

Moving West: Building an Empire

I. 1750-1820 The Ohio Valley and the Chicago Portage

The British royal proclamation of 1763 forbade settlement west of the crest of the Appalachian Mountains, however this did little to deter explorers and settlers who desired to move deeper into the interior. After the American Revolution and the Northwest Ordinance in 1787, the trans-Appalachian West became site of one of the greatest land rushes in US history. Wealthy individuals and companies (such as the Transylvania Company) quickly claimed possession of prime land and viewed the west to be unoccupied and free for the taking.

Examine "[A map of the United States of America](#)." Why do you think the map was "compiled chiefly from the state maps and other authentic information?"

What do you notice are the most important features of this map and why do you think they were chosen (who is the audience)?

Find two landmarks/areas on the map that have different names today.

Map Label	Today's Name

Although we have maps and charts (as well as other government documents), there is a lack of diaries and letters about settlers' experiences. Why do you think that is the case?

Next, examine the [plat of surveys from the Ohio River](#) in 1798. During any "land grab," competing claims are bound to occur. This map shows overlapping boundaries, possibly due to an earlier surveying error. How do you think boundaries were established in a manner that improved on simply stating "as far as the eye can see?" (Hint: Examine both maps)

Of course, the United States was not the only nation vying for control of the continent. The French and Spanish covered land south from Canada through the Great Lakes and all along the Mississippi River across the Great Plains. On June 1, 1792, Kentucky was admitted as the fifteenth state of the Union and became the first state west of the Appalachians (with over 73,00 residents, 12,000 of them slaves). With

greater access to the Ohio River and the Wilderness Road, Kentucky grew rapidly and agriculture became the economic mainstay of the area.

Examine the [Fayette County](#) notice. How does the tone of the top portion differ from that to the “poor and indigent?”

Who would have been the audience of this document? Who would have been excluded?

What is one “consideration” the author gives to his fellow-citizens?

What does this document tell us about society in the “wild west” of the Ohio River valley?

The Chicago Portage

In 1673, French-Canadian explorers **Jacques Marquette** and **Louis Jolliet** passed through the area known by trappers and traders as “Checagou.” The Chicago Portage is a water gap that connects the Mississippi River and Lake Michigan, and is one reason Chicago became a strategic point in the continent.

For the 17th Century French explorers, much like during the expeditions of Lewis and Clark, the interior of the American continent was an unknown territory. Examine the [Franquelin](#) map (1682). What is unique about this map compared to others? How accurate is the map to what we know today?

With what you know about early American settlement, why would a connection between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River be desired in the first place? What sort of difficulties would explorers and traders have experienced in the 1600s?

Although the Chicago Portage is the only direct link between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River, it was not the only option for a connection. Examine the map by [Marquette](#) (1673), a contemporary of Franquelin. What are the main differences between the portage at Chicago and the one farther up the coast of Lake Michigan? What are the differences between this map and the Franquelin map?

Marquette (1673)	Similarities	Franquelin (1682)

Examine the other maps of the interior from the 1700s ([L'Isle](#)) and 1800s ([Arrowsmith](#)). As more sophisticated surveying techniques were invented, and thus more became “known,” do you think the portage at Chicago was still the most logical link? Why do you think Chicago was the better choice?

II. 1812-1860 Manifest Destiny

In 1850, California became the 31st state, formalizing the United State’s claim on the Pacific coast. At the time of the Gold Rush, California (as much of the Pacific region) had a large Chinese immigrant population.

Examine the [boycott](#) notice. What appears to be the primary reason for the boycott?

Many Chinese arrived in California legally through [Angel Island](#) (the counterpart to Ellis Island), but still faced pressure as “outsiders.”

Examine the [Anti-Chinese cartoon](#). What issues are being addressed in the image?

What phrases or depictions stand out as unlike what you would see in a photograph?

List five symbols/metaphors you see and what they represent:
