

## March 1, 1859: Oregon Trail Week 1

Momma thought it would be a good idea for me to keep a journal of our trip down the Oregon Trail to our new home. My name is Sally and I am 12 years old. Ben is my six year old brother. We picked up everything we own and moved from Ohio and arrived in Independence, MO four days ago.

Poppa got it in his head that there were too many people at home. He wasn't used to neighbors crowding his fields and he was worried about what would happen with the Southern states about slavery. Momma didn't have those worries, but after the drought destroyed our crops was ready for a fresh start. I DON'T WANT TO GO! Poppa was certain that I should go to school and I liked my friends and teacher – Momma says that I probably won't ever see them again. I cried all night when I said goodbye to Beth Anne. Ben's just excited about everything and isn't worried about starting over.

Poppa bought a wagon when we arrived. It looks like our farm wagon – maybe 12 feet long. Momma cried as much as I did when she had to get rid of Grandma's dresser and dining room set. Poppa said there is no room. Seems like it's mostly filled with food, warm clothes and the like. I get to keep my favorite doll and book. They're in the wagon under my pillow.

Poppa also bought six oxen to pull the wagon. He is going to train them the next few days before the wagon train starts. He'd been doing some reading about other people going to Oregon. Horses couldn't drag the wagon over the Rockies. Mules are strong but are kind of ornery. Poppa never would cotton to mules around the farm. We had some oxen to pull our plow, so Poppa's comfortable with them. He always said that it takes some time for each to get used to the other to make it easy!

My parents have been reading newspapers and books about what to expect. He found a guide who is leaving real soon. Some of the people in the train are from Ohio, so Poppa feels safe about going along. Momma says she will take me shopping for everything we are going to need tomorrow.

I'm going to bed now. I hope I find friends on the trail!

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## March 4 - 1868 : Founder of Chisholm Trail dies

My name is Hank and I am 14 years old. I just heard that Mr. Chisholm died, and that took me by surprise. Seems he died all of a sudden, from food poisoning. Just last year I helped take one of the first cattle drives from Texas to Kansas along the trail he set up, what became known as the Chisholm Trail.

Mr. Chisholm, he lived a very interesting life. From what I heard, he had a pa from Scotland and a Cherokee ma. He grew up in Arkansas, but in his 20s he moved farther west and started livin' with his ma's people. He started trading with all the different tribes in the area and the people who started movin' in. Because he learned the different languages and was a fair trader, everyone trusted him. Even the US government started using him to work with all the different tribes.

His trading routes went farther and farther, until he started working out of Kansas. He set up a trading route from there to Texas that even the beginningest wagonner could drive – flat and wide, not too many hills and lots of waterholes. It was a great little trading route, but no one knew how good.

Turns out, after the Civil War ended in '65 people on the East Coast were ready to stop living like they were at war and start living a more regular life – especially eating nicer food! And comin' from Texas, I can tell you that nothing tastes better than beef! Texas didn't have lots of veggies, but it had weeds and lots of critters that ate 'em - but no railroads to take cattle from where here to where they were valuable.

There were railroads in Kansas, though, and that's where Mr. Chisholm's trading route came in real handy. It was hard enough to take that first herd – two thousand of the orneriest, wildest four legged critters God made. It took us most of three months to get Mr. Wheeler's herd up there. Pa worked the chuck wagon and his coffee and biscuits got us through lots of dark mornings and late nights. I heard that after all was done, 'bout 5,000,000 cattle took that trip to the railroad before they figured out how to get railroads in Texas!

Strange how something can start out one thing and end up another. They tell me that parts of the Chisholm Trail can still be seen 140 year later – seems like a person's life can make quite a mark – like the dent 5 million head of cattle can put on the ground!

