I Saw the Elephant...
California Trail Interpretive Center

Education Resource Guide
Bureau of Land Management
Elko, Nevada

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Bureau of Land Management - Elko District

California Trail Interpretive Center

Southern Nevada Conservancy

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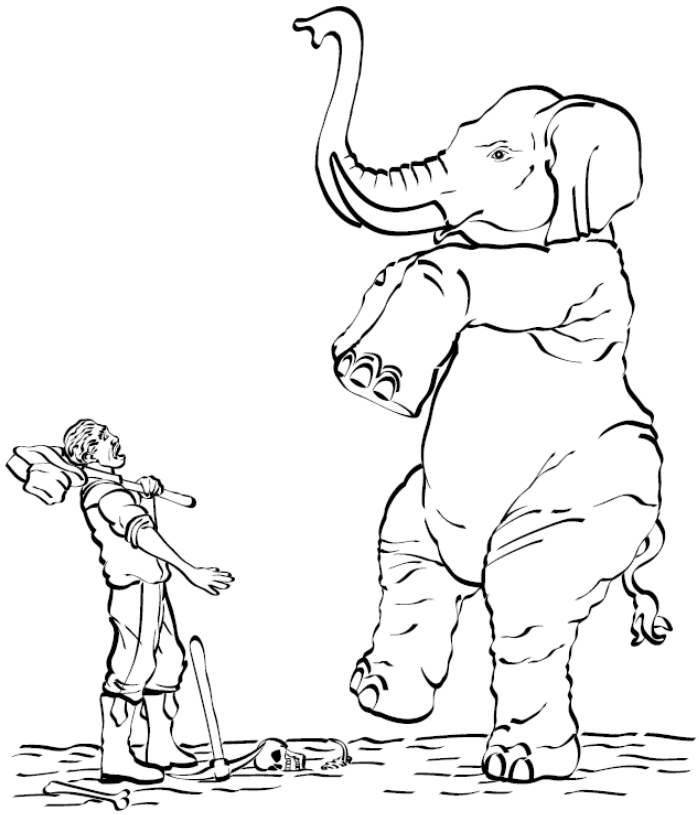
I SAW THE ELEPHANT

"Seeing the elephant," is a phrase found in numerous journal entries of overland emigrants. The phrase is so commonly found, that has become a symbol of the overland journey itself. For people traveling upon overland trails, the West was unlike anything they had ever witnessed. It was a land open and spread out, where resources were scarce and did not follow the norms of the east. In fact, the west contrasted so greatly, that people could not find the words to articulate their experiences. Seeing the elephant was used to replace words, used as a phrase to describe something, "you have to see to believe." Like an elephant, people can use adjectives to describe what they see, however these words will never do justice to the landscape



INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION TO THIS GUIDE:
This Education Resource Guide has been developed by the staff at the California National Historic Trail Center in Elko, Nevada for use by teachers and other non-formal educators to help facilitate learning and understanding of the California Trail experience. While designed for the fourth grade level, as Nevada History is typically taught at this level, it can be easily adjusted according to ability and grade. For optimal use, this guide should be used when planning and in conjunction with a field trip to the California Trail Center. This will better prepare educators and students. Included are summaries of exhibits featured at the California Trail Center, a pre-visit lessons, a self-guided tour of the center, activities for students to participate in while at the center, and a post-visit lessons aimed at reflection and piecing the information together.

PLAN YOUR NEXT FIELD TRIP:
The California Trail Center invites you to hold your next field trip at the California Trail Center. Arrangements made in advance are appreciated. Please contact the Education Specialist at (775) 738-1849 to schedule the date, time, and number of students and chaperones expected for your visit.

QUESTIONS:
If you have any questions or suggestions regarding programming or the content in this guide, please contact the Education Specialist at (775) 738-1849, or email Gary Koy at Gary_Koy@blm.gov.

THEMES, GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & STANDARDS

THEME:
The California Trail was the greatest peaceful migration of people. Americans traveling west on the overland trail redefined and shaped the United States into what it is today, and ultimately changed the lives of people forever.

GOALS FOR THE EDUCATION RESOURCES GUIDE:

1. Show while there were challenges and hardships on the trail, everyday trail life was enjoyable and fun for many emigrants.
2. Depict not only facts but also create personal connections with the stories of the emigrants to illustrate a picture of life on the trail.
3. Have students understand how the California Trail experience attributed to the development of the American character and created ideas that are still used today.
4. Explain emigrant and Native American relations, focusing on how Native Americans were affected by the migration west.
5. Convey that children had a specific and important role on the trail.
6. Reveal conflicts over resources.

OBJECTIVES:
After visiting the Trail Center and completing the book, students will be able to:

1. List 2 reasons why people traveled overland to California.
2. List 2 challenges and 2 comforts on the trail.
3. Explain the progression of control of the land west of the Missouri River
4. Tell 1 way that emigrants and Indians cooperated on the trail.
5. List 3 activities children performed on the trail

STANDARDS:
The intention of the California Trail Center is to augment content covered in Nevada classrooms. The following Nevada Standards of Education have been utilized in the development of this guide:

- Social Studies:
    - Content Standard H1.0 - People, Cultures, and Civilizations
    - Content Standard H2.0 - Nation Building and Development
    - Content Standard H3.0 - Social Responsibility & Change Content Standard G5.0 - The World in Spatial Terms
    - Content Standard G6.0 - Places & Regions
    - Content Standard G7.0 - Human Systems
    - Content Standard G8.0 - Environment and Society

STANDARDS

Grade K Benchmarks	Grade 1 Benchmarks	Grade 2 Benchmarks	Grade 3 Benchmarks	Grade 4 Benchmarks	Grade 5 Benchmarks
H1.K.1 Discuss the importance of working together to complete tasks.	H1.1.1 Describe local life long ago, including jobs, school, communication, transportation, and recreation.				H1.5.1 Identify and describe Native North American life and cultural regions prior to European contact.
	H1.1.2 Listen to stories that reflect the beliefs, customs, ceremonies, and traditions of the varied cultures in the neighborhood.	H1.2.2 Use artifacts to understand how people lived their daily lives.			H1.5.2 Identify and describe the attributes of Native American nations in the local region and North America.
				H1.4.2 Define hunter-gatherer.	
H1.K.2 Listen to stories of family members, local residents, and prominent figures to highlight the human experience.					H1.5.3 Discuss the interactions of early explorers with native cultures.
		H1.2.4 Recognize similarities and differences of earlier generations in areas such as work, dress, manners, stories, games, and festivals.		H1.4.3 Describe the lifestyles of Nevada's Native American cultures.	H1.5.4 Identify the contributions of Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans to North American beliefs and traditions.
				H1.4.4 Discuss the interactions of pioneers with the Great Basin Indians.	
H2.K.1 Identify problems that occur when people live and work together.	H2.1.1 Identify ways that sharing can resolve problems in the classroom and school.	H2.2.1 Identify ways in which people cooperate to achieve a common goal.	H2.3.1 Discuss how conflicts can be resolved through compromise.	H2.4.1 Discuss examples of compromise and conflict within Nevada, i.e., Pyramid Lake Wars, water allocation, Sagebrush Rebellion.	

				H2.4.2 Describe the experiences of pioneers moving west.	H2.5.2 Describe issues of compromise and conflict within the United States.
				H2.4.3 Identify explorers and settlers in pre-territorial Nevada.	H2.5.3 Describe the competition among the English, French, Spanish, Dutch, and Indian nations for control of North America.
				H2.4.4 Identify the diverse population of Nevada's early settlers and discuss their unique experiences.	
				H3.4.1 Compare and/or contrast their daily lives with children in Nevada's past.	H3.5.1 Compare and/or contrast the daily lives of children throughout the United States, both past and present.
			H3.3.3 Define ethnicity and explain that people who make contributions to their communities include those who have diverse ethnic origins, customs, and traditions.		
				H3.4.4 Explain how advances in technologies have impacted Nevada, i.e., railroads, mining, and gaming.	H3.5.4 Explain how technologies in U.S. history changed the way people lived.
		H3.2.5 Define technology and identify uses of technology in their daily lives.	H3.3.5 Explain how technology at home and in school impacts their lives.		

G5.K.1 Recognize that a globe is a representation of Earth and use vocabulary related to direction and location, i.e., up/down; left/right; near/far; above/beyond.	G5.1.1 Differentiate between and identify water and land on a map and globe and use the terms ocean and continent.	G5.2.1 Identify titles and symbols maps.		G5.4.1 Identify and use intermediate directions on a compass rose to locate places on a map of Nevada.	G5.5.1 Identify and locate major geographic features in Nevada and the United States using maps and map elements.
			G5.3.4 Identify and explain simple spatial patterns on a map, i.e., population centers, farmland, mountains		
				G5.4.2 Identify spatial patterns on a map of Nevada, i.e., deserts, mountains, population.	G5.5.2 Identify spatial patterns of the U.S.
				G5.4.3 Construct a map of Nevada displaying human and physical features.	G5.5.4 Construct maps, graphs, and charts to display information about human and physical features in the United States.
		G6.2.1 Define region and provide examples of regions.		G6.4.1 Describe the distinguishing features of historical regions in Nevada, i.e., Native American tribal territories, pioneer trails, and settlement areas.	G6.5.1 Provide examples of human – environment interactions in the U.S.
					G6.5.2 Identify U. S. regions in which historical events occurred, i.e., thirteen colonies, Underground Railroad, and California gold fields.
			G6.3.6 Locate and name the states surrounding Nevada.		

G7.K.1 Explain that people move from one location to another.	G7.1.2 Explain that some people live in locations other than where they were born.	G7.2.2 Categorize different ways to move people, goods, and ideas, i.e., air, water, land, phone, and/or computer.	G7.3.2 Identify transportation and communication networks.	G7.4.2 List examples of movements of people, goods, and ideas into and across Nevada.	G7.5.2 List push-pull factors influencing human migration and settlement in the United States.
		G7.2.4 List types of social groups to which people belong.			
G8.K.1 Recognize weather changes with the seasons and how people adapt to those changes.		G8.2.1 Tell how the physical environment affects community activity, i.e., recreation, water usage.		G8.4.1 Describe ways physical environments affect human activity in Nevada using historical and contemporary examples.	G8.5.1 Describe ways physical environments affect human activity in the United States using historical and contemporary examples.
		G8.2.3 Identify how people shape the physical environment	G8.3.3 Compare ways people modify the physical environment	G8.4.3 Explore the impact of human modification of Nevada's physical environment on the people who live there	
			G8.3.5 Describe ways humans depend on and manage natural resources within their communities.	G8.4.5 Describe the distribution patterns of natural resources in Nevada.	G8.5.5 Describe and compare the distribution patterns and use of natural resources in the United States.
				E9.4.5 Explain why all those who trade must benefit from the trade, using an example such as trading lunch items	
				E11.4.3 Describe resources that are limited in Nevada and ways in which resources are shared.	E11.5.7 Identify scarce resources and identify how they are allocated in the United States.
	E12.1.1 Define trade.	E12.2.1 Demonstrate an understanding of trade by providing an example.	E12.3.1 Differentiate between barter and monetary trade.		

PLANNING A FIELD TRIP

VISITING THE CALIFORNIA TRAIL INTERPRETIVE CENTER

The California Trail Interpretive Center is excited to host your next school field trip!

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?
The California Trail experience was not just a formative period in the history of the United States; it is, arguably, the formative event in the development of the American personality and culture. The California Trail story is the story of individuals and families making very personal decisions to leave their homes, perhaps never to return, and travel to an unknown place. The fact that we are here today and that the United States exists from "Sea to Shining Sea" is testament to the success of these individuals and families. How did these rugged individuals become so successful? They formed wagon trains, elected leaders, agreed on rules and regulations, some even wrote constitutions. When they arrived in California they formed mining and grazing associations and developed schools and churches. In short they worked together cooperatively. It is this juxtaposition of rugged individualism and personal freedom with the spirit of cooperation and community responsibility that is so uniquely American. This is a story that all Americans should know and that Americans should tell to the world.

WHAT WE PROVIDE:
The California Trail Interpretive Center provides programs that augment the Nevada State Educational Standards. While visiting the Center, students are fully immersed into life and experiences on the California Trail with costumed interpreters, life size dioramas, sound tracks throughout the facility, interactive displays, listening stations where emigrants' journals come to life, accessible hiking trails, an outdoor wagon encampment and a Shoshone village.

PLANNING A FIELD TRIP

FIELD TRIP INFORMATION

To ensure that students, teachers, chaperones are prepared for a visit to the California Trail Interpretive Center (CTIC) please review the following information prior to booking a field trip. For more information about planning your field trip please call the California Trail Interpretive Center at 775-738-1849.

ENTRANCE FEES
School groups, teachers, and chaperones can enter the CTIC free of charge.

CHAPERONES
We appreciate 1 adult for every 10 students to ensure the quality of our programs, and safety of students at the CTIC. Please break students into chaperoned groups prior to your arrival at CTIC. Students are required to remain with their supervised groups for the entirety of the field trip. We look to teachers and chaperones to set examples for students by staying with the group and following rules at the CTIC. To prepare chaperones, please share the learning goals of your visit, as well as the rules at the CTIC, prior to your visit.

ARRIVAL
Buses should pull up at the end of the plaza for unloading. Staff will greet you outside and escort your group inside. Please have students separated into their pre-determined groups before entering the facility.

LUNCH
The CTIC is able to accommodate outdoor space for brown-bagged lunches. Food is not available at or around the Trail Center.

OUTDOORS
During summer months, enjoy our Wagon Encampment and Shoshone Village and trail system. Students get the chance to experience camp life on the California Trail. Additionally, year round, students can explore our ADA compliant trail system and to-scale-map on our Plaza. Please make sure that students and chaperones are prepared for the Elko weather and stay in groups when outdoors. Please have students dress for the weather; coats, sweaters, hats and/or raincoats may be necessary on any day, at any time of the year. Safe footwear is necessary for the trails

ACCESSIBILITY
The Interpretive Center, bathrooms, and trails are ADA compliant. There are curb cutouts in the entry drive in front of the visitor center. Wheel chairs are also available.

PLANNING A FIELD TRIP

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO THE CALIFORNIA TRAIL INTERPRETIVE CENTER

Thank you for choosing the California Trail Interpretive Center (CTIC) for your field trip! To prepare you for your time at the center the CTIC staff has prepared this summary of our exhibits. The CTIC exhibits are displayed geographically, starting with a "jumping off town" at the edge of the American Frontier on the Missouri River and progressing west to California. Our exhibits are intended to create a full immersion experience on the California Trail, featuring exhibits that stimulate the senses and listening stations to hear emigrants' own words. As you go through the California Trail Interpretive Center don't forget to look, listen, touch, and even smell the exhibits!

INTRODUCTORY MOVIE

Why did people go? Reasons to head west were as diverse as the people who traveled on the trail. Starting in 1837 America suffered from a severe economic depression, leaving many in financial hardship. Going west offered these people a new lives and opportunities. Also, there was the opportunity for adventure. As pioneers moved west, the American frontier shifted. They were also drawn west by the promise of adventure, hope for better health in the California climate, religious freedom, expanding the United States from "sea to shining sea," protecting lands from other countries, and by their concern over the expansion of slavery.

One of the most important considerations for the emigrants to take into account was the timing of their trip. Emigrants typically left in mid-April, early May. If they left earlier, there wouldn't have been enough grass grown on the prairie to feed their draft animals. If they left later than this they may have gotten stuck in the early snows of the Sierra Nevada and faced the same awful fate as the Donner Party.

Guiding Questions:

- What is Manifest Destiny?

Content Standard H2.0 - Nation Building and Development - *Students understand the people, events, ideas, and conflicts that lead to the evolution of nations, empires, distinctive cultures, and political and economic ideas.*

Content Standard H3.0 - Social Responsibility & Change - *Students understand how social ideas and individual action lead to social, political, economic, and technological change.*

Content Standard G5.0 - The World in Spatial Terms: *Students use maps, globes, and other geographic tools and technologies to locate and extrapolate information about people, places, and environments.*

SEEING THE ELEPHANT

"Seeing the Elephant," is an expression found in the journals of many overland emigrants. It

describes the difficulties in describing the Trail and the West to others. The trail's landscapes and hardships are so extreme that a person cannot merely describe it, they have to see it. Later, this expression also came to describe the fear of the unknown that many emigrants encountered along the trail. In the early 19th century photography was still in its infancy, and few people had ever seen what an elephant really looked like. It makes sense that such a huge, strange beast came to symbolize the California Trail: an experience that could not be described with words alone.

*Activity:

- Choose one or two students to close their eyes and shut their ears. Then have the rest of the class quickly think of five words that describe what an elephant looks like. Ask the two students who didn't watch or listen to try to decide what the list of five works describes. Can they figure it out? If taken out of context the words are used collectively to describe the look of the elephant might not be able to describe an elephant at all. You've got to see it yourself to know what it is!

Guiding questions:

- Have you ever visited somewhere that you knew nothing about?
- How would you feel leaving your home, relatives, friends, the United States, to venture somewhere uninhabited by Americans?

JUMPING OFF

Most emigrants began their overland journey at "jumping off towns" on the Missouri River frontier. People traveled from all over the world and United States to begin their journey across the California Trail at these jumping off towns. The Missouri River Frontier was the last place they could buy supplies for their journey. By crossing to the west bank of the Missouri River they were leaving the United States and crossing into unorganized territory.

Popular jumping off towns were, Independence, Council Bluffs, and St. Joseph. These towns' economies depended on emigrants buying supplies in their towns, so each tried to get the competitive edge by promoting cheap goods and discrediting the competing towns.

The CTC's Jumping-off town tries to get students to understand what life was like in these towns. Students will be immersed in the California Trail when they walk along the sidewalks, look in the store windows, and listen to the sounds of the town.

Guiding questions:

- What are some reasons that people chose their respective Jumping Off towns?
- What are some of the sights, smells and sounds you would expect to find?
- Compare the Jumping off town to Elko. What is different, what is similar?

Content Standard G6.0 - Places & Regions - *Students understand the physical and human features of places and use this information to define and study regions and their patterns of change.*

WAGONS

During the 4-6 months of their journey, the wagon was the emigrant's home. Contrary to Hollywood's portrayal, wagons were not used to carry emigrants but were used to transport food and other necessities. Emigrants would not ride in the wagons because of comfort (wagons did not have suspension or anything to absorb the jolts from the rugged terrain) and most importantly, because of weight. It was essential for the wagons to be as light as possible to not exhaust their draft animals.

Animals were vital to the survival of the emigrants – without them, emigrants would have to carry their own goods. Mules, horses, and most commonly, oxen were used to pull wagons. Other animals, including cows, sheep, goats, and chickens, also traveled on the trail. It is believed that there were 5 animals to every emigrant on the trail. While wagons were the most commonly used carrier, during the Gold Rush many young men tried crossing the trail with mules or on horseback. Emigrants needed to pack enough to supply them for months on the trail, but also needed to pack for their future in California. Supplies were often too expensive or simply unavailable in California.

*activity:

- Pack your wagon. Each wagon has items of a variety of uses, sizes, and shapes. Decide what you would take and what you would leave. Compare between the two groups.

Guiding questions:

- Imagine the longest road trip you have been on with your family. What did you do to keep busy? Did you have toys? Did you play games or watch a movie? Emigrant children traveled with their families for up to 6 months!
- What do you think the most important things to pack are?
- Can you fill the wagon with the most important items? Remember, you want to bring as little as possible.
- What would you bring? Imagine packing everything that you would need for 4 months and be concerned about weight.
- What would you be most upset about leaving behind?

PLATTE RIVER

Life on the trail was difficult but there were also times for celebration. Music, dancing, games, and even weddings took place at camp. These occasions were not confined to emigrants; Indians participated in feasts and games with emigrant parties. A typical day as an emigrant consisted of waking early, walking until noon, taking a break to feed the animals and have lunch, and continuing their journey on average until dusk. Most days, people walked between ten and twenty-five miles, depending on the

terrain, animals, and weather. Groups typically sent people to scout out the terrain ahead. When looking for a campsite, emigrants tried to find a place that had access to water, fuel for their fires, and grass for animals.

At night, women would cook, men would repair equipment, care for the animals and set up camp, while kids did chores. Typical chores for kids included finding buffalo chips or wood for fires, feeding the animals, taking care of other children, fetching water, and assisting with other activities around camp. The overland trail was not all work, however. Kids played with toys and games. For a lot of children and women, the California Trail was an opportunity for more social interaction than at home. Wagon Trains could consist of hundreds of people and wagons, allowing for a better social atmosphere.

Our scene shows four emigrants at their encampment. The women are cooking while the men clean a gun, and play music.

*activity:

- If you could only eat one thing for the next 3 months, what would it be?

Guiding questions:

- What three things did emigrants look for in a good campsite?
- Looking at the diorama, what can you tell about the emigrants' trip? Does it look similar to when you camp? What is the same? What is different?
- Look at the fire. What is burning? Why would they use buffalo chips instead of wood?
- What are some problems the emigrants encountered at camp?

Content Standard G6.0 - Places & Regions - *Students understand the physical and human features of places and use this information to define and study regions and their patterns of change.*

PLATT RIVER 2

When they began their journey the thing many emigrants feared the most was being attacked by Indians. However, most soon learned that there was little reason to be afraid of Indians. Instead of fighting, most Indians wanted to trade with the people on the trail for useful things like metal pots, beads, ammunition, and cloth. The emigrants often needed things the Indians had to offer too, like comfortable moccasins, warm buffalo robes, fresh food, and help crossing rivers.

In later years when there were many people on the trail and some began settling along the trail. This strained the relationship between emigrants and Indians. Imagine how angry you would be if strangers started traveling through your home, scaring off your food, and taking the best campsites for themselves? In the end it was Indians who had more reason to fear the emigrants. Within 50 years of

the first wagon trails on the California Trail, whites put an end to most Indian's traditional ways of life.

This scene shows an emigrant trading with a Native American. An emigrant child is looking on through an opening in the wagon. Items to trade are scattered on the ground.

*activity:

- Sign language. Try your hand at sign language. Try to ask for a deer to eat.

Guiding questions:

- What is the girl in the wagon thinking?
- What items did the Native Americans have that that emigrants would want?
- What items did the emigrants have that the Natives would want?
- What needs to happen to have bartering (trade) be effective?
- Who benefits from trade?

Content Standard H1.0 - People, Cultures, and Civilizations - *Students understand the development, characteristics, and interaction of people, cultures, societies, religion and ideas.*

Content Standard G7.0 - Human Systems - *Students understand how economic, political, and cultural processes interact to shape patterns of human migration and settlement, influence and interdependence, and conflict and cooperation.*

FORT LARAMIE

Emigrants relied on Forts and other landmarks to gauge distance. Forts were also used as trading posts and post-offices. Many emigrants would write one last letter home from Fort Laramie before venturing into the true wilderness of the Great American Desert beyond.

Guiding Questions:

- If this were you last chance to write to your family, what would you say to them?
- What things might the emigrants want to buy at the last trading post?

CLOTHING

Clothing in the mid 1800s was made to be durable. Emigrant's clothing was mainly wool, cotton, and linens. Women typically layered their clothing, wearing up to 6 petticoats under their dresses. Emigrants always wore hats outdoors.

At the CTIC we have 2 chests of clothing for students to wear.

*activity:

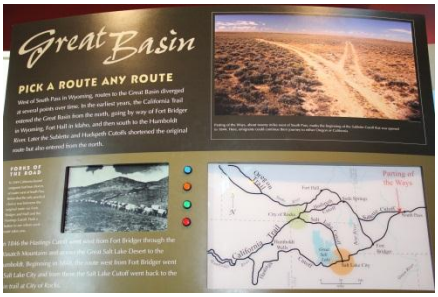
- Try on clothing.

Guiding questions:

- Why are there no shoes in the chests?
- What fabrics are the clothing made out of? Why would they choose that fabric?

FINDING A ROUTE

Within the 28 years the California Trail was in use, many new routes were developed. Emigrants advocated alternative routes based on water and grass availability, and ease and speed of passage. The routes developed were referred to as "cutoffs". Although cutoffs were supposed to be shortcuts, sometimes people would promote routes that had not really been explored. This caused problems for those who decided to take them. (In)famous cutoffs include, Hastings' Cutoff (the end of which faces the Trail Center), Hensley-Salt Lake Cutoff, and the Sublette Cutoff.



While decision making is relevant throughout the CTIC, this structure forces students to choose a route and compares the advantages and disadvantages in taking each route.

*activity:

- Split group into two and have them read the advantages and disadvantages of each route. Have them decide which way they want to go as a group and tell you why. Once they decide, have them follow the decided path. Ask each group to describe what they see and compare.

Guiding questions:

- Have you ever taken a shortcut that actually extended your trip?
- What kinds of decisions did the emigrants need to make along the Trail?
- What could happen if the emigrants took the wrong path?

Content Standard G6.0 - Places & Regions - *Students understand the physical and human features of places and use this information to define and study regions and their patterns of change.*

REGISTER ROCK

This is a replica of Register Rock in Nevada. Journals tell of hundreds of names covering every open space of the rock, while currently names are sparse on the rock due mainly from erosion. Emigrants knew that they were taking part in history and wanted to share their progress with other trains.

Guiding questions:

- What would you do if you saw an artifact on the ground or in a rock?
- What is a good way to record what you have seen?

40 MILE DESERT

After traveling over 1,500 miles the emigrants encountered one of the most challenging sections on the trail, the 40 mile desert. In the modern town of Lovelock the Humboldt River sinks into the ground, depriving people of water and grass for 40 miles. Animals and emigrants alike struggled to cross the waterless area, exhausted from sinking into the loose sand and lack of sustenance. In this section of the trail, people were desperate, throwing out as many of their belongings as they could to lighten their load so their animals wouldn't die of exhaustion. Journals depict the land littered with discarded wagons, metal, trunks and carcasses so abundant that people could walk across on the fallen animals. One emigrant wrote that in 1849 it was possible to walk the whole forty miles without setting foot on the ground – you could step from one animal carcass to the next the whole way!

This diorama depicts emigrants struggling in the 40 mile desert. There are 4 people alongside a collapsed ox. Two men attempt to lift the dying animal while a teenager looks on confused. A woman brings water to the animal. We hope to evoke thoughts of struggle, camaraderie, and loss of innocence to the visitor.

Guiding questions:

- Look at the mural. What strikes you from the image?
- What types of emotions are expressed in the faces of the figures?
- What are some challenges the emigrants would face heading into the 40 mile desert?
- What could the emigrants do to make the journey more successful?
- Have you ever thought that you were almost finished with something, only to find you have just started the most difficult part?
- Why does the box smell of death and decay?

Content Standard G8.0 - Environment and Society - *Students understand effects of interactions between human and physical systems and the changes in use, distribution, and importance of resources.*

CALIFORNIA TRAIL HISTORY

Between the years 1841 and 1869, the United States witnessed the greatest peaceful migration in its history. Over 250,000 people headed west on the California Trail to a land of opportunity, freedom, riches, and adventure. Decisions were made, routes chosen, and supplies bought in preparation for migration west. With every step the emigrants took in pursuit of their dreams in the west, they helped to expand America from "sea to shining sea," and changed lives and landscapes forever.

The decision to head west was difficult. On one hand, leaving meant saying goodbye to friends, family, the familiar, and the United States; on the other, emigrants would be experiencing new adventures and the allure of the west. After 1848, gold lured many, but it wasn't the only reason to venture to California. People came for reasons including economics, adventure, health, and ideas like Manifest Destiny. In the prosperity of the early 1830s, Americans speculated wildly in land, which ended in the Panic of 1837 and a subsequent depression. Many Americans lost their homes and fortunes, creating desire for new opportunities. California was just that; a land of opportunities, of milk and honey, where pre-cooked pigs ran with forks in their backs. California was new land in an ideal climate. Many thought that this climate would alleviate their afflictions or at least allow them to escape the rampant diseases in the east.

After deciding to leave, the emigrants faced the decision on how to travel. There were many routes west but most people traveled on overland trails, including the California and Oregon Trails. Both trails were roughly 2000 miles, depending on the various routes and cutoffs chosen and would take a typical emigrant family 3-6 months to make this journey. Although it is estimated that over 250,000 people traveled upon the California Trail, it is often overshadowed by the less-traveled Oregon Trail. Both trails follow the same route until Idaho, where the Oregon Trail heads west, and California Trail branches south. Emigrants encountered some of the harshest terrain after the divergence of the California Trail, traveling through the 40 mile desert, east of Reno and then, over the Sierra Nevada.

Most emigrants began their overland journey at "jumping off towns" along the Missouri River which, in 1841, was the United States frontier. People traveled from all over the United States and world to begin their journey across the California Trail at these jumping off towns. In the early years, the Missouri River frontier was the last place they could buy supplies for their journey. By crossing to the west bank of the Missouri River they were leaving the United States and entering unorganized territory. Popular jumping off towns were Independence, Kaynesville (Council Bluffs), and St. Joseph. These towns' economies depended on emigrants buying supplies in their towns, so each tried to get the competitive edge by promoting cheap goods and discrediting the competing towns.

The California Trail was in constant use between 1841 and 1869, peaking popularity in 1852. Prior to 1841, minor trails were in use. These began as animal paths, then Indian trails, fur trappers and mountain men routes, and finally an overland passage for the general American public. In 1841, the first emigrant wagon party, the Bidwell-Bartleson Party, established the

California Trail clearing the path for wagons and large scale travel. Trail use declined in 1869 with the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad, providing a faster, safer, and sometimes a cheaper alternative to wagon travel.

During the 3-6 months journey on the California Trail, the wagon was the emigrant's home. Contrary to Hollywood's portrayal, wagons were not used to carry emigrants but were used to transport food and other necessities. Emigrants would not ride in the wagons because of comfort (wagons did not have suspension to absorb the jolts from the rugged terrain) and most importantly, because of weight. It was essential for the wagons to be as light as possible so that their draft animals did not become exhausted and give out.

Animals were vital to the survival of the emigrants – without them, emigrants would have had to carry their own goods. Mules, horses, and most commonly, oxen were used to pull wagons. Other animals, including cows, sheep, goats, and chickens, also traveled on the trail. While wagons were the most commonly used conveyance, during the Gold Rush many young men crossed the trail with mules or on horseback, to quicken the journey. Emigrants needed to pack enough to supply them for months on the trail, but also needed to pack for their future in California. Supplies were often too expensive or simply unavailable in California.

The importance of maintaining a light load forced emigrants to rely heavily on natural resources along the trail. They used native grasses to feed their animals, water in springs, rivers, and lakes, and wood and brush to fuel their fires. Not only did emigrants deplete these resources, but they also contaminated and disturbed the surrounding environment, causing strained relations with Indians.

During the years the California Trail was in use, relations with Indians changed. At the start of their journey, the greatest fear for many emigrants was Indians. After some time on the trail, most learned that there was little reason to be afraid of Indians. Instead of fighting, most Indians wanted to trade with the people on the trail for useful things like metal pots, beads, ammunition, and cloth. The emigrants often needed things the Indians had to offer too, like comfortable moccasins, warm buffalo robes, fresh food, and help crossing rivers. In later years when trail's popularity increased and emigrants began settling along the trail, relations between both groups became strained. Emigrants used resources, contaminated water supplies, and transmitted diseases. In the end it was Indians who had more reason to fear the emigrants. Within 50 years of the first wagon trails on the California Trail, whites put an end to most Indians' traditional ways of life.

The story of the California Trail is one of individual decisions. The individuals and families who decided to embark on the California Trail for the greatest adventure of their lives forever changed world history. By venturing west they pulled the boundary of the frontier with them, expanding America from sea to shining sea. Territories were organized around the towns they established, later to become states. The opening of the west granted the United States access to vast agricultural and mineral wealth, which in turned fueled America's growth into a superpower in the twentieth century. Grand changes were wrought between 1841 and 1869, but those changes began as modest hopes for better lives and broader opportunities.

PRE-SITE ACTIVITIES

California Trail Interpretive Center

Suggested Pre-site Activities

These activities have been developed using the Nevada standards for Social Studies.

Goals

Students will learn discover the preparations and experiences of overland emigrants on the California Trail.

Objectives

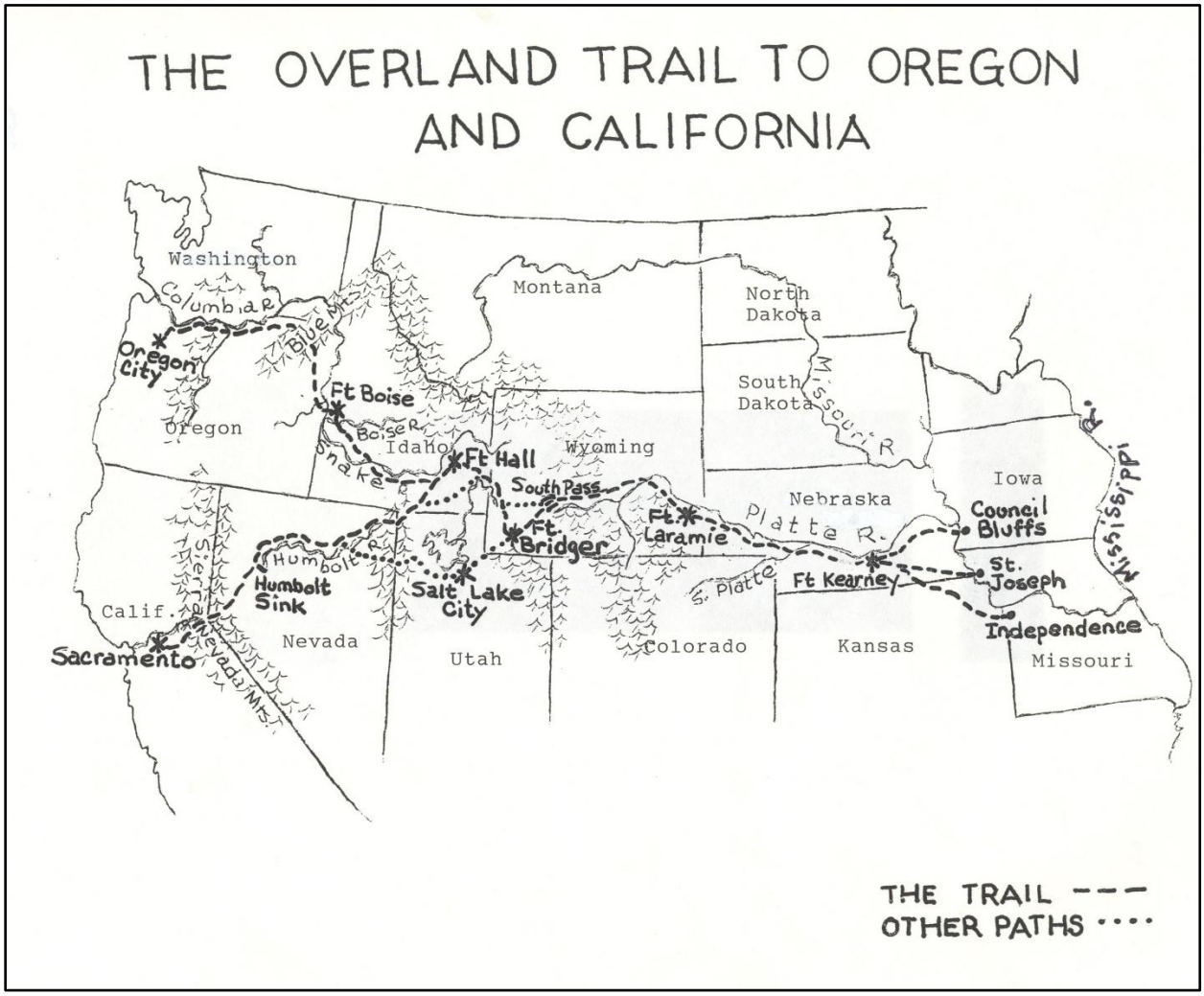
Students will be able to:

- Understand the decision making process involved in traveling on the California Trail
- Know the landscape emigrants traveled upon
- Use relevant vocabulary when describing the California Trail

PRE-SITE ACTIVITIES

The Trail is Where?

Look at the map below of the California Trail.



Look at a map of the United States.

What kind of landscapes does the California Trail go through?

Why does the trail take the shape it does?

PRE-SITE ACTIVITIES

Vocabulary

Define the following words that relate to the California Trail

California Trail –

Cholera –

Covered Wagon –

Emigrant –

Frontier –

Great Basin –

Gold Rush –

Landmark –

Migration –

Native American –

Oxen –

Pioneer –

Propaganda –

Using your NEW VOCABULARY, write a story about emigrants on their journey west.

PRE-SITE ACTIVITIES

Vocabulary

California Trail – a 2000 mile trail facilitating migration of people from the east to California

Cholera – a dangerous infections disease which can kill people in 12 hours

Covered Wagon – a vehicle used to transport goods before the advent of automobiles

Emigrant – a person who leaves one country to settle in another

Frontier – the part of a settled country that lies next to a region that is unsettled

Great Basin – region between the Sierra Nevada and Wasatch Mountains including most of Nevada and parts of California, Idaho, and Utah

Gold Rush – the name used to describe the mass migration of people to California in 1849 after the discovery of gold

Landmark – an object that marks a place

Manifest Destiny – the belief that expansion of the United States was justifiable and inevitable

Migration – the act of moving from one region or country to another

Native American – word used to describe people who lived in America prior to Europeans

Oxen – common domestic cattle used especially for hauling loads

Pioneer – a person who goes into unknown areas, opening up the way for others to follow

Propaganda – an organized spreading of ideas to promote a cause

Using your NEW VOCABULARY, write a story about emigrants on their journey west.

PRE-SITE ACTIVITIES

Failing to Prepare is Preparing to Fail

Have you ever taken a trip? What are some things that you do to prepare for your trip?

Going on a trip requires preparation. Just like us, emigrants in the 1800s needed to prepare for their journey. Below is a list Joseph Ware recommended emigrants to take in 1849. Make a list of items you would bring with you in the column next to his list.

List of supplies needed for the journey	List of supplies I bring on trips
Bedding	
600 lbs. bacon	
1 pair boots	
1 overcoat	
3 rifles	
75 lbs. rice	
1 belt knife	
50 lbs. lard	
1 comb	
3 towels	
1 brush	
1 tent	
1 coat	
Matches	
Sewing items	
30 lbs. lead	
150 lbs. sugar	
50 lbs. dried fruit	
4 colored silk handkerchiefs	
2 pairs stout walking shoes	
2 blue or red overskirts	
3 lbs. laundry soap	
50 lbs. salt, pepper, &c.	
4 pairs woolen socks	
Cooking utensils	
1 broad brimmed hat	
10 lbs. saleratus	
2 pairs cotton drawers	
3 pairs pistols or 2 revolvers	
25 lbs. gun0powder	
2 woolen undershirt	
1 gutta percha poncho	
50 lbs. candles & soap	
5 barrels of flower	
2 toothbrushes	
2 pairs cotton sacks	

PRE-SITE ACTIVITIES

Leaving it Behind

Weight and size were limiting factors on what emigrants could bring in their covered wagons. Emigrants made decisions about what to bring according to necessity and weight.

Divide students into groups of 5. On the floor and one wall, tape the dimensions of a wagon box 10-12 ft long, 3-4 ft wide, and 2-3 feet deep (or cutout the dimensions 10-12 ft x 3-4 ft on a multiple pieces of paper or outline it on a classroom board or outline the dimensions on a wall). Have students "fill in" the wagon using tape, paper, or markers. Not everything will fit, so students will need to determine what to keep and what to leave behind

Food	Personal Items	Clothing	Other
Flour	Heirlooms	Winter clothing	Tools
Saleratus	Toys	Overcoats	Furniture
Sugar	Books	Socks	Extra wagon parts
Tea		Hats	Guns
Bacon		Poncho	
Salt		Extra clothing	
Rice			
Salted pork			

PRE-SITE ACTIVITIES

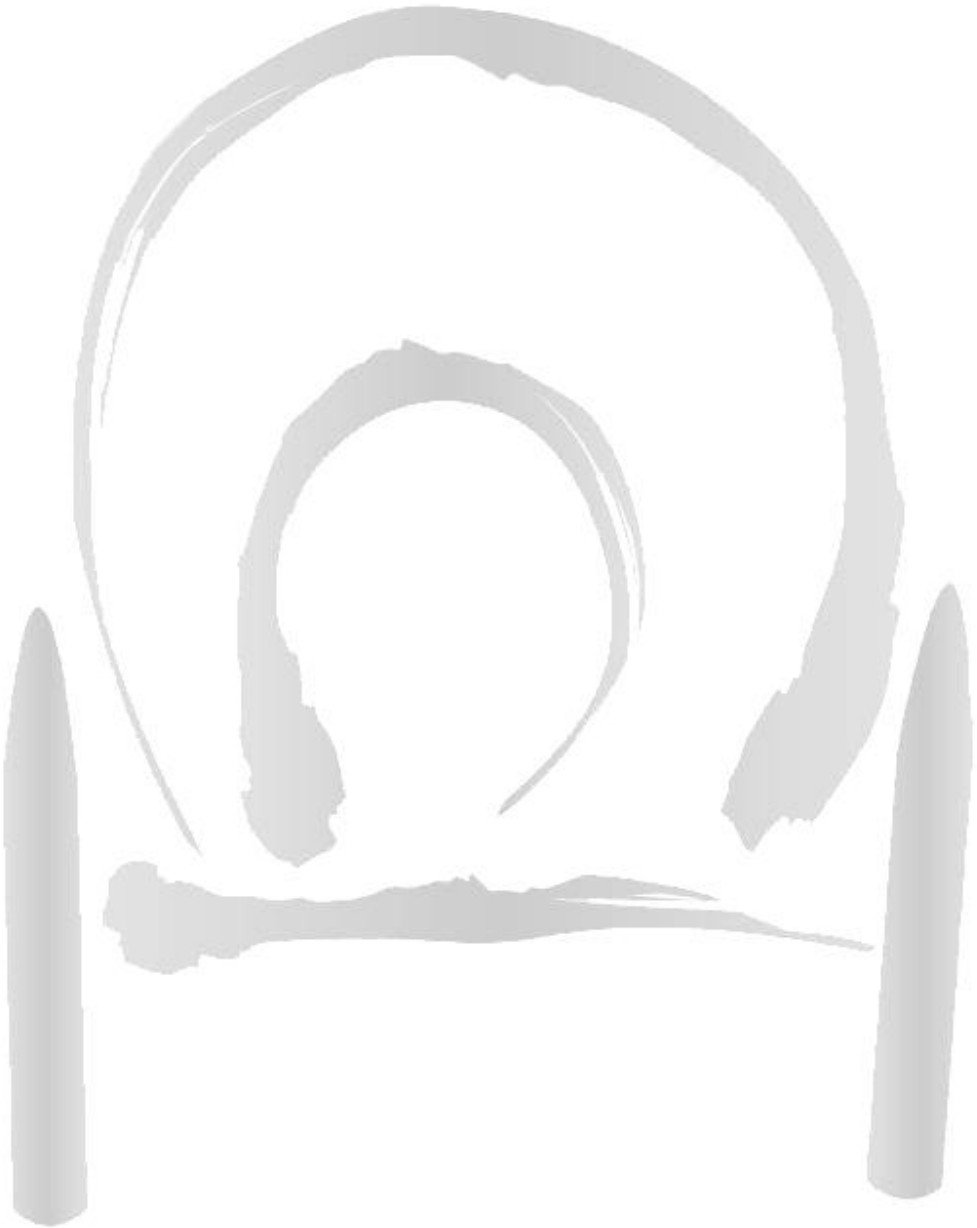
KWL

Before visiting the California Trail Interpretive Center, write down what you know about the California Trail and what you want to know. After your field trip, reflect on what you learned.

What I know	What I want to know	What I learned

ON-SITE ACTIVITIES

On-site activities are available at the California Trail Interpretive Center. For more information, please call 775-738-1849.



POST-SITE ACTIVITIES

JOURNAL

Most of what is known about the California Trail comes from emigrants themselves in journals, letters, and reminiscences. Emigrants reflected on the weather, resources in the area, landmarks they passed, daily activities, and much more in their personal histories**.**

Be an emigrant for the day. Write about your adventure at the California Trail Interpretive Center, or write as an emigrant. Remember to include the weather, what you did, and how long you walked!

_____ (date)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Unscramble the Wagon!

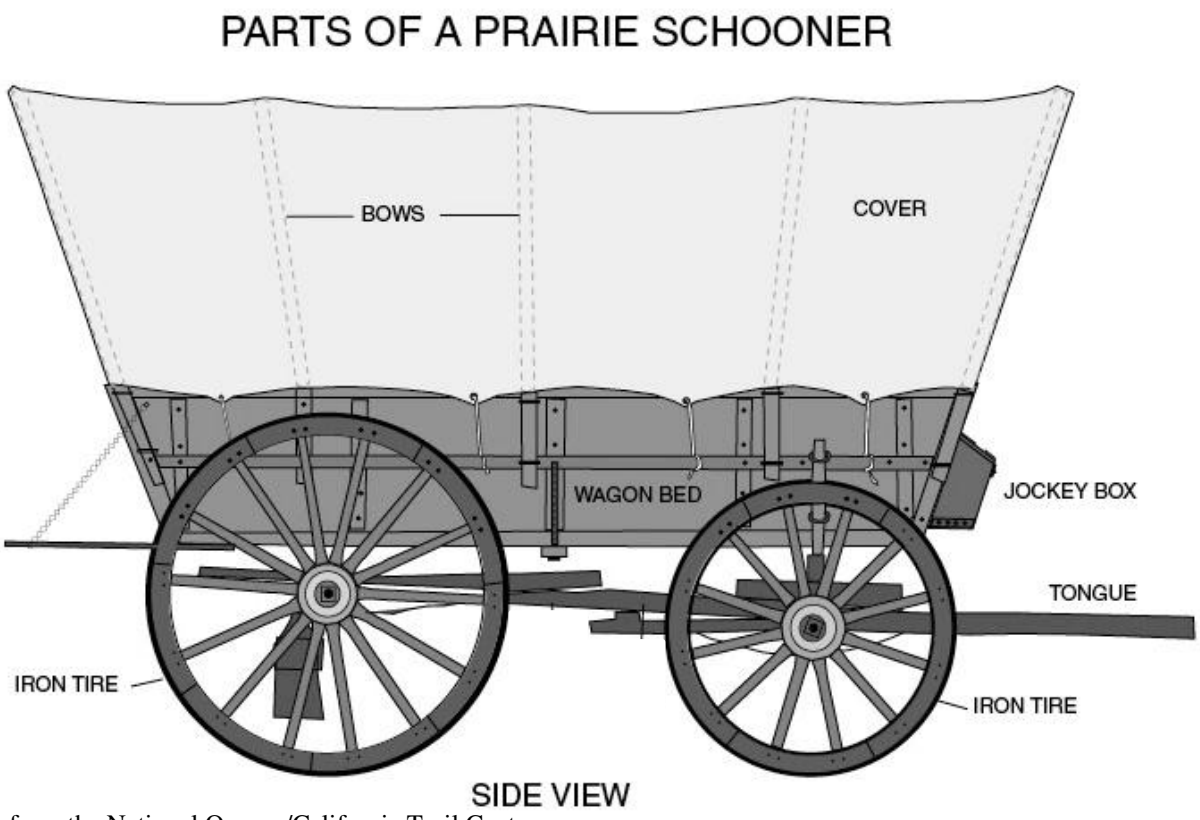
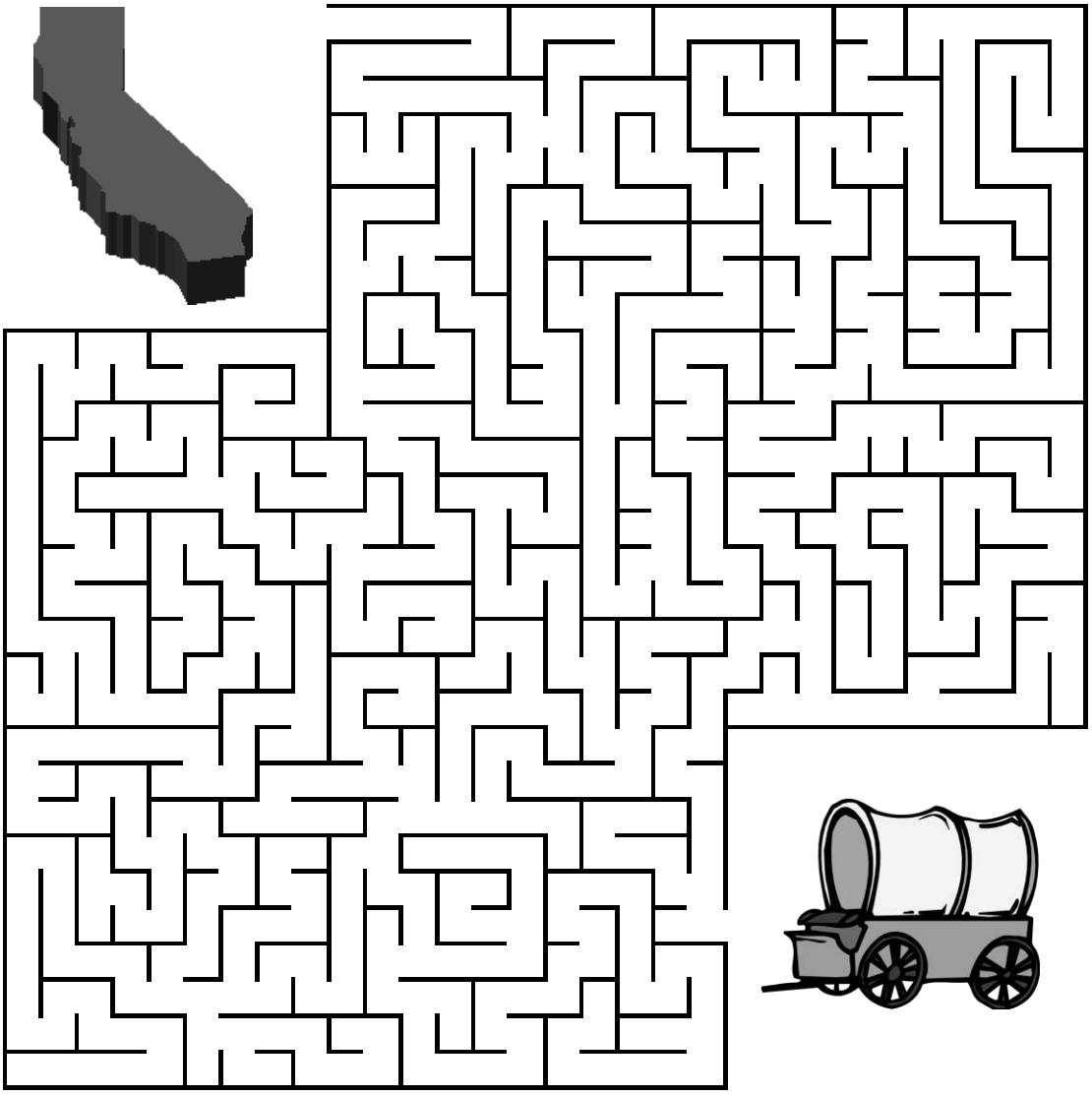


Image from the National Oregon/California Trail Center

ORNI IERT	protects wheels from ware ____ ____
GANOAW EDB	held supplies emigrants needed for their journey. It was usually made of hardwoods to resist shrinking in the dry air of the plains and deserts slow-moving rivers. _____ ___
OGNTEU	place to attach the wagon to draft animals _____
SWBO	used as support for the cover ____
ERVOC	usually were water tight and used to protect contents of the wagon from dust and rain _____
COYKEJ XOB	held equipment for making wagon repairs _____ ___

Help the emigrants find their way to California!



Many wagon trains tried different **cutoffs** (short-cuts) to get to California faster. Some cutoffs shortened the overland journey, while others lengthened it. One famous cutoff is called Hasting's Cutoff, which a famous wagon train, the Donner Party traveled on. This cutoff was 180 miles longer than the original trail! Have you ever taken a short-cut that ended up being longer than you thought?

POST-SITE ACTIVITIES

RUSHING FOR GOLD

In 1848, gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill in California, sparking the 1849 Gold Rush. Thousands of people flocked to California to seek their fortunes, many of which traveled on the California Trail. Find words that relate to the Gold Rush in the puzzle below.

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

CLAIM
DIVERSITY
FORTY-NINER
GOLD
MINING
PANNING
PROSPECTOR
ROCKER BOX
SLUICE BOX
SUTTER'S MILL

POST-SITE ACTIVITIES

Using Math on the California Trail

Weighing the costs

Help decide what emigrants would take and leave behind. Weight was the limiting factor for emigrants when packing their wagons. Emigrants needed to bring enough supplies to last the 4-6 month journey and also keep the weight down for the well-being of your animals

1. Your animals can carry 2,500 lbs. Your wagon weighs 1,200 lbs. How many pounds of supplies can you fit in your wagon?

2. If one ox can carry 600 pounds. How many oxen would it take to carry a 2400 pound wagon?

Distance

It was important for emigrants to know the distance they traveled each day to determine where to stop at night or how much water to bring with them to each destination. One way to determine distance traveled was to count the revolutions of their wagon wheel.

1. If the circumference of the wheel is X and it revolved 800 times, how far did it travel?

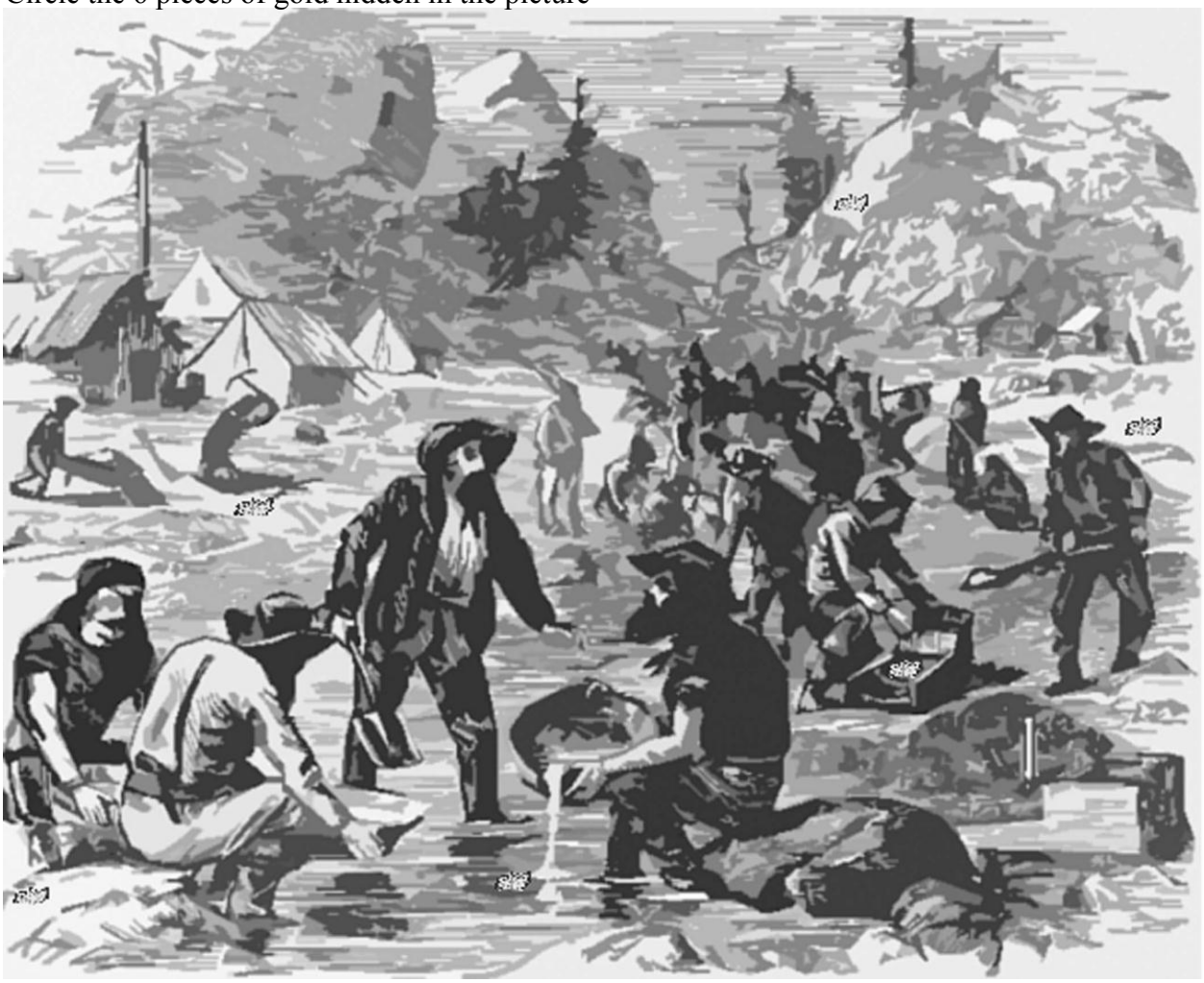
2. It takes a wagon wheel 360 revolutions to travel one mile. How many revolutions does it take to travel 12 miles?

3. The California Trail is 2000 miles long. The average emigrant walked 2 miles/hour. If the train did not stop at all, how many days would it take?

POST-SITE ACTIVITIES

Help the Miners Find GOLD

Circle the 6 pieces of gold hidden in the picture



Clipart ETC, Florida Center for Instructional Technology

WAGONS

Wagons were very important to families traveling over the California Trail. Not only did they hold enough supplies for the 3-6 month journey, but they also carried materials for when the emigrants arrived in California!

Fun facts about WAGONS!

-People rarely rode in wagons. Unlike our cars today, wagons didn't have suspension, creating a VERY BUMPY ride. Also, it would have been too difficult for their animals to pull the extra weight.

-The front wheels were smaller than the back so they could turn easily.

-Wagons had brakes!

-Wagons could easily be broken down so that they could float and fix repairs. Why was that important?

-Wagons could weigh up to 1,300 pounds without anything in them!

-Emigrants rubbed oil on the cover of their wagons to make it water proof.

-Some emigrant families had 2 or more wagons.

-Emigrants sometimes decorated their wagons with phrases like, "California or bust". What would your wagon say?

Ox Talks

Oxen were the most common draft animals used to pull emigrants' wagons. They were cheap, sturdy, reliable, and could eat native grasses along the trail. Without oxen, many emigrants would not have been successful in crossing to California.

Ox FUN Facts

-Oxen is the plural of ox

-In 1846, emigrants paid about $25 for a yoke of oxen. Today, that is more than $600.

-A person who drives oxen are called bullwhackers or teamsters.

-An ox can live to be 16!

-Oxen hooves are cloven (split in two) so they need 2 shoes per hoof.

-Oxen are hitched together by a yoke.

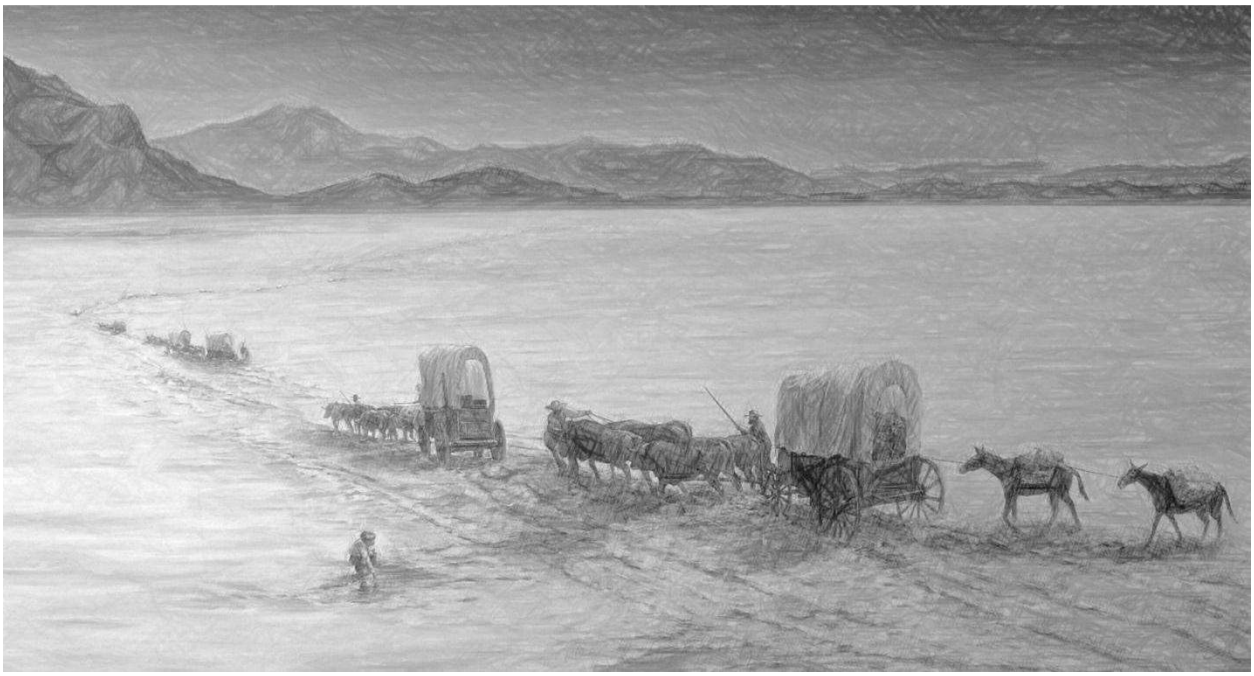
-To make an ox turn right, say, "gee!" To make an oxen turn left, say "haw".

-Oxen are adult, male cattle of any breed, used as draft animals.

-On average, oxen walk 2 miles per hour, just like us!

KIDS RESOURCES

California Trail Fun Facts



*The California Trail spanned **2000 miles**.

*People who traveled on the Trail are called **emigrants** because they were leaving their country to head west.

*Many emigrants brought **animals** along including: chickens, cattle, horses, goats, and sheep.

*Emigrants had a lot of **fun** on the Trail with dances, weddings, music, singing, toys, and storytelling.

*Over **250,000** emigrants traveled on the California Trail!

*Emigrants traveled in **covered wagons**, as part of a bigger wagon train. Wagon trains could contain a hundred wagons!

*Many emigrants lightened their wagon loads by dumping goods along the trail. This is called **trail trash.**

RESOURCES

Other Interpretive Trail Centers:

National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center (Baker City, OR)
http://www.blm.gov/or/oregontrail

National Historic Trails Interpretive Center (Casper, WY)
http://www.wy.blm.gov/nhtic

National Oregon/California Trail Center (Montpelier, ID)
http://www.oregontrailcenter.org

End of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center
http://www.historicoregoncity.org/

Nez Perce National Historic Trail
http://www.fs.usda.gov/npnht

NPS Auto Route Interpretive Guides:

Wyoming
http://www.nps.gov/cali/planyourvisit/upload/WY_ATRIG%20Web.pdf

Nez Pierce
http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fsbdev3_055585.pdf

Oregon
http://www.nps.gov/oreg/planyourvisit/upload/ID%20ATR%20IG%20Final.pdf

Utah
http://www.nps.gov/cali/planyourvisit/upload/UT_ATRIG_Final2-Web.pdf

Trails Information:

OCTA
http://www.octa-trails.org/

Trails West
http://emigranttrailswest.org/

Maps:

National Pak
http://imgis.nps.gov/Geocortex/Viewer/NPS/Viewer.html?Viewer=National%20Historic%20Trails