

The Whitmans were killed by angry Cayuse warriors who blamed them for a deadly outbreak of measles.

In 1847, measles came west with settlers and swept through the Whitman mission. Marcus treated the sick as best he could. The Cayuse noticed that whites usually recovered, while their own people were dying. Rumors spread that Whitman was giving deadly pills to Indians. Angry warriors attacked the mission, killing both Marcus and Narcissa.

The Missionaries' Legacy Like the Spanish priests in California, American preachers in Oregon hoped that their legacy would be large numbers of Christian Indians. In fact, relatively few Indians became Christians. Many, however, died of the diseases that came west with the missionaries. The missionaries' true legacy was to open the West to settlement. In California, Oregon, and other territories, settlers followed in the footsteps of western missionaries.



16.6 The Pioneer Women

Women pioneers shared in the danger and the work of settling the West. Most of these women were wives and mothers, but some were single women seeking **homesteads**, husbands, or other new opportunities. Pioneer women not only helped to shape the future of the West, but also earned new status for themselves and for women throughout the United States.

Oregon Trail starts here

The Granger Collection, New York

On the Trail Between 1840 and 1869, about 350,000 people traveled west in covered wagons. Most westward-bound pioneers gathered each spring near Independence, Missouri. There they formed columns of wagons called *wagon trains*.

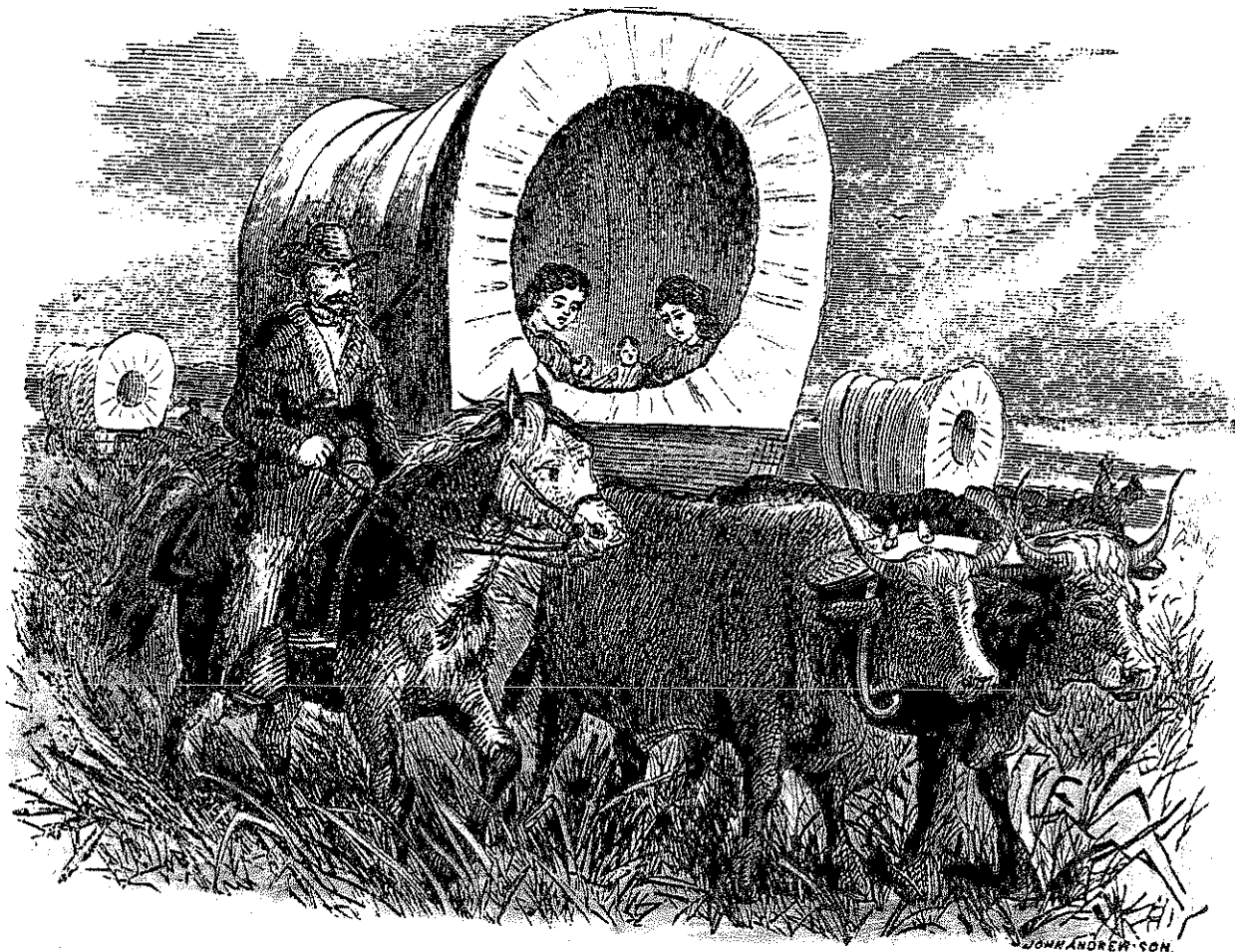
The journey west lasted four to six months and covered about 2,000 miles. Wagon space was so limited that women were forced to leave most of the comforts of home behind. The few treasures they managed to fit in often had to be tossed out when the way became steep. The Oregon Trail was littered with furniture, china, books, and other cherished objects.

Women were expected to do the work they had done back home, but while traveling 15 to 20 miles a day. They cooked, washed clothes, and took care of the children. Meals on wheels were simple. "About the only change we have from bread and bacon," wrote Helen Carpenter, "is to bacon and bread."

The daily drudgery wore many women down. Lavinia Porter recalled, "I would make a brave effort to be cheerful and patient until the camp work was done. Then starting out ahead of the team and my men folks, when I thought I had gone beyond hearing distance, I would throw myself down on the unfriendly desert and give way like a child to sob and tears."

Trail Hazards The death toll on the trail was high. Disease was the worst killer. Accidents were also common. People drowned crossing rivers.

homestead a plot of land where pioneers could build a home, farm, or ranch



Children fell from wagons and were crushed under the wheels. Indian attacks were rare, but the prospect added to the sense of danger.

By the end of the journey, each woman had a story to tell. Some had seen buffalo stampedes and prairie fires on the Great Plains. Some had almost frozen to death in the mountains or died of thirst in the deserts. But most survived to build new lives in the West.

One group of pioneer women faced a unique set of dangers—African Americans who had escaped from slave states or who were brought west by their owners. Even though slavery was outlawed in most of the West, fugitive slaves were often tracked down by bounty hunters. But for some African American women, the move west brought freedom. For example, when Biddy Mason's owner tried to take her from California (a free state) to Texas, Biddy sued for her freedom and won. She moved to Los Angeles, where she became a well-known pioneer and community leader.

The Pioneer Women's Legacy The journey west changed pioneer women. The hardships of the trail brought out strengths and abilities they did not know they possessed. "I felt a secret joy," declared one Oregon pioneer, "in being able to have the power that sets things going."

And women did set things going. Wherever they settled, schools, churches, libraries, literary societies, and charitable groups soon blossomed. A good example is Annie Bidwell. When Annie married John Bidwell, she moved to his ranch in what is now the town of Chico, California. There she taught sewing to local Native American women and

Pioneers who wished to go west met in Independence, Missouri, in the spring. There they formed wagon trains before setting out on the trail.



Although pioneer women had to travel 15 to 20 miles a day, they were still expected to take care of household chores when the wagon train stopped for the night.

Mormons Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. *Latter-Day* means "modern," while *saints* are people who dedicate their lives to following God's teachings.

16.7 The Mormons

In 1846, a wagon train of pioneers headed west in search of a new home. Looking down on the shining surface of Great Salt Lake in what is now Utah, their leader, Brigham Young, declared, "This is the place!"

It was not a promising spot. One pioneer described the valley as a "broad and barren plain...blistering in the rays of the midsummer sun." A woman wrote, "Weak and weary as I am, I would rather go a thousand miles further than remain." But that was one of the valley's attractions. No one else wanted the place that Brigham Young claimed for his followers, the Mormons.

A Persecuted Group The **Mormons** were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. This new church was founded in New York by Joseph Smith in 1830. Smith taught that he had received a sacred book, *The Book of Mormon*, from an angel. He believed that it was his task to create a community of believers who would serve God faithfully.

Smith's followers lived in close communities, working hard and sharing their goods. Yet wherever they settled—first New York, then Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois—they were persecuted by their neighbors.

Many people were offended by the Mormons' teachings, especially their acceptance of polygamy—the practice of having more than one wife. Others resented the Mormons' rapidly growing power and wealth. In 1844, resentment turned to violence when a mob in Illinois killed Joseph Smith.

After Smith's murder, Brigham Young took over as leader of the Mormons. Young decided to move his community to Utah. There, the Mormons might be left alone to follow their faith in peace.

helped their children learn to read and write English. Annie convinced John to give up drinking—he closed the tavern that had been part of his home—and encouraged the building of Chico's first church.

Annie was active in other causes as well, including the movement to give women a right that had long been denied them in the East—the right to vote. Wyoming Territory led the way by granting women the right to vote in 1869. By 1900, a full 20 years before women across the nation would win the right to vote, women were voting in four western states. The freedom and sense of equality enjoyed by women in the West helped pave the way for more equal treatment of women throughout the United States. This was perhaps the greatest legacy of the women pioneers.

Mormon Trail starts here

West to Utah Young turned out to be a practical as well as pious leader. "Prayer is good," he said, "but when baked potatoes and pudding are needed, prayer will not supply their place."

Young carefully planned every detail of the trek to Utah. The pioneers he led west stopped along the way to build shelters and plant crops for those who would follow.

Even with all this planning, the journey was difficult. "We soon thought it unusual," wrote one Mormon, "to leave a campground without burying one or more persons."

When he arrived at Great Salt Lake, Young laid out his first settlement, Salt Lake City. By the time he died in 1877, Utah had 125,000 Mormons living in 500 settlements.

To survive in this dry country, Mormons had to learn new ways to farm. They built dams, canals, and irrigation ditches to carry precious water from mountain streams to their farms in the valley. With this water, they made the desert bloom.

The Mormons' Legacy The Mormons were the first Americans to settle the Great Basin. They pioneered the farming methods adopted by later settlers of this dry region. They also helped settlers make their way west. Salt Lake City quickly became an important stop for travelers in need of food and supplies.

To the Mormons, however, their greatest legacy was the faith they planted so firmly in the Utah desert. From its center in Salt Lake City, the Mormon church has grown into a worldwide religion with more than 7 million members.

When Mormons were unable to purchase wagons or oxen for the journey to Utah, they pulled their belongings in handcarts. What cultural features will these settlers bring to the cities of the West?

