

Bellringer: D19

What was life like for people on the frontier? Would you trade places with them? Explain!

VID

Utah Studies

Ch. 5.3 Hasting's Cutoff & the Donner-Reed Party

Today We'll Discuss:

The ill-advised personal ambitions of Lansford W. Hastings, and his Emigrant's Guide and those who followed it.

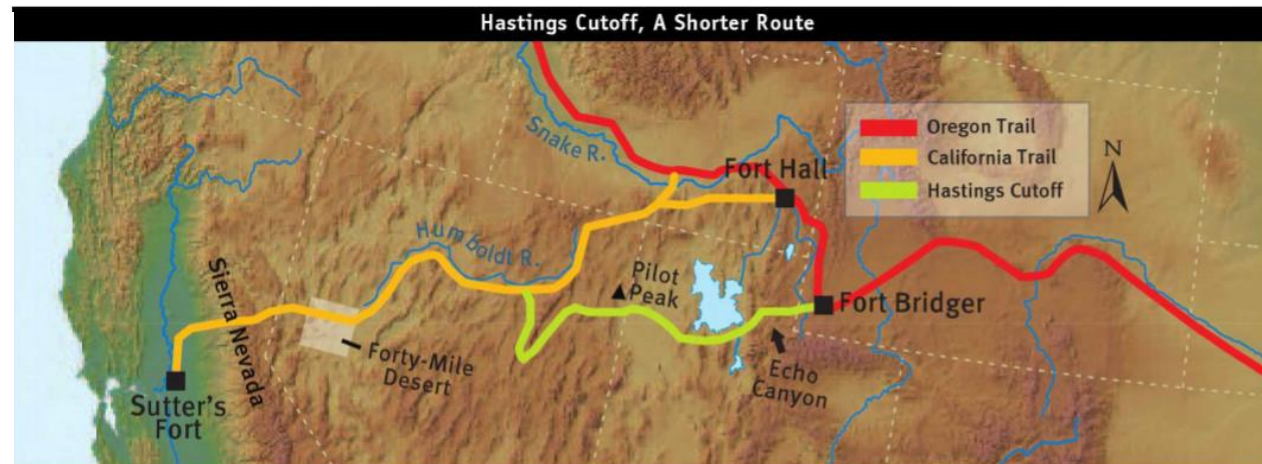
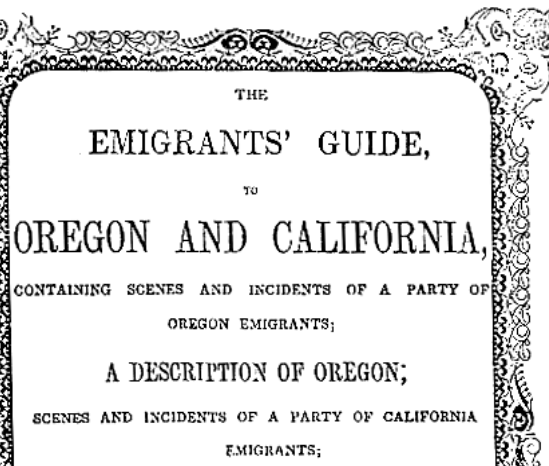
The fate of the Donner Reed Party, which wasn't so lucky...

Hastings Cutoff

In 1846, Lansford W. Hastings, an ambitious lawyer / adventurer who was trying to induce Americans to settle in California, and thus help take California away from Mexico (with him as a prominent ruler thereof), thought that by cutting across Utah, settlers heading to California could shorten the time they spent on the trail.

He published a book called **An Emigrant's Guide to Oregon and California**. He traveled along the Oregon / California Trail and tried to get people to follow along. Several different groups did just that. [VID](#)

The **Bryant Party**, led by Kentucky newspaper editor Edwin Bryant, talked to Hastings at Fort Bridger, and they took mules along the new route. They reached California without any issues.



The Harlan-Young Group

Another group that followed Hastings' "lawyerly" advice was **George Harlan**. He organized a party, called the **Harlan-Young Party**, and he and **Samuel Young** led their families and several others along the Oregon Trail.

They actually met Hastings at Fort Bridger, and they were the **first party to take wagons thru Utah's Mountains**. They had a rough time of it though, and lost a wagon and a team of horses.

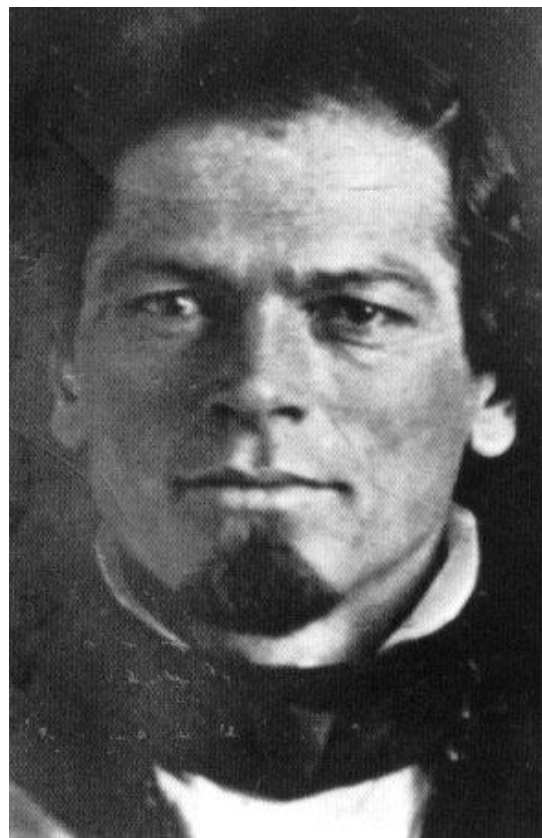
They were joined by another party, who was several days behind them, the **James Mather's Party**, and together they continued on successfully to California.

Hastings mentions at this time that he wondered if the **Hastings Cutoff** he had sold so effectively to settlers was such a good idea after all. He would be sadly proven right.

The next group that used the cutoff was the **Lienhard Party**, led by some Swiss and German immigrants. They met with Hastings, who warned them about the dangers of the canyons they had used. They ignored his warnings, and it worked out ok for them.

On the 7th [of August] we reached the flat shore of the magnificent Salt Lake, the waters of which were clear as crystal, but as salty as the strongest salt brine. . . . The clear, sky-blue surface of the lake, the warm sunny air, the nearby high mountains, with the beautiful country at their foot, through which we on a fine road were passing, made on my spirit a charming impression. The whole day long I felt like singing and whistling; had there been a single family of white men to be found living here, I believe that I would have remained.

—Leinhard's journal



The Donner-Reed Party

The last group of that year to use the **Hastings Cutoff** was the Donner-Reed party. They followed the Lienhard party, and there were 87 of them, including small children, women, and men.

They had **23 wagons** loaded with lots of **heavy things**, like heavy wood furniture, etc., which would prove problematic later. They stopped in Fort Bridger in late July, then went along the Hastings Route. They found a note from Hastings saying he'd lead them thru a better way.

They met up with him, and he showed them a way to go that he thought was shorter. They took that route, but had to make a road in order to pass that way (down **Emigration Canyon**). They did so, but were exhausted after all the toil of making a **passable road** (which the Mormon Pioneers later thankfully used). It took them **18 days** to travel **40 miles**, and they could not make up the lost time.

Donner-Reed Party, Cont.

That lost time would be critical. They hurried across the Salt Flats, suffering enormously from the heat and previous exhaustion of clearing the road to the Salt Lake Valley. A trail of dead oxen, wagons, and other heavy items were left behind in their desperate race to get over the **Sierra Nevadas** before the snow came. [VID](#)

They arrived at the Sierra Nevadas at the end of October, and an **early snow storm** kept them from taking the wagons across. They wore themselves out attempting to do this, and the snow just kept coming. They dug in for the winter, while some of them did escape by foot over the mountains.

The rest were **starved** and **cold**. The **animals** were all **eaten**, as were some of the dead bodies of starved pioneers. Eventually, those who had made it across the mountains came back with help, but only 48 of the original 87 survived the ordeal.

Changing Boundaries

As people passed thru Utah, they went to California and Oregon. Treaty gave **Oregon** to the U.S. in 1846.

The rest of the West was still controlled by Mexico, although that would also soon change.



HW:

Finish filling out your guided notes to use to study

Make sure to finish any projects or homework you still haven't completed!

We will have a test next time, so review the chapter on the website if you need to! All assignments from this chapter **MUST** be done by then! End of the Term!