



## LEARNING FROM OUR PAST...

Can you imagine what it would have been like for you and your family to leave your home behind, pack up your belongings, travel by covered wagon, and move to the Texas frontier in the 1850s? If you had only a small suitcase or trunk in which to pack everything, what would you bring...and what would you leave behind?

Families had to figure out what their new life would be like, so they could be prepared to start over in a new land. What would you need to grow your food? How would you know where to live? What tools would you need to build a new home? And what medicines should you pack in case someone in the family got sick? Would there be room in the covered wagon for Mother's spinning wheel, along with her needles and pins and patterns to make clothes? Do you think there were stores for groceries and clothing on the frontier?

Father must pack his tools carefully. There are many he will need to build a temporary shelter for the family before they are able to construct their permanent home. He will need an axe to chop wood for a log cabin, a broad axe to split timbers to make floors and furniture, and a drawing knife to smooth the surfaces.

Getting to your new home during the mid-1800's meant three to five months of difficult travel by wagon train. Life was harsh on the trail. Families packed as much as their wagons would hold. Since the wagons could only carry about 2000 pounds of important possessions, family members -- including kids -- had to walk alongside the wagons for hundreds of miles to their new homes.

The men and boys in the family got to work immediately to make some type of simple shelter while they cleared the land to build a log cabin home. If you were settling near other families, there would be cabin-raisings to help everyone get their cabin built. There was always work to do on the cabins.



While the men were building shelter for the family, Mother and the girls took the precious supply of seeds brought from home and planted a garden. Then it would be necessary to weed and water the plants...and protect the seedlings from hungry animals. When they finished in the garden, Mother and the girls made, mended or washed clothes. They churned butter and made cheese, and they cooked the family's meals over an open fire. If there was any time left in the day, Mother would spin wool or cotton for cloth.

Experiencing life on the frontier taught many important lessons! One of the most important was that a family's very survival depended on access to water. Locating near a river or stream was first thing your family would consider when choosing a site for your new home. You would need water for your new crops or there wouldn't be enough food to eat. You and your animals would also need water to drink. Trees located near a good supply of water grew tall and straight and provided wood for the log cabins. How many other critical uses for water would a family living on the frontier have?

What do we have in common with those pioneering families? Quite simply, we still need water to survive. Learning lessons from our past can help influence our future. Remembering that water is essential to all life on our planet will make us better stewards of this precious natural resource. The water we conserve today can serve us tomorrow. 💧