

## WESTWARD EXPANSION & THE TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD

### History of Westward Expansion Before Lincoln's Presidency

- The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 officially organized the first official territory owned by the United States but lying outside the organized states.
- In 1803, the Louisiana Purchase essentially doubles the size of the country by adding territory west of the Mississippi
- President Andrew Jackson fueled Westward Expansion with the doctrine of Manifest Destiny – that United States had a right to expand its sovereignty to the Pacific Ocean.
- Jackson's forced removal of Native Americans from the states and territories east of the Mississippi opened up the West for settlement, and European Americans soon followed.
- At the heart of Westward Expansion before 1860 was the question of slavery as that institution made its way across the Mississippi and into the new states being formed there and in the South.
- When Mexico banned slavery in Texas to counter American influence there, American slave owners in Texas forced their former slaves to sign lifetime indentures, effectively circumventing the Mexican order and laying groundwork for Texas' eventual joining the Confederacy.
- The Mexican-American War resulted in the annexation of Texas and the territories of New Mexico and California.

### Westward Expansion in Lincoln's Time

- Between Lincoln's birth and his assassination the number of states more than doubled, adding a total of 18 new states carved from the Northwest Territory, territories gained in the Louisiana Purchase and the break-up of two states.
- States in order of admission to the Union

**December 11, 1816** Indiana – carved from the Northwest Territory

**December 10, 1817** Mississippi – created from territory ceded by South Carolina and Georgia and by territory claimed by Spain

**December 3, 1818** Illinois – carved from the Northwest Territory

**December 14, 1819** Alabama – carved from the Mississippi Territory

**March 15, 1820** Maine – broken off from Massachusetts

**August 10, 1821** Missouri – carved from the Louisiana Purchase

**June 15, 1836** Arkansas – carved from the Louisiana Purchase

**January 26, 1837** Michigan – carved from the Northwest Territory

**March 3, 1845** Florida – territory purchased from Spain

- December 29, 1845** Texas – won from Mexico by Texan nationalists
- December 28, 1846** Iowa is admitted to the Union – carved from the Louisiana Purchase
- May 29, 1848** Wisconsin – carved from the Northwest Territory
- December 9, 1850** California – created from territory won in the Mexican-American War
- May 11, 1858** Minnesota – carved from the Northwest Territory and Louisiana Purchase
- February 14, 1859** Oregon – carved from the Oregon Country
- January 29, 1861** Kansas – carved from the Louisiana Purchase
- June 20, 1863** West Virginia is admitted to the Union – broken off from Virginia
- October 31, 1864** Nevada is admitted to the Union – carved from the Utah Territory

- Lincoln's support of transportation, in particular a transcontinental railroad, fueled Westward Expansion into the second half of the Nineteenth Century.

- July 1860** Theodore Judah identifies the Donner Pass as the ideal location for taking a railroad line through the Sierras
- November 1860** Judah persuades five Sacramento investors to form the Central Pacific Railroad Company
- October 1861** Judah lobbies in Washington, D.C. for appropriations for the Central Pacific Railroad Company
- July 1, 1862** Lincoln signs the Pacific Railroad bill (The bill also carters the Union Pacific Railroad Company to build westward from Missouri and grants each company 64,000 acres of western land and \$48,000 for each completed mile of railroad
- January 8, 1863** Ground is broken for the Central Pacific's end of the project
- Summer 1863** Financial concerns precipitate among board members of the Central Pacific Company and motivates Judah to go east to seek new investors
- October 26, 1863** The Central Pacific Railroad Company lays its first rails
- October 30, 1863** Thomas C. Durant is appointed vice-president and general manager of the Union Pacific Railroad
- December 21, 1863** The Union Pacific Railroad breaks ground in Omaha, Nebraska, for its end of the project
- July 1, 1864** IN response to aggressive and expensive lobbying, Congress

doubles the railroads' land grants, removes all limitations on stock ownership, and grants all natural resources along the rail lines to the rail companies

**October 1864**

Thomas C. Durant engineers the Crédit Mobilier scheme to guarantee huge profits free from any governmental oversight

**January 20, 1865**

Lincoln requests Senator Oakes Ames of Massachusetts to manage the Union Pacific Railroad, but Ames quickly becomes involved in the Crédit Mobilier scheme himself

**January 1865**

The Central Pacific Railroad Company begins to use Chinese laborers

**July 10, 1865**

The Union Pacific finally begins to lay rails

**Summer 1865**

The Central Pacific Company begins drilling tunnels through the Sierra Nevada range

**1875**

The Supreme Court sets the official completion date for the Transcontinental Railroad as November 6, 1869 (six years earlier)

- The Transcontinental Railroad served President Lincoln's goals of unity and expansion.
  - Both practically and symbolically, it joined the nation by connecting California, Nevada, and the western territories with the eastern states.
  - It facilitated westward settlement by both whites and blacks following the Civil War.
  - It also led to the decline of the Native Americans who fought against the building of the railway.
- An influx of four and a half million immigrants between 1840 and 1865 and beyond further fueled expansion.