

California National Historic Trail

City of Rocks National Reserve



**A self-guided journey to discovering
the California National Historic Trail at City of Rocks**



City of Rocks National Reserve is a partnership between the National Park Service and the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation

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Prepared by
Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation
and the
National Park Service

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www.nps.gov/ciro

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Contents

What's in store before you explore? There are eight stops, six of which have interpretive signage, along the 10 mile auto route.

Introduction	3
Map—Overview	4
Parting of the Ways to the Elba Basin	5
The Almo Valley	6
Twin Sisters in the Distance	7
The Salt Lake Alternate	8
Replica Wagons	9
Wagon Trains	10
Camp	11
Guide Books	12
Trails West Markers	12
Entrance to City of Rocks	13
Trail Ruts	14
First View of Circle Creek Basin	15
Tracy Homestead	16
Camp Rock	17
Treasure Rock	20
Map— Locations of the Waysides and Markers	21
Artists on the Trail	23
Register Rock	24
Pinnacle Pass	27
Ledyard and Margaret Ann Alsip Frink	29
Twin Sisters	30
Salt Lake Alternate-Boise Kelton Stage Route	32
Post Office	33
Granite Pass	34
The Mormon Battalion	35
Life on the Trail	36
Emigrant and Native American Interactions	38
Trouble on the Trail	39
Emigrant Names	40
For Further Study / Credits	41
Bibliography	42

Introduction

City of Rocks National Reserve (Reserve) was established by Congress on November 18, 1988 in order to preserve and protect the significant historical and cultural resources; to manage recreational use; to protect and maintain scenic quality; and to interpret the nationally significant values of the Reserve.

The primary significance of the Reserve is the California National Historic Trail and its associated features. These features include the wagon ruts and granite monoliths with signatures as well as the open landscape.

This booklet provides information about the California National Historic Trail from Connor Junction at the north end of the Jim Sage Mountains where the California Trail enters the Elba Basin and follows the trail south through the Almo Valley and present day Almo before turning west through the City of Rocks and then continuing west over Granite Pass.

Over 240,000 people traveled the California Trail between 1843-1882 with the heaviest traffic occurring in the years between 1849, the beginning of the Gold Rush and the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad on May 10, 1869. After the railroad was completed, traffic on the overland trails diminished.

Much of what we know about the journey along the California Trail comes from diaries and journals the emigrants wrote. Journal and diary entries have been included in this booklet to tell the stories of the people, brave and determined, who passed through City of Rocks on the overland road to California.

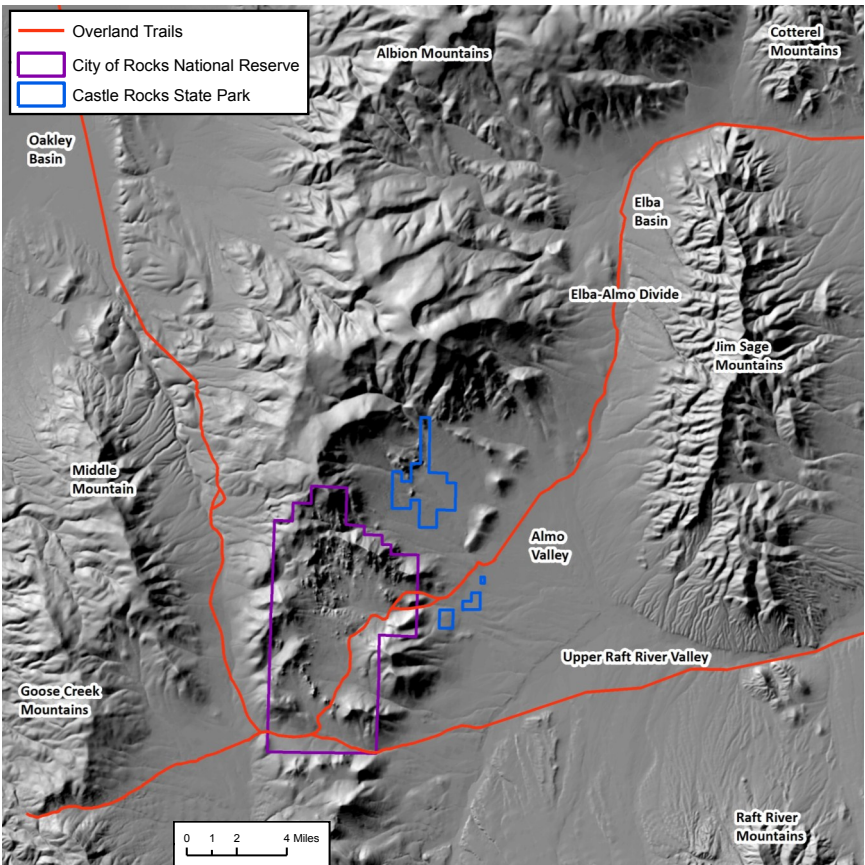
“This journey is only for those who have health and spirit to enjoy and to endure; to those who are unfortunate, it is a chapter of woe.”

Elizabeth Cornelia Woodcock Ferris, 1856

Map—Overview

Why does the Trail go where it goes? This map shows the topography of the area and how it dictated the paths of the trails. Emigrants wanted to take the shortest and most level route with good water and grass for themselves and their stock.

At the top right, the trail goes between the Cottrell and Jim Sage mountains. The trail passes through the east side of the Elba Basin, over the Elba-Almo Divide and through the Almo Valley turning west into the City of Rocks through gaps in the east ridge. The outlet at the south end of the City of Rocks is a gap in the south ridge. Granite Pass is a low point in a high mountain range which extends for miles in either direction.



The Parting of the Ways to the Elba Basin

The “parting of the ways” refers to the place where the California Trail separates from the Oregon Trail. Just west of where the Oregon Trail crosses the Raft River is where emigrants had to make the decision about their destination.

“July 15 ... came to Raft River, a small stream that flowed from the mountains on our left. Here the roads fork again, the right-hand one turning off northwesterly towards Oregon, while we took the left-hand one, going southwesterly towards California, leaving Snake River, and traveling up Raft River.”

Margaret A. Frink, 1850

Emigrants heading to California turned south and followed the Raft River, with the Cotterel Mountains on their right. McClendon Springs, at the base of the Cotterel Mountains, just southwest of present day Malta was a resting stop on the trail.

“July 6, ...found a splendid spring that burst out from the base of the Mts, where we found fine grass skirting the margin of the spring branch which...was to my waist and of an excellent quality. It was one mile to the right of the road and had not been discovered by any previous Emigrants. This was truly an Oasis in the desert.”

James Pritchard, 1849

The Cotterel Mountains end and the California Trail travels through the gap between the Cotterel and the Jim Sage Mountains (see map on page 4).

Emigrants passed through the east side of the Elba Basin, crossed the Elba-Almo Divide and Summit Creek and entered the Almo Valley. The emigrants crossed Grape Creek, Edwards Creek, Almo Creek and several unnamed tributaries in the valley.

The Almo Valley

The route south through the Elba Basin, over the Elba-Almo Divide and the Almo Valley roughly parallels the current road, Route 77 Spur. Journal entries give us glimpses of the conditions in the Almo Valley; light rain showers in early July and snow lingering on the mountains until late August.

“July the 8th was sunday and we laid over and thair was a bout one hundred and seventy packed muels pased by ous and a bout fifty ox wagons this done in one day. I can see a plenty of snow on the mountains. We have no rain of any a Count for som time except two or three shours just a nouf to lay the dust “

Randall Fuller, 1849

“August 26. Sabbath ...We got a late start traveled directly across the valley before us, amidst the best scenery we have seen since we have been among these hills. South, a high range of mountains (Raft River Mountains) speckled with snow.”

William Swain, 1849

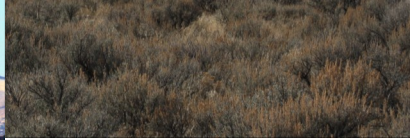
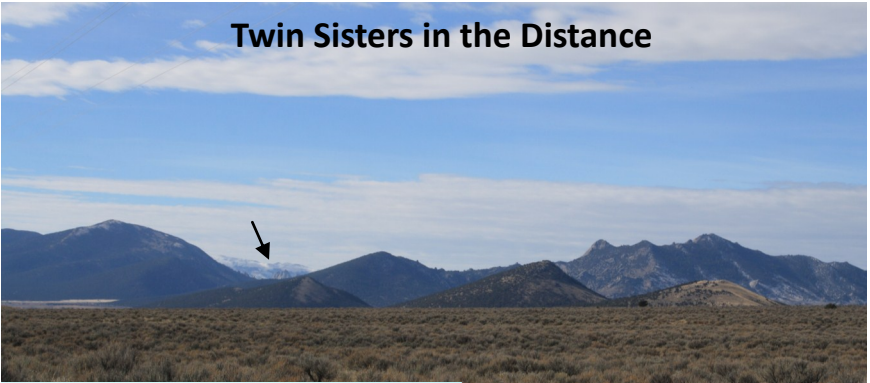
“August 28. We were all white this morning on awakening, with frost, and my hair being very long, the ends were froze to the saddle and the ground, so that I had to pull it loose, but had to leave some, as a memento for the wolves to examine.”

J. Goldsborough Bruff, 1849



The Almo Valley, view south from the Elba-Almo divide.

Twin Sisters in the Distance



The Twin Sisters were truly a landmark on the California Trail. The formation is

visible from the northeast on the California Trail by the wayside exhibit on the Elba Almo divide (above) and from the east on the Salt Lake Alternate (below). The most iconic and often pictured view of the Twin Sisters formation is found on page 30.



The Salt Lake Alternate

The Salt Lake Alternate of the California Trail begins in Salt Lake City and comes north and east of the Raft River Mountains, turns west, crossing the Upper Raft River Valley, and enters the City of Rocks through Emigrant Canyon. The Salt Lake Alternate meets the main stem of the California Trail inside the Reserve in Junction Valley; the trail then heads west over Granite Pass.

Emigrants on the California Trail could see the dust clouds from wagons on the Salt Lake Alternate and vice versa. They would meet at the junction of the trails in the southern part of the Reserve.

“Aug. 11 Early start down the valley southward... At 7 miles halted for noon at a run of clear cool water on a stony bed. Had a good bath. Saw numerous trains moving along westward on a trail away to the south of us (Salt Lake Alternate). It must be a good road from Mormon City. It enters a gap in the mountains south of the one our trail enters. “

Bernard J. Reid, 1849



Replica Wagons

The wagons on display outside the visitor center are replicas of the wagons emigrants used on the California Trail. These wagons have a short wheel base to allow for greater mobility in the mountainous terrain.

Imagine packing everything your family would need for several months inside a wagon like this. A typical list included: clothing- moccasins recommended over leather boots, bedding- two blankets, a comforter, a pillow and a ground cloth, arms- a breach loading rifle, a pistol and ammunition, medicine- in the form of opium, quinine, and “cathartic” medicine, cooking Equipment- pots, pans and matches in a watertight container, and food such as flour, bacon, jerky, sugar, coffee, dried beans, rice, and dried fruits and vegetables, salt and pepper.



“No useless trumpery should be taken”
Joel Palmer, 1847

Wagon Trains

Emigrants would often see an advertisement or hear about a group of people meeting up to travel west. These “wagon trains” would form up around a leader or leaders with experience on the overland trails. The journey would begin from a jumping off point in the Midwest, like Independence, Saint Louis, or Saint Joseph, Missouri or Council Bluffs, Iowa.

Many wagon trains used a system to rotate the lead team like birds in flight or cyclists in races. The first team one day would be the last team in the train the following day. This means each team takes its turn breaking the trail and has relief from the dust.

Wagon trains could be very well organized with rules; one such wagon train would leave people behind if they were not in line, ready to go, at 6 am.



“Between 12 o’clock and one o’clock the train is halted in the road for the oxen to breathe. ...There is a delay of an hour, during which each person partakes of such refreshment as has been provided for him before leaving camp in the morning.”

Edwin Bryant, 1846

Camp

“The company I was in made it a rule that if they could find a suitable place to camp they would always lay over one day in every week to rest up and do their washing.”

David Campbell, 1846

A good campsite had drinkable water and plenty of grass and wood for a fire. Add shelter, shade, and enough water for laundry and a bath and the emigrants would be very pleased.

The women and girls would make an evening meal and prepare for the next morning breakfast while the men and boys would tend to the livestock, make repairs to wagons, and occasionally hunt.

“There were several instruments among the emigrants, and these sounded clearly on the evening air when camp was made and merry talk and laughter resounded from almost every camp-fire”.

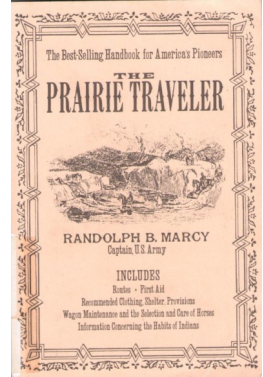
Catherine Sager, 1844



Guide Books

Perhaps before you began your journey to the City of Rocks you looked at a guide book. Many people start their journey by consulting guide books; emigrants on the California Trail were no different. Some guide books were written by veteran travelers such as mountain men, fur trappers, wagon train leaders and soldiers. Some guide books were written by people who never left St. Louis.

Guidebooks would advise emigrants on what to pack and what to expect along the trail. One of the available guidebooks was “The Prairie Traveler” written by Captain Randolph B. Marcy and published by the US Army in 1859.



“The success of a long expedition through an unpopulated country depends mainly on the care taken of the animals, and the manner in which they are driven, herded, and guarded. If they are broken down or lost, every thing must be sacrificed, and the party becomes perfectly helpless.” p44

Trails West Rail Markers

Markers C-6 through C-12 are found near City of Rocks and are in the area covered in this booklet. See maps on pages 4, 21-22.

Trails West Inc., is an organization that marks over-land trails and published a series of guidebooks. Two books in the series are available at the visitor center in Almo.



The Entrance to the City of Rocks

Emigrants entered the City of Rocks from the east. The journal entry below indicates there were two paths; one through the canyon and one over the mountain. The gravel road goes “over the mountain” and a hiking trail passes through the canyon.



“Thursday July 19th. With charming spirits we renewed our journey this morning. ... Three miles we turned again due west, the road passing between two rocky, craggy mountains. The road here for 200 yds. Was rocky in the extreme and tested fully the strength of our wagons. There was the remnants of many laying along this little piece of road, which had split upon these rocks.”

Wakeman Byarly, 1849

“[July] 23 drove to Rock creek ten miles thence 7 miles to the head of Cedar Creek which rises in a basin in the mountains— which Basin for its great natural curiosities is called Pyramid Circle ... There are two ways of entrance from the east one through Cedar Creek Cannon the other over the mountain the road at the west end passes through a narrow defile between perpendicular rocks not wide enough for two teams to drive abreast.”

East S. Owen, 1852

Trail Ruts

There are trail ruts marked with a white marker on Bureau of Land Management property just outside the east entrance of the Reserve. To visit these ruts turn onto the City of Rocks Road and head west 1.6 miles, the ruts are on the right hand side of the road and visible without crossing the barbed wire fence.

There are many places along the overland trails where ruts are not visible. The reasons for the lack of ruts in this area are:

1. road development over the trail route as by the east entrance to the Reserve,
2. nooning or camp locations where the wagons spread out and there was not enough confined traffic to create ruts as in the Circle Creek Basin,
3. places where the ruts have been disturbed by plowing in the early 20th century as in the area between Register Rock and Pinnacle Pass.



First View of the Circle Creek Basin



The first view of the Circle Creek Basin or Pyramid Circle is much the same today as it was for emigrants on the California Trail.

“June 22

At noon we encamped near the so-called Monumental rocks. They are a cluster of rocks forming a sort of semi-circle. They rise to a great height and are of a light grey color and look like the ruins of some enormous structure. They are situated in an amphitheatre of mountains, with snow capped summits. The rocks themselves rise out of a little plain covered with velvet sod. A small stream issues from their base and glitters along down the valley. A sort of thin mist hangs in the air, giving a dreamy appearance to the whole scene All afternoon we travelled along the same valley among rocks of the most singular shapes, some rising to great heights like the spires of churches, others of a more tower like appearance. Encamped on a sage plain near a little creek with tolerable grass. “

William Woodham, 1854

The Tracy Homestead

The stone building is not from the California Trail period but is nevertheless a source of questions from visitors.

The stone ruins at the east edge of the Circle Creek Basin are part of the homestead era (1898-1936). The stone house was built in 1901 by William E. Tracy and purchased by John H. Hull and remodeled in 1909. The house stood empty for many years and burned in 1967. The homestead passed through several owners and is still in private hands.



*Please respect
private property
within the
Reserve.*

Camp Rock

The emigrants left their signatures on some of the granite monoliths along the trail.

“Monday August 9th. Traveled eight miles when we entered Pyramid Circle. This is one of the greatest curiosities on the road. ...These pyramids are of various colors. The sides have been washed by the rains in all manner of fantastic shapes, giving the place a most romantic and picturesque appearance. ...The circle is five miles long and three miles wide, level within the wall around and entirely surrounded by these pyramids or cliffs except an inlet at the east end of about fifty yards , and an outlet at the western end just wide enough to permit the wagons to pass through. The rocks are covered as far up as one can reach or climb, with names of emigrants. We left ours with a date in a conspicuous place for the boys behind. We saw the names of some of our acquaintances who passed here two years ago. “

Eliza Ann McAuley, 1852



See a list of names at: www.nps.gov/ciro/peopleandculture

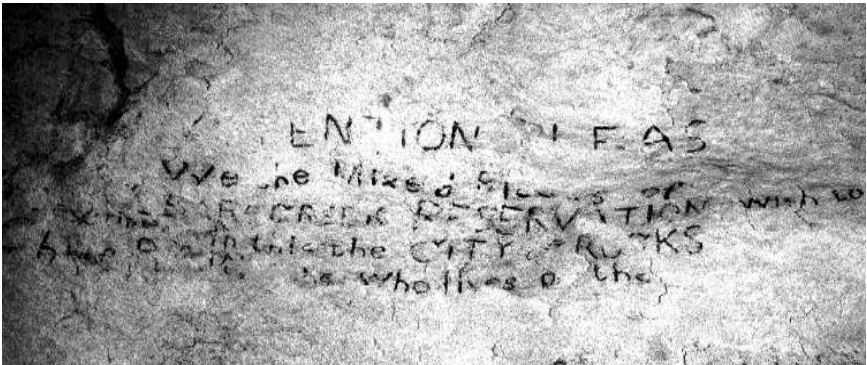
Camp Rock—East Face

This inscription is not from the California Trail Period but most likely from the early 20th century.

The inscription reads:

Attention Please

***We the mixed bloods of the Clear Creek Reservation wish to....
Chief Rain in the Face who lives at the City of Rocks***



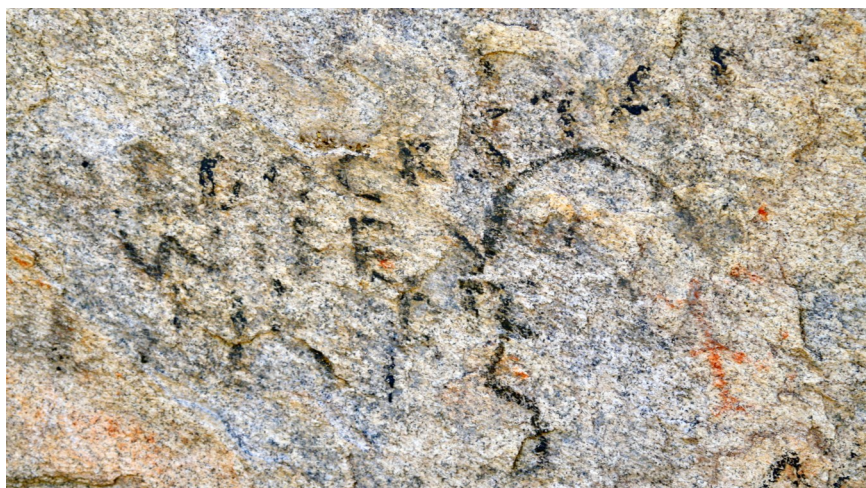
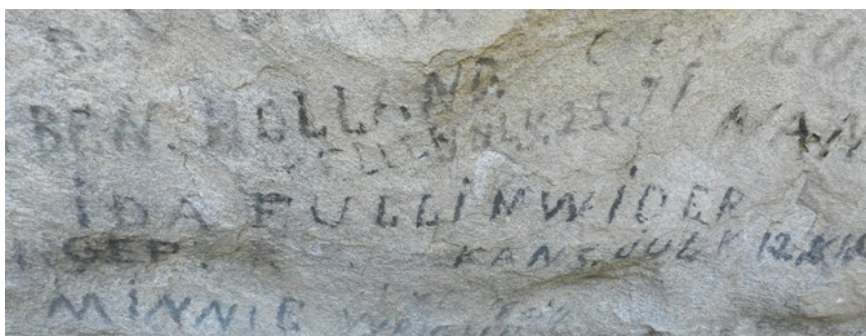
Chief Rain in the Face (1835-1905) was from the Lakota nation. He fought in battles with the U.S. Cavalry between 1866-1876 and most notably against General Custer at Little Big Horn. His home territory was the northern plains, it is unlikely he ever visited City of Rocks.

Rain in the Face's reputation as a villain came from a poem written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow titled "Revenge of Rain in the Face." In the poem, Rain in the Face cuts the heart out of General Custer. The seventh stanza of the poem is reproduced here (right). Rain in the Face, in fact, did not cut out General Custer's heart.

*But the foemen fled in the night,
And Rain-in-the-Face, in his flight,
Uplifted high in air
As a ghastly trophy, bore
The brave heart, that beat no more,
Of the White Chief with yellow hair.*

Camp Rock— Ida Fullinwider

Ida Fullinwider was born in Washington Township in Anderson County, Kansas in January of 1865, about 70 miles southwest of Kansas City. Samuel and Amanda (her parents) were farmers and in 1880 “kept hotel.” Ida was 16 when she was here on July 12, 1881. It seems Ida did not remain in California for long. The marriage records show Ida married J.W. Carroll on October 1, 1885 in Colony Kansas, not far from where she was born. Ida is buried in the Mt. Olivet Cemetery in Salt Lake City and the cause of death listed was “complications of paralysis.” Ida was 22 when she died. We do not know the cause of Ida’s paralysis.



One man wrote “Wife Wanted” and drew his profile on Camp Rock in hopes of creating a family when he reached California.

Treasure Rock

Standing next to Treasure Rock offers a view of the entire Circle Creek Basin. Emigrants camped on the south edge of the basin and allowed livestock to drink water from Circle Creek and graze on its banks.

“We camped in a large bason soon after we got through the Pass, grass is tolerable good but not much water thear is a number of springs but the water sinks after running a few feet Jerome shot three grouse this afternoon this is the first fresh meat that we have had for a long time they are good eating. “

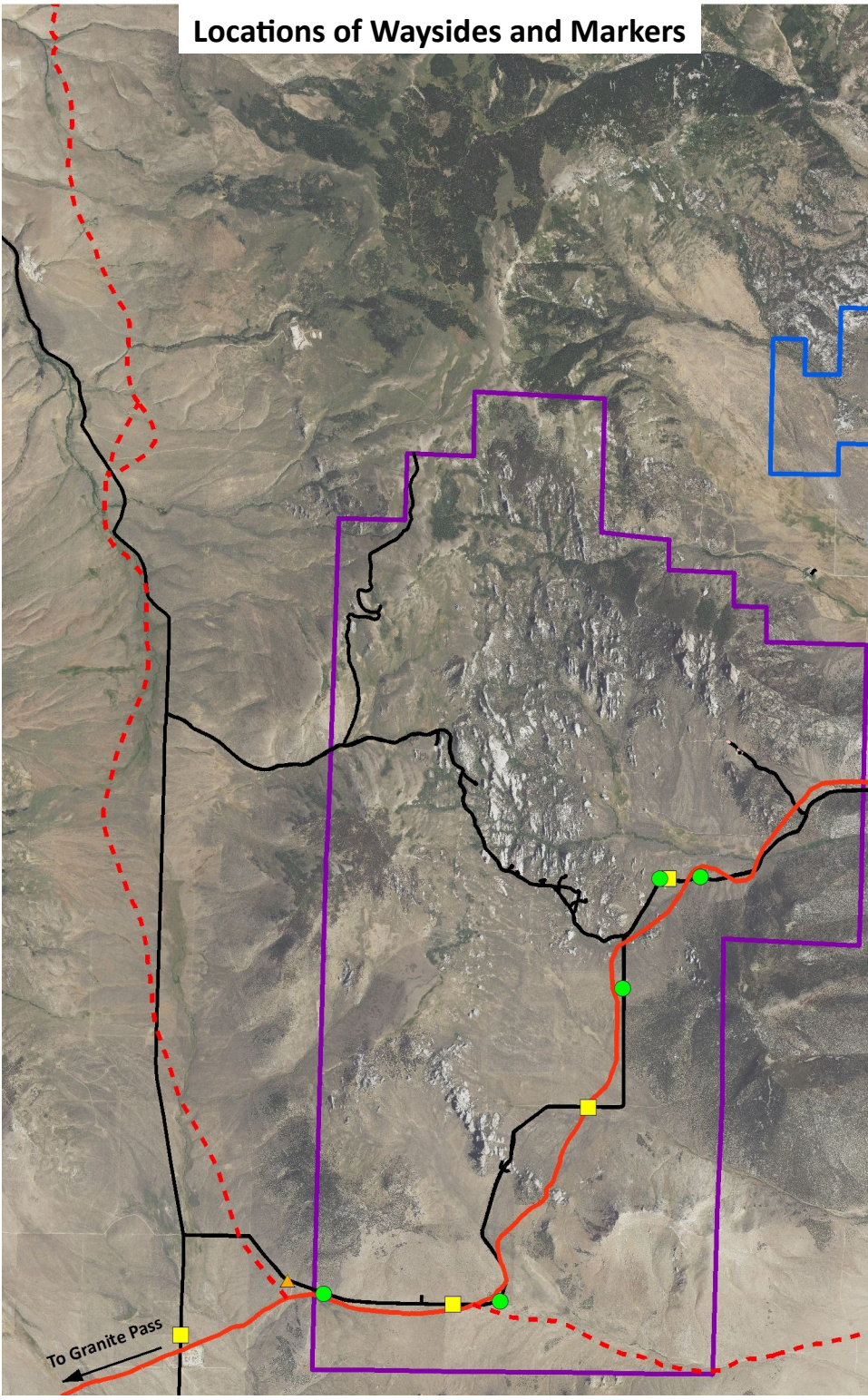
Joseph Hackney, 1849

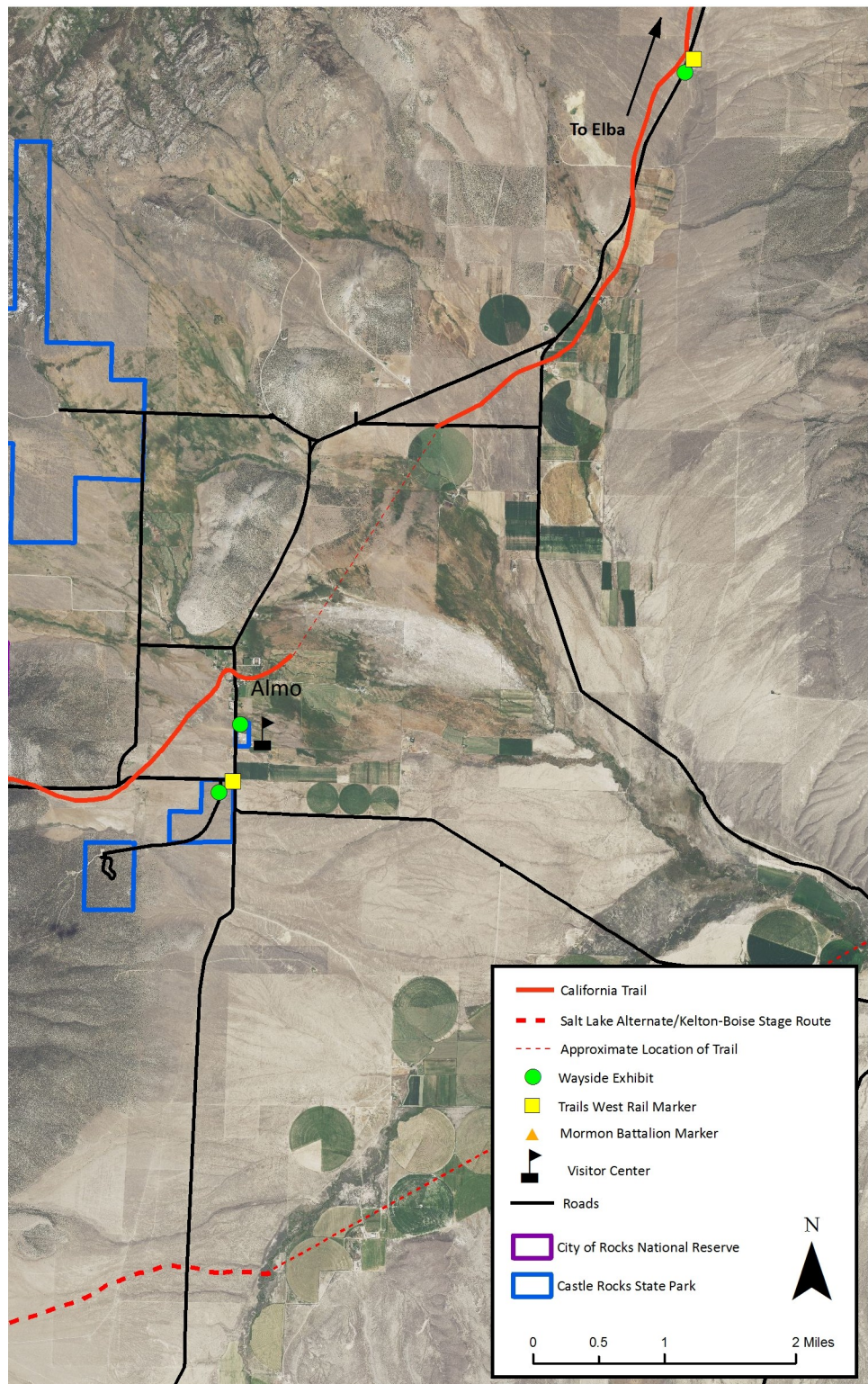
“Aug. 19 At eve we encamped in Pyramid Circle, a delightful place indeed and one which requires the pen of the poet or the pencil of a painter to portray its beauties. It is a perfectly level plain, surrounded by mountains which are covered with pine and cedar trees and studded throughout with numerous tall white and green stones from sixty to one hundred and fifty feet and from ten to twenty feet in diameter at the base. As we view it this eve, the full moon shining upon it, our camp fires blazing near and striving, with their lurid light, to vie with the silvery moon in brightness. Our tents and wagons grouped together and a merry party tripping the light fantastic toe upon the green, whose cheerful, happy voices echo from the hills around us, presents a scene altogether picturesque and novel.”

Harriet Sherrill Ward, 1853



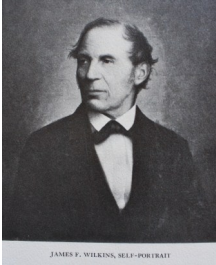
Locations of Waysides and Markers





Artists on the Trail

Some emigrants sketched and painted scenes from the trail. James F. Wilkins, and J. Goldsborough Bruff are well known artists who sketched and painted the scenery along the trail.

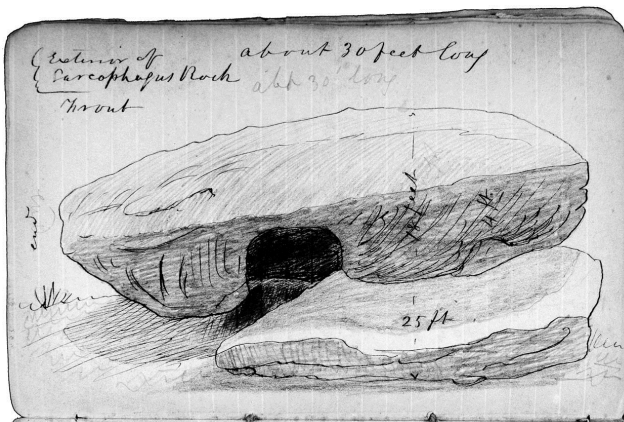


"We encamped at the City of Rocks, a noted place from the granite rocks rising abruptly out of the ground. They are in a romantic valley clustered together, which gives them the appearance of a city."

James Wilkins, 1849

Unfortunately, none of Wilkins sketches or paintings from the City of Rocks are known to survive; however, we do have sketches from J. Goldsborough Bruff.

"August 29. When we entered a very extraordinary valley, called the "City of Castles." ... A group, on left of the trail, resembled gigantic fungii, petrified, other clusters were worn in cells and caverns; and one, which contrasted with the size and height of the adjacent rocks, seemed no larger than a big chest, was, to my astonishment, when close to it, quite large, hollow, with an arch'd entrance, and capable of containing a dozen persons. This, from its peculiar shape, I named the Sarcophagus Rock."



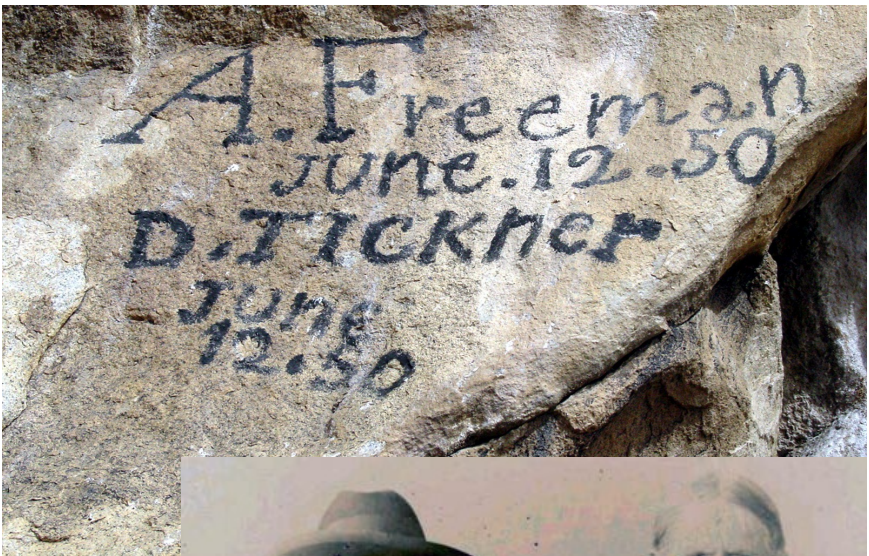
J. Goldsborough Bruff, 1849

Register Rock— Daniel Tickner

Signatures are found on all faces of Register Rock, but the most readable ones are on the west face.

D. Tickner and A. Freeman are displayed prominently on Register Rock. Daniel Tickner traveled to California three times in 10 years. The signature is from his first trip in 1850. Read more about Daniel's extraordinary travels at:

www.nps.gov/ciro/peopleandculture.



Daniel and Mary Wood Tickner resided in California for the rest of their lives. Daniel passed away on October 8, 1906 at the age of 94 and Mary was 85 when she died on April 30, 1909.

Register Rock—Henry Keck

Henry Keck and his brother Joseph Keck traveled to California from Iowa. Henry wrote his name on Register Rock and Joseph Keck kept a journal.

On July 18th the team reached the desert of northern Nevada. Like many others, they lightened their load by dropping off every item that was not a complete necessity; Joseph remarked on the array of items cast off along the trail throughout the desert: *“...the West half of the desert is strewn with all manner of plunder that has been thrown away to lighten up the loads; wagons that were abandoned to pack through[,] casks[,] tents[,] log chains, guns[,] even clothing.”*

Joseph A. Keck, 1851



Henry Keck's
Signature on
Register Rock
(Left).

A photograph of
Henry Keck (right).

The final resting
place of Henry Keck
in Iowa. Henry died
in July of 1918 at
the age of 94 (far
right).



Henry Keck



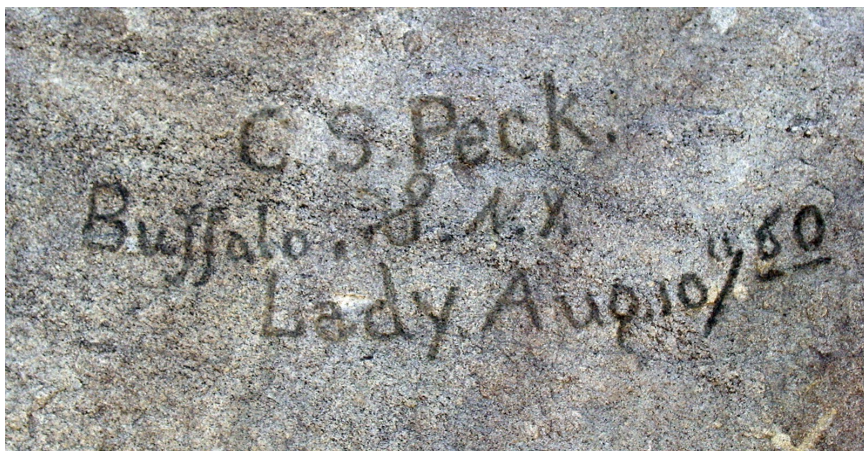
Register Rock—C.S. Peck & Lady

Charles S. Peck was born in 1834 in Buffalo, New York. Charles' brothers, James and John, headed to California in 1849, and Charles followed in 1852. They settled in the vicinity of the Merced River in Merced County, joined in 1853 by Frank, another brother.

Charles is reported to have built the first stone building in Snelling, California. He moved to Mariposa County, where he mined for six years before heading back to New York in 1859. Upon returning to New York, he married Adeline Cook, and they had a son named James who was born in January of 1860 in Buffalo, NY. A few months after James was born, the Pecks headed back to California, settling in Snelling once again. It was on this second trip, in 1860, that Peck signed his name. Perhaps "Lady" is a nickname for Adeline?

The following year, Adeline gave birth to a daughter, Jessie and in 1865, another daughter, Lydia; followed five years later by Addie.

Charles died in 1903 in Merced, California and Adeline lived in Oakland with her daughter Lydia until her death 1920.



Pinnacle Pass



John Goldsborough Bruff sketched Pinnacle Pass in 1849

Pinnacle Pass

Pinnacle Pass is a narrow gap in a ridge of rock at the southern end of the City of Rocks; see photo and sketch on the following page. Emigrants made note of Pinnacle Pass.

“Thursday July 19. Four miles brought us to the coming in of the Mormon Road. Half mile before striking it we passed through a narrow pass of rock, just wide enough for the wagons, & which evidently has been made by some adventurers before us.”

Wakeman Byarly, 1849

“July 27. As we approach the summit of one of the principal ridges our progress appeared to be opposed by a solid wall of granite but a narrow opening was soon discovered through which air was driven with such violence as almost to force us back. The passage was barely sufficient for a road.”

William North Steuben, 1849



*Please respect private property within the Reserve.
If you wish to visit Pinnacle Pass, request a ranger led tour.*

Ledyard Frink and Margaret Ann Alsip Frink

In 1897 Mr. Frink published Margaret's journal under the title "Journal of the adventures of a party of California Gold Seekers".



Ledyard Frink



Margaret A. Frink

Margaret's journal provides a glimpse into the reason they traveled to California. Her journal reads ... *"where we continued to live very pleasantly till 1844, when we made up our minds to try our fortunes father west."* *The couple settled in Indiana .."But we were not yet satisfied. The exciting news coming back from California of the delightful climate and abundance of gold, caused us to resolve, about December, 1849, that we would commence preparing to travel cross the plains by the spring of 1850."*

Although neither Frink left their name on a rock, Margaret's words leave little doubt she passed through the City of Rocks.

"Wednesday, July 17. ...During the forenoon we passed through a stone village composed of huge isolated rocks of various and singular shapes, some resembling cottages, others steeples and domes. It is called "City of Rocks", but I think the name "Pyramid City" more suitable. It is a sublime, strange, and wonderful scene—one of nature's most interesting works."

According to the 1860 census, the Frinks were living with their 11 year old adopted son, Robb P. Frink in Sacramento . Mr. Wilson, Robb's uncle and guardian, agreed to allow Robb to travel from Indiana to California, as Robb was very attached to the Frinks.

District	Precinct	Name of every Person whose usual place of abode on the first day of June, 1860, was in this family.	Sex and Age				Profession, Occupation, or Trade of each Male Person over 15 years of age.	Value of Real Estate.	Place or Birth. Naming the State, Territory, or Country.	Married within the year.	Whether deaf, dumb, blind, idiotic, pauper, or convict.
			Male	Female	Under 15	15 and over					
184	150	Ledyard Frink	39	10		Brandy Maker					
		Margaret A. Frink	37	4				Ind			
		Robb P. Frink	11	0				Ind			

Twin Sisters

Journal entries often comment on these spires, naming them as a landmark on the California Trail.

“June 22. There were so many rocks both here and where we camped last night that might answer the description and the name, we had no little difficulty for a time in determining which was Steeple Rock. The last two rocks, however, as we passed out of the valley, seemed pre-eminently entitled to the appellation. They rise in a cone like form from the bottom of the valley to a height of from 400-600 feet; they are round and quite regular in form tapering gradually to a point. Opposite these two rocks the Salt Lake Road comes in through another valley eight miles from where we first saw it.”

Lorenzo Sawyer, 1850



Twin Sisters

The Twin Sisters were named in 1848 by Addison Pratt, (right) a member of the Mormon Battalion.



“Sept. 15. City of Rocks 15 miles. They reached a chain of mountains with two towering rocks on the left. Addison Pratt called them the Twin Sisters. This place was known as the City of Rocks. They continued seven miles, leaving the old Fort Hall road. When they reached the Hensley Cutoff, they found only a pack trail. There were no wagon tracks and they realized they were making a new wagon road through the sage brush and boulders. They camped at the headwaters of Cassia Creek (Raft River). Everyone was in good spirits. John Borrowman suffered greatly from an infected ankle and leg, which he had scratched on the bushes and a poisonous vine.”

Homes-Thompson Company, 1848

“July 10 traveled 23 miles. Passed Steeple Rocks early in the morning and came to the junction of the Fort Hall and Salt Lake roads. Soon after passing Steeple Rocks came to Goose Creek. Traveled up the creek four miles and camped. Ice in camp this morning. Grass good.”

Orange Gaylord, 1850

“April 23. Last eve went to City rocks. They are at the junction of the California and Salt Lake roads. They are white & about 300 ft high running up to a peak. They are composed of a substance resembling salts & are in a state of decomposition. A few more years & then will be leveled with the ground. They look at a distance like a ruined city.”

Lucena Parsons, 1851

Lucena Parsons and her party wintered in Salt Lake City.

Salt Lake Alternate — Boise-Kelton Road

The Salt Lake Alternate was blazed by the Mormon Battalion in the fall of 1948 on their return from California after the war with Mexico. The Battalion followed the California Trail east until they reached Emigrant Canyon where they headed across the Upper Raft River Valley and then turned south east of the Raft River Mountains.

In the spring of 1849, news of gold in California caused a flood of gold seekers to rush to California along the established trails and the newly established Salt Lake road.

The Salt Lake Alternate was re-established as part of the Boise-Kelton stage coach route. A stage station was established within the Reserve boundaries and abandoned by 1883. The building no longer stands but this photograph taken by Savage and Ottinger from Salt Lake City circa 1861 shows what the station looked like.

The property was homesteaded in 1911 by Joseph Moon. Mr. Moon is reported to have dismantled the stage station to build his home and associated outbuildings.



Please respect private property within the Reserve.
If you wish to visit this site, request a ranger led tour.

Post Office

The area described as the “post office” was at the junction of the California Trail and the Salt Lake Alternate. Imagine the hundred or more sticks with papers fluttering in the breeze.

“July 23. I came to the junction of the roads, where there were many sticks set up, having slips of paper in them, with the names of passengers, and occasionally letters to emigrants still behind.”

A. Delano, 1849



“[July] 24

Drove one mile down the mountain to the junction of the Great Salt Lake & California roads at the junction of the roads we passed a "post office". I dont know what else to call it- and it must have a name- a hundred or more little sticks sticking in the ground with the upper ends split & papers & letters stuck in & directed in the usual manner and every man his own post master walks up & examining the superscription & if it is his he takes it out- if not he leaves it and goes along about his Business ... good road for ten miles then rough & mountainous for eight miles to goose creek grass good water b[r]ackish.”

East S. Owen, 1852

Granite Pass

Granite pass is not the highest pass on the California Trail but it is the steepest descent until the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The east slope, has a rise of 1,110 feet over 5.5 miles, a 4 percent slope but the west side is much more dramatic and treacherous. There are numerous journal entries about this difficult descent.

“Aug. 12 Some very bad pitches to descend; had to let our wagons down by ropes. Dust very bad and grass all gone to California. Sutton and his wife drove two yoke of oxen. They quarreled, cut the wagon box in two and made two carts. Each took one yoke of oxen and had a divorce right there without judge or jury, or even a lawyer.”

George J. Kellogg, 1849

“June 22 From the summits of these mountains we had a wide view of a most wild, rugged, broken and remarkable country.... We now descended a long and tedious mountain to Goose river. The descent is generally gradual but in many places steep and difficult. One place we were obliged to rope down; the descent occupied two and a half hours.”

Lorenzo Sawyer, 1850



Granite Pass—Journal Entries

“August 14, Passed the junction in the fore noon. Ironed. No water except a small puddle to wash hands in. From the time we struck the junction till we encamped we saw 7 dead cattle. Saw 8 or 9 more dead cattle. Awful roads, hilly 5 miles decent, the last hill being steep & dangerous. Emigrants need to let wagons down by ropes wound around alder trees at the top of the hill. A mountain stream runs below as cold as ice water. In 2 miles we struck Goose Creek and nooned. Rolled on 4 miles perhaps & Hannibals wagon wheel broke off at axel in crossing a small run. Mended it with a cedar stick.”

Mary Burrell, 1854

Even with the hardship of the descent from Granite Pass just ahead some emigrants commented on the beauty of the view.

“August 23. ...The mountains that show themselves today, look grand, and beautiful. Assending the mountain through a high gorge, and when at the summit we found spread out before us the most beautiful mountain scenery that I have seen on the road. Our elevation is very high, so that the mountains that lie before us on the opposite side of the valley seem to increase in magnitud as they rise one above another, in succession of their ranges. Our distance today is fifteen miles.”

Gordon Cone, 1849

The Mormon Battalion

On their return from California after the Mexican-American War, the Mormon Battalion traveled through the southern part of the Reserve. There are modern markers along their trail, one just outside the Reserve boundary (left) and one near the top of Granite Pass (right).



Life on the Trail...

No matter where people are, life events continue to occur; including, disagreements, sicknesses, births, and deaths.

"Monday July 8 and 88 day out. We found part of an old wagon. This served us for wood. Passed one grave on the road today."

George Bonniwell, 1850

"Wednesday, July 10.--About nine o'clock this morning we arrived at a creek with steep banks, where we found a number of emigrants digging a grave for a young man by the name of Jacob Waggoner, from Cass County, Illinois, who had died of consumption."

James Abbey, 1850

"July 18th Sabbath. Delightful Day. Edwin arrived with the Dr 1/4 of 1 clock. Physician busy when I awoke lancing Robert at the roots of each jaw. Took from him over 1/2 pint of matter. Swollen so that his face looked like an owls the skin was drawn so tightly probably near 10 inches across from 1 side of his head to the other. Edwin waited on him & spared no paines, nor steps, to afford relief until about 1 oclock Physician told him twas no use... Dr called it [irisopulus?], which frequently the result of mountain fever. Died at 20 minutes past 5. P.M. with little or no struggle. Been light headed since last night. Concious of nothing save immaginations. All rest of camp well. ... Buried him at dusk by the road side. 1 stranger assisted us. Buried most of his clothes in another hole near camp. Feels quite lonesome."

Daniel H. Budd, 1852

"Friday July 23rd/52 ... Encamped about 3 miles beyond the junction at an excellent spring—To night there was a difficulty arose about standing guard which resulted in the separation of our company 3 wagons drove off"

Cyrus E. Phillips, 1852

Life on the Trail Continues...

Children are born and grow up on the trail and mothers take notice. *"Friday August 19th. Very pleasant. We left our beautiful home at an early hour. Our roads much improved by the rain. The first crossing of De Casure very bad, but after waiting a half hour for the gentlemen to prepare the precipitous bank with their shovels, axes, willows etc., we all made our transit without accident, but not without fear and trembling. Willie worked like a man, and indeed he does the work of a man daily.*

Aug 20 This PM we called at a camping ground and inquired after the health of its inmates. They informed us that they had one invalid, a lady with an infant a week old whose birthplace was Pyramid Circle. This child must be a poet, from the fact of its having first beheld the light so completely encircled by the romance of poetry of nature.

Aug 25. During our stay this morn Frank and myself called upon our friends whom we met a week since, and found the babe whose birthplace was Pyramid Circle done finely. The mother improving, but has been quite sick. The boy, poor fellow, must hereafter answer to the unpoetical cognomen of Pyramid Alonzo."

Harriett Sherrill Ward, 1853

Stock was important to the success of the journey and deaths of animals were also mentioned in the journals; *" Here we lost old Sock, he died rather sudden. He was much lamented by the boys, as he was our main standby at the start."*

James Mason, 1850

"This morning old Charlie being so weak, we thought, best to shoot him, -he has been a good horse, and served us well,- peace to his ashes."

Leander Loomis, 1850

Emigrant and Native American Interactions

Popular mythology portrays the interactions between emigrants and Native Americans in the west as violent. Many journal entries describe wary trading or sightings with no interaction.

“July 13 Wednesday ...saw a good many Indians.”

Welborn Beeson, 1853

“July 31. While walking along the creek, and about a quarter mile from the train, we met an Indian, armed with gun, bow and arrows. We were some what frightened, but found it no use to avoid him. We walked boldly up, and shook hands “how de do”. He asked us for some clothing. I directed him to wagons, but he passed on not seeming inclined to go to them, or daring to harm us. We were quite relived when he left us, as he did not appear any to respectful.”

Lorena L Hayes, 1853

“July 29th, The Indians are said to be very hostile in this quarter, but somehow we all appear to be perfectly regardless, and if a fight should occur, I presume we would all wade in, considering that only one of the parts laid down in the programme. We have a delegation of Shoshones in camp now, they don't appear to be very warlike, or even capable of doing much mischief. We have come 18 miles today, and are now at the foot of the Goose Creek Mountains.”

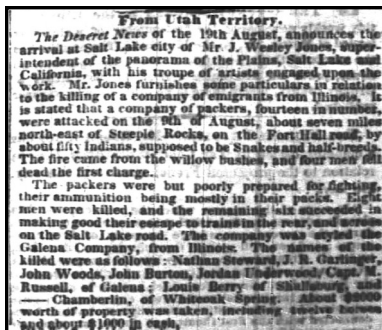
John McTurk Gibson, 1859

“Monday August 13. There have been several Indians at our camp this evening, one of whom had an American horse which he traded to one of the company for an Indian pony: It was presumed that the Indian stole the horse from some Emigrant & he was accused of it but he stoutly denied it affirming that he had given two ponies for him.”

Mary C. Fish, 1860

Trouble on the Trail

There were several documented incidents of attacks in the City of Rocks area. In 1851 this story published in the Deseret News in the middle of August found its way through St Louis, New Orleans, and was printed in the New York Times in November of the same year.



From Utah Territory.

"The Deseret News of the 19th of August, announces the arrival in Salt Lake City of Mr. J. Wesley Jones. ... a company of packers, fourteen in number, were attacked on the 9th of August, about seven miles north-east of Steeple Rocks, on the Fort Hall road, by about fifty Indians, supposed to be snakes and half-breeds. The fire came from the willow bushes, and four men fell dead the first charge. The packers were but poorly prepared for fighting, their ammunition being mostly in packs. ... Eight men were killed, and the remaining six succeeded in making good their escape to trains in the rear. ... About \$2,000 worth of property was taken, including twelve horses and about \$1000 in cash."

There were other troublesome events on the trail which were not reported in the newspapers.

"July 2 ...at any rate, Raft River is not gaining a good reputation these days. Thieving by sullen and surly vagabonds among us is becoming common, and we are warned again to place guards at night to watch the horses lest white "Indians" make away with them. One entire train, was surrounded here by ruffians who took it bodily from the owners at the point of guns and drove onward with it, leaving, so Mr. Thissell says, fifty women and children to walk this burning road toward California until picked up by strangers."

William G. Johnston, 1849

Emigrant Names

A list of names on each of the monoliths and a list of emigrants who wrote journals which mention City of Rocks are available at: <http://www.nps.gov/ciro/historyculture/index.htm>

The list of journals is not exhaustive and new ones come to light now and then. If you know of a journal that mentions City of Rocks which is not on the list, please contact: Kristen_Bastis@partner.nps.gov

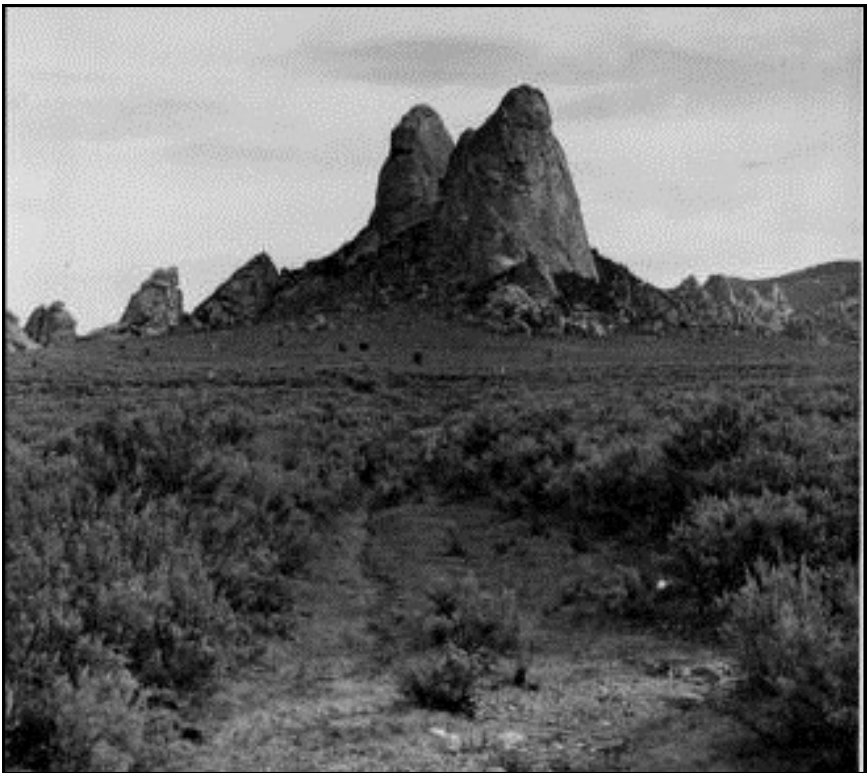
or

City of Rocks National Reserve

Chief of Cultural Resources

PO Box 169

Almo, Idaho 83312208-824-5915



Twin Sisters; Photo Courtesy of the Utah State Historical Society

For Further Study

There are hundreds of books about the California Trail and the other overland trails in the west and many organizations devoted to their protection and study.

National Park Service

California National Historic Trail

www.nps.gov/cali

Oregon National Historic Trail

www.nps.gov/oreg

Bureau of Land Management

Oregon Trail Interpretive center

www.blm.gov/or/oregontrail

California Trail Interpretive Center

[www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/
elko_field_office/blm_programs/blm_special_areas/california_trail_historic](http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/elko_field_office/blm_programs/blm_special_areas/california_trail_historic)

Other Organizations

Oregon California Trails Association

www.octa-trails.org

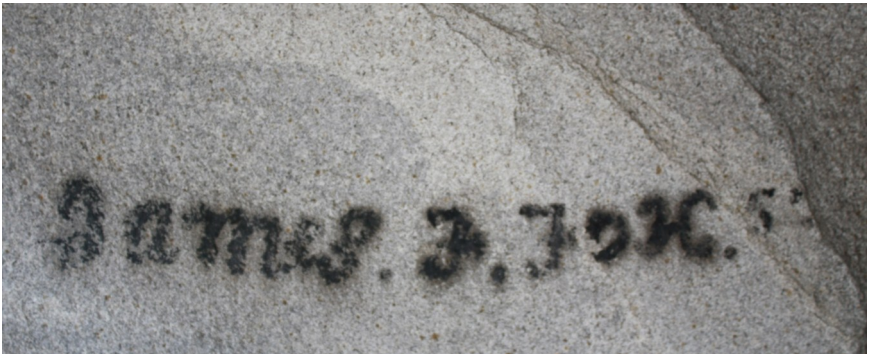
Oregon/California Trail Center

www.oregontrailcenter.org

Credits

The following individuals contributed to the development and completion of the booklet: Kristen Bastis and Wallace Keck.

This is the third in a series of booklets about the Reserve.



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“July 29. Saw a woman on horseback packing it through to California, merry as a cricket, hope she’ll make her pile, and catch a mate, she deserves the best kind of luck.”

John McTurk Gibson, 1859

