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THE WAY WEST 1815-1850



HOW DID economic and demographic pressures in the East spur Western migration?

HOW DID Westward expansion affect the life of Plains Indians?



HOW WAS the United States able to annex Texas from Mexico?

WHICH PEOPLES lived in the Southwest?



1815 1850

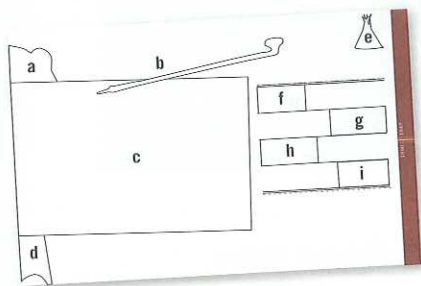


Credits

- i. Alfred Jacob Miller, "The Interior of Fort Laramie," 1858–60. The Walters Art Museum.

IMAGE KEY

for pages 324–325



- a. A tanned buffalo skin.
 b. A long wooden pipe of the Mandan tribe drawn by Swiss artist Karl Bodmer.
 c. Albert Bierstadt (1830–1902), "The Oregon Trail" (oil on canvas).
 d. Cactus with thick green stem with thick glossy spines and a large pinkish coloured flower near the top of the plant.
 e. A scale model of a Native American Plains Indian tepee, with an accompanying figure of a man for perspective.
 f. John Gast (Active 1870'S). "American Progress", c. 1872. Depicts the diaphanously clad America floating over a variety of American people and animals heading westward. The emblematic figure carries a school book and a telegraph wire.
 g. George Catlin, "Commanche Village Life," 1834.
 h. Nathaniel Currier, "General Winfield Scott at the Siege of Vera Cruz, March 1847."
 i. Alfred Jacob Miller, "The Interior of Fort Laramie," 1858–60.

"On an occasion when I had interrogated a Sioux chief, on the upper Missouri, about their Government—their punishments and tortures of prisoners, for which I had freely condemned them for the cruelty of the practice, he took occasion, when I had got through, to ask me some questions relative to modes in the civilized world, which, with his comments upon them, were nearly as follows: and struck me, as I think they must every one, with great force.

He . . . told me he had often heard that white people hung their criminals by the neck, and choked them to death like dogs, and those their own people to which I answered, "yes." He then told me he had learned that they shut each other up in prisons, where they keep them a great part of their lives because they can't pay money. I replied in the affirmative to this, which occasioned great surprise and excessive laughter, even among the women. . . . He said . . . that he had been along the Frontier; and a good deal amongst the white people, and he had seen them whip their little children—a thing that is very cruel—he had heard also, from several white medicine-men, that the Great Spirit of the white people was the child of a white woman, and that he was at the last put to death by the white people! This seemed to be a thing that he had not been able to comprehend, and he concluded by saying, "the Indians. Great Spirit got no mother—the Indians no kill him, he never die." He put me a chapter of other questions as to the trespasses of the white people on their lands—their continual corruption of the morals of their women—and digging open the Indians graves to get their bones, &c. To all of which I was compelled to reply in the affirmative, and quite glad to close my note-book, and quietly to escape from the throng that had collected around me, and saying (though to myself and silently), that these and an hundred other vices belong to the civilized world, and are practiced upon (but certainly, in no instance, reciprocated by) the "cruel and relentless savage."

—George Catlin

Virgil J. Vogel, ed., *A Documentary History of the American Indian* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), pp. 138–139.

GEORGE CATLIN, one of the great illustrators of the West of the American Indians, recorded these words in the 1830s when he traveled over the trans-Mississippi West painting and sketching, in his words, "the looks and customs of the vanishing races of native man in America." Unlike most white people of his generation, he approached Indian cultures with respect, and he realized that native peoples had a valid critique of white America. Born in 1796, he was raised among memories of Indians and their warfare. After briefly practicing law, he turned to painting as a career in the 1820s, and was so taken with the grace and dignity of Indians that he set out to record Indian history and customs before their way of life was engulfed by a surging tide of white settlement.

Some 300,000 Americans traveled the Oregon Trail in the 1840s and 1850s in a trek that eventually made the United States a nation that spanned the continent. They were part of a tide of white migration that eventually saw more than fifty thousand Americans a year migrate west of the Appalachians after the War of 1812.



In the 1840s, the edge of settlement pushed into the Louisiana Purchase territory and across a huge area of plains, desert, mountains, and ocean coast that had seen few American settlers before then.

The broad expanse of the trans-Mississippi region (stretching from the Mississippi Valley to the Pacific Coast) became a meeting ground of people from diverse cultures as Anglo-Americans came into contact and conflict with the Indians of the Plains and the Mexicans of the Southwest. Convinced of their own superiority, Anglo-Americans asserted a God-given right to spread across the continent and impose their notions of liberty and democracy on peoples whose land they coveted. In the process, they defeated and subjugated those who stood in their way.

Manifest Destiny, the label for this presumed providential right, provided a justification for the expansionist Democratic administration of James K. Polk that came to power in 1845. The most dramatic result of these policies was the Mexican War of 1846–1848, which made California and the present-day Southwest part of the American continental empire.

THE AGRICULTURAL FRONTIER

The U.S. population ballooned from 5.3 million in 1800 to more than 23 million by 1850. Four-fifths of this extraordinary gain was from natural increase—the surplus of births over deaths. As the population expanded, it shifted westward. Fewer than one in ten Americans lived west of the Appalachians in 1800; by 1850, about half did (see Map 13–1 p.328).

Through purchase and conquest, the land area of the United States more than tripled in the first half of the nineteenth century. Here was space where Americans could raise the large families of a rural society in which, on average, six to eight children survived to adolescence.

Declining soil fertility and rising population pressure in the rural East propelled these migrations. A common desire for greater economic opportunity, however, resulted in two distinct western societies by the 1840s. North of the Ohio River, in the Old Northwest, free labor and family farms defined the social order. South of the Ohio was the Old Southwest, a society dominated by slave labor and the plantation.

THE CROWDED EAST

Looking back at his rural youth, Omar H. Morse recalled, “My Parents were in very limited circumstances financially yet blessed with a large family of children which is a poor man’s capital though capital of this kind is not considered very available in case of financial Depression.” Born in 1824 in the upstate New York village of Hastings, Morse had no prospect of inheriting land from his father and was tired of taking orders as a farm hand for temporary wages. He moved in the 1840s to Wisconsin, but he lost three farms and eventually settled in Minnesota, where he worked at odd jobs and built houses. Heading west did not guarantee economic success, but it was the best option open to land-starved easterners who dreamed of leaving a productive farm to their children.

By the early nineteenth century, land was scarce in the East, especially in New England. Most New England communities no longer had enough arable land to satisfy all the young men who wanted their own farms. Even recently opened areas such as Vermont felt the pressure of rural overpopulation.

Land was more productive and expensive farther south, in the Mid-Atlantic states. Keyed to the major export crop of wheat, agriculture was more commercialized

HOW DID economic and demographic pressures in the East spur western migration?

Manifest Destiny Doctrine, first expressed in 1845, that the expansion of white Americans across the continent was inevitable and ordained by God.



than in New England, and economic inequality was thus higher. One-third to one-half of the young men in the commercialized agricultural districts of New Jersey and Pennsylvania were landless by the end of the eighteenth century. These men and their families, many of whom were recently arrived Scots-Irish and German immigrants, led the western migration from Pennsylvania.

The pressure to move west was greatest in the slave states along the eastern seaboard. Although population density here was just two-thirds of that in New England, landholdings were more concentrated and the soil more exhausted than in the Northeast. Tenants who wanted their own land and small farmers tired of competing against slave labor were forced west across the mountains. They were joined by the sons of planters. Despite marriages arranged to keep land within the wealthy families, there was no longer enough good land left to carve out plantations for all the younger sons.

By the early 1800s, the young and the poor in the rural East had every incentive to head west, where fertile land was abundant, accessible, and, at \$2 to \$3 per acre, far cheaper than in the East. Land was the basis of wealth and social standing, and its ownership separated the independent from the dependent, the rooted from the rootless. “Those who labor in the earth,” Jefferson wrote in 1785, “are the chosen people of God . . . whose breasts He has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue.”

The western settler, observed a traveler on the Missouri frontier in the 1820s, wanted “to be a freeholder, to have plenty of rich land, and to be able to settle his children around him.” Public policy and private aspirations merged in the belief that access to land was the key to preserving American freedom.

When Jefferson took office in 1801, the minimum price for public land was \$2 per acre, and a block of 320 acres had to be purchased at one time. By the 1830s, the price was down to \$1.25 per acre, and the minimum purchase was only 80 acres. Congress also protected squatters, who had settled on public land before it was surveyed, from being outbid by speculators at a land sale. The Preemption Act of 1841 guaranteed the right to purchase up to 160 acres at the minimum price of \$1.25 when the public auction was held.

THE OLD NORTHWEST

The number of Americans who settled in the heartland of the Old Northwest—Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois—rose tenfold from 1810 to 1840. Ohio had already entered the Union in 1803; Indiana joined in 1816, Illinois in 1818. The end of the War of 1812 and the abandonment by the British of their former Indian allies opened up the region to a flood of migrants.

Two streams of migrants, one predominantly northern and the other southern, met in the lower Midwest and viewed each other as strangers. Lucy Maynard, a New Englander living in south-central Illinois, noted that her neighbors were “principally from Indiana and Kentucky, some from Virginia, all friendly but very different from our people in their manners and language and every other way.”

The Old Northwest was less a melting pot in which regional cultures merged than a mosaic of settlements in which the different values and folkways of regional cultures from throughout the East took root and expanded. Belts of migration generally ran along a line from east to west as settlers sought out soil types and ecological conditions similar to those they had left behind. Thus a transplanted Yankee culture from New England and upstate New York spread over the upper Midwest—northern Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, as well

WHERE TO LEARN MORE



Living History Farms,
Des Moines, Iowa
www.lhf.org/

WHERE TO LEARN MORE



Conner Prairie,
Noblesville, Indiana
www.connerprairie.org



Cyrus McCormick pioneered the development of horse-drawn mechanical reapers. Shown here demonstrating his reaper to potential customers, McCormick helped revolutionize American agriculture with labor-saving machinery that made possible far larger harvests of grain crops.

The Old Print Shop

Claims clubs Groups of local settlers on the nineteenth-century frontier who banded together to prevent the price of their land claims from being bid up by outsiders at public land auctions.

and New Jersey, who were accustomed to ethnic diversity and the politics of competing economic groups. They settled principally in central Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. By emphasizing economic growth and downplaying the cultural politics that pitted Yankees against Southerners, they built a consensus around community development.

It took about ten years of backbreaking labor to create an 80-acre farm in heavily wooded sections. Wives and daughters helped tend the field crops, milked cows and churned butter, and produced the homespun cloth that, along with their dairy goods, found a market in the first country stores on the frontier. Charlotte Webb Jacobs, from the Sugar Creek community on the Illinois prairie, proudly recalled, “I made everything that we wore; I even made my towels and table cloths, sheets and everything in the clothing line.”

Communities pooled their efforts for such tasks as raising a cabin. Groups of settlers also acted as a cooperative unit at public land auctions. Members of local **claims clubs** physically intimidated speculators who refused to step aside until local settlers had acquired the land they wanted.

Surplus goods were sold to newcomers moving into the area or bartered with local storekeepers for essentials such as salt, sugar, and metalwares. This initial economy, however, soon gave way to a more commercially oriented agriculture when steamboats, canals, and railroads opened up vast new markets (see Chapter 11).

The first large market was in the South, down the corridor of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, and the major staples were corn and hogs. By the 1830s, the Erie Canal and its feeder waterways in the upper Midwest began to reorient much of the western farm trade to the Northeast.

Wheat production skyrocketed when settlers overcame their initial reluctance to farming in a treeless terrain and moved into the prairies of Indiana and Illinois in the 1840s. New plows—a cast-iron one patented by Jethro Wood in 1819 and a steel version developed by John Deere in 1837—helped break the thick prairie sod. The plows were followed in the 1840s by horse-drawn mechanical harvesters equipped with a self-rake reaper that enabled family farmers to harvest vastly more wheat. Using traditional harvesting methods, a scythe

as Michigan and Wisconsin. These westerners were Whiggish in their politics, tended to be antislavery, and valued a communal sense of responsibility that regulated moral behavior and promoted self-improvement. The highland Southerners who settled the lower Midwest—southern Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, as well as Kentucky—were Democrats: They fiercely distrusted any centralized authority, political or moral, and considered Yankees intolerant do-gooders. Holding the balance of cultural and political power were the migrants from Pennsylvania



CHRONOLOGY

<p>1803–1806 Lewis and Clark travel up the Missouri River in search of a water route to the Pacific.</p> <p>1816 Settlers surge into the trans-Appalachian region.</p> <p>1821 Mexico gains its independence from Spain. Santa Fe Trail opens. Stephen F. Austin establishes the first American colony in Texas.</p> <p>1824 Rocky Mountain Fur Company begins the rendezvous system.</p> <p>1830 Congress creates the Indian Territory.</p> <p>1834 Protestant missions are established in Oregon. Santa Anna seizes power in Mexico.</p> <p>1836 Texas wins its independence from Mexico.</p>	<p>1837 Smallpox epidemic hits the Plains Indians.</p> <p>1842 First large parties of migrants set out on the Oregon Trail.</p> <p>1845 United States annexes Texas. Democrats embrace Manifest Destiny.</p> <p>1846 Mexican War breaks out. United States and Britain reach an agreement on Oregon.</p> <p>1847 Mormons begin settlement of Utah.</p> <p>1848 Oregon Territory is organized. Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ends the Mexican War.</p> <p>1851 Fort Laramie Treaty with the Plains Indians is signed.</p>
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with a cradle frame, an experienced worker could cut no more than 2 acres a day. With the new machinery the same worker could harvest 12 acres a day. Once railroads provided direct access to eastern markets, the Midwest became the nation's breadbasket.

The commercialization of agriculture in the West also contributed to the growth of eastern manufacturing. Western farms supplied eastern manufacturers with inexpensive raw materials for processing into finished goods. Western corn and wheat not only supplied eastern workers with cheap food but also forced noncompetitive eastern farmers either to move west or to work in factories in eastern cities. In turn, the West itself became an ever-growing market for eastern factory goods. For example, nearly half of the nation's iron production in the 1830s was fashioned into farm implements. At midcentury, the Old Northwest had become part of a larger Midwest whose economy was increasingly integrated with that of the Northeast. Settlers continued to pour into the region, and three additional states—Michigan (1837), Iowa (1846), and Wisconsin (1848)—joined the Union.

The combination of favorable farm prices and steadily decreasing transportation costs generated a rise in disposable income that was spent on outside goods or invested in internal economic development. Manufacturing cities grew out of towns that were favorably situated by water or rail transport. The West north of the Ohio was now economically specialized and socially diverse.

THE OLD SOUTHWEST

"The *Alabama Fever* rages here with great violence and has *carried off* vast numbers of our Citizens," wrote a North Carolina planter in 1817 about the westward migration from his state. "I am apprehensive, if it continues to spread as it has done, it will almost depopulate the country." By 1850, more than 600,000 white settlers from Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas lived in slave states to the south and west, and many of them had brought their slaves with them. Indeed, from 1790 to 1860, more than 800,000 slaves were moved from the South Atlantic region

QUICK REVIEW

Commercialization of Agriculture

- ◆ New technology spurred production.
- ◆ Commercialization of agriculture contributed to growth of eastern.
- ◆ West became a market for eastern factory goods.



OVERVIEW

WESTWARD EXPANSION AND THE GROWTH OF THE UNION, 1815–1850

New Free States	New Slave States	Territories (1850)
Indiana, 1816	Mississippi, 1817	Minnesota
Illinois, 1818	Alabama, 1819	Oregon
Maine, 1820	Missouri, 1821	New Mexico
Michigan, 1837	Arkansas, 1836	Utah
Iowa, 1846	Florida, 1845	
Wisconsin, 1848	Texas, 1845	
California, 1850		

into the Old Southwest. Soaring cotton prices after the War of 1812 and the smashing of Indian confederations during the war, which opened new lands to white settlement, propelled the first surge of migration into western Tennessee and the Black Belt, a crescent-shaped band of rich, black loamy soil arcing westward from Georgia through central Alabama and Mississippi.

Migration surged anew in the 1830s when cotton prices were again high and the Chickasaws and Choctaws had been forced out of the incredibly fertile Delta country between the Yazoo and Mississippi Rivers (see Chapter 10). In less than thirty years, six new slave states—Mississippi (1817), Alabama (1819), Missouri (1821), Arkansas (1836), Florida (1845), and Texas (1845)—joined the Union (see the overview table “Westward Expansion and the Growth of the Union, 1815–1850”).

The southwestern frontier attracted both slaveholding planters and small independent farmers. The planters, though a minority, had the capital or the credit to acquire the best lands and the slave labor to make those lands productive. These slaveholders were responding both to the need for fresh land and to the extraordinary demand for short-staple cotton. As one North Carolina planter put it, Alabama would be a “garden of plenty” compared to the “old-fields and empty corn-houses” of his native state.

Short-staple cotton could be grown anywhere with a minimum of 210 consecutive frost-free days. Eli Whitney’s gin, which eliminated the problem of removing the sticky, green seeds from the fiber, was fifty times faster than hand separation. Meanwhile, the mechanization of the British textile industry had created a seemingly unquenchable demand for raw cotton. With new fertile land and a slave labor force, the South increased its share of world cotton production from 9 percent in 1800 to 68 percent in 1850.

More typical settlers on the southern frontier were small independent yeoman farmers, who generally owned no slaves. Many of them shared the belief of the yeoman farmer Gideon Linecum “in the pleasure of frequent change of country.”

The yeomanry moved onto the frontier in two waves. The first consisted of stockmen-hunters, a restless, transient group who spread from the pine barrens in the Carolina backcountry to the coastal plain of eastern Texas. They prized unfettered independence and measured their wealth in the livestock left to roam



and fatten on the sweet grasses of uncleared forests. They were quick to move on when farmers, the second wave, started to clear the land for crops.

Like the stock herders, the yeoman farmers valued self-sufficiency and the leisure to hunt and fish. They practiced a diversified agriculture aimed at feeding their families. Corn and pork were the mainstays of their diet, and both could readily be produced as long as there was room for the open-range herding of swine and growing patches of corn and small grains. The yeoman's chief source of labor was his immediate family.

Measured by per capita income, and as a direct result of the profits from slave-produced cotton on virgin soils, the Old Southwest was a wealthier society than the Old Northwest in 1850. The settlement of the Old Southwest was also more significant for national economic development. More than any other commodity, cotton paid for American imports and underpinned national credit.

The Southwest Ordinance, enacted by Congress in 1790, opened all territories south of the Ohio River to slavery. Slaves, land, and cotton were the keys to wealth on the southern frontier, and agricultural profits were continually plowed back into these assets. In contrast, prosperous farmers in the Old Northwest were much more likely to invest their earnings in promotional schemes designed to attract settlers whose presence would raise land values and increase business for local entrepreneurs. As early as the 1840s, rural communities in the Old Northwest were supporting bustling towns that offered jobs in trade and manufacturing on a scale far surpassing anything in the slave West. By the 1850s, the Midwest was almost as urbanized as the Northeast had been in 1830, and nearly half the labor force no longer worked on farms.

The Old Southwest remained overwhelmingly agricultural. Once the land was settled, the children of the first generation of slaveholders and yeomen moved west to the next frontier. Relatively few newcomers took their place. By the 1850s, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi were all losing more migrants than they were gaining.

THE FRONTIER OF THE PLAINS INDIANS

Few white Americans had ventured west of the Mississippi by 1840. What scanty knowledge there was of this huge inland expanse was the result of government-sponsored expeditions. Reports of explorations led by Zebulon Pike in 1806 and Stephen Long in 1819 dismissed much of the area as the Great American Desert, an arid, treeless landscape with little agricultural potential.

Beyond Texas and the boundary line drawn by the Trans-Continental Treaty of 1819 lay the northern possessions of Mexico, where horse-mounted Indian tribes dominated by the Sioux were a formidable power. Before the 1840s, only fur trappers and traders, who worked with and not against the powerful Sioux, had pushed across the Great Plains and into the Rockies. The 1840s brought a sudden change, a large migration westward that radically altered the ecology of the Great Plains. Farm families trapped in an agricultural depression and enticed by Oregon's bounty turned the trails blazed by the fur traders into ruts on the **Oregon Trail**, the route that led to the first large settlement of Americans on the Pacific Coast.

TRIBAL LANDS

At least 350,000 Native Americans lived in the plains and mountains of the Trans-Mississippi West in 1840. The point where the prairies of the Midwest gave way to the higher, drier plains marked a rough division between predominantly agricultural

HOW DID westward expansion affect the life of Plains Indians?

Oregon Trail Overland trail of more than two thousand miles that carried American settlers from the Midwest to new settlements in Oregon, California, and Utah.



WHERE TO LEARN MORE

★ Indian Museum of North America,
Crazy Horse, South Dakota
www.crazyhorse.org/museum.shtml

QUICK REVIEW

The Pawnees

- ◆ By 1830s, Pawnees primarily an agricultural people.
- ◆ Agreed in 1833 treaty to move north.
- ◆ Attacked by Sioux in the north and white settler in the south.

tribes to the east and nomadic, hunting tribes to the west. The Kansas, Osages, and Omahas in what is now Kansas and Iowa and the Arikaras, Mandans, and Hidatsas along the upper Missouri River grew corn, beans, and squash and lived in semi-permanent villages, much as woodland Indians had in the East. On the open plains were hunting and raiding peoples, such as the western Sioux, Crows, Cheyennes, and Arapahos.

In the 1830s, the U.S. government set aside a broad stretch of country between the Platte River to the north and the Red River to the south (most of present-day Oklahoma and eastern Kansas) exclusively for tribes resettled from the East under the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and for village-living groups native to the area. Many government officials envisioned this territory as a permanent sanctuary that would separate Indians from whites and allow them to live in peace on allotments of land granted as compensation for the territory they had ceded to the federal government. However, the pressure exerted on native peoples in the Mississippi Valley both from raiding parties of Plains Indians and the incessant demands of white farmers and speculators for more land was rendering a stable Indian-white boundary meaningless.

On the eve of Indian removal in the East, the defeat of the Sauks and Foxes in what white Americans called Black Hawk's War of 1832 opened Iowa to white settlement and forced tribes to cede land. In 1838, Congress created the Territory of Iowa, which encompassed all the land between the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers north of the state of Missouri. The Indians were now on the verge of being pushed completely out of Iowa. Throughout the upper Mississippi Valley in the 1830s, other groups suffered a similar fate.

Farming peoples whose villages straddled the woodlands to the east and the open plains to the west were caught in a vise between the loss of their land to advancing white settlers and the seizure of their horses and agricultural provisions by Indian raiders from the plains. The Pawnees were among the hardest hit.

By the 1830s, the Pawnees were primarily an agricultural people who embarked on seasonal hunts for game in the Platte River Valley. In 1833, they signed a treaty with the U.S. government, agreeing to withdraw from south of the Platte in return for subsidies and military protection from the hostile Indians on the plains. Once they moved north of the Platte, the Pawnees were attacked by Sioux who seized control of the prime hunting grounds. Sioux raiders seeking provisions and horses also harassed Pawnee agricultural villages. When the desperate Pawnees filtered back south of the Platte, they were constantly harassed by white settlers. In vain Pawnee leaders cited the provisions of the treaty that promised them protection from the Sioux. Forced back north of the Platte by the U.S. government, the Pawnees were eventually driven out of their Nebraska homeland by the Sioux.

The Sioux were more than able to hold their own against white Americans in the first half of the nineteenth century. In the eighteenth century, the western Sioux, armed with guns they had acquired from the French, dominated the prairies east of the Missouri.

The Sioux learned to use the horse from the Plains Indians. Horses made buffalo hunting vastly more productive, they made it easier to transport bulky possessions, and they made possible an aggressive, highly mobile form of warfare. The Sioux were the most successful of all the tribes in melding two facets of white culture, the gun and the horse, into an Indian culture of warrior-hunters.

Although the Sioux frequently fought other tribes, casualties from these encounters were light. The Sioux and other Plains Indians fought not to kill the greatest number of the enemy but rather to dominate hunting grounds and to win individual honor by "counting coup" (touching a live foe). When an Army officer



in 1819 urged the Sioux to make peace with the Chippewas, Little Crow, a Santee Sioux, explained why war was preferable: “Why, then, should we give up such an extensive country to save the life of a man or two annually?”

When the United States acquired title to the Great Plains in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, the western Sioux economy was based on hunting buffalo on horse in summer and trapping beaver in winter. In spring, great trading fairs were held in which the western Sioux exchanged their buffalo robes and beaver pelts for goods acquired by the Santee Sioux from European traders.

As the supply of beaver dwindled and the demand for buffalo hides from American and European traders increased in the early 1800s, the Sioux extended their buffalo hunts. Sioux war parties pushed aside or subjugated weaker tribes to the south and west of the Missouri River basin.

Epidemic diseases brought to the plains by white traders helped Sioux expansion. The nomadic Sioux were less susceptible to these epidemics than the more sedentary village peoples. The Sioux were also one of the first tribes to be vaccinated against smallpox by doctors sent by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the early 1830s. A major smallpox epidemic in 1837 probably halved the region’s Indian population. Sioux losses were relatively light and, unlike the other tribes, their population grew.

Some 25,000 strong by 1850, the western Sioux had increased in power and numbers since they first encountered American officials during the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1804 and 1805. Even then, Jefferson had cautioned Lewis to cultivate good relations with the Sioux “because of their immense power.” “These are the vilest miscreants of the savage race,” wrote Lewis and Clark of the Sioux, “and must ever remain the pirates of the Missouri, until such measures are pursued by our government as will make them feel a dependence on its will for their supply of merchandise.”

Americans could vilify the Sioux, but they could not force them into dependence in the first half of the nineteenth century.

THE FUR TRADERS

“Curiosity, a love of wild adventure, and perhaps also a hope of profit—for times *are* hard, and my best coat has a sort of sheepish hang-dog hesitation to encounter fashionable folk—combined to make me look upon the project with an eye of favour.” These were the motives that induced Warren A. Ferris, a New York civil engineer, to join the American Fur Company in 1829 at the age of 19 and go west as a fur trapper and mountain man. During their golden age in the 1820s and 1830s, the trappers blazed the trails that far greater numbers of white settlers would follow in the 1840s.

Until the early 1820s, the Hudson’s Bay Company, a well-capitalized British concern, dominated the trans-Mississippi fur trade. A breakthrough for American interests came in 1824 when two St. Louis businessmen, William Henry Ashley and Andrew Henry of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, developed the rendezvous system, which, in keeping with Indian traditions of periodic intertribal meetings, brought together trappers, Indians, and traders in a grand annual fair at a designated site in the high mountain country of Wyoming. White trappers and Indians exchanged the animal skins they had gathered in the seasonal hunt for the guns, traps, tobacco, whiskey, textiles, and other trading goods that agents of the fur companies in St. Louis brought to the fair.

The trappers’ closest relations were with Indians, and about 40 percent of the trappers married Indian women, unions that often linked them economically and diplomatically to their bride’s tribe. Living conditions in the wilderness



Shown here is a Lakota shirt, c. 1850, that was specially woven for those Sioux warriors who had distinguished themselves in battle. The blue and yellow dyes symbolize sky and earth, and the strands of human hair represent the acts of bravery performed in defense of the Lakota people.

Shirt, about 1860s, unknown Sioux artist Deer skin, hair, quills, feathers, paint, 1947.235. Denver Art Museum Collection, Native Arts Acquisitions Funds.
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WHERE TO LEARN MORE



Museum Association of American
Frontier and Fur Trade, Chadron,
Nebraska

www.stepintohistory.com/states/NE/Fur_Trade.htm



MAP EXPLORATION

To explore an interactive version of this map, go to <http://www.prenhall.com/goldfield2/map13.2>



MAP 13-2

Western Overland Trails The great overland trails to the West began at the Missouri River. The Oregon Trail crossed South Pass in Wyoming and then branched off to Oregon, California, or Utah. The Santa Fe Trail carried American goods and traders to the Mexican Southwest.

WHAT ROLE did geography play in determining overland trails?

were primitive, even brutal. Mortality rates among trappers ran as high as 80 percent a year. Death could result from an accidental gunshot wound, an encounter with a grizzly, or an Indian arrow. “Peg-Leg” Smith became a legend for amputating his own leg after it was shattered by a bullet.

For all its dangers, the life of a trapper appealed to unattached young men like Warren Ferris fleeing the confinements, as well as the comforts, of white civilization. “Fancy to yourself,” Ferris asked readers of his published journals, “three thousand horses of every variety of size and colour, with trappings almost as varied as their appearance . . . ridden by a thousand souls . . . their persons fantastically ornamented. . . . Listen to the rattle of numberless lodgepoles [trailed] by pack-horses. . . . Yonder see a hundred horsemen pursuing a herd of antelopes.” He was describing the color, bustle, and motion at the start of a hunt with the Salish Indians of Montana in the 1830s, played out on “a beautiful level prairie, with dark blue snow-capped mountains in the distance for the *locale*.”

Such spectacles were increasingly rare after 1840, the year of the last mountain men’s rendezvous on the Green River in Wyoming. The most exploitive phase of the fur trade in the 1830s had ravaged the fur-bearing animals and accelerated the spread of smallpox among the tribes. Whiskey, the most profitable item among the white man’s trading goods, had corrupted countless Indians and undermined the vitality of tribal cultures.

The main trading corridor of the fur trade—up the lower Missouri to the North Platte and across the plains to the South Pass, a wide plateau crossing the Continental Divide, and into the Wyoming basin—became the main overland route to the West that migrating farm families followed in the 1840s. The mountain men had removed the mystery of western geography, and in so doing they hastened the end of the frontier conditions that had made their unique way of life possible.

THE OREGON TRAIL

The ruts are still there. One can follow them to the horizon in the Platte River Valley of Nebraska and the dry tablelands of Wyoming, Idaho, and Nevada. They were put there by the wheels of wagons hauled by oxen on a jolting 2,000-mile journey across plains, mountains, and deserts from Missouri to Oregon, Utah, and California (see Map 13-2). Some 150,000 Americans made this overland trek in the heyday of the Oregon Trail in the 1840s and early 1850s. Most of them walked alongside their wagons. They covered up to 15 miles a day on a trip that lasted close to six months.

Under an agreement reached in 1818, the Oregon Country was still jointly administered by the United States and Great Britain. Furs—whether beaver pelts or the skins of the Pacific sea otter—had attracted a few American trappers and merchants, but the British-controlled Hudson’s Bay Company dominated the region. Protestant missionaries established the first permanent white settlements in the 1830s. Under the leadership of Jason Lee, they set up their missions in the fertile Willamette Valley, south of the Columbia River.



12-3

Across the Plains With
Catherine Sager Pringle in 1844



The missionaries repeatedly failed to convert the Indians to Christianity. Unlike the trappers, the missionaries sought to change the entire structure of Indian life and beliefs. With their numbers already thinned by the diseases brought in by the trappers, Oregon tribes such as the Cayuses refused to abandon their traditional culture based on hunting and fishing and become farm laborers for whites. During a measles epidemic in 1847, the Cayuses killed two of the most prominent missionaries, Marcus and Narcissa Whitman. In retaliation, white Americans, who now numbered more than five thousand, virtually exterminated the Cayuses.

The first large party of overlanders on the Oregon Trail left Independence, Missouri, in 1842 for the Willamette Valley. Independence and St. Joseph in Missouri and, by the 1850s, Council Bluffs in Iowa competed to capture the lucrative trade of outfitting the migrants. Merchants profited from supplying, usually at inflated prices, wagons, mules, oxen, guns, ammunition, and staples like flour, bacon, and sugar.

Most overlanders were young farm families from the Midwest, who restlessly searched for the perfect farm that would keep them out of debt. Medorum Crawford said of one family that made the journey to Oregon with him in 1842 and then quickly left for California: “They had practically lived in the wagon for more than twenty years, only remaining in one locality long enough to make a crop, which they had done in every State and Territory in the Mississippi Valley.”

Usually the male head of a household made the decision to move. Besides their usual work of minding the children and cooking and cleaning, women would now have to help drive wagons and tend livestock. Still, many women were also optimistic about the journey. “Ho—for California—at last we are on the way,” exclaimed Helen Carpenter in 1857, “and with good luck may some day reach the ‘promised land.’” A study of 159 women’s trail diaries indicates that about one-third of the women strongly favored the move. Margaret Frink, for example, recalled that she “never had occasion to regret the prolonged hardships of the toilsome journey.”

In the 1840s, some five thousand of the ninety thousand men, women, and children who set out on the Oregon Trail died along the way. Few died from Indian attacks. Indians killed only 115 migrants in the 1840s, and trigger-happy white migrants provoked most clashes. Disease, especially cholera, was the great killer. Second to disease were accidents, especially drownings when drivers tried to force overloaded wagons across swollen rivers.

Cooperation among families was the key to a successful overland crossing. The men often drew up a formal, written constitution at the start of the trip spelling out the assignments and work responsibilities of each wagon. The wagon train had to leave late enough in the spring to get good grass in Nebraska for the oxen and mules. A wagon train that departed too early risked getting bogged down in spring mud; one that left late risked the danger in the Pacific coastal ranges of being trapped in the mountain snows.

Before “Oregon fever” had run its course, the flow of white settlers across the continent radically changed the economy and ecology of the Great Plains. Pressure mounted on plants and animals, reducing the land’s ability to support all the Native-American tribes accustomed to living off it. Far from being separated from white people by a permanent line of division, the Plains Indians now stood astride the main path of white migration to the Pacific.

In response, officials in the Bureau of Indian Affairs organized a great gathering of the tribes in 1851 to push through the Fort Laramie Treaty, the first U.S. government attempt to draw boundaries within which to contain the Plains Indians. In exchange for accepting limitations on their movement and for the loss of

QUICK REVIEW

The Oregon Trail

- ◆ First large party overlanders left Missouri in 1842.
- ◆ Most overlanders were young farm families.
- ◆ In the 1840s, five thousand of the ninety thousand people who attempted the trip died.

WHERE TO LEARN MORE



Scotts Bluff National Monument,
Gering, Nebraska
www.nps.gov/schl/



In trunks such as this, women transported their fine pieces of china to the West on the Oregon trail.

Courtesy of the Lane County Historical Museum



game, the tribes were to receive annual compensation of \$50,000 a year for fifty years (later reduced by the U.S. Senate to ten years). When American negotiators tried to restrict Sioux hunting to north of the Platte, the Sioux demanded and received treaty rights to lands south of the Platte as well. “These lands once belonged to the Kiowas and the Crows,” argued a western Sioux, “but we whipped those nations out of them, and in this we did what the white men do when they want the lands of the Indians.” The Americans conceded the point.

The Fort Laramie Treaty represented a standoff between the Sioux and the U.S. government, the two great powers on the Plains. If neither yielded its claims to the region, war was inevitable.

THE MEXICAN BORDERLANDS

By the mid-1840s, parties of emigrant Americans were beginning to branch off the main Oregon Trail on their way to Utah and California. These areas were then part of the northern borderlands of Mexico. Mostly a semiarid and thinly populated land of high plateaus, dry basins, and desert bisected north to south by mountain ranges, the borderlands had been part of the Spanish empire in North America. Mexico inherited this territory when it won independence from Spain in 1821. Mexico’s hold on this region was always weak. It lost Texas in 1837, and in the next decade, the American penetration of Utah and California set the stage for the American seizure of most of the rest in the Mexican War.

THE PEOPLES OF THE SOUTHWEST

Imperial Spain had divided the population of the Southwest into four main groupings: Indians, full-blooded Native Americans who retained their own languages and customs; *mestizos*, those of racially mixed ancestry, usually Spanish and Indian; *criollos*, American-born whites of Spanish ancestry; and Spaniards.

By far the smallest group were the Spaniards. Despite their small numbers, the Spanish, along with the *criollos*, monopolized economic and political power. This wealthy elite controlled the labor of the *mestizos* in the predominantly ranching economy of the borderlands.

The largest single group in the borderlands were the Indians, about half the population in the 1820s. Most had not come under direct Spanish or Mexican control. Those who had were part of the mission system. This instrument of Spanish imperial policy forced Indians to live in a fixed area, to convert to Catholicism, and to work as agricultural laborers.

Spanish missions, most of them established by the Franciscan order, aimed both to Christianize and to “civilize” the Indians. Mission Indians were forced to abandon their native economies and culture and accept a European definition of civilization that demanded that they live in settled agricultural communities and work under the tight supervision of the friars. Spanish soldiers and royal officials, who lived in military garrisons known as *presidios*, accompanied the friars.

The largest concentration of Indians—some 300,000 when the Spanish friars arrived in the 1760s—was in California. The Paiutes in the Owens Valley perfected an intricate system for irrigating wild grasses, but only the Yumans along the Colorado River in southeastern California practiced full-scale agriculture. The Spanish marveled at their lush fields of wheat, maize, beans, tobacco, and melons. The Yumans also had an elaborate religion based on an oral tradition of dream songs. (Dream songs remain a distinctive feature of Native American culture.)

WHICH PEOPLES lived
in the Southwest?



The major farming Indians east of California were the Pueblo peoples of Arizona and New Mexico. Formally a part of the Spanish mission system, they had incorporated the Catholic God and Catholic rituals into their own polytheistic religion, which stressed the harmony of all living things with the forces of nature. They continued to worship in their underground sanctuaries known as *kivas*.

Once the Pueblos made their peace with the Spaniards after their great revolt in 1680 (see Chapter 3), their major enemies were the nomadic tribes that lived by hunting and raiding. These tribes outnumbered the Pueblos four to one and controlled most of the Southwest until the 1850s. Horses enabled them to gain the means of ranging far and wide for the economic resources that sustained their transformation into societies of mounted warriors.

Other tribes in the Mexican borderlands included the Navajos, the Apaches, the Comanches, and the Kiowas. The Comanches, a branch of the mountain Shoshonis who moved to the plains when horses became available, were the most feared of the nomadic peoples. They took to the horse as few other people ever had. They were utterly fearless, confident, and masterful horsemen. Their stature as mounted warriors reached mythic proportions. For food and clothing, they relied on the immense buffalo herds of the southern plains. For guns, horses, and other trading goods, they lived off their predatory raids. When the Santa Fe Trail opened in the early 1820s, their shrewdness as traders gave them a new source of firearms that strengthened their raiding prowess.

The three focal points of white settlement in the northern borderlands of Mexico—Texas, New Mexico, and Alta California (as distinguished from Lower, or Baja, California)—were never linked by an effective network of communications or transportation. Travel was limited to tortuous journeys along Indian and Spanish trails that barely indented the dry and largely barren landscape. Each of these settlements was an isolated offshoot of Hispanic culture with a semiautonomous economy based on ranching and a mostly illegal trade with French, British, and American merchants that brought in a trickle of needed goods.

Mexico's most pressing problem in the 1820s was protecting its northern states from the Comanches. To serve as a buffer against the Comanches, the Mexican government in 1821 invited Americans into Texas, opening the way to the eventual American takeover of the territory.

THE AMERICANIZATION OF TEXAS

The Mexicans faced the same problems governing Texas that the Spanish had. Sparsely populated and economically struggling, Mexican Texas shared a border with the United States along the Sabine River in Louisiana and the Red River in the Arkansas Territory. As one Mexican official noted with alarm: "If we do not take the present opportunity to people Texas, day by day the strength of the United States will grow until it will annex Texas, Coahuila, Saltillo, and Nuevo León like the Goths, Visigoths, and the other tribes that assailed the Roman Empire." However, attempts to promote immigration into Texas from other parts of Mexico failed. Reasoning that the Americans were going to come in any event, and anxious to build up the population of Texas against Indian attacks, the Mexican government encouraged Americans to settle in Texas by offering huge grants of land in return for promises to accept Mexican citizenship, convert to Catholicism, and obey the authorities in Mexico City.

The first American *empresario*—the recipient of a large grant in return for a promise to bring in settlers—was Stephen F. Austin, who founded the first American colony in Texas. The Austin grant encompassed 18,000 square miles. The *empresarios* stood to grow wealthy by leasing out land, selling parcels to settlers,

WHERE TO LEARN MORE



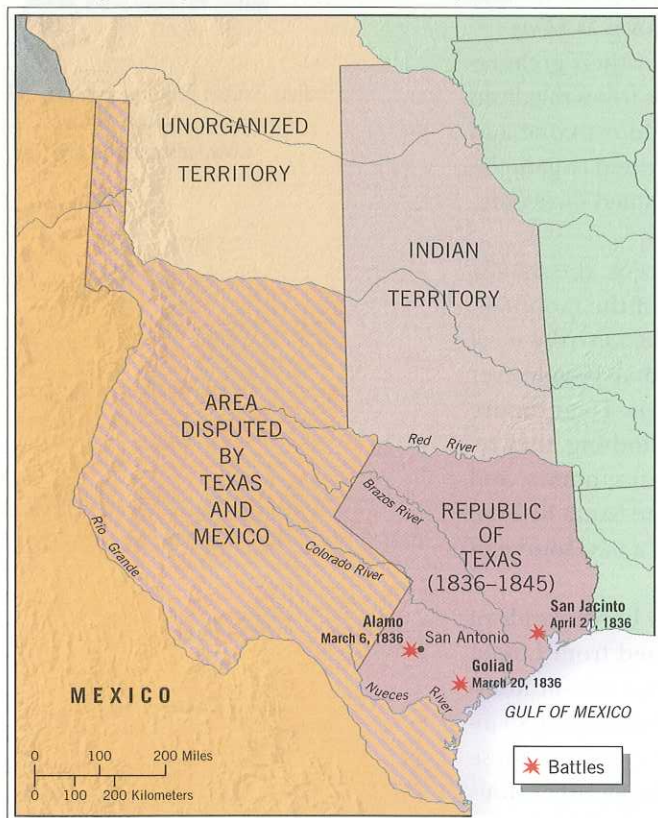
Indian Pueblo Cultural Center,
Albuquerque, New Mexico
www.indianpueblo.org/

Empresarios Agents who received a land grant from the Spanish or Mexican government in return for organizing settlements.



MAP EXPLORATION

To explore an interactive version of this map, go to <http://www.prenhall.com/goldfield2/map13.3>



MAP 13-3

Texas and Mexico after the Texas Revolt The Battle of San Jacinto was the decisive American victory that gained the independence of Texas, but the border dispute between Texas and Mexico would not be resolved until the Mexican War a decade later.

HOW WAS the border dispute between Texas and Mexico resolved, and how did its resolution affect each geographically?

Tejanos Persons of Spanish or Mexican descent born in Texas.

Alamo Franciscan mission at San Antonio, Texas, that was the site in 1836 of a siege and massacre of Texans by Mexican troops.

and organizing the rest into large-scale farms that produced cotton with slave labor in the bottomlands of the Sabine, Colorado, and Brazos Rivers. For the Americans who followed in their wake, Texas offered the chance to acquire good land that was so cheap it was almost free. As early as 1830, eastern and south central Texas were becoming an extension of the plantation economy of the Gulf coastal plain. More than 25,000 white settlers, with around a thousand slaves, had poured into the region.

Many settlers simply ignored Mexican laws, especially the Emancipation Proclamation of 1829 that forbade slavery in the Republic of Mexico. In 1830, the Mexican government levied the first taxes on the Americans, prohibited the further importation of slaves, and closed the international border to additional immigration (See American Views: “A Mexican View of the Texans in 1828”). Still, another ten thousand Americans spilled in during the early 1830s, and they continued to bring in slaves.

Unlike the *empresarios*, many of whom became Catholic and married into elite *Tejano* families, these newcomers lived apart from Mexicans and rejected Mexican citizenship. Cultural tensions escalated. Most of these new arrivals sneered at the Mexicans as a mongrelized race of black people, Indians, and Spaniards and resented having to submit to their rule. As Protestants, Americans considered Catholicism a despotic, superstitious religion and ignored legal requirements that they accept the Catholic faith.

When General Santa Anna, elected president of Mexico in 1833, overturned the liberal Mexican constitution of 1824, his dictatorial centralist rule ended any hope that Texas might become an autonomous state within a federated Mexico. Skirmishing between Mexican troops and rebellious Texans began in the fall of 1835.

At first, the Anglo-Tejano leadership sought to overthrow Santa Anna, restore the constitution of 1824, and win separate statehood for Texas within a liberal Mexican republic. When Santa Anna raised a large army to crush the uprising, he radicalized the rebellion and pushed it to

declare complete independence on March 2, 1836. Four days later, a Mexican army of four thousand annihilated the 187 defenders of the **Alamo**, an abandoned mission in San Antonio. A few weeks later at Goliad, another three hundred Texans were killed after they had agreed to surrender (see Map 13-3).

“Remember the Alamo!” and “Remember Goliad!” were powerful rallying cries for the beleaguered Texans. Volunteers from the American South rushed to the aid of the main Texan army, commanded by Sam Houston. A product of the Tennessee frontier and a close friend of Andrew Jackson’s, Houston’s victory in April 1836 at the Battle of San Jacinto established the independence of Texas. Captured while trying to flee, Santa Anna signed a treaty in May 1836, recognizing Texas as an independent republic with a boundary on the south and west at the Rio Grande. However, the Nueces River to the north of the Rio Grande had been the administrative border of Texas under Mexican rule. The Mexican Congress rejected the treaty, and the boundary remained in dispute.



◆ AMERICAN VIEWS ◆

A MEXICAN VIEW OF THE TEXANS IN 1828

By the late 1820s, Mexico was reassessing its policy of encouraging American immigration to Texas. The Mexican government appointed a commission in 1827 whose real purpose was to recommend policies that would strengthen Mexico's hold on Texas. The following excerpt is from a journal kept by Jose Maria Sánchez, member of the boundary commission.

WHY WAS the Mexican government so ineffective in maintaining control over Texas? What was the appeal of Texas for Americans? How did most of them enter Texas and take up land? Why did Sánchez have such a low opinion of the Americans in the Austin colony? What did he think of Stephen Austin? Why did the Mexicans fear that they would lose Texas?

The Americans from the north have taken possession of practically all the eastern part of Texas, in most cases without the permission of the authorities. They immigrate constantly, finding no one to prevent them, and take possession of the *sitio* [location] that best suits them without either asking leave or going through any formality other than that of building their homes. Thus the majority of inhabitants in the Department are North Americans, the Mexican population being reduced to only Bejar, Nacogdoches, and La Bahía del Espiritu Santo, wretched settlements that between them do not number three thousand inhabitants, and the new village of Guadalupe Victoria that has scarcely more than seventy settlers. The government of the state with its seat at Saltillo, that should watch over the preservation of its most precious and interesting department, taking measures to prevent its being stolen by foreign hands, is the one that knows the least not only about actual conditions, but even about its territory. . . . Repeated and urgent appeals have been made to the Supreme Gov-

ernment of the Federation regarding the imminent danger in which this interesting Department is of becoming the prize of the ambitious North Americans, but never has it taken any measures that may be called conclusive. . . .

[Sánchez goes on to describe the village of Austin and the American colony founded by Stephen Austin.]

Its population is nearly two hundred persons, of which only ten are Mexicans, for the balance are all Americans from the North with an occasional European. Two wretched little stores supply the inhabitants of the colony: one sells only whiskey, rum, sugar, and coffee; the other rice, flour, lard and cheap cloth. . . . The Americans from the North, at least the great part of those I have seen, eat only salted meat, bread made by themselves out of corn meal, coffee, and home-made cheese. To these the greater part of those who live in the village add strong liquor, for they are in general, in my opinion, lazy people of vicious character. Some of them cultivate their small farms by planting corn; but this task they usually entrust to their negro slaves, whom they treat with considerable harshness. Beyond the village in an immense stretch of land formed by rolling hills are scattered the families brought by Stephen Austin, which today number more than two thousand persons. The diplomatic policy of this empresario evident in all his actions, has, as one may say, lulled the authorities into a sense of security, while he works diligently for his own ends. In my judgment, the spark that will start the conflagration that will deprive us to Texas, will start from this colony. All because the government does not take vigorous measures to prevent it. Perhaps it does not realize the value of what it is about to lose.

Source: José Maria Sánchez, excerpted from. "A Trip to Texas in 1828," trans. Carlos E. Castaneda from *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 29 Copyright © 1926. Reprinted courtesy of Texas State Historical Association, Austin Texas. All rights Reserved.



In part because Mexico refused to recognize the Texas Republic, Anglos feared Tejanos as a subversive element. Pressure mounted on them to leave, especially after Santa Anna launched a major counterattack in 1842, capturing San Antonio. Those who stayed lost much of their land and economic power as Anglos used their knowledge of American legal codes or just plain chicanery to reduce the Tejanos to second-class citizens.

More difficult to subordinate were the Comanches. By the early 1840s, Texans and Comanches were in a state of nearly permanent war. Only the force of the federal army after the Civil War ended the Comanches' long reign as the effective rulers of the high, dry plains of northern and western Texas.

QUICK REVIEW

Mexican Rule in California

- ◆ Mexican rule in California weak.
- ◆ Government initiated program of economic development to help strengthen its control over region.
- ◆ Centerpiece of program: secularization of millions.

THE PUSH INTO CALIFORNIA AND THE SOUTHWEST

Mexican rule in California was always weak. The Sonoran desert and the resistance of the Yuman Indians in southeastern California cut off Mexico from any direct land contact with Alta California. Only irregular communications were maintained over a long sea route. For *Californios*, Californians of Spanish descent, Mexico was literally *la otra banda*, "the other shore." In trying to strengthen its hold on this remote and thinly populated region, the Mexican government relied on a program of economic development. The centerpiece of the Mexican program was the secularization of the missions, opening up the landholdings of the Catholic Church to private ownership and releasing the mission Indians from paternalistic bondage. Small allotments of land were set aside for the Indians, but most returned to their homelands. Those who remained became a source of cheap labor for the *rancheros* who carved up the mission lands into huge cattle ranches. Thus by the 1830s, California entered its *rancho* era. The main beneficiaries of this process, however, were not Mexican authorities but the American traders who responded to the economic opportunities presented by the privatization of the California economy.

New England merchants shipped out hides and tallow, a trade fed by the immense cattle resources of the *rancheros*, for processing into shoes and candles. Ships from New England and New York sailed around Cape Horn to California ports, where they unloaded trading goods. Servicing this trade in California was a resident colony of American agents, some three hundred strong by the mid-1840s.

Whereas Yankees dominated the American colonies in coastal California, it was mostly Midwestern farm families who filtered into the inner valleys of California from the Oregon Trail in the 1830s and 1840s. About one in ten of the overland parties ended up in the fertile Sacramento River Valley. Nearly a thousand Americans had arrived by 1846.

California belonged to Mexico in name only by the early 1840s. The program of economic development had strengthened California's ties to the outside world at the expense of Mexico. American merchants and California *rancheros* ran the economy, and both groups had joined separatist movements against Mexican rule.

Except for Utah, the American push into the interior of the Mexican Southwest followed the California pattern of trade preceding settlement. When Mexico liberalized the formerly restrictive trading policies of Spain, American merchants opened up the 900-mile-long **Santa Fe Trail** from Independence, Missouri, to Santa Fe, New Mexico. Starved for mercantile goods, the New Mexicans were a small but highly profitable market. They paid for their American imports with gold, silver, and furs.

Brent's Old Fort on the Arkansas River at the point where the Santa Fe Trail turned to the southwest and Taos, enabled the Brent brothers from Missouri to control a flourishing and almost monopolistic trade with Indians, trappers, caravans on the Santa Fe Trail, and the large landowners and merchants of New Mexico.

Californios Californians of Spanish descent.

Santa Fe Trail The 900-mile trail opened by American merchants for trading purposes following Mexico's liberalization of the formerly restrictive trading policies of Spain.



This trade pulled New Mexico into the cultural and economic orbit of the United States and undermined what little sovereign power Mexico held in the region.

Ties of blood and common economic interests linked a small group of American businessmen with an influential faction of the local elite. After thwarting an 1841 Texan attempt to occupy Santa Fe, the leaders of New Mexico increasingly looked to the United States to protect their local autonomy. They quickly decided to cooperate with the American army of invasion when the Mexican War got under way. Over the opposition of the clergy and ranchers still loyal to Mexico, this group was instrumental in the American takeover of New Mexico.

At the extreme northern and inner reaches of the Mexican borderlands lay Utah. Dominated by an intermountain depression called the Great Basin, Utah was home to the Bannocks, Utes, Navajos, Hopis, and small bands of other Indians. Mexico had largely ignored this remote region. Its isolation made Utah appealing to the leaders of the Mormons, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Founded by Joseph Smith in upstate New York in the 1820s, Mormonism grew rapidly within a communitarian framework that stressed hard work and economic cooperation under the leadership of patriarchal leaders. Harassed out of New York, Ohio, and Missouri, the Mormons thought they had found a permanent home by the late 1830s in Nauvoo, Illinois, but the murder of Joseph Smith and his brother by a mob in 1844 convinced the beleaguered Mormons that they had to leave the settled East. Under the leadership of Brigham Young, they established a new community in 1847 at the Great Salt Lake on the western slopes of the Wasatch Mountains. Ten thousand Mormons joined them.

The Mormons' intense communitarianism was ideally suited to dispensing land and organizing an irrigation system that coordinated water rights with the amount of land under production. To their dismay, however, they learned in 1848 that the United States had acquired Utah, along with the rest of the northern borderlands of Mexico, as a result of the Mexican War. (For more on the Mormons, see Chapter 14.)

POLITICS, EXPANSION, AND WAR

In 1844, James K. Polk, the new Democratic president, fully shared the expansionist vision of his party. The greatest prize in his eyes was California. Although silent in public on California for fear of further antagonizing the Mexicans, who had never accepted the loss of Texas, Polk made the acquisition of California the cornerstone of his foreign policy. When he was stymied in his efforts to purchase California and New Mexico, he tried to force concessions from the Mexican government by ordering American troops to the mouth of the Rio Grande, far within the territory claimed by Mexico. When the virtually inevitable clash of arms occurred in late April 1846, war broke out between the United States and Mexico.

Victory resulted in the **Mexican Cession of 1848**, which added half a million square miles to the United States. Polk's administration also finalized the acquisition of Texas and reached a compromise with the British on the Oregon Territory that recognized American sovereignty in the Pacific Northwest up to the 49th parallel. The United States was now a nation that spanned a continent.

MANIFEST DESTINY

With a phrase that soon entered the nation's vocabulary, John L. O'Sullivan, editor and Democratic politician, proclaimed in 1845 America's "manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of Liberty and federated self-government entrusted to us." Central to Manifest Destiny was the assumption that

WHERE TO LEARN MORE



Fort Union National Monument,
Watrous, New Mexico
www.nps.gov/foun/

HOW WAS the United States
able to annex Texas from Mexico?

Mexican Cession of 1848 The addition of half a million square miles to the United States as a result of victory in the 1846 war between the United States and Mexico.



12-4

John L. O'Sullivan, "The Great Nation of Futurity" (1845)

QUICK REVIEW

Manifest Destiny

- ◆ Manifest Destiny distinguished by its explicitly racial component.
- ◆ Doctrine operated as a self-serving justification for territorial aggrandizement.
- ◆ Manifest Destiny associated with Democratic party.

white Americans were a special people, a view that dated back to the Puritans' belief that God had appointed them to establish a New Israel cleansed of the corruption of the Old World. Evangelical revivals in the early nineteenth century then added an aggressive sense of urgency to America's presumed mission to spread the benefits of Christian civilization. Protestant missionaries, as in Oregon, were often in the vanguard of American expansion.

What distinguished Manifest Destiny was its explicitly racial component. Caucasian Anglo-Saxon Americans, as the descendants of ancient Germanic tribes that purportedly brought the seeds of free institutions to England, were now said to be the foremost race in the world. This superior racial pedigree gave white Americans the natural right as a chosen people to expand westward, carrying the blessings of democracy and progress.

Advocates of Manifest Destiny were not warmongers calling for conquest. Still, the doctrine was undeniably a self-serving justification for what other peoples would see as territorial aggrandizement. Manifest Destiny and popular stereotypes lumped Indians and Mexicans together as inferior peoples. An emigrant guide of 1845 spoke of the Mexican Californians as "scarcely a visible grade in the scale of intelligence, above the barbarous tribes by whom they are surrounded." For Waddy Thompson, an American minister to Mexico in the early 1840s, the Mexicans in general were "lazy, ignorant, and, of course, vicious and dishonest." This alleged Mexican inferiority was attributed to racial intermixture with the Indians, who, it was said, were hopelessly unfit for civilization.

Manifest Destiny was closely associated with the Democratic party. For Democrats, expansionism would counterbalance the debilitating effects of industrialization and urbanization. As good Jeffersonians, they stressed the need for more land to realize the ideal of a democratic republic rooted in the virtues and rough equality of independent farmers. For their working-class Irish constituency, the Democrats touted the broad expanses of the West as the surest means to escape the misery of wage slavery.

Manifest Destiny captured the popular imagination when the country was still mired in a depression after the Panic of 1837. The way out of the depression, according to many Democrats, was to revive the export trade. Thomas Hart Benton, a Democratic senator from Missouri, promoted American trade with India and China, to be secured by American possession of the harbors on the Pacific Coast.

THE MEXICAN WAR

Once in office, Polk was willing to compromise on Oregon because he dreaded the possibility of a two-front war against both the Mexicans and the British.

In the spring of 1846, after Polk had abrogated the agreement on the joint occupation of Oregon, the British agreed to a boundary at the 49th parallel if they were allowed to retain Vancouver Island in Puget Sound. The Senate quickly approved the offer in June 1846. British-American trade continued to flourish, Mexico lost a potential ally, and most important, Polk could now concentrate on the Mexican War that had erupted a month earlier.

Polk refused to budge on the American claim (inherited from the Texans, when the United States annexed Texas in 1845) that the Rio Grande was the border between Texas and Mexico. The Mexicans insisted that the Nueces River, 100 miles to the north of the Rio Grande, was the border, as it had been when Texas was part of Mexico. A boundary on the Rio Grande would more than double the size of Texas.

Polk sent 3,500 troops under General Zachary Taylor to the Nueces River in the summer of 1845. Polk also stepped up his efforts to acquire California, instructing Thomas Larkin, the American consul in Monterey, California, to inform the *Californios* and Americans that the United States would support them if they revolted against



12-5

Thomas Corwin, Against the Mexican War (1847)

FROM THEN TO NOW

Manifest Destiny and American Foreign Policy

From the birth of the nation in 1776 to the U.S. led NATO air strikes on Yugoslavia in 1999, a sense of mission has often imbued American foreign policy. Manifest Destiny was one expression of that sense of mission.

Thomas Paine, in *Common Sense*, declared that America had the “power to begin the world over again.” The shining force of the American republic’s free government, Paine believed, would redeem those suffering under despotic monarchies. According to the lofty rhetoric of Manifest Destiny, America would fulfill this divinely ordained mission by absorbing all the people of North America—at least those deemed capable of self-government—into the republic.

Manifest Destiny helped inspire the American surge to the Pacific and justify the Mexican War. But the war also provoked a contrary fear: Was the United States guilty of an imperial conquest that threatened liberty rather than promoting it? When expansionists pushed for the acquisition of all of Mexico, opponents objected. Mexicans, they claimed, were unfit to join Anglo-Saxon Americans in assuming the responsibilities of self-rule. At the same time, to subject Mexico to colonial rule would deny it the democratic liberty that Manifest Destiny promised. Consequently, the All Mexico movement soon collapsed.

After cresting in the 1840s, Manifest Destiny lost its appeal. Expansionists in the late nineteenth century invoked Manifest Destiny to justify America’s acquisition of an overseas empire following the Spanish-American War, but the new empire didn’t really fit that model. The advocates of Manifest Destiny had envisioned neighboring peoples in North America voluntarily joining the Republic. According to critics, the new empire, on the contrary, rested on the once-despised imperialist doctrines of Old World Europe. For former President Grover Cleveland, the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands in 1898 was “a perversion of our national mission,” a signal that the nation was prepared to “abandon old landmarks and . . . follow the lights of monarchical hazards.”

Cleveland and the other anti-imperialists lost the turn-of-the-century debate over whether the nation should acquire dependent possessions abroad. Still, by insisting, with Thomas

Paine, that America’s true mission must be to serve as the “model republic” for others to follow, they established the theme that characterized at least the public face of American diplomacy in the twentieth century. President Woodrow Wilson, for example, justified American intervention in World War I as a moral crusade to save democracy in Europe, and he sought in vain to bring the United States into a new international body—the League of Nations—designed to curb aggressive nations and prevent future wars. Wilsonian idealism infused the foreign policy of President Franklin D. Roosevelt during World War II and inspired the formation of the United Nations. Throughout the Cold War, America identified itself as the protector of democratic freedoms from the threat of international communism. In the post-Cold War world, both Presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton have cited the need to uphold human rights as grounds for U.S. military intervention abroad.

Critics have charged that the mantle of human rights cloaks the pursuit of less noble U.S. interests in other nations. Whether or not this critique is valid, it is clear that as the twenty-first century dawns, any interventionist foreign policy must present itself in the idealistic terms of a special American mission if it is to have public support.



In this late 1872 evocation of the spirit of Manifest Destiny, Indians retreat westward as white settlers, guided by a diaphanously clad America, spread the benefits of American civilization.

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QUICK REVIEW

War with Mexico

- ◆ Polk sought a war that would give United States control of California.
- ◆ Mexico fought bravely but could not match American Military.
- ◆ Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848): Mexico gave up claim to Texas north of Rio Grande, Alta California, and New Mexico.

Mexican rule. Polk also secretly ordered the U.S. Pacific naval squadron to seize California ports if war broke out with Mexico. Polk's final effort at peaceful expansion was to send John L. Slidell to Mexico City to offer \$30 million to purchase California and New Mexico and to secure the Rio Grande boundary.

When Polk learned that the Mexican government had refused to receive Slidell, he set out to draw Mexico into a war that would result in the American acquisition of California. In early 1846, Taylor blockaded the mouth of the Rio Grande (an aggressive act even if the river had been an international boundary) and built a fort on the northern bank across from the Mexican town of Matamoros. The Mexicans attacked and were repulsed on April 24 (see Map 13–4).

Even before the news reached Washington, Polk had decided on war. Informed of the clash between Mexican and American troops in early May (it took ten days for the news to reach Washington), he sent a redrafted war message to Congress on May 9 asserting that Mexico “has invaded our territory, and shed American blood on American soil.” Congress declared war on May 13, 1846.

The Mexicans fought bravely, but they lacked the leadership, modern artillery, and naval capacity to check the American advances. An army sent west under Colonel Stephen W. Kearny occupied New Mexico. The conquest was relatively bloodless because most of the local elite cooperated with the American authorities. Sporadic resistance was largely confined to poorer Mexicans and the Pueblo Indians, who feared that their land would be confiscated. The largest uprising, one that was ruthlessly suppressed, was the **Taos Revolt** in January 1847, led by Jesús Trujillo and Tomasito, a Pueblo chieftain. A sympathetic observer described the rebels as “those who defend to the last their country and their homes.”

Kearny's army then moved to Tucson and eventually linked up in southern California with pro-American rebels and U.S. forces sent ashore by the Pacific squadron. Despite the loss of its northern provinces, Mexico refused to concede defeat. Taylor established a secure defensive line in northeastern Mexico with a victory at Monterrey in September 1846 and repulsed a Mexican counterattack at Buena Vista in February 1847. Polk then directed General Winfield Scott to invade central Mexico. Following an amphibious assault on Vera Cruz in March 1847, Scott captured Mexico City in September.

Peace talks finally got under way and concluded in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed on February 2, 1848. Mexico surrendered its claim to Texas north of the Rio Grande and ceded Alta California and New Mexico (including present-day Arizona, Utah, and Nevada). The United States paid \$15 million, assumed over \$3 million in claims of American citizens against Mexico, and agreed to grant U.S. citizenship to Mexicans resident in its new territories.

Polk had gained his strategic goals, but the cost was thirteen thousand American lives (most from diseases such as measles and dysentery), fifty thousand Mexican lives, and the poisoning of Mexican-American relations for generations. The war also, as will be seen in Chapter 14, heightened sectional tensions over slavery and weakened the political structure that was vital to preserving the Union.

Taos Revolt Uprising of Pueblo Indians in New Mexico that broke out in January 1847 over the imposition of American rule during the Mexican War; the revolt was crushed within a few weeks.

CONCLUSION

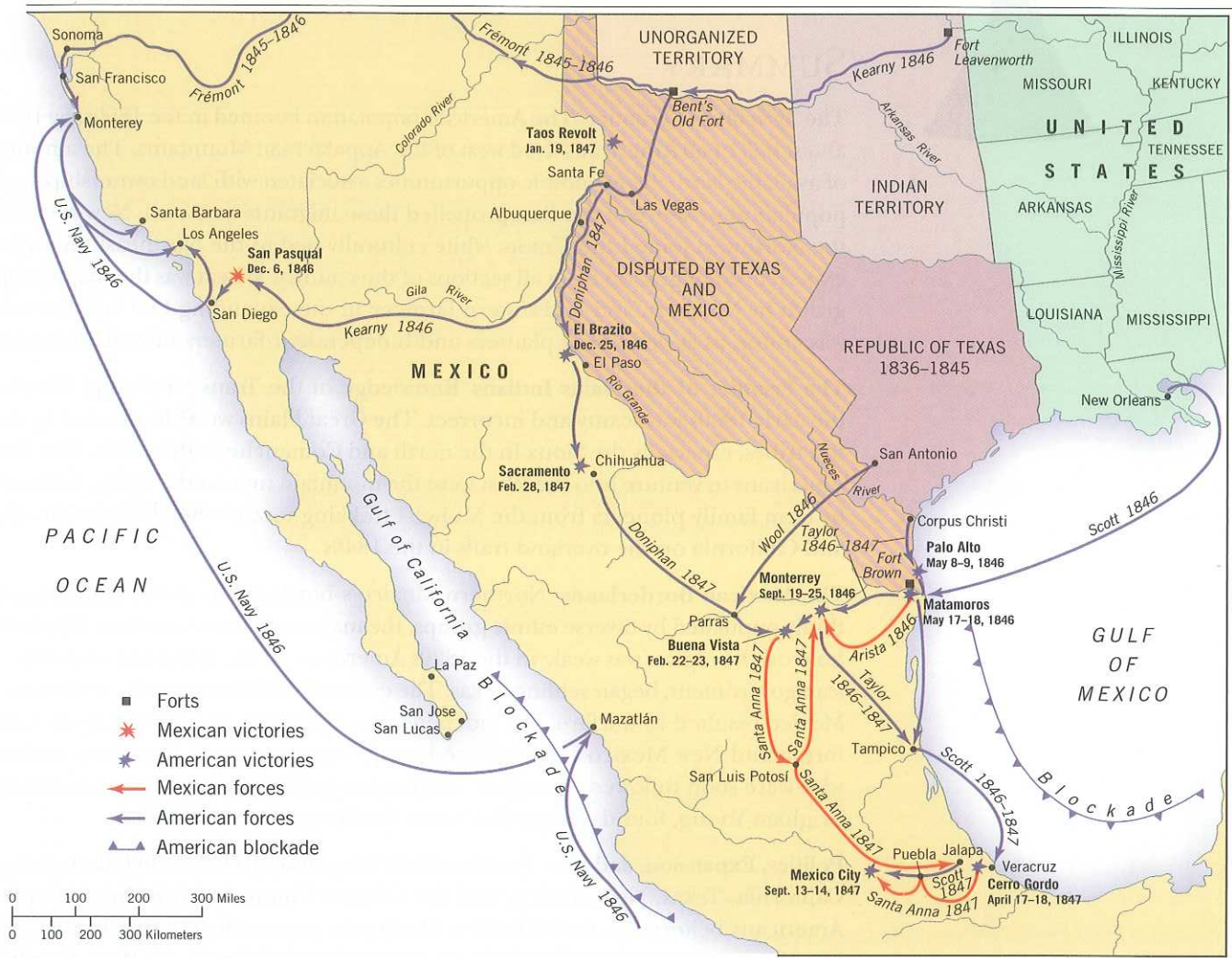
Population pressure on overworked farms in the East impelled much of the westward migration, but by the 1840s, expansion had seemingly acquired a momentum all its own, one that increasingly rejected the claims of other peoples to the land.

Far from being a process of peaceful, evolutionary, and democratic change, as was once thought, expansion involved the spread of slavery, violent confrontations, and



MAP EXPLORATION

To explore an interactive version of this map, go to <http://www.prenhall.com/goldfield2/map13.4>



MAP 13-4

The Mexican War Victories under General Zachary Taylor in northern Mexico secured the Rio Grande as the boundary between Texas and Mexico. Colonel Stephen Kearny's expedition won control of New Mexico, and reinforcements from Kearny assured the success of American troops landed by the Pacific Squadron in gaining Alta California for the United States. The success of General Winfield Scott's amphibious invasion at Vera Cruz and his occupation of Mexico City brought the war to an end.

WHY DID the United States feel the need to employ naval blockades to the east and west of Mexico?

the uprooting and displacement of native peoples. By 1850, the earlier notion of reserving the trans-Mississippi West as a permanent Indian country had been abandoned. The Sioux and Comanches were still feared by whites, but their final subjugation was not far off. The derogatory stereotypes of Mexican Americans that were a staple of both popular thought and expansionist ideology showed clearly that American control after the Mexican War would relegate Spanish-speaking people to second-class status.

However misleading and false much of it was, the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny did highlight a central truth. A broad, popular base existed for expanding across the



continent. As the Mexican War made clear, the United States was now unquestionably the dominant power in North America. The only serious threat to its dominance in the near future would come from inside, not outside, its continental domain.

SUMMARY

The Agricultural Frontier The American population boomed in the 1800s; by 1850 about half of all Americans lived west of the Appalachian Mountains. The amount of available land, the economic opportunities associated with land ownership, and population pressure in the East propelled these migrants westward. New states in the Northwest joined the Union; while culturally tied to the Northeast, this area experienced migration from all sections of the country. Wheat was the major crop grown by Northern and Midwestern farmers; in the expanding Old Southwest it was cotton as slaveholding planters and independent farmers moved westward.

The Frontier of the Plains Indians Knowledge of the Trans-Mississippi West in the early 1800s was scanty and incorrect. The Great Plains were dominated by native tribes, especially the Sioux in the north and Comanche in the south. The first Americans to venture into the West were the mountain men in the 1820s, followed by farm family pioneers from the Midwest trekking toward the Oregon Country and California on the overland trails in the 1840s.

The Mexican Borderlands Northern Mexico's borderlands were semiarid and thinly populated by diverse ethnic groups, the majority Native American. Mexico's hold on the region was weak; in the 1820s Americans, at the invitation of the Mexican government, began settling Texas. The eventual clash between the settlers and Mexico resulted in warfare and independence for Texas. Mexico's grip on California and New Mexico was weakened by the appearance of American traders who were soon followed by settlers. In Mexican-held Utah, the Mormons, led by Brigham Young, found a home free from the threat of persecution.

Politics, Expansion, and War President Polk's expansionist vision included adding California, Texas, New Mexico, and the Oregon Country to the United States. Americans believed in their Manifest Destiny to possess the continent; this philosophy was not welcomed by those occupants already living in the West. Conflict over the southern border of Texas provided an excuse for declaring war; the Mexican War was a one-sided conflict, and the American victory resulted in California and the present day Southwest being added to the United States.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did Americans move westward? How did slavery affect how the new settlements developed?
 2. How did migration transform the West of the Plains Indians after 1830?
 3. Who lived in the Mexican borderlands of the Southwest? Why was it difficult for Mexican authorities to control the region?
 4. What did Americans mean by Manifest Destiny?
 5. Who was responsible for the outbreak of the Mexican War? Were Mexicans the victims of American aggression?
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KEY TERMS

Alamo (p. 340)
Californios (p. 342)
Claims clubs (p. 330)
Empresarios (p. 339)

Manifest Destiny (p. 327)
Mexican Cession of 1848 (p. 343)
Oregon Trail (p. 333)
Santa Fe Trail (p. 342)

Taos Revolt (p. 346)
Tejanos (p. 340)

WHERE TO LEARN MORE

-  **Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, Albuquerque, New Mexico.** This center provides an excellent orientation to the culture, crafts, and community life of the Pueblo and Southwestern Indians. It also includes much material on archaeological findings. Visit www.indianpueblo.org/ for a calendar of events and an introduction to the history of the nineteen pueblos.
-  **Museum Association of American Frontier and Fur Trade, Chadron, Nebraska.** The library in the museum holds archives, maps, and some photographs dealing with the western fur trade. In addition to an event calendar, its website www.stepintohistory.com/states/NE/Fur_Trade.htm provides links to other museums and preservation sites.
-  **Indian Museum of North America, Crazy Horse, South Dakota.** This is one of the best sources for learning of the culture of the Teton Sioux and other American and Canadian tribes on the Great Plains. Holdings include outstanding examples of Indian art and artifacts. For information on exhibits, educational and cultural programs, and special collections of Native American art, go to: www.crazyhorse.org/museum.shtml
-  **Living History Farms, Des Moines, Iowa.** This site includes several working farms, operated as they were at different points in the nineteenth century, as well as a mid-twentieth-century farm. A vintage town with a general store, church, and other buildings has also been re-created. Its website www.lhf.org/ lists events and provides a look at four farm sites.
-  **Scotts Bluff National Monument, Gering, Nebraska.** Scotts Bluff was a prominent landmark on the Oregon Trail, and the museum exhibits here have interpretive material on the trail and the western phase of expansion. Go to www.nps.gov/scbl/ to print a park travel guide and to access a website devoted to the frontier photographer and artist William Henry Jackson.
-  **Conner Prairie, Noblesville, Indiana.** The museum and historic area re-create a sense of life on the Indiana frontier during the period of the Old Northwest. www.connerprairie.org
-  **Fort Union National Monument, Watrous, New Mexico.** Fort Union was a nineteenth-century military post, and the holdings and exhibits in the museum relate to frontier military life and the Santa Fe Trail. For a printable travel guide and a history of the park that includes bibliographical aides, go to: www.nps.gov/foun/

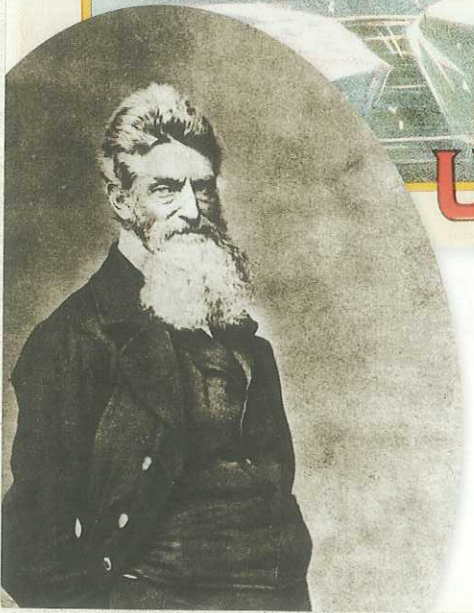
*This horror, this nightmare abomination!
Can it be in my country! It lies like lead on
my heart, it shadows my life with sorrow . . .*



THE FAMOUS JARRETT & PALMER LONDON COMPY SLAVINS ORIGINAL AMERICA
CONSOLIDATED WITH



UNCLE TOM'S CABIN.



The slave Eliza is attacked by vicious dogs while crossing with her baby the ice floes of a frozen river in a poster advertising an 1881 theatrical production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.