

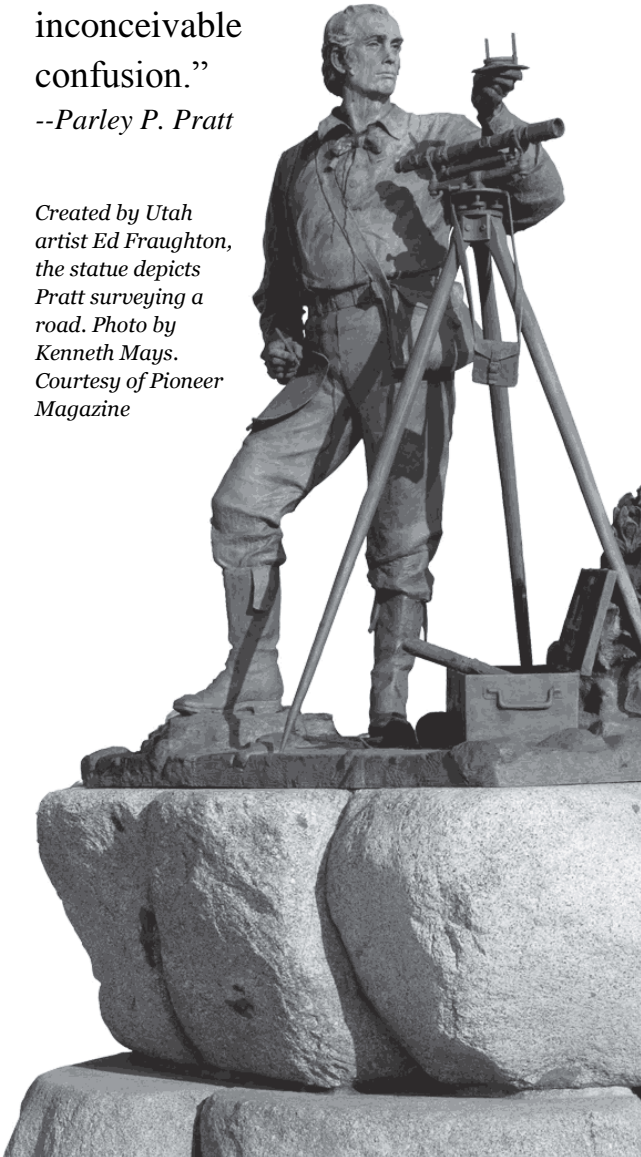
Tour Tip: Tours #2 and 3 will point out locations where Parley P. Pratt's group explored in 1850

Parley P. Pratt's Early Explorations

“The country southward for 80 miles shows no sign of water or fertility. A wide expanse of chaotic matter presented itself: huge hills, sandy deserts, cheerless grassless plains, perpendicular rocks, loose barren clay, dissolving beds of sandstone...all lying in inconceivable confusion.”

--Parley P. Pratt

Created by Utah artist Ed Fraughton, the statue depicts Pratt surveying a road. Photo by Kenneth Mays. Courtesy of Pioneer Magazine



In the winter of 1849-50 the Provisional Government of the State of Deseret, set up under Brigham Young's leadership, authorized Parley P. Pratt and a party of fifty men to explore the south in order to obtain information for settlement sites to secure the territory.

Their route took them past the town of Manti, down the Sevier River, and on to the southwest until they camped at Red Creek, later named Paragonah. They called the area "*Little Salt Lake Valley*." From there one part of the group pushed on to explore while the others stayed to guard the cattle. They explored the Birch Creek area, which became the location of Parowan. West of what became Cedar City they found a big deposit of high quality iron ore.

Exploring farther south they recorded: "*The great Wasatch range along which we had traveled our whole journey here terminates in several abrupt promontories . . . From the Basin Rim 13 miles of rapid descent brought us to milder climate and first cultivation (Indian). The country southward for 80 miles showing no signs of water or fertility . . . a wide expanse of chaotic matter presented itself, huge hills, sandy deserts, cheerless, grassless plains, perpendicular rocks, loose barren clay, dissolving beds of sandstone . . . lying in inconceivable condition . . . in short a country in ruins, dissolved by the peltings of the storms of ages, or turned inside out, upside down, by terrible convulsions in some former age . . . "A mile or so farther brought us to the banks of the Virgin (River, near Toquerville)."*

After the report to the legislature by Parley P. Pratt's group there was considerable interest by Brigham Young in the iron deposits.

In 1850 Brigham Young began settling the southwestern part of what was then called the State of Deseret to secure the area and a "*highway to the sea*" and also develop the iron in newly created Iron County.

Undeterred by Pratt's description of the southern area as "a country in ruins" Brigham Young sent the Saints to settle Utah's "Dixie" in 1861 where their grit and determination turned the land into a place "everyone admires" today.

Adapted from Toquerville, Oasis in the Desert by Cherrie Gubler Naegle.