

Westward expansion essay

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



Ever since the United States was formed, people have continuously moved west.

The West has always been seen as the land of opportunity. It was a place for people to go who may have not been successful in the East. It was a place for wealthy people to invest money.

Despite all these countless opportunities, the trip westward was beyond capabilities of many Americans. Many people could not afford to pay for the long trip out West. To facilitate the migration of Americans to the west, the federal government passed several laws. These laws did everything from providing free land to the expansion of railroads westward. This westward expansion did not come without a price. Unfortunately, it required that the federal government move Native Americans from their homes.

It also required the United States to obtain ownership of Western lands. The federal government promoted westward expansion in many ways. In 1862, Congress passed the Homestead Act.

This act provided homes with free land. Under certain circumstances, people could also buy 160 acres at \$1.25 an acre. People who could not afford it got land for free. Even though land speculators were able to get control of large land, this act allowed many more people to migrate than what they were able to before. The federal government also provided for the expansion of railroads westward through the Pacific Railroad Act.

Railroads, especially transcontinental s, played a large role in the expansion by giving railroad developers land grants. Railroads considerably, shortened

the time it took to travel west. This shortening of time applied to passengers, cargo, troop movement, and mail delivery. America's expansion westward impacted the nation in several ways. First of all, in obtaining western lands, the American government had to interact with foreign nations.

They obtained most of the Great Plains in the Louisiana Purchase from France. America signed a treaty with Britain that settled the Organ Territory at the 49th parallel instead of the 54th as originally demanded by the President. America also gained territory through the annexation of Texas and the Mexican War which gave America the land of California, completing Manifest Destiny. An issue that haunted America throughout the westward expansion was the issue of slavery. The admittance of new states threatened to upset the balance of power between the slave states and the free states in the United States Senate.

This is why Massachusetts refused to support the Mexican War and the annexation of Texas as a slave state. Congress tried to settle the issue in the territories through the passage of Stephen Douglas Kansas-Nebraska Bill of 1854. This bill said that the people of this territory could decide whether they wanted to be a slave state or a free state. This continued to be an issue in the Supreme Courts' ruling on Dred Scott and the Lincoln-Douglas debate. The Westward Expansion has a great impact on America.

The new territories have added greatly to the American economy. The West has provided opportunity for many Americans to escape undesirable conditions in the East. This expansion did not come without a cost to some.