

Manifest destiny assignment

[History](#)



As the country expanded westward the economic interests and policies within the country began to differ depending on location. There are many opinions and interpretations regarding Westward Expansion and as some historians who study this period considers it as an economical opportunity to increase the American empire. Conversely, it can also be seen as the growing division within the American political sphere. Therefore, the question that arises when studying this period is whether, the benefits outweigh a nation being divided.

J Turner is the author of the book, Rise f the New West, Colonization of the West, and in his writing he investigates the period of Western migration and the economical and powerful ideals it furnished. Turner argues that this movement clearly marked a divide between the South and West by the close of the period. The Western lands were areas of great opportunity for people because of, “ the existence of a great body of land offered at so low a price inevitably drew population toward the West” (Turner 306).

After the Louisiana Purchase, the lands were apparently free which attracted settlers, especially those seeking a new ginning or even a better life. There were also those who were dealing with the distress from the War of 1812. Poor whites in the North East who could not compete in the growing market and poor Southern farmers, who did not own land, migrated out West. They brought with them their wives and children to help cultivate the lands. It has always been in human nature to want more; after seeing the life a plot of land could provide in the east the expansion became inevitable.

In a short time one could be a land owner. As Western migration continued Turner explains, “ a new society was forming, a Western flavor. ‘ The West a place of planters as well as pioneers, exploiting the wilderness, a mixture of slave and free” (319). Turner is identifying the inhabitants of this vast land, and explains that those settlers were different but seeking similar objectives. The west became a region of development and immense influence over the cotton kingdom and market economy.

Settlers of the North were attracted to the northern and middle section because as, “ the great bulk of western exports passed down the tributaries of the Mississippi to New Orleans” (Turner, 321). Therefore, it was an area centered on farmers and town builders anxious to trade and prosper. The Southern territories however, were learning the advantages of cotton and sugar cultivation. From this the Southwest resulted in an increase in slave holding. Slaves were purchased in considerable numbers and exported to the Southwest, forming a region of slave holding planters.

Turner even states that, “ it was estimated in 1 832 that Virginia annually exported six thousand slaves for sale to other sates. Illicit importation of slaves through New Orleans reached an amount estimated from ten to fifteen thousand a year” (317). The existence of this new land and settlement illustrated new institutions, growth, and activity but as Turner relates; the journey to the West was long and painful and cannot be dismissed. The expense of the long journey was very costly because of the decrease in transportation “ brought by the competition of the Erie Canal” (Turner, 312).

It was an extremely difficult journey where settlers with no capital would travel on foot, on horseback or carriages along the road side. Through this complex voyage the Western states secured their territory and influence in the United States. Turner explains, West itself had under the appointment of 1822, 47 out of the 213 senators of the House of Representatives while in the Senate its representation was 18 out of 48” (305). This statement makes the claim that the Western states were growing in power and clearly a powerful voice in the interest of the nation.

Turner views the expansion of the frontier as an act moving away from Old America, and signaling the beginnings of a new and powerful country, one that will become to dominate and be a supreme power. Rush Walter studies the Westward Movement, in his document *The Frontier West as Image of American Society: Conservative Attitudes before the Civil War*, where he makes the claim Westward Expansion was the spark to the Civil War.

Walter’s essay is primarily surrounded on opinions and analyzes of political leaders during this period opposing the movement into the West.

Walter examines a printed article in 1828, from the *Biblical Repertory and Theological Review*, which states “ it is evident we cannot be a mixed people and prosper. The happiness of all demands that this mass Of heterogeneous and discordant materials be armed into a harmonious whole” (596). Walter includes this because he is investigating opinions of those against expansion. In this statement the *Theological review* discusses that a nation cannot function properly if it does not coincide with similar ideologies such as religion and civil institutions.

The immigrants from different lands will threaten the beliefs of the American nation. Walter includes the opinion of Charles W. Puma, a Whig Congressmen from Massachusetts, to emphasize the skepticism about Westward expansion. Walter relates Puma's argument that "if the Western people get the power into their hands they will ruin the Atlantic interest" (600). This apprehension to the West is based on the fear that the fate of the American nation will rely solely on Western territories.

Puma does not want the West to undermine traditional virtues, a major concern since the territory is of mixed races and struggles with the issue between pro slavery and anti slavery; due to their being settlers from both Northern and Southern states. Despite opposition, Walter includes that even political influences skeptical of the Westward expansion agree that, "the West promised to guarantee their intoning prosperity, and are induced for the sake of settling their children comfortably, to seek for new cheaper lands" (605).

Even though this was the reason for the Louisiana Purchase, the opposition was because of the effects it would usher in. Jefferson purchase of 15 million, resulted in American debt, but there were other effects many feared. A representative during the debate over the Louisiana Purchase, which Walter includes is, Griffin. He states, "He feared the effects of increased value of labor, the decrease in the value of lands, the influence of climate upon our citizen who should migrate" (606).

With more settlers moving out West, wages in the North Eastern states will increase because there are fewer in the labor force which allows better

wages for those few. With a market system growing, there needs to be an extensive amount of unemployed to keep cost remaining low. Additionally, land prices need to be high so America can reduce their accumulated debt. However, as Turner identified the prosperous advantages of the West, so did Walter in his essay. Walter includes a statement from the New Hampshire Senator, John p. Hale, during his debate to cede more lands to the state of Wisconsin. Retelling Whale's statement that, " when we grant to the West, we grant to our own kindred, our own sons and brothers, who will leave the sterile and hard soil of the East to the fertile valleys of West" (610). This statement identifies the lands in the West as profitable, and opening a window of opportunity for the next generation. It is accepting the West as a means of social and economical promise. Walter recognizes the expansion to the West as a potential threat to equality and unity in the nation because the territories due struggle between the issue of slavery.

Walters essay examines the advantages and economical stability that resulted from expansion but also studies the opinions of those against the expansion. As observed, there are many opinions regarding Westward Expansion and as some historians who study this period consider it beneficial to the American empire. Conversely, it can also be seen as the growing division within the American political sphere. H. H. Powers examine this period in history and interprets American action during this period as a leading cause for the Civil War in his article *The War as a Suggestion of Manifest Destiny*.

His argument is clearly identified in the very first page when he states, “ the war is revelation rather than a revolution. The course of events convinces us war is not accidental but the natural outcome of forces at work” (175).

Powers believes that expansion into new territories and America’s interest in obtaining new lands is a major factor for the causes of war. Furthering this idea that, “ the Monroe Doctrine was constructed as requiring no constructive action on our part and no positive obligation toward the civilized world” (Powers, 173).

He preferences this document because Westward Expansion and the idea Of Manifest Destiny challenge this principal. America is invading and extending outside its sphere of interests, therefore not maintaining neutrality.

American action seems more of a need to imperialism than anything else.

Powers also investigates the territory between Massachusetts and South Carolina after the Louisiana Purchase. He states, ‘ We had a single advantage of a common language and the preponderance of a common stock, this unity was sacrificed by purchase of Louisiana and the annexation of Mexico” (177).

This infers that after these events the nation was separated because it no longer shared one common interest. It included a different religion, language and race. People were mixed, therefore different ideologies and beliefs arose. Powers continues in saying,“ growth means conflict sooner or later” (181 He makes this claim because he believes that the Northwest and Southwest do not share the same economical interests anymore. The Northern part is dependent on trade while the Southern are dependent upon

cotton agriculture and slaves. He believes this was the beginning of an on going trudge which displaced the weak from the triumphant.

Powers concludes his article suggesting “ we are selfish and grasping” (182). He sees American action during this time not in the purpose to defend democracy but to imperialism and gain immense power. Neither Freddie Turner, nor Rush Walter managed to print this statement in their essays but they did share similar assumptions. The differences that resulted after the expansion into the West demonstrate conflicts seen during the Civil War. As some historians document this period of expansion as a means of opportunity and growth in America, others dismiss this notion all together .