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SETTLEMENT IN AMERICA, 1776-1850\*

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The Mississippi Valley in International Politics

The international aspect of the Mississippi Valley from 1781 to 1812 is a complicated story of a three-cornered attempt on the part of the Spanish, the French, and the English to gain control of the region. Each country intrigued to turn the Indians against the United States and to win the allegiance of the settlers west of the Alleghenies. Great Britain continued to hold the forts along the Great Lakes as a means of protecting British interests in the fur trade, in spite of the provisions of the Treaty of 1783. The British emphasized to the Indians the importance of their not ceding land to the settlers from the Atlantic seaboard. They supplied the Indians with arms and ammunition and encouraged them to oppose the westward advance of American settlers. They tried to detach Kentucky from the American Union and carried on long negotiations with Vermont which looked toward Vermont's acquiring something in the nature of dominion status in the British Empire. General Anthony Wayne's victory over the Indians at the battle of Fallen Timbers and the Treaty of Greenville in 1795 opened most of what is now Ohio to American settlers. Nine subsequent treaties between 1795 and 1809 opened western Ohio and what is now Indiana. In the Jay treaty of 1795, Great Britain promised to evacuate the posts on American territory which she still held, but elimination of British interference was not complete until after the War of 1812. The beginning of the final step in this direction was taken when General William Henry Harrison broke the power of the Indians at the battle of Tippecanoe in 1811. This Indian war merged into that of the War of 1812 just as it in turn merged with the great world-wide struggle which found England on one side and Napoleon on the other.

During the years 1781-1783 Spain tried to prevent the New American republic from making good its claims to the land west of the Appalachians. After 1763 Spain held Louisiana and from this place she intrigued with the Creek and Cherokee Indians in the hope of winning them to close relations with Spain and also of using them to check the American advance. Spanish agents also worked among the leaders of the American settlers west of the

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mountains. Even George Rogers Clark, the hero of those who believe that he won trans-Appalachia for the new nation, offered his sword to France and also to Spain. John Sevier and James Robertson also had connections with the Spanish agents who aimed to foster movements looking toward the independence of the American settlements in the west in order to erect them into buffer States. The free navigation of the Mississippi River and the right of deposit at New Orleans were essential to the economic prosperity of the western settlers. Spain held the mouth of the Mississippi and the indifference of the American States along the Atlantic coast to the vital economic problem of the western settlements made Spain's overtures decidedly alluring. This discontent continued until Kentucky was admitted into the American Union as a co-equal state in 1792. Tennessee was admitted in 1796. The Treaty of San Lorenzo el Real in 1795 brought evacuation of the Spanish posts on the east bank of the Mississippi River and also the free use of the river and the right of deposit at New Orleans.

The interest of France in the interior of North America did not end with her defeat in the Seven Years War and the treaty of peace in 1763. When the thirteen American colonies began their revolution, France joined them in an effort to break up the British Empire. At the time of the peace negotiations, 1781-1783, France tried to limit the boundary of the new American republic so as to confine its sovereignty to the region east of the mountains. At the same time she endeavored to get Spain to recede to her the vast territory of Louisiana. The distrust of the French by John Jay and John Adams, two of the American agents sent to Europe to negotiate peace, led them to overlook the provisions of their instructions and to enter into secret negotiations with the agents of the British government which Lord Shelburne was willing to send to meet them. Apparently, by ignoring the French, Jay and Adams got distinctly favorable terms from Shelburne. After the American Revolution the French continued their interest in North America. In their diplomatic policy they tried to keep the thirteen States disunited and to push their own interests in the Mississippi Valley. They hoped to build a vast empire in North America which would check the growing world power of England, making the new United States of America subservient to the French Government and also providing a place where vast quantities of food could be raised for provisioning the French West Indies. This dream was pursued by the Bourbon kings who were eliminated by the French revolution. It was pursued by the various governments that rose and fell in rapid succession during the course of that revolution and it was also part of the plans of the French consulate while dominated by Napoleon. Eventually Napoleon acquired the vast territory of Louisiana by the Treaty of San Ildefonso in 1800. In 1803 he sold it to Thomas Jefferson because he saw that it was hopeless to attempt to hold it so long as England continued to dominate the seas. Furthermore, it had become less valuable to him after the successful revolt in Santo Domingo. Napoleon also needed money with which to continue his struggle against Great Britain and there was always the happy thought that a successful war against his foremost enemy would enable him to take Louisiana back whenever he chose to do so. It was not until the battle of Waterloo that the French dreams of a vast empire in America were ended.



The War of 1812, essentially only the American phase of a vast world struggle between Great Britain and Napoleon, was primarily a war of the western pioneers. Henry Clay and his followers in trans-Appalachia, the "war hawks", pushed the resolution through Congress which declared the existence of a state of hostilities between the United States and England. Details of this western interest in the War of 1812 are found in Julius Pratt's The Expansionists of 1812 and also in Charles A. and Mary R. Beard's The Rise of American Civilization, vol. 1.

### Settlement of the Old Northwest

The Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Ordinance of 1787 prepared the way for the opening of the Old Northwest, that is, the region north of the Ohio and east of the Mississippi. When this land was turned over to the Continental Congress Connecticut reserved an area of land 120 miles wide between the 41st parallel and Lake Erie. This area is known in American history as "The Connecticut Western Reserve" or simply "The Western Reserve." In her reservation she declared that this land was to be held in reserve to foster religion and education and to reimburse those citizens of Connecticut whose homes were burned by British raiding parties during the American Revolution. Virginia also reserved about 6,000 square miles of land between the Scioto and Little Miami rivers as a basis with which to redeem her military bounty certificates. This region was called the "Virginia Military District." The national Congress also reserved land between the Scioto River and the seven ranges for the same reason. The remainder of the vast territory, except the lands which were sold to the Ohio Company, the Scioto Company, and Judge Symmes, was surveyed and sold by Congress to settlers under laws passed for that purpose.

The Ohio Company purchased some two million acres and paid for them with depreciated soldier's certificates immediately after the passage of the Ordinance of 1787. In December of that year the first settlers left Ipswich, Mass chusetts for the Muskingum River in what is now Ohio. In the spring of 1788 they founded Marietta. In the summer of the same year a group of settlers from New Jersey under the guidance of Judge John Cleves Symmes settled the towns of Columbia and Cincinnati. In 1790 Virginians settled in the Virginia Military District. Attempts were also made to colonize groups of French exiles who had been lured to America by the Scioto Company. The State of Connecticut sold most of the land in its reserve to the Connecticut Land Company. General Cleaveland was a leader in this enterprise and in 1796 he took a small party through New York to the south shore of Lake Erie where he founded a community on the site of the city which today bears his name. These settlers in the 1780's and 90's led the way for the occupation of the vast trans-Appalachian west during the course of the nineteenth century.

At the close of the American Revolution western New York was still unoccupied. The Catskill and Adirondack Mountains, the forest, and the hostile Iroquois Indians had kept the whites confined to the Hudson and the lower Mohawk valleys. Soon after the Revolution pioneers from New Jersey and Pennsylvania followed the Susquehanna and Tioga River valleys

north to Seneca Lake and into the heart of what is now the State of New York. At about the same time New Englanders began to push westward from Massachusetts and Vermont. At the time of the census of 1790 there were scarcely more than a thousand Americans in western New York. Most of them lived in log huts at Geneva, Naples, Aurora, Bath, Seneca Falls, Ft. Stanwix, Palmyra and Richmond. The region west of Seneca Lake was sold by Robert Morris to the Holland Land Company which in turn sold the land in smaller tracts to speculators and settlers. East of this Lake the State reserved 1,700,000 acres for military bounties. The entire region, however, was settled for the most part by New Englanders.

### Causes

Among the causes of westward movement was immigration from Europe. From four to five thousand came to America each year but this number increased rapidly after the Napoleonic struggle. During the years 1815 to 1830 about half a million landed in America.

Another cause was the economic depression in America during the period of the Embargo and Non-Intercourse Acts, the War of 1812, and the years immediately following. This depression stimulated the movement into the west. In the southern States planters left the worn-out tobacco lands of Virginia and North Carolina and settled on the fresh alluvial soil of the Old Southwest. In doing so they usually drove before them the small pioneer farmer of the uplands who moved on north into the Ohio valley. There was also discontent in the seaboard States, especially in New England because the ruling power was held by old religious and political oligarchies.

Another factor to be considered is the gradually increasing liberality of the Government in its western policy. This change will be considered in connection with the evolution of the land legislation.

During the period between 1812 and 1830 the Indian titles to land in the west were extinguished, and this action opened a large area of new territory for settlement. The victories of William Henry Harrison in the Old Northwest over the Indians, and of Andrew Jackson in the Old Southwest, were steps looking toward this action.

After 1811 when the first steamboat was launched on the Ohio River whose who moved westward had a new and more rapid means of transportation. By 1820 there were sixty steamboats on the western waters and in the years following 1820 the steamboat was a vital factor in the settlement of the west.

## Rapidity of Settlement

The settlement of the Old Northwest was rapid from the beginning. About 10,000 immigrants drifted past Marietta in 1788. Ohio was admitted into the Union in 1803. In 1810 the region of the Old Northwest had some 272,324 inhabitants; in 1830, 1,470,018; in 1860, 6,926,844. Indiana was admitted as a State in 1816, Illinois in 1818, and Michigan in 1837. By 1831 Ohio had over one million people. This was more than the total for Massachusetts and Connecticut. During the decade 1810-1820 Indiana grew from 24,000 to 147,000. This tremendous westward movement was a very serious drain upon the eastern States, particularly Virginia and Massachusetts, which remained practically stationary in number of people during the decade 1820-1830. The effect of this westward movement upon the older States is indicated in the articles, reprinted by Schmidt and Ross on this period. The rapid growth of the leading cities in the Ohio-Mississippi Valley also reflects the rapidity of settlement in this region. Chicago jumped from a mere fur-trading post to over 100,000 people in the period 1830-1860. Cleveland grew from 6,000 in 1840 to 43,000 in 1860. Cincinnati became the great meat-packing center of America, so much so in fact that it was called Porkopolis.

## Routes

The principal route taken by the farmers who moved into the Old Northwest was the old road which Forbes cut through the wilderness during the French and Indian War from Philadelphia to Pittsburg via Lancaster and Carlisle. At Pittsburg flat boats were utilized. As John Bach McMaster has written in his History of the People of the United States, "If the traveller were a settler coming from the East with his family and his goods, he would repair to Pittsburg, lay in a stock of powder and ball, purchase provisions for a month and secure two rude structures which passed by the name of boats. In the long keel-boat he would place his wife, his children, and such strangers as had been waiting at Ft. Pitt for a chance to travel in company. In the flat-boat, or the ark, would be the cattle and the stores. The keel-boat was hastily and clumsily made. The hold was shallow, the cabin was low. Over the stern projected a huge oar which, mounted on a swivel, was called a sweep, and performed all the duties of a rudder. The ark was of rough plank intended to be used for building at some settlement where saw-mills were scarce... In these craft, if the waters were high and swift, if they did not become entangled in the branches of overhanging trees, if the current did not drive them on an island or dash them against the bank in a bend, if the sawyers and planters were skilfully avoided, and if no fog compelled the boatman to lie to and make fast to a tree, it was possible to drift from Pittsburg to Wheeling in twelve hours." (2:144-145).

Another main route was the road from Albany up the Mohawk River to the Genesee turnpike, then to Lake Erie and Ohio. After the Erie Canal was completed in 1825, this route became the most popular and most important of all means of migrating to the west. Another route was the Catskill turnpike to the headwaters of the Allegheny River.



Another turnpike extended from Baltimore to Cumberland and then along the National Road across the mountains to Wheeling on the Ohio with branches to Pittsburg. The wagon road from Virginia through Cumberland Gap to central Kentucky was the chief southern route. There were many routes from Kentucky and Tennessee to the Ohio River, particularly the region of Cincinnati and Louisville.

### The Source of the Western Settlers

Until about 1820 most of the farmers migrating from New England were absorbed by New England's northern frontier and western New York. In Ohio most of the settlers came from New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Exceptions were the region around Cleveland and Marietta. Virginia contributed predominantly in the settlement of Kentucky and incidentally in the region north of the Ohio. Indiana and Illinois had many New Englanders in their northern counties but were settled for the most part by what we may call yeomen farmers of the up-country of Virginia and North Carolina and also by the restless pioneer farmers who were being pushed out of Kentucky and Tennessee by the more wealthy settlers who were coming from Virginia and North Carolina. The migrations of the Lincoln and La Follette families illustrate this pressure very well. Many of these who pushed north of the Ohio were Scotch-Irish. The "Hoosier" element in Indiana came chiefly from North Carolina. The bulk of the native stock which settled the Mississippi Valley was predominantly from the Southern States, yet the region north of Tennessee did not take on the tone of the Old Southwest. The poor whites from the South who were Presbyterian and Quaker mixed with the New Englanders and the farmers from the Middle States of the Atlantic Seaboard and developed communities of small farms with few or no slaves and with an abiding faith in democracy. The chief European element was the Germans. Over half a million came to America between 1830 and 1850 and one million in the decade preceding the Civil War. Those who came during this decade were for the most part exiles as a result of the failure of the uprising of 1848 in the Germanies. They were destined to stand by the Union in the struggle between the States and came to be a vital factor in the political development of the Mississippi Valley. The Germans settled chiefly around Cincinnati, in the lake counties of Wisconsin, and also in Indiana, Illinois and Michigan.

### The Old Southwest

Although the settlement of the Old Northwest has already been summarized it is well to remember that the first great trans-Allegheny migration was south of the Ohio into the region of what is now Kentucky and Tennessee. This movement began before the Revolution and continued steadily during the course of that struggle. By 1790 Kentucky had over 70,000 people and Tennessee, 35,000. The people of these regions made many attempts to free themselves from political control of Virginia and North Carolina. As has already been indicated their leaders were in constant intrigue with the Spanish governor and his agents at New Orleans.



However, in 1792 and 1796 Kentucky and Tennessee became States in the American Union. This movement consisted chiefly of yeomen farmers of the up-country of the South who had moved down the Great Valley from Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century and of small farmers who had been pushed out by the more wealthy planters of the tidewater region of Virginia and the Carolinas.

The industrial revolution in England and America and particularly the invention of the cotton gin in 1793 provided what seemed to be an insatiable market for raw cotton and turned the attention of the entire South to the growing of this new staple. The tidewater lands of the South Atlantic States were wearing out. It was the demand for cotton which was the chief determining factor in what may be called the second stage of the settlement of the Old Southwest. These stages have been admirably treated by Professor Turner in his Rise of the New West, parts of which have been reprinted in Schmidt and Ross.

The planters who pushed westward seeking land on which they could grow cotton cheaply displaced the pioneer farmers who had preceded them. Unable to refuse the high prices offered by the planters, they sold out and then retreated to the mountains to become the poor whites or pushed north of the Ohio River or across the Mississippi. After these pioneer farmers had been eliminated, the Southwest came under the control of the cotton planters who developed a veritable aristocracy. The rapidity of the development of cotton production indicates the rapidity of settlement of the Old Southwest. In 1791 South Carolina produced 1-1/2 million pounds of cotton. In 1801, 20 million pounds. Georgia produced one-half million pounds in 1791 and ten million pounds in 1801. There were similar increases for the newer States. In 1801 Tennessee produced one million pounds; in 1834, 45 million pounds. In 1801 Louisiana did not produce any cotton. In 1834 she produced 62 million pounds. The rapidity of the development of Mississippi and Alabama is even more rapid. In 1820 South Carolina and Georgia were the leading States in the production of cotton but before 1834 Alabama and Mississippi had gained the lead and these two States had become the heart of the cotton kingdom. After 1830 cotton made up about one-half the total value of the exports of the United States. It was this rapid expansion westward in an effort to secure land upon which cotton could be produced which confirmed slavery as an institution. During the period 1812 to 1921 Louisiana's population increased 41 percent; Tennessee's, 61 percent; Mississippi's, 81 percent and Alabama's, 142 percent.

American expansion into the Old Southwest led to continuous clashes with Spain. There was the trouble over the Mississippi River which has already been indicated. The Pinckney Treaty of 1795 opened the navigation of the Mississippi to American ships, gave Americans the right to deposit goods at the mouth of the Mississippi, and recognized the ownership of the disputed land between the Yazoo River and the 31° parallel. By 1810 a sufficient number of American farmers had pushed into the region, then called West Florida, so that they controlled it. They declared their independence and applied for annexation to the United States. Madison issued orders for the military occupation of West Florida as far as the Pearl River. Spain eventually came to see the inevitability of American expansion and sold East Florida to the United States in 1819.

## Trans-Mississippi Advance Before 1860

The purchase of Louisiana Territory in 1803 increased the area of the United States about 140 percent. When Jefferson made this deal there was a scattered and heterogeneous population in and around New Orleans, chiefly French, Spanish, and Americans, Negroes, and Indians. In Upper Louisiana there were about 10,000 people, chiefly around St. Louis. About one-half of this number were Americans who had been lured across the Mississippi by the convenient land laws of Spain and by the rich fur trade.

Jefferson was a man who was able to think in terms of continents and it was because of his inspiration that Meriwether Lewis and Captain William Clark undertook what is called the Lewis and Clark Expedition. They secured the first real knowledge of the size and resources of the trans-Mississippi West. The explorations of Captain Zebulon Pike in 1805 and later on the Upper Mississippi River and along the Arkansas and Red rivers in the south also contributed to the information about the region beyond the Mississippi.

In the south cotton planters crossed the Mississippi into Louisiana but they were preceded by the cattle rangers. By the 1830's the rangers had reached the Spanish frontier- the international boundary between Mexico and the United States- American ranchers and cotton planters pushed into Texas, eventually rebelled against Mexico, declared the independence of Texas in 1836, then petitioned for annexation to the United States and waited impatiently for action by the American Government. Annexation finally came in 1845 and the war between Mexico and the United States in 1846-1848 immediately followed. By the terms of the treaty which ended the war, Mexico was forced to recognize the independence of Texas and to grant to the United States a vast empire in the Southwest. At about the same time the boundary line between the United States and Canada was extended to the Pacific. A remarkable impetus to migration into the Trans-Mississippi West in this period was the discovery of gold in 1849.

### Routes to the Far West

The routes by which the immigrants to the Pacific Coast reached their destination may be roughly classified into two groups,- the sea routes and the overland routes. One of the sea routes was going entirely by sea around Cape Horn at the lower end of South America, the other was to the Isthmus of Panama and then by ship up the Pacific Coast. In 1849 engineers undertook to build a railroad across the Isthmus to facilitate this traffic. It was completed only after five years of desperate effort and did an enormous business until 1869 when the Union Pacific was completed. The most well-known and widely used of the overland routes was the Oregon Trail. It began at St. Joseph or Independence, Missouri, and followed the Platte River to Fort Laramie and then through South Pass to Ft. Bridger. There the migrator had a choice depending upon his ultimate destination. He could turn south along the Mormon Trail and the Hastings Cutoff to the Humboldt River or continue on to Ft. Hall and then turn

south along the Snake River and Goose Creek to the American Desert. When he reached the Humboldt River and the Truckee River he had reached the gold country. Those whose destination was Oregon continued from Ft. Hall along the Snake River to some distance beyond Ft. Boise where they crossed the Snake River to the western side and continued to Ft. Walla Walla in what is now northeastern Oregon and then turned directly west and followed the Columbia River to Ft. Vancouver at the junction of the Willamette and Columbia Rivers. Those interested in reaching California could also take the southern or Santa Fe trail. They might start southwest from Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, or Independence, Missouri, continuing by way of Ft. Dodge to Santa Fe. They might push directly west from Ft. Smith, Arkansas, and follow the Canadian or Red River to the Pecos and then on to Santa Fe. At Santa Fe they had two alternatives,- the northern, which was called the California cutoff which connected with the Salt Lake trail and a southern way called Kearney's route which crossed the Colorado River near its mouth and then pushed northwestward to Monterey on the Pacific Coast.

Reaching the Pacific Coast by any of these routes brought much privation and suffering for anyone who undertook the journey. Indians, deserts, cholera and typhoid were the main sources of trouble.

After the gold rush of 1849, we have two frontiers in America- one moving slowly westward across the Great Plains to the west of the Mississippi River and one moving eastward from the mountains along the Pacific Coast.

#### The Effect of the Westward Movement on the Eastern States

The rapidity with which the American farmers pushed west of the Allegheny Mountains during and after the American Revolution caused consternation among many in the older settlements. There was fear of the radical, democratic ideas of the frontier farmers and also of their strong tendency toward nationalism. It was feared that these sentiments would upset the balance in the existing order and undermine the work of those who put across the Constitution of 1787. This will be considered more in detail in connection with the subject of the farmers and political activities to the American Civil War. Another effect of the westward movement was the constant draining of ambitious young men and their families from the older States. This was felt particularly in New England,- at least it is there where the effects are most dramatically discussed. Material on this phase is included in the Readings selected by Schmidt and Ross. This migration of young men kept wages high in the slowly growing industrial towns of the East, and it was held that this situation was a severe handicap to the rapid development of American industries. However, in periods of business depression the pushing of the unemployed into the west was probably an alleviating factor. As the Ohio and Mississippi valleys came to be settled, the eastern manufacturers found a market for their products and gradually in the two decades preceding the Civil War we witness the development of a distinct economic sectionalism, based upon an intersectional commerce. The east produced manufactured goods, the west produced food and the south produced cotton.



## Influence of the West upon American Politics

The influence of the West upon American politics in the period following the American Revolution is seen in practically every move which may be regarded as political. It is also seen in State politics. The aggressive frontier farmers seized control of the State governments during or immediately following the American Revolution. They, in many instances, moved the State capitols from the tidewater region. They rewrote the constitutions and embodied revolutionary principles in them. Efforts on the part of the older sections to continue in control by gerrymandering and other devices were attempted but with little success. The triumph of Jefferson and his followers in the national election of 1800 is one of the great turning points in American history. Jefferson himself was a Piedmont farmer and his source of political strength was the frontier pioneer farmer of his day. The things for which he and his party stood will be discussed in other connections. The influence of the western farmer during the period of Jefferson's control is seen in the War of 1812, in the legislation for the building of the National Road, in the tariff acts of 1816, 1824, and 1828. These acts would not have been passed had it not been for the votes of Kentucky and the Northwest which were influenced by the arguments of Henry Clay in forwarding his doctrine of the American system. In 1828 Jackson was swept into power. This like Jefferson's victory in 1800 was a landmark in American history.

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