

# Life in the West

## 16.1 Introduction

The vast region that stretches from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean and from Canada to Mexico is one of the most extraordinary landscapes on earth. Today, tourists come from all over to see its towering mountains, deep canyons, painted deserts, and fertile plains.

To the Spanish priests and soldiers who rode into this region from Mexico, it was the North. To French and British fur trappers who wandered into it from Canada, it was the South. To Chinese treasure seekers who sailed to it from across the Pacific, it was the East. And to the native peoples who had always lived here, it was home.

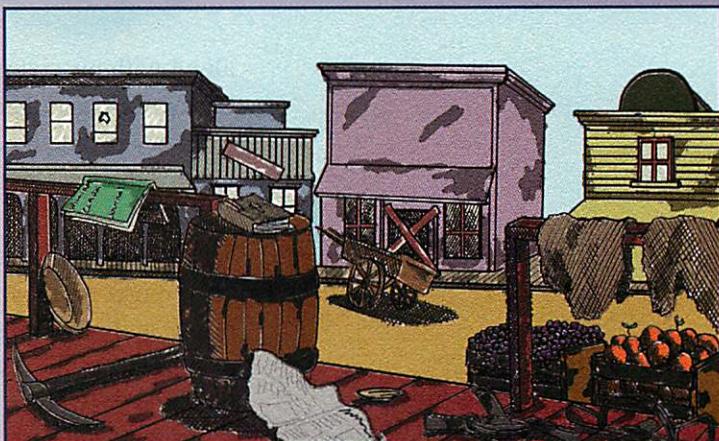
The name that stuck, however, was the one used by settlers from across the Mississippi. To Americans, this great expanse of grasslands, mountains, and deserts was the West.

For all its beauty, the West was a challenging environment. Look at the names settlers gave to its features. Where else can you find a confusion of mountains called the Crazies, a scorching desert named Death Valley, a blood-red canyon called Flaming Gorge, or a raging river known as the River of No Return?

Despite its daunting challenges, the West was never empty. Perhaps as many as 3 million Native Americans lived there before Europeans arrived. These first westerners were far more diverse in language and culture than the Europeans who claimed their land.

In the last chapter, you read about how the United States acquired this vast territory. For Americans, the West became the land of opportunity, a place where people could get a new start in life. Newspaperman Horace Greeley expressed this idea when he wrote, “If you have no family or friends to aid you, and no prospect [opportunity] opened to you...turn your face to the great West, and there build up a home and fortune.”

In this chapter, you will learn about eight groups of people who turned their faces to the West in the first half of the 1800s. You will find out why they came, what hardships they faced, and what legacy they left.



**Graphic Organizer: Illustration**

You will use this illustration to learn about the people who settled the West.

## 16.2 The Explorers

In the early 1800s, a number of expeditions set out from the United States to explore the West. The most famous was the Lewis and Clark expedition, a pet project of President Thomas Jefferson.

The public purpose of the expedition was to make friendly contact with Indian groups that might be interested in trade. Its secret purpose was to find the “Northwest Passage,” a water route across North America that explorers had been seeking ever since Columbus bumped into America. With the purchase of Louisiana from France in 1803, the expedition gained a third purpose—finding out just what the United States had bought.

**Up the Missouri River** In May 1804, the 45-member expedition left St. Louis, Missouri, in three boats. The group was led by Jefferson’s private secretary, Meriwether Lewis, and his friend William Clark. Its members included soldiers, frontiersmen, and Clark’s slave York.

It was hard going from the first day. Rowing upstream against the Missouri River’s strong current left the explorers’ hands blistered and their muscles sore. Hungry mosquitoes feasted on sunburned faces.

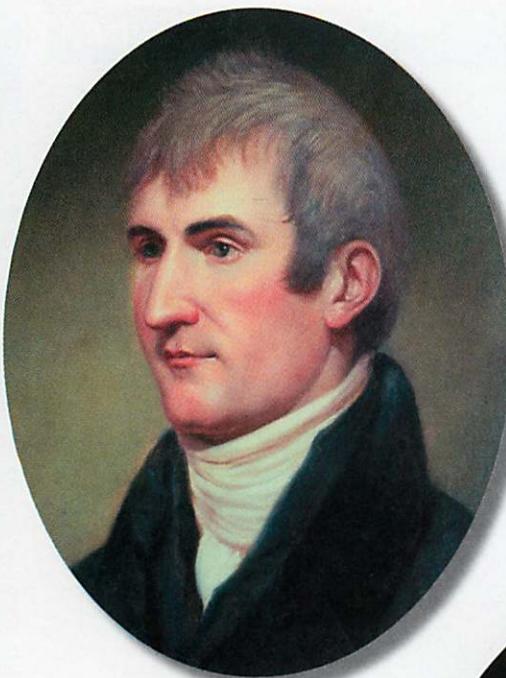
By summer, the explorers had reached Indian country. Most groups welcomed the strangers, and York fascinated the Indians. They had never seen a black man before. Again and again, wrote Clark in his journal, York allowed his skin to be rubbed with a wet finger to prove “that he was not a painted white man.”

The explorers made camp for the winter near a Mandan village in what is now North Dakota. There, a French fur trapper joined them along with his sixteen-year-old wife, a Shoshone woman named Sacagawea, and their infant son. As a girl, Sacagawea had been kidnapped from her people by another group. Lewis and Clark hoped she would translate for them when they reached Shoshone country.

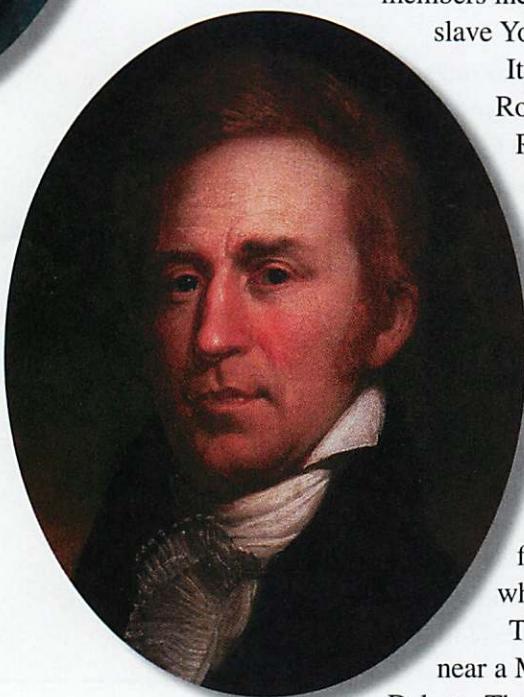
**To the Pacific and Back** In the spring of 1805, the explorers set out once more. As they moved up the Missouri, their progress was slowed by rapids and waterfalls. When they hauled their boats by land around these obstacles, the thorns of the prickly-pear cactus pierced their feet. Meanwhile, grizzly bears raided their camps, and game became scarce.

By late summer, the explorers could see the Rocky Mountains looming ahead. To cross the mountains before the first snows of winter closed the high passes, they would have to find horses—and soon.

Fortunately, the expedition had reached the land of Sacagawea’s child-



William Clark (above) and Meriwether Lewis (right), two former soldiers, led an expedition to explore the newly acquired Louisiana Territory.



hood. One day a group of Indians approached. To Sacagawea's great joy, they proved to be Shoshone. As Clark described the scene, "A woman made her way through the crowd toward Sacagawea and recognizing each other, they embraced with the most tender affection." Learning that her brother was now a Shoshone chief, Sacagawea persuaded him to provide the explorers with the horses they desperately needed.

The explorers made it over the Rockies, but they were more dead than alive. The Nez Percé, an Indian people living in the Pacific Northwest, saved them from starvation. A grateful Lewis wrote in his journal that the Nez Percé "are the most hospitable, honest and sincere [people] that we have met with on our voyage."

As winter closed in, the explorers reached their final destination, the Pacific Ocean. Clark marked the event by carving on a tree, "William Clark December 3rd 1805 By Land from the U. States."

**The Explorers' Legacy** After a wet and hungry winter in Oregon, the explorers headed homeward. In September 1806, two years and four months after setting out, they returned to St. Louis. Lewis dashed off a letter to Jefferson that read, "It is with pleasure that I announce to you the safe arrival of myself and party...with our papers and baggage. In obedience to our orders, we have penetrated the continent of North America to the Pacific Ocean."

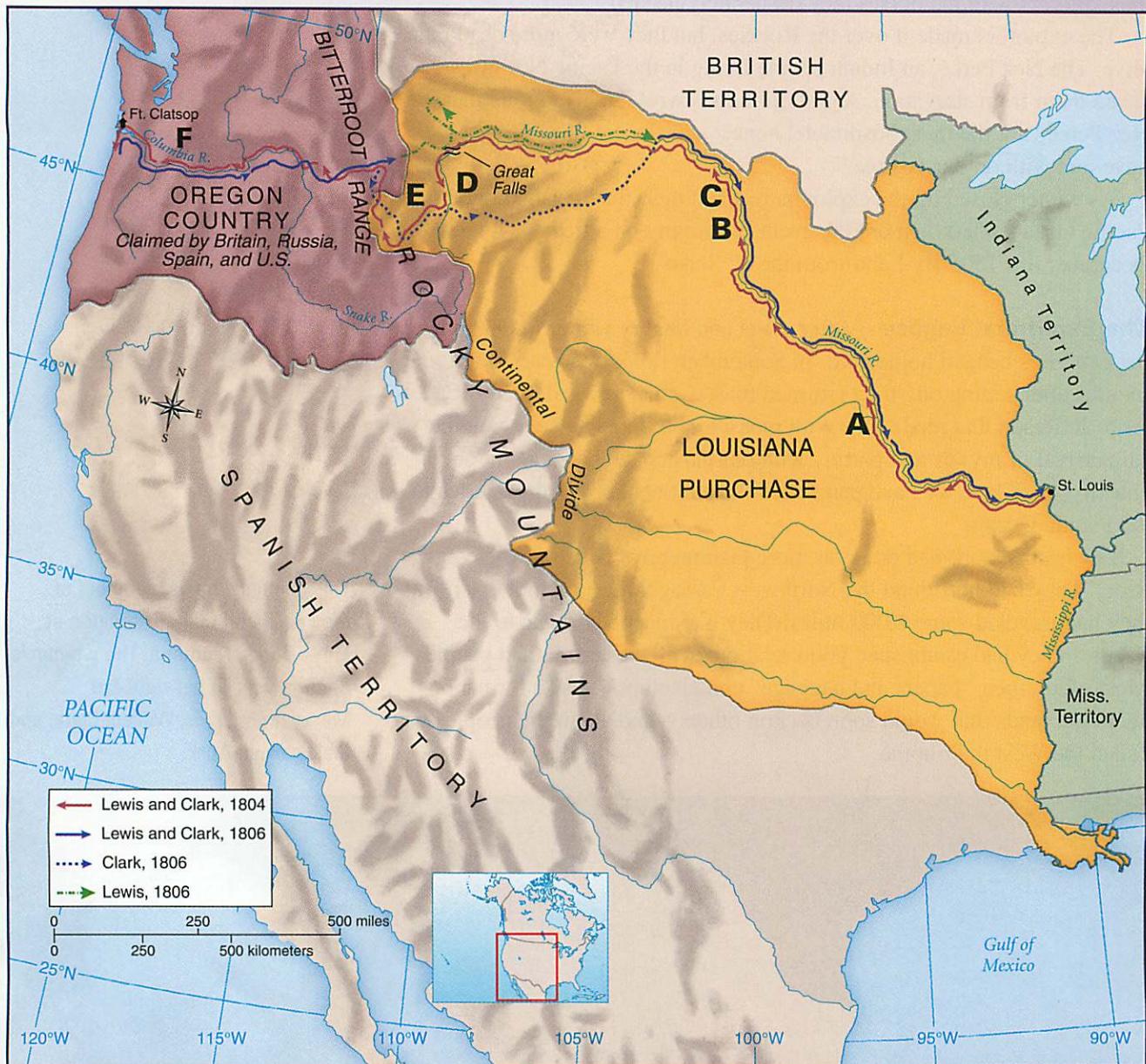
Lewis and Clark had done far more than merely "penetrate the continent." They had not found the Northwest Passage, for it did not exist. But they had traveled some 8,000 miles. They had mapped a route to the Pacific. They had established good relations with western Indian peoples. Most of all, their "papers and baggage" contained priceless information about the lands that would soon beckon others—and about the peoples who called the West their home.

This painting shows members of the Lewis and Clark expedition at Three Forks, Montana. The woman is Sacagawea. To her right are Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, and Clark's slave, York.



# Geography Challenge

## Lewis and Clark Expedition



1. What details do you see on this map?
2. What specific geographic features did Lewis and Clark encounter?
3. What challenges might these features have created for them?
4. What other challenges might Lewis and Clark have faced on their expedition?



Image A: August 3, 1804. Excerpts from William Clark's journal: "chiefs," "long speech," "wishes of our government," "trading," and "a canister of (gun) powder."

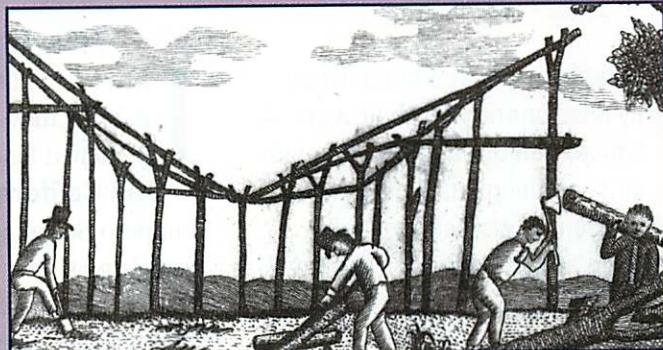


Image B: November 3, 1804. Excerpts from William Clark's journal: "plenty of timber," "building," "our camp," and "we received a visit from Kagohami."

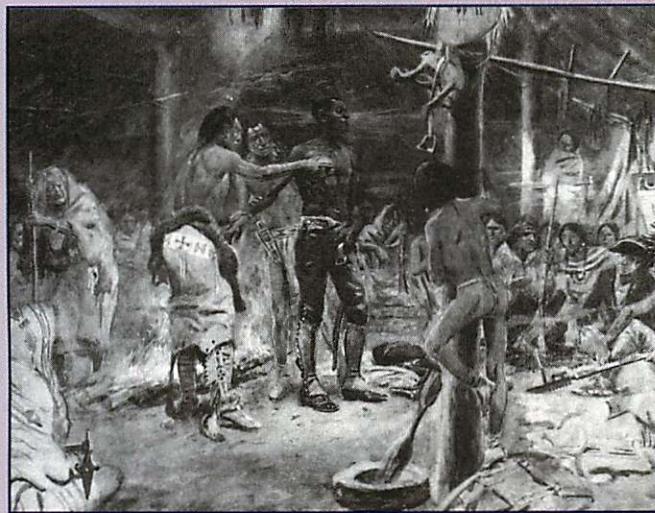


Image C: March 9, 1805. Excerpts from William Clark's journal: "grand chief of the Minnetarees," "surprised," "examined him closely," and "wash off paint."



Image D: August 6, 1805. Excerpts from Meriwether Lewis's journal: "rapid current," "baggage wet," "several articles lost," and "thrown out of one of the canoes."



Image E: August 17, 1805. Excerpts from William Clark's journal: "companions in childhood," "embraced with the most tender affection," "conference," and "interpret."



Image F: November 3, 1805. Excerpts from Joseph Whitehouse's journal: "fog so thick...we cannot see," "met several Indians in a canoe," "they signed to us," and "two hundred miles...to the ocean."

**mission:** A place established by missionaries for their work. A typical California mission included such things as a church, a residence, workshops, and large areas of land for raising crops.

**rancho:** A grant of land made by the Mexican government. Most ranchos were used for raising cattle and crops.

### 16.3 The Californios

If Lewis and Clark had turned south from Oregon after reaching the Pacific, they would have found Spain's best-kept secret, a sun-drenched land called California.

**The California Missions** In 1769, a Spanish missionary named Junipero Serra led soldiers and priests north from Mexico to California. Serra's goal was to convert the California Indians to Christianity. To do this, he began a chain of **missions** that eventually stretched from San Diego to just north of San Francisco. Each mission controlled a huge area of land, as well as the Indians who worked it.

Settlers followed the missionaries to California. "There was never a more peaceful or happy people on the face of the earth than the Spanish, Mexican and Indian population of...California," wrote Guadelupe Vallejo. "We were the pioneers of the Pacific coast, building pueblos [towns] and missions while George Washington was carrying on the war of the Revolution."

Although the missionaries meant well, the missions were deadly to native Californians. Indians were sometimes treated harshly, and thousands died of diseases brought to California by the newcomers.

When Mexico won its independence in 1821, California came under Mexican rule. In 1833, the Mexican government closed the missions and opened mission lands to settlement. Half of this land was supposed to go to Indians. Most of it, however, went to soldiers and settlers. The typical Spanish-speaking Californian, or *Californio*, was granted a **rancho** of 50,000 acres or more.



The prosperity and pride of the Californios is evident in this painting, *Hacienda y Su Mayordomo*, meaning "The Landowner and His Foreman."

**Life on the Ranchos** Life on the ranchos combined hard work and the occasional *fiesta*, or social gathering. Most families lived in simple adobe houses with dirt floors. The Californios produced almost everything they needed at home. Indian servants did much of the work.

The ranchos were so huge that neighbors lived at least a day's journey apart. As a result, strangers were always welcome for the news they brought of the outside world. During weddings and fiestas, Californios celebrated with singing, dancing, and

brilliant displays of horsemanship.

In the 1830s, cattle ranching became California's most important industry. Cattle provided hides and tallow (beef fat) to trade for imported goods brought by ship. An American sailor named Richard Henry Dana described the goods his trading ship carried to California:

*"We had...teas, coffee, sugars, spices, raisins, molasses, hard-ware, crockery-ware, tin-ware, cutlery, clothing of all kinds, boots and shoes ...shawls, scarfs, necklaces, jewelry... furniture...and in fact everything than can be imagined, from Chinese fire-works to English cart-wheels."*

Because California was so far from the capital in Mexico City, the territory was neglected by the Mexican government. Soldiers were not paid, and they took what they needed to survive from the people they were supposed to protect. Officials sent to govern California were often unskilled and sometimes dishonest.

**The Californios' Legacy** In 1846, the United States captured California as part of the war with Mexico. Before long, Californios were a minority in California.

Still, the Californios left a lasting mark. California is full of Spanish place names such as San Diego, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. The Californios also introduced many of California's famous crops, such as grapes, olives, and citrus fruits. Most of all, they opened California to the world. As you will see, the world soon rushed in.

## 16.4 The Mountain Men

The Lewis and Clark expedition stirred new interest in an old industry, the fur trade. Inspired by the explorers' reports of finding beaver in the Rockies, a Spanish trader named Manuel Lisa followed their route west. In 1807, Lisa led 42 trappers up the Missouri River. The next year, he took 350 trappers into the Rockies. For the next 30 years, trappers crisscrossed the West in search of valuable furs.

**The Trapper's Life** The trappers, who were also called *mountain men*, lived hard and usually died young. During the spring and fall, they set their traps in icy streams. In July, they traveled to trading posts to swap furs for supplies or gathered for an annual "rendezvous," or get-together. Here is how writer Washington Irving described one rendezvous:

*This, then, is the trapper's holiday.... [The men] engaged in contests of skill at running, jumping, wrestling, shooting with the rifle, and running horses.... They drank together, they sang, they laughed, they whooped; they tried to outbrag and outlie each other in stories of their adventures and achievements. Here were the free trappers in all their glory.*

Mountain men, like this one pictured in a Frederick Remington painting, were rugged individualists. They often wore shirts and trousers made from animal hides and had hair that hung to their shoulders.



The Granger Collection, New York

In their search for furs, mountain men established new routes to Oregon and California.



The rendezvous may have been fun, but the trappers' lives were filled with hazards. Trappers were attacked by fur thieves, Indians, wolves, and bears. Mountain man Hugh Glass was mauled by a mother bear that threw chunks of his flesh to her hungry cubs before friends rescued him.

Accidents were common, too. A single misplaced step on a mountain, or a misjudged river rapid, often meant sudden death. Disease also took a heavy toll. When one man asked for news about a party of trappers, he learned that "some had died by lingering diseases, and others by the fatal [rifle] ball or arrow." Out of 116 men, he wrote, "there were not more than sixteen alive."

**Freedom and Adventure** Trappers braved this dangerous way of life because of its freedom and adventure. A good example is Jim Beckwourth, a slave who fled Virginia to become a fur trapper. While hunting beaver in the Rockies, Beckwourth was captured by Crow Indians. According to Beckwourth, an old woman identified him as her long-lost son, and he was adopted into the tribe. "What could I do?" he wrote later. "Even if I should deny my Crow origin, they would not believe me."

Beckwourth lived with the Crow for six years and became a chief. By the time he left the tribe in the 1830s, the fur trade was in decline. Like other mountain men, however, Beckwourth continued his adventurous life as an explorer, army scout, and trader. In 1850, he discovered the lowest pass across the Sierra Nevada mountain range, known today as Beckwourth Pass.

**The Mountain Men's Legacy** In their search for furs, the mountain men explored most of the West. The routes they pioneered across mountains and deserts became the Oregon and California Trails. Their trading posts turned into supply stations for settlers moving west along those trails.

A surprising number of mountain men left another kind of legacy as well—personal journals. Their stories still have the power to make us laugh and cry—and to wonder how they lived long enough to tell their tales.

## 16.5 The Missionaries

Ever since Lewis and Clark appeared among them, the Nez Percé had been friendly toward Americans. In 1831, three Nez Percé traveled to St. Louis to learn more about the white man's ways. There, the Nez Percé asked if someone would come west to teach their people the secrets of the "Black Book," or Bible.

Several missionaries answered that call. The best known were Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and Henry and Eliza Spalding. In 1836, the two couples traveled west from St. Louis along the **Oregon Trail**.

It was a difficult journey. Narcissa described the Rockies as "the most terrible mountains for steepness." Still, the missionaries arrived safely in Oregon, proving that women could endure the journey west.

**A Difficult Start** On reaching Oregon, the group split up. The Spaldings went to work with the Nez Percé. The Whitmans worked among a neighboring group, the Cayuse. Neither couple knew very much about the people they hoped to convert. The result was a difficult start.

After three years the Spaldings finally made their first converts. In 1839, Henry baptized two Nez Percé chiefs. A year later, one of the chiefs had his infant son baptized as well. The child would grow up to be the leader best known as Chief Joseph. You will meet him again later in this book.

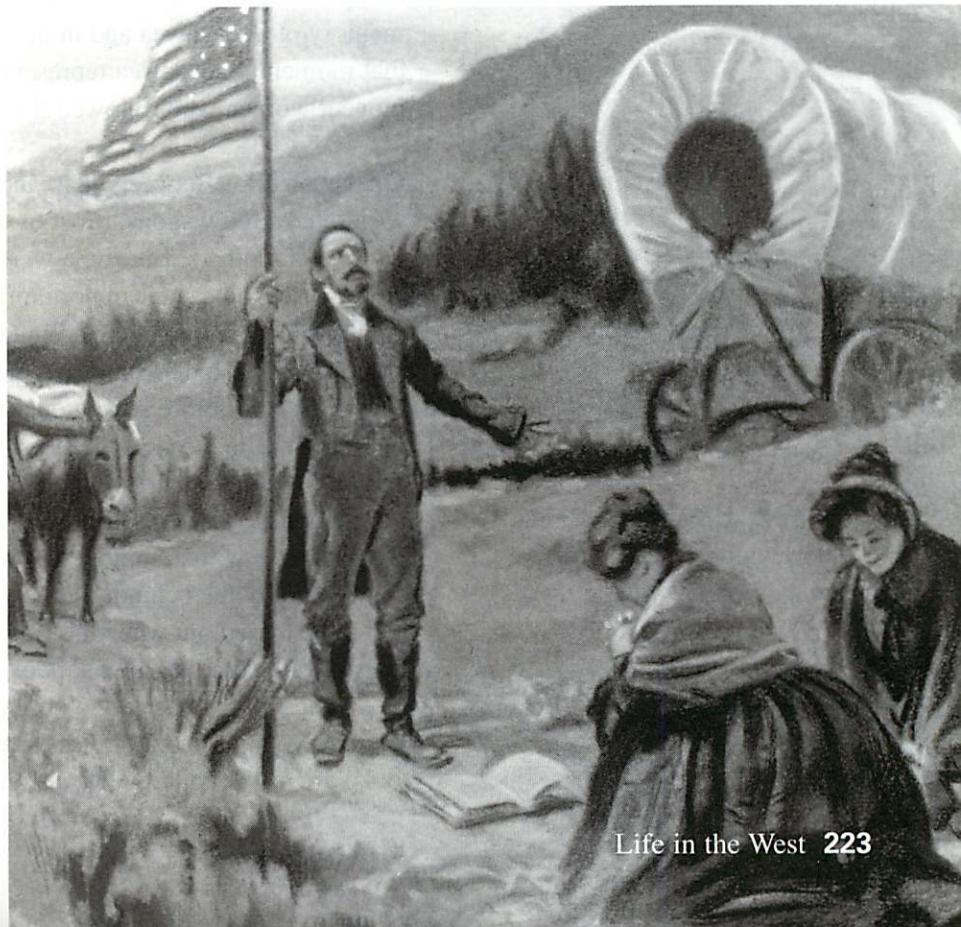
The Whitmans were less successful. The Cayuse were far more interested in the whites' weapons and tools than in their religion. The couple also offended the Cayuse. They refused to pay for the land they took for their mission or to offer visitors gifts, as was the Indians' custom. Not a single Cayuse converted to the new faith.

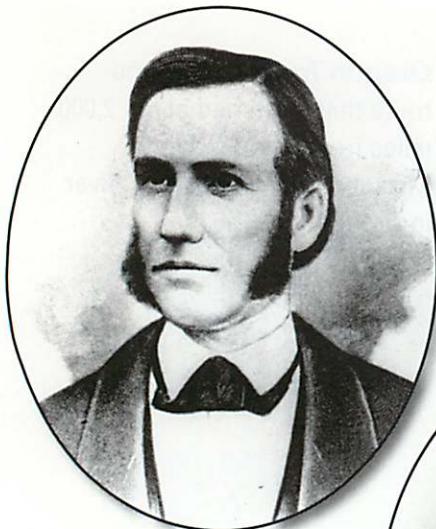
**A Pioneer's Paradise** Marcus Whitman was far more successful at converting Americans to the belief that Oregon was a pioneer's paradise. "It does not concern me so much what is to become of any particular set of Indians," he wrote. "Our greatest work is...to aid the white settlement of this country and help to found its religious institutions."

In 1842, Marcus traveled east on horseback. Along the way, he urged Americans to settle in Oregon. On his return, he guided a large group of settlers along the Oregon Trail. More settlers soon followed. "The poor Indians are amazed at the overwhelming number of Americans coming into the country," observed Narcissa. "They seem not to know what to make of it."

**Oregon Trail:** an overland route that stretched about 2,000 miles from Independence, Missouri, to the Columbia River in Oregon

In 1836, Marcus and Narcissa Whitman married and set out for Oregon to establish a mission. Here they are seen offering prayers for a safe journey.





The Whitmans were killed by angry Indian warriors who blamed them for a deadly outbreak of measles.



In 1847, measles came west with settlers and swept through the Whitman mission. Marcus treated the sick as best he could. The Cayuse noticed that whites usually recovered, while their own people were dying. Rumors spread that Whitman was giving deadly pills to Indians. Angry warriors attacked the mission, killing both Marcus and Narcissa.

**The Missionaries' Legacy** Like the Spanish priests in California, American preachers in Oregon hoped that their legacy would be large numbers of Christian Indians. In fact, relatively few Indians became Christians. Many, however, died of the diseases that came west with the missionaries.

The missionaries' true legacy was to open the West to settlement. In California, Oregon, and other territories, settlers followed in the footsteps of western missionaries.

## 16.6 The Pioneer Women

**O**n a July afternoon in 1905, a crowd gathered at the Lewis and Clark Exposition in Portland, Oregon. They had come to dedicate a statue of Sacagawea, the first woman to journey across the continent.

Cheers rang out as the flag draped over the statue was pulled away. There she stood, a beautiful young woman carrying a baby on her back, her arm pointing the way forever west. The sign beneath the statue read, "In memory of Sacagawea and in honor of the pioneer mothers of Oregon." At that moment, Sacagawea represented the courage and strength of all the pioneer women who followed the missionaries west.

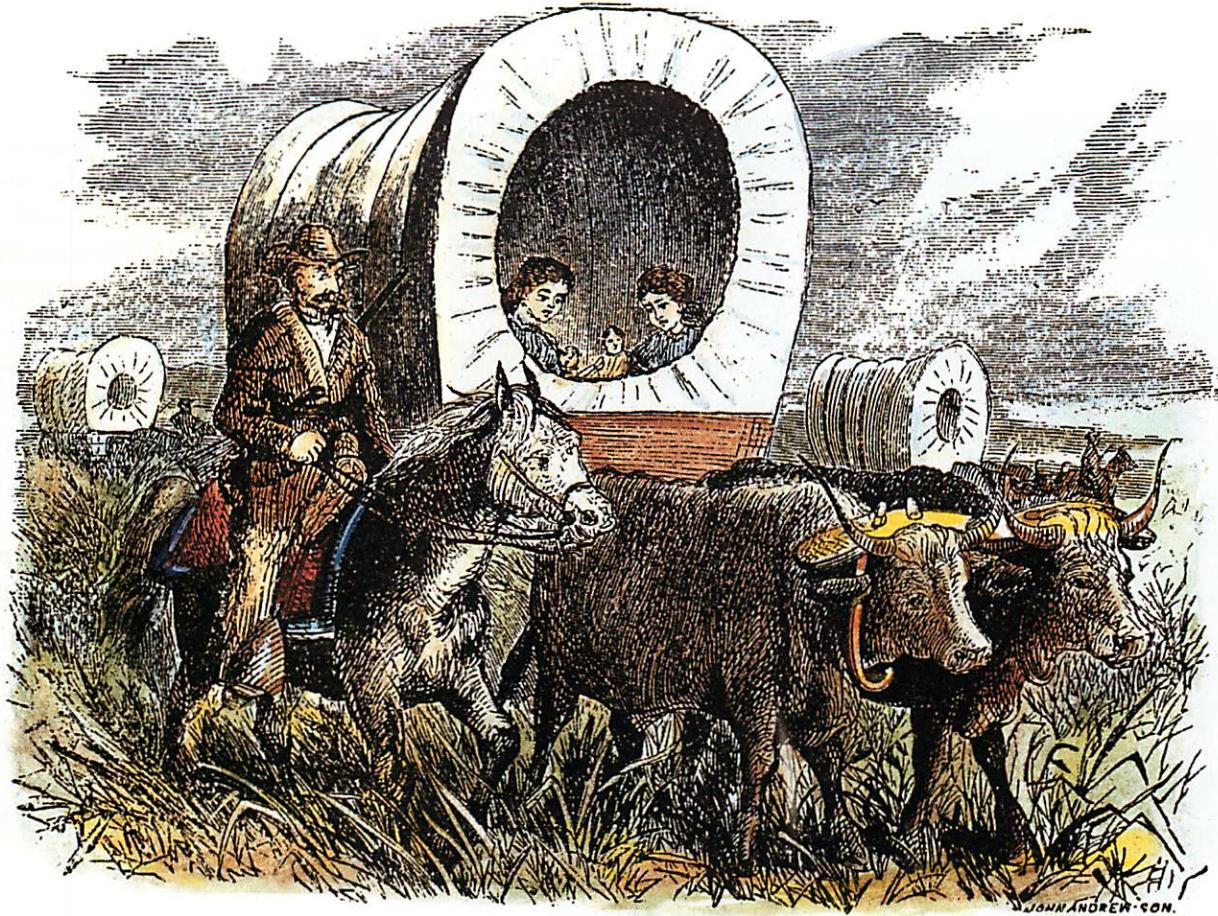
**On the Trail** Between 1840 and 1869, about 350,000 people traveled west in covered wagons. Most of the women who made that journey were wives and mothers. But some were single women seeking **homesteads**, husbands, or other new opportunities.

The pioneers met in the spring near Independence, Missouri. Traveling alone was far too dangerous, so pioneers formed columns of wagons called *wagon trains*. Before setting out, members of a wagon train agreed on rules and elected leaders. They knew that they had to cooperate with one another in order to survive the trip west.

The journey lasted four to six months and covered about 2,000 miles. Wagon space was so limited that women were forced to leave most of the comforts of home behind. The few treasures they managed to fit in often had to be tossed out when the way became steep. The Oregon Trail was littered with furniture, china, books, and other cherished objects.

Women were expected to do the work they had done back home, but while traveling 15 to 20 miles a day. They cooked, washed clothes, and took care of the children. Meals on wheels were simple. "About the only

**homestead:** a plot of land where pioneers could build a home, farm, or ranch



JONN ANDREW SON.

change we have from bread and bacon," wrote Helen Carpenter, "is to bacon and bread."

The daily drudgery wore many women down. Lavinia Porter recalled, "I would make a brave effort to be cheerful and patient until the camp work was done. Then starting out ahead of the team and my men folks, when I thought I had gone beyond hearing distance, I would throw myself down on the unfriendly desert and give way like a child to sob and tears."

**Trail Hazards** The death toll on the trail was high. Disease was the worst killer. Accidents were also common. People drowned in river crossings. Children fell from wagons and were crushed under the wheels.

Indian attacks were rare. At first, many Native Americans saw the settlers' westward movement as an opportunity. They earned money as guides or by selling supplies to the pioneers. The Sac and Pawnee collected tolls from wagons crossing their land. Some Indians even began thinking of moving eastward. Surely, they thought, the East must be empty now that "the whole white village" was moving west!

By the end of the journey, each woman had a story to tell. Some had seen buffalo stampedes and prairie fires on the Great Plains. Some had almost frozen to death in the mountains or died of thirst in the deserts. But most survived to build new lives in the West.

**The Pioneer Women's Legacy** The journey west changed pioneer women. The hardships of the trail brought out strengths and abilities they did not know they possessed. "I felt a secret joy," declared one Oregon pioneer, "in being able to have the power that sets things going."

Pioneers who wished to go west met in Independence, Missouri, in the spring. There they formed wagon trains before setting out on the trail.



Although pioneer women had to travel 15 to 20 miles a day, they were still expected to take care of household chores when the wagon train stopped for the night.

**Mormons:** Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. *Latter-Day* means "modern," while *saints* are people who dedicate their lives to following God's teachings.

And women did set things going. Wherever they settled, schools, churches, libraries, literary societies, and charitable groups soon blossomed. One of the first colleges on the Pacific Coast was founded by sixty-six-year-old Tabitha Brown, who arrived in Oregon in 1846 with six cents to her name. Mother Joseph, a nun from Canada, designed and built the Northwest's first schools and hospitals.

Pioneer women also used their power to win a right long denied them in the East—the right to vote. By 1900, women were voting in four western states. Nowhere else in the United States did women enjoy the freedom and sense of equality of the western pioneers. This was perhaps the greatest legacy of the pioneer women.

## 16.7 The Mormons

In 1846, a wagon train of pioneers headed west in search of a new home. Looking down on the shining surface of Great Salt Lake in what is now Utah, their leader, Brigham Young, declared, "This is the place!"

It was not a promising spot. One pioneer described the valley as a "broad and barren plain...blistering in the rays of the midsummer sun." A woman wrote, "Weak and weary as I am, I would rather go a thousand miles further than remain." But that was one of the valley's attractions. No one else wanted the place that Brigham Young claimed for his followers, the Mormons.

**A Persecuted Group** The **Mormons** were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. This new church was founded in New York by Joseph Smith in 1830. Smith taught that he had received a sacred book, *The Book of Mormon*, from an angel. He believed that it was his task to create a community of believers who would serve God faithfully.

Smith's followers lived in close communities, working hard and sharing their goods. Yet wherever they settled—first New York, then Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois—they were persecuted by their neighbors.

Many people were offended by the Mormons' teachings, especially their acceptance of polygamy—the practice of having more than one wife. Others resented the Mormons' rapidly growing power and wealth. In 1844, resentment turned to violence when a mob in Illinois killed Joseph Smith.

After Smith's murder, Brigham Young took over as leader of the Mormons. Young decided to move his community to Utah. There, the Mormons might be left alone to follow their faith in peace.

**West to Utah** Young turned out to be a practical as well as pious leader. "Prayer is good," he said, "but when baked potatoes and pudding are needed, prayer will not supply their place."

Young carefully planned every detail of the trek to Utah. The pioneers he led west stopped along the way to build shelters and plant crops for those who would follow.

Even with all this planning, the journey was difficult. "We soon thought it unusual," wrote one Mormon, "to leave a campground without burying one or more persons."

When he arrived at Great Salt Lake, Young laid out his first settlement, Salt Lake City. By the time he died in 1877, Utah had 125,000 Mormons living in 500 settlements.

To survive in this dry country, Mormons had to learn new ways to farm. They built dams, canals, and irrigation ditches to carry precious water from mountain streams to their farms in the valley. With this water, they made the desert bloom.

**The Mormons' Legacy** The Mormons were the first Americans to settle the Great Basin. They pioneered the farming methods adopted by later settlers of this dry region. They also helped settlers make their way west. Salt Lake City quickly became an important stop for travelers in need of food and supplies.

To the Mormons, however, their greatest legacy was the faith they planted so firmly in the Utah desert. From its center in Salt Lake City, the Mormon church has grown into a worldwide religion with more than 7 million members.

When Mormons were unable to purchase wagons or oxen for the journey to Utah, they pulled their belongings in handcarts.



**forty-niners:** the people (almost all young men) who joined the rush for gold in California in 1849

## 16.8 The Forty-Niners

In 1848, carpenter James Marshall was building a sawmill on the American River in northern California. Suddenly, he spotted something shining in the water. "I reached my hand down and picked it up," he wrote later. "It made my heart thump, for I felt certain it was gold."

When word of Marshall's discovery leaked out, people across California dropped everything to race to the goldfields. "All were off to the mines," wrote a minister, "some on horses, some on carts, and some on crutches."

**The World Rushes In** By 1849, tens of thousands of gold seekers from around the world had joined the California gold rush. About two thirds of these **forty-niners** were Americans. The rest came from Mexico, South America, Europe, Australia, and even China.

The forty-niners' first challenge was simply getting to California. From China and Australia, they had to brave the rough crossing of the Pacific Ocean. From the East, many traveled by ship to Panama in Central America, crossed through dangerous jungles to the Pacific side, and boarded ships north to San Francisco. Others made the difficult journey overland.

Most forty-niners were young, and almost all were men. When Luzena Wilson arrived in Sacramento with her family, a miner offered her \$5 for her biscuits just to have "bread made by a woman." When she hesitated, he doubled his offer. "Women were scarce in those days," she wrote. "I lived six months in Sacramento and saw only two."

The search for gold was difficult. Miners spent long days searching through the mud and stones of freezing streams for this precious metal.



**Life in the Mining Camps** Wherever gold was spotted, mining camps with names like Mad Mule Gulch and You Bet popped up overnight. At Coyote Diggings, Luzena found “a row of canvas tents.” A few months later, “there were two thousand men...and the streets were lined with drinking saloons and gambling tables.” Merchants made fortunes selling eggs for \$6 a dozen and flour for \$400 a barrel.

With no police to keep order, the camps were rough places. Miners frequently fought over the boundaries of their claims, and they took it on themselves to punish crimes. “In the short space of twenty-four hours,” wrote Louise Clappe, “we have had murders, fearful accidents, bloody deaths, a mob, whippings, a hanging, an attempt at suicide, and a fatal duel.”

Digging for gold was hard and tedious work. The miners spent long days digging up mud, dirt, and stones while standing knee-deep in icy streams. All too soon, the easy-to-find gold was gone. “The day of quick fortune-making is over,” wrote a miner in 1851. “There are thousands of men now in California who would gladly go home if they had the money.”

**The Forty-Niners’ Legacy** By 1852, the gold rush was over. While it lasted, about 250,000 people flooded into California. For California’s Indians, the legacy of this invasion was dreadful. Between 1848 and 1870, warfare and disease reduced their number from about 150,000 to just 30,000. In addition, many Californios lost their land to the newcomers.

The forty-niners also left a prosperous legacy. By 1850, California had enough people to become the first state in the far west. These new Californians helped to transform the Golden State into a diverse land of economic opportunity.

## 16.9 The Chinese

**G**am Saan—“Gold Mountain”—was what people in China called California in 1848. To poor and hungry Chinese peasants, Gam Saan sounded like paradise. There, they were told, “You will have great pay, large houses, and food and clothing of the finest description.... Money is in great plenty.”

By 1852, more than 20,000 Chinese had ventured across the Pacific to California. That year, one of every ten Californians was Chinese.

**An Uncertain Welcome** At first the Chinese were welcome. Lai Chun-Chuen, an early immigrant, observed that they “were received like guests” and “greeted with favor.” In 1852, the governor of California



Miners shoveled gravel into a narrow box called a *sluice*. The water running through washed away the lighter particles, and the gold remained.

Thousands of Chinese left their homeland and flocked to the California goldfields. Most failed to strike it rich. However, many settled in California's Central Valley, where their knowledge of farming helped the area develop.



praised Chinese immigrants as "one of the most worthy classes of our newly adopted citizens."

As gold mining became more difficult, however, attitudes toward immigrants began to change. A miner from Chile complained, "The Yankee regarded every man but...an American as an interloper [intruder] who had no right to come to California and pick up the gold." The Chinese, too, came under attack.

American miners called on the government to drive foreigners out of the goldfields. In 1852, the state legislature passed a law requiring foreign miners to pay a monthly fee for a license to mine. As the tax collectors arrived in the camps, most of the foreigners left. One traveler saw them "scattered along the roads in every direction," like refugees fleeing an invading army.

**The Chinese Stay** The Chinese, however, paid the tax and stayed on. When the miners' tax failed to drive off the Chinese, Americans tried to bully them into leaving. Whites hacked off the long *queues*, or braids, worn by Chinese men. They burned the shacks of Chinese miners. Beatings followed burnings.

Discouraged Chinese immigrants left the mines to open restaurants, laundries, and stores in California's growing cities. "The best eating

houses in San Francisco," one miner wrote, were those opened by the Chinese. So many Chinese settled in San Francisco that local newspapers called their neighborhood Chinatown. Today, Chinatown remains the oldest and largest Chinese community in the United States.

Other Chinese put their farming skills to work in California's fertile Central Valley. They drained swamps and dug irrigation ditches to water arid fields. In time, they would help transform California into America's fruit basket and salad bowl.

**The Legacy of the Chinese Immigrants** Most of the Chinese who came to California in search of gold hoped to return to China as rich men. A few did just that. Most, however, stayed on in America. Despite continued prejudice against them, their hard work, energy, and skills greatly benefited California and other western states. "In mining, farming, in factories and in the labor generally of California," observed a writer in 1876, "the employment of the Chinese has been found most desirable."

The Chinese not only helped to build the West, but they also made it a more interesting place to live. Wherever they settled, Chinese immigrants brought with them the arts, tastes, scents, and sounds of one of the world's oldest and richest cultures.

## 16.10 Chapter Summary

In the 1800s, the West became a magnet for people seeking adventure and opportunity. In this chapter, you learned about the people who settled the West. You used an illustration of a western town to study eight groups of settlers and their contributions to the West.

The Lewis and Clark expedition went west to find the Northwest Passage and to establish friendly relations with the native peoples. By mapping and collecting information about the West, the expedition helped prepare the way for future settlement.

In California, Spanish-speaking settlers followed in the footsteps of missionaries. The Californios' way of life centered on the rancho and the raising of cattle.

Valuable beaver furs—and a life of freedom and adventure—attracted fur trappers to the West. Many of these hardy “mountain men” stayed on as scouts, guides, and traders.

Missionaries traveled to Oregon and other western territories in hopes of converting Indians to Christianity. Although they made few converts, the missionaries attracted other settlers to the West.

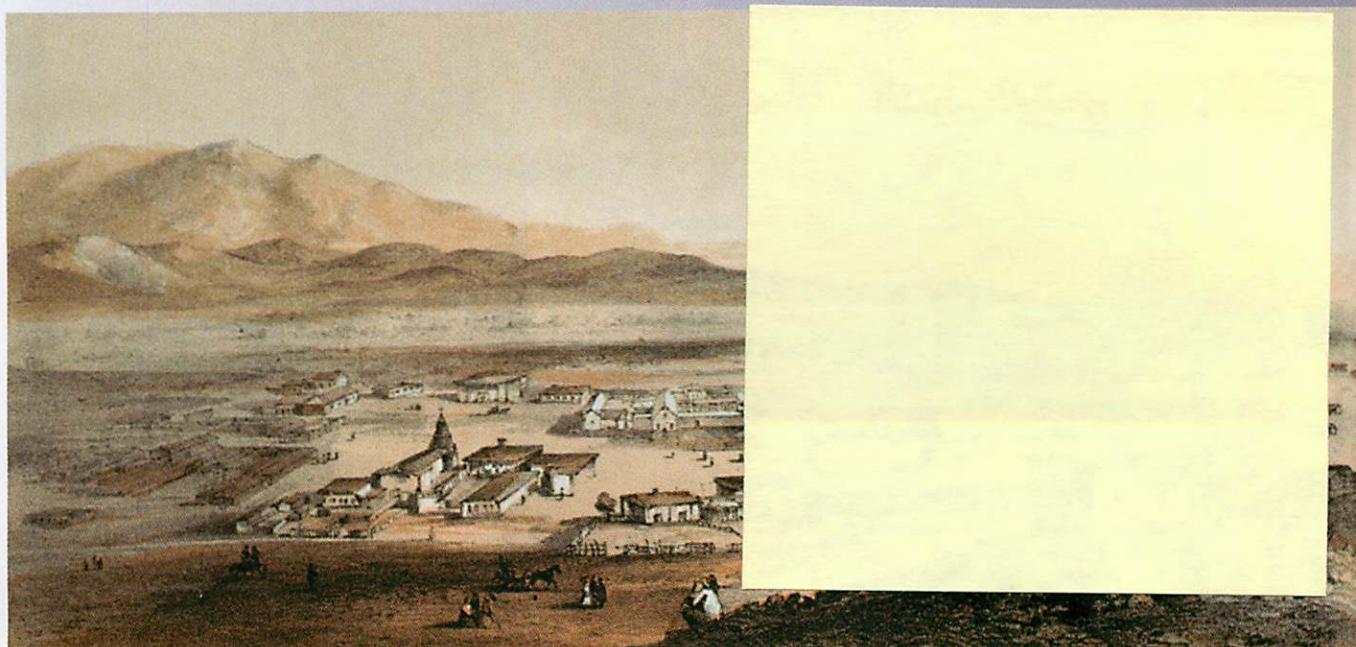
Many women pioneers sought new opportunities in the West. Besides working to establish homes and farms, women brought education and culture to new settlements.

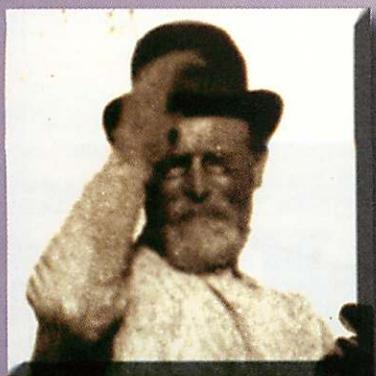
Mormon pioneers traveled to Utah in search of religious freedom. The Mormons built cities and towns, and they introduced new methods of farming to the dry plains.

Gold seekers from all over the world rushed to California in 1849. Few became rich, but many stayed to help build the economy of the new state.

The gold rush attracted thousands of Chinese immigrants to California. Although they often had to fight prejudice, most of them remained in the United States, working as laborers and starting new businesses and farms.

Many settlers who moved west built small towns. Some became huge cities. This painting shows an already sprawling Los Angeles, California, in the early 1800s.





Why does this man need  
a burro?



What do these packs  
contain?



How is this man helping  
the other man?