

THE Mormon Pioneer TRAIL

Historical Overview

In 1846, Mormon Pioneers left Nauvoo, Illinois, because of religious persecution and traveled across Iowa, ending up in Winter Quarters, near what is now Omaha, Nebraska. On April 5, 1847, an advance company led by Brigham Young set off from Winter Quarters on their trek across the country (1,040 miles) to a new home in the Rocky Mountains. This advance company was to arrive in the Salt Lake Valley as early as possible for the purpose of planting crops to feed the large numbers to follow.

The company consisted of 145 men, three women, and two children. They chose to travel on the north side of the Platte River in order to avoid competition for forage and food with the emigrants on the Oregon Trail who traveled on the south side of the river.

They met and talked with several mountain men along the trail who gave them varying opinions about the prospect of settling in the Salt Lake Valley. After reaching Fort Bridger on July 7, the pioneers left the Oregon Trail and followed the Hastings Cutoff, established by Lansford W. Hastings. The ill-fated Donner-Reed party had taken this route the previous year. Near the Bear River, Brigham Young became ill with mountain fever.

Orson Pratt, with twenty-three wagons and forty-two men, was sent ahead to locate the Donner-Reed Trail. They did so, and by July 20th the advance party reached the summit of Big Mountain. On July 21st, Pratt and Erastus Snow scouted the valley and returned to the group.

Then on July 22, the first wagons moved downstream toward the mouth of Emigration Canyon. The pioneers chose not to follow the trail over Donner Hill but instead built a road at the base of the hill to the north. Near this is the **Place Monument** the pioneers were first able to survey the valley which would be their new home. They continued along the south side of Emigration Creek in a southwestern direction and camped for the first time in the Salt Lake Valley on July 22. Brigham Young arrived in the valley on July 24th, and therefore this date was chosen as Pioneer Day, now a state holiday.



The Donner Party came through the Salt Lake Valley the year before the Mormon Pioneers. Their trailblazing effort saved the Mormons time and helped them get crops planted in time to enjoy a meager harvest. Donner Park *above* and Donner Marker, Emigration Canyon *right*.



THE FIRST FEW DAYS IN THE SALT LAKE VALLEY

July 21, 1847

Orson Pratt and Erastus Snow were the scouts for the first two groups. They arrived on July 21 and explored major portions of the valley. From a discourse delivered by Erastus Snow on July 25, 1880:

"It fell to the lot of Elder Orson Pratt and myself to penetrate through the thickets and emerge into this valley and get a view of the Great Salt Lake...The thicket down through the Narrows, at the mouth of the canyon was so dense that we could not penetrate through it. I crawled for some distance on my hands and knees through this thicket, until I was compelled to return, admonished to by the rattle of a snake which lay coiled up a little under my nose, having almost put my hand on him; but as he gave me the friendly warning, I thanked him and retreated... We raised up to a high point south of the Narrows, where we got a view of the Great Salt Lake and this valley, and each of us, without saying a word to the other, instinctively as if by inspiration, raised our hats from our heads and then swinging our hats shouted, 'Hosanna to God and the Lamb!'"

(Discourse on the Utah Pioneers, reported by George F. Gibbs)



The scouting party followed Emigration Creek, which probably looked much as it does today at Blaine Avenue and 1600 East *above*. The creek can be viewed from several other spots, such as Westminster College (1906) *top* and Wasatch Presbyterian Church (1947) *right*.



Also on this day, Orson Pratt and eight others conducted an extensive survey of the area to determine the best location for planting crops. A site about two miles north of this campsite was chosen. From William Clayton's journal:

"Agreeable to President Young's instructions, 'Elder Pratt, accompanied by George A. Smith, John Brown, Joseph Mathews, John Pack, Orrin Porter Rockwell, and J. C. Little started on this morning on horses to seek out a suitable place to plant some potatoes, turnips, etc., so as to preserve the seed at least...There is an extensive, beautiful, level looking valley from here to the lake which I should judge from the numerous deep green patches must be fertile and rich...The intervening valley appears to be well supplied with streams, creeks and lakes, some of the latter are evidently salt...There is but little timber in sight anywhere and that is mostly on the banks of creeks and streams of water which is about the only objection which could be raised in my estimation to this being one of the most beautiful valleys and pleasant places for a home for the Saints which could be found...The land looks dry and lacks rain, but the numerous creeks and springs must necessarily tend to moisten it much."

(William Clayton Journal, July 22, 1847, LDS Church Archives)

Three Wilford Woodruff Family Homes are located near the spot where Mormon pioneers camped their first night in the valley, near 1700 South and 500 East.



Wilford Woodruff Farmhouse (1859-60) *above* Woodruff Villa (1891) *left* Asahel Hart Woodruff House (1907) *right*.



July 22, 1847

The first wagons moved downstream toward the mouth of Emigration Canyon. Since the route over Donner Hill was too rough, the Mormons spent four hours cutting a half mile of new road around the north end of Donner Hill to rejoin the Donner tracks on the high ground south of present Hogle Zoo. Shortly after noon, they followed the Donner tracks on the south bank of Emigration Creek in a southwesterly direction into the valley. After the creek took a turn to the northwest the group continued to a campsite in the vicinity of present-day 500 East 1700 South. They camped on the north bank of Parley's Creek that night. Thomas Bullock noted in his journal:

"...when we turned round the hill to the right & came in full view of the Salt Lake in the distance, with its bold hills on its Islands towering up in bold relief behind the Silvery Lake - a very extensive valley burst upon our view, dotted in 3 or 4 places with Timber - I should expect the valley to be about 30 miles long & 20 miles wide - I could not help shouting 'hurra, hurra, hurra, there's my home at last' - the Sky is very clear, the air delightful & all together looks glorious; the only drawback appearing to be the absence of timber - but there is an Ocean of Stone in the Mountains, to build Stone houses, & Walls for fencing - if we can only find a bed of Coal we can do well, & be hidden up in the Mountains unto the Lord - we descended a gentle sloping table land to a lower level where the Soil & grass improve in appearance - as we progressed down the Valley, small Clumps of dwarf Oak, & Willow appear, the Wheat Grass grows 6 or 7 feet high, many different kinds of grass appear, some being 10 or 12 feet high - after wading thro' thick grass for some distance, we found a place bare enough for a Camping ground, the grass being only knee deep, but very thick; we camped on the banks of a beautiful little stream which was surrounded by very tall grass."

(Thomas Bullock, Thursday, July 22, 1847, LDS Church Archives)



The Isaac C Home is located in City Park (1853).

July 23, 1847

On this morning, the group backtracked about a mile to avoid the very tall grass and marshy areas where Parley's, Emigration, and Red Butte Creeks converged. The wagons moved north from about 11th East and 17th South through present-day Liberty Park ending at an area on the east bank of the south branch of City Creek near present-day Washington Square. Plowing was begun at once, and that evening Pratt dedicated the land

as a place for the future home of the Mormon immigrants. William Clayton stated: "The brethren immediately rigged three plows and went to plowing a little northeast of the camp; another party went with spades, etc., to make a dam on one of the creeks so as to throw the water at pleasure on the field, designing to irrigate the land in case rain should not come sufficiently."

(William Clayton Journal, July 23, 1847, LDS Church Archives)

July 24, 1847

This is the day that Brigham Young arrived in the valley. When he

"emerged from the mouth of Emigration Canon he lifted himself up in his bed and peered out of his wagon which overlooked the valley, the cottonwoods on the creek and the camp on the east side of the creek in fair view", President Young said "that this was the place he had seen long since in vision; it was here he had seen the tent settling down from heaven and resting, and a voice said unto him, 'Here is the place where my people Israel shall pitch their tents.'"

(Erastus Snow discourse delivered July 25, 1880)



Trails After July 24, 1847

On July 26, a group was chosen to accompany Brigham Young and explore Ensign Peak and such places as the warm springs-present-day location of the Children's Museum of Utah (840 N. 300 W.)

On July 27, Amasa M. Lyman, Sam Brannan, Rodney Badger, and Roswell Stevens arrived in the valley on horseback and probably made their own trail to the camp on City Creek.

On July 29, a sick detachment of the Mormon Battalion and a group of Mississippi pioneers entered the valley. They apparently turned north at the canyon mouth, then headed west, crossing Red Butte Creek and leaving the bench near what is now 9th South and 15th East. From there the trail turned northwest to the camp on City Creek.

Later the main migration route into the city from Emigration Canyon shifted north to the head of 300 South, which became known as Emigration Street.



The City & County Building (1891-94) is located near the second campsite of July 23, 1847.



The Social Hall Heritage Museum *right* showcases the foundation of the Social Hall (1852), which was found when excavating an underground entry way to the ZCMI Center Mall.

Gravesites of Brigham Young and family *above*

This is the Place monument *left* commemorates early Utah Pioneers

For more historical information you may want to visit the following locations:

(Call in advance for special group tours.)

The Utah State Historical Society Crossroads of the West Museum and Information Center
300 Rio Grande
Salt Lake City, Utah 84101-1182
(801-533-3500)

This is the Place State Park and Old Desert Village
2601 East Sunnyside
Salt Lake City, Utah 84108
(801-584-8391)

Social Hall Heritage Museum ZCMI Center Mall
51 South State Street
Salt Lake City, Utah 84111
(801-321-8745) Youth and school tours welcome

The Museum of Church History and Art
45 North Temple
Salt Lake City, Utah 84115
(801-240-3310)

The Beehive House
67 East South Temple
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150
(801-240-2672) (801-240-2671, recorded message)

The Pioneer Memorial Museum Daughters of Utah Pioneers
300 North Main
Salt Lake City, Utah 84103
(801-538-1050)

Chase Home Museum of Utah Folk Art
Liberty Park
1300 S. 900 E.
Salt Lake City, Utah 84115
(801-533-5760)



Denver Rio Grande Depot (1910) *above* was donated to the state of Utah in 1977 and has been home to the Utah State Historical Society since 1980.

Special thanks to:

This brochure is based on research by W. Randall Dixon, Senior Archivist, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Russ Hemmert and Hamid Saoudian, P.E., Salt Lake City Public Services

Map published by The Utah State Historical Society.

THE Mormon Pioneer TRAIL

photo by C.E. Henry Morrison, c. 1867, Cache Valley • courtesy of the Utah State Historical Society



THE Mormon Pioneer TRAIL

TO THE NEW

Introduction

Did you know that you can walk in the footsteps of the first pioneers who came into the Salt Lake Valley? Many people assume that the Mormon Pioneer Trail ends at the mouth of Emigration Canyon, where Brigham Young reportedly uttered the now famous words "This is the right place," on July 24, 1847, when he entered the valley. But historians have discovered where the advance party of Mormon pioneers traveled and camped from July 21st through 23rd. You can travel their route today, which follows Emigration Creek through the streets of Salt Lake City. This brochure tells the story of those pioneers' first few days in the valley and maps their trail. Turn the map over for more historical information and journal accounts of pioneers such as Thomas Bullock, William Clayton, and Erastus Snow. Have fun reading the history and then walking or riding your bicycle through the streets near the actual pioneer trail. Stop at the historic and scenic sites where Emigration Creek can be seen today.



Sites of First Few Days in Valley

- 1 Donner Park: Donner Party came through valley 1846 (990 S. Crestview Dr.)
- 2 Campsite of July 22, 1847 (500 E. 1700 S.) *First Encampment Park*
- 3 Campsite of July 23, 1847 (near Washington Square)
- 4 Site of first planting on July 23, 1847
- 5 This Is The Place State Park commemorating Brigham Young's stop to view the Salt Lake Valley on July 24, 1847 (2601 Sunnyside Ave.)
- 6 Pioneer Park: main party campsite and site of first pioneer fort (300 S. 300 W.)
- 7 Ensign Peak July 26, 1847 (north of Utah State Capitol)

Historic Sites (Pioneer Period 1847-69)

- 8 Historic Temple Square
- 9 Wilford Woodruff Farmhouse (1604 S. 500 E.)
- 10 Chase Mill and Home in Liberty Park (1300 S. 900 E.) *Home of the Folk Arts Museum*
- 11 Brigham Young gravesite (138 E. 1st Ave.)
- 12 Brigham Young Residences (State St. and South Temple) *Lion House and Beehive House*
- 13 Social Hall (Social Hall Ave. and State St.)

Where Emigration Creek can be seen today

- A Anderson-Foothill Library (1135 S. 2100 E.)
- B Wasatch Hollow Park: scenic spot and playground (between 1600 and 1700 E. on 1700 S.)
- C Blaine Avenue and 1600 E.
- D Garfield School (1838 S. 1500 E.)
- E Westminster College (1840 S. 1300 E.)

Please do not invade private property to get a closer view of Emigration Creek or other historic sites. Do not litter. Leave a site in better condition than it was found.

Post Pioneer Historic Sites Along the Trail

- 1 Wasatch Presbyterian Church (1626 E. 1700 S.)
- 2 Westminster Ave. Bungalows
- 3 Perkins Addition - Historic Streetcar Subdivision 1890-95 (between 900 and 1000 E. near 1700 S.)
- 4 Wilford Woodruff Family Homes (between 1600 and 1700 S. on 500 E.)
- 5 City-County Building (451 S. State)
- 6 Rio Grande Depot (300 S. 450 W.) *Home of the Utah State Historical Society*
- 7 City Creek Parks (2nd Ave. and State)
- 8 State Capitol (300 N. State)

