

# GO WEST!

## PROGRAM NOTES

*“There’s gold in them thar hills! Gold has been discovered in the hills of California. Land is being given away to settlers willing to make a fresh start in the newly explored regions of the American West. Cowpokes and miners, farmers and trappers, gamblers and adventurers of all kinds are making their way West to chase the promise of the American Dream. They come by way of wagon train, horseback, steamboat and rail. Go West explores important facts about the westward expansion of the early United States and discovers that **real** gold is not always the kind made into ingots and baubles. Real gold is discovered in the ideas and inspiration derived from new lands, fresh starts and attainable dreams abundant in the promises of the land of the free.”* --John Jacobson & Roger Emerson

Throughout our program, see if you can spot these historical figures of westward expansion in the United States during the 19<sup>th</sup> century:

**James Marshall:** The young man who first discovered gold in 1848, while building a water wheel for John Sutter in Coloma, California. The news of gold brought some 300,000 people to California; San Francisco alone grew from a small settlement of about 200 in 1846 to a boomtown of about 36,000 by 1852. Roads, churches, schools, and other towns were built throughout California. In 1849 a state constitution was written, a governor and legislature chosen, and California became a state in 1850 as part of the Compromise of 1850. New methods of transportation developed as steamships came into regular service. By 1869 railroads were built across the country from California to the eastern United States. Although the West was perceived as a place of new beginnings, where great wealth could reward hard work, western expansion and the Gold Rush also caused severe conflict with Native Americans, who were forcibly removed from their lands. Under the leadership of President Andrew Jackson, Native Americans who remained East of the Mississippi were cruelly and violently driven from their homes and concentrated in reservations in what is now Oklahoma.

**John Soule:** The young editorial newspaper writer for the *Terre Haute Express* who may have first coined the phrase, “Go West, Young Man! And grow up with the country!” Some historians argue that the popular phrase originated from Horace Greeley, an editor of the *New York Tribune*.

**Robert Fulton:** An American engineer and inventor, who developed the first commercially successful steamboat, the *North River Steamboat* (later known as the *Clermont*). The use of steamboats on major U.S. rivers soon followed Fulton's success. In 1811 the first in a long line of river

steamboats left the dock at Pittsburgh to steam down the Ohio River to the Mississippi and on to New Orleans. The famous author, Mark Twain, who was also a steamboat pilot, described the operation of steamboats in his *Life on the Mississippi*. Steamboat traffic including passenger and freight business grew exponentially in the decades before the Civil War, and played an important part in the U.S. economy. Steamboats also played a critical role in the Civil War. With rivers serving as the lifeblood of the Confederacy, steamboats permitted the rapid movement of heavy cargo (Union and Confederate) up and down the waterways.

**Yellow Rose of Texas:** The Yellow Rose of Texas is part of a legend from the days of the Texas Revolution (also known as the Texas War of Independence) of the 1830's and 1840's. The legend is based on the real-life historical figure, Emily D. West, a free woman who migrated to Texas from New York City in 1835. According to legend, Emily West convinced Santa Ana to lower his defenses during the Battle of San Jacinto, allowing General Sam Houston to defeat Santa Ana in a matter of minutes. The legend of Emily West was the basis for the traditional folk song, "The Yellow Rose of Texas". The song became popular among Confederate Army troops, especially those from Texas. It was sung after the defeat of Gen. John Bell Hood's Army at the Battle of Nashville in December 1864. "You may talk about your Dearest May, and sing of Rosa Lee, but the Yellow Rose of Texas is the only girl for me."

**Mayor of Independence, Missouri:** The Oregon Trail was the best land route for travel to the western United States. Families usually began their journey at Independence, Missouri near the Missouri River. The journey in a covered wagon took six months, following a winding trail of 2,000 miles through prairies, deserts, and across mountains to the Pacific Northwest. Settlers faced a number of difficult obstacles, such as flooded rivers, cholera, smallpox, firearms accidents, barren deserts, scarcity of food and water, and heavy dust from the crowded pioneer traffic along the trail.

**Peter Cooper:** An industrialist, inventor, and philanthropist who designed and built the first steam locomotive in the U.S., the *Tom Thumb*, built in 1830. The *Tom Thumb* was designed to convince owners of the newly formed Baltimore and Ohio Railroad (B&O) to use steam engines. The *Tom Thumb* is especially remembered for racing a horse-drawn car. It led the race until a belt slipped off a pulley and the engine lost power. Even though it lost the race, the *Tom Thumb* proved that locomotives were the way of the future.