

## ***Teacher Resource Information:***

### **Life as a Pioneer**

#### **First Settlement in Cache Valley**

Mormon Church leaders had been receiving reports of the beauty and good farming conditions in Cache Valley from as early as August of 1847, but it wasn't until the Great Salt Lake Valley became more thickly populated and livestock increased, that it was found necessary to seek more farming land and better grazing ground.

In 1855 a company was organized to take the Church livestock herd into Cache Valley. The herdsman located a ranch just south of present day Logan. They began at once to build some log cabins, corrals and gates. This site became known as Elkhorn Ranch.

By fall, nearly 3,000 head of cattle and horses had been driven into the valley. About 200 tons of wild hay was cut and stacked for winter feed. It was a hard winter and these herdsman met disaster. Of the 2,000 head of Church cattle only 420 survived the winter and the trip over the mountains into the Salt Lake Valley.

Despite this, in 1856 Peter Maughan was sent by Brigham Young to pick out a location in Cache Valley for settlement. He chose a site in the southern part of the valley, near present day Wellsville. Their party was able to put up sufficient hay and build some log cabins just in time for the first snow in September. The winter was hard, but in the spring, these early Cache Valley pioneers began planting crops.

As more emigrants entered Cache Valley, new settlements arose. At the close of 1859, there were six small settlements: Maughan's Fort (present day Wellsville), North Settlement (Mendon), Logan, Providence, Smithfield, and Richmond. Early settlers came from a variety of backgrounds, including English, Scottish, Welsh, and Scandanavian.

#### **Settling in**

When the pioneers first settled in the valley, the first tasks the settlers had to accomplish were: put up hay, make corrals for the livestock, and build cabins. The wagons would be drawn up by the creek and the animals turned loose to graze. The young boys were responsible for watching the livestock, while the men began to work on building shelter. Young men were sent to the canyon for logs, while the men plowed and prepared the ground for spring planting. Location to water with an area to plant their crops was essential for the early settlers. In the spring, these settlers used plows to break the soil, planted their first crops, and dug ditches for irrigation. Barley, potatoes, wheat, oats and corn were planted. Severe weather, insect infestation, problems with irrigation, and poor farming implements were common problems for the early settlers, making life in Cache Valley hard. In the early settlement of Cache Valley, it was vital for a village to have a blacksmith. The blacksmith could make the nails and bolts needed to make homes, he could mend farming equipment such as plows, and the kettles he made were essential for cooking.

## **Homes**

The first homes inhabited by the early settlers in Cache Valley were often hastily built, and sometimes dug. Dugouts could be dug out of the hillside, or in the ground, with minimal timber used to finish them off. Cooking was done outside of the dugout over an open fire. Cabins would be built when more time and resources were available. Most of these cabins had a dirt floor, a plank door hung on iron hinges, and windows with greased paper serving as window panes, because glass window panes were hard to come by in the early years of settlement. These dwellings were often only had one room and the roof may be made with timbers covered with dirt or sod. Home furnishings were homemade and sparse.

## **Domestic Responsibilities**

Every family made its own bread, cheese, soap, butter, and candles. They sheared their own sheep for wool, which could be carded, spun into yarn and made into cloth and they generally made clothes for the entire family. These tasks were very labor intensive. For instance, doing laundry by hand meant water had to be heated up, the clothes had to be agitated and then scrubbed clean on a washboard. The clothes then had to go through the rinse process and then hung out to dry. A garden was kept so the family could have fresh vegetables such as beans, beets, carrots, corn, onions, peas, potatoes, radishes, squash, tomatoes, and turnips.

Children in early Cache Valley had a lot of work to do to help out their parents. Boys were responsible for helping their dad and older brothers care for the animals and the crops. Girls were responsible for helping their mom and older sisters with the cooking, tending younger siblings, mending, and gathering eggs. Although pioneer children had a lot of work to do, they did still have fun! When all of their work was done, there were many games they could play. Many of their games and toys would be hand made out of wood or other materials because pioneers didn't have a lot of money to spend on toys. For example, marbles could be made out of clay. [See Teacher Resource Information: Pioneer Games for a list of games and toys]

## **School**

Early schools in Cache Valley were usually 1-2 room school houses. In the early days of education throughout Utah, school was not mandatory or free. In Cache Valley, students paid from \$ .60 to \$1.50 per term. Because there was no governing body for education in the state, curriculum, class size, teacher salaries, hours and months taught varied. For example, one teacher in Smithfield held classes from April to September because of the harsh winters. Attendance was not mandatory, thus students would show up sporadically. Oftentimes this attendance reflected busy times during planting or harvesting or the opinion of the parents regarding the importance of education.