



UAW-FORD JULY 2016 DIVERSITY DIGEST

Interfaith Insights and Inspiration Mormon Pioneer Day: July 24th

Background

Facing mob violence, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (called LDS or Mormon) fled their main city, Nauvoo Illinois, in the dead of winter in February of 1846. For the next year, most LDS lived in various makeshift communities in Iowa or Omaha Nebraska. They needed to find a permanent home in the West where church members could put down roots and nurture each other in faith.

Vanguard Pioneer Company

Brigham Young organized a vanguard company to break the trail west to the Rocky Mountains, gather information about trail conditions, including water sources and native tribes, and to ultimately find the central gathering point in the Great Basin. The initial company would select and break the primary trail with the expectation that later pioneers would maintain and improve it. It was hoped that the group could, wherever possible, establish fords and ferries, and plant crops for later harvest. A new route on the north side of the Platte River was chosen to avoid major interaction with travelers using the established Oregon Trail on the river's south side.

This vanguard group of pioneers left April 5, 1847 and consisted of 143 men, including eight members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, three women, and two children. The train contained 73 wagons, 93 horses, 52 mules, 66 oxen, 19 cows, 17 dogs, one cannon, and carried enough supplies to fully provision the group for one year. The group began their travels at 7am each day and ended at 8:30pm. They would move 6 days a week, generally staying in camp on Sunday to observe the Sabbath. The journey was hard and some people died, but they walked forward in faith.



Arrival

Towards the end of the journey, Brigham Young had fallen ill and had to be pulled in a covered wagon. On July 24th Brigham Young's wagon had reached Ensign Peak and he could see down into the Salt Lake Valley. Brigham Young had previously been shown the valley in a vision and when he looked out upon the view he declared "This is the right place, drive on." Today a monument stands in the spot where he made this declaration. Over the next few decades, 70,000 immigrants travelled to Utah before the railroad, in what became the largest and best organized westward pioneer trek in history.

Pioneer Day

July 24th is now a Utah state holiday called "Pioneer Day". Pioneer Day activities include fireworks, parades, picnics, rodeos and other festivities throughout the state. Church youth groups also reenact the journey going on their own mini-treks. They push handcarts, sleep under tarps, and learn about their ancestors. While the holiday has strong links to the LDS Church, it is officially a celebration of everyone, regardless of faith, who immigrated to the Salt Lake Valley during the pioneer era. This day celebrates the bravery of the original settlers and their strength of character and physical endurance, something that can be appreciated by people of all faiths!

The goals of these monthly messages are to:

- Provide interesting insights & inspirations that can be widely enjoyed by people of all faiths
- Support diversity and tolerance; promote respect and understanding of people of all religions
- Strengthen unity within Ford; be inclusive of all as we celebrate our varied faith backgrounds

For more information on FIN (Ford Interfaith Network) please see our SharePoint site at:
<https://www.tc2.ford.com/its/FordInterfaithNetwork/default.aspx>