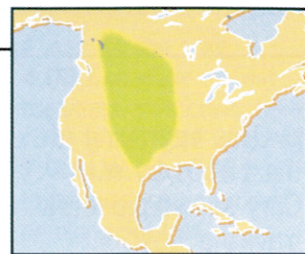




1830 to 1850

HOUSES IN THE GREAT PLAINS



▲ The Great Plains is a huge area of dry grassland. It is now a major agricultural and mining region.

Many pioneers did not go all the way to Oregon. They made their homes in the Great Plains. This grassy prairie land was good for growing corn, wheat, and potatoes, and for raising cattle, pigs, and sheep. The Great Plains also had wild thunderstorms, freezing winters, beastly hot summers—and Native Americans.

Pioneers arrived in the Great Plains with little money. Most likely, they spent their savings on the wagon and oxen that brought them there, or on rifles and guns to protect themselves from the Native Americans, who had been moved out. Land was cheap, but everything else was very expensive because it had to be transported a long way.

Few trees grew on the plains, so only rich people could afford log cabins. Most people built sod houses, which were made of hard-packed earth and mud. Pioneers cut “sods”—slabs of grassy earth—and stacked them to make walls. Roofs were also made of earth, laid on top of wooden poles. Grass grew on the roof. Snakes, rats, and bugs lived in that grass and they also fell into the house.

► This is an early photograph of pioneers outside their sod house in Nebraska. On a mound above the house, horses pull a wagonload of sods needed to repair the roof. The house is built like those of the Mandan and Pawnee **tribes** who lived in the area.



Cooking and preserving food

Food was prepared on a cast-iron stove. Corn was brought in from the fields and made part of almost every meal. Pioneers ate several kinds of corn bread, such as corn pone, johnnycake, and hoecake. They also ate corn on the cob.

Pioneers ate meat, too. Since there were no refrigerators, they found other ways to keep meat from spoiling. They smoked it over a fire, dried it in the sun, or soaked it in salty water. Then the meat stayed good for several months.

► Sod houses had no running water. A toilet was in a wooden shelter outside the house. It was a simple hole in the ground.





◀ Farmers used a special “sod-buster” plow to break the tough grass roots. This ox-drawn steel plow was developed by John Deere in 1837.

▼ A family of seven lives in this sod house. The stove in the corner is used for heat and cooking. For fuel, these people burn dried buffalo dung, called “buffalo chips.” They carry water from a 100-foot-deep (30 m) well they have dug on their farm.

▲ Most pioneers built their own houses, but they often bought the doors and windows by mail order. They picked up their delivery at the nearest **trading post**.

