

and only a few children prepared for the grueling desert march.

After a strenuous desert march, the battalion reached the Pima villages scattered along the Gila River. From there it followed the previously established Gila Trail to the Colorado River, forded the Colorado, then struggled from water hole to water hole along the southern edge of the Imperial Sand Dunes and across the Imperial Valley. Finally, it followed the dry Vallecito Wash to the infamous Box Canyon. As the sidewalls of the wash became too narrow for wagons, the men hewed a route through the rock outcroppings and brought the five remaining wagons into southern California.

The Mormon Battalion's only engagement of the war, the Battle of the Bulls, occurred December 11, 1846, when several of the battalion's hunters opened fire on wild cattle that had stampeded into the rear companies. The toll was ten to fifteen bulls killed, two mules gored to death, three men wounded. When the battalion later neared Tucson, Mexican soldiers and residents chose to flee rather than fight.

After reaching San Diego in January 1847, LDS soldiers were given a variety of garrison responsibilities, with fifteen serving as Kearny's escort back to Fort Leavenworth. After more than 300 were discharged in Los Angeles on July 16, 1847, Captain Hunt led about fifty northward to Monterey. Some of the 300 worked near San Francisco before reuniting for the trip to Salt Lake City. The largest group, about 164 men, met Captain James Brown of the Pueblo detachments on the Truckee River in the Sierra Nevada Mountains on September 7, 1847. Brown was en route to collect his men's pay in San Francisco. Brown brought news of the safe arrival of the PIONEERS in the Salt Lake Valley, along with word that the men were free to work in California or to proceed to Salt Lake City, depending upon their financial circumstances and desire.

While a few went eastward, the majority of the destitute men scattered for odd jobs, including about forty who worked at Sutter's Fort and a few who were at Sutter's Mill when James Marshall discovered gold. Eighty-one men reenlisted as the California Volunteers and performed garrison duty at San Diego. After their discharge in the spring of 1848, these men opened a wagon road via Cajon Pass to Salt Lake City.

Though leaving their families behind was difficult and their desert march arduous, by their sacrifice the men of the Mormon Battalion facilitated

the Saints' move to the Salt Lake Valley and helped develop the West.

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MORMON HANDICRAFT

Mormon Handicraft, a consignment store for handwork, including quilts, rugs, dolls, baby clothes, and other handmade items, was founded in 1937 by Louise Y. ROBISON, then general president of the RELIEF SOCIETY. The store was organized as a means of allowing women to supplement their family income during the depression of the 1930s (*History of Relief Society*, p. 115). Mormon Handicraft followed the pattern of earlier women's co-op stores operated by Relief Societies from the mid-1870s to 1912 (*A Centenary of Relief Society*, pp. 83–84).

Operated as a nonprofit organization, the store was originally administered by the Relief Society leaders, who desired "to preserve the skills of our pioneer ancestors and the skills and crafts of the various countries" (*History of Relief Society*, p. 115). General Board member Nellie O. Parker declared, "For the world to beat a path to the door of Mormon Handicraft Shop is our aim; and if Emerson is right, we are confident it will be so when people know of the fineness and skill of the workmanship to be found here" (Parker, p. 417).

An advertising brochure proclaimed, "Rare skill in handicraft from every country has been perpetuated in Utah. . . . This cosmopolitan background, unique for thrift and versatility, has produced a handicraft guild not to be found in any other place in the world. . . . There is quality only hands can produce" (Parker, p. 417). The brochure was distributed in dining and lounge cars of trains coming into Salt Lake City and was placed in a display case in the Hotel Utah lobby. The cam-

paign was successful: On one occasion, Parker reported, after a visit to the store, a buyer for the Altman Company ordered “up-to-the-minute luncheon sets, copper work and oxen-yoke lamps” (Parker, p. 417).

Beginning in 1960, its scope was broadened and Mormon Handicraft became a distribution point for materials and ideas for the Relief Society’s homemaking meetings, particularly quilting and other handwork supplies. Through the Homemaking Department of the Relief Society, women learned and practiced homemaking arts. The monthly compassionate service instruction given in Relief Society, where members were taught ways to assist less fortunate Church members, often included the production and distribution of quilts, clothing, and other necessities for the home. Availability of materials and classes was, therefore, welcomed by local Relief Society leaders. The sale of materials also helped maintain the economic viability of Mormon Handicraft.

As the Church grew, the need for a centralized distribution and education point diminished, and the shop as a separate unit was closed in January 1986 (*Church News*, Jan. 26, 1986, p. 12). The store then became a division of DESERET BOOK COMPANY in June 1986. At the time of transfer, Ronald A. Millett, Deseret Book president, affirmed the company’s goal of preserving Mormon Handicraft’s reputation in both consignment and retail supply operations (*Church News*, June 8, 1986, p. 14).

In 1987, Mormon Handicraft accepted over 9,000 different items made by 1,900 contributors, ages fourteen to ninety-two. Contributors varied from the widow in Salt Lake City who for forty-eight years produced dish towels, stuffed animals, aprons, bibs, and almost ten thousand crocheted heart sachets, to the women in the Philippines who sold elaborate lace-edged handkerchiefs as their sole income source (*Church News*, Mar. 28, 1987, p. 10; *Mormon Handicraft: A Brief History*, p. 5).

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MORMONISM, AN INDEPENDENT INTERPRETATION

One may take two basic approaches to the study of Mormonism as a religion. The first, which involves examination and careful consideration of the claims of Mormonism to be the truth, is a predominantly religious undertaking. Investigators search for answers to the fundamental question of whether The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (or the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, as the case may be) is, or is not, the only true Christian church and whether, in fact, the Saints have the only legitimate priesthoods of Jesus Christ (Melchizedek and Aaronic).

The other approach to the study of the Latter-day Saints has as its goal not truth so much as understanding. Scholars—both in and outside the academy—study LDS theology, doctrine, ritual, ecclesiology, organizational structure, and the Mormon experience across time in an effort to determine what sort of movement Mormonism is and where and how it fits into the grand mosaic of world religions.

In addition to all the individuals who became Mormon converts, large numbers of journalists and Gentile clerics mounted explorations of the first sort during the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth century. Many of the journalists decided that Mormonism was not a religion at all, while most clerics concluded that it was a Christian heresy. As for academic approaches to the topic before the middle of the twentieth century, only a small number of scholars made serious efforts to comprehend where the Latter-day Saints stood among the world’s religions.

Some scholarly studies of Mormonism were completed before that time. In an appendix to an article on “Scholarly Studies of Mormonism,” Leonard J. Arrington listed thirty-two doctoral dissertations on Mormon history and culture that were completed by 1950 (p. 30). Additionally, almost as soon as professional associations of scholars started to publish articles and proceedings in journal form, articles about the Saints started to appear in professional journals. But despite the serious and systematic study represented in these dissertations and professional articles, only a small number of authors pulled back from their material to attempt a classification of Mormonism within a broad religious context.

This situation changed after World War II when Mormon and non-Mormon scholars alike