

## On the Road Again

*Discovering Mormon Trails: New York to California, 1831-1868*, by Stanley B. Kimball, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1979, 50 pp., \$4.95, maps.

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This soft cover booklet of fifty pages is the latest of Stanley B. Kimball's works on Mormon trails. Stan Kimball has long been noted as an expert on the Mormon hegira and this little text will not detract from his reputation.

The volume was written to "restore [the] memory of some of these trails" and directed to both the Mormon shrine visitors and to serious students of Mormon history. It should be noted, however, that according to Kimball, "aside from some trail-breaking by General Stephen W. Kearny and the Mormon Battalion in 1846 between Santa Fe and San Diego, out of the thousands of miles of trails and roads used by the Mormons of the nineteenth century, they may have actually blazed less than one mile. This was from Donner Hill to the mouth of Emigration Canyon in present-day Utah." The appeal of the booklet is more to the LDS reader but the first three chapters would be meaningful to the RLDS reader as well.

In a format that includes a short chapter for each pioneering venture, the booklet is approximately one-quarter to one-third maps by the able cartographer, Diane Clements. While the text could have become pedestrian, it is instead easy to read, concise, and accented by historical facts.

One of the weaknesses, however, is that this short treatment allows only brief hints at the historical events surrounding each Mormon trail.

The routes covered include the major Mormon movements which finally led the Saints to the Great Basin. New York, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, and Iowa all played a part in the refugees' trek to the Midwest. From that point, Kimball demonstrates his expertise, covering the exodus to the West in depth. While most consider these routes the sum of the Mormon migration, lesser known routes such as those of the Mississippi Saints, the handcart pioneers and Mormon Battalion are dealt with as well.

Most of the material presented is not unique. Kimball has been writing about Mormon historic sites and trails for many years and there is little in this particular book that has not been said elsewhere. Many readers will be familiar with the material from his series starting 1979 in the *Ensign*. Kimball's introduction to *The Mormon Trek West: The Journey of American Exiles* embodies much of the same message as this little booklet.

The value of the booklet is that it is a convenient statement and analysis of the importance of the Mormon migration. It appears that it could be best utilized in conjunction with a good road atlas. And while the interested traveler may be put off by repeated referrals to check county maps or to ask the locals, it will be a welcomed addition for those who vicariously seek the past.



