

July 4th 1847, A Special Day to Remember!

It was an exciting 4th of July in 1847 when our ancestor, Andrew Jackson Shupe, caught up with Brigham Young and the other pioneers of the first Mormon wagon train heading west. Here is the story:

Andrew Jackson Shupe worked in a blacksmith shop in Nauvoo, making parts for wagons to carry the saints westward. He and other Mormons knew they must leave Nauvoo because of the way members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were being persecuted in Illinois. They were following the leadership of Brigham Young after the Prophet Joseph Smith was killed in Carthage in 1844. Everyone was hurrying to get everything ready so they could leave their beautiful city Nauvoo on the banks of the Mississippi River and head west to the Rocky Mountains. They hoped to build a new city, far away from the people who didn't seem to like them.

In 1846, Andrew Jackson Shupe and his family left Nauvoo and made the difficult, muddy, trip across Iowa to Winter Quarters, Nebraska where the saints stopped to rest. His family consisted of his wife Elizabeth and four children, Dorthula Catherine (age 7), John Wetstein (age 5), Rosanna Minerva (age 3) and Brigham Kendrick (age 1). Brigham Young knew the church wouldn't be able to travel to the Rocky Mountains that year, so they set up temporary places to live until the next year. It was here that an Army Captain arrived with a request for 500 Mormon men to serve in the United States Army to fight in the war with Mexico that was going on then.

Andrew Jackson Shupe joined the army and became a member of the "Mormon Battalion". It was a sad day for his wife and children as he marched away with the rest of the army volunteers. The Mormon Battalion's mission was to march down into Mexico and then to San Diego, California to help claim that part of the country for the United States of America. As the battalion marched along, some of the people with them became sick. The march was hard and some couldn't make it much further, so the army chose part of the soldiers to take the sick people (and some women and children that had traveled with the Mormon Battalion) to Pueblo, Colorado for the winter. Andrew Jackson Shupe was one of the soldiers assigned to take the sick people to Pueblo. Then the rest of the Mormon Battalion left and continued on to Mexico.

When Andrew Jackson Shupe and the rest of the “sick detachment” arrived in Pueblo, they built log cabins, hunted game for food and stayed the winter. There were other Mormons in Pueblo too. A group of saints from Mississippi had traveled that far in 1846, expecting to meet the rest of the saints who were traveling west from Nauvoo. When they found out that Brigham Young and the rest of the saints were stopped in Winter Quarters, Nebraska, the Mississippi saints decided to wait in Pueblo.

When Spring came in 1847, the Mississippi saints and the sick detachment from the Mormon Battalion started west again, hoping to catch up with the main body of saints who were heading for the Rocky Mountains. They had trouble with horse thieves, who stole some of their horses, so Andrew Jackson Shupe and others of the Mormon Battalion took off after the horse thieves. They got all the horses back, except for one. Thirteen riders from the Mormon Battalion continued on after the last horse thief. They hurried along, because they found out that Brigham Young and the first wagon train of pioneers were ahead of them.

Brigham Young and the pioneers had come to the Green River in Wyoming. The river was too deep to wade across, so they had to build some rafts out of cottonwood tree logs to float their wagons across. A river crossing with rafts was called a ferry. After they got across the river, they traveled just a little ways further and stopped for Sunday, which was also July 4th. Brigham Young decided that five of the pioneer men should go back across the river and travel back down the wagon trail to meet the next Mormon wagon trains that were coming west. They called these five men “pilots”, because they would pilot the next wagon trains to the Green River ferry, so they could get across the river safely.

As Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards took the five pilots back to the Green River ferry, they saw Andrew Jackson Shupe and the other Mormon Battalion horseman on the other side of the river, putting their baggage on one of the rafts so they could cross the river. When they learned that the men were from the Mormon Battalion, they shouted for joy: “Hosannah! Hosannah! Give glory to God and the Lamb, Amen!” When Andrew Jackson Shupe and the other soldiers got across the river, Brigham Young and the others welcomed them enthusiastically and took them to the camp where the other pioneers were resting for the Sabbath.

The Mormon Battalion soldiers formed a military line and listened to President Brigham Young say a few words. Then the whole camp of pioneers gave three cheers for the safe return of this part of the Mormon Battalion. Then Andrew Jackson Shupe and the rest of the soldiers were dismissed to receive congratulations from the pioneers. It was a memorable 4th of July for everyone.

Andrew Jackson Shupe traveled with that first wagon train of Mormon pioneers the rest of the way to the Salt Lake Valley. When the pioneers arrived in the valley, they began planting crops, surveying the valley and planning a new city to replace Nauvoo that they had to leave behind in Illinois. It was a busy time, getting ready for the rest of the pioneers who were heading west across the Mormon trail on their way to the Salt Lake Valley. Andrew Jackson Shupe didn't stay long in the Valley. He wanted to get back to his wife and family. So, after a few weeks (on August 16th), he headed back east with some other men. It was a 700 mile trip back to Winter Quarters. When he got there, he didn't know where his family was staying, so he had to hunt for them. Finally, after sunset, he found them. He rejoiced that his wife and children were alive.

Andrew Jackson Shupe's family had suffered while he was gone with the Mormon Battalion. His mother and father had died. So, he bought a little place where he could take care of his family. They stayed in the area about five years before they traveled the Mormon trail west to join the rest of the saints. The Shupe family arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in September of 1852 and then settled in Ogden.

Andrew Jackson Shupe was a part of important events that moved Mormons from Nauvoo to the valley of the Great Salt Lake. He helped the saints get ready to leave Nauvoo, he took his family west to Winter Quarters, he left them there while he went with the Mormon Battalion, he joined Brigham Young and the first pioneer wagon train on July 4th, 1847, he was among the first saints to enter the Salt Lake Valley and finally he brought his family to Utah and settled in Ogden. Let's remember him and his faithfulness on the 4th of July.

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