

Is your LDS pioneer ancestor listed in the Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel database?

The Church History Library maintains a database on the Church's website (accessible through www.mormontrail.lds.org) that lists the names of known LDS pioneers and the companies in which they traveled to Utah (1847-1868). Church historians estimate that over 60,000 pioneers traveled overland to Utah (only about 3% of whom came by handcart). The official rosters of the pioneer companies are housed in the archives of the Church History Library; many of the lists are incomplete or missing, but all of those that do exist have been indexed and input into this database. Of the estimated 60,000+ emigrants to Utah only about 40,000 names have been identified, leaving the database lacking about 20,000 pioneers' names and information.

On the website you are able to search for your ancestor and the respective company in which he or she traveled. You can also see an alphabetized list of everyone currently known to have been a member of a specific company and read transcribed diaries, life sketches, and newspaper accounts that describe what happened in that company during the journey. The transcribed documents can be printed from the convenience of your home computer! Even if your ancestor didn't leave behind a recorded account of his or her pioneering experience, you can read other emigrants' accounts who traveled in the same company. This approach will give you insightful information and clues about what the emigration experience may have been like for your own ancestor. And you may even find that your ancestor was mentioned in someone else's account!

The Church History Library encourages you to help make the database more accurate and complete! If your ancestor's name is missing from the database, an option exists on the menu screen to add that name after supplying adequate documentation. After you submit your ancestor's name and your personal contact information, a representative of the Church History Library will either call or correspond (by e-mail) with you to help determine if sufficient documentation exists to qualify your ancestor's name for inclusion. If you are unable to pinpoint the emigrant company in which your ancestor traveled, your ancestor's name will be placed in the category "Unidentified Companies" for the year that he or she is known to have emigrated.

This database can be very useful for youth groups planning handcart re-enactment activities at Martin's Cove, Wyoming, or other locations. Many emigrants in the Willie and Martin handcart companies left behind no records of their existence (diaries, life sketches, etc.), so this website can provide valuable information about others in the company who recorded their own perspectives and experiences during the arduous westward trek.

If your pioneer ancestor kept a diary, life sketch, or reminiscent account of his or her experience crossing the plains and that account is not represented in the company's list of sources on the website, please contact the Church History Library so that we can arrange to add this valuable information to the database. You can contact the Church History

Library by sending an e-mail directly from the database (choose menu option "Submit Information" on the left side of the database's main page) or by sending an e-mail to churchhistorylibrary@ldschurch.org. You may also contact Melvin Bashore, Church History Information Specialist, at 801-240-3582.

(Information submitted by Jay G. Burrup, Church History Library)