

*Adventures on the American Frontier*

# Following the Frontier West

Part Seven

“Uncle John” Smith  
and the Wagon Train Raid



A Royal Fireworks Production

Royal Fireworks Press  
Unionville, New York



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This book features QR codes that link to audio of the book being narrated so that readers can follow along.

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ISBN: 978-089824-944-6

Printed and bound in Unionville, New York, on acid-free paper using vegetable-based inks at the Royal Fireworks facility.

Publisher: Dr. T.M. Kemnitz  
Editor: Jennifer Ault  
Book and cover designer: Christopher Tice  
Audio and narration: Christopher Tice



In the early half of the 1800s, men forged trails west across the great American wilderness. Soon the Santa Fe Trail, the Oregon Trail, and the California Trail all grew hard and wide from the wheels of hundreds of covered wagons. The more travelers there were, the more supplies were needed at the outposts that had sprung up along the way. Supply wagon trains went back and forth from the Missouri towns to the outposts, adding to the traffic over the trails.





One day in June of 1845, four trappers who were still trying to make a living from furs reached a bluff looking out over the Santa Fe Trail. They had been in the mountains for three years and had at last gathered enough beaver, otter, mink, and



other furs to take them to market. They planned now to follow the old trail to Missouri. They made camp on the grassy plain above the bluff and cooked their supper. Their five pack mules were hobbled and grazing at the edge of the plain.

Supper over, the trappers leaned against some large rocks and filled their pipes with tobacco as the sun began to drop below the horizon. But soon they heard the mules begin to snort and try to break loose from their hobbles.

John Smith, one of the trappers, got up to look around. "Mules don't act like that unless there's something in the wind," he said to his friends Dick, Al, and Bill.

He walked toward the edge of the bluff. Suddenly a shot and the sound of Native American war cries reached his ears. He hurried to the bluff's edge and looked down at the trail below. A long line of wagons, heading to the east, was trying to get into a circle to protect itself. A band of about sixty Pawnees rode around the wagons,



shooting arrows into the circle.

“Come on!” yelled John to his friends.

The four men picked up their rifles and headed for the bluff. They scrambled down the steep slope.

The last wagon in the train had dropped well behind the others, and now it was cut off from the rest. Several of the Pawnee warriors were riding toward it. The trappers saw a man, a woman, and a small boy jump down from the wagon and run toward the other wagons.