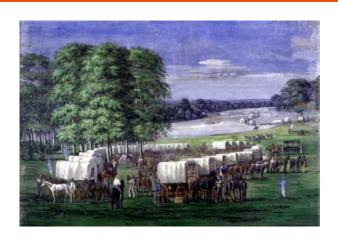
WAGON TRAINS GO WEST



- 0. WAGON TRAINS GO WEST Story Preface
- 1. THE AMERICAN WILDERNESS
- 2. SCENES OF UNSPOILED BEAUTY
- 3. FREE LAND!
- 4. WAGON TRAINS GO WEST
- 5. TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD
- 6. THE RAILROAD IS FINISHED
- 7. TRAINS GO WEST
- 8. PEOPLE GO WEST
- 9. WESTERN TOWNS
- 10. THE PRICE of FREE LAND

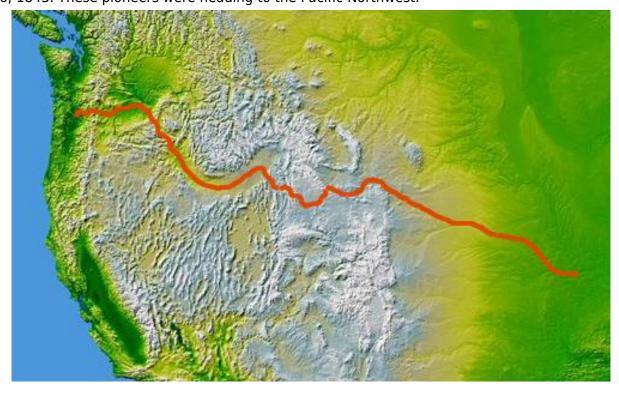


Heading for the Pacific Northwest, the first major "wagon train" leaves Elm Grove, Missouri with about one thousand pioneers. They plan to reach their destination via the Oregon Trail. This image depicts a painting, by C.C.A. Christensen (1831-1912), entitled "Wagon Train: Pioneers Crossing the Plains of Nebraska." The original is maintained by the Brigham Young University Museum of Art. Click on the image for a better view.

Between the 1840s and the 1860s, about 300,000 people set out for a new life in America's western territories. (Gold was <u>discovered</u> in California in 1848).

In the days before railroads connected both coasts, how did these individuals travel? In wagons, drawn by horses, <u>over</u> extremely difficult terrain (like the <u>Oregon</u> and Santa Fe Trails) where conditions were very primitive.

The first major Oregon-Trail wagon train, <u>consisting of a thousand people</u>, left the Missouri town of Elm Grove on May 16, 1843. These pioneers were heading to the Pacific Northwest.



<u>Conestoga Wagons</u> were a popular method of <u>transportation</u>. Invented by the Pennsylvania Dutch in the early <u>1700s</u>, and named after the Conestoga Valley, they were also called camels of the prairie. Their wheels had broad rims which helped a wagon pass through mud. Without its wheels, a Conestoga could become a boat. Teams of four to <u>six horses</u> pulled them.

The "Prairie Schooner," another wagon which carried families across the undeveloped west, was manufactured

by the Studebaker brothers, among others. Although it resembled the Conestoga, it was smaller, sleeker and required fewer horses. It could even be pulled by mules or <u>oxen</u>.

Pioneers, including African-Americans and <u>women</u> who made the long trip, usually traveled in groups. These "wagon trains" would typically number around thirty, although sometimes as many as two hundred wagons journeyed together.

On average, it took about four to six months for a family to get from Independence, Missouri to Oregon or California.

Some people did not want to go west by wagon train. Until 1868, stagecoaches (like the <u>Concord</u>) followed the <u>Overland Trail</u>. Mark Twain and his brother made that <u>uncomfortable journey</u> in 1861.

Others thought a water route would be better. But in the days before the Panama Canal, there was no good way to sail to America's west coast.

One option - a bad one - was to sail completely around the southern coast of South America. By the time people reached their final destination, they had a year invested in the trip.

Another option - sometimes worse - was to sail on the Atlantic to the <u>Isthmus of Panama</u>, trek <u>across land</u> to the Pacific side and, hopefully, catch a seaworthy boat. For many would-be gold miners, the ships never came or did not have room.



One group of people - the Cherokee - had no plans to go west. The federal government, at the direction of President <u>Andrew Jackson</u>, forced them to leave <u>their own lands</u> for relocation in Oklahoma. Why did this happen?

As European settlers made their way to America, many of them wanted to settle land which belonged to Native Americans. Such was the case in Georgia, where indigenous people of the Cherokee Nation lived. A song which was popular in the 1820's makes the point:

All I ask in this creation Is a pretty little wife and a big plantation Way up yonder in the Cherokee Nation.

To further complicate life for the Cherokee people, <u>gold was found</u> on their lands in 1830. That same year, the U.S. Congress passed the "Indian Removal Act." Americans who disagreed with the federal government's policies tried to speak for the Native Americans - to little (or no) avail.

Some of the people were <u>forced west</u> over a land route, while others <u>traveled by water</u>.

The Cherokee "Trail of Tears" occurred between 1838-39. It remains a dark chapter in American history.

As pioneers and their loaded wagons were moving west, workers and their railroad bosses were building a better way to travel. In 1869, the Union Pacific and Central Pacific met at <u>Promontory Point</u>, Utah.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/WAGON-TRAINS-GO-WEST-Go-West-U.S.-Westward-Ex

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/WAGON-TRAINS-GO-WEST-Go-West-U.S.-Westward-Expansion

Media Stream



<u>Oregon Trail - by Albert Bierstadt</u> Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

PD

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Oregon-Trail-by-Albert-Bierstadt



1849 Gold Rush Map via Sea

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/



Oregon Trail Campfire - by Albert Bierstadt

Image described above, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

PD

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Oregon-Trail-Campfire-by-Albert-Bierstadt



Conestoga Wagon

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Conestoga-Wagon



Six Horse Team Pulling a Conestoga Wagon

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Six-Horse-Team-Pulling-a-Conestoga-Wagon



Oxen Pulling A Conestoga Wagon

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Oxen-Pulling-A-Conestoga-Wagon



Map Depicting the Isthmus of Panama

Image online, courtesy the gettyimages.com website.

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Map-Depicting-the-Isthmus-of-Panama



Drawing - Scene at the Isthmus of Panama

Image online, courtesy the panamarailroad.org website.

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Drawing-Scene-at-the-Isthmus-of-Panama



Map: The Cherokee Country

Image online, courtesy the <u>Perry Castañeda Library</u>, the University of Texas at Austin. View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Map-The-Cherokee-Country



Map: Trail of Tears National Historic Trail

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Park Service.

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Map-Trail-of-Tears-National-Historic-Trail



Meeting at Promontory Point

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

PD

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Meeting-at-Promontory-Point



WAGON TRAINS GO WEST

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/WAGON-TRAINS-GO-WEST-Illustration-



Andrew Jackson and the Cherokee "Trail of Tears"

Music video entitled "Andrew Jackson - The Atrocious Saint" by Christopher Hedge, with David Grisman and R. Carlos Nakai. From the PBS documentary: "Andrew Jackson: Good, Evil and the Presidency" (by Carl Byker, Mitch Wilson and KCET Los Angeles).

Online, courtesy Christopher Hedge via YouTube.

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Andrew-Jackson-and-the-Cherokee-Trail-of-Tears-