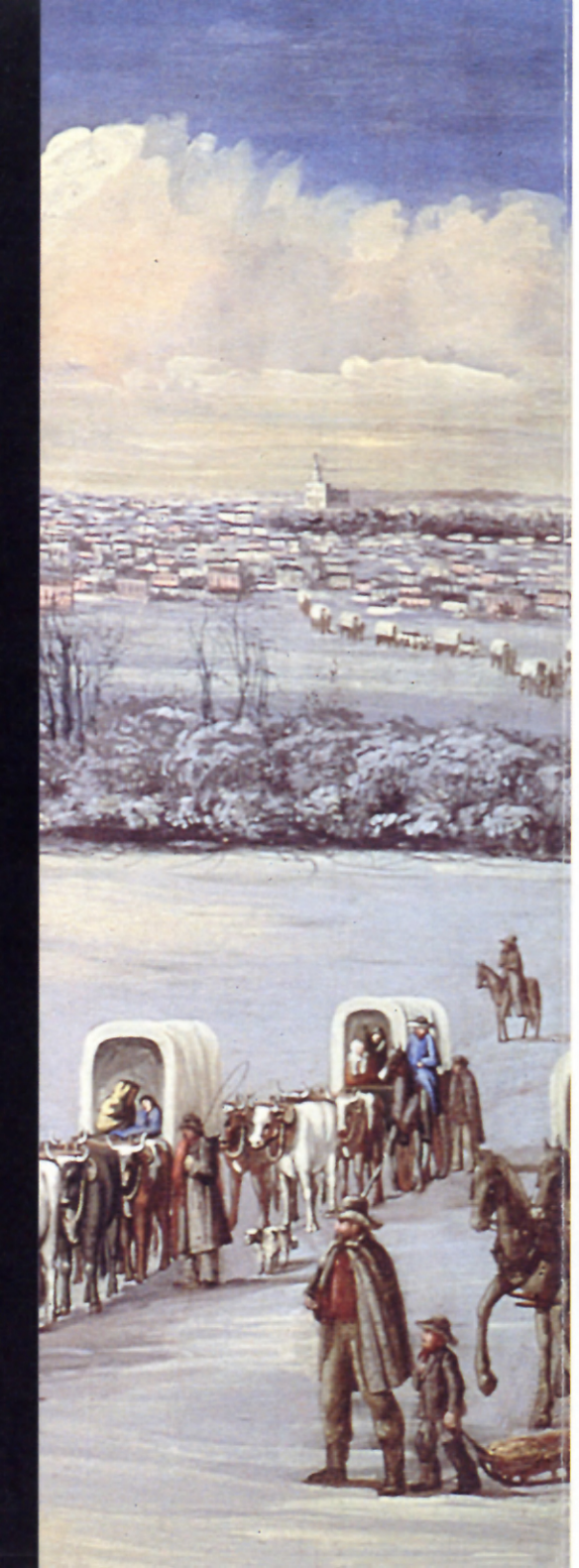




Important dates in the 1846 and 1847 treks from Nauvoo, Illinois, to Utah are noted at right. Quotations from contemporary diaries and letters describe those years. All objects shown here made the journey across the trail.

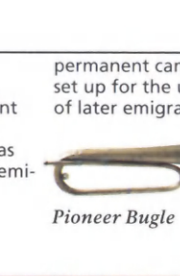


Mormon Blessing Gown

February 4, 1846  
First wagons leave Nauvoo and cross the Mississippi River.

*The great severity of the weather, and . . . the difficulty of crossing the river during many days of running ice, all combined to delay our departure, though for several days the bridge of ice across the Mississippi greatly facilitated the crossing. . . .*  
Brigham Young, February 28, 1846

April 24, 1846  
Garden Grove, the halfway point across Iowa, is reached. This was one of several semi-



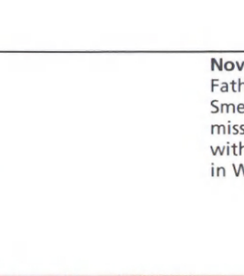
Pioneer Bugle

June 14, 1846  
Brigham Young arrives at the banks of the Missouri River.



Travel Chest

September 1846  
Winter Quarters is set up on the Nebraska shore of the Missouri River. Approximately 4,000 people spend the winter here.



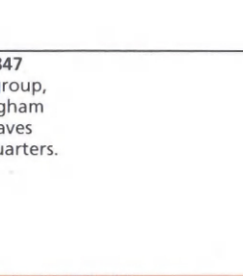
Travel Chest

November 1846  
Father Pierre de Smet, a Jesuit missionary, visits with the Mormons in Winter Quarters



Travel Chest

April 5, 1847  
The first group, led by Brigham Young, leaves Winter Quarters.



Travel Chest

*I walked some this afternoon in company with Orson Pratt and suggested to him the idea of fixing a set of wooden cog wheels to the hub of a wagon wheel, in such order as to tell the exact number of miles we travel each day.*  
William Clayton, April 19, 1847



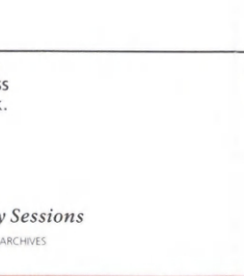
Travel Chest

May 26, 1847  
Emigrants pass Chimney Rock.



Travel Chest

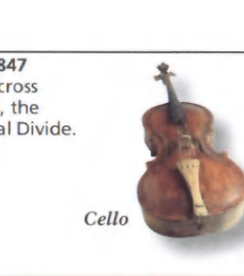
June 27, 1847  
Mormons cross South Pass, the Continental Divide.



Travel Chest

*In advance of us, at a great distance can be seen the outlines of mountains, loftier than any we have yet seen . . . their summits . . . covered with snow.*  
Horace Whitney, June 23, 1847

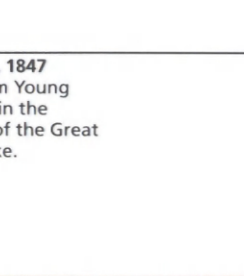
July 24, 1847  
Brigham Young arrives in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake.



Travel Chest

*And beholding in a moment such an extensive scenery open before us, we could not refrain from a shout of joy which almost involuntarily escaped from our lips the moment this grand and lovely scenery was within our view.*  
Orson Pratt, July 21, 1847

July 24, 1847  
Brigham Young arrives in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake.



Travel Chest

## The Route West

To the sounds of snapping harness and creaking wagon wheels the pioneers in the vanguard of westward expansion moved out across the North American continent. Between 1840 and 1870, over 500,000 emigrants went west along the Great Platte River Road from departure points along the Missouri River. This corridor had been used for thousands of years by American Indians and in the mid-1800s became the transportation route for successive waves of European trappers, missionaries, soldiers, teamsters, stagecoach drivers, Pony Express riders, and overland emigrants bound for

opportunity in the Oregon Territory, Great Basin, and California gold fields.

The trunk of the corridor generally followed the Platte and North Platte rivers for around 600 miles, then paralleled the Sweetwater River before crossing the Continental Divide at South Pass, Wyoming. Beyond South Pass the route divided several times, each branch pioneered by emigrants seeking a better way to various destinations. The route's importance declined with the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 but continued to receive limited use into the early 1900s.

From 1846 to 1869 over 70,000 Mormons traveled along an integral part of the road west, the Mormon Pioneer Trail. The trail started in Nauvoo, Illinois, went across Iowa, connected with the Great Platte River Road at the Missouri River, and ended near the Great Salt Lake in Utah. Generally following pre-existing routes, the trail took tens of thousands of Mormon emigrants to a new home and refuge in the Great Basin. From their labors arose the State of Deseret, later to become Utah Territory, and finally the state of Utah.

The Trail Experience  
Mormon pioneers shared similar experiences with others traveling west: the drudgery of walking hundreds of miles, suffocating dust, violent thunderstorms, mud, temperature extremes, bad water,

poor forage, sickness, and death. They recorded their experiences in journals, diaries, and letters that have become a part of our national heritage.

The Mormons were a unique part of this migration, however, surrounded the church. The rapid growth of church membership, the financial success of the members and their church, religious beliefs that were outside mainstream Christian tradition, the practice of plural marriage (polygamy), a large well-armed militia, the blurring of lines between church and state, and the perception that the church was a threat all fueled intolerance. Hostilities escalated. On June 27, 1844, Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were killed by an angry mob while jailed in Carthage, Illinois.

By 1845 the Mormon population in and around Nauvoo had grown to over 11,000, making it one of the largest cities in the state. In September 1845 foes burned more than 200 Mormon homes and farm buildings in an attempt to force the Mormons to leave.

A move to the Far West had been discussed by church leaders as early as 1842, with Oregon, California, and Texas possible destinations. In 1844 Joseph Smith obtained a map and report by John C. Fremont, which described the Great Salt Lake and its surrounding fertile valleys. Subsequently, the Rocky Mountains and the Great Basin became the prime candidates for settlement.

The initial party reached the Missouri River on June 14, having taken over four months to complete the trip. Some of the emigrants established a settlement called Kaneshville on the Iowa side of the river. Others moved across the river into the area of present-day Omaha, Nebraska, building a camp called Winter Quarters.

The lead party left with 148 people (143 men, three women, and two young boys), 72 wagons, 93 horses, 66 oxen, 52 mules, 19 cows, 17 dogs, and some chickens. This hand-picked group was organized into two large divisions and further split into companies of 50 and 10. This structure was based on Brigham Young's plan for migrating west.

The plan also included details on camp behavior and devotional practices to be followed during the journey. The trail across the Great Plains traversed hundreds of miles along the north side of the Platte and North Platte rivers.

The Salt Lake Valley. The Mormons followed the faint, year-old track of the ill-fated Donner-Reed party through the Wasatch Mountains.

The final 116 miles, from Fort Bridger to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake, were the most difficult. The people were weary, their wagons worn, and livestock weakened by almost 1,000 miles of hauling. Travel through the narrow, willow-choked canyons and over tree-covered slopes and rocky ridges of the Wasatch Range was so slow that it took the party 14 days to complete this part of their journey. On July 22, 1847, when Thomas Bullock caught his first full view of the valley, he shouted, "hurra, hurra, hurra, there's my home at last."

The pioneer party began planting late crops as soon as they reached the valley. During the next few weeks they laid out streets, built temporary shelters, and prepared for winter. Mormons continued to arrive during the remaining weeks of summer and fall, and some 1,650 people spent their first winter in the valley. Shortly after their arrival, Brigham Young and many members of the pioneer party made the return trip to Winter Quarters to be with their families and to organize the next spring's migration.

All but two of the handcart companies completed the journey with few problems. The fourth and fifth companies, known as the Martin and Willie companies,

includes 822 miles (64 percent) on private land, 264 miles (20 percent) under federal management, and 214 miles (16 percent) in state and local ownership.

Much of the trail is no longer visible, though some trail segments and sites can be visited. Long stretches of the trail can still be seen in Wyoming. The map on the other side of this brochure shows the historic route and site locations. If you want to visit sites on private land, you must obtain the landowner's permission.

The designated corridor is almost 1,300 miles long and is managed as a cooperative effort among private landowners, trail associations, state and local agencies, the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and US Forest Service. Land along the trail

The handcart, made almost entirely of wood, were modeled after carts used by street sweepers. They were generally six to seven feet long, wide enough to span a narrow wagon track, and could be alternately pushed or pulled. The small boxes affixed to the carts were three to four feet long and eight inches high. They could carry about 500 pounds, mostly trail provisions and a few personal possessions.

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Joseph Smith's (left) 1820 vision led to the organization of the Mormon Church. From 1839 to 1846 they lived and prospered in Nauvoo, IL (above).

FAIR LEFT—COURTESY BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF ART

IMAGES IN THIS BROCHURE ARE PROVIDED COURTESY OF THE MUSEUM OF CHURCH HISTORY AND ART, SALT LAKE CITY, UNLESS OTHERWISE CREDITED.



Plan for the Nauvoo temple shows a majestic building.

The church headquarters subsequently moved to Ohio, Missouri, and, in the spring of 1839, Nauvoo, Illinois. There it remained until 1846, when the church moved beyond the Rocky Mountains into then unsettled Mexican territory

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## Explore the Mormon Pioneer Trail

For more information on the history of the trail, locating sites, or traveling segments of the trail, contact:

**National Park Service**  
**National Trails**  
**Intermountain Region**  
PO Box 728  
Santa Fe, NM 87504-0728  
505-988-6098  
www.nps.gov/mopi

**More Information**  
www.nps.gov/mopi  
history.utah.gov  
www.mormontrails.org

**Auto Tour Route Guides**  
These interpretive guides provide descriptions and driving directions to trail sites. Find them on the Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail website:  
www.nps.gov/mopi.

**Historical Department**  
**Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints**  
50 E. North Temple  
Salt Lake City, UT 84150

**National Historic Trails**  
**Interpretive Center**  
1501 N. Poplar St.  
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www.blm.gov

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# Exploring the Trail

