

### *Would you go to school during the trip?*

It all depended on how many children there were in the wagon train. If there were many, in some wagon trains they would get together when the wagons stopped for lunch or dinner and an older person would go over lessons with the children.

On some wagon trains, children would study their readers and learn arithmetic from their parents or older brothers and sisters.

Many families were able to bring a few books with them in their wagons, so that you could practice your reading.

Some people said that the whole trip was one great big school because you were learning new things every day. You might learn the names of flowers or animals you had never seen before.

You would learn about fixing things when they broke down, because you couldn't just go to a store and buy something new.

You would learn about cooking outdoors and tying up the animals so that they had enough room to move around and eat but couldn't run away.

There were so many new things to learn that by the end of the trip, you knew a lot more than when you had started out.

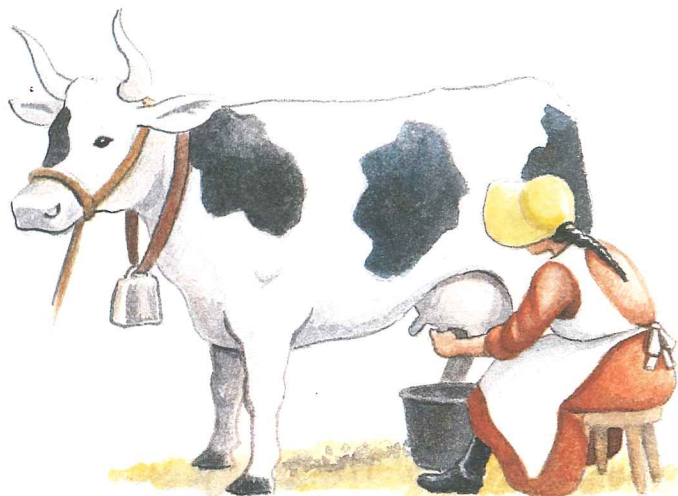




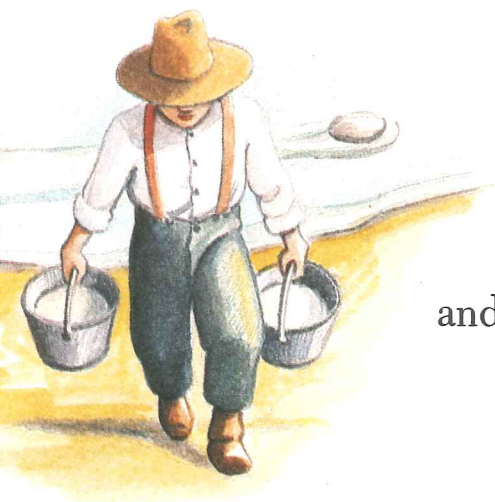
*What chores would you have to do?*

Everybody worked very hard during the long days of traveling West. Children had lots of things to do:

They milked the cows



and fetched water from the rivers



and watched the cattle when they walked behind the wagons



and helped cook the food

and washed dishes



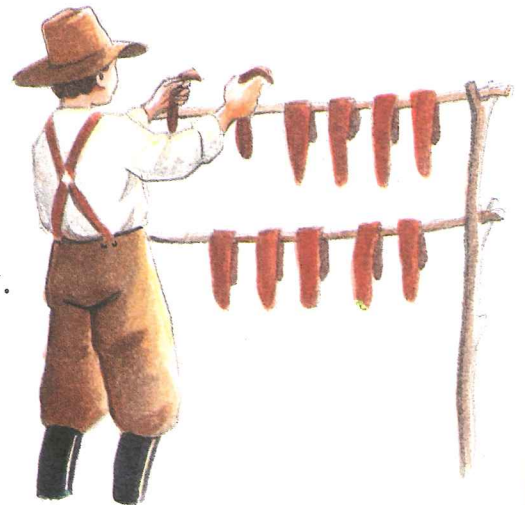
and helped skin and prepare the buffalo or deer or wild turkey when they were caught

and collected wood or buffalo chips in baskets to help  
make the fire



and shook out the blankets and quilts in the fresh air

and hung the beef jerky to dry.



Some of it was hard work, some easy. But most of the chores were interesting because instead of living in a house, you were living in a covered wagon and things had to be done in new and different ways.

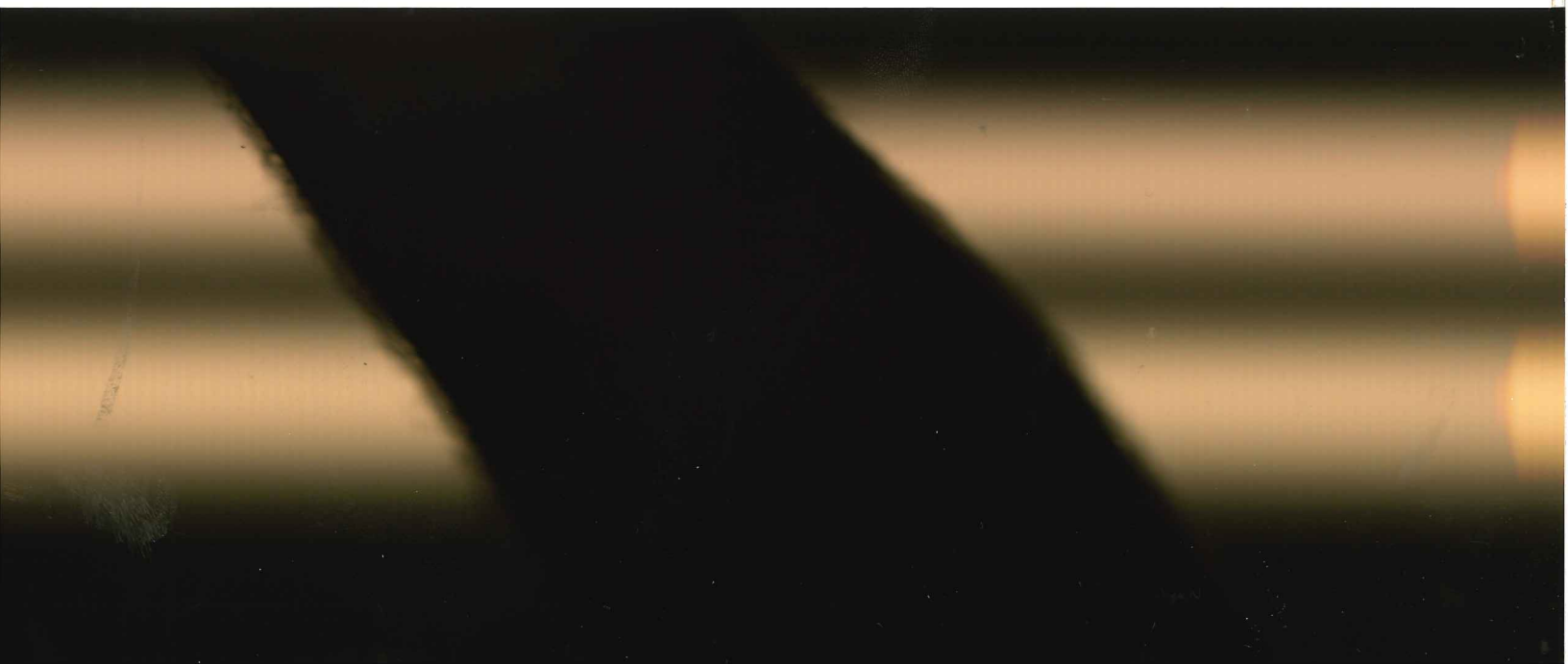
*Could you have fun on the trip?*

If you like going places that you have never been before — and if you like seeing things for the first time that you have only heard or read about — you would have had a lot of fun. For there was something new to see and hear almost every day.

During the day there would be a chance to explore a little if you didn't go too far from the wagons.

Then at night, after you helped with dinner and cleaned up the dishes, many interesting things happened.

Usually there was someone in the wagon train who knew how to play a harmonica or a fiddle. Everybody would gather around and sing songs and dance.





Sometimes you would sit by the camp fire and listen to stories — maybe even a ghost story!

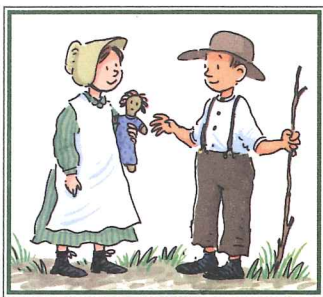
And if the sun was shining in early July, the July 4th celebrations were something very special. Everybody prepared for days for an Independence Day party.

Most people didn't carry an American flag with them on the trip, and so they had to make one. You would need something red and something white and something blue. So you would look for just the right material.

First you would take a sheet for the white of the flag. In one wagon train they cut up a red shirt to make the stripes and a blue jacket for the stars to be sewn on. By the end of 1845, you would have needed twenty-eight stars.

If you knew how to sew, you could help to make the flag. And before you knew it, "Old Glory" would be ready!

# TRAIL CHORES



## How often did pioneers change their clothes on the trail?

About as often as they bathed—not very often at all! Most pioneers wore the same dirt-encrusted clothes day after day. It wasn't easy to find clean water for washing, which pioneer women probably thought was just as well. Laundry was an awful chore that took an entire day.

To keep their dresses from dragging in the mud, women wore their skirts a little higher than they had back home. A few daring women wore the new fashion of *bloomers*, or loose pants that were gathered at the ankles. Men and boys wore linen or woolen pants and shirts. To protect their faces and eyes from the sun, men and boys wore wide-brimmed hats and women and girls wore bonnets. Everyone wore sturdy shoes or boots.

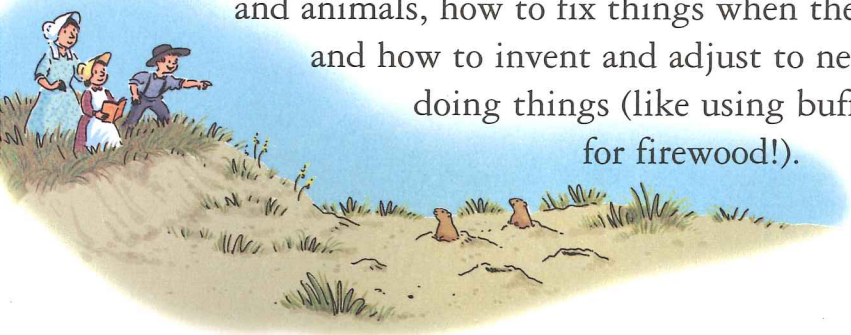
## How did pioneer children learn their lessons on the trail?

Since there was no school to attend, some parents gave their children lessons on the trail. Other children just read the few books they brought along, kept journals, and wrote letters to friends and family.

But even more than spelling and math, children's biggest lessons were probably the ones taught by trail life itself.

Pioneer children learned how to identify new plants and animals, how to fix things when they broke, and how to invent and adjust to new ways of doing things (like using buffalo chips for firewood!).

Parents learned things along the trail, too. Pioneer women discovered that the bumpy wagons churned their butter for them if they just left the milk can hanging on its hook!







# ALL WORK AND NO PLAY...



Guess who won this game of checkers!



AT RECESS, nineteenth-century children used to play games like tag and crack-the-whip. If they needed a ball, they often used an inflated pig's bladder.

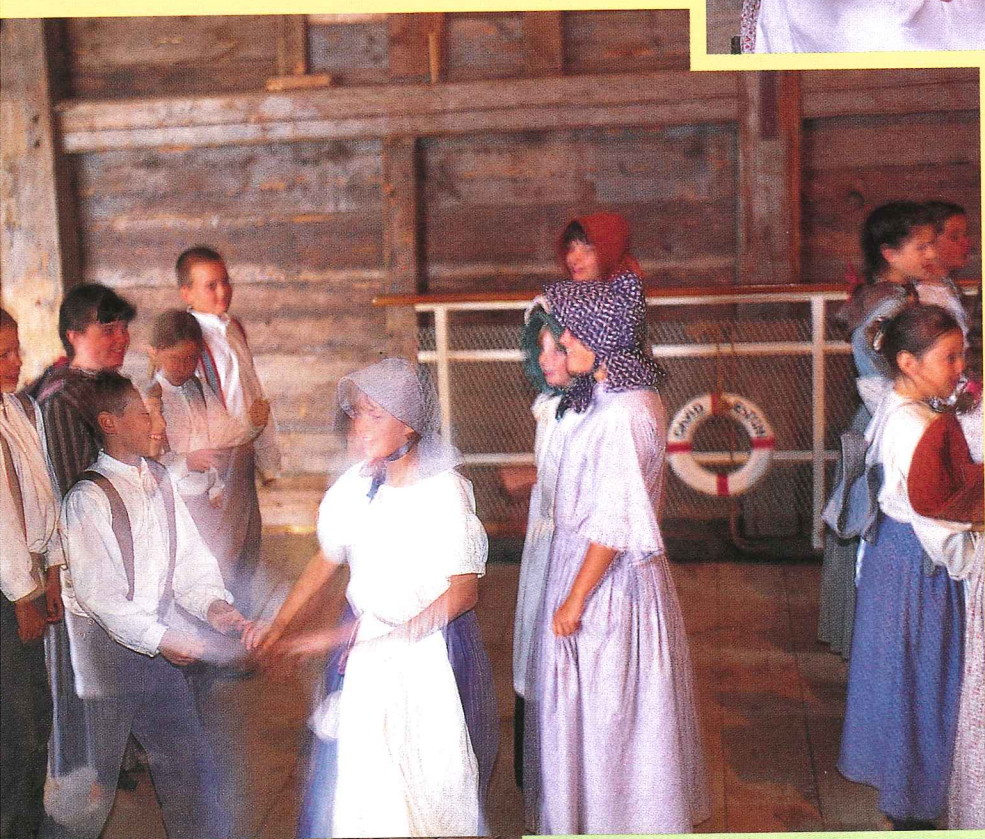
"I think some of their games were better," said Amanda. "Now, unless they're playing sports, kids don't have as many games they play outside."

Here are some of the other ways that nineteenth-century children had fun in the days before video games and TV.



Nineteenth-century children made work fun by having friends join in. In this "wool-picking bee," the kids got wool ready for spinning by picking out the sticks and burrs. "Talk and laugh," said Darlene, "but do a good job. You wouldn't want any twigs in there if your mom was knitting your woolen underwear!"

"Square dancing is sort of fun," said Megan, "but I'd never do it at home."



"Cool," said Alex, after he hit his croquet ball through the wicket. "Oh, it feels a little warm to me," replied Darlene, gently reminding Alex to have a nineteenth-century reaction next time he made a good shot.

