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# The Mormon Trail (South Fork)

Geary County Historical Society

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

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## The Mormon Trail (South Fork)



Between 1846 and 1869 thousands of Mormon immigrants traversed the Great Plains enroute to sanctuary in the Great Basin of the Rocky Mountains. The main route ran through Nebraska, paralleling the Platte River.

A cholera epidemic in the fall of 1853 caused the bulk of the immigrants to seek a new pathway west. Mormon wagon and handcart companies traveled from Westport, Missouri, down the Santa Fe Trail to 110-Mile Creek crossing, then across the prairie [through Osage and Wabaunsee Counties] into Geary County and Fort Riley, and on north to link up with the main Mormon route.

Used heavily by Mormon wagon trains in 1854, the route descended diagonally down the face of Grant Ridge just south of Interstate 70, crossed Marshall Army Airfield and forded the Kansas River. It

then crossed the Main Post portion of Fort Riley and crossed the rimrock area behind the post headquarters. From there the trail ascended Custer Hill.

The trail was used heavily by the military, settlers, and freighters after the Mormons abandoned the route. The northern segment became known as the Fort Kearny Road in 1858.

This trail was one of the first connecting routes between the Santa Fe and Oregon trails and was a main artery of settlement and commerce in territorial Kansas.

*Geary County Historical Society and  
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*



*Mormons crossing the plains with hand carts from Florence Neb to Salt Lake  
This train started from Iowa City and passed thro Council Bluffs 1856*

MORMONS CROSSING THE PLAINS  
George Simons  
Courtesy Council Bluffs Public Library, Council Bluffs, Iowa