

In other parts of the year they continued their migratory, nomadic habits as they searched for game and native plants.

Due to the lack of converts, the missionary bosses back east wanted to discontinue the mission and consolidate resources near Spokane, Wash. Marcus Whitman, however, had other ideas. He traveled east to lobby to keep the mission open. On the way back West, he joined the first large wagon train on what would become the Oregon Trail.

Each year, more pioneers used the trail. Most dreamed of settling in the fertile Willamette Valley and claiming their own piece of paradise.

In 1844, the Whitman Mission population grew as Marcus and Narcissa adopted seven Sager children whose parents had died on the trail.

The Whitmans offered the mission as a rest stop just off the trail. They provided food to the hungry, medicine to the sick and repairs to folks who had broken wagons.

The school for Indian children failed. Eventually it was replaced by a boarding school for settlers' children.

The trickle of emigrants on westward migration became a flood. Then, in 1847, a measles epidemic broke out, and Marcus offered medicine for both whites and Indians.

The Cayuse became increasingly agitated when white children mostly survived, but the Indian children, lacking immunity, died.

Their antipathy grew as the Whitmans



welcomed white settlers who Indians suspected as wanting to steal their land.

The boil-over point came on Nov. 29, 1847, when a small band of Indians attacked the mission. The Whitmans and 11 other whites were killed. The mission burned down, and 53 people were taken hostage.

News traveled slowly in those days. But when Congress learned of the attack, they quickly moved to make Oregon a legal territory, a step toward white dominance in a previously wild land.

A walk around the grounds is a step back in time. Visit the Great Grave, the Whitman Memorial, the reconstructed Oregon Trail ruts.

At the visitor center, open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., learn more about the history of Whitman Mission by watching a 25-minute film.



The park grounds are open 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., including Memorial Day, July 4 and Labor Day. The grounds are closed on other federal holidays.

None of the original buildings survive.

But on a self-guided tour you can see where buildings such as the blacksmith shop were located, and with imagination visualize how things looked before that fateful day in 1847.

Above: The obelisk at Whitman Mission is visible in the background, at the top of the hill. **Left:** Explore history at the Whitman Mission National Historic Site in Walla Walla, Washington.

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