



# *OCTA at the Crossroads*

12th Annual Convention

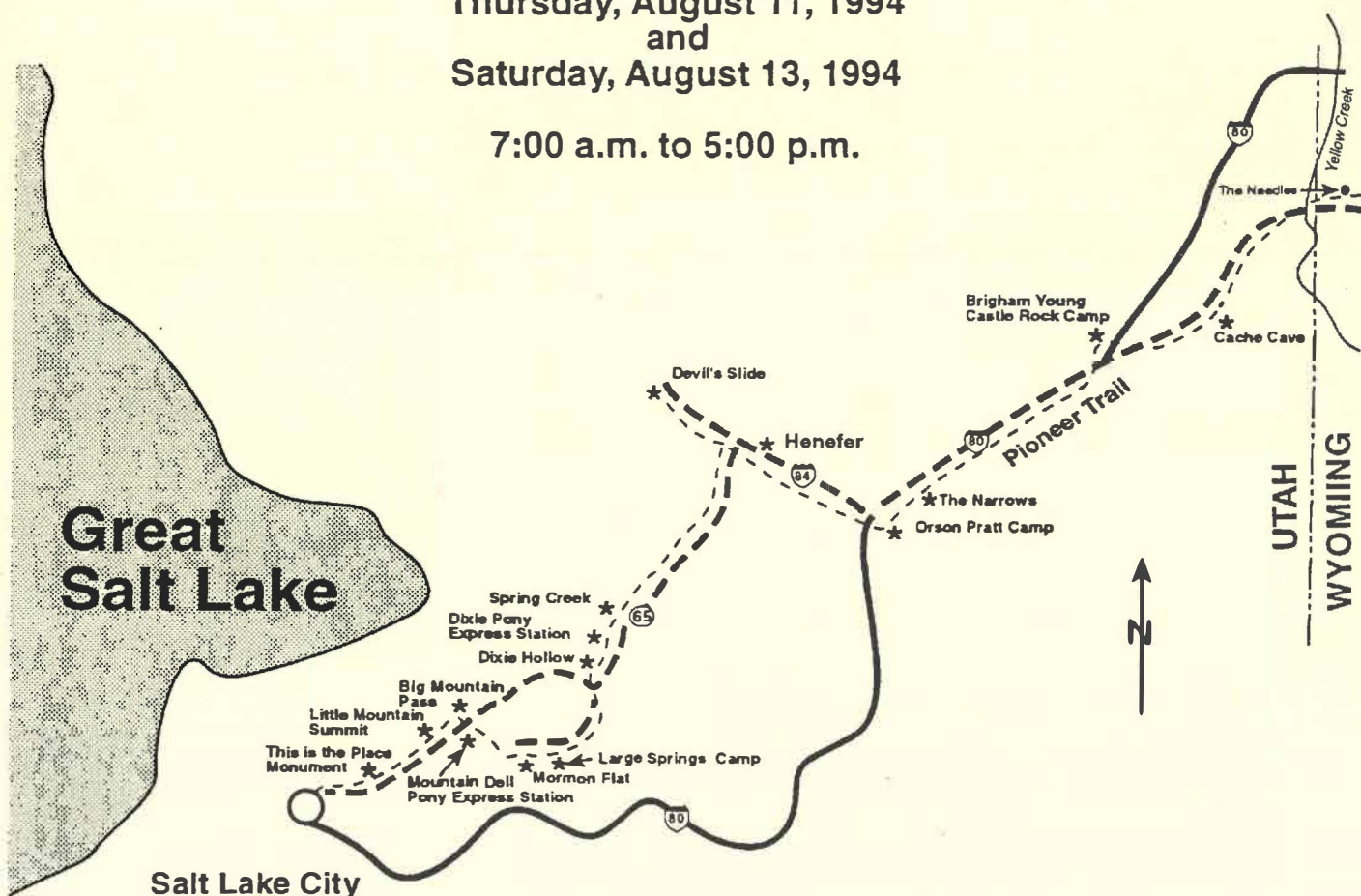
## **Tour A Pioneer Trail (Mormon/Donner Trail)**

**Yellow Creek, Wyoming to the Salt Lake Valley**

Sponsored by  
**Oregon-California Trails Association  
Crossroads Chapter**

**Thursday, August 11, 1994  
and  
Saturday, August 13, 1994**

**7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.**



## **TOUR A THE PIONEER TRAIL**

**Cache Cave:** This cave was originally named Reddin's Cave by Return Jackson Redden who was one of the first pioneers to visit it. The cave was given its present name by William Clayton in 1848. Cache cave was named for the practice of the early trappers to cache their extra supplies there. The opening resembles the doors attached to an out-door cellar, being 8 feet high and 12 or 14 feet wide.

**Brigham Young Castle Rock Camp:** This camp is the site of the "Head of Echo" Pony Express Station. This station, the first in Echo Canyon, was named for the large sandstone formation located near the site. The John W. Young railroad camp, the Big Fill and tunnels are also located here.

**The Narrows:** Fortifications, Dam, and Wickiup City. This site was also used as a Utah War Camp for the Mormon Militia.

**Orson Pratt Camp:** This was the camp of James G. Willie Handcart Company and rescue team.

**Devil's Slide:**

**Henefer:** This is the beginning of Pratt's Pass.

**Spring Creek Station:** J.C. Little, 1857.

**Dixie Pony Express Station:**

**Dixie Hollow:** Mouth of Broad Hollow

**Large Springs Camp:** Orson Pratt & John Brown went from here to the top of Big Mountain and were the first of the Mormon pioneers to see the Salt Lake Valley.

**Mormon Flat:** Here the Donner-Reed party and the later Mormon pioneers began their climb up Big Mountain after resting and recruiting their livestock at nearby Large Springs.

**Big Mountain Pass:** Looking West, towards Salt Lake Valley, is the same view pioneers had as they caught their first sight of the valley. From that point you can look down a draw, and on down the canyon towards Mountain Dell.

**Mountain Dell Pony Express Station:**

**Little Mountain Summit:** Here the Pioneer Trail follows a route to the right of the present road. From the summit, look back and down towards the dam. The route of the trail may be discerned by following the draw from a point south of the dam (Camp Grant) to the summit.

**This is the Place Monument:** Near this point, Brigham Young designated Salt Lake Valley as the gathering place of the Mormon people. The monument is on the opposite side of Emigration Creek from the actual Pioneer Trail.

## THE PIONEER TRAIL

Today's travel over the Pioneer Trail has two aspects to it that the pioneers never faced: first, it is an abridged version of the trail from Fort Bridger to the Salt Lake Valley, covering less than half the distance, and we are today doing it backwards.

This is a walking trip, and we will be covering the four miles from the top of Big Mountain to Mormon Flat, all downhill. We have three hours allotted for this part of our trail tour.

Doing it backwards is not really all that unusual for while the pioneers traveled from east to west, there were many who traveled the trail from west to east. James Clyman and Lansford Hastings traveled west to east in 1846: the Mormon pioneers sent men back over the trail to Winter Camp to bring the word of their safe arrival in the Salt Lake Valley, and others did it as well.

On arrival in the valley the emigrants did not head straight for Temple Square, but when they emerged from the confines of Emigration Canyon they traveled southwest to the area of today's Sugarhouse (17th S., 5th E.) area of the city where they camped along the streams there. The 1846 emigrants headed off to the west, passing to the south of the Great Salt Lake and westward over the Hastings' Cutoff. The Mormon pioneers in 1847 went northwest to the area of City Creek where they laid out their city-to-be.

The trail guide, *Trailing the Pioneers* identifies the trail west from the Salt Lake Valley as the Hastings Cutoff: in truth, the Pioneer Trail we are following today is also the Hastings Cutoff, but has not been so called for years. It is referred to as the Mormon Trail, The Donner Trail, and mostly the Pioneer Trail, which is what it is called in the guidebook.

Our tour begins with a drive-by of Pioneer Park, the site of the earliest fort in the valley. Around the fort a village of adobe homes grew, the mud for the adobes coming from clay deposits along a stream just to the west of the park. By October of 1847 there were two thousand people living on this block that now comprises Pioneer park, and to the block to the north and south.

When the early pioneers arrived in the Salt Lake Valley the valley floor was rife with streams coming from the hills all around, and flowing to the Jordan River, or the Great Salt Lake. As the city grew, the streams were diverted, covered, or eliminated. The first Mormon effort at irrigation took place on City Creek in the vicinity of the Center Theatre and office building at the corner of State St. and 3d South.



Approaching Pioneer Trail State Park and the mouth of Emigration Canyon we are crossing the pioneer trail. Neither the 1846 emigrants nor the Mormons in 1847 traveled the route north of our road, where the "This is the Place" monument stands. The Donner-Reed party fanned out over the lands the east of the road we are on, having come this way from their arduous climb over Donner Hill. The Mormon pioneers traveled a bit below that, over the golf course, as they had cut their way through the underbrush at the mouth of the canyon and exited at its mouth. The base elevation of the Salt Lake Valley is officially 4,200 feet, measured at the lakeshore: the elevation at Temple Square is 4,330 feet. Here we are at about 4,600 feet.

As we enter the canyon itself, the narrows at the canyon mouth is the only independent contribution to the Pioneer Trail made by the Mormons. In 1846 and '47 this narrow portion of the canyon was choked with underbrush and the Donner-Reed party of 1846 had not enough men to cut its way through the tangle of weed and trees, so it cut up over the ridge to your right, where the condominiums now stand, to come out of the canyon. The 1847 Mormon train had sufficient manpower to expend in cutting through this area, and in four hours cut a path through it for the wagon train. William Clayton, a Mormon chronicler wrote of this narrow part of the canyon:

Two men were sent around the blockage to determine what might be done and they said a good road can soon be made down the canyon by digging...and cutting...some ten or fifteen rods. After spending about four hours labor the brethren succeeded in cutting a pretty good road along the creek...

On your right is the Donner Hill marker indicating the place where the Donner-Reed party left the canyon and drove their wagons over the ridge and into the valley.

The canyon today is much more residential than wild, with homes bordering the stream all along the way. It is at present a part of the county; however, there is again talk of incorporating the entire canyon within Salt Lake City. There is also much argument over this proposal. The emigrant trail down the canyon was well to the right (south) of the road, following the more open areas beyond the creek.

Our stopping point here is the summit of Little Mountain, at an elevation of 6,230 feet. Here is the historical marker noting the passage of both the Donner-Reed party in 1846, and the Mormons in 1847. Looking east, the direction the emigrants came from, is the site of Camp Grant - at the base of the dam - where the emigrants rested before tackling the climb up Little Mountain. As we descend from Little Mountain, the route they traveled up from Camp Grant may be discerned by following the

line of the vehicle track and pipeline markers to the summit.

Also visible from the Little Mountain summit is, to the left of the reservoir and in the clump of trees, the probable site of the Ephraim Hanks Pony Express Station.

As the climb begins to the Big Mountain summit we will pass two defaced historical markers: the first probably identified the site of the Ephraim Hanks Pony Express Station, and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles beyond that is the marker that once identified the Birch Springs Camp of Orson Pratt's advance party of Mormons in 1847.

At the summit of Big Mountain is the historical marker identifying the pioneer trail at that point. Here, at an elevation of 7,420 feet the pioneers were atop one of the more formidable heights they had to conquer, and almost the last. A walk to the south end of the parking lot gives two excellent perspectives: first is the first view the pioneers had of the Salt Lake Valley, and the second is of the hill they had to descend in order to get to Little Mountain and Emigration Canyon which was, in George Shepard's words, "...the longest and steepest and crookedest hill I ever see." He was surely not out of that line with that comment for the drop from the summit of Big Mountain to Mountain Dell Canyon while relatively short, averages an amazing 700 feet per mile. By comparison, the drop from the Little Mountain summit down Emigration Canyon averages a comparatively mild 200 feet per mile, and down Parley's Canyon roughly 225 feet per mile. Those routes, however, are each about ten miles in length and, everything considered, more difficult than the shorter, steeper descent from Big Mountain.

Richard Rieck made the comment that a survey of fifty trail journals indicated that by more than two to one the emigrants regarded a "long grinding descent" as more demanding than similarly steep ascents (*Overland Journal* 12:1, 29). Most of the elevations given here came from his article on the geography of the trails.

On the north side of the parking lot is the start of the walking part of this expedition, down Little Emigration Canyon to Mormon Flat. State Parks personnel will be with us on this walk, but as you go down keep in mind George Shepard's words (and remember he was climbing up) "we now ascended a mountain four miles on a steady pull sometimes on the sidehill sometimes in the crick and going 3 or 4 rods on nothing but stones before we got to the top of the mountain." We will be walking that trail of the pioneers.

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Mormon Flat, where the emigrant trains began their climb up Big Mountain. Here, and farther on up the road at Large Springs,

they camped and rested both their stock and themselves on East Canyon Creek before attempting this climb on their way to the valley. Here also, on the ridges to the west of the parking lot, may be seen the Mormon fortifications from the 1857 Mormon War.

They came from the north, the direction we are now heading, and drove along this creek from the time they turned into East Canyon.

On the right is a farm house, and a restored building that purports to be the site of the Bauchmann Pony Express Station. This location is questioned, and the site of the station, sometimes called the Snyderville Station, is most likely under water of the East Canyon Reservoir.

We are now approaching the East Canyon Reservoir and will be driving along its eastern shore. As we travel along, look to the left - to the northwest and the dam. There are several optimal viewpoints along here to see the dam. In 1846 the Bryant-Russell party, all traveling on mules and with no wagons or other impediments, turned northwest to return to the Weber River route they had been forced to abandon at the Devils Slide below Henefer. They had been unable to cut their way through the heavy undergrowth at that point, and had of necessity followed the route up Main Canyon to East Canyon, where they were able to get around the narrows of the creek only by using an old Indian trail which climbed the ridge to the right of the dam.

On the far side of the reservoir is the state park where we will stop for lunch. We will take up the commentary later, but for the moment, as you sit in the park looking back along the way we have come, realize that the Pioneer Trail entered this canyon, now a reservoir, from the east, to your left, made a turn to the south (in the middle of the reservoir), and proceeded over the route we have just followed.

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As we drive out of the park, and back to the junction, on your left is a Mormon Trail marker marking the place where the trail came down from Broad Bench to East Canyon. Up ahead is the spot, also with a marker, where Dixie Hollow became impassable, and they were forced to turn up to Broad Bench. In this vicinity the Donner-Reed party camped in 1846, as did Orson Pratt's advance party in 1847.

We are now on the Hogsback, where the emigrants topped the ridge, coming from Main Canyon into Dixie Hollow. The elevation here is 6,265 feet. We will stop here for a few minutes and I suggest you get out and look back to the west. You will see just what the emigrants saw as they got their first awesome view of the Wasatch Range ahead of them, and which they knew they had to cross before reaching the valley.



We are now traveling down Main Canyon toward Henefer. On your left you may be able to spot several places where evidences of the trail still exist--they are the bare spaces on the gully side. Also on your left is a marker, again without plaque, that marks the site of Dixie Springs, a Mormon militia camp in 1857. Beyond that is the Summit historical marker which originally stood at Echo Junction where the Lincoln Highway (Rte 30) and the Pioneer Trail joined. It was moved to this site when I-80 was built through Echo Canyon.

At the junction of Main Canyon road and the road through Henefer, we are turning toward Weber Canyon and the Devils slide. As we enter the canyon, the slide will be on our left; however, a few miles down, we will turn around, and it will be on our right on the return trip. It was here that the Bryant-Russell party was stopped in their effort to continue down the canyon. They were only nine men, and insufficient for the task of cutting their way through. The Harlan-Young party, led by Lansford Hastings, did go this way the valley below; however, even with the manpower to cut their way through, it was an ordeal, and for that reason Hastings recommended the Donner-Read party take the Main Canyon route to Emigration Canyon. With the widening for the interstate, and quarrying activities along this stretch it is impossible to even imagine what it must have been like to a party of pioneers with wagons attempting this passage.

The trail followed along the west side of the Weber River from the crossing to Main Canyon, and we are now approaching the Weber Ford. As you stand in this gravel road, looking toward the river, the crossing was about 45° to your left, about where you can see the bend in the river. In 1850 the Mormons were operating a ferry here, charging \$3 to ferry a wagon over, the horses having to swim. George Shepard's party objected to such an outlandish charge until they watched another party attempting to cross at another ford in high water. They then returned to the ferry, and gladly paid the toll.

Here is the Weber Canyon explorers trail marker. At this point in 1846 the Harlan-Young and Hoppe-Lienhard parties joined together with Lansford Hastings as their guide and proceeded down Weber Canyon. They followed the Weber River to the valley in the vicinity of Ogden, where they turned south to the Salt Lake Valley and around the south end of the lake. Hastings took these groups down the Weber Canyon route, but recommended Main Canyon, and the route we have been following, to the Donner-Reed party.

Where the river passes under I-80 is the site of a Donner-Reed camp in 1846, and we are now turning into Echo Canyon. We are going only as far up the canyon as Castle Rock before returning to Salt Lake City. In 1846 the Pioneer Trail came down the canyon from the Needles, south of Evanston, entering Echo Canyon several miles above Castle Rock. The Castle Rock area was



the site of a Pony Express Station, and immediately north of the exit is the site of Brigham Young's camp of 15 July 1847. Just a mile and a half back down the canyon, the way we are returning, is the site of the Hastings-Clyman, Hoppe-Lienhard and Donner-Reed camps in 1846.

We are unable, by time constraints, to cover the entire Pioneer Trail from Fort Bridger to the Salt Lake Valley, but this portion of the trail through Echo Canyon is one of the more dramatic parts of the trail, and elicited much comment from the pioneers as they wended their way between its steep walls.

The story goes that Echo Canyon was named by Jim Bridger, who often traveled between the Salt Lake Valley and his trading post on Black's Fork of the Green River, where our Pioneer Trail begins. The mouth of this canyon was just about one day's ride from the valley, and as he bedded down for the night he would holler up-canyon "Time to get up, Jim," and the echo would bounce back down the canyon at dawn to awaken him.

William Clayton wrote an excellent commentary about the canyon in 1847. It was then called Red Fork Canyon. He wrote that:

There is a very singular echo in this ravine, the rattling of the wagons resembling carpenters hammering at boards inside the highest rocks. The report of a rifle resembles a sharp crack of thunder and echos from rock to rock for some time. The lowing of cattle and braying of mules seem to be answered beyond the mountains. Music, especially brass instruments, have a very pleasing effect and resemble a person standing inside the rock imitating every note.

Clayton wrote more, and others also commented on the strength and extent of the echos in the canyon. George Shepard failed to comment on the echoes of the canyon, but he did note that in descending it they "...crossed the creek good many times and very bad crossings."

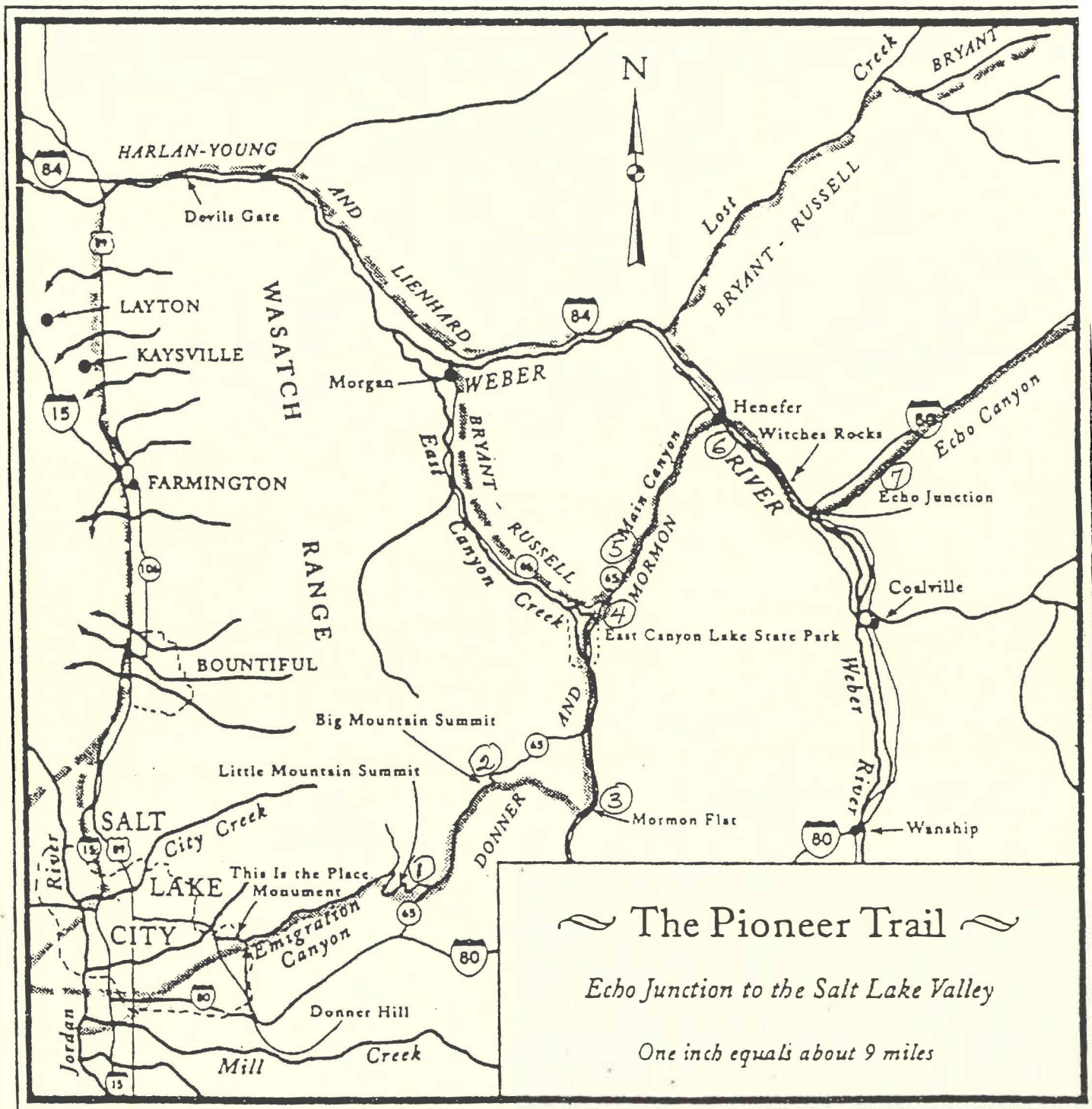
Back at Echo Junction, the Pioneer Trail turns off to the north and follows the Weber River, the trail we have just followed. From here, our return to Salt Lake City will be on I-80 which, while not a part of the Pioneer Trail, was an important route into the valley beginning in 1850. Within a year after the Mormon arrival in the Salt Lake Valley, Parley Pratt began exploring the many canyons for an easier alternative to the Emigration Canyon route. He found one, and in 1850 Pratt's "The Golden Pass! or New Road Through the Mountains" was opened in time to serve the early California gold rush sojourners. The Golden Pass Road left the Pioneer Trail at the mouth of Echo Canyon and followed essentially the route we are following on I-80 to the city. It was opened as a toll road, and saw use for

only one year. Pratt left the valley on a church mission to Chile, and without his promotion and maintenance the road was soon abandoned, and the Emigration Canyon route again became the primary road followed into the Salt Lake Valley.

On the right as we approach the Park City area is the Kimball Ranch. The large stone building is one of the original buildings of the stage station from the 1860's.

Soon we will begin our descent to the city, following I-80 down Parley's Canyon. It's ten miles and a 2,000 foot drop in elevation from 7,016 feet at Parley's Summit to the mouth of the canyon, and a favorite reference for car dealers in Salt Lake. "Why, it'll take Parley's in high gear," they'll tell you as they encourage you to take a car out for a test drive.

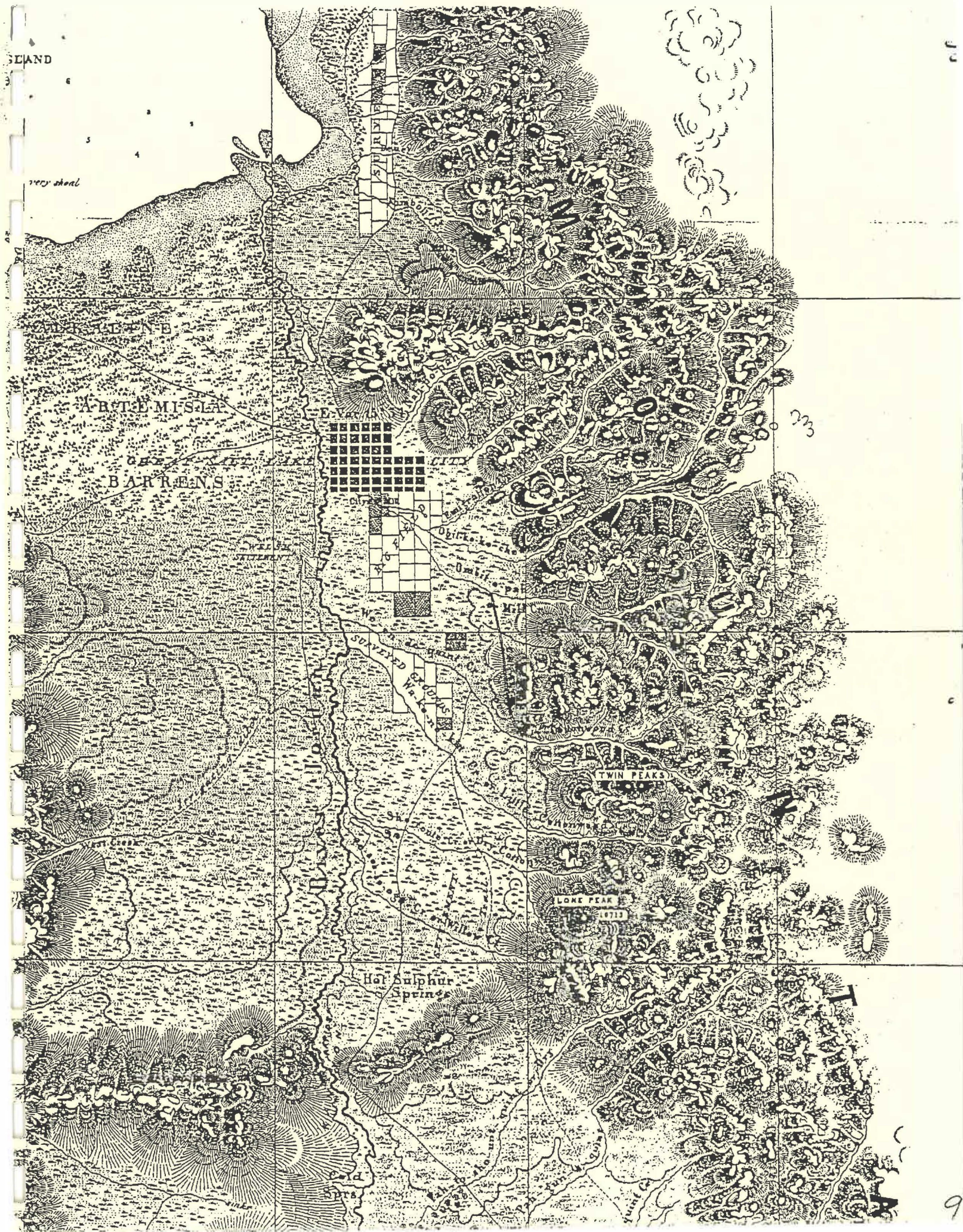
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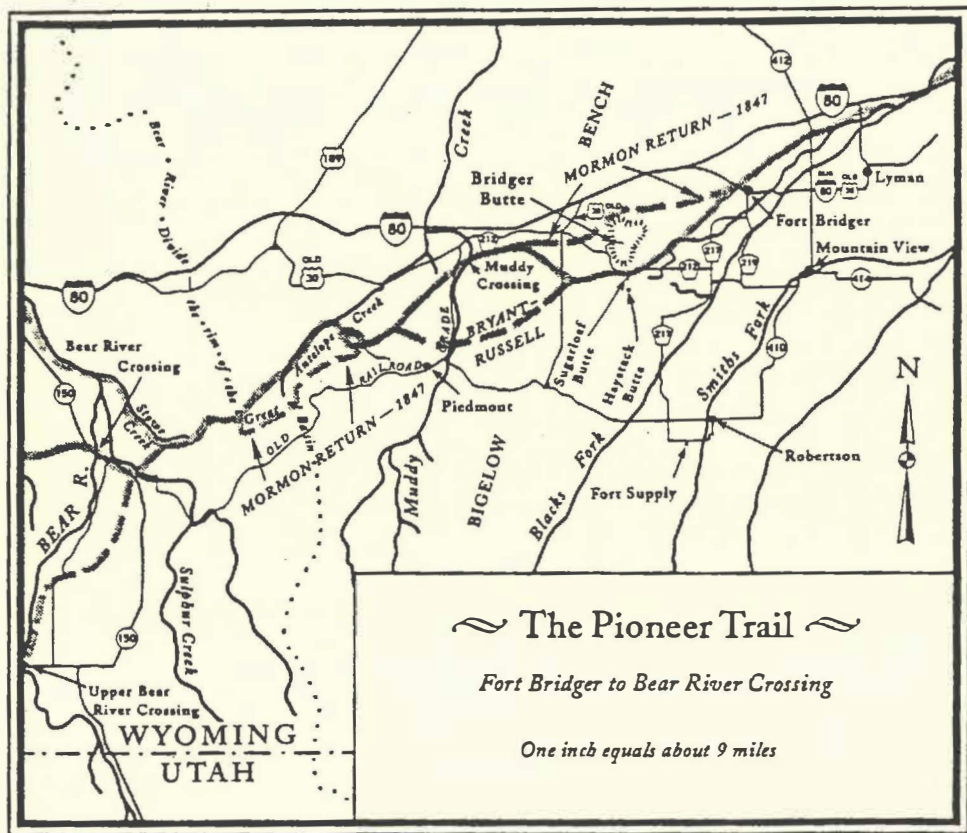


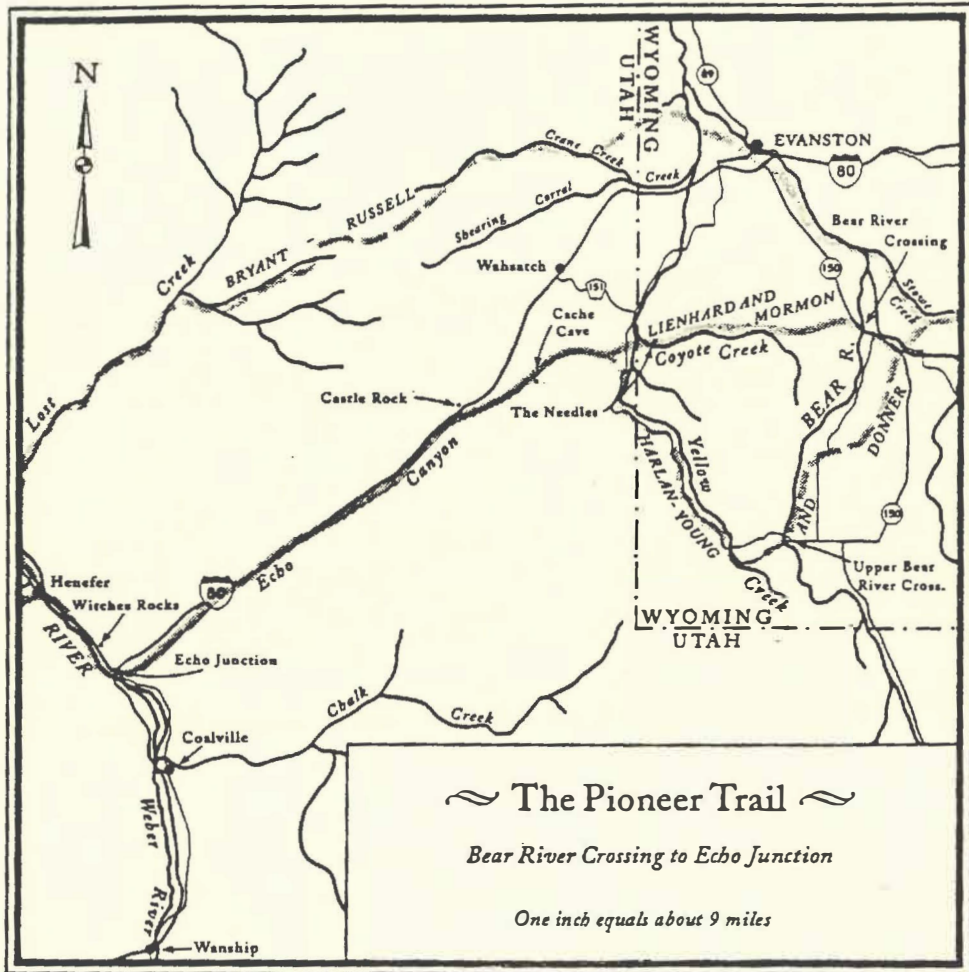
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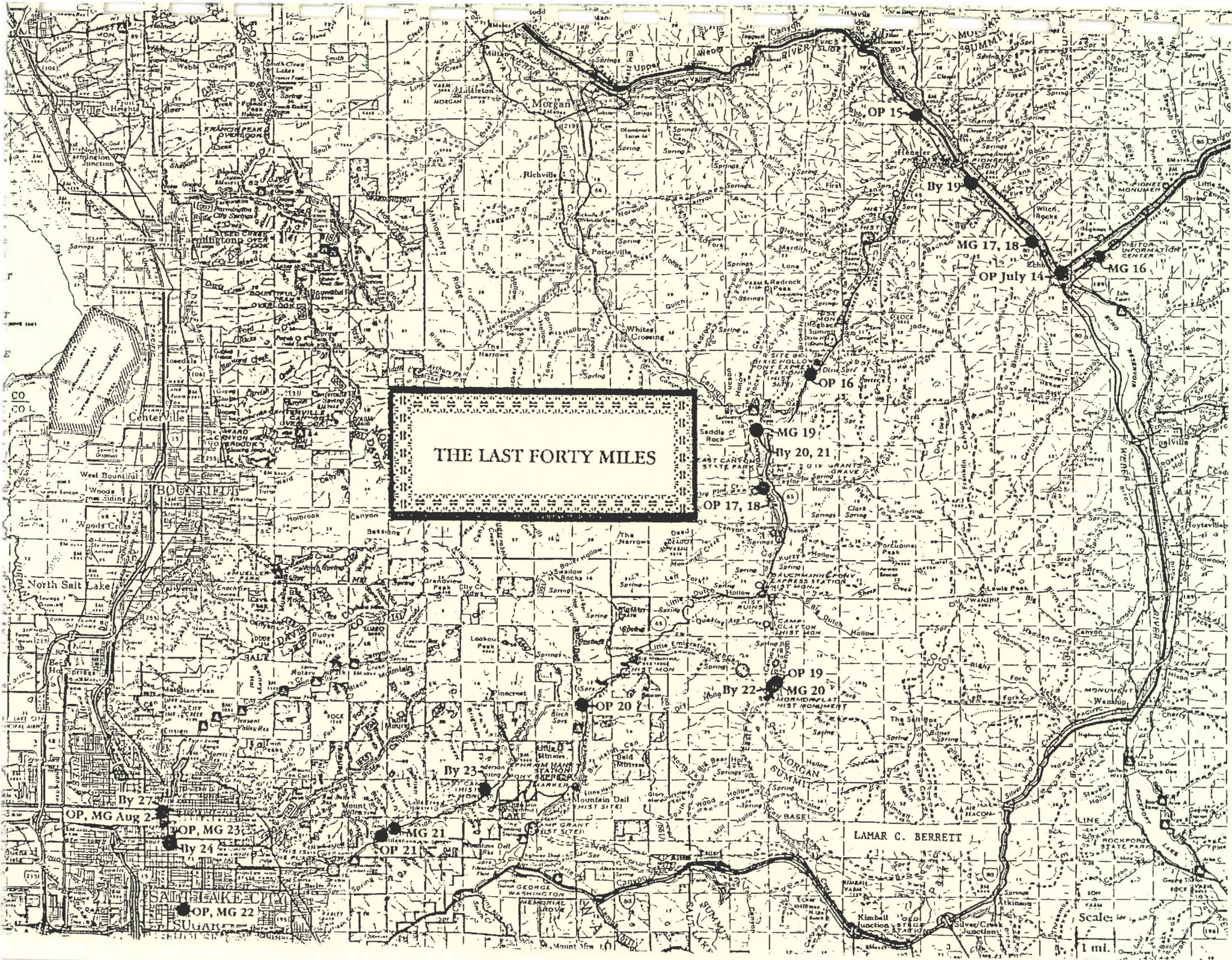












THE LAST FORTY MILES

LAMAR C. BERRETT

Scale: 1 mi.