

William's Departure

The settlement at Garden Grove was barely two months old when United States Army Captain James Allen arrived at the neighboring way station of Mount Pisgah, thirty miles to the north and west, to raise a battalion of Mormon men to serve twelve months in the war against Mexico. The Army unit, commanded by Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny and known as "the Army of the West," was prepared to reimburse the men for their services. ¹

To achieve his recruitment objective of four or five companies Allen issued a "Circular To The Mormons," dated June 26, 1846. The enticement, in part, said:

"The (enlistees) will receive pay and rations, and other allowances, such as volunteers or regular soldiers receive, from the day they shall be mustered into the service, and will be entitled to all comforts and benefits of regular soldiers of the army, and when discharged, as contemplated, at California, they will be given, gratis, their arms and accoutrements, with which they will be fully equipped at Fort Leavenworth. This is offered to the Mormon people now.

NOTE. - I hope to complete the organization of this battalion in six days after my reaching Council Bluffs, or within nine days from this time. Will receive all healthy, able-bodied men of from eighteen to forty-five years of age."

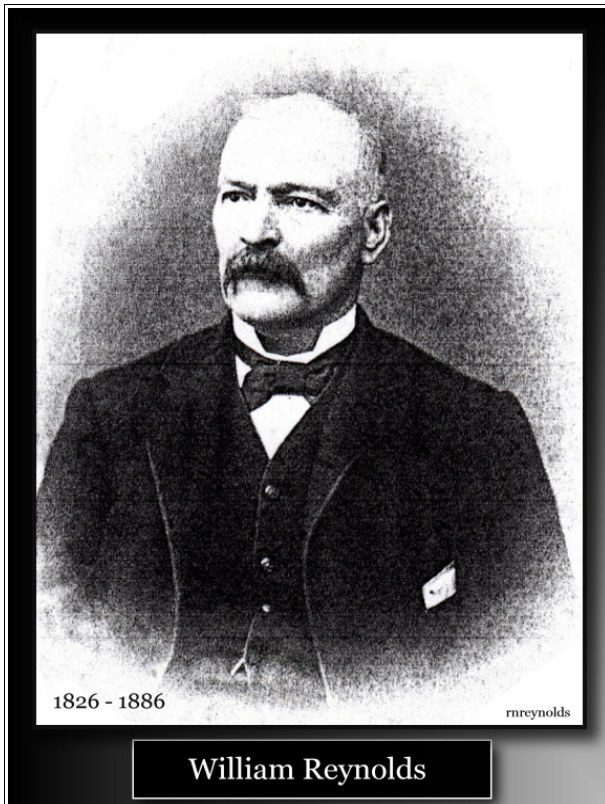
The practical mind of Brigham Young quickly saw advantages to Captain Allen's call. First, he said, it would give the saints an opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty to the United States; second, it would transfer five hundred men fifteen hundred miles west at government expense; third, it would furnish money for the Saints to make the trip west since the volunteers could draw some of the money for their clothing allowance in advance. ²

On July 7, 1846, Brigham Young urgently addressed a lengthy letter to Samuel Bent, Branch President at Garden Grove, laying forth all the persuasive reasons for recruiting volunteers to travel immediately to Council Bluffs to join the Mormon Battalion. ³

1 For a full account of the Mormon Battalion, see *Army of Israel, Mormon Battalion Narratives* edited by David L. Bigler and Will Bagley, Utah State University Press, Logan, Utah, 2000.

2 Charles C. Rich Journal, 2:11.

3 Brigham Young to Samuel Bent, Mt. Pisgah, 7 July 1846, quoted in *Journal History*.



William was born in Avon, Livingston County, New York, September 25, 1826. He moved to Michigan with his widowed mother when ten years of age; later walking through the Michigan frontier to Saline, Washtenaw County, Michigan where he took up the trade of miller with his older brother Levi Hull. In 1846 William left for the West with his older brother Warren F. and Warren's new bride Edna Merrell. At Council Bluffs, Iowa, William enlisted as a private in Co. C of the Iowa Volunteers of the Mormon Battalion in the War with Mexico. After completing one of the longest marches in military history he returned to Michigan in 1848 where he married Calista Climena Carver. He continued as a miller while serving as a County Supervisor and for two years the Sheriff of Ionia County. He died at Hubbardston on 5 December 1886. On January 29, 1887 his wife Calista was granted a monthly pension of \$8 dollars for his military service.

William responded in the affirmative and began the trip of one hundred and thirty-eight miles to the west. It is most likely that he traveled together with many other recruits who decided to join and follow Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards on their return trip to Council Bluffs.

The volunteers assembled on 15 July, 1846 in Council Bluffs to hear Brigham Young admonish them to be faithful soldiers and to abide by the advice of church

leaders once disbanded in California. On the following day, July 16, 1846, four companies of over four hundred men, and part of the fifth, were mustered into the service of the United States by Captain James Allen. Their pay and rations dated from that time. A fifth company was soon afterwards filled.⁴

At just under twenty years old, William found himself among the young Iowa volunteer recruits of the Mormon Battalion. He was given the rank of Private and assigned to Company C. He served faithfully as one of only a handful of Battalion members who were not Mormons. From statements contained in his wife's pension affidavits it appears that, for a time, he was assigned to assist the battalion's infamous Dr. George B. Sanderson who, deservedly or not, earned the nickname, "Dr. Death."

At the conclusion of the march in the late spring of 1847 in Los Angeles, California, General Stephen Watts Kearny chose an escort of 15 of his best soldiers to return with him to the United States with the objective to reach Fort Leavenworth, Kansas in August of that year. Kearny's purpose was to return Colonel John C. Fremont to Washington D. C. and have him tried for his attempted usurpation of the governorship of California, which Kearny held was his alone because of his rank and his orders from President Polk. William was chosen as one of the escorts and acted as a guard for Fremont on the return trip. After his military service was ended at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas in August 1847, William returned to Michigan by way of St. Louis. On 21 May, 1851 he married Calista C. Carver in the Presbyterian church at Clinton, Lenawee County, Michigan with the Rev. W. P. Wastele officiating. He fathered four children and died at Hubbardston, Michigan in 1886.⁵

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4. Notes: Thursday, July 16, 1846, Council Bluffs, in Iowa: Four companies of the Mormon Battalion, about four hundred men, were officially mustered into service. They were formed into a square by their captains on Redemption Hill, where they were addressed by members of the Twelve. They then marched double file seven miles down the bluffs to the flats by the river at the ferry crossing. At 1:30 p.m., Brigham Young (at Cold Spring) had started for the river and by 2:30 had crossed over and met with the volunteers who were ready to be delivered over to newly promoted Lieutenant Colonel Allen for service in the Mormon Battalion. Colonel Allen read an order to the battalion, "In virtue of authority given me by the Colonel commanding the Army of the West, I hereby assume the command of the Mormon Battalion, raised at this place for the service of the United States. Therefore, companies now organized will be held in readiness to march at the shortest notice, and as soon as the fifth company be filled all will be ready for movement." The battalion was then taken to Trader's Point where Colonel Allen issued provisions which included, "camp kettles, knives, forks, spoons, plates, coffee, sugar and blankets." These items were deducted from their first pay.
 5. Digital copies of William's Mexican War records are now available at Fold3.com. They include records of his muster and release dates as well as his assignments as Teamster, Cook, and the Special Detail ordered by General Kearny.



Historic "Soldier" monument at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
where Pvt. William Reynolds was mustered out
of General Kearny's Special Detail
in August, 1847.

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