



Oregon!

The very word evoked visions of paradise. Towering trees. Lush valleys with rich soil. Land of unlimited opportunity. Between 1840 and 1869 those visions lured over 500,000 pioneers west to fulfill their dreams and a nation's destiny. Their 2,000-mile route is known today as the Oregon Trail.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

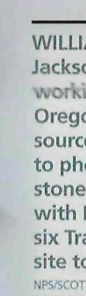


NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

ROCK CREEK STATION, NEBRASKA. Emigrants rested and stocked up at this Trail milepost before heading west. It also served as a Pony Express station. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

Long before it was a wagon road, the Oregon Trail was part of an ancient network of Indian footpaths and animal trails that crisscrossed the West. In the early 1800s British, French, and American fur trappers followed those paths as they hunted for beaver, whose fur was in demand for stylish hats in Europe. In 1812 fur trader Robert Stuart and six companions, following an Indian trace in today's Wyoming, made an important discovery—a wide pass, 7,550 feet in elevation, across the Continental Divide. South Pass made overland travel with ox-drawn wagons possible, and it became the gateway to the West. In 1851 Amelia Hadley wrote: "There we saw the far famed south pass, but did not see it until we had passed it for all the time I was looking for some narrow place . . . but was disappointed."

Freight wagons began to beat a track along the Platte River and South Pass in the 1820s and 1830s. These fur brigades carried supplies from St. Louis to the fur trappers' annual Rendezvous in the Green River country of today's Wyoming and Utah. Returning caravans hauled pressed beaver pelts to Missouri. This "fur trace," wheel tracks



NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

WILLIAM HENRY JACKSON (1843–1942) Jackson sketched hundreds of scenes while working as a freight wagon bullwhacker on the Oregon Trail in 1866; these became the primary source for his paintings. Jackson was the first to photograph western wonders, like Yellowstone in 1871. Drawing on his early encounters with Indians and settlers, Jackson painted these six Trail scenes (*below*) in his 80s, revisiting each site to ensure their accuracy.

Before 1700 Indians live throughout the country centuries before Europeans arrive. Although of different tribes and languages, they establish extensive trading networks.



Jackson's 1877 hunting sketch adopts an Indian narrative style. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

1750–1800 Plains Indians obtain horses and guns. The horses provide mobility; guns enable better hunting and defense. White explorers and fur traders follow Indian trails west.

1800–1830 Louisiana Purchase doubles U.S. territory. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark expedition opens American West. Monroe Doctrine initiated, keeps European powers from meddling in U.S. affairs.



1836–1837 Missionaries Marcus and Narcissa Whitman (*right*) attend the Rendezvous in Wyoming, then travel to Oregon territory; banks fail; economic depression sweeps United States; eastern citizens consider a new life in the West.



NPS

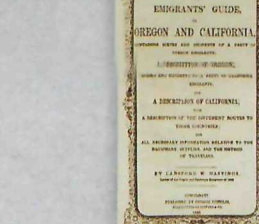
Dearest mother, For two or three days past I have felt weak, restless and scarcely able to sit on my horse. But see how I have been diverted by the scenery, and carried out of myself in conversation about home and friends. . . . [recalling] my last impressions of home . . . I forget that I am weary and want rest.
—Narcissa Whitman, August 29, 1836.

1843 Nearly 1,000 emigrants complete the trip to Oregon. American settlers there organize a provisional government for self-rule, separate from British or U.S. control.

Out in Oregon I can get me a square mile of land . . . Dad burn me, I am done with this country. Winters it's frost and snow . . . summers the overflow from Old Muddy drowns half my acres; taxes take the yield of them that's left.
—Peter Burnett, emigrant, 1843.

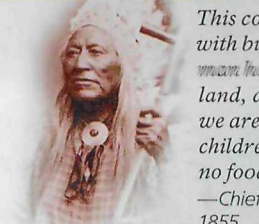
Our manifest destiny [is] to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.
—John L. Sullivan, editor, 1845.

1845–1848 U.S. thirst for expansion and economic opportunity spurs thousands to hit the trail; gold found in California.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Lansford Hastings' guidebook (*left*) promoted emigration and idealized the West and its settlers. *The Oregon emigrants . . . are not indolent, dissolute, ignorant and vicious, but they are enterprising, orderly, intelligent and virtuous.*
—Lansford Hastings, entrepreneur and trail promoter, 1845.

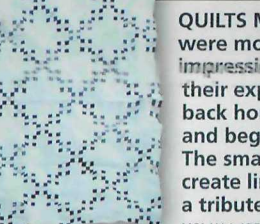


This country was once covered with buffalo . . . Since the white man has made a road across our land, and has killed off our game, we are hungry. . . . Our women and children cry for food and we have no food give them.
—Chief Washakie, Eastern Shoshone, 1855
NATIONAL ARCHIVES

1849–1850 Cholera kills thousands of overlanders. Donation Land Act of 1850 promotes homesteading in Oregon and allows a married woman to hold land in her own name.

1851–1861 About one-third who cross the plains are women, 1852; Oregon gains statehood, 1859; Pony Express company delivers fast, up-to-date news, unites East and West coasts.

1862–1869 Indians rise up as white settlement leads to loss of traditional homeland and broken treaties; transcontinental railroad completed, signals end of covered wagon travel.



Double Nine Patch quilt made in Oregon by 10-year-old Eliza Emily Dibble, 1856. MOLALLA AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

QUILTS MADE BY PIONEER WOMEN were more than bed covers. The impressionistic designs reflected their experiences—remembering back home, enduring Trail life, and beginning anew in Oregon. The small squares in this quilt (*left*) create lines suggesting movement, a tribute to the long journey.

Planning Your Visit Along the Trail corridor today you can visit hundreds of historic sites, landmarks, and scenic overlooks, and see about 300 miles of wagon traces (ruts). An auto route follows the Trail between Independence, Mo., and Oregon City, Ore. For information about services in communities or Trail sites, contact area chambers of commerce and state divisions of tourism.

National Trails System Office
National Park Service
324 South State Street, Ste. 200
Salt Lake City, UT 84111
801-741-1012

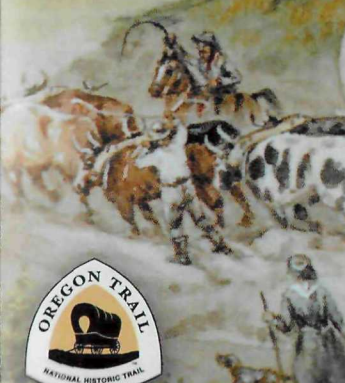
Auto Tour Route Interpretive Guides provide Trail highlights and driving directions. Contact the National Trails System Office (*above*) or visit: www.nps.gov/oreg.

Bureau of Land Management
www.blm.gov/or/oregontrail
U. S. Forest Service
www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/trails/nat_trails.shtml

Oregon–California Trail Association
www.octa-trails.org

National Frontier Trails Center
www.ci.independence.mo.us/nftm
©GPO2014–383 6442087 New in 2008
Printed on recycled paper.

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL

Why Go West?

Economic depressions in 1837 and 1841 left desperate farmers and businessmen looking for new opportunities. Politicians urged people to go West, where a stronger American presence might help wrest the disputed Pacific Northwest from British control. Missionaries described the land's fertility and promoted its development potential. A growing spirit of national pride and the idea of Manifest Destiny—that God intended the United States to stretch from coast to coast—made it seem a citizen's patriotic duty to go West. The fur trade had crashed, leaving unemployed trappers looking for new work as trail guides.

In early 1841 the first emigrant wagon train set out from Independence, Mo. The party of about 80 men, women, and children joined guide Thomas Fitzpatrick. He led them up the Little Blue River across northeastern Kansas, following the old fur trace along the Platte River. The wagons rumbled by Chimney Rock's spire and Scotts Bluff's prominence. On the Sweetwater River they passed by Independence Rock and the cleft called Devil's Gate, finally starting up a long, wide, gentle grade—South Pass! The emigrants

were on the Pacific side before they realized they had crossed the Continental Divide.

The travelers separated at Soda Springs. The core, the Bidwell-Bartleson Party, headed to California, while the others followed Fitzpatrick to Fort Hall. The Oregon-bound travelers hired a new guide to pilot them along the Snake River and over the Blue Mountains, and Indians guided them down the Columbia River to Willamette Valley. This route became the Oregon Trail corridor.

SCOTT'S BLUFF, NEBRASKA. Indians named this landmark *Me-a-pa-te—hill that is hard to go around.* Travelers could see this 800-foot bluff towering over the prairie several days before reaching it. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



UPPER CROSSING OF THE SOUTH PLATTE RIVER, NEBRASKA. After crossing the river, emigrants faced their first major

grade, California Hill, a climb of 240 feet in about 1 1/2 miles. Trail ruts are plainly visible on the hill today. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



INDEPENDENCE ROCK, WYOMING. Thousands of pioneers chiseled their names into this rock that looked like a "huge whale" from a distance. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

THREE ISLAND CROSSING, IDAHO. Travelers faced a tough decision here: risk crossing the swift, deep Snake River or endure the hot, rocky route along the river's south bank. Pioneers' diaries



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM



OREGON, AT LAST! In 1845 the Barlow party opened the first overland route over the Cascades, traversing the south side of Mount Hood. The trip was over when the wagon trains reached the end of the Trail at Oregon City. NPS/SCOTT'S BLUFF NM

<

