

Interesting Facts

- Famous pioneer songs include "My Darling Clementine," "Home on the Range," "Buffalo Gals," and "Oh Susanna!"
- Pioneers would take many supplies with them, including yeast, cornmeal, dried meat, potatoes, rice, and, sometimes, even a cow for its milk!
- Pioneers traveled in wagons pulled by oxen because oxen were stronger than horses or mules. These wagons could not carry more than 2,000 pounds. It took five to seven days to travel the distance we can travel in a car in one hour.

Music of the Westward

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How Does the Music Express the Pioneers' Way of Life?

Pioneers shared many experiences. Travel began in the 1700s with the Appalachian Mountains as the frontier. Later, with the westward expansion, the pioneers moved to territories beyond the Mississippi River.

The pioneers came from different parts of the United States to begin their new lives. They came from many different backgrounds. Some were farmers, doctors, teachers, missionaries, or lawyers. The majority of their ancestors were from European countries.

The pioneers' way of life is depicted in their music. They knew they had long and difficult jour-

neys ahead of them. Many brought their music with them, which made the trip more bearable.

They sang about people they knew or met along their way. They sang about places they left behind and places they dreamed of. They sang about adventure, like finding gold, or even about love. Many times, they would sing about silly things and make up silly verses about people they actually knew.



Music to travel west

Some Songs Are Based on Tall Tales.

When people in the East first heard descriptions of the western frontier, they didn't know where the facts ended and the fiction began. The pioneers soon developed an exaggerated form of storytelling to present the big picture—the tall tale.

In those days, before TV and movies, people depended on storytelling for entertainment. After a long day's work, people gathered to tell one an-

other funny tales. Many of these tales became folk songs that the pioneers sang as they traveled.

Through the years, they would add lyrics to the songs they knew. Then no one really tired of singing the same old song twice. New lyrics gave pioneers an opportunity for more storytelling, creativity, and exaggeration and most likely took the boredom out of long trips to unknown lands.

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Some Songs May Be Based on a Real Person.

Many a time, the settlers would find among their company of travelers an outstanding person worthy of writing a song about. With time, the pioneers would find new verses to add to their songs.

Sometimes these songs would become a complete exaggeration of a legendary character or even an actual person known by the travelers.

The songs would tell about what the person did, where he or she came from, where they were going, and eventually what may have happened to them along the way. Whether they were successful in their adventures didn't matter and probably led to some type of exaggeration. The song could be based on a person that was living way beyond their times.

Silliness, sloppiness, adventurousness, and daring are some of the characteristics found in these characters.



“Oh, My Darling Clementine”

The banjo is an American development of African origins.

Musical Instruments of the Frontier

The banjo is an American development of African origins. It can have four, five, six, seven, eight, or more strings.

The Celtic harp is a small instrument of 24 to 34 strings, around three-and-a-half-foot tall, with a curved neck and pillar.

The dulcimer's name applied to certain musical instruments of the box-zither type. This includes the hammered dulcimer and Appalachian dulcimer.

The harmonica was the first of the modern European free-reed instruments. It has a block of 10 or more double-sided reeds and is mouth-blown.

The mandolin is a small Italian lute that usually has 8 strings, sometimes 12. Now popular throughout the western world, it is often made with a flat back like a cittern.

Music Inspired and Motivated

Music captivates and maintains attention. It affects many parts of the brain. Music is an effective memory aid. Music supports and encourages movement. Music taps into memories and emotions.

Pioneers loved music because anyone could participate in the singing and the creation of new lyrics. Music revived the weary and comforted the sick-at-heart. Music played a large part in the lives of the pioneers.

