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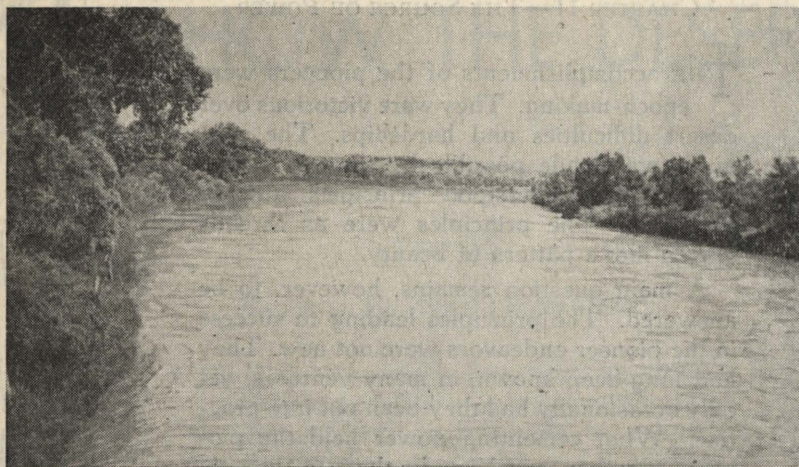
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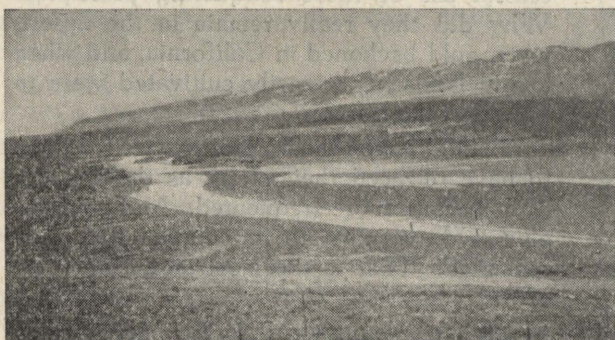
The Improvement Era
Centennial



WYOMING—Pathway of the Mormon



The historic North Platte River near Torrington, Wyoming, as it looks at present.



Site of the Platte River crossing near Casper, Wyoming, where Mormon Ferry was built, June 1847.

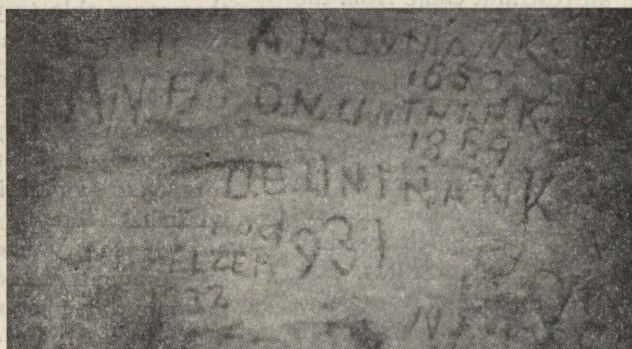
FROM the Delaware Indian language *Maughwauwama*, Wyoming derives her name. It means "large plains." But the topography of this section also boasts some prominent mountain ranges. To the east rise the Black Hills, made dark by scrub cedar and pine. To the north stand the lofty Big Horns, so named because of the famed big-horn sheep that roam over the steep slopes. To the south and southwest extend the Laramie Range, among which rises Laramie Peak, a famous landmark of early emigrant days. Stretching westward, where land and sky seem to meet, are mountain peaks and passes of the Wind River, Teton, and Shoshone ranges. Indeed, with the happy intermingling of mountain and plain, beautiful valleys scooped out of boundless prairies, crystal streams that flow from their secret sources on some mountaintop to water a thirsty desert spot—it is little wonder that this virgin land of yesterday should hold a lure and enchantment for early trappers and explorers as they came west to map and eventually to guide

the footsteps of those who were to follow.

Geography played a generous part also in giving to Wyoming some of the most famous trails and landmarks in history. It lay directly in the pathway of the vast tide of westward migration. Hence, east, west, north, and south, dim trails marked the land, but the road toward the setting sun was destined to become the most historic in the world, the Old Oregon Trail. Along this path, which later became a broad highway, the vista of the west opened its doors to trappers, explorers, missionaries, homeseekers, and there was to follow along its course the migration of

a mighty people, bound together by a religious ideal which they sought to cultivate and worship. The Mormon pioneers were to immortalize this roadway by undertaking the greatest trek in history. They were to add to its name, "Mormon Trail," and leave on the plains and mountain passes of Wyoming landmarks and shrines cherished today as an integral part of that historic march to Utah.

Along the route of this famous trail were natural barriers. The trail wound through arid wastes. Deep rivers blocked its course, and high mountain ranges rose like giants in its path. The heat of a mid-summer sun beat down with torrid intensity, and stifling dust beset the weary pioneers, but by the strength of their arms and the valor of their hearts, many of these difficulties were overcome. The trail witnessed many thousands of Latter-day Saints reach their destination in the valley of the mountains. It witnessed the rush of gold seekers to California.



Some of the inscriptions found on Register Cliffs, near Guernsey, Wyoming.

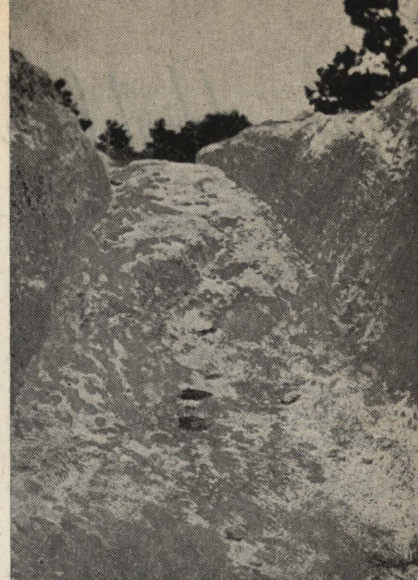
the march of an army to Utah, the hoofbeats of the pony express, and the rumblings of the stage coaches were heard along its course.

By the side of this famous route in Wyoming, favorite camp sites were founded. It is to these history spots of yesterday that we glance in retrospect and follow along with the Mormon pioneers as they made their way to the west.

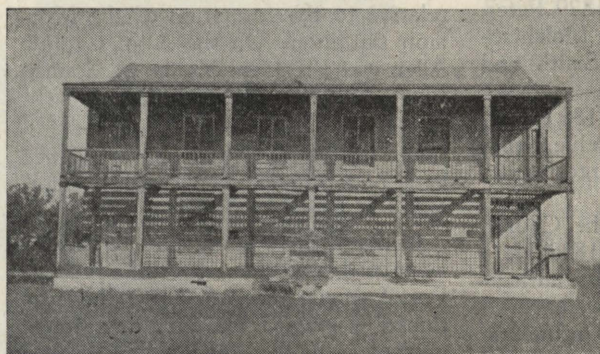
THE heyday of the fur trapper was drawing to a close. The beaver, that had represented the wealth of the western wilderness, was becoming scarce. Mountain men who had made that epoch famous, were, by

Pioneers to Utah

By HAZEL NOBLE BOYACK

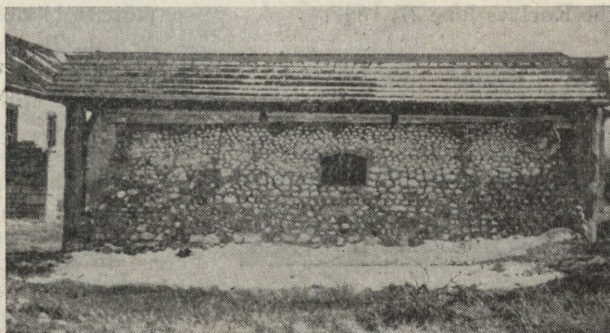


One of the deepest cuts along the entire route of the Old Oregon Trail, near Guernsey, Wyoming.

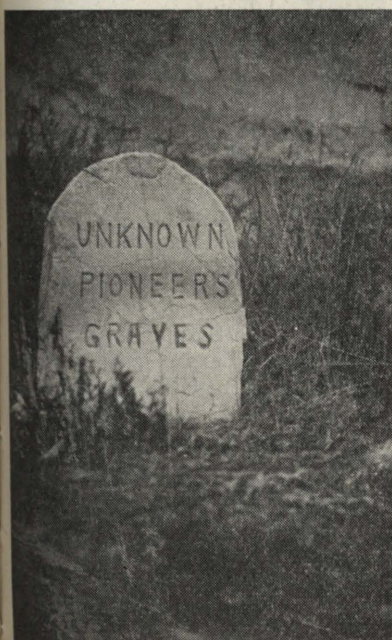


"Old Bedlam," Fort Laramie, Wyoming. Built in 1849 and famous for its social life during the Fort's history.

Part of the cobblestone wall, built by Latter-day Saints at Fort Bridger in 1855.



This monument stands at the base of Register Cliffs, south of Guernsey, Wyoming.



a military garrison, Fort Laramie served as an outstretched hand, giving aid to parties destitute of food, camps stricken with the cholera. Weary travelers used it as a refuge to obtain a few days' rest, and to seek food and fresh stock for the unfinished journey. At its height of usefulness, Fort Laramie contained sixty buildings. All roads led through this gateway to the West.

To the doors of the old fort, in

fort was abandoned as a military post and sold at auction. Not until 1938, by legislative action, did this historic shrine achieve the status of a national monument.

BEYOND the Old Fort, about a day's travel by ox team, rose Register Cliff, so named because of the many hundreds of names inscribed on its chalk-like surface. This place was a popular camping ground. At the base of the cliff is a burial ground dedicated to "Unknown Pioneers' Graves." The waters of the tranquil North Platte flow gently by this spot, and on the banks of this stream near-by is a monument where once stood a pony express station.

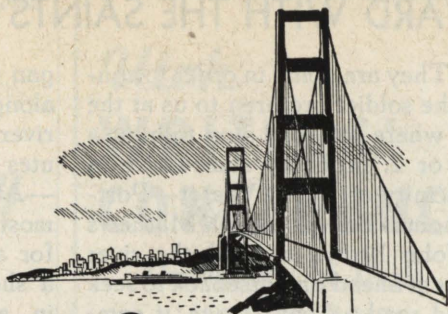
Following along a gravel bed for a few miles, the Pioneers came to Warm Springs, a place where water about 70° F. gushes forth from a rocky cavern on the hillside. This spring was known as the "Emigrants' Laundry Tub." Here camps were made while women took time out to do the urgent family washings. This camp site is mentioned in the diaries of the Mormon vanguard company.

Another historic spot around which much interest gathered was

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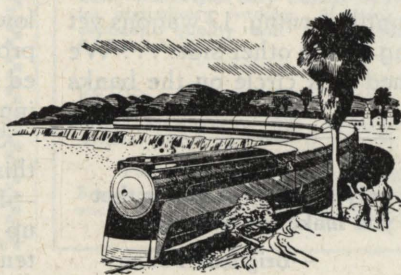
1847, came the vanguard of the Mormon pioneers to the Salt Lake valley. President Brigham Young and his company of 143 men, 3 women, and 2 children, had left Winter Quarters in April and had followed along the north bank of the Platte River. In the vicinity of Fort Laramie, they crossed the river and camped at the fort for three days. Elder Orson Pratt mounted the tower over the entrance and estimated the latitude and longitude of the fort. He also approximated the height of Laramie Peak that rose directly west about forty miles. At the fort, blacksmithing was done and supplies purchased for the journey. For years the Latter-day Saints used the fort as a half-way station between Salt Lake valley and the Missouri River. In 1890, the historic old

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Wyoming

(Continued from page 375)

the North Platte crossing on the western edge of the present city of Casper, Wyoming. In June 1847, President Brigham Young and his company reached the North Platte crossing. They had with them a portable craft, called the *Revenue Cutter*. By the use of this boat they were able to get their equipment across the swollen stream; President Young was quick to see the value of a ferry at this point. Men were sent into the near-by hills for timber, and a sturdy raft was made and put into operation. Nine men of the original company were left at the crossing to operate the ferry. Thus came into existence Mormon Ferry. It was in operation several years until toll bridges were built. At this crossing in October 1856, the delayed Martin Handcart Company forded the cold waters of the North Platte where a chilling wind and heavy snow overtook them and exacted its first heavy toll of life from among these heroic handcart people.

As the wagon trains made their way toward central Wyoming, another river, the Sweetwater, figured prominently in pioneer diaries. On the north bank of this stream, in central Wyoming, a huge granite rock rises above the plain. The old Oregon Trail wound its way close to the base of this landmark. How Independence Rock acquired its name is not definitely known, but the credit is given to a patriotic band of trappers led by William H. Ashley, who camped here on their nation's natal day in the early 1820's. This monument, through the years, acquired a fame peculiar to itself. On its hard surface were carved hundreds of names. Passers-by read these as eagerly as they would have read a letter from home. Father De Smet called it the "Great Registry of the desert." Others referred to it as the emigrant's post office. Independence Rock was held vivid in the memory of the pioneers.

IN 1930 Independence Rock was formally dedicated as a monument to our western pioneers. Today perhaps no other historic shrine in Wyoming bears so many bronze plaques, commemorating the westward movement of our pioneers as does this privately owned landmark.

Six miles to the west of Independ-

ence Rock is an unusual aperture of nature called Devil's Gate, a rift in a granite ridge some four hundred feet deep through which flows the Sweetwater. Near-by to the south ran the emigrant's trail. It was in the vicinity of Devil's Gate that tragedy overtook the Martin Handcart Company. With the greatest difficulty these people had made their way from Mormon Ferry to this point. Here they could go no farther. In a cove near-by they sought refuge from the deep snows and wintry

blasts. Here rescue parties sent out from Salt Lake City found them.

Over famous old South Pass went the westward migration. So gentle and gradual was the ascent over this pass that the traveler scarcely knew when he had crossed the Continental Divide. En route over Wind River range. En route over the highway was a small stream called Rock Creek. The Willie Handcart Company, which had been in advance of the Martin Company by about two weeks, had been caught in the same severe storm. Thirteen of their number perished in one night.

As the western slopes of South Pass level into the valley of the Green River one finds many landmarks that dot this area. Pacific Springs—a famous old camp site; Simpson's Hollow where wagon trains of Colonel Johnston's Army were burned; sites of the crossing of the Little and Big Sandy rivers and others. In this area President Brigham Young first met Jim Bridger,

famous mountain scout. The Mormon leader was eager to avail himself of any information Mr. Bridger might give regarding the Salt Lake valley. Here the two parties camped for the night, and a conference was held.

As Fort Laramie had stood at the eastern gateway of the trek through Wyoming, so another fort was to have its rise in southwestern Wyoming and stand at the crossroads of the trails. Fort Bridger was established in 1843 by Jim Bridger, one of the West's best-known mountain men and scouts. It was situated on Black's Fork, a tributary of the Green River, and on one of the most available routes for the tide of overland travel from the Missouri River to the Pacific Coast.

Fort Bridger came into existence as the second permanent settlement in what is now Wyoming. Situated as it was, the fort served a large portion of the Oregon emigrants as well as those going to California and to the Great Salt Lake valley.

The Latter-day Saints purchased the old trading post in 1853, and in November of the same year they located a settlement called Fort Supply about twelve miles southwest of Fort Bridger. These two forts were important Mormon outposts of that early period of colonization. At Fort Supply irrigation was first introduced into Wyoming. With the advent of Johnston's Army in the fall of 1857, these two forts were deserted and burned. Colonel Johnston took possession of Fort Bridger in the name of the United States and declared it a military reservation. It remained in possession of the government until 1890 when ownership passed into private hands. In June 1933, ceremonies took place dedicating Fort Bridger as a Wyoming historical landmark and museum.

Within the area of the famous old fort are many interesting historic sites. Chief among them is a section of a cobblestone wall erected by the Latter-day Saints in the fall of 1855. This is being carefully preserved. The stables used by the Pony Express are among the best preserved along the entire route. Close by stands the old warehouse and mess hall erected by the post trader in 1858. One of the most interesting

(Concluded on page 413)

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Hole in the Rock

Stanford roared with laughter. "Darned if you aren't stickin' up for me, Belle!" He gave an agile spring, and, landing in the wagon beside Arabella, kissed her quickly. Then he jumped down and was gone, racing over the flat to inspect the Fifty Mile Spring.

Arabella's eyes were so blurred with tears that she saw only his blue shirt, like a piece of sky, bobbing along the landscape.

SILAS SMITH and his two counselors, dismayed at the barrenness around them, paced up and down near the spring, talking in earnest tones.

"This is not an adequate camp site," Silas was saying. The water in the spring sinks before it gets to the surface. It's alkali at that! Forty Mile Spring was bad enough! But this—it's well that we left half the company back at Forty Mile camp!"

"Everything has been getting progressively worse since I joined you." Platt Lyman looked at Silas and smiled engagingly. "Do you suppose I brought a jinx, or is it just that we are getting nearer to the Hole in the Rock and the Colorado, where formidable country is to be expected?"

Silas smiled. "You brought us a fund of faith and good humor, Brother Lyman. I'm grateful for your presence. I get too serious at times. That right, Brother Nielson?"

"Ya. You have enough to be serious over, what with all the new companies that have come in. What we do with them?" Jens Nielson pointed to a small group of wagons, just coming into sight.

Silas scratched his head. "Here comes our road foreman. We'll ask him."

Stanford came up to the three men. "This is a dreary prospect for newcomers," he said. "There isn't a stick of fuel within miles of here. I suggest we get the boys out with their saddle ponies and let them lasso shadscale and drag it in in bundles. I rode this country as far as the river, yesterday, and there is just nothing anywhere."

"That's a practical suggestion about the boys. It will keep them out of mischief, as well. But this company that's coming in, what shall we do with them?"

(Continued on page 414)

WYOMING

(Concluded from page 409)

buildings is the first schoolhouse erected in Wyoming. A fine museum stands apart from these buildings and contains many valuable pioneer relics, chief among them a flag with twenty stars. It is interesting to note that the Wyoming legislature of 1947 has made available a fund of \$30,000 to restore and maintain this landmark.

Today as the sands of the century

hour glass have run their course, the spots our Mormon pioneers made famous in their westward trek are taking on a new significance to all of us. By superb faith, toil, and sacrifice, these pioneers made possible a modern Zion, whose roots have sunk deeply into the soil of the Rocky Mountain area. This good tree Zion has spread its branches to the uttermost parts of the earth and has yielded abundantly of its fruit.

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