



PROJECT MUSE®

## Mormon Trail, The

William Hill

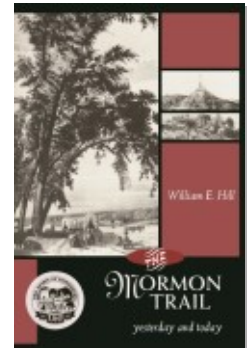
Published by Utah State University Press

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>

## Guidebooks

BY 1847, WHEN THE MORMONS WERE READY TO EMBARK ON THEIR JOURNEY west from Winter Quarters to establish their promised land, over 8,000 other emigrants had already moved west. Established trails already existed in many areas that would be followed by the emigrating Mormons. In addition to the earlier emigrants, numerous military exploratory expeditions had gone west and hundreds of trappers had been traveling back and forth along the Platte River from the mountains to the Missouri since the early 1800s. Routes had already been established to Oregon and to California with their jumping-off places located along the Missouri River in places such as the Independence-Westport area, Weston, Fort Leavenworth, St. Joseph, Nebraska City, and the Council Bluffs-Kanesville area. Thus, for most of the way, the emigrating Mormons would not be traveling through uncharted lands. However, this is not to say that guidebooks would not be useful. It seems most emigrant companies had copies of guidebooks once they became available. The better books provided the emigrants with useful information not only about the number of miles between sites, but also about the availability of grass, water, and wood. Many also provided lists of equipment and provisions that should be packed. Some even described the areas through which the emigrants would be traveling.

Among the most important sources of information about the West were Captain John Charles Frémont's reports. While Frémont's reports to Congress about his exploration expeditions to the Rocky Mountains, Oregon, and California were not published as an emigrant guide, they served the same purpose. They were the most informative and most frequently cited of the trail material available to the Mormons. In 1844 Frémont's early map and report had already been brought to the attention of Joseph Smith. After Smith's death, copies of Frémont's later maps and

reports were also read by Brigham Young and the other Mormon leaders. These reports were brought along as the Mormons moved west in 1847. They provided daily descriptions of what Frémont encountered along the way. They appear to have been most useful to the Mormons on the trail sections from near Grand Island to the South Pass and then in the Great Salt Lake Valley area.

The section of Frémont's *The Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains* quoted below describes the area along the North Platte from below Chimney Rock to Scotts Bluff as recorded July 9–11, 1842, by Charles Preuss.

July 9.—...Notwithstanding the confusion and excitement, we were very early to the road, as the days were extremely hot, and we were anxious to profit by the freshness of the morning. The soft marly formations, over which we were now journeying, frequently offers to the travellers remarkable and picturesque beauty. To several of these localities, where the winds and the rain have worked the bluffs into curious shapes, the voyageurs have given names according to some facial resemblance. One of these is called the *Court-house*, we passed about six miles from our encampment of last night, and towards noon came in sight of the celebrated *Chimney rock*. It looks, at this distance of thirty miles, like what it is called—the long chimney of a steam factory establishment, or a shot-tower in Baltimore. Nothing occurred to interrupt the quiet of the day, and we encamped on the river, after a march of twenty-four miles. Buffalo had become very scarce, and but one cow had been killed, of which the meat had been cut into thin slices, and hung around the carts to dry.

July 10.—We continued along the same fine plainly beaten road, which the smooth surface of the country afforded us, for a distance of six hundred and thirty miles, from the frontiers of Missouri to the Laramie fork. In the course of the day we met some whites, who were following along the train of Mr. Bridger; and, after a day's journey of twenty four miles encamped about sunset at the Chimney rock, of which the annexed drawing will render any description unnecessary. It consists of marl and earthy limestone, and the weather is rapidly diminishing its height, which is now not more than two hundred feet above the river. Travellers who visited it some years since placed its height at upwards of five hundred feet.

July 11.—The valley of the North Fork is of a variable breadth, from one to four, and sometimes six miles. Fifteen miles from Chimney rock we reached one of those places where the river strikes the bluffs, and forces the road to make a considerable circuit over the uplands. This presented an escarpment on the river of about nine hundred yards in length, and is familiarly known as Scott's Bluff. We have

made a journey of thirty miles before we again struck the river, at a place where some scanty grass afforded insufficient pasturage to our animals. About twenty miles from Chimney rock we had found a very beautiful spring of excellent and cold water; but it was in such a deep ravine and, so small, that the animals could not profit by it, and we therefore halted only a few minutes, and found a resting-place ten miles further on. The plain between Scott's bluffs and Chimney rock almost entirely covered with drift-wood, consisting principally of cedar, which, we were informed, had been supplied from the Black hills, in a flood of five or six years since.

Perhaps the most famous of the guidebooks available to the Mormons and other emigrants was Lansford Hastings's *The Emigrants' Guide to Oregon and California*, which was written in 1844 and published in Ohio in 1845. Hastings had originally gone to Oregon, became dissatisfied and then decided his fortune could best be made in California. It was in his guidebook that his infamous cutoff—the short cut to California by turning southwest from Fort Bridger to California—was recommended. The guide, like Frémont's reports, had been reprinted in many of the newspapers available to the Mormon and non-Mormon emigrants starting in 1845. It was also brought along and referred to on the journey to Salt Lake. Unlike Frémont's report, Hastings's guide provided only very general information about specific sections of the trail. However, a waybill handwritten by Hastings specifically for the Mormons was more useful. The waybill described the route east from Johnson's settlement in California back along the cutoff to Fort Bridger. It was sent along with the hand-drawn map of the general route from Fort Bridger across the Wasatch Mountains and Salt Lake Desert which Hastings appears to have considered the most difficult portion of his new cutoff to California. This map was the one included earlier. Here is Hastings's waybill (Korns and Morgan, *West From Fort Bridger*).

**HASTINGS'S WAYBILL**  
**ROUTE FROM MR. JOHNSON'S SETTLEMENT—**  
**CALIFORNIA TO BRIDGER'S FORT, AS PER MR.**  
**HASTINGS ACCOUNT**

From Johnson's to Bear River Valley, 60 miles—thence to Trucker's Lake, on the other side of the mountains 40—thence down Trucky River 60—thence to the sink of Mary's River 40—thence up and along Mary's River, 250—to the forks of the Road—thence taking the right hand road, up the South Fork of Mary's River 15—Thence up a branch of the South Fork 8—thence to a sink of a small creek 7—thence up the said creek to the point where the road leaves it 5 miles—thence

through a pass in the mountain 12—thence along the foot of the mountain passing numerous springs 30, to a point where the road leaves the foot of the mountain—thence 20 miles over the plain and hills to a Spring—thence 10 miles to a Spring—thence 9 miles to a Spring—thence 12 miles to a Spring—thence 25 miles to a Spring—thence 4 or 5 miles along the foot of the mountain, passing several Springs to a Spring, and a large encampment, at the west side of a Salt Plain—thence over the Salt Plain 55 miles to a Spring—thence 6 miles to a Spring—thence along and around the foot of the mountain passing numerous Springs on the West side 20 miles to a Spring on the East side—Thence keeping to the right hand road, along the foot of the mountain passing several Springs. Then bearing to the left, across the plain 20 miles, to the point of the mountain at the Salt Lake. Thence passing several Springs, and keeping [to] the right hand road, 12 miles to the Eutaw Outlet—Thence over the mountains 12 miles. Thence down a small Creek, and bearing to the right over the hills 15 miles to Weber's River—Thence up Weber River 7 miles—Thence up the Red Fork 40 miles—Thence keeping to the left hand road 25 miles to Bear River—Thence 25 miles to Bridger's Fort, on Black's Fork of Green River.

Hastings's guide, like many of the other guidebooks produced, included a list of items emigrants needed in order to outfit properly for their journey west. By 1845, a year after Joseph Smith's death, the Mormons were already preparing to leave Nauvoo because of deteriorating relations with the non-Mormons in the area. Included here is the Bill of Particulars, which was originally published in 1845 in preparation for the Mormon migration which was to leave Nauvoo in 1846. Initially, the Mormons hoped to complete their journey west in one year. However, as it turned out, the Mormon migration from Nauvoo advanced only as far as the Indian territory across the Missouri River from the Council Bluffs area. Their journey across Iowa was much more difficult than they had expected. They were forced to halt and to establish what became known as Winter Quarters on the west bank of the Missouri River and make preparations for the coming winter. This listing of items that the Mormons were recommended to pack for their journey appeared in the October 29, 1845 *Nauvoo Neighbor*.

While the Mormons did not have one guidebook for their 1847 journey, a decision was made to carefully record their progress and prepare a detailed guidebook for the Mormons who were to follow later. The task of keeping accurate records and preparing a guidebook was given to William Clayton. He served as "Clerk of the Camp of Israel" when the first Mormons left Nauvoo and traveled to their Winter Quarters. When the

## BILL OF PARTICULARS

FOR THE EMIGRANTS LEAVING THIS GOVERNMENT NEXT SPRING.

Each family consisting of five persons, to be provided with

<p>1 good strong wagon, well covered with a light box.</p> <p>2 or 3 good yoke of oxen between the age of 4 and 10 years.</p> <p>2 or more milch cows.</p> <p>1 or more good beeves.</p> <p>3 sheep if they can be obtained.</p> <p>1000 lbs. of flour or other bread or bread stuffs in good sacks.</p> <p>1 good musket or rifle to each male over the age of 12 years.</p> <p>1 lb. Powder,</p> <p>4 do Lead,</p> <p>1 do Tea,</p> <p>5 do Coffee.</p> <p>100 do Sugar,</p> <p>4 do Cayenne Pepper,</p> <p>2 do Black do,</p> <p>½ do Mustard,</p> <p>10 do Rice for each family.</p> <p>1 do Cinnamon,</p> <p>¼ do Cloves,</p> <p>1 doz Nutmegs,</p> <p>25 lbs Salt,</p> <p>5 do Saleratus,</p> <p>10 do Dried apples.</p> <p>¼ bush. of Beans.</p> <p>A few lbs of dried Beef or Bacon.</p> <p>5 lbs dried Peaches,</p> <p>20 do do Pumpkin,</p>	<p>25 do Seed grain,</p> <p>1 gal. Alcohol,</p> <p>20 lbs of Soap each family,</p> <p>4 or 5 Fish hooks and lines for do.</p> <p>15 lbs. Iron and Steel.</p> <p>A few lbs of wrought nails,</p> <p>One or more sets of saw or grist mill Irons to company of 100 families,</p> <p>2 sets of Pully Blocks and ropes to each co'y for crossing rivers,</p> <p>1 good Seine and hook for each company,</p> <p>From 25 to 100 lbs of Farming &amp; mechanical tools,</p> <p>Cooking utensils to consist of a Bake kettle, frying pan, coffee pot, &amp; tea kettle;</p> <p>Tin cups, plates, knives forks, spoons, &amp; pans as few as will do.</p> <p>A good tent and furniture to each 2 families.</p> <p>Clothing &amp; bedding to each family not to exceed 500 pounds.</p> <p>Ten extra teams for each company of 100 families.</p>
---	---

N. B. In addition to the above list, horse and mule teams, can be used as well as oxen. Many items of comfort and convenience will suggest themselves to a wise and provident people, and can be laid in in season; but none should start without filling the original bill.

BILL OF PARTICULARS—LDS Archives  
(Note: On the listing, "do" means "ditto.")

PROMINENT POINTS AND REMARKS.	Dist. miles.	From W. Qua. miles.	From Cof G S L miles.
Duck-weed creek, 10 feet wide. - - - Abundance of food, cold spring water, Oct. 1, 1847.	2	346½	684½
Shoal stream, 3 feet wide. - - - Dry, October 1, 1847.	2	348½	682½
Rattlesnake creek, 20 feet wide, 1½ ft. deep. Swift current, sandy bottom, but not bad to cross.	3½	352½	678½
Cedar Bluffs. - - - On the south side the river. Lat. 41° 17' 44" Long 101° 52'	1½	354	677
Creek, six feet wide. - - - Water plenty, September 30, 1847. Land, in this neigh- torhood, sandy.	5	359	672
Creek, four feet wide. - - - Plenty of water, September 30, 1847.	½	359½	671½
Crooked Creek, five feet wide. - - - Plenty of water, September 30, 1847.	½	359½	671½
Camp Creek, eight feet wide. - - - Two creeks here, about the same size, but a few rods apart—water cold and plenty, September 30, 1847. No doubt they rise from springs.	4	363½	667½
Creek, three feet wide. - - - Plenty of water, May 20, but dry, September 30, 1847	4	367½	663½
Pond Creek, four feet wide. - - - Dry, September 30, near the river, but farther north many ponds and tall grass.	½	368	663
Wolf Creek, 20 feet wide. - - - At the east foot of Sandy Bluffs, which are bad to cross, you will probably have to double teams, if heavy loaded.	1½	369½	661½
Sandy Bluffs, west foot. - - - Two hundred yard further, is a creek five feet wide.	2	370½	660½
Watch Creek, 8 feet wide, and 2 feet deep. After this, the road runs pretty near the river banks to avoid some swamps near the bluffs.	3½	373½	657½
"Lone Tree," north side the river. - About three hundred yards south from the road.	4½	378	653
Ash Hollow, south side the river. - So named from a grove of Ash timber growing on it. It occupies a space of about fifteen or twenty acres, and is surrounded by high bluffs.	2½	380½	650½
Castle Creek, 6 rods wide, 2 feet deep. Swift current, quick sand bottom, water muddy. Low banks, but not good to cross, on account of quick sands.	3	383½	647½
Castle Bluffs, south side the river. - You cross no more creeks of water until you arrive at Crab creek, twenty-five and a half miles from here. The road good, except in one place, where you traverse three fourths of a mile over sand.	4½	388	643
Sand Hill creek, 12 feet wide, south side the road. - - - Near some sandy mounds, on the north side the road	2	388½	642½
Creek or slough. - - - Dry	1½	390½	640½
Creek or slough. - - - Dry	7½	397½	633½
Sandy Bluffs, east foot. - - -	3	400½	630½

PROMINENT POINTS AND REMARKS.	Dist. miles.	From W. Qua. miles.	From Co of G. S. L. miles.
Sandy Bluffs, west foot. - - -	1	401½	629½
Dry creek. - - - - -	½	401½	629½
Dry do. - - - - -	½	402½	628½
Dry creek, 30 feet wide. - - -	4	406½	624½
The road runs near the river, from here to Crab creek.			
Crab Creek, 20 feet wide, very shoal. -	3	409½	621½
Two miles further you will see some high bluffs on the right. By ascending one of the highest you will see Chimney Rock, to the west.			
Small lake, south of the road. - -	1½	410½	620½
Good chance to camp, without turning from the road.			
Cobble Hills, east foot. - - -	5	415½	615½
You cross three dry creeks before you arrive here and then you travel over another range of sandy bluffs— ascent pretty steep, but not very sandy.			
Cobble Hills, west foot. - - -	2½	417½	613½
After you descend on the low land, you will find it mostly sandy for ten miles, and in some places very heavy drawing.			
"Ancient Bluff Ruins," north side the road.			
Latitude 41° 33' 3". - - -	1½	419	612
Resembling the ruins of ancient castles, fortifications, &c.; but visitors must be cautious, on account of the many rattle-snakes lurking round, and concealed in the clefts of the bluffs.			
R. and R., road joins the river. - -	10½	429½	601½
Good place to camp. After this, the road runs near the river, until you arrive at the next low sandy ridges.			
Low sandy bluffs, east foot. - - -	7½	437	594
Low sandy bluffs, west foot. - - -	1	438	593
After this, the land for several miles, is soft in wet weather, but good traveling in dry weather.			
"Chimney Rock," (meridian) south side the river. - - - - -	14½	452½	578½
The higher land now begins to be sandy and barren. Many Prickly pears and Wild Sage, which continue mostly through the remainder of the journey.			
Scott's Bluffs, (mer.) south side the river.	19½	472	559
The road here is near enough to the river to camp. Lat. of meridian 41° 54' 32"; Long. 103° 29'.			
Spring Creek, 10 feet wide, 8 inches deep.	4	476	555
South of the road. You do not cross it, but travel half a mile alongside. Good water, and many trout in it.			
R. and R., road runs near the river. -	12½	488½	542½
Good chance to camp.			
Low sandy bluffs, north side the road. -	2½	491½	539½
You travel at the foot of these bluffs, but will find the road sandy and heavy on teams.			
Creek, about 200 yards south of road. -	2	493½	537½
By ascending one of the highest bluffs near, you have a view of the Snake Peak, in the Black Hills.			
Timber, north side the river. - - -	11½	504½	526½
Road here about a quarter of a mile from the river— after it a goodly stream from one to two miles distant. The road to L. is mostly very sandy.			
"Raw Hide" creek, 1 rod wide. : -	5½	510	521
L. dry of water, June 1st, but dry, Sept. 15, 1847.			



vanguard company of Mormons left their Winter Quarters on April 15, 1847, he was appointed to assist Thomas Bullock, the official clerk, in keeping a detailed record of their journey and daily progress. Within a few days it became evident that they needed a precise method for measuring the distance traveled. First, he tried estimation; then he tried counting wheel revolutions; and finally he used a "roadometer," a mechanical device that counted wheel revolutions to measure distance. It was jointly developed by Clayton, Orson Pratt, and Appleton Harmon. The device was installed on May 12 and from then on his records were extremely accurate. After he arrived in Salt Lake Valley, he was assigned to prepare a table of distances between Salt Lake and Winter Quarters and a map to complement it. He started on his return trip and again measured and recorded information which he used in his guidebook. Five thousand copies of his guide, *The Latter-Day Saints Emigrants' Guide*, were initially printed. It was an instant success. Not only was it in demand by Mormons, but non-Mormons also used it, and even other authors of guidebooks "freely" copied sections of his book and incorporated them into their own guidebooks. Two pages of Clayton's guide are included here. Note the milepost approach and detail. There is no evidence, however, that he prepared a corresponding map.

These two pages from Clayton's guide correspond to the section of the journey described in the diary section and also shown on the Frémont Section Maps. Ash Hollow is at mile 380 3/4 from Winter Quarters and Scotts Bluff is at mile 472.

In later years Mormon wagon companies did not always follow the same route. As a result they often relied on other guidebooks besides Clayton's. Hosea Horn's guide was used by Frederick Piercy in 1853. Horn's guide started at Council Bluffs, followed the north side of the river until reaching Fort Laramie, where it crossed over to the south side. Piercy, however, followed the north side of the Platte River all the way to central Wyoming, never crossing to the south side near Fort Laramie. This route has often been called Chiles's Route. On his way back, however, Piercy did travel on the south side.