

Pioneers

A simulation of decision-making on a wagon train



Westward Expansion

In 1843 more than one thousand men, women, and children left Independence, Missouri, in the largest wagon train ever to cross the continent to Oregon. You too will soon join a wagon train and have adventures similar to many that those early pioneers experienced. But before you join your wagon train, here is some Western history to consider.

THE WEST AS A MAGNET When the average American of the 1840s heard the words “the West,” he thought of adventure, excitement, land, freedom, and wealth. He knew many frontiersmen’s stories of rich prairies, fast horses, majestic mountains, rushing rivers, and fierce Indians. Naturally many of these stories were exaggerated, but to an Ohio farmer or an Indiana storekeeper these stories were powerful magnets pulling him westward. Of course, by the 1840s many courageous families had already moved west. For over 150 years rugged men and their families had been settling new lands and starting small towns. Earlier groups of persons had started new lives in several Western territories: Texas, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Colorado. Now the westward movement was reaching into New Mexico, California, and Oregon.

LEAVING HOME Some families had been struggling hard to break rough ground and plant seed only to lose half of it to the wind, insects, and wild animals. So they were eager to move any place where a better life seemed possible. Other men and women just liked seeing new land; they moved every time a new frontier opened. Then there were dreamers who were convinced that this time they would strike it rich. For reasons such as these, farmers, storekeepers, doctors, lawyers, miners, bankers, and many others persons all packed their belongings and prepared to set off for the promised land.

TRAVELING WEST Before these eager frontiersmen could fulfill their dreams, they had to reach the new land, which was thousands of difficult miles away. If you examine a map carefully, you will soon realize that if you had been in the eastern half of the United States during the 1840s and you had wanted to get to Oregon, you had very few ways to get there. You could have gone by land or by sea, but whichever way you chose, you would have had a long, hard trip. Some settlers and much of their supplies went by sea. They boarded a sailing ship at an eastern port and sailed south around the tip of South America. From there the ships headed north for a west coast port still thousands of miles away. The long distances, the dangerous weather at the tip of South America, and the high costs kept average homesteaders from traveling this way.

THE PANAMA ROUTE Your second choice was to go by sea as far south as the Isthmus of Panama, hire a guide, and cross to the Pacific side. This short trip was often the downfall of many travelers because of disease and robbers. If they did reach the Pacific side of the Isthmus, they still had to find a ship to take them north to a west coast port. Soon this route lost popularity and people concentrated on the long trip across land from Missouri to Oregon.

THE OVERLAND TRAIL The majority of those heading west packed their goods into a covered wagon and followed one of the well-traveled trails. This way was also long, difficult, and hazardous. Its only appeal was that it was the cheapest way to get there. While a few people continued to look for other ways to get to their homesteads in the West, most gave up the hope of an easy route and joined a wagon train.

HAZARDS OF THE TRAIL Such a cross country trip meant overcoming many hardships and surviving numerous dangers. There were problems with the weather, with too much water or too little water, with too much heat or too much cold. They faced narrow trails, steep trails, or lost trails. Disease, snakes, lack of food, broken wagons, dead livestock, and, of course, Indians all plagued them. Problems such as these combined to make a western trip extremely hazardous before the Civil War.

JOHN WESLEY, the author of PIONEERS, completed his undergraduate work at San Francisco and San Diego State Universities. John and his wife, Diane, spent two years as VISTA volunteers working in Appalachia. Currently both are fifth grade teachers in El Cajon, California, where they create simulations and other methods to make learning a vital experience for their students.

Westward Expansion (Continued)

WAGON TRAINS In an attempt to find group solutions to the individual problems that they faced, many travelers banded together into a single train of wagons. These people would hire a guide and usually several guards to help them on their trip into the unknown. At certain cities such as Independence, Missouri, these guides were the ones who formed the wagon trains. They gathered together families headed in the same direction and escorted them west. The wagon master was either the guide or one of the homesteaders; he was elected by the rest of the wagon train. It was the wagon master's duty to see that the rules of the train were strictly obeyed and to punish or banish anyone who violated them. It didn't matter who organized the train or who the wagon master was. The trip to Utah, New Mexico, California, or Oregon was a trip that provided persons with a lifetime of exciting memories— if they survived the journey!

YOUR WESTWARD JOURNEY

It is about time for you to become a member of an imaginary wagon train heading for Oregon. As you simulate being on a wagon train, you will begin to understand many aspects of frontier life. For example, why did people suddenly decide to leave their relatively comfortable homes, pack all worldly possessions into small wagons, and face the uncertainties of life on the trail? What things did these adventurous people take with them? What problems did they face when they were far from civilization? And when they had these problems, how did they solve them? Your experiences in PIONEERS will answer these questions and many more.

YOUR WAGON TRAIN For the next few weeks, your class will be divided into four or five wagon trains. Each train will have five to seven members. You and other members of your train will represent a cross-section of an actual wagon train that might have been heading for Oregon during the 1840s. Your job will be to work with others so that your train can reach Oregon as quickly and safely as possible. The speed with which you travel will depend on how well you do certain assignments and on how well you solve certain problems.

SUPPLIES After receiving your identity, your first assignment will be deciding what supplies to take. This will not be easy because the number and variety of supplies is far greater than your small wagon can hold. Once you have made this decision, you will be ready to start west. As you travel, you will complete assignments related to travel events. When problems pop up, you will have to make both individual and group decisions. You will also write diary entries on your experiences and do a short group research project on a Western topic.

DELAY POINTS Someone on your train may fail to complete an assignment, or your group may fail to solve a problem that arises along the trail. If this happens, your wagon master must begin exercising real leadership, for laziness and careless problem-solving will result in your train being given DELAY POINTS. And delay when you are miles from civilization could be fatal! Your progress will also be influenced by your train's ENERGY FACTOR. At the beginning, each wagon train has an identical ENERGY FACTOR of 50. Each day you will multiply this ENERGY FACTOR times the points you have earned; this will result in your day's TRAVEL POINTS that will move you along the trail.

FATE CARDS As your wagon trains move west, FATE CARDS will be drawn to represent events along the trail. Some of these FATE CARDS will tell of good fortune while others will relate disasters that have struck you. In either case, your train's ENERGY FACTOR will be affected and therefore so will your movement. A FATE CARD might present disease, death, washed out trails or floods; in such a case it would reduce your train's previous speed. However, if you are crossing a long hot desert and a FATE CARD helps you reach the other side where there is a cool, green valley with plenty of water, your spirits will be lifted and you will move faster, at least for several days. No matter what supplies you select, no matter whom you choose to be your wagon master, no matter what fate does to you, GOOD LUCK! You will need good fortune because of the hazards facing you during your perilous trip to your Oregon homestead.

FAMILY IDENTITIES

WAGON TRAIN 1

- 1 NAME:** Dr. and Mrs. Albert Smith
FAMILY: daughter, 10
HOME: Pennsylvania
OCCUPATION: doctor
LIVESTOCK: pair of oxen
- 2 NAME:** Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Black
FAMILY: son, 16; daughter, 13; son, 11;
grandmother, 66
HOME: Massachusetts
OCCUPATION: farmer
LIVESTOCK: 4 oxen, 4 cows, 2 mules
- 3 NAME:** Mr. and Mrs. Roger Eller
FAMILY: daughter, 8; son, 3; daughter, 1
HOME: Missouri
OCCUPATION: farmer
LIVESTOCK: pair of oxen, 5 cows, 1 horse,
8 chickens
- 4 NAME:** Mr. and Mrs. John Adams
FAMILY: son, 6; son, 4; daughter, 2; expecting
HOME: Ohio
OCCUPATION: farmer
LIVESTOCK: 2 pair of oxen, 3 cows, 2 mules
- 5 NAME:** Godefryd Richards
FAMILY: none
HOME: Iowa
OCCUPATION: blacksmith
LIVESTOCK: pair of oxen, 2 horses, 1 cow

WAGON TRAIN 2

- 1 NAME:** Dr. and Mrs. Dan Cotton
FAMILY: daughter, 6; son, 4; son, 3; grandmother, 77
HOME: Ohio
OCCUPATION: doctor
LIVESTOCK: pair of oxen, 4 cows, 1 horse, 2 goats
- 2 NAME:** Mr. and Mrs. Sam Conrad
FAMILY: daughter, 6; son, 4; son, 3; grandmother, 77
HOME: Virginia
OCCUPATION: farmer
LIVESTOCK: pair of oxen, 4 cows, 1 horse, 2 goats
- 3 NAME:** Mr. and Mrs. James Wright
FAMILY: daughter, 3; son, 1
HOME: Missouri
OCCUPATION: farmer
LIVESTOCK: pair of oxen, 2 cows, 8 chickens
- 4 NAME:** Mr. and Mrs. Walter Sanders
FAMILY: daughter, 14; son, 6; daughter, 2; expecting
HOME: Ohio
OCCUPATION: farmer
LIVESTOCK: 2 pair of oxen, 1 goat, 2 mules

FAMILY IDENTITIES

WAGON TRAIN 3

- 1 NAME:** Dr. and Mrs. John Butler
FAMILY: son, 6; daughter, 1
HOME: Missouri
OCCUPATION: doctor
LIVESTOCK: pair of oxen, 2 goats, 3 cows
- 2 NAME:** Mr. and Mrs. Larry Morris
FAMILY: daughter, 3; grandmother, 70
HOME: Tennessee
OCCUPATION: farmer
LIVESTOCK: 3 oxen, 1 horse
- 3 NAME:** Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Ives
FAMILY: son, 20; son, 18
HOME: Virginia
OCCUPATION: farmer
LIVESTOCK: pair of oxen, 5 cows, 8 chickens
- 4 NAME:** Mr. and Mrs. Cletus Brown
FAMILY: son, 19; daughter, 4; expecting
HOME: Indiana
OCCUPATION: farmer
LIVESTOCK: 2 pair of oxen, 1 horse, 2 mules
- 5 NAME:** Tony Wilson
FAMILY: none
HOME: New York
OCCUPATION: blacksmith
LIVESTOCK: pair of oxen, 6 cows, 8 chickens

WAGON TRAIN 4

- 1 NAME:** Dr. and Mrs. Joseph Mingo
FAMILY: daughter, 16; son, 13; grandfather, 59
HOME: Virginia
OCCUPATION: doctor
LIVESTOCK: pair of oxen
- 2 NAME:** Mr. and Mrs. Norm Cline
FAMILY: daughter, 6; grandmother, 59
HOME: Indiana
OCCUPATION: farmer
LIVESTOCK: 4 oxen, 6 cows, 1 horse
- 3 NAME:** Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Flag
FAMILY: son, 4; daughter, 1
HOME: Iowa
OCCUPATION: farmer
LIVESTOCK: pair of oxen, 4 cows, 8 chickens
- 4 NAME:** Mr. and Mrs. Mick Colloni
FAMILY: son, 11; son, 9; son, 6; expecting
HOME: Italy
OCCUPATION: blacksmith
LIVESTOCK: pair of oxen, 1 horse, 2 mules
- 5 NAME:** Clarence Jones
FAMILY: none
HOME: Kentucky
OCCUPATION: blacksmith
LIVESTOCK: pair of oxen, 2 mules

FAMILY IDENTITIES

WAGON TRAIN 5

- 1 NAME:** Dr. and Mrs. Lon Frye
FAMILY: son, 13; daughter, 9
HOME: Missouri
OCCUPATION: doctor
LIVESTOCK: pair of oxen, 2 goats, 3 cows
- 2 NAME:** Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Whitmore
FAMILY: daughter, 11; grandmother, 65
HOME: Pennsylvania
OCCUPATION: farmer
LIVESTOCK: 3 oxen, 1 horse, 2 cows
- 3 NAME:** Mr. and Mrs. Jeb Nichols
FAMILY: son, 9 ; son, 7
HOME: Georgia
OCCUPATION: farmer
LIVESTOCK: pair of oxen, 4 cows, 4 chickens
- 4 NAME:** Mr. and Mrs. Mortimer Kincaid
FAMILY: son, 14; daughter, 8; expecting
HOME: Missouri
OCCUPATION: farmer
LIVESTOCK: 2 pair of oxen, 2 horses, 3 mules
- 5 NAME:** Desmond Lewis
FAMILY: none
HOME: Rhode Island
OCCUPATION: blacksmith
LIVESTOCK: pair of oxen, 4 cows, 4 chickens

AVAILABLE SUPPLY LIST

DIRECTIONS: The following 92 items represent 92 popular and often vital supplies that were carried by pioneers heading west. Since you cannot take everything, you will have to select those items you believe would be most important to you on the trail and at your homestead in Oregon. You can elect to take as many of each item as you believe necessary for you and your family. Later you will enter the supplies you select on your WAGON TRAIN SUPPLY LIST. The number in parenthesis after each supply is its BULK WEIGHT UNITS (BWU). These BWUs represent a combination of the size and weight of each item. **Remember that your wagon holds only 1000 BWUs.** Notice that as you begin to select supplies, those that are heavy or large soon fill your wagon, while those that are small and light take less room. Select your supplies carefully, considering the uses and importance of each item both on the trail and once you get to Oregon. Very possibly your fate will depend on how wisely you select these supplies.

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

pair of candle sticks (2)
bedding for 1 bed (12)
15 yards of material (12)
baby cradle (15)
bed pan (2)
cooking utensils for family (4)
lantern (3)
clock (5)
stool (8)
5 candles (1)
set of dishes (20)
woven basket (5)
spinning wheel (25)
mirror (10)
match bottle and matches (2)
cooking pan (6)
bed (30)
blanket (7)
family Bible (5)
Dutch oven (6)
wooden bucket (5)
coffee pot (3)
butter churn (10)
cooking stove (75)
plants (10)
butter mold (2)
coffee grinder (6)
loom (35)
rocking chair (15)
pitcher and bowl (10)
chest for clothing (35)

family heirlooms (20)
rug (25)
table and 4 chairs (50)
piano or small organ (100)
1 gallon coal oil (12)
needle and thread (1)
PERSONAL ITEMS
hunting knife (3)
powder horn (4)
bag of clothing for 1 person (20)
children's toys (8)
guitar (6)
fiddle (5)
eating utensils for 1 person (2)
family first aid kit (10)
pistol (4)
rifle (5)
extra pair of boots (7)
chaps (8)
snow shoes (6)

TOOLS

pick axe (5)
100 feet of rope (6)
hatchet (4)
axe (7)
shovel (7)
3-prong pitch fork (6)
2-man cross-cut saw (7)
hammer (2)
corn sheller (25)
anvil (4)
4 steel animal traps (5)

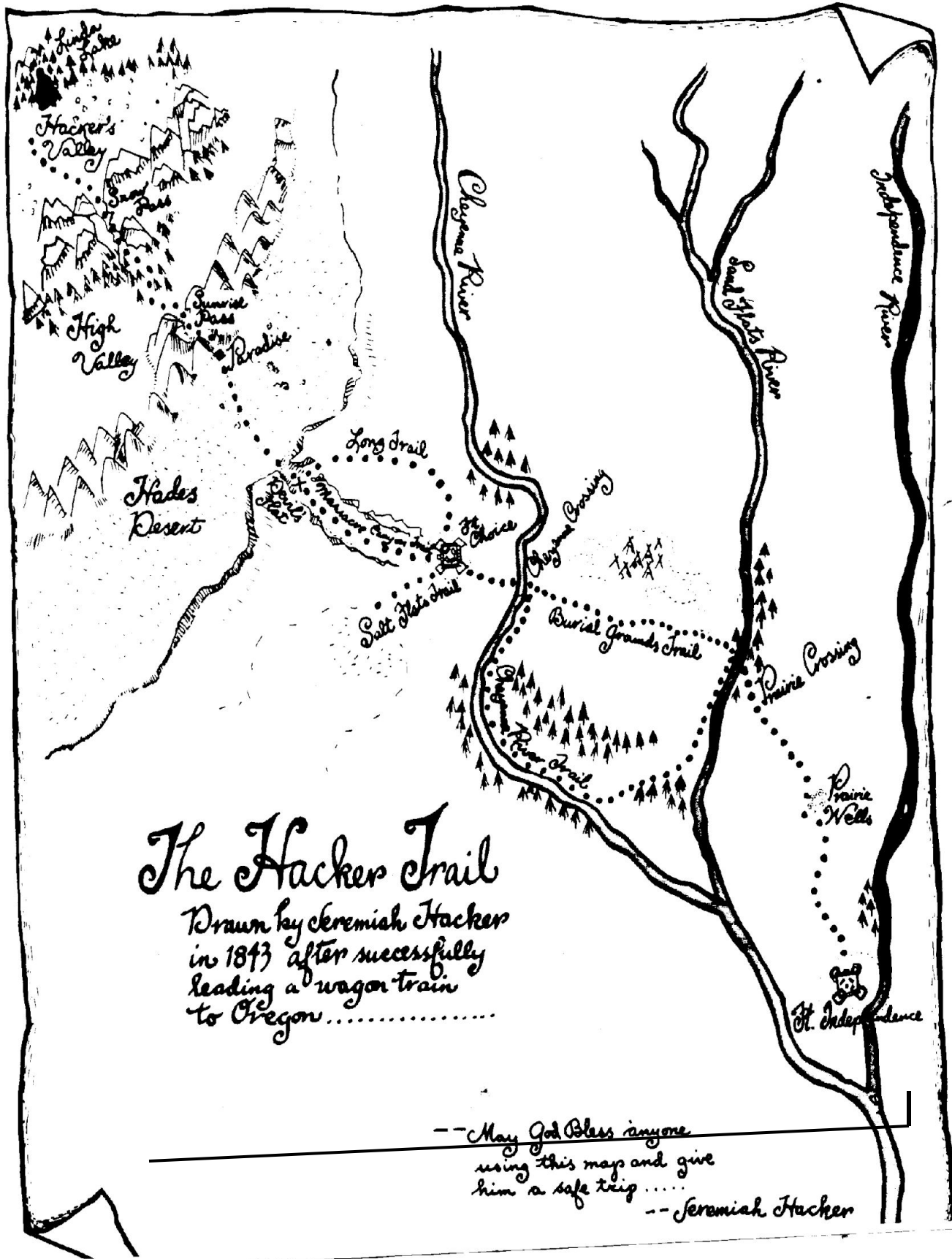
metal plow (40)
large grinding stone (20)
bellows for fire (10)
vise (5)
tool assortment (10)
grain cradle (10)
twine (2)
axle grease (13)
oxen yoke repairs (15)
hoe (4)
scythe (7)

FOOD

50 lbs. of flour (50)
25 lbs. of bacon (30)
25 lbs. of vegetables (30)
5 lb. tin of fruit (8)
25 lbs. of dried beef (25)
15 lbs. of salt pork (20)
25 lbs. of Pinto beans (25)
20 lbs. of sugar (20)
5 gal. of vinegar (25)
assorted spices (5)
25 lbs. of salt (30)

MISCELLANEOUS SUPPLIES

50 lb. bag of seeds (50)
chicken coop (12)
wood box full of wood (25)
extra keg of gun powder (20)
wine press (25)
20 gallon barrel of water (60)
saddle (25)
feed for 1 pair of animals (30)



The Hacker Trail

Drawn by Jeremiah Hacker
in 1843 after successfully
leading a wagon train
to Oregon.....

-- May God Bless anyone
using this map and give
him a safe trip.....
-- Jeremiah Hacker