

Westward expansion

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



The westward expansion, which started in the 1820s, was one of the biggest steps forward our country has ever taken. It nearly tripled the size of our country and increased the population by monstrous amounts. It also improved the economy greatly through agricultural means, prompted political leaders to send people to explore (Lewis and Clark), started a civil war, motivated huge amounts of people to move west, and almost destroyed our country. The expansion was magnified greatly by the Louisiana Purchase, when President Jefferson bought a large area of land west of the Mississippi river from Spain, the purchase added large amounts of fertile, unsettled land to the United States. This purchase was made possible by the exuberant democratic belief in the Manifest Destiny. The Manifest Destiny was a belief that Americans were meant to explore the western territories and settle the entire continent this, was strongly believed by most democrats and was a large political controversy. This, as well as making the Louisiana Purchase possible, made it so that President Polk could start the Mexican War. The Mexican War was a war between America and Mexico during which the U. S. acquired large amounts of land formerly owned by Mexico. The war started in 1846 and ended in 1848. The war was prompted by the Mexicans invading the U. S. annex of Texas which even after the Texas Revolution in 1836 Mexico claimed as theirs. The war ended informally in the fall of 1847 when an American army captured Mexico City and formally in 1848 with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Lewis and Clark also made a significant impact on the westward expansion by exploring enormous amounts of land, from the Mississippi to the Pacific Ocean. They were sent out by President Jefferson to find a water route across North America and,

with the help of an Indian named Sacajawea, they tried to do exactly that and although they couldn't find any all water routes they did make many significant discoveries. A few of the discoveries Lewis and Clark made were pricelessly valuable to civilization. For example they discovered at least 70 different Native American tribes and discovered and documented 200 new plant/animal species that were completely unknown to science. The list of different kinds of people who went west is enormous. There were slaves and other low-class people looking for a fresh start, upper/ middle-class plantation owners and farmers looking to expand, explorers and adventurers looking for excitement in wild/unexplored lands, and many, many others. Even though these people were different in many ways they all wanted a fresh start. Now not all of them got what they were hoping for but a great deal did in the end although this brought up the issue of slavery. The westward expansion brought up the issue of slavery. The previous laws allowed for slavery below the 36°30' parallel but now it had to be decided whether or not slavery was going to be allowed in the new states/colonies/settlements. This as you can imagine caused major political differences. It was finally decided that the colonies would decide for themselves by voting. This caused many people to move so that they could vote in favor of their opinion. But this then caused South Carolina to secede from the union and prompted the civil war but I'll get into that in another paper. <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/lewisandclark> © 1996- National Geographic Society. <http://www.history.com/topics/westward-expansion> © 1996-2013, A&E Television Networks, LLC. Carroll, Anne W. Christ and the

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