

This Day in History... July 24, 1847

Founding of Salt Lake City

After 17 months of travel searching for a new home for his persecuted people, Brigham Young found Utah's Great Salt Lake Valley on July 24, 1847 and proclaimed, "This is the place"

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was founded in 1830 when Joseph Smith published the Book of Mormon. The religion grew fast in his New York community and spread to Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois.

In Missouri, after a Mormon newspaper published two articles discussing the state's slavery laws in 1833, Mormons were expelled from Jackson County. As a compromise, Mormons were given Caldwell County in 1836 to settle in. However, tensions continued to grow and violence broke out. In 1838, the governor signed Missouri Executive Order 44, also called the Mormon Extermination Order.



When Mormons first settled in Missouri, they did so in the area that would eventually become Kansas City.

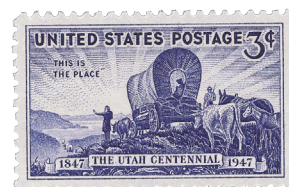
The Mormons then settled in Illinois, founding the city of Nauvoo with Joseph Smith as the mayor. As the Mormon population grew, neighboring communities grew concerned about their increasing political power, and the Anti-Mormon Party was formed. In 1844, a small group of Nauvoo residents who had left the church published a newspaper critical of Joseph Smith, and Smith ordered their printing press destroyed and declared martial law. He was then charged with inciting a riot and treason, and was held in the county jail. Before a trial could be held, a mob attacked and Smith was killed.

Following Smith's death, Brigham Young became the church's new leader and vowed to find a new home for all of his fellow Mormons, in "a place on this earth that nobody else wants." He led a convoy of more than 10,000 followers and set up camp in Iowa. Young then took a smaller detachment of 148 people across the Rocky Mountains. As soon as he reached Utah's Great Salt Lake Valley, he knew it was his people's future home.

These devout settlers called the region Deseret, after the Mormon word for honeybee. The honeybee is an important symbol of hard work and industry for the Mormons. Many people still refer to Utah as Deseret, and Utah's nickname is the Beehive State.

In 1849, the Mormons established the Perpetual Emigrating Fund. This fund helped Mormons move to Utah. It operated for about 40 years and attracted about 50,000 Mormons to Utah. These people came from other areas of the United States as well as Denmark, England, Norway, Scotland, Sweden, and Wales.

When the Mormons first arrived in Utah, the area officially belonged to Mexico.



Stamp pictures Brigham Young and his followers arriving at Salt Lake City in 1847.



The Utah flag pays tribute to the Mormon settlers with the beehive at its center.

This Day in History... July 24, 1847 continued

However, at that time the US and Mexico were fighting the Mexican War, which lasted from 1846-1848. When the US won the war, it acquired a great deal of land, including Utah.

The Mormons established the State of Deseret in 1849, with a temporary government led by Brigham Young. A constitution was adopted, and the settlers asked to be admitted to the Union. However, Congress was embroiled in great debates about slavery at the time. But with the Compromise of 1850, the Utah Territory was established.

Between 1849 and 1895, Utah tried to join the Union several times. Congress refused because of an uncommon Mormon practice called polygamy – specifically, a form where a man had more than one wife which they referred to as “plural marriage.” Few Mormons actually practiced polygamy. But as long as the Mormons allowed it, Utah was denied statehood.

The federal government began enforcing the laws against polygamy during the 1880s. About 1,000 Mormons were fined or sent to prison. In 1887, a law was passed allowing the federal government to seize church property for use by public schools. In 1890, the church began discouraging polygamy, and by 1904 it was prohibited.

In 1895, Utah submitted a new constitution to Congress. This constitution outlawed polygamy and protected the government from church domination. As a result, Utah achieved statehood on January 4, 1896.



The beehive symbolized the ideals of hard work and self-reliance, which were needed to tame the harsh land.

The Pony Express Arrives in Salt Lake City

In 1860, William Russell, Alexander Majors, and William B. Waddell sought to create a mail-carrying company that would be faster and more efficient than the stagecoaches of the Butterfield Overland Mail. At that time, it could take months for mail to be delivered to the unsettled West by stagecoach.



When this stamp was issued many suggested the horse's running position was impossible. They expected it to be reissued, but it never was.

They established 184 stations 10-15 miles apart in just two months. The three founders then put a call out for small, brave young men that could ride a horse well. 400 of the fastest horses they could find were purchased and 80 daring riders were hired. The first ride left St. Joseph, Missouri, on April 3, 1860,

and arrived in Sacramento, California, just ten days later. In the mochilla, or saddlebag, was a message of congratulations from President Buchanan to the governor of California, which had been telegraphed from Washington to St. Joseph.

The adventurous service came to an end just 18 months after that first ride. On October 24, 1861, the Western Union Telegraph Company completed the first transcontinental telegraph line in Salt Lake City. This accomplishment ushered in a new age of communications in the US.



This Transcontinental Railroad stamp has an error too – the flag is blowing in a different direction than the smoke.

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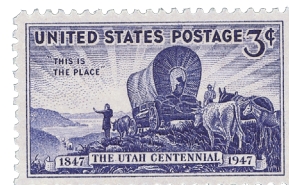
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