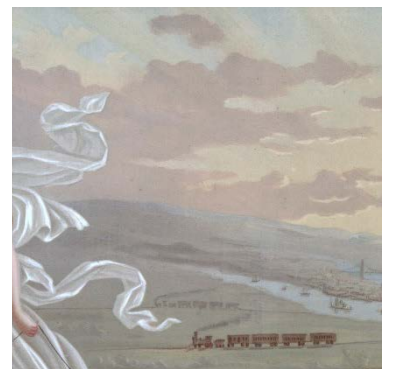
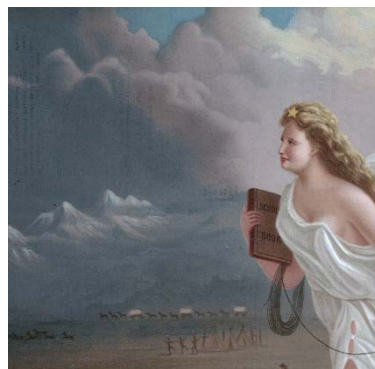


Was the **SPREAD** of the
UNITED STATES
across the continent



D e s t i n y
o r D e s i g n ?





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Q u e s t i o n S e v e n

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EXPLORING AMERICA'S HISTORY THROUGH COMPELLING QUESTIONS

S U P P O R T I N G Q U E S T I O N S

- 1 WHY DIDN'T JEFFERSON'S VISION OF PEACEFUL, SCIENTIFIC EXPLORATION TYPIFY THE WESTWARD EXPANSION OF WHITE AMERICA?
- 2 WHEN SOMETHING IS WRONG BUT POPULAR, HOW SHOULD INDIVIDUALS RESIST?
- 3 & 4 HOW HAVE THE REAL AND MYTHOLOGIZED PEOPLE OF THE WEST SHAPED OUR NATIONAL IDENTITY?
- 5 WERE THE INDIAN WARS A TRIUMPH OR A TRAGEDY?

D E V E L O P E D A N D C O M P I L E D B Y
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Q u e s t i o n S e v e n

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European settlers first landed in the Americas along the Atlantic Coast. By the time the United States freed itself from British rule, White settlement stretched as far inland as the Appalachian Mountains. At the end of Andrew Jackson's two terms in office most Native American tribes had been removed to the west side of the Mississippi River, and in 1890 the superintendent of the Census declared the frontier to be closed. Just over 100 years after the nation's birth, White Americans lived everywhere.

In 1845, John O'Sullivan, a New York newspaper editor, coined the phrase manifest destiny. The term described the very popular idea of the special role of the United States in overtaking the continent. As the two words imply, O'Sullivan and most White Americans believed it was their God-given duty to seize and settle the continent and spread Protestant, democratic values from sea to shining sea.

Expansion westward seemed perfectly natural to many Americans in the mid-1800s. Like the Massachusetts Puritans who hoped to build a city upon a hill, courageous pioneers believed that America had a divine obligation to stretch the boundaries of their noble republic to the Pacific Ocean. Independence had been won in the Revolution and reaffirmed in the War of 1812. The spirit of nationalism that swept the nation in the next two decades demanded more territory. The every man is equal mentality of the Jacksonian Era fueled this optimism. With territory up to the Mississippi River claimed and settled and the Louisiana Purchase explored, Americans headed west in droves.

The religious fervor spawned by the Second Great Awakening created another incentive for the drive west. Indeed, many settlers believed that God himself blessed the growth of the American nation. The Native Americans were considered heathens. By Christianizing the tribes, American missionaries believed they could save souls and they became among the first to cross the Mississippi River.

Economic motives were paramount for others. The fur trade had been dominated by European trading companies since colonial times. German immigrant John Jacob Astor was one of the first American entrepreneurs to challenge the Europeans. He became a millionaire in the process. The desire for more land brought aspiring homesteaders to the frontier. When gold was discovered in California in 1848, the number of migrants increased even more.

Herein lies an interesting question. Did the march of White culture toward the Pacific Ocean happen because of destiny, or was it planned – the result of thousands of purposeful decisions? It is easy to study history and see what *did* happen as what *must* have happened. What do you think? Was the spread of the United States across the continent destiny or design?

European settlers first landed in the Americas along the Atlantic Coast. By the time the United States freed itself from British rule, White settlement stretched as far inland as the Appalachian Mountains. At the end of Andrew Jackson's two terms in office most Native American tribes had been removed to the west side of the Mississippi River, and in 1890 the superintendent of the Census declared the frontier to be closed. Just over 100 years after the nation's birth, White Americans lived everywhere.

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F I R S T Q U E S T I O N WHY DIDN'T JEFFERSON'S VISION OF PEACEFUL, SCIENTIFIC EXPLORATION TYPIFY THE WESTWARD EXPANSION OF WHITE AMERICA?

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INTRODUCTION

In 1803, President Thomas Jefferson betrayed his past as a strict constructionist of the Constitution and did something the Constitution did not specifically grant him the authority to do: he bought land. In fact, he doubled the size of the nation. The enormous purchase turned out to be one of the greatest bargains the United States ever got.

The Louisiana Territory was huge. Even looking at a map of the nation today, the land Jefferson purchased it covers almost a third of the lower 48 states. Perhaps most incredibly, Jefferson and most White Americans at the time had almost no idea what they had just bought. Few Whites had ventured far beyond the Mississippi River. On some maps, the entire Great Plains were simply labeled the "Great American Desert."

When Jefferson's Corp of Discovery set off to find out just what the nation had purchased, their leaders Lewis and Clark had instructions from Jefferson to explore, map, record what they found, and form friendly relationships with the Native Americans in the territory. This was Jefferson's dream: westward expansion based on peaceful coexistence and scientific curiosity.

While Jefferson himself, and Lewis and Clark may have believed in these ideals, rest of America's story of westward expansion tells a strikingly different tale. Violent conflict, broken treaties, cultural misunderstanding, encroachment, and ultimately cultural annihilation are the norm. It is the Corp of Discovery's peaceful journey to the Pacific Ocean and back this stands out as the anomaly.

Why is this? Why did the spread of White Americans from sea to shining sea have to be so violent and destructive? Why didn't Jefferson's ideal typify the westward movement?

THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE

As president, Thomas Jefferson realized his greatest triumph as chief executive in 1803 when the United States bought the Louisiana Territory from France for \$15 million. It was a bargain price, considering the amount of land involved. Perhaps the greatest real estate deal in American history, the **Louisiana Purchase** greatly enhanced the Jeffersonian vision of the United States as an agrarian republic in which yeomen farmers worked the land. Jefferson also wanted to bolster trade in the West, seeing the port of New Orleans and the Mississippi River (then the western boundary of the United States) as crucial to American agricultural commerce. In his mind, farmers would send their produce down the Mississippi River to New Orleans, where it would be sold to European traders.

The purchase of Louisiana came about largely because of circumstances beyond Jefferson's control, though he certainly recognized the implications of the transaction. Until 1801, Spain had controlled New Orleans and had given the United States the right of deposit, that is, the right to traffic goods in the port without paying customs duties. That year, however, the Spanish had ceded Louisiana, including the port of New Orleans, to France. In 1802, the United States lost its right to deposit goods duty-free in the port, causing outrage among many, some of whom called for war with France.

Jefferson instructed Robert Livingston, the American envoy to France, to secure access to New Orleans, sending James Monroe to France to add additional pressure. The timing proved advantageous. Because black slaves in the French colony of Haiti had successfully overthrown the brutal plantation regime, Napoleon could no longer hope to restore the empire lost with France's defeat in the Seven Years War. His vision of Louisiana and the Mississippi Valley as the source for food for Haiti, the most profitable sugar island in the world, had failed. In need of funds to support his wars against France's European neighbors, the emperor agreed to the sale in early 1803.

The Louisiana Purchase helped Jefferson win reelection in 1804 by a landslide. Of 176 electoral votes cast, all but 14 were in his favor. The great expansion of the United States did have its critics, however, especially Northerners who feared the addition of more slave states and a corresponding lack of representation of their interests in the North. And under a strict interpretation of the Constitution, it remained unclear whether the president had the power to add territory in this fashion. But the vast majority of citizens cheered the increase in the size of the republic. For slaveholders, new western lands would be a boon; for slaves, the Louisiana Purchase threatened to entrench their suffering further.

The Louisiana Territory held tremendous promise, but the true extent of the United States' new territory remained unknown. No one knew precisely what lay to the west or how long it took to travel from the Mississippi to the Pacific. To head the expedition into the Louisiana territory, Jefferson



Louisiana Purchase: 1803 purchase of land from France by President Jefferson which doubled the size of the nation. It was an example of a loose interpretation of the Constitution despite Jefferson's preference for strict interpretation.



Meriwether Lewis: Along with Clark, one of the two leaders of the Corps of Discovery that President Jefferson sent to explore the Louisiana Purchase.

appointed his friend and personal secretary, twenty-nine-year-old army captain **Meriwether Lewis**, who was instructed to form a **Corps of Discovery**. Lewis in turn selected **William Clark**, who had once been his commanding officer, to help him lead the group.



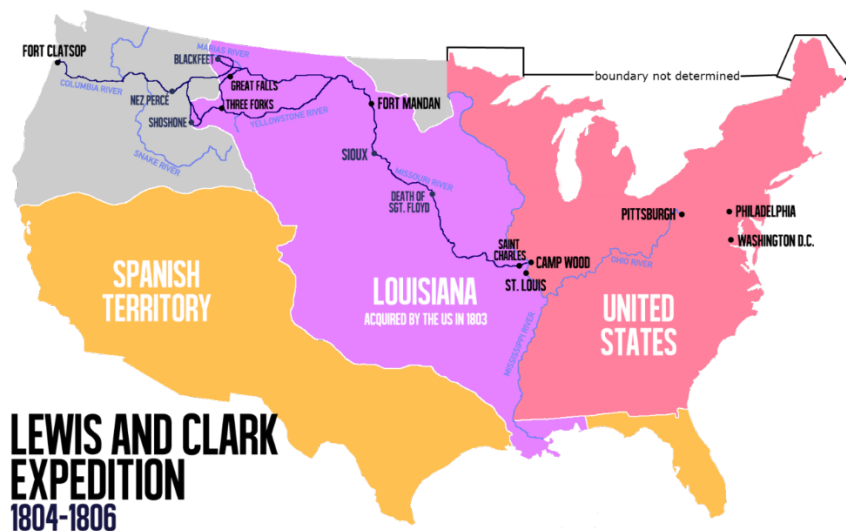
William Clark: Along with Lewis, one of the two leaders of the Corps of Discovery that President Jefferson sent to explore the Louisiana Purchase.



Corps of Discovery: Group of explorers led by Lewis and Clark that crossed the new Louisiana Purchase all the way to the Pacific Ocean. They tried to establish peaceful relationships with Native Americans, created maps, and recorded the plants and animals they found.

Secondary Source: Map

The route of the Lewis and Clark Expedition from St. Louis to the Pacific Ocean



Jefferson wanted to improve the ability of American merchants to access the ports of China. Establishing a river route from St. Louis to the Pacific Ocean was crucial to capturing a portion of the fur trade that had proven so profitable to Great Britain. He also wanted to legitimize American claims to the land against rivals, such as Great Britain and Spain. Lewis and Clark were thus instructed to map the territory through which they would pass and to explore all tributaries of the Missouri River. This part of the expedition struck fear into Spanish officials, who believed that Lewis and Clark would encroach on New Mexico, the northern part of New Spain. Spain dispatched four unsuccessful expeditions from Santa Fe to intercept the explorers. Lewis and Clark also had directives to establish friendly relationships with tribes, introducing them to American trade goods and encouraging warring groups to make peace. Establishing an overland route to the Pacific would bolster American claims to the Pacific Northwest, first established in 1792 when Captain Robert Gray sailed his ship *Columbia* into the mouth of the river that now bears his vessel's name and forms the present-day border between the states of Oregon and Washington. Finally, Jefferson, who had a keen interest in science and nature, ordered Lewis and Clark to take extensive notes on the geography, plant life, animals, and natural resources of the region into which they journeyed.

After spending the winter of 1803–1804 encamped at the mouth of the Missouri River while the men prepared for their expedition, the Corps set off in May 1804. Although the 33 frontiersmen, boatmen, and hunters took with them Alexander Mackenzie's account of his explorations and the best maps they could find, they had no real understanding of the difficulties they would

face. Fierce storms left them drenched and freezing. Enormous clouds of gnats and mosquitos swarmed about their heads as they made their way up the Missouri River. Along the way they encountered, and killed and ate a variety of animals including elk, buffalo, and grizzly bears. One member of the expedition survived a rattlesnake bite. As the men collected minerals and specimens of plants and animals, the overly curious Lewis sampled minerals by tasting them and became seriously ill at one point. What they did not collect, they sketched and documented in the journals they kept. They also noted the customs of the Native Americans who controlled the land and attempted to establish peaceful relationships with them in order to ensure that future White settlement would not be impeded.

The corps spent their first winter in the wilderness, 1804–1805, in a Mandan village in what is now North Dakota. There they encountered a reminder of France's former vast North American empire when they met a French fur trapper named Toussaint Charbonneau. When the corps left in the spring of 1805, Charbonneau accompanied them as a guide and interpreter, bringing his teenage Shoshone wife Sacagawea and their newborn son. Charbonneau knew the land better than the Americans, and **Sacagawea** proved invaluable in many ways, not least of which was that the presence of a young woman and her infant convinced many groups that the men were not a war party and meant no harm.



Sacagawea: Native American woman who travelled with Lewis and Clark during their exploration of the Louisiana Purchase. Her services as an interpreter were invaluable.

Secondary Source: Currency

The quarter bearing the likeness of Sacagawea and her baby.



The Corps set about making friends with native tribes while simultaneously attempting to assert American power over the territory. The Corps followed native custom by distributing gifts, including shirts, ribbons, and kettles, as a sign of goodwill. The explorers presented native leaders with medallions, many of which bore Jefferson's image, and invited them to visit their new "ruler" in the East. These medallions or peace medals were meant to allow future explorers to identify friendly native groups. Not all efforts to assert American control went peacefully; some Indians rejected the explorers' intrusion onto their land. An encounter with the Blackfoot turned hostile, for example, and members of the corps killed two Blackfoot men.

After spending eighteen long months travelling and nearly starving to death in the Bitterroot Mountains of Montana, the Corps of Discovery finally reached the Pacific Ocean in 1805 and spent the winter of 1805–1806 in Oregon. They arrived back in St. Louis later in 1806 having lost only one man, who had died of appendicitis. Upon their return, Meriwether Lewis was named governor of the Louisiana Territory. Unfortunately, he died only three years later in circumstances that are still disputed, before he could write a complete account of what the expedition had discovered.

Although the Corps of Discovery failed to find the coveted, but non-existent, all-water route to the Pacific Ocean, it nevertheless accomplished many of the goals Jefferson had set. The men traveled across the North American continent and established relationships with many tribes, paving the way for fur traders like John Jacob Astor who later established trading posts and solidified American claims to Oregon. Delegates of several tribes did go to Washington to meet the president. Hundreds of plant and animal specimens were collected, several of which were named for Lewis and Clark in recognition of their efforts. And the territory was more accurately mapped and legally claimed by the United States. Nonetheless, most of the vast territory, home to a variety of native peoples, remained unknown to Americans.

THE SIXTY YEARS WAR

History is usually thought of in stages, and American history is generally broken down in fairly predictable ways. Our own study of history has so far followed the traditional pattern. However, in studying the westward expansion of White American culture, and the corresponding loss of land and culture on the part of the Native population, it is worth looking at events and separating them into a different set of periods. In doing so, a new conflict emerges, albeit one that is not known outside of academic circles: The Sixty Years War.

The Sixty Years' War from 1754 to 1814 was a military struggle for control of the Great Lakes and Mississippi River region, encompassing a number of wars over several generations. Traditionally, the war for control of the Great Lakes region has been written about only in reference to the individual wars.

The designation Sixty Years' War provides a framework for viewing this era as a continuous whole. The Sixty Years' War encompassed multiple conflicts:

In the Seven Years War of 1754 to 1763, Native Americans generally fought alongside the French. The Iroquois Confederacy attempted to remain neutral in the conflict, except for the Mohawks, who fought as British allies. The conquest of New France by the British marked the end of French colonial power in the region and the establishment of British rule in what would become Canada. While the conflict between France and Great Britain ended in 1763, Pontiac's Rebellion continued for another two years in which tribes that had been allies of the defeated French renewed the struggle against the British victors, eventually leading to a negotiated truce.

While the Proclamation of 1763 was intended to prevent conflicts between settlers and Natives on the western side of the Appalachian Mountains, it did not. A war with Ohio tribes, primarily Shawnees and Mingos, forcing them to cede their hunting ground south of the Ohio River in modern Kentucky was fought in 1764.

The American Revolutionary War of 1775 to 1783 spilled over onto the frontier, with British commanders in Canada working with Native American allies to halt White expansion and to provide a strategic diversion from the primary battles in the East. With the victory of the United States in the war, Great Britain ceded the Old Northwest, the homeland of many of her Native allies, to the Americans.

Naturally, a large confederation of Native tribes resisted occupation of the Old Northwest. After suffering numerous defeats, the United States won the Battle of Fallen Timbers and gained control of most of modern Ohio. Fighting for control of territory continued and when the United States declared war on Great Britain in 1812, the British and Native tribes once again united in their common effort to defeat the United States.

The war between the United States and Great Britain Canada ended as a stalemate, establishing the Great Lakes as a permanent boundary between the United States and Canada. After this struggle, Native Americans in the region no longer had a European ally in the struggle against White expansion.

Since we have already studied the Seven Years War, the War for Independence and the War of 1812, we will not look again at those conflicts from the perspective of White Americans and Europeans, but rather look at the Native conflicts that occurred concurrently with the War of 1812.

TECUMSEH'S WAR

The Shawnee chief **Tecumseh** and American general William Henry Harrison had both been junior participants in the Battle of Fallen Timbers at the close of the American Revolution. Tecumseh was not among the signers of the **Treaty of Greenville** between the United States and Britain's Native allies that had ended the war and ceded much of present-day Ohio, long inhabited



Tecumseh: Native American political leader who, along with his brother The Prophet, organized a campaign to unite the tribes up and down the Mississippi River against White expansion during the early

by the Shawnees and other Native Americans, to the United States. However, many Indian leaders in the region accepted the Greenville terms, and for the next ten years, resistance to American power in Ohio faded.

Most of Ohio Shawnee and Miami who had participated in the earlier war and signed the Greenville Treaty urged cultural adaptation and accommodation with the United States. The tribes of the region participated in several treaties, including the Treaty of Grouseland and the Treaty of Vincennes that gave and recognized American possession of most of southern Indiana. The treaties resulted in an easing of tensions by allowing settlers into Indiana and appeasing the Indians with reimbursement for lands lost.

In May 1805, Lenape Chief Buckongahelas, one of the most important native leaders in the region, died of either smallpox or influenza. The surrounding tribes believed his death was caused by a form of witchcraft, and a witch-hunt ensued, leading to the death of several suspected Lenape witches. The witch-hunts inspired a nativist religious revival led by Tecumseh's brother **Tenskwatawa**, better known as The Prophet, who emerged in 1805 as a leader among the witch hunters. He posed a threat to the influence of the accommodationist chiefs, to whom Buckongahelas had belonged.

As part of his religious teachings, Tenskwatawa urged Natives to reject White American ways, such as drinking liquor, European-style clothing, and firearms. He also called for the tribes to refrain from ceding any more lands to the United States. Numerous leaders who preferred cooperation with the United States were accused of witchcraft and some were executed by followers of Tenskwatawa. The older, moderate leaders who had signed the Treaty of Greenville began to put pressure on Tenskwatawa and his followers to leave the area to prevent the situation from escalating.

Three years after starting their movement, Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh retreated further northwest and established the village of **Prophetstown** near the confluence of the Wabash and Tippecanoe Rivers, land claimed by the Miami. The Miami leader Little Turtle told the Shawnee that they were unwelcome there, but the warnings were ignored. Tenskwatawa's religious teachings became more widely known as they became more militant, and he attracted Native American followers from many different nations, including Shawnee, Iroquois, Chickamauga, Meskwaki, Miami, Mingo, Ojibwe, Ottawa, Kickapoo, Delaware (Lenape), Mascouten, Potawatomi, Sauk, Tutelo and Wyandot. Tecumseh eventually emerged as the leader of the confederation, but it was built upon a foundation established by the religious appeal of his younger brother.

Prophetstown came to be the largest Native American community in the Great Lakes region and served as an important cultural and religious center. It was an intertribal, religious stronghold along the Wabash River in Indiana for 3,000 Native Americans; it was known as Prophetstown to whites. Led

1800s. His army was defeated at the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811 and he moved to Canada.



Treaty of Greenville: 1795 agreement between Native American leaders in what is now Ohio and the American government in which the Native tribes agreed to give up their land. Tecumseh was among the minority of tribal leaders in Ohio who rejected the treaty and decided to fight White expansion.



Tenskwatawa: Also known as The Prophet, he was the brother of Tecumseh and provided a spiritual rationale for resistance to White expansion. He was less talented as a military leader than his brother and his mistakes helped lead to their defeat at Tippecanoe in 1811.



Prophetstown: Tecumseh's camp in Indiana that was the site of the Battle of Tippecanoe.

by Tenskwatawa initially, and later jointly with Tecumseh, thousands of Algonquin-speaking people gathered along the banks of the Tippecanoe River to gain spiritual strength.



Primary Source: Painting

Tecumseh's younger brother, Tenskwatawa, was painted by George Catlin in 1830, many years after he and his brother led the confederation of tribes at Prophetstown.

Meanwhile, in 1800, **William Henry Harrison** had become the governor of the newly formed Indiana Territory. Harrison sought to secure title to Native lands to allow for American expansion. In particular, he hoped that the Indiana Territory would attract enough White settlers to qualify for statehood.

In 1809, Harrison was able to negotiate among the various tribes in the territory for an agreement to sell lands. The Treaty of Fort Wayne was signed on September 30, 1809, in which the United States purchased over 4,600 square miles of Native land.

Tecumseh was outraged by the Treaty of Fort Wayne and revived an idea advocated in previous years by the Shawnee leader Blue Jacket and the



William Henry Harrison: Governor of Indiana who defeated Tecumseh's army in the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811. He capitalized on his popularity as an "Indian fighter" to win the presidency in 1840 but died after only 31 days in office.

Mohawk leader Joseph Brant that stated that Native land was owned in common by all tribes, and thus no land could be sold without agreement by all. Tecumseh knew that such broad consensus was nearly impossible to achieve.

Not yet ready to confront the United States directly, Tecumseh's primary adversaries were initially the Native American leaders who had signed the treaty, and he threatened to kill them all. Tecumseh began to expand on his brother's teachings that called for the tribes to return to their ancestral ways, and began to connect the teachings with idea of a pan-tribal alliance. Tecumseh began to travel widely, urging warriors to abandon the accommodationist chiefs and to join the resistance at Prophetstown.

Harrison was impressed by Tecumseh and even referred to him in one letter as "one of those uncommon geniuses." He feared Tecumseh had the potential to create a strong empire if he went unchecked and suspected that he was behind attempts to start an uprising. Harrison also feared that if Tecumseh were able to achieve a truly pan-tribal federation, the British would take advantage of the situation and ally with the Natives in an effort to retake the Great Lakes region.

In August 1810, Tecumseh and 400 armed warriors traveled down the Wabash River to meet with Harrison in Vincennes. The warriors were all wearing war paint, and their sudden appearance at first frightened the soldiers. The leaders of the group were escorted to Grouseland, where they met Harrison. Tecumseh insisted that the Fort Wayne treaty was illegitimate and asked Harrison to nullify. He warned that Americans should not attempt to settle the lands sold in the treaty. Tecumseh acknowledged to Harrison that he had threatened to kill the chiefs who signed the treaty if they carried out its terms, and that his confederation was rapidly growing. Harrison rejected Tecumseh's claim that all the Indians formed one nation, and each nation could have separate relations with the United States.

Tecumseh launched an impassioned rebuttal, but Harrison was unable to understand his language. A Shawnee who was friendly to Harrison cocked his pistol from the sidelines to alert Harrison that Tecumseh's speech was leading to trouble. Finally, an army lieutenant who could speak Tecumseh's language warned Harrison that he was encouraging the warriors with him to kill Harrison. Many of the warriors began to pull their weapons and Harrison pulled his sword. The entire town's population was only 1,000 and Tecumseh's men could have easily massacred the town, but once the few officers pulled their guns to defend Harrison, the warriors backed down. Chief Winnemac, who was friendly to Harrison, countered Tecumseh's arguments to the warriors and instructed them that because they had come in peace, they should return in peace and fight another day. Before leaving, Tecumseh informed Harrison that unless the treaty was nullified, he would seek an alliance with the British.

During the next year, tensions escalated. Four settlers were murdered on the Missouri River, and in another incident, a boatload of supplies was seized by Natives from a group of traders. Harrison summoned Tecumseh to Vincennes to explain the actions of his allies. In August 1811, Tecumseh met with Harrison at Vincennes, assuring him that the Shawnee brothers meant to remain at peace with the United States. He then traveled to the South on a mission to recruit allies among the Cherokee, Creek, Choctow and other major tribes in the lower Mississippi. Most of the southern nations rejected his appeals, but a faction among the Creeks, who came to be known as the Red Sticks, answered his call to arms.



Secondary Source: Painting

This painting was created based on drawings of Tecumseh from his lifetime. Interestingly he wears a mix of both traditional and European clothing, including a medal received as a sign of friendship.

Having heard from intelligence that Tecumseh was far away, Governor Harrison decided to take advantage of the situation and embarked on a publicity campaign aimed at discrediting Tenskwatawa. Tecumseh ordered his brother to take no action, but The Prophet lifted the ban on firearms and

was able to quickly procure them in large quantities from the British in Canada. Tenskwatawa took his brother's absence as an opportunity to raise tensions even higher by further stirring up his followers.

While Tecumseh was still in the South, Harrison marched more than 1,000 men on an expedition to intimidate the Prophet and his followers. His stated goal was to force them to accept peace, but he acknowledged that he would launch a pre-emptive attack on the Natives if they refused. On November 6, 1811, Harrison's army arrived outside Prophetstown, and Tenskwatawa agreed to meet Harrison in a conference to be held the next day. Tenskwatawa, perhaps suspecting that Harrison intended to attack the village, decided to risk a pre-emptive strike, sending out roughly 500 of his warriors against the American encampment. Before the dawn of the next day, the Indians attacked, but Harrison's men held their ground, and the Natives withdrew from the village after the battle. Despite the surprise attack, the victorious Americans burned Prophetstown the following day. The **Battle of Tippecanoe**, as it is called today, was a short, but consequential conflict.

Harrison, and many subsequent historians, claimed that the Battle of Tippecanoe was a deathblow to Tecumseh's confederacy. Harrison eventually became the President of the United States largely on the memory of this victory. The battle was a severe blow for Tenskwatawa, who lost prestige and the confidence of his brother.

By December, most of the major American newspapers began to carry stories on the battle. Public outrage grew and many Americans blamed the British for inciting the tribes to violence and supplying them with firearms. Andrew Jackson was among the forefront of men calling for war, claiming that Indians were "excited by secret British agents." Other western governors called for action. William Blount of Tennessee called on the government to "purge the camps of Indians of every Englishmen to be found..." Acting on popular sentiment, Congress passed resolutions condemning the British for interfering in American domestic affairs. Tippecanoe fueled the worsening tension with Britain, helping to push reluctant Americans into the War of 1812.

In that war, Tecumseh found British allies in Canada. Canadians would subsequently remember Tecumseh as a defender of Canada, but his actions in the War of 1812, which would cost him his life, were a continuation of his efforts to secure Native American independence from outside dominance. Tecumseh and his efforts to unify Native Americans in the Great Lakes Region died along with him in the 1813 Battle of Thames.

THE CREEK WAR

The **Creek War** of 1813–1814, also known as the Red Stick War, began as a civil war within the Creek Nation, a powerful tribe located in the lower Mississippi region centered in what is now Alabama.



Battle of Tippecanoe: 1811 fight between American troops led by Indiana governor William Henry Harrison and a coalition of Native Americans led by Tecumseh. Harrison was victorious, thus breaking the last major coordinated effort to stop White expansion east of the Mississippi River.



Creek War: A series of conflicts in 1813 and 1814 between members of the Creek Nation in what is now Alabama. The conflict was about how best to

A faction of younger men from the Upper Creek villages, known as **Red Sticks**, sought aggressively to return their society to a traditional way of life, culturally and religiously. Red Stick leaders such as William Weatherford (Red Eagle), Peter McQueen, and Menawa were all allies of the British. They clashed violently with other Creek leaders over White American territorial encroachment. Many of the Upper Creek were influenced by the prophecies of Tecumseh's brother, Tenskwatawa, which, echoing those of their own spiritual leaders, predicted the extermination of the European Americans.

The Red Sticks aggressively resisted the civilization programs administered by the government Indian Agent, Benjamin Hawkins, who had stronger alliances among the Lower Creek. Lower Creek towns had been under more pressure from settlers in present-day Georgia and had been persuaded to cede land in 1790, 1802, and 1805. Settlers had ruined hunting grounds, and as the wild game disappeared, the Lower Creek began adopting White farming practices.

In February of 1813, a small war party of Red Sticks, returning from Detroit and led by Little Warrior, killed two families of settlers along the Ohio River. Benjamin Hawkins learned of this, and demanded that the Creek turn over Little Warrior and his six companions to the government. Instead of complying, old Creek chiefs, led by Big Warrior, decided to execute the war party themselves. This decision ignited civil war in the Creek Nation. In the months that followed, warriors of Tecumseh's party began to attack the property of their Lower Creek enemies, burning plantations and destroying livestock.

The first clashes between the Red Sticks and United States forces occurred on July 21, 1813. A group of territorial militia intercepted a party of Red Sticks returning from Spanish Florida, where they had acquired arms from the Spanish governor at Pensacola. The Red Sticks escaped and the soldiers looted what they found. Seeing the Americans looting, the Creek regrouped and attacked and defeated the Americans. The Battle of Burnt Corn, as the exchange became known, broadened the Creek Civil War to include American forces.

Concerned about the ongoing conflict, the Tennessee legislature authorized Governor Willie Blount to raise 5,000 militia for a three-month tour of duty to make war on the Red Stick Confederacy. Blount called out a force of 2,500 West Tennessee men under Colonel Andrew Jackson to "repel an approaching invasion... and to afford aid and relief to... Mississippi Territory."

In addition to the state actions, the federal government sent emissaries to organize the friendly Lower Creek under Major William McIntosh, a Native chief, to aid the militias in actions against the Red Sticks. At the request of Return J. Meigs, the Cherokee Nation voted to join the Americans in their fight against the Red Sticks. Under the command of Chief Major Ridge, 200 Cherokee fought with the Tennessee Militia under Colonel Andrew Jackson.

deal with White expansion – accommodation or violent resistance.



Red Sticks: Group of Creek Native Americans who had been allied with the British during the War of 1812 and were supporters of Tecumseh. They wanted to use violence to resist White expansion and fought with other members of the Creek Nation in what became known as the Creek War.

The irony of Cherokee warriors fighting under Jackson's command against other Native Americans should not be lost on anyone.

The Red Stick Confederacy was unprepared for the scope of the conflict they had brought about. At most, their force consisted of 4,000 warriors, possessing perhaps 1,000 muskets. They had never been involved in a large-scale war, not even against neighboring tribes. Many Creek tried to remain friendly to the United States, but as the conflict progressed, few Whites in the region distinguished between friendly and unfriendly Creeks.



Primary Source: Painting

Menawa, one of the leaders of the Red Sticks was painted in 1837 by Charles Bird King.

The war ended after Jackson commanded a force of combined state militias, Lower Creek, and Cherokee to defeat the Red Sticks at Horseshoe Bend along the Tallapoosa River in Alabama. The **Battle of Horseshoe Bend**, which occurred on March 27, 1814, was a decisive victory for Jackson, effectively ending the Red Stick resistance. On August 9, 1814, Andrew Jackson forced headmen of both the Upper and Lower Towns of Creek to sign the **Treaty of Fort Jackson**. Despite protests from the Creek chiefs who had fought alongside Jackson, the Creek Nation was forced to cede 23 million acres of land, accounting for half of Alabama and part of southern Georgia, to the



Battle of Horseshoe Bend: Decisive battle in 1814 between American forces under the command of Andrew Jackson and Red Stick Creeks. It resulted in the Treaty of Fort Jackson in which the Creek Nation agreed to give up their land.



Treaty of Fort Jackson: 1814 agreement between the Creek Nation and American government in which the Creeks agreed to give up their land and move west. It was a result of Andrew

United States government. In what would be a prelude to his latter attitudes toward Native Americans, Jackson recognized no difference between his Lower Creek allies and the Red Sticks who fought against him, forcing both to cede their land.

Jackson's successful military campaign against the Red Stick Creeks.

SETTLEMENT OF THE MIDWEST

With land in the Midwest opened for White settlement through both treaty and by force, and the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, settlers from New England and the Middle Colonies spread throughout the region. Most of them started as farmers, but later the larger proportion moved to towns and cities as entrepreneurs and urban professionals.

The fact that most of the settlers in the Midwest were from the North had a lasting impact on the region. Historian John Bunker explained the effect in this way. "Because they arrived first and had a strong sense of community and mission, Yankees were able to transplant New England institutions, values, and mores, altered only by the conditions of frontier life. They established a public culture that emphasized the work ethic, the sanctity of private property, individual responsibility, faith in residential and social mobility, practicality, piety, public order and decorum, reverence for public education, activists, honest, and frugal government..." Social institutions in the Midwest tended toward communal involvement. A strong public school system was established and later immigrants from the Netherlands and Scandinavia found both the climate and the philosophical outlook of the Midwest inviting and familiar.

In contrast, territories to the south, including Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi became home to slave-owning planters who transported their hierarchical culture and slave-based economy. Also making the journey were thousands of descendants of the Scotch-Irish, who formed the lower class of White non-slave-owning residents of the trans-Appalachian South.

CONCLUSION

When English settlers first landed in New England and Virginia, leaders such as Powhattan and Massasoit attempted to forge positive trading and defensive alliances with the Whites, but found that land ownership was an issue on which their new neighbors simply had no willingness to compromise. As the decades wore on, generation after generation of Native Americans did their best to protect their lands from the advance of English-speaking settlers. They partnered with the French in 1754, with the British in 1775, and with the British again in 1812. While some had tried peaceful negotiation that resulted in sales of land, and others had even adopted the lifestyles of the Whites even so far as to use the American court system, the ultimate outcome was the same. Like all their forbearers, Tecumseh and his followers, the Creeks, the Cherokee, and the many tribes whose traditional

homelands were east of the Mississippi River found that there was little they could do to prevent White encroachment on their territory.

Jefferson knew that White culture was going to spread west, and did nothing to hide his desire that it would. But he did not envision the violent, tragic struggles that typified the movement. Why wasn't his vision of expansion based on respect, understanding, peaceful cooperation, and scientific curiosity the norm?

Was the opportunity for peace betrayed by greedy settlers, or impatient young Native Americans? Was the timing always just a little wrong? In the Spanish colonies Native Americans intermarried with Europeans and the cultures became a blend of both worlds. But this didn't happen in the United States. Why not?

What do you think? Did the settlement of the West by Whites have to be violent?

SUMMARY

Thomas Jefferson purchases Louisiana from France in 1803. The land he bought was much larger than the current State of Louisiana. In effect, Jefferson doubled the size of the country. To explore the land he had just purchased, he sent Lewis and Clark on a multi-year journey to the Pacific Ocean and back. Their Corps of Discovery was meant to map the land, study the animals and plants, and make friendly connections to the Native Americans. They were helped by Sacagawea, a young mother who helped translate along the way.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition may have been peaceful, but most encounters between White Americans and Native Americans were not. Natives had been fighting for 60 years to try to preserve their lands, and they mostly were losing. They had fought in the Seven Years War, the Revolution and during the War of 1812.

Between the Revolution and the War of 1812, Tecumseh and his brother "The Prophet" Tenskwatawa had tried to unite the tribes along the Mississippi River to form a wall against White expansion. They ended up fighting American troops at the Battle of Tippecanoe led by William Henry Harrison and lost. Tecumseh left for Canada, Harrison became popular and won the presidency, and White expansion continued.

Much of this fighting took place in the region we now call the Midwest, encompassing the states of Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Ohio and Wisconsin. Once Native Americans had been defeated and the Erie Canal opened, White settlers from New England, New York and Pennsylvania swarmed in. They all became states before the Civil War.

Creeks in the South also fought White advancement into their territory at the same time as the War of 1812. Like William Henry Harrison, Andrew Jackson fought them, won and later won the presidency as well.



PEOPLE AND GROUPS

Meriwether Lewis: Along with Clark, one of the two leaders of the Corps of Discovery that President Jefferson sent to explore the Louisiana Purchase.

William Clark: Along with Lewis, one of the two leaders of the Corps of Discovery that President Jefferson sent to explore the Louisiana Purchase.

Corps of Discovery: Group of explorers led by Lewis and Clark that crossed the new Louisiana Purchase all the way to the Pacific Ocean. They tried to establish peaceful relationships with Native Americans, created maps, and recorded the plants and animals they found.

Sacagawea: Native American woman who travelled with Lewis and Clark during their exploration of the Louisiana Purchase. Her services as an interpreter were invaluable.

Tecumseh: Native American political leader who, along with his brother The Prophet, organized a campaign to unite the tribes up and down the Mississippi River against White expansion during the early 1800s. His army was defeated at the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811 and he moved to Canada.

Tenskwatawa: Also known as The Prophet, he was the brother of Tecumseh and provided a spiritual rationale for resistance to White expansion. He was less talented as a military leader than his brother and his mistakes helped lead to their defeat at Tippecanoe in 1811.

William Henry Harrison: Governor of Indiana who defeated Tecumseh's army in the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811. He capitalized on his popularity as an "Indian fighter" to win the presidency in 1840 but died after only 31 days in office.

Red Sticks: Group of Creek Native Americans who had been allied with the British during the War of 1812 and were supporters of Tecumseh. They wanted to use violence to resist White expansion and fought with other members of the Creek Nation in what became known as the Creek War.



TREATIES, LAWS & POLICIES

Louisiana Purchase: 1803 purchase of land from France by President Jefferson which doubled the size of the nation. It was an example of a loose interpretation of the Constitution despite Jefferson's preference for strict interpretation.

Treaty of Greenville: 1795 agreement between Native American leaders in what is now Ohio and the American government in which the Native tribes agreed to give up their land. Tecumseh was among the minority of tribal leaders in Ohio who rejected the treaty and decided to fight White expansion.

Treaty of Fort Jackson: 1814 agreement between the Creek Nation and American government in which the Creeks agreed to give up their land and move west. It was a result of Andrew Jackson's successful military campaign against the Red Stick Creeks.



EVENTS

Battle of Tippecanoe: 1811 fight between American troops led by Indiana governor William Henry Harrison and a coalition of Native Americans led by Tecumseh. Harrison was victorious, thus breaking the last major coordinated effort to stop White expansion east of the Mississippi River.

Creek War: A series of conflicts in 1813 and 1814 between members of the Creek Nation in what is now Alabama. The conflict was about how best to deal with White expansion – accommodation or violent resistance.

Battle of Horseshoe Bend: Decisive battle in 1814 between American forces under the command of Andrew Jackson and Red Stick Creeks. It resulted in the Treaty of Fort Jackson in which the Creek Nation agreed to give up their land.



LOCATIONS

Prophetstown: Tecumseh's camp in Indiana that was the site of the Battle of Tippecanoe.

2

S E C O N D Q U E S T I O N WHEN SOMETHING IS WRONG BUT POPULAR, HOW SHOULD INDIVIDUALS RESIST?

Was the SPREAD of the
UNITED STATES
across the continent
D e s t i n y
o r D e s i g n ?

INTRODUCTION

Everyone has been warned that sometimes what is popular is not always right. America's history clearly bears this out. There are so many examples of things that were popular – slavery, Jackson's Native American policy, war with Mexico – that were popular in their own time but are seen by us today as clearly morally wrong.

That brings us to our question: How can individuals stand up for what they know is right, even when it's popular? Whether in school, in politics, at work or with friends, everyone will eventually be faced with this choice. In 1846, the United States went to war with Mexico. The United States clearly instigated the fight, and the objective was clearly to gain control of the land that is now New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada and California. Most Americans supported the decision to go to war and thousands of patriotic, brave young men volunteered to join the army.

A small group of equally brave Americans decided to stand up to the majority and argue against the war. We see them today as being on the right side of history, but they were in the minority at the time – unpopularly criticizing their government as their neighbors risked their lives for the glory of their country. It is hard to imagine anyone describing them as brave at the time.

So what do you do when you believe you are right, adrift in a sea of your friends, coworkers, neighbors, and compatriots who all think you are wrong?

AMERICAN SETTLERS MOVE TO TEXAS

Since the conquest of Cortez, Mexico had been Spanish territory, and at the start of the 1800s, the Spanish government began actively encouraging Americans to settle **Texas**, their northernmost province. The few Mexican farmers and ranchers who lived there were under constant threat of attack by hostile Native American tribes, especially the Comanche, who supplemented their hunting with raids in pursuit of horses and cattle.

To increase the non-Native population in Texas and provide a buffer zone between its hostile tribes and the rest of Mexico, Spain began to recruit empresarios who brought settlers to the region in exchange for generous grants of land. Moses Austin, a once-prosperous entrepreneur reduced to poverty by the Financial Panic of 1819, requested permission to settle three hundred English-speaking American residents in Texas. Spain agreed on the condition that the resettled people convert to Roman Catholicism.

Austin died in 1821 before being able to carry out his dream, but asked his son Stephen to continue his plans, and Mexico, which had won independence from Spain the same year, allowed Stephen to take control of his father's grant. Like Spain, the new Mexican government also encouraged settlement in the state of Coahuila y Texas and passed colonization laws to encourage immigration. Thousands of Americans, primarily from neighboring American slave states, flocked to Texas and quickly outnumbered the **Tejanos**, the Mexican residents of the region. The soil and climate were good for cotton production and Texas offered a good opportunity to expand slavery. Land was plentiful and offered at generous terms. Unlike the American government, Mexico allowed buyers to pay for their land in installments and did not require a minimum purchase. Furthermore, to many Whites, it seemed not only their God-given right but also their patriotic duty to populate the lands beyond the Mississippi River, bringing with them American slavery, culture, laws, and political traditions.

THE TEXAS WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE

Most Americans who migrated to Texas at the invitation of the Mexican government did not shed their identity as Americans or loyalty to the United States. For instance, the majority of these new settlers were Protestant, and though they were not required to attend the Catholic mass, Mexico's prohibition on the public practice of other religions upset them and they routinely ignored it.

Accustomed to representative democracy, jury trials, and the defendant's right to appear before a judge, the Anglo-American settlers in Texas also disliked the Mexican legal system, which provided for an initial hearing by an alcalde, an administrator who often combined the duties of mayor, judge, and law enforcement officer. The alcalde sent a written record of the



Texas: Largest of the lower 48 states. It was a territory of Mexico before American-born Tejanos fought for independence in 1835. It was known as the Lone Star Republic for a decade before it was annexed by the United States in 1845.



Tejanos: Mexican-born Hispanic residents of Texas. They were outnumbered by the influx of American-born Whites in the early 1800s.

proceeding to a judge in Saltillo, the state capital, who decided the outcome. Settlers also resented limited representation in the state legislature.

Their greatest source of discontent, however, was the Mexican government's 1829 abolition of slavery. Most American settlers were from southern states, and many had brought slaves with them. Mexico tried to accommodate them by maintaining the fiction that the slaves were indentured servants. But American slaveholders in Texas distrusted the Mexican government and wanted Texas to be a new slave state.

The dislike of most for Roman Catholicism, the prevailing religion of Mexico, and a widely held belief in American racial superiority led them generally to regard Mexicans as dishonest, ignorant, and backward. Belief in their own superiority inspired some Texans to undermine the power of the Mexican government. When empresario Haden Edwards attempted to evict people who had settled his land grant before he gained title to it, the Mexican government nullified its agreement with him. Outraged, Edwards and a small party of men took prisoner the alcalde of Nacogdoches. The Mexican army marched to the town, and Edwards and his troop then declared the formation of the Republic of Fredonia between the Sabine and Rio Grande Rivers. To demonstrate loyalty to their adopted country, a force led by Stephen Austin hastened to Nacogdoches to support the Mexican army. Edwards's revolt collapsed, and the revolutionaries fled Texas.

The growing presence of American settlers in Texas, their reluctance to abide by Mexican law, and their desire for independence caused the Mexican government to grow wary. In 1830, it forbade future immigration and increased its military presence in Texas. Settlers continued to stream illegally across the long border and by 1835, there were 20,000 Americans in Texas.

Fifty-five delegates from the Anglo-American settlements gathered in 1831 to demand the suspension of customs duties, the resumption of immigration from the United States, better protection from Native American tribes, the granting of promised land titles, and the creation of an independent state of Texas separate from Coahuila. Ordered to disband, the delegates reconvened in early April 1833 to write a constitution for an independent Texas. Surprisingly, General **Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna**, Mexico's new president, agreed to all demands, except the call for statehood. Coahuila y Texas made provisions for jury trials, increased Texas's representation in the state legislature, and removed restrictions on commerce.

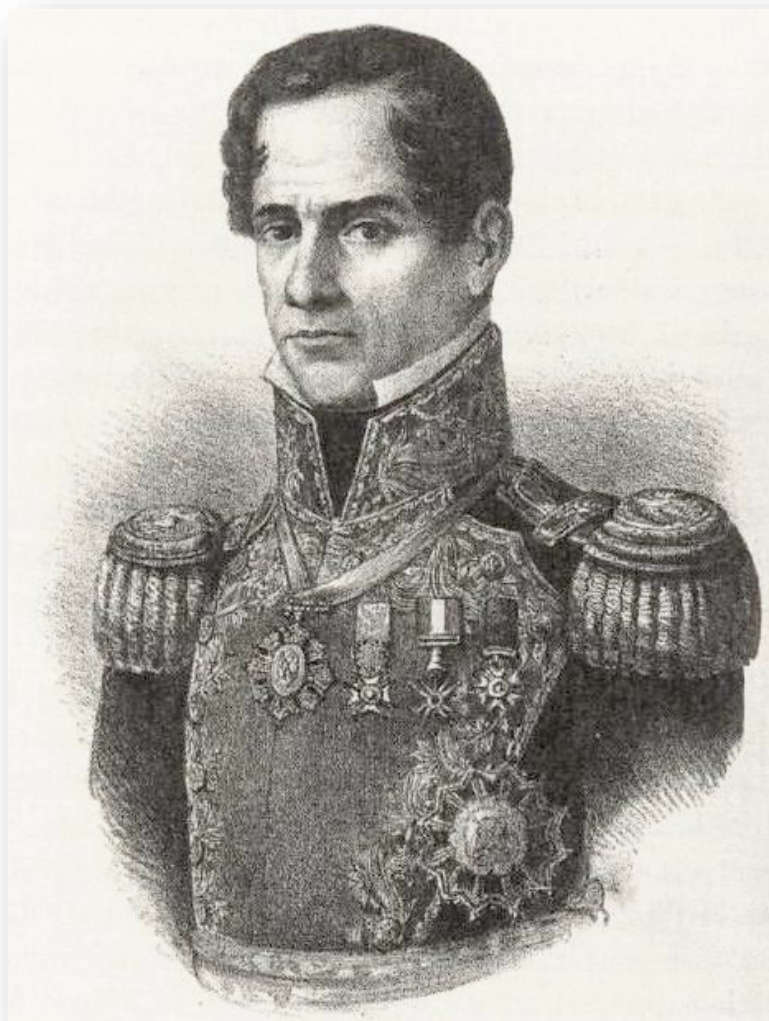
Texans' hopes for independence were quashed in 1834, however, when Santa Anna dismissed the Mexican Congress and abolished all state governments, including that of Coahuila y Texas. In January 1835, reneging on earlier promises, he dispatched troops to the town of Anahuac to collect customs duties. Lawyer and soldier William B. Travis and a small force marched on Anahuac in June, and the fort surrendered. On October 2,



Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna:

Mexican dictator who fought against the Texans in the Texas War for Independence. He was the Mexican commander at the Battles of the Alamo and San Jacinto. Later he led Mexico against the Americans in the Mexican-American War.

Anglo-American forces met Mexican troops at the town of Gonzales. The Mexican troops fled and the Americans moved on to take San Antonio.



Primary Source: Engraving

Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, president of Mexico during both the Texas Revolution and then again during the Mexican-American War.

Now more cautious, delegates to the Consultation of 1835 at San Felipe de Austin voted against declaring independence, instead drafting a statement, which became known as the Declaration of Causes, promising continued loyalty if Mexico returned to a constitutional form of government. They selected Henry Smith, leader of the Independence Party, as governor of Texas and placed **Sam Houston**, a former soldier who had been a congressman and governor of Tennessee, in charge of its small military force.

The Consultation delegates met again in March 1836. They declared their independence from Mexico and drafted a constitution calling for an American-style judicial system and an elected president and legislature. Significantly, they also established that slavery would not be prohibited in



Sam Houston: Former governor of Tennessee who moved to Texas and led the Texas Revolution, was the president of the Republic of Texas and first Governor of the state once Texas joined the Union. A major city was named in his honor.

Texas. Many wealthy Tejanos supported the push for independence, hoping for liberal governmental reforms and economic benefits.

REMEMBER THE ALAMO!

Mexico had no intention of losing its northern province. Santa Anna and his army of 4,000 had besieged the Texan city of San Antonio in February 1836. Hopelessly outnumbered, its 200 defenders, under Travis, fought fiercely from their refuge in an old Catholic mission known as **the Alamo**. After ten days however, the mission was overrun and all but a few of the defenders were dead, including Travis and James Bowie, the famed frontiersman, land speculator and slave trader. A few male survivors, possibly including the frontier legend and former Tennessee congressman **Davy Crockett**, were led outside the walls and executed. The few women and children inside the mission were allowed to leave with the only adult male survivor, a slave owned by Travis who was then freed by the Mexican Army. Terrified, they fled. Although hungry for revenge, the Texas forces under Sam Houston nevertheless retreated across Texas, gathering recruits as they went.



Two months later, Houston and his army came upon Santa Anna's encampment on the banks of San Jacinto River on April 21, 1836 and waited as the Mexican troops settled for an afternoon nap. Assured by Houston that "Victory is certain!" and told to "Trust in God and fear not!" the seven hundred men descended on a sleeping force nearly twice their number with cries of "Remember the Alamo!" Within fifteen minutes the **Battle of San Jacinto** was over. Approximately half the Mexican troops were killed, and the survivors, including Santa Anna, taken prisoner. The **Texas Revolution** was over.



The Alamo: Mission in San Antonio, Texas that was defended by Texans in 1836 against the Mexican Army under the command of Santa Anna at the start of the Texas Revolution. The Texans and their American allies were defeated, but they were remembered as martyrs and the loss became a source of inspiration for Texans.



Davy Crockett: American outdoorsman, congressman and frontier legend from Tennessee who died at the Alamo.

Secondary Source: Painting

One artist's impression of the last stand of the Texans at the Alamo. Davy Crockett stands tall as the hero of the battle.

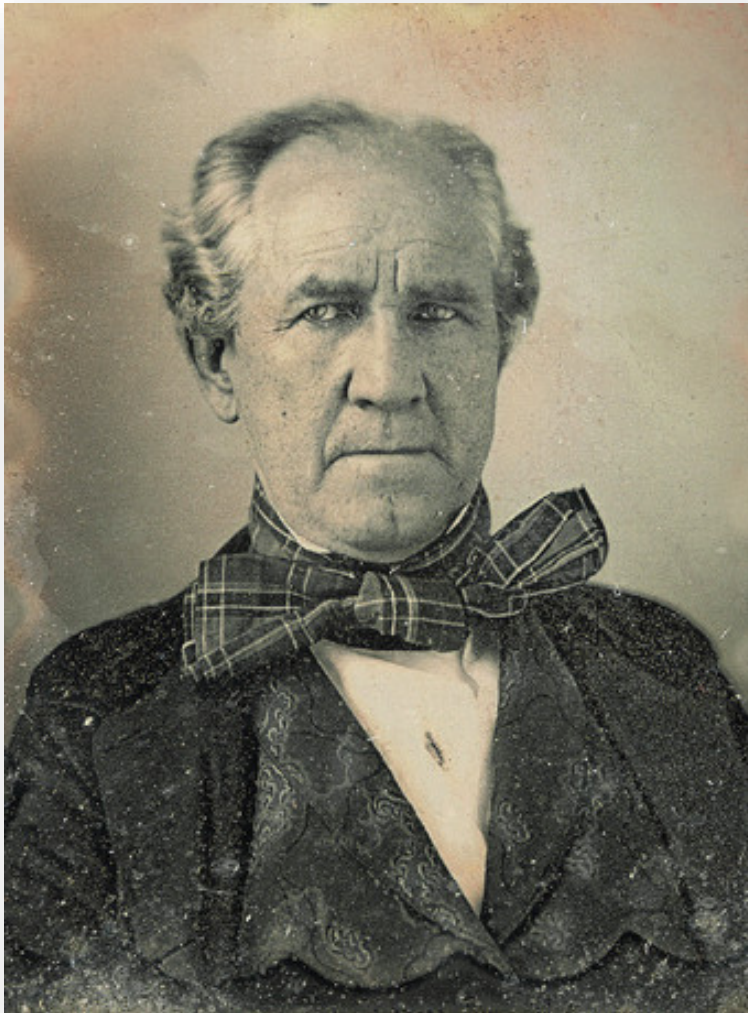


Battle of San Jacinto: Last battle of the Texas Revolution in 1836, in which the Texans under the command of Sam Houston defeated Santa Anna's Mexican forces and forced him to recognize Texan independence.



Texas Revolution: War between American-born Texans and the Mexican government under the command of Santa Anna in 1835 and 1836 that resulted in independence for Texas. It was fought largely due to disagreements about culture, language, religion and especially slavery.

Santa Anna grudgingly signed a peace treaty and was sent to Washington, where he met with President Andrew Jackson and, under pressure, agreed to recognize an independent Texas with the Rio Grande River as its southwestern border. By the time the agreement had been signed, however, Santa Anna had been removed from power in Mexico and the Mexican Congress refused to be bound by Santa Anna's promises and continued to insist that the renegade territory still belonged to Mexico.



Primary Source: Photograph

Sam Houston, the George Washington of Texas who led Texas to independence and served as president of the Lone Star Republic before serving as governor and senator for the state after it joined the Union.

THE LONE STAR REPUBLIC

In September 1836, military hero Sam Houston was elected president of Texas, and, following the relentless logic of American expansion, Texans voted in favor of annexation to the United States. This had been the dream of many settlers in Texas all along. They wanted to expand the United States west and saw Texas as the next logical step. Slaveholders there, such as Sam

Houston, William B. Travis and James Bowie, believed too in the destiny of slavery. Mindful of the vicious debates over Missouri that had led to talk of disunion and war, American politicians were reluctant to annex Texas or, indeed, even to recognize it as a sovereign nation. Annexation would almost certainly mean war with Mexico, and the admission of a state with a large slave population would bring the issue of slavery once again to the fore. Texas had no choice but to organize itself as the independent **Lone Star Republic**. To protect itself from Mexican attempts to reclaim it, Texas sought and received recognition from France, Great Britain, Belgium, and the Netherlands. The United States did not officially recognize Texas as an independent nation until March 1837, nearly a year after the final victory over the Mexican army at San Jacinto.

Uncertainty about its future did not discourage Americans committed to expansion, especially slaveholders, from rushing to settle in the Lone Star Republic, however. Between 1836 and 1846, its population almost tripled. By 1840, nearly 12,000 enslaved Africans had been brought to Texas by American slaveholders. Many new settlers had suffered financial losses in the severe financial depression of 1837 and hoped for a new start in Texas. According to folklore, across the United States, homes and farms were deserted overnight, and curious neighbors found notes reading only GTT – Gone to Texas. Many European immigrants, especially Germans, also settled in Texas during this period.

Americans in Texas generally treated both Tejano residents and Native Americans with utter contempt, eager to displace and dispossess them. Failing to return the support Tejano neighbors had extended during the rebellion, Americans instead repaid them by seizing their lands. In 1839, the republic's militia attempted to drive out the Cherokee and Comanche. The impulse to expand did not lay dormant, and White settlers and leaders soon cast their gaze on the Mexican province of New Mexico as well. Repeating proven tactics, a Texas force set out in 1841 intent on taking Santa Fe. Its members encountered an army of New Mexicans and were taken prisoner and sent to Mexico City. On Christmas Day, 1842, Texans avenged a Mexican assault on San Antonio by attacking the Mexican town of Mier. In August, another Texas army was sent to attack Santa Fe, but Mexican troops forced them to retreat. Clearly, hostilities between Texas and Mexico had not ended simply because the Texans had won at San Jacinto.

PRESIDENT JAMES K. POLK

A fervent belief in expansion gripped the United States in the 1840s. In 1845, a New York newspaper editor, John O'Sullivan, introduced the concept of **manifest destiny** to describe the very popular idea of the special role of the United States in overspreading the continent: the divine right and duty of White Americans to seize and settle the American West, thus spreading Protestant, democratic values.



Lone Star Republic: Nickname for the independent nation of Texas between 1836 and 1846.



Manifest Destiny: Belief held by many Americans, especially in the 1800s that it was clear that the nation would spread from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. This belief fueled expansion, including migration of pioneers, war with Mexico and Native Americans, and a belief in the superiority of White, Christian culture.

In this climate of opinion, voters in 1844 elected **James K. Polk**, a slaveholder from Tennessee, because he vowed to annex Texas as a new slave state and take **Oregon**. Annexing Oregon was an important objective for the United States because it appeared to be an area rich in commercial possibilities. Northerners favored control of Oregon because ports in the **Pacific Northwest** would be gateways for trade with Asia. Southerners hoped that, in exchange for their support of expansion into the Northwest, Northerners would not oppose plans for expansion into the **Southwest**.



President Polk, whose campaign slogan in 1844 had been “**Fifty-four forty or fight!**” asserted the United States’ right to gain full control of what was known as Oregon Country, from its southern border at 42° latitude, the current boundary with California, to its northern border at 54° 40’ latitude. According to an 1818 agreement, Great Britain and the United States held joint ownership of this territory, but the 1827 Treaty of Joint Occupation opened the land to settlement by both countries. Realizing that the British were not willing to cede all claims to the territory, Polk proposed the land be divided at 49° latitude, the current border between Washington and Canada. The British, however, denied American claims to land north of the Columbia River, Oregon’s current northern border. Indeed, the British foreign secretary refused even to relay Polk’s proposal to London. However, reports of the difficulty Great Britain would face defending Oregon in the event of



James K. Polk: President elected in 1844 who championed westward expansion. He annexed Texas, led the Mexican-American War and negotiated the resolution to the boundary dispute with the United Kingdom over the Pacific Northwest.



Oregon Territory: Region that today includes the states of Oregon, Washington and the Canadian province of British Columbia. It was divided between the United States and Canada along 49th Parallel.



Pacific Northwest: Region that includes that states of Washington and Oregon.



American Southwest: Region that includes the states of New Mexico, Arizona, and sometimes expanded to include California, Nevada, Utah, Texas and Oklahoma.

Secondary Source: Map

The disputed Oregon Territory.



Fifty-four forty or fight: President Polk’s rallying cry during the election of 1844. It referred to the northern boundary of the Oregon Territory. Eventually he abandoned this demand and settled to split the territory peacefully at a line further south.

an American attack, combined with concerns over affairs at home and elsewhere in its empire, changed the minds of the British, and in June 1846, Queen Victoria's government agreed to a division at the 49th Parallel.

Although he had been elected while blustering about war with Britain over Oregon, Polk ultimately favored a diplomatic solution. When it came to Mexico, however, Polk and the American people proved willing to use force to wrest more land for the United States. In keeping with voters' expectations, President Polk set his sights on the Mexican state of California.

Tensions between the United States and Mexico rapidly deteriorated in the 1840s as American expansionists eagerly eyed Mexican land to the west, including the lush northern Mexican province of California. Indeed, in 1842, an American naval fleet, incorrectly believing war had broken out, seized Monterey, California, a part of Mexico. Monterey was returned the next day, but the episode only added to the uneasiness with which Mexico viewed its northern neighbor.

After the mistaken capture of Monterey, negotiations about purchasing the port of San Francisco from Mexico broke off until September 1845. Then, following a revolt in California that left it divided in two, Polk attempted to purchase Upper California and New Mexico as well. These efforts went nowhere. The Mexican government, angered by American actions, refused to recognize the independence of Texas.

Finally, after nearly a decade of public clamoring for the annexation of Texas, in December 1845 Polk officially agreed to the annexation of the former Mexican state, making the Lone Star Republic an additional slave state. Incensed that the United States had annexed Texas, however, the Mexican government refused to discuss the matter of selling land. Indeed, Mexico refused even to acknowledge Polk's emissary, John Slidell, who had been sent to Mexico City to negotiate. Not to be deterred, Polk encouraged Thomas O. Larkin, the American consul in Monterey, to assist any American settlers and any **Californios**, the Mexican residents of the state, who wished to proclaim their independence from Mexico. By the end of 1845, having broken diplomatic ties with the United States over Texas and having grown alarmed by American actions in California, the Mexican government warily anticipated the next move. It did not have long to wait.

THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR

The United States had long argued that the **Rio Grande** was the border between Mexico and the United States, and at the end of the Texas Revolution, Santa Anna had been pressured to agree. Mexico's new government, however, refused to be bound by Santa Anna's promises and insisted the border lay farther north, at the **Nueces River**. To set it at the Rio Grande would, in effect, allow the United States to control land it had never occupied. In Mexico's eyes, therefore, President Polk had violated sovereign Mexican territory when he ordered American troops into the disputed lands



Californios: Mexican residents of California. Like the Tejanos, they lost many of their rights and land after California became part of the United States.



Rio Grande: River that divides the United States and Mexico. It flows into the Gulf of Mexico and forms most of the southern border of Texas.



Nueces River: River just north of the Rio Grande that Mexico claimed was the boundary between the United States and Mexico. The dispute was used by President Polk to instigate the Mexican-American War.

in 1846. From the Mexican perspective, the United States had invaded their nation.

In January 1846, the American force that was ordered to the banks of the Rio Grande to build a fort on the “American” side encountered a Mexican cavalry unit on patrol. Shots rang out, and 16 American soldiers were killed or wounded. Angrily declaring that Mexico had “invaded our territory and shed American blood upon American soil,” President Polk demanded the United States declare war on Mexico. On May 12, Congress obliged. The ensuing conflict is known on the northern side of the Rio Grande as the **Mexican-American War**, and on the southern side as the American Intervention in Mexico.

A small but vocal anti-slavery faction decried the decision to go to war, arguing that Polk had deliberately provoked hostilities so the United States could annex more slave territory. Illinois representative Abraham Lincoln and other members of Congress issued the **Spot Resolutions** in which they demanded to know the precise spot on American soil where American blood had been spilled. Many Whigs also denounced the war.

Democrats, however, supported Polk’s decision, and volunteers for the army came forward in droves from every part of the country except New England, the seat of anti-slavery sentiment. Enthusiasm for the war was aided by the widely held belief that Mexico was a weak, impoverished country and that the Mexican people, perceived as ignorant, lazy, and controlled by a corrupt Roman Catholic clergy, would be easy to defeat.

American military strategy had three main objectives. First, take control of northern Mexico including New Mexico. Second, seize California, and third, capture Mexico City. General **Zachary Taylor** and his Army of the Center were assigned to accomplish the first goal, and with superior weapons they soon captured the city of Monterrey. Taylor became a hero in the eyes of the American public, and Polk appointed him commander of all American forces. General Stephen Watts Kearny, commander of the Army of the West, accepted the surrender of Santa Fe, New Mexico, and moved on to take control of California. Despite Kearny’s assurances that New Mexicans need not fear for their lives or their property, and in fact the region’s residents rose in revolt in January 1847 in an effort to drive the Americans away. Although Price managed to put an end to the rebellion, tensions remained high.

Kearny, meanwhile, arrived in California to find it already in American hands through the joint efforts of California settlers, American naval commander John Sloat, and **John C. Fremont**, a former army captain and son-in-law of Missouri senator Thomas Benton. Sloat seized the town of Monterey in July 1846, less than a month after a group of American settlers led by William B. Ide had taken control of Sonoma and declared California a republic. This Bear Flag Republic was short-lived. A week after the fall of Monterey, the



Mexican-American War: War between the United States and Mexico between 1846 and 1848. It was a major victory for the United States and the subsequent Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo resulted in the Mexican Cession, the land that became the modern states of New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, California and part of Utah.



Spot Resolutions: A series of resolutions passed in Congress at the start of the Mexican-American War by Polk’s Whig opponents demanding to know exactly where Americans had been killed by Mexican forces. The debate centered on the dispute over which river formed the border.



Zachary Taylor: American general who led an invasion of Mexico during the Mexican-American War. He was known as “Old Rough and Ready” and his exploits led to political popularity and eventually to his election to the presidency.



John C. Fremont: Explorer, army general, senator from California, wealthy gold miner, and surveyor of the route of the transcontinental railroad. He was a public hero and was the first nominee for president from the Republican Party, although he did not win.

navy took San Francisco with no resistance and California fell under American control. Although some Californios staged a short-lived rebellion in September 1846, many others submitted to the American takeover. Thus Kearny had little to do other than take command of California as its governor.

Leading the Army of the South was General Winfield Scott. Both Taylor and Scott were potential competitors for the presidency, and correctly anticipating that whoever seized Mexico City would become a hero, Polk assigned Scott the campaign to avoid elevating the more popular Taylor.

Scott captured Veracruz in March 1847 and slowly closed in on the capital. His march almost exactly mirrored route taken by Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés in 1519. Every step of the way was a difficult however, as Mexican soldiers and civilians both fought bravely to save their land from the invaders. Mexico City's defenders, including young cadets at the Castle of **Chapultepec**, Mexico's premier military academy, fought to the end. According to legend, cadet Juan Escutia's last act was to save the Mexican flag, and he leapt from the city's walls with it wrapped around his body. All efforts to stop the Americans were in vain, however, and on September 14, 1847, Scott marched triumphantly into Mexico City's central plaza



The **Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo** officially ended the war was signed in February 1848, and was a triumph for American expansionism. Under the terms of the treaty, Mexico ceded nearly half its land to the United States. The **Mexican Cession**, as the conquest of land west of the Rio Grande was called, included the current states of California, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, and portions of Colorado and Wyoming. Mexico also recognized the Rio Grande as the border with the United States. Mexican citizens in the ceded territory were promised American citizenship in the future when the territories they were living in became states. In exchange, the United States agreed to assume \$3.35 million worth of Mexican debts



Chapultepec: Mexican military school in Mexico City. It was attacked by American forces during the Mexican-American War and the valiant defense mounted by the teenage student cadets is now legendary in Mexico.

Secondary Source: Painting

The Battle of Chapultepec, the Mexican military academy where teenage cadets defended their school against the overwhelming American army.



Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: Treaty signed in 1848 that formally ended the Mexican-American War. As part of the agreement, Mexico sold about half of its territory to the United States. This land, called the Mexican Cession, includes the states of California, Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and portions of a few other states as well.



Mexican Cession: The land sold to the United States by Mexico at the end of the Mexican-American War. It includes the states of California, Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and portions of Colorado and Wyoming.

owed to American citizens, paid Mexico \$15 million for the loss of its land, and promised to guard the residents of the Mexican Cession from Native American raids.

Like the outbreak of the war itself, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was well received back home, but still had its critics. Some argued the United States should taken all of Mexico. Many of these were Southerners who desired the annexation of more slave territory. Many of the treaty's critics were also Southerners who did not want to incorporate Mexico's large **mestizo** population into the United States. Others, especially Northerners who were still whipped up with Second Great Awakening and anti-Irish immigrant fervor, did not want to absorb a nation of Roman Catholics.



Mestizo: An ethnic blend of Spanish and Native American. Most Mexicans and residents of the Mexican Cession who became residents of the United States were of this ethnic group.

IMPACT OF THE WAR

Many of the military leaders who fought on both sides of the Civil War some twenty years later fought as junior officers in Mexico. This list includes Ulysses S. Grant, George B. McClellan, William T. Sherman, George Meade, and Ambrose Burnside as well as Southerners Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson and the future Confederate President Jefferson Davis.

From the perspective of 21st Century historians, the rationale for the war is clearly unjust. Even at that time, there were some who understood that Polk's explanations were an excuse to wrest land from Mexico. President Ulysses S. Grant, who had been a young army lieutenant under General Taylor, recalled in 1885 that, "Generally, the officers of the army were indifferent whether the annexation was consummated or not; but not so all of them. For myself, I was bitterly opposed to the measure, and to this day regard the war, which resulted, as one of the most unjust ever waged by a stronger against a weaker nation. It was an instance of a republic following the bad example of European monarchies, in not considering justice in their desire to acquire additional territory." Grant also expressed the view that the war against Mexico had brought punishment on the United States in the form of the American Civil War. "The Southern rebellion was largely the outgrowth of the Mexican war. Nations, like individuals, are punished for their transgressions. We got our punishment in the most sanguinary and expensive war of modern times." This view was shared by the Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson, who towards the end of the war wrote, "The United States will conquer Mexico, but it will be as the man swallows the arsenic, which brings him down in turn. Mexico will poison us."

Nevertheless, the war was a decisive event for the nation, marking a significant waypoint in its growth as a military power, and a milestone in the narrative of Manifest Destiny.

The war also elevated that status of General Zachary Taylor, who Polk had accurately predicted would become a national hero. Despite a general lack of political experience, the Whig Party recruited Taylor to run for president and he won in 1848. As president, Taylor sought to reduce growing tensions

about the expansion of slavery into the territories he had help win, but died of a digestive illness after only 16 months in office.

GADSDEN PURCHASE

The conclusion of the Mexican-American War set off a bid to build railroads across the new territory to California. One of the routes proposed by the Southern Pacific Railroad, however, would need to travel north of the Gila River through territory that would not amenable to railroad construction. The company officials knew that a route south of the river would be less expensive and easier to build because the land was flatter.

That territory was still Mexican, so in 1853, President Franklin Pierce sent James Gadsden to Mexico to negotiate a redefinition of the border. The Mexican government was desperately short of cash and agreed to the American offer to purchase the land for \$10 million. The new territory of 30,000 square miles is now the southern edges of New Mexico and Arizona. The **Gadsden Purchase** was the final puzzle piece that make up what is now the 48 contiguous United States.



Gadsden Purchase: Small strip of land purchased from Mexico in 1853 in order to provide flat land for a railroad between Texas and California. It forms the southernmost portions of Arizona and New Mexico.

Secondary Source: Map

All the various territorial acquisitions that formed the final lower 48 states.



CONCLUSION

Emerson's study must have been a lonely place during the Mexican-American War. There with just a few other critics of the war, the Transcendentalist philosopher wrote his criticism and watched the waves up history sweep past.

It turns out, of course, that Emerson and the few others who objected to America's war of conquest against Mexico were absolutely right. As General Grant noted, the country was punished by fate, or in Emerson's eloquent

metaphor, poisoned. This must have been little consolation for those who were strong enough of conviction to stand up and speak out against what they knew was morally wrong when the nation was quite latterly marching in the opposite direction.

What could they have done differently? What would you have done? What can you do now when faced with such a situation? When something is wrong but popular, what can you do to resist?

SUMMARY

Texas was originally part of New Spain, and then Mexico after Mexico won independence. Mexico invited American settlers to move into Texas to increase the non-Native population. These were Tejanos, and they brought their slaves with them. When Mexico outlawed slavery, the Tejanos decided to fight for independence from Mexico. They did not want to give up slavery, they did not speak Spanish, and they were not Catholic.

The Texas Revolution was a success for the Tejanos. After the loss of the Alamo, they defeated Mexican dictator Santa Anna and forced him to recognize Texan independence. Sam Houston became the president of the new Republic of Texas. Almost immediately they asked Congress to annex the territory, but because of concerns about balancing slave and free states in the Senate, Texas remained independent for ten years.

Americans started to believe in the idea of manifest destiny. They thought that god wanted their nation to stretch from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans. They elected James K. Polk president in 1844. He was a strong believer in this idea and promised to annex Texas. He also promised to go to war with Great Britain over control of the Oregon Territory.

Polk did go to war with Mexico, but chose to settle with Great Britain peacefully. The Oregon Territory was divided. The modern states of Oregon and Washington became American territory. British Columbia is now part of Canada.

Polk annexed Texas and then instigated a war with Mexico by sending American troops across the Nueces River into land both the United States and Mexico claimed. Some Americans believed a war with Mexico was wrong, but many others wanted land in the West and supported the effort. The war went well. American troops invaded Mexico, defeated Santa Anna and forced him to give up the Mexican Cession, which makes up most or all of what is now the states of Arizona, California, New Mexico, Nevada and Utah.

The Mexican-American War had some important impacts. Zachary Taylor who was the hero of the Mexican-American War was elected president. The young officers in the war later led the armies of the Civil War. Debate about expanding slavery into the new lands won from Mexico helped cause the Civil War.

The final piece of land that makes up the map of the United States we know today was the Gadsden Purchase. It was bought from Mexico in order to build a railroad along flat land between Texas and California.



KEY CONCEPTS

Manifest Destiny: Belief held by many Americans, especially in the 1800s that it was clear that the nation would spread from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. This belief fueled expansion, including migration of pioneers, war with Mexico and Native Americans, and a belief in the superiority of White, Christian culture.

Fifty-four forty or fight: President Polk's rallying cry during the election of 1844. It referred to the northern boundary of the Oregon Territory. Eventually he abandoned this demand and settled to split the territory peacefully at a line further south.



TREATIES & LAWS

Spot Resolutions: A series of resolutions passed in Congress at the start of the Mexican-American War by Polk's Whig opponents demanding to know exactly where Americans had been killed by Mexican forces. The debate centered on the dispute over which river formed the border.

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: Treaty signed in 1848 that formally ended the Mexican-American War. As part of the agreement, Mexico sold about half of its territory to the United States. This land, called the Mexican Cession, includes the states of California, Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and portions of a few other states as well.



EVENTS

Battle of San Jacinto: Last battle of the Texas Revolution in 1836, in which the Texans under the command of Sam Houston defeated Santa Anna's Mexican forces and forced him to recognize Texan independence.

Texas Revolution: War between American-born Texans and the Mexican government under the command of Santa Anna in 1835 and 1836 that resulted in independence for Texas. It was fought largely due to disagreements about culture, language, religion and especially slavery.

Mexican-American War: War between the United States and Mexico between 1846 and 1848. It was a major victory for the United States and the subsequent Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo resulted in the Mexican Cession, the land that became the modern states of New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, California and part of Utah.



LOCATIONS

Texas: Largest of the lower 48 states. It was a territory of Mexico before American-born Tejanos fought for independence in 1835. It was known as the Lone Star Republic for a decade before it was annexed by the United States in 1845.

The Alamo: Mission in San Antonio, Texas that was defended by Texans in 1836 against the Mexican Army under the command of Santa Anna at the start of the Texas Revolution. The Texans and their American allies were defeated, but they were remembered as martyrs and the loss became a source of inspiration for Texans.

Lone Star Republic: Nickname for the independent nation of Texas between 1836 and 1846.

Oregon Territory: Region that today includes the states of Oregon, Washington and the Canadian province of British Columbia. It was divided between the United States and Canada along 49th Parallel.

Pacific Northwest: Region that includes that states of Washington and Oregon.

American Southwest: Region that includes the states of New Mexico, Arizona, and sometimes expanded to include California, Nevada, Utah, Texas and Oklahoma.

Rio Grande: River that divides that United States and Mexico. It flows into the Gulf of Mexico and forms most of the southern border of Texas.

Nueces River: River just north of the Rio Grande that Mexico claimed was the boundary between the United States and Mexico. The dispute was used by President Polk to instigate the Mexican-American War.

Chapultepec: Mexican military school in Mexico City. It was attacked by American forces during the Mexican-American War and the valiant defense mounted by the teenage student cadets is now legendary in Mexico.

Mexican Cession: The land sold to the United States by Mexico at the end of the Mexican-American War. It includes the states of California, Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and portions of Colorado and Wyoming.

Gadsden Purchase: Small strip of land purchased from Mexico in 1853 in order to provide flat land for a railroad between Texas and California. It forms the southernmost portions of Arizona and New Mexico.



PEOPLE AND GROUPS

Tejanos: Mexican-born Hispanic residents of Texas. They were outnumbered by the influx of American-born Whites in the early 1800s.

Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna: Mexican dictator who fought against the Texans in the Texas War for Independence. He was the Mexican commander at the Battles of the Alamo and San Jacinto. Later he led Mexico against the Americans in the Mexican-American War.

Sam Houston: Former governor of Tennessee who moved to Texas and led the Texas Revolution, was the president of the Republic of Texas and first Governor of the state once Texas joined the Union. A major city was named in his honor.

Davy Crockett: American outdoorsman, congressman and frontier legend from Tennessee who died at the Alamo.

James K. Polk: President elected in 1844 who championed westward expansion. He annexed Texas, led the Mexican-American War and negotiated the resolution to the boundary dispute with the United Kingdom over the Pacific Northwest.

Californios: Mexican residents of California. Like the Tejanos, they lost many of their rights and land after California became part of the United States.

Zachary Taylor: American general who led an invasion of Mexico during the Mexican-American War. He was known as "Old Rough and Ready" and his exploits led to political popularity and eventually to his election to the presidency.

John C. Fremont: Explorer, army general, senator from California, wealthy gold miner, and surveyor of the route of the transcontinental railroad. He was a public hero and was the first nominee for president from the Republican Party, although he did not win.

Mestizo: An ethnic blend of Spanish and Native American. Most Mexicans and residents of the Mexican Cession who became residents of the United States were of this ethnic group.

3

T H I R D Q U E S T I O N HOW HAVE THE REAL AND MYTHOLOGIZED PEOPLE OF THE WEST SHAPED OUR NATIONAL IDENTITY?

Was the SPREAD of the
UNITED STATES
across the continent
D e s t i n y
o r D e s i g n ?

INTRODUCTION

The settlement of the West – the region west of the Mississippi River – can be told in a variety of ways. We are going to look at it here by separating it out into the different groups of people who made the West what it is today. And in doing so, we are also going to look at the mythologized versions of those people, because, more than any other era in American history, the settlement of the West is a time that has spawned stories that are more important than the reality. American's love the West. We love cowboy stories, cowboy hats, riding horses, riding pickup trucks and wearing jeans. We have sports teams named for heroes and imagined heroes of the West. The West is part of America's national identity. As we explore these people, consider, how have the real people of the West, and their mythologized alter egos shaped our identity?

MOUNTAIN MEN

The **mountain men** were explorers who lived in the wilderness, most commonly in the Rocky Mountains in the mid-1800s. They were instrumental in discovering and opening the various trails that would later be widened into wagon roads and allowed Americans in the East to settle the new territories of the far West.

The mountain men came into existence during the early era of Westward Expansion, usually driven by the lucrative earnings available in the fur trade. Driven to the West at first by published accounts of the Lewis and Clark expeditions' findings, a few courageous, independent men succeeded in traversing the Rocky Mountain region working as trappers, as scouts for the Army or wagon train guides. Others ran fort-trading posts along the Oregon Trail to service the remnant fur trade and the settlers heading west.

Although relatively few in number, the mountain men were invaluable to later phases of settlement. In all, approximately 3,000 mountain men ranged the mountains between 1820 and 1840, the peak beaver-harvesting period. While there were many free trappers, most mountain men were employed by major fur companies. Out of the fur trade grew the tradition of the annual **rendezvous**. Donald Mackenzie, representing the North West Company, held a rendezvous in the Boise River Valley in 1819. The rendezvous system was later implemented by the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, whose representatives would haul supplies to specific mountain locations in the spring, engage in trading with trappers, and bring pelts back to communities on the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers like St. Louis in the fall. This system of rendezvous with trappers continued when other firms, particularly the American Fur Company owned by John Jacob Astor, entered the field.

A second fur trading and supply center grew up in Taos in what is today New Mexico. This trade attracted numerous French Americans from Louisiana and some French Canadian trappers, in addition to Anglo-Americans. Some New Mexican residents also pursued the beaver trade, as Mexican citizens initially had some legal advantages. Trappers and traders in the Southwest covered territory that was generally inaccessible to the large fur companies. It included parts of New Mexico, Nevada, California and central and southern Utah.

The life of a mountain man was rugged. Many did not last more than several years in the wilderness. They faced many hazards, especially when exploring unmapped areas. Biting insects and other wildlife, bad weather, diseases of all kinds, injuries and hostile tribes presented constant physical dangers. Grizzly bears were one of the mountain man's greatest enemies. Winters could be brutal with heavy snowstorms and low temperatures.

In order to stay alive, the men needed keen senses, and knowledge of herbal remedies and first aid, among other skills. In summer, they could catch fish, build shelter, and hunt for food and skins. The mountain man dressed in the



Mountain Men: The White explorers who travelled throughout the Rocky Mountains and West in the early and mid-1800s. They were essential in the early years of westward expansion because they discovered passes, rivers, and later served as guides for miners, the army, and pioneer who settled the region.




Rendezvous: Annual meetings of mountain men held between 1820 and 1840 where furs were traded. They were important economic and social events.

clothing perfected by Native Americans. There were no doctors in the regions where mountain men worked and they had to set their own broken bones, tend their wounds, and nurse themselves back to good health. Additionally, they needed to be able to maintain good relationships with the Native Americans in the regions they worked.


The age of the roving trapper did not last long. Changing fashions which lessened the demand for beaver fur and competition from Canadian companies killed off the American fur trade. By 1846, only some 50 American trappers still worked in the Snake River country, compared to 500-600 in 1826. The end of the beaver trade may have spelled the end of the mountain man, but that the great push west along the newly opened Oregon Trail built up from a trickle of settlers in 1841 to a steady stream in 1844-46, and then became a flood. The demand for guides was immense, and the mountain men who knew the West from their days as trappers found a new role as guides.

The mountain men were indispensable. Although they did not work as a group, the mountain men by the accumulation of their many individuals actions, mapped the West. They also serve as cultural icons, representing American ruggedness, individualism, independence, ingenuity and perseverance.


John Colter, one of the first mountain men, was a member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. He later became the first European man to enter Yellowstone National Park, and to see what is now Jackson Hole and the Teton Mountain Range. His description of the geothermal activity there seemed so outrageous to some that the area was mockingly referred to as Colter's Hell. Colter's narrow escape following capture by Blackfeet, leaving him naked and alone in the wilderness, became a legend known as "Colter's Run".

 **John Colter:** First of the mountain men. He was a member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and was the first White person to see Yellowstone.

Born into slavery, **Jim Beckwourth** arrived in Missouri with his parents and was freed by his father. He signed on with the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, lived with the Crow tribe for years and became a war chief. He was the only African American in the West to have his life story published. He was credited with the discovery of Beckwourth Pass in the Sierra Nevada in 1850 and improved a Native American path to create what became known as the Beckwourth Trail through the mountains to Marysville, California.

 **Jim Beckwourth:** Famous African American mountain man. He lived with the Crow tribe and discovered a pass through the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California.

Jim Bridger went west in 1822 at the age of 17. He is one of the first men of European descent, along with Étienne Provost, to see the Great Salt Lake, which because of its salinity, he first believed was an arm of the Pacific Ocean. In 1830, Bridger purchased the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. He established Fort Bridger in southwestern Wyoming and was well known as a teller of tall tales.

 **Jim Bridger:** Mountain man who was the first to see the Great Salt Lake in Utah. He was well known as a story teller.

Jedediah Smith was a hunter, trapper, and fur trader. He is considered the first man of European descent to cross the future state of Nevada, the first

to traverse Utah from north to south and from west to east; and the first American to enter California by an overland route. He was also first to scale the High Sierra and explore the area from San Diego to the banks of the Columbia River. He was a successful businessman and a full partner in the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. Smith also had notable facial scarring from a grizzly bear attack.

Jedediah Smith: Important mountain man who explored much of California and Nevada. He was a successful businessman and a partner in the Rocky Mountain Fur Company.

Primary Source: Novel Cover

One of many dime novels celebrating the supposed heroics of the mountain men – in this case: Kit Carson.



Kit Carson achieved notability for his later exploits, but he got his start and gained some early recognition as a trapper. Carson explored the West to California and North through the Rocky Mountains. He lived among and married into the Arapaho and Cheyenne tribes. He was hired by John C.

Kit Carson: Prototypical mountain man. He helped Fremont explore California, married into two different Native American tribes and was a national hero.

Fremont as a guide and led him through much of California, Oregon, and the Great Basin area, and achieved national fame through Fremont. Stories of his life as a mountain man turned him into a frontier hero-figure, the prototypical mountain man of his time.

MINERS

The allure of gold has long sent people on wild chases. In the American West, the possibility of quick riches was no different. The search for gold represented an opportunity far different from the slow plod that homesteading farmers faced. The discovery of gold at **Sutter's Mill** in Coloma, California in 1848, set a pattern for such strikes that was repeated again and again for the next decade, in what collectively became known as the **California Gold Rush**. In what became typical, a sudden disorderly rush of **prospectors** descended upon a new discovery site, followed by the arrival of those who hoped to benefit from the strike by preying off the newly rich. This latter group of camp followers included saloonkeepers, prostitutes, store owners, and criminals, who all arrived in droves. If the strike was significant in size, a town of some magnitude might establish itself, and some semblance of law and order might replace the vigilante justice that typically grew in the small and short-lived mining outposts.



The original **Forty-Niners** were individual prospectors who sifted gold out of the dirt and gravel through **panning** or by diverting a stream through a sluice box. To varying degrees, the original California Gold Rush repeated itself throughout Colorado and Nevada for the next two decades. In 1859, Henry T. P. Comstock, a Canadian-born fur trapper, began gold mining in Nevada with other prospectors but then quickly found a blue-colored vein that proved to be the first significant silver discovery in the United States. Within twenty years, the **Comstock Lode**, as it was called, yielded more than \$300 million in shafts that reached hundreds of feet into the mountain.



Sutter's Mill: Location gold was discovered in California in 1848.



California Gold Rush: Major migration of people to California beginning in 1849 to search for gold.



Prospectors: People who search for gold or other precious metals.

Primary Source: Advertisement

An advertisement for the clipper ships, the fastest ship of the day, which could carry the hopeful miners around the cape of South America and up the Pacific Coast to California.



Forty-Niners: Nickname for the prospectors who travelled to California during the Gold Rush.

Their name is derived from the first year of the migration of such miners.



Panning: A process of searching for gold by sifting through the gravel at the bottom of a stream.



Comstock Lode: Major discovery of gold in Nevada. Found in 1859, it was eventually mined with hundreds of tunnels dug deep into the mountain.

Subsequent mining in Arizona and Montana yielded copper, and, while it lacked the glamour of gold, these deposits created huge wealth for those who exploited them, particularly with the advent of copper wiring for the delivery of electricity and telegraph communication.

By the 1860s and 1870s, however, individual efforts to locate precious metals were less successful. The lowest-hanging fruit had been picked, and new mines required investment capital and machinery to dig shafts that could reach hundreds of feet down to the remaining ore. With a much larger investment, miners needed a larger strike to be successful. This shift led to larger businesses underwriting mining operations, which eventually led to the development of greater urban stability and infrastructure. Denver, Colorado, was one of several cities that became permanent settlements, as businesses sought a stable environment to use as a base for their mining ventures.



Primary Source: Photograph

Cody, Wyoming, one of the better preserved ghost towns of the American West.

For miners who had not yet struck it rich, this development was not a good one. As miners working in company mines instead of independently panning in streams, they were paid a daily or weekly wage to work underground in dangerous conditions. They worked in shafts where the temperature could rise to above one hundred degrees Fahrenheit, and where poor ventilation might lead to long-term lung disease. They coped with shaft fires, dynamite explosions, and frequent cave-ins. By some historical accounts, close to 8,000 miners died on the frontier during this period, with over three times that number suffering crippling injuries. Conditions in mines helped fuel a push toward labor organization in the later 1800s.

Eventually, as the ore dried up, most mining towns turned into **ghost towns**. Even today, a visit through the American West shows old saloons and storefronts, abandoned as the residents moved on to their next shot at riches. The true lasting impact of the early mining efforts was the lasting desire of the government to bring law and order to the “**Wild West**” in order



Ghost Town: A town that was abandoned in the West, leaving behind homes, shops, etc., usually when a mine ran out and residents moved on to other prospective digs.

to more efficiently extract natural resources and encourage stable growth in the region. As more Americans moved to the region to seek permanent settlement, as opposed to brief speculative ventures, they also sought the safety and support that government order could bring



Wild West: A term that refers to the West during the early years of settlement when there was little formal government, and few women.

Primary Source: Company Logo

The logo of Levi Strauss & Company emphasized the strength of their pants. Supposedly, a pair of horses could not tear them about.



JEANS

Like many young German men of his time, **Levi Strauss** left his home in 1851 and immigrated to New York where joined his older brothers who ran a goods store. In 1853, he moved to San Francisco to open his own dry goods business in hopes of catering to the needs of the Forty-Niners. There he met Jacob Davis, a tailor who often bought bolts of cloth from the Levi Strauss & Co. wholesale house. In 1872, Davis wrote to Strauss asking to partner with him to patent and sell clothing reinforced with rivets that would be durable enough to withstand the beating pants took in the gold fields. The copper rivets were to reinforce the points of stress, such as pocket corners and at the bottom of the button fly. Levi accepted Davis's offer and the two men received US patent No. 139,121 for an "Improvement in Fastening Pocket-Openings" on May 20, 1873. Their company logo emphasized the strength of their pants that, they claimed, could not be torn apart by teams of horses.

Davis and Strauss experimented with different fabrics and found denim the most suitable material for work-pants. They began using it to manufacture their riveted pants. Initially, Strauss' jeans were simply sturdy trousers worn by factory workers, miners, farmers, and cattlemen throughout the North American West. When Levi Strauss & Co. patented the modern, mass-produced prototype in the year 1873, there were two pockets in the front and one on the back with copper rivets. Later, the jeans were redesigned to today's industry standard of five pockets including a little watch pocket and copper rivets. Although styles have changed over time, blue jeans remain a



Levi Strauss: Co-founder of the Levi's company and inventor of jeans. He had gone to California to sell tents to Forty-Niners but found that he could use the canvas he brought to create durable pants that were in greater demand.

symbol of America and American fashion around the world, and jeans continue to be emblematic of the frontier spirit.

RANCHERS AND COWBOYS

While the cattle industry lacked the romance of the Gold Rush, the role it played in western expansion should not be underestimated. For centuries, wild cattle, the descendants of escaped cows that had been brought by the Spanish conquistadors, roamed Texas and the Southwest. At the end of the Civil War, as many as five million **longhorn** steers could be found along the Texas frontier, yet few settlers had capitalized on the opportunity to claim them, due to the difficulty of transporting them to eastern markets. The completion of the first transcontinental railroad and subsequent railroad lines changed the game dramatically. Cattle ranchers and eastern businessmen realized that it was profitable to round up the wild cattle and transport them by rail to be sold in the East for as much as thirty to fifty dollars per head. These ranchers and businessmen began the rampant speculation in the cattle industry that made, and lost, many fortunes.



Longhorn: A type of cow descended from the cattle released by Spanish explorers in Texas. The famous cattle drives of the 1860s and 1870s involved driving these cows north to railheads. They are symbol associated with Texas.

Primary Source: Photograph

The descendants of escaped Spanish cattle, the Texas longhorn roamed wild before the arrival of the cowboys who rounded them up, drove them north to the railheads, and then shipped them East where Americans realized the liked the taste of beef.

So began the impressive **cattle drives** of the 1860s and 1870s. The famous **Chisholm Trail** provided a quick path from Texas to railroad terminals in Abilene, Wichita, and Dodge City, Kansas, where cowboys would receive their pay. These **cow towns**, as they became known, were the end of the rail lines, and thus, the nearest points the railroads came to the Texas range where the cattle were first rounded up. And these towns quickly grew to accommodate the needs of cowboys and the cattle industry. Cattlemen like **Joseph G. McCoy**, born in Illinois, quickly realized that the railroad offered a perfect way to get highly sought beef from Texas to the East. McCoy chose Abilene



Cattle Drive: Movement of longhorn cows rounded up in Texas and driven by cowboys north to railheads in Kansas. They were common in only the 1860s and 1870s before the extension of railroads further west, but are emblematic of the West in general.



Chisholm Trail: Famous route of the cattle drives of the 1860s and 1870s. It runs from Texas, through Oklahoma to Kansas.

as a locale that would offer cowboys a convenient place to drive the cattle, and went about building stockyards, hotels, banks, and more to support the business. He promoted his services and encouraged cowboys to bring their cattle through Abilene for good money. Soon, the city had grown into a bustling western city, complete with ways for the cowboys to spend their hard-earned pay. Between 1865 and 1885, as many as 40,000 cowboys roamed the Great Plains, hoping to work for local ranchers. They were all men, typically in their twenties, and close to one-third of them were Hispanic or African American. It is worth noting that the stereotype of the American cowboy, and indeed the cowboys themselves, borrowed much from the Mexicans who had long ago settled those lands. The saddles, lassos, chaps, and lariats that define cowboy culture all arose from the Mexican ranchers who had used them to great effect before the cowboys arrived. In fact, much of the cowboy jargon familiar to us today are borrow words from Spanish. Lasso, lariat, ranch, buckaroo and canyon are all anglicized versions of Spanish cowboy terms.

Life as a cowboy was dirty and decidedly unglamorous. The terrain was difficult. Conflicts with Native Americans, especially in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma), were notoriously deadly. However, the longhorn cattle were hardy stock, and could survive and thrive while grazing along the long trail, so cowboys braved the trip for the promise of steady employment and satisfying wages. Eventually, the era of the free range ended. Ranchers developed the land, limiting grazing opportunities along the trail, and in 1873, the new technology of **barbed wire** allowed ranchers to fence off their lands and cattle claims, thus bringing an end to the short-lived, but glamorized age of the great cattle drives.

With the end of the free range, the cattle industry, like the mining industry before it, grew increasingly dominated by eastern businessmen. Capital investors from the East expanded rail lines and invested in ranches, ending the reign of the cattle drives.

THE GUNSLINGERS

Western **gunslinger** heroes are portrayed as local lawmen or enforcement officers, ranchers, army officers, cowboys, territorial marshals, nomadic loners, or skilled fast-draw artists. They are normally masculine persons of integrity and principle – courageous, moral, tough, solid, and self-sufficient, maverick characters (often with trusty sidekicks), possessing an independent and honorable attitude. They are depicted as similar to a knight-errant, wandering from place to place with no particular direction, often facing curious and hostile enemies, while saving individuals or communities from those enemies in terms of chivalry. In films, the gunslinger often possesses a nearly superhuman speed and skill with the revolver. Twirling pistols, lightning draws, and trick shots are standard fare for the gunmen of the big screen.



Cow Town: Nickname for any one of the towns at the ends of the railroad lines in Kansas that were the destinations of the cattle drives of the 1860s and 1870s. Abilene, Wichita and Dodge City were famous examples.



Joseph G. McCoy: Businessman who purchased cattle in Kansas and shipped it to consumers in the East. He helped make the cattle drives and Americans' love for beef possible.



Barbed Wire: Invention that allowed ranchers and farmers to quickly build miles of fences that cows would not penetrate, thus bringing an end to the days of the cattle drives.



Gunslingers: Nickname for the lawmen and criminals of the West, based on the fact that many carried handguns and some were legendary for their supposed abilities with these pistols.

In the West of the 1800s, however, gunmen who relied on flashy tricks and theatrics died quickly, and most gunslingers took a much more practical approach to their weapons. Real gunslingers did not shoot to disarm or to impress, but to kill.

Another classic bit of cinema that is largely a myth is the **showdown at high noon**, where two well-matched gunslingers agree to meet for a climactic formal duel. These duels did occasionally happen, however, gunfights were usually close-up and personal, with a number of shots blasted from pistols, often resulting in innocent bystanders hit by bullets gone wild. Much of the time, it would be difficult to tell who had won the gunfight for several minutes, as the black powder smoke from the pistols cleared the air.

The gunslinger's reputation often was as valuable as any skills possessed. In Western films and books, young toughs often challenge experienced gunmen with the hopes of building a reputation, but this rarely happened in real life. A strong reputation was enough to keep others civil and often would spare a gunfighter from conflict. Even other gunslingers were likely to avoid any unnecessary confrontation. In the days of the Old West, tales tended to grow with repeated telling, and a single fight might grow into a career-making reputation. For instance, the **Showdown at the O.K. Corral** made legends of **Wyatt Earp** and the Outlaw Cowboy gang, but they were relatively minor figures before that conflict. Some gunslingers, such as Bat Masterson, actively engaged in self-promotion. Johnny Ringo built a reputation as a gunslinger while never taking part in a gunfight or killing unarmed civilians.

Mythology and folklore often exaggerate the skills of famous gunfighters. Most of these historical figures were not known to be capable of trick shooting, nor did they necessarily have a reputation for precision sharpshooting. Such tropes that are characteristic of Westerns include shooting the center of a coin, stylistic pistol twirling, glancing shots that intentionally only graze an opponent (the bullet through the hat being an example), shooting an opponent's belt buckle (thus dropping his pants), a bullet cutting the hangman's rope, or shooting the guns out of opponents' hands (typically as an alternative to killing). The latter was debunked by Mythbusters as an impossibility, as unjacketed bullets tend to shatter into fragments that can hurt or even kill.

In Western movies, the characters' gun belts are usually worn low on the hip and outer thigh, with the holster cut away around the pistol's trigger and grip for a smooth, fast draw. This type of holster is a Hollywood anachronism. Fast-draw artists can be distinguished from other movie cowboys because their guns will often be tied to their thigh. Long before holsters were steel-lined, they were soft and supple for comfortable all-day wear. A gunfighter would use tie-downs to keep his pistol from catching on the holster while drawing. Most of the time, gunfighters would just hide their pistols in their pockets and waistbands.



Showdown at High Noon: Legendary event in which two men faced off to settle a dispute by dueling in the days of the Wild West. Such events were actually rare but are an important part of the myth of the West and feature in many stories and movies.



Showdown at the OK Corral: An actual duel that happened between Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday and other lawmen and outlaws in 1881 in the town of Tombstone, Arizona. It is the most famous gunfight of the Wild West.



Wyatt Earp: Famous lawman of the Wild West. He and his brothers were participants in the Showdown at the OK Corral in Tombstone, Arizona in 1881.

Although quick draw and hip shooting was an important skill in the West, only a handful of historically known gunslingers were known to be fast, such as Luke Short, John Wesley Hardin, Wild Bill Hickok, Doc Holliday, and Billy the Kid. Shooting a pistol with one hand is normally associated with gunslingers, and is also a standard for them of the era to carry two guns and fire ambidextrously. Capt. Jonathan R. Davis carried two revolvers in his iconic gunfight, while Jesse James himself carried over half a dozen revolvers in many of his gunfights.

Most Old West men who were labeled gunfighters did not kill nearly as many men in gunfights as they were given credit for, if any at all. They were often labeled as such due to one particular instance, which developed from rumors into them having been involved in many more events than they actually were. Often their reputation was as much self-promotion as anything else. Wyatt Earp with his brothers Morgan and Virgil along with Doc Holliday killed three outlaws in the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral in Tombstone, Arizona Territory but he has been said to have been involved in more than one hundred gunfights in his lifetime. Earp himself wrote in a letter that, “notoriety had been the bane of my life.”

In other cases, certain gunfighters were confused, over time, with being someone else with a similar name. The most well known of Butch Cassidy's Wild Bunch gang, the Sundance Kid, was in reality only known to have been in one shootout during his lifetime, and no gunfights. Some historians have since stated that it is possible that over time he was confused with another Wild Bunch member, Kid Curry, who was without a doubt the most dangerous member of the gang, having killed many lawmen and civilians during his lifetime before being killed himself. Hence, it is the Sundance Kid who is better known.

It is often difficult to separate lawmen of the Old West from outlaws of the Old West. In many cases, the term gunfighter was applied to constables. Despite idealistic portrayals in television, movies, and even in history books, very few lawmen could claim their law enforcement role as their only source of employment. Unlike contemporary police officers, these lawmen generally pursued other occupations, often earning money as gamblers, business owners, or even as outlaws. Usually, when a gunman was hired by a town as town marshal, they received the full support of the townspeople until order was restored, at which point the town would tactfully indicate it was time for a change to a less dangerous lawman who relied more on respect than fear to enforce the law.

A different class of gunslingers were the **outlaws** of the West. Most worked together in groups and of these, two stand out as the most infamous. The **James-Younger Gang** had its origins in a group of Confederate bushwhackers that participated in the bitter partisan fighting that wracked Missouri during the American Civil War. After the war, the men continued to plunder and murder, though the motive shifted to personal profit rather than for the glory



Outlaws: Criminals of the Wild West. Many had been Confederate soldiers during the Civil War who continued fighting in the 1870s and 1880s. Jesse James, Billy the Kid and Butch Cassidy are famous examples.

of the Confederacy. For nearly a decade following the Civil War, the James-Younger Gang was among the most feared, most publicized, and most wanted confederations of outlaws on the American frontier. The gang's activities spanned much of the central part of the country. They are suspected of having robbed banks, trains, and stagecoaches in at least ten states: Missouri, Kentucky, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Alabama, and West Virginia. The James-Younger Gang dissolved in 1876, following the capture of the Younger brothers in Minnesota during the ill-fated attempt to rob the Northfield First National Bank in Minnesota. Three years later, **Jesse James** organized a new gang but his career came to an end in 1882 when one of the new gang members, Robert Ford shot, James from behind for reward money.



James-Younger Gang: Gang of famous outlaws of the Wild West. They had been confederate soldiers during the Civil War from Missouri and later robbed banks, trains and stagecoaches in many states. Their failed raid on a bank in Northfield, Minnesota proved to be their undoing.



Jesse James: Famous outlaw who led the James-Younger Gang. He was eventually killed by a member of his own gang.

Primary Source: Photograph

Billy the Kid was one of the most notorious outlaws of the West.



Most famous of the individual outlaws was **Billy the Kid**. Orphaned at age 13, his first arrest was for stealing food at age 16 in late 1875. Ten days later, he robbed a Chinese laundry and was arrested, but he escaped two days later. After murdering a blacksmith during an altercation in August 1877, he



Billy the Kid: Famous young outlaw in New Mexico and Arizona who was wanted for multiple murders. He was killed by sheriffs when he was only 21.

joined a group of cattle rustlers. He became a well-known figure in New Mexico and Arizona when he became involved in the Lincoln County War, a fight between rival groups vying for control of the cattle and dry goods business in New Mexico. In April 1878, he participated in the killing of three men, including Lincoln County Sheriff William J. Brady and one of his deputies. Sheriff Pat Garrett captured Billy the Kid and in April 1881, he was tried and convicted of the murder of Brady, and was sentenced to hang but escaped from jail on April 28, 1881, killing two sheriff's deputies in the process and evading capture for more than two months. Garrett eventually caught up with him and shot and killed him, at age 21.

At the end of the century, a new gang rose to capture the nation's attention and imagination. **Butch Cassidy's Wild Bunch** was one of the loosely organized outlaw gangs operating out of Wyoming during the 1890s. The gang was led by Butch Cassidy, and it included his closest friend Elzy Lay, the Sundance Kid, Tall Texan, News Carver, Camilla "Deaf Charley" Hanks, Laura Bullion, Flat-Nose Curry, Kid Curry and Bob Meeks. They were the most successful train-robbing gang in history. Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid eventually fled to South America to escape Pinkerton Detectives where they were killed in a shootout with police.



Butch Cassidy's Wild Bunch: One of many outlaw gangs in Wyoming in the 1890s. They robbed trains the gang was made up of men with colorful nicknames who epitomized the Wild West.

THE FRONTIER MYTH

There are two Wests: the historical West in which farmers, ranchers, miners, prostitutes and criminals pursued their happiness, and the mythic West that took deep root in the American imagination. Western novels like those found at supermarket checkout lines, mainstream literature such as Cooper's Leatherstocking Tales, newspapers, and plays portrayed the West as both a barren landscape full of savages and a romanticized idealistic way of living for rugged men. This second version of the American West has perhaps had a longer-lasting impact on American culture since it remains even now long after the actual historical West has been replaced by modern life. This is the **Frontier Myth**.



Frontier Myth: Romanticized idea of what the West was like before it was fully settled. This idea contains such concepts as lawmen who stood up for justice against evil outlaws, noble cowboys braving the elements to drive cattle north, and independent miners struggling against nature to win their reward. Values such as independence, justice, and freedom are part of this idea which is still celebrated in America today.

The origins of the Frontier Myth are as old as White settlement in America itself. Beginning in the original colonies, settlers brought a synthesis of romantic European myths and ideas across the Atlantic, particularly the idea that the New World was a place where they could reinvent themselves. However, the land was occupied by Native Americans and the incoming colonists took the land with violence and the Frontier Myth took on a layer of meaning imbued with a sense of regeneration through violence. Violent interactions with Native Americans became central to the myth of the frontier, and the American hero has been one who mediated between these two worlds. The first national hero to do this was Daniel Boone, the first archetype of the western hero, "An American hero is the lover of the spirit of the wilderness, and his acts of love and sacred affirmation are acts of violence against the spirit and her avatars," argues historian Richard Slotkin. This is the foundation for the myth of the frontier that began in the colonies.

It was further developed in the 1800s to meet the growing needs of industrialization, incorporating the exploitation of land. The myth of the frontier held promise of wealth in the undiscovered lands and thus encouraged settlement, but Slotkin argues that the myth of the frontier distorted the historical reality. The Frontier Myth holds that Americas became rich by riding the Great Plains or mining the gold fields of California, but in reality, most fortunes were made in the industrial cities of the North.



Primary Source: Photograph

John Wayne, one of Hollywood's quintessential cowboys. Although his characters all had different names, they all embodied the essentials of the traditional cowboy according to the Frontier Myth.

Christine Bold studied the development of the Frontier Myth and argues that the formula for it was created by a group of writers, politicians, painters, and entertainers. She found that they used their money and influence to silence the voices of African Americans, Native Americans, immigrants, and non-elite white men. They did this both in their creation of the formula for the myth of the frontier, and in public policy. In the regards to myth their efforts were successful, and the common myth of the frontier to follow this period features the white cowboy riding in to save the white townsfolk, particularly women, usually from Native Americans or Hispanics. Although African Americans were common in the actual West of the 1800s, they are almost entirely absent in the mythologized version.

Legends like Wild Bill, Calamity Jane, Jesse James' gang, Buffalo Bill, are products of this myth, and still present in popular culture, as well as in the books of Theodore Roosevelt, Frederic Remington and Owen Wister, or in comics like Lucky Luke and western films.

Despite variation, there are key elements to the Frontier Myth that are common. The cowboy of the myth is heroic, recognizes evil and is unafraid

to fight it. In popular culture, the good cowboys wear white and shoot the evil cowboys in black. Our modern infatuation with superhero stories is entirely in line with this element of the myth.

Another aspect of the western archetype is the self-reliant man. Our idealized cowboy rides a horse, needs no one, can survive for weeks alone, and stoically faces adversity. Americans who live in cities but purchase oversized pickup trucks or Harley Davidson motorcycles are recreating this aspect of the myth.

Also, the cowboy of myth is an achiever. He can make things happen. Overcoming any adversity, he can bring the cattle to market, fight any number of Native Americans, or travel any distance to save the girl. Just as the real pioneers crossed the West to settle California, Utah and Oregon, so too did Americans set foot on the Moon. After all, our mythologized western man is an innovative problem solver who dares where others are timid.

Myths are much more about the way we would like to see ourselves than about historical reality, and the Frontier Myth is no different. After all, the historical cowboys are relatively unimportant to us today. Who needs a few thousand men from the 1800s when the Dallas Cowboys, Texas Ranger, San Francisco 49ers, Denver Nuggets, Portland Trailblazers, or San Antonio Spurs are playing sports on cable television?

SUMMARY

Mountain men were fur trappers and explorers who mapped the West. They met every year to share news and sell their furs. Some later became guides to show the way for pioneers.

Miners went to the West in search of gold, silver and copper. The 49ers went to California beginning in 1849 after gold was discovered. Some struck it rich, but many did not. Levi Strauss invented jeans to sell to miners who wore out their pants panning for gold. California grew tremendously because of this gold rush. Silver rushes in Nevada, copper rushes in Montana, and a gold rush in Alaska also drove increases in the populations of these future states.

In some places in the West, thousands of people flocked to a particular spot to dig in a mine. These sudden towns were places without the traditional structures like police, churches, and women who helped maintain civic order in the East. Stories from these towns gave rise to the legend of the Wild West. In some cases, when the gold or silver ran out, people simply left, leaving behind empty ghost towns.

Ranchers started rounding up the longhorn cattle of the Texas prairie, the descendants of cattle released by the Spanish. Cowboys drove herds of these cows north to the ends of the railroads where they were loaded up and shipped to Chicago. There the cattle were slaughtered and shipped to customers in the East. Within a few decades the railroads spread, farmers put up barbed wire, and the days of the cattle drives were over. The legend of the cowboy and the cattle drive come from this short era in history.

Gunslingers became a popularized character of the West. The mythologized cowboy with six shooters in both hips who stood up for justice and hunted down evildoers is based on some real characters from the real West, but is mostly a creation of Hollywood. This frontier myth is still an important idea in modern America. We like our pickup trucks and the lone hero who sets out on a quest to fight the good fight. There were some real outlaws in the West, most notably the James-Younger Gang, Billy the Kid and Butch Cassidy.

THE RAILROADS

The **Pacific Railway Acts** were pivotal in helping settlers move west more quickly, as well as move their farm products, and later cattle and mining deposits, back east. The first of many railway initiatives, these acts commissioned the **Union Pacific Railroad** to build new track west from Omaha, Nebraska, while the **Central Pacific Railroad** moved east from Sacramento, California. The law provided each company with ownership of all public lands within two hundred feet on either side of the track laid, as well as additional land grants and payment through load bonds, prorated on the difficulty of the terrain it crossed. Because of these provisions, both companies made a significant profit, whether they were crossing hundreds of miles of open plains, or working their way through the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California. As a result the nation's first **transcontinental railroad** was completed when the two companies connected their tracks at **Promontory Point, Utah**, in the spring of 1869. Other tracks, including lines radiating from this original one, subsequently created a network that linked all corners of the nation.

THE FORTS

In addition to legislation designed to facilitate western settlement, the government assumed an active role on the ground, building numerous forts throughout the West to protect and assist settlers during their migration. Forts such as **Fort Laramie**, built in 1834 in Wyoming and Fort Apache in Arizona served as protection from nearby Native Americans as well as maintained peace between potential warring tribes. Others located throughout Colorado and Wyoming became important trading posts for miners and fur trappers. Those built in Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas served primarily to provide relief for pioneers along the trails west or for farmers during times of drought or related hardships. Forts constructed along the California coastline provided protection in the wake of the Mexican-American War as well as during the American Civil War.

HOMESTEADERS

In the 1800s, as today, it took money to relocate and start a new life. Due to the initial cost of relocation, land, and supplies, as well as months of preparing the soil, planting, and subsequent harvesting before any produce was ready for market, the original wave of western settlers along the Oregon Trail in the 1840s and 1850s consisted of moderately prosperous, White, native-born farming families of the East. But the completion of the first transcontinental railroad and passage of the **Homestead Act** meant that, by 1870, the possibility of western migration was opened to Americans of more modest means.

The Homestead Act allowed any head of household, or individual over the age of twenty-one, including unmarried women, to receive a parcel of 160



Pacific Railway Acts: Series of laws passed in 1862 that granted public land to railway companies in order to construct the Transcontinental Railroad. It was one of many times the federal government official supported the railroad industry in order to spur development.



Union Pacific Railroad: Company that built the Transcontinental Railroad from Iowa to Utah.



Central Pacific Railroad: Company that built the Transcontinental Railroad from California to Utah.



Transcontinental Railroad: First railroad connecting the East with California. It was built by two companies, the Union Pacific in the East and the Central Pacific in the West. The two tracks eventually met at Promontory Point in Utah in 1869.



Promontory Point, Utah: Spot where the tracks being laid by the Union Pacific and Central Pacific Railroads finally met in 1869 and the golden spike was driven in, thus completing the first transcontinental railroad.



Fort Laramie: Important army fort and trading post along the Oregon Trail in Wyoming.

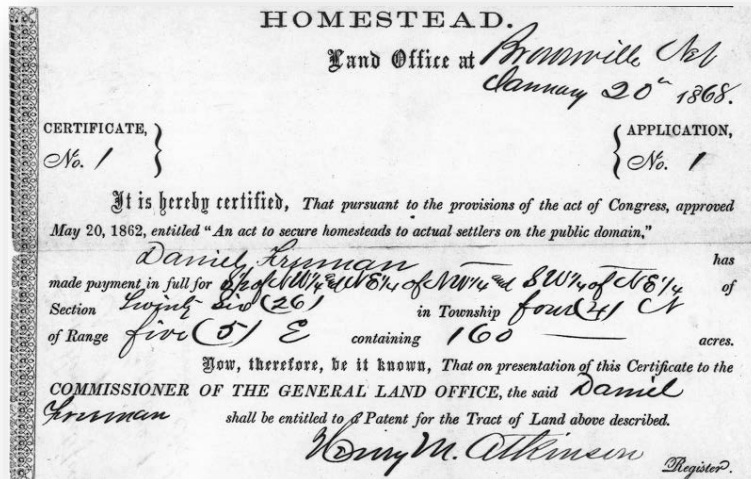


Homestead Act: 1862 law that granted pioneers land in the West if they could survive and farm it. It was an important driver of migration from the East as well as inspiration for foreign immigrants seeking a better life as farmers in America.

acres of land for only a nominal filing fee. All that recipients were required to do in exchange was to “improve the land” within a period of five years of taking possession. The standards for improvement were minimal. Owners could clear a few acres, build small houses or barns, or maintain livestock. Under this act, the government transferred over 270 million acres of public domain land to private citizens.

Primary Source: Government Document

A deed for a homestead in Nebraska from 1868.



What started as a trickle became a steady flow of migration that would last until the end of the century. Nearly 400,000 settlers had made the trek westward by the height of the movement in 1870. The vast majority were men, although families also migrated, despite incredible hardships for women with young children. More recent immigrants also migrated west, with the largest numbers coming from Northern Europe and Canada. Germans, Scandinavians, and Irish were among the most common. These ethnic groups tended to settle close together, creating strong rural communities that mirrored the way of life they had left behind. According to Census Bureau records, the number of Scandinavians living in the United States during the second half of the nineteenth century exploded, from barely 18,000 in 1850 to over 1.1 million in 1900. During that same time period, the German-born population in the United States grew from 584,000 to nearly 2.7 million and the Irish-born population grew from 961,000 to 1.6 million. As they moved westward, several thousand immigrants established homesteads in the Midwest, primarily in Minnesota and Wisconsin, where, as of 1900, over one-third of the population was foreign-born, and in North Dakota, whose immigrant population stood at 45% at the turn of the century.

In addition to a significant European migration westward, several thousand African Americans migrated west following the Civil War, as much to escape the racism and violence of the Old South as to find new economic opportunities. They were known as **Exodusters**, referencing the biblical



Exodusters: Nickname for former slaves who moved west as pioneers after the Civil War.

flight from Egypt, because they fled the racism of the South, with most of them headed to Kansas from Kentucky, Tennessee, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. Over twenty-five thousand Exodusters arrived in Kansas in 1879–1880 alone. By 1890, over 500,000 African Americans lived west of the Mississippi River. Although the majority of Black migrants became farmers, approximately 12,000 worked as cowboys during the Texas cattle drives. Some joined the army in the wars against the last of the Native American tribes. The Natives equated their black, curly hair with that of the buffalo and they were nicknamed **Buffalo Soldiers**. Many had served in the Union army in the Civil War and were now organized into six, all black cavalry and infantry units whose primary duties were to protect settlers from Indian attacks during the westward migration, as well as to assist in building the infrastructure required to support western settlement.



Buffalo Soldiers: Nickname for African American soldiers who participated in the Indian Wars of the late 1800s.

As settlers and homesteaders moved westward to improve the land given to them through the Homestead Act, they faced a difficult and often insurmountable challenge. The land was difficult to farm, there were few building materials, and harsh weather, insects, and inexperience led to frequent setbacks. The prohibitive prices charged by the first railroad lines made it expensive to ship crops to market or have goods sent out. Although many farms failed, some survived and grew into large bonanza farms that hired additional labor and were able to benefit enough from economies of scale to grow profitable. Still, small family farms, and the settlers who worked them, were hard-pressed to do more than scrape out a living in an unforgiving environment that comprised arid land, violent weather, and other challenges.

THE LIFE OF THE HOMESTEADER

Of the hundreds of thousands of settlers who moved west, the vast majority were homesteaders. These pioneers, like the Ingalls family of Little House on the Prairie book and television fame, were seeking land and opportunity. Popularly known as **sodbusters** since they cut the thick prairie grass, these men and women in the Midwest faced a difficult life on the frontier. They settled throughout the land that now makes up the Midwestern states of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas. The weather and environment were bleak, and settlers struggled to eke out a living.

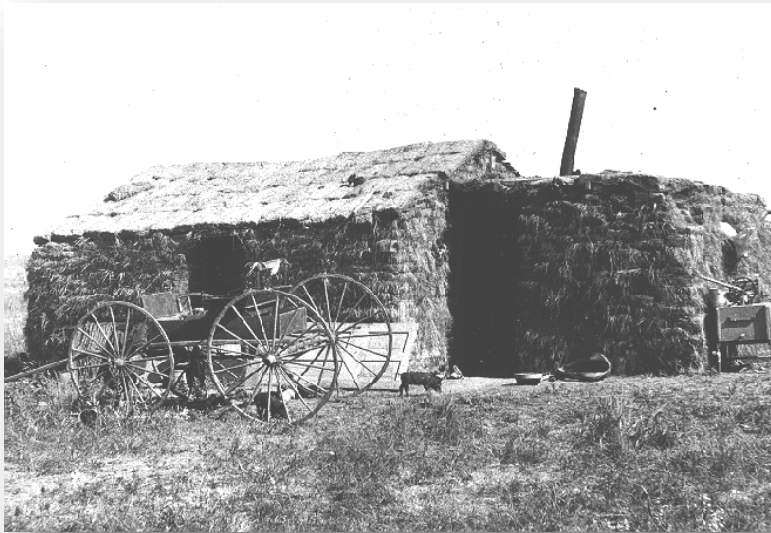


Sodbusters: Nickname for the pioneers who settled in the Great Plains and struggled with harsh weather to farm the thick soil.

A few unseasonably rainy years had led would-be settlers to believe that the great desert was no more, but the region's typically low rainfall and harsh temperatures made crop cultivation hard. Irrigation was a requirement, but finding water and building adequate systems proved too difficult and expensive for many farmers. It was not until 1902 and the passage of the Newlands Reclamation Act that a system finally existed to set aside funds from the sale of public lands to build dams for subsequent irrigation efforts. Prior to that, farmers across the Great Plains relied primarily on dry-farming techniques to grow corn, wheat, and sorghum, a practice that many continued in later years. A few also began to employ windmill technology to

draw water, although both the drilling and construction of windmills became an added expense that few farmers could afford.

The first houses built by western settlers were typically made of mud and sod with thatch roofs, as there was little timber for building. Rain, when it arrived, presented constant problems for these sod houses, with mud falling into food, and vermin, most notably lice, scampering across bedding.



Primary Source: Photograph

A sod house, made out of “bricks” of cut sod, the thick prairie grass.

Weather patterns not only left the fields dry, they also brought tornadoes, droughts, blizzards, and insect swarms. Tales of swarms of locusts were commonplace, and the crop-eating insects would at times cover the ground six to twelve inches deep. One frequently quoted Kansas newspaper reported a locust swarm in 1878 during which the insects devoured “everything green, stripping the foliage off the bark and from the tender twigs of the fruit trees, destroying every plant that is good for food or pleasant to the eye, that man has planted.”

Farmers also faced the ever-present threat of debt and farm foreclosure by the banks. While land was essentially free under the Homestead Act, all other farm necessities cost money and were difficult to obtain in the newly settled parts of the country where market economies did not yet fully reach. Horses, livestock, wagons, wells, fencing, seed, and fertilizer were all critical to survival, but often hard to come by as the population remained sparsely settled across vast tracts of land. Railroads charged notoriously high rates for farm equipment and livestock, making it difficult to procure goods or make a profit on anything sent back east. Banks also charged high interest rates, and, in a cycle that replayed itself year after year, farmers would borrow from the bank with the intention of repaying their debt after the harvest. As the number of farmers moving westward increased and harvest

yields correspondingly increased, the market price of their produce steadily declined, even as the value of the actual land increased. Each year, hard-working farmers produced ever larger crops, flooding the markets and subsequently driving prices down even further. Although some understood the economics of supply and demand, none could overtly control such forces.

Eventually, the arrival of a more extensive railroad network aided farmers, mostly by bringing much needed supplies such as lumber for construction and new farm machinery. While John Deere sold a steel-faced plow as early as 1838, it was James Oliver's improvements to the device in the late 1860s that transformed life for homesteaders. His new, less expensive "chilled plow" was better equipped to cut through the shallow grass roots of the Midwestern terrain, as well as withstand damage from rocks just below the surface. Similar advancements in hay mowers, manure spreaders, and threshing machines greatly improved farm production for those who could afford them. Where capital expense became a significant factor, larger commercial farms, known as **bonanza farms**, began to develop. Farmers in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota hired migrant farmers to grow wheat on farms in excess of twenty thousand acres each. These large farms were succeeding by the end of the century, but small family farms continued to suffer. Many would-be landowners lured westward by the promise of cheap land became migrant farmers instead, working other peoples' land for a wage. The frustration of small farmers grew, ultimately leading to the creation of an entirely new political movement.



Bonanza Farm: Large commercial farms made up of many smaller homesteads in the Great Plains that developed in the late-1800s. They developed as individuals realized that it was inefficient to try to raise grain in small amounts and sold out to wealthier neighbors. This process mirrored the industrial consolidation happening in the East at the same time.



Primary Source: Photograph

A homesteading family in Nebraska in 1866.

Although the West was numerically a male-dominated society, homesteading in particular encouraged the presence of women, families, and a domestic lifestyle, even if such a life was not an easy one. Women faced all the physical hardships that men encountered in terms of weather, illness, and danger, with the added complication of childbirth. Often, there was no doctor or midwife providing assistance, and many women died from treatable complications, as did their newborns. While some women could find employment in the newly settled towns as teachers, cooks, or seamstresses, for the vast majority of women, their work was not in towns for money, but on the farm. As late as 1900, a typical farm wife could expect to devote nine hours per day to chores such as cleaning, sewing, laundering, and preparing food. Two additional hours per day were spent cleaning the barn and chicken coop, milking the cows, caring for the chickens, and tending the family garden. One wife commented in 1879, “[We are] not much better than slaves. It is a weary, monotonous round of cooking and washing and mending and as a result the insane asylum is a third filled with wives of farmers.”

Despite this grim image, the challenges of farm life eventually empowered women to break through some legal and social barriers. Many lived more equitably as partners with their husbands than did their eastern counterparts, helping each other through both hard times and good. If widowed, a wife typically took over responsibility for the farm, a level of management that was very rare back East, where the farm would fall to a son or other male relation. Pioneer women made important decisions and were considered by their husbands to be more equal partners in the success of the homestead, due to the necessity that all members had to work hard and contribute to the farming enterprise for it to succeed.

The cult of domesticity that defined gender roles in the industrial East did not have the same sway in the West. Therefore, it is not surprising that the first states to grant women’s rights, including the right to vote, were those in the Pacific Northwest and Upper Midwest, where women pioneers worked the land side by side with men. Some women seemed to be well suited to the challenges that frontier life presented them. Writing to her Aunt Martha from their homestead in Minnesota in 1873, Mary Carpenter refused to complain about the hardships of farm life, saying, “I try to trust in God’s promises, but we can’t expect him to work miracles nowadays. Nevertheless, all that is expected of us is to do the best we can, and that we shall certainly endeavor to do. Even if we do freeze and starve in the way of duty, it will not be a dishonorable death.”

Although the homesteaders lived far from centers of commerce, they were not entirely isolated. Because of advances in communication and transportation, especially with the expansion of railroad networks, innovative retailers were able to bring the products of the city to the citizens of the prairies and rural South. Aaron Montgomery Ward, Richard Warren

Sears and Alvah Curtis Roebuck developed **mail order catalog** companies that distributed well-known books listing their products – everything from sewing machines, to doll houses, to tractors and event cars and kits to build houses. Until it was surpassed by Walmart in 1989, Sears was the largest retailer in the nation. Not surprisingly, both Sears and Montgomery Ward were based in Chicago, the hub of the rail networks in the Midwest.

While most stories of the West focus on cowboys and gunslingers, the lives of the homesteaders were made famous by **Laura Ingalls Wilder**. Originally published in the 1930s and 1940s, Ingalls's book **The Little House on the Prairie**, and its many sequels have been in print continuously since. The television show, *Little House on the Prairie*, ran for over a decade and was hugely successful. The books, although fictional, were based on her own childhood as she travelled west with her family via covered wagon, stopping in Kansas, Wisconsin, South Dakota, and beyond. Wilder wrote of her stories, "As you read my stories of long ago I hope you will remember that the things that are truly worthwhile and that will give you happiness are the same now as they were then. Courage and kindness, loyalty, truth, and helpfulness are always the same and always needed." While Ingalls makes the point that her stories underscore traditional values that remain the same over time, this is not necessarily the only thing that made these books so popular. Perhaps part of their appeal is that they are adventure stories, with wild weather, wild animals, and Native Americans all playing a role.

HISPANICS

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican-American War in 1848, promised American citizenship to the nearly 75,000 Hispanics living in the American Southwest. Approximately 90% accepted the offer and chose to stay in the United States despite their immediate relegation to second-class citizenship status. Relative to the rest of Mexico, these lands were sparsely populated and had been so ever since Mexico had achieved its freedom from Spain in 1821. In fact, New Mexico, not Texas or California, was the center of settlement in the region in the years immediately preceding the war with the United States, containing nearly 50,000 Mexicans. However, those who did settle the area were proud of their heritage and ability to develop ranches of great size and success.

Despite promises made in the treaty, they quickly lost their land to White settlers who simply displaced the rightful landowners, by force when necessary. Repeated efforts at legal redress mostly fell upon deaf ears. In some instances, judges and lawyers would permit the legal cases to proceed through an expensive legal process only to the point where Hispanic landowners who insisted on holding their ground were rendered penniless for their efforts. Much like Chinese immigrants, Hispanic citizens were relegated to the worst-paying jobs under the most terrible working conditions. They worked as **peóns** (manual laborers similar to slaves), **vaqueros** (cattle herders), and cartmen (transporting food and supplies) on



Mail Order Catalog: A book offering items for purchase that became popular in the late-1800s. They were especially aimed at rural customers and were made possible by the development of the railroad. Sears was one of the first to capitalize on this opportunity.



Laura Ingalls Wilder: Pioneer writer of autobiographical stories of life on the Frontier. Her many books are still hugely popular.



Little House on the Prairie: First of the many autobiographical books by Laura Ingalls Wilder about her family's life as pioneers on the Great Plains in the late-1800s.



Peons: Name for the manual laborers in the Southwest. Such jobs were some of the only positions available to Hispanics after the region was absorbed into the United States after the Mexican-American War.



Vaqueros: Spanish name for cowboys. Many of the cowboys of the West were Hispanic.

the cattle ranches that White landowners possessed, or undertook the most hazardous mining tasks.

In a few instances, frustrated Hispanic citizens fought back against the White settlers who dispossessed them of their belongings. In 1889–1890 in New Mexico, several hundred Mexican Americans formed las **Gorras Blancas** (the White Caps) to try to reclaim their land and intimidate White Americans, preventing further land seizures. White Caps conducted raids of White farms, burning homes, barns, and crops to express their growing anger and frustration. However, their actions never resulted in any fundamental changes. Several White Caps were captured, beaten, and imprisoned, whereas others eventually gave up, fearing harsh reprisals against their families.

Some White Caps adopted a more political strategy, gaining election to local offices throughout New Mexico in the early 1890s, but growing concerns over the potential impact upon the territory’s quest for statehood led several citizens to heighten their repression of the movement. Other laws passed in the United States intended to deprive Mexican Americans of their heritage as much as their lands. **Sunday Laws** prohibited “noisy amusements” such as bullfights, cockfights, and other cultural gatherings common to Hispanic communities at the time. **Greaser Laws** permitted the imprisonment of any unemployed Mexican American on charges of vagrancy. Although Hispanic Americans held tightly to their cultural heritage as their remaining form of self-identity, such laws took a toll on the community’s sense of self-worth and pride.

In California and throughout the Southwest, the massive influx of White settlers simply overran the Hispanic populations that had been living and thriving there for generations. Despite being American citizens with full rights, Hispanics found themselves outnumbered, outvoted, and, ultimately, outcast. Corrupt state and local governments favored Whites in land disputes, and mining companies and cattle barons discriminated against them, as with the Chinese workers, in terms of pay and working conditions. In growing urban areas such as Los Angeles, **barrios**, or clusters of working-class homes, grew more isolated from the White American centers. Hispanic Americans, like the Native Americans and Chinese, suffered the fallout of the White settlers’ relentless push west.

CHINESE

The initial arrival of Chinese immigrants to the United States began as a slow trickle in the 1820s, with barely 650 living in the United States at the end of 1849. However, as gold fever swept the country, Chinese immigrants, too, were attracted to the notion of quick fortunes. By 1852, over 25,000 Chinese immigrants had arrived, and by 1880, over 300,000 Chinese lived in the United States, most in California. While they had dreams of finding gold, many instead found employment building the first transcontinental railroad.



Gorras Blancas: Group of Hispanics who raided White-owned farms in New Mexico around 1890. Their brief period of violent resistance was born of frustration about the treatment of Hispanics as Whites moved into and took over power in the region.



Sunday Laws: A series of laws that were passed by Whites in New Mexico in the 1890s aimed at restricting Hispanic culture. They banned such practices as bullfights.



Greaser Laws: Laws passed in New Mexico in the 1890s that allowed White authorities to imprison unemployed Hispanics.



Barrios: Hispanic neighborhoods in the growing cities of the West. They developed as White migrants took over political and economic power in the late-1800s and early-1900s.

Some even traveled as far east as the former cotton plantations of the Old South, which they helped to farm after the Civil War. Several thousand of these immigrants booked their passage to the United States using a credit-ticket, in which their passage was paid in advance by American businessmen to whom the immigrants were then indebted for a period of work, much like the indentured servants of the Colonial Era. Most arrivals were men. Few wives or children ever traveled to the United States. As late as 1890, less than 5% of the Chinese population in the United States was female. Regardless of gender, few Chinese immigrants intended to stay permanently although many were reluctantly forced to do so, as they lacked the financial resources to return home.

Prohibited by law since 1790 from obtaining citizenship through naturalization, Chinese immigrants faced harsh discrimination and violence from White settlers in the West. Despite hardships like the special tax that Chinese miners had to pay to take part in the Gold Rush, or their subsequent forced relocation into Chinese districts, these immigrants continued to arrive in the United States seeking a better life for the families they left behind. Only when the **Chinese Exclusion Act** of 1882 forbade further immigration from China for a ten-year period did the flow stop.



Chinese Exclusion Act: Law passed in 1882 that ended all immigration from China and prevented any Chinese person already in the United States from becoming a citizen.

Primary Source: Editorial Cartoon

Uncle Sam kicks Chinese immigrants out of the United States. Such attitudes were widespread among the White population in California and the nation in general.



The Chinese community banded together in an effort to create social and cultural centers in cities such as San Francisco. There, they sought to provide

services ranging from social aid to education, places of worship, health facilities, and more to their fellow Chinese immigrants through the creation of benevolent societies. Only Native Americans suffered greater discrimination and racial violence, legally sanctioned by the federal government, than did Chinese immigrants at this juncture in American history. As Chinese workers began competing with White Americans for jobs in California cities, the latter began a system of built in discrimination. In the 1870s, white Americans formed **anti-coolie clubs**. Coolie was a racial slur directed towards people of any Asian descent, through which they organized boycotts of Chinese produced products and lobbied for anti-Chinese laws. Some protests turned violent, as in 1885 in Rock Springs, Wyoming, where tensions between White and Chinese immigrant miners erupted in a riot, resulting in over two dozen Chinese immigrants being murdered and many more injured.

Slowly, racism and discrimination became law, and the history of Chinese immigrants to the United States remained largely one of deprivation and hardship well into the twentieth century.

CONCLUSION

Real people settled the West. Miners, homesteaders, Chinese railroad laborers, children growing up on the prairie – they were all real people. But now, 100 years later, that have become something more than that. The Founding Fathers are glorified, but they are still real people to us.

Not so with the people of the West. For us, the cowboys, outlaws, miners and brave pioneers who cut the sod and tamed the West have been divorced from their true selves. Television, dime novels, and Hollywood have made them into something else entirely. They are now part of the American myth. They define us. We are them. We seek to embody their ethos, their values, the traits we think made them successful, and live our lives as if we were them.

What do you think? How have the real people, and mythologized people of the West shaped our national identity?

And perhaps more importantly, how have the stories of those people, shaped your own identity?



Anti-Coolie Clubs: Nativist organizations formed by White Americans in the 1870s in California to promote anti-Chinese policies. Some of these groups also carried out violent attacks on Chinese communities.

SUMMARY

Railroads eventually stretched across the West. The first transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869. The western side was built mostly by Chinese immigrants. Other railroads soon followed.

The army built forts in the West. These served as trading hubs and stopping points for pioneers crossing the plains. The Homestead Act gave inexpensive land to anyone who could stay and survive as farmers in the West. This last group of people to move West were the ones who stayed and truly settled the West, because they came as families. Some were Exodusters, former slaves who struck out to make a new life on the prairie. Life on the plains was hard, and some didn't make it. Over time, farmers sold their land to bonanza farms and farming started to consolidate the same way industry was consolidating in the East. With the expansion of railroads, homesteaders could buy things from the East. Mail order catalogue companies such as Sears, grew up to provide for them.

Hispanics who found themselves in the United States after the Mexican-American War often lost their land to Whites. Some fought back, but they generally lost out as Whites pushed west.

Chinese immigrants who arrived in California for the gold rush, also lost out. Whites did not want to share claims to land and Chinese immigrants ended up working in industries that supported the miners, or on the railroads. The Chinese Exclusion Act ended all immigration from China in 1882.



KEY CONCEPTS

Wild West: A term that refers to the West during the early years of settlement when there was little formal government, and few women.

Frontier Myth: Romanticized idea of what the West was like before it was fully settled. This idea contains such concepts as lawmen who stood up for justice against evil outlaws, noble cowboys braving the elements to drive cattle north, and independent miners struggling against nature to win their reward. Values such as independence, justice, and freedom are part of this idea which is still celebrated in America today.



LOCATIONS

Sutter's Mill: Location gold was discovered in California in 1848.

Comstock Lode: Major discovery of gold in Nevada. Found in 1859, it was eventually mined with hundreds of tunnels dug deep into the mountain.

Ghost Town: A town that was abandoned in the West, leaving behind homes, shops, etc., usually when a mine ran out and residents moved on to other prospective digs.

Chisholm Trail: Famous route of the cattle drives of the 1860s and 1870s. It runs from Texas, through Oklahoma to Kansas.

Cow Town: Nickname for any one of the towns at the ends of the railroad lines in Kansas that were the destinations of the cattle drives of the 1860s and 1870s. Abilene, Wichita and Dodge City were famous examples.

Promontory Point, Utah: Spot where the tracks being laid by the Union Pacific and Central Pacific Railroads finally met in 1869 and the golden spike was driven in, thus completing the first transcontinental railroad.

Fort Laramie: Important army fort and trading post along the Oregon Trail in Wyoming.

Bonanza Farm: Large commercial farms made up of many smaller homesteads in the Great Plains that developed in the late-1800s. They developed as individuals realized that it was inefficient to try to raise grain in small amounts and sold out to wealthier neighbors. This process mirrored the industrial consolidation happening in the East at the same time.

Barrios: Hispanic neighborhoods in the growing cities of the West. They developed as White migrants took over political and economic power in the late-1800s and early-1900s.



EVENTS

Rendezvous: Annual meetings of mountain men held between 1820 and 1840 where furs were traded. They were important economic and social events.

California Gold Rush: Major migration of people to California beginning in 1849 to search for gold.

Cattle Drive: Movement of longhorn cows rounded up in Texas and driven by cowboys north to railheads in Kansas. They were common in only the 1860s and 1870s before the extension of railroads further west, but are emblematic of the West in general.

Showdown at High Noon: Legendary event in which two men faced off to settle a dispute by dueling in the days of the Wild West. Such events were actually rare but are an important part of the myth of the West and feature in many stories and movies.

Showdown at the OK Corral: An actual duel that happened between Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday and other lawmen and outlaws in 1881 in the town of Tombstone, Arizona. It is the most famous gunfight of the Wild West.



LAWS

Pacific Railway Acts: Series of laws passed in 1862 that granted public land to railway companies in order to construct the Transcontinental Railroad. It was one of many times the federal government official supported the railroad industry in order to spur development.

Homestead Act: 1862 law that granted pioneers land in the West if they could survive and farm it. It was an important driver of migration from the East as well as inspiration for foreign immigrants seeking a better life as farmers in America.

Sunday Laws: A series of laws that were passed by Whites in New Mexico in the 1890s aimed at restricting Hispanic culture. They banned such practices as bullfights.

Greaser Laws: Laws passed in New Mexico in the 1890s that allowed White authorities to imprison unemployed Hispanics.

Chinese Exclusion Act: Law passed in 1882 that ended all immigration from China and prevented any Chinese person already in the United States from becoming a citizen.



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Panning: A process of searching for gold by sifting through the gravel at the bottom of a stream.

Longhorn: A type of cow descended from the cattle released by Spanish explorers in Texas. The famous cattle drives of the 1860s and 1870s involved driving these cows north to railheads. They are symbol associated with Texas.

Barbed Wire: Invention that allowed ranchers and farmers to quickly build miles of fences that cows would not penetrate, thus bringing an end to the days of the cattle drives.

Transcontinental Railroad: First railroad connecting the East with California. It was built by two companies, the Union Pacific in the East and the Central Pacific in the West. The two tracks eventually met at Promontory Point in Utah in 1869.



BUSINESS

Union Pacific Railroad: Company that built the Transcontinental Railroad from Iowa to Utah.

Central Pacific Railroad: Company that built the Transcontinental Railroad from California to Utah.

Mail Order Catalog: A book offering items for purchase that became popular in the late-1800s. They were especially aimed at rural customers and were made possible by the development of the railroad. Sears was one of the first to capitalize on this opportunity.



BOOKS

Little House on the Prairie: First of the many autobiographical books by Laura Ingalls Wilder about her family's life as pioneers on the Great Plains in the late-1800s.



PEOPLE & GROUPS

Mountain Men: The White explorers who travelled throughout the Rocky Mountains and West in the early and mid-1800s. They were essential in the early years of westward expansion because they discovered passes, rivers, and later served as guides for miners, the army, and pioneer who settled the region.

John Colter: First of the mountain men. He was a member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and was the first White person to see Yellowstone.

Jim Beckwourth: Famous African American mountain man. He lived with the Crow tribe and discovered a pass through the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California.

Jim Bridger: Mountain man who was the first to see the Great Salt Lake in Utah. He was well known as a story teller.

Jedediah Smith: Important mountain man who explored much of California and Nevada. He was a successful businessman and a partner in the Rocky Mountain Fur Company.

Kit Carson: Prototypical mountain man. He helped Fremont explore California, married into two different Native American tribes and was a national hero.

Prospectors: People who search for gold or other precious metals.

Forty-Niners: Nickname for the prospectors who travelled to California during the Gold Rush. Their name is derived from the first year of the migration of such miners.

Levi Strauss: Co-founder of the Levi's company and inventor of jeans. He had gone to California to sell tents to Forty-Niners but found that he could use the canvas he brought to create durable pants that were in greater demand.

Joseph G. McCoy: Businessman who purchased cattle in Kansas and shipped it to consumers in the East. He helped make the cattle drives and Americans' love for beef possible.

Gunslingers: Nickname for the lawmen and criminals of the West, based on the fact that many carried handguns and some were legendary for their supposed abilities with these pistols.

Wyatt Earp: Famous lawman of the Wild West. He and his brothers were participants in the Showdown at the OK Corral in Tombstone, Arizona in 1881.

Outlaws: Criminals of the Wild West. Many had been Confederate soldiers during the Civil War who continued fighting in the 1870s and 1880s. Jesse James, Billy the Kid and Butch Cassidy are famous examples.

James-Younger Gang: Gang of famous outlaws of the Wild West. They had been confederate soldiers during the Civil War from Missouri and later robbed banks, trains and stagecoaches in many states. Their failed raid on a bank in Northfield, Minnesota proved to be their undoing.

Jesse James: Famous outlaw who led the James-Younger Gang. He was eventually killed by a member of his own gang.

Billy the Kid: Famous young outlaw in New Mexico and Arizona who was wanted for multiple murders. He was killed by sheriffs when he was only 21.

Butch Cassidy's Wild Bunch: One of many outlaw gangs in Wyoming in the 1890s. They robbed trains the gang was made up of men with colorful nicknames who epitomized the Wild West.

Exodusters: Nickname for former slaves who moved west as pioneers after the Civil War.

Buffalo Soldiers: Nickname for African American soldiers who participated in the Indian Wars of the late 1800s.

Sodbusters: Nickname for the pioneers who settled in the Great Plains and struggled with harsh weather to farm the thick soil.

Laura Ingalls Wilder: Pioneer writer of autobiographical stories of life on the Frontier. Her many books are still hugely popular.

Peons: Name for the manual laborers in the Southwest. Such jobs were some of the only positions available to Hispanics after the region was absorbed into the United States after the Mexican-American War.

Vaqueros: Spanish name for cowboys. Many of the cowboys of the West were Hispanic.

Gorras Blancas: Group of Hispanics who raided White-owned farms in New Mexico around 1890. Their brief period of violent resistance was born of frustration about the treatment of Hispanics as Whites moved into and took over power in the region.

Anti-Coolie Clubs: Nativist organizations formed by White Americans in the 1870s in California to promote anti-Chinese policies. Some of these groups also carried out violent attacks on Chinese communities.

F I F T H Q U E S T I O N

5 WERE THE INDIAN WARS A TRIMUPH OR A TRAGEDY?

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INTRODUCTION

Just as they had done east of the Mississippi River, when White settlers pushed westward, they came into conflict with Native American tribes. Although the threat of attacks was quite slim and nowhere proportionate to the number of army actions directed against them, the occasional attack, often one of retaliation, was enough to fuel the popular fear of “savage Indians.” The clashes, when they happened, were indeed brutal, although most of the brutality occurred at the hands of the settlers.

Ultimately, the settlers, with the support of local militias and, later, with the federal government behind them, sought to remove the tribes from lands the Whites desired. The result was devastating for the Native American tribes who lacked the weapons and group cohesion to fight back against well-armed forces.

Modern Americans celebrate the nation as a land stretching from sea to shining sea, but that expansion came at a cost. The final conflict between the government and the Sioux Nations of the northern plains did indeed open the entire West to White settlement, but marked the absolute destruction of traditional Native American culture. Was this episode in America’s westward march a triumph or a tragedy? What do you think?

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REMOVAL BY TREATY

Back East, the popular vision of the West was of a vast and empty land. Of course, this was an exaggerated depiction. On the eve of westward expansion, as many as 250,000 Native Americans, representing a variety of tribes, populated the Great Plains. Previous wars against these tribes in the early nineteenth century, as well as the failure of earlier treaties, had led to a general policy of the forcible removal of many tribes in the eastern United States. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 resulted in the infamous Trail of Tears, which saw nearly fifty thousand Seminole, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Creek Indians relocated west of the Mississippi River to what is now Oklahoma between 1831 and 1838. Building upon such a history, the government was prepared, during the rest of the century, to deal with tribes that settlers viewed as obstacles to expansion.

As settlers sought more land for farming, mining, and cattle ranching, the first strategy employed to deal with a perceived threat from resident Native Americans was to negotiate settlements to move tribes out of the path of White settlers onto designated lands called **reservations**. In 1851, the chiefs of most of the Great Plains tribes agreed to the **First Treaty of Fort Laramie**, which did just that. This agreement established distinct tribal borders, essentially codifying the reservation system. In return for annual payments of \$50,000 to the tribes (originally guaranteed for fifty years, but later revised to last for only ten) as well as the hollow promise of noninterference from westward settlers, Native Americans agreed to stay clear of the path of settlement. Due to government corruption, many annuity payments never reached the tribes, and some who moved to the reservations were left destitute and near starving. In addition, within a decade, as the pace and number of western settlers increased, even designated reservations became prime locations for farms and mining. Rather than negotiating new treaties, settlers, oftentimes backed by local or state militia units, simply attacked the tribes out of fear or to force them from the land. Some Native American groups resisted, only to then face massacres.

THE SIOUX WARS

In 1862, frustrated and angered by the lack of annuity payments and the continuous encroachment on their reservation lands, **Sioux** in Minnesota rebelled in what became known as the Dakota War, killing the White settlers who moved onto their tribal lands. Over 1,000 White settlers were captured or killed in the attack, before an armed militia regained control. Of the 400 Sioux captured by government troops, 303 were sentenced to death, but President Lincoln intervened, releasing all but 38 of the men. The 38 who were found guilty were hanged in the largest mass execution in the country's history, and the rest of the tribe was banished.

Settlers in other regions responded to news of this raid with fear and aggression. In Colorado, Arapahoe and Cheyenne tribes fought back against



Reservations: Areas of land set aside by the federal government for Native American tribes. They are typically located on land that was undesirable for settlement and are more common in the West than the East.



First Treaty of Fort Laramie: 1851 agreement between the Federal Government and the tribes of the Great Plains. It set up the reservation system by establishing borders around tribal lands. In return, the government agreed to pay the tribes \$50,000/year.



Sioux: Group of related Native American tribes who lived in and around the area that is now North and South Dakota. They mounted some of the last and most fierce resistance to White expansion and the reservation system.

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land encroachment. White militias then formed, decimating even some of the tribes that were willing to cooperate. One of the more vicious examples was near Sand Creek, Colorado, where Colonel John Chivington led a militia raid upon a camp in which the leader had already negotiated a peaceful settlement. The camp was flying both the American flag and the white flag of surrender when Chivington's troops murdered close to one hundred people, the majority of them women and children, in what became known as the **Sand Creek Massacre**. For the rest of his life, Chivington would proudly display his collection of nearly one hundred scalps from that day. Subsequent investigations by the army condemned Chivington's tactics and their results. However, the raid served as a model for some settlers who sought any means by which to eradicate the perceived threat from their Native American neighbors.

Hoping to forestall similar uprisings and all-out Indian wars, Congress commissioned a committee to investigate the causes of such incidents. The subsequent report of their findings led to the passage of two additional treaties: the **Second Treaty of Fort Laramie** and the **Treaty of Medicine Lodge Creek**, both designed to move the remaining tribes to even more remote reservations. The Second Treaty of Fort Laramie moved the remaining Sioux to the **Black Hills** in the Dakota Territory and the Treaty of Medicine Lodge Creek moved the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, and Comanche to **Indian Territory**, later to become the State of Oklahoma.

The agreements were short-lived, however. With the subsequent discovery of gold in the Black Hills, settlers seeking their fortune began to move upon the newly granted Sioux lands with support from federal cavalry troops. By the middle of 1875, thousands of White prospectors were illegally digging and panning in the area. The Sioux protested the invasion of their territory and the violation of sacred ground. The government offered to lease the Black Hills or to pay \$6 million if the Sioux were willing to sell the land.

When the tribes refused, the government imposed what it considered a fair price for the land, ordered the Natives to move, and in the spring of 1876, made ready to force them onto the reservation. In the **Battle of Little Bighorn**, perhaps the most famous battle of the American West, Sioux chiefs **Sitting Bull** and **Crazy Horse** urged neighboring tribes to join in defense of their lands. At the Little Bighorn River, the army's Seventh Cavalry, led by Colonel **George Custer**, sought a showdown. Driven by his own personal ambition, on June 25, 1876, Custer foolishly attacked what he thought was a minor Native encampment. Instead, it turned out to be the main Sioux force. The Sioux warriors, nearly 3,000 in strength, surrounded and killed Custer and 262 of his men and support units, in the single greatest loss of government troops to a Native American attack in the era of westward expansion.



Sand Creek Massacre: 1864 attack on a Cheyenne village in Colorado by troops under the command of John Chivington. They murdered approximately 100 people, including women and children. Although the army official condemned his actions, the raid served as a model for later attacks and Native American tribes remembered it as a reason not to trust Whites.



Second Treaty of Fort Laramie: 1868 treaty between the federal government and Sioux in which they agreed to move to the Black Hills area of South Dakota. The treaty was later broken when gold was discovered in the Black Hills.



Treaty of Medicine Lodge: 1867 collection of agreements between the federal government and the tribes of the southern Great Plains that moved them to reservations in exchange for government payouts.



Black Hills: Group of low mountains in South Dakota. They were sacred to some Native American tribes and were the site of an early Sioux reservation until gold was discovered there and the Native Americans were relocated.



Indian Territory: Location of a collection of Native American reservations. The tribes of the Southeast were moved there by Andrew Jackson (including the Cherokee in the Trail of Tears) and tribes of the southern plains such as the Cheyenne, Arapaho and Comanche moved there in the later 1800s. It later became the state of Oklahoma.




Battle of Little Bighorn: 1876 battle between the Sioux nations under the command of Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse and the 7th Cavalry under the command of George Custer. It was a rare victory for the Native Americans.




Sitting Bull: Sioux leader during the Indian Wars of the late-1800s. Along with Crazy Horse, he was one of the principle leaders at the Battle of Little Bighorn.

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 **Crazy Horse:** Sioux leader during the Indian Wars of the late-1800s. Along with Sitting Bull, he was one of the principle leaders at the Battle of Little Bighorn.


 **George Custer:** Youngest general during the Civil War. He was renowned for his daring cavalry attacks and pursuit of Native Americans in the 1870s. He misjudged the size of the Sioux force at Little Bighorn and led his troops into total destruction in 1876.

Primary Source: Photograph

Sitting Bull, one of the leaders of the Sioux at the Battle of Little Big Horn.

THE BUFFALO

The modern American **bison**, or **buffalo** as it is more commonly known, was a one-stop shop for the Plains tribes. Before the introduction of horses as part of the Columbian Exchange, bison were herded into large chutes made of rocks and willow branches and trapped in a corral called a buffalo pound and then slaughtered or stampeded over cliffs, called buffalo jumps. Both pound and jump archaeological sites are found in several places in the United States and Canada. In the case of a jump, large groups of people would herd the bison for several miles, forcing them into a stampede that drove the herd over a cliff. Horses taken from the Spanish were well-established in the nomadic hunting cultures by the early 1700s, and indigenous groups once living east of the Great Plains moved west to hunt the larger bison population. There, during the 1600s and 1700s, extensive intertribal warfare

 **Bison/Buffalo:** Large land animal that roamed the Great Plains in massive herds and provided the basis for the nomadic lifestyle of the tribes of the plains. They were nearly driven to extinction by Whites who saw their destruction as synonymous with destruction of Native American culture.

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was waged over access to hunting grounds opened for the first time because of the access to horses.

For the government and White settlers alike, destruction of the great bison herds of the Plains was equivalent to the destruction of the Plains tribes, and the second half of the 1800s saw the near complete extinction of the species. For settlers of the Plains region, bison hunting served as a way to increase their economic stake in the area. Trappers and traders made their living selling buffalo fur. In the winter of 1872–1873, more than 1.5 million buffalo were put onto trains and moved eastward. In addition to the potential profits from buffalo leather, which was commonly used to make machinery belts and army boots, buffalo hunting forced Natives to become dependent on beef from cattle. General Winfield Scott Hancock, for example, reminded several Arapaho chiefs at Fort Dodge in 1867, “You know well that the game is getting very scarce and that you must soon have some other means of living; you should therefore cultivate the friendship of the white man, so that when the game is all gone, they may take care of you if necessary.”

Commercial bison hunters also emerged at this time. Military forts supported hunters, who would use their civilian sources near their military base. Though officers hunted bison for food and sport, professional hunters made a far larger impact in the decline of bison population. Officers stationed in Fort Hays and Wallace even had bets in their “buffalo shooting championship of the world”, between “Medicine Bill” Comstock and “Buffalo Bill” Cody. Some of these hunters would engage in mass bison slaughter in order to make a living.

The army sanctioned and actively endorsed the wholesale slaughter of bison herds. The federal government promoted bison hunting to allow ranchers to range their cattle without competition and primarily to weaken the Native American population. Without the bison, the people of the plains had no choice but to leave the land or starve to death. One of the biggest advocates of this strategy was General William Tecumseh Sherman. On June 26, 1869, the Army Navy Journal reported that, “General Sherman remarked, in conversation the other day, that the quickest way to compel the Indians to settle down to civilized life was to send ten regiments of soldiers to the plains, with orders to shoot buffaloes until they became too scarce to support the redskins.”

As railroads expanded, military troops and supplies were able to be transported more efficiently to the Great Plains. Some railroads hired commercial hunters to feed their laborers. “Buffalo Bill” Cody, for example, was hired by the Kansas Pacific Railroad for this reason. Hunters began arriving in masses, and trains would slow down so men could climb aboard the roofs of trains or fire shots at herds from outside their windows. As a description of such a hunt from Harper's Weekly noted, “The train is ‘slowed’ to a rate of speed about equal to that of the herd; the passengers get out fire-arms which are provided for the defense of the train against the Indians,

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and open from the windows and platforms of the cars a fire that resembles a brisk skirmish.” The railroad industry also wanted bison herds culled or eliminated. Herds of bison on tracks could damage locomotives when the trains failed to stop in time and encounters with bison herds could delay a train for days.



Primary Source: Photograph

Bison bones, including these skulls, were collected after the great hunts to be used for fertilizer. This photograph gives modern historians a sense of the scope of the slaughter.

The destruction of bison signaled the end of the Indian Wars, and consequently their movement towards reservations where, having no knowledge of agriculture, they become dependent on government rations as source of food. The last Native American bison hunt was in 1882.

When the Texas legislature proposed a bill to protect the bison, General Sheridan disapproved of it, stating, “These men have done more in the last two years, and will do more in the next year, to settle the vexed Indian question, than the entire regular army has done in the last forty years. They are destroying the Indians’ commissary. And it is a well known fact that an army losing its base of supplies is placed at a great disadvantage. Send them powder and lead, if you will; but for a lasting peace, let them kill, skin and sell until the buffaloes are exterminated. Then your prairies can be covered with speckled cattle.”

The mass buffalo slaughter had an ecological impact as well. Unlike cattle, bison were naturally fit to thrive in the Great Plains environment. The bison’s giant heads are naturally fit to drive through snow and make them far more likely to survive harsh winters. Additionally, bison grazing helps to cultivate the prairie, making it ripe for hosting a diverse range of plants. Cattle, on the other hand, eat through vegetation and limit the ecosystem's

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ability to support a diverse range of species. Agricultural and residential development of the prairie is estimated to have reduced the prairie to 0.1% of its former area. The plains region has lost nearly one-third of its prime topsoil since the onset of the buffalo slaughter. Cattle are also causing water to be pillaged at rates that are depleting many aquifers of their resources. Research now suggests that the absence of native grasses leads to topsoil erosion which was a main contributor of the dust bowl and black blizzards of the 1930s. Although their strategy of destroying the bison to force Native Americans onto reservation worked to the White's advantage, it would have been better for them in the end to adapt to the ways of their Native American neighbors and raise bison instead of cattle.

Ultimately, bison were hunted down to roughly 300 individuals before a few ranchers and zoos began working to preserve the species. Today, about 500,000 bison currently exist on private lands and around 30,000 on public lands. Approximately 15,000 bison are considered wild, free-range bison not primarily confined by fencing. Bison is the national mammal, a symbol of the many sides of America and its complicated history.

THE LAST OF THE FREE TRIBES

Despite their success at Little Bighorn, neither the Sioux nor any other Plains tribe followed this battle with any other armed encounter. Perhaps due to the loss of bison, or due to fear of returning troops, most accept payment for forcible removal from their lands. Sitting Bull himself fled to Canada, although he later returned in 1881 and subsequently worked in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show.

By the end of the 1880s, a general consensus seem to have been reached among many politicians in Washington that the assimilation of Native Americans into American culture was preferable to slaughter on the battlefield and that it was the time for them to leave behind their tribal landholding, reservations, traditions and ultimately their identities. On February 8, 1887, the **Dawes Act** was signed into law by President Grover Cleveland in pursuit of these goals.

The Dawes Act divided tribal reservations into plots of land for individual households, which had White reformers hoped would break up tribes as social units, encourage individualism, help convert nomadic Natives into farmers, reducing the cost of administering reservations, and open the remainder of the West to White settlers.

Eligible Native Americans had four years to select their land, but the lands set aside for reservations were not good for farming. In most cases, agreeing to the terms of the Dawes Act was tantamount to agreeing to live off of government handouts forever since the land would never support even a meager living, and so resistance to the reservation policy continued.



Dawes Act: 1887 law that divided Native American reservations into individually owned plots of land. It was part of the process of assimilation of Native Americans into White culture and accelerated the destruction of traditional native ways of life.

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Primary Source: Photograph

Chief Joseph led a group of Nez Perce on a long march to escape to Canada before the army could catch them and escort them to reservations. The quest ultimately failed and he became a symbol of the heroic last push to preserve traditional folkways.

In Montana, the Blackfoot and Crow were forced to leave their tribal lands. In Colorado, the Utes gave up their lands after a brief period of resistance. In Idaho, most of the Nez Perce gave up their lands peacefully, although in an incredible episode, a band of some eight hundred Nez Perce sought to evade government troops and escape into Canada. **Chief Joseph**, known to his people as “Thunder Traveling to the Loftier Mountain Heights,” hoped to lead the retreat of his people over fifteen hundred miles of mountains and harsh terrain, only to be caught within fifty miles of the Canadian border in late 1877. His speech has remained a poignant and vivid reminder of what the tribe had lost.

“Tell General Howard I know his heart. What he told me before, I have it in my heart. I am tired of fighting. Our Chiefs are killed; Looking Glass is dead,



Chief Joseph: Leader of the Nez Perce in the late-1800s. He led his tribe in a failed attempt to escape across the border into Canada where he believed they would have a better chance of being allowed to continue their traditional way of life. His famous surrender message includes the lines, “My heart is sick and sad” and “I will fight no more forever.”

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Ta Hool Hool Shute is dead. The old men are all dead. It is the young men who say yes or no. He who led on the young men is dead. It is cold, and we have no blankets; the little children are freezing to death. My people, some of them, have run away to the hills, and have no blankets, no food. No one knows where they are—perhaps freezing to death. I want to have time to look for my children, and see how many of them I can find. Maybe I shall find them among the dead. Hear me, my Chiefs! I am tired; my heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands I will fight no more forever.” Chief Joseph, 1877

WOUNDED KNEE

The final episode in the so-called Indian Wars occurred in 1890, at the **Massacre of Wounded Knee** in South Dakota. On their reservation, the Sioux had begun to perform the **Ghost Dance**, which told of a Messiah who would deliver the tribe from its hardship, make the Whites disappear and return the world to the way it was before the arrival of the Whites.

Settlers began to worry that the Ghost Dance movement was foretelling an uprising and the militia prepared to round up the Sioux. The tribe, after the death of Sitting Bull, who had been arrested, shot, and killed in 1890, prepared to surrender at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, on December 29, 1890. A detachment of the 7th Cavalry Regiment intercepted Spotted Elk's band of Miniconjou Lakota and 38 Hunkpapa Lakota and escorted them to Wounded Knee Creek, where they made camp.

On the morning of December 29, the cavalry troops went into the camp to disarm the Lakota. One version of events claims that during the process of disarming the Lakota, a deaf tribesman named Black Coyote was reluctant to give up his rifle, claiming he had paid a lot for it. Simultaneously, an old man was performing a Ghost Dance. Black Coyote's rifle went off at that point, and the army began shooting at the Native Americans. The disarmed Lakota warriors did their best to fight back. By the time the massacre was over, between 150 and 300 men, women, and children had been killed and 51 were wounded. 25 soldiers also died, and 39 were wounded.

At least 20 soldiers were awarded the Medal of Honor at the time, but the event has come to be regarded a massacre on the part of the cavalry, rather than a battle. It does however, mark the last violent conflict on the Great Plains between government troops and Native Americans.

AMERICANIZATION

Through the years of the Indian Wars of the 1870s and early 1880s, opinion back East was mixed. There were many who felt, as General Philip Sheridan (appointed in 1867 to pacify the Plains Indians) allegedly said, that “the only good Indian was a dead Indian.” But increasingly, several reformers who would later form the backbone of the Progressive Era had begun to criticize



Massacre at Wounded Knee: Last of the violent conflicts between government troops and Native Americans at the end of the 1800s. In December, 1890, the army massacred between 150 and 300 Lakota Sioux who had participated in the Ghost Dance.



Ghost Dance: Religious movement that swept Native American communities in the late-1800s. Led by Wovoka, it promised that if tribes who participated in a special dance, the Whites would disappear and a savior, ancestors and buffalo would return. Whites feared it was a sign up a coming uprising and responded with violence, especially at Wounded Knee.



Americanization: Process of assimilating Native Americans into White society. Well-meaning White leaders believed this would help Native Americans become self-sufficient and opened Indian schools, but it had many negative long-term consequences. The policy was not abandoned until the 1930s.

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the violence, arguing that the Native Americans should be helped through **Americanization** to become assimilated into American society.

Individual land ownership, Christian worship, and education for children became the cornerstones of this new, and final, assault on Native American life and culture. Beginning in the 1880s, clergymen, government officials, and social workers all worked to assimilate Natives into American life. The government permitted reformers to remove children from their homes and place them in boarding schools, such as the **Carlisle Indian School** or the Hampton Institute, where they were taught to abandon their tribal traditions and embrace the tools of American productivity, modesty, and sanctity through total immersion. Such schools not only acculturated Indian boys and girls, but also provided vocational training for males and domestic science classes for females. Adults were targeted by religious reformers, specifically evangelical Protestants as well as a number of Catholics, who sought to convince Native Americans to abandon their language, clothing, and social customs for a White lifestyle.



Carlisle Indian School: Most famous of the many boarding schools for young Native Americans. These schools were meant to Americanize children by teaching them English and how to participate in White society.

Primary Source: Photographs

Tom Torlino, a Navajo who attended the Carlisle Indian School. Before and after photographs such as these were especially popular at the school.

While the concerted effort to assimilate Native Americans into American culture was abandoned officially in the 1830s, integration of Native American tribes and individuals continues to the present day. Non-Native Americans often fail to see that assimilation was never completed.

Since the 1960s, there have been major changes in American society in general, including a broader appreciation for the pluralistic nature of United States and its many ethnic groups, as well as for the special status of Native American nations. More recent legislation to protect Native American religious practices, for instance, points to major changes in government policy. Some tribes have instituted a sort of reverse of the boarding schools of 100 years ago and initiated language immersion schools for children, where a native language is the medium of instruction. For example, the Cherokee Nation instigated a 10-year language preservation plan that involved growing new fluent speakers of the Cherokee language from childhood. The Cherokee Preservation Foundation has invested \$3 million into opening schools, training teachers, and developing curricula for

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language education, as well as initiating community gatherings where the language can be actively used.

Despite efforts to right the wrongs of the past, the nation's first residents remain its poorest and most oppressed. The United States is home to 3.1 million Native Americans, which accounts for only 0.9% of the entire population. While Native Americans have begun to take more control of their tribal economies, especially through the establishment of casinos, poverty on Reservations is still a major issue. The Census in both 1990 and 2000 found that the poverty rate of Native Americans is 25% and unemployment rates are usually high. For example, the unemployment rate on the Blackfoot Reservation in Montana was 69% at a time when the national unemployment rate was 6.7%. According to the 2000 Census, Native Americans living on reservations have incomes that are less than half of the general population. Alcoholism, mental illness, especially due to fetal alcohol syndrome, and teen suicide all remain problems on America's Native American reservations.

CONCLUSION

It is hard to look at the history of the Indian Wars and feel anything but shame and sadness for the destruction of lives, cultures, and ecology of the Native American West. Indeed, America's first citizens are perhaps the ones who lost the most during the course of its history.

So, perhaps the question is easy for us to answer from our perspective in the 21st Century. Of course, the Indian Wars were a tragedy. But, we as historians must remember to look at history through two lenses. Yes, we can view what happened through the perspective we are granted now and judge the past based on our own values. In this way, we can use the Indian Wars, the destruction of the bison, and Americanization as cautionary tales to illustrate messages we wish to tell.

However, we must also consider the past from the perspective of all those who lived through it. Certainly, for some, wasn't the outcome of the Indian Wars a triumph? Who were these people? Where they evil to have had ideas we judge to be so wrong? What do you think?

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SUMMARY

As White homesteaders movement into the Great Planes they encountered the last of the free Native American tribes. Some groups moved peacefully. The government promised money and land in the First Treaty of Fort Laramie. In the late 1800s, the army fought a series of wars with the tribes that did not agree to move.

The Sioux were a large confederation of tribes living in what is now the Dakotas and Montana. Violent conflicts between Sioux and settlers led to the Sand Creek Massacre by the army. Treaties the Natives did sign were often broken. Eventually, the Sioux formed up into a massive fighting force under Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. In 1876 the

Central to the life of the plains tribes was the buffalo. They used it for its meat, fur, bone, and it was central to their religion as well. Whites understood this and began to slaughter the buffalo on a massive scale. They correctly believed that if there were no buffalo, the Native Americans would not be able to survive and would be forced to move to reservations.

Congress passed the Dawes Act, which sought to make Native Americans live more like White Americans. It divided tribal lands into small portions so that individuals owned property instead of collective ownership by tribes. In most cases, the land set aside for reservations was not good for farming, and these nomads-turned-farmers struggled to survive. They became dependent on the government for supplies of food. Depression and alcoholism developed. The government succeeded in destroying Native cultural practices.

Chief Joseph led his Nez Perce tribe on a desperate trek to cross the border into Canada and escape reservation life. However, he and his people were starving in the cold while pursued by the army and were caught a few miles from the border. His surrender message is famous for its sadness.

The final violent conflict of the Indian Wars happened at Wounded Knee. A new religious movement had swept through Native American societies in the West promising that if they engaged in a Ghost Dance the Whites would disappear and the buffalo would return. A group of mostly women, children and old men engaged in this dance were slaughtered by the army in 1890.

In the following decades, boarding schools were opened where Native Children were taught English and White culture. The Carlisle Indian School was the most famous of these. It was not until the 1940s that this process of forced Americanization ended.



LOCATIONS

Reservations: Areas of land set aside by the federal government for Native American tribes. They are typically located on land that was undesirable for settlement and are more common in the West than the East.

Black Hills: Group of low mountains in South Dakota. They were sacred to some Native American tribes and were the site of an early Sioux reservation until gold was discovered there and the Native Americans were relocated.

Indian Territory: Location of a collection of Native American reservations. The tribes of the Southeast were moved there by Andrew Jackson (including the Cherokee in the Trail of Tears) and tribes of the southern plains such as the Cheyenne, Arapaho and Comanche moved there in the later 1800s. It later became the state of Oklahoma.

Carlisle Indian School: Most famous of the many boarding schools for young Native Americans. These schools were meant to Americanize children by teaching them English and how to participate in White society.



TREATIES & LAWS

First Treaty of Fort Laramie: 1851 agreement between the Federal Government and the tribes of the Great Plains. It set up the reservation system by establishing borders around tribal lands. In return, the government agreed to pay the tribes \$50,000/year.

Second Treaty of Fort Laramie: 1868 treaty between the federal government and Sioux in which they agreed to move to the Black Hills area of South Dakota. The treaty was later broken when gold was discovered in the Black Hills.

Treaty of Medicine Lodge: 1867 collection of agreements between the federal government and the tribes of the southern Great Plains that moved them to reservations in exchange for government payouts.

Dawes Act: 1887 law that divided Native American reservations into individually owned plots of land. It was part of the process of assimilation of Native Americans into White culture and accelerated the destruction of traditional native ways of life.



PEOPLE AND GROUPS

Sioux: Group of related Native American tribes who lived in and around the area that is now North and South Dakota. They mounted some of the last and most fierce resistance to White expansion and the reservation system.

Sitting Bull: Sioux leader during the Indian Wars of the late-1800s. Along with Crazy Horse, he was one of the principle leaders at the Battle of Little Bighorn.

Crazy Horse: Sioux leader during the Indian Wars of the late-1800s. Along with Sitting Bull, he was one of the principle leaders at the Battle of Little Bighorn.

George Custer: Youngest general during the Civil War. He was renowned for his daring cavalry attacks and pursuit of Native Americans in the 1870s. He misjudged the size of the Sioux force at Little Bighorn and led his troops into total destruction in 1876.

Chief Joseph: Leader of the Nez Perce in the late-1800s. He led his tribe in a failed attempt to escape across the border into Canada where he believed they would have a better chance of being allowed to continue their traditional way of life. His famous surrender message includes the lines, "My heart is sick and sad" and "I will fight no more forever."



KEY CONCEPTS

Ghost Dance: Religious movement that swept Native American communities in the late-1800s. Led by Wovoka, it promised that if tribes who participated in a special dance, the Whites would disappear and a savior, ancestors and buffalo would return. Whites feared it was a sign up a coming uprising and responded with violence, especially at Wounded Knee.

Americanization: Process of assimilating Native Americans into White society. Well-meaning White leaders believed this would help Native Americans become self-sufficient and opened Indian schools, but it had many negative long-term consequences. The policy was not abandoned until the 1930s.



EVENTS

Sand Creek Massacre: 1864 attack on a Cheyenne village in Colorado by troops under the command of John Chivington. They murdered approximately 100 people, including women and children. Although the army official condemned his actions, the raid served as a model for later attacks and Native American tribes remembered it as a reason not to trust Whites.

Battle of Little Bighorn: 1876 battle between the Sioux nations under the command of Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse and the 7th Cavalry under the command of George Custer. It was a rare victory for the Native Americans.

Massacre at Wounded Knee: Last of the violent conflicts between government troops and Native Americans at the end of the 1800s. In December, 1890, the army massacred between 150 and 300 Lakota Sioux who had participated in the Ghost Dance.



ANIMALS

Bison/Buffalo: Large land animal that roamed the Great Plains in massive herds and provided the basis for the nomadic lifestyle of the tribes of the plains. They were nearly driven to extinction by Whites who saw their destruction as synonymous with destruction of Native American culture.

Q u e s t i o n S e v e n

Was the SPREAD of the
UNITED STATES
across the continent

D e s t i n y
o r D e s i g n ?

White culture spread out from the Atlantic to the Pacific, slowly at first, and then in a great rush in the second half of the 1800s. Everywhere White settlers went, Native American's resisted the loss of their territory, but, to use a sports metaphor, there were never any successful goal line stands. Certainly, there were moments of successful resistance, Little Big Horn being the most notable. But they never made a difference in the final outcome.

Was this destiny? Was it a foregone conclusion that once Europeans had established themselves at Plymouth and Jamestown that these tiny settlements would eventually lead to a nation that would overrun an entire continent worth of Native cultures?

Or, alternatively, was it design? Was the westward expansion of White culture a series of many conscious decisions to be conquerors, some big like the Louisiana Purchase or the declaration of war against Mexico, and many small, such as the decision of a single family to cross the plains on wagon train.

What do you think? Was the spread of the United States from sea to shining sea fated to happen, or a choice that could have been made differently?



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