



# EMIGRANT TRAILS HALL OF FAME

OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION

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## Biography

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- Born: 1801, Whitingham, Vermont
- Died: 1877, Salt Lake City, Utah Territory
- Religious leader, politician, settler

## Achievements

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- Second president and prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- Colonizer of the West and founder of Salt Lake City
- Governor of Utah Territory

## Brigham Young

Brigham Young, the second president and prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), was born in Whitingham, Vermont. He grew up in upstate New York in a Methodist family. In 1832 he became a member of the LDS church which had been founded in 1830 by Joseph Smith. Young was ordained a member of its original Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1835 and became president of the Quorum in 1839.

After the murder of Joseph Smith in 1844, Young became responsible for leading several thousand followers recently forced from their homes in Illinois. He began planning a massive western migration.

In the early spring of 1847 he led the vanguard pioneer company of 143 church members west. Other parties had climbed the north bank of the Platte, but in '47 the Saints' hundreds of wagons earned the route the name "Mormon Trail," which followed the Donner Party's tracks across the Wasatch Mountains to the Salt Lake Valley, arriving on July 24. He became the second president of the Church in December 1847.

Young was a dynamic, hands-on leader in the migration and the founding of Salt Lake City. He helped scout the route, selected campsites, hunted game, cajoled his company. Eventually some 70,000 Mormons and 150,000 others followed the route Young helped blaze and refine.

Young was inextricably tied to many other hallmarks of overland migration. The Mormon Battalion, part of Kearny's Army of the West during the Mexican War, helped open a new road across the Southwest to California. In 1848 some of its members blazed the Mormon-Carson Emigrant Trail over the Sierra Nevada, a route which became the main thoroughfare of the gold seekers.

The Perpetual Emigration Fund, established by the church in 1849, provided economic assistance to more than 30,000 individuals who sought to emigrate from Europe to the Salt Lake Valley.

The handcart migration, devised by Young, added almost 3,000 migrants between 1856 and 1860. Often fraught because of defective materials, poor planning, and severe winter weather, two of the 1856 companies suffered several hundred deaths, the largest disaster in the history of overland trails.

Young served as president of the LDS church until his death in 1877. He was appointed by President Millard Fillmore as the first Governor of the Utah Territory and superintendent of American Indian Affairs from 1851-1858. As Church president and territorial governor, he established Latter-day Saint settlements in Utah and throughout the West.