

The Family Heritage Series

A weekly discussion of Americanist truths and traditions for those "heirs of all the ages" who will have to preserve that most important inheritance of all — freedom.
Produced by the Movement To Restore Decency.



Volume II

Lesson Fifty-Nine

KIT CARSON

LESSON IDEA

To develop an appreciation of the courage, determination, and ingenuity that were required to develop our western territories, by studying the life of one of the most famous "mountain men," Kit Carson.

PREPARATION

Read "During The Week" and make some preliminary preparations for the project suggested. Since the next four lessons will deal with the West, any pictures you can find of the people or land would be helpful in giving younger members of the family a better understanding of the events we will be discussing.

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KIT CARSON, one of the great Americans of the Old West, might have grown up like other Kentucky boys of the 1800's, one of a family of fourteen children, eating mush and molasses with a long wooden spoon, or sitting on a rail fence dreaming of the time when he could handle his own long rifle. But when Kit, whose real name was Christopher, was only a year old, his family left the Blue Grass State to settle on the Missouri frontier. On their way through Hardin County, Kentucky, they must have passed near the log cabin where Nancy Hanks Lincoln was caring for her infant son — Kit's senior by eleven months — who was to preside over the nation which Kit Carson did so much to expand.

The Carsons had been pioneers for generations — since the first one left Scotland for the freedom and opportunity of America. Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Kentucky — they had lived in each state for awhile, only to move on as the wildness

of the frontier gave way to settlements and farms. The presence of danger was more to their liking than the presence of neighbors. And the young, tow-headed Kit grew up in the rough-and-tumble style of all frontier boys, his ears full of tales of adventure, of Indian raids, of Daniel Boone, of the Revolution and the War of 1812, of Andrew Jackson and the defeat of the British at New Orleans.

At the age of fifteen he was apprenticed to a saddler in the frontier town of Franklin. His favorite customers were the mountain men — those strong, self-reliant individualists of the wilderness who trapped beaver and fought Indians in the great Southwest, which was then under the rule of Mexico. They told him yarns of the mountains; of Taos, the trappers' rendezvous in New Mexico; of Indian skirmishes and Spanish señoritas. They freely voiced their scorn of all civilized fixin's.

KIT WAS SIXTEEN YEARS OLD when he left his bench at the saddle shop and joined a Santa Fe wagon train as a "cavy boy" — a herd boy responsible for the lame oxen, sore-backed mules, untamed ponies, and extra saddle-horses that followed the caravan. Within two weeks he had learned how to find and rope stray animals; how to sleep soundly in spite of hard ground, mosquitoes, stamping mules, talk and singing; how to go without food until noon and to endure the soaking of a thunderstorm without complaint. The more he learned and the more he listened to the mountain men, to the Indian hunters, to the teamsters, the

