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Mormon Trail, The

William Hill

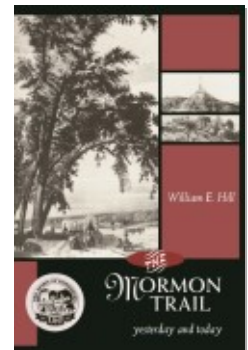
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Iowa



CAMP AT KEOKUK—From Piercy's *Route from Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley*

The Mormons with whom Piercy was traveling started their overland journey from Keokuk, Iowa, about twelve miles south-southwest of Nauvoo. Describing the Mormon camp he wrote, "I sallied out in search of the camp, which, after climbing a steep bluff on the edge of the River, I found most picturesquely situated on the top of a hill,...commanding a view of the country for miles around....The emigrants from each nation had wisely been placed

together, and those who crossed the sea together were still associated as neighbours in Camp....Before leaving I made the accompanying sketch of the Camp.

Today Keokuk has grown and expanded over the area. Fine homes and a park stand where wagons once gathered and tents stood. This view shows a modern road that climbs the steep bluff at the edge of the river and follows the crest of the hill as shown in the sketch.



KEOKUK—Today



MT. PISGAH, IOWA—Hansen, LDS Church Archives

Peter Hansen made this drawing of the camp at Mt. Pisgah in 1846. This was the second of the major way stations set up by the Mormons on their exodus from Nauvoo. Garden Grove, farther east, was the first one developed. Small towns grew up at each location. They provided food and shelter for the emigrating Mormons. Mt. Pisgah was used by the Mormons from 1846-1852.

Here is a similar view of the area today. On the hill sloping from the left to the right are faint traces of what some think are remnants of one of the routes down the hill to the valley. There is a small park and a monument in the nearby cemetery with a sign commemorating the role this community played in the Mormon migrations.



MT. PISGAH—Today



PREPARING HANDCARTS—Spiegle, LDS Church Archives

Just west of Iowa City is Coralville. This was the site used by the Mormon handcart companies to outfit themselves after they disembarked from the trains that had brought them west. This engraving shows the Mormons hard at work building their handcarts. Today there is a small

park in the area with different displays. One tells the story of the handcarts. Others deal with the geography of the site and the deaths that occurred. You can walk quietly through the area and imagine the sounds of all the emigrants working to prepare for the start of their journey.



HANDCART PARK—Today



FORT DES MOINES—Today

Farther west the Mormon handcart companies had to cross the Des Moines River. A number of the emigrants recorded seeing parts of old abandoned Fort Des Moines. Today this is all that is left. It is located next to the river near the crossing area.

Garden Grove was the site of the first way station built on April 25, 1846 after leaving Nauvoo. Very little archaeological work has been done here. Only recently has Garden Grove begun to receive the attention it deserves.



GARDEN GROVE—Today



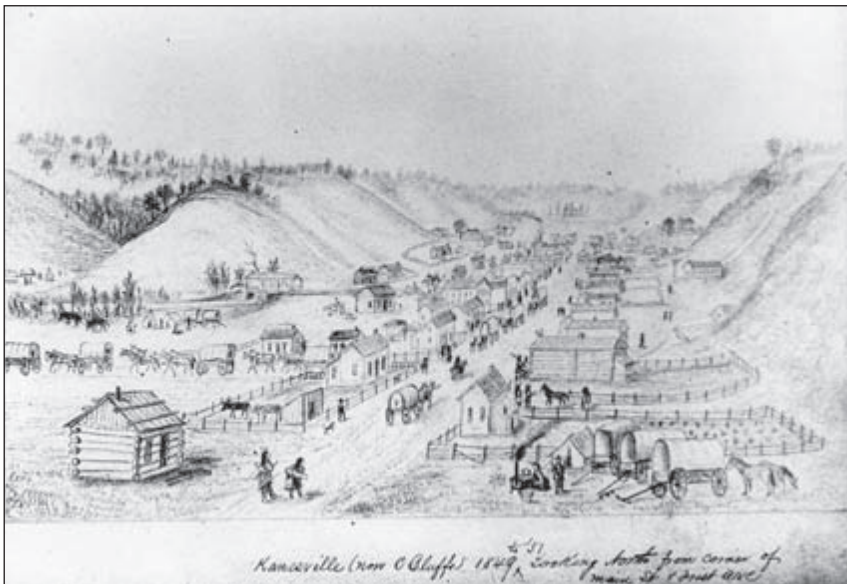
**MORMON CAMP NEAR PARK'S MILL—
Simons, Western Heritage Museum**

There are very few illustrations of the Mormons crossing Iowa. Piercy did not travel with the Mormons once they left Keokuk. However, in the 1850s George Simons sketched and later painted a Mormon camp on Mosquito Creek just east of Council Bluffs (Kanesville) near the present-day Iowa School for the Deaf.

Today there is a marker and small display in the area on land adjacent to the Iowa School for the Deaf near the intersection of highway 92 and US 275. This view is not from the marker but from the old railroad right-of-way west of the display. This whole area was used by the Mormons as a camping ground.



MOSQUITO CREEK—Today



**COUNCIL BLUFFS—Simons, Collections:
Council Bluffs Public Library**

This Simons sketch of Kanesville (Council Bluffs) was made around 1849, a few years before Piercy made his drawing of the area. This view is looking north. The Mormons had begun to settle in this area, which they first

called Miller's Hollow, in June of 1846 before crossing the Missouri a few miles farther up river, where they established Winter Quarters on the other side.



COUNCIL BLUFFS—Today

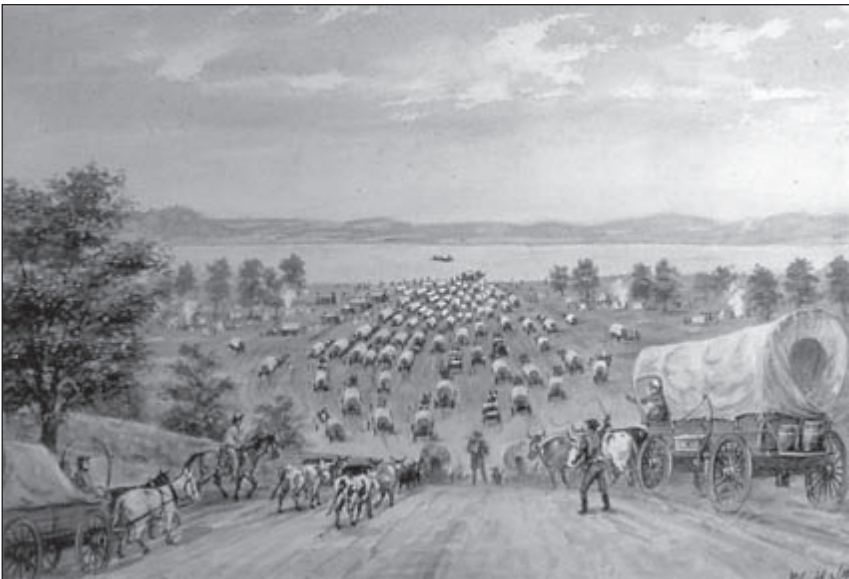


ENTRANCE TO KANESVILLE—Piercy, LDS Church Archives

After leaving Nauvoo and Keokuk, Piercy returned along the Mississippi River to St. Louis and then took a riverboat up the Missouri River to St. Joseph, Missouri. There he started overland to rejoin the Mormons in Kanesville. This is how Kanesville (Council Bluffs) looked as Piercy approached it.

Jackson made the painting below showing the tremendous bottleneck that occurred at

major river crossings such as at Kanesville. This is probably the middle or lower ferry crossing. Some emigrants reported waiting at Kanesville as long as ten days before it was their turn to cross. Soon a number of ferries were in operation in the area of Council Bluffs, but they were not always reliable. Today the I-480 bridge over the Missouri River makes it possible to cross in only a few minutes.



KANESVILLE CROSSING—Jackson, National Park Service, Scotts Bluff National Monument



MORMON FERRY (Iowa side)—Piercy, LDS Church Archives

Piercy made this drawing of the Mormon Ferry, or upper ferry. It shows the view looking west across the Missouri River. His sketch shows a calm and peaceful setting, very different from Jackson's painting. Look just above

and to the left of the two waiting wagons and you will see two wagons across the river climbing a hill. That was the location of the Winter Quarters, which was abandoned by the time Piercy arrived.