

During his lifetime, George Bush established a good life for himself and his family. But he never became an American citizen with full rights. He died in 1863, five years before passage of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Constitutional Amendments, which gave black men full citizenship.

Born a slave in Virginia in 1817, another black pioneer to brave trials of the Oregon Trail was George Washington. Legend has it that Washington's mother was an English lady and his father a slave. Shortly after his birth, Washington was adopted by a white couple, James and Anna Cochran.



*George Washinton,
founder of Centralia*

Washington did as well as a black man could in Missouri. He even was made a legal citizen of Missouri in 1843 by an act of the legislature. But Missouri citizenship did not help him prevail in the federal court system. Washington had a business in



Panoramic view of early Centralia.

Missouri, where he gave people goods on credit. One of his customers, a white man, refused to pay his debt. Washington took him to court, where he found that he was unable to prosecute because he was not considered an American citizen. The injustice of

this case was the final event that turned Washington's thoughts westward -- to land where he thought life would be filled with more opportunity.

Washington and the Cochrans headed for the West Coast in 1850, following the same route as George Bush and many other pioneers. Washington arrived in