

# PART FIVE

## The Nation Adjusts to a Moving Frontier

Chapter 13: The West Comes into Power

Chapter 14: New Lands and New Ideas

# To The West

With spirit

To the West! To the West! To the land\_ of the free, Where might-y Mis - sou-ri rolls  
down to the sea. Where a man is a man, if he's will - ing to toil, And the  
humb-lest may gath-er the fruit of the soil. Where chil-dren are bless-ings, and  
he who hath most, Has aid for his for-tune and rich-es to boast. Where the young may ex -  
ult, and the a - ged may rest, A - way, far a - way, to the land\_ of the West.

CHORUS:

*a tempo*  
*mf* To the West! To the West! To the land\_ of the free, Where might - y Mis -  
sou - ri rolls down to the sea. Where the young may ex - ult, and the  
a - ged may rest, A - way, far a - way, To the land of the West!

To the West! To the West!  
Where the rivers that flow  
Run thousands of miles  
spreading out as they go;  
Where the green waving forests  
shall echo our call,  
As wide as all England  
and free to us all.  
Where the prairies like seas,  
where the billows have roll'd,  
Are broad as the kingdoms  
and empires of old.  
And the lakes are like oceans  
in storm or in rest,  
Away, far away,  
to the land of the West.

To the West! To the West!  
There is wealth to be won,  
The forest to clear  
is the work to be done;  
Where the Stars and the Stripes  
like a banner unfurled,  
Invites to its regions  
the world, all the world.  
Where the people are true  
to the vows that they frame,  
And their pride is the honor  
that's shown to their name;  
And away! far away!  
let us hope for the best,  
And build up a home  
in the land of the West.



## Chapter 13

# The West Comes into Power

### WHERE IS WEST?

DURING THE Revolutionary War settlers began to cross the mountains through the Cumberland Gap and to follow the Wilderness Road into Kentucky. Many were Scotch Irish from the middle and southern colonies. Their pack trains were loaded with precious salt, wallets of seed corn, bundles of bedding, a favorite rocker, a chest of drawers, a spinning wheel, and other prized possessions. The feather beds were tied in front, almost on the horses' necks, where the babies could ride in safety and comfort. Cooking kettles and long-handled spoons dangled from the pack saddles, fashioned from the fork of a hickory tree. At the end of a day's travel the emigrants "camped out." Over an open fire the women broiled venison, roasted turkeys, parched corn, boiled greens, and baked hoe cake. Rolled in their blankets the weary travelers slept under the stars beside the trail. In rainy weather they built a "lean-to" shelter of poles and bark. The way was long and hard but packed with adventure and filled with hope. At the end was a farm and a home for every one willing to work. Land was the magnet that pulled the train of settlers over the

mountains into Kentucky and Tennessee.

Many settlers bound for Tennessee followed the valleys of the Powell, Clinch, and Holston Rivers. They loaded furniture, seed, and livestock onto flatboats and floated down the streams as far as they could and then went overland. Many of the early settlers used dugout canoes to ride the rapids of the Tennessee River. The most dangerous spot was Muscle Shoals in the great bend of the Tennessee River. In early days these shoals were covered with mussels. The first white men found Indian villages scattered the full length of the shoals so that the natives could feed upon the shellfish. For some unknown reason, perhaps because they did not know how to spell correctly, the first white men called the spot "Muscle Shoals." The name has clung to it. The most treacherous places were named Boiling Point, the Suck, Frying Pan, the Narrows, and Tumbling Shoals. A boatman's fear of these shoals can best be told in the words of a man who led a party of settlers down the Tennessee River.

It was during the Revolutionary War. Shortly after the British had captured Savannah, Donelson's boat *Adventure* led a flotilla of flatboats and dugout canoes down the river from the fort at Kingsport,

Tennessee. After reaching the shoals, Donelson wrote in his diary:

*Sunday, March 12, 1780:* Set out, and after a few hour's sailing we heard the crowing of cocks, and soon came within view of the town. Here, the Indians fired on us again. About ten o'clock, we came in sight of the Muscle Shoals. — When we approached them, they had a dreadful appearance to those who had never seen them before. The water being high made a terrible roaring, which could be heard at some distance among the driftwood heaped frightfully upon the points of the islands, the current running in every possible direction. Here we did not know how soon we should all be dashed to pieces, and all our troubles ended at once. Our boats frequently dragged on the bottom, and they warped as much as in a rough sea. — I know not the length of this wonderful shoal. It had been represented to me to be twenty-five or thirty miles. If so, we must have descended very rapidly, as indeed we did, for we passed it in about three hours.

The settlers drifted down the Tennessee River into the Ohio. Then they headed for the Cumberland, going up that river to found a settlement. In this party was a little girl who grew up to become the wife of Andrew Jackson. Her name was Rachel Donelson.

People like those in the Donelson party made a new and different life for themselves in their frontier homes. When they crossed the Appalachians, they put a mountain barrier between themselves and their past. Old ties were broken and they turned their faces toward the West. English, Scotch, Irish, German, Swiss, French, Swedish, and other Europeans lived as neighbors and friends. Their children and their grandchildren intermarried. They did not think of their neighbors as English or Germans but as Americans.

On the frontier, no one was rich and no

one was poor. When a newcomer arrived, families in the neighborhood gathered to help him build his house. The men cut down trees, sawed logs, and erected the cabin, while the women roasted pork, beef, and venison in a barbecue pit. When the roof was on, the floor was laid with hewn logs, and the cabin was ready for the housewarming. This meant a party. A fiddler seated himself in a corner and the workers danced 'til sun up. Families rode horses and mules for thirty miles and more to take part in this lograising. Helping each other was fun for all. No one was ever too busy to aid in the harvest, to take care of the sick, or to attend a funeral. Here a neighbor was a "friend in need."

Frontier life was family life. Mother, father, and children went together to sermons, to picnics, to cornhuskings, to lograisings, and to funerals. It took large families to succeed in a wilderness where many hands were needed for many kinds of work. Mixed nationalities worked together, worshipped together, and played together. They built their own homes, raised their own food, and made their own clothes. They had little money and little need for money. They were independent, resourceful, and free. Every little town had its political club where the citizens of the surrounding country gathered to talk over new laws, to select candidates for office, and to squelch any attempt to rob them of personal liberty.

In August of 1786 a major in the United States Army stopped overnight in Danville, Kentucky, on his way to the falls of the Ohio to pay some western troops guarding the frontier. In his diary, he wrote:

Very much disturbed by a Political Club which met in the next house where we slept and kept us

awake till 12 or 1 o'clock. — It is composed of members of the most respectable people in and near Danville, who meet every Saturday night to discuss politics. Some pretty good speeches and some tolerable good arguments were made use of last night. — A very long debate took place.

(From Filson Club Publications.)

On the frontier, a man was judged for what he was himself, and not for what his family had been before him. Where life was so real, people lived in the present, and looked forward to the future with hope, trust, and confidence. Again, "something new" was growing up in the New World.

## A PRESIDENT MOVES INTO THE WHITE HOUSE

WHAT MAKES A self-made man? The story of Andrew Jackson is one answer. Andrew Jackson was the son of Irish emigrants from the north of Ireland. His parents landed at Charleston, South Carolina, ten years before the Battle of Lexington. They settled on a claim in the uplands of South Carolina, along the Catawba River near the border of North Carolina. (Since the line between North and South Carolina was uncertain at the time, both states claim Andrew Jackson). After cutting down trees and clearing about six acres of land, they built a cabin and planted corn. In 1767, after two short years in the new cabin home, the father died suddenly. About two weeks later his third son was born and was named Andrew Jackson for him.

During his childhood the fatherless lad lived with an uncle in a nearby settlement where children had the advantage of a one-room school. At the age of nine, young Andrew was invited to read aloud a copy of the Declaration of Independence printed in

the first Philadelphia paper that reached the frontier settlement after July 4, 1776. Standing on the porch of his uncle's store, he pronounced every word of the document for the forty pioneers who had gathered at the village center to hear the latest news. (Many frontiersmen were unable to read.)

Following the death of his oldest brother in the Revolutionary War, Jackson, then thirteen years old, took part in a few skirmishes in the South. He and another brother were captured by the British and thrown into prison. Their mother won their release because they were so young and both were ill with smallpox. Only Andrew survived the terrible disease. Shortly after the surrender at Yorktown, his mother volunteered to nurse the ailing American soldiers released from British prison ships where they had suffered from starvation and neglect. She contracted yellow fever and died.

At fourteen, Andrew Jackson had lost his father, his mother, and his two brothers. He had to depend upon himself to make his way in the world. He learned to make saddles and to mend harnesses. While teaching school he managed to study enough law to pass the bar examination in North Carolina when he was twenty years old. The following year he joined an emigrant train of about sixty families headed west to the frontier settlements on the Tennessee River. Jackson rode horseback with two pistols in his saddle holsters, another in his belt, and a brand new rifle by his side. A pack mare trailed behind, carrying his clothes, blankets, law books, ammunition, tea, salt, and other personal belongings.

The young lawyer settled in Nashville where he and his partner began to practice law in a two-room log cabin with

their office in the front room and their bedroom in the rear. In this frontier town Jackson began to fight the Indians. Tennessee had long been the hunting grounds of the southern tribes who resented its occupation and raided the settlements. When Indians attacked, Jackson closed his law office and led a band of frontiersmen against them. He soon held an officer's rank in the militia.

There was little money in the new settlements. Lawyer's fees were paid in land and livestock, as a rule. Jackson once said that he had been paid enough land in fees to make a county if he had it all in one place, and enough cattle and horses to stock the farms of a county. In this way, Jackson had his start as a plantation owner and a stock breeder.

At heart he was a farmer. He liked to see crops growing and he took great pride in his fine cattle and horses. But his countrymen did not let him spend much time at home on his large plantation.

Jackson helped to write the state constitution when Tennessee was admitted to the Union. Afterwards he was elected as the state's first Representative in Congress. Later he was appointed judge of the supreme court in Tennessee. Then came the War of 1812 and the officer of Tennessee's militia was appointed a general in the regular Army of the United States. The Battle of New Orleans, in which his straight-shooting backwoodsmen defeated a crack British army, made him a national hero. He invaded Florida without the permission of Congress to pacify that territory. Then it was ceded to the United States by a treaty with Spain in 1819.

Every year, all over the country, his admirers celebrated the anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans with Jackson Day

dinners. The general was as popular in New Hampshire as he was in Tennessee. In 1828 Andrew Jackson was elected President of the United States. The westerners rejoiced. He was their man, one of them. (Six American Presidents had come from old states on the Atlantic seaboard where the first British settlements had been made — Virginia and Massachusetts. The seventh President came from the new state of Tennessee, out West, beyond the mountains.) The election was well received in Spanish America. Mexico City was illuminated and celebrations took place all over that republic. The westerners had supported independence for the colonies of Spain because they wanted to trade with these countries.

## THE "JACKSONIAN ERA"

ANDREW JACKSON, a new kind of President, was swept into office on a wave of new ideas, new improvements, and new visions. However, the "Jacksonian Era" had been developing way for a quarter of a century and Jackson was only a part of it.

The prosperity of the westerners depended upon transportation to carry their produce to the markets in New Orleans. In August of 1807, after his first successful trip from New York to Albany on the steamboat, *Clermont*, Robert Fulton wrote to a friend:

Steam will give a quick and cheap conveyance to merchandise on the Mississippi, Missouri, and other great rivers which are now laying open their treasures to the enterprise of our countrymen.

The first frontier President of the United States was a passenger on a steamboat leaving Nashville, Tennessee, on the





*Library of Congress*

### ANDREW JACKSON

President of the United States 1828-1836

seventeenth of January in 1829. Jackson traveled by boat down the Cumberland River to the Ohio, up that stream to Pittsburgh, and overland by coach on the National Road to Washington. The journey took twenty-eight days. He traveled alone without a "First Lady" for the White House. A few weeks earlier, three days before Christmas, Mrs. Jackson had died at The Hermitage, their home in Nashville.

Since water transportation was the cheapest, the westerners wanted canals connecting rivers and lakes where natural waterways did not exist. Of these the best-known was the Erie Canal connecting the Great Lakes and the Atlantic Ocean by way of the Hudson River. Great crowds gathered to see the first canal fleet from Buffalo on its way down the Hudson to the

port of New York. As part of the celebration the governor of New York State emptied kegs of water from Lake Erie into the Atlantic Ocean. It took eight years to dig the "big ditch," forty feet wide and four feet deep, for 363 miles across the state of New York from Buffalo on Lake Erie to Albany on the Hudson River. Although horses walking a path along the bank pulled the barges only four miles per hour, this canal became a highway of commerce from east to west. Another canal linking Lake Champlain with the Hudson River increased the boats on that northern body of water from twenty to two hundred. This was the canal era.

The demand grew in the West for good wagon roads where canals, lakes, and rivers could not provide transportation to markets. The Cumberland Pike began in Maryland and ended at Wheeling on the Ohio River. Later it was extended across Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois to St. Louis. The cost averaged about \$13,000 per mile and tolls were charged to pay for it. In Pennsylvania a man on horseback paid four cents a mile at a tollgate and the driver of a "coach-and-four" paid eighteen cents. Many famous men traveled over this scenic road, including Lafayette, who visited the "Hero of New Orleans" in Tennessee on a tour of the United States in 1825. However, it was the wagon freighter, hauling manufactured goods to the West and farm products to the East, that paid for the Cumberland Road. These were the tavern days when hotelkeepers along the highways boasted of their lodgings, their meals, and their famous guests.

In the year of Jackson's election Baltimore celebrated the opening of the railroad age and tried to outdo Philadelphia with a big parade. Cloth woven on a float

in the procession was presented to Charles Carroll, the last living signer of the Declaration of Independence. He was given the honor of breaking the ground for the building of a railroad line from Baltimore to the Ohio River. In winter the railroads could haul passengers and freight when the canals were frozen and closed to traffic.

The promise of more transportation to haul produce to market led to wild speculation in western lands. Men with money bought large tracts from the Government at \$1.25 per acre, expecting to sell at huge profits when a wagon road or a railroad line went through their territory.

This period of rapid change was the setting for a President who toppled so many traditions that his term of office came to be known as the "Jacksonian Era." Traditions were broken on inauguration day. Andrew Jackson did not call on the outgoing President and John Quincy Adams did not attend his successor's inauguration. The plain people, who had elected Jackson, crowded into Washington by the thousands for his inauguration. Some wore homespun clothes and looked as if they had walked all the way from Tennessee. At the reception so many crowded into the White House to shake the hand of the new President, that Jackson was forced to escape through a window. The mob, in the excitement of congratulating "Old Hickory," as Jackson was called, broke dishes and glassware, and damaged fine furniture. The day was mild and in order to get the crowd out of the White House, servants carried tubs of punch onto the lawn and passed it around freely. Many inside were unable to get out when they tried to leave.

In his inaugural address, Jackson said:

The recent demonstration of public sentiment inscribes, on the list of executive duties, in characters too legible to be overlooked, the task of reform.

What did Jackson mean by reform?

## JACKSON INTERPRETS THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE

THE FARMERS of the West and the planters of the South voted for Jackson, and he intended to give them what they wanted. The manufacturers of New England voted for John Quincy Adams and Jackson remembered that fact. For the first time, New England was not represented in the President's Cabinet. John C. Calhoun, the elected Vice President, hailed from South Carolina. The northern leader of the newly formed Democratic Party, Martin

### CONESTOGA WAGON

In 1830, John Studebaker built this Conestoga wagon entirely by hand in his blacksmith's shop near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. In this wagon, he moved his family to Ashland, Ohio in 1835, and to South Bend, Indiana in 1851.

This type of covered wagon with a deep, roomy bed was the rolling house on wheels for both passengers and freight going west.

*Studebaker Corporation*



Van Buren of New York, became the new Secretary of State.

To Jackson, a man of strong feelings, those who voted for him were his friends and those who voted against him were his enemies. Being intensely loyal, he wanted his friends to share in his success. "To the victor belong the spoils." Jackson discharged hundreds of government employees appointed by former Presidents, and gave their jobs to friends who had voted for him. Such wholesale "firing" had not been done by any President before him. Later, to check the abuses of this "spoils system," the Civil Service Act was passed in 1883. Under this law men and women take examinations for government positions. They cannot be removed as long as their work is satisfactory.

The northern manufacturers wanted a high tariff to make foreign goods cost as much or more than the articles they produced in their mills. The southerners, who did little manufacturing, wanted the tariff lowered to make the foreign goods they bought cost them less money. At first the southerners, too, had favored a protective tariff. Slave labor, successful in the field, proved to be unprofitable in the factory. Therefore, the high tariff protected the northern manufacturers and forced the southern planters to pay higher prices.

Out of this argument over tariff, there arose again the dangerous doctrine of nullification — the doctrine that a state had the right to nullify a law passed by Congress if a majority of its citizens agreed it was unfair and harmful to their interests. This doctrine (which threatened the Union) was the subject of the celebrated debate between Robert Hayne of South Carolina and Daniel Webster of Massachusetts in the

Senate of the United States. Webster's answer to Hayne, delivered in the Senate on January 26, 1830, is considered to be a great oration.

A large forehead, heavy eyebrows, and deep-set eyes gave Webster a commanding appearance. When he stood and faced the Senate chamber, packed to the doors, a sudden silence fell upon the audience, like the hush before a storm. The Union itself was at stake. Webster was a master of reasoning. Slowly, he developed his subject, speaking in a deep, musical voice that wooed his listeners to agree with him. No state had the right to disobey a law passed by Congress. Nullification was unconstitutional. The oration finally ended with a masterful plea for the preservation of the Union and won for Webster the title, "Defender of the Constitution." Webster's final words became a slogan: "Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!"

Although both the President and Vice President were staunch defenders of states' rights, they did not agree on nullification. Shortly after the reply of Webster to Hayne, both Jackson and Calhoun attended a dinner celebrating the birthday of Thomas Jefferson. Jackson sat, fuming with anger, while after-dinner speakers linked the doctrine of nullification with the Democratic Party. When invited to make his toast, his tall thin figure unrolled to its full height, tense and erect. The President was in a fighting mood. Looking Calhoun straight in the eye, Jackson spoke defiantly:

"Our FEDERAL Union. It MUST BE PRESERVED."

This was not the toast printed in the program, but words Jackson had scribbled in pencil on the back page of it. Calhoun felt obliged to reply. He lifted his glass and flung back this challenge:



“The Union – next to our liberty the most dear! May we all remember that it can only be preserved by respecting the rights of the States and distributing equally the benefits and burdens of the Union.”

Calhoun resigned as Vice President and was elected to the Senate from South Carolina where he became the great champion of states’ rights. When a state convention in South Carolina declared that the Tariff Act was “null, void, and no law, nor binding upon this state,” Jackson dispatched a fleet to Charleston harbor and prepared to enforce the laws of the Union. The threat of secession was averted when Congress voted to lower the tariff to please the southerners.

Henry Clay helped to make this compromise but he made a political error when he forced the issue to recharter the Bank of the United States. The constitutionality of the bank had been questioned more or less ever since it had been established during Washington’s Administration. In 1818, the legislature of Maryland passed a law to tax all banks, including the Bank of the United States. When the case was appealed to the Supreme Court, Chief Justice John Marshall ruled that Congress had the power to charter the Bank with branches in any state, and that these branches could not be taxed by state law.

Although the bank had restored credit, stabilized currency, and aided prosperity, many people claimed it was dangerous to liberty for government funds to be placed in an institution owned by approximately 250,000 stockholders, one third of whom were foreigners. Jackson shared the opinion of westerners, who owned less than two percent of the stock, that the Bank of the United States amounted to a monopoly of

the few who might use their power to influence government policy. Under Clay’s guidance Congress passed a bill to recharter the bank before the old charter expired. This made the bank a campaign issue in 1832. Jackson promptly refused to sign the bill and it was not passed over his veto. Henry Clay ran against Jackson as the champion of the bank and was defeated.

Jackson interpreted his reelection as a mandate from the people to destroy the bank. He began to withdraw deposits to pay the national debt but the bank was able to pay out this money. Then he adopted the policy of depositing government money in state banks which his enemies nicknamed “pet” banks. Without deposits the Bank of the United States suffered big losses, and caused many failures in business. Since the small banks that received the government deposits were not accustomed to handling such large sums of money, some loaned it unwisely for get-rich-quick schemes that failed. The United States Treasury did not suffer immediately from this speculation because such large sums were pouring in from the sale of public lands. The speculation in land created problems for Jackson.

## THE TRAIL OF TEARS

WHEN DE SOTO marched into the mountain homeland of the Cherokees in search of gold in 1540, the long struggle began between the red man and the white man. Each wanted possession of the country east of the Mississippi River and south of the Ohio. As the land along the Atlantic coast was being occupied, settlers started across the mountains to stake their farms in the area which had long been the





*Miami Chamber of Commerce*

#### **A SEMINOLE INDIAN AND HIS WIFE MOVING TO A NEW CAMP**

The Seminoles living in the Florida Everglades are the descendants of tribesmen who fled into this swampy land to escape General Jackson's campaign against the southern Indians, and the forced migration to lands west of the Mississippi River.

home of Cherokees and Chickasaws. They went farther south and west to the lands of Choctaws, Creeks, and Seminoles. These tribes adapted themselves to the white man's way of life. They planted the same crops, reared the same breeds of cattle, and built the same kind of houses. The Indian women carded, spun, and wove into cloth wool clipped from their sheep and cotton grown in their fields. Many sent their children to the schools and churches of Christian missionaries. Thus they came to be called the Five Civilized Tribes.

Long before Jackson was elected, the yearly crops of cotton and tobacco had sapped the strength of the soil in the coastal region of Georgia and the Carolinas. The planters from the coast lands cast longing glances at the fertile fields of the

Creeks in Alabama and of the Choctaws in the rich bottom lands along the Mississippi River. This was cotton country. The tribes appealed to the "great white father" for protection when bands of armed men stole their horses and cattle and drove them from their farms. Many Indian families, of their own free will, moved to the prairie lands west of the Mississippi to get beyond the grasping reach of the white settlers. Most of the tribesmen clung to their ancestral homes, hoping to gain the right to stay through treaties with the government. Both Henry Clay and Daniel Webster spoke in Congress in defense of the right of the southern Indians to remain on their lands.

When Jackson the Indian fighter was elected, the southerners and westerners renewed their efforts to gain the lands of the Five Civilized Tribes. A bill was proposed to move the Indians from their ancestral holdings east of the Mississippi to new country on the western prairie. The eloquent plea of Clay and Webster failed to prevent the passage of the Indian Removal Bill by Congress. Jackson signed it. Four years later in 1834 Congress created the Indian Territory, lands beyond the Mississippi, for Indians ONLY. The forced removal was under way. The actual removal was carried out by the United States Army. Soldiers surrounded the Indian homes and ordered the families out. Cattle and horses were left grazing in the pastures, and meals left uneaten on the tables. The soldiers who herded the families into stockades to await the long trek west considered their military duty painful and sympathized with the Indians.

The government promised to provide food, shelter, and transportation for the entire journey with funds realized from the sale of tribal lands. The removal of 60,000





THE  
**FIRST**  
 INTER-TRIBAL COUNCIL  
 OF THE  
 FIVE CIVILIZED TRIBES  
 1950

*Oklahoma Historical Society*

The five Civilized Tribes are Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole.

persons was a large undertaking, however. The government was sometimes unable to keep its word, because men who had been engaged to have supplies waiting at stations along the line of march failed to arrive on time. It was a case of good intentions and bad management. In bitter winter weather a group of Indians had only one blanket for

each family. Army officers had to halt the march six and seven times a day to build fires to warm the crying children. A kind-hearted farmer invited a party of hungry Indians into his turnip field and they ate the entire crop, raw, in one meal. Nearly two hundred and fifty Creeks drowned when a chartered steamboat





*United States Department  
of Interior National Park Service*

### THE GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS IN NORTH CAROLINA AND TENNESSEE

This beautiful mountain country with streams and waterfalls, flowers and forests, is commonly called, "Land of the Sky." The Indian name for this region of misty mountains and heavy rainfall was "Unega" (White Land). Part of this area is now a national park. Adjoining is the Cherokee Indian Reservation where 3000 tribesmen live today, descendants of those who escaped the forced migration to the Indian Territory.

collided with another vessel at night on the Mississippi River. About six hundred Chickasaws died of smallpox, contracted when crossing Arkansas. Thousands died in this forced migration from exposure, accident, and disease. The Indians named this painful journey "The Trail of Tears."

Those who survived the hardships of this western trek settled down to making a living in their new lands on the prairie. The government furnished farm tools and seed for their first crops and food for their families while they awaited the harvest. Friends and relatives, who had gone West before the forced removal, greeted the newcomers kindly, and life was not unbearable. They were soon joined by

other tribes who were forced to leave the country north of the Ohio River and to migrate to the Indian Territory.

Of all the tribes none fought removal more than the Cherokees, the mountain people of the South. On the way to the stockades and along the march some escaped and returned to their native hills. The fugitives lived in secret caves and ate wild roots. One group in North Carolina finally gained permission to stay because they had bought their farms from white settlers. This was the same land that had belonged to their forefathers before white men heard of the New World. Their descendants, and those of the runaways, are living today in their old home country, where a blue haze like ghostly smoke from ancient Indian fires still lingers in the valleys. In winter the frosty air still wraps the mountain peaks in fluffy cloaks of fog. This is "Unega" – white land – ancestral home of the Cherokees.

### FUR TRADERS LEAD THE WESTWARD MARCH

THE TREK of the Five Civilized Tribes to lands beyond the Mississippi was only a part of the westward march started years before by colonial explorers, hunters, and trappers. At the close of the French and Indian War, a royal charter from the King of England had given the Hudson's Bay Company the sole right to the fur trade in the territory acquired from France. Thus, English buyers found their way to trading posts scattered along the western rivers. French and half-breed trappers living in the territory brought their furs to the new buyers from the English firm.

When Lewis and Clark were exploring



the Louisiana Purchase for President Jefferson, they spent a winter at one of these fur posts. The post was located among the Mandan Indians on the upper Missouri, near the present town of Bismarck, North Dakota. It was here that Sacajawea joined the expedition, leading the explorers across the mountains to the Columbia River. American trappers and buyers followed close at the heels of this exploring party. They wanted to get some of the business from the Hudson's Bay Company. In less than ten years after the purchase of Louisiana, a number of these small companies were merged into one, the Pacific Fur Company. The president of the

American company was a German immigrant in New York City. He was John Jacob Astor, destined to be one of the nation's first millionaires.

Following the plan of the rival British firm, Astor hired experienced French Canadian "voyageurs," some of the most daring and skillful canoe men in the world. A party of these woodsmen came down the Hudson River in bark canoes, attracting much attention all the way. The rollicking songs of these voyageurs brought crowds to line the river as the Canadians, with feathers in their caps, paddled their craft into New York.

The crowds at the dock gasped in

#### CANADIAN VOYAGEURS

When hunters and traders came to rapids in a stream, they unloaded their bundles of furs and carried them on their backs to a spot above the swift currents in the river. Then, the hardy woodsmen lifted their canoes to their shoulders and carried them over the same portage to the same place, where they reloaded their bundles and continued the journey.

*Currier and Ives*





wonder when these brawny boatmen from the north lifted the heavy canoes to their shoulders and walked off with them. A mutual understanding exists between a voyageur and his craft. The canoe carries the man over the water and the man carries the canoe over the land. After loading the canoes on a vessel in the harbor, the trappers sailed out of the port of New York for the long voyage around Cape Horn and up the Pacific Coast. At the mouth of the Columbia River in 1811 the party built a trading post and named it Astoria, after the founder of the company.

In a short time American vessels, loaded with pelts, were sailing for the Orient. In China the furs were traded for teas, silks, beads, cotton cloth, embroideries, art

objects, and luxuries of an old and cultured civilization. These return cargoes were brought around Cape Horn to the Atlantic seaboard. They sometimes netted a profit of a thousand percent. In this way the fur business of the Northwest opened up new trade lanes across the Pacific. When the first American trappers landed at the mouth of the Columbia River, a new republic of the West faced an old empire of the East. Their interests became entwined through mutual profits in trade.

Great Britain and the United States were not the only nations competing for the rich fur business of the Northwest. Russia had trading posts extending south from Alaska to Fort Ross, near San Francisco.

Russia's claim to this territory was based

#### MINK TRAPPING

Trappers trailed the streams through forests, searching for the valuable pelts of mink and beaver. These furs brought the highest prices in St. Louis, the leading fur market in the United States.

*Currier and Ives*





upon her fur hunting expeditions into Alaska, whose boundaries had not been set. Russian trading posts, creeping down the Pacific coast, helped to invoke the Monroe Doctrine. In 1824 Russia agreed to give up all claim to territory south of 54 degrees, 40 minutes north latitude, leaving the United States and Great Britain as rivals for the possession of Oregon. A British naval officer, George Vancouver, sailed up the Columbia River soon after it had been discovered by an American, Captain Gray, and named by him. Lewis and Clark had followed the stream from the mountains to the sea. British fur traders were established in Oregon before Astor started his post at the mouth of the Columbia River. Astoria was captured by the British in 1812 and was not returned until after peace had been signed. About a hundred miles up the Columbia, the Hudson's Bay Company built Fort Vancouver, which became an English settlement with a trading post, farms, and sawmills. Who would win Oregon? Believing that those who lived on the land would gain the country, the American government encouraged emigration to Oregon. Meanwhile Great Britain and the United States agreed to let their citizens share the disputed territory until some permanent settlement was made.

## **MISSIONARIES FOLLOW THE TRAPPERS**

THE FUR TRADERS blazed the trail for missionaries who followed in their footsteps. With the French Canadian and half-breed trappers of the Hudson's Bay Company were members of the Iroquois and other eastern tribes. These Indians had become Christians. From them tribes of the

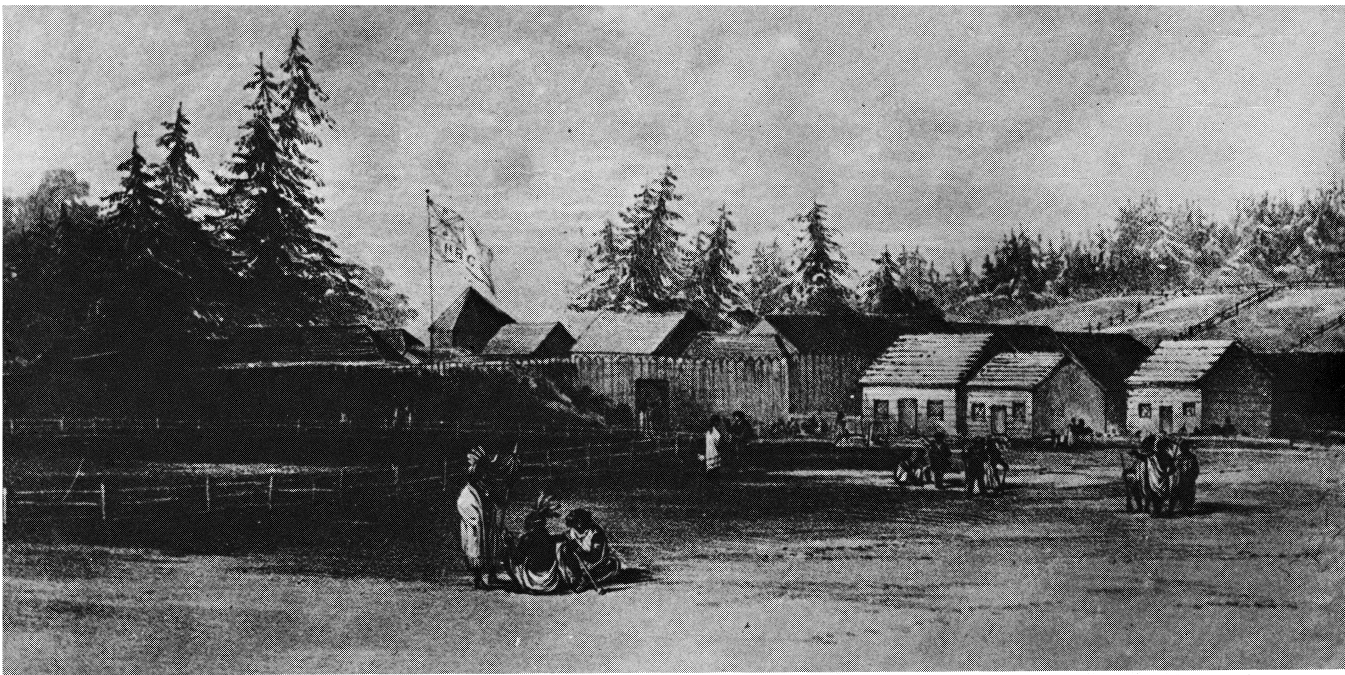
Northwest learned something of the Christian religion. In 1831 four Indians from the Salmon River Valley of Idaho paddled their canoes almost 3000 miles down the Missouri River to St. Louis to ask that Christian teachers be sent to their tribes. Upon arrival the Indian leaders called upon General Clark of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, who made their request known. The story of these four brave men who endured the hardships of such a long journey to seek Christianity fired the missionary zeal of churches throughout the nation.

Fur traders leaving the Missouri frontier soon boasted of a minister or two in their parties. Among the first to answer the call was Dr. Marcus Whitman.

In March, 1836 Dr. Whitman and his bride left Steuben County, New York, to establish a mission in Oregon. At Pittsburgh they met another young minister and his bride on their way to start a mission among the Osages on the plains. They persuaded the couple to join them in the trek to Oregon. At Liberty on the Missouri frontier the two couples joined a hunting party of Astor's American Fur Company. It was not safe for small parties to travel alone. The wives of the two ministers were the first white women to cross the plains and the first the Indians had seen. Mrs. Whitman rode sidesaddle, which was strange to Indian women who rode astride. In her diary Mrs. Whitman wrote:

We ladies are such a curiosity to the Indians. They come and stand around our tent, peep in, and grin to see such looking objects.

At the trappers' rendezvous in the Green River Valley of Wyoming, the Whitmans met Indians from the tribes they hoped to Christianize. The rendezvous was the big



*Provincial Archives, Victoria, British Columbia*

#### FORT VANCOUVER OF HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY

The Hudson's Bay Company was granted a charter by Charles II, King of England, on May 2, 1670 "for the finding some Trade for Furrs Minerals and other considerable Commodities" in the region of Hudson Bay. When the Northwest Fur Company joined the Hudson's Bay Company, western headquarters were established in 1824 with the building of Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River. John McLoughlin crossed the mountains to take charge of the new fur trading post where he came to be called a king of the Oregon country.

The fort stockade was 750 feet long and 600 feet wide. On a farm of 1500 acres around the post, grains, vegetables, and fruits were grown. Pastures were stocked with cattle, sheep, and horses. The McLoughlins entertained visitors like royalty in their frontier home.

event of the year, a gathering time for old friends. Around the evening fire they talked far into the night. They told of chasing bison, fighting grizzly bears, and swimming rivers. There were stories of quarrels with Indians over setting traps, of days of hunger without food of any sort, and of the many dangers and escapes in the daily life of a trapper. Yet, few of these hunters were willing to give up this free life in a wilderness. Indians came in large numbers to these meeting places and brought their families. While the men bartered their pelts of beaver, marten,

otter, fox, and mountain goat to the fur buyers, the women and children danced, visited, and feasted at the trappers' party. Mrs. Whitman wrote of her meeting with Indian women at this rendezvous:

As I alighted from my horse, I was met by a company of native women, one after another shaking my hands and saluting me with a most hearty kiss. This was unexpected and affected me very much. After we had been seated awhile in the midst of the gazing throng, one of the chiefs whom we had seen before, came with his wife and very politely introduced her to us. They say they all like us very much and are glad we have come to live with them.

At this trappers' rendezvous on the Green River, Dr. Whitman removed an arrowhead from the back of Jim Bridger, the noted scout for whom Fort Bridger was named. Indians from the Flathead and Nez Perces tribes in Oregon watched with awe. They were much impressed with Whitman's surgical skill and invited the doctor to live among them. He accepted the invitation.

Near the middle of September the missionaries arrived at Fort Vancouver, the Hudson's Bay settlement on the Columbia River, where they were hospitably received by Dr. McLoughlin, manager of the British post and actual governor of the Oregon Territory. After living for weeks at a time on dried buffalo meat it was a treat to be served a real dinner. There was vegetable soup with rice, roast duck, boiled pork, fresh salmon, potatoes, bread and butter, and tea with milk and sugar. The dessert was a great surprise – APPLE PIE.

An English fur buyer started the apple industry in the Northwest. In 1824 before leaving for the United States, his friends invited him to a farewell party in London, at which apples were passed around to the guests. To get rid of the seeds the man dropped them into his vest pocket. After a long sea voyage around Cape Horn he arrived at Fort Vancouver, wearing the same vest with the apple seeds in the pocket. He planted the seeds in the garden of the trading post. Here grew the first apples in the Pacific Northwest.

The big fur companies cultivated farms to furnish wheat, vegetables, fruits, poultry, milk, cheese, pork, and all kinds of food for their trappers. On the fourth day after arrival at the mouth of the Columbia, the Astor party planted potatoes and garden seeds. Indians and

halfbreeds did most of the farm work for a share of the produce they raised.

Four years later Father De Smet, a Jesuit from Belgium, answered the request of the Indians for Christian teaching. He traveled by steamboat from St. Louis to Westport, now Kansas City, where he joined a hunting party of the American Fur Company. The traders hunted and trapped as they worked their way to the yearly rendezvous in the Green River Valley, arriving in time with bundles of pelts, salted and dried. There, in the summer of 1840, Father De Smet held a religious service for Indians, French Canadians, half-breeds, European immigrants, and citizens of the United States. The cathedral was a mountain meadow with logs for an altar and the sky for a roof.

This missionary zeal for Oregon played an important part in our history, not because of the number of Indians who were converted to Christianity, but for quite another reason.

## **COVERED WAGONS CROSS THE PLAINS TO OREGON**

THE TRADERS AND TRAPPERS spent years amid the scenic beauty of the Northwest, but they had little to say about it. They were occupied with the fur business. It was the missionaries who spread the news in letters to their relatives back home. The wagon trek to Oregon was promoted by what the ministers' wives wrote to sisters, aunts, and cousins living in little towns in New England and the country east of the Mississippi.

Every letter told of the beauty of the country – the evergreens in the dense forests, the white cone of Mt. Hood, and





*Title Insurance and Trust Company, Los Angeles, California*

### A WAGON TRAIN CROSSING THE PLAINS

Oxen were used more than horses and mules by the early western emigrants, because these animals could endure more hunger and thirst, and were more patient in wading the rivers. The driver of oxen, called a bullwhacker, walks beside his teams and drives with a long whip.

the waters of the Columbia, “clear as crystal and smooth as glass.”

The mountains were covered with timber and the rivers were stocked with fish. Cherries were found along the streams and berries grew wild in the woods. Roast duck was an everyday dish and salmon was common fare. Anything would grow in the rich soil of Oregon valleys, where land was plentiful and free. New England farmers struggling on worn-out land cast their eyes westward. To jobless workers in the factory towns, Oregon became the promised land when the Panic of 1837 threw them out of employment.

Andrew Jackson’s popularity had helped elect his former Secretary of State, Martin Van Buren, to succeed him in the White

House. In a phaeton, made of wood from the famous frigate *Constitution* and drawn by four gray horses, the two had ridden down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol on the fourth of March in 1837. The tall, white-haired President, seventy years old, sat erect and smiled but he looked thin and tired. Beside him, a whole head lower, sat “Little Van,” Jackson’s choice to take his place. It had been a time of peace and prosperity when only a few had been aware that a financial storm was gathering on the horizon.

People did not agree on the causes of the Panic of 1837. The opposing party, the Whigs, blamed Jackson’s Administration. They declared that government funds removed from the Bank of the United States and distributed among many state



banks, unaccustomed to handling such large deposits, were loaned too freely for speculation. Men borrowed money when it was so plentiful for speculating in land. When they could not sell quickly at a profit, they could not pay back the money when it was due. Many of these small state banks issued paper money that they could not redeem with gold nor silver upon demand. To check this speculation in land, Jackson had instructed his Secretary of the Treasury to issue the specie circular, instructing banks to accept only gold and silver money in payment for public land. The payment of the national debt during Jackson's Administration had increased the

credit of the United States and brought in a flood of foreign capital to invest in real estate, canal and railroad stocks. The reckless gambling had continued. In 1815 land in Buffalo, New York was traded for forty dollars worth of candles and sold in 1835 for two million dollars. In the same year a hundred and fifteen acres near Louisville, Kentucky sold for \$275,000, although it was purchased for \$675 in 1815. This reckless speculation was probably the underlying cause of the Panic of 1837, although many reasons were given from many sources.

During the depression money became scarce, prices soared, business firms failed, banks closed doors, and factories shut

#### BUNCH GRASS ON PLAINS OF CENTRAL OREGON NEAR MAUPIN

This native grass still grows on the unbroken plain about twenty miles from a branch of the old Oregon Trail leading through Barlow Pass. Growing in tufts, clumps like these were commonly called bunch grass. The stringy clusters with long roots were high in food value for the teams pulling the wagons, but riding was rough for the people in the wagons. One woman who crossed the plains in 1849 wrote in her diary:

In our train were four bachelors who had a wagon drawn by four oxen with two milk cows following behind. These men gave many a cup of milk to children in the train. The evening's milk was used for supper, but that milked in the morning was put into a high churn. And the constant jolting that it got all day formed delicious butter by night. We were all glad to swap some of our food for butter and buttermilk.

*Alfred A. Monner*



down. In the cities riots occurred among the unemployed who demanded food and fuel. In such a time of want, people turned to the land for a living. The great migration to Oregon followed the Panic of 1837.

After Father De Smet had spread the news of Oregon in Europe, where he solicited funds for his Indian missions, families came from Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Germany, and Switzerland around Cape Horn to settle in the Pacific Northwest. However, most of the migrants were Anglo American. These people went overland in covered wagons. Some of the immigrants came from New England where their forefathers had settled in colonial days. Many were restless pioneers whose fathers and grandfathers had gone "West" over the Wilderness Road into Kentucky and down the Ohio in flatboats to farm the land in the Northwest Territory. The sons and daughters of one frontier pushed west to become the pioneers on another frontier.

The way to Oregon was long and hard. The route, starting at Independence, Missouri, followed the trail of trappers along the Kansas, Little Blue, Platte, Sweetwater, Snake, and Umatilla rivers to the Columbia. The immigrant trains crossed the Continental Divide at the easiest point, South Pass, discovered by early fur traders. At the rate of ten to twenty miles a day the clumsy covered wagons jolted across the plains, climbed over the mountains, and forded streams that were sometimes flooded or filled with quicksand. On the prairie the wind blew hot and cold, with clouds of sand, driving rain, and pelting hail. Women wept when family heirlooms were dumped into the sandy bed of a river to lighten the load of teams grown weary from the long haul. Oxen puffed for breath as the white-topped caravans climbed the

gradual ascent of South Pass in Wyoming.

Diaries show that some of the immigrants complained of the hardships in crossing the plains, while others reveled in them with the spirit of adventure. A minister wrote:

Sunday, May 13, 1838 – Hoped it would rain so we could rest on the Sabbath. Strong appearance of rain, but the order was to start. Left the west branch of the Blue and rose from the bottomland on the prairie. Took our course for the Platte. Most of the way was on a level plain, the distance 25 miles without sight of wood or water. Made the whole distance without any stop. Much fatigued with the journey. How different from the manner of spending the Sabbath at home in New England!

Applegate, leader of a caravan in 1843, describes a day's journey in the same valley:

It is four o'clock A.M. The sentinels on duty have discharged their rifles, the signal that the hours of sleep are over. Every wagon and tent is pouring forth its night tenants, and slow-kindling smokes begin to rise and float away in the morning air. Sixty men start from the corral, spreading through the vast herd of cattle and horses that make a semi-circle around the encampment. – By five o'clock, the herders begin to contract the great, moving circle, and the well-trained animals move slowly towards camp. In about an hour five thousand animals are close up to the encampment, and the teamsters are busy selecting their teams and driving them inside the corral to be yoked. The corral is a circle formed with wagons, the one in the rear being connected with the wagon in front by its tongue and ox chains.

From six to seven is a busy time. Breakfast is to be eaten, the tents struck, the wagons loaded and the teams yoked ready to be attached to their respective wagons. All know when, at seven o'clock, the signal to march sounds, that those not ready to take their places in the line of march must fall into the dusty rear for the day.

It is on the stroke of seven. The rush to and fro, the cracking of whips, the loud command to oxen,



and the confusion of the last ten minutes has ceased. The clear notes of a trumpet sound in the front; the pilot and his guards mount their horses; the wagons move out of the encampment and take up the line of march.

While a party of young hunters scoured the plains for buffalo and other game to provide the evening meal, scouts rode ahead to find the next camping spot with water, fuel, and grass, if possible. In the late afternoon the lead-wagon turned to the right, the next one to the left, and the others alternating to the right and the left until the wagons formed a tight circle. Inside this corral the sleeping tents were pitched. Outside the circle the cooking fires were kindled. Applegate's diary continues:

It is not yet eight o'clock when the first watch is to be set. The evening meal is just over, and the corral now free from cattle and horses. Groups of children are scattered over it. — Before a tent near the river a violin makes lively music, and some youths and maidens have improvised a dance upon the green. It has been a prosperous day; more than twenty miles have been accomplished of the great journey.

Hope lured on both old and young — free men, in a free country, on the way to free land. To OREGON!

#### MAPS:

WA16r WA21r WA19r

*Atlas of American History* by Edgar B. Wesley