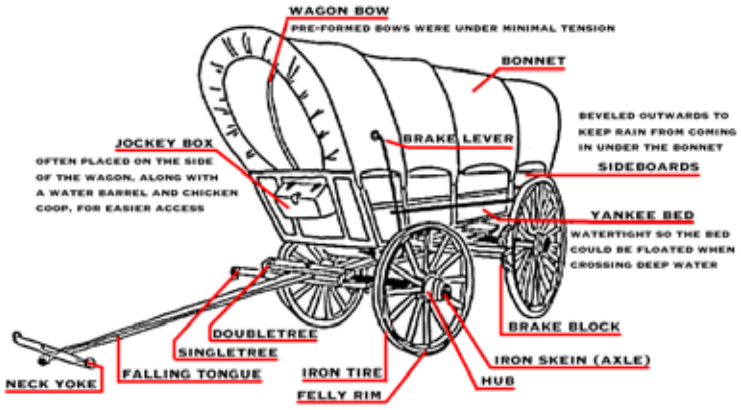
What's Different Now?

FUNCTION	IN FRONTIER DAYS	PRESENT
Transportation	Horses and wagons Steamboats, Oar-powered boats, Stagecoaches	Automobiles, Subways, Trains Airplanes, Trains Aerial trams, Ships
Heating & Cooking	Fireplaces Wood burning stoves & ovens	Oil, gas & petroleum heat Gas and electric stoves/ovens Microwave ovens
Light	Candles	Lightbulbs
Jobs	Miners Blacksmiths Wagon drivers Stagecoaches Cowhands Farmers Trappers	Miners Auto mechanics Truck drivers Bus drivers Factory workers Food factory workers Garment Industry workers



WAGON DESIGN COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

Items Used Differently Today

ITEM	IN FRONTIER TIMES	PRESENT
Trains	Coal-powered	Gas & electricity powered
Horse	Used for tranportation	Pleasure
Houses	Made of wood, brick, logs, sod, tipis [animal hide], adobe	Mad of steel, concrete, wood, bricks, glass
House Size	Average homes had 1-4 rooms	Average homes have 6-10 rooms
Guns & Arms	Used muskets, rifles, pistols, cannon, bow & arrow	Use Rifles, pistols, machine guns, bombs, missiles, grenades
Toys	Handmade at home with straw, sewed clothing, yarn paint, horse hair, thread	Machine made and sold in stores from plastic, metal, cloth, electronic elements, thread

WESTWARD EXPANSION

Making New Lives in the New World

by

ETHAN ZHANG & ARI WEI

Meals on the Oregon Trail

The wagons could travel in daylight. Breakfast had to be made at 4:00 am and eaten in time to begin travelling when the sun rose. The pioneers stopped only for one hour for lunch, so their main meal was dinner. Women made bread in the wagons and let it rise all day so it could be baked at dinner time, when the wagon trains stopped for the night at around 5:00 pm.

Bacon n' Biscuits

"Had us a fine Trail breakfast this here mornin'... not too fussy neither! Fried up some bacon real crispy and served it up with cold soda biscuits to dip in the grease. Made the morning a little special since it's been 2 months, today!, since we left our home in Wisconsin - a little celebration - I warmed up a bit of maple syrup to dip the biscuits in also. Was good for a smile all 'round the fire and a good start to the day."

After 1849, the Oregon Trail had been travelled by so many families heading west that firewood was scarce. Even live trees near the trail had been chopped up for wood. Buffalo dung became the primary source of fuel. It didn't smell while burning and gave a nice, hot flame but it wasn't much fun to collect. If fires could not be lit for lack of fuel or because the fuel was damp, food was eaten anyway, cold and uncooked.

Emigrant Rev. Samuel Parker:

"Dry bread and bacon consisted our breakfast, dinner and supper. The bacon we cooked when we could obtain wood for fire; but when nothing but green grass could be seen, we ate our bacon without cooking."

Water was avaiilable from the Platte River and springs along the way. the Platte River water was murky and full of wiggle-tails [mosquito larvae]. Boiling helped kill the bugs and sanitize the water. Many people died on the Oregon Trail of disease and infections from drinking untreated water.

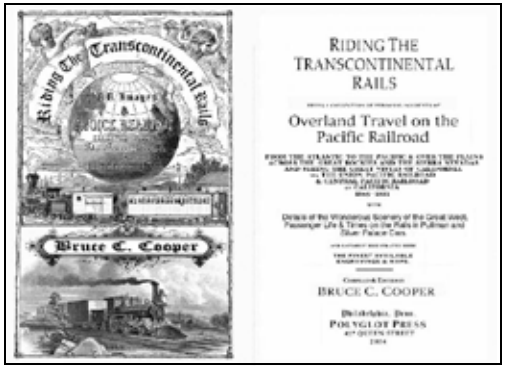
Lanford Hastings Recommendation of Provisions for the Trail

"In procuring supplies for this journey, the emigrant should provide himself with, at least, 200 pounds of flour, 150 pounds of bacon; ten pounds of coffee; twenty pounds of sugar; and ten pounds of salt." [1845]

Why People Moved West

People moved west for many reasons. Some of the most popular reasons were

- Adventure
- The Homestead Act of 1862, granting land to western settlers
- A fresh new start
- Fertile farmland
- Escape from religious persecution
- Prospects of riches
- More game for hunting and trapping



Who Lived on the Frontier

There were many people living along North America's Frontier. Approximately 350,000 people moved west to challenge the indigenous natives for their land. The pioneers represented the many cultures living in America as well as immigrants wishing to establish more prosperous lives in the open western lands being newly settled by people of European descent. Along with them travelled some freed slaves and the Chinese men who were conscripted, as a type of slave laborer, to build the railway system connecting the west with the already developed east coast of lower north America.

The railroad act was signed into law just six months after the Homestead Act was signed in 1862. Within seven years, by 1869, a transcontinental railway connected the new pioneer settlements with the "civilized world" back East.

Making a Living in the Early West

There were many jobs in the west. After people had completed travelling the Oregon Trail and reached the frontier, they began to build settlements. Once the settlements were completed, communities formed and settlers needed skilled services for constructing buildings, making and repairing tools and farm machinery.

There were horses and livestock to be cared for, and the railway to connect the frontier with the east coast needed to be built. Raw materials had to be gotten and everyone needed to eat. People worked as farmers, miners, blacksmiths, explorers, trappers, hunters, guides, soldiers scouts, railway workers, and saloonkeepers. Many native Americans were scouts and a lot of Afro-Americans became buffalo soldiers.

There were sheriffs, cowboys and marshalls too, and the Pinkerton agents took care of railroad security after 1869 when the transcontinental railroad was completed.

Homesteads

There were a variety of different homes built along the frontier. A lot of the homes built were made out of a specific kind of material because that material is what was available in the surrounding area. Other reasons for choosing a specific material were lack of time for wood to be cured, and needing to get a shelter made quickly because bad weather was soon going to set in.

In the plains regions, homes were not made out of wood because there were barely any trees on those open expanses of land. Some of the housing types used by pioneers throughout the west were log houses, sod houses (soddies), long houses, tipis [hide], forts, adobe brick, stone houses and stables. As the land became settled, and good, seasoned wood was available, lumber was also used.

Sod Roofed One Room Log School House

Challenges for the Frontier Settlers

The pioneers appropriated land from the native Americans, killing those who resisted being run off of their own land. Native Americans fought back to protect their homes, foraging and hunting grounds, retaliating by attacking Pioneer homes and killing their families.

Pioneers also had natural challenges to face as they travelled west through tornadoes, sandstorms, snow, floods, drought and cold. They were victims of bison stampedes, mountain lion attacks and disease.

Pioneers needed to produce and store food for the winter months and when enough crops grew poorly in the summer they suffered famine. The meat sources of frontierspeople came from hunting and raising farm animals. They raised sheep for wool, sheared them in the spring when their coats were long from the cold winter, spun and died it. With sheep's wool, sweaters and socks were knitted and textiles were woven on looms to make carpets, blankets, jackets and cloth.

Black Family with Team of Oxen

Modes of Transportation

Some of the different types of transportation used in Frontier Life were prairie schooners (or covered wagons), buckboard wagons, horses, boats, stage coaches, ponies, oxen, mules, trains, travois.

On the way to the frontier, most pioneers walked, because the wagons and mules were needed for hauling the belongings families would start their new lives with when they arrived, plus food and water. Only the sick, elderly and very young children rode in wagons.

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