

First Wagon Train to California in 1841

<https://www.familytree.com/blog/first-wagon-train-to-california-in-1841/> (accessed 8-3-2019).

There was a young man, John Bidwell, a native of New York, who also continued to move westward and new opportunities. Bidwell at age 21 along with Capt. John Bartleson organized the Western Emigration Society and led the first wagon train of pioneers across the Rocky Mountains. On May 1, 1841 this group headed west out of Missouri. There were 69 adults, with only 5 woman and a couple children. None of them, including Bidwell and Bartleson had ever been to California.

As this group, traveling roughly 12 to 15 miles a day in their Conestoga wagons with their oxen, horses and mules made it to Soda Springs, Idaho, the group broke into two groups. Half wanted to travel to Willamette Valley, Oregon, the other half to California. Capt. Bartleson took the Oregon group and John Bidwell led the California group.

With Bidwell were only 33 people and they all suffered desperate hardship after having to abandon their wagons to cover the rough terrain, lack of clear water and near starvation, crossing the Sierra Nevada Mountains before arriving in the area of Tuolumne County on November 4, 1841. It was estimated that only 100 white Americans even lived in California before the wagon train led by Bidwell arrived. Most of the new settlers lived along Sullivan Creek.ⁱ

“The opening of the California Trail was nearly five years in the making. It began as an enterprising attempt in 1841 with the Bidwell-Bartleson Party struggling along the Humboldt River with their pack animals and ending with a desperate crossing of the Sierra Nevada into the San Joaquin Valley of central California. In 1843, Joseph Walker led a small wagon party off the Oregon Trail to the Raft River, in present day southeastern Idaho. From there he guided his party southwest to the Humboldt River near present day Wells, Nevada. After following the Humboldt River to its Sink, Walker faced the same problem of how to surmount the Sierra Nevada. Having abandoned his wagons, Walker found a passage over what later became Walker Pass at the southern end of the Sierra Nevada (near present day Bakersfield). The final breakthrough came later the next year with the Elisha Stephens wagon party who had followed Walker’s route to the Humboldt Sink. With guidance from a Paiute Indian known as Chief Truckee, they managed to find a wagon route along the Truckee River and passage over the Sierra Nevada in the vicinity of present day Donner Pass. Although it took them until early 1845 to get their wagons to Sutter’s Fort (now Sacramento), they had opened the first viable wagon route to northern California.”ⁱⁱ

The first known wagon train to cross northern Utah was the Bidwell-Bartleson party. They wanted to get to California by wagon. John Bidwell, a teacher, and John Bartleson led the group. They had little knowledge and no maps of the route west. Fortunately, they joined three priests who were being guided by a fur trapper, “Broken Hand” Fitzpatrick. He guided them as far as the Great Salt Lake.

The first known white woman to enter northern Utah, nineteen-year-old Nancy Kelsey, was part of the group. She traveled with her husband, Ben, and their two-week-old baby daughter.

“Our ignorance of the route was complete. We knew that California lay west, and that was the extent of our knowledge.” John Bidwell.

“October and the wagons were too heavy to get up the steep mountains, so they were left behind. Pushing through the mountains with a lighter load, the brave group walked into California.

No one was to travel this same route again. It did prove, however, that pioneers could reach California by land. The trip was promoted as being ‘so easy a woman could do it.’ⁱⁱⁱ



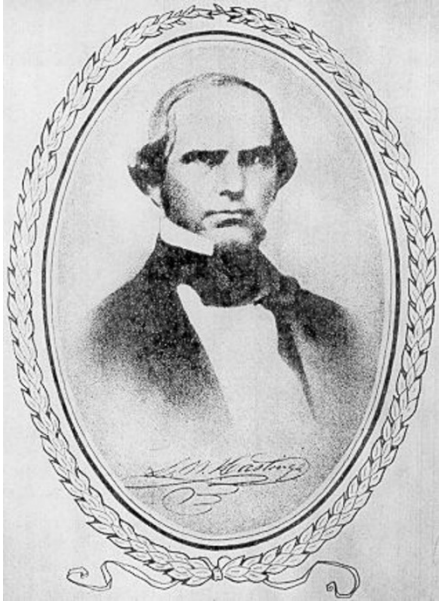
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/2/22/Wpdms_california_trail3.png/220px-Wpdms_california_trail3.png (accessed 8-8-2019).

ⁱ California Trail <https://emigranttrailswest.org/virtual-tour/california-trail/> (accessed 8-3-2019).

ⁱⁱ Bidwell-Bartleson Party, 1841 The Utah Journey, Gibbs Smith, Layton, 2019, pg. 84.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid. 85.

Hastings Cutoff Images included in article <https://www.history.com/news/donner-party-route-cannibalism> (accessed 8-8-2019):



Lansford Hastings



Weber Canyon in the Wasatch Mountains of Utah, circa 1868



The attempt to walk over the Sierra Nevada Mountains

https://www.history.com/.image/c_limit%2Ccs_srgb%2Cq_auto:good%2Cw_700/MTYyMTE1MjI3NDM1OTM1MzU3/donner-party-gettyimages-96741870.webp (accessed 8-8-2019).



Stumps of trees cut by the Donner Party, seen in Summit Valley circa 1866.

Hastings Cutoff Map



<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/2/28/HastingsCutoff.gif/250px-HastingsCutoff.gif>
(accessed 8-8-2019).



The Bonneville Salt Flats, photo taken by Helen Elaine Jones, July 10, 2019.



Tribute to pioneers who settled California. It is built on the site of a cabin used by the Donner Party. It is as tall as the snow that trapped these travelers in 1846. Photo taken by Helen Elaine Jones, July 12, 2019.

Hastings Cutoff Excerpt

(<https://www.history.com/news/donner-party-route-cannibalism> (accessed 8-8-2019).

“Hastings Cutoff, as it was known, was briefly touted as a better way for pioneers to get to Cal—even though its main promoter had never traveled the treacherous route.

Lansford Hastings was an ambitious attorney who saw the promise in California and Oregon years before the Gold Rush sent thousands of fortune-seekers out west. In the early 1840s, he spent time in the future states

To further those goals, Hastings published *The Emigrants' Guide to Oregon and California* in 1845, a book that billed itself as a one-stop guide to traveling West. He wanted to promote white settlement in California, which he hoped would become an independent state, and also to profit from his travels.

The book contained a passing reference to a route that would save more than 300 miles over the traditional California Trail that previous emigrants had used, which took travelers across Wyoming and into southern Idaho before crossing down into Nevada to reach California.

“The most direct route, for the California emigrants, would be to leave the Oregon route, about two hundred miles east from Fort Hall, thence bearing west southwest, to the Salt Lake; and thence continuing down to the bay of St. Francisco,” Hastings declared. The description was brief, but to those who dreamed of settling California, the route through Utah teemed with promise.

There was just one problem: Hastings had never tested out the route. Only in 1846, after the book had been in print for a year, did he get a chance to try it. The self-styled guide to all things California took the route from Salt Lake to Fort Bridger, Wyoming. The weather was mild and because he wasn't headed toward the Sierra Nevadas, time was not of the essence.

Once Hastings got to Fort Bridger, he spread the word that his overland route was faster and better than any other. “It was Hastings's renown as an author and trail leader, coupled with his presence on the trail...that helped persuade the emigrants to undertake the cutoff that now bears his name,” writes historian Thomas F. Andrews. To further publicize his route, Hastings wrote open letters claiming that his route would save pioneers' time, and that he'd meet anyone interested at Fort Bridger to lead them to California. (Source: Public Domain)

Instead of passing through Idaho, Hastings' route swerved into Utah. It involved trekking through Weber Canyon, a steep, dangerous path that involved walking through a quickly-moving river to get between sheer walls of quartz rock. That was just the start. Once Hastings' followers got further into Utah, they would have to cross the salt flats surrounding the Great Salt Lake, a salt desert that involved trekking for 80 miles with no water.

While the route was appealing on paper, it had its share of detractors, including James Clyman, a mountain man who had accompanied Hastings east from California. Another skeptic was journalist Edwin Bryant, who was concerned that the shortcut was too risky.

Clyman was also an old friend of James Frazier Reed, one of the Donner-Reed party's organizers. When they ran into one another at Fort Laramie, Wyoming, Clyman warned his friend not to take Hastings Cutoff. "I told him to 'take the regular wagon track and never leave it — it is barely possible to get through if you follow it — and it may be impossible if you don't,'" wrote Clyman. "Reed replied, 'There is a nigher route, and it is of no use to take so much of a roundabout course.' I admitted the fact, but told him about the great desert and the roughness of the Sierras, and that a straight route might turn out to be impracticable."

The allure of a shorter route was clear. The Donner-Reed party was large—with nearly 90 people—and had already taken plenty of time on the trail. By the time they got to Fort Bridger, they were determined to take the new route. Despite Hastings' promise to guide their party along the route, he was not there to escort them: he had gone ahead with another party.

The trail presented problems from the start. Unlike the California Trail, which had already been well worn by travelers, Hastings Cutoff lacked clear markings or wagon ruts to follow. Ahead of the Donners, Hastings' party ran into serious trouble when they tried to traverse Weber Canyon. He left a note encouraging the Donners and Reeds to go a different way.

Members of the party rode ahead to catch up with him, but Hastings didn't come back with them. Instead, he told them about his proposed alternative route. Back on the trail, the party had to make the hard decision to follow through with his recommendations.

Disaster ensued. The men of the party had to hack through the Wasatch Mountains themselves, moving trees and cutting down brush to make it possible for the party's enormous wagons to get through. After weeks of wasted time in the mountains, they finally made it to Utah's Great Salt Lake Desert.

It was a perilous journey. The salt flats had turned into mud that made their wagon wheels practically useless. As the Donner Party slowly dragged their wagons across the Great Salt Lake's flats, they began to offload everything they could, dumping their personal belongings overboard as they coaxed their oxen and their primitive vehicles forward. Oxen became dehydrated and died or ran away; members of the party began to see mirages of lakes and even Hastings' party.

When the party finally made it across the salt flats, they rejoined the trail usually taken by emigrants. Now they were running a month late, and many of their oxen had run off or died on the salt flats. The worst was yet to come. Because of the time lost taking Hastings Cutoff, the party ran into a catastrophic—and fatal—snowstorm. Only 48 of the original 87 party members would survive getting snowbound in the Sierra Nevada that winter, and hunger and desperation would turn some of them into cannibals.

The doomed party's wagon ruts can still be seen on Utah's salt flats—a mute reminder of what happened when the party trusted an impresario's words about how to travel to California."¹ (Source: Library of Congress)

¹ <https://www.history.com/news/donner-party-route-cannibalism> (accessed 8-8-2019).

Mormon Battalion Wagon Route to California Excerpts

The Mormon Battalion is the religious military unit from a single religion to ever serve in the U.S. military. Military leaders wanted 500 men in the Army of the West to fight during the Mexican/American War. Their journey begins at Council Bluffs, Iowa, along the Santa Fe Trail across southwest deserts to the Pacific Ocean. This group actually made a wagon route between present day Tucson, Arizona and San Diego, California.

The decision to join the Mormon Battalion required great thought as would be expected when someone asks men to leave their families just before their own journey across the plains to a new settlement church leader, Brigham Young, had chosen. Age requirements of 18 to 45, first specified by Lieutenant Colonel Allen, were ignored by a number of volunteers. The oldest recruit was 67 year old Samuel Gould and the youngest was Alfred Higgins, barely 14.ⁱ

“When the five companies were complete, there were 496 men listed on the company rosters. Three other Mormons were on the command roster and one man joined up at Fort Leavenworth, making a total of five hundred volunteers in the battalion. Four others, including Captain Allen, completed the command staff. Thirty-one wives of battalion members accompanied their husbands. Although twenty signed up as laundresses, only the names of eighteen laundresses have been identified. To date, only two women are known to be mentioned in journals as doing soldier laundry. In both cases, the soldier paid them for doing his laundry. There is no record located that confirms the women were ever paid by the army. Forty-four children accompanied the thirty-one couples.”ⁱⁱ

The first commanding officer of the Mormon Battalion, Colonel James Allen, became sick near Fort Leavenworth. Captain Jefferson Hunt assigned several officers to lead the men on the way to Santa Fe. Lieutenant Colonel Philip St. George Cooke, led the battalion the rest of the way to California.

“Colonel Cooke succeeded in blazing a wagon road to California as directed. In California, they fought no battles. The war with Mexico was almost at an end by the time they arrived except for a few skirmishes with Indians. The battalion was discharged at Fort Moore in Los Angeles on July 16, 1847.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The men of the Mormon Battalion are honored for their willingness to fight for the United States as loyal American citizens. They participated in the early development of California by building Fort Moore in Los Angeles, a courthouse in San Diego, digging wells, and making bricks used throughout southern California. The Mormon Battalion was officially mustered out in July 1847, after completing their one year enlistment. About 60 members re-enlisted for six months in California.^{iv}

Some men discharged from service with the Mormon Battalion extended their duty under the command of General Stephen W. Kearney, the officer who was asked to create the battalion. Men traveling with General Kearney on June 22, 1847, buried under the middle of a cabin used by members of the Donner Party remains of bodies

found in the vicinity, according the history walk presentation offered at a memorial to the infamous Donner Party.^v

The travels of members of the Mormon Battalion were not over once they were released from the Army. Many travelled over 4,000 miles in less than two years, returning from California all the way back to Council Bluffs to get their families (pioneering the California Trail used by many in the Gold Rush just two years later), and then doubling back once again to Utah. And they did not rest when they finally arrived in Utah. Their hard earned desert survival skills - including irrigation and desert farming learned from the Pima Native Americans along the Gila River - were in great demand. Former members of the Battalion were repeatedly "salted" in almost every settlement of eastern and European Mormon "greenhorns" throughout the mountain west, from northern Mexico to southern Canada.^{vi}

ⁱ <http://www.mormonbattalion.com/File/a3bbbb9f-eb8c-4cc8-b0bc-bb29b616a88c> (accessed 7-31-2019).

ⁱⁱ Mormon Battalion: United States Army of the West, 1846-1848 by Norma Ricketts, <https://www.google.com/search?tbm=bks&hl=en&q=Mormon+Battalion%3A+United+States+Army+of+the+West%2C+1846-1848> (accessed 7-31-2019). Preview with no page numbers.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} <http://www.mormonbattalion.com/File/a3bbbb9f-eb8c-4cc8-b0bc-bb29b616a88c> (accessed 7-31-2019).

^v Helen Elaine Jones, reflection of a visit to Donner Memorial State Park, Truckee, California, July 12, 2019.

^{vi} <http://www.mormonbattalion.com/File/a3bbbb9f-eb8c-4cc8-b0bc-bb29b616a88c> (accessed 7-31-2019).

Mormon Trail Excerpts

The Mormon Trail officially began in Iowa City, Iowa according to some available maps. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints living in Nauvoo, Illinois experienced another request from neighbors to leave in 1846. Brigham Young became church leader with the death of Joseph Smith, Jr. in June 1844.

Brigham Young directed members living in Nauvoo to cross the Mississippi River into Iowa when mobs forced them from their homes. Many members on the journey saw the settlement at Winter Quarters, now Florence, Nebraska, or Council Bluffs, Iowa as the beginning of their journey. Brigham Young used the north side of the Platte River along the Oregon Trail. This decision for people affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint to travel across the river from those using the Oregon Trail gave these changes the name: Mormon Trail.

An advance party left Winter Quarters in early April. Several leaders of the company included Wilford Woodruff, Orson Pratt, Willard Richards, and Brigham Young. Brigham's brother, Lorenzo had his wife with the group, an altered development from the original plan. Lorenzo also brought a milk cow along despite Brigham's objections. Lorenzo agreed to abandon the cow along the trail if she slowed them down. The cow made the trip providing milk and butter along the way.

A practice that set travelers along the Mormon trail apart during the journey involved Sunday travel. The pioneers rested on Sunday. They found that day of rest for animals helped them stay in good condition. A guide who traveled the Oregon Trail often noted that resting every Sunday would get the traveler to California 20 days sooner.ⁱ

In June, U.S. military leaders approached the Mormons camped at Council Bluffs, Iowa. The letter from the Secretary of War, William Marcy requested volunteers to fight the Mexican/American War. The officers who contacted church leaders with a request for 500 men had to persuade men to leave their families to accept the assignment. Church leaders gave counsel on the matter, but individual men made the decision. The clothing allowance would help their families join groups crossing the plains. The 500 volunteers left Council Bluffs, Iowa on July 16, 1846.ⁱⁱ

The advanced company made notes about the journey as they traveled. Journal entries of where to find water and grass for animals, the distance between water sources included the development of a roadometer through the efforts of William Clayton and built by Orson Pratt. These notes also listed where to cross rivers, and where the group set up a ferry for wider rivers.

Just after passing Chimney Rock, the psychologic halfway point of the journey, the Mormon Trail joined the Oregon Trail due to sheer rock walls on the north side of the river at Fort Laramie.

The trail through South Pass, in present Wyoming, brought the advance party near Independence Rock and Devils Gate would later become the location of a tragedy involving handcart pioneers in the Willie and Martin Handcart Company in 1857. The

trail across the Sweetwater River to Fort Bridger brought a meeting between Brigham Young and mountain man, Jim Bridger.

Jim Bridger examined the maps Brigham Young showed him. Bridger saw the maps he reviewed of no value. He did not recommend following the Green River drawn on the map. Despite this council, Brigham Young's group left the Oregon Trail.

When the group reached what is now the Wyoming-Utah border, many of the group including Brigham Young contacted mountain fever. The illness slowed the company three days. Due to the mountain fever delay, Brigham Young sent a party forward along the trail used by the Donner Party in 1846.

When the group with Orson Pratt left Echo Canyon, there were still 36 miles of rugged mountains and brush to reach the Salt Lake valley taxed the strength of men as they tried to improve the road. Orson Pratt and Erastus Snow were the first to enter the Salt Lake valley on July 21. The larger group behind them arrived on July 22. Brigham Young, still sick from mountain fever was among the last to enter the valley. When he arrived in a carriage provided by Wilford Woodruff, he viewed the valley. On July 24, 1847, Brigham Young made it official, "This is the right place, drive on," as recorded by Wilford Woodruff.ⁱⁱⁱ

Among the company traveling with Brigham Young were two more women, in addition to Lorenzo Young's wife, two boys under seven years old, and some teenage boys. Several men described as "servants" but were actually slaves became part of the first group entering the Salt Lake valley. Green Flake, Oscar Crosby, and Hark Lay made the first journey along the Mormon Trail. Green Flake was assigned by his owner to build a house for the family who would follow later. Green Flake was freed after his owner died.^{iv}

Many families used the Mormon Trail until the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad. Family records of the trip include what some women experienced along the trail. "Ann Prior walked every step of the way [to the Salt Lake Valley], over 1000 miles, across the plains. When the journey began, she was 5 months pregnant. Amelia was 7 years old and she also walked with her mother, all the way. About 6 weeks after they arrived, Ann gave birth to a healthy baby boy."^v

ⁱ Hal Knight and Dr. Stanley B. Kimball, E]xcerpts from "111 Days to Zion" by Hal Knight and Dr. Stanley B. Kimball, Deseret Press, Salt Lake City, 1978

ⁱⁱ <http://www.mormonbattalion.com/File/a3b9999f-eb8c-4cc8-b0bc-bb29b616a88c> (accessed 7- 31-2019). See Mormon Battalion Excerpt for more information.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hal Knight and Dr. Stanley B. Kimball, E]xcerpts from "111 Days to Zion" by Hal Knight and Dr. Stanley B. Kimball, Deseret Press, Salt Lake City, 1978.

^{iv} The Utah Journey, Gibbs Smith Publishing, Layton, 2009, 106.

^v Tidbits Worth Repeating: From the Webb Family History, Compiled by Arlene Hall Parry, 2019, page 24. Booklet in excerpt compiler's possession.

Oregon Trail Highlights

The Oregon Trail covered more than 2,200 miles between Independence, Missouri to Oregon City, Oregon. This popular route, used by American pioneers, brought hundreds of thousands west during the mid-1800's. The difficult trail across the plains, bent around mountains, and meant crossing rivers multiple times. The trail crossed the present day states of Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, and Idaho before entering the Oregon Territory. The Oregon Trail and Oregon Donation Land Act in 1850, encouraged settlers to travel the long distance to settle Oregon.

The Oregon Trail was created through the efforts of missionaries beginning in 1834. Merchant Nathan Wyeth led a missionary group to an outpost in Idaho. In 1835, Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and another missionary couple wanted to bring Christianity to the native people of the Oregon Territory. The Whitman Mission operated until 1842. The journal kept by Narcissa Whitman became published. It helped inspired part of the Great Migration of 1843. Whitman headed west yet again in 1843. He met a huge wagon train destined for Oregon. The group included 120 wagons, about 1,000 people and thousands of livestock. Their trek began on May 22 and lasted five months. Whitman turned his attention to helping settlers arriving in the new territory. Whitman used his medical training to help Cayuse people during a measles epidemic in 1847. Whitman, Narcissa and some of those working with them were killed, or held hostage for months.

The time of year settlers began using the Oregon Trail was critically important. If wagon trains left cities near the Mississippi River in April or May if they hoped to reach Oregon before the winter snows began. Leaving in late spring also ensured there'd be ample grass along the way to feed livestock. Travelers on the trail found the first trading post at Fort Kearney. These groups averaged between ten and fifteen miles per day.

From Fort Kearney, they followed the Platte River over 600 miles to Fort Laramie and then ascended the Rocky Mountains where they faced hot days and cold nights. Summer thunderstorms were common and made traveling slow and treacherous. Travelers had a goal: reach Independence Rock by July 4. Arrival by July 4 meant they were on schedule.

The trail took travelers over the Rocky Mountains through South Pass. The trail included a stop at Fort Hall to purchase supplies. Three more difficult areas must be faced before reaching the desired Oregon destination: the Snake River, the Blue Mountains, and finally the Columbia River.

There were dangers along the Oregon Trail due to diseases like dysentery, cholera, smallpox or flu, accidents when wagon wheels ran over people because travelers' ignorance, fatigue, and drowning. Swollen rivers were troublesome for wagons and walkers. It could be said that drowning killed more people than any of the other dangers along the route.

Conditions along the Oregon Trail improved as bridges and ferries were built to make water crossings safer. Settlements and additional supply posts built along the way gave weary travelers rest before continuing their journey.

The completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869 impacted use of the Oregon Trail. Westward wagon trains decreased significantly as settlers chose the faster and more reliable mode of transportation. The route continued to serve those with dreams of gold in California. It was also a main thoroughfare for massive cattle drives between 1866 and 1888.ⁱ

ⁱ <https://www.history.com/topics/westward-expansion/oregon-trail> (accessed 8-3-2019).

Name: _____

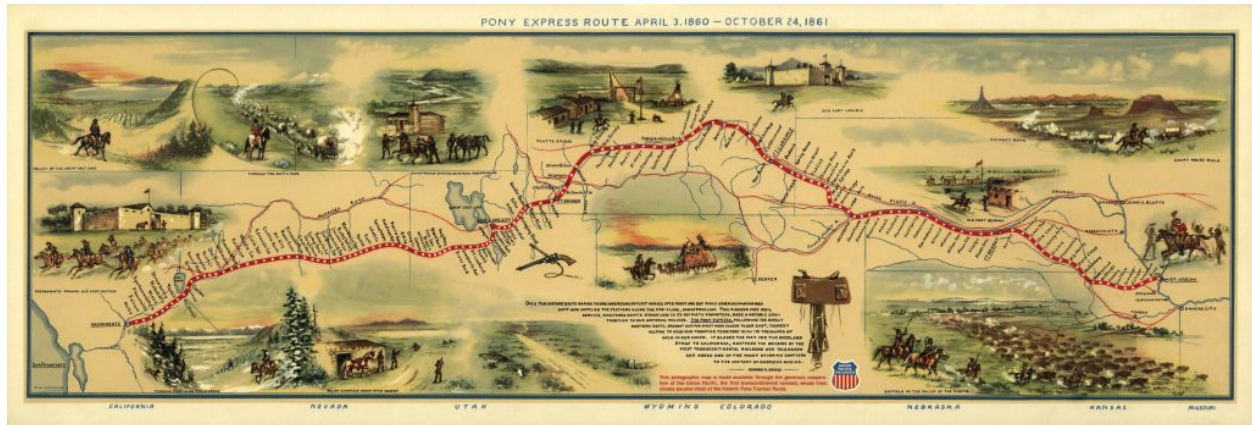
Period: _____

Overland Trail Comparison Chart

| Trail Name | Developer | Starting Point | Destination | Important Main Ideas about trail design, problems, results, etc. | Were women present? |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|---|----------------------------|
| Santa Fe | | | | | |
| Oregon | | | | | |
| California | | | | | |
| Trail Name | Developer | Starting Point | Destination | Important Main Ideas about trail design, problems, results, | Women present? |

| | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|-------------|--|
| | | | | etc. | |
| Hastings Cutoff | | | | | |
| Mormon | | | | | |
| Wagon Route of Mormon Battalion | | | | | |
| Pony Express | | | | | |
| Transcontinental Railroad & Telegraph | | | | | |

Pony Express Route



http://nationalponyexpress.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Pony_Express_Map_William_Henry_Jackson-1024x348.jpg
(accessed 8-8-2019).

“More than 1,800 miles in 10 days! From St. Joseph, Missouri, to Sacramento, California the Pony Express could deliver a letter faster than ever before. In operation for only 18 months between April 1860 and October 1861, the Pony Express nevertheless has become synonymous with the Old West. In the era before electronic communication, the Pony Express was the thread that tied East to West.

As a result of the 1849 Gold Rush, the 1847 Mormon exodus to Utah and the thousands who moved west on the Oregon Trail starting in the 1840s, the need for a fast mail service beyond the Rocky Mountains became obvious. This need was partially filled by outfits such as the Butterfield Overland Mail Service starting in 1857 and private carriers in following years.

But when postmaster general Joseph Holt scaled back overland mail service to California and the central region of the country in 1858, an even greater need for mail arose. The creation of the Leavenworth & Pike's Peak Express Company by William H. Russell, Alexander Majors and William B. Waddell became the answer. It was later known as the Pony Express.”¹

“The Pony Express captivated America’s imagination and helped win federal aid for a more economical overland postal system. It also contributed to the economy of the towns on its route and served the mail-service needs of the American West in the days before the telegraph or an efficient transcontinental railroad.

Riders, who were paid approximately \$25 per week and carried loads estimated at up to 20 pounds of mail, were changed every 75 to 100 miles, with horses switched out every 10 to 15 miles. Among the riders was the legendary frontiersman and showman William “Buffalo Bill” Cody (1846-1917), who reportedly signed on with the Pony Express at age 14. The company’s riders set their fastest time with Lincoln’s inaugural address, which was delivered in just

less than eight days. The initial cost of Pony Express delivery was \$5 for every half-ounce of mail. The company began as a private enterprise and its owners hoped to gain a profitable delivery contract from the U.S. government, but that never happened.ⁱⁱ

“Home stations were scattered along the route, with food and sleeping quarters for riders after they had ridden all day (or night) to hand off the mochila to a new rider. Because existing stage stations were often not close enough together for Pony Express use, additional stations had to be built. Because most of the trail through Utah and Nevada crossed wasteland, nearly all of the relay stations there (rudimentary structures, providing the barest essentials for survival) had to be built from scratch. In parts of the western route, the trail itself had to be surveyed to ensure that it was the fastest route.

The horses that were used varied according to the terrain, but most were half-breed [California](#) mustangs. Well fed with the best grain, these horses were faster than most Indian mounts, and, in addition to meeting the demands of the schedule, they often saved the lives of riders who were able to outdistance Native American attackers. Of course, the best horses were of no use without experienced riders, and so Russell, Majors and Waddell assigned their division superintendents the task of hiring 70–80 riders each. They sought young men born to the saddle, undaunted by danger, and generally slight of build so as to minimize the strain on their mounts.”

Candidates also needed knowledge of the portion of the trail to which they were assigned. Anyone riding at top speed along a trail in rain or snow or at night had to be familiar with the terrain. For their efforts, the riders were paid from \$100 to \$150 per month according to their run; aside from top executives, riders were paid the most in the service. Wages for station keepers and general hands ranged down to \$50 per month, plus room and board, which in most cases did not amount to much.ⁱⁱⁱ

“On October 26, 1861, the Pony Express was officially terminated, but it was not until November that the last letters completed their journey over the route.”^{iv}

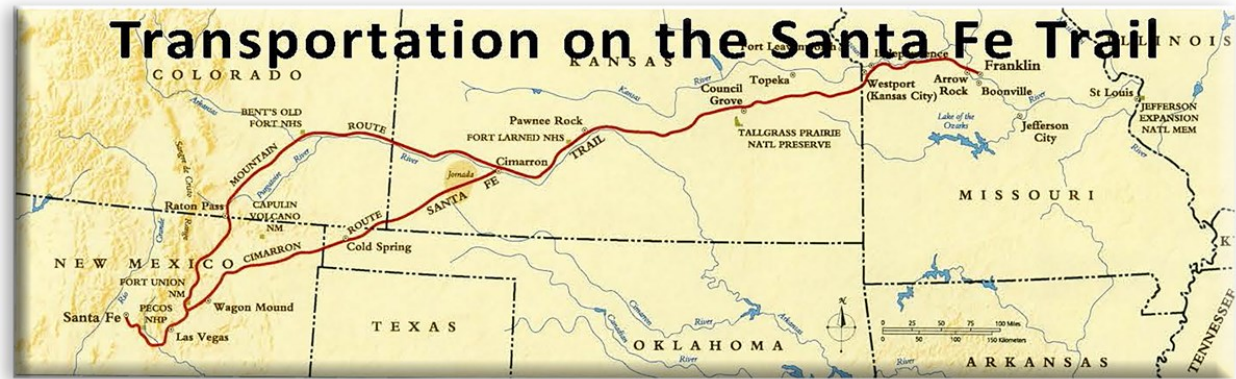
ⁱ <https://www.nps.gov/poex/learn/historyculture/index.htm> (accessed 8-8-2019).

ⁱⁱ <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/pony-express-debuts> (accessed 8-8-2019).

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Pony-Express/The-first-delivery> (accessed 8-8-2019).

^{iv} <https://www.nps.gov/poex/learn/historyculture/index.htm> (accessed 8-8-2019).

Santa Fe Trail



https://www.nps.gov/fols/learn/historyculture/images/Transportation-on-the-Santa-Fe-Trail_Page_1.jpg?maxwidth=1200&maxheight=1200&autorotate=false (accessed 8-8-2019).

History of the Santa Fe Trail

(excerpts from <https://www.history.com/topics/westward-expansion/santa-fe-trail>(accessed 8-8-2019).

“The Santa Fe Trail was America’s first commercial highway. Traders established the trail—which connected Missouri to Santa Fe, New Mexico and covered some 900 miles of the Great Plains—in 1821. Before its demise due to the completion of the Santa Fe railroad, the Santa Fe Trail served as a thoroughfare for countless traders, pioneers and America’s military, and it played a crucial role in America’s westward expansion.

When William Becknell learned Mexico was open for business, he wasted no time heading for Santa Fe. He left Franklin, Missouri, in September 1821 with a small group of men and a cargo of goods and arrived in Santa Fe on November 16. They were welcomed with open arms by Mexican citizens and government officials and encouraged to return soon with more goods to trade.

Becknell’s initial path to Santa Fe became known as the Mountain Route. It followed the Arkansas River to the Colorado Plains to the Purgatoire River and across the narrow, treacherous Raton Mountain Pass into Santa Fe.

Becknell hoped to find a faster route. His exact course there is disputed; however, the route he took home became known as the Cimarron Route and was the most popular track on the Santa Fe Trail.

The Cimarron Route followed the Arkansas River to Cimarron, Kansas, near what would later become Dodge City. From there, it trekked through southwest Kansas and the western panhandle of Oklahoma before venturing into Round Mound and Point of Rocks, New Mexico and San Miguel.

After navigating the Glorieta Mountain Pass, it ended in Santa Fe. The Cimarron Route was about 100 miles shorter than the Mountain Route and less dangerous, although it wasn't without its challenges. Water could be scarce along this barren, desert path and Indian raids were common.

In 1845, the United States voted to annex Texas (which included parts of present-day New Mexico) from Mexico, causing tensions to mount between the two countries.

In 1846, the United States declared war on Mexico and sent General Stephen Watts Kearney and his 1,600 men along the Santa Fe Trail to occupy New Mexico. Kearney took the Mountain Route, hoping its hazardous terrain would offer protection from Mexican troops.

Although the Raton Pass took its toll on Kearney and his troops, they took over Santa Fe without resistance. When the Mexican-American War ended, the United States purchased Mexico's southern territories including New Mexico, California and Arizona.

The Santa Fe Trail was mainly a trade route but saw its share of emigrants, especially during the California Gold Rush and the Pike's Peak Gold Rush in Colorado. The trail also became an important route for stagecoach travel, stagecoach mail delivery and as a mail route for the famed Pony Express.

As the Union Pacific Railroad expanded west, it was clear the Santa Fe Trail's days were numbered. Mule and oxen-drawn wagons couldn't compete with trains for hauling freight or speeding passengers westward.

On February 9, 1880 a Santa Fe Railway Company train arrived with considerable fanfare at the Santa Fe railroad depot and effectively ended the Santa Fe Trail."

The Impact of the Transcontinental Railroad and Telegraph Systems

By Helen Elaine Jones



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/ff/ff6/Transcontinental_railroad_route.png/330px-Transcontinental_railroad_route.png (accessed 8-9-2019).

The celebration at Promontory Point in northern Utah on May 10, 1869 marked the completion of work to connect people living between Omaha, Nebraska and Sacramento, California. The completed line now meant starting a new life west of the Mississippi River meant people could ride through country on a train in a shorter time than those who crossed the same distance with wagons, hand carts, or on foot. The photo of the celebration does not show any women at the event, but it did impact them. It raises several questions: What was the railroads impact on women? What was women's impact on the railroad?

The railroad made getting manufactured goods from industrial centers east of the Mississippi much faster. The general stores of larger towns could offer a larger variety of items for sale. Farm families, including women could get their produce to market easier.

The railroad opened opportunities for women to train in the medical field. Martha Hughes Cannon, Ellis Reynolds Shipp, and Romania Pratt brought medical skills learned by traveling outside Utah back to serve the women of the Utah territory and state. Women used the railroad for travel as they became more involved in national issues. The temperance associations trying to improve conditions for workers, and families could send their advocates to western cities to deliver their message in person easier. The train brought Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Salt Lake City in 1871 to deliver a suffrage speech at the Salt Lake Tabernacle. The train took Emmeline B. Wells, editor of the *Woman's Exponent*, to national suffrage meetings to represent women who could vote until the passage of the Edmunds-Tucker Act took away voting rights in Utah for men and women.¹

On June 16, 1860, about ten weeks after the Pony Express began operations, Congress authorized a bill instructing the Secretary of the Treasury to subsidize the building of a transcontinental telegraph line to connect the Missouri River and the Pacific Coast. The passage of the bill resulted in the incorporation of the Overland Telegraph Company of California and the Pacific Telegraph Company of Nebraska. While the lines were under construction the Pony Express operated as usual. Letters and newspapers were carried the entire length of the line from St. Joseph to Sacramento, but telegrams were carried only between the rapidly advancing wire ends. On October 26, 1861, San Francisco was in direct contact with New York City.”ⁱⁱ

The transcontinental railroad assisted the development of training for telegraph workers. In 1866, Deseret Telegraph opened a school for young men and young women in Utah to learn the skills needed for these positions. Western Union developed a training program to train women for telegraph jobs in 1869. Although only four percent of telegraphers were women in 1870, their participation rose to twenty percent in 1920.ⁱⁱⁱ

The ability to travel and communicate across America gave women across the country a chance to work together on issues of common interests. The ability to meet with government leaders on extending voting to women were enhanced by the completion of the transcontinental railroad and telegraph.

ⁱ <https://www.utahwomenshistory.org/lessons/utah-women-and-the-railroad/> (accessed 8-3-2019). Article supported by information provided by betterdays2020.com.

ⁱⁱ <https://www.nps.gov/poex/learn/historyculture/index.htm> (accessed 8-8-2019).

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.utahwomenshistory.org/lessons/utah-women-and-the-railroad/> (accessed 8-3-2019). Article supported by information provided by betterdays2020.com.