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INFORMATION SHEET 29

**MORMON EMIGRATION**

The first Mormons, or members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, arrived in Liverpool from America on board the *Garrick* on 19 July 1837 and were sent to preach the restored gospel by Church President, Joseph Smith, Jr. The Church had been formally organised in America on 6 April 1830. Three of the seven missionaries were Canadian and two had been born in England, and they set up branches of the Church at Preston and throughout the Ribble Valley in Lancashire. Within eight months of their arrival membership had reached some 2,000 people. By 1850, 42,316 people had been baptised and another 52,192 had been baptised by 1870.

From 1840 the majority of these early converts were encouraged by the Church leaders to emigrate from Britain to North America to help build the community's own settlement, Nauvoo, on marshland alongside the Mississippi River in Illinois. Brigham Young arrived in Liverpool on 6 April 1840 on board the packet ship *Patrick Henry* and the first company of 41 emigrant Mormons left Liverpool on the *Britannia* for New York on 6 June 1840. On 20 April 1841 Brigham Young boarded the *Rochester* with a party of 130 Mormon emigrants, arriving in New York one month later.

In 1846, persecution culminating in the assassination of the Church leader, Joseph Smith, forced the Mormons to flee west into unsettled territory in the Rocky Mountains, to found "Zion" at Salt Lake City in the State of Utah in July 1847. Many thousands of Mormon emigrants followed.

Many of these emigrants were poor, and were assisted to emigrate by their local Church branches, or from 1849 by the Church's own Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company. By 1852, over £125,000 had been given to assist poor emigrants, and the Church had its own charter and supply agent in Liverpool.

In 1854 the Mormon agent and passenger-broker, Elder Samuel W. Richards, gave evidence to a parliamentary inquiry on how the Church organised this mass emigration. He described how the Church chartered its own ships, charging passengers £3.12s.6d. to New Orleans, and £20 for the full journey to Salt Lake City. The journey to Utah from New Orleans consisted of a 1,300 mile trip by steamboat on the Mississippi to St. Louis, then a further 800 miles on the Missouri River to Council Bluffs. From Council Bluffs they joined the wagon trains along the *Mormon Trail* to Salt Lake Valley, some 1,030 miles across the Rocky Mountains.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, about 55,000 British Latter-day Saints immigrated to North America. Between 1870-1920 the Church in America was composed of mainly English emigrants. With more leaving than settling, most of the branches of the Church were then closed down in Britain. Official Church Emigration Records began to be recorded in Liverpool (the primary port of Mormon European emigration) commencing in 1849 and were kept until 1925. Church leaders continually emphasized the importance of British converts remaining in their native homeland and building up the Church throughout the duration of the 20<sup>th</sup>

century. However, some of these converts were not content with staying in their country until they were able to receive the full blessings of Church membership made available for the first time in the UK through the erection and dedication of the LDS London Temple in 1958. <sup>1</sup> Currently in the UK, there is a Church membership of over 183,000 members, six missions, two temples, 336 congregations and 117 family history centers. <sup>2</sup>

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The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints encourages its members to research their family histories and the Church has the world's largest genealogy record collection. These records are made available to members and non-members alike through Family History Centres around the world, including Liverpool. In addition the Church now runs a genealogy site, *Family Search* (see below) making available a database of over 400 million names online, and the International Genealogical Index which gives 240 million names with birth or christening and marriage details, and microfilm copies of parish registers in the Church's area.

Online details on Mormon emigration and other useful links, can be found at, <http://www.lds.org.uk>

The website of the British Latter-day Saints Society, can be located at: <http://www.ldshistory.org>

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, can be located at:  
<http://www.familysearch.org>

The Mormon Migration website, <http://lib.byu.edu/mormonmigration/> hosted by the Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, provides a place for historical and genealogical research into the world-wide migration records and history about the 19th and 20th century movement of thousands of immigrants from many nations who are part of the membership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, more commonly known as the Mormon Church. It includes 543 voyages with about 90,000 Mormon passengers, and over 1,000 first person Latter-day Saint immigrant accounts for the years 1840-1890, as well as additional information to interpret the story of the Mormons immigrating to America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It provides names, ages, origins, ports of departure and arrival, as well as the known number of Saints and their company leaders on each voyage.

The autobiographies, journals, diaries, reminiscences, and letters link to over 500 known LDS immigrant voyages and they provide a composite history of those who crossed the Atlantic and Pacific, travelling by land and water to gather to America. Immigrants from 1840–46 gathered to Nauvoo, Illinois. Beginning in 1847, the Saints, driven west, gathered in the Salt Lake Valley and later other regions of Utah. The immigrant accounts of their travels to the Great Basin describe not only their experiences crossing the oceans, but also their trek to frontier outfitting posts, and entry into the Salt Lake Valley (1847–1869).

The Mormon Migration website complements the **Mormon Pioneer Overland Trail Database**, <https://history.lds.org/overlandtravels>, which covers crossing the plains. The accounts include those of the immigrants who gathered by rail from 1869–1890, not solely those who came by wagon, handcart or walking, thus adding to the complete immigration story from international ports of departure to entry by train into the Salt Lake Valley.<sup>3</sup>

## Footnotes & Acknowledgements

<sup>1</sup> Information kindly provided by Fred E. Woods  
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<sup>2</sup> The statistics for Church membership were taken from  
<http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/united-kingdom-england-scotland-northern-ireland-and-wales> As from August 2016 see  
<http://www.mormonnewsroom.org.uk/facts-and-statistics>

<sup>3</sup> Source as (1) above, Mormon Migration website press release.