
EARLY SETTLERS

ON THE KANSAS PLAINS

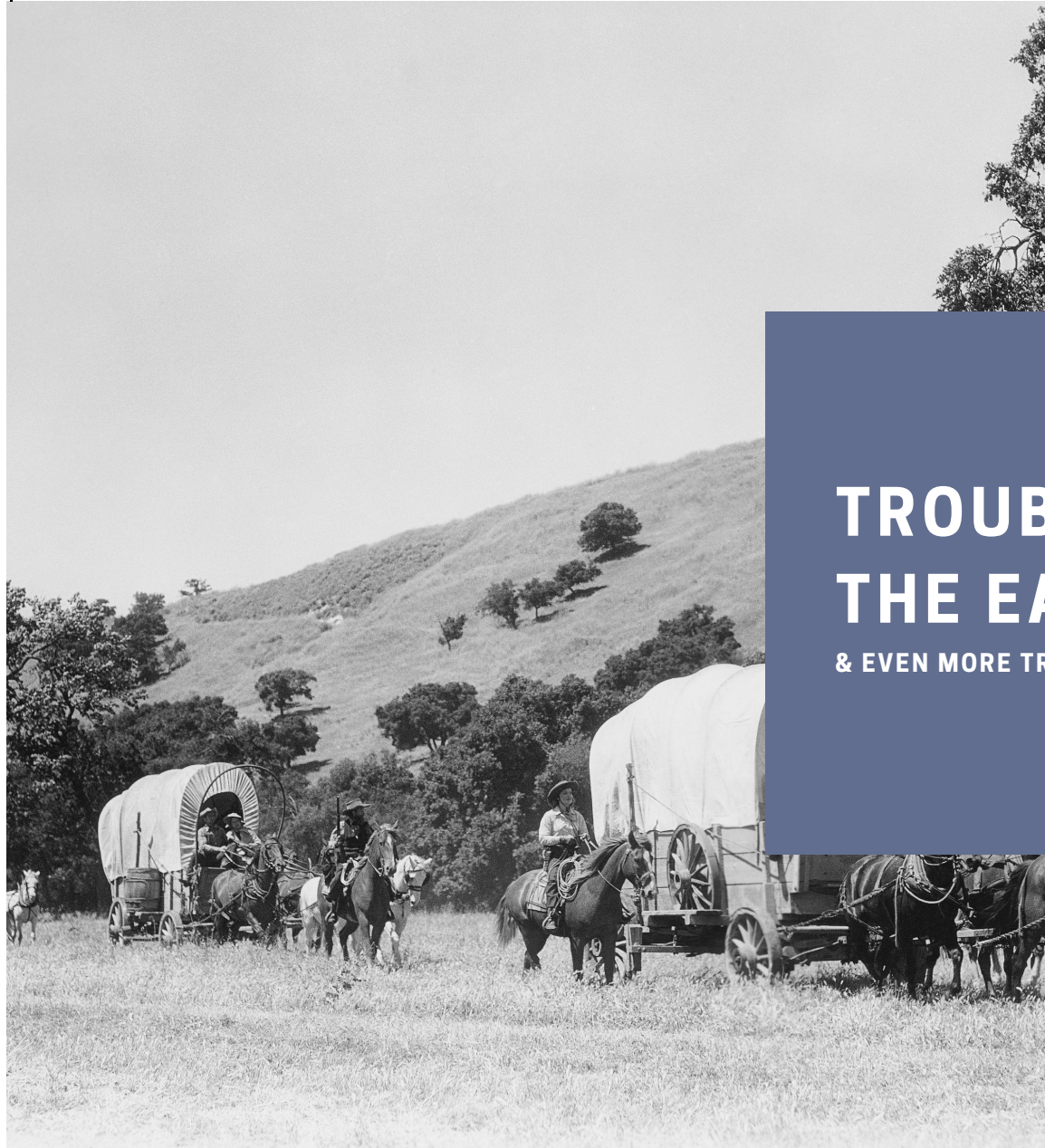


HEADING WEST!

WHY DID PEOPLE GO WEST?

Some people did not have a lot of money, so they thought going west would give them a new life. Many people took their whole families out west! Can you imagine moving away from your home?

Well, people went west to find a new home! Many people who decided to go west had heard wonderful things from those who had already gone west. They packed up their wagons and traveled along well-established trails. The Homestead Act of 1854 granted the head of a household 160 acres if they promised to farm the land. So, many people who headed west wanted to become farmers. Have you ever been on a farm?



TROUBLE IN THE EAST

& EVEN MORE TROUBLE IN THE WEST

WHEN DID PEOPLE GO WEST?

In 1803, the United States bought land so that the country could extend west. Many people supported Manifest Destiny. This was the belief that America was meant to move West, settling the country from sea to sea. The United States opened the land for settlement so that this dream would come true.

The Kansas Territory opened in 1854 with the Kansas-Nebraska Act. The Kansas-Nebraska Act was created to determine if the states of Kansas and Nebraska would be free or slave states. The Emigrant Aid Society sent many people to Kansas so that they could vote to make it a free state. Many pro-slavery people also moved to Kansas in order to make it a slave state. Tensions were high among those who relocated in order to vote on the fate of the state.

How did people go West?

Covered Wagons

Many families decided to travel West with a covered wagon! Covered wagons were usually made out of wood. They were useful because they could hold many things!



Oxen

Oxen were said to be the most reliable animal to pull a covered wagon. They were very strong and much cheaper than horses and mules. Oxen could help people move steadily from one location to another.



Trains

The first railroad track opened in the United States in 1830. Railroad tracks were then built all across the country. The first railroad tracks were laid in Kansas in 1860!



WHAT DID SETTLERS ON THE PRAIRIE SEE?



Settlers did not see the towns and cities that we see today. Instead, they saw open land with many different types of plants and animals. As they walked through the prairie, they would have seen many different prairie grasses such as Little Bluestem, Prairie Wedgegrass, and Virginia wild rye. They would have seen animals such as buffalo, prairie dogs, and different types of rodents. Also, the nights would have been very dark, because there were no big cities that provided them any light. They also did not have electric lighting. If the skies were clear, they would have seen many stars! They also saw a lot of different people as they passed by small towns and settlements. A lot of pioneer parties were big so they could help each other reach the destination!



Where did the settlers go?

As settlers moved West, they stopped in many different places. People moved to states like Kansas and Nebraska, which were voting on issues like slavery. People also traveled very famous trails, such as the Oregon Trail and the Santa Fe Trail. Both of these passed through Kansas. The California Gold Rush began in the year 1848. Many different people flocked to California. The trails were often long and dangerous. People were exposed to bad weather conditions, diseases, and starvation.

*...the fulfillment of
our manifest destiny
to overspread the
continent...*

JOHN L. O'SULLIVAN



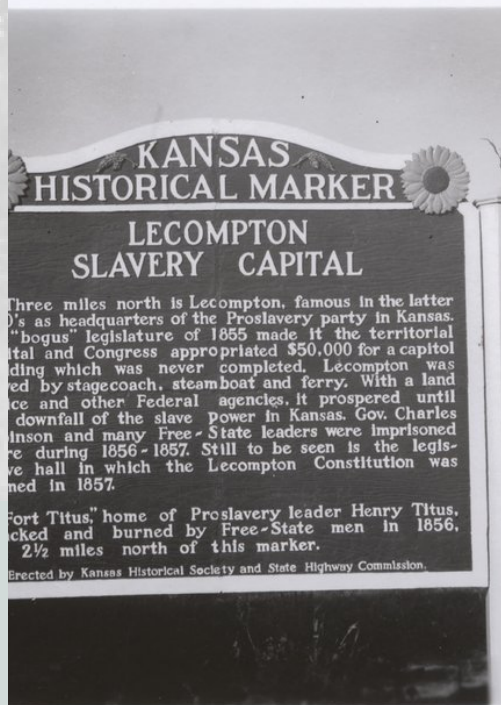
Lecompton, Kansas

EARLY SETTLEMENT

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CONSTITUTION HALL



Three miles north is Lecompton, famous in the latter 1850's as headquarters of the Proslavery party in Kansas. The "bogus" legislature of 1855 made it the territorial capital and Congress appropriated \$50,000 for a capitol building which was never completed. Lecompton was reached by stagecoach, steamboat and ferry. With a land office and other Federal agencies, it prospered until the downfall of the slave power in Kansas. Gov. Charles W. Johnson and many Free-State leaders were imprisoned here during 1856-1857. Still to be seen is the legislative hall in which the Lecompton Constitution was drafted in 1857.

Fort Titus, home of Proslavery leader Henry Titus, was sacked and burned by Free-State men in 1856, 2 1/2 miles north of this marker.

Erected by Kansas Historical Society and State Highway Commission.

People began settling in Lecompton, Kansas in 1854! It began as a small town, but it grew as people moved west! Lecompton was especially popular because people were very split on the issue of slavery. There were many pro-slavery and anti-slavery people. The Lecompton Constitution was proposed in 1857, and it was drafted in Constitution Hall. The Constitution wanted Kansas to be a slave state, and it sparked intense debate around the nation. It was endorsed by President James Buchanan. It also played a large part in the Lincoln-Douglas debates. Ultimately, the Constitution failed and Kansas was admitted as a free state.

Early Settlers Quiz for Online Users

Send the words "Early Settlers-Watkins" and your answers to cpreut@watkinsmuseum.org

Students missing only one answer or less will receive a prize and be entered into the raffle.

1. What is one reason people went west?

- a. Hunt for aliens
- b. Attend a new school
- c. Find a new home and/or farmland
- d. See their favorite band

2. In what year did the Kansas territory open for settlement?

- a. 1597
- b. 1854
- c. 2008
- d. 1984

3. What did many people use to carrying their belongings in while traveling west?

- a. Car
- b. Airplane
- c. Dog sled
- d. Covered wagons

4. What is something settlers probably didn't see while traveling west?

- a. Skyscrapers
- b. Stars
- c. Wild animals
- d. Other people

5. Which would you choose to take with you while traveling west?

- a. Favorite stuffed animal
- b. Enough candy to last the whole trip
- c. A very comfortable blanket
- d. A picture of your close friends from back home

In order to complete this packet, please complete the following craft: a Craft Stick Log Cabin! In order to do this, please follow the instructions below:

1. Locate the craft sticks in your packet.
 2. Use your craft sticks to build a log cabin!
 3. Once you are happy with your cabin begin gluing the sticks together.
 4. Imagine how it would feel to live in your log cabin!
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