

(Dear Readers: this tale is a 'genre' (type) of story you can write called Historical Fiction. It has a setting and facts based on a real time in history, but the characters, places and events may be fiction. Historical Fiction is good to encourage you to read more about the history of times past: like the lifestyle of the early pioneers migrating West on the Oregon Train.

There's a 'whopping' 247 'O,o' letters. Have fun finding as many as you can!

Owen and Babe Oxen

Owen and Babe are a team of oxen on Mr. Henson's farm.

The Henson family had left Missouri late in the 1800's to join the Westward movement on the Oregon Trail. They bought Owen and Babe for \$25 for a 'yoke of oxen' to pull their 'prairie schooner'. They loaded their three children, food, clothes, and Gramma's rocking chair into that small covered wagon. A vision of land in the green Willamette Valley was ever before them.

From Missouri to Oregon, Owen and Babe proved to be worth the price.

They labored across rugged mountains, plodded across hot, grassy, golden plains, through rolling rivers and down deep valleys. Finally, they got to the Oregon Territory where Mr. Henson claimed the promise of a piece of land he could call his own.

After the long journey, Owen and Babe helped Mr. Henson and his sons drag logs to build a cabin. The oxen team pulled the plow that dug straight, deep furrows in the ground for the crops that grew food for the family. The

fields prospered with okra, carrots and broccoli; potatoes, tomatoes, and corn. Sometimes, the children would ride on the broad backs of the docile bovines. Those were the 'good old days' when Owen and Babe were young and strong.

But then one day, there was a loud, snorting noise out by the farmhouse. Mr Henson's young son had gone out and got one of those new 'tractor' things to pull the plow.

"But, Pa", he argued, them old oxen take a whole day to plow one acre. But this new tractor can turn that soil before mid-morning!"

And so, Farmer Henson had hung up the wooden oxen yoke on the corral fence. Owen and Babe were put out to pasture. Days came and went. Owen and Babe listened to the sounds of the tractor in the field.

One morning, the Hensons' woke in a hurry to plow the last acre for planting. But the tractor did not make a sound. It was broken. Mr. Henson's son was worried. "How are we gonna plow that last acre today, Pa?" he wailed. You know we got to get those seeds in the ground by tomorrow!"

Mr. Henson looked over at the ox yoke hanging on the corral. Mr. Henson looked at Owen and Babe in their ox stall. Mr. Henson looked at his son.

“I got an idea, Pops!” the son said. “How ‘bout old Owen and Babe pull that plow today? I know they got ‘one more acre’ in them!”

And so, Mr. Henson took the worn yoke down from the fence. Owen and Babe knew just what to do. Mr. Henson and Owen and Babe plowed that acre before the sun went down.

After that, tractors took over the land. Crops abounded and the people prospered for a while. But when the hard times came and the crops failed to grow, the old-time folks had a legend of hope from Owen and Babe: *if you look out across the land in the early dawn of a new day, you can see two oxen on the horizon, pulling that plow ‘just one more acre.’*

THE END



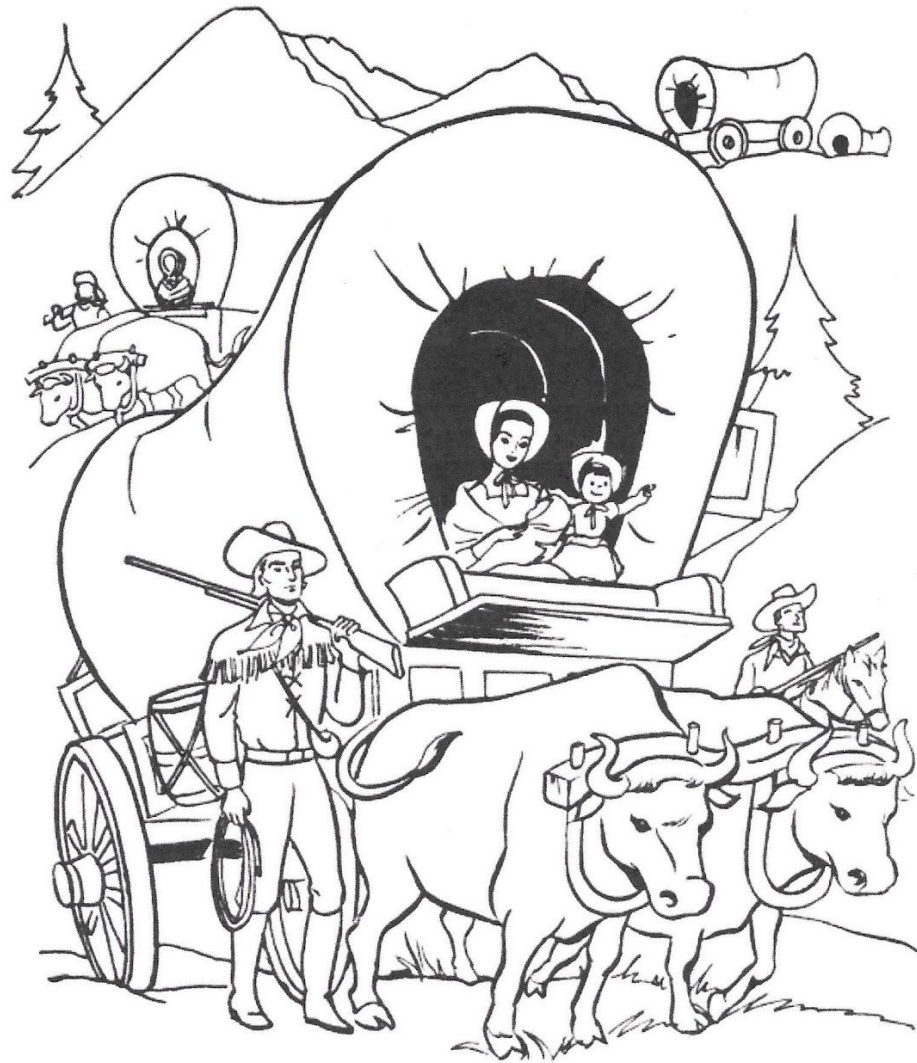
Did You Know?

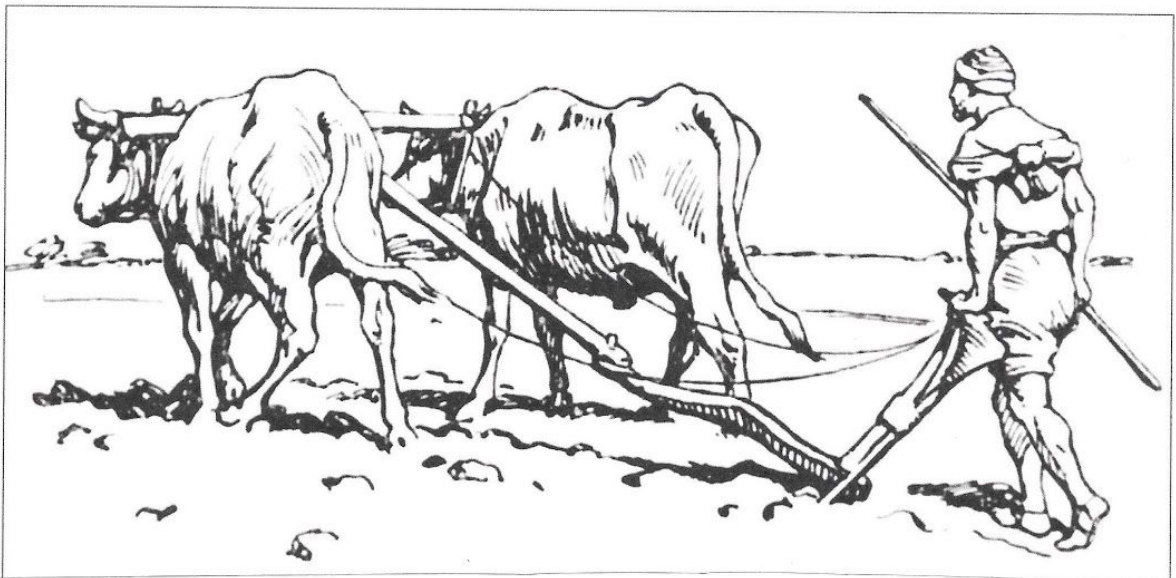
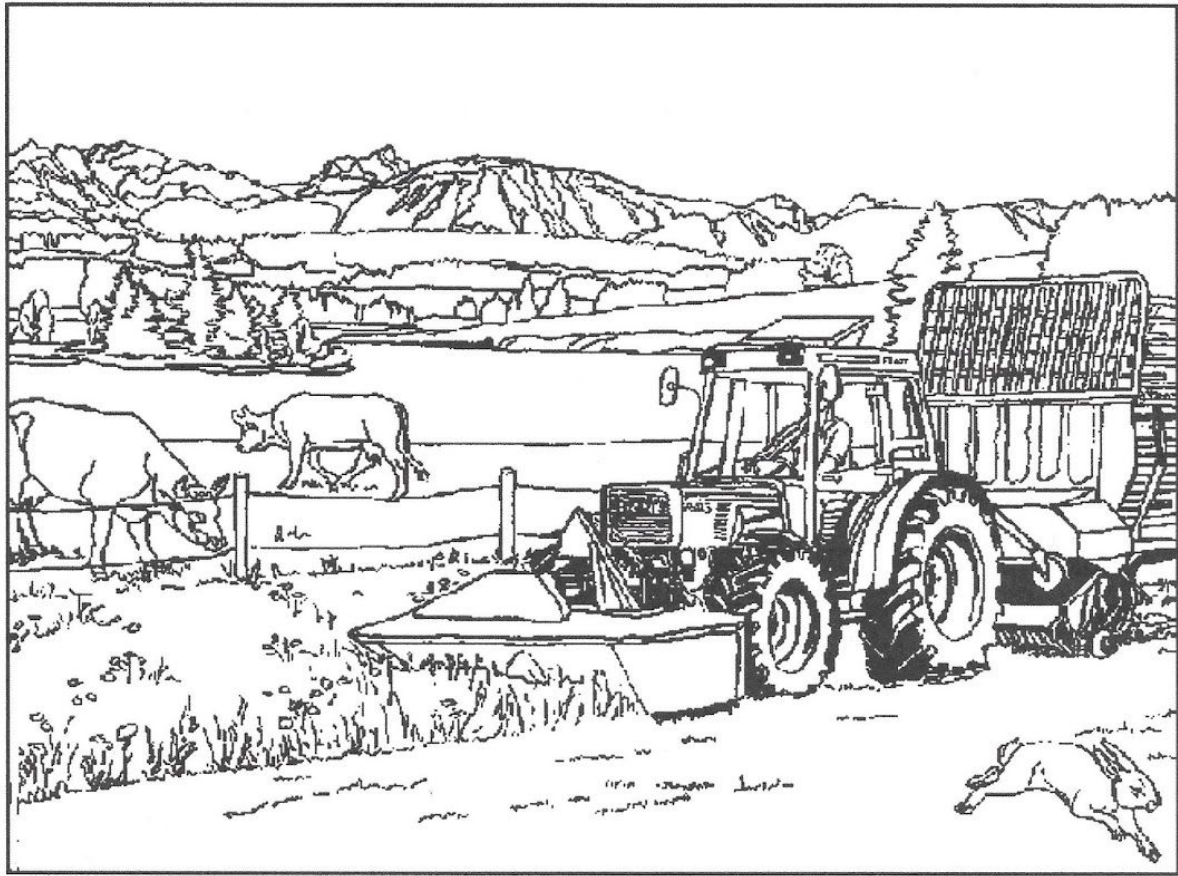
- The Oregon Trail was 2,000 miles long.
- It took 6 months to travel the Oregon Trail.
- A family of four had to take 1,000 pounds of food to make the trip.
- The Trail went from Missouri through Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, Idaho, to Oregon.
- A typical covered wagon was 10' long and 4' wide.
- Levi Strauss made 'blue jeans' from the rough canvas material of covered wagons.
- Able-bodied adults and children walked the route alongside the wagons
- Oxen could pull a wagon about 15 miles a day (slower than horses or mules).
- Oxen were good animals to pull the wagons because: people didn't want to steal oxen like valuable horses, oxen would not run off, oxen were steady and tireless workers, oxen ate the sparse grass along the way.
- An ox is in the 'bovine' (cattle) family.
- oxen were 'docile' (gentle).
- In early times, an acre was the amount of land a man and yoke of oxen could plow in a day. Today, with a 150-horsepower tractor, a man can plow an acre in 5 minutes!

Owen and Babe Oxen True/False Quiz

(Answers in the Story and Did You Know)

1. 'Oxen' means 'more than one ox'.
2. A 'prairie schooner' is a covered wagon.
3. The Oregon Trail was 100 miles long.
4. Mr. Henson used horses to pull his wagon.
5. Owen and Babe are an example of what it means to 'never give up'.
6. A 'yoke' is a funny story.
7. Pioneers used oxen to pull wagons because they were fast.
8. An ox is in the 'bovine' family.
9. Children walked along much of the Oregon Trail.
10. It took a year to travel the Oregon Trail.





Draw a vegetable garden. Bushes with tomatoes, green beans, corn stalks, vines with yellow squash, watermelon etc.

