

encouragement, shares understanding, and promotes hope.

—Claire Foley

Women of the Mormon Battalion,
by Carl V. Larson and Shirley N.
Maynes (Watkins Printing, 1995)

This small book describes the precious experiences of more than thirty women who traveled with the Mormon Battalion. Most were wives who, refusing to be left behind, enlisted along with their husbands as soldiers in the Mexican War. The women served as nurses, laundresses, and companions to their husbands during the long march. Only four women accompanied the battalion all the way to California; the rest became part of the battalion sick detachment and spent the winter at Fort Pueblo, Colorado. All the women suffered the hardships of the march—shortage of food, water, clothing, and the comforts they had left behind. At least two who marched to California, Melissa Burton Cory and Lydia Edmunds Hunter, were pregnant.

Colonel Thomas L. Kane, present at the enlistment of the battalion at Council Bluffs, Iowa, observed that the Mormon women

had been bred to other lives. . . . Before their flight, they had sold their watches and trinkets as the most available resource for raising ready money; and . . . [even though they] were without earrings, finger rings, chains, or broaches . . . they lacked nothing most becoming the attire of

decorous maidens. They neatly darned white stockings, and clean, bright petticoats, the artistically clear-starched collar and chemisette, the something faded, only because too well-washed, lawn or gingham gown, that fit modestly to the waist of the pretty wearer—these, if any of them spoke of poverty, spoke of a poverty that had known its better days. (28)

Even though this 130-page book lacks personal journals written by the women, the statements recorded by their biographers give the reader a picture of what the women of the Mormon Battalion experienced during their trek across the deserts of the southwestern United States during the fall and winter of 1846–47, as well as additional details of these women's lives as they joined their husbands in colonizing the Great Basin and parts of California.

—Clark V. Johnson

*The Balm of Gilead: Women's
Stories of Finding Peace*
(Deseret Book, 1997)

The 1996 Women's Conference Committee extended a call for essays on a theme taken from an address by Relief Society General President Elaine Jack entitled "Relief Society: A Balm in Gilead." The balm of Gilead was a salve used in ancient times to heal and soothe wounds. The healing properties of the balm seemed an appropriate metaphor "through which women could share perspectives on their

own life experiences" (1) and define their paths to peace.

Essays poured in. This volume presents thirty of these essays, each having its own individual style and focus, yet uniting with the others in expressing the struggle to reap the benefits of the gospel of Jesus Christ and to find peace in a world of adversity. Whether she struggles with physical, mental, or spiritual aspects of her life, every woman can find hope in these stories, which bear testimony of the love and mercy of God, the truthfulness of his plan and the promises of salvation and happiness.

One essayist describes her balm of Gilead as "the sweetness of Christ and the gospel of service that has come into my life. It has helped to heal my heart and will continue to do so as long as I turn my eyes to him" (88). Another essay suggests that the balm of Gilead "is produced from the yield of the Tree of Life. . . . Balm has been abundantly available for me as the need has been manifested throughout my life. It has been supplied at times by my own effort, but often it comes through another's compassion" (10-11). Through her struggles, another writer has realized peace and purpose in pain: "We will not be judged on what problems we have but how we handle them. And I've learned that every problem, if we look hard enough, has a silver lining" (97).

These essays encourage the joy-yielding traits of faith, hope, and charity. They promote learning

and growth from experience and trials, and they testify of the purpose of life, and the love of the Savior.

—Claire Foley

A Comprehensive Annotated Book of Mormon Bibliography, edited by Donald W. Parry, Jeanette W. Miller, and Sandra A. Thorne (Research Press, 1996)

A Comprehensive Annotated Book of Mormon Bibliography, a massive compilation recently published by FARMS, is an essential source of information for Book of Mormon scholars. The 650-page volume describes more than 6,300 pieces about the Book of Mormon, including books and monographs, articles, theses, dissertations, pamphlets and reports, book reviews, newspaper articles, plays, and poetry.

The bibliography lists all published Book of Mormon sources that could be found, drawing items from the Mormon collections of sixteen major libraries in the United States and England. To facilitate access, the book includes a diskette with the same bibliographic information in electronic form. This extensive information will provide students of the scriptures with a comprehensive overview of scholarly research on the Book of Mormon, as well as bring attention to areas that need further study.

FARMS has also published a shorter version—*A Guide to Publications*