

U.S. Expansion

Manifest Destiny was a term used by Americans to represent the idea that the U.S. was **entitled** to expand its territory across North America. People supported westward expansion because they believed that they were spreading democracy and civilization. From the early 1800s to the 1850s, the United States nearly tripled in size as the country gained land west of the Mississippi River.

1775-1783 Revolutionary War

1781-1788 Articles of Confederation (weak on purpose)

1788 Ratification (approval) of U.S. Constitution

1799: North Carolina Gold Rush

Twelve year old Conrad Reed found a 17 pound gold nugget in what is today Carbarus County, NC, near Charlotte. It was used as a doorstop for three years until Reed's father took it to jeweler who bought it for \$3.50. Gold mining was a booming business in NC during early 1800s.

1803: Louisiana Purchase

President Thomas Jefferson sent James Monroe and Robert Livingston to France to purchase the port of New Orleans for \$10 million. **France offered the entire Louisiana Territory, stretching from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains**, for \$15 million. The Louisiana Purchase **doubled the size of the United States**.

1803–1806: Lewis & Clark Expedition

Thomas Jefferson appointed Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to explore the U.S. lands to the west of the Mississippi River. Jefferson wanted the men to find a land route to the Pacific Ocean and strengthen U.S. claims to the Oregon Territory. Jefferson also wanted them to gather information about Native Americans living in these areas. Lewis and Clark made a survey of the West, taking notes about people, plants, and animals living in the U.S.-owned territories. It took them almost three years to complete their survey and return.

1770s-1840s: NC as the Rip Van Winkle State

In the early 1800s, the number of wagons moving west out of North Carolina increased, and the state became known as the **Rip Van Winkle State**. (Rip Van Winkle is a character in a tale by Washington Irving. In the story, Rip falls asleep for 20 years while the world keeps changing and he misses all that happens.) At this time, leaders from the **eastern part** of North Carolina opposed spending tax money on schools, roads, agricultural reforms, or any other form of economic advancement. Their opposition hurt the state's people, especially in the **western part** of North Carolina. Without good roads to get crops to market, farmers could not make profits. Without progressive leadership in agricultural reforms, farmers did not learn about the importance of crop rotation. Instead, they continued old farming practices that used

up nutrients in the soil and exhausted the land. Although newspapers and reformers pointed out the high degree of ignorance and poverty in which people lived, state leaders seemed to pay no attention to the needs of the people. Disgusted by the state's do-nothing policy, farmers gave up on their exhausted lands and moved west to Tennessee and beyond, where they could find cheaper, more fertile land to farm. Conditions in North Carolina did not begin to improve until a progressive political leadership gained control of the state in 1835. That same year, 1835, the N.C. Constitution was amended to improve conditions in the state and make the legislature more representative of the entire state. In 1840 the first public school was established. Soon railroads were introduced, with tracks stretching across the state. Plank roads and other internal improvements developed. Manufacturing began to flourish. At last North Carolina could shake its Rip Van Winkle image. Once White North Carolinians felt they could prosper at home, the massive emigration of White citizens out of the state began to decline.

1830: Indian Removal Act

Congress passed this act **to make room for American settlers**. The act said that the president could negotiate treaties with Native Americans to relocate them to areas west of the Mississippi River. **Andrew Jackson** was president at the time, and he signed 94 treaties with Native American tribes.

1838: Trail of Tears

According to the Treaty of New Echota, signed in 1835, the Cherokee would give up their land east of the Mississippi River in exchange for land west of the Mississippi River and \$5 million. Most of the members of the Cherokee tribe did not agree with this treaty and refused to move. **In 1838, the U.S. government sent troops to force the Cherokee to move from North Carolina to what is now Oklahoma.** Along the 1,000-mile route from Georgia to Oklahoma, over 4,000 Native Americans died due to disease, starvation, and exposure to cold weather. The journey they took is referred to as the Trail of Tears.

