

The American West 1820-1850

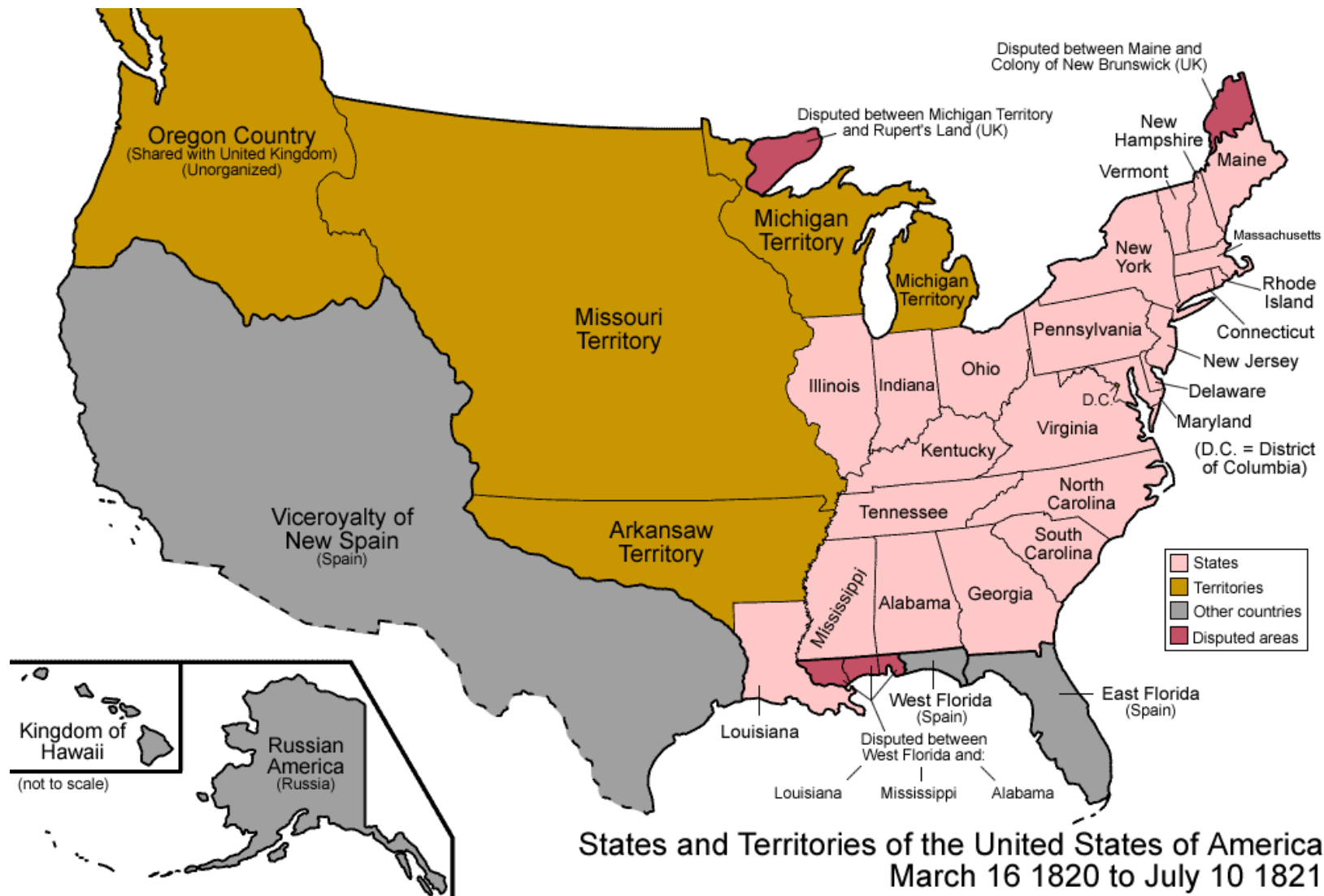
“Go West, young man, go West and grow up with the country.” -- Horace Greeley

The West stretches from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean, from the northern plains to the Rio Grande -- more than two million square miles of the most extraordinary landscape on earth. It is a land of broad rivers and vast deserts, deep canyons and impenetrable mountains, boundless prairies and endless forests, a place where towering mountains of rock and boiling waters rise naturally from the earth. The West means opportunity...Opportunity to the new frontier...

George Washington's nation ended at the Mississippi River, for no other white settlers officially lived past the Appalachian Mountains before the 1800s. Thomas Jefferson's nation extended to the Rocky Mountains by claim, but not by settlement. In 1821, no one knew who would control the West's infinite spaces, or what language would be dominant, or whose god would be worshipped, or what the West's destiny would be. The West was *completely* unknown. When Americans went to the moon, we had seen pictures of space, but when people trekked westward in the 1800s, they had no idea what each day would bring. In the mid 1800s, two young countries -- the **United States** and the newly established **Republic of Mexico** -- claimed most of the land in the west. England still had trade forts in the Pacific Northwest in the Oregon Territory, while a host of Indian nations not only inhabited the land, but challenged each other for more. From 1820--1850, the West saw drastic changes and what you will learn and explore are the different groups and places of the west. You will see what inventions and ideas conquered the west. And you will see how America ended up the victor nation that conquered and claimed the west.

How many states were in the Union according to the map in 1820? _____

List the four territories America controlled but had yet to occupy in 1820. _____



1. Why did Americans start moving west? _____

2. Numbered in ORANGE are two images. Choose one of the two images and explain how these images depict the west. What do you see?



3. In 1806 the Lewis & Clark Expedition returned to St. Louis, and the news spread like wildfire about what “the west” looked like. Men heard about this new land and decided to explore it on their own and thus the mountain man era was born! From 1806-1840 the **Mountain Man** went west to earn their keep. Hats...Yes, hats was the name of the game. Men and women wore them alike. The fancier, the furrier, and the more luxurious they looked and felt, the better one was looked on in society. In the early 1800s, hats were becoming the fad of American and European aristocrats. Hats were the thing that set the standard of fashion. Fur was also considered a sign of wealth, and the animal population was a dying breed for them. The most exotic furs for hats, clothing, blankets, etc, the more demand there was for animal trappers to search for them. In the early 1800s, the animal of choice that was new to both Americans and Europe were beaver hats.

Ask the mountain man before you about some of the dangers in the west and what the mountain men were in search for.

#3 -- The Oregon Trail! [Click This Link For The Game! Oregon Trail](#)

Oregon! The very word evoked visions of paradise. Luscious forests, beaver pelts, fish and game were said to have been unlimited in the west in the 1840s. Between 1840--1869, over 500,000 pioneers travelled west to fulfill their dreams and a nation's destiny. This 2000 mile trek from Independence, MO to Portland, Oregon and could take between 140-160 days depending on the weather, trail conditions, and the time of year a party left Mizzouri. In the early 1800s, the first white settlers set out west into the unknown looking for opportunity and an escape from eastern lifestyle. What these "mountain men" found were beaver pelts, bison-filled plains, countless forests, and wildlife like they had never imagined. These stories eventually made their way back to settlers in the east in the 1830s-1840s. As the beaver trade slowed in the late 1830s, the next movement west was publicized by politicians and journalists who wanted the nation to be fully inhabited and settled from sea to shining sea!

The Oregon Trail would truly begin in the 1840s. In 1841, the first emigrant wagon train consisting of 80 men, women, and children, left Independence, MO headed for Oregon...They would be the first of over 500,000 who would trek across Mizzouri, Nebraska, Wyoming, Idaho, and into the Oregon wilderness...

List **five** items these migrants brought with them on the Oregon Trail. Explain why they brought these particular items.

Look at the map of the Oregon Trail. How far was Fort Laramie, Wyoming from Independence, Mizzouri? _____

How far was it to Oregon City, the END of the Oregon Trail? _____

Now play the Oregon Trail game yourself. The average group travelled 10-15 miles per day on the Oregon Trail... After playing the game, what were some difficulties one faced on the trail?

UH OH!!! Things on the Oregon Trail Don't Look So Hot...

The Platte River, Nebraska was often one of the deadliest places along the trail. What are the two major diseases are before you? What were the symptoms of the diseases the travelers experienced?



The typical day on the Oregon Trail was no “typical” day for any of us. I don’t get nervous of rattlesnake bites while I drive to work. I rarely think about getting lost for weeks as I turn onto each road. I have yet to get cholera in my car...But there’s still hope! After reading through the typical day on the Oregon Trail, what was the most surprising to you?

4. Before you are pictures of the “car” the migrants traversed the country in...The Conestoga Wagon! What were the approximate dimensions?

Length _____ Width _____ Height _____

List **THREE** food items the settlers brought with them on the trail.

#5 Texas: Watch the video link below to answer the questions about Texas...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0AMHkCgvt0>

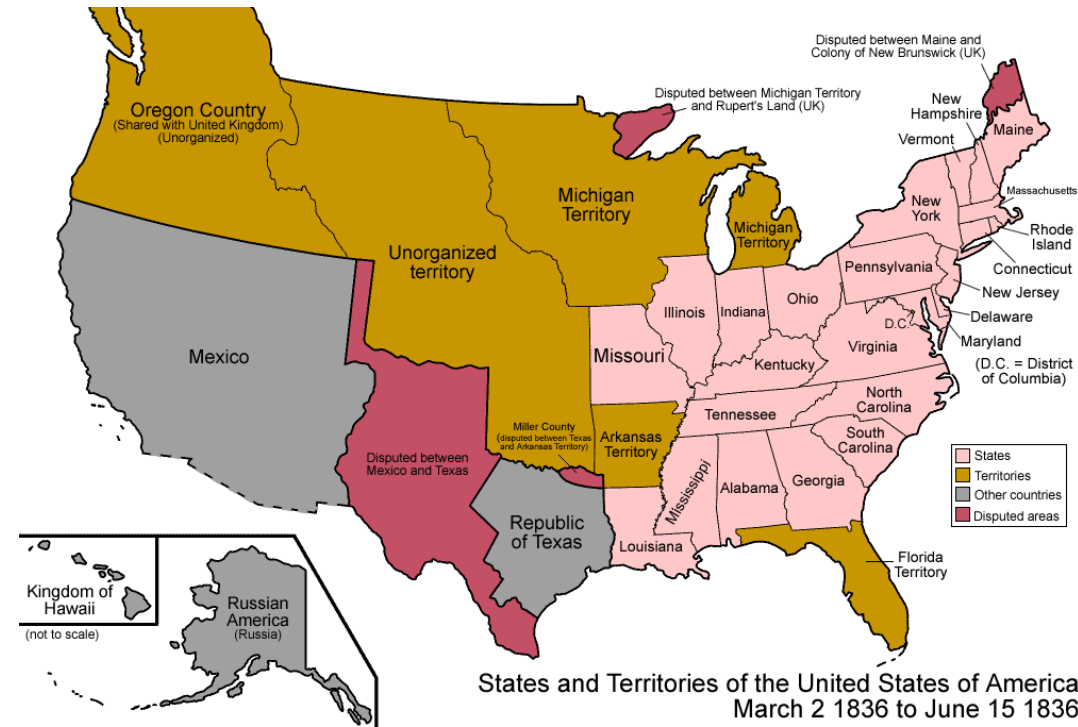
1. According to the map, present-day Texas was occupied by which two nations?

2. What did Stephen F. Austin do in 1821?

3. By 1836, how many Americans were living in present-day Texas?

4. Sam Houston hoped that Texas would become a part of the United States. Why did northerners fear the entrance of Texas into the Union?

5. Look at the large map of Texas & disputed territory. From 1846- 1848 the United States and Mexico fought over the disputed territory of Texas. What were the results of the Mexican War?



#6 The Mormons: The Mormons are one of the most interesting, yet controversial, people in American history. They are a major world religion with over 15 million members today who belong to the Mormon Church; the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Today, we know the cultural center for the Mormons is in Salt Lake City, Utah, but this was not always their home. Mormons have always had a very strong sense of community. Today, some of the common practices by Mormons are the *prohibition* of alcoholic beverages, tobacco, coffee, tea, and other addictive substances. Mormons also have a very strict law of chastity -- requiring abstention from sexual relations until marriage, and in some cases, **polygamy** is still a part of the culture. Scan the QR Code and watch the movie about the Mormons & follow the readings to answer the questions below.

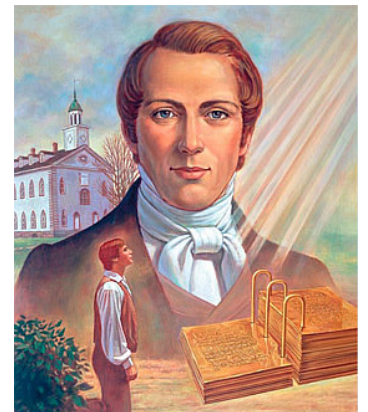
1. Who is considered their founder and when did Mormonism begin?

2. Where did Mormons live before they eventually settled in Utah?

3. After Smith's murder, who was the Mormon's second disciple?

4. Looking at the trail map, list three important events/stops on the trail.

4. When did the Mormons finally arrive in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake and how many people survived the journey?



#7 Communication!

Communication is the most important thing mankind has done with each other over time. I don't really care what your argument against this might be... Imagine life without the ability to communicate: Text message...Call someone on a cell phone...Call someone's home land-line...Receive an e-mail...Fax (Do you know what the heck that is??)... Send a telegraph...Snail mail...Ship packages... In the 1700s, you sent messages by word of mouth or mail. It took forever. In 1830 to send a letter from Boston to Savannah took up to three weeks by land. In 1844, things changed forever.



1. What was the invention of the 1840s by Samuel F. B. Morse?

2. How did his invention work?

3. When was the transcontinental telegraph completed?

4. What were the effects of the telegraph?

Decipher this message below: --- .-- -... .. --. -... .- .-.. !!!!



#8 The Gold Rush! The news was astonishing, and it traveled swiftly around the world: **gold** -- precious gold -- had been discovered in California. Almost overnight, tens of thousands rushed off -- obsessed with striking it rich. The

Gold Rush was the first time people from all of the continents came together into one particular place. It didn't always work so well. We can look to that as a pivotal event in human history where you see created for the very first time a world class, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-cultural society. In 1847, the United States defeated Mexico in a two-year conflict known as the Mexican War. When the peace treaty was signed in early February 1848, Mexico was forced to cede an enormous swath of territory, including California, to the United States. Neither country was yet aware that gold had been discovered just days before...

What was the population of California in 1848 before gold was discovered? _____

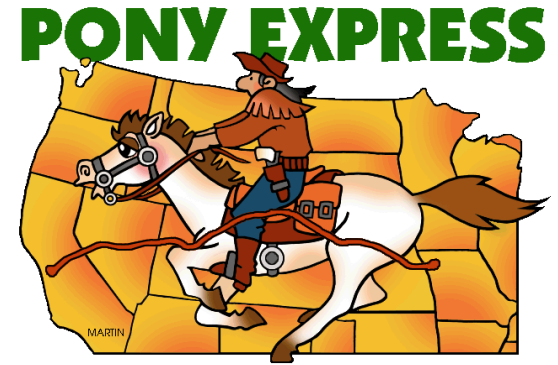
What was the population of California in 1850? _____ ... Crazy, huh? That's what gold will do..

Scan the QR Code or Grab an iPad/Mac to and watch the video on the Gold Rush and provide **Five Facts** you learned from the video about the California Gold Rush. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uFNbwyTiXM>)



The Pony Express! Huzzah!

1. What was the Pony Express?



2. In 1845, approximately how long did it take a message to get from California to Washington, DC?

3. Why do you think the Pony Express wanted riders to refrain from drinking who weighed 125 lbs or less?

4. Where did the Pony Express begin? _____ End?

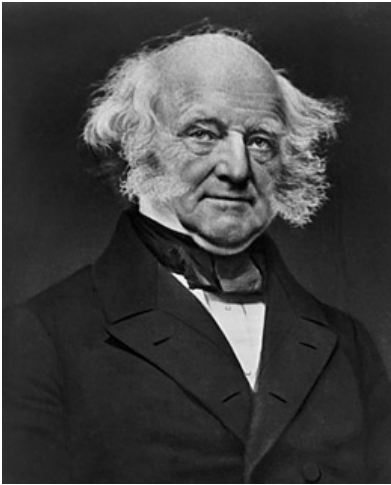
5. How many riders worked for the Pony Express? _____

6. How long was the Pony Express trail? (Distance in miles) _____

7. What do you think were dangers of the Pony Express riders faced?

8. What was the most interesting thing you learned about the Pony Express?

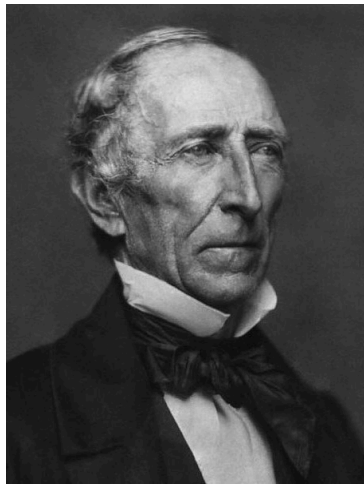
A FEW PRESIDENTS NO ONE HAS EVER HEARD OF...



Martin Van Buren
1837--1841

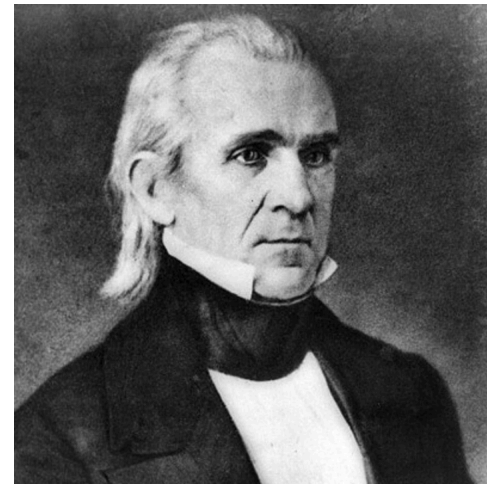


W. H. Harrison
1841



John Tyler

1841-1845



James K. Polk

1845-1849

Scan the QR Codes for each president and watch the PBS one-minute flicks! Continue with the reading when finished....



MVB



WHH



JT



JKP

From 1820--1850, the nation voted for six different presidents, many of whom had various backgrounds and paths to the presidency. Andrew Jackson was the first real “expansionist” president since Jefferson (who purchased Louisiana) and wanted to bring Texas under American control. Following Jackson were a few lesser known presidents: #8 Martin Van Buren, #9 William Henry Harrison, #10 John Tyler, & #11 James K. Polk.

Van Buren, the co-founder of Jackson’s Democratic party, tried to follow Old Hickory’s footsteps as president, but struggled to overcome a financial depression from 1837-1841. Because Jackson closed down the Bank of the United States, the nation’s economy did not have a structured financial system. In 1838, the nation’s industrial output slowed, cotton farming slowed, and the economy...well...it slowed too. Banks crashed and in 1838 alone, **500,000 jobs were lost and of the 850 banks in the US, 40% of them closed**...It was the Panic of 1837-1838. On top of Van Buren’s financial troubles, the Indian Removal Act of 1830 deadline for complete relocation was approaching. The government spent \$12 million on the military to round up the Natives and physically march the remaining tribes to the Oklahoma territory...Van Buren didn’t stand a chance at reelection and in 1840, the nation elected William Henry Harrison, the hero from the Battle of Tippecanoe!



In 1840 the nation elected “Tippecanoe & Tyler Too” -- Catchy slogan, huh? William Henry Harrison & John Tyler were elected, and ironically they lived less than 10 miles from each other near Williamsburg, VA. In 1840, Harrison won the election because he was a lot like Andrew Jackson: War hero, born in a log cabin, frontiersman, and he seemed like a tough guy. At 67 (that’s old by the way) Harrison decided it was necessary to give the longest inaugural address in American history; just under two hours, on a rainy and cold March day. Unfortunately, trying to prove he was a tough guy, Harrison did NOT wear a winter coat, caught pneumonia, then died 30 days later...Great job Tip!



When Harrison died, the nation wondered, “who the heck is president now?!” VP John Tyler was playing marbles at his home in Virginia when he got the news that HE was now president. Though Tyler was very much like Jackson -- pro slavery, hated banks, and an expansionist, he was completely the opposite of William Henry Harrison. The nation didn’t like this. For four years, Tyler fought with his Cabinet members, Congress, and pretty much everyone else. People started calling Tyler, “His Accidency”, and this pretty much ruined his presidency...Tyler finished the four years of Harrison’s term and that was that...In 1844, a new president, James K. Polk would change the presidency forever adding

over 1.5 million square miles of territory to the US, fighting a war with Mexico & threatening to go to war with Great Britain, all while enabling the progress of white westward expansion into the gold fields of California...