



Emanuel Thompson served during the Civil War as a private in Company A, 69th Regiment, Ohio Infantry. He was baptized as a Latter-day Saint following the war. See Appendix E for additional information about this soldier. (Courtesy of Shirley Williams)



CHAPTER 16

Robert C. Freeman

LATTER-DAY SAINTS IN THE CIVIL WAR

The American Civil War (1861–65) was the most tragic event that has occurred in the history of the United States. Not only was it the war in which the most Americans died, but it was also the only experience, military or otherwise, that truly brought this nation to the brink of destruction.¹ Yet, historically speaking, the overt impact of the Civil War upon The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its members has generally been viewed as relatively minimal.² This may explain why there has been little written on this subject.

The war occurred fourteen years after the arrival of the Saints in the Great Basin. It may be argued that the colonization of the Church in the West was actually aided by the war as the full attention and energy of national leadership was consumed by the events of the war, thus allowing for the continued establishment of the Church in the valleys of the Rocky Mountains.³

For many Latter-day Saints, the outbreak of the Civil War was seen as a fulfillment of a prophecy made by the Prophet Joseph Smith nearly thirty years before (D&C 87).⁴ Of

course, most of the fighting occurred over a thousand miles away. Still, for many Church members whose roots were from the northeastern region of the nation, there was great interest in the conflict as well as concern for the safety of loved ones who were living in the midst of the violence.⁵

The war was historically significant for the Church. It was the first time Latter-day Saints served in war where a chief motivation for service was patriotic in nature.⁶ This was the first war in which members of the Church were to be found on both sides of a military conflict. And finally, this was the first national American conflict in which a Latter-day Saint died from wounds sustained in battle.⁷

Perhaps the greatest example of Latter-day Saint participation in the war was the response by two Utah cavalry units to the Union call in April 1862 to maintain open transportation and communication lines on the Overland Trails. The smaller of those units was led by Colonel Robert T. Burton, whose commission was from the Nauvoo Legion in Utah, and the larger by Captain Lot Smith, whose

commission was from the United States Army.⁸ Burton's unit did not meet the criteria for a federalized unit, but Smith's company did. The soldiers commanded by Lot Smith qualified for federal veterans' pensions after the war.

Locating the names of Latter-day Saints who served poses a challenge for researchers as religious affiliations were not officially listed on military induction or enlistment papers during the Civil War. Given that the total membership of the Church during the 1860s was about 70,000, it is believed that no more than several hundred served in the conflict. This is a very small number when compared to the total number of Union (approximately 2,200,000) and Confederate (600,000–1,500,000) soldiers.⁹

The modest number of soldier Saints is partially due to the decided lack of enthusiasm demonstrated by Mormon leadership regarding the conflict. Strong and able young men were not encouraged to fight for a nation that only a few years earlier had essentially banished the Mormon people from her borders. Church leaders spoke out often about the war, and the opinions expressed were generally negative toward both the North and the South.¹⁰ Still, many of the Church's members, including those in key positions of Church leadership, had their family roots in the fertile soil of the northeastern United States. Most Mormons maintained a keen interest in the events in the States. While relatively few Saints engaged in the fighting, the experience of the war left an indelible mark on the lives of those who did fight. What follows are short sketches of Latter-day Saints who are known to have participated in the battles of the Civil War. For purposes of this chapter, soldiers whose baptisms occurred after the war have not been included.¹¹

HENRY WELLS JACKSON

Perhaps the most compelling story of a Latter-day Saint who participated in the war is one of a soldier who did not return home. Henry Wells Jackson was born on March 10, 1827, in Chemung, New York.¹² His mother died when he was eleven years old. This imposed great difficulties on the family—he being the seventh of thirteen children. Jackson grew to adulthood, and along the way he was introduced to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints together with his brother, James. He was baptized at Nauvoo on January 28, 1844, by John Hicks.¹³



Henry Wells Jackson may have been the first Latter-day Saint to die in an American conflict as a result of battle wounds. (Saints at War Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library)

Following the Saints' departure from Illinois, young Jackson enlisted as a musician in the Mormon Battalion in the summer of 1846. He marched from Iowa to Los Angeles. When his initial enlistment with the battalion expired, he reenlisted for six months and participated in the discovery of gold in California.¹⁴ Jackson eventually made his way to the Rocky Mountains to reunite with the Saints in the Salt Lake Valley.

Soon after arriving in the Utah Territory, he met Eliza Ann, a daughter of the early and influential Church leader Philo Dibble.¹⁵ The two were married by Brigham Young on February 3, 1850. Shortly after their marriage,

the couple moved to Tooele, Utah, where their first child was born. From there they relocated to San Bernardino, California. The family returned to Utah in 1857. Henry went to work carrying mail from Utah to California, a route with which he had become very familiar. The mail service was discontinued after a few years, but his final wages were never paid. Jackson was determined to go east and file a claim to get his money as well as to visit his aged father and other relatives. While on his journey, Jackson ran out of money and hired out as a wagon master in order to support himself while he waited to receive his back pay.

While delivering provisions as a wagon master, he was captured by Confederate forces and placed in a Southern prison camp for about three months. Prisoner-of-war camps were notorious for inflicting death and disease on the unfortunate incarcerates. Following his release, Jackson determined to protect himself and enlisted in the First District of Columbia Cavalry. His enlistment began on January 6, 1864, and he agreed to serve for three years or for the duration of the war, whichever came first. Because of his military experience with the Mormon Battalion, he was commissioned as a first lieutenant.

On May 8, 1864, the First District of Columbia Cavalry began its march toward the Nottaway railroad bridge above Jarrett's Station. The soldiers encountered an entrenched enemy unit on the opposite end of the bridge. The rebels came forward, and a fierce battle followed in which the enemy force was driven through the woods and down the tracks for half a mile.

During this battle for the bridge, Lieutenant Jackson was shot. The bullet entered his breast, passed through his lung, and exited through his shoulder blade. He was taken first

to Fort Jackson, then to Chesapeake General Hospital in Hampton, Virginia, where he died about two weeks later on May 24, 1864. His body was laid to rest in Hampton National Cemetery.¹⁶ Having served in two national conflicts, Henry Wells Jackson represents an important example of an early soldier-Saint who made great sacrifices. As previously stated, it is likely that Jackson was the first Latter-day Saint soldier to die in consequence of injuries sustained in action during a U.S. war.



An immigrant from England, William Rex was a Latter-day Saint at the time of the war and later settled with his family in Randolph, Utah. (Saints at War Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library)

WILLIAM REX

Despite being born on foreign soil (in November 1844 at Sherborne, Dorset, England), William Rex served in the Union Army.¹⁷ His family joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in England when he was just a boy. Shortly afterward, the family immigrated to America to join with the Saints in Zion. They traveled up the Mississippi River, arriving at St. Louis in December 1850. Rex's father died a year and a half later, leaving behind his widow, Mary, and their five children. Life was difficult for them, so Rex and his brothers helped provide for the family. Among the jobs listed in his journal was swimming the Mississippi River in search of driftwood, which was sold to local families to heat their homes. Rex was baptized in May 1854.

When war broke out between the Northern and Southern states, William Rex was just fifteen years old. In 1863, two years into the conflict, he ran away from home and joined the Union Army—enlisting as a private in the 145th Illinois Infantry Regiment. His first assignment was to guard the freight wagons.¹⁸ Much to his dismay, his mother soon discovered his whereabouts and insisted he return home.

Rex resumed his military service in May 1864—again serving with the 145th Illinois Infantry Regiment. Family records report that he served in Georgia under General William Tecumseh Sherman and participated in victories over Confederate forces there.¹⁹ Rex served from June 9, 1864, until September 23, 1864, and received an honorable discharge.

The remainder of Rex's life was spent in the Rocky Mountains. In 1869, his family moved to Utah via the newly completed transcontinental railroad. Rex worked for the Overland Telegraph Company. Five years after his arrival, he married Mary Elizabeth Brough in the Endowment House at Salt Lake City. Most of Rex's life was spent in Randolph, Utah, where he and his family endured many hardships associated with frontier living. In 1884, Rex was called to serve a mission to his beloved England. After his return, he lived out his life in Utah and died on April 6, 1927.

DAVID HAROLD PEERY

David Harold Peery's story is unique because he joined the Church during the time of the war.²⁰ Born May 6, 1824, he was raised in Tazewell County, Virginia. As a boy, he worked on his father's farm alongside family slaves, attended common school during the winter months, and later enrolled at Emory and Henry College. In 1846, when he was only twenty-two years old, Peery began a merchandising

business with his brother, John. He later purchased his brother's share of the business.

Peery was a handsome young man, but it was not until Nancy Campbell Higginbotham (1835–62) walked into his life that he fell in love. Following a brief courtship, David and Nancy were married. The young couple was in love but disagreed over religion. David was an agnostic, but Nancy was a devout Latter-day Saint. In an effort to turn her against Mormonism, David enlisted two trained ministers to persuade Nancy against the gospel that she so fully believed. Both ministers were bested by his young bride.



David H. Peery is a rare example of a Latter-day Saint who converted to the Church during the war and served in the Confederate Army. (Saints at War Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library)

The secession of Virginia from the Union took place in April 1861. This marked the beginning of a long sequence of sad events that would ultimately compel Peery to turn toward his wife's religion. On May 1, 1861, the couple's two-year-old son, Thomas Carnahan, died from typhoid fever.²¹ In early 1862, David enlisted in the Confederate Army and served as an assistant commissary officer for General Humphrey Marshall's forces in Kentucky. While serving in the Army, he was likewise struck with typhoid fever and returned home to recover. He recovered, but soon several others in his family were ravaged by the deadly disease. David's mother died on May 17, 1863. His father died soon after on

July 8. Next his father-in-law succumbed to the disease. Eventually, Nancy and their son, William, died in the fall of that year. All were victims of disease, not of the war.

Heartbroken, Peery began an earnest search for comfort and spiritual answers. How could God allow such a tragedy to strike so many of those he loved? Ironically, it was within his wife's religion that he found the answers. Apostle Parley P. Pratt's pamphlet *Voice of Warning* and some writings by Orson Pratt about eternal family relationships were among the gospel treasures left behind by his wife. The concept of eternal families was especially attractive to him. In November 1862, Peery asked his mother-in-law, Louisa, where he could find the nearest Mormon elder, and she directed him to Absalom Young, who lived twenty-five miles away. The two men cut a hole through six-inch-thick ice, and Peery was baptized as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.²²

The following month (December 1862), Peery returned to the army to serve under General Williams in Kentucky; he left his daughter, Louisa Letitia, in the care of his mother-in-law and sister-in-law. Once again he caught typhoid fever, and for weeks he lay on the verge of death. During his absence from home, the Union army swept through his homestead and destroyed his home, store, outer buildings, and all the provisions and property therein.

By 1864, the war was going poorly for the South. Discouraged and disheartened, Peery and his brother-in-law, Simon, who had also been serving in the Confederate Army, returned home to Virginia, gathered remaining family members, and prepared to join the Saints in the West. They arrived there safely on August 31, 1864. Once in Utah, Peery

began to farm and teach school. That winter, romance grew again in Peery's heart, this time for Elizabeth Letitia Higginbotham (1846–1938), his late wife's sister. Elizabeth had cared for his daughter since Nancy's death. The two became engaged and were married the following spring on April 10, 1865.²³ Seven months later, they were sealed in the Salt Lake Endowment House by President Heber C. Kimball. That same day, Elizabeth served as a proxy for Nancy, so Nancy too was sealed to Peery for time and all eternity.

The new couple moved to Ogden, where David, despite having his business destroyed at least three times, prospered in merchandising, milling, publishing, and banking. He and Elizabeth had ten children together. Much of Peery's remaining life was spent in Church leadership positions. He participated in various business endeavors, family events, and other opportunities that demonstrated his energetic and hardworking nature as well.

Peery left Utah in 1875 to serve a mission in Texas, Tennessee, and Virginia. In 1877, President Brigham Young called Peery to be a stake president, saying, "The name I propose to be your stake president is a man you all know and like. He is not known as a religious man, not a long praying man, but a man who will make you all rich if you will let him." He was well liked, and the people were not only satisfied but pleased by this announcement. David Peery was elected mayor of Ogden in 1883 and again in 1885. Peery additionally served as a territorial legislator for many years and actively worked for Utah's statehood. After he retired, he built "the Virginia"—a beautiful home where he lived the rest of his days. Peery passed away unexpectedly on September 17, 1901, and was buried in the Ogden City Cemetery.²⁴

JOHN DAVIS EVANS

John Davis Evans was born March 4, 1841, in Aberdare, Glamorganshire, South Wales.²⁵ His parents joined the Church when he was four years old, and John was baptized a few days before his ninth birthday in 1850. His family immigrated to America in October that year. John's younger brother, Edward, died before they reached New Orleans in November 1850, and his father died shortly after reaching St. Louis, which left his pregnant mother with the responsibility to care for four small children. From June to September 1859, Evans crossed the plains from Nebraska to the Salt Lake Valley. He ultimately crossed the plains as part of a wagon team two additional times in order to help immigrants.

As the Civil War began, Evans returned to St. Louis, Missouri, to enlist—one of only a few Latter-day Saints from Utah who did so. John volunteered as a private in the 7th Missouri Infantry and was mustered in on June 1, 1861.²⁶ He trained with a broom handle because his unit did not have enough money to buy rifles. At the Battle of Gettysburg, he was wounded in his left leg and was hospitalized. He was honorably discharged in June 1864 after three years of active duty service.²⁷

Evans returned to Utah and married Margaret Williams on July 16, 1870. They were married in the Endowment House at Salt Lake City by Daniel H. Wells, a member of the First Presidency. At different points in his life, Evans hauled salt from the shores of the Great Salt Lake, quarried canyon rock for the Salt Lake Temple, and made charcoal from cedar trees. He also helped lay tracks for the first rail line into Pleasant Valley, Utah. His wife accompanied him and brought their children; she cooked for all of the men who worked on the tracks. Later, Evans moved with his family

to Nevada and worked in the mines until he got lead poisoning. At one point, he weighed only ninety-six pounds, and Margaret had to take in boarders to provide for the family.

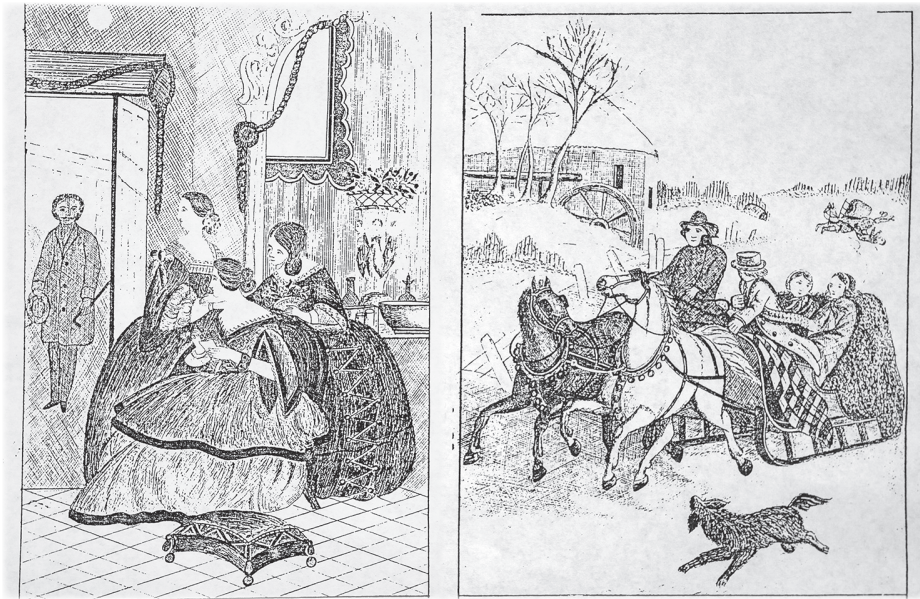
They moved back to Utah, where Evans bought property in Salt Lake City and started one of Utah's first ice cream businesses—called “Evans Union Ice Cream.” It flourished for eighteen years until his death. He cut ice from a canal during the winter and saved it in shacks with sawdust between the blocks. He sold milk as well as ice cream. Originally, they made their ice cream turning it all by hand.

John and Margaret Evans were parents to ten children. During John's life, he assisted in building several Latter-day Saint houses of worship. After a long and useful life, he died on July 30, 1908, in Salt Lake City.²⁸

JOHN ROZSA

John Rozsa was born on foreign soil in Hungary on November 7, 1820. He grew up in a good home with parents who tried to give him the best in life. As a youth he found friends who got him into trouble. His family relationships were strained because of his choices. At the age of eighteen he joined the Sixth Hungarian Linize Regiment without telling his parents. When his parents found out, they tried to stop him, but Rozsa would not listen. He enjoyed life as a soldier, although it was very difficult. He was made a field captain when the Italian war broke out and was in line to become an officer until he deserted on August 21, 1849.²⁹

He traveled and lived reasonably well during the next few years until he was arrested in March 1853 for being present at an armed expedition in Switzerland. Not long after being jailed, the prisoners were shipped to America. Upon their arrival in New York on



These Civil War-era pen and ink drawings by John Rozsa are entitled Christmas in the City and Christmas in the Country. (Courtesy of Drucilla Smith)

May 15, they were set free. There Rozsa found work as a barkeeper in an Italian hotel, and after a few months of working he decided to become a soldier again. On December 12, 1853, he enlisted in the United States Army.

While with the military, Rozsa participated in a march west. In May 1857, he received orders to march to Salt Lake, where the Mormons were allegedly not cooperating with the federal government. The winter months of travel were extremely cold and difficult. Rations were cut due to the difficulty of finding food. In June 1858, they marched through Salt Lake City, which was nearly abandoned. In July, the soldiers were paid and given a leave of absence. Rozsa had the opportunity to explore Utah. He visited Lehi, south of Great Salt Lake City. While there he learned about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and was baptized on December 8, 1858. During that time he met and married Patience Loader, who was also a Latter-day Saint.³⁰

Shortly after his marriage, his unit was ordered to leave Utah. He arrived in Washington, DC, in October 1861 and stayed for the winter. During the spring and summer of 1862, he lived on the battlefield. His unit marched to Fort Monroe, Yorktown, Williamsburg, and Richmond as part of the Peninsular Campaign. After several battles, they marched back to Alexandria, Virginia, to await new orders. During this period he visited his family and was given a position as a clerk at the Army headquarters. This eased his soldier life and tripled his pay. The pay increase was a blessing to his family as his wife was close to giving birth.

By October, he was ordered to rejoin his company and was reduced to the rank of private because he had left his company for the clerk job without permission. This rank made it hard for him to support his wife and two children, but he was grateful to be near his wife during a period of confinement. Eventually he was able to assist in issuing

rations and received a small increase in wages that helped his family.³¹

John Rozsa died on May 24, 1866, while returning with his wife to Utah. His health had been slowly failing for some time. He was buried along the trail about three days beyond Fort Kearney.³²

CONCLUSION

The accounts in this chapter represent some of those Latter-day Saint soldiers who fought during the American Civil War for whom we have detailed records. The number of Latter-day Saints who fought was statistically insignificant, but their service was anything but insignificant—not only for them individually but for the nation as well.

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, very little has been published about the actual participation of Latter-day

Saints in the Civil War other than perhaps the experience of the expedition led by Lot Smith. Understandable as this may be, it is important to share these profiles of Civil War Saints who were present and who sacrificed in some measure for the cause they believed in. The Sesquicentennial of the war provides a fitting anniversary to memorialize these few Church members that we know of. It is hoped that perhaps additional research will come to light so that others may be added to this roster.

In the discovery of these stories, the goal is to preserve the details of their contributions so that these soldiers of long ago will be remembered and added to the long roster of other Latter-day Saints who have served in each of the wars of the latter days. For any and all that can be found, it will be a privilege to pay tribute to their service.

Robert C. Freeman is a professor of Church history and doctrine at Brigham Young University.

NOTES

1. If one combines deaths in consequence of injury and illness, Civil War losses eclipse those of World War II. Some sources maintain that World War II saw more deaths resulting from fighting than the Civil War. See John Whiteclay Chambers II, ed., *American Military History* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 210.
2. There has been little published on the subject of Latter-day Saints in the Civil War. One modest attempt is the volume Margaret M. Fisher, ed., *Utah and the Civil War* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1929). Fisher's book provides excerpts of journal accounts and a listing of the Lot Smith and Robert T. Burton Expeditions.
3. See Eugene Moehring, "The Civil War and Town Founding in the Intermountain West," *Western Historical Quarterly*, Autumn 1997, 316–41.
4. This section, received on December 25, 1832, has been one of the most frequently cited prophecies of Joseph Smith that saw clear fulfillment. Some Church members felt that the Civil War heralded the promised return of Christ. See Scott C. Esplin's chapter on this subject herein.
5. James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 299.
6. While about five hundred Latter-day Saints served in the Mormon Battalion during the Mexican-American War, economic motives are generally agreed to have been the primary purpose of their enlistment.
7. Henry Wells Jackson is very likely the first Latter-day Saint to perish in an American conflict. The author is indebted to the Jackson family for personal papers and images relating to his life and ultimate demise.

- Particular thanks are expressed to Paul Hoffman, Marilyn and Celia Smith, and LaMar Taft Merrill Jr., as well as to Don Smith, who has conducted substantial research into Henry Jackson's life. Saints at War Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo.
8. In brief, the unit commanded by Burton was composed of approximately twenty-four soldiers, and they served for about thirty days. Smith's company was composed of approximately one hundred and six soldiers that included officers, privates, and teamsters. Their service was for ninety days. See Fisher, *Utah and the Civil War*. See also chapter by Stuart and Alford and chapter by Dickson herein.
 9. *American Military History*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 2005), 849.
 10. See Richard E. Bennett, "We Know No North, No South, No East, No West": Mormon Interpretations of the Civil War, 1861–65," *Mormon Historical Studies* 10, no. 1 (2009); reprinted herein.
 11. An example of a Latter-day Saint Civil War veteran who was baptized following the war is Joshua Clark, father of J. Reuben Clark (an LDS Apostle and member of the First Presidency), who served for almost two years in the Union Army and was baptized in 1868.
 12. Henry Wells Jackson Papers (unpublished manuscript), Saints at War Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections.
 13. Don Smith, "Life Sketch: Henry Wells Jackson" (unpublished manuscript).
 14. Smith, "Life Sketch: Henry Wells Jackson."
 15. For more on Philo Dibble, see Arnold K. Garr, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard O. Cowan, eds., *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 295.
 16. Major Baker, Jackson's commanding officer, said Henry was a "brave and noble young officer." A picture of Jackson's headstone is in the possession of the author.
 17. William Rex papers (unpublished manuscript), Saints at War Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections.
 18. William Rex Papers, Saints at War Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections. His headstone, located in the Randolph City Cemetery in Wyoming, indicates he served as a private in the 145th Illinois Infantry.
 19. David Boone, *Nineteenth-Century Saints at War* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2006), 123.
 20. See William Hartley, "The Confederate Officer and 'That Mormon Girl': A Nineteenth-Century Romance," *Ensign*, April 1982. See the Saints at War Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections. See also Julina Peery Parker, interviewed by author via telephone, June 16, 2011.
 21. See William Hartley, "The Confederate Officer and 'That Mormon Girl,'" *Ensign*, 1982. See also Julina Ward Higginbotham (great-granddaughter of David Peery), interviewed by author via telephone, June 16, 2011.
 22. Liliu Davis Peery, comp., "History of David Harold Peery" (unpublished manuscript, February 1941), 2. Peery's baptismal date is only identified as November 1862. In Hartley's article the date given is 1863.
 23. They were married by Elder Winslow Farr in Holladay, Utah. See *Life History of Elizabeth Letitia Higginbotham Peery* (unpublished manuscript), Saints at War Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections.
 24. A picture of David Peery's headstone is in the possession of the author.
 25. Thomas, "John Davis Evans."
 26. Thomas, "John Davis Evans."
 27. Jerry Crouch Evans, *Silencing the Vicksburg Guns: The Story of the 7th Missouri Infantry Regiment* (Victoria, Canada: Hither & Yon, 2005).
 28. Some of the notes for this profile are courtesy of Diane Tague as part of a contribution to the Saints at War Project, December 2005. Papers in the possession of the Saints at War Project, Brigham Young University.
 29. *John Rozsa's Autobiography: A Sure Storm Will Follow Fine Weather and Vice Versa*, Americana Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, 3–4.
 30. Patience Loader Rozsa Archer, *Recollections of Past Days: The Autobiography of Patience Loader Rozsa Archer* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2006), 98.
 31. *John Rozsa's Autobiography*.
 32. Archer, *Recollections of Past Days*.