

Historic Sites and Markers Along the Mormon and Other Great Western Trails

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Historic Sites and Markers along the Mormon and Other Great Western Trails, by Stanley B. Kimball. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1988. xviii, 320 pp. Maps, illustrations, appendix, bibliography, index. \$37.50 cloth, \$15.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY COY F. CROSS II, SCOTT AIR FORCE BASE

Shortly after Joseph Smith organized the Church of the Latter Day Saints in western New York in 1830, he established the church in Kirtland, Ohio, and in western Missouri. By 1839 intolerant neighbors had driven the Mormons from Ohio and Missouri into Illinois. The unaccepting mobs allowed the Saints only a brief respite in Illinois before killing Smith in 1844 and driving the nonconformists from their new home. Smith's successor, Brigham Young, led his followers out of Illinois, across Iowa, and finally to Utah, where they established their permanent settlement in 1847. Between 1847 and 1869, when builders completed the transcontinental railroad, Mormons from all over the United States and Europe used the western trails to reach their "new Zion." After 1869 most Mormon emigrants became "Pullman Pioneers" and the importance of the trails declined.

Professor Stanley B. Kimball describes *Historic Sites and Markers along the Mormon and Other Great Western Trails* as "a comprehensive guide to more than 550 historic sites and markers scattered along some 10,000 miles of emigrant trails" (xii). His guidebook contains detailed maps not only of the best-known trek from Nauvoo, Illinois, to the Great Salt Lake Basin, but also the earlier ones from New York to Ohio and Ohio to Missouri. At the beginning of each chapter Kimball briefly recounts the events that inspired the migration over that particular section of trail. He also includes pictures as examples of the markers along the way and detailed directions on how to locate them. Then he cites the inscription of each marker. The detailed descriptions of remote locations suggest that Professor Kimball supplemented his knowledge as a respected historian of the Mormon people and their migration by driving or walking all ten thousand miles of the trails.

Despite the attention to detail in the guidebook, the maps could have made a greater contribution if there were a map of the entire United States to help readers see how each trail fit with the others; also, since the maps are not located near the related text, readers have to flip back and forth across many pages to relate the narrative to the map. Finally, the title of the book leads one to believe that the "other great western trails" are given equal treatment. They are not. These minor objections should not detract from the value of Professor Kimball's work. The book is an invaluable guide for any student of

Mormon history or any nonstudent interested in retracing the steps of the great migration to Salt Lake City.

Ghost Towns of Kansas: A Traveler's Guide, by Daniel Fitzgerald. Foreword by Joseph W. Snell. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988. xiv, 348 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$25.00 cloth, \$12.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY SUSANNE GEORGE, KEARNEY STATE COLLEGE

Ghost Towns of Kansas, a culmination of ten years of research by Daniel C. Fitzgerald, focuses on one hundred towns that blossomed briefly on the plains. The book is a helpful guide for history buffs, photographers, and artifact collectors in locating these "dead-towns" scattered across Kansas. Fitzgerald breathes life into these forgotten settlements, finding in each community a unique personality. Steamboat towns, health resorts, coal and oil settlements, military posts, and farming communities come alive, with wagons rumbling down dusty streets and gunshots ricocheting off county courthouses. The book could be subtitled "Biographies in Plains History."

Some of these "children of Kansas" were dreamers: Octagon City hoped to create a vegetarian utopia, while Pawnee wanted to be the state capital. Others were tenacious, such as Irving, which survived a series of natural disasters: two tornadoes, two floods, and two major fires within nine years. Still others grew up rough and rowdy: the infamous Trail City was "so clogged with prostitutes that they overflowed the brothels and hotels and set up shops and tents along the city's streets" (288). Fitzgerald manages to rattle some skeletons in the community closets and even to awaken some lingering ghosts.

However diverse their origins and aims, patterns seem to emerge in the downfall of these once thriving and hopeful communities. Disension over slavery, over the establishment of county seats, and over the routing of railroads pitted neighbor against neighbor. Natural disasters, such as tornadoes, floods, droughts, blizzards, fires, and grasshoppers, destroyed what homesteaders had so painstakingly created on the harsh prairie, while economic panics aggravated their distress. Using primary sources, Fitzgerald analyzes the causes of the decline of each settlement, making this work an important addition to American studies.

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