

Have you ever gone on a long car trip with your family? Did you get bored during that long trip? Did you ask that famous question, which all parents love to hear: “Are we there yet?” Well, let me tell you—it could have been worse!

You could have been going west in the 1800s. In those days there were no cars. You would have traveled in a covered wagon like the one shown here. Your wagon would have been pulled by horses, mules, or oxen. You and your family would have bumped along unpaved, dusty roads. You would have traveled all day long, and it would have taken you about six months to get from the East to the West! Does that sound like fun? Actually, your trip might have been even harder. Your family would have had to pack everything you owned into a wagon, including personal belongings, clothing, food, water, and supplies, so there wouldn't have even been room for you to ride in the wagon. That's right, you might have had to walk all the way to Oregon!

# Going West



Covered  
Wagon



In the 1840s and 1850s, tens of thousands of Americans went west in wagon trains. These pioneers hoped to make a better life for themselves. Many of them were eager to claim farmland in Oregon or California. They left many of their friends and family behind, loaded everything they had into a wagon, and set off for the West. The following story tells about what it was like to make the trip west. Unlike some ancient civilizations that we learned about, in which we got most of our information from archeologists, this account is based on records that people left behind such as diaries and journals. In this account the Morgan family makes the trip from Indiana to Oregon. The Morgans were farmers. They hoped to start a new life in Oregon. This is their story: The Morgans left for Oregon in April of 1846. They had a single wagon, loaded with all of their belongings. Mrs. Morgan and the young children rode in the wagon. The older children walked alongside. They also helped herd the cows that trailed along behind the wagon.

**I can describe how the colonial times are connected to westward expansion.**

**Yo puedo describir cómo los tiempos de la colonia están conectados con la expansión hacia el oeste.**





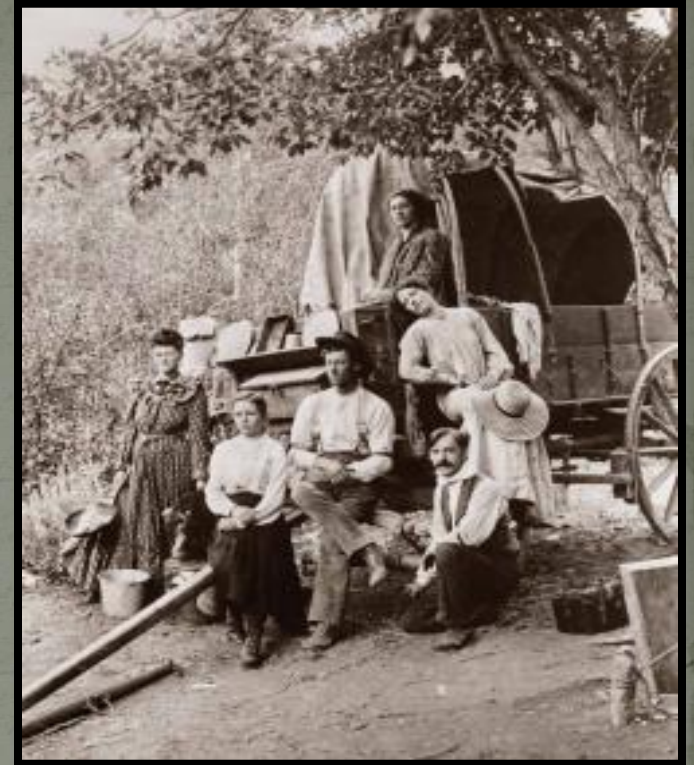
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On the first day of their journey, the Morgans traveled fourteen miles. When the sun began to set, they set up camp. The boys gathered wood for a campfire. Then Mrs. Morgan cooked supper. After supper, Mrs. Morgan set up beds for the children in the wagon. Once the children were asleep, she lit a candle and wrote the first entry in a journal she had decided to keep:

*April 11, 1846. Began our journey to Oregon. Made fourteen miles on our first day. The sun felt warm upon our skin as we made our way along. Our journey was brightened by the wildflowers that dotted the landscape. By the time we made camp, the older children were exhausted from walking. I have to admit that I gave them each a little extra stew for supper tonight.*

*For the next few weeks, the Morgans traveled west across Indiana and Illinois. They rose early each morning and traveled until just before sundown. On their good days they covered twenty miles. When it rained or the roads were bad, they covered fewer.*



Campfire - Fogata



About one month after starting their journey, the Morgans reached the Mississippi River. They hired a ferry to carry them, their wagon, and their animals across the river. On that day Mrs. Morgan had a lot to write in her journal. This is some of what she wrote:

*May 10, 1846. The great Mississippi is wider than I could ever have imagined. Our wagon, our horses, and our supplies were loaded onto a flatboat and carried across the mighty Mississippi. I held my breath as I watched all our earthly possessions float away.*

Another month later, the Morgans reached St. Joseph, Missouri, where they bought food and supplies. The next morning, they crossed the Missouri River. This meant they were leaving the United States and were entering the area people called “Indian territory.” On this day, Mrs. Morgan wrote in her journal:

*June 5, 1846. The children are hoping to see Indians. We have been told that the Cheyenne and the Pawnee live in the area we are traveling through. We have heard that they are sometimes willing to trade horses and food for clothes and tobacco.*

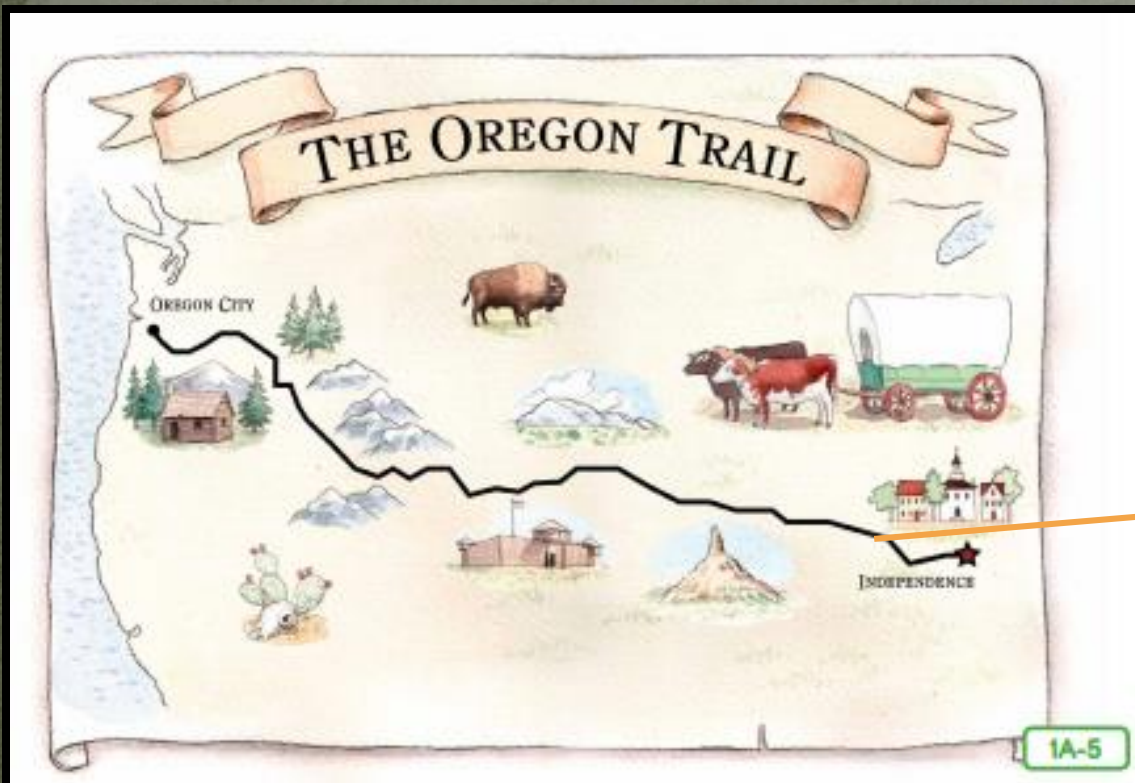
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Mississippi River.

A few days later, the Morgans turned onto the main road to Oregon, known as the Oregon Trail. There were many other settlers traveling on this road. The Morgans joined up with a group of more than one hundred settlers traveling to Oregon. By mid-June, the wagon train was crossing the Great Plains. On all sides they saw vast open fields of grass, without a tree in sight.



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Trail – Sendero/Camino



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The Morgans also began to see large herds of buffalo. They noticed that these magnificent creatures spent much of their time with their heads bowed, grazing on the abundant grass.

On one moonlit June night, as the stars sparkled in the sky, Mr. Morgan shot a buffalo, and Mrs. Morgan cooked the meat for supper. On that night Mrs. Morgan wrote in her journal:

*June 14, 1846. Buffalo meat, although tasty, takes a lot of chewing. I watched the children eat as the flames from the flickering fire lit their dirty faces. The good thing was that, while they were chewing, they weren't complaining!*

A few days later, the Morgan's wagon broke. Mrs. Morgan stood guard all night in the rain while Mr. Morgan fixed the wagon.

Two weeks later, something even worse happened. Eight of the oxen that pulled the Morgan's wagon vanished during the night. The Morgans searched for the animals but could not find them. They hitched up some of their cows instead, but these animals were not used to pulling a wagon, and the Morgans made slow progress until they could get better animals.

Buffalo herds – Manada de Búfalos

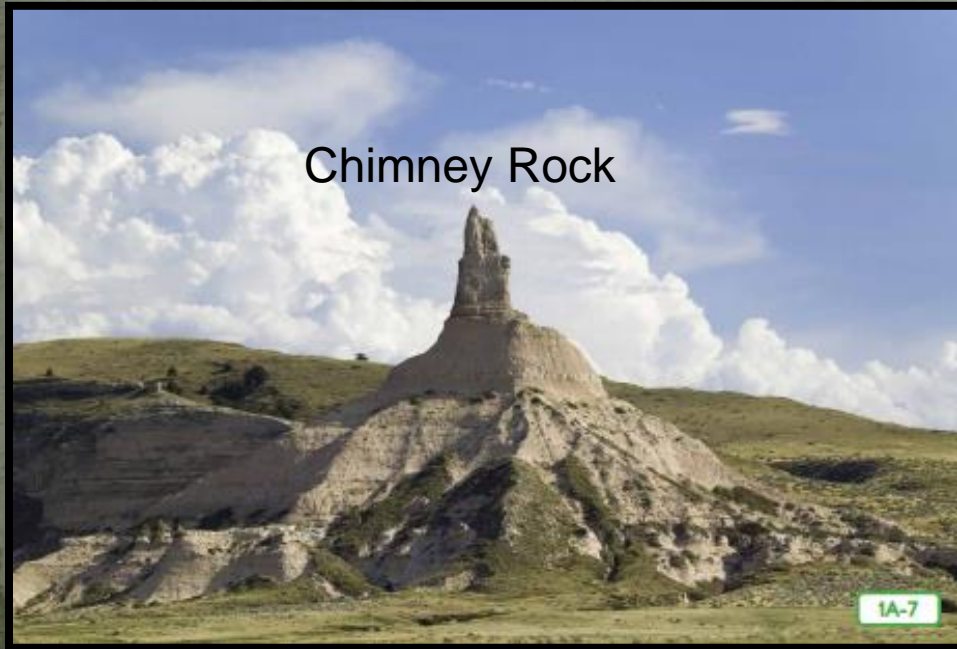




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In mid-July the Morgan's reached Chimney Rock , in what is now Nebraska. You can see Chimney Rock in this photograph. While admiring the sights , Mrs. Morgan and a friend almost got caught in a hailstorm. This is what Mrs. Morgan had to say about this adventure that evening in her journal:

*July 15, 1846. We are making much slower progress. Yesterday we only covered eleven miles. We were delighted to see Chimney Rock, though we had the most dreadful hail-storm. Mrs. Peterson and I were pelted by hailstones the size of small rocks. The hailstones tore some of the wagon covers off, broke some bows, and scared several of the oxen away.*



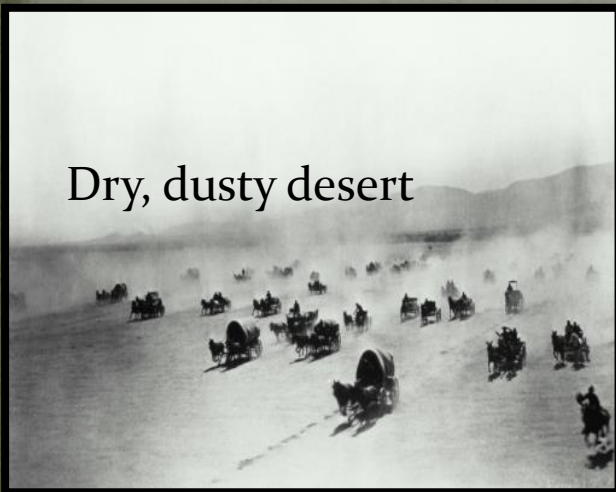


A few days later, the wagon train reached Fort Laramie, another common landmark on the trip for pioneers heading west. Two weeks later, they crossed the Rocky Mountains. Mrs. Morgan wrote:

*August 9, 1846. We wound our way over the mountains along a very crooked road. Had rain and hail today, which made it a very disagreeable experience. However, Papa and I smiled so as not to discourage the children.*

In late August, the Morgans traveled across a dry, dusty desert. Mrs. Morgan wrote that the dustiness was like nothing her friends in the East had ever seen: *August 30, 1846. My friends back east know nothing about dust. This dust makes it impossible for us to see where we are going. We cannot even see the oxen that pull our wagon. cattle struggle to breathe and we have the taste of the dusty air in our mouths all the time. When the children go to sleep, every one of them is covered in a layer of dust.*

Dry, dusty desert



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Fort Laramie – El Fuerte Laramie

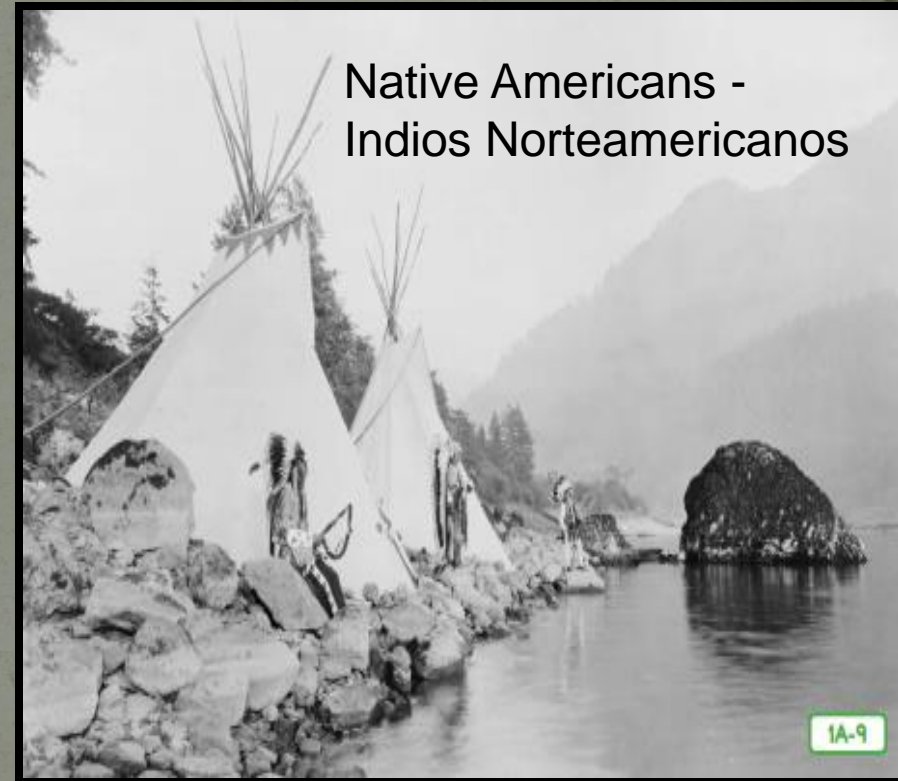




In mid-September the Morgan's encountered some Native Americans on their journey. Mrs. Morgan wrote: *September 14, 1846. The Native Americans along Snake River wear only a cloth tied around their hips. They have few horses and no blankets. The immigrants are happy to trade them old clothes for fish.* Toward the end of September, a young woman in the Morgans' party decided she had had enough of the Oregon Trail. She sat down on the side of the trail and claimed that she could not travel any farther. Then she began to sob loudly. The Morgan's felt sympathy for her but there was nothing else to do but to press on.

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Press on - Continuar



In mid-November, the Morgan's reached Fort Dalles, Oregon on the banks of the Columbia River. They built a raft that would carry them and their things down the river. Unfortunately, it had been raining for several days. The river was flooded and running too fast for raft travel. The Morgan's had to wait for several days by the riverside. It was cold, rainy, and windy. The family huddled around a campfire to try to stay warm. Mrs. Morgan recorded two entries while they waited for the weather to improve:

*November 14, 1846. We are unable to move forward. We must wait for the wind to ease. We have one day's provisions left. The warm sunshine has abandoned us and we are chilled to the bone.*

*November 16, 1846. No let-up in the weather. If anything, it is worse. Waves rise up over our simple raft. It is so very cold that icicles hang down from the wagon. On all sides we see vast open fields of grass, without a tree in sight.*

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*Chilled to the bone -  
Con muchísimo frío*

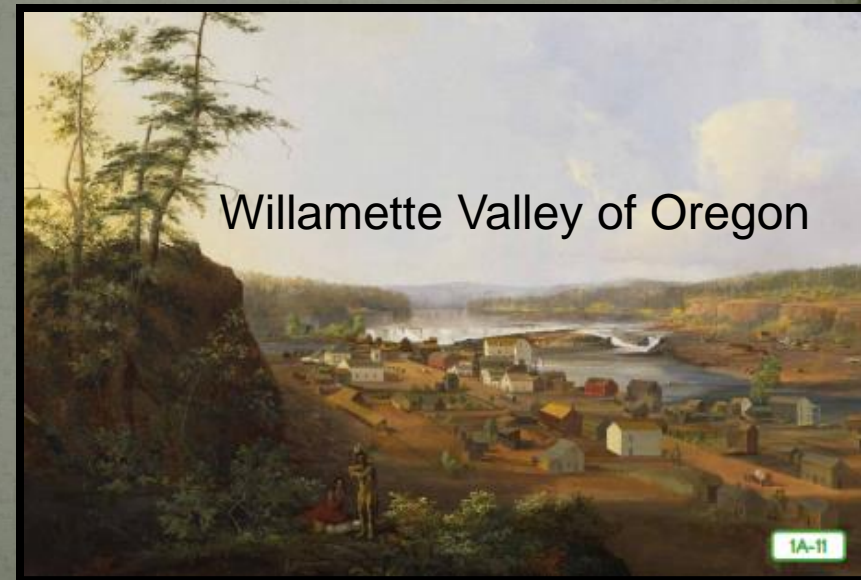


Finally, the Morgans were able to make their way down the river into the Willamette Valley of Oregon. This painting shows what an Oregon town looked like at the time. Unfortunately, toward the end of the trip, Mr. Morgan had fallen ill (sick). Mrs. Morgan rented a tiny house in Portland and, with the help of some kind men, the Morgans moved into the tiny house for the winter. Mrs. Morgan sold their last possessions to buy food. Mr. Morgan was so sick he could not get out of bed. Some of the children got sick as well. Mrs. Morgan was so busy caring for her family that she stopped writing in her journal for a while. In mid-February, she started writing again: *February 13, 1846. It rains constantly. Our house is cold and the roof leaks badly. It is difficult to keep our spirits up. We are only able to eat one good meal a day. We still dream of our new home in Oregon. I know we will get there.*

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*Spirits up - Esperanza*





Mr. Morgan recovered and, in the spring, the Morgan family settled on a farm in Oregon.

The Morgan family's journey ended well, though for many others who traveled west it did not.

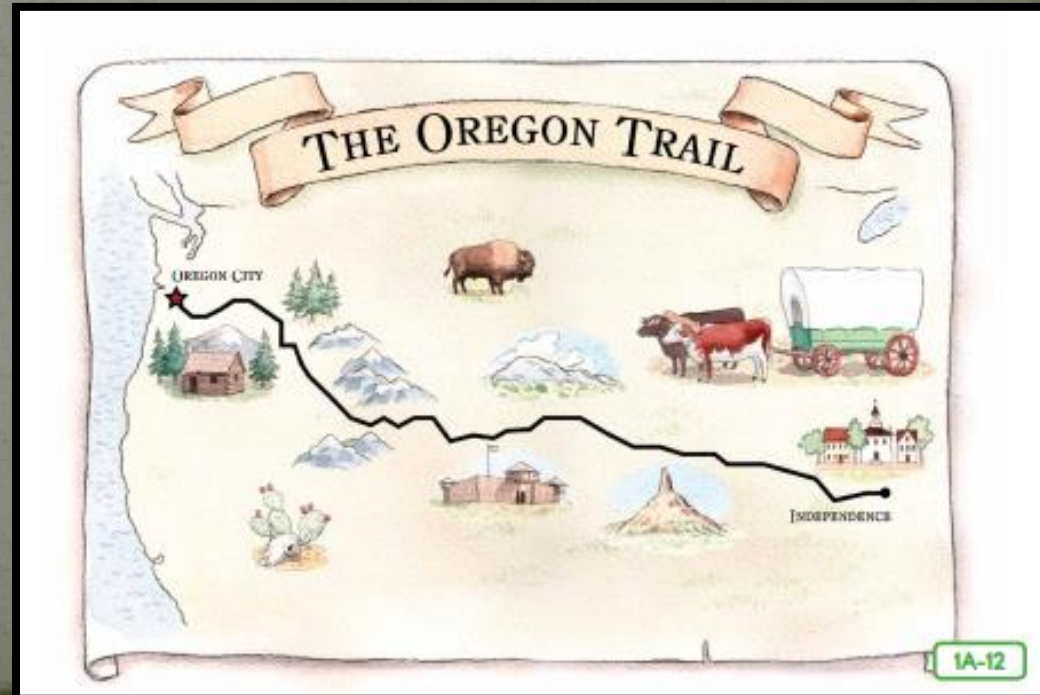
So, the next time you're on a long trip, thinking how boring and terrible it is, think of the Morgans and their trip (journey) to Oregon, and remember—it could be worse!

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Boring - Aburrido





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1. **Literal** Who was going west in this read-aloud?
2. **Literal** How did they travel?
3. **Literal** What did they take with them?
4. **Inferential** Why did they want to move to the West?
5. **Inferential** What difficulties did they face on their trip?
6. **Literal** Where did the family decide to settle? What interesting sights did they see on the way?
7. **Inferential** Was life easy or difficult once they settled in Oregon? How do you know?

