

Westward Expansion

Introduction to Westward Expansion

The Louisiana Purchase

In 1803, Thomas Jefferson bought a huge portion of land west of the Mississippi. He bought this land from France. The new territory was called the Louisiana Purchase. It more than doubled the size of the United States! The Louisiana Purchase cost 15 million dollars total. That amounts to about 4 cents an **acre**¹ The land included 828,000 square miles of new land.

Now Americans would be responsible for exploring and settling much of this huge continent. The age of Westward Expansion was about to start.

Manifest Destiny

By the 1840's, Americans **envisioned**² a nation that spread “from sea to shining sea.” They felt that it was their duty to spread out across the land. The belief in young democracy was so strong that Americans wanted to spread it across the entire continent. To them, exploring and **cultivating**³ new territory was the **destiny**⁴ of the young country and its citizens. Soon, the phrase “Manifest Destiny” was echoing in newspapers and political speeches. The West was the **embodiment**⁵ of American optimism. Many American adventurers would go west to seek their fortunes.

¹ **acre** – a unit of area used to measure land

² **envision** – to imagine

³ **cultivate** - to grow crops

⁴ **destiny** - something a person or group is meant to be or do

⁵ **embodiment** – the physical form of something