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Latter-day Saints and the Civil War

Kenneth L. Alford Ph.D.

Brigham Young University - Utah, alford@byu.edu

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The Civil War had a deep and lasting effect on the United States. In many ways it shaped the nation that Americans live in today. Although Utah Territory was physically removed from the war’s battlefields and the resulting devastation, the Civil War also had a deep impact on the territory and its inhabitants. To a large extent, though, Utah Territory watched the war from the sidelines—providing only one active-duty military unit for ninety days of federal service guarding a portion of the Overland Trail. Latter-day Saints who lived outside of Utah were often more directly and deeply influenced by the course of the war.

The genesis of this volume was the sesquicentennial of the Civil War, especially the 150th anniversary of the active federal service of Captain Lot Smith’s Utah Cavalry company. Previous histories, especially Margaret Fisher’s 1929 book Utah and the Civil War and E. B. Long’s The Saints and the Union in 1981, have addressed Utah Territory and the Civil War. The purpose of this book is to take a fresh look at several aspects of the intersection between Latter-day Saints, Utah Territory, and the Civil War.

In December 1860, a few months before Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated as the sixteenth president of the United States, delegates from the state of South Carolina met in Charleston to draft an Ordinance of Secession. They appealed “to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions” and “declared that the Union heretofore existing between this State and the other States of North America, is dissolved, and that the State of South Carolina has resumed her position among the nations of the world, as a separate and independent State.” The primary reason they gave to justify secession was the “increasing hostility on the part of the non-slaveholding States to the Institution of Slavery.”

It is generally accepted that Civil War hostilities began on April 12, 1861, when Confederate forces fired upon Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor. The opening artillery rounds of the Civil War were actually fired, though, on January 9, 1861, when a
Confederate artillery battery in Charleston Harbor opened fire on the *USS Star of the West*, a ship sent to resupply the Union garrison stationed at Fort Sumter.²

As an example of the many personal and family dramas that would play out during the next four years, the commander of the Confederate artillery battery that shelled Fort Sumter was P. G. T. Beauregard, a West Point graduate who served as superintendent at the United States Military Academy for just five days in 1861 before being asked to resign because of his well-known Southern sympathies. Beauregard’s antagonist commanding Fort Sumter was Major Robert Anderson. Ironically, Anderson had been Beauregard’s artillery instructor when Beauregard was a West Point cadet, and the two officers knew each other well.³

Two months after Fort Sumter was attacked, on July 22, 1861, the U.S. House of Representatives adopted the following resolution that officially recognized that a civil war existed between the Northern and Southern states:

Resolved by the House of Representatives of the Congress of the United States, That the present deplorable civil war has been forced upon the country by the dis-unionists of the Southern States now in revolt against the constitutional Government and in arms around the capital; that in this national emergency Congress, banishing all feelings of mere passion or resentment, will recollect only its duty
to the whole country that this war is not waged upon our part in any spirit of oppression[,] nor for any purpose of conquest or subjugation, nor purpose of overthrowing or interfering with the rights or established institutions of those States, but to defend and maintain the supremacy of the Constitution and to preserve the Union, with all the dignity, equality, and rights of the several States unimpaired; and that as soon as these objects are accomplished the war ought to cease.  

Three days later, on July 25, 1861, the Senate adopted a similar resolution.

It is likewise generally accepted that the Civil War ended on April 9, 1865, when General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox, Virginia. Lee’s surrender was a major turning point in the war, and it clearly marked the beginning of the war’s end, but General Lee actually only surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia. It took over two months for the remaining Confederate armies to surrender to Union forces. The Cherokee general Stand Watie surrendered the final Confederate forces at Fort Towson in the Indian Territory (today Oklahoma) on June 23, 1865.

It may come as a surprise to many readers to learn that the Civil War did not come to a complete end until almost fourteen months after the last Confederate soldiers laid down their arms. On June 13, 1865, as a preliminary step toward formally ending the war, President Andrew Johnson issued a proclamation that declared “that the insurrection which heretofore existed in the several States before named, except in Texas, was at an end and was henceforth to be so regarded.” Likewise, it was not until April 2, 1866, that the President proclaimed, “The insurrection in the State of Texas has been completely and everywhere suppressed and ended and the authority of the United States has been successfully and completely established in the said State of Texas and now remains therein unresisted and undisputed.” And it was not until August 20, 1866, that President Johnson signed Proclamation 157, which declared that “the insurrection is at an end and that peace, order, tranquility, and civil authority now exist in and throughout the whole of the United States of America.”

The time line provides a summary of events for both the United States and the

Stand Watie, a Confederate brigadier who served as a chief of the Cherokee nation (1862–66), was the last Confederate general to surrender (on June 23, 1865, at Fort Towson in the Indian Territory). (Courtesy of Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield; WICR 31445)
Latter-day Saints (with an emphasis on events within Utah Territory). The time line begins prior to the Civil War and continues past 1865, listing events that both influenced and were influenced by the Civil War. The years 1861 to 1865 are outlined in greater detail.

In chapter 1, William P. MacKinnon sets the stage for the opening of the Civil War by demonstrating numerous ways that the Utah War—the U.S. Army’s last major deployment prior to the Civil War—had a pervasive impact on the leadership skills of its veterans who served across the country in both the Union and Confederate armies while unleashing a variety of political, economic, religious, geographical, and societal forces that affected Utah during the Civil War and thereafter. Sherman L. Fleek provides an overview of the Civil War in chapter 2 to give readers an overview of the wartime events that transpired beyond Utah’s borders.

Latter-day Saints believe that on Christmas Day in 1832, Joseph Smith received a revelation from the Lord prophesying in some detail the sources and causes of the American Civil War. In chapter 3, Scott C. Esplin discusses the history and varied uses of this revelation from 1832 to the present—with an emphasis on the period surrounding the Civil War.

It is difficult to mention the Civil War without considering the towering presence of Abraham Lincoln. In chapter 4, Mary Jane Woodger provides insight into the relationship between Abraham Lincoln and the Mormons that stretched over several decades.

Throughout the Civil War, rumors swirled across the nation that Utah Territory was going to secede. Craig K. Manscill observes in chapter 5 that suspicion of Mormon secession began decades prior to the war—even before Latter-day Saints established themselves in the Rocky Mountains.

In chapter 6, Richard E. Bennett, in an article reprinted from *Mormon Historical Studies*, has assembled some of the wartime public pronouncements made by Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff, Heber C. Kimball, and other Latter-day Saint leaders.

Brett Dowdle, who read and researched the 1860–65 correspondence, both public and private, of Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff, and other Latter-day Saint Church leaders, presents his findings in chapter 7. The views those leaders expressed in letters reveal a
more complete understanding of their feelings regarding the war than can be obtained from examining only the public record.

In chapter 8, “The Lot Smith Cavalry Company: Utah Goes to War,” Joseph R. Stuart and Kenneth L. Alford take a close look at the cavalry unit that was called to military service on April 28, 1862, at President Lincoln’s request. Their ninety-day period of service was the only unit-level active duty military contribution Utah Territory made during the Civil War.

In addition to Latter-day Saints who served on active duty in Union and Confederate armies and navies during the Civil War, Mormons also served in non-federalized state and territorial militias. In chapter 9, Ephriam Dickson examines the service of the Nauvoo Legion, Utah’s territorial militia. While not considered pension-eligible Civil War veterans, those men provided valuable service throughout the period of the Civil War.

In the following chapter, Kenneth L. Alford and William P. MacKinnon investigate the wartime establishment of Camp Douglas in the foothills overlooking Salt Lake City—which served as a continuing source of friction between the army and the Latter-day Saints throughout the remainder of the Civil War.

In chapter 11, Brant W. Ellsworth and Kenneth L. Alford introduce us to several Latter-day Saint Civil War veterans, both Union and Confederate, as they seek to uncover the motivation for their military service. The wartime experiences of Joseph Barlow Forbes (Union), David Crockett Stuart (Confederate), David Harold Peery (Confederate), Lorenzo Dow Watson (Union), Lewis Albert Huffaker (Union), Reuben Parley Miller (Union), Edwin Brown (Union), Saul Norman (Union), Hans N. Chlarson (Union), and John Rozsa (Union) are shared. They also share the unique story of a “galvanized Yankee” who served during the Civil War as a soldier in both the Confederate army and the Union army.

Utah and the other federal territories also had to contend with various challenges from Native Americans throughout the Civil War. Chapter 12 provides an overview of the relationship between settlers and Native Americans in Utah Territory during the war. In January 1863, Union forces under the command of Colonel Patrick Edward Connor killed approximately three hundred Indians—men, women, and children—during what was known at the time as the
Battle of Bear River; it is most frequently referenced today as the Bear River Massacre. Chapter 13 is a reprint of Harold Schindler’s 1999 article from Utah Historical Quarterly entitled “The Bear River Massacre: New Historical Evidence.” An Addendum by Ephriam Dickson shares recently discovered information regarding William Leake Beach, a California Volunteer soldier who sketched the contemporary battle map included in that chapter—information not available to the late Harold Schindler when he researched and wrote his article.

Throughout the nineteenth century, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were expected to “gather to Zion” to join the main body of the Church. Emigration to Utah, primarily of converts from the British Isles and Scandinavia, faced new sail, rail, and trail challenges because of Civil War conditions. In chapter 14, William G. Hartley examines the war’s impact on LDS emigration from 1861 through 1865.

During the Utah War, 1857–58, Utah and Mormonism were among the most frequent topics of reports in American newspapers. Mormons, polygamy, Utah Territory, and Brigham Young also continued to be a source of frequent news reported during the Civil War. In chapter 15, Kenneth L. Alford shares numerous Civil War newspaper stories about Latter-day Saints and Mormonism from both Northern and Southern newspapers.

Robert C. Freeman shares additional information regarding Latter-day Saint Civil War veterans in chapter 16. Readers will
learn about Union soldiers Henry Wells Jackson, William Rex, John Davis Evans, and John Rozsa, as well as Confederate soldiers David Harold Peery and Simon Shelby Higginbotham. As Andrew C. Skinner points out in chapter 17, the end of hostilities did not bring with it an immediate healing of the war’s wounds. During Reconstruction the nation turned from defeating slavery to eliminating polygamy—with Utah Territory as the focal point of that continuing campaign.

Civil War veterans, like most military veterans, enjoyed continued association following the war. The Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) veterans’ organization was established in 1866 and grew to be a large and politically powerful organization. Chapter 18 by Kenneth L. Alford provides an overview of the GAR’s history in Utah with an emphasis on relations between Latter-day Saints and the GAR. The final chapter, by Ardis E. Parshall, shares the delightful story of the GAR’s 1909 National Encampment in Salt Lake City. The city and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints went to great lengths to ensure that the Civil War veterans who attended had a wonderful and memorable experience.

A bibliography and eight appendices follow. In Appendix A, William P. MacKinnon supplements chapter 1 with three letters and a 1907 reminiscence from a soldier who remembered meeting the infamous William Quantrill who served as a civilian teamster in Utah Territory during the Utah War. The three letters were written during the Utah War, by West Point–trained officers who served as generals during the Civil War. Appendix B by Ephriam Dickson shares the Camp Douglas photographs and story of Private Charles D. Beckwith, who opened a studio and photographed Camp Douglas in 1864.

How many Latter-day Saints served in the Union and Confederate military forces during the American Civil War, and who were they? Surprisingly, the answers have remained elusive. In the one hundred and fifty years that have passed since the beginning of the Civil War, no thorough search for Latter-day Saint Civil War veterans has apparently been undertaken and published—until now. Appendix C is an explanation of the methodology used to document Latter-day Saints who served in both Union and Confederate military forces during the Civil War. Appendix D contains two tables that explain the Latter-day Saint Civil War veteran records found in the next two appendixes. The first table discusses each field within individual veteran records; the second table explains the various codes and acronyms that are included in Appendixes E and F for the databases, books, and resources used to document Latter-day Saint membership and Civil War veteran status for the veterans included. Appendix E is an alphabetic listing of Latter-day Saint Civil War veterans. Each entry includes personal details regarding their life, Civil War service, and LDS Church membership. Source information and general interest notes are also included. Appendix F is a smaller list of soldiers who are also noteworthy. The appendix includes records for soldiers, such as teamsters for the Lot Smith Utah Cavalry, who served during the war but were not considered veterans, soldiers whose LDS baptism is uncertain, and soldiers who were not baptized as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or whose Latter-day Saint baptisms could not be verified but who are interesting in their own
right and deserve recognition. The final two appendixes provide summary information for the Latter-day Saint Civil War veterans who are listed in Appendix E. Baptismal date summary information and the corresponding veteran lists are found in Appendix G; Appendix H provides a summary of military service (Union or Confederate and branch of service) and associated lists of the individuals in each category.

The Civil War had little direct effect on Utah Territory. No Union versus Confederate battles took place within her borders. Few Utahns served on active duty for either the United States of America or the Confederate States of America. But it would be folly to believe that the Civil War did not deeply affect Utah Territory, Utahns, and Latter-day Saints throughout the world. This volume is an effort to consider and understand some of the many ways that Latter-day Saints were affected by the American Civil War. It is hoped that readers will gain a deeper appreciation for the experiences and sacrifices that made the Civil War and its effect upon the United States and Latter-day Saints such a watershed event.

Kenneth L. Alford is an associate professor of Church history and doctrine at Brigham Young University.
NOTES

1. Declaration of the Immediate Causes Which Induce and Justify the Secession of South Carolina from the Federal Union; and the Ordinance of Secession (Charleston, SC: Evans and Cogswell, Printers to the Convention, 1860), 7–10.


