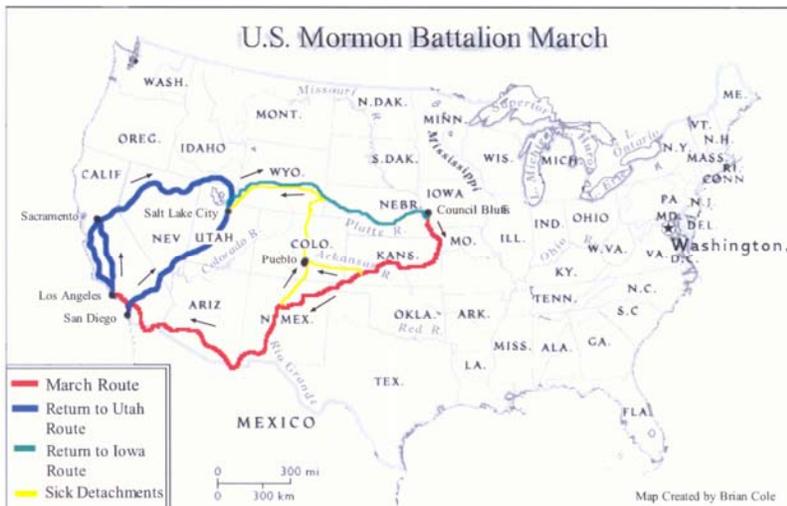


MORMON BATTALION AND TUCSON PRESIDIO

Mexico broke off relations with the United States in March 1845 after the annexation of Texas. A Mexican attack on U.S. troops occupying disputed territory preceded a U.S. declaration of war on Mexico in May 1846.

The Mormon Battalion served under General Kearny, commander of the Army of the West. He led his soldiers of "wilderness-worn dragoons" from Santa Fe in 1846, descended the Gila, and spent the next two months following the river's passage to the Colorado. They marched through the villages of the Gila Pimas, but completely bypassed Tubac and Tucson and avoided any confrontation with Mexican troops.



The Mormon Battalion, a company of Latter Day Saints from the Midwest who volunteered for duty in order to prove their patriotism and diffuse the religious hatred of their neighbors, swung farther south and went through Tucson on its way to California. The Mormons were the first representatives of the U.S. government to meet the Mexican population of Arizona at a mescal distillery between the San Pedro and Santa Cruz valleys. There the tee-totaling Mormons met a sergeant and several soldiers from

the Tucson presidio. The sergeant politely requested that the Mormons make a detour around Tucson.

Several days of sparring followed as Tucson's veteran commander, Antonio Camadurán, attempted to persuade the battalion not to enter the community. When all threats and pleas for an armistice failed, Comadurán withdrew his outnumbered garrison to San Xavier. The result was a peaceful day of trading between the Mormons and the Mexican inhabitants of Tucson. The battalion lumbered into town on December 17. The residents of Tucson offered the soldiers food and water, and the soldiers responded by bartering clothing for the beans and flour they needed.