

Westward Expansion

KIDS
DISCOVER



FOR SALE:
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Border
Disorder

TRAILS
BEFORE
RAILS

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The United States in 1815

Your family has seen so many changes in the year 1815, you can hardly count them. You've traveled a long way by ship to the United States, and now you're headed west in a covered wagon, with everything you need to start a new farm. One day, as the wagon rumbles along, you play tag with your little brother. Through the trees, you see some American Indian kids running. They're playing tag, too! You wonder what else you have in common. You don't realize that, like yours, their lives are changing, too.

In the early 1800s, American Indians saw waves of pioneers traveling across the land. Many of the settlers were recent immigrants from Britain and other parts of Europe. They had heard explorers' reports of wide-open spaces ready for taking and wanted some for themselves. These pioneers had come from different places. But more and more, they thought of themselves as Americans. Many had even begun to believe Americans were meant to own all the land between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans.

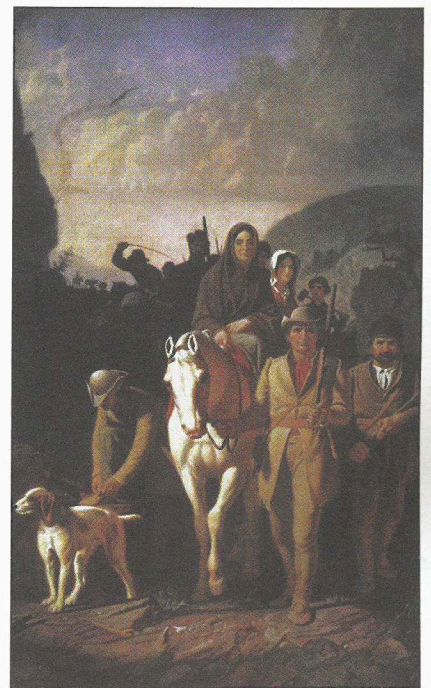


▲ **EARLY IMMIGRANTS** in the U.S. included many groups from Britain and other parts of Europe. The Scots-Irish, also called Ulster Scots, came

from what is now Northern Ireland. Many settled in frontier areas of Pennsylvania and Virginia, beyond communities that already existed.

German farmers came to the new republic in the early 1800s. They often headed west and bought land to start new farms.

► **ONE WAY FOR** early settlers to go west was through the Cumberland Gap, an opening in the mountains where present-day Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia meet. American Indians used this pass long before Daniel Boone showed up. He was one of the first pioneers to travel through it. Later he was hired to build the Wilderness Road. It became the main path from the East to Kentucky.

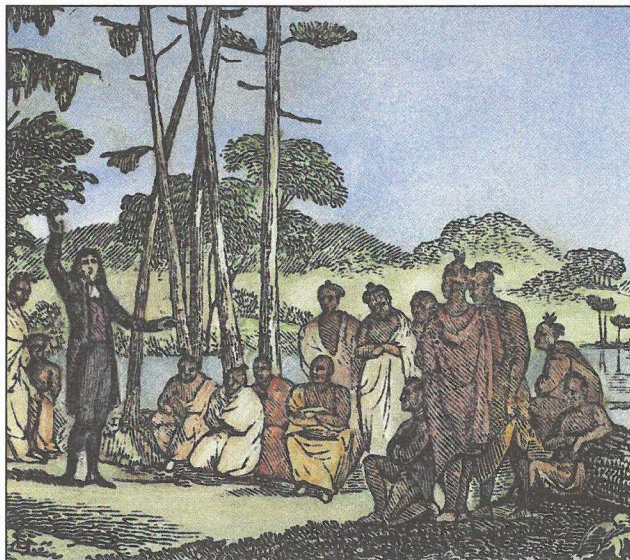




▲ **IN 1803**, President Thomas Jefferson made the Louisiana Purchase, doubling the size of the United States. This huge territory stretched from the city of New Orleans to Canada, and from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark explored these lands. Other explorers, such as Zebulon Pike and John C. Frémont, also mapped the territory. Reports of their discoveries made people want to go west.

► **SHAWNEE INDIAN** chief Tecumseh talked other American Indian tribes into joining forces to stop the settlers from pushing them off their land. The British in Canada helped him. This alliance was one reason the United States and Britain

fought the War of 1812. After the war, many in the U.S. felt like winners. People began seeing themselves as Americans rather than, say, New Yorkers or Virginians.



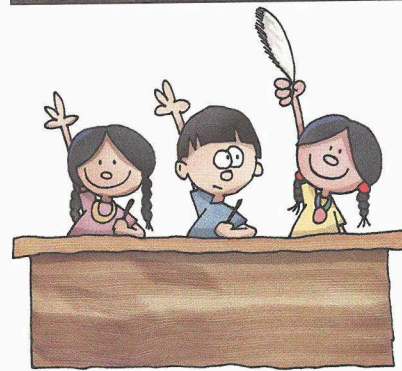
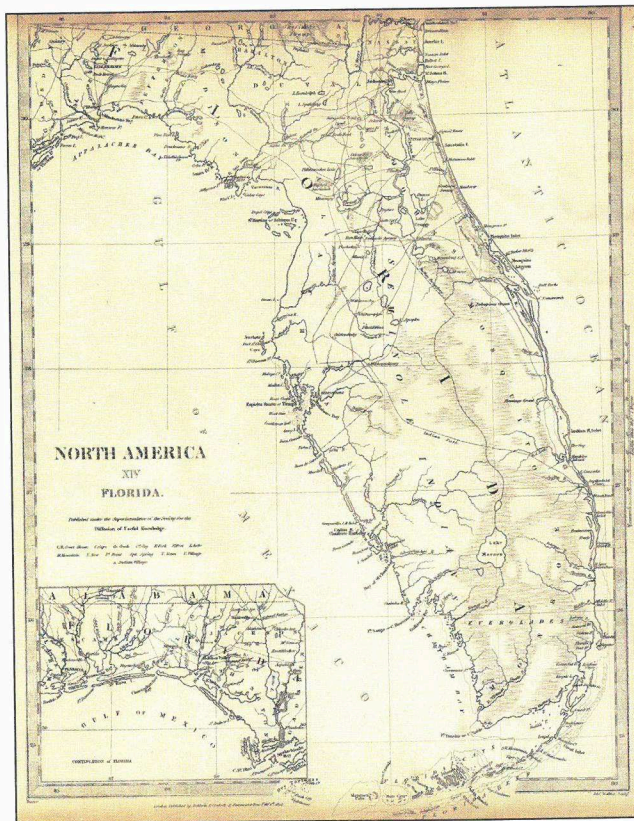
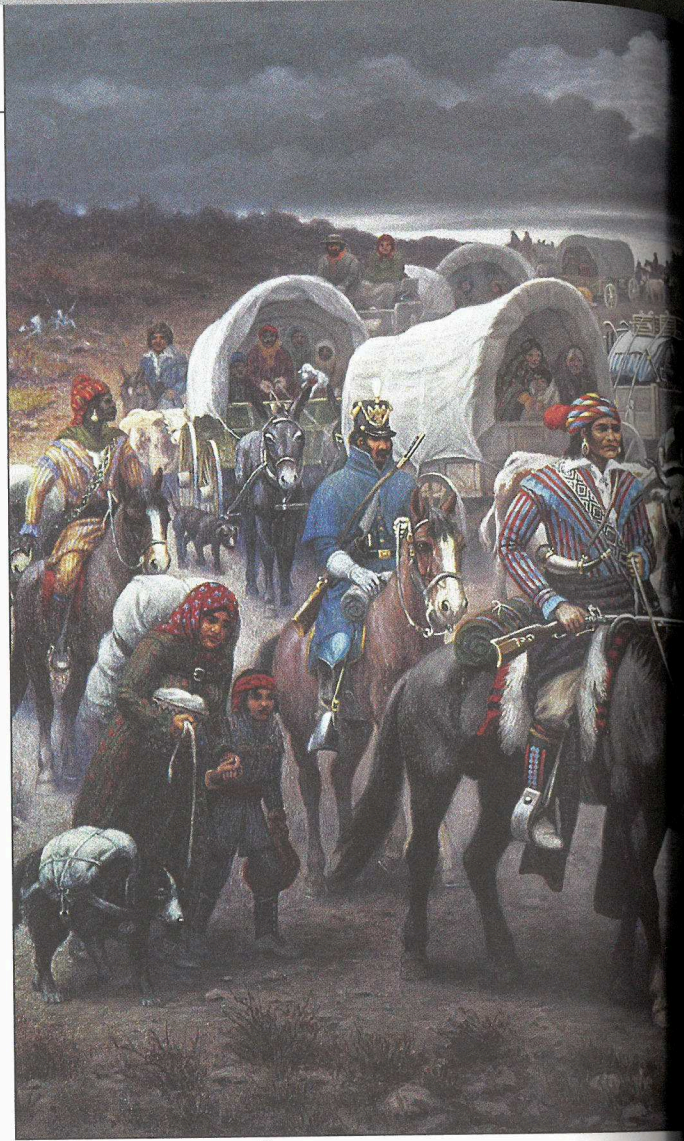
◀ **EARLY ON**, THE U.S. government said it wanted to respect American Indians. But it didn't do a very good job of that. Tribes would be sent to places settlers didn't want, only to be moved again when their new homes were found to contain something valuable, like gold. By 1815, many Americans thought they were destined

to take over western lands. This idea had started among the early English colonists.

The Indian Removal Act

The elders of your Cherokee tribe are holding a big meeting, and everyone's in a very serious mood. Listening outside, you and your best friend hear your father say, "The Americans are going to make us go west." But your people already have homes here, in the place the Americans call Georgia. Some of your friends even learn English in their schools! Why would they want you to leave?

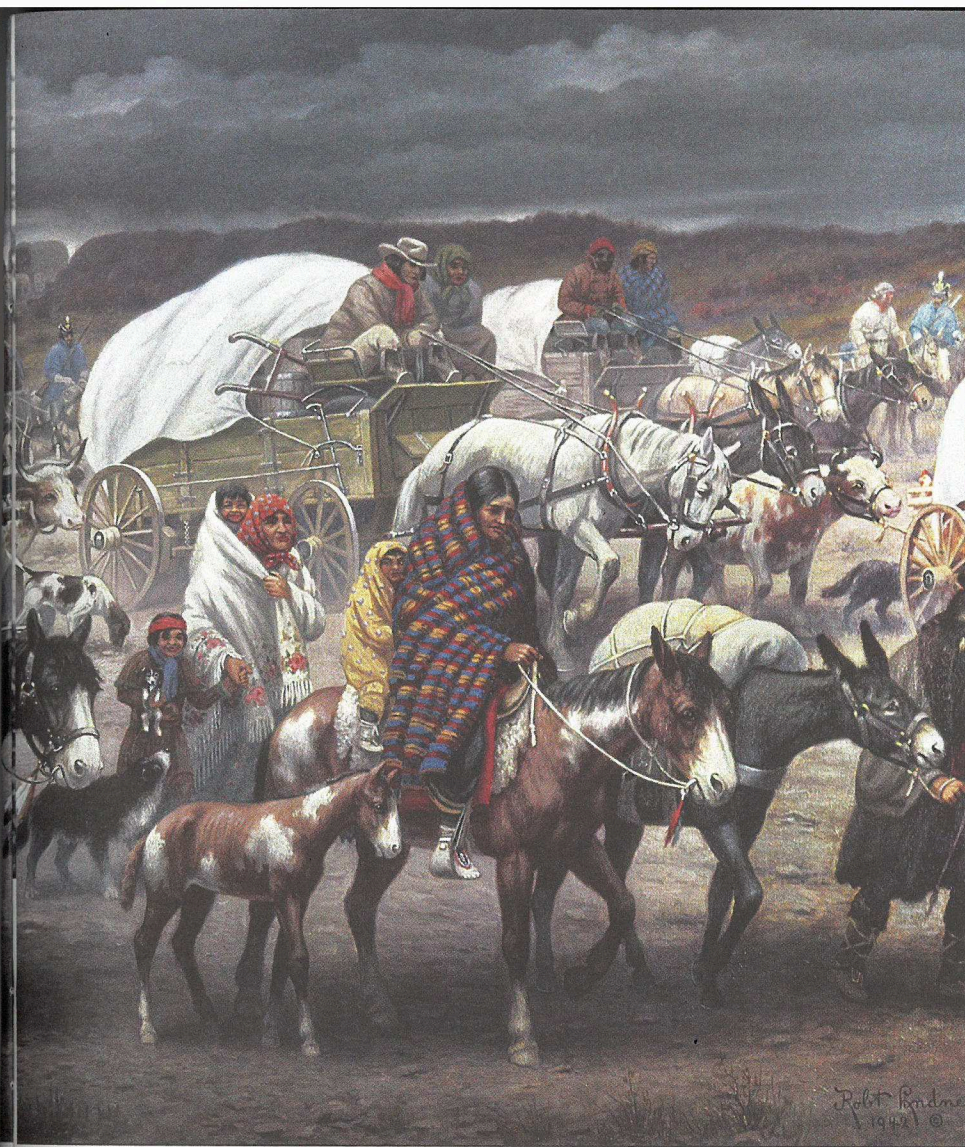
The U.S. government had promised to respect American Indians' rights, but as more settlers moved to land west of the Appalachians, many didn't like being around native people. In 1830, President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act, a law that broke many earlier treaties. It said Indians east of the Mississippi River had to trade their land for land west of the river. This area, known as "Indian Territory," took up most of what is now Oklahoma. What if tribes refused? Then the government forced them to leave.



◀ **BY THE LATE** 1700s, many Seminole Indians lived in the swampy Everglades of Spanish Florida. They helped people who had escaped slavery, and many American settlers didn't like that. This tension led to the Seminole Wars. The U.S.

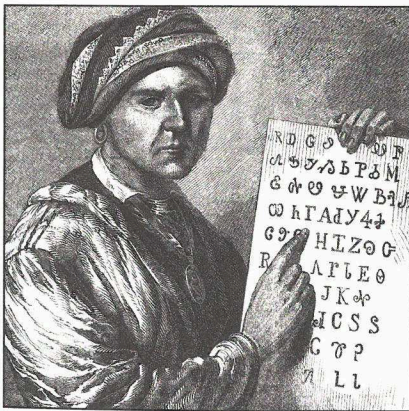
created a Seminole reservation, or land set aside for only American Indians. But later, the government made them move west again. After the U.S. put Seminole chief Osceola into prison, where he died, many Seminoles moved west.

◀ **IN THE EARLY** 1800s, the Cherokee lived on land that covered a big chunk of the South, including North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and Alabama. The Cherokee people were interested in how Americans lived. They even started to assimilate, or do things the way Americans did them. Some Cherokee kids went to American schools and learned English.



▲ **AFTER GOLD WAS** found in Cherokee Nation territory, the Georgia government gave the land to American settlers. Cherokee chief John Ross (above) argued for his people before the Supreme Court. And in 1832, Chief Justice

John Marshall said Georgia was wrong. But President Jackson didn't agree, even though it was his job to support the decision. Instead he said, "John Marshall has made his decision, now let him enforce it."

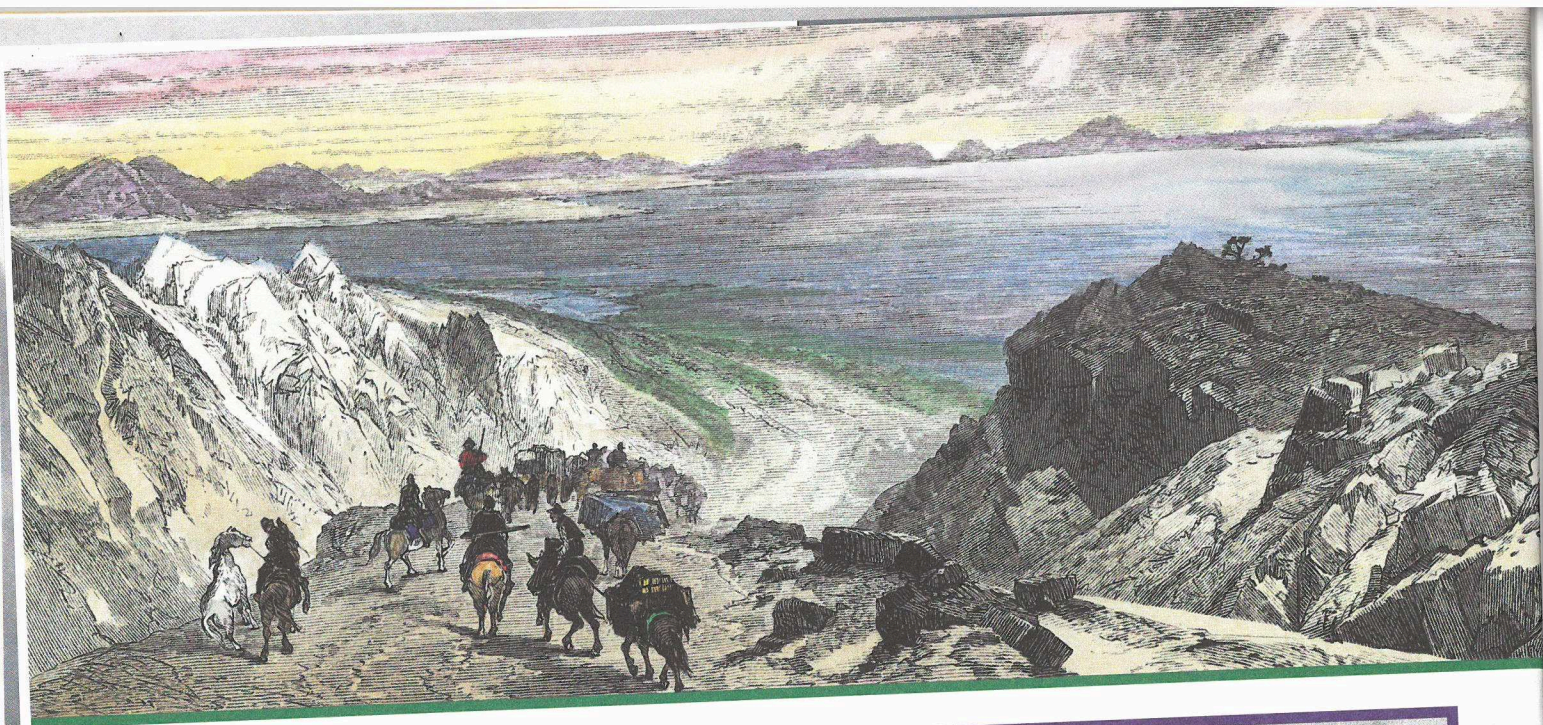


▲ **THE CHEROKEE** were interested in the American way of life but wanted to keep their culture alive. Cherokee leader Sequoyah thought there was power in written language. He thought that if his people had one, like the Americans did, they

could collect more knowledge, which would help them stay independent. By 1821, he had invented a Cherokee alphabet, and in 1827, his people used it to write a constitution. The Cherokee Nation would elect leaders, as the U.S. did.



◀ **IN 1838,** President Martin Van Buren sent army troops to force the Cherokee to walk about 800 miles to the Indian Territory. Bad weather and hunger killed many of them. The path was called "the place where they cried." It was later known as the Trail of Tears. Other Indian groups, including the Chickasaw and Creek, were also forced off their lands. They, too, died by the thousands on the Trail of Tears.



Trails West

It's been a long trip over bumpy land and rushing rivers, but your family has finally come to Independence, Missouri! Many pioneers are gathering in this busy town, buying supplies for their journey west. At first your folks planned to follow the Oregon Trail, which would take you almost to the Pacific Ocean. But they might take the Santa Fe Trail instead. It also goes west but heads south through warmer territory. Which path would you like best?

How did settlers find their way across plains, through mountains, and over rivers? How did they deal with hardships along the way? Some got help from pathfinders, or people who mapped paths through unfamiliar territory.

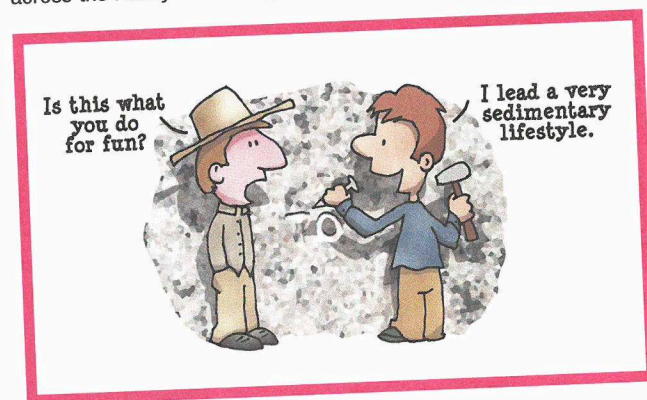
Many pathfinders were early western settlers who had made a living selling furs. As more people moved in, trappers found fewer wild animals to hunt. But they knew more about the West than most pioneers did. They could help settlers when the trail got rough or the weather was bad. Guiding travelers to choice land became a new way to make a living.



▲ In 1826, fur trader Jedediah Smith became one of the first Americans to enter California from the east. Then he found the South Pass across the Rocky

Mountains. That became part of a path to the Oregon Country, an area covering parts of modern Canada, Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Oregon. Later,

explorer John C. Frémont mapped this path. It became known as the Oregon Trail. His reports sparked "Oregon fever" across the country.



▲ **THE OREGON TRAIL** stretched about 2,000 miles, from Independence to the Willamette River Valley. Pioneers faced such dangers as raging rivers, hot deserts, and rough

mountains. But most kept going. Some even left messages for the people behind them. One friendly landmark was Independence Rock, in what is now Wyoming,

where many pioneers carved their names. Some settlers reached part of what is now Idaho, and headed southwest on what became known as the California Trail.

► **FROM INDEPENDENCE,** the Santa Fe Trail headed south toward New Mexico. It was opened in 1821 by trader William Becknell. The wide

path let merchant wagons carrying fur and silver travel in two side-by-side columns. When attacked, they quickly formed a circle. The Santa Fe Trail became the

Old Spanish Trail, which went all the way to Los Angeles in present-day California. The Gila (HEE-luh) Trail, another way into California, was a hard desert road.

◀ **MORMONS** belonged to a religion called the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Their faith was not always welcomed in the eastern U.S. So, many headed west to build their own communities. Starting in 1846, a lot of Mormons took the same route to the same



place: the Great Salt Lake in what is now Utah. This path became known as the Mormon Trail.

▲ **MARY ROCKWOOD POWERS** traveled on the Oregon Trail to Sacramento, California. She made the trip with her husband and



three children. Her letters home were collected in the book *A Woman's Overland Journey to California*. Sometimes she

wrote about the awful weather they faced. One entry says she spent "two hours and a half with the ice water running

onto me, and the hailstones beating upon my head. . . ."

THINK PIECE!



If you were a pioneer, which trail would you pick for your journey to the West? What are the reasons you would take that path?

Trails to the West



Westward Ho!

At last your family is headed west! During the day, you get to walk alongside the oxen as they pull the wagon. Your little brother has to stay inside, because he can't keep up. At night you both have chores, like fetching firewood and water. Your parents

talk excitedly about the Oregon Territory, where a family can claim 640 acres of land for free. More quietly, they speak of the dangers ahead.

Why did people move west? Some were looking for new places to sell goods, some wanted their own land, and others wanted a place to feel at home. Reports from earlier settlers inspired people to make the trip.



► **MOST PEOPLE** in the East didn't accept the Mormon religion, and Mormons were often treated badly. So, leader Brigham Young took his people west. After a 1,000-mile journey,

he chose the Great Salt Lake as a gathering place. By 1847, about 2,000 Mormons had moved to a settlement around the lake. The area soon became known as the Utah Territory.



► **MANY SETTLERS** started their trips west in Independence, Missouri. Pioneers would wait until enough people had gathered to form a wagon train (a group of wagons traveling together). Then they

hired a guide and headed out. They went northwest to Nebraska's Platte River, then followed the river across the Great Plains toward the Rocky Mountains. They crossed the Rockies through the South Pass.

In 1836, Marcus and Narcissa Whitman set up a Christian mission near the Walla Walla Valley. As one of the first American women to cross the South Pass, she wrote letters home describing the beautiful valleys and rich soil in Oregon. Her letters were later published, attracting more settlers.

▼ **WHEN PIONEERS** came to the fast-moving Columbia River, some built big wooden rafts to float their wagons downstream.

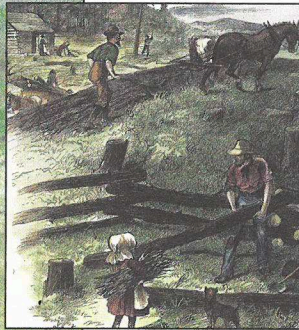
Wagon trains also had to ford, or cross, deep rivers by driving through them. If a wagon tipped over, people could lose everything.

Settlers crossed hot deserts in some places, and icy mountains in others. Sometimes they struggled through terrible storms.

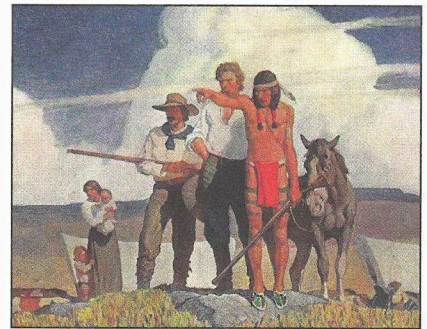


◀ **AT LAST, THE** settlers made it to the end of the Oregon Trail! Pioneers who already lived in the Willamette Valley welcomed them to their new home with food, clothing,

and shelter. Once they were rested, the newcomers claimed their free land. They started building houses and barns and turning the land into farms.



► **THE TRAILS THE** pioneers used had been American Indian footpaths for centuries. Tribes traded with each other along these paths. At first, they traded with settlers, too. But some thought all these new arrivals would make it harder to find animals to



hunt. Settlers didn't always understand Indians or their way of life. Sometimes

Indians attacked wagon trains, and other times settlers attacked Indians.

◀ **AS MORE** settlers moved into American Indian territory, they pushed tribes farther west. Food and other resources became harder to get, and people started fighting over them. For example, the Lakota Sioux battled

other groups over hunting grounds in present-day South Dakota, Nebraska, and Wyoming. In an 1851 treaty, the Lakota and other tribes agreed to stop attacking each other and the settlers. But the peace didn't last long.



Crossing the Plains

How big could a wagon train be? In 1843, Dr. Marcus Whitman led one big group of 1,000 pioneers west on the Oregon Trail from Independence, Missouri. They had more than a hundred wagons, with a herd of 5,000 cattle. That's a lot of people – and a lot of cows!

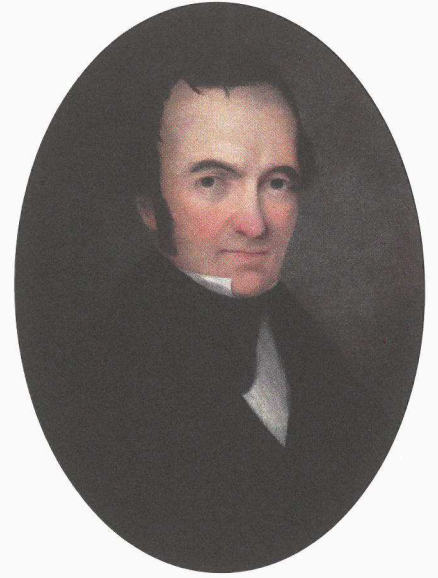




Lone Star State

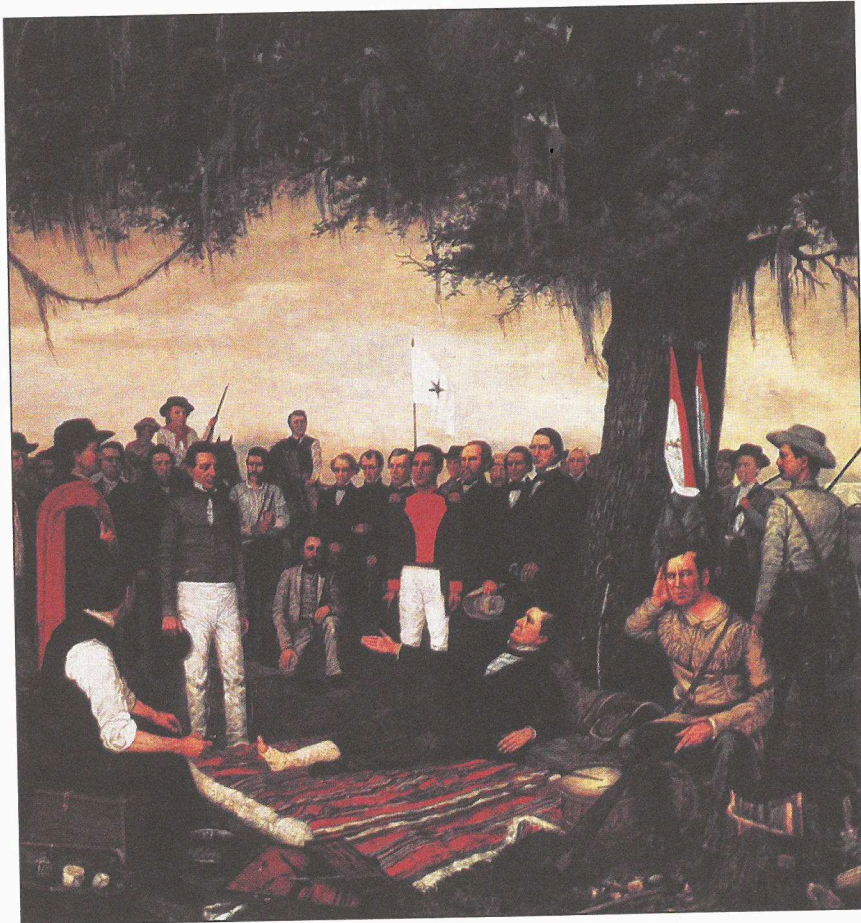
It's been three months since your family moved to Texas, and more and more people are coming into town every day. When a new wagon rolls past your house, you and your sister run after it, eager to see who's inside. Maybe it's a family from Missouri, where you're from. If the travelers are from Mexico, the kids might help you practice your Spanish. You might even meet some French kids, or a family from Switzerland!

Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821. After that, the new Mexican government gained control over a lot of the Southwest, including Texas. Mexico's leaders gave its citizens land in Texas to get them to move there. People from other places were interested in this new frontier, too. By 1830, thousands of Mexicans, Americans, and Europeans had built homes and communities in Texas.



▲ In 1824, Missouri businessman Stephen F. Austin made a contract with the Mexican government to give land grants to about 300 families. They all settled along the Brazos River. This was the first

major colony of English-speaking people in Mexican Texas. Three more contracts in 1825, 1827, and 1828 let him settle 900 more families in the same area. Austin, Texas, is named after him.



▲ THE MEXICAN government didn't want so many Americans coming to Texas. Its new leader, General

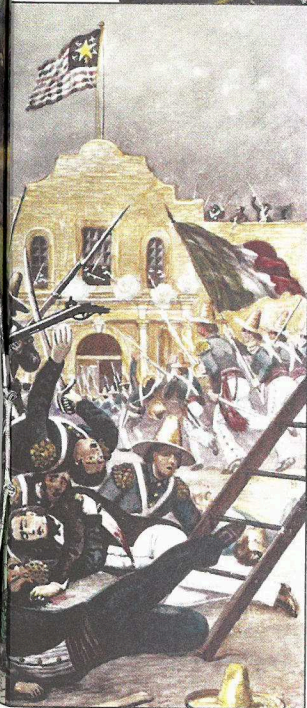
Antonio López de Santa Anna, passed laws to make Texans pay more taxes. These laws made settlers

angry. In 1835, fighting between the settlers and Mexican troops broke out. In 1836, Texas declared

its independence from Mexico. Sam Houston was named the commander of the new nation's army.



◀ **GENERAL SANTA ANNA** wasn't going to just let Texas go. His troops surrounded the San Antonio de Valero Mission, also known as the Alamo. About 189 defenders made a stand there, including famous pioneers James Bowie and Davy Crockett. After 13 days, the general led one last attack, and the Alamo defenders lost. Only a few women, children, and enslaved people survived.



◀ **THE LOSS AT** the Alamo only made Texans more determined to win their freedom. Santa Anna went on to battle Sam Houston's army near the San Jacinto River. On April 21, 1836, Texan forces took the larger

Mexican group by surprise – and defeated it. Houston's men ran into battle yelling, "Remember the Alamo!" During the fighting, Houston's men captured Santa Anna, who later agreed to retreat. Texas was free!

▲ **THE REPUBLIC OF** Texas was an independent nation for nearly ten years. In 1836, Texans voted to join the United States. At first, the U.S. decided

not to annex, or add, Texas. In the 1840s, the U.S. had slave states, which allowed slavery, and free states, which did not. Texas was

a slave state, so people opposed to slavery didn't want it in the U.S. Finally, on December 29, 1845, Texas became the 28th state.



Growth and Conflict

As you sweep up the back room of your dad's shop, you hear him talking with some other men. Many people in your little town think of themselves as Americans, even if the Oregon Country isn't really a state. But some of your father's customers are British, and they say this town will belong

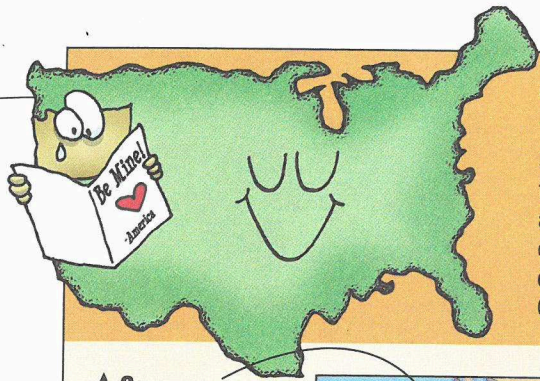
to Britain someday. You wonder what that means. Could you wake up one morning and find yourself suddenly living in a different country? "Don't worry," your mom says later. "The government will figure it out, and one day we will be part of the United States."

Western expansion gave Americans many exciting new ways to make their lives better. But it brought the U.S. government into conflict with Britain and Mexico, which also had claims on western lands. Sometimes there was just a lot of arguing over where borders should go. Other times the arguments led to all-out war.



THINK PIECE!

When the U.S. offered to pay Mexico for land in the Southwest, Mexican leaders said no, and war soon followed. If you were in charge of Mexico then, would you have taken the payment? Would that have kept the war from happening?



The Growth of the United States

IN THE 1840s, the United States and Britain argued over the border of the Oregon Country. President

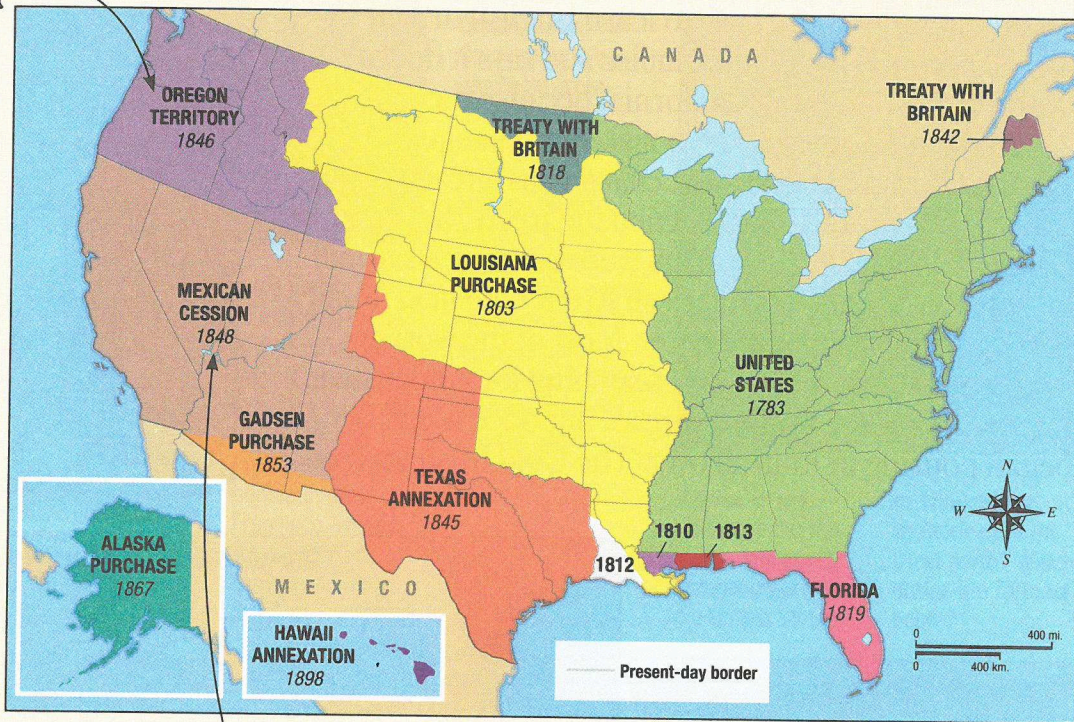
James K. Polk was strongly in favor of manifest destiny. This idea held that the U.S. was meant to control

all the land from coast to coast. President Polk wanted the border to be farther north than the British did.

Finally, in 1846, the nations agreed on where to put the line, and signed the Oregon Treaty.

▲ CONGRESS

created the Oregon Territory in 1848. It included all of the modern states of Oregon, Idaho, and Washington, plus parts of Wyoming and Montana. Soon there was talk of making Oregon a new state. People who lived in the territory agreed that it would not be a slave state. After more discussion about admitting another free state, President James Buchanan made Oregon the 33rd state on February 14, 1859.



▼ THE UNITED STATES

also argued over borders with Mexico. President Polk offered \$30 million for California, New Mexico, and Texas land north of Mexico. But Mexican leaders refused. So Polk sent sev-

eral thousand U.S. troops to the area the countries were arguing about. The Mexican-American War officially began on May 13, 1846, and ended just over a year later, when the U.S. captured Mexico City.

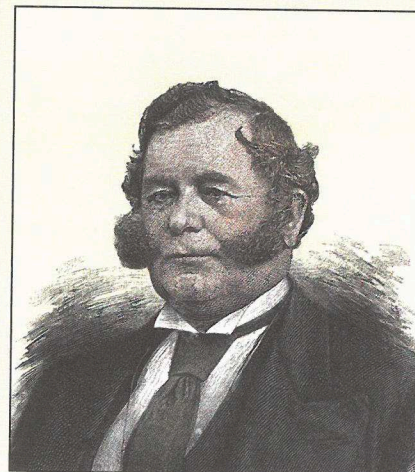
• **MEXICO GAVE THE** U.S. a large area known as the Mexican Cession. A cession, or concession, is something that is given up (like when a sports team concedes a game). This area included all of what are now California, Nevada, and Utah. It also included parts of New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and Wyoming. In return, the United States paid Mexico \$15 million.



▲ **IN 1853, JAMES GADSDEN** was the U.S. minister to Mexico. In a deal known as the Gadsden Purchase, he bought the rest of what became New Mexico and Arizona. It brought the southern continental United States to the size it is now. The Gadsden Purchase also set the border between the United States and Mexico.

▼ **AFTER THE** Mexican-American War, most of the 80,000 Mexicans who stayed in new U.S. territory became American citizens. The land was their home. Their ancestors had lived there since the 1700s. As Mexican-

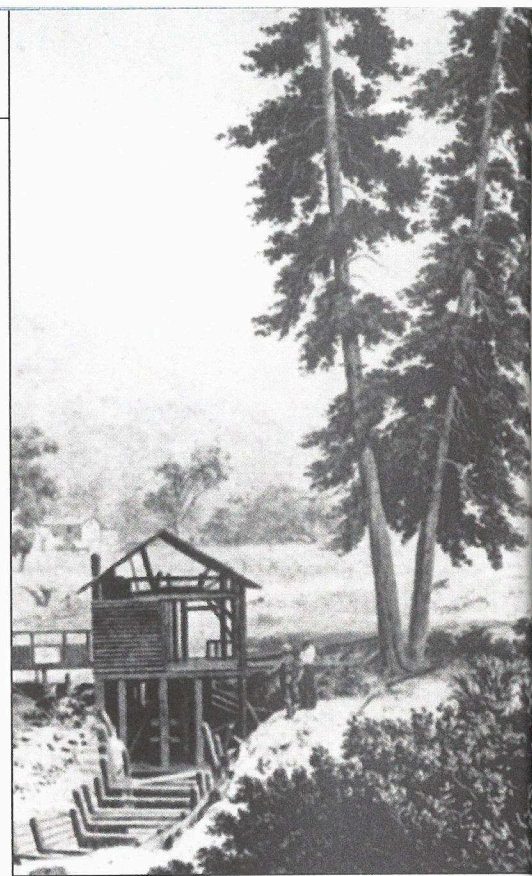
American politician and rancher Guadalupe Vallejo said: "We were the pioneers of the Pacific Coast, building towns and missions while General Washington was carrying on the War of the Revolution."



Race to California

It's 1848, and strangers have come to your family's ranch with some stunning news. The Mexican-American War is over, and now California belongs to the United States. Feeling a little worried, you wonder what will happen next. Will you have to learn English or join the U.S. Army? Your father smiles and says it doesn't matter if the U.S. owns California, because the government is too far away to make any changes. What he doesn't know is that change has already begun.

Just days before Mexico signed the treaty that gave California to the U.S., workers were building a sawmill for John Sutter on the American River. One man found some gold nuggets in the water. Most of the workers stopped building and started searching for gold instead. It took a while for word to spread, but once it did, people began pouring in from all over. The Gold Rush was on!

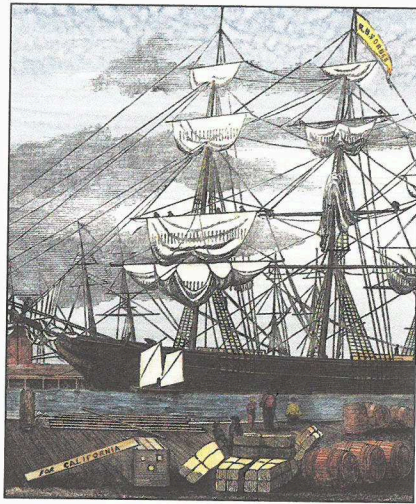


▲ **THE PEOPLE WHO** came to look for gold were often called forty-niners, because many got to California in 1849. They were from all over the United States – and all over the world. Fortune-seeking immigrants came from China, Chile, France, Germany, the Sandwich Islands (now Hawaii), and many other places. By about 1855, more than 300,000 people had moved to California.

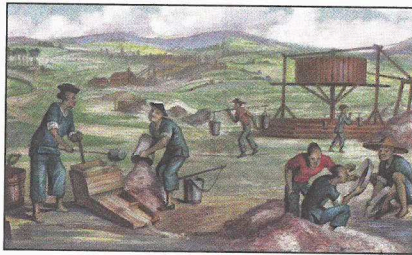
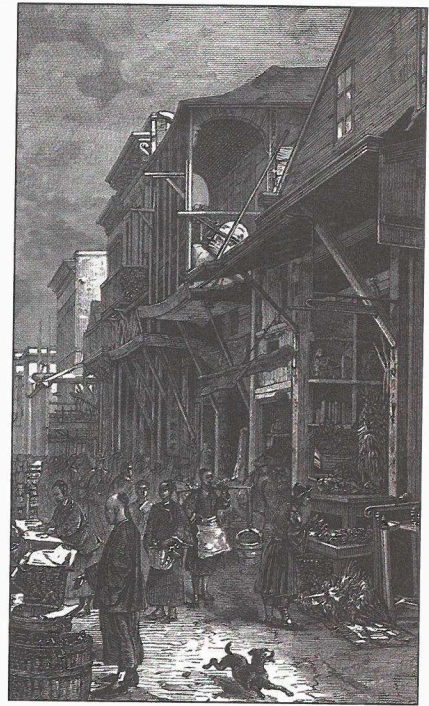
► **MANY FORTY-NINERS** traveled west along the overland trails, but others came to California in ships. To reach the Pacific coast, some had to sail all the way around Cape Horn at the southern tip of South America. Mining was hard work, and a prospector's life was tough. Experts say miners dug up about \$2 billion in gold. However, not many people actually got rich.



► **BEFORE THE GOLD RUSH**, New England sailors were already taking the long, scary sea journey to California. It was worth the risk. On the West Coast, they got valuable resources like cattle hides and tallow (beef or sheep fat used as lamp oil). Some sailors hunted whales. They also hunted sea otter and seals to sell the fur back East.



► **THANKS TO** the Gold Rush, California's population grew to about 100,000 by 1849. That same year, a group of delegates decided California should join the United States. Once again, a big argument broke out in the U.S. Congress. Slave states were against adding California, because slavery was illegal there. But finally Congress agreed to admit it as a free state. On September 9, 1850, California became the 31st state.



a big part in that. Immigrants came to find gold – and stayed to start new lives. For example, many Chinese immigrants made homes in San Francisco, where the population exploded during the Gold Rush.

▲ **CALIFORNIA HAD** more people from more different

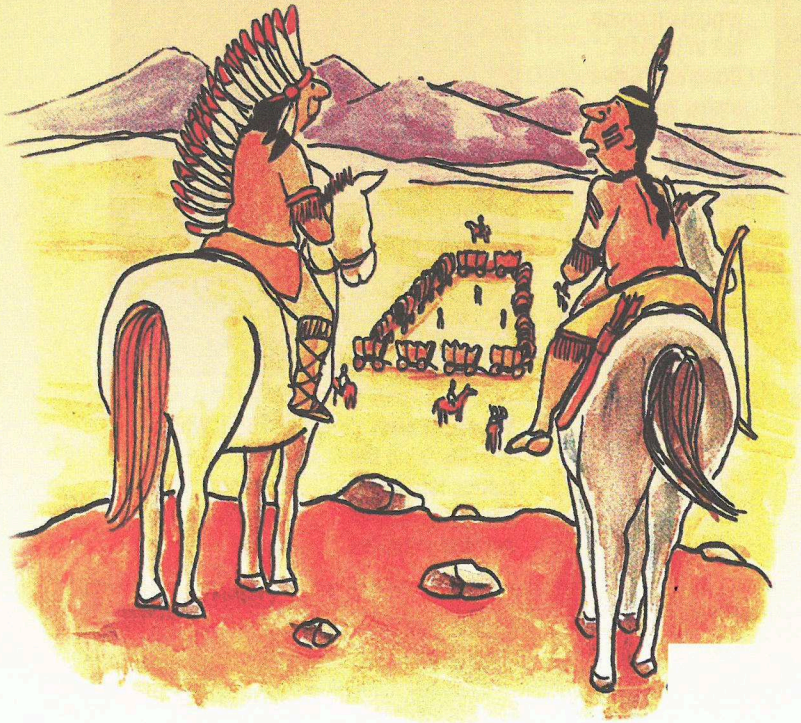
places than any other state. The Gold Rush played

▼ **LOOK AT THIS** map showing the states, territories, and geography of the United States

in 1850. Which territories are farthest north? Which states are farthest south?



Activities



"They squared the wagons! Can they *do* that?"

WRITE A SUMMARY

Throughout westward expansion, more and more settlers pushed through American Indian lands. What effect did their migration have on the lives of the native people who lived there? How did the American Indians respond? Spend time thinking about westward expansion from the point of view of the American Indians. Using what you learned in the magazine, write a summary that explains its effects on their lives.

MAKE FLASH CARDS

In 1850, 31 states and several territories existed from present-day Virginia to California. Make a flash card for each state and territory that existed then. Write the name of the state or territory on one side of the card. On the other side, write the location and the major geographical features. Use the cards to play a question-answer or answer-question game with a partner.

OREGON



TERRITORY