



Chapter 13

Westward Expansion

1820-1860

What's Ahead

Section 1
Oregon Country

Section 2
Texas Wins Independence

Section 3
California and the Southwest

Section 4
War With Mexico

Section 5
A Rush to the West

By the mid-1800s, Americans began to dream of extending their territory to the Pacific Ocean. In this chapter, you will see how that dream came true.

First, the United States secured the Pacific Northwest by signing a treaty with Britain. Next, after American settlers declared independence from Mexico, the United States brought Texas into the Union. Americans then won California and the Southwest by fighting a war with Mexico. As settlers poured into the Southwest, a new culture developed that blended American, Mexican, and Indian cultures.

Why Study History?

Every year, millions of Americans visit historic memorials, from battlefields to the homes of famous people. To many Texans, for example, the best-loved historic site is a San Antonio mission called the Alamo. Why do so many Americans work to preserve the places where history happened? To explore this question, see this chapter's *Why Study History?* feature, "History Is All Around You."



American Events

● **1821**
First white American traders arrive in Santa Fe, New Mexico

● **1836**
Republic of Texas is formed

1820

1825

1830

1835

1840

World Events

▲ **1833 World Event**
Santa Anna comes to power in Mexico



Viewing HISTORY A Growing Texas City

This painting by William G. Samuel shows a street in San Antonio, Texas, in 1849. Texas had joined the Union a few years before, after winning independence from Mexico. In the mid-1800s, the United States gained vast western territories, including Texas, California, Oregon, and New Mexico. As a result, the nation stretched from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific. ★ **How does this painting show the Mexican roots of the Southwest?**

1845 ●

James K. Polk becomes President



1846 ●

Americans in northern California declare independence from Mexico

1859 ●

Oregon is admitted to the Union

1840

1845

1850

1855

1860



1840 World Event

Britain recognizes Texas as an independent nation

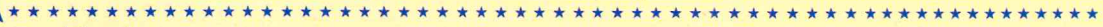


1854 World Event

Japan and United States sign trade agreement



Oregon Country



Explore These Questions

- How did rival claims to Oregon Country develop?
- How did fur trappers and missionaries help open up the Far West?
- What hardships did settlers face?

Define

- mountain man
- rendezvous

Identify

- John Jacob Astor
- James Beckwourth
- Marie Dorion
- Marcus and Narcissa Whitman

SETTING the Scene

In 1851, Horace Greeley, a New York newspaper editor, published an article titled “To Aspiring Young Men.” In it, Greeley offered the following advice:

“If you have no family or friends to aid you, . . . turn your face to the great West and there build up your home and fortune.”

The public soon came to know Greeley’s message as a simple, four-word phrase: “Go West, young man.” His advice exactly suited the spirit of the times. Thousands of young men—and women—rallied to the cry “Westward Ho!”

The Lure of Oregon

By the 1820s, white settlers had occupied much of the land between the Appalachians and the Mississippi River. Families in search of good farmland continued to move west. Few, however, settled on the Great Plains between the Mississippi and the Rockies. Instead, they went onward to lands in the Far West.

Americans first heard about the area known as Oregon Country in the early 1800s. Oregon Country was the huge area beyond the Rocky Mountains. Today, this land includes Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and parts of Wyoming, Montana, and Canada.

The varied geography of Oregon Country attracted both farmers and trappers. Along

the Pacific coast, the soil is fertile. Temperatures are mild all year round and rainfall is plentiful. Early white settlers found fine farmland in the Willamette River valley and the lowlands around Puget Sound.

Farther inland, dense forests covered a coastal mountain range. Beaver and other fur-bearing animals roamed these forests, as well as the Rocky Mountains on the eastern boundary. As a result, trappers flocked to Oregon Country.

Between the coastal mountains and the Rockies is a high plateau. This intermountain region is much drier than the coast and has some desert areas. This region of Oregon had little to attract early settlers.

Competing Claims

In the early 1800s, four countries had claims to Oregon. These countries were the United States, Great Britain, Spain, and Russia. Of course, several Native American groups had lived in Oregon for thousands of years. The land rightfully belonged to them. However, the United States and competing European nations gave little thought to Indian rights.

The United States based its claim to Oregon on several expeditions to the area. For example, Lewis and Clark had journeyed through the area in 1805 and 1806.

The British claim to Oregon dated back to a visit by the English explorer Sir Francis Drake in 1579. Also, Fort Vancouver, built by

the British, was the only permanent outpost in Oregon Country.

In 1818, the United States and Britain reached an agreement. The two countries would occupy Oregon jointly. Citizens of each nation would have equal rights in Oregon. Spain and Russia had few settlers in the area and agreed to drop their claims.

Fur Trappers in the Far West

At first, the few Europeans or Americans who traveled to Oregon Country were mostly fur traders. Since furs could be sold at tremendous profits in China, merchants from New England stopped along the Oregon coast before crossing the Pacific. In fact, so many Yankee traders came to Oregon that, in some areas, the Indian name for a white man was “Boston.”

Only a few hardy trappers actually settled in Oregon. These adventurous men hiked through Oregon’s vast forests, trapping animals and living off the land. They were known as **mountain men**.

Mountain men won admiration as rugged individualists, people who follow their own independent course in life. Even their colorful appearance set them apart from ordinary society. They wore shirts and trousers made of animal hides and decorated with porcupine quills. Their hair reached to their shoulders. Pistols and tomahawks hung from their belts.

Lives filled with danger

Mountain men could make a small fortune trapping beaver in Rocky Mountain streams. They led dangerous lives, however. The long, cold mountain winters demanded special survival skills. In the thick forests, trappers had to be on the lookout for attacks by bears, wildcats, or other animals.

During the harsh winters, game was scarce. Facing starvation, trappers would eat almost anything. “I have held my hands in an anthill until they were covered with ants, then greedily licked them off,” one mountain man recalled.

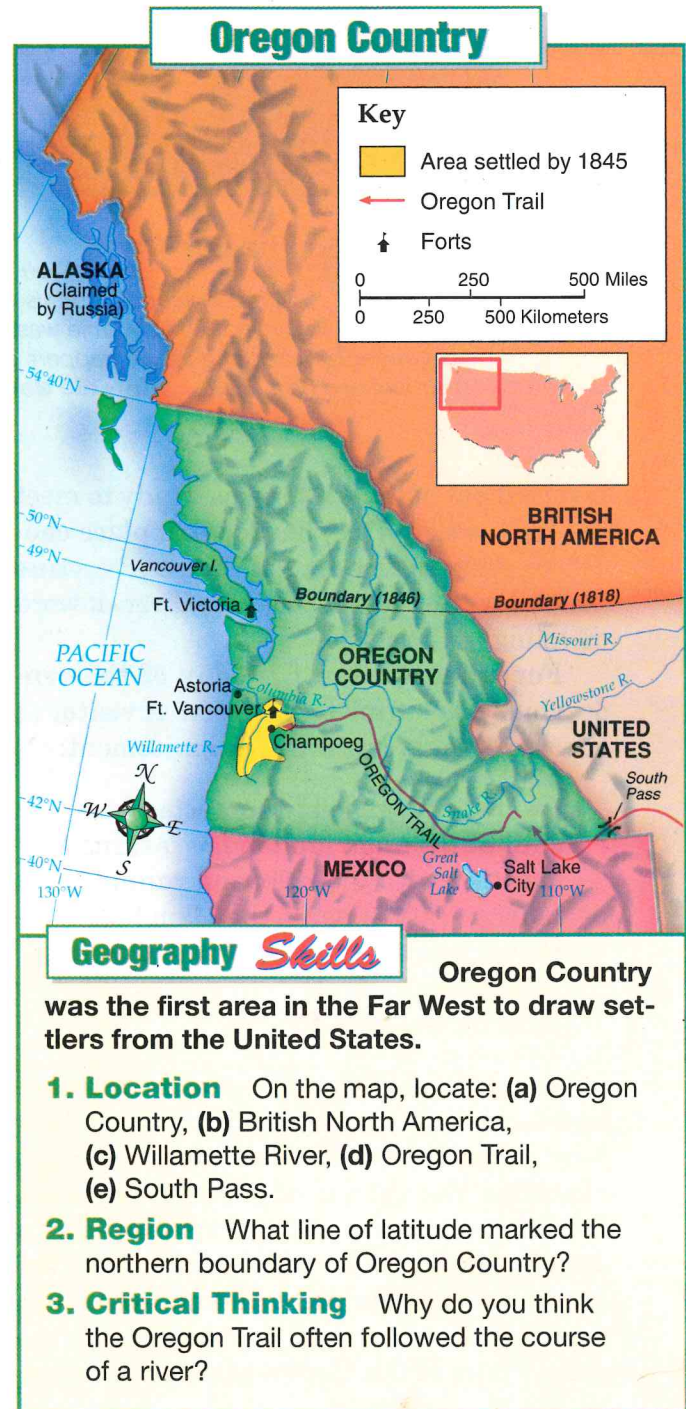
Trappers often spent winters in Native American villages. They learned many trapping skills from Indians. Many mountain

men married Indian women who taught the newcomers how to find their way and survive in the mountains.

Relations with Native Americans were not always friendly, however. Indians, like the Blackfeet, sometimes attacked mountain men who trapped on Indian hunting grounds without permission.

Trading furs

During the fall and spring, mountain men tended their traps. Then in July, they





Viewing HISTORY

The Fur Trade

Alfred Miller painted this watercolor, Fort Laramie, in 1837. Located in present-day Wyoming, Fort Laramie was originally built as a fur-trading post. Once a year, mountain men and Indian trappers gathered at trading posts like this one to sell their furs and have fun. ★ How did Native Americans help fur trappers?

tramped out of the wilderness, ready to meet the fur traders. They headed to a place chosen the year before, called the **rendezvous** (RAHN day voo). Rendezvous is a French word meaning get-together.

For trappers, the first day of the rendezvous was a time to have fun. A visitor to one rendezvous captured the excitement:

“ [They] engaged in contests of skill at running, jumping, wrestling, shooting with the rifle, and running horses. . . . They sang, they laughed, they whooped; they tried to out-brag and out-lie each other in stories of their adventures. ”

Soon, though, trappers and traders settled down to bargain. Because beaver hats were in demand in the East and in Europe, mountain men got a good price for their furs. Trading companies did even better. **John Jacob Astor**, a New Yorker, founded the American Fur Company. He made so much money in the fur trade that he became the richest man in the United States.

By the late 1830s, the fur trade was dying out. Trappers had killed so many beavers that the animals had grown scarce. Also, beaver hats went out of style. Even so, the mountain men’s skills were still in demand. Some began leading settlers across the rugged trails into Oregon.

Exploring New Lands

In their search for furs, mountain men explored much new territory in the West. They followed Indian trails across the Rockies and through mountain passes. Later, they showed these trails to settlers moving west.

Jedediah Smith led white settlers across the Rockies through South Pass, in present-day Wyoming. Manuel Lisa, a Spanish American fur trader, led a trip up the Missouri River in 1807. He founded Fort Manuel, the first outpost on the upper Missouri.

James Beckwourth, an African American, headed west from Virginia to escape slavery. He was accepted as a chief by the Crow Indians. As a guide, Beckwourth discovered a mountain pass through the

Sierra Nevadas that later became a major route to California.

At least one mountain “man” was a woman. **Marie Dorion**, an Iowa Indian, first went to Oregon with fur traders in 1811. She won fame for her survival skills.

Missionaries in Oregon

The first white Americans to build permanent homes in Oregon Country were missionaries. Among them were **Marcus and Narcissa Whitman**. The couple married in 1836 and set out for Oregon, where they planned to convert local Native Americans to Christianity.

The Whitmans built their mission near the Columbia River and began to work with Cayuse (KI oos) Indians. They set up a mission school. Soon, other missionaries and settlers joined the Whitmans. As more settlers arrived and took over Cayuse lands, conflicts arose. Even worse, the newcomers brought diseases that often killed the Indians.

In 1847, tragedy struck. An outbreak of measles among the settlers spread to the Cayuses. Many Cayuse children died. Blaming the settlers, a band of angry Indians attacked the mission, killing the Whitmans and 12 others.

Wagon Trains West

Despite the killing of the Whitmans, other bold pioneers set out on the long trek to Oregon. Missionaries sent back glowing reports about the land. Farmers back East marveled at tales of wheat that grew taller than a man and turnips five feet around. Stories like these touched off an outbreak of “Oregon fever.”

Oregon fever spread quickly. Soon, pioneers clogged the trails west. Beginning in 1843, wagon trains left every spring for Oregon. They followed a route called the Oregon Trail. (See the map on page 347.)

Families planning to go west met at Independence, Missouri, in the early spring. When enough families had gathered, they formed a wagon train. Each group elected leaders to make decisions along the way.

The Oregon-bound pioneers hurried to leave Independence in May. Timing was important. Travelers had to reach Oregon by early October, before snow began to fall in the mountains. This meant that pioneers had to cover 2,000 miles (3,200 km) on foot in five months!

Life on the trail

Once on the trail, pioneer families woke to a bugle blast at dawn. Each person had a job to do. Young girls helped their mothers prepare breakfast. Men and boys harnessed the horses and oxen. By 6 A.M., the cry of “Wagons Ho!” rang out across the plains.



Biography Narcissa Whitman

Narcissa Prentiss married Marcus Whitman in 1836. They then set out on a seven-month journey to Oregon. When they finally reached the Columbia River valley, she wrote, “The beauty of this extensive valley at the hour of twilight was enchanting and [turned] my mind from the fatigue under which I was laboring.”

★ **Why did Narcissa Whitman journey to Oregon?**



China trunk brought to Oregon by eastern pioneers

Wagon trains stopped for a brief meal at noon. Then it was back on the trail until 6 or 7 P.M. At night, wagons were drawn up in a circle to keep the cattle from wandering.

Most pioneer families set out on the journey west with a lot of heavy gear. When it came time to cross rivers and scale mountains, however, many possessions were left behind to lighten the load. One traveler found the Oregon Trail littered with objects such as “blacksmiths’ anvils, ploughs, large grindstones, baking ovens, kegs, barrels, harness [and] clothing.”

The long trek west held many dangers. During spring rains, travelers risked their lives floating wagons across swollen rivers. In summer, they faced blistering heat on the treeless plains. Early snowstorms often blocked passes through the mountains.

The biggest threat was sickness. Cholera and other diseases could wipe out whole wagon trains. Because the travelers lived so close together, germs spread quickly.

Trading with Native Americans

As they moved west toward the Rockies, pioneers often saw Indians. The Indians seldom attacked the whites trespassing on their

land. A guidebook published in 1845 warned that pioneers had more to fear from their own guns than from Indians: “We very frequently hear of emigrants being killed from the accidental discharge of firearms; but we very seldom hear of their being killed by Indians.”

Many Native Americans traded with the wagon trains. Hungry pioneers were grateful for food the Indians sold. A traveler noted:

“Whenever we camp near any Indian village, we are no sooner stopped than a whole crowd may be seen coming galloping into our camp. The [women] do all the swapping.”

Oregon at last!

Despite the many hardships, more than 50,000 people reached Oregon between 1840 and 1860. Their wagon wheels cut so deeply into the plains that the ruts can still be seen today.

By the 1840s, Americans greatly outnumbered the British in parts of Oregon. As you have read, the two nations agreed to occupy Oregon jointly in 1818. Now, many Americans began to feel that Oregon should belong to the United States alone.

★ Section 1 Review ★

Recall

1. **Locate** (a) Oregon Country, (b) Willamette River, (c) South Pass, (d) Oregon Trail.
2. **Identify** (a) John Jacob Astor, (b) James Beckwourth, (c) Marie Dorion, (d) Marcus and Narcissa Whitman.
3. **Define** (a) mountain man, (b) rendezvous.

Comprehension

4. How did the United States and Britain settle their claims to Oregon Country?
5. (a) Why did mountain men first go to Oregon?
(b) How did they contribute to later settlement?

6. (a) Why did settlers flock to Oregon after the 1840s? (b) Describe two difficulties along the way.

Critical Thinking and Writing

7. **Linking Past and Present** (a) What qualities helped the mountain men survive in the wilderness? (b) Do you think such qualities are still important today? Explain.
8. **Analyzing Ideas** Economists talk about the “law of supply and demand.” It states that when people want a product that is hard to get, the price goes up. How does the Oregon fur trade illustrate the idea of supply and demand?



Activity Writing a Letter to the Editor You are one of the young people Horace Greeley told to “go West.” You took his advice. Now, write him a letter and tell him what it was like traveling to the West!

turn to pg. 727