

books forbidding blacks to settle in the state for more than six months.

The West, with its wide open spaces and lack of structured government, held great appeal for many pioneers. From the early 1800's on, caravans of settlers



*The home of George Bush (Backside).*

made the long, perilous journey across the country, seeking land and opportunity. Many followed the Oregon Trail, ending up at the Columbia River.

Among the steady stream of immigrants to the area were a number of black men and their families, including George Bush. Born in Pennsylvania a free man, Bush moved Missouri and married Isabell, a white woman. In 1844, at the age of fifty, Bush, his wife and five children

left Missouri with 800 others and headed for the Northwest.

Bush was considered one of the wealthiest members of the expedition and used his wealth to help several other families emigrate. The group spent seven months on the Oregon Trail before reaching their destination, a settlement on the south side of the Columbia River called the Dalles.



*William Owen Bush*

But the freedom Bush was seeking eluded him in Oregon. The Provisional Government had recently passed anti-black laws that were as repressive as those he had left behind in Missouri. Gravely disappointed by what he found, Bush, his family and several others crossed the Columbia River into what would become the State of Washington and formed the first American community there. He settled in what was "Bush Prairie," which later became Thurston