WHO MIGRATED
• Adventurous frontiersmen, explorers and surveyors led the way
• Usually families, neighbors, ethnic and religious groups mitigated together (Mormons went with Mormons; Scots – Irish with Scots-Irish)
• May have stayed in one place for some time before moving on – “Chain Migration”
• Traveled in winter before spring thaw; roads passable; arrive in time for spring planting; late summer or fall harvest

WHY DID YOUR ANCESTOR LEAVE HOME? When a person disappears ask “Why?” The answer may be in the history of the area. Also consider the push-pull factor, including:

Positives or pull factors
• Expectation of a better life; to be with family or friends who have already moved; thrill of adventure; land; religion; economics

Negative or Push Factors
• Land; Mother Nature; disease; religion; military; economics; trouble with the law, family, neighbors

COLONIAL TIMES
• Early colonists established settlements along seacoast
• Used same trails as Indians, explorers and traders
• Where possible followed waterways

MAJOR COLONIAL ROUTES
• Boston Post Road; three branches
• King’s Highway – Boston to SC; after Revolutionary War to Georgia
  – Portions of the Kings Highway called:
    • Philadelphia to Alexandria portion called Great Coastal Road
    • Alexandria to Norfolk called Potomac Trail
• Fall Line Road – breaks off from King’s Highway at Fredericksburg; reached NC by 1750; after Revolutionary War to Georgia
  – “Fall Line” geographic feature between river tidelands and inland elevations
  – Upper Road – (a/k/a Carolina Road at southern end) opened early 1700s; after Revolutionary War to Georgia
• The Great Wagon Road
  – Portion from Lancaster, via York and Gettysburg, to the Potomac River called “The Philadelphia Road” or the “Lancaster Pike”
  – Traveled up the Shenandoah Valley passing Winchester, Virginia, where the it received the name the Great Valley Road
    • In the Valley the road followed the flow of the Shenandoah River “up” means South and “down” means North as the River flows south to north.
• By early 1750s settlers could travel from Big Lick (Roanoke) into North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia - This portion of the Great Valley Road was often referred to as the Carolina Road

• In conjunction with the Great Valley Road
  – Pioneer’s Road connected to Great Valley Road from Alexandria to Winchester; first route through mountains; completed 1746
  – Northwestern Turnpike opened in 1831; ran from Winchester to Parkersburg (West) Virginia; from there one could continue on to Ohio

• Wilderness Road and Cumberland Gap (1774-5)
  – Wilderness Road connects by Cumberland Gap (near where VA, TN and KY meet)

• Both Braddock’s Road (1755) and Forbes Road (1758) built for military purposes
  – Both went to Fort Duquesne/Fort Pitt (Pittsburgh)
  – Braddock Road first to cross over Appalachian Mountains built 12’ wide to accommodate wagons
    • Ran from Fort Cumberland, Maryland to Fort Pitt in Pennsylvania
    • After Braddock’s death road in disrepair; pioneers into western Pennsylvania used packhorse
  – Forbes Road shorter trip than Braddock with no major rivers to cross
    • 1733 money is approved for Great Conestoga Road from Philadelphia to Lancaster and later to Harrisburg; Forbes Road ran from Harrisburg to Pittsburg
  – Both Braddock’s Road and Forbes Road traveled east to west
  – These two roadways with connections linked the Kings Highway to the Ohio River, using flat bottom boats/rafts, etc., travelers could go down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers

After the revolutionary war several factors quickened westward migration

1. Acquisition of land between Appalachian Mountains and Mississippi River
   – State ceded their western lands to the US creating
     • (Old) Northwest Territory (1787)
       – Present day - Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and part of Minnesota
     • Territory South of Ohio River (a/k/a Southwest Territory (1790) – now Tennessee (KY remained part of VA until 1792)
     • Mississippi Territory (1798) – now Alabama and Mississippi
       – Migration into this territory slow until 1814 with Treaty of Fort Jackson when Creek Indians ceded much of Alabama to US
     • 1803 Louisiana Purchase

2. Bounty-land grants to those who served in the Revolutionary War, War 1812 and other wars (1775-1855)
   • Grants issued by the Federal Government were for the US Military District of Ohio (for Rev. War and previous wars)
     – Virginia – gave bounty land for property in its military district in Ohio and land in KY
     – North Carolina granted bounty land in Tennessee
     – War 1812 – tracts of land were in Illinois, Arkansas and Missouri

3. Development of new and improved migration routes
• 1792 saw construction of first paved turnpike or toll road which covered a long distance. Private companies were formed to build turnpikes.
• A main route to Northwest Territory (a/k/a Old Northwest) was the Ohio River
• Steamboats began travel on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers 1812-1816
• Erie Canal opened 1825 – 365 miles from Albany on the Hudson River to Lake Erie
  i. Feeder canals were added over time allowing transport into upper New York State (May 1836 the Genesee Valley Canal ran from Erie Canal on south side of Rochester, NY to Allegheny River at Olean, NY)
  ii. Led to opening of other canals (St. Lawrence Seaway opened 1848).
• National Road - (a/k/a Cumberland Road)
  – First “Interstate Highway” funded by new federal government; road authorized by Congress in 1806; turned over to states in 1838; tollhouses erected
• Kentucky and Tennessee often “temporary home”
  – Wilderness Road to Ohio, Indiana and Illinois; south along Tennessee River into Alabama
  – Maysville or Limestone Road from Maysville, KY to Ohio River in late 1700s
  – Natchez Trace (a/k/a Chickasaw Trace)
  – Jackson Military Road
• Nashville Road
  – Completed 1788
  – Linked Knoxville to Nashville; from there to Great Valley Road
  – Primary route for east-west traffic through Tennessee
  – No longer needed to use Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers
• The Federal Road
  – 1806 began as a post road; widened 1811 for military purposes
  – Ran from Athens, GA area to Ft. Stoddert, AL; 1811 widened and rerouted by US Army
  – Could travel Upper Road and meet Federal Road in Columbus, GA; Take Fall Line Road and meet Federal Road via post roads in Georgia
• Three Chopped Way
  – Between Natchez, MS and Burnt Corn, AL with extension to St. Stephens, AL in 1807
  – First east-west connection to tie Natchez Trace and Federal Road going north and south
  – Opened migration through the first land sales in the public domain areas of Mississippi Territory
• The West and Wagon Trains
  – Wagon trains took settlers to Pacific Northwest on Oregon Trail
  – Mormon Trail (1846) Began in Nauvoo, Illinois, then followed Oregon Trail to Fort Bridger, southwest to Great Salt Lake
  – Santa Fe Trail – Independence, MO to Fort Dodge to Santa Fe and the Rio Grande
    • First wagons used this trail to go west; opened in 1821

OTHER TRAILS NOT COVERED - The California Trail; The Chicago Road and the State Road; The Mohawk (Iroquois) Trail (Buffalo to Detroit); Genesee Road (Albany to Buffalo, NY); Zane’s Trace (Wheeling to Maysville, OH); Occaneechi Path (James River to Augusta, GA); The Great Eastern Road (New York City to Portsmouth, New Hampshire); and many more.

WHY STUDY MIGRATION ROUTES
• To learn more about your family by the journey they took
• Finding your ancestors can be made easier by following established migration trails

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• Knowing where the roads go will help in tracing your ancestors back to where they began and stopped along the way
• So you can find the records our ancestors “hopefully” left by –
  • Creating a time line of events in your ancestor’s life (remember boundary changes)
  • Look for clues to previous residence
  • Deed showing previous residence
  • Read about the history of the area
  • Determine course of road by comparing historical maps with today’s maps to determine migration routes and towns traveled through
  • Check records at repositories along the migration path – you never know where a record may be located

References:

American Migration Facts, Beverly Whitaker, Kansas City, Missouri, online [http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~gentutor/facts.html](http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~gentutor/facts.html) compiled by Beverly Whitaker - this is a great gateway for more books, articles and websites on migration routes both by land and water. Has free PDF downloads on various trails.


NGS Home Study Course, Lesson XIV, Migration Routes and Maps