

Robin and Polly Holmes

Day 4 Materials

Information from the Oregon Encyclopedia-a project of the Oregon Historical Society

In 1844 Nathaniel Ford traveled from Missouri to Oregon along the Oregon Trail. He brought Robin and Polly Holmes and 3 of their 6 children with him.

The Holmes family was enslaved by Nathaniel Ford. Before they left for Oregon, Nathaniel Ford sold 3 of Robin and Polly's children, separating the family and leaving 3 children behind in Missouri.

Before they left for Oregon, Nathaniel Ford told Robin and Polly that he would free them once they reached Oregon if they helped him set up his farm. In 1850 (6 years after they arrived in Oregon!) Ford did free Robin and Polly and one of their children but he refused to free their other children. Robin Holmes demanded that his children be freed but Ford ignored his demands and threatened to sell the whole family back into slavery.

A fed up Robin Holmes sued Nathaniel Ford. One of the Holmes children had died while still enslaved to Ford, and Robin and Polly were worried about their remaining children, Mary Jane (11), James (7), Roxanna (5). Although it was a difficult battle, the Holmes family won the case and a judge ruled that their children must be returned to their parents.

What questions would you ask Robin and Polly Holmes about their experiences?

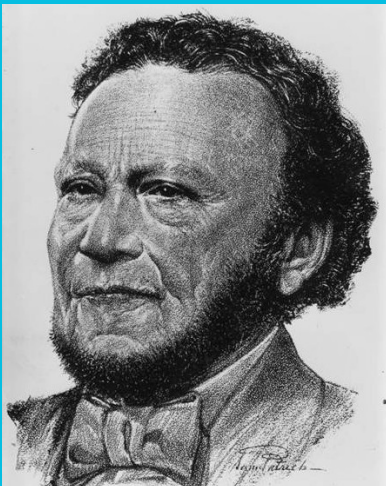
George Washington Bush Day 4 Materials

Information from the Washington State Historical Society

George Washington Bush was a free, mixed race Black man who traveled to Oregon in hopes of escaping racial prejudice. His mother was Irish and his father was Black. Bush left Missouri and traveled to Oregon in 1844. When he arrived in the Oregon he found out that the settlers there had just passed Exclusion Laws that prevented Black people from settling in the territory.

The Exclusion Laws discouraged Bush from settling in the area. If he could not find freedom from prejudice in Oregon he decided that he would go elsewhere. He decided to continue north beyond the Columbia River. He ended up settling in what is now Bush Prairie and he built a successful farm there. George Washington Bush was a skilled trapper and navigator, a war veteran, an excellent farmer and a generous person who helped many settlers establish a life in Washington.

George Washington Bush is important because he paved the way for more settlers to move farther north in what was then, Oregon territory. The increasing population of American settlers, led by Bush, helped the United States establish the land where Bush settled as American territory. This territory later broke away from Oregon and became Washington.



George Washington Bush

What Questions would you ask George Washington Bush about his experience in Oregon?



Above are photos of William Owen Bush, one of George Washington Bush's sons

Abner Hunt Francis

Day 4 Materials

Information from the Oregon Encyclopedia: A project from the Oregon Historical Society

Abner Hunt Francis arrived in Oregon with his brother Issac and wife Sydna in 1851. Once they settled in Oregon the brothers opened a successful store selling men's clothing. One day while Abner was away his brother was arrested. His brother Isaac was arrested because he was Black. Abner and his brother were both in violation of Oregon's Exclusion Laws which made it illegal for Black people to live in Oregon. A judge told both brothers that they needed to leave Oregon within 4 months!

Over 200 White Portlanders signed a petition asking that the law be repealed and that the brothers be allowed to stay in Portland. In the end, the Francis brothers were not forced to leave Oregon but the law was not repealed. Many Oregonians still supported discouraging Black people from coming to Oregon by keeping the exclusion laws.

Abner's brother died in 1856 and in 1858 Abner moved to Victoria, British Columbia and established new stores there. The Governor in British Columbia welcomed Black people and encouraged them to move and become citizens there.



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What Questions would you ask Abner Hunt Francis about his experience in Oregon?

Jacob Vanderpool

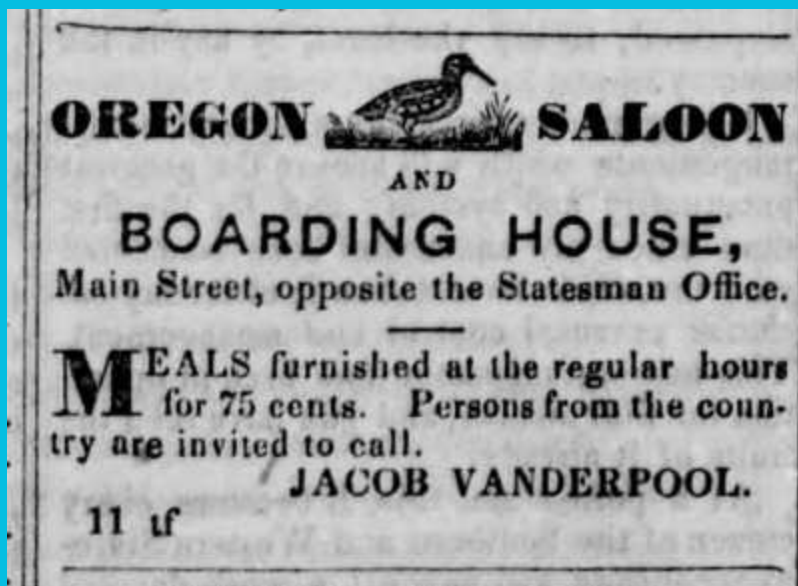
Day 4 Materials

Information from the Oregon Black Pioneers Oregonblackpioneers.org

Jacob Vanderpool was a sailor from the West Indies who settled in Oregon City in 1850. Once he was settled in Oregon, Vanderpool became a business owner who opened a saloon, restaurant, and boarding house across the street from the offices of the Oregon Statesmen.

The next year (1851), a competitor reported Vanderpool for violating the Oregon Territory's Exclusion Acts. These Exclusion Acts made it illegal for Black people to settle in Oregon or own property in the Territory. A judge found Vanderpool guilty and ordered him to leave Oregon. Vanderpool followed the judge's orders and left. Jacob Vanderpool was the only person expelled through Oregon's Exclusion Acts.

What Questions would you ask Jacob Vanderpool about his experience in Oregon?



Compare Jacob Vanderpool's story with the Francis brother's story. What similarities and differences can you find in the way Oregon's Exclusion Laws affected them?