

Westward expansion

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



The United States serves as a giant puzzle. From coast to coast, each region of land is slowly being put together. This is very similar to westward expansion. From 1801 to 1844, westward expansion spread rapidly and America experienced a serious change in national unity. During this period territorial expansion had a very large impact and overall brought Americans together. During the early 1800's (1800-1823) the Louisiana Purchase and Treaty of 1818 increased national unity. The Louisiana Purchase was economically beneficial and generally cemented the union. The Treaty of 1818 resolved boundary issues between the United States and the United Kingdom and Ireland allowing joint occupations of the Oregon territory. This eventually led to the purchase of the Oregon Territory and eventually the Mexican Cession. American expansion to the Pacific was a reasonable goal and was made ultimately uniting America to what it is today " from sea to shining sea". Expanding from the eastern Atlantic to the western Pacific was not an easy process. As population increased, the east coast started to get very overpopulated and cramped. Farmers decided to move west as they were enticed by cheaper land. This was a new beginning for America. Curiosity spread as farmers made their way to move westward. Similar to Columbus' ambition to discover new land, Jefferson wanted to continue to expand America and purchased the Louisiana territory. Although it was thought to be unconstitutional, Jefferson purchased it anyways to remove France and to protect the U. S trade access to New Orleans and the Mississippi. This improved national unity. Since Americans had a vast majority of land they could exploit it and have access to trading ports. They could trade easily and more frequent benefitting the economy extremely.

Although this benefited the U. S., tensions rose between the North and South. The south committed itself to the slave system and cotton growing while the north focused on moving to a commercial, industrializing economy. In 1820, Missouri was issued for statehood and rose controversy on whether or not it should be a free state or not. Northerners argued that if more slave states moved into the union, the north would be outnumbered in Congress. This led to the Missouri Compromise in 1820, prohibiting slavery in northern Missouri, which evenly balanced slave states and free states strengthening the union. Although this was later to be seen as a factor for national disunity, the Missouri Compromise at least showed an attempt to keep the states in union. Once Americans settled in these western states the U. S. experienced revolutionary improvements in transportation. These improvements encouraged Americans to keep moving west. Improved roads, canals, and steamboats, and the new introduction of railroads made it a lot easier for Americans to get around and reduced travel times. This linked the West to the eastern seaboard, fostering a national identity. The success of the Erie Canal which collected \$8.5 million in tolls in the first 9 years, encouraged other states to construct similar water ways spreading and revolutionizing trade. In 1830, railroads surpassed canals as investors rushed to profit from this new invention. Railroads increased demand force and modernized the iron industry. This trade and transportation innovation ultimately revolutionized American and also helped spread to the west. While the improvements in transportation were taking place, the nature of American politics was changing. Americans justified their expansion because it was their “manifest destiny” to spread. Americans were proud of what they had

done so far but wanted even more. They wanted to expand further and eventually reach the Pacific coast to trade with Asia. Manifest destiny was an evangelical religion which called them to Christianize Indians. They believed in destroying their culture and surrounding them with American examples. Expansionism was tied to national politics. Democrats supported expansion while the Whigs didn't. The Whigs believed in the change in industrialization but feared that expanding would raise an issue of slavery in new territories while the Democrats feared the industrialization. Whigs saw economic progress but Democrats saw economic depression similar to the Panic of 1837. Democrats wanted to continue to follow Jefferson's vision of establishing new territories and expanding. Even though there were many different political views on westward expansion, the union continued to stick together for this over goal of Manifest Destiny. By 1845, about 5, 000 Americans reached Oregon and 3, 000 to California. From reports from Oregon's Willamette Valley, it "[promised] economic opportunity. " This led to the Great Migration. The Oregon Trail, a 2, 000 mile long trail in which it connected the Missouri River to Oregon, was discovered by the expedition of Lewis and Clark. Although some feared Indian attack, a large population traveled with their families in wagon trains and moved west. The settlement of Oregon provided a lot of development and trade with in the states and ultimately helped the U. S reach the cultural goal of Manifest Destiny. The U. S. was really starting to develop nationally but land disputes between the Spanish rose. In 1845, American annexed Texas and made it a part of the U. S. even though this captured land was already a part of Mexico. This easily led to tension between the two countries and led to the Mexico-American

War. America captured California and New Mexico during this period and due to the Treaty of Guadeloupe Hidalgo it turned the land over to the U. S permanently in exchange for \$15 million dollars. Although it was economically stressing, this allowed Americans to move southwest, gaining the West Coast ports essential to trade and defend. Westward expansion spread very fast in the early 1800's. Territorial expansion had great impact on national unity and brought Americans together. It started with an overpopulated east coast and curious farmers wanting to seek new land to Jefferson's vision of expanding with his purchase of Louisiana to the purchase of more and more parts of the U. S. like California and New Mexico. The U. S economically benefited over all with the expanding to the West and has united us all together as one much like a puzzle. Although it's hard to connect the right pieces, we eventually are put together.