

Pathfinder: Selecting Gear and Starting Out

Introduction

This pathfinder was developed to be used with the film *In Pursuit of a Dream*. The film, including a disc of supplemental film footage, is available through Landmark Media. The OCTA web site has a link to their web site and ordering information. Under the Educational Resources section of the OCTA web site is another link to *In Pursuit of a Dream* and under that, a link to a Study Guide that includes some discussion questions related to the film. The supplemental film footage includes additional material on eminent domain (Topographical Engineers), trail preservation, oxen on the trail, Independence Rock, Martin's Cove (Mormon migration), Shoshone Indians (stories and dances, three episodes), around the campfire, the Antiquities Act, and OCTA's role in trail preservation and marking the historic trails (two episodes).

This pathfinder is not designed to be a complete reference, but rather to provide some ideas to start you thinking and learning and to give you some resources for starting your own research.

Outline

Deciding to Move West

- Historical Context

- Motivations

Selecting Gear

- Wagons and Animals

- Provisions and Supplies

- Guidebooks and Maps

Starting Out

- Saying Goodbye to Home

- Jumping-off Places

- Forming a Wagon Train

- Reaching the First Night's Camp

Each section or sub-section of the pathfinder has three parts: information, questions to ask and things to do (discussion questions and learning activities), and where to find information (sources used to compile that sub-section and other recommended sources).

Deciding to Move West: Historical Context

In 1840, at the beginning of the overland migration period, the western boundary of the United States was the Mississippi River. Beyond that was Indian Territory. On the far Pacific Coast California belonged to Mexico and the Oregon Country belonged to Great Britain. A few explorers, fur hunters, and missionaries had been into the western country, but to most Americans it was a vast unknown. In every move or migration there are both push and pull factors. What are people moving away from? What are they moving toward? These are the factors that people consider in making a decision to move to a new place. Most women probably

went reluctantly, but they had little choice. More than one diary speaks of a husband who comes home one day to announce that he has sold the family farm and all the family possessions and that the family will head to Oregon as soon as the wagons can be loaded. If a man was going to California for gold, the family was likely to be left behind.

Author Rosemary Gudmundson Palmer says that “In order to truly understand what motivated people in the 1840s-1870s to make the long journey to Oregon or California or Utah, we need to see the westward migration not only from their vantage point, but also in its social and historical context. We need to know about the historical time period and the culture in which they lived.” This is different from the historical background, which is knowledge about what happened before the emigration period, such as the early Indian cultures, the explorers and fur traders, and missionaries that came before the emigrants.

“The westward emigration period in the mid-19th-century,” says Palmer, “was a time of transition and turbulence. The United States was moving from a mostly rural country toward urbanization and the development of factories, but most people were still poor. There was a fairly rigid class structure, and extremes of affluence and poverty. In the United States the class structure was less evident. Society was more diverse and democratic and there was a rising middle class. It was a time of economic difficulties and social discontent but at the same time it was an age of social, political and economic opportunity. Most people were religious and gender roles were quite strictly defined.” Slavery was a growing issue, the country was moving toward the Civil War, and there were many areas of uncertainty in people’s lives.

Deciding to Move West: What Motivated People?

There were many reasons. In 1846 mountain man James Clyman asked why “so many of all kinds and classes of People should sell out comfortable homes in Missouri and Elsewhere pack up and start across such an enormous Barren waste to settle in some new Place of which they have at most so uncertain information.” Clyman’s answer was simple: “This is the character of my countrymen.”

Historian Will Bagley puts it a slightly different way: “...there were as many motives as there were emigrants...all agreed in the one general object—that of bettering their condition,” but their individual hopes and dreams “were as various as can well be imagined.”

Deciding to Move West: Questions to Ask and Things To Do:

Make a timeline of events between 1840 and 1870. Research in books and online to find information. As you continue to study, consider the questions below and add events to your timeline.

- What else was going on in the United States during the time period of the 1830s-1870s?
- What was going on in your state or your part of the country during this same time period?
- From the factors affecting the United States during this time period, as described by Rosemary Palmer (above) find events that are examples of these factors. Add them to your timeline.

- How might the events on your timeline have affected people's decision to go West? How might they have affected people's destination?
- Discuss your answers to these questions. Do other people agree or disagree? Give your reasons. Support your reasons with information from your reading and research.

Make a list of all the possible reasons you can think of for people to go west. What were people leaving behind? What were they moving toward or looking forward to?

- You may want to make two lists, one for things people were leaving behind and one for things people were moving toward.
- How might each of the motivations on your list affect people's destination?
- Which of the motivations on your list would convince you to pack up all your belongings and move across the country? Give your reasons.
- Do you have neighbors or a friend or someone in your family who moved from another country to the United States or who moved all the way across the United States at a different time in history? What were their reasons for moving? Compare their reasons to the reasons that motivated people to move west in the 1840s-1870s.

Look at a map of the United States as it was in 1840 to familiarize yourself with the geography and political boundaries. On the map locate these features: the Mississippi River, the Missouri River, California, Mexico, Indian Territory, and the Oregon country.

- What other geographic features (for example, mountains, rivers, or deserts) do you see that might affect the journey west to the Pacific coast?
- What political boundaries might affect the journey?
- Give your reasons why you think these things might affect the journey and in what ways. Support your point of view with information from your reading and research.

Make a vocabulary list of words or phrases that you learn from your reading and research.

- Here are a few words and phrases to get you started:
 - Emigrants
 - Oxen
 - Covered wagon
 - Manifest destiny
 - Jumping off
 - Wagon train
- What meanings of these words or phrases are specific to the topic of moving west? How are these different from the meanings of these words or phrases in other contexts?
- As you continue to study, add words and phrases to your vocabulary list.

Deciding to Move West: Where to Find Information

General Research Tips

To learn more about westward migration you will need to use both primary and secondary sources. Here are definitions of these terms:

- **Primary source:** A document or object written or created at the time of an event or by a person who was present at the event. Primary sources are such things as diaries, letters,

interviews, memoirs, contemporary newspaper articles, photographs, drawings, or official documents. An object or artifact might also be a primary source. Examples might be such things as an original covered wagon that came across the trail to Oregon or a gold pan that was used by a miner in California during the gold rush.

- Secondary source: A document or object created by someone either not present when the event took place or removed by time from the event. Examples are such things as a history book, a journal article, a present-day newspaper article, an encyclopedia article, or the report of an overland journey written by a grandchild of the pioneer who actually made the trip. A modern replica of a covered wagon would be a secondary source.

You will also need to use both printed and online sources. Specific sources, both print and online, will be cited throughout this Pathfinder.

A good online source to start with is the Oregon-California Trails Association web site at <http://www/octa-trails.org>. The site has a great deal of information about the topics covered in this Pathfinder—and more. As with any web site, go to the site and spend some time exploring it. Go to the various sections and sub-sections of the web site and look at them to find out in detail what is there. Much of the information of interest to students and teachers will be under these sections on the OCTA web site: Educational Resources and its sub-sections, Trail Maps and Views, Trail Facts, and People and Places. There is also a search box (upper left on the home page) where you can put in key words for topics of interest, for example timelines or maps or wagons or food, and you can then access the links to every place on the OCTA web site that has information on those topics.

Deciding to Move West: Where to Find Information

One good strategy for finding information about a topic with which you are unfamiliar—even for adults-- is to find a good children's book on the subject. Such a book will give you basic information and provide you with a framework for further reading and research. Here are two good possibilities:

- Hill, William E. *Reading, Writing and Riding Along the Oregon-California Trails: An Educational Activity Book*. OCTA, 1993. You can purchase it from the online OCTA Bookstore (see the link on the OCTA web site).
- *America the Beautiful*, third series. Scholastic, 2009. A good series of children's books. There is a volume for each state, with good historical content, maps, and photographs and a variety of learning projects. Each volume has a basic timeline of the state's history. The series is designed for students in grades 5-8. Many public libraries will have this set.

A set of basic books, intended for an adult audience, that can serve the same purpose is:

- *Auto Tour Route Interpretive Guides* published by the National Park Service. They have basic historical background information, excellent maps and clear driving directions. Volumes for Western Missouri/Northeastern Kansas, Nebraska/Northeastern Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, and Utah have been completed. Volumes for Oregon and Washington are in preparation and volumes for Nevada and California are planned. They are available online as pdf files. Go to <http://www.nps.gov/oreg/planyourvisit/upload>; for Utah or California, use "Utah: or "cali" instead of "oreg." These can often be found at travel and tourism centers along the historic trails routes. The Missouri/Kansas volume has a clear definition of Manifest Destiny.

Try these online sources:

- www.wikipedia.org is a good source for basic information. Use “Oregon Trail” or “California Trail” to start your search. Add modifying terms to narrow the search.

There are many good books for adults. Here are a few to get you started:

- Lavender, David. *Overland Migrations: Settlers to Oregon, California and Utah*. Handbook 105. Division of Publications, National Park Service, 1980. One of a series of small books that have accurate historical background information as well as travel information. This one has good information on motivations for moving west in the first chapter, “The Fever Catches,” pp. 28-31. You can buy it from the U.S. Government Bookstore. The easiest way to find it is to do a Google search using the search term National Park Service. In the search box that comes up, type in Overland Migrations. It is Stock No. 024-005-00932-9.
- Unruh, John. *The Plains Across*. University of Illinois, 1982. Classic history of the overland emigration, chock full of excellent information, This one is good for historical context.
- Bagley, Will. *So Rugged and Mountainous: Blazing the Trails to Oregon and California, 1812-1848*. University of Oklahoma Press, 2010. New and detailed history of the overland migration. This is the first of a projected four-volume history that aims to present a fresh look at the entire western migration. Has lots of information on all aspects of the early years of trail travel. Indispensable.
- Mattes, Merrill. *The Great Platte River Road*. Nebraska Historical Society, 1969. Classic history of the central portion of the overland routes through the Platte River Valley, by a renowned trail scholar.
- Franzwa, Gregory M. *The Oregon Trail Revisited*, Silver Anniversary ed. Patrice Press, 1997. A good guide to traveling the trail today, but with plenty of historical background information too.

Diaries are one of the best sources of contemporary information. Many have been published and are available in libraries; some can be purchased. An example of a published diary is:

- Clyman, James. *Journal of a Mountain Man*. Mountain Press, 1984.

There are many, many more. Several are available through the OCTA bookstore.

Two good guides to diaries are:

- Mattes, Merrill J. *Platte River Road Narratives*. University of Illinois Press, 1988. A comprehensive guide to emigrant diaries and where to find them. Look for this in libraries.
- *Paper Trail*. This data base is a detailed index to emigrant diaries and where to find them. Read about the data base and access it from the Oregon-California Trails web site or go directly to www.paper-trail.org

Full-text versions of some diaries are online. Do a Google search using the terms “Oregon Trail diaries” or “California Trail diaries to find them.”

Collections of diaries or diary excerpts are also good sources. Here are some to get you started:

- Holmes, Kenneth L., editor. *Covered Wagon Women*, 11 volumes; paperback edition published by University of Nebraska Press. This set of women’s diaries is one of the best

collections available. Look for it in libraries or purchase from the OCTA online bookstore.

- Hammond, Andrew and Joanne. *The Look of the Elephant*. Oregon-California Trails Association, 2009. An excellent compilation of diary excerpts for the journey to Oregon or California.
- Werner, Emmy E. *Pioneer Children on the Journey West*. Westview Press, 1995.
- Palmer, Rosemary G. *Children's Voices from the Trail*. Arthur H. Clark Co., 2002.

Here are two that are transcribed excerpts from interviews with pioneers who traveled across to trail to Oregon. Some of the excerpts are quite brief, but they are all interesting:

- Lockley, Fred. *Conversations With Pioneer Women*. Rainy Day Press, 1981.
- Lockley, Fred. *Conversations With Pioneer Men*. Rainy Day Press, 1996.

Contemporary newspapers are an excellent source. Emigrants wrote letters back home and these were often published in the local newspaper. There were also articles about local people who were leaving for California or Oregon. Many historical newspapers are available online. Start with this free site: <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov> from the Library of Congress. It has a collection of historical newspapers 1836-1922 and a directory of U.S. newspapers 1690 to the present. This site is not easy to use, but the web site "How to Search Chronicling America" may help: http://www.okhistory.org/research/forms/Guide_to_Using_Chronicling_America.

An older but still valid way to access newspapers is newspapers on microfilm. Your public library can often obtain them for you on interlibrary loan.

Chronological history books are good sources of information for inclusion in timelines. Look for them in the reference section of your public library. Here are some standard ones:

- *Encyclopedia of Facts and Dates*
- *Chronicling of America*
- *Timetables of American History*

Many books about American history or about historic trails include timelines. Here are a few good ones to start with:

- Hill, William E. *The Oregon Trail: Yesterday and Today*. Caxton, 1987, 1989. Includes an excellent timeline. He has also written books about other historic trails; all are similar in format.
- Hill, William E. *Reading, Writing and Riding Along the Oregon-California Trails: An Educational Activity Book* has a very similar timeline that is geared to younger elementary school children.

There are many Internet sites with chronology information; some allow you to add your own events. The OCTA web site has at least one timeline; use the search feature to find it. Good search terms for a Google search are "Oregon Trail timeline" or "California Trail timeline." These will bring you literally hundreds of results. In either case, of the first ten results most will have very good information, or try reducing the number of results by specifying a date range, for example: "Oregon Trail timeline 1840-1870."

Here are some useful sites for maps:

The OCTA web site: www.octa-trails.org has several useful maps; The easiest way to find them is the use the search feature and type in maps. Most of the resulting maps will show political

boundaries for various times before and during the 1840s-1870s overland migration period. There are also links to two other maps:

- The *Overland Trails map*, produced by OCTA, shows trail routes and topographical features. It is available from the OCTA bookstore. There is excellent text on the back side, so you may want to get two copies to make a nice wall display.
- Rug Maps is a link to information on rugs that show a map of the United States with some topographical features. Good for younger students. Gives ordering information.
- Look for an historical atlas of the United States. National Geographic has one.
- *The Atlas of American Migration*, by Stephen A. Flanders. Facts on File, 1998, is also useful. Look for this or other atlases at your public library.
- The National Atlas: www.nationalatlas.gov. There will be a number of different maps. You may need to look for separate maps for political boundaries and topographical features.

Selecting Gear: Wagons and Animals

Traveling successfully to Oregon or California depended mainly upon the “outfit.” This meant the wagon and the means of pulling the wagon. The trip was expensive, requiring not only a wagon and animals to pull it, but also supplies, hardware, livestock and money. The trip to the West Coast usually took from four to six months, often over very rough ground. Wagons could and did break down, so spare parts were needed. Animals could and did wear out or get sick and die and had to be replaced. Along the route, especially in the early days of the migration period, there were few if any places where emigrants could purchase such items as a new wagon wheel, or an additional team of oxen or more food supplies.

Most emigrants did not travel in Conestoga wagons. Conestoga wagons, which were larger and heavier, more suitable for hauling freight, had been developed in the Conestoga Valley of Pennsylvania. A fully loaded Conestoga wagon could haul several tons of freight, and were often pulled by mules. The usual emigrant “prairie schooner” was smaller and lighter—often a farm wagon, built with extra-sturdy wheels and a canvas top. The cover could be tied down tight in bad weather or left flapping loose to admit air on a hot day. It was sometimes pulled by mules, but more often by oxen. Both oxen and mules, though slower than horses, could subsist on less food and water. Oxen had the added advantage that if you got short of food, you could eat them. A major disadvantage of horses was that Indians were prone to steal them, whereas they had little interest in oxen or mules.. Some affluent folks had horses to ride or carriages to ride in, but most people walked—fourteen to twenty miles a day was average. Room in the wagons mostly had to be reserved for the supplies necessary to a successful journey and besides, walking was generally more comfortable than riding in a jolting wagon.

An article, “Outfit for Oregon,” from the *St. Joseph, Missouri Gazette*, March 19, 1847, has this to say about wagons and animals: “The wagons should be new, made of thoroughly seasoned timber, and well ironed and not too heavy, with good tight beds, strong bows, strong bows, and large double sheets. There should be at least four yoke of good oxen to each wagon—one yoke to be considered as extra, and to be used only in case of emergency.”

Selecting Gear: Wagons and Animals

Questions to Ask and Things to Do

In the *In Pursuit of a Dream* film, what kind of wagons were used? What kinds of animals were used to pull them? How were the wagons and animals used in the film the same as or similar to the wagons pioneers would have used? How were they different? Give the reasons for your answers.

Compare the amount of supplies (both volume and weight) that could be carried in a farm wagon and a Conestoga wagon. Write down your calculations and how you arrived at your conclusions.

Compare the cost of oxen versus mules or horses needed for each type of wagon. Write down the costs. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of each type of animal you might use to pull your wagon. Find diary quotes or other information to support the factors you list in your comparison. Which combination of wagon and animals do you think would be best? What would this outfit cost? Find diary quotes or other information to support your answers.

The journey to Oregon or California was about two thousand miles. If you traveled an average of fifteen miles a day, calculate how many days it would take you to get to your destination. List factors that might enable you to move faster. List factors that might slow you down. Find diary quotes or other information to support the factors you list.

Selecting Gear: Wagons and Animals

Where to Find Information

Start with the OCTA web site: <http://www.octa-trails.org>. There you will find an excellent web quest, “Wagons of the Westward Migration.” Use the search feature on the web site to find additional information on wagons and the animals that pulled them.

“Oxen on the Trail,” one episode of the supplemental film footage for *In Pursuit of a Dream*, has good information on oxen and wagons.

William Hill’s *Reading, Writing and Riding Along the Oregon-California Trails*, has pictures of Conestoga and farm wagons and information on the animals used to pull them on pages 10-11. His book *The Oregon Trail: Yesterday and Today*, has good information on wagons and animals on pages 68-76.

Will Bagley’s book *So Rugged and Mountainous* has lots of good information on wagons and animals on pages 134-153.

Another excellent web site is The Oregon Territory and Its Pioneers, compiled and edited by Stephanie Flora: <http://www.ortrail.com/ortrail.htm>. The section entitled “The Journey” has information on wagons and animals and more. Explore other parts of this site for excellent information on all aspects of trail travel to Oregon.

Don’t forget diaries, journals, reminiscences and contemporary newspapers. Newspaper advertisements for wagons or animals may have useful information.

Selecting Gear: Provisions and Supplies

Provisions and supplies had to include not only what you would need on the journey west, but also what you would need to start life in the new place when you reached your destination. The things you needed for both purposes were food—enough to see your family through the long trip; cooking utensils; household goods including tents and bedding; clothing; tools; medical supplies; weapons; money; guidebooks and maps. You might take livestock—chickens, pigs, a cow or two for milk along the way, and probably seeds to plant when you reached your new place. Many people also took a few prized personal possessions—a family Bible, a favorite doll or toy, a prized dish or chair.

Inexperience sometimes caused people to make poor decisions—not enough food, too many possessions they didn't want to leave behind, no tools or supplies for unexpected contingencies. An example in the *In Pursuit of a Dream* film is the group that decides not to take a cross-cut saw and later, when they reach the forests of Oregon, wish they had it.

Seven-year-old Benjamin Bonney of Illinois, whose family traveled to California in 1845 spent several months helping his father build the emigrant wagon for their journey. He describes some of the supplies they took with them: "Father built a large box in the home-made wagon and put in a lot of dried buffalo meat and pickled pork. He had made over a hundred pounds of maple sugar which we took along instead of loaf sugar. He also took along plenty of corn meal....He laid in a plentiful supply of home twist tobacco. Father chewed it and Mother smoked it...in an old corn-cob pipe."

For meals, pioneers were dependent on their limited provisions and what they could hunt and gather along the way. They relied on their ingenuity and adaptability to survive. At times, game was scarce. Often the plants were different from what people knew and they were afraid to harvest the unfamiliar wild foods they encountered along the way. Some emigrant diaries do talk about picking berries or finding wild greens to eat.

In any case, supplies were limited and meals were monotonous. One emigrant woman described them this way: "About all we had to eat was bacon and biscuits, and for variety, biscuits and bacon."

Selecting Gear: Provisions and Supplies Questions to Ask and Things to Do

Discuss these questions:

- What kinds of supplies and provisions would people need on the journey to Oregon or California?
- What kinds of supplies would people need when they reached their destination and started a new life?
- How would people know what kinds of supplies and provisions they needed to take and how much they would need?

Support your answers with information from your reading and research. You might share your findings in these ways:

- Write a report of what you learned and the research strategies you used to find the information. Compare what you learned with what other people in your class or group learned.
- Make a list or find or draw pictures and make a poster showing all the different kinds of supplies and provisions you would need for the long overland journey. Tell why you would need each item on your poster or list.

Watch the film *In Pursuit of a Dream*. Note how the young people in the film are making their choices about which supplies to take and what to leave. Do you agree with their choices? Disagree? Give your reasons. Find diary quotes or other information to support your reasons.

If your journey to Oregon or California will take four months, figure out how many meals you will have to prepare on the journey. Explain the method you used to find your answer. Figure out how many meals you would have to prepare if your trip lasts six months instead of four. Figure out how much more food you would need to take for the longer journey. How much food will you need to take on the trip? As you work on this, think about these questions too:

- What kinds of foods might people be able to find along the way?
- How could people keep their food from spoiling on the long trip?
- What could people do if their food supplies started to run out?

Support your answers with information from your reading and research.

You are a pioneer heading across the trail to Oregon or California. The food items you have with you are flour, dried beef, dry beans, bacon, corn meal, lard, coffee and tea. You also have some salt, sugar, and saleratus. Your party is well equipped so you have a milk cow and a few chickens. Using the food supplies you have, plan a week's menus for three meals a day. Do some research to see if you can find recipes for the foods you plan to prepare. If possible, actually prepare at least one of these recipes or even a whole meal. Share it with your class or group.

For a family of five people, figure out what the total weight of all your food supplies will be. Start a list with this figure as the first item. If your wagon will carry a total of 2100 pounds, how much more weight can you add after all your food supplies are in?

Read and research to figure out what other supplies you will need to take and the approximate weight of each item. Add these weights to your list. As you work on this, consider these questions:

- What kinds of things might happen on the journey that you may need to prepare for before you start out (for example, an accident that damages your wagon or bad weather)?
- What will you do if you don't have enough room in your wagon for all the things you need to take?

Here are some ways you might make this activity more real:

- Divide your class or group into several "families" of three to six people each. Have each family figure out their responses to the suggested activities and questions. Compare your answers.
- Pack a small hand-pulled wagon with small packages representing the weights and sizes of the supplies and provisions a pioneer family would need to put in their covered wagon.

- Make a rectangular outline the size of a real covered wagon on the floor with masking tape or string (Use something that won't leave marks on the floor). Use cardboard boxes to represent the provisions and supplies; mark each with its content and weight. Pack your wagon by placing your boxes inside your marked rectangle.

Answer this question: If you were going on the long journey to Oregon or California and could take only one personal possession with you, what would it be, and why? You may want to follow up by comparing your answer and reasons with those of other people in your class or group. You could also bring your personal items for a "show and tell" sharing with other people in your class or group.

Selecting Gear: Provisions and Supplies

Where to Find Information

Start with the OCTA site: <http://www.octa-trails.org>. There are several places where information on supplies and provisions can be found.:

- Under "Trail Facts. Frequently Asked Questions" are two with pertinent information:
What load did a wagon carry?
What kind of provisions were carried?
- Under "People and Places" is a series of articles by Jim Tompkins. One of these is entitled "Outfitting for the Trail" that has lots of good information.
- Under "Slide Presentations and Web Quests" is an excellent and detailed web quest on food on the Oregon Trail.

Wagon Wheel Kitchens: Food on the Oregon Trail, by Jacqueline Williams. University Press of Kansas, 1993, is the most complete source on the subject. Much information, culled from diaries, contemporary newspapers and emigrant guidebooks. The author says "It is the combination of diaries and explanations of cooking methods that adequately explain how emigrants were able to prepare meals day after day for six months."

Leslie J. Whipple's *Oregon Trail Cookbook*. Maverick Press, 1992, is another good source. The informative article "Outfit for Oregon," from the *St. Joseph, Missouri Gazette*, March 19, 1847, is reproduced in its entirety here.

So Rugged and Mountainous, by Will Bagley. University of Oklahoma Press, 2010, has a good section on provisions and supplies on pages 168-171 and one on clothing, pages 161-168. Look in the Index to find other pertinent sections.

The Oregon Territory and Its Pioneers web site: <http://www.oregonpioneers.com/ortrail.htm> has much good information. The section "The Journey" has information on provisions and on what to pack. Also on this site is "Oregon 101," a series of articles by Jim Tompkins. It includes articles on preparation, food and provisions, and packing to go.

Selecting Gear: Guidebooks and Maps

Guidebooks

Within a few years after the westward migration started, guidebooks became available. They were of varying quality, from “very useful totally useless.” They were written mostly by people who had successfully made the trip and usually included such information as mileages, locations of major river crossings and springs, availability of grass, comments about the nature of the road, and major landmarks. The best ones also included a list of campsites, trading posts, advice on equipment, the best routes, and how to deal with Indians.

John C. Fremont’s *Report of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains*, first published in 1843 as a government document, was, according to historian Will Bagley, “The most influential book ever written on overland emigration.” Another early and popular guidebook, though often inaccurate, was Lansford W. Hastings’ *The Emigrant Guide to Oregon and California*, published in 1847. One of the best guidebooks was William Clayton’s *The Latter Day Saints’ Emigrant’s Guide*, published in 1847 and covering only the first half of the trail. There were a number of other guidebooks. Some of the later ones had more practical information.

For more specific information about foods to carry and provisions one might pick up along the way, people garnered information from letters and journals sent home by people who had completed the trip. Such information was often printed in local newspapers

Maps

While most emigrants would agree that a map would be a good item to have for the long overland journey, there weren’t many available. In the earlier years, in lieu of a map, emigrants had to depend on landmarks to find their way, or hire a mountain man to guide them. Indians occasionally acted as guides. One of the few maps available was the one made by Charles Preuss, cartographer for Fremont’s expeditions. In 1849 T. H. Jefferson’s excellent *Map of the Emigrant Road from Independence, Mo. To St. Francisco, California* appeared on the market. It was the first commercial map of the California Trail.

Selecting Gear: Guidebooks and Maps

Questions to Ask and Things to Do

On a United States outline map that shows physical features, identify the major mountain ranges that emigrants would have to cross to get to Oregon and to get to California. Do the same for the major rivers that emigrants followed on their journey. Which rivers would have to be crossed? Locate South Pass on the map. What other landmarks might be shown on a map that emigrants might take with them to help them find the way to Oregon or California? Mark their locations on the map.

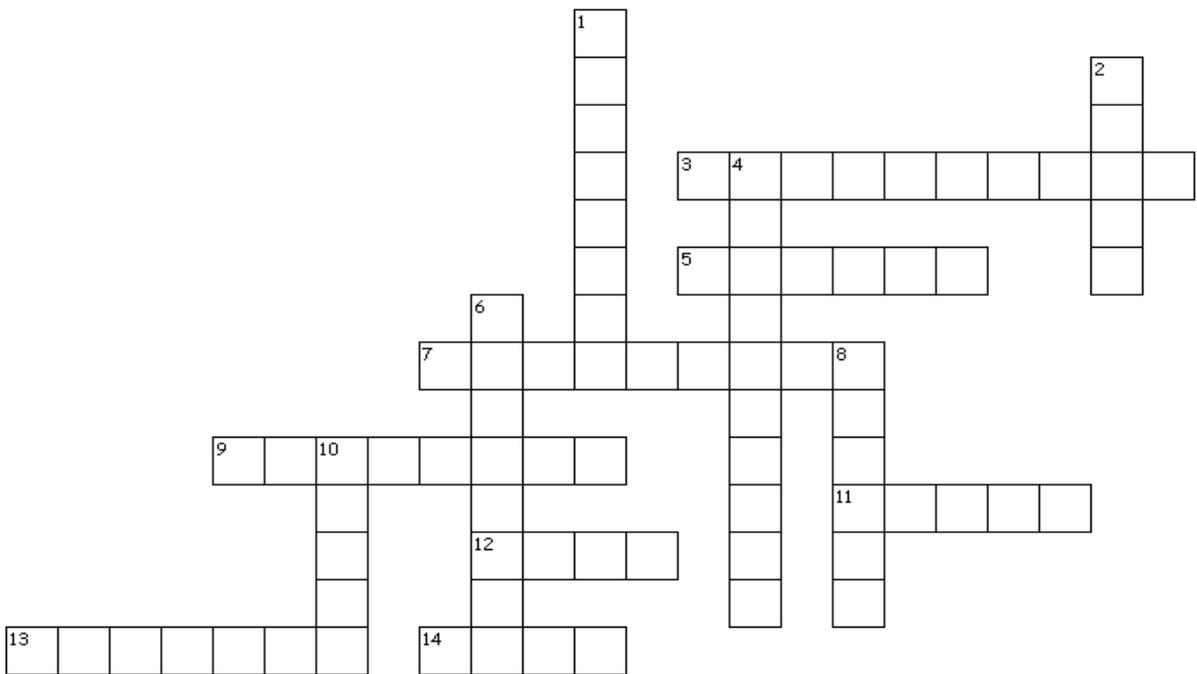
Here are two puzzles having to do with landmarks. Using the list of landmarks listed here, fill in the Criss Cross and Word Search puzzles. Here is the list:

- Mountains: Blue, Cascade, Rocky, Sierra
- Rivers: Columbia, Green, Humboldt, Missouri, Platte, Raft, Snake, Sweetwater, Willamette

- South Pass

Or try making your own puzzles, using any list of words you like. This would be a good way to reinforce your knowledge of the words on your vocabulary list from the beginning of this pathfinder.

Physical Features of the Oregon-California Trail



Across

3. near Independence Rock
5. too thick to drink to thin to plow
7. halfway to Oregon or California
9. where wagon trains jumped off
11. everyone had to cross them
12. between the Grande Ronde Valley and the Columbia River
13. Mt. Hood is part of this range
14. split off here to go to California

Down

1. sinks into the ground
2. cross this river in Wyoming
4. you know you've reached your destination when you get here
6. great river of the West
8. California range
10. major tributary of the Columbia River

Physical Features of the Oregon-California Trail

I C W Y L Z U R D K A R G C E
T Q E K A E T D Z F E S O Y T
N E T T E M A L L I W W G H P
Q C T K A D H G R E E N X R P
V Z A C H B L U E W Q U M T W
U N L S V A O T M I D W T X E
S P P J C S W A I B M U L O C
U O R S S A P H T U O S N I C
Q G L I T H D M M E S L U G D
B E M E E D W E N D P R D U L
S S R R O C K Y X Q T X P T U
R F T R T Z Y Q W S X U V U Y
X V S A P C A E L F A I V S W
B Z L F F N G A R Z P C L Y H
G D L T E V D P P D S M E Z X

BLUE
CASCADE
COLUMBIA
GREEN
HUMBOLDT
MISSOURI
PLATTE
RAFT
ROCKY
SIERRA
SNAKE
SOUTHPASS
SWEETWATER
WILLAMETTE

Selecting Gear: Guidebooks and Maps

Where to Find Information

A Google search using the term “physical outline map of US.” Led to an excellent map to use for identifying rivers, mountains, and other physical features. The web site is Education Place at www.eduplace.com/ ; for the *USA: Physical* map add this to the url: ss/maps/pdf/usphys/pdf.

If you want to make your own Criss Cross, Word Search, or other puzzles, try this web site: www.discoverededucation.com/free-puzzlemaker

So Rugged and Mountainous, by Will Bagley, has an excellent overview of guidebooks of the early westward migration period, on pages 131-135. Use the index to find more information on some of them and the people who wrote them.

Reading, Writing and Riding Along the Oregon-California Trail, by William Hill, has a good chapter on landmarks, distances, and guidebooks, on pages 17-24. There is also a map and several learning activities.

Hill’s *The Oregon Trail: Yesterday and Today* also has information on guidebooks in the “Introduction” on page xxvi.

The Oregon-California Trails Association bookstore has two emigrant guidebooks that have been published—those by Lansford W. Hastings and William Clayton. Check the bookstore section on the OCTA web site for ordering information.

Some emigrant guidebooks are online, either as images of the original text or as transcriptions. Try these web sites:

- <http://archive.org/details/reportexploring00hallgoog> for John C. Fremont’s *Report of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842 and to Oregon and North California in the Years 1843-44*.
- http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/iguide/oregon_t.htm for Lansford W. Hastings *The Emigrants’ Guide to Oregon and California*. This one is also available on several other web sites.
- <http://net.lib.byu.edu/imaging/into/pco1847/clayton's/claytonfs.html> for William Clayton’s *The Latter Day Saints Emigrants’ Guide*.

A Google pr Google Books search on the title of a specific guide may turn up an online version.

Puzzle Answer Keys

Criss Cross

Across

3. near Independence Rock **Sweetwater**
5. too thick to drink to thin to plow **Platte**
7. halfway to Oregon or California **South Pass**
9. where wagon trains jumped off **Missouri**
11. everyone had to cross them **Rocky**
12. between the Grande Ronde Valley and the Columbia River **Blue**
13. Mt. Hood is part of this range **Cascade**
14. split off here to go to California **Raft**

Down

1. sinks into the ground **Humboldt**
2. cross this river in Wyoming **Green**
4. you know you've reached your destination when you get here **Willamette**
6. great river of the West **Columbia**
8. California range **Sierra**
10. major tributary of the Columbia River **Snake**

Word Search

Physical Features of the Oregon-California Trail-Answers

I	C	W	Y	L	Z	U	R	D	K	A	R	G	C	E
T	Q	E	K	A	E	T	D	Z	F	E	S	O	Y	T
N	E	T	T	E	M	A	L	L	I	W	W	G	H	P
Q	C	T	K	A	D	H	G	R	E	E	N	X	R	P
V	Z	A	C	H	B	L	U	E	W	Q	U	M	T	W
U	N	L	S	V	A	O	T	M	I	D	W	T	X	E
S	P	P	J	C	S	W	A	I	B	M	U	L	O	C
U	O	R	S	S	A	P	H	T	U	O	S	N	I	C
Q	G	L	I	T	H	D	M	M	E	S	L	U	G	D
B	E	M	E	E	D	W	E	N	D	P	R	D	U	L
S	S	R	R	O	C	K	Y	X	Q	T	X	P	T	U
R	F	T	R	T	Z	Y	Q	W	S	X	U	V	U	Y
X	V	S	A	P	C	A	E	L	F	A	I	V	S	W
B	Z	L	F	F	N	G	A	R	Z	P	C	L	Y	H
G	D	L	T	E	V	D	P	P	D	S	M	E	Z	X

Starting Out: Saying Goodbye to Home

When people decided to emigrate westward to California or Oregon they then focused toward the future—and hoped for a better future for themselves and their families. They were also leaving some things behind, saying goodbye to people dear to them and places they had perhaps known all their lives. Given the long distances, slow methods of transportation, and expense of the journey, the separation was most likely permanent. “Consequently,” says author Andrew Hammond, “departure was a combination of heartfelt hope for the future and heartbreaking sadness for what was being left behind...”

For many emigrants the “fear of what lay ahead and having to say goodbye to home, friends and family was a painful experience. For others, any concerns were overshadowed by the excitement of adventure and a change for a better life.”

The decision to go west was largely a male one. By the accepted standards of the time, women were generally subservient to men and thus had little choice. A number of authors quote Margaret Hereford Wilson’s 1850 comment: “I am going with him as there is no other alternative.”

The decision was often made more difficult for women by the fact that while the majority of male emigrants were in the prime of their lives, the majority of the women were in their child bearing years, a time when they wanted and needed support from family and friends. Many women were pregnant for at least part of their westward journey.

Once the decision was made, most women took an active role in preparing for the journey. They sewed clothing for their family members, prepared bedding, gathered cooking utensils, and helped with all the many tasks necessary in preparing for the long trip ahead. Their hard work and planning played an important role in the success of the venture.

Children were of course subject to the decisions of their parents, but most tended to focus on the adventure of the journey to come.

When the time came for the actual leave taking, some people were quite matter-of-fact about it while others were quite emotional. All realized it was unlikely they would ever see again those they were leaving behind. Sarah Pratt was quite matter-of-fact and perhaps a bit sarcastic: “After the usual ceremonies attendant upon such occasions we left cherished homes and started for the ‘far west’ that land of golden hopes and yellow fancies.” Peter Decker, writing in 1849, was more emotional: “...this is the day set apart for taking a long leave of home and friends...To break off these ties of association with a Father, Brother, and Sisters is too much for cool regret. I have lost control of my feelings and the heart speaks language of tenderness in tears.”

Starting Out: Saying Goodbye to Home Questions to Ask and Things to Do

In the *In Pursuit of a Dream* film when the young actors were asked to give up their cell phones—at least for the duration of the filming—what do you think they were feeling? What other things

today might a person have to give up or be parted from? Make a short list. For each item on your list identify the circumstances or reasons for the parting. Here are a few examples:

- Your family is moving across the country and will be living in a small apartment in the new place so your mother says it's time to give up the favorite blanket you had when you were very young.
- Your boyfriend has gotten a four-year scholarship to a university on the other side of the U.S. from your home town. He won't have money or time to come home for visits for at least a year, maybe longer.

Choose one item or person from your list. Write a short vignette or poem about your feelings at being parted from the item or person. Share your list and what you have written with your class or group. Sharing should be optional.

Starting Out: Saying Goodbye to Home Where to Find Information

Diaries will be the best sources for information on how people felt about leaving their homes and relatives and friends to go west. Books on the westward migration for the most part have very little on this aspect of the overland migration, but here are a few that do:

- Hammond, Andrew and Joanne. *The Look of the Elephant*. Oregon-California Trails Association, 2009. This is one of the few books to treat the leave-taking aspect of the overland journey. Read the chapter "Leaving Home," pp. 39-44 for information and quotes.
- Bagley, Will. *So Rugged and Mountainous*. University of Oklahoma Press, 2010. Good information in the section "Their Last Goodbye: Leave Taking," pp. 176-177.

For information about women who crossed the trails and their feelings about leaving their homes and families for the long and perilous overland journey, try these books:

- Schlissel, Lillian. *Women's Diaries of the Westward Journey*. Schochen Books, 1982.
- Buttraille, Susan G. *Women's Voices From the Oregon Trail*. Tamarack Books, 1993.

To learn how children felt about leaving home and the adventure to come, explore these books:

- Werner, Emmy E. *Pioneer Children on the Journey West*. Westview Press, 1995. Much of the information is drawn from children's diaries, most of which have not been published.
- Palmer, Rosemary G. *Children's Voices From the Trail*. Arthur H. Clark Co., 2002.
- Peavy, Linda and Smith, Ursula. *Frontier Children*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1999; paperback edition 2002.

There is some good information on this web site:

- <http://www.oregpioneers.com>. Under the "Journey" section, click "Oregon Trail 101" by Jim Tompkins. There is an article entitled "Saying Good-bye."

