

= Mormon Trail =

The Mormon Trail or Mormon Pioneer Trail is the 1 @, @ 300 @-@ mile (2 @, @ 092 km) route that members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter @-@ day Saints traveled from 1846 to 1868 . Today , the Mormon Trail is a part of the United States National Trails System , known as the Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail .

The Mormon Trail extends from Nauvoo , Illinois , which was the principal settlement of the Latter Day Saints from 1839 to 1846 , to Salt Lake City , Utah , which was settled by Brigham Young and his followers beginning in 1847 . From Council Bluffs , Iowa to Fort Bridger in Wyoming , the trail follows much the same route as the Oregon Trail and the California Trail ; these trails are collectively known as the Emigrant Trail .

The Mormon pioneer run began in 1846 , when Young and his followers were driven from Nauvoo . After leaving , they aimed to establish a new home for the church in the Great Basin and crossed Iowa . Along their way , some were assigned to establish settlements and to plant and harvest crops for later emigrants . During the winter of 1846 ? 47 , the emigrants wintered in Iowa , other nearby states , and the unorganized territory that later became Nebraska , with the largest group residing in Winter Quarters , Nebraska . In the spring of 1847 , Young led the vanguard company to the Salt Lake Valley , which was then outside the boundaries of the United States and later became Utah .

During the first few years , the emigrants were mostly former occupants of Nauvoo who were following Young to Utah . Later , the emigrants increasingly comprised converts from the British Isles and Europe .

The trail was used for more than 20 years , until the completion of the First Transcontinental Railroad in 1869 . Among the emigrants were the Mormon handcart pioneers of 1856 ? 60 . Two of the handcart companies , led by James G. Willie and Edward Martin , met disaster on the trail when they departed late and were caught by heavy snowstorms in Wyoming .

= = Background = =

Under the leadership of Joseph Smith , Latter Day Saints established several communities throughout the United States between 1830 and 1844 , most notably in Kirtland , Ohio ; Independence , Missouri ; and Nauvoo . However , the Saints were driven out of each of them in turn , (lacking citation , or source) due to conflicts with other settlers (see History of the Latter Day Saint movement) . This included the actions of Governor Lilburn Boggs , who issued Missouri Executive Order 44 , which called for the " extermination " of all Mormons in Missouri . The Latter @-@ day Saints were finally forced to abandon Nauvoo in 1846 .

Although the movement had split into several denominations after Smith 's death in 1844 , most members aligned themselves with Brigham Young and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter @-@ day Saints (LDS) . Under Young 's leadership , about 14 @, @ 000 Mormon citizens of Nauvoo set out to find a new home in the West .

= = The Trek West = =

As the senior apostle of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles after Joseph Smith 's death , Brigham Young assumed responsibility of the leadership of the church . He would later be sustained as President of the Church and prophet .

Young now had to lead the Saints into the far west , without knowing exactly where to go or where they would end up . He insisted the Mormons should settle in a place no one else wanted and felt the isolated Great Basin would provide the Saints with many advantages .

Young reviewed information on the Great Salt Lake Valley and the Great Basin , consulted with mountain men and trappers , and met with Father Pierre @-@ Jean De Smet , a Jesuit missionary familiar with the region . Young also organized a vanguard company to break trail to the Rocky Mountains , evaluate trail conditions , find sources of water , and select a central gathering point in the Great Basin . A new route on the north side of the Platte and North Platte rivers was chosen to

avoid potential conflicts over grazing rights , water access , and campsites with travelers using the established Oregon Trail on the river ? s south side .

The Quincy Convention of October 1845 passed resolutions demanding that the Latter @-@ day Saints withdraw from Nauvoo by May 1846 . A few days later , the Carthage Convention called for establishment of a militia that would force them out if they failed to meet the May deadline . To try to meet this deadline and to get an early start on the trek to the Great Basin , the Latter @-@ day Saints began leaving Nauvoo in February 1846 .

= = = Trek of 1846 = = =

The departure from Nauvoo began on February 4 , 1846 , under the leadership of Brigham Young . This early departure exposed them to the elements in the worst of winter . After crossing the Mississippi River , the journey across Iowa Territory followed primitive territorial roads and Native American trails .

Young originally planned to lead an express company of about 300 men to the Great Basin during the summer of 1846 . He believed they could cross Iowa and reach the Missouri River in four to six weeks . However , the actual trip across Iowa was slowed by rain , mud , swollen rivers , and poor preparation , and it required 16 weeks ? nearly three times longer than planned .

Heavy rains turned the rolling plains of southern Iowa into a quagmire of axle @-@ deep mud . Furthermore , few people carried adequate provisions for the trip . The weather , general unpreparedness , and lack of experience in moving such a large group of people all contributed to the difficulties they endured .

The initial party reached the Missouri River on June 14 . It was apparent that the Latter @-@ day Saints could not make it to the Great Basin that season and would have to winter on the Missouri River ..

Some of the emigrants established a settlement called Kaneshville on the Iowa side of the river . Others moved across the river into the area of present @-@ day Omaha , Nebraska , and built a camp called Winter Quarters .

= = = The Vanguard Company of 1847 = = =

In April 1847 , chosen members of the vanguard company gathered , final supplies were packed , and the group was organized into 14 military companies . A militia and night guard were formed . The company consisted of 143 men , including three blacks and eight members of the Quorum of the Twelve , three women , and two children . The train contained 73 wagons , draft animals , and livestock , and carried enough supplies to provision the group for one year . On April 5 , the wagon train moved west from Winter Quarters toward the Great Basin .

The journey from Winter Quarters to Fort Laramie took six weeks ; the company arrived at the fort on June 1 . While at Fort Laramie , the vanguard company was joined by members of the Mormon Battalion , who had been excused due to illness and sent to winter in Pueblo , Colorado , and a group of Church members from Mississippi . At this point , the now larger company took the established Oregon Trail toward the trading post at Fort Bridger .

Young met mountain man Jim Bridger on June 28 . They discussed routes into the Salt Lake Valley and the feasibility of viable settlements in the mountain valleys of the Great Basin . The company pushed on through South Pass , rafted across the Green River , and arrived at Fort Bridger on July 7 . About the same time , they were joined by 12 more members of the sick detachment of the Mormon Battalion .

Now facing a more rugged and hazardous trek , Young chose to follow the trail used by the Donner ? Reed party on their journey to California the previous year . As the vanguard company traveled through the rugged mountains , they divided into three sections . Young and several other members of the party suffered from a fever , generally accepted as a ? mountain fever ? induced by wood ticks . The small sick detachment lagged behind the larger group , and a scouting division was created to move farther ahead on the designated route .

Scouts Erastus Snow and Orson Pratt entered the Salt Lake Valley on July 21 . On July 23 , Pratt offered a prayer dedicating the land to the Lord . Ground was broken , irrigation ditches were dug , and the first fields of potatoes and turnips were planted . On July 24 , Young first saw the valley from a ? sick ? wagon driven by his friend Wilford Woodruff . According to Woodruff , Young expressed his satisfaction in the appearance of the valley and declared , " This is the right place , drive on . "

In August 1847 , Young and selected members of the vanguard company returned to Winter Quarters to organize the companies scheduled for following years . By December 1847 , more than 2 @, @ 000 Mormons had completed the journey to the Salt Lake Valley , then in Mexican territory .

Farming the uncultivated land was initially difficult , as the shares broke when they tried to plow the dry ground . Therefore , an irrigation system was designed and the land was flooded before plowing , and the resulting system provided supplemental moisture during the year .

Salt Lake City was laid out and designated as Church headquarters . Hard work produced a prosperous community . In their new settlement , entertainment was also important , and the first public building was a theater .

It did not take long , however , until the United States caught up with them , and in 1848 , after the end of the war with Mexico , the land in which they settled became part of the United States .

= = = Ongoing migration = = =

Each year during the Mormon migration , people continued to be organized into " companies " , each company bearing the name of its leader and subdivided into groups of 10 and 50 . The Saints traveled the trail broken by the vanguard company , splitting the journey into two sections . The first segment began in Nauvoo and ended in Winter Quarters , near modern @-@ day Omaha , Nebraska . The second half of the journey took the Saints through the area that later became Nebraska and Wyoming , before finishing their journey in the Salt Lake Valley in present @-@ day Utah . The earlier groups used covered wagons pulled by oxen to carry their supplies across the country . Some later companies used handcarts and traveled by foot .

By 1849 , many of the Latter @-@ day Saints who remained in Iowa or Missouri were poor and unable to afford the costs of the wagon , teams of oxen , and supplies that would be required for the trip . Therefore , the LDS Church established a revolving fund , known as the Perpetual Emigration Fund , to enable the poor to emigrate . By 1852 , most of the Latter @-@ day Saints from Nauvoo who wished to emigrate had done so , and the church abandoned its settlements in Iowa . However , many church members from the eastern states and from Europe continued to emigrate to Utah , often assisted by the Perpetual Emigration Fund .

= = = Handcarts : 1856 ? 60 = = =

In 1856 , the church inaugurated a system of handcart companies in order to enable poor European emigrants to make the trek more cheaply . Handcarts , two @-@ wheeled carts that were pulled by emigrants instead of draft animals , were sometimes used as an alternate means of transportation from 1856 to 1860 . They were seen as a faster , easier , and cheaper way to bring European converts to Salt Lake City . Almost 3 @, @ 000 Mormons , with 653 carts and 50 supply wagons , traveling in 10 different companies , made the trip over the trail to Salt Lake City . While not the first to use handcarts , they were the only group to use them extensively .

The handcarts were modeled after carts used by street sweepers and were made almost entirely of wood . They were generally six to seven feet (183 to 213 cm) long , wide enough to span a narrow wagon track , and could be alternately pushed or pulled . The small boxes affixed to the carts were three to four feet (91 to 122 cm) long and eight inches (20 cm) high . They could carry about 500 pounds (227 kg) , most of this weight consisting of trail provisions and a few personal possessions .

All but two of the handcart companies successfully completed the rugged journey , with relatively few problems and only a few deaths . However , the fourth and fifth companies , known as the Willie and Martin Companies , respectively , had serious problems . The companies left Iowa City , Iowa ,

in July 1856 , very late to begin the trip across the plains . They met severe winter weather west of present @-@ day Casper , Wyoming , and continued to cope with deep snow and storms for the remainder of the journey . Food supplies were soon exhausted . Young organized a rescue effort that brought the companies in , but more than 210 of the 980 emigrants in the two parties died .

The handcart companies continued with more success until 1860 , and traditional ox @-@ and @-@ wagon companies also continued for those who could afford the higher cost . After 1860 , the church began sending wagon companies east each spring , to return to Utah in the summer with the emigrating Latter @-@ day Saints . Finally , with the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869 , future emigrants were able to travel by rail , and the era of the Mormon pioneer trail came to an end .

= = Sites along the trail = =

The following are major points along the trail at which the early Mormon pioneers stopped , established temporary camps , or used as landmarks and meeting places . The sites are categorized by their location in respect to modern @-@ day US states .

= = = Illinois = = =

Nauvoo ? Nauvoo was the starting point for the Mormon trail and the early home base for LDS migrants . They left because they were treated poorly by those whom lived there . Brigham Young took a group of people through Illinois to Utah , the non part of the United States

= = = Iowa = = =

Sugar Creek (7 miles (11 km) west of Nauvoo) ? Beginning with their first ferry crossing of the Mississippi River on February 4 , 1846 , months before many of them were ready , the Latter @-@ day Saints started gathering at the frozen banks of Sugar Creek . More refugees continued to cross into Iowa for a number of months many taking advantage of the freezing of the Mississippi river a few weeks later . The poorly prepared emigrants suffered from severe winter weather while camped there . Sugar Creek was the staging area for the westward trek across Iowa . Ultimately about 2 @, @ 500 refugees and 500 wagons started west on March 1 , 1846 . Several thousand more would follow on later as they sold their property for what they could get and continued to leave Nauvoo , Illinois .

Richardson 's Point (35 miles (56 km) west) ? The emigrants made their way past Croton and Farmington to ford the Des Moines River at Bonaparte . In early March 1846 the party was halted for 10 days by heavy rain at a wooded area known as Richardson 's Point . Some of the first deaths of the pioneers occurred at this location .

Chariton River Crossing (80 miles (129 km) west) ? The trail continues past the modern towns of Troy , Drakesville , and West Grove to reach the Chariton River . At this crossing , on March 27 , Young organized the lead group of the migration , forming three camps of 100 families , each led by a captain . This military @-@ style organization would be used for all subsequent Mormon emigrant companies .

Locust Creek (103 miles (166 km) west) ? The trail proceeds past Cincinnati to Locust Creek . There on April 13 William Clayton , scribe for Brigham Young , composed " Come , Come Ye Saints , " the most famous and enduring hymn from the Mormon Trail .

Garden Grove (128 miles (206 km) west) ? On April 23 the emigrants arrived at the location of their first semi @-@ permanent settlement , which they named Garden Grove . They enclosed and planted 715 acres (2 @. @ 89 km2) to supply food for later emigrants and established a village that is still in existence today . About 600 Latter @-@ day Saints settled at Garden Grove . By 1852 they had moved on to Utah .

Mount Pisgah (153 miles (246 km) west) ? As they entered Potawatomi territory , the emigrants established another semi @-@ permanent settlement that they named Mount Pisgah . Several

thousand acres were cultivated and a settlement of about 700 Latter @-@ day Saints thrived there from 1846 to 1852 . Now the site is marked by a 9 @-@ acre (36 @,@ 000 m2) park , which contains exhibits , historical markers , and a reconstructed log cabin . However , little remains from the 19th century except a cemetery memorializing the 300 to 800 emigrants who died there .

Nishnabotna River Crossing (232 miles (373 km) west) ? From Mount Pisgah the trail proceeds past the modern towns of Orient , Bridgewater , Massena and Lewis . Just west of Lewis , the 1846 emigrants passed a Potawatomi encampment on the Nishnabotna River . The Potawatomis were also refugees ; 1846 was their last year in the area .

Grand Encampment (255 miles (410 km) west) ? From the Nishnabotna River , the trail proceeds past present @-@ day Macedonia to Mosquito Creek on the eastern outskirts of present @-@ day Council Bluffs . The first emigrant company arrived on June 13 , 1846 . At this open area , where the Iowa School for the Deaf is now located , the LDS emigrant companies paused and camped , forming what was called the Grand Encampment . From this site on July 20 , the Mormon Battalion departed for the Mexican @-@ American War .

Kanesville (later Council Bluffs) (265 miles (426 km) west) ? The emigrants established an important settlement and outfitting point at this site on the Missouri River , originally known as Miller 's Hollow . The emigrants renamed the settlement as Kanesville , honoring Thomas L. Kane , a non @-@ LDS attorney who was politically well connected and used his influence to assist the Latter @-@ day Saints . From 1846 to 1852 , it was an important LDS settlement and the outfitting point for companies traveling to present @-@ day Utah . Orson Hyde , an Apostle and ecclesiastical leader of the settlement , published a newspaper called the Frontier Guardian . In 1852 the major LDS settlements at Kanesville , Mount Pisgah , and Garden Grove were closed as the settlers moved on to Utah . After 1852 , however , the Church continued to outfit and supply emigrant companies (mostly LDS converts coming from the British Isles and mainland Europe) at this community , now renamed Council Bluffs , until the mid @-@ 1860s , when the terminus of the First Transcontinental Railroad was extended to the west .

= = = Nebraska = = =

Winter Quarters (266 miles (428 km) west) ? Although Brigham Young had originally planned to travel all the way to the Salt Lake Valley in 1846 , the emigrants ' lack of preparation had become apparent during their difficult crossing of Iowa . Furthermore , the departure of the Mormon Battalion left the emigrants short on manpower . Young decided to settle for the winter along the Missouri River . The emigrants were located on both sides of the river , but their settlement at Winter Quarters on the west side was the largest . There they built 700 dwellings where an estimated 3 @,@ 500 Latter @-@ day Saints spent the winter of 1846 ? 47 ; many would also reside there during the winter of 1847 ? 48 . Conditions such as scurvy , consumption , chills and fever were common ; the settlement recorded 359 deaths between September 1846 and May 1848 . However , while at Winter Quarters the LDS emigrants were able to save or trade for the equipment and supplies that they would need to continue the westward trek . The settlement was later renamed Florence and is now located in Omaha .

Elkhorn River (293 miles (472 km) west)

Platte River (305 miles (491 km) west) ? All emigrants leaving Missouri traveled along the Great Platte River Road for hundreds of miles . There was a prevailing opinion that the North side of the river was healthier , so most Latter @-@ day Saints generally stuck to that side , which also separated them from unpleasant encounters with potential former enemies , like emigrants from Missouri or Illinois . In 1849 , 1850 & 1852 , traffic was so heavy along the Platte that virtually all feed was stripped from both sides of the river . The lack of food and the threat of disease made the journey along the Platte a deadly gamble .

Loup Fork (352 miles (566 km) west) ? Crossing the Loup Fork was , like the Elkhorn , one of the early and very difficult crossings during the trek west from Council Bluffs .

Fort Kearny (469 miles (755 km) west) ? This fort , named after Stephen Watts Kearny , was established in June 1848 . Another fort named after Kearny was established in May 1846 , but was

abandoned in May 1848 . Due to this , the second Fort Kearny is sometimes called New Fort Kearny . The site for the fort was purchased from the Pawnee Indians for \$ 2 @, @ 000 in goods .

Confluence Point (563 miles (906 km) west) ? On May 11 , 1847 , three @-@ fourths of a mile north of the confluence of the North and South Platte Rivers , a " roadometer " was attached to Heber C. Kimball 's wagon driven by Pilo Johnson . Although they did not invent the device , the measurements of the version they used were accurate enough to be used by William Clayton in his famous Latter @-@ day Saints ' Emigrants ' Guide .

Ash Hollow (646 miles (1 @, @ 040 km) west) ? Many passing diarists noted the beauty of Ash Hollow , although this was ruined by thousands of passing emigrants . The Sioux Indians were often on location and were at the site and General William S. Harney 's troops won a battle over the Sioux there in September 1855 ? the Battle of Ash Hollow . The site is also the burial ground of many who died of cholera during the gold rush years .

Chimney Rock (718 miles (1 @, @ 156 km) west) ? Chimney Rock is perhaps the most significant landmark on the Mormon Trail . Emigrants commented in their diaries that the landmark appeared closer than it actually was , and many sketched or painted it in their journals and carved their names into it .

Scotts Bluff (738 miles (1 @, @ 188 km) west) ? Hiram Scott was a Rocky Mountain Fur Company trapper abandoned on the bluff that now bears his name by his companions when he became ill . Accounts of his death are noted by almost all those who kept journals that traveled on the north side of the Platte . The grave of Rebecca Winters , a Latter @-@ day Saint mother who fell victim to cholera in 1852 , is also located near this site , although it has since been moved and rededicated .

= = = Wyoming = = =

Fort Laramie (788 miles (1 @, @ 268 km) west) ? This old trading and military post served as a place for the emigrants to rest and restock provisions . The 1856 Willie Handcart Company was unable to obtain provisions at Fort Laramie , contributing to their subsequent tragedy when they ran out of food while encountering blizzard conditions along the Sweetwater River .

Upper Platte / Mormon Ferry (914 miles (1 @, @ 471 km) west) ? The last crossing of the Platte River took place near modern Casper . For several years the Latter @-@ day Saints operated a commercial ferry at the site , earning revenue from the Oregon- and California @-@ bound emigrants . The ferry was discontinued in 1853 after a competing toll bridge was constructed . On October 19 , 1856 , the Martin Handcart Company forded the freezing river in mid @-@ October , leading to exposure that would prove fatal to many members of the company .

Red Butte (940 miles (1 @, @ 513 km) west) ? Red Butte was the most tragic site of the Mormon Trail . After crossing the Platte River , the Martin Handcart Company camped near Red Butte as heavy snow fell . Snow continued to fall for three days , and the company came to a halt as many emigrants died . For nine days the company remained there , while 56 persons died from cold or disease . Finally , on October 28 , an advance team of three men from the Utah rescue party reached them . The rescuers encouraged them that help was on the way and urged the company to start moving on .

Sweetwater River (964 miles (1 @, @ 551 km) west) ? From the last crossing of the Platte , the trail heads directly southwest toward Independence Rock , where it meets and follows the Sweetwater River to South Pass . To shorten the journey by avoiding the twists and turns of the river , the trail includes nine river crossings .

Independence Rock (965 miles (1 @, @ 553 km) west) ? Independence Rock was one of the trail 's best known and most anticipated landmarks . Many emigrants carved their names on the rock ; many of these carvings are still visible today . The emigrants sometimes also celebrated their arrival at this landmark with a dance .

Devil 's Gate (970 miles (1 @, @ 561 km) west) ? Devil 's Gate was a narrow gorge cut through the rocks by the Sweetwater River . A small fort was located at Devil 's Gate , which was unoccupied in 1856 when the Martin Handcart Company was rescued . The rescuers unloaded

unnecessary equipment from the wagons so the weaker handcart emigrants could ride . A group of 19 men , led by Daniel W. Jones , stayed at the fort over the winter to protect the property .

Martin 's Cove (993 miles (1 @, @ 598 km) west) ? On November 4 , 1856 , the Martin Handcart Company set up camp in Martin 's Cove as another blizzard halted their progress . They remained there for five days until the weather abated and they could proceed toward Salt Lake City . Today , a visitor 's center is located on the site .

Rocky Ridge (1 @, @ 038 miles (1 @, @ 670 km) west) ? Between the fifth and sixth crossings of the Sweetwater , on October 19 , 1856 , the Willie Handcart Company was halted by the same snowstorm that stopped the Martin Handcart Company near Red Butte . At the same time , the members of the Willie Company reached the end of their supplies of flour . A small advance team from the rescue party found their camp and gave them a small amount of flour , but then pushed on to the east to try to locate the Martin Company . Captain James Willie and Joseph Elder went ahead through the snow to find the main rescue party and inform them of the Willie Company 's peril . On October 23 , with the help of the rescue party , the Willie Company pushed ahead through the biting wind and snow up Rocky Ridge , a rough 5 @-@ mile (8 @. @ 0 km) section of the trail that ascends to a ridge in order to bypass a section of the Sweetwater River valley that is impassable .

Rock Creek (1 @, @ 048 miles (1 @, @ 687 km) west) ? After their grueling 18 @-@ hour trek up Rocky Ridge , the Willie Handcart Company camped at the crossing of Rock Creek . That night 13 emigrants died ; the next morning their bodies were buried in a shallow grave .

South Pass (Continental Divide) (1 @, @ 065 miles (1 @, @ 714 km) west) ? South Pass , a 20 @-@ mile (32 km) wide pass across the Continental Divide , is located between the modern towns of Atlantic City and Farson . At an elevation of 7 @, @ 550 feet (2 @, @ 300 m) above sea level , it was one of the most important landmarks of the Mormon Trail . Near South Pass is Pacific Springs , which received its name because its waters ran to the Pacific Ocean .

Green River / Lombard Ferry (1 @, @ 128 miles (1 @, @ 815 km) west) ? The trail crosses the Green River between the modern towns of Farson and Granger . The Latter @-@ day Saints operated a ferry at this location to assist the church 's emigrants and to earn money from other emigrants traveling to Oregon and California .

Ft . Bridger (1 @, @ 183 miles (1 @, @ 904 km) west) ? Fort Bridger was established in 1842 by famous mountain man Jim Bridger . This was the site where the paths of the Oregon Trail , the California Trail , and the Mormon Trail separated ; the three trails ran in parallel from Missouri River to Fort Bridger . In 1855 , the LDS Church bought the fort from Jim Bridger and Louis Vazquez for \$ 8 @, @ 000 . During the Utah War in 1857 , the Utah militia burned down the fort so that it would not fall into the hands of the advancing U.S. Army under General A.S. Johnston .

Bear River Crossing (1 @, @ 216 miles (1 @, @ 957 km) west) ? At this , one of the last river crossings on the Mormon Trail , Lansford Hastings and his company turned north , while the Reed ? Donner Company turned south . Also at this site , the vanguard company met mountaineer Miles Goodyear on July 10 , 1847 , who attempted to persuade them to take the northern track toward his trading post .

The Needles (1 @, @ 236 miles (1 @, @ 989 km) west) ? Near this very prominent rock formation , close to the Utah ? Wyoming border , Brigham Young became ill with what was probably Rocky Mountain spotted fever during the advance push into the Salt Lake Valley .

= = = Utah = = =

Echo Canyon (1 @, @ 246 miles (2 @, @ 005 km) west) ? One of the last canyons through which the emigrants descended , this deep and narrow canyon made it a veritable , and frequently noted , echo chamber .

Big Mountain (1 @, @ 279 miles (2 @, @ 058 km) west) ? Although dwarfed by the surrounding Wasatch mountain peaks , this was the highest elevation of the entire Mormon trail at 8 @, @ 400 feet (2560 m) .

Golden Pass Road (1 @, @ 281 miles (2 @, @ 062 km) west) ? Although unsuccessful in a petition to Salt Lake City for funding , Parley P. Pratt obtained the deed to the canyon and began the

construction of a road through Big Canyon Creek in the Wasatch Mountains just south of Emigration Canyon in July 1849 . The canyon became known as Parley 's Canyon and the road he built as the " Golden Pass Road , " due to the large number of gold miners who used it on their way to California . A cutoff was constructed through Silver Creek Canyon by 1862 , diverting much of the traffic on what is today the route of I @-@ 80 .

Emigration Canyon (Donner Hill) (1 @,@ 283 miles (2 @,@ 065 km) west) ? About a year before the Latter @-@ day Saint emigrants , the Reed ? Donner wagon train carved the first road through the final geographic obstacle between Big Mountain and the Salt Lake Valley . About halfway through , the group changed course and went up and around the final constriction near the valley 's mouth . The resulting exhaustingly brutal climb over rock and sage most likely contributed to the historic tragedy that befell the travelers three months and 600 miles (970 km) to the west . When an advance team from the Latter @-@ day Saint vanguard company came through , it chose to stick to the valley floor and hacked its way through to the bench overlooking the Great Salt Lake basin in less than four hours .

Salt Lake Valley (1 @,@ 297 miles (2 @,@ 087 km) west) ? Although the Salt Lake Valley had a special meaning to each emigrant , signifying the end of more than a year of crossing the plains , not all of the pioneering Saints settled in the Salt Lake Valley . Settlement outside the Salt Lake Valley began as early as 1848 , with a number of communities planted in the Weber valley to the north . Additional townsites were carefully chosen , with settlements placed near canyon mouths with access to dependable streams and stands of timber . Latter @-@ day Saints founded more than 600 communities from Canada down into Mexico . As historian Wallace Stegner stated , the Latter @-@ day Saints " were one of the principal forces in the settlement of the West . "