



PROJECT MUSE®

---

## Mormon Trail, The

William Hill

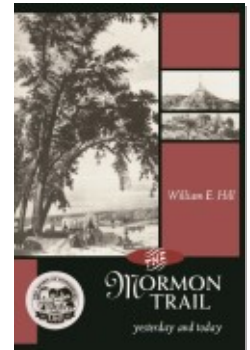
Published by Utah State University Press

Hill, William.

Mormon Trail, The: Yesterday and Today.

Utah State University Press, 1996.

Project MUSE.[muse.jhu.edu/book/9409](https://muse.jhu.edu/book/9409).



➔ For additional information about this book

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/9409>

## Preface

MY OTHER BOOKS ABOUT THE OREGON, CALIFORNIA, AND SANTA FE Trails were primarily concerned with the historical development of the physical route of the trails and their condition today. This book on the Mormon Trail, however, must be expanded to include not only that type of information but also material about the development of the Mormon faith and church. The reader must have some general knowledge of the history of the Mormon Church, officially known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in order to understand the development of the Mormon Trail since the history of the two are intertwined. This book is not an in-depth explanation of the major tenets of the Mormon faith and its different branches. It is, however, a book that is meant to serve as an introduction and overview of the Mormon Trail experience and to spark an interest in further research and study of its different aspects and influences on the development of the United States. Some of the practices and beliefs associated with the early Mormon Church and its society will be identified later in order to give the reader a clearer understanding of the development of the Mormon Trail.

Today the use of the term “Mormon Trail” is usually synonymous with the route designated by the National Park Service as the Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail. There are also other trails with National Historic Trail status: the Oregon National Historic Trail, the California National Historic Trail, the Santa Fe National Historic Trail, and the Pony Express National Historic Trail. In 1978 the Oregon Trail was the first to receive this designation during the resurgence of interest in western migration. By the mid-1980s the National Park Service had conducted its historic resource study, identifying and mapping the Oregon Trail route. The Mormon Trail was also designated a National Historic Trail then, but it has only been in the last few years that its historic

resource study was completed and detailed mapping commenced. The other three trails have received their national historic trail designation in recent years. Other historic routes, such as the Mormon Battalion route, are also being considered for this status.

By necessity the specific routes of these National Historic Trails have been narrowed down from all the actual routes used by all the different emigrants. The particular route of the respective emigrants often varied from one year to another or even from month to month. Sometimes these trail variations consisted of only a few feet, at other times parallel routes miles apart developed, and short cuts which were heavily used one year might be all but forgotten in subsequent years. To have included every twist and turn, every parallel route and camp road, every short cut developed or ever used by emigrants during the period of westward migration would have been an impossible task for the National Park Service to have accomplished.

Emigrants also used a variety of locations for outfitting and jumping off. For the Mormons during 1846, it was Nauvoo, Illinois, and the next year, Winter Quarters, Nebraska. For the next twenty years it could have been one or more of a variety of additional cities or towns such as Kaneshville, Iowa; Westport, Missouri; Iowa City, Iowa; or Wyoming, Nebraska. The route that has been designated the Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail itself was also used extensively by many emigrants going to Oregon and California. Merrill Mattes and other prominent western historians note that the trail on the north side of the Platte, although presently designated the Mormon Trail, was known by other names, such as the Council Bluffs Road, and it was used by many more emigrants going to Oregon and California than by those Mormons going to Utah during the period of westward migration. This does not, however, diminish the concept of a Mormon Trail and its significance, but only helps to better explain the concept of National Historic Trails.

Depending on the year, emigrants of all kinds, with different destinations as their goal, could be found traveling together along parts of the same route. This was especially true of the eastern portions of the trail. Traders and emigrants to Santa Fe, to California, to Oregon, or to Salt Lake City used the Independence, Missouri, area as their outfitting and jumping-off site. St. Joseph, Missouri, was used heavily by travelers to California and Oregon and only briefly by the Mormons and the Pony Express. Council Bluffs, Iowa—the Kaneshville area then—was heavily used by early trappers, and by California-, Oregon-, and Salt Lake- and Great Basin area-bound emigrants. The central Platte River Valley in Nebraska and parts of the trails in Wyoming were used by all those going

to Oregon, California, or Salt Lake City, and with the opening of the Bozeman Trail even those going to Montana could be found sharing the same route, traveling side by side. The reality of the trails was that there really was no one single route that was exclusively used all the way by any one category of emigrants. Some segments of the trails may have been used predominantly by travelers to one destination, especially towards the end of the trails. However, through the years all the trails overlapped, and the travelers intermingled with one another.

In this book the term Mormon Trail will refer to the 1,300 mile route designated the Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail. The route starts from Nauvoo, Illinois, and goes west across Iowa through Council Bluffs, Iowa, to Winter Quarters in Omaha, Nebraska. The trail then follows along the north side of the Platte River, crossing the North Platte River to the south side near Fort Laramie.

There appear to be three factors that influenced the original decision of the Mormons to use the trail on the north side of the Platte River. The fact that Winter Quarters was established on the north side of the Platte made it most likely that the Mormons would travel on that side. In addition, since the south side was more heavily traveled, there was the contention that they would be less likely to suffer persecution. Also, grasses were more plentiful since fewer people and animals were using the north side.

Near Fort Laramie the Mormon Trail crosses the North Platte River. Then it generally follows the south side of the North Platte until it again crosses the river near present-day Casper, Wyoming. There the trail cuts across to meet and follow the Sweetwater River to the South Pass area. Turning southwest, the trail heads down the Big Sandy, across the Green River, and over to Fort Bridger. This major section coincides with the Oregon National Historic Trail and parts of the California National Historic Trail. From Fort Bridger the Mormon Trail continues in a southwesterly direction down into Echo Canyon to the Weber River and over the Wasatch Mountains into the Valley of the Great Salt Lake. The majority of the route west of Fort Bridger had been first used by those emigrants following the Hastings Cutoff going to California in 1846. It was the Donner-Reed Party that cut the wagon route over the Wasatch Mountains. This whole route represents the one used by the Mormon pioneers in 1846-48. As mentioned earlier, many of the Mormons who came in later years often followed portions of other routes, which varied depending on the year they traveled. This fact will become evident when you read some of the diaries listed in the bibliography as they describe different areas and the specific routes they took. The map included in this book shows the Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail route

along with some of the other National Historic Trails and many of the other cutoffs and feeder trails.

In recent years there have been several trail organizations that have become heavily involved in preserving these great emigrant trails. The Oregon-California Trails Association (OCTA) was founded in 1982 when some historians and trail buffs came together to see what they could do to save the Oregon Trail. It quickly developed into an organization dedicated to not only the Oregon and California Trails but to all the major emigrant trails. Its headquarters are located in Independence, Missouri, at the National Frontier Trails Center. OCTA has succeeded, and today it is the largest of all the national historic trail preservation groups. In addition to the national organization, it has local chapters in all the western trail states. Members, however, can be found as far away as Japan in the Far East and Germany in Europe. It has actively supported the National Historic Trails status of the Oregon, Santa Fe, Mormon, California, and Pony Express Trails. OCTA is also supporting the designation and addition of other trails into the National Historic Trail system. It has worked on its own and with the assistance of the National Parks Service (NPS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to map and mark the trails on both private and public lands.

Another group that has worked extensively to have the Mormon Trail designated as a National Historic Trail is the Mormon Trails Association. This organization was founded in 1992. Its headquarters are in Salt Lake City. It has been working extensively with the National Parks Service on the Mormon Trail survey. The organization also has a number of state and local chapters. It has been very active in recent years researching and developing the sites with historical significance in Mormon history. Many of these sites seem to have been long forgotten, but now they are getting the attention they have long deserved.

The two major branches of the Mormon Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, with its headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah, and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, with its headquarters in Independence, Missouri, have been active in obtaining and restoring sites of historical significance to the Mormon faith for many years. Historic Nauvoo, Illinois, is a prime example of their longtime and continuing work, but there are also many other sites that have been saved by either or both churches. The "This is the Place" state park along with its "Old Deseret" village is another area undergoing extensive expansion by the state of Utah through the Utah Statehood Centennial Commission.

Just as the history of the Mormon Trail is intertwined with the other emigrant trails, the history of the Mormons and Utah are also interwoven. The committees responsible for the celebrations of both the sesquicentennial of the Mormon Trail and the centennial of Utah's statehood have brought about a flurry of activities, too many to mention all. Some projects are presently in the planning stage, others are well on their way to completion, and many have been recently finished.

All of these organizations have made it much easier for the modern traveler to experience the Mormon Trail. Yet two other significant pieces of Mormon history must be mentioned again. They are the songs "Come, Come, Ye Saints" and "The Handcart Song." The verses of these two songs tell us more about the Mormon Trail experience than perhaps many of the diaries that were kept by the Mormon emigrants. In the songs are the stories of their hopes, their pain and suffering, and the final fulfillment of their dreams. "Come, Come, Ye Saints" was written by William Clayton on April 16, 1846 while camped at Locust Creek, Iowa, during the Mormon exodus from Nauvoo, Illinois. "The Handcart Song" reflects a later period in their history when thousands of Mormons were determined to reach Zion/Salt Lake City.

Read their words again, and then start your journey west along the Mormon Trail.

Come Hear Their Songs,  
Come Follow Their Trail!

## **Come, Come, Ye Saints—1846**

William Clayton

Come, Come, ye Saints, no toil nor labor fear, But with joy wend your way;  
Tho' hard to you this journey may appear, Grace shall be as your day.  
'Tis better far for us to strive Our useless cares from  
us to drive; Do this, and joy your hearts will swell—All is well! all is well!

Why should we mourn, or think our lot is hard? 'Tis not so; all is right!  
Why should we think to earn a great reward, If we now shun the fight?  
Gird up your loins, fresh courage take, Our God will never  
us forsake; And soon we'll have this truth to tell—All is well! all is well!

We'll find the place which God for us prepared, Far a-way in the West;  
Where none shall come to hurt or make a-fraid; There the Saints will be blessed.  
We'll make the air with music ring—Shout prais-es to our  
God and King; Above the rest these words we'll tell—All is well! all is well!

And should we die before our journey's through, Hap-py day! all is well!  
We then are free from toil and sor-row too; With the just we shall dwell.  
But if our lives are spared again To see the Saints, their  
rest ob-tain, O how we'll make this chorus swell—All is well! all is well!

## The Handcart Song—1851

John D. T. McAllister

Ye Saints that dwell on Europe's  
shores,  
Prepare yourselves with many more  
To leave behind your native land  
For sure God's Judgements are at  
hand,  
Prepare to cross the stormy main  
And with the faithful make a start  
To cross the plains with your hand-  
cart.

### *Chorus:*

For some must push and some must  
pull,  
As we go marching up the hill.  
So merrily on the way we go,  
Until we reach the Valley, Oh!

That land that boasts of liberty  
You ne'er again may wish to see  
While poor men toil to earn their  
bread

And rich men are much better fed,  
And people boast of their great light.  
You see they are as dark as night  
And from them you must make a start  
To cross the plains with our hand-  
carts.

### *Chorus*

But some will say it is too bad  
The Saints upon their feet to pad  
And more than that to push a load  
As they go marching up the road.  
We say this is Jehovah's plan  
To gather out the best of men,  
And women too, for none but they  
Will ever gather in this way.

### *Chorus*

As on the way the carts are hurled  
'T would very much surprise the world

To see the old and feeble dame  
Lending her hand to push the same.  
The young girls they will dance and  
sing.  
The young men happier than a king,  
The Children they will laugh and play  
Their strength increasing day by day.

### *Chorus*

But ere before the valley gained  
We will be met upon the plains  
With music sweet and friends so dear  
And fresh supplies our hearts to  
cheer,  
Then with the music and the song  
How cheerfully we'll march along  
So thankfully you make a start  
To cross the plains with our hand-  
carts.

### *Chorus*

When we get there amongst the rest  
Industrious be and we'll be blessed,  
And in our chambers be shut in  
With Judgement cleanse the earth  
from sin,  
For well we know it will be so,  
God's servants spoke it long ago,  
And tell us it's high time to start  
To cross the plains with our hand-  
carts.

### *Chorus:*

For some must push and some must  
pull,  
As we go marching up the hill.  
So merrily on the way we go,  
Until we reach the Valley, Oh!

—from Hafén and Hafén,  
*Handcarts to Zion*



## Roster of the Pioneer Company to Utah, 1847

They are given as divided into companies of "Tens":

First Ten—Wilford Woodruff, captain; John S. Fowler, Jacob D. Burnham, Orson Pratt, Joseph Egbert, John Freeman, Marcus B. Thorpe, George A. Smith, George Wardle

Second Ten—Ezra T. Benson, captain; Thomas B. Grover, Barbaras (Barnabas) L. Adams, Roswell Stevens, Amasa M. Lyman, Starling (Sterling) G. Driggs, Albert Carrington, Thomas Bullock, George Brown, Willard Richards, Jesse C. Little

Third Ten—Phineas H. Young, captain; John Y. Green, Thomas Tanner, Brigham Young, Addison Everett, Truman O. Angel(l), Lorenzo D. Young, Bryant Stringham, Joseph Scofield, Albert P. Rockford

Fourth Ten—Luke S. Johnson, captain; John Holman, Edmond Ellsworth (Elsworth), Alvarnus Hanks, George R. Grant, Millen Atwood, Samuel B. Fox, Tunis Rappleyee, Harry Pierce, William Kykes (Dykes), Jacob Weiler

Fifth Ten—Stephen H. Goddard, captain; Tarlton Lewis, Henry G. Sherwood, Zebedee Coltrin, Sylvester H. Earl, John Dixon, Samuel H. Marble, George Scholes, William Henrie, William. A. Empey

Sixth Ten—Charles Shumway, captain; Andrew Schumway, Thomas Woolsey, Chauncey Loveland, Erastus Snow, James Craig, William Wordsworth, William Vance, Simeon Howd, Seeley Owen

Seventh Ten—James Case, captain; Artemas Johnson, William C. A. Smoot, Franklin B. Dewey, William Carter, Franklin G. Losee, Burr Frost, Datus Ensign, Franklin Stewart, Monroe Frink, Eric Glines, Ozro Eastman

Eighth Ten—Seth Taft, captain; Horace Thorton, Stephen Kelsey, John S. Eldredge, Charles D. Barnum, Alma Williams, Rufus Allen, Robert T. Thomas, James W. Stewart, Elijah Newman, Levi N. Kendall, Francis Boggs, David Grant

Ninth Ten—Howard Egan, captain; Heber C. Kimball, William A. King, Thomas Cloward, Hosea Cushing, Robert Byard, George Billings, Edison Whipple, Philo Johnson, William Clayton

Tenth Ten—Appleton M. Harmon, captain; Carlos Murray, Horace K. Whitney, Orson K. Whitney, Orrin P. (Porter) Rockwell, Nathaniel T. (Thomas) Brown, R. Jackson Redding, John Pack, Francis Pomeroy, Aaron Farr, Nathaniel Fairbanks

Eleventh Ten—John S. Higbee, captain; John Wheeler, Solomon Chamberlain, Conrad Klineman, Joseph Rooker, Perry Fitzgerald, John H. Tippetts, James Davenport, Henson Walker, Benjamin Rolfe

Twelfth Ten—Norton Jacobs, captain; Charles A. Harper, George Woodward, Stephen Markham, Lewis Barney, George Mills, Andrew Gibbons, Joseph Hancock, John W. Norton

Thirteenth Ten—John Brown, captain; Shadrach Roundy, Levi Jackman, Lyman Curtis, Hans C. Hansen (Hanson), Mathew Ivory, David Powers, Hark Lay (African American), Oscar Crosby (African American)

Fourteenth Ten—Joseph Mathews, captain; Gilbroid Summe, John Gleason, Charles Burke, Alexander P. Chessley (Chesley), Rodney Badger, Norman Taylor, Green Flake (African American), Ellis Eames

Three women and two children also accompanied the camp. They were the wife of Lorenzo Young, Harriet, and their two children, Isaac and Sabisky; Clarissa Decker Young, one of Brigham's wives; and Ellen Sanders Kimball, one of Heber's wives.

Ellis Eames returned to Winter Quarters from the Pioneer camp the day after they left on account of sickness.