

What types of non-hostile interactions took place between the Indians and emigrants? If they traded, what were some of the things that they traded?

"Plains tribes generally had sufficient quantities of three types of goods that they could readily trade to the passing emigrant trains—moccasins, bison (buffalo) robes, and food." P. 42

"Because the plains tribes they encountered along the Platte River Road were not primarily agriculturalists, emigrants rarely purchased vegetables and other food stuffs from them. Tribes of the Great Basin and Pacific Northwest, however, specialized in trading a greater variety of foods beyond the usual bison, deer, and antelope meat." P.45 Tate also cites diarists who reported trading for honey, wild ducks, fish, and meat from mountain goat.

In the Pacific Northwest trout and salmon were very frequent trade items. Needles and thread, as well as mirrors and inexpensive jewelry (rings, etc.) were also favored trade items as well as items of clothing, cloth and ribbons. Many of these types of items were the same as those brought initially by Lewis and Clark on their journey of exploration in the early 1800's.

Besides items of apparel, American Indians placed a high priority obtaining processed food items, which wagon trains carried in significant quantities. Chief among these were flour, sugar, and coffee, supplies that could not be adequately stocked by western fur trading posts or delivered on a consistent basis by Kansas City traders or government annuities contractors."

"Tobacco was also a highly prized trade item among American Indians, not merely for recreational smoking but also because it occupied a central place in many spiritual traditions and ceremonies." P. 51.

"At the apex of the trade network along the Oregon, California, and Mormon trails stood the mutual exchange of horses and mules." P.53 (It should also be noted that raiding or stealing stock also happened and emigrants were very concerned about it.)

"A great many Indians wished to acquire firearms and ammunition through trading; most emigrants, however, were unwilling to enter into such transactions." P 56-7

Michael L. Tate, Indians and Emigrants: Encounters on the Overland Trails, Chapter 3, was the source for the quoted information.

Regarding the other types of non-hostile interactions another excellent source is John Unruh, Jr. The Plains Across. The late Professor Unruh, among a great many other points, notes that Indians with some frequency assisted emigrant trains in river crossings. His chapter 5, "Emigrant-Indian Interaction", is a cornucopia of information. Other examples of interaction can also be found on this website, see People & Places, Trail Stories (Indians & Emigrants).