



The Oregon Trail and Oregon Pioneer History

Grade: 4, Adaptable for all grades

Overview

Every teacher likely has an abundance of resources about the Oregon Trail as well as the events that occurred regarding Oregon's statehood. [Historic Oregon Newspapers](#) has a large collection of authentic and relevant content from this time period. These newspaper articles and photographs can be utilized for firsthand accounts of the pioneers' experiences on the Oregon Trail, or during pioneer life in Oregon during the mid 1800s to the early 1900s.

Listed below are a variety of articles that can be accessed through the [Historic Oregon Newspapers](#) website related to Oregon's rich history. This is not a complete list, but rather a working list of all the newspapers and articles that can be connected with the Oregon Trail. To conduct further research, go to our [advanced search option](#), which allows you to narrow down the years, key words, and specific newspaper.

Oregon Common Core State Standards

Social Studies Standards:

- Historical Knowledge 4.2: Explain how key individuals and events influenced the early growth and changes in Oregon.
- Historical Thinking 4.5: Distinguish between fact and fiction in historical accounts by comparing documentary sources on historical figures and events with fictional characters and events in stories.
- Historical Thinking 4.6: Create and evaluate timelines that show relationships among people, events, and movements in Oregon history.
- Historical Thinking 4.7: Use primary and secondary sources to create or describe a narrative about events in Oregon history.
- Geography 4.10: Compare and contrast varying patterns of settlements in Oregon, past and present, and consider future trends.
- Geography 4.12: Explain how people in Oregon have modified their environment and how the environment has influenced people's lives.
- Social Science Analysis 4.20: Describe the sequence of events in given current and historical accounts.

Links

The articles are organized chronologically.

“From Maine to Oregon: Early Days Traveling from Coast to Coast” [From the Astoria Daily Morning Astorian, December 6, 1889.](#)

- Remembrances of R.S. Thurston’s transcontinental trip from Brunswick, ME to Oregon in 1844. Thurston later served as Oregon’s congressman.

“Today Celebrates Her Ninetieth Birthday” [From Portland Morning Oregonian, February 28, 1905.](#)

- Recounts the 1852 pioneer experiences of Sophrona Gibson, a long-lived Oregon Trail veteran. With a photo of the birthday gal, this story is a good way to “put a face” on the pioneer experience (i.e. personalize it) for students.

“Early Days In Oregon: Policy of the Hudson Bay Company” [From the Astoria Daily Morning Astorian, December 2, 1883.](#)

- Earliest mention of the ‘Oregon trail’ (by name) in the digitized newspapers. Details efforts by the British Hudson Bay Company to discourage American settlers from travelling overland to Oregon.

“Story of The Famous Old Oregon Trail” by Walter E. Meacham, serialized in *The Ontario Argus* in 5 weekly installments beginning April 6, 1922: [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#), [Part 4](#), and [Part 5](#).

“Old Oregon Trail was Famous Route in Prairie Schooner Days” [From Pendleton East Oregonian, September 22, 1921.](#)

- Lot Livermore recounts his experience on the Oregon Trail having moved from Marietta, Ohio to Pendleton, Oregon.

These stories relate to Oregonians’ initial efforts to commemorate and mark the original route of the Oregon Trail, beginning around 1900:

“The Oregon Trail: Project to Mark It With Monuments From Missouri to This State” [From Pendleton East Oregonian, April 25, 1900.](#)

- Details the Oregon Historical Society’s first plans to commemorate the trail.

“Trip Over Oregon Trail,” [From Portland Morning Oregonian, September 17, 1900.](#)

- Professor F. G. Young’s account of retracing the 600-mile journey in 1900.

“Great Fair in 1905: Oregon Historical Society Starts the Movement,” [From Portland Sunday Oregonian, December 16, 1900.](#)

- Reports initial planning that would lead to the great Lewis & Clark World’s Exposition in Portland in 1905.

“Will Retrace The Old Oregon Trail,” [From Portland Sunday Oregonian, September 17, 1905.](#)

- Story about Ezra Meeker, an original Oregon Pioneer of 1852, who plans to retrace the trail in his old age, installing commemorative markers along the route. Includes a map of the Oregon Trail from Missouri to the Northwest.

“Trail Taken Again” [From Morning Oregonian, March 15, 1910.](#)

- Story about Ezra Meeker making his third trip across the Oregon Trail to make sure that all states are restoring their sections of the Oregon Trail and preserving the history of this trail.

“Move in Behalf of Oregon Train Intent of Daughters of Revolution” [From The Sunday Oregonian, March 15, 1914.](#)

- The Daughters of Revolution fight to have the Oregon Trail marked because of its significance in Oregon history from George Washington’s army walking over it to Indian Chief, Nemocobin having crossed over it.

The remaining links are to stories that are perhaps only partially, or indirectly, concerned with the Oregon Trail. However, they present fascinating perspectives on other aspects of early pioneer history in Oregon:

“Early Local Government in Rhode Island and Oregon,” [From Astoria Daily Morning Astorian, November 18, 1884.](#)

- Fascinating piece details Oregon’s remarkable early history of political organization, and compares it with similar developments during the ‘pioneer’ settlement of an Eastern state nearly 200 years earlier.

“Joaquin Miller Writes on Oregon for the Chicago Times,” [From Jacksonville Oregon Sentinel, September 25, 1886.](#)

- Known in his day as the ‘Poet of the Sierras’ and the ‘Bard of Oregon,’ here Miller writes a prose overview in praise of our state. In this article he coins a nickname that would become popular: “The Emerald Land.” This piece was reprinted in many papers back east, helping to form Oregon’s image with the rest of the country.

“Beginnings of Oregon: Explorations and Early Settlement at the Mouth of The Columbia River,” [From Portland Morning Oregonian, April 19, 1901.](#)

- With illustration, “Astoria As It Was In 1813.”

“One Hundred Years In Oregon,” [From Portland Morning Oregonian, January 1, 1903.](#)

- Condensed (1 page) history of Oregon’s first Century of Anglo-American settlement and development. Well illustrated.

“Eastern Oregon Road-Building Programme Includes 814 Miles” [From The Morning Oregonian, January 2, 1922.](#)

- Construction work on three major highways in Eastern Oregon: John Day Highway, Oregon Trail, and Dalles-California highway. The Oregon Trail being restored first in 1922. This article presents two hand drawn maps with a different vantage point of Oregon’s roadways and mountains.