During the 1800s, Wyoming became the focus for American expansion into the trans-Mississippi west. Robert Stuart's discovery of South Pass in October 1812 gave hope that a practical overland route to the Pacific (the route Lewis and Clark searched for but failed to find) did exist. By 1824, South Pass was in annual use by mountain men and trappers engaged in the Rocky Mountain Fur Trade. Soon trappers discovered connections that linked South Pass with the Snake and Columbia Rivers and with the Hudson's Bay Company holdings. Some 150,000 pioneers went west between the years of 1849 and 1852. By the mid-1850s, stage coaches and freight wagons were regular users of the California, Mormon Pioneer and Oregon trails, rolling both east and west through South Pass. For 19 months in 1860-61, the riders of the Pony Express transcontinental mail service thundered through the pass on an incredible schedule covering 2,000 miles from St. Joseph, Missouri, to San Francisco, California. Historians estimate that some 500,000 pioneers “went westering” along the South Pass trail system before the great overland wagon train migrations slowed down with the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. About 80,000 were headed for the Willamette Valley in Oregon. Some 70,000 Mormons had the Great Salt Lake region as their destination. Most of the remaining 350,000 were bound for California with just a few headed for intermediate destinations. Of those that started the journey, one in 10 would not complete it. Thousands would die along the way, mostly from accidents, cholera and other diseases. Some would simply get to their destination and turn back. On October 2, 1968, The National Trails System Act was passed by the U.S. Congress and signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson. Today, the National Trails System is larger than the Interstate Highway System in length, and includes 11 National Scenic Trails, 19 National Historic Trails, and more than 1,300 National Recreation Trails (including 21 National Water Trails) in all 50 States.
Wyoming Historic Trails (1840-1900)

Congressionally-Designated National Historic Trails

- The Pony Express - 1860-1861:
  The Pony Express was a private mail service that provided fast delivery between the East and West Coasts during the 1860s. It used horse-mounted couriers to transport mail and news, and it played a significant role in the expansion of the United States.

- The Overland Trail - 1849-1869:
  This trail was used by thousands of emigrants to travel from the east to the west, particularly during the California Gold Rush. It was a crucial route for the expansion of the United States and the development of the West.

- The Oregon Trail - 1843-1869:
  The Oregon Trail was one of the most important trails used by pioneers heading west. It was a significant route for the expansion of the United States and the development of the West.

- The California Trail - 1849-1869:
  The California Trail was used by thousands of emigrants to travel from the east to California. It was a crucial route for the expansion of the United States and the development of the West.

Other Significant Historic Trails

- The Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) Trail - 1877:
  This trail was used by the Nez Perce people to travel from the Northwest to the Southwest. It was a significant route for the expansion of the United States and the development of the West.

- The Upper Missouri River Route - 1805:
  This route was used by Lewis and Clark during their expedition to explore and map the region. It was a crucial route for the expansion of the United States and the development of the West.

- The Chief Joseph Scenic Byway - 1925:
  This byway is located in the eastern part of the state and offers beautiful views of the surrounding landscape.

- The Wind River Indian Reservation - 1868:
  This reservation is located in the western part of the state and is home to the Wind River Indian people.

- The Buffalo Bill State Historical Park - 1925:
  This park is located in the western part of the state and is home to the Buffalo Bill Museum and the Buffalo Bill Memorial.

- The Fort Bridger State Historical Park - 1925:
  This park is located in the western part of the state and is home to the Fort Bridger State Historic Site.

- The Lander Trail - 1853:
  This trail was used by emigrants and prospectors to travel from the east to the west. It was a crucial route for the expansion of the United States and the development of the West.

- The Stagecoach Trails - 1860-1900:
  These trails were used by stagecoach companies to transport mail and passengers. They were significant routes for the expansion of the United States and the development of the West.

- The Fort Laramie State Historical Site - 1834:
  This site is located in the western part of the state and is home to the Fort Laramie National Historic Site.

- The Fort Bridger State Historical Park - 1868:
  This park is located in the western part of the state and is home to the Fort Bridger State Historic Site.

- The Fort Thomas State Historical Site - 1859:
  This site is located in the western part of the state and is home to the Fort Thomas State Historic Site.

- The Fort Washakie State Historical Site - 1868:
  This site is located in the western part of the state and is home to the Fort Washakie State Historic Site.

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