



TEACHER GUIDE

THE OREGON TRAIL



OVERVIEW

This activity is a classroom simulation to be used in conjunction with your current Oregon Trail, Westward Expansion, or American West unit. All simulation rules and activities have worked well for my classroom, but feel free to adjust anything to fit your needs. I have found that this simulation is an exciting and enjoyable way to study the Oregon Trail.

For basic instructions on how the simulation works, see the entitled "Student Instructions" page. This simulation will be used in conjunction with your current westward unit, but should not replace it. I typically average about 15-20 minutes of class time on Oregon Trail travel as the rest of class time is spent studying our regular lessons on western American History. The following are some typical daily tasks: rolling the dice to travel, writing down transactions, reading summaries about each site, stopping to hunt, crossing a river, shopping at the general store, etc.

SAMPLE DAY

What does a classroom day look like when going through the Oregon Trail Simulation. Below is a sample explanation to help explain how it works:

Today we are going to leave Ash Hollow and arrive at Ft. Laramie. This leg of the trip is 146 miles and should take the average wagon approximately 10 days ($146 \div 15m \text{ per day} = 10 \text{ days}$). I then talk about some of the sites we passed on this leg of the trip by using facts and visuals from the **Oregon Trail Simulation Presentation Slideshow** that can be accessed on the previous page.

After we have talked about life along this part of the trail, I have a member from each wagon come up and roll the dice on the SMARTboard/computer. The interactive dice are included in the accompanying **Oregon Trail Simulation Presentation Slideshow**. (You may also just use two dice on a desk if that is easier for your class).

Based upon the roll of their dice, students should then record all necessary information such as supplies lost or gained, food usage totals, calendar days traveled, etc.. I also help them figure out how the calendar works. In this given scenario, if the wagon rolled a 6 & 1, then what should have taken 10 days, only takes 8 days because the wagon gained 2 days (see included "Traveling Guide" to make sense of this). Every so often it's nice to have wagons share where they are in the calendar to see who is winning. Whichever team is earliest in the calendar is the current winning wagon.

After the dice roll, we might go hunting, shop at a fort, read about a travel site on the **Presentation Slideshow**, or return back to the classroom textbook we are studying.

IDEAS FOR USE

Below are some random ideas/options I have done that you may or may not want to incorporate:

- I typically take a day to read the student directions, determine family occupation, and then have wagon groups figure out their family story: family last name, first names of travelers, ages, relationships to each other, where have they come from, and why they are going west. Then I have groups share their stories.
- I give students 15 minutes to shop for initial supplies at Independence, MO (May 8-9 on calendar).
- I like to start the trail on May 10th (of the included calendar) because it is historically accurate and it allows most wagons to arrive at Independence rock around July 4th.
- A wagon could hold around 2,000 lbs with approximately 1500 lbs for food. Shortly after they depart, after a few days on the trail, I pick certain items to throw overboard due to weight and overpacking. The real


emigrants did this too. For example, I might say, "If you have over 1,500 lbs of food, throw the excess over, more than 1 wheel throw it over, etc." This can be done after Fort Laramie as well.

- To counteract students from buying large amounts of only one food, I will at times say, "Bug infestation... lose 50% or 100% of flour." Or say "Bacon spoiled, lose ____% of bacon." These are possible scenarios.
- The mileage chart is accurate and should be used in accordance with 15 miles per day.
- As they get traveling, if team owns a cow then the milk can take 1 lb off their daily rations per person.
- Teams can butcher their cows for food but then lose the milk option (200 lbs worth of edible food).
- Part way through, you could lower their rations from 5 lbs per person to 4 lbs and so on as they get toward the end because emigrants had to ration their supplies.
- Once a wagon team uses an item due to a dice roll, you can have it subtracted off the team's supply list and the team must get another. For example: if a team uses a shovel, they use it up and must get another. Same with chains, hatchet, bullets, medicine, sewing kit, fiddle, etc.
- I sometimes allow trading between wagons. Both parties must agree on the trade, trade must be done quickly and teacher must approve the trade. Trade could be goods for goods, goods for money, or goods for food.
- As homework, I have them write a paragraph or two in their journals describing what happened that class day as one journal entry. They can include the calendar dates in the title of the entry. Samples are in the slideshow.
- Have students cross a river here and there. Roll the dice to determine the outcome.
 - a. odd roll = lose a day, lose any items of teacher's choice, or even lose a life
 - b. even roll = cross the river successfully
 - c. hire a Native guide for \$40 then roll (all dice rolls equal a successful crossing except a dice roll of #1)
- When they get to the The Dalles, wagons have a choice:
 - a. Float down the Columbia River and pay \$80 to have a safer ferry transport. (6 days for average wagon)
 - This is potentially quicker but dangerous. Now roll the dice.
 - For each odd roll - Tip, lose 1 life, and add 1 day. Keep rolling until team gets an even.
 - Even roll - once an even number is rolled, go directly to Oregon city. Takes only 6 days if no odd rolls. Add additional days for each odd roll.
 - b. Take the Barlow Toll Road
 - Pay toll of \$6 = (\$5 per wagon plus 10¢ per head of livestock)
 - It's a 150 mile stretch, so it will take average wagon 10 days to get to Oregon
 - Roll the dice as usual to see what happens. It may be shorter or longer than the 10 days.
- When they reach Oregon City, add a day of mourning on the calendar for each person that died in their wagon so that the wagon having the most people gets rewarded.
- The team that made it to Oregon City first is considered the winning wagon for the competition. (Although, if anyone made it alive, they definitely won an experience!)
- Give a certificate to the winning wagon team. This winning certificate is included in this pdf lesson download.

FINAL REMARKS

All necessary information and worksheets are included in this Oregon Trail Simulation: travel guides, map of trail, shopping list, ledgers, trail calendar, winning certificate, and more... I hope that you and your students enjoy learning about the Oregon Trail through this exciting simulation activity. Good luck and may the strong survive!

P.S. - Read more about this amazing Oregon Trail Simulation Activity from Mister Harms on the Mister Harms blog!





INTRODUCTION

STUDENT GUIDE • THE OREGON TRAIL



OVERVIEW

The year is 1846 and you are about to embark upon a historical trip of a lifetime. Get ready for adventure, pain, and hopefully some luck as you set out as an emigrant for Oregon Country. You will start at the "Jumping Off" point in Independence, Missouri where you will get the supplies needed for your trip. You and three other students will belong to a family wagon, and each family member will have specific responsibilities for your journey.

PRE-TRAIL

- **Occupation** - You will be a member of a family that owns a wagon. Each wagon will have 5 people (four real people and one imaginary person). You will start by rolling the dice to determine your wagon leader's occupation and how much money your wagon team will start out with.
 - o Roll 1 or 2 - Farmer = \$2,000
 - o Roll 3 or 4 - Teacher = \$2,600
 - o Roll 5 or 6 - Doctor = \$3,200
- **Character** - As a wagon, you will need to determine specific details for your individual character as this will be used for your journaling assignment. The following information should be included:
 - o Family Role - Are you the dad, mom, daughter, friend, cousin of the wagon leader, etc.?
 - o Name - What is your character name?
 - o Age - How old are you?
 - o Bonus - Any bonus information you feel you would like to add to your character.
- **Duties** - Each member of the wagon will be responsible for a specific task or duty to help your wagon stay organized by documenting the important information below.
 - o Money Register - Keep track of all financial transactions bought and sold.
 - o Supply Register - Keep track of all supplies that are bought, traded, used, or lost.
 - o Food Register - Keep track of your food supply that is consumed, bought, destroyed, etc.
 - o Calendar - Keep track of days traveled, destinations visited, and stops along the way.

THE TRAIL

- **Distance** - The entire trail is approximately 2,170 miles long and took the emigrants about 4-6 months to complete. This averages out to only 15 miles per day! From Independence, Missouri to Oregon City it was a distance of 1,930 miles.
- **Traveling** - Each class day we will be visiting a place along the trail, and I the teacher will tell you about how many trail days it should take the average wagon. When you roll the dice to determine what happens on your travels, you may lose or gain a trail day. See "Traveling Guide" to determine what happens when you roll the dice. - (The Calendar Register will record trail day progress)

- **Food** – For each trail day, 5 pounds of food will be used per person. So starting off, 25 pounds of food would be subtracted from your Food Register each trail day. If you run out of food on a leg of the journey, one member of your wagon must die.
- **Hunting/Fishing** – Throughout the trip, you will be allowed to go out hunting from time to time by rolling two dice. The first dice determines how many bullets you used. The second dice (x10) determines the pounds of food taken. (Supply Register student would then record bullets used, Food Register student marks down amount of food gained). For fishing, add the two rolled dice together and multiply by 3 pounds.
- **Journal** – You will want to create an authentic journal with a creative look. Throughout the trail, the teacher will have you write entries in your journal. The entries should be from your character's point of view and should include much of the following:
 - o Day of journey and the trail calendar date.
 - o All entries should be from your character's point of view.
 - o What did you see? Daily life experiences...
 - o Descriptive sites and sounds of historical places visited...
 - o Experiences, foods eaten, entertainment, clothing, hunting results...
 - o What circumstances happened? - Death, storms, sickness (see "Travel Guide" sheet)
 - o Include imagination of what possibly might have happened...
 - o **Sample Example:** Today is June 1, day 31 of our journey. Dad was able to go out hunting while we stayed back and played cards. He brought back a rabbit and 2 coons for supper. We met a Native today. He was really nice. He even showed us a shortcut which saved us one whole day of travel. Tonight I look forward to ...
- **Initial Supplies** - At Independence, the emigrants bought their needed supplies. This included food, 1 wagon, 2 oxen and an oxen yoke. Buy additional items that you think you will need. Make sure you have enough food to begin with and some extra supplies in case parts break down.
- **Death** – If you should die along the way, you (as your spirit) will still be responsible for all duties and journaling. The assignment of the full journey will be graded and your wagon still needs your duties.
- **Map** – Each student will keep track of a map and will be responsible for labeling the stops.

TRAIL'S END

- **Winner** – The winner is the wagon that makes it to Oregon City in the least amount of days with the most people.
- **Assignments** – Each person will turn in a completed journal, and each wagon will turn in all completed registers.
- **Grade** – Your grade will be determined by participation, your journal entries, and your completed registers.
- Good luck and may the strong survive! Westward Ho!



TRAVELING GUIDE

THE OREGON TRAIL



1st dice rolled is roman numeral category + 2nd dice rolled is number under numeral category

I. Equipment Problems – lose one day unless specified

1. Wheel Broke – replace, or hire Native for \$50 to get to the next stop
2. Axle Broke – replace, trade with another wagon, fix if farmer, or hire a farmer for \$40
3. Wagon Cover ripped – replace, trade with another wagon, fix if you have a sewing kit, or hire fix for \$40
4. Oxen Yoke broke – replace, trade with another wagon, fix if farmer, or hire farmer for \$40
5. Loose & Creaky Wagon – use grease, trade with another wagon for supplies, or hire fix for \$40
6. Firearms explosion/Wagon Fire – lose 2 days and all hunting supplies

II. Weather Problems – lose one day unless specified

1. Fog – lose 2 days if you don't have a lantern
2. Extreme Cold Weather – having blankets = safe; no blankets = youngest dies
3. Hailstorm – slow going; lose 2 days if you don't have a tent
4. Drought – lose 1 day; having water canteen = safe; no canteen = youngest dies
5. Grass Fire & Smoke – stops progress, lose only 1 day, cow dies
6. Trees Down From Thunderstorm – saw or hatchet lose only 1 day; no saw or hatchet lose 2 days

III. Terrain Difficulties – lose two days unless specified

1. Rocky Terrain/Animal Injured – only 1 day if you use animal medicine tincture
2. Stuck In Mud – only 1 day if you have a shovel
3. Extreme Incline – throw weight overboard; lose extra wheel, tent, dutch oven, and 2 days
4. River Crossing – Roll one more dice:
 - if odd roll = unsuccessful; lose 100 pounds of food, all bullets, and 2 days
 - if even roll = cross successful; lose only 1 day
5. Extreme Decline – chains = lose only 1 day; no chains = lose 2 days and \$100 to repair from crash
6. Toll Road – lose 2 days for slow going and \$50 for toll

IV. Traveling Crisis – lose two days unless specified

1. Cholera Disease – lose 1 family member and 2 days for burial; medicine won't help; "healing card" will save
2. Snake Bite:
 - If no human medicine tincture = lose 1 family member and 2 days
 - If human medicine tincture = save family member and lose only 1 day
3. Wolves Attack Wagon – lose 100 lbs of food and 2 days
4. Get Lost – roll one dice to see how many total days you will lose on this part of the trail
5. Enemy Attack – lose 1 oxen, all hunting supplies, and 2 days; only 1 day if you have a horse to help escape
6. Scarlet Fever – lose 1 family member and 2 days for burial; medicine won't stop this fever; "healing card" will save

V. Good Fortune – gain one day for each in addition to the benefit listed

1. Trade With Natives – gain a shovel, set of blankets, and 50 lbs of food
2. Find Abandoned Wagon – collect 1 supply item of choice (see general store list)
3. Find Fruit Trees – add 100 lbs of food if you have a cooking kit
4. Good Progress, Stop to Rest – all recoup and gain one "healing card" if you own a family Bible and a tent
5. Find a Short Cut – gain a 2nd day if you have a compass
6. Trade With Another Wagon – gain \$50 from trade if you can trade a saw, hatchet, or shovel

VI. Lucky Day – gain one day for each in addition to the benefit listed.

1. Meet Native Guide – find short cut and gain a 2nd day if you can trade your Native friend a dutch oven
2. Find Fish Creek – if fishing gear, roll both dice to gain food (add dice together then times by 5 lbs)
3. Great Weather – roll one dice to determine total number of days you will gain
4. Find Trunk – gain 1 human medicine tincture, family bible, and one teacher choice from the general store
5. See Buffalo – if gun & bullets, you can go hunting and multiply by 100 lbs
6. Relax at Campfire – gain another day if cooking kit; gain yet another day if fiddle due to rejuvenating entertainment



GENERAL STORE

OREGON TRAIL SHOPPING LIST



Welcome to the General Store. Look around and shop.
You may buy any of the items below but **each wagon must have the bolded items.**

FOOD ONLY

Flour	40 lbs	\$2.00
Cornmeal	20 lbs	\$1.00
Rice	20 lbs	\$1.00
Dried Fruit	10 lbs	\$3.00
Molasses	10 lbs	\$1.00
Coffee	5 lbs	\$2.00
Tea	5 lbs	\$2.00
Bacon	40 lbs	\$4.00
Dried Beef	40 lbs	\$6.00
Salt/Pepper	5 lbs	\$1.00

MISCELLANEOUS SUPPLIES

Dutch Oven	\$15
Candles	\$5
Fiddle	\$15
Playing Cards	\$5
Cooking Kit	\$20
Family Bible	\$10
Sewing Kit	\$15
Blankets	\$10
Human Medicine Tincture	\$40
Animal Medicine Tincture	\$30

WAGON SUPPLIES

Wagon (includes 4 wheels and 2 axles)	\$350
Wagon Axle (spare)	\$40
Wagon Wheel (spare)	\$40
Oxen Yoke (for 2 oxen)	\$50
Ox (will need 2 to pull wagon)	\$70
Horse	\$40
Cow	\$30
Whip	\$4
Wagon Cover	\$15
Resin/Tar (grease)	\$20
Chains	\$12
Rope	\$10

OUTDOOR SUPPLIES

Rifle	\$50
5 Bullets (1 box)	\$10
Fishing Gear	\$30
Saw	\$20
Hatchet	\$15
Water Canteen	\$10
Tent	\$25
Shovel	\$12
Knife	\$5
Rain Poncho	\$7
Compass	\$10
Lantern & Oil	\$12



MILEAGE CHART

THE OREGON TRAIL

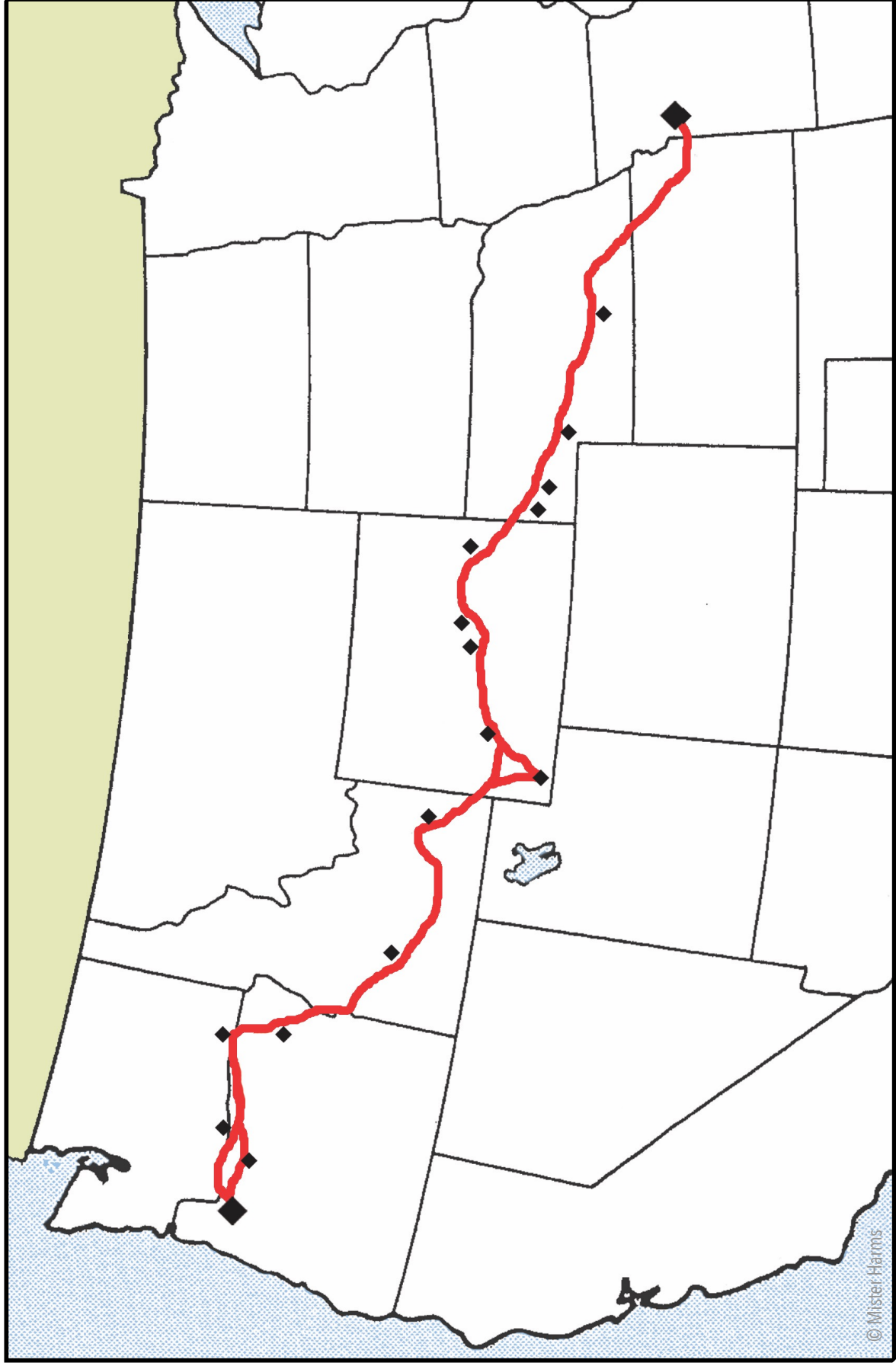


Though the entire trail was about 2,170 miles, the trail from Independence, MO to Oregon City was 1,930 miles. The average wagon could make the trip in 4-6 months. This averages out to approximately 15 miles per day (which is extremely less than 15 miles per hour). The following is the actual distance given to the emigrants as they began the trail.

Destination	Trip Mileage	Total Miles Traveled
Independence, MO	0	0
Fort Kearny	319	319
Platte River / Ash Hollow	185	504
Chimney Rock	57	561
Scotts Bluff <i>(1/3 of trail completed)</i>	35	596
Ft. Laramie	54	650
Independence Rock	165	815
Devil's Gate	10	825
South Pass <i>(nearly 1/2 way)</i>	89	914
Ft. Bridger	112	1026
Soda Springs	132	1158
Three Island Crossing	240	1398
Flagstaff Hill	203	1601
Whitman Mission	109	1710
The Dalles	110	1820
Barlow Pass	58	1878
Oregon City <i>(We made it!)</i>	52	1930

TRAIL MAP

THE OREGON TRAIL



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THE OREGON TRAIL



Wagon _____

[illegible]



THE OREGON TRAIL

Emigrant's Name BERTHA JONES (Cassidy Strong)

Wagon JONES FAMILY

SAMPLE

EXAMPLE



THE OREGON TRAIL



Wagon _____

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THE OREGON TRAIL



Wagon JONES FAMILY

[illegible]



THE OREGON TRAIL

Emigrant's Name_____

Wagon _____

[illegible]



THE OREGON TRAIL



CALENDAR - 1

THE OREGON TRAIL



Emigrant's Name _____

Wagon _____

May - 1846

				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

June - 1846

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

July - 1846

		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		



CALENDAR - 2

THE OREGON TRAIL



Emigrant's Name _____

Wagon _____

August - 1846

					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

September - 1846

	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

October - 1846

			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	



CALENDAR - 1

THE OREGON TRAIL



Emigrant's Name JEDEDIAH JONES (Mike Johnson)

Wagon JONES FAMILY

May - 1846

				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
					1	2
						3
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

June - 1846

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

July - 1846

		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		