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# **Discovering Mormon Trails**

**New York to California  
1831-1868**

Stanley B. Kimball

Diane Clements, Cartographer

*Deseret Book Company  
Salt Lake City, Utah  
1979*

## About the Author

Stanley B. Kimball is historian of the Mormon Pioneer Trail Foundation. In 1974 he was appointed by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to prepare a detailed study of the Mormon Trail for the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation of the U.S. Department of the Interior for their use in preserving and developing the trail. For this study he was awarded the Outdoor Recreation Achievement Award by Rogers C. B. Morton, Secretary of the Interior. Dr. Kimball, who teaches history at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, Illinois, is a great-great-grandson of Heber C. Kimball and of John W. Hess, both of whom personally followed some of these trails.

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## Preface

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The famous British historian R. H. Tawney once noted, "What historians need is not more documents, but stronger boots," which reminds us of the power of place and the importance of locale in history. In no other study of the past is such advice more valid than in the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, often referred to as the Mormons.

As a people the Latter-day Saints used at least a dozen well-known and not-so-well-known trails and roads from New York to California, from 1831 through 1868 and beyond, from the world-famous exodus from Nauvoo, Illinois, into the Valley of the Great Salt Lake to the totally forgotten Nebraska City Cutoff Trail once used by thousands. One of the aims of this study is to restore to memory some of these trails, to retell their history, and to provide maps to enable modern-day travelers to retrace them.

It is not really accurate to say that the Mormons were trailblazers. Their journeys were made as expeditiously and conveniently as possible along the best available roads. They were not looking for a place in history books; they simply wanted to get a job done. Aside from some trailbreaking by General Stephen W. Kearny and the Mormon Battalion in 1846 between Santa Fe and San Diego, out of the thousands of miles of trails and roads used by the Mormons of the nineteenth century, they may have actually blazed less than one mile. This was from Donner Hill to the mouth of Emigration Canyon in present-day Utah — an effort that required but four hours. (Of course, after 1847 the Mormons blazed many colonizing trails in the Great Basin.)

As a student and professor of history for several decades, I have never enjoyed an

opportunity more than this one — to discover, map, follow, and photograph Mormon trails. Whatever comes of this effort, verily I have had my reward already.

This book has been designed for the armchair as well as the professional historian, for Mormon as well as for non-Mormon, and perhaps especially for all who wish to relive, recapture, or simply enjoy part of the fascinating Mormon — and American — past. It is hoped that individuals and all sorts of groups will find occasion on foot or horseback, in cars, campers, buses, or even planes, to use this guide to get out on the old trails, and to encourage and help local, state, and federal agencies to better mark and preserve this rapidly disappearing part of our American heritage.

The maps have been developed, as far as possible, to give travelers three touring options: (1) quick tours via superhighways; (2) reasonably thorough explorations along state roads; and (3) close examinations of all sorts of obscure roads and trails.

Whatever the traveler has in mind, he should supplement these maps with standard highway maps or atlases with a scale of no more than twenty miles to the inch. More serious students should avail themselves of county maps with a scale of one-inch or one-half-inch to the mile; such maps are published by most state highway or transportation departments. Some travelers will even desire or need the extremely detailed 7.5 minute U.S. geological topographic maps. And there will be times when it will be necessary to use a compass and to ask locally for directions. Routes and road numbers change, cutoffs come into use, factories and fences become barriers, bridges disappear, new reservoirs come into being, shooters (not hunters) vandalize signs and markers, and even Mother Nature occasionally alters the terrain, and urban sprawl takes its toll. Parts of western Wyoming can be especially tricky. I have become lost more than once, experienced blowouts and frozen thermostats, run out of gas, and become mired. Some places demand four-

wheel traction, and a few can be seen only by walking. In every case, however, the reward is well worth the effort.

One further caveat: At times in Wyoming and Utah recent ranch and oil-field roads look more like the old trail than the old trail itself and can be confusing. Check maps carefully.

I have been especially fortunate in having as my cartographer Diane Clements, who has not only brought professional skill to the task, but, as a fourth-generation Mormon herself, has also displayed that necessary sensitivity, understanding, and great patience requisite in such matters.

In all but one case these trails were personally researched, traveled, photographed, and mapped by me. The exception is that portion of the Mormon Battalion Trail between Ft. Leavenworth and San Diego, for which I relied on an excellent study, *Mormon Battalion Trail Guide* (Utah State Historical Society, 1972), prepared by Charles S. Peterson, John F. Yurtinus, David E. Atkinson, and A. Kent Powell. Regarding Mormon settlement patterns in the West I gained much from D. W. Meinig's "The Mormon Culture Region: Strategies and Patterns in the Geography of the American West, 1847-1964" (*Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, June 1965); and in reference to the problem of territorially defining the Great Basin I have followed Nevin M. Fenneman's map "Physical Divisions of the United States" (1946 ed.).

Scores of friends, scholars, ranchers, librarians, and archivists have willingly helped. So have many citizen-band radio "good buddies" who provided help, saved me from blunders, and, most important, permitted me to tap into local expertise at will.

I would like to thank the Graduate and Research Office of Southern Illinois University for extensive financial help and support, and Jay M. Todd and Lavina Fielding Anderson of the *Ensign*, who took my original modest proposal regarding "Four Forgotten Mormon Trails" and encouraged me to enlarge it.

## MAP LEGEND

- Communities Existent at Time of Mormons
- Communities Not Existent at Time of Mormons
- ★ Communities of Interest
- ..... Trail
- Interstate Highways
- Major Highways
- County Roads
- ■ ■ ■ County Border
- ■ ■ ■ State Border

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## Chapter One

# The First Road West: The New York Saints Trail, 1831

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## New York

The first “road” west left more of a boat’s wake than a wagon’s rut, because it traversed mostly water. Joseph Smith had barely established the restored Church in a few counties of western New York and northern Pennsylvania when he was given the divine fiat during December 1830 and January 1831 to “go to the Ohio.” (See Doctrine and Covenants, sections 37 and 38.) Joseph counseled the converts in New York and Pennsylvania to sell their properties and move to Kirtland, Ohio. He and his wife, Emma, and a few others left Fayette Township, Seneca County, New York, in January 1831 to go to Kirtland, where the Church was growing rapidly. The nearly two hundred Mormons left behind formed themselves into three groups and prepared to follow their prophet.

The first of these groups to leave was the first branch organized in the restoration: the Colesville Branch of Broome County, New York. Although a few individuals left independently, the main group of about sixty, under the leadership of Newel Knight, departed early in April 1831, following the Old State Road north of Binghamton toward Ithaca. As the accompanying map shows, the Saints from Colesville (now Nineveh) went overland via South Bainbridge (now Afton), the place where Joseph and Emma Smith were married and Joseph had been arrested for preaching about the Book of Mormon. In front of the Afton Fairgrounds is a marker telling of this marriage. The home where they were married stood until 1948, when it was torn down. In passing it is

interesting to note that the area of nearby Harmony (now Oakland), Pennsylvania, where the Aaronic Priesthood was restored, is connected to Colesville and South Bainbridge by the beautiful Susquehanna River.

From Afton the Colesville Saints went by way of Coventry and Triangle to Ithaca; thence by boat up Cayuga Lake; and then eleven miles down the Cayuga and Seneca Canal to the Montezuma Swamp, where the canal intersected with the Erie Canal. They followed the Erie Canal for over 160 miles to Buffalo, and from there took a Lake Erie steamer 150 miles to the Fairport Harbor at Painesville, Ohio, only eleven miles from Kirtland, where they arrived in May.

The second group, consisting of about eighty Saints under the direction of the Prophet’s mother, Lucy Mack Smith, embarked for Buffalo from Waterloo, Seneca County, New York. (Lucy’s husband, Joseph Smith, Sr., had already left for Kirtland.) Part of this Waterloo group came from Fayette Township, where the Church had been organized April 6, 1830. They gathered at the Smith home two miles east of Waterloo (north of Highway 5) at a settlement then called the Kingdom. The Waterloo-Fayette company was divided into two parts, each traveling on different canal boats, with the first led by Lucy Mack Smith and the second by Thomas B. Marsh. They departed Kingdom about May 3, traveling on the Cayuga and Seneca Canal, which ran in front of the Smith home. Transferring to the Erie Canal at Montezuma, they arrived in Buffalo five days later and at Kirtland shortly thereafter.

Under the leadership of Martin Harris, a third group of about fifty persons from Palmyra, New York, departed May 27 for Buffalo. They embarked on the Erie Canal, which ran through their village, and arrived in Kirtland in June.

Theoretically, at least, these three groups could have made the entire trip from Ithaca to Buffalo and even on to Ohio without once touching land. Travel by canal boat was considered more convenient, cheaper, and

more comfortable than overland travel. By law the horse-drawn boats were restricted to four miles per hour, or to an absolute maximum of ninety-four miles a day. Long delays in going through many locks, however, cut their real average to about fifty miles a day. (Most canal traffic ended by the 1840s because railroads were much faster, averaging 15 miles an hour.)

During the day passengers stayed below in the main cabin or sat outside on the roof of the cabin, where they had an unobstructed view of all they passed. If one felt the need to stretch one's legs it was possible to jump off the boat onto the bank, walk a spell, and leap back on. Three substantial meals were served every day, and additional supplies and refreshments could



be obtained along the route while the boat went through the locks. At night, cabin areas were usually divided into male and female sections. Bunks, three and four tiers high, were lowered from the cabin sides and provided reasonably tolerable sleeping conditions.

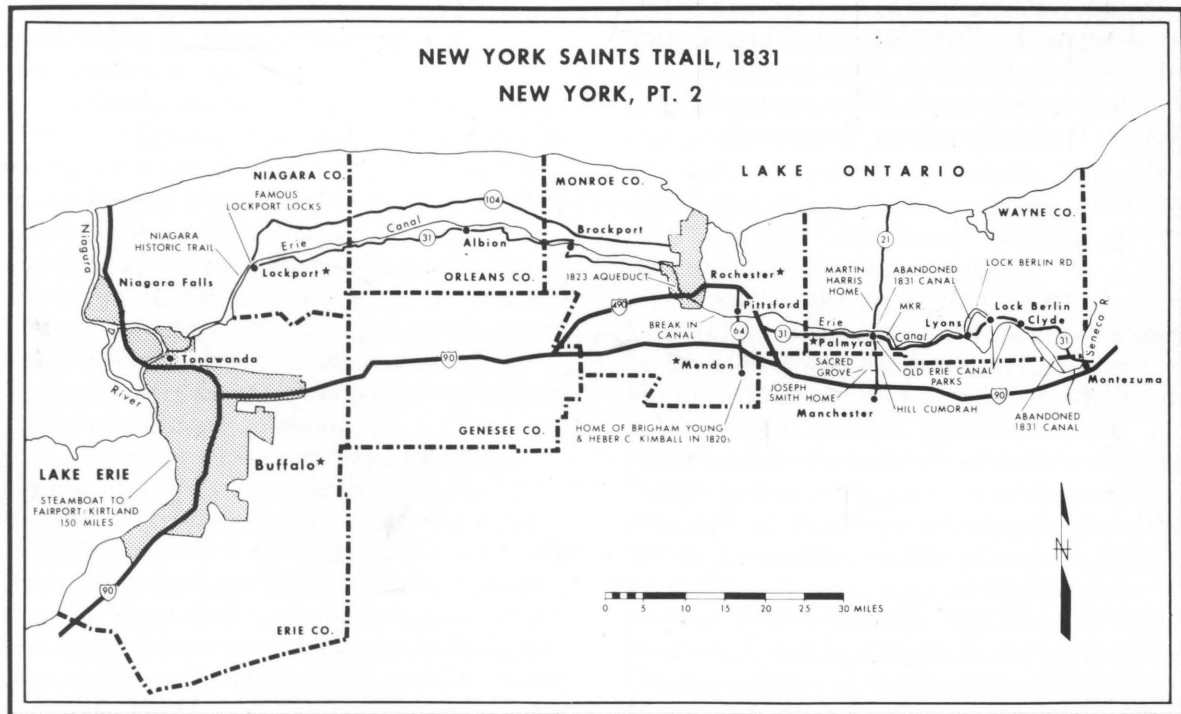
The voyage of the three groups was generally uneventful. Near Pittsford Lucy Smith's company was delayed by a break in the canal wall, and ice at Buffalo held up the Colesville Saints for some days.

Today, following the route these first emigrants took is easy, pleasant, and interesting. From Colesville there are good roads to Ithaca at the southern end of Cayuga Lake, one of the glacially formed Finger Lakes. According to an Iroquois Indian legend these Finger Lakes were formed when the Great Spirit placed his hand on the earth, designating this area as a chosen spot. Highway 89 provides a beautiful view of Cayuga Lake, and it is convenient to pass through the village of Fayette and visit the Peter Whitmer Farm (in Fayette Township). The

Church was officially organized here on April 6, 1830.

Several miles north is the village of Waterloo. Late in 1830 Joseph Smith's parents had left Manchester because of religious difficulties and had settled in Waterloo Township, at a place known as the Kingdom, two miles east of the village of Waterloo, where their son had previously organized a small branch. Today a large Kingdom Shopping Center and a historic marker one mile east of the center and north of the road are all that mark this vanished village.

The Erie Canal traveled by the Saints has been enlarged and improved twice since they used it. Referred to affectionately as "Clinton's Ditch" (it was built by De Witt Clinton between 1817 and 1825), it was forty feet wide and four feet deep. During the 1840s and 1850s most of this canal was improved and enlarged to be seventy feet wide and seven feet deep, and during the early twentieth century it was again enlarged, this time to seventy-five feet wide and



twelve feet deep, and was rechristened the New York State Barge — Erie Canal. In general, all three canals followed the same route with few changes; therefore, only bits and pieces of the Clinton's Ditch of pioneer times are still visible. Some of the best preserved and most accessible sections are at Montezuma, between Lock Berlin and Lyons, and at Palmyra. The traveler is urged to visit these places and also one or more of the Old Erie Canal Parks in Wayne County, especially the ones at Lock Berlin and Palmyra. Highway 31 follows the canal rather closely from Montezuma to Lockport.

Beyond Palmyra few remnants of the older canals are visible. At Rochester (under South Street) is the 802-foot stone aqueduct, built in 1823, by which the Saints crossed the Genesee River. Near the end of the trip are the famous locks at Lockport, where in the 1830s (as today) a series of five locks raised and lowered canal boats fifty-six feet. Between Montezuma and Buffalo the Saints were lifted a total of 179 feet by locks at Clyde, Lyons, Brighton, Rochester, and Lockport, and by the time they reached Buffalo they had been on the Erie Canal for 163 miles. From Lockport, modern travelers may follow the lovely Niagara Historic Trail to Buffalo via Tonawanda.

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## *Chapter Two*

# **West from St. Louis: The Boonslick Trail, 1831-39**

## **Missouri**

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During their sojourn in Missouri between 1831 and 1839, the Mormons used a famous trail between Jackson County and St. Louis. This trail, known as the Boonslick Trail, started in 1764 in downtown St. Louis near the Old Courthouse. Originally a trace used by Indians and trappers, it developed into the first road to the Far West, a main highway out of which grew the more famous Santa Fe, California, and Oregon trails. The Boonslick Trail got its name from frontiersman Daniel Boone, who with his sons had by 1805 extended the early trail to some salt springs, an animal licking place in Saline County. The trail was eventually extended to the Missouri River at Independence, Missouri.

The first Mormons to use this trail were Parley P. Pratt and four other missionaries who left Kirtland, Ohio, early in 1831 to preach to the Lamanites (American Indians) immediately west of Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, across the Missouri River in Indian Territory. Their success with the Shawnees and Delawares was minimal, but those missionaries were the first Mormons in what was soon to become one of the main centers of the Church — Jackson County, Missouri.

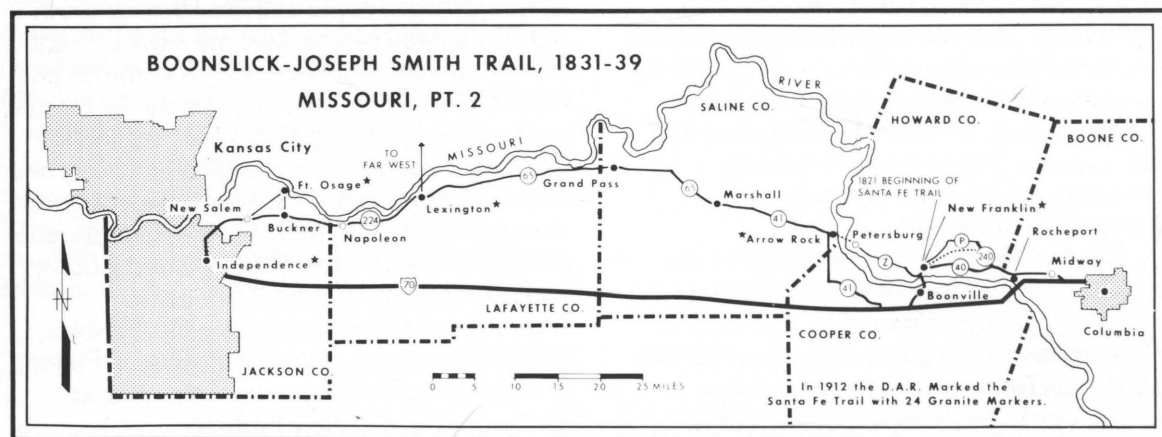
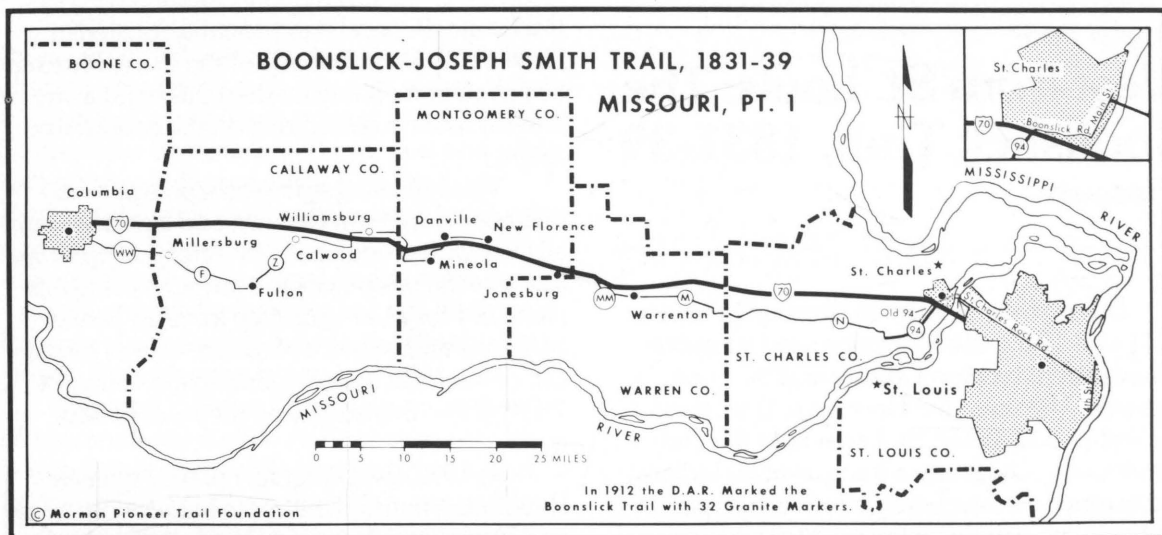
Joseph Smith himself visited Jackson County during the summer of 1831. He traveled from Kirtland, and walked the entire 240 miles from St. Louis to Jackson County. He returned partway, probably as far as Howard County, Missouri, by canoe. On August 12, at a point on the river called McIlwaine's Bend, he received a revelation (Doctrine and Covenants, section 61) not to travel further by water; so he

returned to St. Louis and to Kirtland by coach. (McIlwaine's Bend was probably located in Howard County, but one of the many Missouri floods so completely washed this bend away that there is no record of it on the earliest river maps.)

The following spring Joseph again had business in Jackson County, and that time went all the way by regular coach. After that there are few specific references to Mormons using this road, but for as long as they traveled between St. Louis and western Missouri — until forced out of the state by mobs during the winter of 1838-39 — this is the way they would have gone.

In 1912 the Daughters of the American Revolution marked this route between St. Louis and Franklin with thirty-two granite markers. Although today some of these markers are in out-of-the-way places, they are a good check for determining how close one is to the original road. Nineteen of these markers can be located easily at the following places: one behind the Old Courthouse on 5th Street in St. Louis, one at the courthouse in St. Charles, five scattered along county road N in St. Charles County, two on county roads 00 and M in Warren County, and others north of the courthouse in Warrenton, in Jonesburg, Danville, Mineola, and Williamsburg, at the courthouse in Fulton, in Millersburg, in downtown Columbia, at Rocheport, and in New Franklin.

Travelers should start at the Old Courthouse in St. Louis, first visiting the famous St. Louis Arch and the Jefferson Expansion Museum, then proceeding north on 4th Street to Washington Avenue. On the northwest corner of this intersection is a Mormon Pioneer Trail Foundation plaque (on the Missouri Athletic Club Building) indicating the site of the first chapel used by the Mormons in St. Louis, 1854-57. Follow the map via Washington Avenue, 12th Boulevard, Martin Luther King Boulevard, and St. Charles Rock Road to St. Charles (which was first mentioned by the Mormons in 1831); go south on historic,



restored South Main Street, west on the modern Boonslick Road, and pick up old Highway 94. The new St. Charles Mormon Chapel is on this highway and therefore directly on the old route.

From St. Charles follow various country and state roads via Warrenton, Jonesburg, Danville, Mineola, Williamsburg, Calwood, Fulton, Millersburg, Columbia, and Rocheport to New Franklin. New Franklin was built after the original town was washed away by the Missouri River. Here the Boonslick Trail became the Santa Fe Trail, as indicated by a

large granite marker commemorating its 1821 beginning. In 1912 the Daughters of the American Revolution also marked this trail to the Missouri River with twenty-four granite markers. Eighteen of these markers can be located easily: on county road Z west of New Franklin; west of Petersburg; Arrow Rock opposite the State Park exit on Highway 41; one mile west of Arrow Rock on Highway 41; on Highway 65 halfway between Marshall and Malta Bend; at Malta Bend; at Grand Pass; near

the post office in Waverly; in the Dover town park; on Highway 224 at the west end of Lexington; opposite the post office in Wellington; on the Ish School grounds south of Napoleon; on the old Lexington Road in Levasy; on Highway 24 in Bruckner; just east of the old Sibley Cemetery at Fort Osage; on Blue Mills Road halfway between Fort Osage and New Salem; in a small roadside park at New Salem; and at the courthouse in Independence.

From Franklin Joseph Smith and the Saints of his day would have crossed the Missouri at Arrow Rock by ferry, as shown by the dotted line on the map. Today one must make a long detour on Highway 41.

Lexington was an important river city, and many Mormons came there by riverboat and went overland to Far West and other northern Missouri communities. During the expulsion of 1838-39 many Mormons fled to Lexington, where they took riverboats to Illinois. It was also near Lexington, in April 1852, that the steamboat *Saluda* exploded, killing twenty-six Mormons and seriously injuring many more. In Lexington there is a monument indirectly honoring Mormon pioneer women, the Madonna of the Trail statue erected by the Daughters of the American Revolution on Highway 13.

About halfway between Lexington and Independence is Fort Osage, an old log trading post that has been restored. Although Mormons had little to do with this fort, Joseph Smith did note that he had paddled past it on the Missouri in 1831.

Independence is rightfully known as the Queen City of Trails, and several monuments to the Santa Fe, California, and Oregon trails on the courthouse grounds attest this to distinction. In the Independence and Liberty area are many places of interest connected with Mormon history for the traveler to visit. One is advised to commence at the Latter-day Saint and Reorganized Latter Day Saint visitors' centers on Walnut Street.

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Chapter Three

## Zion's Camp March, 1834

*Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri*

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The nearly 900-mile march of Zion's Camp from Kirtland, Ohio, to Jackson County, Missouri, during the spring of 1834 gave the Mormons their first practical experience in moving large groups of people and materials over long distances, helping prepare them for the much greater exodus of 1846-48. The purpose of this small army of Ohio Saints was to help reinstate their Missouri brethren on their Jackson County lands, from which they had been driven by mobs earlier that same year. Joseph Smith led the march, and almost all the leading Mormons of that day participated.

Several independent bands left Kirtland around the first of May by way of Chardon and Streetsboro for New Portage (now part of Akron near Norton), their staging ground 50 miles to the south. At this point of rendezvous Joseph organized the 130 men and 20 baggage wagons of the camp.

The march began at New Portage on May 9, and the company proceeded without incident through open, rolling hill country to Wooster (where tradition says the first Christmas tree in the New World was trimmed the same year the Mormons reached Utah, in 1847) and Mansfield. Near Bucyrus Joseph told his men they were in the area where Colonel William Crawford had been burned at the stake in 1782 by some Delaware and Wyandot Indians during one of the many late eighteenth-century border conflicts. A few days later in Wyandot County they passed some Wyandot Indian settlements near Upper Sandusky, where Parley P. Pratt and four companions had preached in 1831 on a missionary

trip to western Missouri.

The camp continued through the year-old county seat of Kenton, past the Devil's Backbone — a series of glacial ridges several miles long and about seventy feet high — to Bellefontaine, West Liberty, and along the level Mad River Valley to Urbana. Three miles farther they crested Donavin's Hill and were rewarded by one of the most beautiful vistas of the entire march. From there the road led to Springfield and Dayton (where they crossed the Miami River) and to the Indiana state line.

On May 17, the Mormons reached the Indiana line just east of Richmond and picked up the famous National Road (today's highway 40), the superhighway of its day between Cumberland, Maryland, and Vandalia, Illinois. They followed this road across gently rolling country via Centerville and beyond Indianapolis to the junction of today's Highways 40 and 240. Along the National Road they would have been passed often by splendid stagecoaches that averaged 15 miles an hour between scheduled stops and changes of horses.

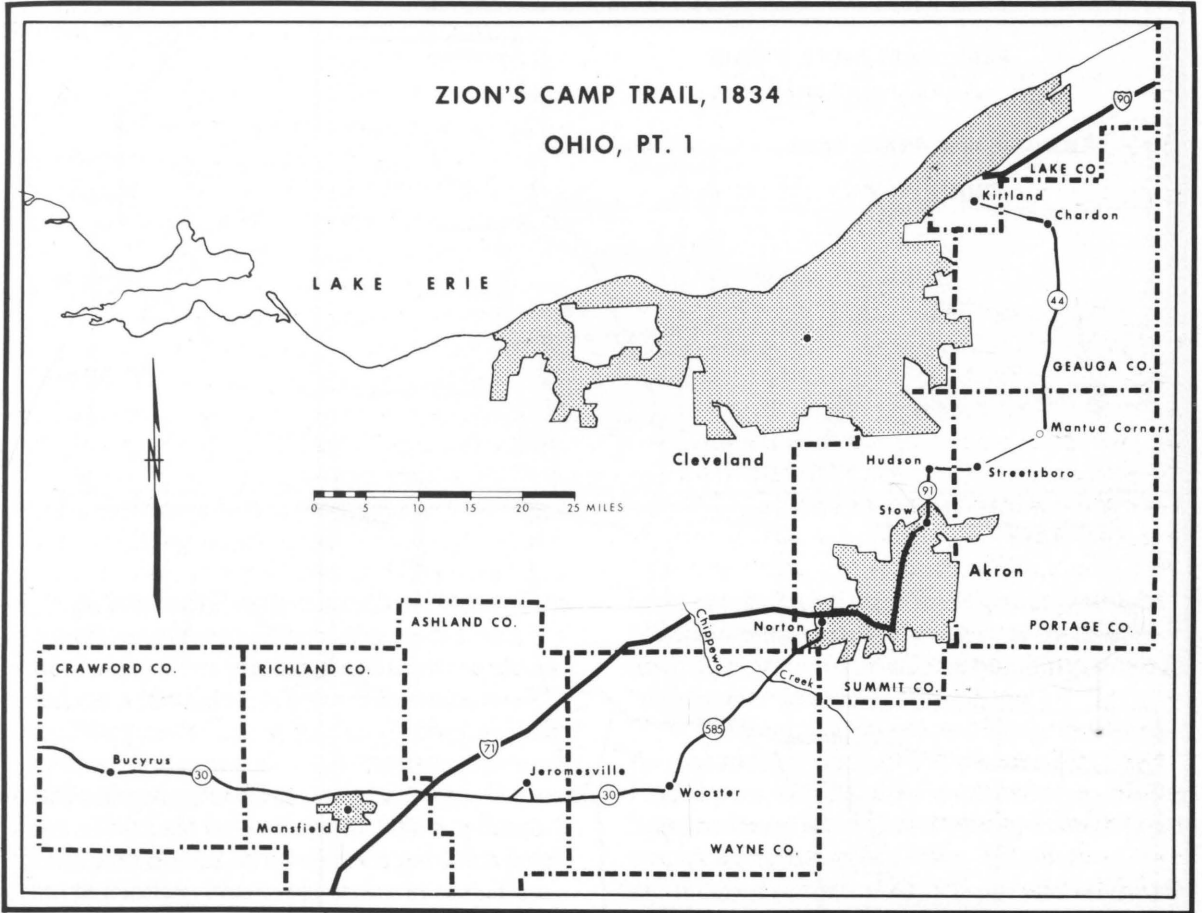
From Mansfield to Clinton the old road passes through some of the loveliest country to be seen along the whole route. Park County is famous for its thirty-nine covered bridges, all built after 1834. The traveler is advised to have a Park County map and to stop and ask directions often, for the road is most complicated to follow. An easier way is via Rockville. At Clinton the company crossed the Wabash River by ferry, and entered Illinois a few miles to the west on May 24.

Just west of the Embarras River in Coles County some of the men wanted to kill three rattlesnakes, but Joseph said, "Let them alone — don't hurt them! How will the serpent ever lose his venom, while the servants of God possess the same disposition, and continue to make war upon it?" (*History of the Church* 2:71.)

Near Decatur the men fought a sham battle to test their military preparedness.

## ZION'S CAMP TRAIL, 1834

### OHIO, PT. 1



Between Mechanicsburg and Springfield an old road passes through a short stretch of unspoiled country. (Ask locally for directions.)

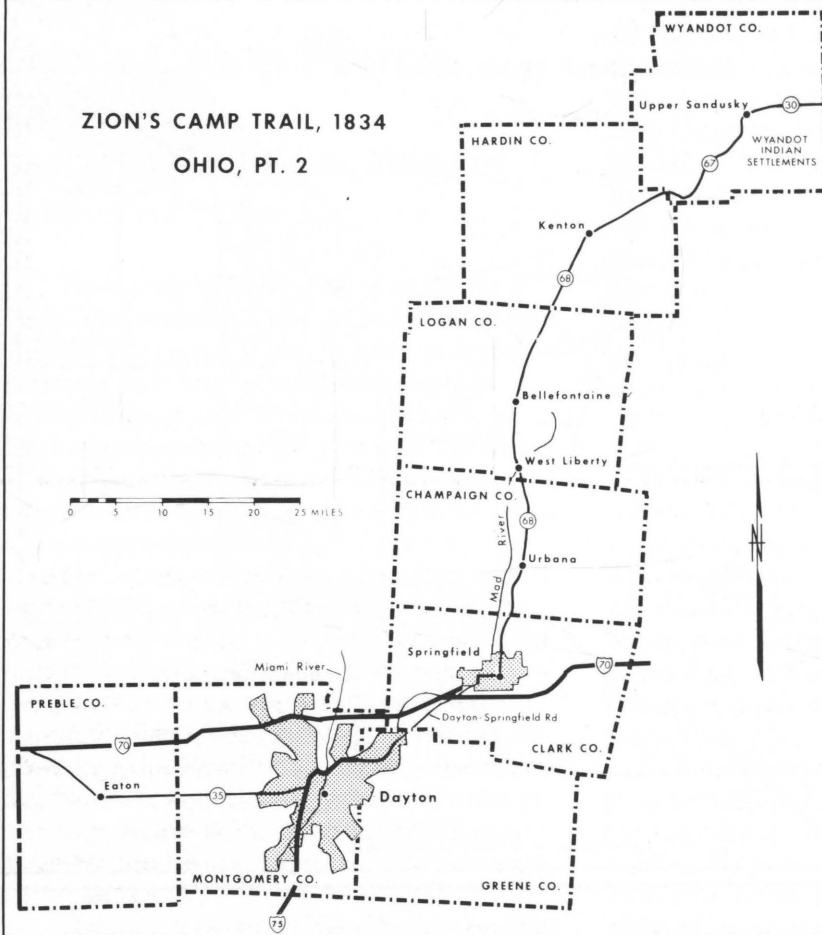
West of Exeter is Valley City, one of the most important places along the whole Zion's Camp route. The early Saints crossed the Illinois River by ferry at Valley City. Modern travelers must follow routes 100 and 35. The country road from Detroit to Valley City is scenic, but one must ask locally for directions. Going via highway 107 is longer, but much simpler.

One mile south of Valley City on the bluffs of the Illinois River is the "Zelph Mound." (It is on private property and tourism is not encouraged.) On June 3 Joseph and a few

others climbed the high bluffs here and discovered a mound; they dug into it and unearthed a skeleton. Joseph is reported to have identified the remains as those of Zelph, a great Lamanite warrior killed in some long-forgotten battle. About half a mile north of the Zelph Mound, back toward Valley City, a very rough road cuts west up through the bluffs. This is Church Hollow Road, apparently the only original part of the entire Zion's Camp trail remaining. After two and a half miles the road improves, coming out on the prairie and leading to Pittsfield. (Ask locally for directions.) This road is now being marked by the Boy Scouts of America.

# ZION'S CAMP TRAIL, 1834 OHIO, PT. 2

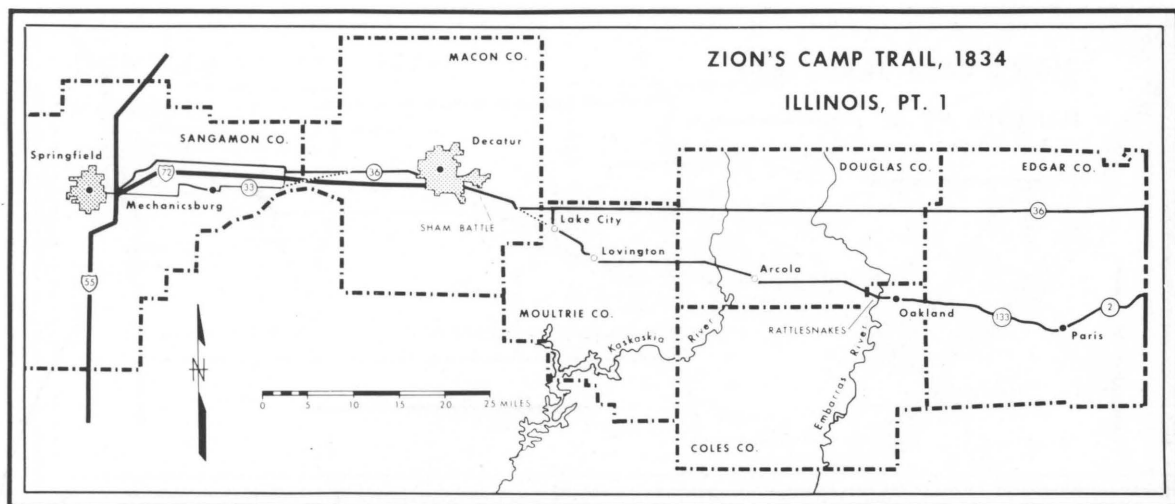
0 5 10 15 20 25 MILES



# ZION'S CAMP TRAIL, 1834 INDIANA

0 5 10 15 20 25 MILES





Just east of Pittsfield, north of Highway 36, is a sign marking the site of Mormon Town, where several hundred Saints found refuge and lived for a few years following the expulsion from Missouri in 1838-39. No visible trace of Mormon Town remains, although at one time there were supposed to have been gravestones there. The East School of Pittsfield is a Pike County museum, which has on exhibit a large map illustrating Mormon history in early Pike County.

West of Pittsfield is Atlas, one of the oldest communities in central Illinois, founded in 1825. During the Missouri expulsion the families of Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball lived here for seven weeks in 1839. Brigham Young and his family lived in a brick trading post that still stands on the northeast corner of the intersection of Highways 54 and 96. The Kimballs (Heber was still in Missouri) roomed in the Colonel William Ross home, which is now in ruins on the east side of Highway 96 about 100 yards north of this same intersection.

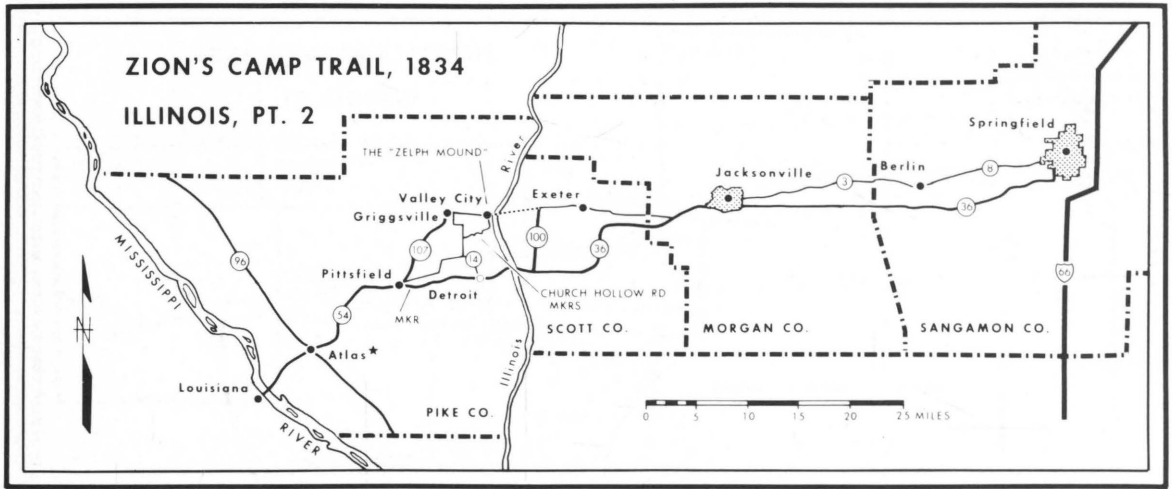
On June 5 and 6 the Mormons crossed the Mississippi River west of Atlas at Louisiana, Missouri. This community was an established

ferry crossing and was used by many of the Missouri Saints later when they were driven from that state. It was also an outfitting center for many other westering Americans.

Between Louisiana and Perry the scenic county roads (locally known as the Old Paris Road) pass several old communities, including Spencerburg, which has a graveyard with headstones from the early 1830s. Travelers are advised to have county maps and ask locally for directions. The easy route is via New London.

Immediately east of Paris near the Salt River was a small Mormon community called the Salt River settlement. Here Joseph's company on June 8 met his brother Hyrum's company, which had come from Michigan. Combined, the small army now numbered 205 men, 11 women, 7 children, and 25 baggage wagons. Zion's Camp most likely entered Paris at the old ford across the Middle Fork of Salt River on Hill Street, where there is a bridge today. Highway 24 through Moberly, Keytesville, and Brunswick to De Witt follows approximately the camp's route west.

The community of De Witt did not exist in 1834. Missouri Mormons established it during



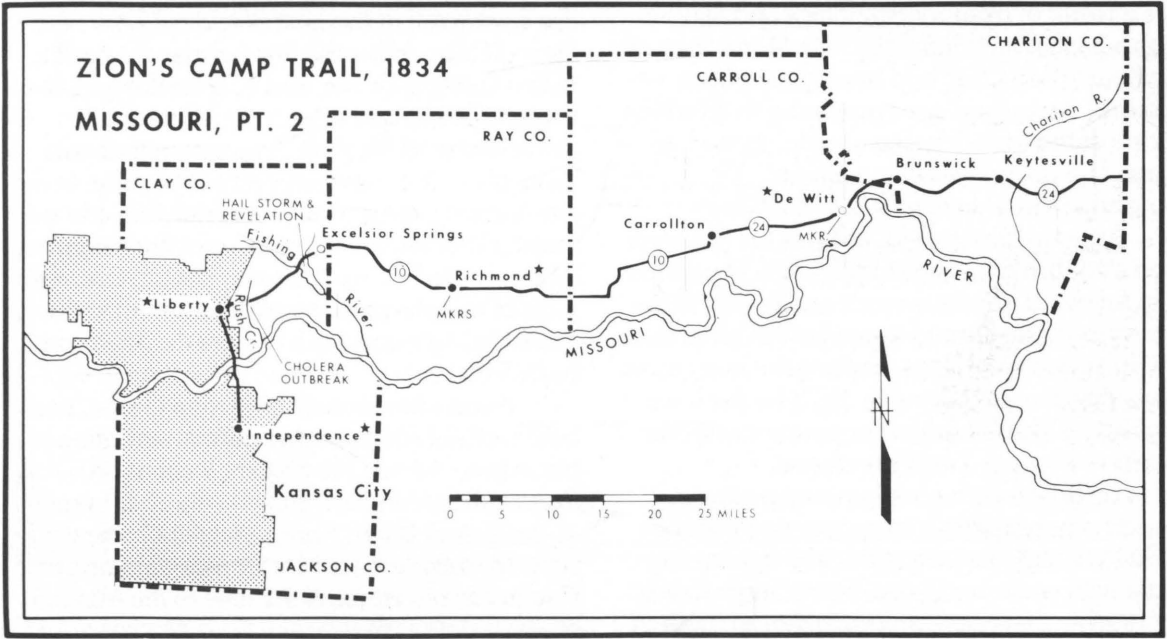
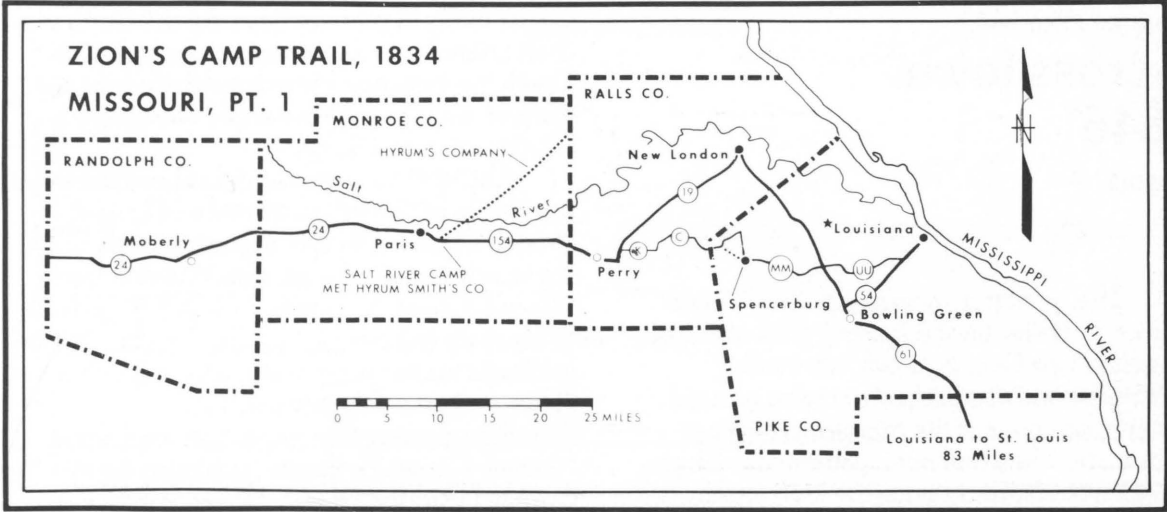
the summer of 1838 as a river port city for northern Missouri. They were driven out the following October. In the years since Zion's Camp the Missouri has changed course and now flows about a mile from the old De Witt landing. In the center of town is a flagpole with bronze markers telling the story of the Mormons in De Witt. Most of the road west to Richmond follows the flat flood plain of the Missouri.

There is much Mormon history associated with Richmond. The Three Witness Graveyard, where Oliver Cowdery, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, is buried, is just north of town; and the grave of David Whitmer, another of the three witnesses, is west in the city cemetery on Highway 10. There is also a small Mormon exhibit in the Ray County Museum located in the main building of the old Poor Farm.

Just west of today's Excelsior Springs, a once-famous health resort located in some unusually hilly terrain, the old road crossed several branches of the Fishing River. On June 19, while the army was camped on the flat and unprotected flood plain between the two main branches, a mob from Jackson County,

Missouri, attacked. Only a hailstorm drove the mob off. Several days later Joseph received the "Fishing River" revelation (Doctrine and Covenants 105), in which he was told not to pursue the "redemption of Zion" further at that time. From there the camp moved to Rush Creek near Liberty, where they suffered from cholera; they disbanded on June 25, and returned to Kirtland, Ohio.

When the Mormons left Ohio for Missouri in 1837 they followed no special route. Some used the Zion's Camp road; others went south to Wellsville, Ohio, and took various riverboats on the Ohio, Mississippi, and Missouri rivers to Lexington, Missouri, and then continued by wagon. The same was true when the Saints were driven from northern Missouri in 1838-39. Some followed the Zion's Camp road back to Illinois via the ferry at Louisiana, Missouri; others went to the ferry at Quincy, Illinois, the largest city on the upper Mississippi, probably via Kingston, Utica, Chillicothe, Linneus, Bloomington, Shelbyville, and Palmyra; and some fled to Iowa, most likely by way of Shelbyville and then north to Philadelphia, Monticello, and Waterloo.



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Chapter Four

# Across Iowa, 1846 *Iowa*

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The great trek west really commenced March 1, 1846, on the frozen banks of Sugar Creek in Lee County, Iowa, where the Mormons had established a staging ground seven miles west of the Mississippi River at Montrose. They had been gathering at Sugar Creek from Nauvoo since the first crossing of the Mississippi River on February 4. This exodus was a result of misunderstandings and Illinois mob activities and demands. The Mormons had previously fled Ohio and been driven from Missouri. Now they were preparing to go where "none could hurt or make afraid," to the Far West. This group was the vanguard; thousands more were to follow that year.

As far as Bloomfield, at least, the pioneers used established old territorial roads. Thereafter they followed primitive roads and Indian paths. Travelers today should watch for the more than one hundred road signs marking the trail across Iowa; these were erected in 1972 by the Iowa Highway Commission in cooperation with the Mormon Pioneer Trail Foundation.

Terrible weather and unpreparedness caused much suffering to people and livestock at Sugar Creek and along the trail until spring came with water and grass. From Sugar Creek the pioneers traveled by foot and in all kinds of wagons, with all kinds of draft animals, via Croton and Farmington toward a ford on the Des Moines River at Bonaparte. Where possible William Pitt's Brass Band played in exchange for supplies and money.

The first known example among the Mormons of blessing a sick animal to restore its health occurred at the Indian Creek camp in

Van Buren County. Such blessings were given occasionally in pioneer days, for the death of a draft animal was a serious loss. From Indian Creek the trail meandered generally west via present-day Troy, Drakesville, West Grove, Cincinnati, and Genoa.

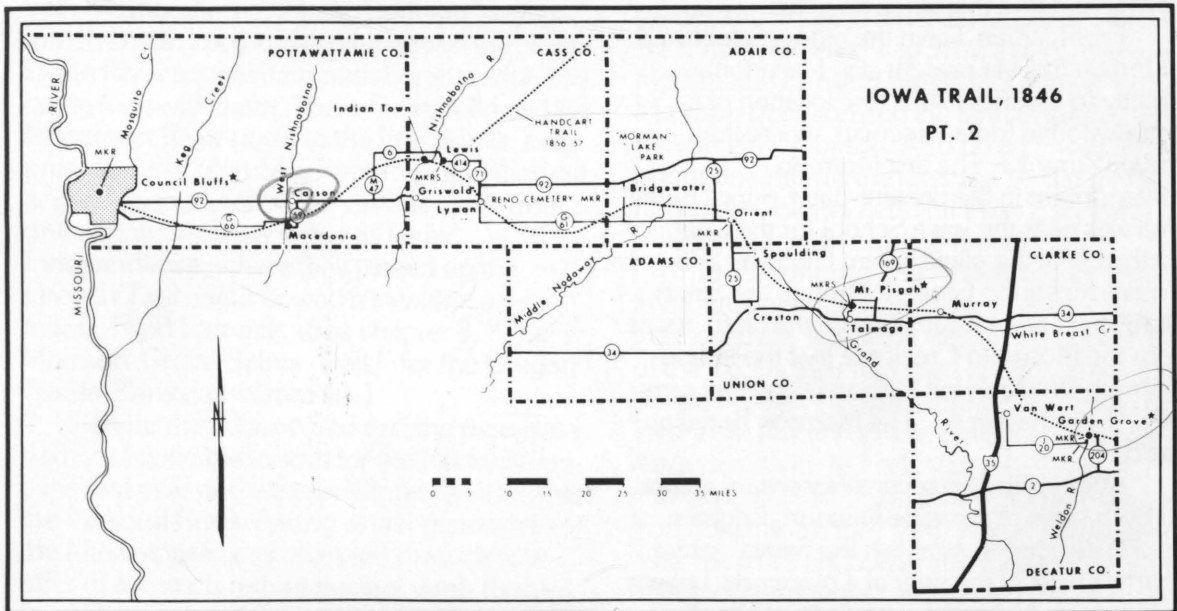
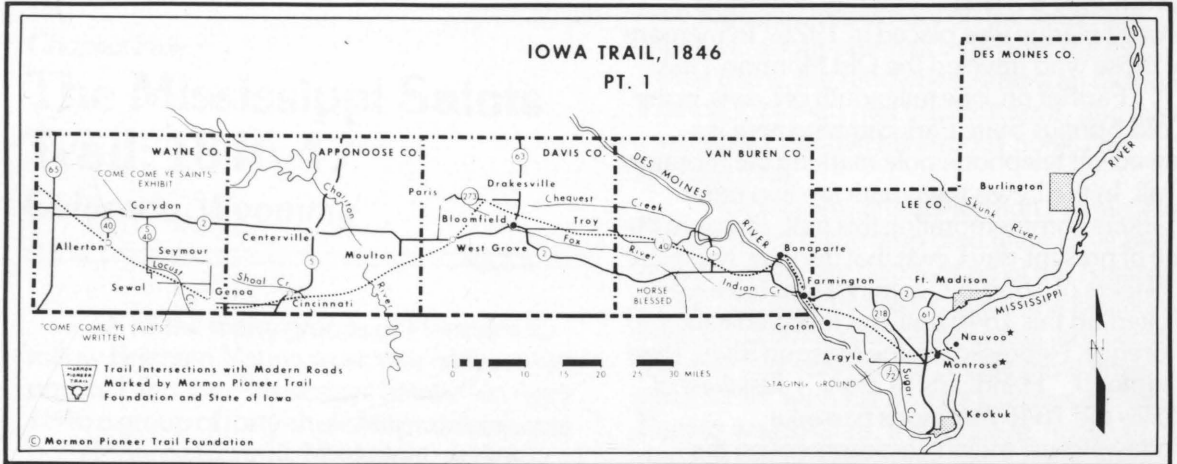
On April 13 while camped about five miles northwest of Genoa, to the west of Locust Creek, William Clayton, the camp clerk, wrote the words to the now famous Mormon hymn "Come, Come, Ye Saints." He did this partially to buoy up the people, but more particularly in gratitude for the news that a wife, left behind in Nauvoo, had safely borne a son.

Commemorating this event is an impressive "Come, Come, Ye Saints" exhibit in the Wayne County Historical Society Museum in Corydon.

On April 23 the pioneers made camp on the west bank of the East (Weldon) Fork of the Grand River. Here the first permanent camp, called Garden Grove, was built for the benefit of those following, and here the Mormons remained until May 12. A community of this same name still exists on the old campsite. In the small town park is a large boulder with a brass marker that reads "in memory of the Mormons who founded Garden Grove, Iowa." One mile west of this plaque, a small monument in the Trailside Historical Park honors the Mormons buried there.

Soon after founding Garden Grove, the Saints established another permanent camp at a place they named Mt. Pisgah, located on Pottawatomie Indian lands by another branch of the Grand River. Fortunately the Indians were friendly, for the Mormons would be on Pottawatomie lands all the way to the Missouri River.

There is little left of this camp today but a cemetery, a monument to the 300 to 800 persons who died there between 1846 and 1852, and a nine-acre park and picnic area with information signs. A Daughters of the American Revolution marker is also here, designating Mt. Pisgah as the first white settlement in Union County, but it fails to mention the Mormons. Mt.



Pisgah is located on a crooked country road north of Highway 34 and immediately west of Talmadge. (Ask locally for directions.) There is another — some think a better — way to reach Mt. Pisgah. One and one-half miles east of Talmadge go two miles north on Highway 169. Turn west at a cemetery and follow small signs for about one and one-half miles.

Leaving Mt. Pisgah June 1, the pioneers

passed through present-day Orient, where a marker attesting to that fact is located on the schoolgrounds. Near one of their campsites in Adair County, two miles east of Bridgewater, Mormon Trail Park and "Mormon" [sic] Lake commemorate their passing.

East of Lyman on county road G61 the old trail passes the site of an early post-Mormon town named Reno. All that is left of this

community is a small cemetery in which a bronze plaque was placed in 1926 "In memory of those who traveled the Old Mormon Trail."

Farther on, one mile south of Lewis, in the Cold Springs State Park camping area is a sawed-off telephone pole marking the Mormon Trail. In the Lewis town park are two other markers commemorating this trail. (It was at the site of present-day Lewis that the early handcart pioneers of 1856-57, coming from Iowa City, picked up this 1846 trail and followed it to Florence, Nebraska, on the Missouri River. (See chapter 9, "Handcarts to Zion.") Just west of Lewis the 1846 Mormons passed a Pottawatomie Indian encampment on the Nishnabotna River and dubbed it "Indian Town," a name that stuck for years.

From Indian Town the pioneers followed an Indian trail via present-day Macedonia, directly to Council Bluffs (the location of a Pottawatomie Indian agency), where they arrived June 13. The first Mormon encampment in the present-day Council Bluffs area was near the Iowa School for the Deaf, northwest of the place where Highway 275 crosses Mosquito Creek. Although the Saints established several campsites at the bluffs, it was from the Mosquito Creek site that the famous Mormon Battalion left for San Diego that same year. (See chapter 6, "The Mormon Battalion March.")

After setting up several temporary camps on both sides of the wide Missouri, Brigham Young decided to establish the Saints' winter quarters west of the river at a place now known as Florence, Nebraska, just north of Omaha. Aside from some Mormon Pioneer Trail Foundation road signs, there is but one marker in Council Bluffs honoring the Mormons. It is located on the north side of Baylis Park on South Main Street in downtown Council Bluffs.

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Chapter Five

## **The Mississippi Saints Trail: 1846-47 Colorado, Wyoming**

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Of all the many groups of Mormons to follow Brigham Young west, one of the most unusual was the "Mississippi Saints." In April 1846 a group of forty-three Mormon converts from Monroe County, Mississippi, under the leadership of William Crosby, started north with the intention of joining Brigham Young and the main body of the pioneers on the North Platte River somewhere near Fort Laramie and going west with them. These Saints followed the Mississippi River north to the Iron Banks, near present-day Columbus, Kentucky, and then cut across Missouri, following various roads from one county seat to another as far as Independence, where they picked up the Oregon Trail and followed it to within a few miles of Fort Laramie. (See chapter 8, "The Mormon Grove Saints Trail," for the Oregon Trail in Kansas or Nebraska.)

There they discovered that the pioneers had not been able to start for the Rocky Mountains that year and were in Winter Quarters on the Missouri River. Facing winter themselves, the Mississippi Saints accepted the welcome offer of a French mountainman, John Reshaw, to guide them along an old trappers' trail south to Fort Pueblo on the Arkansas River in present-day Colorado. Reshaw was headed that way himself with his furs. The party experienced no trouble en route with the Cheyenne, Sioux, or Arapahoe, and reached the fort, which had been established in 1842, on August 7. Later they were joined by three sick detachments of the Mormon Battalion. (See chapter 6, "The Mormon Battalion March.") A total of 287 men, women, and children wintered together in a

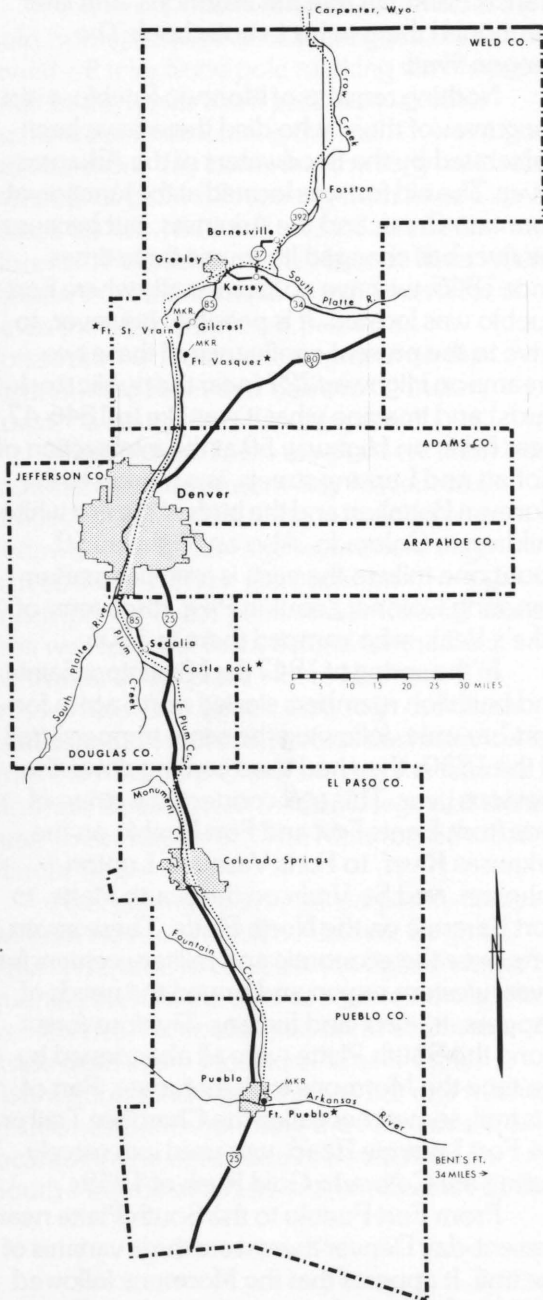
little log-cabin settlement on the south side of the river, about one-half mile from the fort. While there, the renowned American historian Francis Parkman met the Mormons, and later mentioned them in his famous book *The Oregon Trail*.

Nothing remains of Mormon Pueblo; even the graves of those who died there have been obliterated by the floodwaters of the Arkansas River. The old fort was located at the junction of Fountain Creek and the Arkansas, but because the river has changed its course three times since 1846, we have no idea exactly where Fort Pueblo was located. It is possible, however, to drive to the present confluence of these two streams on Highway 227 (near the public stockyards) and imagine what it was like in 1846-47. Near here, on Highway 50 at the intersection of Moffatt and Lansing streets, is a marker to the Mormon Battalion and the birth of the first white children in Colorado. Also on Highway 50, about one mile to the east, is a similar marker honoring Colonel Zebulon Pike, discoverer of Pike's Peak, who camped there in 1806.

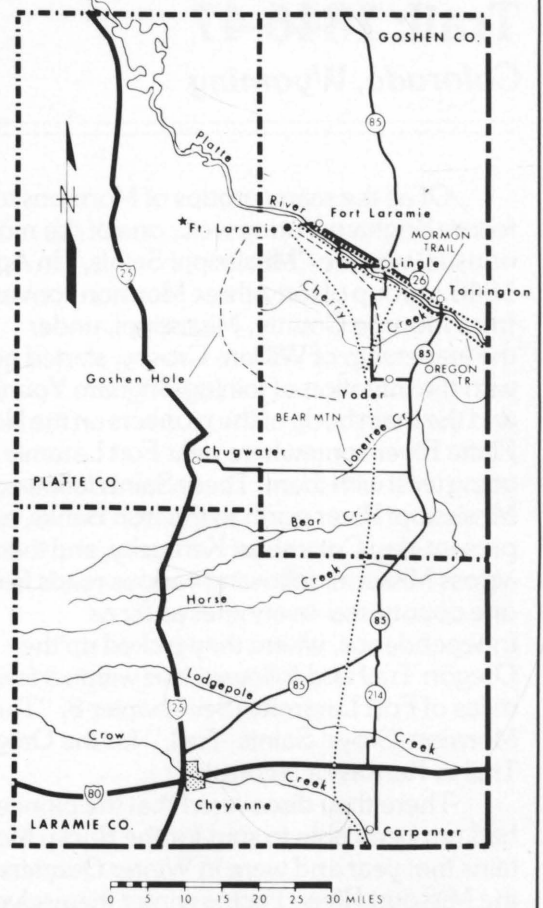
In the spring of 1847 the Mississippi Saints and battalion members started north again for Fort Laramie, following the same trappers' trail of the 1830s they had used coming down the previous year. This trail connected a string of forts from Bents Fort and Fort Pueblo on the Arkansas River, to Forts Vasquez, Lupton, Johnson, and St. Vrain on the South Platte, to Fort Laramie on the North Platte. These seven forts were the economic and military centers for a vast western region and served the needs of trappers, traders, and Indians. The four forts along the South Platte were all abandoned by the time the Mormons took that route. Part of this trail, sometimes called the Cherokee Trail or the Fort Laramie Road, was used extensively during the Colorado Gold Rush of 1859.

From Fort Pueblo to the South Platte near present-day Denver there were three variants of the trail. It appears that the Mormons followed the one closest to the mountains, along Fountain, Monument, East Plumb, and Plumb creeks

# MISSISSIPPI SAINTS TRAIL, 1846-47 COLORADO



# MISSISSIPPI SAINTS TRAIL, 1846-47 WYOMING



to the latter's confluence with the South Platte just south of Denver. Keeping the majestic Rampart Range of the Colorado Rockies to their left, they would have passed 14,110-foot-high Pike's Peak at Colorado Springs. Interstate 25 follows this old trail closely as far as Castle Rock, a dramatic outcrop of salmon-colored stone that served as a landmark for Indians, explorers, and the Mormons.

Once the Mormons reached the South Platte at present-day Denver they followed it as far as possible, to beyond modern-day Greeley. With the towering Front Range of the Colorado Rockies to the west, they would have first passed Fort Vasquez, which had been abandoned in 1842 (today a reconstruction of this fort stands in the median of Highway 85), and then Fort St. Vrain, which had been abandoned in 1844. Nothing remains of Fort St. Vrain except a marker three miles west of Gilcrest on a dirt road. (Ask locally for directions.) Both these forts were originally on the South Platte River, but the river has since changed course.

East of Greeley the Mormons picked up Crow Creek and followed it north into Wyoming, where the Rockies faded away into the west and the high plain commenced. Part of the old trail can be intersected by taking the Chugwater road west from Highway 85 about seven miles to Bear Mountain. A favorite campsite was along Lonetree Creek.

Just inside a thirty-mile-wide natural basin named Goshen Hole, the trail divided and the Mississippi Saints could either have taken the shorter way via Cherry Creek or cut northeast to the North Platte and followed the Oregon Trail proper to Fort Laramie. It appears they took the North Platte route.

The vanguard of these Saints reached Fort Laramie before Brigham Young and happily greeted the pioneers from Winter Quarters when they arrived sixteen days later on June 1. From that point the two companies traveled together.

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Chapter Six

## The Mormon Battalion March, 1846-47

*Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado,  
Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona,  
California*

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What has been called the longest infantry march in history commenced July 20, 1846, in Council Bluffs, Iowa. This march of more than 1,850 miles to San Diego, California, was the result of the Mexican War of 1846 during which James K. Polk, president of the United States, asked the Mormons to furnish 500 men to help in the war effort.

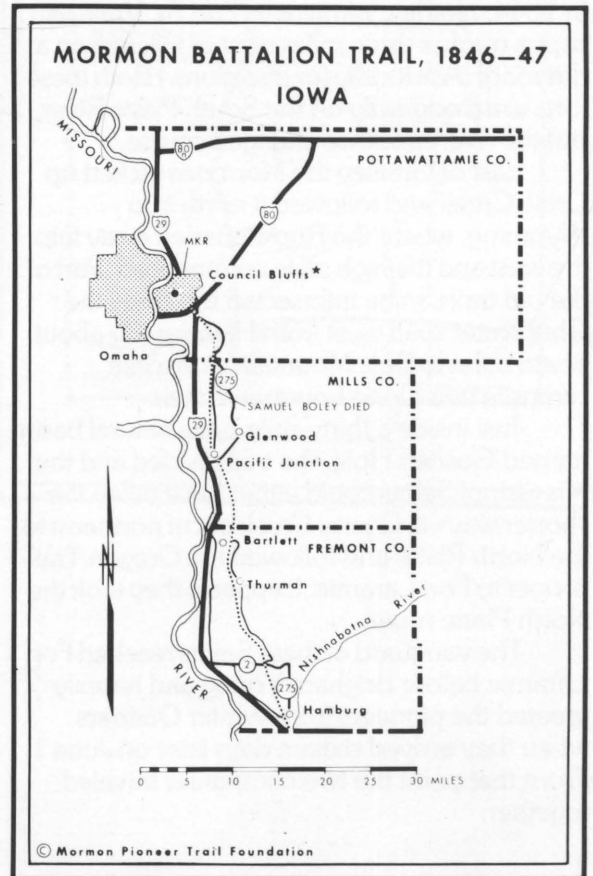
Mormon leaders agreed to provide the men, for it would help demonstrate their basic loyalty to their country and they would benefit materially from the military pay, from the arms that the men could keep, from the uniform money allotments (since the Mormons were allowed to wear their own clothes), and from the fact that many men would be transported west at government expense.

The battalion of 549 men, 60 women, and some children formed on the site of the first Mormon camp in the Council Bluffs area (northwest of where Highway 275 crosses Mosquito Creek, near the Iowa School for the Deaf) on July 20 and commenced the first leg of its epic march, a 180-mile stretch down the left bank of the Missouri toward Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. While no Mormons were killed during the entire venture, two men died en route. The first, Samuel Boley, expired only twenty-eight miles from Council Bluffs, just inside Mills County.

The first part of the trail hugged the river bluffs, following what became the Council Bluffs to St. Joseph (Missouri) stagecoach route.

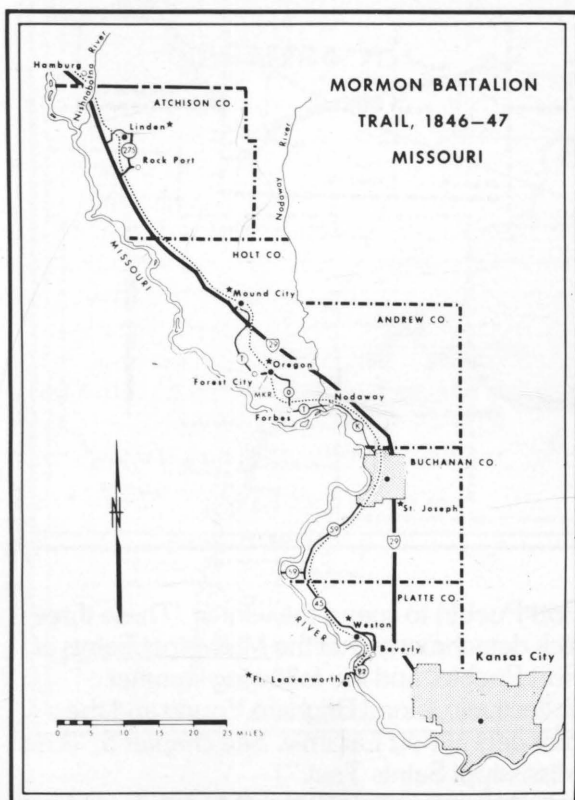
(Note that all of the roads the early Mormons used along the Illinois, Mississippi, and Missouri rivers closely followed the bluff line, for in those days of frequent river flooding, roads were never built on the flood plain. Today one is always closer to the old roads the nearer one is to the bluffs.) These old bluff-line roads still exist in Iowa and Missouri, but one can get a good and more convenient view of the area from Interstate 29 as far as Mound City, Missouri.

Passing through present-day Pacific Junction and Hamburg, Iowa, the battalion crossed the Nishnabotna River and entered Missouri, from which they had been driven in 1838-39. They remained on guard, but suffered no difficulties. Their first camp in Missouri was near Linden, a community of which little exists



today save a graveyard. (Ask locally for directions.)

Next they passed through Mound City and Oregon (named after the famous trail). A

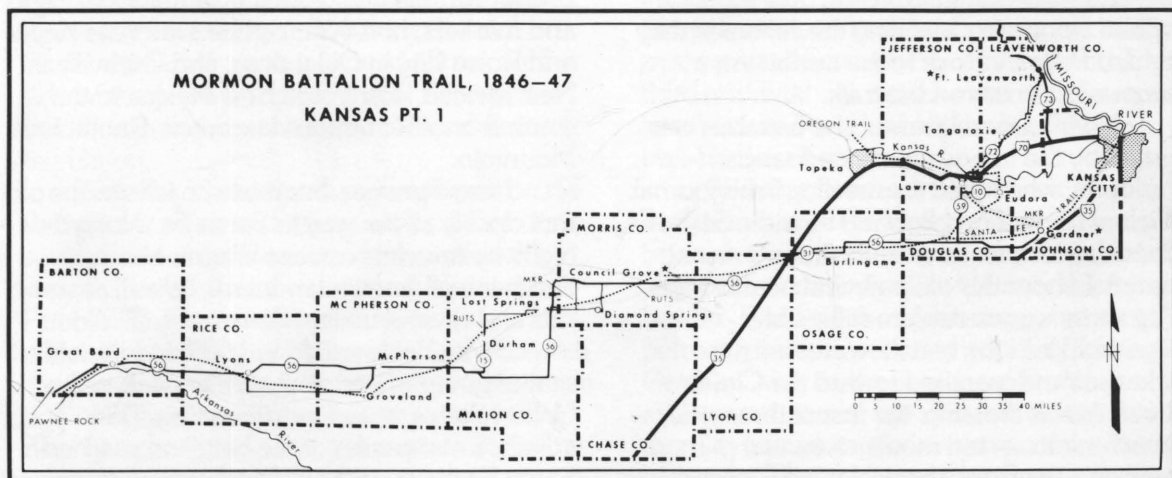


marker on the courthouse square in Oregon mentions the Mormons' passage. The largest community in Missouri through which the battalion passed was St. Joseph, and to "show the Missourians a thing or two" they marched double file with music, astonishing many who had not believed the Mormons would answer their country's call. Later St. Joseph became the beginning of the Pony Express Trail. (The station still stands.)

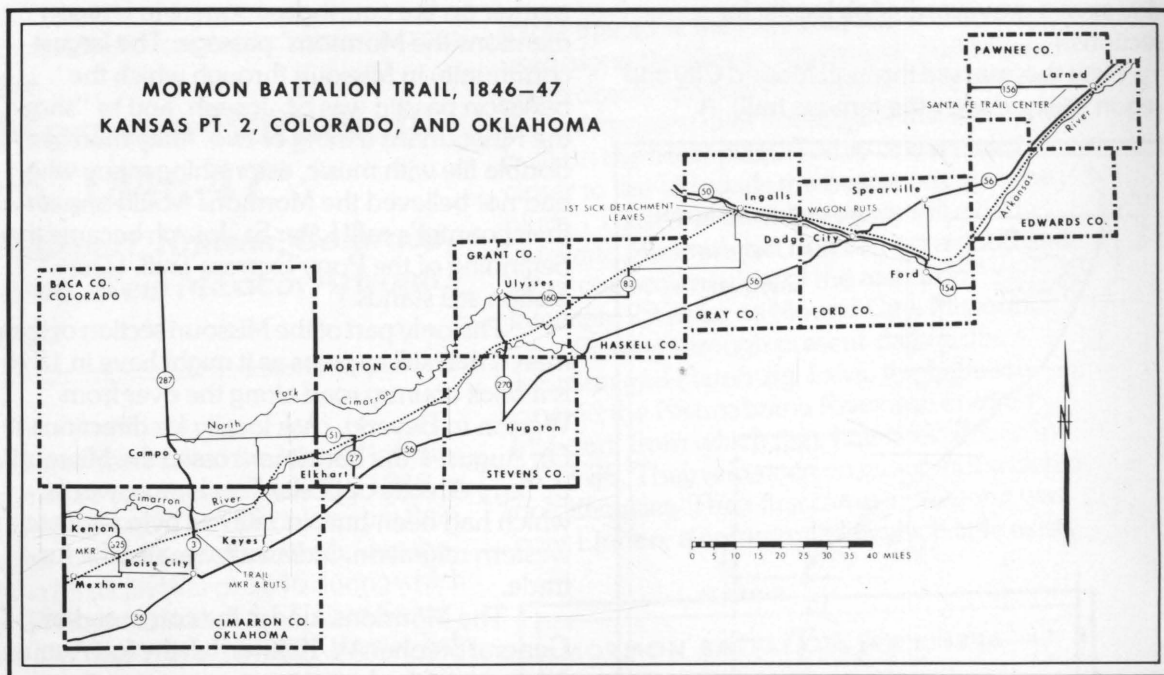
The only part of the Missouri section of the march that still appears as it might have in 1846 is a back country road along the river from Weston to Beverly. (Ask locally for directions.) On August 1 the battalion crossed the Missouri by ferry directly opposite Fort Leavenworth, which had been built in 1827 to help regulate western migration, Indian affairs, and the fur trade.

The Mormons, under the command of General Stephen W. Kearny, left the fort August 13 and marched southwest — crossing the Oregon Trail west of Eudora — to the Santa Fe Trail, which they intersected near the crossing of Highways 59 and 56. They would follow this trail all the way to Santa Fe.

On August 27 they reached Council Grove, one of the principal stops on the Santa Fe trail. Here Colonel James Allen, who had



**MORMON BATTALION TRAIL, 1846-47  
KANSAS PT. 2, COLORADO, AND OKLAHOMA**



brought Polk's request for the battalion to Brigham Young, died. The Mormons had liked Allen and held a memorial service for him.

Between Council Grove and today's town of Durham, trail ruts are still visible. Near Lyons the men first sighted buffalo. At the famous Great Bend of the Arkansas River they commenced following this river for 120 miles to Ingalls. Soon after reaching the Arkansas they sighted Pawnee Rock to the northwest, a famous landmark on the trail.

Near Larned, Kansas, the battalion was visited by the famous historian Francis Parkman, who noted the meeting in his journal. West of Larned on Highway 56 is the Santa Fe Center, which features much informational material about this old trail, and near Dodge City some wagon ruts are still visible.

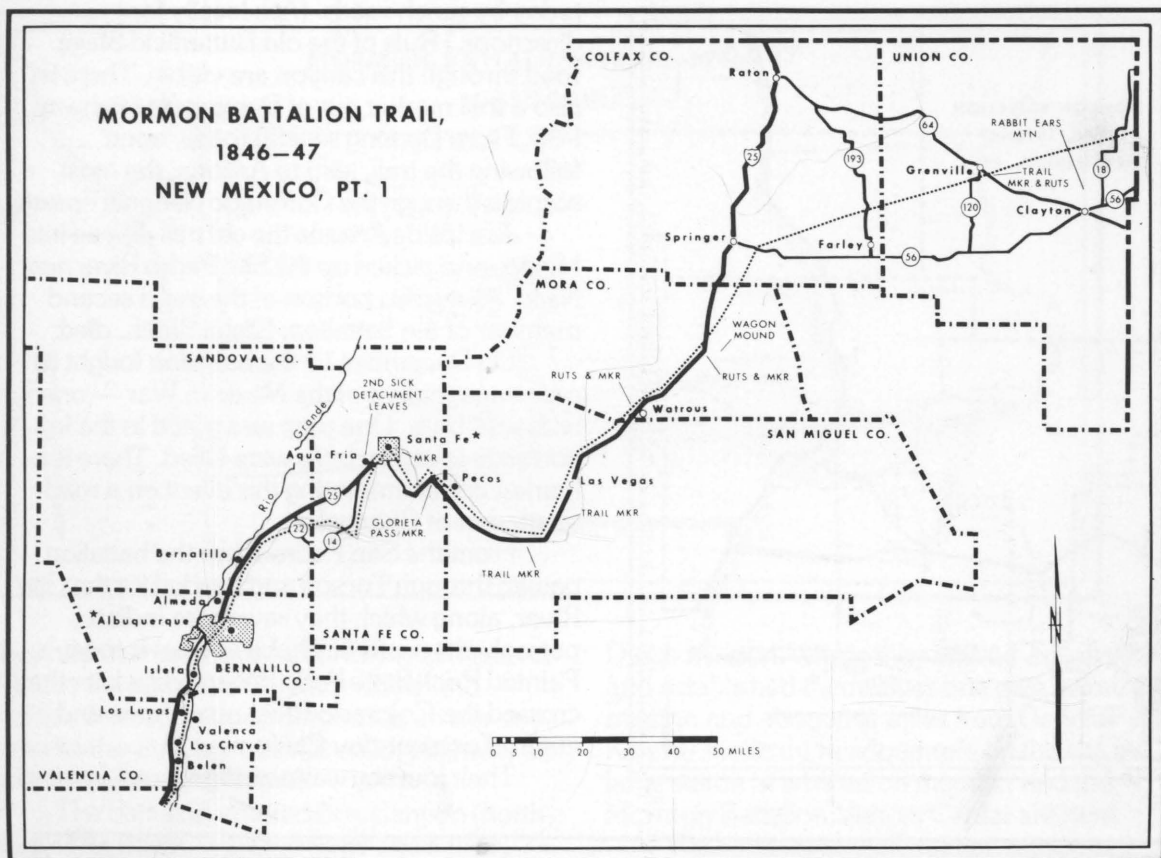
At Ingalls the battalion crossed the Arkansas and marched toward the Cimarron River. At this crossing, the first of three sick detachments — ten men and several families — were sent back along the Arkansas to

Fort Pueblo to spend the winter. (These three sick detachments met the Mississippi Saints at Fort Pueblo, and the following summer collectively joined Brigham Young and the pioneers at Fort Laramie. See chapter 5, "The Mississippi Saints Trail.")

From Ingalls into New Mexico the old trail cannot be followed closely by automobile. Ruts and markers, however, can be seen near Keyes and Boise City in Oklahoma, and Grenville in New Mexico. Just inside New Mexico to the south is another famous landmark, Rabbit Ears Mountain.

Near Springer, Interstate 25 follows the old trail closely all the way to Santa Fe. Along this highway travelers can see Wagon Mound, another well-known landmark, as well as some ruts and several trail markers.

Santa Fe, founded in 1609 and the oldest seat of government of all state capitals in the United States, is well worth visiting. The advance companies of the battalion reached Santa Fe the evening of October 9 and camped

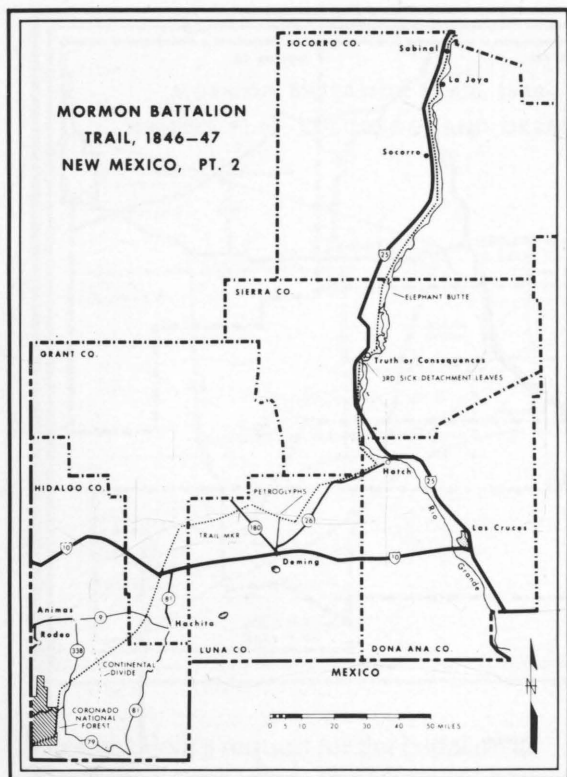


in a wheat field behind the cathedral. They had by then marched nearly 800 miles from Fort Leavenworth, nearly 1,000 from Council Bluffs. A marble marker located on the north side of the plaza honors General Kearny, the battalion, and the annexation of New Mexico to the Union.

Ten days later the men were again on the march. Six miles underway, at Aqua Fria, a second sick detachment — 86 men and 20 women and children — was sent back to Fort Pueblo. The reduced battalion, by then consisting of 397 men, followed the old Spanish Trail southward along the Rio Grande, passing a line of Spanish communities strung along the river like pearls on a string. Interstate 25 follows the trail closely through Old

Albuquerque — now the largest city in New Mexico — and passes Elephant Butte just inside Sierra County to Truth or Consequences. Three miles west of here, on November 9 and 10, the third and final sick detachment of 58 men was sent back to Fort Pueblo, leaving 339 trail-hardened men.

Shortly afterward, near Hatch, the battalion left the Rio Grande and followed other Spanish trails, some vague, some established, toward the continental divide near the Arizona border. En route the Mormons noted some petroglyphs thirteen miles north of Deming in Cook's Canyon; these aroused much excitement among the men, who considered them as circumstantial evidence of the Book of Mormon. The hardy can visit Cook's Canyon



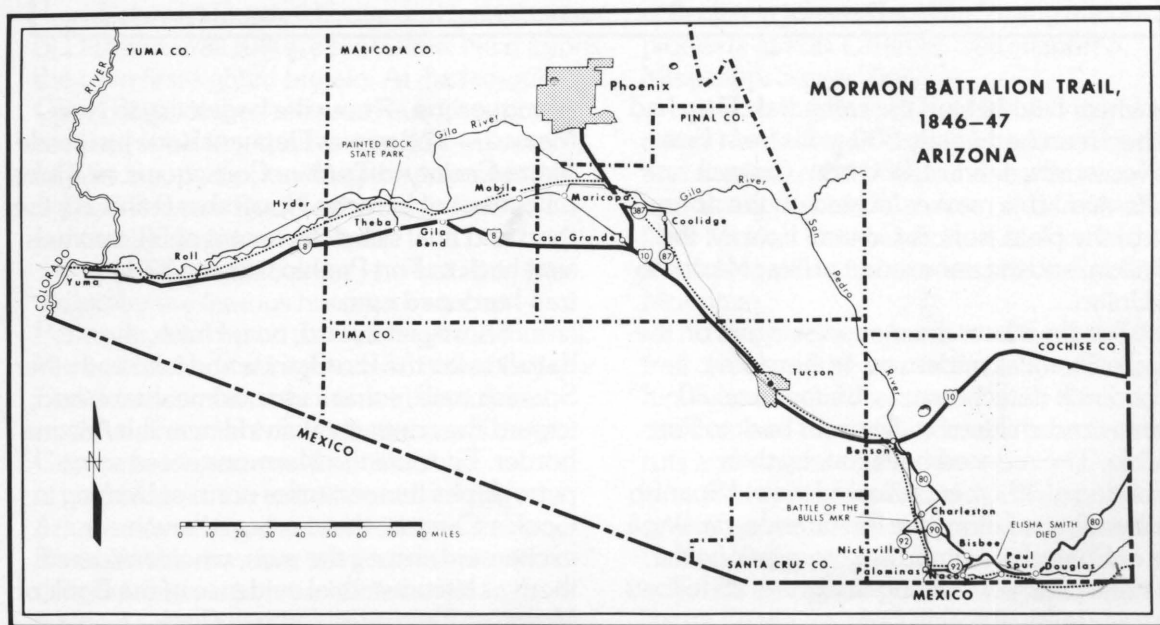
today by ranch roads. (Ask locally for directions.) Ruts of the old Butterfield Stage road through this canyon are visible. There is also a trail marker out of Deming on Highway I-80. From Deming several roads, none following the trail, lead to Arizona; the most scenic is through the Coronado National Forest.

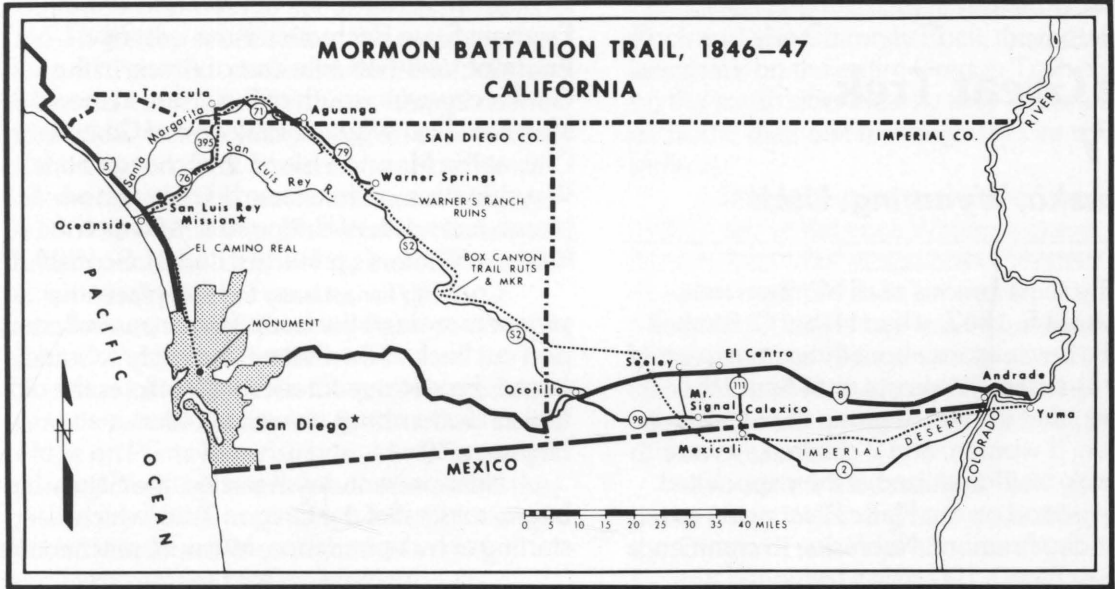
Just inside Arizona the old trail dipped into Mexico and picked up the San Pedro River near Naco. Along this portion of the trail a second member of the battalion, Elisha Smith, died.

On December 11 the battalion fought its only engagement of the Mexican War — one with wild bulls. One man was gored in the leg and sixty to eighty bulls were killed. There is a marker commemorating this event on a road southwest of Charleston.

From the San Pedro River the battalion passed through Tucson and headed for the Gila River, along which they saw more Indian petroglyphs north of Theba at what is today's Painted Rock State Park. Several days later they crossed the Colorado River near Yuma and entered present-day California.

Their journey was nearing an end, but first





they had to cross the dreadful Imperial Desert in Mexico between the Colorado River and today's Mexicali. Along here roads do not stay close to the trail, but after Ocotillo, Highway 52 generally parallels the trail.

The battalion entered Box Canyon (north-west of Ocotillo), which in parts was a foot narrower than their wagons. Places where the Mormons had to cut through the canyon are still visible. After this the camp rested at Warner's Ranch.

Following various small rivers, they passed the famous San Luis Rey Mission, one of the twenty-one Spanish missions founded in California between San Francisco and San Diego. Thereafter they marched along *El Camino Real*, The Royal Road connecting these missions, to their destination at the San

Diego Mission, where they arrived January 29 and established themselves one mile below the mission and about five miles from General Kearny's military headquarters on the sea. A large statue of a battalion member and the Mormon Battalion Visitors Center are here.

For some time the battalion performed routine garrison duty in San Diego and also at San Luis Rey and Los Angeles, finally being discharged July 16, 1847. Some reenlisted for six months, but most made preparation for joining the pioneers in the Great Basin. They pushed north and picked up the Old Spanish Trail, which had been blazed between 1776 and 1830. Some decided to winter at Sutter's Mill (where they later discovered gold), but most went on to the Great Salt Lake Valley, where they arrived October 16, 1847.

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Chapter Seven

# The Great Trek, 1847 Nebraska, Wyoming, Utah

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The most famous of all Mormon treks began April 5, 1847, when Heber C. Kimball moved a few wagons about three miles west of Winter Quarters. It was not until April 19, however, that the whole group of pioneers — 143 men, 3 women, and 2 children — were sufficiently well-organized at their appointed staging ground on the Platte River near present-day Fremont, Nebraska, to commence in earnest their 1,100-mile exodus.

Before leaving Winter Quarters (Florence, Nebraska), travelers should note the historic sites and markers in that area, which are mainly along 30th Street near a small park. First, there is the Mormon Pioneer Memorial Bridge where Interstate 680 crosses the Missouri River. Close by are the old Mormon Mill (still in use) at 9124 North 30th Street, two historic markers in the Florence Park, Mormon Street and Young Street, and the famous Mormon Pioneer Cemetery at 34th and State streets. There is also a marker on the approximate site where Heber C. Kimball camped April 5; this can be found just east of the intersection of Highway 36 and 72nd Street on an old section of Highway 36 bordering the south end of the North Omaha Airport.

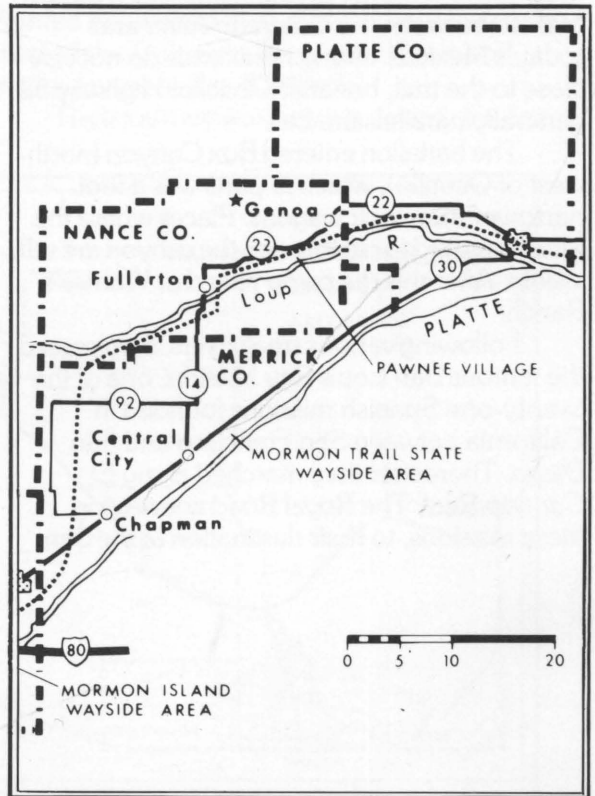
In general the trail would follow the gentle, broad Platte River valley for 600 miles to Fort Laramie, where the pioneers intersected the Oregon Trail. They followed the latter trail for 396 miles to Fort Bridger, where they began following the faint trace of the Reed-Donner party on into the Valley of the Great Salt Lake.

Many Oregon/Mormon Trail markers are scattered across Nebraska west of Winter Quarters. Specifically Mormon markers are

located in Barnard Park at Fremont; in the Fremont State Recreation Area west of Fremont; one-half mile east of Ames; in the Genoa city park; south of Fullerton; in the Mormon Trail Wayside Park east of Central City; at the Mormon Island Interchange State Wayside Area on Interstate 80 near Grand Island; just north of Bridgeport; and at Rebecca Winters's grave just east of Scottsbluff.

Looking for an easy fording place, the pioneers crossed the Loup River near Fullerton and cut back to the Platte near today's Grand Island. From there Interstate 80 follows the old trail to Gothenburg, as well as older Highway 30.

Near present-day Kearney, the Saints began to parallel the Oregon Trail, which, starting at Independence, Missouri, reached the



south side of the Platte at this point. In the mid-1840s the south side of the river was the favored route, but earlier travelers had followed the north bank. The Mormons, always on the north side, were actually using an older branch of the Oregon Trail. Later this same route was followed by the first transcontinental telegraph in 1861, the Union Pacific railroad commencing in 1861, and the Lincoln Highway (Route 30), which reached San Francisco in 1913. Somewhere west of Kearney the Mormons first sighted and hunted buffalo.

Just inside Dawson County the pioneers were threatened by prairie fire, but they found refuge on Platte River islands. A little farther on, although they were surely not aware of it, they passed the 100th meridian, west of which rainfall would prove so slight that irrigation would be required for most crops.

Along this stretch of the trail, somewhere west of North Platte, William Clayton, tired of either estimating distances or counting the revolutions of a wagon wheel, suggested that a counting device be made. Thus was born the famous Mormon odometer, first used near Paxton, Nebraska. Dirt roads north of the Platte River, west of North Platte city, are historic and scenic, but travelers must consult county maps.

On May 20 the Saints passed one of the most famous stopping places on the Oregon Trail: Ash Hollow, which was on the south side of the trail, and which the Mormons used to check on the accuracy of their maps. (The Mississippi Saints had camped here in 1846; today's travelers are advised to visit the State Historic Park.)

To the west the pioneers entered the broken uplands and the terrain became more dramatic. Soon they came to an Indian lookout point, two miles west of Lisco on Highway 26, which several of them climbed. Five miles farther they camped by the Ancient Ruins Bluff, the most outstanding landmark on their side of the river in Nebraska. The leaders climbed it on Sunday, May 24, wrote their names on a buffalo skull, and left it on the southwest corner.

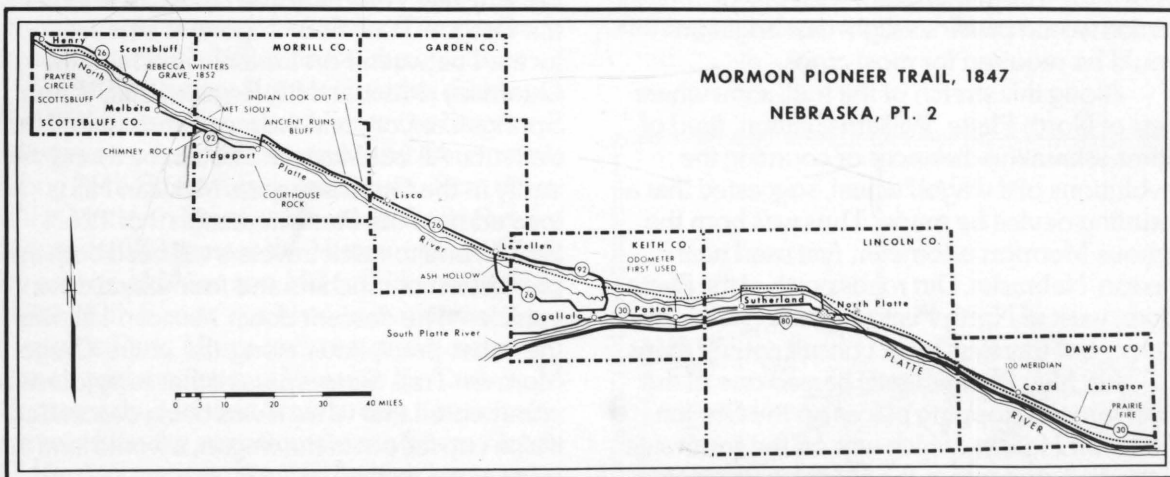
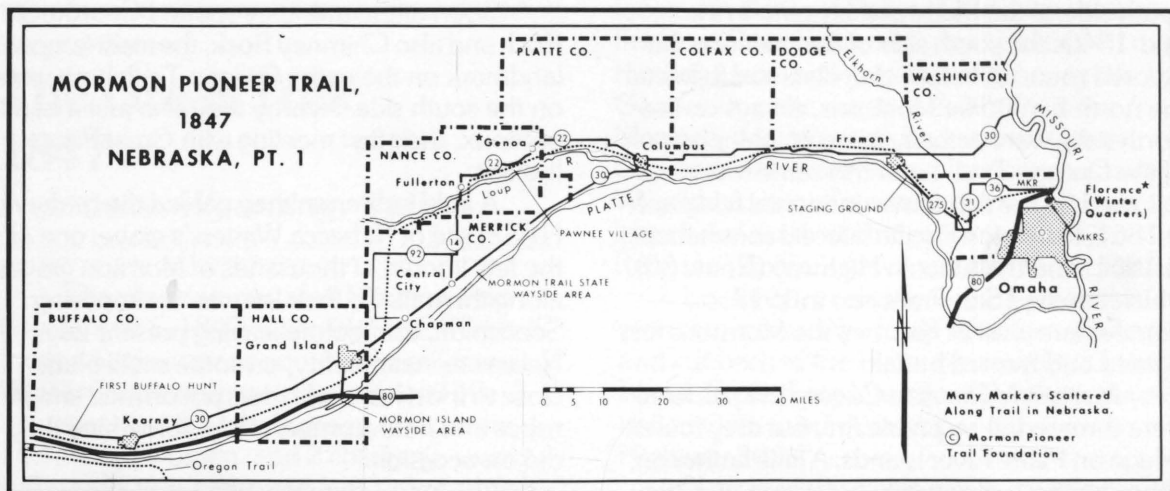
Soon afterward, they spotted Courthouse Rock and also Chimney Rock, the most famous landmark on the entire Oregon Trail; both were on the south side. Nearby they also met a band of Sioux, their first meeting with Great Plains Indians.

A little farther on they passed the future (1852) site of Rebecca Winters's grave, one of the few known of thousands of Mormon graves along the trail. To their left was the imposing Scottsbluff. Just before leaving present-day Nebraska, near Henry, on some small bluffs close to the river, the leaders put on their temple robes and held a prayer circle, something they did on occasion.

On June 1 they reached Fort Laramie in present-day Wyoming and crossed the Platte to the Oregon Trail. Four important sites are located between Fort Laramie and modern Guernsey: Mexican Hill, Register Cliff, Warm Springs Canyon, and the most famous of all the trail ruts. All but Mexican Hill can be found easily in the Guernsey area. Mexican Hill is located near the Platte in section 9 of T26N, R65W, and to visit it travelers will need both the permission of ranchers and four-wheel drive vehicles. The descent down Mexican Hill was the most precipitous along the entire Oregon/Mormon Trail. So steep was it that early journals commented that while it was being descended, if a tin cup fell out of the wagon, it would land in front of the oxen.

Many Oregon/Mormon Trail markers are scattered across Wyoming. Markers that are specifically Mormon are at the famous trail ruts near Guernsey; at restored Fort Caspar; near Martin's Cove; at the Willie's Handcart grave; at Simpson's Hollow; in the Lyman city park; at Fort Bridger; and near "Bear Town" on the Bear River.

Between Guernsey and Douglas the trail is difficult to follow. There is a good dirt road paralleling Cottonwood Creek to Interstate 25, and the trail may be intersected at Horseshoe Creek on the Esterbrook Road out of Glendo. County maps are necessary. Before reaching



I-25 the curious may wish to visit Porter's Rock (presumably named after the famous Mormon frontiersman, Porter Rockwell), located near the center of section 21 (T27N and R67W), but county maps are necessary, as are rough-terrain vehicles.

West of Douglas is Ayers Natural Bridge, the only natural bridge in the world with the stream that created it still running under it. Old Mormon journals record visits to this natural wonder, which was several miles south of the trail. At Glenrock one can drive up Mormon Canyon, where some Mormon families lived in

the mid-1850s, and walk or drive up Deer Creek Canyon about a quarter of a mile to see the rocky bluffs Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball scrambled up to get out of the way of a mother grizzly bear. (Ask locally for directions.)

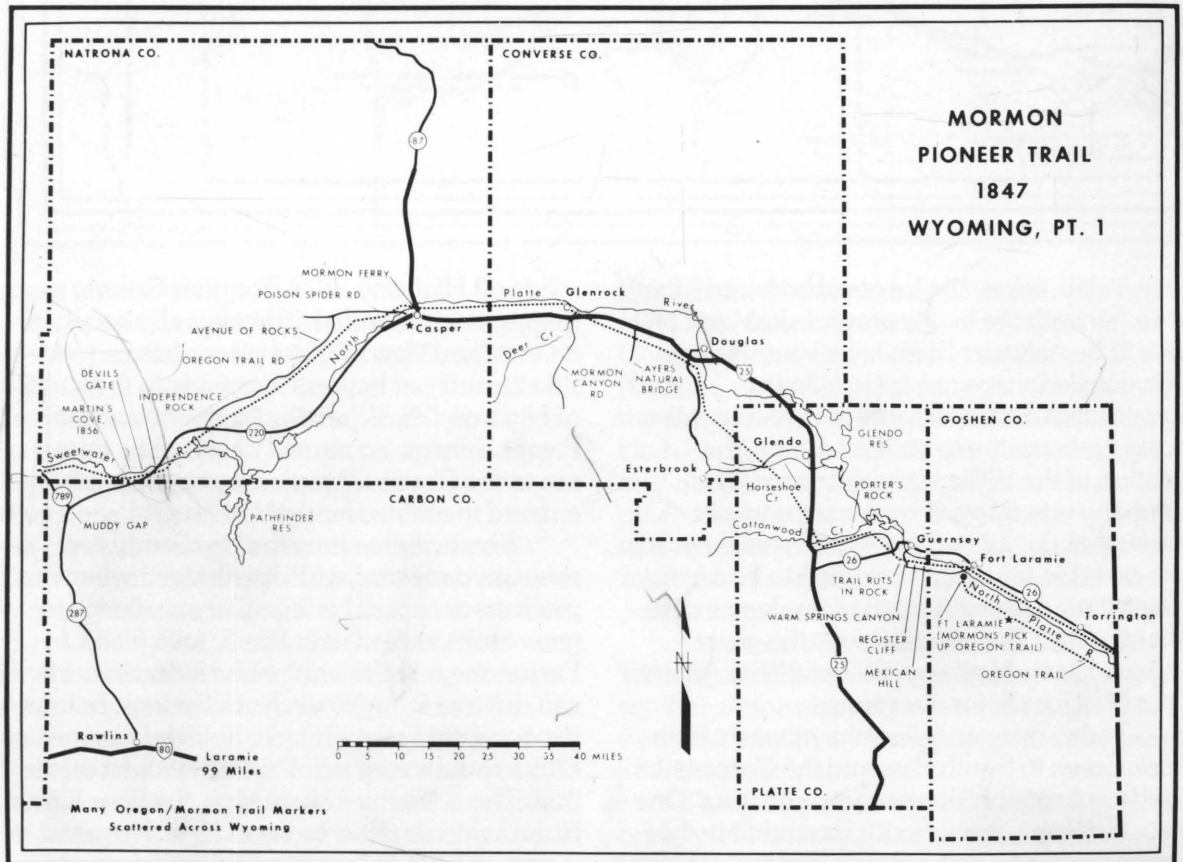
At present-day Casper Mormons and Oregonians alike usually crossed and left the Platte and the place became known as Last Crossing. Here the pioneers built and maintained a ferry for themselves and the thousands who would follow. The now-restored post-Mormon Fort Caspar is at the location of the old Mormon ferry.

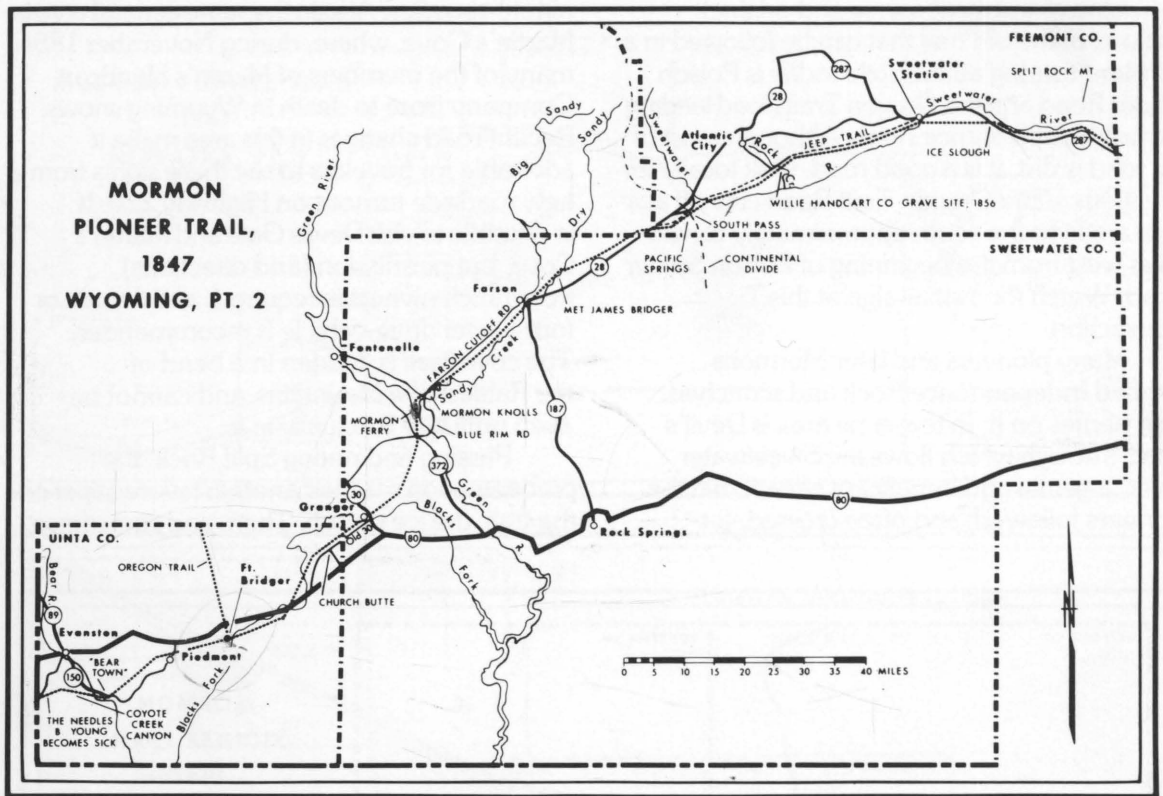
One of the most scenic and original sections of the old trail that can be followed in a standard touring automobile today is Poison Spider Road and the Oregon Trail Road leading toward Independence Rock. Although most of the road is dirt, it is a good road. (Ask locally for directions.) The Oregon Trail Road cuts off at a right angle to the south approximately eleven miles west from the beginning of Poison Spider Road. Watch for a small sign at this T intersection.

Many pioneers and later Mormons climbed Independence Rock and scratched their names on it. In the same area is Devil's Gate, through which flows the Sweetwater River, a gentle and beneficent stream that the pioneers followed, and often crossed, for

ninety-six miles. Also in the same general area is Martin's Cove, where, during November 1856, many of the members of Martin's Handcart Company froze to death in Wyoming snows. Recent road changes in this area make it advisable for travelers to see these sights from a new roadside turnout on Highway 220. It is possible to visit Devils Gate and Martin's Cove, but permission (and directions) from ranch owners is required, and a truck or four-wheel drive vehicle is recommended. The cove itself is hidden in a bend of the Rattlesnake Mountains and cannot be seen until one is actually in it.

Passing and noting Split Rock, the pioneers soon reached another favored spot on the trail, the ice slough. Then, and sometimes



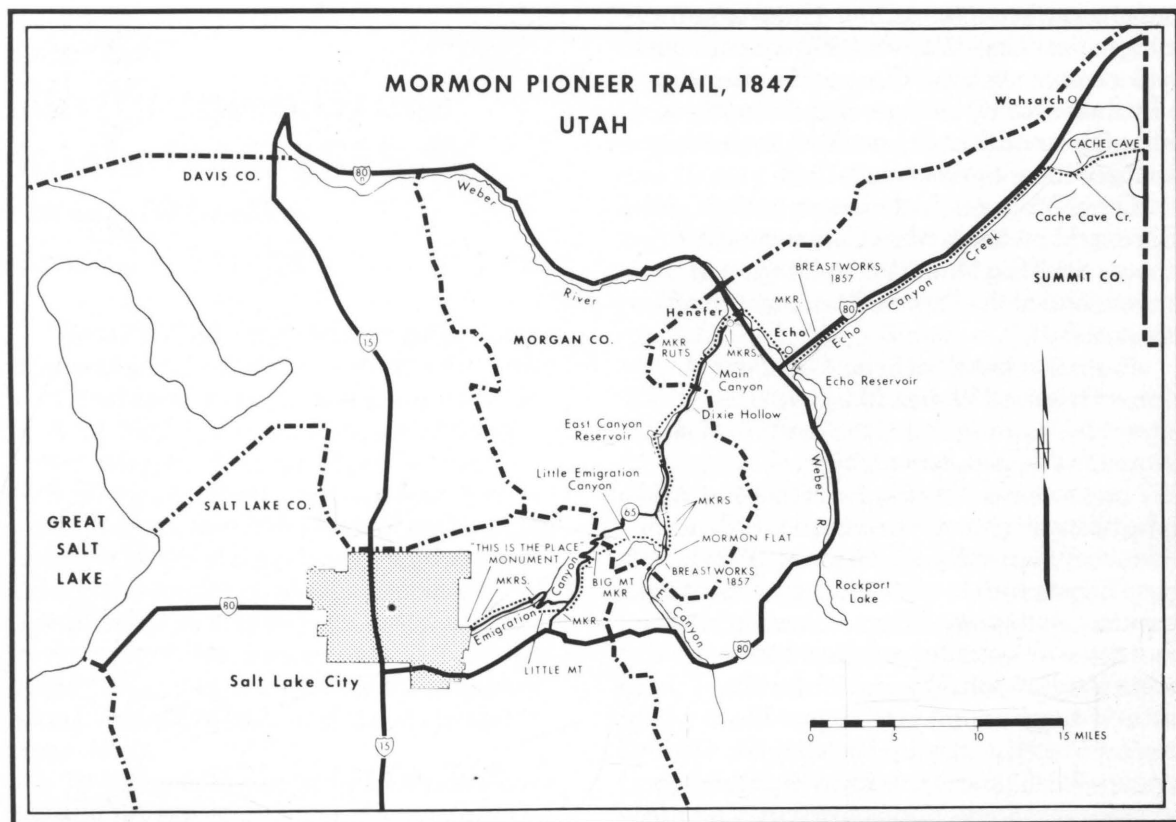


even today, refreshing ice could be found a foot or so beneath the boggy ground. Just west of here at Sweetwater Station the venturesome with detailed maps can try to follow a complicated Jeep trail some twenty-four miles along the Sweetwater to Rock Creek, the location of the Willie Handcart grave. This company was trapped by the same winter snows that devastated the Martin company. It is also possible (and much simpler) to take a country road running north of the Jeep trail to Atlantic City. The easiest way to the grave, however, is via Highways 287 and 28 to Atlantic City. (Ask locally for directions.)

Today one can follow the pioneers from Rock Creek to South Pass and the Continental Divide only on foot or on a dirt-motor bike. One may, however, reach South Pass and another famous stopping place, Pacific Springs, via dirt

roads off Highway 28. A Fremont County map is recommended. Travelers also may get an excellent view of these places from a roadside turnoff just beyond the divide to the south of Highway 28. When the pioneers reached Pacific Springs (so named because the waters ran to the Pacific Ocean), they had formally entered the fabled land of Oregon.

Somewhere along the Dry Sandy the renowned meeting with Jim Bridger, when the pioneers accepted his legendary challenge to grow crops in the Great Basin, took place. In Farnon the traveler must make a decision. He can drive to Granger via Rock Springs, or take the good dirt Farnon Road cutoff via Fontenelle. Either route is easy to follow but leads far off the trail. There is a third alternative, the Blue Rim Road, which is closer to the old trail. However, it is very difficult to follow, and detailed county



maps are necessary.

From Granger it is possible and interesting to take the decayed old Highway 30, which follows the pioneer trail through the lunarlike landscape of the Badlands to Church Butte, so named because some Mormons supposedly held church services here. (Ask locally for directions.) Another way to reach this point is via a gravel road going north at the Church Butte exit off Interstate 80. (There is no easy way to this butte.)

On July 7, the pioneers reached Fort Bridger, where the Oregon Trail turned north. After a short rest they picked up the barely visible trace of the Reed-Donner party into the Valley of the Great Salt Lake. Part of this trail can be approximated by taking the Leroy exit off Interstate 80 to abandoned Piedmont and following a dirt road to "Bear Town," on the

Bear River. (A county map is recommended.) Here the Mormons went down Coyote Creek Canyon to an unusual rock formation called the Needles, or Pudding Rocks, near the mouth of the canyon and about one-half mile from the Utah border. (One should ask for permission and directions to drive this rough canyon; otherwise one must get to the Needles by way of an unmarked gravel road bearing southwest for eight miles out of Evanston. A county map is required.)

One mile east of the Needles Brigham Young was stricken with mountain fever. As a result the pioneers split into three divisions — a vanguard, the main company, and a rear guard with Brigham Young.

This rear guard entered present-day Utah on July 15, following Cache Cave Creek into Echo Canyon, near the mouth of which are

located some breastworks and a marker pertaining to the "Utah War" of 1857. The modern traveler can reach Echo Canyon the easy way, via Evanston, or by taking a dirt road a little north of the mouth of Coyote Canyon leading west three miles to Wahsatch, Utah.

Other Mormon Trail markers in Utah are located in Henefer, in Main Canyon, in East Canyon, atop Big Mountain, in Emigration Canyon, and at the Pioneer Monument State Historical Park.

From the mouth of Echo Canyon the pioneers followed Weber, Main, and East canyons to Mormon Flat at the mouth of Little Emigration Canyon, where there are more 1857 breastworks. The modern traveler can do this by taking Highway 3 or Interstate 80N north to Henefer, then following Highway 65 to a ninety-degree turn to the west at the foot of Big Mountain. At this turn follow a dirt road south about three miles to the mouth of Little Emigration Canyon. One must hike this four-mile-long canyon to the top of Big Mountain, or else drive up Highway 65. The pioneers slid their wagons down Big Mountain and drove over Little Mountain to Last Camp in Emigration Canyon, which is marked. Brigham Young's party reached Last Camp July 23 and entered the valley, as everyone knows, on July 24, 1847. Most of the company remained in the valley only thirty-three days and then returned to Winter Quarters to prepare the main body of the Saints for the same trek in 1848.

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*Chapter Eight*

## **The Mormon Grove Saints Trail, 1855-56 Kansas, Nebraska**

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Between 1848 and the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 the Mormons developed several points of departure for the Far West. Most of the outfitting stations were located along the Missouri River. During 1855-56 the preferred place was Mormon Grove, Kansas, four miles west of Atchison, an important Missouri River port city. Along the Missouri the Mormons always established themselves several miles from the large port cities in order to be at a safe distance from the assorted ills and evils found there and to have space to build tent cities and grazing lands for their animals.

To better understand the Mormon Grove Trail and several other lesser-known trails, one must realize that the great Oregon Trail was really a network of at least two main branches and many feeder trails. The Mormon Grove Trail was such a feeder and was also part of the Fort Leavenworth Military Road, which joined with the Oregon Trail at Marysville, Kansas. Later the Pony Express Trail from St. Joseph followed much the same route during its short life from 1860 to 1861.

In February 1865 Milo Andrus, president of the St. Louis Stake, selected Mormon Grove as a point of departure for the Saints. It was located on the prairie at the head of Deer Creek, an excellent camping place with water, wood, and range for stock, and also close enough to Atchison for supplies. It was used mainly by Danish, Scottish, and Welsh converts. Some of the early Mormon leaders at Mormon Grove included Richard Ballantyne, who in 1849 organized the first Sunday School among the

Mormons, and Elder Erastus Snow, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

The first Mormons arrived at Mormon Grove from Europe via New Orleans and St. Louis in April 1855 and soon fenced 160 acres and planted 20. Between June 7 and August 3, 1855, eight companies — totaling 2,041 people and 337 wagons — left for Zion. A group of 15 members remained behind to await the next year's immigrants. During the 1856 season, however, only one company of 97 Saints left from Mormon Grove. Most immigrants were then going directly by rail from the East Coast to Florence, Nebraska. After 1856 a few Mormons formed a branch in Atchison, and non-Mormon squatters took over the grove campsite.

To rediscover this old campsite and trail, start at the foot of Atchison Street in Atchison, where the Saints would have debarked. Then follow Highway 73 approximately four and a half miles west and turn south on a section road. The first farmhouse on the west side of the road is the home of Floyd Armstrong, on whose land the old cemetery, all that is left of Mormon Grove today, is located. At least fifty Mormons were buried there, but no trace of the graves remains. Most died of the great river scourge of the day — cholera.

This historic cemetery, about 150 feet long (north to south) and 35 feet wide (east to west), is located near the southwest corner of the Armstrong farm, or at the southwest corner of the south half of the northeast quarter of section 5 (T6S, R20E), just north of where a new highway from Atchison has been surveyed. Unfortunately, no marker commemorates this cemetery.

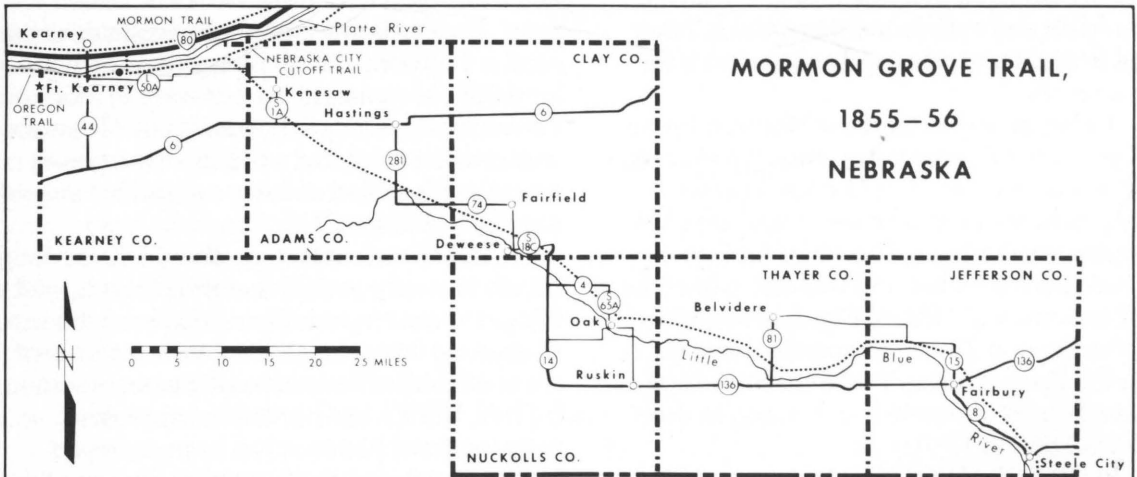
After visiting this site, return to Highway 73 and go west to Marysville via Horton, Granada, and Seneca. En route you will pass the sites of four old stagecoach stops on the trail: Lancaster on Highway 73; Kenekutt, two miles from Horton (ask locally for directions); Capinoma, just north of Granada; and Richmond, three miles north of Seneca.

From Seneca, an old Pony Express

## MORMON GROVE TRAIL, 1855-56 KANSAS



## MORMON GROVE TRAIL, 1855-56 NEBRASKA



station, take Highway 36 west to Marysville, where the Mormons forded the Big Blue River at what was variously known as the Independence, Mormon, or California Crossing, and picked up the Oregon Trail coming north from Independence, Missouri. (There is a Pony Express station in Maryville.) From this crossing the Oregon/Mormon Grove Trail followed the

Little Blue River as closely and as far as possible toward Fort Kearney. Modern travelers from Maryville should go to the Nebraska line via Hollenberg, where there is another Pony Express station, and Steele City.

Between Steele City and Fort Kearney the state of Nebraska has placed thirty-four markers along the flat flood plain on the north side of the

Little Blue, on county roads, and on section line roads. Sixteen of these are easy to find, and travelers can gauge by them how closely they are following the old trail. One of these markers is located five miles east of Steele City on Highway 8; another is two miles north of Fairbury on Highway 15; one is three miles south of Belvidere on Highway 81; five are in the area of Oak; three are placed between Oak and Deweese; one is in Deweese; one is eleven miles west of Fairfield on Highway 74; another one is eight miles west of Hastings; one is one mile south of Kenesaw; and the last one is near the Kearney-Adams county line.

East of Fort Kearney this trail was joined by the Nebraska City Cutoff Trail, which Mormons later used in the 1860s. (See chapter 10, "The Nebraska City Cutoff.") The Mormons spent little time at Fort Kearney. Rather, they forded the Platte there and picked up the old 1847 Mormon Trail north of the river and followed it to the Salt Lake Valley. (See chapter 7, "The Great Trek.")

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Chapter Nine

## Handcarts to Zion, 1855-57

### Iowa

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What has often been called the most remarkable travel experiment in the history of the Old West commenced in Iowa City, Iowa, in 1856. By that year it had become possible to travel by rail from the east coast to Iowa City, and that railhead became the point of departure for the Rocky Mountains. Brigham Young had also decided to try a supposedly faster, easier, cheaper, and certainly more unusual way to bring thousands of European converts to Salt Lake City — by handcarts. The carts could be pushed or pulled by hand and were designed to carry up to five hundred pounds of clothing and supplies. Some were painted with such mottos and inscriptions as “Truth Will Prevail,” “Merry Mormons,” and “Zion’s Express.”

These Saints, mainly from England, Wales, and Scandinavia, landed in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, and traveled by train via Chicago for Iowa City, the end of the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad. The depot in those days was only three blocks east of the present one.

Train travel beat travel by oxcart, but it was far from luxurious. The trains averaged twenty miles an hour and had no sleeping accommodations or dining cars; smoke and soot were everywhere, and schedules were wildly erratic, but on the travelers came.

From the Iowa City depot the handcart immigrants crossed the Iowa River and went to the staging area that had been located on the banks of Clear Creek, three miles west of Iowa City, at a small settlement known as Clark’s Mills, now called Coralville.

This famous experiment involved 2,962 people in nine companies from 1856 through 1860, but only the first seven companies, or 2,071 Saints (69 percent of the total), trod Iowa soil. The last two companies of 1859 and 1860 were able to ride various railroads all the way from the east coast to Council Bluffs, Iowa. With the exception of the fourth and fifth companies, the famous Martin and Willie companies, which started too late in the year and were trapped in Wyoming snows, the system was a success.

The first seven companies made the 275-mile trip across Iowa from Iowa City to Florence, Nebraska, in from 21 to 39 days, averaging 25 days and 11 miles a day. The first company of 226 persons started out on June 9, 1856, led by the Birmingham Brass Band from England, and arrived in Utah September 26. March music and singing kept the people together and helped ward off tedium and fatigue. The most popular of all songs was the famous “Handcart Song”:

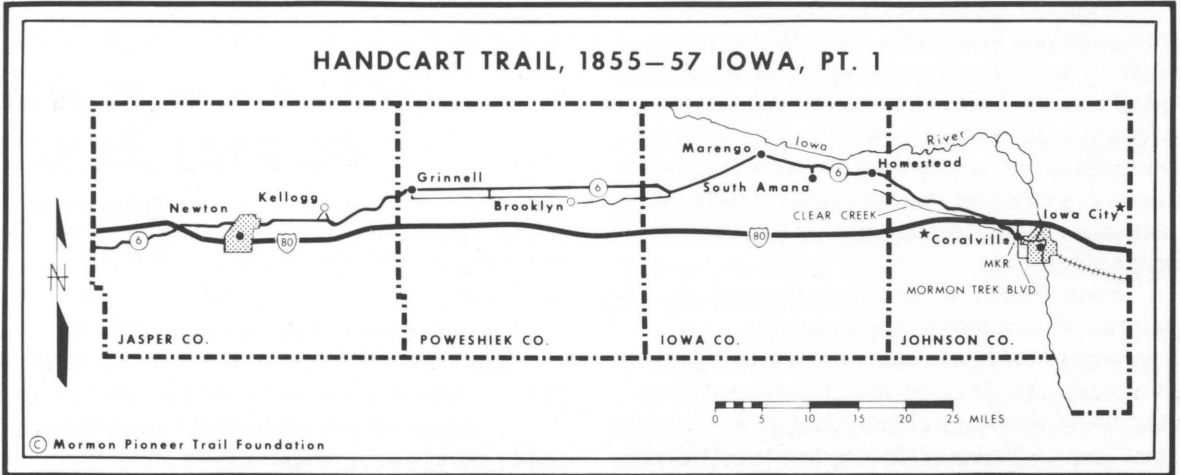
*Some must push and some must pull  
As we go marching up the hill,  
As merrily on the way we go  
Until we reach the valley, oh!*

From Florence, all nine of the handcart companies followed the Mormon Trail of 1847 for 1,100 miles to Salt Lake City. (See chapter 7, “The Great Trek.”) The handcart era ended after 1860 when the Mormons switched to large ox-team trains sent out from Salt Lake City to haul immigrants and freight west from the Missouri and other points.

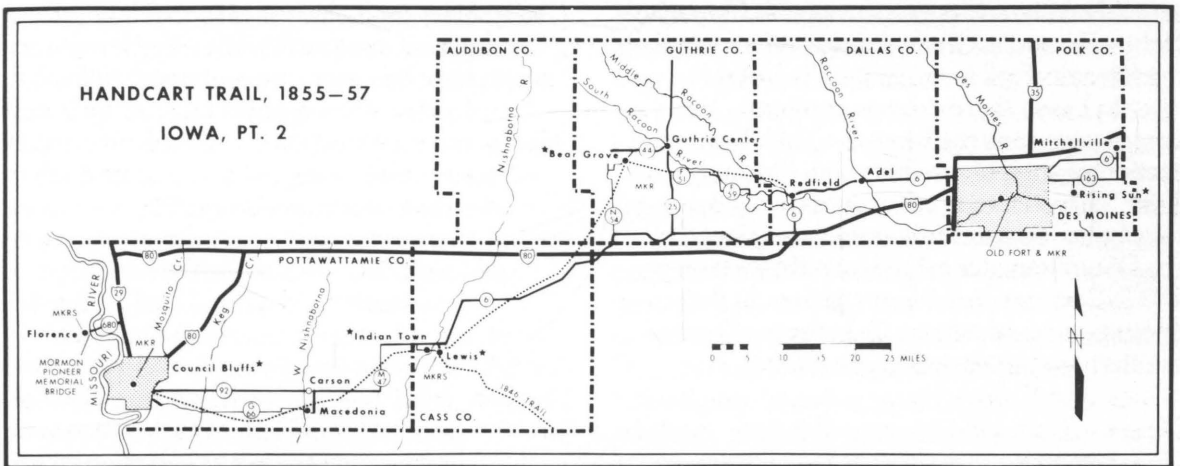
In Coralville, Iowa, the Daughters of the American Revolution have erected a bronze tablet commemorating the handcart companies on the south side of the road just west of the intersection of Fifth Street and Tenth Avenue. South of this intersection, flowing parallel with Highway 6, is Clear Creek. Also in Coralville and western Iowa City is the Mormon Trek Boulevard, a modern highway honoring these pioneers.

Although the handcart pioneers did not know it before starting out, Iowa roads were to be veritable “superhighways” compared to

## HANDCART TRAIL, 1855-57 IOWA, PT. 1



## HANDCART TRAIL, 1855-57 IOWA, PT. 2



what lay west of the Missouri. Like all Mormon pioneers before and after them, they used the best, most convenient roads and trails. Since at least 1846, when Brigham Young led the Saints across Iowa, there had been some kind of a road between Iowa City and Council Bluffs. In the beginning it had been a military road to Fort Des Moines, and later a territorial, state, mail, and coach route. Most of the handcart journals of 1856-57 refer often to the good roads. In fact, had the Saints not been so poor, they could have ridden by coach to the Missouri for about eleven dollars a person.

Today's Highway 6 generally follows this

old trans-Iowa road, one of the oldest and most historic in the state, as far as Redfield. From Coralville the pioneers passed through Homestead and South Amana, two German colonies established in 1854. (This part of Highway 6 up to Grinnell is also marked officially as the Hiawatha Pioneer Trail.) Passing slowly through Marengo, Brooklyn, Grinnell; Newton, and Rising Sun, they reached Fort Des Moines. The old fort on the west bank of the Des Moines River was by then abandoned, but still standing. Near the intersection of Riverside Drive and Southwest First Street is a granite marker and part of the newly restored fort.

West of Des Moines the Mormons proceeded via Adel to Redfield. West of Redfield the old trail is only approximated by today's roads. From Redfield the pioneers went to Bear Grove. Merely a wide spot in the road today, Bear Grove was then an important coach stop and a place where the pioneers obtained needed supplies. (Ask locally for directions to Bear Grove.)

From there the Saints traveled the old Dragoon Road, which is now largely nonexistent but approximates the dotted line, to Council Bluffs. At Lewis they intersected the older 1846 Pioneer trail (see chapter 4, "Across Iowa") and followed it directly to Council Bluffs, where, crossing the Missouri by ferry, they arrived at the new staging ground in Florence, Nebraska, and made final preparations to follow the Pioneer Trail to the Salt Lake Valley.

In Lewis there are two markers commemorating the Mormon Trail. One is a section of a telephone pole with "Mormon Trail" carved into it; a few yards away is a handsome bronze marker that was placed by the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1917. Both are in the town square. In the camping area of nearby Cold Spring Park is another telephone-pole-type marker.

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*Chapter Ten*

## **The Nebraska City Cutoff, 1864-66**

### **Nebraska**

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Of all the early Mormon immigrant trails, by far the least known today is the Nebraska City Cutoff. Just as Florence, Nebraska, replaced Iowa City in 1860 as the main outfitting place for the Saints crossing the plains and the mountains to Utah, so in 1864 did Wyoming, Nebraska, take over from Florence. For several years most European immigrants took trains from the east coast, especially New York City, straight through to St. Joseph, Missouri. From there they traveled by riverboat up the Missouri to Wyoming—forty-five miles below Florence and seven above Nebraska City—which was the eastern terminus of the last overland trail to the west, the 169-mile-long Nebraska City Cutoff to Fort Kearney.

Originally laid out, as was common in those days, as a single plowed furrow in the sod, this trail flourished from 1859 to 1866, when it gave way to the Union Pacific Railroad. The importance of this prerailroad trail may be suggested by the fact that during 1865 over forty-four million pounds of freight moved over it. This cutoff, the result of developing a route to Fort Kearney shorter than the older and longer trails that stayed close to the Platte, shortened the distance by some forty miles, or about twenty percent.

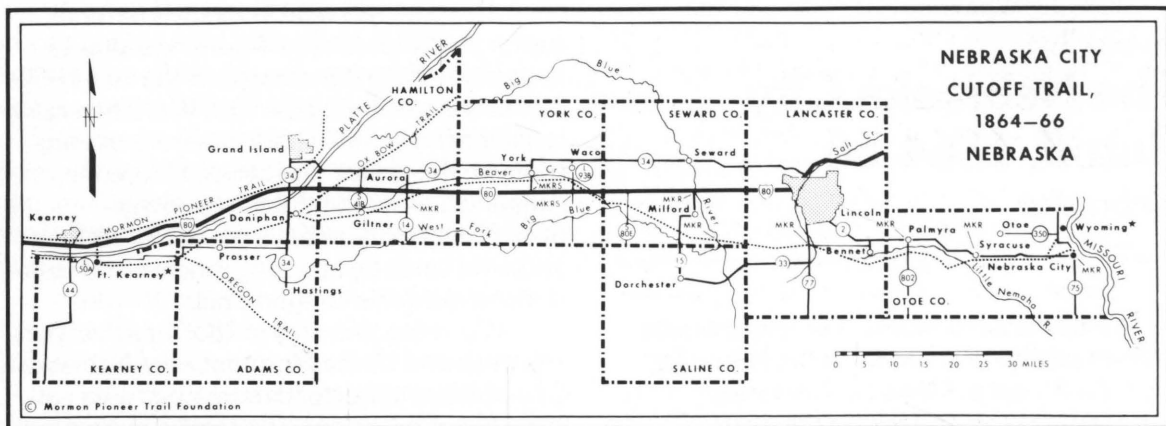
This shortcut is often referred to as the Steam Wagon Road because of an 1862 experiment with a tractorlike steam wagon to haul freight. On its first trial, however, the machine broke down a few miles out of Nebraska City, and the whole project was eventually abandoned.

The principal reason for the Mormons' switch from Florence to Wyoming seems to have been the Indian troubles of the mid-1860s that broke out during the Civil War when many regular troops were withdrawn from military posts on the plains. The Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapahoe, and other tribes seized this opportunity to try to drive the whites off their ancestral lands by attacking ranches and stage stations along the Oregon Trail.

Wyoming, founded in 1855 as a river port, was preferred by the Mormons over Nebraska City because it provided more open area for their staging ground and was well removed from the rough elements of Nebraska City. The first Mormon emigrant agent in Wyoming, Joseph W. Young, arrived there May 14, 1864. The first company of 973 Mormon emigrants arrived in Wyoming one month later, on June 15, 1864, and, like almost all others, traveled west to Salt Lake City in Church mule and ox-team wagon trains dispatched from Utah just for that purpose.

Twenty-two organized Mormon emigrant companies left Wyoming during its three-year service. It is estimated that these companies comprised a total of about sixty-five hundred Danish, Swiss, German, Dutch, French, Norwegian, Swedish, and English Saints. In addition, probably some five hundred or more Mormons traveled as individuals with other non-Mormon freight trains from nearby Nebraska City.

Wyoming and the cutoff were important to the Mormons not only as a means of transporting emigrants west, but also for freighting. The Church's economic policy was to make Utah as economically independent as possible, and to this end home manufacture was promoted and the importation of goods from the East was discouraged. But since the Mormons could not produce all that they needed, many items had to be imported. To control as much of this trade as possible, the same ox-team trains sent to pick up emigrants at Wyoming also carried freight back to Utah. The



various agents tried to send one thousand pounds of such goods with each wagon.

Although the Mormons built a few buildings in Wyoming nothing is left of them today. Old Wyoming, which for a season was later renamed Dresden, was finally doomed when the Missouri, Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad bypassed it. In fact, nothing at all of the old city is left except the site of a forgotten and unmarked graveyard located about a mile north of the old town center. Perhaps as many as a hundred individuals were buried there, including some Mormons. We know, for example, that in June 1865 nine-month-old Sidney Biddle, three-year-old Samuel A. Shaw, and a Lars Petersen were buried here. Eight more Mormons were laid to rest here in 1866. Most deaths resulted from measles, scarlet fever, cholera, and diarrhea. In 1926 some effort was made to erect a suitable marker near this old cemetery but, regrettably, nothing was accomplished.

To reach the old site, take Highway 75 north from Nebraska City about six and a half miles from the courthouse. There are no road signs, so watch for a country road going west to Otoe; two and a half miles north of this there is a dirt road leading east to the river. (Ask locally for directions.) The course of the river has changed since 1866, and the present shoreline is nearly one-half mile east of where it was when the

Mormons were there. The current hamlet of Wyoming, two and a half miles southeast of old Wyoming, has nothing to do with the older community or the Mormons.

Several markers to this old trail are in Nebraska City: one on the courthouse square and one at Arbor Lodge State Historic Park. The Mormons picked up the trail somewhere west of Nebraska City near Highway 2 and crossed the Little Nemaha River at Syracuse. There is a marker west of the only bridge in Syracuse that crosses this river. The Mormons called this stopping place Nursery Hill. At Palmyra there is also a marker one-half mile south of the bridge on Highway 802. The Mormons passed eight miles south of Lincoln, and another marker can be found at the southwest corner of the intersection of Highway 77 and a section-line road from Bennet. (This one has been temporarily removed because of road construction.)

From here to York County the old trail is hard to follow. Generally, it stayed close to the West Fork of the Big Blue River and Beaver Creek. Travelers should probably take Interstate 80. Just west of the Milford exit on the south side of Interstate 80 is a rest area in which there is a marker commemorating the crossing of the Big Blue. Seven miles southeast of the community of Milford is another marker for the crossing of this river. (Ask locally for directions.)

At the Waco exit off Interstate 80 there is a marker one-quarter mile west of that intersection on the west side of county road L93B. Still another marker can be found in the small Beaver Creek Park on the west side of Highway 81 just east of the York bridge over Beaver Creek. Other historic markers are to be found in rest areas on Interstate 80 just east and west of the York exit. Continue west on Interstate 80 to the Aurora exit, where there is a marker on the east side of Highway 14 about one mile south of the intersection. This marker is in the shape of a famous well that furnished water to trail-weary travelers of the past.

Travelers are advised to leave the interstate at the Aurora exit and to follow the old trail through Giltner to its intersection with the Ox Bow Trail near Doniphan on Highway 34. The Ox Bow Trail was an older and longer route between Nebraska City and Fort Kearney.

West of Doniphan the combined Nebraska City Cutoff and Ox Bow trails generally followed the Platte River to the Kearney and Adams county line, west of Prosser, where they joined the Oregon Trail leading to Fort Kearney. This portion of the Oregon Trail had been used previously by the Mormon Grove Saints. (See chapter 8, "The Mormon Grove Saints' Trail.") At the fort the Mormons crossed the Platte River and picked up the old Mormon Trail of 1847, which they followed to Utah. (See chapter 7, "The Great Trek.")

## Chapter Eleven

# Emigrant Routes, 1840-68

## United States, General

During thirty years of foreign immigration to the Mormon headquarters in Illinois, Missouri, and Utah, from the arrival of the first English converts in New York City on July 20, 1840, to the completion of the first transcontinental railroad on May 1, 1869, at Promontory, Utah, Mormons developed or utilized twenty-two points of departure, or staging grounds, from New York to California. In one way or another, all but those who came via California eventually picked up the famous

Mormon Trail of 1847 from one of these places and followed it to their Zion.

Only the first two groups of English emigrants in 1840 sailed to New York City; thereafter, for fifteen years all European emigrants sailed to New Orleans and then up the Mississippi River to various other points of departure. Until 1845, they went straight to Nauvoo, Illinois. Afterwards, many other points of departure were developed:

*Winter Quarters (later Florence),  
Nebraska, 1846-48*

*Council Bluffs, Iowa, 1846-52*

*St. Louis, Missouri, 1852*

*Keokuk, Iowa, 1853*

*Westport, Missouri, 1854*

*Mormon Grove, Kansas, 1855-56\**

*Iowa City, Iowa, 1856-57 (There was no formal immigration in 1858 as a result of the "Utah War.")*

*Florence, Nebraska, 1856-63*



*St. Joseph, Missouri, 1859*  
*Genoa, Nebraska, 1859*  
*Wyoming, Nebraska, 1864-66*  
*North Platte, Nebraska, 1865*  
*Laramie City, Wyoming, 1868*  
*Benton, Wyoming, 1868*

\*Because by 1856 it was possible to go by railroad to Chicago and beyond, European emigrants again landed in New York City, and also in Boston and Philadelphia. This rail route was not only more convenient, but it also kept the Saints away from the dreaded cholera and other water-borne diseases so prevalent between New Orleans and various Mississippi and Missouri river ports.

A relatively few emigrants from Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific islands entered the United States at San Diego and San Francisco and followed either the Old Spanish Trail or the Old California Trail to Utah.

The Union Pacific Railroad began moving west from Omaha, Nebraska, on July 10, 1865. Thereafter the Mormons abandoned the Nebraska City cutoff and took trains to three different U.P. railheads: North Platte, Nebraska, in 1867, and Laramie City and Benton, Wyoming, in 1868. Each of these three railheads in its turn became a hell-on-wheels, wide-open, rip-roaring town, which greatly concerned Mormon leaders. The first two of these railheads are prospering to this day, but Benton is distinctive for having become the first ghost town in Wyoming, lasting only from July through September 1868. It was located on the eastern edge of the Red Desert, eleven miles east of Rawlins, near the North Platte River. The curious can find the exact location of vanished Benton today by looking for the Union Pacific milepost number 672.1 off old Highway 30, indicating precisely how far one is west of Omaha.

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*Chapter Twelve*

## **Utah Colonization Patterns, 1847-1900: The Inner Cordon Utah**

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The Mormons began colonizing and taming the Great Basin and making the desert blossom as the rose as soon as they arrived in 1847. By the time of Brigham Young's death thirty years later, in 1877, 358 colonies had been planted as a result of his colonizing program, the most impressive in the history of the American West. Thereafter colonizing proceeded at a more leisurely pace until about 1900, when official Mormon colonizing ended, possibly because the membership of the Church was becoming too scattered, and also because few desirable places were left to colonize.

In what became the state of Utah, the main pattern of colonizing consisted of three tiers moving east from the edge of the Great Basin. The first tier was made up of the Wasatch Front and its extension along the Old Spanish and Salt Lake Trail to Cedar City. Beyond Utah, this tier of colonies was extended to San Diego, along the famous Mormon Corridor, in the hope of giving inland Mormons easy access to the sea and immigrants a more convenient way to come to the Great Basin than by the overland trails. Within five years much of this first tier was colonized.

The second tier, consisting primarily of a chain of fertile valleys lying east of the mountains that delimited the first tier, was colonized mainly in the early 1860s. The third tier included most of the remaining desirable areas in the middle Rocky Mountain region and

the Colorado Plateau, and was colonized into the 1870s. These three tiers account for 75 percent of all colonies established in Utah.

Dixie was a small, separate area of colonization. Other colonies appeared here and there, mainly on the Colorado Plateau.

Little was left to chance in Mormon colonizing. Sites were carefully selected in advance. All of the leaders and often most of the colonists were assigned by Brigham Young to go and settle in these various places. Most of those who went considered they were called by revelation to do so, and many made great sacrifices. Most colonies were planned as agricultural and ranching communities, but some were assigned special missions, such as proselytizing Indians, mining, or fishing. Some colonies became ethnic enclaves of Scandinavians or Germans.

Almost all of the settlements were laid out in typical Mormon grid fashion, with homes, gardens, and orchards in the town and farms and most livestock outside. To this day most old Mormon settlements appear different from settlements founded by non-Mormons in Utah.

## 1847–1900



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*Chapter Thirteen*

## **Great Basin Colonization Patterns, 1847-1900: The Outer Cordon**

### ***Western United States***

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The Mormon empire spread in fertile valleys and along rivers, eventually reaching into Canada and Mexico. In so doing the Mormons founded the first Anglo-Saxon settlements not only in Utah, but also in Wyoming, Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, and Colorado.

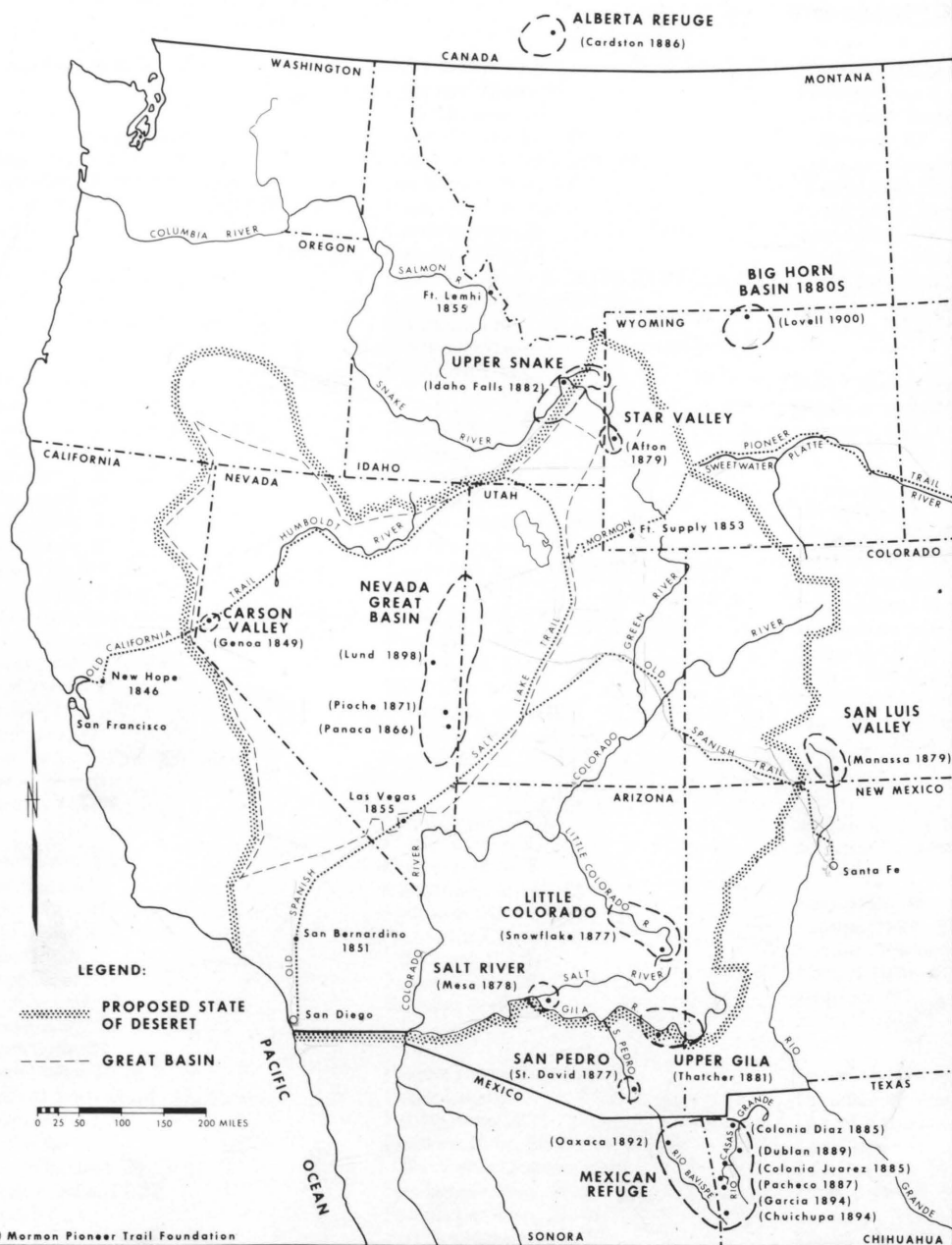
Until recently it has been considered axiomatic that these distant colonies were founded to secure the borders of this huge area, extending from the crest of the Sierras to the Continental Divide and from Mexico to Oregon, which the Mormons proposed as the new State of Deseret. Within this area the main settlements were in the Star and Carson Valleys, along the Little Colorado, Upper Gila, and Salt rivers, in the Nevada Great Basin, and at San Bernadino and Las Vegas. Beyond the state of Deseret (Utah) were many colonies in the Big Horn Basin in Wyoming, in the San Luis Valley in Colorado, and along the Upper Snake River in Idaho and the San Pedro River in Arizona.

Several newer studies, however, indicate that colonies of the outer cordon were each organized for specific reasons (such as civilizing and converting the Indians, mining, or raising special crops like figs, olives, grapes, sugar, almonds, and tobacco) rather than as part of some master plan.

During the 1880s, because of the U.S. government's vigorous prosecution of polygamists, two areas of foreign colonies were founded. One was the Alberta Refuge, around

Cardston, Alberta, Canada, and the other, the Mexican Refuge, consisted of seven colonies in northern Chihuahua and Sonora, the earliest of which was Colonia Diaz in 1885. Those who went to Mexico usually left from St. David, Arizona, and proceeded to Colonia Diaz via Hachita and Mesquite Springs, or from Deming, Arizona, via Columbia.

# MORMON COLONIZATION IN THE WEST, THE OUTER CORDON: 1846-1900





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