

Let's Review!

Use this space to think about the following questions

Why might people say,
"It's complicated!"
when talking about Oregon's
status as a free territory?

How might these laws have
affected Black pioneers?

Sources

Oregon Encyclopedia a project of the Oregon Historical Society
<https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/>

Understanding

Oregon's Black Exclusion Laws

What were Oregon's Black
Exclusion Laws?

Why did Oregon have
Exclusion Laws?

Let's find out!



Oregon is a free territory!

"Section I. That slavery and involuntary servitude shall be forever prohibited in Oregon"

When Amanda Gardner Johnson arrived in Oregon in 1853 Oregon was a free territory that did not allow slavery. However, a series of Oregon laws discouraged Black people from living there. These laws were called Exclusion Laws. Although it was never enforced, one of the laws said that Black people who did not leave Oregon within a certain period of time could be subject to a lashing!

But wait, I thought Oregon was a free territory??

Let's Talk About It!

What does it mean to be at an "economic disadvantage?"

You're right! Oregon was established as a free territory but it's more complicated than that! Many of the settlers who traveled to Oregon were small farmers back east. They had seen how farms like theirs could not compete with large plantations that relied on enslaved Black people as unpaid workers.

Section II. That in cases where slaves shall have been, or shall be, brought into Oregon, the owners of such slaves respectively shall have the term of three years from the introduction of such slaves to remove them out of the country.

When those small farmers traveled to Oregon they worried that allowing slavery in Oregon would once again put them at an economic disadvantage. Although some White settlers simply did not want to live alongside Black neighbors, discrimination against Black individuals was more complex.

It is important to understand that although slavery was not allowed in Oregon, enslaved people who traveled to Oregon were not automatically granted their freedom. Enslavers had 3 years to "remove" enslaved individuals from Oregon. This meant that people could remain enslaved in Oregon for 3 years even though it was a free territory! Enslaved Black pioneers would only be granted their freedom if they were not removed after 3 years.

Let's Talk About It!

What do think might have happened to enslaved people who were "removed" from Oregon?

Let's look at a few of the Exclusion Laws

Discuss:
What does this law mean?

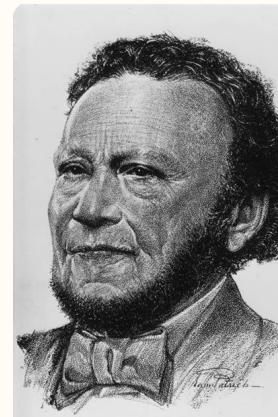
Section IV. That when any free negro or mulatto shall have come to Oregon, he or she (as the case may be), if of the age of eighteen or upward, shall remove from and leave the country within the term of two years for males, and three years for females from the passage of this act; and that if any free negro or mulatto shall hereafter come to Oregon, if of the age aforesaid, he or she shall quit and leave the country within the term of two years for male and three years for females from his or her arrival in the country.

In 1869, there were 128 Black settlers within a total population of 52,465

From 1850-1860, 75 Black people settled in Oregon compared to 4,000 in California.

Let's Talk About It!

How would you feel if you were a Black pioneer and you saw this complicated set of laws?



The lashing penalty was so extreme that the law was removed in 1845 before anyone was punished. But it still discouraged potential settlers like George Bush who was a well-educated Quaker, a veteran of the War of 1812, a skilled trapper and navigator, and an excellent farmer. He took his talents for public service and farming (and his sons) to Washington instead.

Section VI. That if any such free negro or mulatto shall fail to quit the country as required by this act, he or she may be arrested upon a warrant issued by some justice of the peace, and, if guilty upon trial before such justice, shall receive upon his or her bare back not less than twenty nor more than thirty-nine stripes, to be inflicted by the constable of the proper county.

Discuss:
What does this law mean?

Let's Talk About It!

How did Oregon miss out by not attracting Black settlers like George Washington Bush?