

## **How long was the journey from the Missouri "jumping off" place to California or Oregon?**

About 2,000 miles.

## **How long did the trek take, on the average?**

Subject to considerable variation because of weather, accidents, etc., on the average a wagon train could expect to be "on the road" 4 1/2 to 5 months.

[Greg Franzwa, *folio:Newsletter of the Patrice Press*, May 1996.]

Average number of days of travel time to California and to Oregon:

**1841-1848:** California: 157.7 Oregon: 169.1

**1849:** California: 131.6 Oregon: 129.0

**1850:** California: 107.9 Oregon: 125.0

**1850-60:** California: 112.7 Oregon: 128.5

**1841-1860:** California: 121.0 Oregon: 139.6

[John Unruh, Jr. *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-60*, p. 403]

## **How long did emigrants "lay by" after arriving at the Missouri River before beginning the trek west?**

During the Gold Rush, the '49er's averaged about 15 days; during the years before and after 1849, the figure was reduced. Probably most fell within a time frame of a week to 10 days.

[John Unruh, Jr. *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-60*, p. 112]

## **When did travel on the Oregon-California Trail begin?**

In the winter of 1812-13, Robert Stuart and his party returning from Astoria stumbled through South Pass on their way back to the "States." The effective discovery of South Pass was accomplished by Jedediah Smith and Thomas Fitzpatrick in 1824. The Bidwell-Bartleson Party is generally credited with being the first true emigrant train. It left Missouri in 1841 in the company of the party of fathers Jean Pierre DeSmet and Nicholas Point, guided by Thomas Fitzpatrick. The party split at Fort Hall with some going on to the Snake River and the others opting for the Humboldt River and California. By the time the latter reached California they were no longer a "wagon" train, having been forced to abandon their wagons en route. The first major migration to

Oregon came in 1843. Among its prominent members were Peter Burnett, Jesse Applegate and Marcus Whitman.

[Merrill Mattes, *Platte River Narratives*, p. 1]

**Which type of draft animals were most frequently used by overlanders?**

"John Unruh, Jr. and Merrill Mattes, the two premier scholars of westward migration, are in general agreement that oxen were much preferred, with horses and mules considerably less favored. Unruh is content to make the general observation that more than half of all overlanders' wagons were pulled by oxen, while Mattes cites diary excerpts that suggest a figure closer to two-thirds or three-quarters ... The cost of a yoke of oxen during the last half of the 1840s varied from a low of \$25 to a high of \$65." [Robert L. Munkres, "Wagon Train Animals," *Annals of Wyoming*, Summer/Fall 1993, p 16.]