

# Utah

## HISTORICAL TRAILS MAP

The Routes of Explorers, Early  
Wayfarers, and Immigrant Trails  
Depicted in Relation to the Modern  
Highway System of the State.

Prepared by

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for the

UTAH STATE DEPARTMENT  
OF PUBLICITY AND  
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

No. 8 on West Second South Street  
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### *A Word About Utah's Historical Trails—*

Utah's highways are celebrated as highroads to adventure. Sometimes that is the breathtaking adventure of coming suddenly to the rim of Bryce Canyon, for example, or to the divide that overlooks Bear Lake. Sometimes it is the adventure of being shown through Brigham Young's Lion House, or of listening to the majestic tones of the Salt Lake Tabernacle organ. Sometimes it is the adventure of a heart-warming encounter with a Utahn who is glad to welcome you to this the *Friendly State*.

But the highways of the State also are highroads into a romantic and fascinating past. One who drives south up the Sevier River on US 89 may look about him with the eye of the discoverer, for so went Jedediah Smith in 1826 on that first overland journey of any American to California; so also went the noted Spanish Trail between Santa Fe and Los Angeles. One who drives through Utah on US 91 may similarly see with the eyes of Father Escalante, and imagine himself to jog along beside that blackrobed adventurer of 1776. One who drives north and west around Great Salt Lake on US 30S may see, if he has the will, a ghostly com-

pany of forty-niners on their way to the gold fields by this, the Salt Lake Cutoff to the California Trail. . . .

Following in footpath and wheeltrack of the firstcomers is an adventure having an especial allure and excitement. This map, the most comprehensive and detailed map of the kind ever prepared, has been published by the Utah State Department of Publicity and Industrial Development as an invitation to such an adventure. Many of these trails coincide with the finest modern highways of the State. If you depart from these on secondary roads into the back country, however, look first to the mechanical condition of your car — in case of trouble, you may have a long hike before you can tell your troubles to anyone. Beware of washes in rainy weather, and keep an eye peeled for holes in the road! These are some of the hazards of going exploring across rough country in an automobile. But also you are likely to have the time of your life and to see a lot of scenery, neglected and unknown in Utah, that would be the pride of less richly endowed states. Welcome to Utah's historical trails!

—Rulon S. Howells

# UTAH'S HISTORICAL TRAILS

## *The Escalante-Dominguez Explorations 1776*

Although Captain Garcia Lopez de Cardenas, commanding a detachment of Coronado's conquistores, in 1540 may have penetrated as far north as Glen Canyon of the Colorado, and thus become the first white man to cross at any point the present boundaries of Utah, the expedition of Father Silvestre Velez de Escalante and Father Francisco Atanasio Dominguez first made Utah territory known to the world.

The two friars set out from Santa Fe on July 29, 1776, to explore a route between New Mexico and the missions just established in California. Making their way up through western Colorado, they entered what is now Utah on September 11, 1776. They forded the Green River north of present Jensen and then journeyed west through the Uinta Basin to Utah Valley. This valley the fathers believed the fairest in the whole of New Spain, and they envisioned a mission there—a project which, if carried out, would have changed the whole history of Utah. But still they hoped to reach Monterey and on September 25, 1776, resumed their journey south. No likely route invited them west, and eventually they had to reconsider their purpose. Lots were cast to decide what they should do, and fortune directed them to return to Santa Fe. Veering southeasterly, they climbed to the Rim of the Great Basin, descended to Utah's Dixie, and then rode south into present Arizona. Lacking a guide, they wandered for many days through the chaotic red rock country before fording the Colorado finally at what ever since has been called the Crossing of the Fathers. The two priests eventually arrived back at Santa Fe on January 2, 1777.

## *The Ashley Explorations 1825*

The trapping parties sent to the mountains by the Virginia-born William Henry Ashley first penetrated to Utah in the fall of 1824. Probably the first of Ashley's partisans to enter Utah was William Sublette, who spent the winter of 1824-25 in Cache Valley—it was as a member of his party that young Jim Bridger made the historic discovery of Great Salt Lake.

Ashley himself, after following his men to the mountains, began a voyage of exploration down the Green River in April, 1825. He explored as far as Desolation Canyon, 50 miles below the mouth of the Duchesne, before turning back to ascend the Duchesne and cross the Uinta Mountains. The appointed place of rendezvous with his men was the mouth of Henry Fork, which would have been in present Utah, but he found that his trappers had moved 20 miles up the creek, and thus it was just across the Wyoming line that the first great rendezvous or trading fair of the fur trade was held.

After taking his furs back to the States, Ashley returned to the mountains in 1826, to the rendezvous which seems to have been held on the site of Ogden, but may have been held in Cache Valley (at the "Trappers' Cache" of our map). He came, however, only to sell out to his capable lieutenants, Jedediah Smith, David E. Jackson, and William Sublette.

## *The Ogden Explorations 1825-29*

Simultaneous with Ashley's explorations were those of the Hudson's Bay Company's great brigade leader, Peter Skene Ogden. The British fur trader brought a large expedition south out of the Oregon

country to make an independent discovery of Great Salt Lake on May 20, 1825. Three days later he had the misfortune to fall in with a party of American trappers, who induced many of his men to desert with their furs. Where this happened is not known, but it may have been the circumstance that gave rise to the name, "Ogdens Hole," applied to the mountain valley east of Ogden.

Ogden's route of 1825 back to the Snake River is not known certainly, except that it was "by a different Route" than he had taken in coming south. The northbound route shown on our map is a guess only; he may instead have gone north up the Malad River. Not until the winter of 1828-29 did Ogden enter present Utah again. After discovering the Humboldt River, he came into Utah from the west, circling the north shore of Great Salt Lake and going on up the Malad River into present Idaho. Next spring he trapped down the Bear River and retraced his new trail to the Humboldt, returning finally to his base in the Oregon country.

## *The Smith Explorations 1826-27*

One of the first to join with Ashley, Jedediah Smith led from the Missouri River the first known party to go westbound through the famous South Pass in central Wyoming. After many adventures in the mountains, he became senior partner in the firm of Smith, Jackson & Sublette, and in the summer of 1826 set out on a journey of exploration to California, thus becoming the first white man to traverse Utah from north to south. Returning from California next spring, he crossed the arid waste of Nevada to rejoin his partners at the annual rendezvous, held in this and the following year at Bear Lake. He arrived July 3, 1827, to be saluted by the cannon Ashley had sent out early that year—the first wheeled vehicle known to have crossed the Continental Divide. After only 10 days at rendezvous, Smith set out for California again. A succession of disasters befell him, including the massacre of 25 of his men by the Mojave and Umpqua Indians. Though he survived all these hazards, in May, 1831, while on a trading expedition to Santa Fe, he was slain by Comanches on the Cimarron Desert.

## *The Armijo Explorations 1829-30*

Antonio Armijo in the winter of 1829-30 took a trading expedition from New Mexico to California. His company is the only one other than Escalante's definitely known to have used the Crossing of the Fathers. Coming up from the south, he reached the Virgin River near present Hurricane and went on west out of Utah by Jedediah Smith's trail of 1827. He pioneered through Nevada an important part of what subsequently became known as the Spanish Trail, later called the Mormon or Southern Road.

## *The Spanish Trail*

Because it is shrouded in mystery, the Spanish Trail is the most romantic of all the trails. Spanish traders followed Escalante to Utah Valley soon after his return, there being record of such expeditions in 1805 and 1813, and doubtless they found improvements on his route to the Uinta Basin, including perhaps that trail to the mouth of White River shown on our map because Antoine Robidoux is known to have traveled it in 1837 and 1842.

The Spanish Trail as it is best known, which crossed the Green at present Green River, seems to have come into use in the 1830's, after California

replaced Utah Valley as the old trail. This is the main trail shown on our map, reaching Little Salt Lake by a shorter route west than Jedediah Smith's, going southwesterly to the mouth of the river, then turned south up to the Mountain. The tragic immigrant massacre at the mouth of the Santa Clara River, which followed the trail of 1827, which was followed by the eastern part of the trail, fell into disuse after 1848, the trail was in heavy use for 20 years after that.

Most mysterious of the trails is one the vague early maps show as the Colorado badlands to cross the way between Green River and the Fathers. No physical evidence has ever been found, and this supposed route has been, instead, a confused one explored by Armijo.

## *The Walker Exploration*

The trapping expedition of John C. Fremont, dispatched in 1833 "to California," as he claimed later, was commanded by Joseph Reddeford Walker. The members of this company were not in California; in crossing the Sierras they discovered the Yosemite to give the name to the discoverer, and on his return he discovered Walker Pass. Bonneville him valley of the Great Salt Lake, the vagaries of history that his to the prehistoric lake of which the shrunken remnant.

## *The Bartleson-Bidwell*

Determined to go to California, the company headed by John Bartleson and James W. Wadsworth well became the most famous of the first wagon trail across Utah. In 1841 they came down the Bear River to the mouth of the Great Salt Lake, and then west around the lake. Scouts that wagons could not be taken, they hauled their nine wagons across the Salt Desert. One had to be abandoned at the eastern base of the Pilot Knob, the others were abandoned a few days later. The little company finally reached the lake, ragged, footsore, and worn down. The lone woman in their number, Mrs. Kelsey, is the first white woman to have set foot in Utah.

## *The Oregon and California*

The famous trail from the Oregon to California, which entered Utah at no point entered Utah. The 1843 company was the first of the later wagon road to enter Utah. Two places entered present Utah, one from Fort Bridger, Jackson, to the upper Bear River to head the trail, then followed the river down to the mouth of the Bear River, and out of Utah in present River. The Raft River and Goose Creek were a few miles of the northwestern part of their route. This latter part of their route was the California Trail. It may be that this route in reverse, on return to California in 1834.

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The Spanish Trail as it is best known, which crossed the Green at present Green River, seems to have come into use in the 1830's, after California

replaced Utah Valley as the objective of the traders. This is the main trail shown on our map. After reaching Little Salt Lake Valley, it adopted a shorter route west than Jedediah Smith had taken; going southwesterly to the site of Enterprise, it turned south up to the Mountain Meadows, site of the tragic immigrant massacre of 1857, and then descended the Santa Clara River as far as the Smith trail of 1827, which was followed out of the State. Although the eastern part of the Spanish Trail fell into disuse after 1848, the southern segment saw heavy use for 20 years after the Mormons settled in Utah.

Most mysterious of the variant Spanish Trails is one the vague early maps show as threading the Colorado badlands to cross the Colorado River midway between Green River and the Crossing of the Fathers. No physical evidence for such a trail has ever been found, and this supposed trail may have been, instead, a confused conception of the route explored by Armijo.

## *The Walker Explorations 1833*

The trapping expedition Captain B. L. E. Bonneville dispatched in 1833 "to explore the Great Salt Lake," as he claimed later, but actually to go to California, was commanded by the mountain man, Joseph Reddeford Walker. The chief discoveries of this company were not in Utah but in California; in crossing the Sierras, Walker passed near enough to the Yosemite to give him his claim as first discoverer; and on his return journey he discovered Walker Pass. Bonneville himself never visited the valley of the Great Salt Lake, and it is one of the vagaries of history that his name has been given to the prehistoric lake of which Great Salt Lake is the shrunken remnant.

## *The Bartleson-Bidwell Party 1841*

Determined to go to California, though vague about how to get there, the little immigrant company headed by John Bartleson, of which John Bidwell became the most famous member, made the first wagon trail across Utah. In the summer of 1841 they came down the Bear River to the valley of the Great Salt Lake, and then turned north-west around the lake. Scouts surprisingly reported that wagons could not be taken directly west, so they hauled their nine wagons south around the rim of the Salt Desert. One had to be abandoned along the eastern base of the Pilot Range, and the others were abandoned a few days later in eastern Nevada. The little company finally reached California, ragged, footsore, and worn down to skin and bones. The lone woman in their number, 19-year-old Nancy Kelsey, is the first white woman known to have set foot in Utah.

## *The Oregon and California Trails*

The famous trail from the Missouri to the Columbia at no point entered the present State of Utah. The 1843 company which pioneered much of the later wagon road to California, however, at two places entered present Utah. Hired to pilot them from Fort Bridger, Joe Walker took them to the upper Bear River to hunt deer and elk, and then followed the river down to where the Oregon Trail reached it; thus the Bear River took them into and out of Utah in present Rich County. By way of the Raft River and Goose Creek, they also traversed a few miles of the northwestern corner of Utah. This latter part of their route became established as the California Trail. It may be that Walker had used this route in reverse, on returning from California in 1834.

## *The Frémont Explorations 1843-45*

The celebrated explorations of John Charles Frémont first brought him into Utah in September, 1843. After a voyage in a leaky India-rubber boat to the island in Great Salt Lake later named for him, he returned north to go on to Oregon and California. Next spring he came back into Utah from the south, journeying north to Utah valley and then turning east into the mountains. After visiting Antoine Robidoux' Fort Wintey, he crossed Diamond Mountain Plateau to Browns Hole and thence went on east through present Colorado. Next year he came back into Utah again, down the White River, up the Duchesne, and across the divide to the Provo River. After reaching the site of Salt Lake City and making a horseback reconnaissance of Antelope Island, Frémont continued on west to California, making the first known crossing of the Salt Desert. It was he who gave Pilot Peak its famous name.

## *The Clyman Party 1846*

Frémont's new trail across the Salt Desert was followed in the spring of 1846 by a small party eastbound from California, in which James Clyman and Lansford W. Hastings were the most prominent figures. They safely crossed the desert, and after reaching Salt Lake Valley took an Indian trail up Parleys Canyon to Mountain Dell and then northeast across the mountains to present Henefer, the route followed today by the Pioneer Memorial Highway. After fording the Weber, the little company headed up Echo Canyon for Fort Bridger. Their successful use of "Hastings' Cutoff" resulted in its adoption by many of this year's westbound immigrants.

## *The Bryant-Russell Party 1846*

Among those persuaded to try the new cutoff was a little party which included William H. Russell and Edwin Bryant. This company explored its own route through the Wasatch, and though on muleback had a difficult time getting through the rugged canyons. After circling Great Salt Lake to Tooele Valley, they tried to cross the Stansbury Mountains by way of Willow Canyon, west of Grantsville. This difficult route even today remains only a horse trail, and after coming into Frémont's trail in Skull Valley, they were satisfied for the rest of the journey to California to follow the beaten path.

## *The Hastings Party 1846*

The wagon road west of Fort Bridger that Lansford Hastings pioneered in 1846 is best known as the Mormon Trail, but to Bear River it seems to have been the route traveled in 1843 by Joe Walker. West of the Bear, Hastings' wagons were genuine trailbreakers, and made a way down Echo and Weber Canyons only by terrific exertions. Their subsequent crossing of the Salt Desert was so taxing that the company arrived at Pilot Peak nearly demoralized. Hastings took them on west into Nevada, south around the Ruby Mountains, and finally back to the California Trail; his "cutoff" proved to be pretty much of a mirage.

## *The Donner-Reed Party 1846*

This tragically famous company came along on Hastings' trail, a week behind. Advised that they would do better to cut a road over the mountains than try to get through the canyons of the Weber, they turned south at present Henefer, following in reverse the Clyman route, except that they emerged from the Wasatch by Emigration rather than

Parleys Canyon. This toilsome crossing of the mountains cost them 20 days' labor, and they were further delayed by their near-disastrous crossing of the Salt Desert. Eventually caught by the snows of Sierra Nevada, only 47 of the 87 men, women, and children reached California alive.

## *The Mormon Pioneers 1847*

Seeking a haven in the Rockies, the first group of the Mormon Pioneers journeyed to the mountains in the summer of 1847. The Donner trail led them across the Wasatch to Salt Lake Valley, and their first scouts entered the valley July 21. On July 24 the main body of the group, which included President Brigham Young, reached the site of the future City of the Latter-day Saints, a day since commemorated as Utah's Pioneer Day.

## *Pratt's Golden Pass Road 1848-50*

The outcome of explorations by Parley P. Pratt for an easier route into Salt Lake Valley was his toll road opened in June, 1850, through Parleys Canyon. This road saw heavy travel in 1850, but after Pratt sold it in 1851 to finance his church mission to Chile, it fell into disuse.

## *The Salt Lake Cutoff*

The wagon road north around Great Salt Lake was pioneered in 1848. In August of that year, a small party under Samuel Hensley went north around the lake from the Mormon settlements. Far down the Humboldt River, Hensley encountered a detachment of the Mormon Battalion eastbound from California, and gave them a map of his route. The Battalion members had several wagons, and with these they pioneered Hensley's route as a wagon road. Next year, the flood of "forty-niners" who came by way of Great Salt Lake City permanently established the Salt Lake Cutoff as a branch of the California Trail.

## *The Death Valley Party 1849*

Some of the "forty-niners" who reached Utah too late to attempt the northern route turned south in October, 1849, to reach California by the Spanish Trail. Hearing of a supposed cutoff west across the Nevada deserts, many of them diverged from the known trail at present Enterprise. The sheer walls of Beaver Dam Wash forced a long northern detour, and when they turned west again, it was to blunder into and give name to Death Valley.

## *The Stansbury Explorations 1849*

Captain Howard Stansbury vainly attempted, in August, 1849, to explore a better route to the valley of the Great Salt Lake. Giving up his quest, he rode on to Great Salt Lake City and then north to Fort Hall to arrange for his supplies. Returning, from Bear River he embarked upon a reconnaissance of the lake shore to get some idea of the problems its surveying would entail. He found it impracticable to follow the miry west shore of the lake, and had to bend his course far west, to Pilot Peak, from which he journeyed back to the Mormon settlements by the Hastings Road. The following spring he made his celebrated survey of the Great Salt Lake, and in the autumn of 1850 returned east to publish his famous Report.

## *The Gunnison-Beckwith Explorations 1853-54*

Captain J. W. Gunnison, who had been Stansbury's subordinate, returned to Utah in the fall of

1853, exploring for a Pacific railroad route. Soon after he emerged from the Wasatch Mountains, while reconnoitering the Sevier Lake area, he and six of his men were slain by Pahvant Utes. Lieutenant E. G. Beckwith took the survivors north to Great Salt Lake City, and in the spring, after a reconnaissance of the mountain valleys of the Wasatch, including a side-journey to Fort Bridger by way of Chalk Creek, he finished Gunnison's job by carrying out an exploration the rest of the way to California.

### ***The Frémont Explorations 1853-54***

Late in 1853 a winter exploration in the interests of a central railroad route brought Frémont back into Utah. A gallant undertaking, it was nevertheless ill-advised, and one of his starving party died before they reached Parowan. Frémont's route of that year is not known in all its details, and as shown on our map is in some part conjectural.

### ***The Simpson Explorations 1858-59***

After United States Army forces established Camp Floyd in the summer of 1858, Captain J. H. Simpson was ordered to locate new wagon roads east to Fort Bridger and west to Carson Valley. He soon attended to the first job, and also made preliminary explorations as far west as the Dugway Mountains. In the spring of 1859 he resumed his work and went all the way to Carson Valley. Returning, he laid out a still shorter route to the south, which, however, was dryer and never saw much use.

### ***The Pony Express 1860-61***

For the famous Pony Express, established in the spring of 1860, a new route was found through western Utah. From Camp Floyd it went by Simpson's route to Fish Springs, then turned northwest to follow the Beckwith trail into Nevada. The Pony Express began riding on a weekly schedule in April, 1860, and continued until the completion of the Overland Telegraph late in 1861.

### ***The Powell Explorations 1869***

The last great exploration in the continental United States was carried out in the summer of 1869 by Major John Wesley Powell, down the canyons of the Green and Colorado rivers. The party met with no serious misadventure until, on reaching an apparently impassable rapid in the Grand Canyon, three of the men abandoned the endeavor.

The others ran the rapid safely, but the three who climbed out of the canyons were ambushed and slain by the Shivwit Indians.

### ***The Hole-In-The-Rock Mission 1879-80***

In some respects the most amazing of all the Mormon colonizing missions, the San Juan Mission

set out from Panguitch in the fall of 1879, determined to cut a new road to Bluff through the Colorado River badlands. This heroic labor took months, and when they reached the Colorado River, it was the brink of a 2,000-foot precipice overlooking the river. To get down to the river it was necessary to cut out a "chute" down a narrow cleft ever since called the Hole-in-the-Rock. Eighty-odd wagons caromed down that chute to be ferried across the Colorado on a boat built of timbers that had been lugged the whole way. The crossing of the Slick Rocks and the Clay Hills was just as difficult, and it was April, 1880, before the indomitable missionaries reached Bluff.

### ***Forts In Utah***

What is possibly the oldest white habitation in Utah intended for permanent occupation has been unearthed in the delta between the White and Green rivers, near Ouray. This was an adobe fort which from archeological evidences was occupied only a short time, and tradition has given it the name, Fort Robidoux. If built by Antoine Robidoux, it was probably constructed in the winter of 1837-38. The site had been a favorite wintering ground for trappers since 1824-25, and three log cabins had been raised there as early as the winter of 1834-35. It may be that Robidoux built this adobe fort only to be flooded out, and then built the better-known Fort Wintey or Uintah on the Whiterocks River. The ruins of this second fort have been found three-quarters of a mile east and half a mile south of present Whiterocks. Fort Wintey itself, though often dated earlier, was certainly not established before 1837. It was abandoned by Robidoux in 1845 after the Utes attacked his branch establishment, Fort Uncompahgre, in Colorado.

A competing post to Fort Wintey, Fort Davy Crockett, was founded on the left bank of the Green River in Browns Hole, approximately on the Colorado line, perhaps in the summer or fall of 1837, by Philip Thompson, William Craig, and William Sinclair. It is even possible that this fort antedated Robidoux' forts, and that the latter were built to counter this competition to his established post in Colorado. Fort Davy Crockett was abandoned probably in 1840. The exact location of its ruins has not been established.

The first white settlement with claims to permanence was made by the mountain man, Miles Goodyear, on the site of Ogden, perhaps in the winter of 1844-45, though perhaps as late as the winter of 1846-47. This post, named Fort Buena-ventura, was sold to the Mormons in November, 1847. The Goodyear cabin is still preserved on Tabernacle Square in Ogden.

Of later army posts, the most famous are Camp Scott, in present Wyoming two miles south of Fort Bridger, where the Utah Expedition wintered in 1857-58, and Camp Floyd, west of Utah Lake, to which the Army removed in the summer of 1858. Renamed Camp Crittenden, the latter post was abandoned in 1861, after the outbreak of the Civil War.

D.L.M.