

WAGON ROAD

1849—1869

At twilight, or in a gloomy daylight, all the canons feel like coffins. Emigration Canon ... Cliffs are relieved by no beauty of form or colour, they are stern, grim, unpitying; the snow higher up looks warmer; you may fancy Giant Despair looking over their edge at his prisoners.

— William Chandless, *A Visit to Salt Lake City Being a Journey Across the Plains and Residence in the Mormon Settlements in Utah*

Overland Freight and Mail

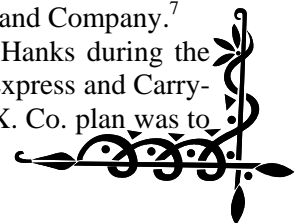
The influx of emigrants to Great Salt Lake City kept the Emigration Canyon wagon road open and used, but maintenance was primitive. Roads in those days were dirt and mud tracks—often mere ruts—that were marginally suitable for wagon travel. And the wagons didn't bring just emigrants. Contributing significantly to road use, both in terms of degradation and upkeep, were the teamsters who rumbled constantly back and forth carrying freight and mail.

As early as 1849, the Great Salt Lake Carrying Company was handling freight between the Missouri River and California, charging passengers \$300 to ride along. Also in that year, the first post office was established in Great Salt Lake City. But the post office was merely a central depository of all mail arriving in town. Delivery was voluntary, as mail was brought by travelers from Independence, Missouri, when convenient or carried by boat to San Francisco and then overland to Salt Lake City.¹ The Mormons soon organized their own private mail service between the valley and the Saints in Kanessville (now Council Bluffs, Iowa), with Almon W. Babbit covering the bimonthly route through Emigration Canyon. Babbit carried the mail at his own expense, probably using pack animals.

The first official government mail contracts included local “Mormon Boys” who were familiar with the roads through the mountains—Feramorz Little, Ephraim Hanks, and Charles F. Decker.² The local contract called for Little and his crew to pick up the westbound mail at Fort Laramie on the fifteenth of every month. The trip from Salt Lake could be made in ten days if all went well, but prudence suggested allowing fifteen. The Mormon Boys generally left Salt Lake City on the first of the month with a wagon and whoever was headed east at the time. Some travelers bought passage on the wagon. Others had their own horses, riding along with the mail train for safety.³ The mail service in those years was no longer catch-as-catch-can, but it was still “inadequate, irregular and erratic.”⁴ Little, Hanks, and Decker knew Emigration Canyon as well as anyone during those days. Eph Hanks admits not only to delivering the mail, keeping the roads open, assisting Mormon emigrants, and “placating” hostile Indians but also to dressing in native garb to scare—and pilfer from—the Oregon and California emigrants.⁵

In 1854 new mail contracts went to gentiles W. M. F. Magraw and John M. Hockaday. They upgraded the service to a monthly stagecoach but could not withstand the financial losses caused by Indian deprivations and other normal operations.⁶ The Magraw contract was annulled in 1856 due to “poor undependable service” and was taken over by a Utah firm, (Hiram) Kimball and Company.⁷

Kimball also subcontracted his mail route to Feramorz Little⁸ and Ephraim Hanks during the winter months, enabling him to spend time helping organize the Brigham Young Express and Carrying Company (or the Y.X. Co.), which was launched in February of 1857. The Y.X. Co. plan was to





Teams of oxen rumbled constantly back and forth along the dirt and mud trail that was the road in Emigration Canyon. (*National Archives*)

provide rapid freight (and mail) to Independence, Missouri, by dotting the route with way stations, storehouses, mills, and crops at intervals of one day's travel, or about every fifty miles. The plan also called for a "swift pony express."⁹

That plan was never fulfilled. W. M. F. Mergaw, blaming his lack of success on the Mormons, had petitioned the president of the United States himself to intervene and break Mormon control in Utah. His timing could not have been better, as the U.S. government was hearing from a score of outraged gentiles having a bad time in Zion. These ill tidings eventually led to the Utah War. Kimball's mail contract was terminated without explanation. Little and Hanks made a bold attempt to bring back the mail by themselves in the winter of 1856–57, but Utah's communication with the U.S. government had ceased.¹⁰

The Utah War

At dawn, June 26, 1858, Emigration Canyon was host to a military procession that filled the canyon top to bottom. Three thousand troops from the States, led by Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston and guided by Jim Bridger, marched into Great Salt Lake City as a show of force that began as a misguided mission to subdue the "mutinous"

population of Utah.

Relations between Mormons and gentiles in the valley had been strained for some years. The influx of gentile territorial officials and merchants during the 1850s brought tempers to blows. Politicians from the East were told that Brigham Young was a cruel overlord who enslaved his people while he preached treason. "After dark no gentile walks the streets alone."¹¹ The Mormons had not forgotten their brutal treatment by "mobocrats" back east. Brigham Young summed up their feeling like this:

I want the Gentiles to understand that we know all about their whoredom and other abominations. If we have not invariably killed such corrupt scoundrels, those who seek to corrupt and pollute our community, I swear to you that we mean to, and to accomplish more in a few hours, towards clearing the atmosphere, than all your grand and traverse juries can in a year.¹²

President James Buchanan, hopeful that a show of force would bolster his sagging public ratings, sent federal troops to Utah to put down the insurrection. Porter Rockwell, part desperado and part mythic protector, caught wind of the plan while patrolling the trails and keeping them safe for emigrants and mail carriers. He galloped back home from the plains, 513 miles in five

days, arriving on the very day of the tenth anniversary of Mormon settlement.¹³ The Pioneer Day celebration that year was at the head of Big Cottonwood Canyon. Brigham Young must have feared Rockwell's unexpected visit that day, as the news couldn't be good. But he and other Mormon Church leaders waited until the festivities were over before lashing out about the advancing attack.¹⁴

During the months that followed, Brigham Young mustered the Mormon militia, called the Nauvoo Legion, under General Daniel H. Wells, while he spoke out about the government's plan. By the time the United States army had advanced to the territorial boundary in present-day Wyoming, Brigham Young had made it clear that he and the people of Utah considered the army a hostile force. The Mormons had decided to fight.

On August 13, 1857, the first regiment of the Nauvoo Legion, containing about 75 men, headed east toward Fort Bridger to hurry any emigrants along and to assess the strength of the advancing army. On September 29, Daniel H. Wells headed to Echo Canyon with twelve hundred fifty men. His plan was to intercept the army's supplies, burn the prairie so their animals had nothing to eat, and generally harass their supply wagon trains, thus avoiding a direct confrontation. The Mormon tactics of guerilla warfare were successful, laying waste to supply wagons and flustering the uncertain teamsters. Lot Smith, a Mormon hero of the Utah War, told U.S. Army Captain Dawson, with the freight wagons, of the "return or burn" order. Captain Dawson said "For God's sake don't burn the trains." Lot Smith replied "It's for His sake I *am* going to burn them."¹⁵

On November 8, Mormon scouts reported the army advancing north to follow Bear River into the valley, and within days the Nauvoo Legion marched to the mountains via Emigration Canyon to intercept.¹⁶ They didn't find a fight, however; they found snow. A large storm brought winter down on the war, which proved to be the best defense possible. The Mormons trudged through the snows for three days, getting only as far as Big Mountain. The U.S. troops were completely unprepared for a western winter. They retreated to the closest safe haven, the valley of Black's Fork at Fort Bridger. But Fort Bridger

A few recruits from the Mormon Militia kept journals of their whereabouts during the Utah War. More than one mention stopping off at John Killian's "ranch," about five miles up Emigration Canyon. Killian had recently completed his "cutoff" to Mountain Dell and the soldiers were using the new route.

We can speculate that if Killian was a lumber man, he probably built the road to access timber. After John Killian's death, Appleton Milo Harmon built a lumber mill at the foot of Big Mountain. He would have used Killian's road too. All we have left is "Killyons" misspelled name and the visible remnants of his cutoff.

had been burned by the Mormons, so the dazed army was forced to go into winter quarters and make do, a hundred miles short of their destination. By December it was obvious that the army was there for the winter. The Nauvoo Legion was released from the mountains, leaving a small party to keep on eye on the enemy.

The canyon roads were watched closely that winter. Stone fortifications, still visible today, were built in Echo and East canyons. Scouts and messengers ranged back and forth. Although Parley's Canyon may have been used as an alternate route to and from Fort Bridger (and Ogden recruits must have used Weber Canyon), diaries mention Emigration Canyon as the main thoroughfare.

The idea of war soon lost its glory as both sides cooled off during the long winter. Little by little negotiations succeeded in finding a way for everyone to save face. Brigham Young allowed a new governor to be seated. The Mormons accepted a pardon, while not admitting to any wrongdoing, and allowed the army to establish a post in Utah Territory.¹⁷ The United States agreed to locate the base forty miles from the city at present-day Camp Floyd. The Mormons allowed the army to march through the city as a show of force, and the army agreed not to stop until they crossed the Jordan River.

Brigham Young added one more wrinkle to the plan—a maneuver that became known as "the move south." Thirty thousand or more residents of Salt Lake City and northern Utah moved lock, stock and barrel to Utah Lake while the army marched on Utah, with the intention of fleeing

further south if necessary. A few visible torchbearers were left behind to set fire to the city if fighting occurred.

Johnston's Army camped in Mountain Dell on July 25, 1858. The call to order was at 3:00 a.m. The troops had to enter the city at dawn if they were to get over the Jordan in a day's time. Soldier Charles A. Scott described it this way:

June 26, 1858 [After camping in Mountain Dell] Started at six, a long hill to pull up for a commencement. at the top we found Ash Hollow No. 3,¹⁸ its descend, or Little Mountain as it is named—one of the lock chains of the forge (which I was driving) broke and if the other had done the same I would have got to the bottom in less than double quick time as the wheel team I have is not much account—however we all got safely down and a few hours brought us to the City but it was like entering a Graveyard, silence reigned supreme.¹⁹

Captain Albert Tracy was there too: "In the place of the usual crowd to gather and gaze at or hang upon the heels of the troops, no single living soul, beyond the lounging vagabonds . . . appeared—and only those by twos and threes, at corners, with clubs in their hands, and pistols ready slung at their belts."²⁰

Johnston's Army established Camp Floyd in Cedar Valley. If the mission of the post was to break Mormon domination of Utah Territory, it succeeded in an unplanned manner. The influx of government goods and money broke the Mormon's economic hold on the region. Utah was never the same.

Camp Floyd was active for a few years, riding herd on a people who had ceased to be "rebellious." The post was abandoned in 1860.

The Utah War had been won and lost by both sides at the same time—with hardly a shot fired.²

The peculiar outcome of the Utah War rekindled the need for dependable mail and freight service. Camp Floyd, established by federal troops squarely in Utah Territory, re-established communication with the United States, chiefly through the freight company that had supported Johnston's Army during its march on Utah, the firm of Russell, Majors and Waddell. They were experienced military freighters, but they had suffered great losses in the Utah War. Their renewed government contract, and a gold rush at Pike's Peak, helped them get back on their feet.

Free at Last

The soldiers at Camp Floyd must have hated it here; stranded in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by their enemies, with no one to serve or protect. After a couple of years of being fleeced by the locals for their supplies, the recruits were likely looking for any excuse to flee. The Civil War, a "real" war, was just the ticket.

Fifteen-year-old Edmund Ellsworth, Jr., was on hand to witness the last remnants of Johnston's Army leaving town. He was herding cows in Emigration Canyon when an officer gave him a horse that had given out after a hard and hasty day's drive.

By the 1860s, stagecoaches were taking over the roads from the freight wagons. Stages were pulled by six to eight mules or horses and were able to carry nine passengers (plus driver, conductor and mailbags). They often traveled day and night and could cover more than a hundred miles in twenty-four hours.²² Stagecoaches encouraged the use of way stations along the route to change horses and to cater to the comforts of weary passengers.

The Pony Express

Russell, Majors and Waddell grew to become the largest freight operators in the West, but William Russell was not content with being the biggest in the business. Part visionary, part reckless schemer, he was driven by the spirit of adventure. His dream became the Pony Express.

Even though he was overextended financially, Russell bought out existing stage stations (situated roughly twenty-five to thirty miles apart by that time) and began building stations between them, at ten to fifteen mile intervals. He brashly announced to the world the establishment of a horseback express service that would deliver mail from San Francisco to New York in eight days.

Russell's aggressive promotion and his success at bringing about the long-standing dream of a postal express captured the public's imagination immediately. The Pony Express continues to enthrall western history buffs to this day. The idea of galloping full force across the continent, of lonely heroics in the call of duty, of the giddy optimism of a growing society has inspired literature, poetry, and personal quests for over a hun-



EMIGRATION CANYON, NEAR SALT LAKE CITY.

Lithograph of the canyon's mouth, circa 1870s. Today's road is in the same place, but the stagecoach and waterfall are long gone. (*Albert Deanne Richardson, Beyond the Mississippi: From the Great River to the Great Ocean, Life and Adventure on the Prairies* [1867]; *Rare Books Division, Special Collections Department, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah.*)

dred years. This all despite the fact that the Pony Express operated only eighteen months and ended in financial failure. After more than a hundred years of popular myth, the true story of the Pony Express is a bit cloudy. But most experts agree that its mail carriers galloped through Emigration Canyon, between stations at Mountain Dell and downtown Salt Lake City.

The first riders left St. Joseph, Missouri, and San Francisco, California, on April 3, 1860. According to myth, the riders left simultaneously at midnight, but that does not seem to be the case. It appears that much of William Russell's promotional hype lives on today as "fact." That there was a celebration for the departure of the first riders is clear. There was some fanfare in Salt Lake City, as the *Deseret News* reported the arrival of the first express mail, putting the valley within "6 days communication with the frontier and 7 days from Washington."²³ According to the paper, the first rider to Salt Lake City came from the west April 7 at 11:45 P.M., four and a half days out of San Francisco. The rider from the east got here at 6:25 P.M. on April 9 after six days. William Russell had delivered on his promise. The Pony Express provided dependable service during its short history, reducing mail delivery from twenty-one days to ten.²⁴ Their record of five days brought news of Abraham Lincoln's election.²⁵

The Pony Express employed eighty regular riders who were ready for the saddle at any given time and a support crew of four hundred. There were 150 stations and 420 horses used over the 1966-mile trail. Stations varied over the year and a half, some having not been built in time for opening day. Relay, or "swing," stations, found every ten or fifteen miles, housed horses in a corral with a single caretaker. A rider was allowed two minutes to change horses at every swing station. Horses would return with a rider going in the other direction, totaling twenty-to-twenty-five miles a day.

After several swing stations was a "home" station, usually an established stagecoach station, at sixty-five to one hundred mile intervals. The riders changed at home stations. An agent or station keeper was in charge of five or six boys. A rider averaged one hundred to one hundred and forty miles a day, often reversing direction and

making fifty to seventy-five miles each way. In this manner, the mail was carried two hundred fifty miles every day. Riders were supposedly recruited with a famous ad: "Wanted—young, wiry fellows, not over 18. Must be expert riders willing to risk death daily. Orphans preferred. Wages \$25 a week." This story has its share of skeptics and is perhaps more accurately consigned to the notion that if it wasn't exactly true, it should have been.²⁶ There is reason to believe that the firm required each rider to sign a pledge: "While I am in the Employ of A. Majors, I agree not to use profane language, not to get drunk, not to gamble, nor to treat the animals cruelly, and not to do anything incompatible with the conduct of gentlemen. I agree if I violate any of the above conditions to accept my discharge without any pay for my services."²⁷ The teamsters employed by Russell, Majors and Waddell had quite the opposite reputation. Perhaps Majors was troubled by their behavior and wished to set a better example when he was able. It is also quite possible that all employees were encouraged by pledge or by policy to refrain from uncouth practices but it was impossible to enforce any commitment. In either case, the Pony Express rider emerged as hero, while the teamster was considered lower class.

Mountain Dell Station

Mountain Dell, built as a stagecoach station in 1858, was the last Pony Express swing station before Salt Lake House near today's Tribune building. Called "Mountain Dale" in most of the literature, and also referred to as "Hanks Station" and "Big Canyon Creek Station,"²⁸ its precise location is still unknown. It was probably located near the upstream shore of today's Little Dell Reservoir. The Pioneer Trails and Landmark Association (now defunct) placed a marker near the site on February 6, 1934, when the station's foundation may still have been visible. But the exact location and any artifacts have been lost. Descriptions of the station are available, as is a painting showing several houses and barns.²⁹ Trail buffs have scoured the area for relics or remnants, but to no avail. Excavations by archeologists have likewise turned up nothing absolute.



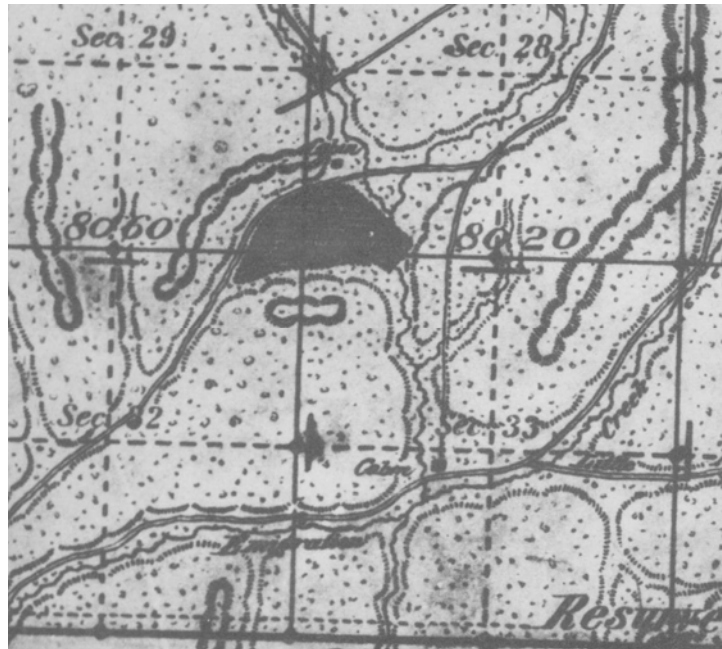
The Mountain Dell stage station in a painting. *Ephraim K. Hanks' Home at Mountain Dell*, by Utah artist Dan Weggeland. (used by permission, Utah State Historical Society, all rights reserved.)

Mountain Dell Station was built and inhabited by the famous Ephraim Hanks. Hanks, we have seen, had been carrying mail along the route since 1850, keeping the roads open in winter by running oxen through the deep snow.³⁰ A recent hero of the Utah War and handcart rescue team and notorious as a possible Danite, he moved to the valley between Big Mountain and Little Mountain in the fall of 1858.³¹ Hanks named the valley Mountain Dell. He operated the stagecoach station and trading post, where he fleeced incoming travelers through a skillful combination of opportunism and contempt. Acclaimed adventurer Sir Richard Burton remembered Hanks in his well-known book, *City of the Saints*:

I had often heard of this individual as one of the old triumvirate of Mormon desperadoes, the other two being Orrin Porter Rockwell and Bill Hickman—as the leader of the dreaded Danite band, and, in short, as a model ruffian. The ear often teaches the eye to form its pictures: I had eliminated a kind of mental sketch of those assassin faces which one sees on the Apennines and Pyrenees, and was struck by what met the eye of

sense. The “vile villain,” as he has been called by anti-Mormon writers, who verily do not try to *menager* their epithets, was a middle-sized, light-haired, good-looking man, with regular features, a pleasant and humorous countenance, and the manly manner of his early sailor life, touched with the rough cordiality of the mountaineer. “Frank as a bear-hunter” is a proverb in these lands. He had, like the rest of the triumvirate, and like most men (Anglo-Americans) of desperate courage and fiery, excitable temper, a clear, pale blue eye, verging upon gray, and looking as if it wanted nothing better than to light up, together with a cool and quiet glance that seemed to shun neither friend nor foe.

. . . [the stage driver] entertained us with many a ‘tale, of which the hero was the redoubtable Hanks: how he had slain a buffalo bull single-handed with a bowie knife; and how, on one occasion, when refused hospitality by his Lamanite brethren, he had sworn to have the whole village to himself, and had redeemed his vow by reappearing *in cuerpo*, with gestures so maniacal that the sulky Indians all fled, declaring him to be “bad medicine.” The stories had at least local colouring.³²



A cabin noted in Emigration Canyon during and early survey was thought by some to be a Pony Express station. But it isn't. This is sheepman John McCrea's cabin. (*Map of Township No 1 South of Range No 2 East, SLC, UT, April 28, 1882, Salt Lake County Recorder*)

A Canyon Blacksmith?

Blacksmith Hollow, about four miles up Emigration Canyon, was once owned by Frank Meik, who knew the canyon as well as anyone. He told current owners (Gerald and Hilda Hutchins) that it was named after a Pony Express blacksmith stop located there.

Old corrals in the upper hollow seem to lend some credence to the story, but students of the Pony Express tend to discount this tale. There is no reason to have a blacksmith midway between Mountain Dell Station and the home station in Salt Lake City where blacksmiths were aplenty.

Mark Twain also met Ephraim Hanks, but his description is more blunt:

Half an hour or an hour later, we changed horses and took supper with a Mormon "Destroying Angel." "Destroying Angels," as I understand it, are Latter-Day Saints who are set apart by the Church to conduct permanent disappearances of obnoxious citizens. I had heard a good deal about these Mormon Destroying Angels and the dark and bloody deeds they had done, and when I entered this one's house I had my shudder all ready. But alas for all our romances, he was nothing but a loud, profane, offensive, old blackguard! He was murderous enough, possibly, to fill the bill of a Destroyer, but would you have *any* kind of an

Angel devoid of dignity? Could you abide an Angel in an unclean shirt and no suspenders? Could you respect an Angel with a horse-laugh and a swagger like a buccaneer?³³

Destroying Angel or Guardian Angel aside, Hanks was a trusted friend to Brigham Young, and he was asked to carry important messages to California during his stay in Mountain Dell. He became a Mormon Church patriarch in his later years.

One intriguing, but generally discounted theory contends that the Mountain Dell Pony Express Station was actually located in Emigration Canyon at the mouth of Freeze Creek or Brigham Fork.³⁴ The theory was undoubtedly based on a published reminiscence of express rider George Edwin Little's daughter, which creates some confusion by describing crossing east to west over Little Mountain before reaching Mountain Dell when it should have been the other way around:

Father was bringing in the mail from the east to the station at Mountain Dell. He was riding a little bay horse, weighing about nine hundred pounds, about six or eight years old. Father said he was a

good horse and he thought a lot of him, but he didn't have the bottom of some of the others but would give all he had. There was a heavy snow storm came up and crossing over "Little Mountain" the snow became so heavy and deep that his horse gave out and he had to leave him.

He took his pocket knife and cut the saddle bags open and put the letter mail inside his shirt. Then afoot he broke a trail over to Mountain Dell, arriving there about three o'clock in the morning. The next morning he rode a horse bareback to Salt Lake and delivered the mail to old 'Salt Lake House', which was the post office. Ephraim Hanks rode back up the canyon next morning and brought the horse, which seemed none the worse.

They who were expecting important mail were afraid that the mail would not reach Salt Lake City that day. They were so elated when the mail came in with the boy carrying it in his shirt and riding bare-back, that they picked him up and carried him around the street on their shoulders.³⁵

A survey map of the canyon from 1881 shows a cabin at the mouth of either Freeze Creek or Brigham Fork which may have served as the station. Most historians, however, contend that the Little childhood reminiscence confuses Little Mountain with Big Mountain. Today's Mountain Dell, twelve or fourteen miles from Salt Lake House, is the better bet, because swing stations were normally ten to fifteen miles apart. Field notes from that survey indicate that the cabin on the map in question belonged to homesteader John McCrea and not to the Pony Express.³⁶

Most scholars agree that the Pony Express normally came through Emigration Canyon. However, when the first riders from the East arrived in April 1860, Big Mountain was buried under recent snowstorms. The riders were forced to detour along Parley's Golden Pass route, exchanging horses at Snyder's Mill near Kimball Junction before heading down Parley's Canyon to town. This detour was used for six weeks until the main road cleared in mid-May. Stagecoaches, too, used both routes, depending on weather or whim.³⁷

The Pony Express was never intended to be

a long-term or the only system of delivery. Mail was still carried overland with wagons and stagecoaches. Ponies only carried express mail, at \$2.00 a half-ounce. The telegraph was already well on its way to linking the frontier when the Pony Express began operating. The transcontinental telegraph, arriving in Salt Lake City in October of 1861, merely sealed the doom of the operation, which was already collapsing due to Indian depredations, harsh winter conditions, and financial hocus pocus. The last riders of the Pony Express arrived in St. Joseph on November 4, 1861, and in San Francisco on November 20, 1861.

Russell, Majors and Waddell lost their shirts in the deal, but their legacy lies in helping preserve California for the Union by strengthening communication with the West Coast; securing for posterity the central overland route that had been tainted by the Donner tragedy; and thereby helping show the way for the transcontinental railroad. That, and of course, it wrote one of the most romantic chapters in the history of the West—a chapter whose lead characters raced through Emigration Canyon.

The Telegraph

Though the Pony Express made for livelier press, the telegraph truly transformed the country. Time and distance were completely redefined as communication across thousands of miles was suddenly reduced from weeks to minutes. With time-zone changes from coast to coast, a message from New York could reach San Francisco three hours and fifteen minutes before it left New York! It has been said that the telegraph changed the United States to "America."³⁸ A single thread of wire, called the "electric highway," was suspended on wooden poles for three thousand miles between New York and San Francisco.³⁹

The telegraph industry was the first industry based on electricity, and Western Union became one of America's largest corporations. The telegraph had been in common use in the eastern states for some ten years (Washington, D.C., and Baltimore were connected by telegraph in 1843) and California was using it too. But government funding (the Telegraph Act of 1860) provided the push for coast-to-coast connection, and Western Union knew how to take advantage of financial incen-



The Pony Express and telegraph both snaked their way through Emigration Canyon. (*Used by permission, Utah Historical Society, all rights reserved*)

tives.

Crews were assembled, heading east from California and west from Omaha. Utahns were given a contract for construction from Salt Lake City in both directions. The ubiquitous Feramorz Little and Charles Decker supplied the poles for 250 miles of the line. To the east of town, wood was easier to find, but poles had to be shipped as far as 250 miles in barren stretches. All told, the entire line used 27,500 poles. On average, crews built three to eight miles of line per day (their record was sixteen).⁴⁰ Surveyors were the first on site, setting stakes. Wagons brought poles, which were left every seventy yards or so. Post-hole diggers dug the holes five feet deep and set the poles for the wire stringers who followed.

Salt Lake City was first connected to the east on October 17, 1861. That line is thought to have traversed Emigration Canyon, but that assumption is difficult to confirm. The telegraph did follow the Pony Express route over Big Mountain, so Emigration Canyon provided the shortest distance to the city.

On October 24, Brigham Young sent the first

official message on the new telegraph line, congratulating Western Union and stating: "Utah has not seceded, but is firm for the Constitution and laws of our once happy country, and is warmly interested in such useful enterprises as the one so far completed."⁴¹

The Overland Stage

Unlike the Pony Express, the Overland Stage was not affected by the telegraph. Parley P. Pratt's Golden Pass Road was improved for stage use through the narrows of lower Parley's Canyon in 1860, reducing the amount of travel seen in Emigration Canyon. The road in Parley's also cut into Ephraim Hanks's business. He moved to Parley's Park, where legend has it that he started the mining boom in Park City with his discovery of the Green Monster Mine.⁴² Utahn Ben Holladay took over the run from Russell, Majors and Waddell in 1862 and ran a successful stagecoach venture for some time, transporting passengers and mail three times a week between Salt Lake



The Pony Express and telegraph both snaked their way through Emigration Canyon. (*Used by permission, Utah Historical Society, all rights reserved*)

City and Independence, Missouri. Holladay's coaches were garish affairs, sporting silk curtains and silver candlesticks.⁴³ His route probably favored Parley's Canyon and became known as the Overland Stage Line.

Many of the swing stations were abandoned in the ensuing years, but the Overland Stage kept several stations (and employees) for its own use (there were fifty-one stations between Denver and Salt Lake City). A few stations remained as ranches and local way stations. Stagecoach travel was virtually abandoned after the Golden Spike, linking the transcontinental railroad, was driven in 1869.

Some time around 1862, W. L. Hardy started a small farm that evolved into an overland stage and mail station at "The Forks" of Mountain Dell and Parley's Creek, thirteen miles up Parley's Canyon (now under Mountain Dell Reservoir). Hardy's Station grew to a dozen or so families with a two-storey schoolhouse, a sawmill, and

several summer cottages. Salt Lake City had begun using water from Parley's Creek, eventually building a dam at the canyon's mouth (at Suicide Rock) in 1891. The city was concerned about Hardy's settlement using and fouling the water and bought their property in 1898 to secure the city's water rights. Salt Lake City built Mountain Dell dam in 1900.

The road in Emigration Canyon was still used extensively, though not exclusively, for many years. Memoirs contend that emigrants camped in the canyon even after the coming of the transcontinental railroad.⁴⁴ William Chandless, traveling with freight wagons from Salt Lake merchants Livingston and Kinkead in 1855, describes the canyon wagon road as intimidating:

We camped at the head of Emigration Canon on the evening of November 6, having made just one hundred miles since October 23. I have dwelt at length on these last days of the journey, as well to show the manner in which Salt Lake Valley is

walled in, as the difficulties of the route; and not least that a reader may thus appreciate both the actual relief and intense exhilaration of recovered light, and space, and prospect. At twilight, or in gloomy daylight, all the canons feel like coffins: before you can well see the clouds above you they have passed out of your sight; either you feel no breeze or else a gust rendered fierce by compression. Emigration Canon is one of the deepest and narrowest of them all; its cliffs are relieved by no beauty of form or colour, they are stern, grim, unpitying; the snow higher up looks warmer; you may fancy Giant Despair looking over their edge at his prisoners.⁴⁵

Travel in the canyon fell dramatically in the 1860s. In 1869 the transcontinental railroad allowed a new and better way of getting to the Salt Lake Valley. The railroad opened a new era of accessibility and, in so doing, officially closed the pioneer era in Utah and the West. The road in

Emigration Canyon was no longer the critical artery for immigrants to Salt Lake City, but its well-worn track was now to be used for a new purpose—as access to the valuable building resources of rock and timber and as a major driveway for huge herds of sheep.