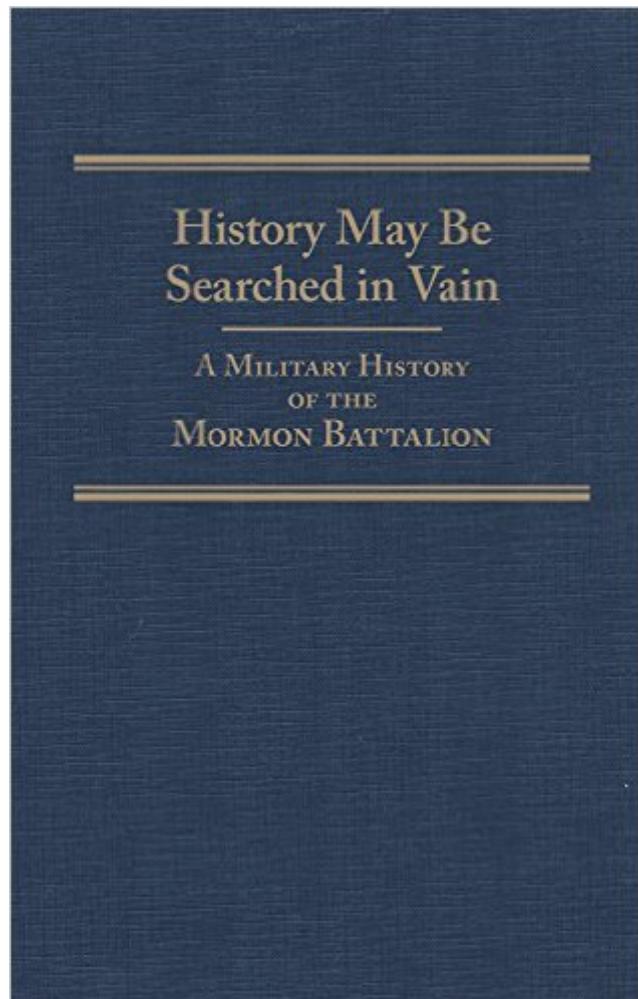


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# History May Be Searched In Vain: A Military History Of The Mormon Battalion



## Synopsis

The only religious unit in American military history. The Mormon battalion was unique in federal service, having been recruited solely from one religious body and having a religious title as the unit designation. Serving in the Mexican War, they marched across the Southwest to California. Strangely, though, the battalion's story has not been told from the perspective of the profession of arms. Since it did not engage in battle, military historians have paid little attention to it. Military aspects of the battalion overlooked. The military aspects of this unique battalion usually been ignored. The most common portrayal of the unit has been to treat it as a group of pioneers, rather than soldiers--emigrants who followed a unique path during the Mormon hegira to the Great Basin. A unique military unit. This volunteer unit of five companies was unique in many ways beyond its pioneer experience. Led by regular officers, including Philip St. George Cooke, it served as part of General Stephen W. Kearny's Army of the West, invading and occupying what would become New Mexico, Arizona, and California. Formed in July 1846 in Council Bluffs, Iowa, the battalion marched to California, where it was discharged from federal service in July 1847, after exactly one year's service. In the process, it did not experience combat, but made one of the most incredible and challenging marches in American military history. The great march across the Southwest. The story of that grueling march across wide prairies, mountains, and deserts is central to the battalion's story. It symbolizes the very essence of the Mormon drama as a frontier epic, and proves more than anything else the men's loyalty, stamina, and sacrifice. In telling that tale, the author also illuminates the battalion's place in the U.S.-Mexican War, as most accounts of its history have ignored its role in the greater campaign. First-hand accounts bring detail and immediacy to the story. More than eighty diaries, journals, memoirs, and typed manuscript copies prepared by battalion members were accessed by the author in the preparation of this work. The journal of Dr. Sanderson: Dr. George B. Sanderson was known in Mormon legend as "Dr. Death," and was feared and loathed by many in the battalion. In the spring of 2003, the Mormon Battalion legacy was greatly enhanced by the discovery of his journal, while serving as a volunteer assistant surgeon assigned to the battalion. This journal, extensively quoted in the book, provides a window to the soul of one of the two most hated characters of the battalion. It joins the other great accounts of Daniel Tyler, Levi Hancock, Henry Standage, William Coray, and others. Maps and illustrations enhance the work. The two appendixes included contain the Army Pay Scale, 1846, and the Mormon Battalion Command and Staff. A thorough bibliography and index complete the book, and add to its value. A handsome volume of typeset and bound to match other volumes in the Frontier Military Series, of which this is volume twenty-five. The book includes a chronology, historical introduction, footnotes, two

appendices, bibliography and index. Printed on acid-free paper and bound in rich blue linen cloth with spine and front covers stamped in gold foil. With thirteen illustrations and three maps.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Let me start the review with a disclaimer. I am an active member of the Mormon Church and also an active Army Officer, which is obviously going to affect my view of the subject. This book is NOT a sustainment of inspirational Mormon folklore about the Mormon Battalion. This book is a factual review of the Mormon Battalion covering its establishment, formation, training, military service, and ultimate discharge from service. It is not the folklore stories of the battalion I had learned in Sunday school it is a critical review of the subject, including some subjects which many members might object. This is not to say the history I had previously learned of the battalion was wrong. To steal a line from Obi Wan, my prior knowledge was "the truth, from a certain point of view". The book lays out the facts from both members of both factions, US government with their motives and the early church member with their motives. The author pulls no punches point out how church leadership, including the Brigham Young, through direct guidance and orders interfered with operational necessities of belonging to a military organization. The split of loyalties between supporting your church leadership and conducting themselves as Soldiers did cause some decent amongst the members. As members of the Mormon Church we sustain our President as a Prophet, seer and revelator. As a Soldier you are expected to comply with orders unless those are illegal, unethical or immoral. Bottom line is some of the guidance issued by the Prophet could not have been compiled with by members of the Battalion without their being insubordinate.

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