MORMON BATTALION ASSOCIATION



AI depiction of the Mormon Battalion's march.

A note from MBA Chairman: *Tom Griggs*

First of all, welcome to our two new board members David Bylund, Heath Nielsen. We are looking forward to working with them. They will be really good additions to the board.

Recently, the Sons of the Utah Pioneers approached us about placing our grave markers on about 284 Battalion graves in Arizona, Utah and Idaho. They will make them part of an 8" diameter 4" thick piece of concrete that will be placed in the ground next to the headstones of Battalion member's graves.

However, they will not replace the markers that have been on the graves for years. Additionally, we are working with them to recognize the people who supported the Battalion–wives, children, laundresses, and young men that helped the officers.

We are developing a smaller marker for these people. This is a three-year project, and we are excited to have these great men, women and children recognized for their sacrifices, and we are excited to

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Welcome to two New MBA Leaders

Dear MBA Members,

It's my pleasure to introduce two new members of our leadership team, Heath Nielsen and John Corless.

Heath is joining our Board of Directors. He is an accomplished publicist, administrator, writer, and educator whose career spans collegiate athletic administration, education, and historical research.

Heath spent nearly three decades in university administration at Mississippi State University, New Mexico State University, and Baylor University. In a second career, he became an educator, teaching broadcast journalism at the high

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MBA President, Greg Christofferson

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school level in Colorado.

A 1994 graduate of Utah State University, Heath recently resumed his academic studies with the goal of earning a graduate degree in history to study the American West. As part of a 2026 capstone project, he authored the essay "The Forgotten Winter Quarters: Pueblo's Sanctuary for Mississippi Saints and Mormon Battalion Soldiers During the Mexican War, 1846-47."



Heath Nielsen



John Corless

An Arizona native who grew up in California, Heath has lived in eight different states across the country but prefers the years spent living in the Four Corners region. He and his wife Deena, a native of Cache Valley, Utah, raised three sons in Texas and Colorado and are the proud grandparents of three granddaughters.

John Corless is assuming the position of staff treasurer. He is a retired CPA, and a Certified Internal Auditor and Certified Fraud Examiner.

He earned a BS degree from BYU with a major in Accounting and minor is Business Administration and holds MS and PhD degrees from the University of Minnesota.

John has taught at the University of Connecticut (where he found it a joy to live in the cradle of liberty for the 200th birthday of our country), University of Wyoming, and CSU-Sacramento.

John moved back to Utah in 2019. His wife, Ronda passed away in 2024. They are the parents of five sons and 20 grandchildren. His favorite place where he has lived is in Connecticut.

We are pleased to have two such qualified and willing members of our board and staff!

I would like to acknowledge Ron Kirkpatrick for his years of devoted service to the Association, where he has served as treasurer.

We will miss his knowledge, expertise and humor. We wish him well in all that he is doing in the future.

Finally, we would love to have you join us for the "Days of '47" parade on July 24th. We muster at the corner of South Temple and State Street at 8 a.m.. The parade lasts about an hour and the route is mostly downhill. If you don't feel up to it, please let your children and teenagers and older grandchildren. It would be a great experience for them. All are welcome, male and female. Just wear pioneer-type dress and we will provide the accouterments. Hope to see you there!

Greg

Mormon Battalion Association Board

Tom Griggs, Chair
Smokie Bassett
David Bylund,
Peter D. Guilbert
L. Denny Hoeh
Terry Latey
Randall D. Madsen
Heath Nielsen,
Gary L. Smith

Executive & Support Staff

Greg Christofferson	President
Laura & Craig Anderson	Co-Directors
Tate Abdon	Vide President
Linda Griggs	Secretary
John Corless	Treasurer
Richard Harden	Monuments
David Day	Legal Adviser
Peggy Bradfield	Newsletter
Lawrence Law	Website
Jonathan Rivera	Membership
Val John Halford	Reenactor Coordinator
Mary Ann Kirk	Facebook

GROUP STUDIES TRAGEDY SPRINGS AREA IN THE HIGH SIERRA NEVADA MOUNTAINS



Members of the Tragedy Spring Group pause near the MB marker

Two years ago, 2024, about 11 members of MBA followed a guided tour of the trans-Sierra Mormon Emigrant Trail from Sutter's Fort to the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, noting that serious fire and wind damage was present at Tragedy Spring, and improvements were needed at Devil's Ladder.

A year ago, 2025, members of MBA, OCTA, USFS, NPS-Trails, local LDS Stake members, and others met at Tragedy Springs and Devil's Ladder to discuss restoration and interpretive site plans for both sites.

On Thursday, June 25, 2026, members from the groups listed above met at Tragedy Spring to perform more detailed studies of this site and map its features. Preceding the meeting, Coreen Donnelly of the NPS-Historic Trails provided maps showing proposed ADA compliant trails that could be constructed at the Tragedy Spring site. After the trails are built, interpretive signage would be added to the trails.

There was no discussion of the Devil's Ladder site at this time. The emphasis was merely the Tragedy Spring site. Efforts during this meeting included:

- Mapping the precise location (geographical coordinates) of site features;
- Measuring distances and bearings between features;
- Locating the water pipe from the spring's cistern, and locations of its leaks (the owner of the water rights and adjacent property volunteered to remedy these issues);
- Detecting possible under-ground locations of human remains via "Kalli" the Cadaver Dog;
- Shooting drone videos of the entire site;
- Discussing where to construct ADA compliant and interpretive trails, and where not to construct

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work with the SUP on this project. I think it will help strengthen the relationship between the two organizations. We will be doing a flag ceremony with them on the 24th of July.

One of the things we did at Rootstech is foster a reciprocal working relationship with the LDSAFA (Latter-Day Saint Ancestral Family Association). They will encourage the members of their families to join us and support us. In return it is appropriate that our members join the LSDAFA families, if they have family ties, and support them. It may be of interest that a couple of the families have purchased grave markers for their ancestors. Attached is a copy of the LDSFA mission statement and list of member families.

For more information on what LDSAFA is, and its mission statement, and a list of member families, please see the information on page 6.

YUMA MBA GROUP MARKS 12TH YEAR IN SNOWFLAKE, AZ PARADE



Yuma Mormon Battalion Group looks forward to Snowflake parade.

Our organization averages 21 young men along with eight young women, ages 14 to 18, plus 14 adult committee members, for a total of 46 members.

Our group will be marching for our 12th year in the Snowflake, Arizona Pioneer Day Parade on Saturday, July 25th. We enjoy going there since the weather is much cooler there for Arizona, since the mountains are cooler during the summer than in the desert weather of Yuma, AZ (107 degrees is the high today). The Snowflake Parade committee has asked our group to carry their parade banner on numerous occasions, which we consider a great honor. And the Taylor, AZ rodeo is held on Friday night, which is very enjoyable to watch.

Our reenactors do three events each year beginning with the Colorado River Crossing of 1847 commemoration, which is held on the Saturday closest to Jan 9, 10 and 11.

The crossing took the Battalion 3 days to traverse the mighty Colorado River. Diary records of the time gauge the river as one-half mile wide, and, once entering, the current took the soldiers, animals and wagons down stream one mile before exiting.

Second, is the Pioneer Day Parade in Snowflake, AZ and Third, is the Veterans Day Parade. The U S Army of the West Mormon Battalion was the first American military force to arrive at Yuma. The Battalion's job, as assigned by the United States Department War, was to build a wagon road from Santa Fe, New Mexico as no roads existed at the time, and maps were virtually non-existent.

TRAGEDY

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trails so as to preserve delicate historic features;

- Determining how and who to remove fallen timber and debris. Originally it was thought that the local USFS would do that, but it was learned that it is not an USFS priority, but permission can be granted to MBA and local LDS Stake(s) for some of the debris removal, following USFS's guidelines.

The gathering lasted about 2 to 3 hours, and the above listed items were accomplished. Planning efforts will continue this year. It is expected that work crews will be organized this year or next year to remove debris from the site.

Richard Harden
MBA Monuments



Grave site with fallen and burnt wood.

MBA Reflects on Activities from 175th Year

The Mormon Battalion Association successfully organized a wide range of projects and events in honor of the 175th anniversary four years ago, made possible by the generosity of both public and private grants. Gratitude was shown to grantees through acknowledgments in the trail brochure, printed programs, musical CD/DVD, on the MBA website, and through verbal recognition in various venues.

Brochure Distribution and Outreach

A total of 25,000 brochures were created and printed, then distributed at six Church historic sites, museums, and visitor centers to tourists traveling along the Battalion Trail. These efforts helped to broaden awareness and engagement with the Battalion's history.

National Events and Activities

The Association either sponsored or participated in events commemorating the Battalion across several states, including Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, Kansas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, and Utah. Activities included symposiums, presentations, reenactments, trail excursions, and the coordination of both large and small events in various cities and towns.

Research and Historical Verification

A multi-year research project was completed, verifying all soldiers of the Battalion as well as the women and children who accompanied them. This effort has contributed significantly to the historical record.

Key Events and Partnerships

In January 2022, the Association helped organize and coordinate multiple events and tours in San Diego, in collaboration with the Oregon California Trails Asso-ciation Mid-Year Conference and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. These events attracted thousands



Volunteers begin the July 24th Parade last year.

sands of attendees. July 2022 saw an encampment and educational symposium in Stansbury Park, Utah, held in partnership with the Utah Living History Association and attended by several hundred people.

Parade Participation and Musical Tribute

The Association organized the initial Flag entry for Salt Lake's Days of 47 parade, featuring nearly 150 participants representing Mormon Battalion detachments. The parade was viewed live by thousands along the route and by many more on television. Additionally, through private funding, the Association commissioned award-winning composer Marden Pond to create a musical tribute to the Battalion. This composition was recorded for a CD/DVD [see our web site mormonbattalion.com for copies] and performed live with narration and professional musicians at the Mormon Tabernacle on Temple Square on July 24, with an estimated 3,000 people in attendance.

Storytelling and Educational Outreach

A Humanities grant enabled the hiring of storytellers to write and perform stories focused on the women connected to the Mormon Battalion. Many of these stories were recorded and uploaded to the Association's new YouTube Channel. Educational presentations were also hosted online every other month, featuring researchers and historians discussing various aspects of the Battalion and the trail experience. Educational articles appeared in major publications such as Church News, LDS Living, and the Mormon History Association Publication.

Public Involvement and Media Presence

The Association's outreach was extensive, with thousand attending live events and additional exposure through articles in major newspapers and professional publications. Social media engagement was significant, with multiple Facebook posts and numerous educational videos added to the Association's YouTube Channel, reaching and engaging thousands more.

Preparations and Plans for the 180th Commemoration

Brochure Updates and Distribution

To prepare for the upcoming celebration, 30,000 updated brochures have been printed and distributed. If you need brochures or your event, please reach out to Laura Anderson at 801-898-9085 or Greg Christofferson at (714) 318-6644.

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Volunteers gather to restore MB marker in Arizona

A call from a local Casa Grande, Arizona historian and preservation advocate to a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints set in motion the sprucing up of the town's Mormon Battalion marker and involved the church's local youth in the process.

Marge Jantz phoned church member Scott McEuen and said the monument could use some work. The monument that was erected in the 1970s with young boys from the Mesa 3rd Ward and Boy Scout Troop 57 needed some TLC. Those that volunteered to work on this marker dressed in authentic 1880s costumes, added fresh paint, touched up the sign, and then spruced up the landmark's surroundings.

Tucson historian, Randy Madsen came to speak to the gathering about the sacrifices of those original Mormon Battalion volunteers, among them his great-great grandfather on one side of his family tree and another was a great-great-great grandfather on the other side. These brave men went days without sufficient food or water and many were without shoes, yet they persevered and continued their journey to San Diego, California.



Volunteers dressed for the period pause for a photo. Picture courtesy Pinal Central News.

"They taught us about helping our neighbors, being adventurous, know how to sacrifice, know how to be obedient and know how to persevere when times get tough," he said.

Click on the link below to read more about this story "Local youths help restore CG Mormon Battalion monument" by Jodie Newell published by Pinal Central news at: https://www.pinalcentral.com/casa_grande_dispatch/local-youths-help-restore-cg-mormon-battalion-monument/article_0cb1283f-32ed-4221-81c3-998cbbd83d5a.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=email&utm_campaign=user-share.

REFLECTS

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Parade Participation and Musical Tribute

Once again, the Association will organize the opening Flag entry at Salt Lake's Days of '47 parade. See information provided on p. 6 of the newsletter.

Pioneer Program at the Tabernacle on Temple Square

Thanks to private funding, the Association has again engaged award-winning composer, Marden Pond, to direct a musical tribute to the Battalion. This performance, featuring professional musicians, and narration, will take place at the Mormon Tabernacle on Temple Square. Our guest speaker will be D. Todd Christofferson, a member of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Last time, we had around 3,000 attendees; this year, with no COVID restrictions, we hope to fill all 8,000 seats in the Tabernacle. More details are forthcoming.

How can I help?

We encourage you to plan an activity about Mormon Battalion history for 2027. Connect with your local SUP or DUP group, participate in the SUP grave marking project, contact your local museum, library, or historical society, write for a newsletter, or organize a historical outing. Help with the making of accouterments for the parade. You can also follow the Auto Tour Brochure. Don't forget to share your activities and photos with our newsletter. For Mormon information call Laura Anderson at 801-909-9085.

Other resources:

Mormon Battalion Facebook page, maintained by Mary Ann Kirk provides histories of each man and woman involved. See p. 7 for more.

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Calling Participants for the Days of '47 Parade



Calling participants for the Days of '47 Parade. This year it is on Friday, July 24th, and planning ahead for 2027, it will be on Saturday, July 24th. The Association will feature as the opening flag entry. Our aim for 2027 is to exceed the number of volunteers we had for the 175th commemoration, in which we made an effort to portray the Battalion Sick detachment of about 150 men. The parade will be watched live by thousands along the route and many more thousands on television. This is a great way to promote the Battalion story! The Mormon Battalion has participated in this parade since at least 1854. What a legacy. We invite you to join us, or if that is not advisable, then please encourage your descendants to join our parade entry. Sons or grandsons make wonderful participants.

HISTORIES

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https://www.facebook.com/p/Mormon-Battalion-Association-Official-Site-100069476179805/ for past presentations for ideas https://www.youtube.com/@themormonbattalionassociat5568, or MBA's official YouTube channel Mormonbattalion.com web-site,

Latter Day Saint Ancestral Families Association

https://sites.google.com/view/ldsafa/home

Latter Day Saint Ancestral Families Association (LDSAFA) is a free registration, publication and support association for LDS Ancestral Family Organizations (AFOs). (An Ancestral Family Organization is larger than a parent or grandparent family and includes the descendants of a common ancestral couple.)

LDSAFA encourages the continuation of LDS AFOs through freely registering, publicizing and supporting their genealogical and historical activities. In fact, LDSAFA can be considered a free "one-stop-shop" for locating links and information about LDS AFOs.

There are no costs for LDS AFOs to register and participate in LDSAFA, and all LDSAFA member organizations are entitled to use the LDSAFA Member Seal and receive free listing, publicity and news reports on matters pertaining to LDS AFOs.

LDSAFA provides information about resources, practices and activities that ancestral family organizations have found meaningful and successful through the years, including information and links on: AI research, communications, DNA research, documents and photos, fundraising, genealogies, histories, incorporations, organization, pioneer memorials, publicity, publishing, research, reunions, technologies, testimonials, videos, websites, and youth involvement.

LDSAFA Ancestral Family Organizations

Allred Family Organization
Milo **Andrus** Family Organization
Belnap Family Organization
Bluth Family Association
Braithwaite Family Organization
Brough Family Organization
Busath Family Organization
Anson Bowen **Call** Family Organization
John **Carter** & Hannah Knight **Libby** Family Org.
Ezra Thompson **Clark** Family Organization
Samuel **Clark** Family Organization
George **Clayton** Family Organization
Phineas Wolcott **Cook** Family Organization
Alfred **Cordon** Family Organization
Winslow **Farr** Sr. Family Organization
Henry **Grow** Family Association
Hale Family Organization
Nathan **Harris** and Rhoda **Lapham** Family Org.
Martin **Heiner** Family Organization
Henry **Hendricks** Family Organization
Benjamin Franklin **Johnson** Family Org.
Joseph **Knight** Sr. Family Organization
Western Association of **Leavitt** Families
Henry **Lunt** Family Organization
Nichols and **Booth** Family Organization
Osmond Family Organization
John **Pack** Family Association
Jared **Pratt** Family Association
John Hardison **Redd** Family Organization
Miles Park **Romney** Family Organization
Joseph **Smith** Jr. & Emma **Hale** Historical Soc.
Abraham Owen **Smoot** Family Organization
Jacob **Strong** Family Organization
George Washington **Taggart** Family Org.
Joseph **Taylor** Sr. Family Association
Theodore **Turley** Family Organization
John **Walker** Family Organization
Whiting Family Organization

JULY 24 PARADE INFO:

Where: State Street and South Temple

When: Friday July 24th. Line up by 8 a.m.

Costuming
If you need accoutrements (belts etc.) call Laura Anderson at 801-898-9085
.
For an easy way fo remake a white, button-down shirt for men instructions can be found at:

https://mommamindyprairieprimer.wordpress.com/2013/01/08/repurposed-pioneer-shirt/