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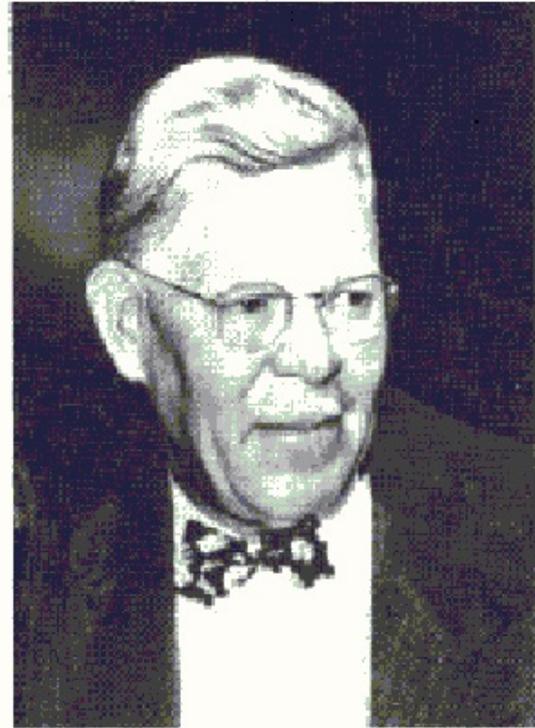
TRAILING THE PIONEERS

To Utah's four pioneering trail historians:



Charles Kelly (1889-1971)

Photograph Archives, Utah State Historical Society



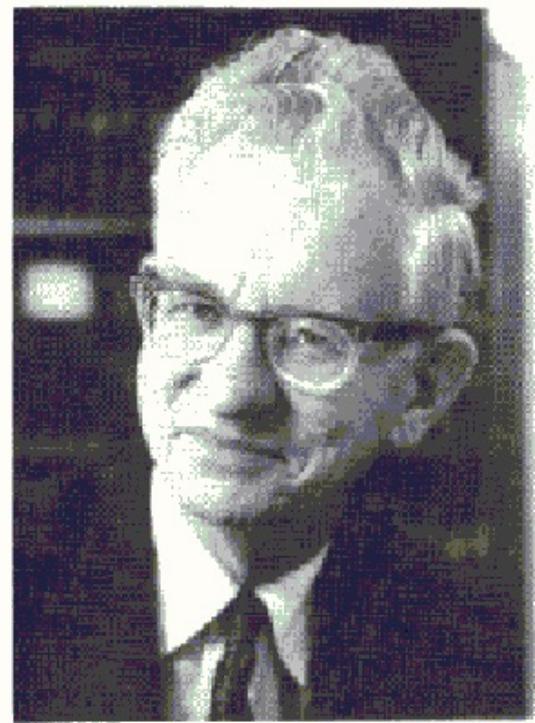
J. Roderic Korns (1890-1949)

Photograph Archives, Utah State Historical Society



David E. Miller (1909-1978)

Photograph Archives, Utah State Historical Society



Dale L. Morgan (1914-1971)

Photograph by Harold Schnalle

TRAILING THE
PIONEERS

*A Guide to Utah's Emigrant Trails,
1829-1869*

edited by
Peter H. DeLafosse

Utah State University Press, with
Utah Crossroads, Oregon-California Trails Association

LOGAN, UTAH
1994

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Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vi
FOREWORD	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
<i>by Peter H. DeLafosse</i>	
THE SPANISH TRAIL	9
<i>by Steven K. Madsen</i>	
Utah-Colorado Border to Green River, Utah	12
<i>Green River to Salina, Utah</i>	18
<i>Salina to Cedar City, Utah</i>	23
<i>Cedar City to Utah-Arizona Border</i>	27
THE BIDWELL-BARTLESON TRAIL	33
<i>by Roy D. Tea</i>	
Soda Springs, Idaho to Corinne, Utah	35
<i>Corinne to Wendover, Utah</i>	44
THE PIONEER TRAIL	55
<i>by Jack B. Tykal</i>	
<i>Fort Bridger, Wyoming to Salt Lake City</i>	58
THE HASTINGS CUTOFF	73
<i>by Rush Spedden</i>	
<i>Salt Lake City to Wendover, Utah</i>	76
HENSLEY'S SALT LAKE CUTOFF	73
<i>by Will Bagley</i>	
<i>Salt Lake City to City of Tocks, Idaho</i>	76

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	111
<i>by Harold Schindler</i>	
INDEX	123

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Foreword

Utah Crossroads is proud to present this new guidebook to the historic emigrant trails of our state as a special offering of the 1994 convention of the Oregon-California Trails Association at Salt Lake City and as a unique contribution to our 1996 Utah Statehood Centennial. This work combines many years of research and field study by some of the foremost authorities on these trails, members of our OCTA chapter. It is offered to the public by the men and women of Utah Crossroads, who are dedicated to the identification and preservation of Utah's historic routes of exploration, trade, and emigration.

Albert Mulder, Jr.
President
Utah Crossroads
Oregon-California Trails Association

Introduction

Peter H. DeLafosse

ABOUT THIS BOOK

On their way to California in 1841, the Bidwell-Bartleson party separated from their traveling companions at what is now Soda Springs, Idaho. Heading south and entering Cache Valley, they brought the first wagons into present-day Utah. A flood of emigrants followed over the next decade, establishing the routes of Utah's great overland trails. The overland emigrants were searching for many things -- land, religious sanctuary, gold, a new beginning - - and the trails they developed united the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Utah was at the crossroads of this travel.

Trailing the Pioneers is a concise guide to Utah's emigrant trails during the years 1829 to 1869. This four-decade period opened with the establishment of a trade route from Santa Fe to southern California that passed through Utah; included the period of heavy overland travel to Oregon and California in the 1840s and 1850s, the arrival of the Mormon pioneers in 1847, and the Mormon colonization of the Intermountain West, and closed with the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, the symbolic end of overland wagon travel. This period left a rich historical legacy, much of which can be seen from today's roads.

Comprising a series of automobile tours, this book is intended for the general tourist traveling in an ordinary passenger car. The tours include directions to view trail remnants, and a few optional off road vehicle tours

for those interested in exploring remote sections of the trails. The trails include

The Spanish Trail from the Utah-Colorado border, near Monticello, to the Utah-Arizona border, near St. George;

The Bidwell-Bartleson Trail from Soda Springs, Idaho, to Wendover, Utah;

The Pioneer Trail from Fort Bridger, Wyoming, to Salt Lake City;

The Hastings Cutoff from Salt Lake City to Wendover, Utah; and

The Salt Lake Cutoff from Salt Lake City to City of Rocks, Idaho.

Prefacing each tour is a brief historical perspective, followed by the tour description, which attempts to answer questions such as Why did the emigrants follow this particular route? What obstacles did the emigrants face? and Which trail landmarks did the emigrants consider important enough to record in their journals? Written in an informal style, each tour description includes an approximation of the route of the trail using today's roads, identifies the location of the actual trail in relationship to the roads, and interprets the trail's history.

Obviously, the information in a book of this size must be selective. The tours are designed to give you a sense of the epic sweep of the trail and an awareness of the major landmarks noted by the pioneers. Trail enthusiasts will want to explore the vast trail literature, and the selected bibliography will give you an introduction to primary and secondary sources of information on the trails included in this book.

ORGANIZATION AND MODEL

Trailing the Pioneers is cast in the tradition of the American Guide Series published in the 1930s and 1940s by the Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration (WPA). The Federal Writers' Project provided work for unemployed writers during the Great Depression. Under this program, writers gathered local historical material into state archives, preserving much information that would otherwise have been lost, and a guidebook was written and published for each state.

State guidebooks were divided into two parts. The first consisted of a series of essays about the state's history, peoples, geography, and natural resources.

The second comprised a series of automobile tours along the state's major roads. The tours interpreted the view as seen by the automobile tourist, identifying towns, major points of interest, and items of

historical importance. The informal style of the automobile tours, mixing historical fact and anecdote, contributed to their charm.

The Idaho and Utah guidebooks were among the best written volumes of this American Guide Series. Idaho novelist Vardis Fisher was appointed state director of the Idaho Writers' Project in 1935, and under his capable leadership, *Idaho: A Guide in Word and Picture* was published in January 1937. The first volume published in the American Guide Series, the Idaho guide set the organizational standard for the succeeding volumes.

Utah was most fortunate in having native son Dale L. Morgan as state supervisor of the Utah Writers' Program. Under Morgan's direction and following the organizational model of the Idaho guide (general essays followed by tours), *Utah: A Guide to the State* was published in 1941. The Utah guide bears Morgan's personal stamp because, like Fisher, he wrote most of the text. It was Morgan's first major book and launched his distinguished career as a western historian.

The American Guide Series volumes contain much valuable information, but in the half-century since their appearance new information has been discovered that needs to be documented in a convenient and accessible form. This was one of our objectives in writing *Trailing the Pioneers*. In instances where details remain in dispute, it is so noted, and we welcome corrections for future editions.

TRAIL NAMES

Utah's emigrant trails existed in both place and time, and their names may be confusing because trails sometimes overlapped. Naming the trail from Fort Bridger to Salt Lake City poses a particular problem. Pioneering this route in 1846 were several emigrant groups -- including the Bryant-Russell, Harlan-Young, and Donner-Reed parties -- on their way to California via the Hastings Cutoff across the Great Salt Lake Desert. The Mormons followed this route to Salt Lake Valley in 1847 at the end of their trek from Nauvoo, Illinois. By 1850, the trail had become a well-traveled road, serving as the eastern end of the Hastings Cutoff, the eastern approach to the Salt Lake Cutoff, and the western end of the Mormon Trail. In the context of this book, Pioneer Trail designates the route from Fort Bridger to Salt Lake City, and Hastings Cutoff designates the route from Salt Lake City to Pilot Peak.

Emigrant trails differ from our modern concept of a highway - a well-defined roadbed. Emigrant trails sometimes had variant routes for part of their distance. Again using the Pioneer Trail example, the Bryant-Russell and Harlan-Young parties traveled from Fort Bridger to Salt Lake City via Weber Canyon, while the Donner-Reed party and the Mormon pioneers traveled to Salt Lake City via Emigration Canyon. The Pioneer Trail, as described here, includes these two variant routes.

IMPORTANCE OF UTAH'S HISTORIC TRAILS

Why is it important to view the trails? Describing Jedediah Smith's 1827 trek across the Great Salt Lake Desert, Utah historian Charles Kelly wrote, "This expedition of Jedediah Smith in crossing such a barren and desolate country for the first time, without any knowledge whatever of what lay before him, has never been fully appreciated by historians, due partly to his own brief account of the journey, and partly to the historians' lack of first-hand knowledge of the country over which he had to pass." Many historians now understand and appreciate the experience of early travelers, but one can achieve a clear understanding of the written record only by seeing the landscape through which the emigrants traveled. Unlike the written record, which is subject to archival preservation, trails are ephemeral. Modern roads and development projects have obliterated many trail segments. Ultimately, nature will reclaim all trail remnants. However, overland emigrant history is relatively recent, presenting us with the opportunity to study the trails firsthand.

Published in 1930, Charles Kelly's *Salt Desert Trails: A History of the Hastings Cutoff and Other Early Trails Which Crossed the Great Salt Desert Seeking a Shorter Road to California* was one of the first books to awaken modern interest in Utah's trails. Kelly's magnificent black and white photographs, which illustrate *Salt Desert Trails*, capture like no other images the awesome loneliness, desolation, and grandeur of the Great Salt Lake Desert, so vividly noted in emigrant journals. Kelly described his personal travels across the desert in the last chapter of his book, to which he gave the title "Trailing the Pioneers." We pay tribute to Kelly's pioneering research by borrowing his chapter title for the title of this book.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Trailing the Pioneers is the premier publication of the Utah Crossroads chapter of the Oregon-California Trails Association (OCTA). Founded in 1982 and headquartered in Independence, Missouri, OCTA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation and appreciation of all trans-Mississippi emigrant trails to the American West. OCTA supports trail identification and marking and encourages trail studies through its publications and educational programs. *Overland Journal* is OCTA's quarterly magazine and contains scholarly articles and book reviews about historic trails. *News from the Plains* is OCTA's quarterly newsletter and provides information about national and local OCTA activities. Annual conventions are held during the second week in August and include presentations of papers, educational workshops, and field trips near the host city. Local OCTA chapters sponsor regional field trips and other activities. Utah Crossroads was organized in January, 1990.

The authors and editor of *Trailing the Pioneers* are all charter members of Utah Crossroads. Peter DeLafosse received his bachelor's degree in engineering sciences from Purdue University and is employed by Evans & Sutherland Computer Corporation. He is a member of the editorial advisory board of OCTA's *Overland Journal* and a member and past president of the Utah Westerners. Peter edited the Hastings Cutoff Sesquicentennial Edition of Charles Kelly's *Salt Desert Trails* (1996).

Will Bagley received his bachelor's degree in history from the University of California at Santa Cruz. In 1969, he built a raft in Rock Island, Illinois, and took it 1,300 miles down the Mississippi River to New Orleans, visiting historic sites along the way. He has edited *A Road from El Dorado: The 1848 Trail Journal of Ephraim Green* (1991) and *Frontiersman: Abner Blackburn's Narrative* (1992). *Frontiersman* was awarded the 1991 Evans Biography Award by the Mountain West Center for Regional Studies. Will is a national director of OCTA and is a member of Utah Westerners, the Utah State Historical Society, the Mormon History Association, and the Western History Association.

Steven K. Madsen is the historian of Washington, D.C.'s National Independence Day Festival and Parade. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of Utah and his master's degree from Brigham Young

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the author of *A Union, Utah, History, Precinct Government in Salt Lake County, Utah*; and the government studies *Boating on the Upper Colorado and The Navigational History of Bear River*. He co-authored with Dr. C. Gregory Crampton the forthcoming book *In Search of the Spanish Trail, Santa Fe to L.A.* Steven is a member of Utah Westerners and a life member of the Sons of the Utah Pioneers. In 1982, America the Beautiful Fund of Washington, D.C., awarded him the National Good Citizen Award for his efforts in preserving the Union Pioneer Cemetery.

Harold Schindler is daily columnist and feature writer for *The Salt Lake Tribune*. He is the author of *Orrin Porter Rockwell: Man of God, Son of Thunder* and is the winner of the American Association for State and Local History Award of Merit in 1967 for Outstanding Contribution to Local History. He is a founder and charter vice president of Utah Westerners, has been a member of the Utah State Historical Society Advisory Board of Editors since 1970, and was named an Honorary Life Member of the Utah State Historical Society in 1992 for distinguished service. Harold received the Dominguez-Escalante State/Federal Bicentennial Committee Newspaper Publications Award in 1976. He was contributing commentator on PBS's "The American Experience: The Donner Party."

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