

Chapter 13 Outline - The Contested West, 1815–1860

- I. Introduction

Most whites and free blacks who were part of the westward movement of the Americans during the first half of the nineteenth century believed that the West offered better opportunities for themselves and their families. Many white northerners wanted the West to remain free of slavery, while many white southerners believed it was their right to own slaves in the region. Eventually, it became difficult to disentangle the issues of westward expansion and slavery.

- II. The West in the American Imagination

- A. Defining the West

For most white Americans, the West represented the future and was a place where they could seek economic and social betterment for themselves and their families. Slaves were forced by their masters to move West. The same was true for eastern Indians removed from their homes by the Indian Removal Act.

- B. Frontier Literature

Daniel Boone was the archetypal frontiersman in the minds of white Americans. James Fenimore Cooper's "Leatherstocking Tales" helped mythologize the West. Western adventure stories turned Davy Crockett into a mythical hero.

- C. Western Art

The work of many artists often represented an idealistic depiction of the West. The lithographs and engravings of the West's plants, animals, and people done by Samuel Seymour and Titian Ramsay Peale, who were part of the Long Expedition, were printed in reports of the West published by Congress.

George Catlin is an example of one artist who painted the West with a

moral in mind.

- D. Countering the Myths

Rebecca Burlend's autobiographical account, *A True Picture of Emigration*, of her experience as an English immigrant who settled in Illinois sought to present a realistic description of what awaited western settlers.

- III. Expansion and Resistance in the Trans-Appalachian West

- A. Deciding Where to Move

Many western migrants often traveled with people they knew and settled in communities where they had relatives or friends.

For many western migrants, the decision of where to move depended on the status of slavery and the availability of transportation, land, and economic opportunity.

- B. Indian Removal and Resistance

In the Midwest and Southwest, the expansion of white American settlement depended on the removal of Indians.

- C. Black Hawk War

The attempt by Black Hawk and his people to return to their ancestral lands led to the Black Hawk War. Many of Black Hawk's people were slaughtered. The capture of Black Hawk ended militant Indian uprisings in the Old Northwest.

- D. Selling the West

Land speculators, steamboat companies, and manufacturers of farming implements promoted the Midwest as peaceful and as a land of opportunity.

Labor-saving devices such as the McCormick reaper and the steel plow made the West more appealing.

- E. Clearing the Land

Most white western migrants were farmers. Clearing the land was an arduous task.

Single young men were attracted to the West by the lumbering and mining industries.

- IV. The Federal Government and Westward Expansion

- A. The Fur Trade

Fur trappers were among the first white Americans to settle in the trans-Appalachian West.

- B. Transcontinental Exploration

Many of the early western explorers were attempting to find quicker and safer routes for the transportation of furs and other goods. Such explorers helped chart the Santa Fe Trail and re-discovered the South Pass.

The Corps of Discovery was only the first of many federally sponsored expeditions to chart the trans-Mississippi West.

- C. A Military Presence

The army helped ready the West for settlement, and 90 percent of the U.S. military was stationed west of the Mississippi River by the 1850s.

- D. Public Lands

The federal government controlled large tracts of land in the West. The General Land Office oversaw the distribution of those lands

controlled by the federal government. Its policies favored speculators over individuals.

Congress did not pass a general preemption bill until 1841 with the passage of the Log Cabin Bill. The right of preemption was further extended by the Homestead Act of 1862.

- V. The Southwestern Borderlands

- A. Southwestern Slavery

Slavery had existed in the Southwest for centuries by the time white Americans became interested in the northern reaches of Mexico.

Southwestern slavery was built on racial mixing, which was denounced by most white Americans.

- B. The New Mexican Frontier

Most of the peoples of New Mexico engaged in irrigated agriculture.

The Santa Fe Trail would cause a commercial explosion in New Mexico.

- C. The Texas Frontier

When Mexico gained its independence in 1821, indigenous Indians were the dominant group in Texas

- D. The Comanche Empire

As Anglos moved west, the pressure on the Comanche of the southwest mounted. Natives clashed not only with whites but with new Native American arrivals to the region. The U.S. formed a treaty with the Comanche in 1835 that allowed further immigration in exchange for trade opportunities.

- E. American *Empresarios*

American began settling in Texas under the *empresario* system in the 1820s.

Stephen Austin persuaded the Mexican government to honor the land grant of some 200,000 acres originally given to his father. Despite the promise by Austin of no slaves, some 400 black “contract laborers” were brought into Texas.

To attract more settlers, the Mexican government passed the Colonization Law in 1824.

- F. Texas Politics

Calls for an independent Texas began in 1826. Attempts by the Mexican government to weaken the American presence in Mexico failed.

- G. The Lone Star Republic

Through armed rebellion, Texas won its independence from Mexico and declared itself the Lone Star Republic in 1836.

- H. Wartime Losses and Profits

The U.S. went to war with Mexico in 1846. Many civilians suffered property destruction and person atrocities as a result. Others, however, profited by selling provisions to the military. Gambling and prostitution were also profitable.

- VI. Cultural Frontiers in the Far West

- A. Western Missionaries

Catholic missionaries had a strong presence in the Far West.

In the Pacific Northwest, Catholic and Protestant missionaries

competed for the soul of Indians.

The Whitmans undertook missionary work among the Cayuse Indians. The Spaldings undertook similar work among the Nez Perce.

- B. Mormons

Under the leadership of Brigham Young, Mormons sought sanctuary in the Great Salt Lake Valley in 1847.

National animosity toward Mormons increased when they sanctioned polygamy in 1852.

In the Mountain Meadows Massacre of 1857, Mormons and Paiute Indians attacked a wagon train of non-Mormons.

- C. Oregon and California Trails

The encounters that most western migrants had with Indians were peaceful.

Settlers often had to worry about the theft of their livestock. One such incident resulted in the Grattan Massacre, which laid the groundwork for some 20 years of warfare between the Lakota and the U.S. Army.

- D. Indian Treaties

The Indian office attempted to negotiate treaties with the goal of keeping Indians from interfering with western migration and commerce.

- E. Ecological Consequences of Cultural Conflict

Disease took far more lives along western trails than did armed conflict.

Many Native Americans blamed western migrants for the disappearance of the buffalo.

Prairie fires were a frequent problem.

- F. Gold Rush

Tens of thousands of “Forty-Niners” poured into California after the discovery of gold in 1848.

Most of the Forty-Niners did not find enough gold to pay their expenses, and many eventually took jobs with mining companies.

The arrival of the Forty-Niners led to an agricultural boom in California.

- G. Mining Settlements

There was a commercial and industrial boom in mining areas as merchants attempted to supply, feed, and clothe the new settlers.

As new inhabitants poured into the region, the Indian population experienced devastation. “An Act for the Government and Protection of Indians,” passed by the California legislature, legalized the enslavement of Indians.

- VII. The Politics of Territorial Expansion

- A. Manifest Destiny

Manifest Destiny was the label given to the belief that American expansion westward and southward was inevitable, just, and divinely ordained. The desire for territorial expansion was furthered by the continuing American hunger for land, national pride, racism, and the desire to secure the nation from external threats.

- B. Fifty-Four Forty Or Fight

Expansionists demanded the entire Oregon Country for the United

States, up to the northernmost border of 54°40'.

- C. Polk and the Election of 1844

Democrat James K. Polk won election over Henry Clay on a platform call for the occupation of the entire Oregon territory and the annexation of Texas.

- D. Annexation of Texas

Texas was annexed by joint resolution of Congress in 1845.