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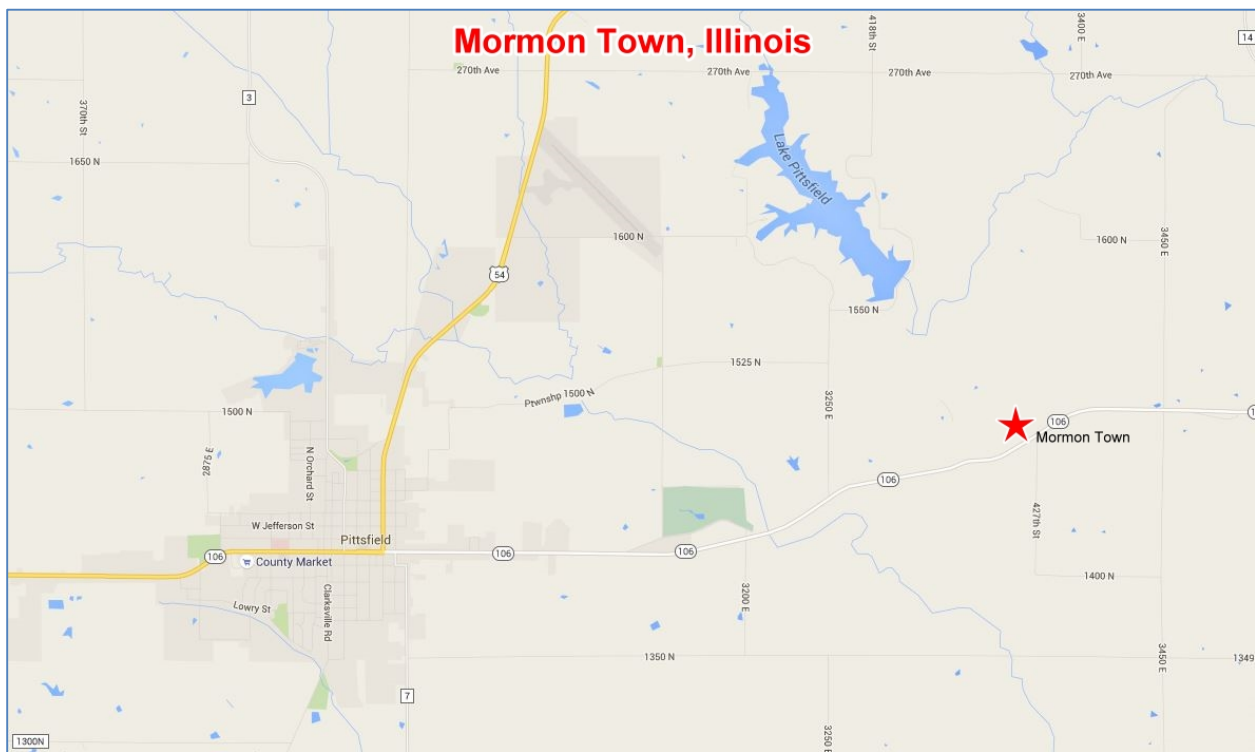
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Mormon Town, Illinois

Although the Mormon experience is much more extensive in the Illinois counties to the north there is some history of Mormon activity in Pike County.



When the Mormons were driven from Missouri during the winter of 1839-1840 they temporarily settled at a new town called Mormon Town (aka: Mormontown), two miles east of Pittsfield. The town grew to have as many as 300 voters by 1845 but as the troubles grew at Nauvoo to the north Mormon Town was abandoned and no trace of it remains today.

A set of six small, bell-shaped pieces of brass with strange engravings were “discovered” in 1843 in an Indian mound near Kinderhook. According to Latter Day Saint belief, the Book of Mormon was originally translated from a record engraved on Golden Plates by the ancient inhabitants of the Americas. The plates, known as the



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Kinderhook Plates, were designed to appear ancient, but were in fact a forgery created by three local men. There is a large map illustrating Mormon history at the East Ward School, home of the Pike County Historical Society, in Pittsfield.

[WAYMARKER TEXT]

Mormon Town Site

On February 22, 1839, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, refugees driven from Missouri under the "extermination Order" of Governor Lilburn Boggs, settled on this site. The property was owned by Thomas Edwards, who later joined the church. Silas Smith, high priest in the church and uncle of Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, was the leader of these Mormon refugees. The community grew to more than 300 members. Silas Smith died on September 13, 1839, at the age of 58 and was buried here near his home. Smith was succeeded by John Lawton and later by Harlow Redfield, who presided over the congregation until it disbanded in 1845.

In October 1842, Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball preached at a church conference held here. The settlement, which later became known as Mormon town, extended on both sides of the road at this location. Cabins were built and wells dug. A schoolhouse and a church were erected on the south side of the road. The cemetery, which measured 60 by 80 feet, fell into disrepair in later years. Gravestones were bulldozed into a ditch and the graveyard plowed over. The church building was relocated to Pittsfield and used as a parish hall by St. Mary's Catholic Church. The pews and pulpit were moved to a church near Pleasant Hill, Illinois.