

Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel, 1847-1868

Between 1847 and 1868, Mormon emigrants traveled on the pioneer trail in more than 250 companies departing from various outfitting places. These companies in which about 60,000 LDS Church members traveled include freight trains, independent companies, handcart companies, and various types of other Church companies. By its very nature, travel on the trail was unavoidably informal and disarrayed which may account for discrepancies in reports and accounts. After beginning their travels, companies often divided into small divisions or traveled in a scattered condition, thereby arriving in the Salt Lake Valley over the period of several days.

Click on the Internet Explorer icon and type www.lds.org in the address field and press “Enter.”

To the left of “WELCOME” at the top of the page is a list of options. Move your mouse to “About the Church” then move the mouse over and click on “Church History” in the list that appears at the right. On the “Church History” page, click on “Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel.” A search screen will open up.

Enter the name of one of your ancestors who traveled overland to Salt Lake between the years 1847-1868 (the year of the coming of the railroad.) For most searches, leave the company information on “All Companies” and “All Years.” Click on “Search.” When the name of the company is found, click on the underlined name of the company. The list of individuals in this company, date of travel and arrival in the Salt Lake Valley and where possible, a bibliography containing diaries, journals, letters, and reminiscences written by company members or contemporary reports about the company is also listed.

Early Latter-day Saint Database (From <http://earlylds.com>)

This database is the combination of efforts of the Land and Records Office in the Illinois Nauvoo Mission and the Pioneer Research Group in Winter Quarters. The Land and Records Office started working on the database in 1987 and have been collecting and adding information since then. A missionary couple (Don and Diane Snow) had the assignment in the Illinois Nauvoo Mission of preparing the PAF file for posting on the Internet. The original emphasis of the Land and Records Office was on the Nauvoo period (1839-1846), but it now includes Latter-day Saints from 1829 up to the Utah period (1868).

The Pioneer Research Group based in the Winter Quarters (Omaha, Nebraska) and Kanesville (Council Bluffs, Iowa) are gathering the names of pioneers who lived in the more than 90 settlements of Latter-day Saints who were in the Middle Missouri Valley and across the state of Iowa during the years of 1846 – 1868. Their emphasis began with the gathering of names of members of the Iowa Branches, Winter Quarters Wards and those buried in the Winter Quarters Cemetery but not limited to that specific time period or area.

The names in the database are mostly early Latter-day Saints. Where their parents’ information was available it is included. Families are linked together as well. We know it isn’t complete and we will continue to correct and add to it. We also know, realistically, that absolute completeness and accuracy is impossible in a project of this magnitude. Still, we feel this is a major help to historians and family historians.

Genealogy Links www.genealogy-links.org

This site contains a collection of links to help you make use of the **numerous** genealogy resources on the internet. Most of the links are to free sites, with the exception of those to Ancestry.com.

The sites are categorized into 9 groups. Click on the hyperlink next to the number to access the group of links in that category. Numbers **7-LDS Ancestors** and **8-LDS to Zion** are of particular interest to those who have early LDS pioneers.

[Note: Occasionally this site is down so don't give up; just try it on another day!]

Mormon Immigration Index

Many Family History Centers have the Mormon Immigration Index available for the use of their patrons. The CD can also be purchased through LDS Church Distribution Services by going to ldscatalog.com on the Internet.

The Mormon Immigration Index is a database of immigrants who came from various international ports to the United States. Information in this database includes the age, country of origin, ports of departure and arrival, as well as the approximate number of Saints and nonmember passengers on each voyage and the company leaders assigned to each voyage.

The Mormon Immigration Index contains transcriptions of autobiographies, journals, diaries, reminiscences, and letters of approximately 1,000 immigrant converts who came to Zion between 1840 and 1890. These immigrant accounts are linked to over 500 known LDS companies and provide a composite account of those who crossed the Atlantic and Pacific oceans and then by land, rivers, and rails to gather to Zion.

Not all people who took part in these voyages were members of the LDS church. Some nonmembers accompanied the Saints for a variety of reasons and were listed with the LDS immigrants.

Historical Perspective

During the 19th century, over 94,000 converts of the LDS church crossed the oceans to gather to Zion. In 1840, the first company of immigrant Saints began their journey to Zion. They were followed by a continual flow of immigration for the next 50 years.

The destination of most members who immigrated from 1840 to 1846 was Nauvoo, Illinois. After the Saints were driven west in 1847, the gathering place became the Salt Lake Valley and numerous communities in the Great Basin of the west. Immigrant Accounts of those who traveled not only described their experiences crossing the oceans, but also documents their travels to frontier outfitting posts and their arrival into the Salt Lake Valley. The portion dealing with the Saints crossing the plains (1847–1868) has generally been omitted due to the vast amount of bibliographic material.

With the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, most of the immigrants between 1869 and 1890 went by rail rather than by wagon or handcart. Consequently, the immigration story of many Saints from international ports of departure to entry by train into the Salt Lake Valley during this time has been captured in vivid detail through their journals and biographical accounts.