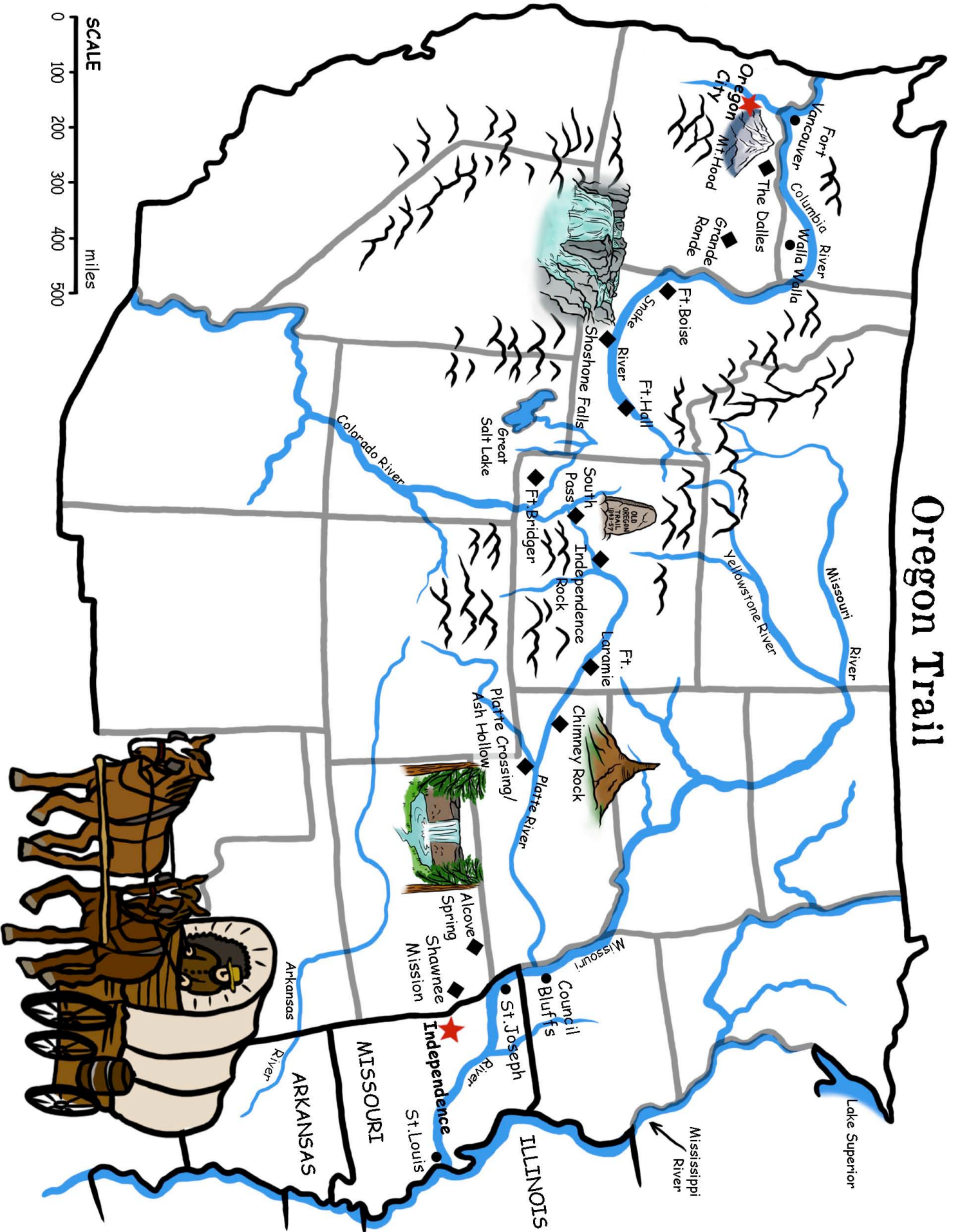


Oregon Trail



The Great Migration of 1843

In the 1840s the United States barely spread passed the Mississippi River. Western areas at that time belonged to Mexico or were open country. Texas was fighting to be its own republic. And to head west from the safety of organized borders and cities was daring and dangerous.

Read along and connect stops on the Oregon Trail headed west on the map.

1. Almost 1,000 people with 120 wagons and several thousand cattle left Independence, MO within days of each other in May 1843. It was the largest group at the time to travel west. They didn't know it yet but their successes would spur other Americans dreaming of Manifest Destiny.



Oregon Trail

2. Shawnee Mission was an outpost built by the Methodist church in the 1830s, and the first night's camp of many emigrants.

3. Alcove Spring rewarded travellers with a restful, green place for fresh water. And by now they needed it! Overland travellers had gone over 165 miles from Independence, most of them on foot.

4. Traveling hundreds of miles along the southern side of the Platte River emigrants had to ford across before it forked to reach the North Platte River and continue west. Nearby, Ash Hollow offered clear, spring water but only after a dangerous, steep hill. After drinking muddy Platte water for so long, many thought it was worth the hazard.

5. Today Chimney Rock stands at an impressive 325 feet from the spire to the base. Back then it was taller, and inspired many attempts to climb it.

6. Reaching Fort William (called Ft. Laramie since 1850) meant that emigrants were a third of the way there. The fort also marked the start of the Rocky Mountains.

7. Emigrants reached Independence Rock by Independence Day. After 1843 migrations were an annual event and travellers knew if they hadn't reached here by July 4th, they were behind schedule and in danger of being trapped in the mountains during winter.



Independence Rock

8. The most important trail site was the South Pass through the Rocky Mountains—an opening in the mountain range about 20 miles wide. It was the halfway point of the trail, (and it crosses the Continental Divide). Wagons would not have had access to the western territories without it.

9. Built at the Black Fork of the Green River in 1843, Ft. Bridger was started by Jim Bridger, a famous mountain man, and seasoned fur trapper, Louis Vasquez, to resupply the emigrants to Oregon.

10. Fort Hall was owned by the British business, Hudson's Bay Company. Employees at the fort had been convincing travellers to abandon their wagons, and generally discouraged people from going to Oregon Country. Led by Dr. Marcus Whitman, most of the wagon train in 1843 pressed on; some split toward California.



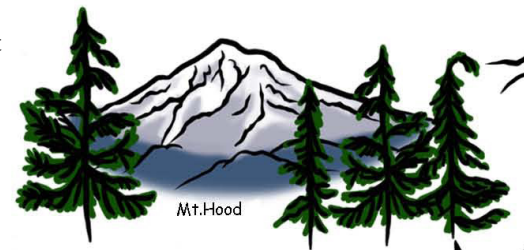
Shoshone Falls

11. Shoshone Falls on the Snake River was a short side trip for some. It was a remarkable sight, higher than Niagara Falls.

12. There were still 400 miles to go from Boise, and worries of getting to Willamette Valley before winter.

13. The green Grande Ronde valley was a welcome sight after traveling dry plains, but it was still far from settlements or protection.

14. When the wagon train reached The Dalles they were stopped short by Mount Hood. Wagons had to be disassembled and floated down the Columbia River, and cattle lead around the mountain.



Mt. Hood

15. In October 1843 the wagon train made it to Oregon City, the hub of the Willamette Valley. And the end of the 2,000 mile trek!