

America's Westward Expansion: 25 Events in 50 Minutes*

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**Please note: this presentation includes disturbing topics of America's government-led expansion of slavery, and the land theft and subsequent forced migration, assimilation, and/or genocide of Mormon, Mexican, and Native American populations. I acknowledge that we here in the U.S. are residing on unceded tribal land of indigenous people whose ancestors inhabited this land thousands of years prior to our violent invasion.*

Objective: To highlight major laws and events that contributed to America's westward expansion between 1787 and 1890, with a focus on territorial boundaries, slavery, and wars against Mexico and Native Americans.

1. **Northwest Ordinance** (1787) - A Congressional act created the Northwest Territory from formerly British land following the American Revolution.
2. **Louisiana Purchase** (1803) - Napoleon sold the Louisiana Territory (827,000+ mi²) to the U.S., doubling its size and extending its sovereignty across the Mississippi River.
3. **Lewis & Clark Expedition** (1804-1806) - The Corps of Discovery was led by Lewis & Clark to explore and map the Louisiana Purchase land.
4. **Military Tract of 1812** - A Congressional act set aside bounty land for War of 1812 soldiers to encourage settlement in the frontier.
5. **Missouri Compromise** (1820) - Slavery was banned north of Missouri's southern border (excluding Missouri) but was allowed south of that border.
6. **Indian Removal Act** (1830) - President Andrew Jackson ordered indigenous Americans from their land, with military members and volunteers imprisoning and slaughtering them, then marching those who remained along the Trail of Tears.
7. **Texas War of Independence** (1836) - Many Mexicans & Texan Americans successfully battled for secession from Mexico, resulting in the Texas Republic.
8. **Oregon Trail** (1843) - Missionary Marcus Whitman accompanied 1,000+ people, their wagons, and livestock on a 2,000+-mile route from the Missouri River to Oregon.
9. **Oregon Treaty** (1846) - President James Polk's treaty ended joint British & American occupation of Oregon Country, and established the 49th parallel as the northwest border between the U.S. and Canada.

10. **Mormon trek to Utah** (1846) - Brigham Young led 70,000+ Mormons from Illinois along the Mormon Trail and into Salt Lake City, Utah to escape religious persecution.
11. **Mexican-American War** (1846-1848) - President James Polk's offer to purchase some of Mexico's land was rejected, leading to a border skirmish between the Mexican Calvary and U.S. troops. The U.S. gained present-day Arizona*, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico*, and Utah (*except those portions later a part of the Gadsden Purchase) through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.
12. **California Gold Rush** (1848-1855) - Gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill 9 days before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ceded California to the U.S.
13. **Compromise of 1850** - Congress passed 5 separate laws to solve boundary disputes and the issue of slavery in California, New Mexico, Utah, and Washington, DC.
14. **Indian Appropriations Act** (1851) - Native Americans were confined to reservations, freeing up their land for distribution to non-native, white settlers.
15. **Gadsden Purchase** (1854) - President Franklin Pierce authorized James Gadsden's \$10 million purchase of 29,000 square miles of Mexican land in present-day southern Arizona and New Mexico, creating a new border between Mexico and America.
16. **Kansas-Nebraska Act** (1854) - President Pierce's act created the Kansas Territory and Nebraska Territory, repealing the 1820 Missouri Compromise's border between free & slave states and mandating "popular sovereignty."
17. **Pike's Peak Gold Rush** (1858-1861) - The discovery of gold occurred in the area of present-day Denver, Colorado and attracted 100,000+ settlers from across the U.S.
18. **Pony Express** (1860-1861) - A mail-delivery system that spanned 2,000+ miles between Missouri and California utilized 100+ stations, 80+ mail deliverymen, and 400+ horses, and allowed mail sent from Missouri to reach California in under 13 days.
19. **U.S. Civil War** (1861-1865) - The Civil War started over the demand of states' rights to slavery, as recorded in the Confederate States Constitution, Ordinances of Secession, and Declaration of Cause.
20. **Homestead Act** (1862) - President Abraham Lincoln's act allowed 160 acres of government land to be bought for \$18, accelerating the settlement of the west.
21. **Transcontinental Railroad** (1863-1869) - The 1862 Pacific Railroad Act provided land and limited financing to the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific railroad companies to link the eastern and western halves of America.

22. **Black Hills Gold Rush (1874-1876)** - Increasing rumors of Black Hills gold following General Custer's expedition to the Dakota Territory drew vast numbers of trespassing prospectors to land that belonged to the Sioux and Cheyenne Nations.
23. **Great Sioux War (Black Hills War) of 1876** - The discovery of gold in the Black Hills was used to excuse war against local Native Americans, forcing them off their land.
24. **The Dawes Act/General Allotment Act (1887)** - President Grover Cleveland stripped tribal land from Native Americans, then allotted some land back to those willing to become U.S. citizens. Remaining tribal lands were sold to non-native, white settlers.
25. **Western frontier is "closed"** (1890) - The Census Bureau Superintendent said that the 1890 census reflected an absence of a frontier line (a population density of less than 2 people per square mile) and declared the Western frontier to be "closed."

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