



**The early spring image is what Missouri must have looked like on leaving day.**

## **THE OREGON TRAIL**

**Most emigrants made the decision to travel west a year before leaving day. The man of the family almost always made the decision and the women were put to work. A year wasn't nearly enough time to be prepared. Supplies had to be laid in, wagons built and covered, livestock bought and prepared to pull heavy loads, clothing for varying temperature extremes needed to be made, and the most difficult decisions had to be made.**

**Astute travelers paid close attention to the directions and handbooks provided by the wagonmasters and left behind heavy furniture, iron stoves, heirloom china, and other sentimental objects. Poorly chosen items often ended up on the side of the trail when the livestock teams couldn't pull the weight. I imagine the heartbreak of having to toss something personal and precious on the side of a dusty trail was profound.**

**Sarah Pierce, the mother in JOH, chose not to take her mother's entire set of delicate china, but she did pack a teapot, two saucers, and two cups in a small barrel of corn meal. The rest she sold to the new owner of the general store she had owned with her husband.**

**What were the pioneers required to pack in the 10 foot by 4 foot wagon bed covered with a water-proof canvas? They needed four to six head of oxen or mules to pull the load. Most included several head of cattle in the herd and a milk cow. Hunting was important for the addition of food on the trail.**

**600 pounds flour**

**120 pounds biscuits/hardtack**

**400 pounds bacon packed in barrels of bran**

**60 pounds coffee/4 pounds tea**

**100 pounds sugar**

**200 pounds lard**

**Beans/Rice**

**Eggs packed in a barrel of corn meal**

**Dried fruit**

**Wheels of cheese**

**Potatoes**

**Dutch Oven**

**Skillet**

**Coffee pot/Coffee Grinder**

**Eating Utensils**

**Butter churn**

**Water pail**

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**Rifle/Shotgun/Hunting Knife/Axe/Whet stone**

**Saw**

**Mallet**

**Horse shoes/Oxen shoes/Nails/Rasp**

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**Clothing and shoes for every family member including coats**

**Mattress/Bedding/Tent/Waterproof pads**

**Medical Kit**

## **Journals/Pencils**

### **Toys/Books**

**Leaving day and the days before were times of great sadness. The time came to tell friends and family good-bye for what would probably be a lifetime. But, when the wagons began to roll forward on the 2000 mile journey the emigrants became excited by the promise and the hope for achieving their dreams. Early spring was the best time to leave because the grasses were beginning to grow on the prairie. They hoped to arrive at their destination in the middle of October.**

**Routine, weather, lack of forage for the livestock and water, disease, accidents, and illness stalked the emigrants. Death occurred too often. The stamina and courage required of the early pioneers would make us in this day and time tremble with fear. What brave people. They arrived in the Oregon Territory exhausted, hungry, cold, wet, and ready to begin clearing the new land they acquired.**

**Leaving you with images of the trail.**



