

## **The Youngest Member of the U.S. Army of the West**

**By Roger Blakeley**

Lot Smith was only 16 years old when he signed up to join the historic march across the United States 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, hot temper, and good looks and having a heart as big as the whole world nothing could keep him from joining the Battalion. He felt joining the Battalion was the right thing to do as he answered the voice of the Prophet to serve his Country who had the year before issued an extermination order to kill all Mormons for their belief in Christ and God.

Lot made the entire march to California over 2000 miles. Lot was called on to perform many duties as he was young and strong he was asked to help the members of the Battalion during times of great suffering. Lot learned about service, discipline, and duty on this purifying march across the nation. He joined a boy and ended his service as a seasoned skilled man.

On one occasion after the Battalion left Yuma, Arizona and was crossing the Sand Dunes he was given the task to bring water back to the straggling Battalion members. He was ordered to serve the last straggler with water first then work his way back up the rank. But when Lot found the men they were in such need of water that he disobeyed the order and gave water to the men as he found them. When he returned to camp he was punished for his lack of discipline.

Lot was one of the men that wintered at Sutter's Mill along the American River near present day Sacramento, California and Lot struck it rich and found gold. He found a fortune in gold and brought it back to Salt Lake City. Legend has it that as he arrived in the Salt Lake Valley his first stop was to Brigham Young where he gave all his gold to the Prophet for the building of the Kingdom of God on the earth. Brigham told young Lot the Lord only required 10%, so with the rest of the gold he bought a ranch and a horse.

Lot was content to ride the range and ranch cattle and raise the best horses stock in the territory. But in 1857 Governor Young learned about a plan that the United States Military were approaching the Utah area to take over the government of the Utah territory. As no official word had been communicated to the Mormons they felt that this was again a hostile action and organized a resistance movement to stop the advancing Army.

Lot Smith was again called into the service of the Church and was given an assignment to stop the advance of the U.S. Army but he could not kill anyone. He was to take a small band of faithful men and disrupt the supply lines and keep the army at bay. His group was known as the Mormon Raiders. Because of Lot's actions he stopped the advancing army and forced them to winter at Fort Bridger. Lot captured 1,400 livestock and additional 600 horses from Johnston's Army. These spoils of war became important to

the Utah economy as a new financial institution was started and known as the Desert Currency Association. Where "Moo Money" was started. The value of the currency was based on the cattle that had been captured by Lot Smith.

In 1858 there was a growing sentiment in the United States against President Buchanan for sending troops to invade the Mormon outpost. The President agreed to meet with Utah representatives and discuss the events to find a compromise. The compromise included pardoning Lot Smith's Mormon Raiders and also allowing the cattle and horses to remain with the Saints.

In 1876 Lot led a colonizing mission to Arizona. Because of his efforts he was able to build up large herds and breed excellent strains of horses. A Navajo herder killed him over a grazing issue in 1892.

We remember Lot Smith and his contribution to the Army of the West and the building up of Zion. If you would like to learn more about the U.S. Army of the West and its march across the Southwest territory please visit [www.usarmyofthewest.org](http://www.usarmyofthewest.org) we need your help in bringing about a statue to mark the trail of the soldiers who marched across the country.