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# EARLY SETTLERS

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## ON THE KANSAS PLAINS



## HEADING WEST!

### WHY DID PEOPLE GO WEST?

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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?

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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 also 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, who 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. People took the Santa Fe Trail down to New Mexico. 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...*

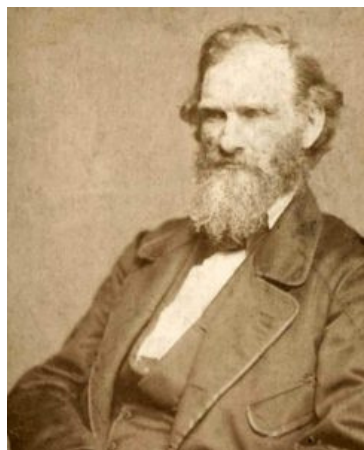
**JOHN L. O'SULLIVAN**



# Wakarusa River Valley Settlers and Settlements



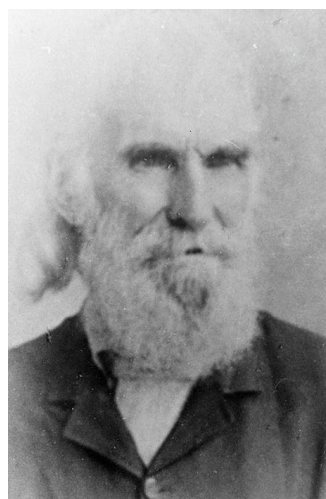
Richland



Augustus Wattles,  
Free State Leader  
Bloomington



Joseph Gardner  
Free State Leader  
Lone Star



Eliab Macy  
Free State Leader  
Bloomington



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:

- Locate the craft sticks in your packet.
- Use your craft sticks to build a log cabin!
- Once you are happy with your cabin begin gluing the sticks together.
- Imagine how it would feel to live in your log cabin! Bring it to the museum to get your prize and to be entered into the raffle for bigger prizes.



# Early Settlers Quiz for Online Users

Send the words "Wakarusa-Early Settlers" and your answers to [cpreut@watkinsmuseum.org](mailto: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