

United States History for Family Historians

Part Two, The National Era

- I. Impact of the Revolution on migration patterns.
 - A. Declaration of independence removes some impediments to westward movement.
 - 1. No more Proclamation line of 1763
 - 2. No British control over Indian policy.
 - 3. No British regulation of trade with French and Spanish West Indies.
 - B. Social and economic dislocation during the war.
 - 1. No trade with the former mother country.
 - 2. Disruption of many aspects of life during the Revolution.
 - 3. Loyalists in some areas and patriots in others encouraged to relocate.
 - 4. Tensions between landed and landless states.
 - 5. Treaty of Paris of 1783 results in a nation almost double in size to that anticipated, with the Mississippi River as a western boundary.
- II. Postwar problems and their resolution affect western migration
 - A. Initial difficulties with Spain over the boundary of Florida and with Britain over control of the area north and west of the Ohio River impede western migration.
 - B. Land Ordinances of 1785 and 1787 resolve questions of integrating new territory.
 - C. Treaty of Ft. Greenville, Jay's Treaty and Pinckney's Treaty mitigate some problems with Indians, British and Spanish.
 - D. Invention of the Cotton Gin and utilization of upland cotton dramatically affects not only the South, but the North, and the entire world.
 - 1. Demand for, and demands of, cotton leads to rampant western migration, not only in areas where cotton can be grown.
 - 2. Development of the textile industry in the North both encourages and impedes migration.

III. The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 almost doubles the size of the nation once more and opens vast territories for settlement.

IV. Impact of government policy affects Western migration throughout the nineteenth century.

- A. The Embargo of 1807
- B. Internal improvements, such as canals, roads and eventually railroads.
- C. The Treaty of 1818 with Great Britain guarantees a 49th parallel boundary to the Rocky Mountains, and joint occupation beyond.
- D. The Indian Removal Treaty of Washington, 1826
- E. The Pre-emption Act of 1841
- F. The Mexican Cession of 1848 opens the Southwest for American settlement.
- G. The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 heightens sectional strife and affects migration.
- H. The Homestead Act and Pacific Railway Act in 1862.
- I. The Mining Law of 1872
- J. The Dawes Severalty Act of 1887

IV. Other significant factors in predicting or understanding the movements and actions of our ancestors.

- A. Enduring quality of cultural traits passed on in families.
 - 1. Language, or vestiges in the form of expressions.
 - 2. Religious beliefs.
 - 3. Appreciation for music, literature, art or drama.
- B. Impact of geography in determining building styles, livelihoods and activities.
- C. Importance of prior experience and personal preferences in selecting geographical setting..
- D. Assumptions regarding farming procedures, soil selection and care, settlement techniques and locations.
 - 1. "Rule of the Harvest" dictates amount of land which can be cultivated effectively.
 - 2.. Presence of hardwood trees used as an indicator of soil quality.
 - 3.. Families usually do not move unless they have enough money to sustain themselves for two years without additional income.

4. Families often moved in the wintertime.

E. Cataclysmic events such as the potato famine of 1844, the failed “Revolution of 1848” and the California gold rush likely affected our own families.