

Starting to Go West

Daniel Boone had tramped through deep woods and crossed many streams in his day. He had seen flocks of pigeons so thick that they blocked out the sun. He had heard the screams of bobcats; he had listened to the strange animal noises coming from the swamps. But not even Boone dreamed what was beyond the Appalachian Mountains.

Few settlers believed the tales the Indians told of huge trees and giant bears in the West. Few people believed Lewis and Clark, who reported millions of bison on the plains. They did not believe John Colter, who said there were great spouts of water in the Rockies and a lake so deep that it seemed bottomless. Today we know all about grizzly bears and redwoods and geysers. But try to imagine how wild all the stories must have sounded to someone in Franklin's Philadelphia.

Philadelphia had wide streets paved with stones. It had shops and brick houses. It had street lamps and a fire company. Sometimes pigs and cows wandered down the sidewalks. And now and then someone threw garbage out his front door. But most people thought Philadelphia was the best city in the world. What do you think the other big cities were like?



Giant redwoods



*Castle Geyser,
Yellowstone National
Park, Wyoming*

City life was not for everyone. Many people wanted to get to the open space of the West. At first, only the brave and strong went. They lived on what food they could find along the way, slept on the ground, and made clothes from the skins of animals.

Sometimes a man went out on a trip and did not come back for years. Such men were called *long hunters*. Why do you think they were called that? What do you think they were hunting for? Some were looking for land to farm. Some were looking for furs to sell. Some were just looking to see what was out there.

