

"THEY CROSSED THE PRAIRIES, AS OF OLD
THE PILGRIMS CROSSED THE SEA,
TO MAKE THE WEST, AS THEY THE EAST,
THE HOMESTEAD OF THE FREE."

ERECTED OCTOBER TWENTY-SECOND
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND THIRTEEN.

MARKING THE MORMON TRAIL.

For some twenty years the present Curator of the Historical Department of Iowa has been accumulating information upon trans-state commerce prior to the opening of the Union Pacific Railway. Some years ago he first presented to an Iowa state convention of the Daughters of the American Revolution, his views upon the travel and traffic over and settlement along the old Mormon Trail. Suggesting the extensive use of this route for emigration to California and other notable movements eastward and westward both before and after the gold excitement, he advocated the expenditure by that patriotic order of both thought and money upon the erection of appropriate markers along the route.

There has resulted a gradual awakening of interest and retrieving of information upon the subject. The distinction has been clearly drawn between the subject of *Travel along the Mormon Trail*, which was commended, and those of the *Mormon travel* or *Mormon trails*. The sincere convictions of the people of our State against the tenet of polygamy, entangle us in a feeling against all institutions and names associated with it. But a study of the travel on the Mormon Trail has had a beneficial effect in that it has aided us to look through the name "Mormon Trail" to the really important early travel over it.

A glimpse of what that travel was, and was expected to become, can be had through the eyes of the early prophets of Iowa, one of whom, James W. Grimes, in 1853 published in his *Iowa Farmer and Horticulturist* an editorial on "The Future Markets of Iowa" wherein he said:

Conversing a short time since with a returned Californian, and informing him of the vast numbers of cattle, sheep, &c., driven through our State this spring, he remarked that numerous as were

the California drovers of 1853, they were nothing to what would come hereafter. . . . Hundreds of men in the Golden State were laying up money for the sole purpose of coming to Iowa and Illinois to purchase and drive cattle and sheep. This trade is the most profitable of any now carried on in California and is one which we are assured it is impossible to overdo for the next twenty-five years. The drovers come, not with the rags of eastern shiplaster mills, too often mere phantoms and shadows of a currency, but with solid gold which cannot easily take wings and disappear, even while you clutch it in your hand. They ask no credit, and pay fair and remunerating prices. The further west the cattle are found, the better they suit their purposes, and the more readily are they sold. No market need be sought, for the purchaser seeks the vendor at his home, and at once pays his money and drives off his purchase. The heavier the stock on hand, the greater the attraction for the buyer. No more profitable and satisfactory business need be asked by any man than the future which is opening up to the farmer of the prairies of Iowa.

On these and similar facts and reasons, through this and no other vision, came Salmon P. Chase's bill of 1853 appropriating funds for a survey for a Pacific railway.

There was no considerable traffic across our State up to the opening of the Union Pacific Railway that did not go over some portion of the old Mormon Trail. In one decade the traffic was transferred to railways and the old route abandoned. Memory both of traffic and route had been dimmed by time and further obscured by the tragic events of the Civil war. Records of even the Western Stage Company are meager indeed. The subject of Mormons, Mormon church, Mormon travels and Mormon routes are of but trivial importance in Iowa annals. But the movements of the pioneers upon the Mormon Trail is one of the most fruitful themes of inquiry. It is most worthy to be commemorated by markers along its ancient way.

HISTORICAL PORTRAIT COLLECTING.

Iowa, through the Historical Department at Des Moines, has a notable collection of pictorial data of her more noted citizens. Our oil portraits are exhibited in accordance with the best gallery rules, and afford to the visitor as satisfactory

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