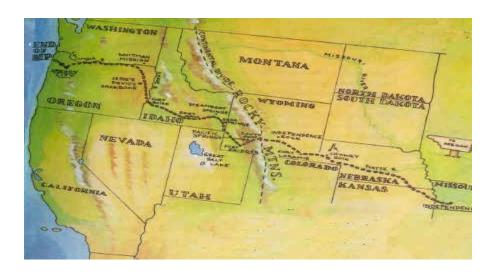
"HOW PIONEERS AND THEIR HORSES SETTLED THE LAND"

The pioneers were the first people to move west across the North American continent to settle. They were looking for a fresh life and a new beginning separate from the already established colonies in the East. Their first frontier was the Appalachian Mountains in the early 1700's and later moved across the Mississippi River around 1783. After settling fertile land west of the Mississippi, they began to move into the Great Plains, the Pacific coast, and Texas in the mid-1800's.

One of the most prominent trails used by pioneers to move across the country was the Oregon Trail. It was used by the first exploreers and was a popular fur trading route. It streteched over 2000 miles and started in Independence, Missouri and ended in the Oregon territory. The pioneers traveled this trail by wagon train in approximately six months.



The wagon trains consisted of several families moving at once. This made the journey safer and allowed groups to rely on one another in case of an emergency or problem. Without help from others, pioneers would have difficulty fixing broken wooden wheels on the wagons, hunting for food or searching for water when supplies ran out, protecting their families from Indian raids, or getting the wagons, people, and livestock safely through river crossings.

When a pioneer family finaly found their perfect home site, they would establish residency there by claiming the land and building a home. As each family decided to stay in



their favorite area, the wagon train got smaller and smaller until they had all reached their destinations. Upon finding the perfect site, the family would often stay in their covered wagon until they could construct a temporary dwelling called a lean-to or a shanty. These dwellings were more like a shed than a home, but many families made due until they could use large trees or lumber to build a more permanent structure like a log cabin.

If trees were readily available to cut down on their land, life was a bit easier. Teams of horses were used to drag the large logs to the homesite for building. If there were no trees for building, the pioneers would have to trade or purchase logs to build their homes. This was a difficult job and often took months to complete. However, once the logs were in place, the pioneers would use mud or prairie grass to fill in the gaps between the logs to keep the wind and other elements out of the home.



Many pioneers were farmers and lived off the land. They used horses to pull heavy cast iron plows made back in New England for sandy type soils. These plows were often useless against the hard ground and prairie grass roots in the western territories. In 1837, a man by the name of John Deere developed the steel plow with a shiny blade that cut deep into the ground and tore up hard roots.





As time went on and the need to produce crops faster arose, plows began to become larger and easier to manage. Between 1833 and 1870, over one million pioneer settlers had moved into lowa alone and it became a major agriculture region.

Without the use of horses, pioneers would not have been successful. Their horses allowed them to pack and travel successfully, to hunt in various regions, haul lumber for building homes, and to pull heavy plows to break up soil for crops. Horse also aided in keeping other livestock tended and rounded up such as milk cows or even sheep used for wool.



