

# American history and the frontier

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In his article “ Significance of the Frontier in American History” presented to the American Historical Association during the Chicago World Fair of 1893, Frederick Jackson-Turner writes about the ways in which the frontier shaped America and how, in his own words “ to the frontier America intellect owes its striking characteristics.”

The article was written as a response to the claim put out by Director of the Bureau of the Census that after the 1890 Census, the frontier ceased existing.

Jackson-Turner explores such important topics as Americanization, democracy and economic growth. He does it in a very effective and persuasive manner, giving specific examples and clarifications for each of his claims.

On the issue of Americanization, Jackson-Turner claims that the frontier is the line of most rapid and effective type of one. He is masterful in using the words like ruggedness, crudeness and initiative, all of which ring true to this very day. His conclusion that “ the frontier produced characteristics ... the world recognized as American” is a great way of summing up how we, and the others, see America.

For a description of the impact of the frontier on American economic development Jackson-Turner uses a reference to Peck’s New Guide to the West, published in Boston in 1837.

He explains three waves of settlers conquering the frontier - pioneers, land-owners, and entrepreneurs. His description is clear, straight to the point, and explains in detail how American economy grew during the years of westward

expansion. Again, in modern day times American society relies on pioneers and entrepreneurs to be its driving force.

In a somewhat critical approach to American democracy, Jackson Turner makes a distinction between talking and working politicians. He believes that the working one comes from the frontier with fresh ideas, as opposed to talking politicians from the East.

The latter, mastered theories and oratorical skills, but became inert and offered little to the advancement of democracy. This, too, is current, as the majority of Americans see Washington as a place of a slow change.

Overall, this article is an important piece of writing. It is modern in its organization, it has a clear introduction, it flows well, is logically constructed. Furthermore, the subject matter ties very accurately to our present. The best part of the article is the conclusion, in which the author offers a summary of his views.

There, he captures the American spirit and values that are still in place as a backbone of this society. The only negative remark I have is that Jackson-Turner does not talk in more detail about two controversial issues in American history- slavery and treatment of natives.