

Timeline of the History of the Oregon Trail

- 1803** President Jefferson buys Louisiana Territory for \$15 million.
- 1804-1806** The Lewis and Clark Expedition explores the new territory, crossing the Rocky Mountains and camping near the mouth of the Columbia River for the winter.
- 1807-1814** Journals from the Lewis and Clark Expedition are published.
- 1820-1840** Mountain men engaged in fur trapping and trading use Indian paths that later become sections of the Oregon Trail.
- 1832** Nathaniel Wyeth's first expedition to Oregon country.
- 1834** Wyeth's second expedition brings the first missionary to Oregon.
- 1836** Missionaries Marcus Whitman and Henry Spalding travel with their wives to Oregon, founding missions among the Cayuse and Nez Percé.
- 1843** First wagon train on the Oregon Trail.
- 1843** The "great migration" of more than 1,000 settlers heads for Oregon.
- 1840-1860** More than 300,000 pioneers travel the Oregon Trail.
- 1844** James Polk is elected president on an expansionist platform.
- 1846** The northern U.S. border with British Canada is established at the 49th parallel.
- 1847-48** Brigham Young leads Mormon pioneers to Utah and founds Salt Lake City.
- 1849** Seeking gold in California, 25,000 argonauts travel the Oregon Trail.
- 1862** Congress passes the Homestead Act, and by 1890 two million people have moved into the West and claimed land as provided by the Act.
- 1869** Completion of the transcontinental railroad makes the Oregon Trail obsolete.