

Lot Smith
Private, Company E

Lot Smith was only 16 years old when he signed up to join the Mormon Battalion on its historic march in the Mexican-American War. Some say he had to stand on his tiptoes to meet the height requirement. He was young and ambitious with flowing red hair, a hot temper, and good looks. He also had a heart as big as the whole world and nothing could keep him from volunteering for service in the battalion. He felt his enlistment was answering the call of a prophet and was an opportunity to serve his country.

Lot Smith made the entire march of nearly 2,000 miles from Council Bluffs, Iowa to San Diego, California on foot. Assigned to Company E, Private Smith was called on to perform many duties that would serve him well throughout his life. At this young age, he learned about service and duty.

After they crossed the Colorado River near present-day Yuma, Arizona, the Battalion had to traverse the vast Colorado Desert. This was one of the most difficult stretches on the trek to San Diego. After reaching Carrizo Creek, Private Smith was given the task to bring water back to the straggling Battalion members behind him. His orders were to serve the last straggler with water first then work his way back up the rank. But when he found the first of the struggling soldiers, they were in such need of water that he disobeyed his orders and gave water to the men as he found them. When he returned to camp he was punished for his lack of discipline.

Lot Smith was mustered out of military service in San Francisco. He was one of the men that wintered at Sutter's Mill along the American River near present-day Sacramento, California. It was here that he and his fellow battalion members found gold, ushering in the California Gold Rush. Claiming his share of gold dust, Lot ventured to the Great Salt Lake to join his family. Legend has it that as he arrived in the Salt Lake Valley, his first stop was to see Brigham Young, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. His desire was to give all his gold to the president, for the building up of the fledgling community. Brigham told him that the Lord only required ten percent, so with the rest of his gold dust he established a farm near Farmington, Utah. Demonstrating his familiar ambition and vigor, he was soon elected sheriff of Davis County. In addition, his exceptional skills on horseback earned him the nickname "The Horseman". During the Civil War, Lot was commissioned into the union army as a Major in the cavalry and tasked to protect the Overland Trail in Utah and Wyoming.

In 1876, Lot Smith was again called into service, this time from his church. Lot led a colonizing mission to northern Arizona on behalf of the Mormon Church. He and his fellow pioneers were able to establish several communities there including Joseph City. He also established the famous "Circle S" Ranch in eastern Arizona. Because of his efforts he was able to build up large herds and bred excellent strains of horses, noted as the best in the territory. At the age of 62, in the year 1892, Lot Smith's life ended abruptly when he was killed in a dispute over grazing rights.