

“Brothers Can Never Be Burdens”

Late June 1846, Mt. Pisgah, Iowa. Captain James Allen of the United States Army went among the refugees seeking volunteers to join the Army in the war with Mexico. Those

refugees were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. After considerable encouragement from President Brigham Young, more than 500 men volunteered to form the first and only U.S. military battalion organized by religious affiliation.



Among those who signed up was Meltiar Hatch. He asked that his younger brother, Orin, also be allowed to join. Orin was only sixteen years of age.

Family tradition holds that his father charged Meltiar to “bring him back safely.” Permission was granted and the two brothers, with the rest of the volunteers, left Council Bluffs, Iowa in July 1846.

It would be an extremely difficult march of more than 2000 miles from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas to San Diego, California. In addition to long forced marches, there would be days without water, hot desert conditions, blowing sand, rugged mountain crossings, disease, and starvation. For five months the men marched, blazing roads and trails as they went.

As their commanding officer, Colonel Philip St. George Cooke would later declare, “History may be searched in vain for an equal march of infantry.”

According to Meltiar’s journal and the family history, somewhere in Arizona or California, young Orin became ill and weakened to the point that he could not walk without help. Meltiar and a friend lifted him up and with one on each side, supported him. They walked on.



This continued day after day until Orin became so weak and slow that, even with help, he could not keep up.

Finally, the order came that he must be left by the side of the trail to die. The company moved on without him. That night however, after the Battalion camped, Meltiar and a friend went back, found Orin, picked him up, and brought him into camp, arriving just before the company was to depart. As the Battalion moved out that morning, once again, Orin was left behind. And again, that night, Meltiar and his faithful friend went back for Orin.

This went on day after day, until finally, their commanding officer, seeing their determination and loyalty for a brother, gave up his horse. Orin was strapped to the back of the horse and could now keep up.

When the Battalion arrived in San Diego in January 1847, Orin Hatch was with them, thanks to the love and loyalty of a brother and a friend. In fact, the family history records that he was among a group of five soldiers selected to go into the woods and cut the pole used to hoist the first American flag flown over California. It has been well-said, "brothers can never be burdens."



Source: <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/KWN2-8R6>
<https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/KWVK-QCV>

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