

# The effects of westward expansion 1994 essay

[Business](#), [Industries](#)



At the beginning of the 1840s there was a new mindset that was summed up by Horace Greeley's famous quote, Go West, Young man.

This was only fueled by the numerous Natural and Social environmental advantages of going west. The Natural environment of the West was the land, gold, industry, and climate. The Social environment of the West was freedom and Native American interaction. The natural environment along with the social environment of the West helped greatly shape the way in which the West was developed and the way in which people lived their lives while west of the Mississippi river.

The Natural environment of the West greatly affected the development of the west. First natural environmental factor was gold and other precious minerals. The discovery of gold and silver led many poor Americans to move to the far West. The great and sudden rush of people led to boom towns, which were towns that were basically built over night. These towns often had no police and mainly had just bars, brothels, and motels. Most of these boom towns became ghost towns when the mine dried up. On occasion some of these towns would remain and grow greatly.

Some of these towns included San Francisco, Sacramento Denver, and Greeley. The growth of Greeley, Colorado can be seen in Document G. In addition to gold and other minerals being an important natural environmental factor, so was the land.

To the east of the Mississippi river, according to the map in document A, most of the land was forest. In the west however, most of the land was grass or desert. This shaped the development of the west because the grass lands

allowed for vast amounts of farming and grazing, while the desert was full of precious minerals to be mined.

The negative of the desert was the lack of water, which led to a little amount towns showing up over the desert. The lack of water in the mid west led to a great increase in dry-farming techniques. The lack of water also made cattle herding very hard, which can best be seen in Andy Adams, *The Log of a Cowboy*, when he writes, after passing the next chain of lakes it was sixty miles to the next water. There are only five herds ahead of us, and the first three went through the old rout, but the last two for some reason or other turned and went westward (Doc. I). The lack of water in the great plains of the Midwest led many cattle herders to move westward to find some more water. The discovery of precious minerals and the vast amounts of land greatly impacted the development of the west.

There were not only economical factors like land and gold, but there were climatic and industrial factors. Towards to southwest the climate was very hot and dry, while in the Northwest the climate was very cold and dry. The effects of the cold climate can be seen in L. R. Hafens, *Recollections of a Handcart Pioneer*, which is an account of the 1846 to 1847 trek to Salt Lake City.

Cold weather, scarcity of food, lassitude and fatigue from over-exertion We soon though it unusual to leave a camp-ground without burying one or more persons, (Doc. C). Additionally, in *Diary of Lucy Henderson Dealy* in document E, there is a tale of death from cold and a trip that took almost twice the months it should have. To adapt to the cold and dry climate the

west developed great amounts of railroads to shorten trips out west and make it easier and safer to travel. With the expansion of the railroad industry, there was an increase in migration west and an increase in the percentage that survived the trip west.

The climate and industry greatly impacted the development of the west. Not only were there Natural environmental factors, but there was also social factors. After the end of the civil war, racial tensions were still very high.

Many African Americans moved west to start a new life away from the racist white supremacists. With the end of slavery many mid western farmers had to find new ways of working on the plantation. Many people headed west to get work on a plantation, which helped the farmers adapt to the lack of a free work force. In addition to racial freedom, women in Wyoming were gaining freedoms. Two acts were passed by the Wyoming Territorial legislature in 1869 and 1870. The first act was to confer to women all rights of citizenship, (Doc. F) and the second act was stop protect married women in their separate property, and the enjoyment of their labor, (Doc.

F). These acts were basically giving women the right to vote, hold office, and own property. These may have led to the women civil rights movement. In addition to American citizens, the Native Americans were being affected.

During the 1860s to 1870s Natives were becoming much more violent because of the Homestead Act, which gave 160 acres to any family that lived on that land for five years, and the Dawes Act, which attempted to break up tribal separation.

This can be seen when Parra-Wa-Samen of the Yamparika Comanches said, the Texans had kept out of my country, there might have been peace (doc. H). Opinions like this led to many battles between the United States Military and the Natives, including the battle of Wounded Knee and the battle of Little Big Horn. It was not until 1924 that the United States admitted partial failure of its policy of forced assimilation, and in turn granted all Natives full Citizenship.

The Social environmental factors of freedom and Native policy caused a great impact into the development of the west. Clearly the Social and Natural environmental factors greatly impacted the development of West. Some Natural environmental factors were the gold, the land, the climate, and the expansion of industry. Some of the Social environmental factors were the freeing of black people, the rights granted to women, and the treatment of Native Americans. Although many of the factors were good from the start, some like gold caused an increase in questioning of the way the government handled its money supply. Also, the Homestead Act and Dawes Act caused great tension between the Natives and the Western Americans.

The West is what it is today because of the Natural and Social environments of the 1840s through the 1890s.