

David Evans-Militia Leader

In February 1852, the Territory of Utah was divided into military districts for the security of the people, and for effective operations of the “Nauvoo Legion”, the title by which the Utah territorial militia was then known.

David Evans had been commissioned a Major in the Legion by Brigham Young, on March 11, 1854. Accordingly, as intensive preparations were being made in the spring of 1857 to resist the possible intrusion of Federal troops into the Territory, Lieutenant-General Daniel H. Wells issued a general order relating to the organization of the militia. Among other actions, the order designated David Evans as the commanding officer of the Lehi Military District”. The order established the boundaries of the District as ‘the northern portion of Utah County, extending south to the northern limits of the city of Provo.

David Evans served in this capacity--first as Major--later as Colonel--when the activities of militia were at their height due to the Echo Canyon Campaign, the administration of martial law, and the so-called “move south”. All three of these actions were ordered by Brigham Young to protect the settlers should the Johnson Army enter the Territory and conduct a campaign of violence and destruction under the guise of “putting down” a reported rebellion.

The Governor’s initial reaction to this outside interference was to resist at all costs, evacuate the people into the mountains, and devastate the valleys by destroying crops, vegetation, homes and other facilities. This plan however, was later modified to include only evacuation and movement south of all the people north of Utah County. The action became known, generally, as the “Move”.

At the outset of the campaign of resistance, the Lehi Military District furnished one company of cavalry and one company of infantry for military service in Echo Canyon to block the entrance of the troops into the Salt Lake Valley. The cavalry unit from the Lehi District first engaged only in the construction of barricades in the mountain passes. Later they engaged in tactics of harassment to Johnson’s troops. According to reports they burned his supply trains, drove off his horses and mules, stampeded his cattle, and set fire to the dry grass around his camp-sites, “but they shed not a drop of blood”.