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Mormon Trail, The

William Hill

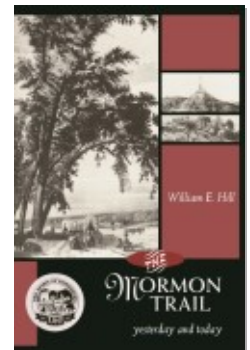
Published by Utah State University Press

Hill, William.

Mormon Trail, The: Yesterday and Today.

Utah State University Press, 1996.

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Pictorial Journey

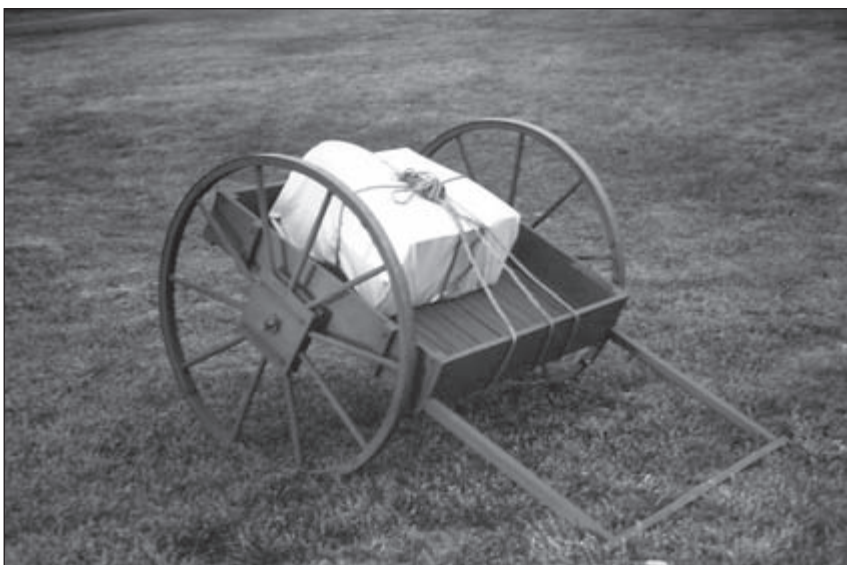
COME NOW AND FOLLOW ALONG ON A PICTORIAL JOURNEY WEST ON THE Mormon Trail to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake. View the journey through the art of early emigrants that captured their journey. See not only the major landmarks, but many minor sites and historic places. Then compare the sites they recorded with those of today as photographed by the author. Relive the experience and journey with them.



WAGON—Reproduction Today

Most Mormon emigrants used one of two major methods of transportation on the journey to Salt Lake City. Wagons pulled by oxen were used by the first wave of Mormons in 1847. Mules and horses were also used. In the 1860s, the “down and back” wagon companies organized by the Mormon Church were also pulled

by oxen. The other method employed by many was the use of handcarts. Above and below are reproductions of the two major means used by the Mormon emigrants, the emigrant wagon and the handcart. The handcart was extensively used during the mid-1850s.



HANDCART—Reproduction Today



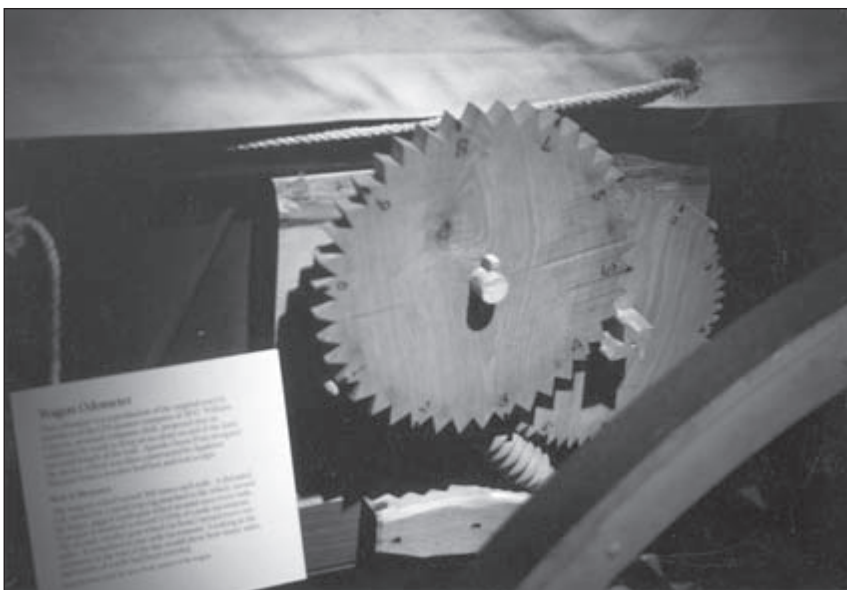
EMIGRANT & HIS WAGON—Nebraska State Historical Society

This old photo shows an emigrant at rest next to his wagon. Below is a recent photograph of the author next to his mode of transportation. As the emigrants used their wagons for their homes

on wheels, so did the author and his family use their vehicle while researching the Mormon Trail.



AUTHOR AND CAR—Today



ROADOMETER—Reproduction Today

A major concern of the emigrants heading west was determining how far they had traveled. Below is a model of a roadometer, developed and used by the Mormons. A variety of models existed at the time. This one is on display at the LDS Church Museum at Salt Lake City.

Death was a common occurrence along the trail, yet very few Mormon graves have been identified. Just east of Scotts Bluff, Nebraska is the grave of Rebecca Winters. She died of cholera on August 15, 1852. Her grave was marked

by a bent iron wagon tire. Her long forgotten grave was rediscovered years ago when workers were laying track. The Burlington Railroad resurveyed the route and moved the track a few feet south allowing the gravesite to remain undisturbed until recently. Her grave has now been moved a few hundred feet east to a small park still near the railroad tracks but in a place safer for travelers to view. This photo shows the grave in its original location just before it was relocated.



REBECCA WINTERS'S GRAVE—Today



**PRAIRIE STORM—Jackson, National Park Service,
Scotts Bluff National Monument**

One of the many dangers facing emigrants on their journey west was the occurrence of violent prairie storms. The thunder and lightning could scare the stock. The rain and hail could tear tents and wagon canvas. Streams and rivers could flood, making crossing them difficult or even forcing emigrants to wait a day or more for the levels to drop to allow safe fording. The road could be heavy with mud, causing the wagons and animals to become stuck. William Henry Jackson encountered a Mormon company enduring a terrible storm in eastern Nebraska in 1866. His depiction of this event is above.

On the other extreme was the terrible dust that wagon and emigrants had to endure. They complained about the dust being in their eyes, mouth, food, and every place imaginable. Below is a photo of the dust that was kicked up on a recent four-wheel drive outing along the Oregon-California Trails Association along the Hastings Cutoff and Mormon Trail west of Fort Bridger. Even after washing and vacuuming the author's car three times, some of the dust still remained in it.



DUST ON THE TRAIL—Today



PAWNEE CAMP—Jackson, Smithsonian Institution Photo #1249

The Mormons usually were on very good terms with the Indians. Their Winter Quarters were built on Indian lands. One of the tribes living in eastern Nebraska along the Platte and Loup rivers was the Pawnee. Jackson took this photo of the Pawnee camp on the Loup River. Many emigrants mentioned seeing and visiting abandoned Pawnee camps. In 1847 Patty Sessions wrote in her diary “we pass the Pawnee village to day it has been burnt by the Sues [Sioux].”

As the emigrants neared and then crossed the South Pass one of the Indian tribes encountered was the Shoshone. The Jackson photo below shows Chief Washakie’s camp near the South Pass. The Shoshone were very helpful to most of the emigrants crossing the plains. It appears that Mormon emigrants tended to have less trouble with the Indians than other emigrants.



SHOSHONE CAMP—Jackson, Smithsonian Institution Photo #1667