

APPENDIX 1

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES
ON
OVERLAND TRAILS

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DOCUMENTARY SOURCES ON OVERLAND TRAILS

Emigrant trail literature of all types is the primary documentary resource available to the trail researcher. Fortunately, knowledge of and access to this trail literature is becoming more readily available. For the researcher, it's a process of identifying and locating desirable emigrant documents, then utilizing them by following the research procedures recommended in the MET Manual. The more knowledge trail researchers have of trail literature, the easier the task and the more effective fieldwork becomes.

If detailed enough, emigrant diaries and journals—eyewitness accounts of trails—provide the most reliable documentary evidence for trail research and field verification. A number of standard, published bibliographies on emigrant overland travel are readily available for various emigrant trails. For brevity, only the authors/editors, titles, and publication years are given.

On the northern routes see:

- ▶ Merrill J. Mattes, *Platte River Road Narratives: A Descriptive Bibliography of Travel Over the Great Central Overland Route to Oregon, California, Utah, Colorado, Montana, and Other Western States and Territories, 1812–1866* (1988).
- ▶ John M. Townley, *The Trail West: A Bibliography – Index to Western American Trails, 1841–1869* (1988).
- ▶ Lannon W. Mintz, *The Trail: A Bibliography of the Travelers on the Overland Trail to California, Oregon, Salt Lake City, and Montana during the Years 1841–1864* (1987)
- ▶ Marlin L. Heckman, *Overland on the California Trail: A Bibliography of Manuscript & Printed Travel Narratives* (1984).
- ▶ Kris White & Mary-Catherine Cuthill, *Overland Passages: A Guide to Overland Documents in the Oregon Historical Society* (1993).
- ▶ Davis Bitton, *Guide to Mormon Diaries & Autobiographies* (1977)

Will Bagley has extensive bibliographies on northern overland travel in his projected four-volume series *Overland West: The Story of the Oregon and California Trails*. See the first volume *So Rugged and Mountainous: Blazing the Trails to Oregon and California, 1812–1848* (2010), pp. 409-439; and the second volume *With Golden Visions Bright Before Them: Trails to the Mining West, 1849–1852* (2012), pp. 419-444. Two more volumes are forthcoming, covering the years 1853–1860 and 1861–1912.

On the southern routes see:

- ▶ John M. Townley, *The Trail West: A Bibliography – Index to Western American Trails, 1841–1869* (1988).

▶ Patricia A. Etter, *To California on the Southern Route, 1849: A History and Annotated Bibliography* (1998).

Other related bibliographies of published overland sources are:

▶ Henry R. Wagner & Charles L. Camp, *The Plains & Rockies: A Critical Bibliography of Exploration, Adventure and Travel in the American West, 1800–1865* (Fourth Edition, Edited by Robert H. Becker, 1982).

▶ Gary F. Kurutz, *The California Gold Rush: A Descriptive Bibliography of Books and Pamphlets Covering the Years 1848–1853* (1997).

▶ David A. White, *Plains & Rockies, 1800–1865: One hundred twenty proposed additions to the Wagner-Camp and Becker bibliography of travel and adventure in the American West, With 33 selected reprints* (Supplemental volume to the series *News of the Plains and Rockies*, 2001).

▶ Adelaide R. Hasse, *Reports of Explorations Printed in the Documents of the United States Government* (Originally published in 1899 and reprinted in 1969 by Burt Franklin, New York.)

Increasingly, the internet has become a rich source for identifying primary emigrant accounts of overland travel. The most comprehensive bibliography made available recently is Will Bagley's *Across the Plains, Mountains, and Deserts: A Bibliography of the Oregon-California Trail, 1812–1912* (Jan. 2014). This bibliography was undertaken for the National Park Service, National Trails System Office in Salt Lake City, as an Oregon-California Trail Bibliography: For a Historic Resource Study of the Oregon & California National Historic Trails. Currently, this bibliography lists almost 2,500 primary and secondary sources. The first part of this extensive bibliography identifies "Primary Sources, 1812–1904," where the trail researcher will find references to overland emigrant narratives of all types. This bibliography can be accessed at a National Park Service URL: <http://www.nps.gov/oreg/historyculture/bibliography.htm>

The above bibliographies on emigrant overland sources allow the trail researcher to identify potentially useful documents. The next step is finding those emigrant documents. Those that have been published are usually available from libraries of all types. It's the unpublished documents, primarily diaries and journals, that are often difficult to access. These are found in a wide variety of locations: national/state/county archives, university research libraries, state and county historical societies, newspaper archives, state and county highway departments, county land records, state BLM offices, and increasingly at related online websites.

OCTA is developing regional research collections along the overland trails. The two holding the most extensive collections are (1) the Merrill J Mattes Research Library at the National Frontier Trails Museum adjacent to OCTA headquarters in Independence, Missouri, and (2) the Western Overland Trails Collection in the Special Collections Branch of the California State Library in

Sacramento. Additional OCTA supported collections are developing in various western regions and sponsored by OCTA Chapters.

Among the more prominent repositories for emigrant narratives are:

- ▶ Western Americana Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
- ▶ Western Americana Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.
- ▶ (Joint Collection) Western Historical Manuscript Collection, Ellis Library, University of Missouri, Columbia, and Missouri State Historical Society, Columbia.

For the Oregon Trail:

- ▶ Oregon Historical Society Research Library, Portland.
- ▶ University of Oregon Library, Eugene.

For the California Trail:

- ▶ Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
- ▶ Special Collections Branch, California State Library, Sacramento.
- ▶ Alice Phelan Sullivan Library, the Society of California Pioneers, San Francisco.
- ▶ California Historical Society Library Collection, San Francisco.

For the Mormon Pioneer Trail:

- ▶ LDS Archives. Church History Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.
- ▶ Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
- ▶ Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.

Research repositories will have online search programs for identifying diaries and related narratives. However, due to the wide dispersal of these research repositories across the nation, access is difficult and time-consuming. Most research libraries are willing to make copies of documents but this takes negotiating time and can be costly. There are numerous overland diaries, journals, and letters that have been published in historical quarterly magazines that are more accessible.

There are published collections of overland diaries, journals, letters, reports, etc. that are readily available. Among the more well-known are:

- ▶ Kenneth L. Holmes, *Covered Wagon Women: Diaries & Letters from the Western Trails, 1840-1890*, in 11 volumes (1983-1993).
- ▶ David A. White, *News of the Plains and Rockies, 1803-1865: Original narratives of overland travel and adventure selected from the Wagner-Camp and Becker bibliography of Western America*, in 8 volumes (1996-2001).
- ▶ LeRoy R. & Ann W. Hafen, *The Far West and the Rockies Historical Series, 1820-1875*, in 15 volumes (1954-1961).
- ▶ Ralph P. Bieber, *The Southwest Historical Series*, vol. 5, *Southern Trails to California in 1849* (1937).
- ▶ Dale Morgan, *Overland in 1846: Diaries and Letters of the California-Oregon Trail*, in 2 volumes (1963).
- ▶ Patricia K. A. Fletcher, Jack Earl Fletcher, & Lee Whiteley, *Cherokee Trail Diaries*, in 3 volumes (2001).
- ▶ Susan Badger Doyle, *Journeys to the Land of Gold: Emigrant Diaries from the Bozeman Trail, 1863-1866*, in 2 volumes (2000).
- ▶ Sandra L. Myres, *Ho for California! Women's Overland Diaries from the Huntington Library* (1980).
- ▶ Doyce B. Nunis, Jr., *The Bidwell-Bartleson Party, 1841 California Emigrant Adventure: The Documents and Memoirs of Overland Pioneers* (1991).
- ▶ Jesse G. Petersen, *West from Salt Lake: Diaries from the Central Overland Trail* (2012).

A growing number of Western Americana websites, and related links, have listings of emigrant sources and some display the complete document for downloading. Examples are:

- ▶ www.history.lds.org/overlandtravels/search Go to Sources (Mormon overland accounts to Salt Lake City/Utah Territory).
- ▶ www.over-land.com Go to People and then to On-line Diaries, Memoirs and Letters (on the Oregon Trail).
- ▶ www.oregonpioneers.com Go to The Settling of Oregon and Its Pioneers, then to Emigrant Lists and to Diaries/Journals/Reminiscences.

A more practical way to identify, locate, and obtain copies of unpublished emigrant documentary sources is to develop networking arrangements with fellow trail researchers who may have collected copies relating to specific trails. The more experienced researcher can provide tips and suggestions on how to gain access to desired emigrant documents.