

WESTWARD EXPANSION

In the Beginning...

In 1607, members of the Virginia Company set up the first permanent English settlement in the New World, called Jamestown. This was the beginning of a great British empire in North America. The Thirteen Colonies were nestled snugly between the eastern seaboard and the Appalachian Mountains, stretching from Georgia to Maine (which was then part of Massachusetts). The English were not the only empire in North America, and soon were at war with the French over the Ohio River Valley. Upon their victory in the French and Indian War, Great Britain claimed all of France's former territory, expanding all the way to the Mississippi River. However, under the Proclamation of 1763, American colonists were prevented from moving onto the new land out of fear that it would incite Indian attacks. This infuriated the colonists, and paired with rising taxes, misrepresentation, and philosophical differences, the American Revolution broke out. With the Treaty of Paris, Great Britain ceded its North American holdings to the United States.

In 1803, President Thomas Jefferson purchased the territory of Louisiana from the French government for \$15 million. The Louisiana Purchase stretched from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains and from Canada to New Orleans, and it doubled the size of the United States. To Jefferson, westward expansion was the key to the nation's health: He believed that a republic depended on an independent, virtuous citizenry for its survival, and that independence and virtue went hand in hand with land ownership, especially the ownership of small farms. In order to provide enough land to sustain this ideal population of virtuous yeomen, the United States would have to continue to expand.

Florida had been a tense situation for years. The colony of Georgia had originally served as a buffer state between Catholic Spanish Florida, and the wealthy, Protestant colony of South Carolina. But religious differences were not the only problem. Native American tribes had often raided the border and attacked white villages, supposedly under direction from the Spanish. Southern slaves also would escape their plantations and run to freedom in the Spanish colony. In 1819, General Andrew Jackson was sent to quell the escapes and raids by marching his troops to guard the border. Without permission from President Monroe, he marched across the border (an act of war), and invaded Spanish forts. In order to avoid a full-blown war, Spain ceded the territory to the United States, on the condition that the United States pay up to five million dollars to cover the claims made by American citizens against Spain.

Manifest Destiny

By 1840, nearly 7 million Americans--40 percent of the nation's population--lived in the trans-Appalachian West. Most of these people had left their homes in the East in search of economic opportunity. Like Thomas Jefferson, many of these pioneers associated westward migration, land ownership and farming with freedom. In Europe, large numbers of factory workers formed a dependent and seemingly permanent working class; by contrast, in the United States, the western frontier offered the possibility of independence and upward mobility for all.

In 1845, a journalist named John O'Sullivan put a name to the idea that helped pull many pioneers toward the western frontier. Westward migration was an essential part of Americans' "manifest destiny;" to carry the "great experiment of liberty" to the edge of the continent: to "overspread and to possess the whole of the [land] which Providence has given us," O'Sullivan wrote. The survival of American freedom depended on it.

Westward Expansion and Slavery

Meanwhile, the question of whether or not slavery would be allowed in the new western states shadowed every conversation about the frontier. In 1820, the Missouri Compromise had attempted to resolve this question: It had admitted Missouri to the union as a slave state and Maine as a free state, preserving the fragile balance in Congress. More important, it had stipulated that in the future, slavery would be prohibited north of the southern boundary of Missouri (the 36°30' parallel) in the rest of the Louisiana Purchase.

However, the Missouri Compromise did not apply to new territories that were not part of the Louisiana Purchase, and so the issue of slavery continued to fester as the nation expanded. The Southern economy grew increasingly dependent on "King Cotton" and the system of forced labor that sustained it. Meanwhile, more and more Northerners came to believe that the expansion of slavery impinged upon their own liberty, both as citizens--the pro-slavery majority in Congress did not seem to represent their interests--and as yeoman farmers. They did not necessarily object to slavery itself, but they resented the way its expansion seemed to interfere with their own economic opportunity.

Westward Expansion and the Mexican War

Despite this sectional conflict, Americans kept on migrating West in the years after the Missouri Compromise was adopted. Thousands of people crossed the Rockies to the Oregon Territory, which belonged to Great Britain, and thousands more moved into

the Mexican territories of California, New Mexico and Texas. In 1837, American settlers in Texas joined with their Tejano neighbors (Texans of Spanish origin) and won independence from Mexico. They petitioned to join the United States as a slave state.

This promised to upset the careful balance that the Missouri Compromise had achieved, and the annexation of Texas and other Mexican territories did not become a political priority until the enthusiastically expansionist cotton planter James K. Polk was elected to the presidency in 1844. Thanks to the maneuvering of Polk and his allies, Texas joined the union as a slave state in February 1846; in June, after negotiations with Great Britain, Oregon joined as a free state.

That same month, Polk declared war against Mexico in an effort to obtain California, claiming (falsely) that the Mexican army had “invaded our territory and shed American blood on American soil.” The war proved to be relatively unpopular, in part because many Northerners objected to what they saw as a war to expand the “slaveocracy.” In 1846, Pennsylvania Congressman David Wilmot attached a proviso to a war-appropriations bill declaring that slavery should not be permitted in any part of the Mexican territory that the U.S. might acquire. Wilmot’s measure failed to pass, but it made explicit once again the sectional conflict that haunted the process of westward expansion.

Westward Expansion and the Compromise of 1850

In 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo ended the Mexican War and added more than 1 million square miles, an area larger than the Louisiana Purchase, to the United States. The acquisition of this land re-opened the question that the Missouri Compromise had ostensibly settled: What would be the status of slavery in new American territories? After two years of increasingly volatile debate over the issue, Kentucky Senator Henry Clay proposed another compromise. It had four parts: first, California would enter the Union as a free state; second, the status of slavery in the rest of the Mexican territory would be decided by the people who lived there; third, the slave trade (but not slavery) would be abolished in Washington, D.C.; and fourth, a new Fugitive Slave Act would enable Southerners to reclaim runaway slaves who had escaped to Northern states where slavery was not allowed.

Bleeding Kansas

But the larger question remained unanswered. In 1854, Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas proposed that two new states, Kansas and Nebraska, be established in the Louisiana Purchase west of Iowa and Missouri. According to the terms of the Missouri Compromise, both new states would prohibit slavery because both were north of the 36°30’ parallel. However, since no Southern legislator would approve a plan that would give more power to “free-soil” Northerners, Douglas came up with a middle ground that he called “popular sovereignty”: letting the settlers of the territories decide for themselves whether their states would be slave or free.

Northerners were outraged: Douglas, in their view, had caved to the demands of the “slaveocracy” at their expense. The battle for Kansas and Nebraska became a battle for the soul of the nation. Emigrants from Northern and Southern states tried to influence the vote. For example, thousands of Missourians flooded into Kansas in 1854 and 1855 to vote (fraudulently) in favor of slavery. “Free-soil” settlers established a rival government, and soon Kansas spiraled into civil war. Hundreds of people died in the fighting that ensued, known as “Bleeding Kansas.” A decade later, the civil war in Kansas over the expansion of slavery was followed by a national civil war over the same issue.

Fulfilling Destiny

In the years following the Civil War, the United States acquired a new territory, Alaska. Secretary of State William H. Seward, purchased 586,412 square miles of the arctic territory from Russia for \$7.2 million. Many Republican members of Congress scoffed at what they referred to as “Seward’s Folly,” seeing Alaska as a useless, uninhabitable wasteland. For nearly thirty years, the critics decried the purchase, that is, until gold was discovered in the Yukon, setting off a rush of settlers to the territory.

The last territories to be added to the American map were acquired in less than ideal circumstances. American businessmen had set up trade posts on the islands of Hawaii as early as the 1790s. By the turn of the twentieth century they had tired of paying high export prices to sell their goods in America. They created a Committee of Safety to safeguard their business interests and convinced the U.S. government to send in the military to protect them from Hawaiian insurrection. They placed Queen Liliuokalani under house arrest and took control of the island chain. Hawaii was annexed by the United States in 1900, and as a U.S. territory saw population expansion and the establishment of a plantation system for growing sugar cane and pineapples.

Only about a year later, the U.S. found itself in a war with Spain over the treatment of its colony, Cuba. Cuba had been a Spanish colony for years, and was seeking independence. Recognizing similarities from the fight for American independence, the U.S. decided to help out. It was a swift victory against the Spanish, and the U.S. gained control of all the Spanish colonies, including Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. The American government had promised Cuba its independence before the war broke out (though they were offered American statehood), but maintained control over the other provinces. The Philippines would gain independence after World War II, while Guam and Puerto Rico remain U.S. territories.

WESTWARD EXPANSION

In the Beginning...

1. What was the first permanent English colony and when was it founded? _____
2. What was the Western border of the original thirteen colonies? _____
3. Where was the new border of the British colonies after the French and Indian War? _____
4. How did the Louisiana Purchase change the physical image of the United States? _____

5. Buying the Louisiana Territory went against Thomas Jefferson's strict constructionist views; why did he feel westward expansion was necessary? _____

6. What were the problems surrounding Florida? _____

7. Who was sent to deal with the matter? _____
8. How did the United States Gain control of Florida? _____

Manifest Destiny

9. What did the western frontier offer to Americans that wasn't possible in Europe? _____

10. What is Manifest Destiny? _____

Westward Expansion and Slavery

11. What were the elements of the Missouri Compromise? _____

12. Where was the dividing line for slavery located? _____
13. How didn't the Missouri Compromise solve the slavery issue completely? _____

14. What were some of the reasons northerners were against the expansion of slavery? _____

Westward Expansion and the Mexican War

15. Which country originally held control of Texas? _____
16. Why was the annexation of Texas a dangerous issue? _____

17. Who did the U.S. gain the Oregon Territory from? _____

18. What was Wilmot's Proviso? _____

Westward Expansion and the Compromise of 1850

19. What was the name of the Treaty that ended the Mexican War? _____

20. What were the four elements of Senator Henry Clay's compromise?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Bleeding Kansas

21. What new states were proposed by Senator Stephen A. Douglas? _____

22. Why wouldn't they have been approved by Southern legislators? _____

23. What was "popular sovereignty?" _____

24. How did Missourians try to influence the vote in Kansas (giving them the nickname of "border ruffians")? _____

25. What gave Kansas its nickname of "Bleeding Kansas?" _____

Fulfilling Destiny

26. Why was the Alaska Purchase known as "Seward's Folly?" _____

27. How were critics of Seward proved wrong? _____

28. Who sought to overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy? _____

29. How was control over Hawaii achieved? _____

30. How did the U.S. attain control over Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines? _____

31. Why does the U.S. no longer control Cuba? _____

32. When did the Philippines gain independence? _____