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MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

**COLLEGE TEXTBOOKS ON THE AMERICAN WEST:
1910-1997**

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF ARTS**

**BY
MICHAEL R. LOWMAN**

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

12 DECEMBER 1998

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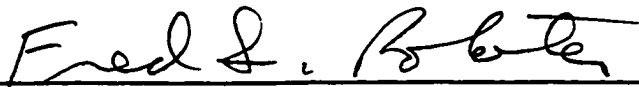
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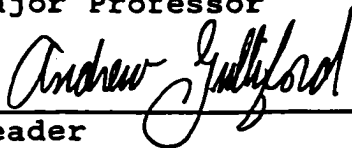
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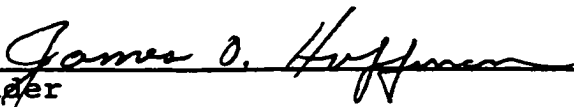
College Textbooks on the American West:
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Michael R. Lowman

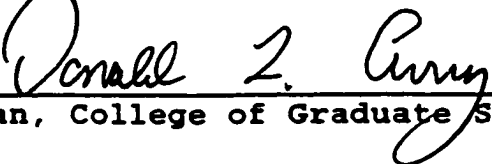
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines frontier and western history undergraduate college textbooks published between 1910 and 1997 to determine to what extent and in what manner textbooks reflected the historiographical thought current at the time of their publication. The study is divided into four major time periods: 1893-1930, 1930-1945, 1945-1960, and 1960-1997. Textbooks published in each time period are analyzed in light of the historiographical thinking of their era. Questions considered include:

Which textbooks are Turnerian, and which are anti-Turnerian or neo-Turnerian?

Which textbooks are chronological, which are thematic, and which take an inquiry approach?

Which textbooks deal with the frontier movement and which focus on the West?

Do the textbooks conclude at 1890, or do they extend their study into the twentieth century?

To what extent and with what degree of comprehensiveness do the books include any persons other than white Anglo-Saxon Protestant males--Indians, women, blacks, Asians, and other ethnic groups?

Which books are limited to traditional political and economic history and which deal significantly with social, cultural and environmental history?

Generally, the study has been limited to first editions of textbooks. However, in the case of books that went through several editions over a period of years, one or more

later editions is included so that significant changes can be noted.

The study concludes that textbooks on the history of the American West have changed considerably, especially since 1970. Recent textbooks tend to ignore or challenge Turnerian concepts. While they give some attention to America's early trans-Appalachian frontier, they focus on the trans-Mississippi West, carrying the account well into the twentieth century.

Recent textbooks deal significantly with social and cultural history, including more information regarding females and minority peoples. By the late 1980s, with the influence of New Western History, textbooks incorporated much information about the environmental consequences of westward expansion, but they excluded many of the characters and events found in traditional textbooks. They also abandoned the chronological narrative, focusing on themes of human and environmental exploitation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my wife Dorothy and our daughters Beneth and Joy, without whose support and sacrifice my doctoral program would not have been possible

I wish to express appreciation to the members of my dissertation committee. Dr. Andrew Gulliford shared valuable insights regarding America's western history. Dr. Thaddeus M. Smith offered helpful suggestions to improve my writing. Dr. James O. Huffman provided needed assistance.

Special recognition is due Dr. Frederick S. Rolater, who from the first day of my doctoral program proved himself to be a dedicated teacher, a wise counselor, and a helpful friend.

The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.
Prov. 16:33 KJV

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INTRODUCTION

Serious historical study of the American frontier and the American West is just over a century old. The romanticism of the West captured the attention of the American people before the Civil War, but scholarly writing about America's westward movement emerged only at the end of the nineteenth century. Beginning in the 1880s the writings of Theodore Roosevelt did much to popularize the history of the American West. Then in 1893 Frederick Jackson Turner stood before the World Congress of Historians and Historical Students and delivered his famous address: "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." Although Turner's speech drew little attention at the time of its delivery, it was soon to change the course of American historiography. Historians soon took keen interest in Turner's thesis, and the significance of America's frontier became a major topic of historical inquiry and debate. The teaching of college courses in frontier history began at the turn of the twentieth century, and by the 1920s western American historiography was at the center of American historical writing. At least by the third decade of this century scholars were distinguishing between frontier history and western history, which gave rise to new controversy.

During the past century scholarship in regard to frontier and western history has undergone a series of significant revisions. Historians have posed and hotly debated numerous questions about the nature of America's westward expansion and its role in the development of the United States as a unique nation. Over the years the popularity of frontier and western history has ebbed and flowed. As late as the 1980s some historians were predicting that western history was a dying field, but a renewed controversy arose over whether the West can best be understood as a frontier process or as a specific place marked by certain geographic, cultural, and economic characteristics. By the 1990s the significance of the American West was a topic of hot and sometimes intemperate debate among historians.

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine frontier and western history undergraduate college textbooks published between the turn of the twentieth century and the present to determine to what extent and in what manner textbooks reflected the historiographical thought current at the time of their publication. To accomplish this goal the study summarized the trends in the development of western historiographical study from the 1890s to 1997. The summary is divided into four major time periods: 1893-1930, 1930-1945, 1945-1960, and 1960-1997. The significant textbooks published in each time period have been analyzed

in light of the historiographical thinking of their era. To place the study in its historical context this research project begins with a summary of significant developments in western history before 1890, but the focus of the project is the period from about 1890 to 1997. In analyzing the textbooks a number of questions have been considered, including the following:

Which textbooks are Turnerian, and which are anti-Turnerian or neo-Turnerian?

Which textbooks are chronological in format, which are thematic, and which take an inquiry approach?

Which textbooks deal with the frontier movement and which focus on the West?

What time period do the books cover? Do they conclude at 1890, or do they extend their study into the twentieth century?

To what extent and with what degree of comprehensiveness do the books include any persons other than white Anglo-Saxon Protestant males--Indians, women, blacks, Asians, and other ethnic groups?

Which books are largely limited to traditional political and economic history and which deal significantly with other topics, such as social, cultural and environmental history?

Over the years numerous journal articles have been written about the state of western historiography at a given time. However, only recently have a very few book-length studies attempted to present a historical overview and synthesis of the development of western history. These few studies are primarily topical rather than chronological. Most are organized around specific subjects so as to

summarize the historiography of certain topics, such as frontier women, racial and ethnic groups, military affairs, economic development, transportation, or urbanization.

A recent brief overview of western historiography, arranged topically, is Brian Dippie's "American Wests: Historiographical Perspectives." The most extensive overview of western historiography is Gerald D. Nash's Creating the West: Historical Interpretations, 1890-1990. Two other works which approach western historiography topically are Historians and the American West, edited by Michael P. Malone, and American Frontier and Western Issues: A Historiographical Review, edited by Roger L. Nichols. A recent reference work summarizing and analyzing the work of fifty-seven frontier and western historians is Historians of the American Frontier: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook, edited by John R. Wunder. A recent study which focuses on Frederick Jackson Turner, his legacy, and his influence on western history and on individual western historians is Wilbur R. Jacobs's On Turner's Trail: 100 Years of Writing Western History. Another work which is pertinent but limited to the twentieth century is The Twentieth Century West: Historical Interpretations, edited by Gerald D. Nash and Richard Etulain.¹

¹Brian Dippie, "American Wests: Historical Perspectives," American Studies International 27 (October 1989): 3-25; Gerald D. Nash, Creating the West: Historical Interpretations, 1890-1990 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991); Michael P. Malone, ed., Historians and

The 1980s gave rise to New Western History, which rejects the Turnerian concept of the frontier as a process and views the West as a distinct region, the development of which is characterized by invasion, conquest, and exploitation. Several recent works explain and defend the New Western History. Two enlightening collections of essays are Trails: Toward a New Western History, edited by Patricia Nelson Limerick, Clyde A. Milner II, and Charles E. Rankin, and Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Past, edited by William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gatlin. However, these aforementioned works are not geared specifically toward a study of college textbooks.²

A recent publication, A New Significance: Re-envisioning the History of the American West, edited by Clyde Milner II, commemorates the centennial of Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 presentation of "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" and anticipates a second

the American West (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983); Roger L. Nichols, ed., American Frontier and Western Issues: A Historiographical Review (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986); John R. Wunder, ed, Historians of the American Frontier: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1988); Wilbur R. Jacobs, On Turner's Trail: 100 Years of Writing Western History (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994); Gerald D. Nash and Richard Etulain, ed., The Twentieth Century West: Historical Interpretations (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989).

²Patricia Nelson Limerick, Clyde A. Milner II, and Charles E. Rankin, ed., Trails Toward a New Western History (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991); William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gatlin, ed., Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Past (New York: Norton, 1992).

century of western history. This collection of essays by a new generation of respected young historians looks beyond New Western History and suggests new topics and new perspectives as America enters a new century of western historical study.³

Allan Bogue's introductory essay in A New Significance appeared earlier (in a slightly different version) as a journal article entitled "The Significance of the History of the American West: Postscripts and Prospects." This essay summarizes the development of western history courses in American institutions of higher learning and briefly considers the authors and viewpoints of several western history textbooks which have been widely used over the years. However, Bogue's essay gives only brief consideration to textbooks and deals with only a select few.⁴

This dissertation strives to provide an organized history of college frontier and western history textbooks. It seeks to present a balanced overview of the trends, changes, and major developments in western history textbooks. The dissertation provides a more definitive

³Clyde Milner II, ed., A New Significance: Re-envisioning the History of the American West (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁴Allan Bogue, "The Significance of the History of the American West: Postscripts and Prospects," Western Historical Quarterly 34 (February 1993): 45-68; revised and reprinted as "The Course of Western History's First Century," in A New Significance, 3-28.

picture of how western history textbooks came to be as they are today, and it attempts to shed light on the ways in which western history textbooks are likely to change in the near future.

In essence, this dissertation demonstrates that western history textbooks have gone from one extreme to another. For much of the twentieth century the texts focused on white Anglo-American males, ignoring females, minority peoples, and environmental issues. By the late 1980s, with the influence of social history and New Western History, textbooks incorporated much information about women, minorities, and environmental consequences of expansion. However, they had abandoned much of the material found in traditional texts. Focusing on human and environmental exploitation, these new books ignored the story of western romance and adventure, leaving the typical undergraduate student with little to which he could relate.

This study is limited both in time and in scope. Time it is limited to the period between the mid-1880s, when Teddy Roosevelt's writings on the West brought frontier history to prominence, and 1997. Significant events during the several decades before 1880 are briefly summarized in order to provide background for the study. The analysis of textbooks begins in 1910, when the first textbook on the American West was published.

Scope of textbook analysis has been limited to books suitable for and/or intended to be used as survey textbooks in undergraduate courses in frontier and western history. In this study the term textbook is defined as a book containing an overview presentation of the subjects pertinent to a study of the American frontier or the American West, and a book intended to be studied by the student and used by the teacher as a basis of instruction. Only books intended to be capable of standing alone as the only required textbook for a course in frontier or western history are analyzed.

Generally, the study has been limited to the first edition of any given textbook. However, in the case of books that went through several editions over a period of many years, one or more of the later editions has been studied so that significant changes can be noted. The purpose here has been to determine the extent to which revisions reflect changing scholarship.

A word needs to be said about the use of the terms frontier and West. Distinguishing between the American frontier and the American West has always been troublesome for historians. Most agree that no completely satisfactory definitions have been formulated, and the two terms are often used in an overlapping manner. However, certain distinctions can be noted.

Turner used the term frontier loosely without giving it a precise definition, but generally since his day historians have viewed the frontier as a process of civilization, or a recently settled area where the process of civilization is taking place. The frontier has been seen as mobile, advancing with westward expansion.

While frontier connotes process, West connotes region, a place geographically, climatically, and perhaps culturally, distinct from the rest of the nation. Scholars have long debated over exactly what constitutes the American West, and a recent survey by historian Walter Nugent indicates this is still very much the case. The survey indicates that the section of the United States lying between the front range of the Rockies and the Sierras is widely recognized as being a part of the West, but beyond this "unambiguous West" there is little agreement. Many scholars include Alaska and even Hawaii in the American West. Those who distinguish between a geographic West and a historical West are inclined to include the midwest as part of the historical West. On the other hand some scholars are very exclusive, insisting certain regions, such as California, must be excluded from the West for geographical or cultural reasons. Most scholars today claim the American West is west of the Mississippi River, and many insist it is the generally dry region west of the 98th meridian. In this

study the terms frontier and West are used as they have been described here.⁵

⁵Walter Nugent, "Where is the American West: Report on a Survey," Montana The Magazine of Western History 42 (Summer 1992): 2-23.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND

From the time they landed on the shores of North America, Europeans were vitally interested in the frontier that lay to the west of their settlements. During the nineteenth century Americans became captivated by written accounts of the frontier. In the early decades of the nineteenth century explorers and some professional writers produced accounts of the West. Such explorers as Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, Zebulon Pike, and Stephen H. Long wrote accounts of their expeditions into the West. These accounts provided information on the flora and fauna, described terrain and climate, and reported on western Indian tribes. Although for many years Long's account of his expedition, (actually written by Edwin James) misled Americans into thinking that the Great Plains were a Great American Desert, these explorer accounts were largely factual in nature.

From the 1820s through the 1840s professional writers gave a more literary and romanticized view of the frontier. James Fennimore Cooper, who never ventured west of his native New York, made the frontier a subject for romantic interpretation in his "Leatherstocking Tales," beginning with The Pioneers (1823) and continuing with The Last of the

Mohicans (1826) and The Deerslayer (1841). Two New England intellectuals based their frontier accounts on actual brief visits to the West. Washington Irving made such a trip and incorporated some of his findings into A Tour of the Prairies (1835), Astoria (1836), and The Adventures of Captain Bonneville (1837). In 1849 young Harvard graduate Francis Parkman published The Oregon Trail (originally entitled The California and Oregon Trail), a classic of American literature, in which he chronicled his 1845 trip west.¹

Another writer of western travel adventure was Richard Henry Dana. In the 1830s Dana visited the coast of California as a sailor on an American trading vessel. In 1840 he published Two Years Before the Mast, an account of his experience in the merchant marine that included descriptions of life in coastal California.

By the middle of the nineteenth century Americans had been exposed to both factual and literary accounts of the American West. As the century progressed western communities, anxious to attract new residents from the East, sponsored elaborate booster campaigns, optimistically publicizing the West as a land of inevitable progress. In the last half of the nineteenth century the image of the

¹Richard Etulain, "Introduction: The Rise of Western Historiography," in Writing Western History: Essays on Major Western Historians, ed. Richard W. Etulain (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 2-3.

West was shaped by two influences: the Wild West, also known as the West of the imagination, and the historical West as presented by historians.

After the Civil War the Wild West concept gained rapid popularity, mixing fact and legend. Through popular histories, biographies, and newspaper stories real frontiersmen, such as Wild Bill Hickok, Kit Carson, Calamity Jane, and even Billy the Kid, became bigger-than-life heroes. Meanwhile fictitious folk heroes, such as lumberjack Paul Bunyan and cowboy Pecos Bill were reported to have performed superhuman feats. In 1883 William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody, an accomplished frontier hunter, scout, and Indian fighter, organized his Wild West Show complete with real war-whooping Indians, including Sitting Bull, and crack-shot marksmen, most notably Annie Oakley ("Little Sure Shot"). Buffalo Bill's Wild West circus toured the United States and parts of Europe for years. Cody's show and several competitors thrilled urban spectators and spurred fantasy about the Wild West.

Meanwhile dime-novel westerns fanned the flames of imagination about the wild frontier. In the decades following the Civil War avid readers consumed thousands of these pulp-paper westerns. With little regard for truth, dozens of authors, such as E.C.Z. Judson (alias Ned Buntline), told embellished tales of real western heroes and created purely fictional characters such as Deadwood Dick.

By the 1890s the popularity of dime novels and their frontier heroes was waning, but the greatest western hero of all, the cowboy, was just coming to prominence. In part, the cowboy myth was promoted by cowboys themselves. For example, in 1903 Andy Adams, who worked as a cowboy for many years, published his reminiscences in The Log of a Cowboy. No one did more to popularize the cowboy than novelist Owen Wister. The cowboy, as portrayed by Wister, lacked the less believable characteristics of earlier bigger-than-life frontier heroes, but he was a chivalric and noble character and quickly became the most romantic figure of the Wild West. Wister's stories appeared in various magazines in the late nineteenth century, but he is best remembered for his publication in 1902 of the classic western The Virginian, which sold over 1.6 million hardbound copies. As important as Wister in shaping the image of the cowboy was artist Frederic Remington, who illustrated many of Wister's works. The works of Owen Wister and the illustrations of Frederic Remington set the pattern for Western novels and inspired artists, photographers, and film makers, whose works helped to create what William Goetzmann and others have characterized as "the West of the imagination."²

²Ibid., 4-7; Kent L. Steckmesser, The Westward Movement: A Short History (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), 401; see William H. Goetzmann and William N. Goetzmann, The West of the Imagination (New York: Norton, 1986).

While Wister and other literary figures were shaping the West of the imagination, scholars were discovering the frontier and were beginning to shape the historical West. Most of these scholars intended to be objective. However, so strong was the Wild West tradition that not even historians could escape its influence. Thus the real West of historical fact had within it elements of the Wild West of the imagination and a blindness toward the displacement of native peoples and the often corrosive effects of capitalism.³

An early romantic historian of the frontier was the Boston Brahmin Francis Parkman. His trip west in 1845, which resulted in the publication of The Oregon Trail, also provided much material for The Conspiracy of Pontiac, which he published in 1851. This work became the predecessor of his multivolume story of Anglo-French rivalry in the New World, France and England in North America. The series was not completed until 1892, with the publication of A Half Century of Conflict. Parkman's literary skill remains unquestioned, but he could not escape the fact that he had been "nurtured in the romantic tradition." Parkman admitted that in all of his writing "two ideas possessed him: 'One was to paint the forest and its tenants in true and vivid colors; the other was to realize a certain ideal of manhood,

³Etulain, "Introduction," in Writing Western History, 6-7.

a little medieval, but nevertheless good.'" Clearly, "his Anglo-Saxon view pervaded his writing." Parkman contributed to the romantic view of the West and helped to create in America a "cult of masculinity," which was later cultivated by Theodore Roosevelt, Owen Wister, and others.⁴

During the same era Hubert Howe Bancroft did much to promote the history of the Far West. A San Francisco businessman and book collector, Bancroft became fascinated with the history of western North America and Mexico. In the late 1850s he began to collect documents relating to the history of western North America and Central America. His document-hunting expeditions took him to many parts of the United States and Europe. By 1880 Bancroft estimated his holdings on western North America at 60,000 volumes. His still-valuable collection, which included rare books, newspapers, letters, diaries, maps, and other documents, ultimately became the nucleus for the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley.⁵

In the 1870s and 1880s Bancroft hired a team of researchers and writers, sometimes as many as fifty, who organized and indexed his collection and used it to mass-produce multivolume histories of Mexico and the western

⁴Michael Kraus, The Writing of American History (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), 145, 146, 154; Etulain, "Introduction," in Writing Western History, 3.

⁵Jo Tice Bloom, "Hubert Howe Bancroft," in Historians of the American Frontier: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook, ed. John R. Wunder (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 58.

United States. Many of the volumes that bore his name on the title page were actually written by others. He and his collaborators published a multitude of works, the most notable of which is a thirty-nine volume set The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft, 1882-1890. The Works were sold by subscription; each volume was distributed to subscribers as it rolled off the press. This marketing scheme guaranteed broad sales and helped to make Bancroft a wealthy man.

Bancroft's interest in the southwestern United States gave him recognition as America's first regional historian. His interest in the common history of the southwestern United States and Mexico inaugurated "Borderlands" studies. Bancroft was interested in facts, and his publications were encyclopedic in nature. He gave little thought to theory and interpretation. Nevertheless, being a man of his time, he brought a romantic element to history." Through the broad distribution of his books he certainly contributed to interest in and fascination with the American West.⁶

More popular than Bancroft's writings were those published by Teddy Roosevelt between 1889 and 1896 under the title The Winning of the West. In 1884 this New Yorker went west, to escape grief over the death of his wife and mother. He spent two years ranching and hunting in the Dakota territory and became fascinated with the frontier and its

⁶Ibid., 57; Etulain, "Introduction," in Writing Western History, 65.

place in American history. Much of his early writing was about the West, but it was his four-volume epic The Winning of the West that proved most popular and of most lasting significance. It dealt primarily with the early trans-Appalachian frontier. Roosevelt preferred to emphasize the strenuous life, dwelling on heroic men and dramatic incidents. He was at his best when describing fierce battles with hostile Indians. Francis Parkman and Hubert Howe Bancroft "portrayed the Indian as a romantic, tragic figure."⁷ But Roosevelt painted a much different picture. Though he was critical of whites who had mistreated Indians, Roosevelt the historian was unable to rise above the racial prejudices of Roosevelt the cowboy. Apparently these prejudices still held sway during his Presidency, when he supported the allotment of Indian land in spite of Indian pleas to the contrary. In any case, Roosevelt's writing described the Indians as "savages," who were "cruel beyond belief," inflicting "unthinkable tortures" upon their captives. Roosevelt's colorful and romantic writing appealed to the general reader and did much to glorify the American westward movement.⁸

⁷Robert C. Carriker, "The American Indian from the Civil War to the Present," in Historians and the American West, ed. Michael P. Malone, with a foreword by Rodman W. Paul (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 185.

⁸Kraus, 76; Michael Collins, "Theodore Roosevelt," in Historians of the American Frontier, ed. John R. Wunder, 551; Theodore Roosevelt, The Winning of the West, vol. 1 (New York: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1889; reprint, New York: The

The concept of the Wild West, evidenced in the popular imagination and further promoted by historical writing, had a profound impact upon turn-of-the-century America. Early in colonial times the frontier myth had become what cultural historian Richard Slotkin described as the "structuring metaphor of the American experience." During the course of the nineteenth century, especially after the Civil War, Americans developed a preoccupation with the frontier myth. The dime novels and Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show, and then the fiction of Owen Wister, illustrated by Frederic Remington, reached a wide audience, promoting the myth on a grand scale.⁹

The historical writing of the late nineteenth century gave credence to the myth, and the widely published works of Hubert Howe Bancroft brought a new awareness of the significance of the West. The romantic flare of Francis Parkman fueled the fire, promoting his cult of masculinity.

But the historical work that had the most profound effect in promoting the frontier myth was that of Teddy Roosevelt. Through his own study Roosevelt became convinced that the frontier myth was the way to "explain and rationalize the development of American economic and

Current Literature Publishing Company, 1906), 96, 115, 117.

⁹Richard Slotkin, Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860 (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), 5.

political power."¹⁰ Roosevelt believed great history should be presented as literature, and he was successful at accomplishing this goal. For his readers Roosevelt turned history into an exciting narrative, but he also had a "tendency to make it the vehicle of imperialism," the justification for expanding America's world influence.¹¹ Through The Winning of the West and through Roosevelt's political career his ideas about America's history and her destiny became widely influential.

At the turn of the century the philosophy embodied in the frontier spirit became the foundation for a national mythology by which Americans sought to justify their nation's rise to world dominance. The frontier myth became the clarion call for the expansion of American power at home and abroad. It served as a justification for a new twentieth century Manifest Destiny.

Nowhere was the influence of the frontier myth more evident than in the handling of the Spanish-American War of 1898, which in the minds of many was an extension of frontier Indian fighting and a means of extending American civilization. One of the fruits of this "splendid little war" was America's takeover of the Philippine Islands, and when the Filipinos rebelled against an American takeover in

¹⁰Richard Slotkin, Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America (New York: Atheneum, 1992; reprint, New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 59.

¹¹Kraus, 278.

1899, Buffalo Bill Cody himself was reputed to have compared the tactics and character of Filipinos to those of frontier Indians. President McKinley spoke in tones reminiscent of Manifest Destiny in proclaiming, somewhat reluctantly, America's responsibility to take western civilization to the people of the Philippines. Meanwhile Professor Woodrow Wilson of Princeton suggested that it was the duty of the United States to bestow upon the people of the Philippines "a government which they can count upon to be just," a government based upon the system which the United States had inherited from England and which had matured through America's frontier experience.¹²

The influence of the frontier mentality spilled over into early twentieth century domestic policy. The philosophy portrayed in The Winning of the West "converted the history of the Frontier into a myth of origins for the Progressive movement."¹³ By the end of the nineteenth century the frontier played a key role in the thinking of American people about their nation's heritage and about its destiny. Americans had a new awareness of the frontier experience and the great American West, but they also felt

¹²Slotkin, Gunfighter Nation, 85; Woodrow Wilson, Constitutional Government in the United States (New York: Columbia University Press, 1908), 47, 52, 53.

¹³Richard Slotkin, The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890 (New York: Atheneum, 1985; reprint, New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 532.

considerable uneasiness because in a few short generations they had spanned the continent and united the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. What was yet to be done? The clarion call of Manifest Destiny had been answered.

CHAPTER 2

TURNER'S THESIS PROPOSED AND SUPPORTED: 1893-1930

As the nineteenth century drew to a close American scholars took serious interest in America's frontier. The primary figure here, of course, was to be Frederick Jackson Turner. A notable predecessor, however, was Josiah Royce, a Harvard philosopher, with no historical training.

Born and reared in the booming and often rugged mining camp of Grass Valley, California, Royce used his own youthful frontier experience, along with a great deal of careful research, to write, early in his professional career, a history entitled California, From the Conquest in 1846 to the Second Vigilance Committee in San Francisco: A Study of American Character (1886) and a little-read novel about life on the frontier, The Feud of Oakfield Creek: A Novel of California Life (1887). In his history of California Royce presented an early study of the concept of community, in which he argued that community played an important role in shaping individuals and in creating a national consciousness. Royce gained recognition as an intellectual philosopher, and his philosophy anticipated social-science history several generations before that field became a recognized area of study. Royce's historical writing foreshadowed the work of Frederick Jackson Turner by

suggesting that the frontier community had a definite relationship to the development of national character.¹

Of course the historian who really made the frontier the focal point in the study of American history was Frederick Jackson Turner. At a glance Turner's achievements hardly seem remarkable. He devoted his life to teaching, at the University of Wisconsin from 1885 to 1910 and then at Harvard until his retirement in 1924. In 1927 he received a research appointment at the Huntington Library in California where he served until his death in 1932. Always suffering from a "writing block" Turner managed to publish only two monographs (one of those posthumously) and a series of essays. Yet, he had a profound impact upon the study of American history.²

The occasion of Turner's famous speech, delivered on the evening of July 12, 1893, was the World Congress of Historians and Historical Students, which met in Chicago in conjunction with the World's Columbian Exposition. Stepping before the assembly Turner cited "a recent bulletin of the

¹Robert V. Hine, "The Western Intellectual: Josiah Royce," Montana: The Magazine of Western History 41 (Summer 1991): 72; Robert V. Hine, "Josiah Royce: The West as Community," in Writing Western History: Essays on Major Western Historians, ed. Richard W. Etulain (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 37.

²Richard White, "Frederick Jackson Turner," in Historians of the American Frontier: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook, ed. John R. Wunder (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 660; Wilbur R. Jacobs, On Turner's Trail: 100 Years of Writing Western History (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 14.

Superintendent of the Census for 1890" which announced that the American frontier line of settlement no longer existed. Then he emphatically declared,

Up to our own day American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development.³

Turner, a thirty-two-year-old rising scholar, here challenged the accepted explanation of American history, which held that America's development could best explained as a extension of medieval Teutonic structures which through the centuries had made their way first to England and eventually to North America.

Turner was a product of his time and experience. To an extent, Turner was himself a product of the frontier. Born in 1861 in Portage, Wisconsin he grew up in that small but thriving village, a community not far removed from its frontier experience. Turner's childhood memories of his community included woodlands, Indians, and a variety of immigrants and people descended from immigrants. Having received B.A. and M.A. degrees from the young University of Wisconsin, Turner went to Johns Hopkins to earn his Ph.D. under the highly respected faculty, most of whom had been trained in Germany or were strongly influenced by German

³Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" in The Turner Thesis Concerning the Role of the Frontier in American History, ed. George Rogers Taylor, 3rd ed. (Lexington, Mass., 1972), 3.

thinking. During his college days Turner accepted the intellectual tenets of his time. Strongly influenced by the ideas of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer in regard to evolution, Turner accepted elements of both economic determinism and environmental determinism.⁴

On one point, however, Turner reacted against his education. At Johns Hopkins he spent a year in the seminar of Herbert Baxter Adams, a respected historian, and a strong proponent of the Teutonic germ theory of America's development. Adams, insisting that American culture had been transferred from England by way of the Atlantic coast, especially New England, paid scant attention to the West. In addition, Adams, convinced that political thinkers and practitioners determined the course of history, slighted the common man in his explanation of American development. The wall of his seminar room bore the slogan "History in past Politics, and Politics present History." Turner, a product of rural Wisconsin, took offense at this Atlantic coast bias. He later acknowledged that his famous speech was "pretty much a reaction" against Adams' dogmatism.⁵

Turner's thesis did not break entirely with the germ theory advocated by Herbert Baxter Adams. Turner acknowledged that America's early history had been

⁴Jacobs, 24, 32.

⁵James West Davidson and Mark Hamilton Lytle, After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 86; Jacobs, 6.

significantly affected by European origins, but he maintained that too much emphasis had been put on German origins and not enough on American factors. He argued that the frontier experience had brought rapid Americanization. He insisted that, "The true point of view in the history of this nation is not the Atlantic coast, it is the Great West."⁶

Turner purposefully did not define "frontier" carefully, but he said that, "The most significant thing about the American frontier is that it lies at the hither edge of free land." Turner saw the ever-advancing frontier moving west in stages: the fur-trade frontier, the mining frontier, the stockraising frontier, and the agricultural frontier. In the course of westward advancement a process of social evolution took place. At first "the wilderness masters the colonist," but eventually the colonist "transforms the wilderness." On the frontier Americans of English descent mingled with immigrants from other nations and America became a "melting pot." This blending of peoples led to the development of a spirit of nationalism, encouraged a spirit of independence and individualism, and promoted the growth of democracy and democratic institutions. Turner argued that not only political, economic, and social institutions, but even the American

⁶Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in The Turner Thesis, 4, 5.

intellect was shaped by the frontier. In short Turner was proposing that the frontier experience had been the principal factor in shaping American civilization.⁷

When Turner delivered his famous address listeners gave little immediate response (in part, perhaps, because the audience was weary; his was the last of five speeches on a very hot and humid second evening of the conference). His thesis was not looked upon as revolutionary. While others had noted the effect of the frontier on American character Turner provided systematic analysis. Teddy Roosevelt commended Turner for having put "into shape a good deal of thought that has been floating around rather loosely." But in little more than a decade Turner's frontier thesis had changed the entire focus of American historical interpretation.⁸

As Turner matured as a scholar he broadened his analysis of American history. In later years he came to emphasize an idea only hinted at in his 1893 address--that of sectionalism. In Turner's mind the frontier and sectionalism were interrelated. The frontier was ever shifting and helped to create America's national uniqueness, but the developing sections took on permanence and gave rise

⁷Ibid., 4, 5, 27.

⁸Davidson and Lytle, 87; Richard Slotkin, Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America (New York: Atheneum, 1992; reprint, New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 29.

to distinct cultural regions. For his view of the frontier Turner has been remembered, praised, and condemned.⁹

Turner quickly gained a large following, and his frontier thesis was soon being supported and expanded. In the opening decades of the twentieth century numerous colleges and universities inaugurated courses in frontier and western history. Turner never claimed his thesis was more than a theory to be investigated, and he never claimed the frontier experience was the only cause of America's unique character. He was a believer in multiple causation. But, as is often the case, many of his disciples proved to be more narrow and more rigid than he in defending his thesis. During his years of teaching at Wisconsin and Harvard Turner trained an influential generation of historians, and by the time Turner retired from teaching at Harvard in 1924 his thesis had won almost universal acclaim.¹⁰

From the 1890s through the 1920s Turner's thesis was widely accepted in both scholarly and popular circles. Historians applied the thesis in interpreting American history, and scholars in other fields of study did not miss the implications of Turner's thesis for geography, economics, and political science. By the 1920s interest in

⁹White, "Frederick Jackson Turner," in Historians of the American Frontier, 669.

¹⁰George Rogers Taylor, introduction to The Turner Thesis, viii.

western culture was being promoted by literary figures, such as folklorist J. Frank Dobie, who served for many years on the faculty of the University of Texas at Austin. Dobie's stories portraying life in the Southwest promoted interest in western culture and indirectly promoted enthusiasm for the frontier.¹¹

With America's turn-of-the-century interest in her frontier experience, new historical works began to appear on the subject. The histories of the American frontier published during Turner's lifetime were generally Turnerian in view. The first history of the frontier to be published after Turner's Chicago speech was Justin Winsor's 1897 study entitled The Westward Movement: The Colonies and the Republic West of the Alleghanies, 1763-1798. The Westward Movement detailed the history of the area bordered by the Appalachian Mountains, the Great Lakes, and the Mississippi River, from the end of the French and Indian War in 1763 until United States ownership of that land was clearly confirmed in 1798. Winsor made a clear connection between youthful America and her English heritage, describing his work as "a story of how much of our territorial integrity we owe to British forbearance, when the false-hearted diplomacy of France and Spain would have despoiled us." A highly respected Harvard librarian and cartographer, Winsor reveled

¹¹Martin Ridge, "The Life of an Idea: The Significance of Frederick Jackson Turner's Frontier Thesis," Montana: The Magazine of Western History 44 (Winter 1994): 11.

in detail. His work was replete with detailed maps, and he told his reader, "The history of this western region during these years was constantly moulded by its geography."¹²

While The Westward Movement was published too soon after Turner's speech to be Turnerian in view nothing in the work runs contrary to Turner's thesis. Turner himself was greatly pleased with the work and commended Winsor for his "abundance of facts." His primary criticism of Winsor's work was that it lacked "artistic instinct" and "historical imagination," being only "a thesaurus of events."¹³

In the first decade of the twentieth century appeared the American Nation series. This collection of works on American history, edited by Albert Bushnell Hart of Harvard, was the work of the first generation of professionally trained American historians. As part of this series Turner produced his only book published during his lifetime, The Rise of the New West: 1819-1829, a study of the development of sectionalism in the 1820s and the rise of Jacksonian politics.¹⁴

¹²Justin Winsor, The Westward Movement: The Colonies and the Republic West of the Alleghanies, 1763-1798 (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1897), iii, 3.

¹³Frederick Jackson Turner, review of Justin Winsor, The Westward Movement, in American Historical Review 3 (April 1898): 557, quoted in Richard Etulain, "Introduction," in Writing Western History, 10, 11.

¹⁴Michael Krauss, The Writing of American History (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), 229; Frederick Jackson Turner, The Rise of the New West: 1819-1829 (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1906).

Another volume in the American Nation series dealt specifically with the theme of American expansion. In 1906, George Pierce Garrison, long-time professor of history at the University of Texas published Westward Extension: 1841-1850. While the theme of this work was the Anglo-American expansion of the 1840s into Oregon and the Southwest, the work showed the influence of Frederick Jackson Turner. Garrison's footnotes contained scattered references to articles published by Turner and repeated references to Turner's Rise of the New West.¹⁵

Garrison proclaimed that the American people's westward movement had been of "fundamental importance" in creating a national spirit and in shaping a national character. Echoing Turner, Garrison said that while the English settlements on the Atlantic coast had democratic tendencies, the westward movement had given rise to intensified democracy which characterized the United States.¹⁶

Several volumes dealing with frontier themes appeared early in the twentieth century as part of the "Chronicles of America" series produced by Yale University Press under the general editorship of Allen Johnson. Most of these were popular works done by scholars known for their literary skills. The most exceptional and the most lasting of these

¹⁵George Pierce Garrison, Westward Extension, 1841-1850, vol. 17 of The American Nation: A History (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1906).

¹⁶Ibid., 4, 5.

volumes, The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest, was written in 1921 by Herbert Eugene Bolton, a student of Turner who would himself make a significant contribution to the broadening of the study of frontier and western history.

As an undergraduate at the University of Wisconsin from 1893 to 1895 Bolton studied under Turner shortly after Turner had presented his thesis. Bolton hoped to earn his Ph.D. under Turner, but because of financial considerations he did his doctoral work at the University of Pennsylvania, where Turner helped him get a substantial fellowship. He and Turner continued a close relationship. A prolific writer and a popular teacher, Bolton is best remembered for The Spanish Borderlands. By promoting Borderlands studies Bolton broadened the discussion of western American history and emphasized the common heritage of the nations of the western hemisphere.¹⁷

While always speaking respectfully of Turner's work, Bolton developed a distinct concept. In his 1932 presidential address to the American Historical Association, entitled "The Epic of Greater America," Bolton challenged his listeners to apply the Turner thesis to the Spanish-American frontier. In later years Bolton continued to give lip service to the idea of applying the Turner thesis on a

¹⁷Donald E. Worcester, "Herbert Eugene Bolton: The Making of a Western Historian," in Writing Western History, 193, 194.

broader basis. Yet his publications indicated his real interest was in studying the influence of Spaniards upon the American frontier, and he strongly influenced his students to follow in his footsteps. Indeed a generation of Boltonians became extremely critical of Turner's followers for their habit of emphasizing the Anglo-American frontier and ignoring racial and ethnic minorities in the West. Nevertheless, in recent years some scholars acknowledged that, in a sense, Bolton was lifting the Turner Thesis from a national to an international perspective. He encouraged Americans to see the frontier influence from broader multinational and multicultural perspectives.¹⁸

In the "Chronicles of America" series, the clearly Turnerian volume was The Passing of the Frontier: A Chronicle of the Old West, 1918, authored by the popular writer and historian Emerson Hough. Venting a Turnerian nostalgia, Hough lauded America's frontier and lamented it passing:

Always it has been the frontier which has allured many of our boldest souls. And always, just back of the frontier, advancing, receding, crossing it this way and that, succeeding and failing, hoping and despairing--but steadily advancing in the net result--has come that portion of the population which builds homes

We had a frontier once. It was our most priceless possession The frontier has been a lasting and ineradicable influence for the good of the United States. It was there we showed our fighting edge, our

¹⁸David J. Weber, "Turner, the Boltonians, and the Borderlands," American Historical Review 91 (February 1986): 68, 69.

unconquerable resolution, our undying faith. There, for a time at least, we were Americans.

We had our frontier. We shall do ill indeed if we forget and abandon its strong lessons, its great hopes, its splendid human dreams.¹⁹

Other volumes in the "Chronicles of America" series that dealt with specific portions of the frontier story included Stewart Edward White, The Forty-Niners: A Chronicle of the California Trail and El Dorado, 1918; Constance Lindsay Skinner, Pioneers of the Old Southwest: A Chronicle of the Dark and Bloody Ground, 1919; Frederic Austin Ogg, The Old Northwest: A Chronicle of the Ohio Valley and Beyond, 1919; Archer B. Hulbert, The Paths of Inland Commerce: A Chronicle of Trail, Road, and Waterway, 1920; Constance Lindsay Skinner, Adventures of Oregon: A Chronicle of the Fur Trade, 1920; and Nathaniel W. Stephenson, Texas and the Mexican War: A Chronicle of the Winning of the Southwest, 1921. All are adventuresome, heroic, nostalgic, and nationalistic in tone, as exemplified by the closing line from Frederic Austin Ogg's account of pioneering in the Northwest: "Decade after decade the powerful epic of westward expansion, shot through with countless tales of heroism and sacrifice, had steadily unfolded before the gaze

¹⁹Emerson Hough, The Passing of the Frontier: A Chronicle of the Old West, Chronicles of America Series (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1918), 172-173.

of an astonished world; and the end was not yet in sight."²⁰

The first two actual textbooks on the frontier were produced by Frederic Logan Paxson, a historian who spent some forty years teaching and writing American history, especially the history of the frontier. Having received his Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1903, Paxson taught at the University of Colorado and the University of Michigan. In 1910 when Turner accepted a position at Harvard, Paxson took Turner's place at the University of Wisconsin. Except for military service during World War I Paxson stayed at Wisconsin until 1932, when he accepted a position at the University of California at Berkeley where he remained until his retirement in 1947. Both of Paxson's frontier textbooks were products of the earlier years of his career.²¹

In 1910, the year he moved to the University of Wisconsin, Paxson published his first textbook, The Last American Frontier. In the words of one historian, "Paxson's Turnerian view of history saturates every page." The opening sentence of the first chapter summed up the Turner thesis: "The story of the United States is that of a series

²⁰Frederic Austin Ogg, The Old Northwest: A Chronicle of the Ohio Valley and Beyond, Chronicles of America Series (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1919), 209.

²¹Tully Hunter, "Frederic Logan Paxson," in Historians of the American Frontier, 458.

of frontiers which the hand of man has reclaimed from nature and the savage, and which courage and foresight have gradually transformed from desert waste to virile commonwealth." Paxson declared that until the closing of the frontier at the end of the nineteenth century, the frontier influence had been the "strongest single factor in American history." He also recognized Turner as the initiator of the study of western history.²²

The Last American Frontier was limited both in time and in scope. It described America's westward movement only from about 1821, when pioneers began to advance west of Paxson's oft-mentioned "great bend in the Missouri," until approximately 1885, when the last frontier had been conquered. The book presented a chronological survey of frontier events, but it was rather brief (402 pages), omitting many topics and giving only cursory attention to others. For example, it focused on the northern Great Plains and Rockies and said little about the Pacific coast and the Southwest. Two topics were dealt with rather extensively: conflicts between Indians and settlers, and the role that improved transportation played in the passing of the frontier. In regard to transportation Paxson gave

²²Ibid., 461; Frederic Logan Paxson, The Last American Frontier (New York: Macmillan, 1910; reprint, New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1970), 1, 3, 387.

particular attention to railroads, a familiar topic from his earlier publications.²³

In summarizing the Indian-white conflict Paxson was sympathetic toward the Indians. He said the United States policy, while "generally benevolent," was "badly conceived." Yet, he labeled the Indians "savage" and described them as "wild beasts that harassed the advancing frontier." Paxson concluded that the conflict between Indians and whites came to its inevitable conclusion.²⁴

In 1924 Paxson published his second book on the West, the Pulitzer Prize winning History of the American Frontier: 1763-1893. In many ways this work expanded and amplified his earlier work. In the preface to The Last American Frontier he acknowledged that the work was brief and said he hoped in a few years to produce a more detailed study. In the preface to the History of the American Frontier he proclaimed it to be a "synthesis, in which an attempt is made to show the proportions of the whole story." The History of the American Frontier was a longer, more detailed story (598 pages). While The Last American Frontier offered no documentation, The History of the American Frontier contained numerous references to authoritative sources. It began with the frontier of 1763; significantly, it ended

²³Richard W. Etulain, "After Turner: The Western Historiography of Frederic Logan Paxson," in Writing Western History, 144-145.

²⁴Paxson, The Last American Frontier, 14-15.

with 1893, the year Turner presented his frontier thesis. Like the first work, the second emphasized Indian-white conflicts. However, here the Indians received better treatment. They were not described as savages but rather as a barrier to the advance of pioneer civilization. Like its predecessor this work emphasized developments in transportation; however, the History of the American Frontier gave much fuller treatment to numerous other topics, including settlement of the trans-Appalachian West, formation of territories and states, economic policies, and the roles of such political thinkers as Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, and Henry Clay.²⁵

Like The Last American Frontier, the History of the American Frontier was clearly Turnerian. In the preface to the History of the American Frontier Paxson hyperbolically reaffirmed that "the frontier with its continuous influence is the most American thing in all America." Early in the work he acknowledged Frederick Jackson Turner as the leading frontier historian. In the first chapter Paxson echoed Turner's melting pot idea by declaring that while the early trans-Appalachian frontier had immigrants from many lands a process of amalgamation began as soon as the newcomers set foot upon American soil. At the end of his work Paxson concluded that by the close of the nineteenth century "the

²⁵Ibid., v; Frederic Logan Paxson, History of the American Frontier: 1763-1893 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924), preface.

frontier had disappeared," and with it had gone its influence which had made American history unique.²⁶

Paxson's two textbooks had much in common with each other and with Turnerian thinking. In each of Paxson's texts the frontier was a process by which, in a series of stages, civilization claimed the wilderness from uncivilized natives. Paxson's books gave little space to peoples of color except as they affected Anglo-Americans. In neither book does the name of any frontier woman appear in the index. However, the History of the American Frontier did devote one paragraph to the plight of frontier wives and twice mentioned property rights of frontier women. Both books virtually ignored cultural history. Turner, who made much of geography and map study, must have been pleased with the fact that Paxson's textbooks provided numerous maps.²⁷

In some ways Paxson differed from Turner. He never displayed much interest in Turner's concept of section. In contrast to Turner, Paxson ignored the colonial frontier. Unlike Turner, he wrote chronological narrative that synthesized frontier history and gave little attention to "significance." And unlike Turner, Paxson showed little interest in the application of social science techniques to history. After Turner's death Paxson had second thoughts about the frontier thesis. In 1933, the year after Turner's

²⁶Ibid., preface, 5, 7n.3, 573.

²⁷Ibid., 115, 354, 399.

passing, Paxson still defended the thesis in its broadest terms. Yet, Paxson doubted whether the frontier had exercised the full nationalizing influence Turner had claimed.²⁸

Nevertheless, Paxson was widely considered to be Turner's successor as the leading historian of the American frontier. His texts, clearly promoting the Turnerian view, served as the standard in a multitude of college courses on frontier history from 1910 until Ray Allen Billington produced his widely used Westward Expansion in 1949. In the words of one historian, "Paxson may have done more to anchor the Turner thesis as a basic component to American historiography than any other immediate post-Turnerian."²⁹

After Paxson's texts the next new textbook on the American West appeared in 1930, when Robert Riegel published the first edition of America Moves West. Riegel, who spent his entire career teaching history at Dartmouth College, received his Ph.D. in 1922 at the University of Wisconsin, where he studied under Frederic L. Paxson, who influenced him to write a dissertation on railroads west of the Mississippi River, but in spite of his early interest in

²⁸Etulain, "After Turner," in Writing Western History, 158,160; Frederic L. Paxson, "A Generation of the Frontier Hypothesis: 1893-1932," Pacific Historical Review 2, no. 2 (1933), 45-46, 51.

²⁹Etulain, "After Turner," in Writing Western History, 160; Hunter, "Frederic Logan Paxson," in Historians of the American Frontier, 463.

railroads, Riegel was not an economic historian. His writings demonstrate a shallow understanding of economics. He considered himself to be a social and intellectual historian.³⁰

By the time Riegel published America Moves West in 1930 Turner critics had begun to raise their voices, but Riegel took an unabashed Turnerian view. He opened the text by declaring,

The American frontier has been the most characteristic and vital of the forces which have distinguished the development of the United States from that of the Old World. For the greater part of three centuries dimly known mountain ranges, illimitable forests, unexplored streams and vast prairies lay to the west of the more settled portions of the country. . . . A knowledge of the influence of the unsettled West is necessary to make understandable the whole course of the development of the United States.

Riegel credited Turner with being "the man to give permanent direction to the study of western history" and said that Turner's famous 1893 essay "marked the year one for the more modern studies of the West." Riegel also acknowledged his own indebtedness to Frederic L. Paxson whom he recognized as one of "literally hundreds" of historians who "have followed the Turner tradition."³¹

In scope America Moves West followed a Turnerian format. It presented a chronological story of the westward

³⁰Richard Saunders, Jr., "Robert Edgar Riegel," in Historians of the American Frontier, 512.

³¹Robert E. Riegel, America Moves West New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1930), 3, vii, 540.

expansion of the American frontier. The first two chapters summarized America's colonial era, although the story really started with expansion over the Appalachian Mountains after America's independence. The book concluded at 1890, although it carried certain themes to their logical conclusion in the 1890s or the early 1900s. The work was clearly a frontier study and dealt with the trans-Appalachian West in more detail than it did the trans-Mississippi West.

The book dealt with the advance of what Riegel called "white civilization," which in reality was almost exclusively Anglo-American civilization. Non-English immigrants received only passing mention. Most of Riegel's characters were white males, and he virtually ignored minority groups. He described the institution of slavery in a few pages but said little of the slaves themselves. The only women mentioned by name were legendary heroines, such as Calamity Jane and Annie Oakley.³²

Riegel's attitude toward the American Indian was typical of the time. On the one hand he condemned the white attitude toward Indians, but he also credited the United States government with recognizing "at least in theory" Indians' rightful ownership of land and pointed out that settlers refused to cooperate with federal policy:

³²Ibid., 3, 424-425, 463, 466, 546.

No westerner took Indian land ownership seriously, for to him the Indians were savage barbarians whom God for some inscrutable reason had allowed to hinder the progress of his chosen white people. After whites had met this trouble and overcome the evil (the Indians) they could enter upon the joy of possessing their rightful heritage. Killing Indians was like killing snakes--entirely desirable except from the standpoint of the victim.

Riegel recognized that on the frontier two ways of life clashed. He acknowledged that the Indians had no concept of the permanent ownership of or sale of land and that they never actually understood the terms of a treaty, but on the other hand Riegel stated, "While the Indian was in many ways an interesting and admirable person, he made a very unpleasant neighbor for the white frontiersman." In war the Indians became "lurking savages." In the end, the "reds" were a "menace" to the advance of civilization and therefore their plight seemed inevitable.³³

America Moves West was broad in scope. Riegel's works typically treated political topics in summary fashion and were weak on economic topics. America Moves West was no exception, but its 595 pages covered a wide variety of social and intellectual topics. The book devoted undue space to railroads, a topic familiar to Riegel. Other transportation topics, such as roads and steamships, also got considerable space. But numerous other topics were addressed in detail, including exploration, fur trade, mining, cattle raising, Indian-white relations, and the role

³³Ibid., 54, 56, 224.

of religious movements and groups. An entire chapter was devoted to the Mormons, whom Riegel credited with playing a key role in the settlement of the Far West. However, in a tongue-in-cheek tone, which makes the origin of the Mormon religion look ridiculous, Riegel seriously questioned the integrity and morality of Joseph Smith and the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.³⁴

Being a social historian Riegel chose to focus on ordinary people and the way they lived. He ignored analysis and concentrated on historical narrative. A gifted story teller, Riegel used heavy doses of colorful adjectives to add interest. A good example is his account of the removal of the Cherokee Indians from Georgia: The Federal government proved "dilatatory" in keeping its promise to remove the Indians. It finally signed removal treaties with the tribes, but Georgia became "impatient" in waiting for the treaties to be fulfilled. When the Indians became "stubborn" Georgia "retaliated." The clash ended in "frightful suffering and untold horror."³⁵

Riegel added interest to the story by including selections from poems and folk tunes about American heroes and American life. A few selective maps are used. All are

³⁴Saunders, "Robert Edgar Riegel," in Historians of the American Frontier, 513-514.

³⁵Riegel, 225.

simply drawn in black and white, but they are easy to read and add clarity to geographic data.

In some ways America Moves West seemed a bit ahead of its time and not quite what one would expect of a true Turnerian work. Riegel presented a good deal of social history when most historians were still concentrating heavily upon political history, and Riegel recognized subtleties of recent scholarship. For example he acknowledged that not all population movement was East to West: "There was an undertow of varying proportions from West to East." Like Turner, Riegel believed that the frontier had closed by 1890. Yet Riegel asserted that the frontier process can still be seen in the twentieth century, in such places as Alaska and Nevada, and also in other parts of the world—Canada, Africa, and South America. Riegel also recognized the role of the mythical West. He suggested that "it is possible to view the westward movement as a search for mental and spiritual values as much as an endeavor to seek economic opportunity." He pointed to continued interest in the wild west show and the rodeo and the popularity of Tom Mix and W.S. Hart movies as evidence of the influence of the mythical West in twentieth century American life. America Moves West was well received and eventually went through five editions over a period of forty years.³⁶

³⁶Ibid., 225, 564-565.

Between 1893 and 1930 the Turner thesis gained wide acceptance and had broad influence on the writing of American history. A type of criticism came from Herbert Eugene Bolton, who suggested Turner's thesis was too narrow and Anglo-centric, failing to take into account the Spanish and other minorities of the Southwest; and many of Bolton's students eventually became outspoken opponents of the Turner thesis. However, throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century most publications on the history of the American frontier took a clearly Turnerian in perspective. Indeed, the first three college textbooks on the frontier, Frederic Paxson's The Last American Frontier (1910) and his History of the American Frontier (1924), and Robert Riegel's America Moves West (1930), embodied and promoted the Turner thesis. However, as America moved through the Great Depression and into World War II, the Turner thesis would face considerably more opposition.

CHAPTER 3

TURNER'S THESIS QUESTIONED AND REJECTED: 1930-1945

Between 1930 and 1945 the Turner thesis encountered strong criticism. In post-World War I America of the 1920s, where confidence in America's destiny gave way to cynicism and pessimism, and where a fervent national spirit began giving way to a growing international spirit, Turner's thesis, with its emphasis on rugged individualism and American uniqueness, was out of vogue. Scholars were proposing new economic, cultural, and psychological concepts to explain the course of American history. In this atmosphere Turner's proposal that America's development was best explained by her frontier experience seemed, to some, too simplistic. The Great Depression promoted more doubt about the origin and future of America's institutions and ideas. By the 1930s, then, the Turner thesis faced serious challenge.

The earliest challenges came from frontier historians themselves. In 1931 Walter Prescott Webb, a native Texan who was passionately loyal to his state and who spent most of his life teaching history at the University of Texas, published his first and most influential book, The Great Plains. He argued that the American West constituted a distinct geographic region characterized by varying

combinations of aridity, flat land, and lack of trees. The plains region posed such a harsh environment that it substantially affected American westward migration. Americans could not conquer it until they had the requisite technology, which included the Colt revolver, barbed wire, windmills, and irrigation. In Webb's words, the plains environment "constitutes a geographic unity whose influences have been so powerful as to put a characteristic mark upon everything that survives within its borders. Particularly did it alter the American institutions and cultural complexes that came from a humid and timbered region." He argued that the Great Plains contrasted so sharply with the region east of the ninety-eighth meridian as to have a major impact upon the pioneering way of life.¹

Webb did not reject the Turner hypothesis out-of-hand. Indeed, in his last book, The Great Frontier, Webb, in essence, applied the frontier thesis to the whole New World, using it as a way of explaining how Europeans brought civilization to the western hemisphere. However, The Great Plains portrayed the West not as a moving frontier but as a distinct geographic region. In addition the work demonstrated that it took technology, not just the pioneer spirit of individualism, to conquer the Great Plains. Consequently, in the eyes of many scholars The Great Plains

¹Walter Prescott Webb, The Great Plains (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1931), vi, 8.

rendered the Turner thesis insufficient to explain America's development.

In 1932, just before Turner's death, his frontier thesis met further challenge from one of his former students, T.P. Abernethy. In that year Abernethy, a frontier historian, published From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee: A Study in Frontier Democracy. Although Abernethy dedicated the book to Turner, the study challenged his mentor's contention that economic equality and democratic institutions had prevailed on the frontier. Abernethy argued that in frontier Tennessee political leaders, such as Andrew Jackson, had been antidemocratic. Abernethy concluded that "the first offspring of the West was not democracy but arrogant opportunism." Poor farmers went to the back country or found themselves dependent on wealthy landlords. Abernethy's later publications continued to challenge the idea that the frontier was a seedbed of democracy.²

Between 1930 and 1945 frontier historians and historians whose interests lay in other areas challenged Turner's thesis. Some historians attacked the Turner thesis in broad terms, questioning its validity. In this regard one of the most comprehensive attacks came from George

²William H. Graves, "Thomas Perkins Abernethy," in Historians of the American Frontier: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook, ed. John R. Wunder (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1988), 3.

Wilson Pierson, a longtime American historian at Yale. In the early 1940s he charged Turner's essay on "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" as being vague, self-contradictory, guilty of glaring omissions, and simply unprovable.³

Other historians in the 1930s and 1940s condemned the Turner thesis as being out of step with the times. Economic determinists, most notably Charles A. Beard, had been Turner critics even before the 1920s, and the economic chaos of the Great Depression spurred economic historians to new criticism. In an atmosphere where cooperation and government intervention, rather than individualism, seemed to be the solution to economic chaos, Turner's thesis lost some of its appeal. Marxist historians of the 1930s were disgruntled with Turner because in emphasizing the frontier he drew attention away from unemployment, class conflict, and the other problems associated with urbanization and industrialization. In the midst of the Great Depression Louis Hacker, a young historian at Columbia University became a chief spokesman for this view. In 1933 he published a scathing review of "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," denying that America's

³George Wilson Pierson, "The Frontier and American Institutions: A Criticism of the Turner Thesis," The New England Quarterly XV (June 1942): 224-255; reprinted in The Turner Thesis Concerning the Role of the Frontier in American History, ed. George Rogers Taylor, 3rd ed. (Lexington, Mass., 1972), 97.

historical development was significantly different from that of Europe, and insisting that the frontier experience was irrelevant to a nation caught in economic depression:

Only by a study of the origins and growth of American capitalism and imperialism can we obtain insight into the nature and complexity of the problems confronting us today. And I am prepared to submit that perhaps the chief reason for the absence of this proper understanding was the futile hunt for a unique "American spirit" which Frederick Jackson Turner began forty years ago and in which he involved most of America's historical scholars from that time until now.⁴

By the conclusion of World War II the United States had abandoned isolationism and was a leader in global affairs. Some historians were convinced that the Turner thesis, with its emphasis on American uniqueness, contributed to intellectual isolationism in the United States. These scholars advocated setting the frontier thesis aside so that the historical profession could better promote an internationalist perspective. A chief spokesman for promoting internationalism was Carlton Hayes, a student of European history and a one-time ambassador to Spain. In his presidential address to the American Historical Association in 1945 Hayes challenged his colleagues in this regard:

It is no longer a question of creating a great American nation. It is now a question of preserving and securing this nation in a world of nations. Nor is it now a question of isolationism versus internationalism. . . . The question now is whether as a nation we are going to be sufficiently informed and intelligent about foreign conditions, sufficiently free

⁴Louis M. Hacker, "Sections--Or Classes?," The Nation 137 (July 26, 1933): 108-110; reprinted in The Turner Thesis Concerning the Role of the Frontier in American History, 56.

from provincialism, to ensure the effective operation of the United Nations. . . . The American frontier is a frontier of European or "Western" culture. . . . The Atlantic community has lost none of its potential importance for us and for the world. We must look anew to it and strengthen our ties with it if we are to escape the tragedy of another world war. To this end the historical guild in America can immeasurably contribute.⁵

In spite of extensive criticism of the Turner thesis between 1930 and 1945, many historians continued to embrace it. In the early 1940s Turner critic George Wilson Pierson concluded on the basis of a survey he conducted among American historians that a majority still accepted the Turner hypothesis. Certainly the writers of college frontier textbooks were still loyal Turnerians.⁶

In 1937 Dan Elbert Clark, professor of history at the University of Oregon, published The West in American History. While Clark accepted the basic tenets of Turnerian thought, his textbook differed from its predecessors in several ways. Clark commended Turner as the first to point out and evaluate the influence of the frontier on the American people and nation. He ranked Turner's paper on "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" among the great works of historical interpretation and recognized the Turner thesis as "a part of the general currency of

⁵Carlton J. H. Hayes, "The American Frontier--Frontier of What?" American Historical Review 51 (January 1946): 199, 200, 214, 216.

⁶George W. Pierson, "American Historians and the Frontier Hypothesis in 1941," Wisconsin Magazine of History 26 (December 1942): 154.

American historical thought." Throughout the text Clark referred to the fact that the frontier had closed: "There is no lack of realization that the frontier has disappeared." While Clark accepted the general tenets of Turnerian thought he departed from the Turner thesis on one point. In the words of historian Allan Bogue, Clark contended that "the successive stages of economic development described by Turner were more typical of the Middle West than the Far West." Clark saw the Far West as composed of distinct regions, and this regional view played an important role in the organization of his text.⁷

Clark's text proved innovative in several ways. Interestingly, it became the first book of its kind to refer in its title to "the West." It purported to be a history of the West "from the coming of the first European explorers to the close of the frontier era toward the end of the last century." And indeed the book did start with a description of North America's geography and its Indian inhabitants at the time of European discovery. The textbook proceeded to discuss Spanish and French activities in North America and the eventual coming of the English.⁸

⁷Dan Elbert Clark, The West in American History (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1937), 624; Allan G. Bogue, "The Significance of the History of the American West: Postscripts and Prospects," Western Historical Quarterly 34 (February 1993): 60.

⁸Clark, v.

Clark made his text innovative in that it did not follow a strictly chronological organization. The book consisted of 37 chapters divided into three parts. Part I, after describing Spanish and French colonization, presented the Anglo-French conflict for control of North America and described the westward movement of England's American colonies down to the time of American independence. Part II, entitled "The Frontier of the Middle West," dealt with

the region between the Appalachian Mountains and the western border of the first tier of States west of the Mississippi, with special emphasis on the upper Mississippi Valley from 1783 to the close of the frontier era in that section. . . . The treatment is topical, with chapters arranged as nearly as possible in the order in which subjects and problems with which they deal arose in the process of western settlement.

Part III, entitled "The Frontier of the Far West," provided a "frankly episodic" presentation, since Clark believed "that the early history of the American occupation of the Far West must continue to be written largely on a regional or sectional basis."⁹

Clark's book was largely a social history of the West. He limited his discussion of political history and concentrated on people--ordinary people such as backwoodsmen, farmers, and pioneer merchants. Clark presented information on a wide variety of topics including education, religion, exploration, transportation, ranching, mining, and frontier society and culture. Clark had no

⁹Ibid., vi.

interest in telling tales which promoted the romantic image of the West. He wanted to paint the West as it was. One way he did this was by using numerous quotations from pioneers and other people of their time. According to Ray Allen Billington, Clark was able to present a realistic view of the West because he had spent a lifetime reading diaries, letters, travel accounts, newspapers, and other contemporary writings of the period.¹⁰

While the book proved innovative in several ways, it remained quite traditional in others. While Clark outlined Spanish and French activities in North America, he did not develop their cultures, colonial policies, or governmental institutions, claiming these factors "left no significant, permanent impress upon American development." After a brief description of Spanish and French exploration and colonization in North America, the rest of the book was devoted primarily to the story of American settlers. Throughout the book minority groups were ignored. Clark mentioned slavery as an issue of political debate but said nothing of the life of slaves. He said little about the life of frontier women in general and nothing about any women in particular.¹¹

¹⁰Ray Allen Billington, foreword to The Middle West in American History, by Dan Elbert Clark (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1965), iv.

¹¹Clark, v, 16.

The treatment of Indians was much like that in earlier frontier history textbooks. Clark gave a brief overview of Indian culture, explained that cultural differences led to misunderstandings between Indians and settlers, and said that the treatment of Indians by whites has been the subject of much debate. Like Frederic Paxson he credited the federal government with attempting in good faith to follow reasonable policies, but Clark said "the United States government was virtually powerless to control the actions of its citizens." Clark concluded that most of the "red men" in North America "had not risen out of barbarism." He described them as having "fierce, war-like dispositions," being guilty of "cruelty," and being generally "quarrelsome."¹²

Another Turnerian textbook became available in 1941, when LeRoy Hafen, professor of history at the University of Denver, and Carl Coke Rister, professor of history at the University of Oklahoma, published Western America: The Exploration, Settlement, and Development of the Region Beyond the Mississippi. This text reflected the interests of its authors, Hafen, who specialized in the study of the Far West and the fur trade, and Rister, who dedicated his life to the study of the Southwest. Western America was largely traditional, although it did feature certain innovations. The work presented a largely chronological

¹²Ibid., 12-16, 221-225.

overview of the development of the West, combining political, social, economic, cultural, and military history. In addition to presenting the more standard topics the book also dealt with education and religion and offered interesting insight on outlaws, vigilance committees, and frontier justice, and described popular pastimes such as cockfighting and fandangoes.

Western America was a transitional text in that while it showed the influence of Frederick Jackson Turner it also showed the newer influence of Herbert Eugene Bolton and Walter Precott Webb. The book commended Turner for his influence in emphasizing "the significance of the frontier as shaping force in American culture" and credited Turner and Frederic Paxson with having produced "the best general analyses of the advancing frontier and the emergence of the American cultural pattern." The book views the frontier as having closed by 1890 and credits Turner with calling attention to that fact. In Turnerian fashion the authors concluded their study at about 1890, except when they carried certain themes to a logical later conclusion.¹³

The book also fit the Turnerian mold in that it emphasized and glorified the civilizing accomplishments of America's Anglo settlers in the West. The text admitted

¹³LeRoy R. Hafen and Carl Coke Rister, Western America: The Exploration, Settlement, and Development of the Region Beyond the Mississippi (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1941), 88-89, 664, 625.

that, "From the settlement of Jamestown until the disappearance of the last American frontier, the white intruders generally dealt ruthlessly with the Indians." But the Indians received only summary treatment. In one sentence the authors acknowledged that, "the Indian deserves space in any history of Western America." Yet in the next sentence they stated that they had "confined their attention largely to a presentation of his relation with the white man." The book assumed that United States territorial expansion in the West was inevitable and desirable. This book gave more detail than most about the early influence of the Spanish and the French in the West, but it did not necessarily present those settlers in a good light. Little was said about the institution of slavery, except when the authors described the enslavement of blacks by the Spanish and French. Beyond this, minority groups and women were virtually ignored.¹⁴

While Western America showed the influence of Turner, it also showed the influence of Herbert Eugene Bolton, to whom it was dedicated, and of Walter Precott Webb. This was the first college text to focus exclusively on the trans-Mississippi West. The first four chapters, demonstrating Boltonian influence, dealt with the early achievements of the Spanish and French in the American West. While the next four chapters provided background material of Anglo-American

¹⁴Ibid., 83, viii.

achievements by summarizing the history of the trans-Appalachian West, the focus of the book was clearly on America's expansion beyond the Mississippi. The book made much of regionalism. The introduction reflected the influence of Walter Prescott Webb. After explaining that "the 'Great Plains' was the first distinctive geographic unit of Western America encountered by Anglo-Americans," it devoted more than five pages to outlining the topographic regions of the West and emphasized that "environment was to be a powerful contributing force in the making a Western America," altering both "economic life" and "social institutions."¹⁵

The illustrations in this text were standard for their time. The book did have two maps printed in color. There were various black and white maps. Other illustrations consisted of black and white reproductions of works by nineteenth century illustrators and a few actual photographs of frontier scenes.

During the years of the Great Depression and World War II the Turner thesis faced strong challenges from frontier historians as well as from other scholars. The influential historian Walter Prescott Webb portrayed the West not as a moving frontier but as a distinct region, strongly influenced by geography and climate. T.P. Abernethy cast doubt on the theory of frontier democracy.

¹⁵Ibid., viii, xiii.

Meanwhile other scholars charged that the Turner thesis was invalid or out of step with the times. Nevertheless, the frontier textbooks published during these years were Turnerian in perspective. While they showed certain innovations they demonstrated the basic Turnerian view.

CHAPTER 4

TURNER'S THESIS RENEWED AND REVISED: 1945-1960

The conclusion of World War II brought drastic changes in America. The United States of 1945-1960 was very different from the United States of 1930-1945. A new era in world history dawned, and the United States prepared to play a major role in the new drama of human events. A booming national economy, unprecedented progress in science and technology, and an undisputed position of world leadership, promised to make America a dominant force in creating a better world. The promise of the future was tempered by the coming of the Cold War and the threats of the Atomic Age, but for most Americans the cynicism and pessimism of post-World War I years and the Depression Era were replaced by a new spirit of optimism and a new world view.

Significant changes took place in America's historical profession. The second generation of professional historians, born in the nineteenth century, passed from the scene, giving way to the third generation, born in the twentieth century. New scholars brought new perspectives. They began to come from more diverse cultural backgrounds. Some were the children or grandchildren of immigrants. The G.I. revolution swelled the size of American colleges and universities and consequently swelled the ranks of higher

education professionals, including historians. Eventually the G.I. Bill made it possible for the children of working-class Americans to enter the ranks of the historical profession. The proliferation of knowledge in all areas, combined with new technology which made possible new research techniques, contributed to increasing specialization in all fields, including frontier and western history. Like all Americans the new historians were influenced by their times. Some scholars, having lived through depression and world war were more cynical and less confident in the inevitability of progress than earlier American intellectuals. Others had outlooks tempered by their own participation in World War II or the Korean Conflict, in which they had fought for American freedom and ideals.¹

With the historical profession in a state of rapid change, the Turner thesis faced new challenges. From 1893 to 1930 the Turner thesis had been accepted almost without question. Then between 1930 and 1945 the thesis was questioned by numerous scholars and was rejected by some, but between 1945 and 1960 western historiography took a different direction. Some scholars continued to debunk Turner's ideas, but many took a more positive view. They

¹Gerald N. Grob and George Athan Billias, Interpretations of American History: Patterns and Prospects, vol. II, Since 1865 (New York: Free Press, 1978), 11-12; Joyce Applby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, Telling the Truth About History (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994) 147-148.

saw the Turner thesis as a valid beginning for an explanation of American history. They saw it as one aspect of the truth, needing to be revised and expanded.

Between 1945 and 1960 several significant trends played a role in reorienting frontier history. In the first place historians tended to take a more international view. Frederick Jackson Turner and his followers had viewed the United States as a unique nation made distinct by its frontier experience. However, post-World War II historians, becoming part of a global society, looked for common characteristics with the rest of the world. In his 1951 book The Great Frontier, and in ensuing articles, Walter Prescott Webb criticized Turner for "having treated the frontier as if it were something exclusively American, as if the United States were the only nation that had felt the powerful influence of access to vacant land." Webb argued, "The American frontier concept . . . needs to be lifted out of its present national setting and applied on a much larger scale to all western civilization in modern times." By the 1950s other historians began to apply the Turner thesis to Latin America, Finland, Canada, Australia, South Africa, and other parts of the world.²

²Walter Prescott Webb, "Ended: Four Hundred Year Boom: Reflections on the Age of the Frontier," Harper's 203 (October 1951): 26, 27, 33, quoted in Gerald D. Nash, Creating the West: Historical Interpretations, 1890-1990 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 55.

A second trend in the reorientation of frontier history during this era was that more historians viewed the frontier as a region rather than as a process. Turner declared the American frontier closed in 1890, and many scholars had taken this to mean that America had become a closed society. In the financially depressed 1930s the West seemed to be the place where Anglo-American society had reached its financial and cultural limits; there seemed to be no place for growth and cultural diversity. But during the second world war the West had grown considerably in population, in prosperity, and in political power. By the late 1940s many scholars were viewing the West as a distinct region with great potential, built upon an open society, where people of many backgrounds brought a variety of cultural influences.

While these scholars were departing far from Turner's thesis many did not reject Turner's thinking. A good example is James Malin, a historian of the American grasslands. Between 1945 and 1960 Malin published a series of books and articles that gained him the reputation as one of the strongest Turner critics. He argued that to properly understand the development of the American West one must study the role of technology, and the part played by a variety of social and cultural forces, including the rise of cities. Yet, while Malin argued that "the frontier-section theories were inadequate as full explanations" of America's development he spoke respectfully of Turner's pioneering

work. He saved his real condemnation for Turner's followers, who "perverted the frontier message," making it mean more than Turner intended, as if it were the only force that had shaped American character and institutions.³

The 1950s brought another trend, a new interest in applying the methods of social science to history. The social sciences--psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, and economics--provided concepts, laws, and models which historians applied to historical investigation.

Some historians used social science methods to refute Turner's ideas. A notable example is economic historian Fred A. Shannon. Turner had postulated that during depression years the frontier restrained radical agitation by serving as a safety valve, drawing off to the West unemployed eastern workers. In the 1930s historians began to compile data to refute this idea, arguing that more easterners went West during good economic times than during bad times. In the 1940s Shannon gave a resounding blow to the safety valve theory by using statistical analysis to argue that the West did not even act as an indirect safety

³Allan G. Bogue, "James C. Malin: A Voice from the Grassland," in Writing Western History: Essays on Major Western Historians, ed. Richard W. Etulain (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 234, 235, 237.

valve by drawing eastern farmers who might otherwise have become factory workers.⁴

In the post-World War II era three historians influenced the reorientation of frontier and western history: Earl Pomeroy, Henry Nash Smith, and Ray Allen Billington. Among the historians who began to emphasize cultural influences on the development of the West none was more influential than Earl Pomeroy. Born in 1915 in Capitola, California, a small town south of San Francisco, Pomeroy grew up in the West. He did his doctoral work at the University of California at Berkeley under the direction of Frederic Logan Paxson, and like Paxson, he combined the two fields of frontier history and recent American history. In 1947 Pomeroy published his first book, The Territories and the United States, 1861-1890: Studies in Colonial Administration. In this analysis of the United States government's territorial system Pomeroy took issue with Turner's contention that the West had been politically innovative. Pomeroy argued that eastern political institutions were purposefully transplanted to the West.

⁴Frederick Jackson Turner, "Contributions of the West to American Democracy," in The Frontier in American History (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), 243-268; Fred A. Shannon, "A Post-Mortem on the Labor-Safety-Valve Theory," Agricultural History 19 (January 1945), 31-37, reprinted in Ray Allen Billington, ed., The Frontier Thesis: Valid Interpretation of American History? (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966), 41-50.

Pomeroy described the West as being shaped in the mold of eastern political institutions.⁵

In 1955 Pomeroy published in the Mississippi Valley Historical Review a ground-breaking article entitled "Toward a Reorientation of Western History: Continuity and Environment." In this influential essay Pomeroy argued that a wide variety of eastern cultural influences had shaped the West. He went so far as to say, "The Westerner has been fundamentally imitator rather than innovator." While Turner had seen the West as a strong influence in shaping the East, Pomeroy presented evidence that pioneers had patterned the West as nearly as possible after the eastern establishment. Thus Pomeroy struck at the most basic of Turnerian concepts, the concept of the West reshaping the East.⁶

Another aspect of post-World War II emphasis on cultural influences was a renewed interest in the mythical West. Though such interest was not new the post-war era, with its emphasis on psychology, brought a new awareness of the role of mental perceptions in the lives of people and nations. Scholars became acutely aware that the West was important not only for what it had been but for what

⁵Michael P. Malone, "Earl Pomeroy and the Reorientation of Western American History," in Writing Western History, 311-314.

⁶Earl S. Pomeroy, "Toward a Reorientation of Western History: Continuity and Environment," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 41 (March 1955): 579-600, quoted in Malone, "Earl Pomeroy and the Reorientation of Western American History," in Writing Western History, 320.

Americans thought it had been or wanted to believe it had been. In the uncertainties of the Cold War era Americans found comfort in perceiving the nineteenth century West as a land where rugged, individualistic, heroic forbearers determined their own destiny. The popularity of the myth was both evidenced and reinforced by the proliferation in the 1950s of western movies.

A leading scholar in promoting the study of the mythical West was Henry Nash Smith. Born in Dallas, Texas in 1906 Smith grew up in the West. In 1940 he became the first to receive a doctorate from Harvard in American Civilization, and he went on to become a leading scholar in the new field of American Studies. Early in his professional career Smith became fascinated with the role of the imagined West in American history. In 1950 he published Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth, which opened with a challenge to the Turner thesis: "One of the most persistent generalizations concerning American life and character is the notion that our society has been shaped by the pull of a vacant continent drawing population westward through the passes of the Alleghenies, across the Mississippi Valley, over the high plains and mountains of the Far West to the Pacific Coast." Drawing upon many areas of knowledge, but especially upon psychology and anthropology, Smith integrated history with literature to analyze questions of cultural meaning. He concluded that

Americans of both the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries had fooled themselves into seeing the West as a place of inevitable progress and limitless opportunities.⁷

Smith's work was extremely influential. Historian Gerald D. Nash says, "What Turner had done for the West as frontier in the 1890s, what Webb had accomplished for the West as region in the 1930s, Smith accomplished for the West as myth in the 1950s." In the words of historian Lee Clark Mitchell, Smith "made us realize how necessary the West has been to our history, and how our altering conceptions of it have shaped and been shaped by our sense of ourselves as Americans."⁸

If both Pomeroy and Smith struck at the heart of the Turner thesis, some other historians of the post-war era embraced the thesis and set out to modify and correct it in order to make it acceptable in the light of modern scholarship. The most articulate of these neo-Turnerians was Ray Allen Billington, who through his writing refined the frontier hypothesis and made it acceptable to modern generations. Billington also became the most highly

⁷Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth, revised edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 3, quoted in Lee Clark Mitchell, "Henry Nash Smith's Myth of the West," in Writing Western History, 247; Wilbur R. Jacobs, On Turner's Trail: 100 Years of Writing Western History (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 111.

⁸Nash, 226; Lee Clark Mitchell, "Henry Nash Smith's Myth of the West," in Writing Western History, 270.

regarded western history textbook writer of his era. Billington's rise to prominence is especially interesting since little in his formal training prepared him for a career in frontier history. In the early 1920s he attended his home state's University of Michigan to prepare for a career in journalism. However, as editor of a student newspaper, he published an article that scandalized the university and led to his expulsion.⁹

Consequently, he moved to the University of Wisconsin, where his interest turned to history and where one of his teachers was Frederic Logan Paxson. Subsequently, Billington returned to the University of Michigan for an M.A. in history and then went to Harvard to pursue doctoral work. While earning a Ph.D., which he completed in 1933, Billington took one seminar on frontier history, which was conducted jointly by Professor Frederick Merk, Turner's successor at Harvard, and James B. Hedges. But while Billington got a taste of frontier history his special area of study was intellectual and cultural history, and his primary professor was Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., under whose direction he completed a dissertation which he eventually published (1938) under the title The Protestant

⁹Michael P. Malone, "Introduction," in Historians and the American West, ed. Michael P. Malone, with a Foreword by Rodman W. Paul (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 6.

Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism.¹⁰

In 1931, while completing his Ph.D., Billington began his college teaching career at Clark University. In 1937 he moved to Smith College. It was while Billington was teaching at Smith in the early 1940s that Harvard historian James B. Hedges, who had a reputation as a procrastinator, invited Billington, who was known for his enthusiasm and his writing ability, to join him in writing a textbook history of the American frontier. Although Billington knew little about the subject, he accepted the challenge and plunged into nine years of reading, research, and writing. Meanwhile, Hedges abandoned the project. When the resulting textbook, Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier, was published in 1949, only three chapters had been written by Hedges; the rest was the work of Billington.¹¹

The publication of Westward Expansion began Billington's long career as a frontier historian and pushed him to the forefront of the controversy over the Turner

¹⁰Richard E. Oglesby, "Ray Allen Billington," in Historians of the American Frontier: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook, ed. John R. Wunder (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 97; Patricia Nelson Limerick, "Persistent Traits and the Persistent Historian: The American Frontier and Ray Allen Billington," in Writing Western History, 278.

¹¹Jacobs, 189, 191; Oglesby, "Ray Allen Billington," in Historians of the American Frontier, 97-98; Limerick, "Persistent Traits and the Persistent Historian," in Writing Western History, 278.

thesis. In preparing to write Westward Expansion Billington's intensive study led him naturally into a study of the ongoing debate between critics and supporters of Turner's frontier hypothesis. Billington emerged from his study convinced of the basic validity of Turner's ideas. Henceforth he endeavored "to place Frederick Jackson Turner in his proper place in American historiography."¹²

Meanwhile, in 1944 Billington moved to Northwestern University, where he taught until 1963, when he became senior research associate at the Huntington Library in California, a position he held until his death in 1981. In the course of long career Billington wrote and edited a series of books and articles on the frontier and the West. His publications were well received, and he also became a widely sought public speaker. Among his most recognized publications were a narrative history in the New American Nation Series, The Far Western Frontier, 1830-1860 (1956); a defense of the Turner thesis in light of modern social science, America's Frontier Heritage (1966); a biography, Frederick Jackson Turner: Historian, Scholar, Teacher (1973); and the highly acclaimed Land of Savagery, Land of Promise: The European Image of the American Frontier (1981), an analysis of the influence of the mythical West.¹³

¹²Oglesby, "Ray Allen Billington," in Historians of the American Frontier, 99.

¹³Ibid., 98.

Throughout Billington's successful career one goal remained clear. Historian Patricia Limerick summed it up well: "In book after book, article after article, Billington fought to keep the cold winds of historiographical change from extinguishing the flame lit by Frederick Jackson Turner in 1893. A reading of his major works, from the first edition of Westward Expansion (1949) to Land of Savagery, Land of Promise (1981), provides a remarkable case study in loyalty and persistence." Billington recognized that during the 1920s and 1930s the Turner hypothesis faced strong criticism, and he admitted that Turner's ideas were flawed. Billington himself made various modifications in Turner's work. Some scholars argued that Billington had misinterpreted Turner. But Billington remained convinced that Turner's basic argument that the frontier had a lasting influence on the development of America and the character of its people was valid. Billington became the primary interpreter of frontier history and the primary defender of Turner and his hypothesis."¹⁴

In an interesting turn of events, Billington's high regard for Frederick Jackson Turner's ideas drew him into a

¹⁴Limerick, "Persistent Traits and Persistent Historian," in Writing Western History, 277-278; Oglesby, "Ray Allen Billington," in Historians of the American Frontier, 99, 97; Richard Slotkin, The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890 (New York: Atheneum, 1985; reprint, New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 42.

conflict with his former graduate professor Frederick Merk, who had been a student of Turner and who became Turner's successor at Harvard. When Merk learned the contents of Billington's about-to-be published Westward Expansion he was offended and "considered legal action to protect what he considered to be the theft of his lectures." He claimed Billington's book was little more than his class lectures in narrative form. The actual fact of the matter was that both Billington and Merk had borrowed heavily from Turner's class lecture notes.¹⁵

Billington attempted to patch the rift with his mentor by dedicating Westward Expansion "to Frederick Merk whose inspirational teaching and meticulous scholarship perpetuate the traditions of Frederick Jackson Turner" and by acknowledging in the preface: "I have a special obligation to Professor Merk of Harvard University, whose course the History of the Westward Movement I attended as a graduate student. Professor Merk was a student and colleague of Professor Turner. . . . His course has served me specifically with contributions of analysis and interpretations, and generally as a guide in the preparation of many chapters in this volume." Billington's acknowledgement only partially appeased Merk, who, many years later, after retiring from Harvard, finally published his own western history textbook. Billington's preface also

¹⁵Jacobs, On Turner's Trail, 188-191.

acknowledged his indebtedness to two other Turnerians: James B. Hedges, who taught Billington at Harvard and then served briefly as his collaborator on Westward Expansion, and Frederic L. Paxson, who taught Billington at the University of Wisconsin.¹⁶

No book better exemplified Ray Allen Billington's thinking, nor his high regard for Frederick Jackson Turner, than Westward Expansion. The preface to the work clearly set forth Billington's purpose in the opening sentence: "This book attempts to follow the pattern that Frederick Jackson Turner might have used had he ever compressed his voluminous researches on the American frontier within one volume." In the first chapter of the book Billington summarized and refined Turner's frontier hypothesis, contending that while years of criticism had modified the Turner thesis, scholars had not refuted Turner's basic doctrine. Billington acknowledged that "the frontier seldom served as a 'safety valve' for working men" and that "the cost of moving to the West was also a barrier that few easterners could overcome." Billington summarized Turner's vision of the frontier as "a migrating geographic area which moved westward from Atlantic to Pacific over the course of three centuries." But Billington himself was careful to give a more precise definition: "The frontier can be

¹⁶Ray Allen Billington, Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), v, viii.

pictured more accurately as a series of contiguous westward-migrating zones, each representing a different stage in the development of society from elemental to complex forms. As the westward movement gained momentum, a standardized zonal pattern developed which, although varying slightly with time and place, remained largely consistent until the continent was occupied." Modifications notwithstanding, Billington stood firm on the basic premise: "Yet the most carping critic will agree that the unusual environment, and the continuous rebirth of society in the western wilderness, endowed the American people and their institutions with characteristics not shared by the rest of the world."¹⁷

Western Expansion was a sweeping epic which told the story of European advance across North America, from the earliest exploration of the Spanish in the Southeast to the era of Granger and Populist unrest in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The approach is essentially chronological, although it is tempered by the influence of Turner, who "stressed the geographic continuity in the settlement process rather than the chronological." As Billington told his readers in the preface, "The outline used to give order to the following pages is roughly that prepared by Professor Turner for his course on the history of the frontier at Harvard University."¹⁸

¹⁷Ibid., vii, 3, 10.

¹⁸Ibid., vii.

Westward Expansion was divided into three sections. The first, "The Colonial Frontier," dealt with the period from the European discovery of the New World to the conclusion of the American War for Independence. The second, "The Trans-Appalachian Frontier," continued the story of America's westward movement to 1850. The third, "The Trans-Mississippi Frontier," backtracked to recount the early Spanish exploration in the West and then carried the story to the close of the nineteenth century.

Westward Expansion took an Anglo-centric approach to American history. In the words of historian Burton Williams, the book "read somewhat like a history of the English people--continued in America." This theme is revealed in the titles of three chapters, "The French Barrier," "The Spanish Barrier," and "The Indian Barrier." Except for a brief survey of the age of exploration, Westward Expansion said little about the Spanish or French. Other minority groups received little mention anywhere in the book, with the exception of Indians. Women were ignored. In the words of Patricia Limerick, "The English-speaking, American white male was the star of the story."¹⁹

Billington demonstrated an ambivalent attitude toward American Indians, whom he often referred to as "red men."

¹⁹Burton J. Williams, "The Twentieth Century American West: The Old Versus the New," Rocky Mountain Social Science Journal 6 (October 1969): 163, 164; Limerick, "Persistent Traits and Persistent Historian," in Writing Western History, 286.

He showed considerable sympathy for the plight of the Indians. For example, in regard to King Philip's War in seventeenth-century New England, he said that the Indians had been "mercilessly abused" and were pushed into violence. In the Great Lakes region of the early nineteenth century, government agents used "brutal directness" to see that Indians were "pushed from their native lands" In the Jacksonian era the Cherokee Indians found themselves "at the mercy of an unsympathetic president and ruthless state officers who vied with each other in making life unpleasant for the red men." In regard to the western Plains Indians, Billington said they were ultimately subdued, "but only at a cost of blood, wealth, and human decency which will forever stain the annals of the American frontier." Yet, in spite of Billington's sympathy for the Indians, tribes were portrayed as ultimately little more than a barrier for Anglo-American civilization to overcome. They were alternately "menacing Indians," "fleeing savages," and "lurking savages;" and the Plains Indians were placed in a chapter on "The Natural Setting."²⁰

Western Expansion praised the frontier spirit of America's past, but toward the end of the story Billington revealed that he was not oblivious to his own times. America's tradition of rugged individualism had been tempered by the Great Depression and world wars. Many

²⁰Billington, 181, 315, 409, 651, 73, 291, 47, 746.

Americans of the post-war era felt a need for community and national cooperation. Billington assured his readers that the passing of the frontier had significant political implications for the future. In his concluding lines he predicted a new American spirit: "The hardy, self-reliant men and women who through three centuries conquered the continent have played their role in the drama of American development; as they pass from the scene a new generation, freed from the prejudices of an outworn past where the needs of individuals transcended the needs of society, will blaze the trails into the newer world of co-operative democracy that is America's future."²¹

One of Western Expansion's appeals, and at the same time, one of its disadvantages, was its size. With 756 pages of text it was by far the biggest and the most detailed of the western history textbooks of its day. Some instructors doubted their undergraduate students could comprehend the massive volume and consequently adopted other textbooks. Yet all western history specialists were highly appreciative of Western Expansion's magnificent and still useful bibliography

Western Expansion had much to commend it. Ray Allen Billington was a good writer and a good storyteller. As Patricia Limerick pointed out, "His beginning ties to journalism never left him, and the result was a level of

²¹Ibid., 756.

readability and intelligibility all too uncommon in academic prose." The volume was packed with interesting details, though it had no pictures. In keeping with Turnerian tradition, it had numerous easy-to-read black and white maps. Many were small, but some were nearly full-page in size. It is no surprise that Westward Expansion remained popular for decades and eventually went through five editions.²²

While Billington's Westward Expansion was the most popular western history textbook during the post-war era, it was not the only one available. Two older textbooks were issued in new editions during these years, and also another new textbook was published.

In 1947 Robert Riegel published a second edition of America Moves West. In the original 1930 edition Riegel mentioned Frederick Jackson Turner and took a Turnerian view, but by 1947 Turner had been widely criticized, and in response Riegel now took a bold stand for the Turner thesis. In this revised edition Riegel added a new concluding chapter that centered on Turner. The chapter was a good overview of historical interpretation in regard to the American West. After stating that America's first graduate school, Johns Hopkins University, was "overwhelmingly concerned with the Germanic origins of Anglo-Saxon political

²²Limerick, "Persistent Traits and the Persistent Historian," in Writing Western History, 280.

institutions," Riegel mentioned early historians of the West, such as H.H. Bancroft and Theodore Roosevelt. Then he proceeded to lay out tenets of the Turner thesis. This section was followed by one which outlined the major criticisms of the thesis. Riegel acknowledged that Turner spoke in broad general terms, that his language was sometimes vague, and that some of the criticisms had certain validity. But Riegel concluded that many of the critics had gone too far in rejecting Turner's writings, throwing out "the good with the bad, the baby with the bath." He retorted that, "In some instances the critics would seem to be more interested in supporting the pretensions of their own sections against Turner's Middle West than in finding the truth." He rejected "a trend toward developing the thesis that the frontier had no significance," labeling such thinking "ridiculous." He concluded, "No one of intelligence can really believe that the conquering of three thousand miles of wilderness did not leave some stamp on American history and on the American character." In the remainder of the chapter Riegel contended that while the exact significance of the frontier in American history was open to debate its strong influence could not be denied: "The frontier has been of great importance in the development of the distinctive culture of the United States,

and its influence is bound to continue into the remote future."²³

The rest of Riegel's second edition had substantial revisions which made the book, in his words, a "fresh synthesis of western history." However, there was no real change in historical interpretation. The chapters were reorganized and much of the material on railroads was removed, making more room for social history. The book had a substantial amount of interesting detail about daily life and common people. It dealt with customs, education, religion, technology, medicine, literature, Indians, and Mormons. Most of the first edition's stinging comments about the origin of the Mormon religion were deleted, although Riegel told his reader, "The authenticity of the Book of Mormon has often been questioned, and it has been labeled a farrago of nonsense stated in pseudo-Biblical language, with many near quotations from the Bible, Shakespeare, and Pope, and with particular attention devoted to the problems of the farmer of central New York." This edition reorganized and expanded the information on the trans-Mississippi West. Some maps from the first edition remained unchanged, but a few were redone and a few new ones were added.²⁴

²³Robert Riegel, America Moves West, Revised Edition (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1947), 614, 624, 630.

²⁴Ibid., vii, 395.

In tone the second edition was much like the first. Riegel continued to use colorful descriptive language. He was critical of James Fenimore Cooper's habit of stereotyping frontier characters, yet Riegel himself was guilty of stereotyping. For example, in describing dock workers on the rivers he referred to the "happy and carefree" Negro.²⁵

In the 1930 edition of America Moves West Riegel had hinted at the role of the mythical West. In this 1947 edition he expanded that concept a bit in a reorganized and retitled chapter, "The West is Fictionalized," in which he summarized the role of western literature, western plays, and the wild west show and updated the section on the role of moving pictures in creating "a beautiful and heroic myth of the West." Interestingly, Riegel was himself doing a work that was, partly at least, a product of the mythical West. He included plenty of interesting tales about a wide variety of people, including outlaws, lawmen, gamblers, and river men. There were exciting tales of holdups, hangings, and steamboat races. Riegel acknowledged that many of these tales are likely more folklore than fact, but he included them to add to the spirit of adventure. This edition added interest by including more lines of song and poetry than did the first.²⁶

²⁵Ibid., 230, 302.

²⁶Ibid., 608.

In 1956 Riegel published a third edition of his America Moves West. It was, in essence, an updated version of the second edition. The format and tone of the work were basically unchanged.

Meanwhile, in 1950 LeRoy Hafen and Carl Coke Rister produced a second edition of Western America, but the changes were of little significance. The geographical part of the first edition's introduction was now expanded into a new first chapter, but in tone and purpose the second edition was like the original 1941 edition. Indeed much of the material was taken verbatim from the first edition.

The last new textbook on frontier history to be published in this era was notably careful in taking a Turnerian stand. In 1959 Thomas D. Clark, a historian at the University of Kentucky, who specialized in the southern and southwestern frontiers, published Frontier America: The Story of the Westward Movement. As a textbook writer Clark has been called "the last of the traditionalists." Clark announced early in his text, "No attempt is made to adhere to a thesis." He said, "Whether or not the frontier was truly a place where American history was democratized may remain an open question for all time." Still, he said with confidence, "That the American political and social systems

were vitally influenced by the westward movement, however, seems beyond reasonable question."²⁷

Generally speaking, Clark's presentation fit the Turnerian mold. He traced America's westward movement chronologically "from the middle of the eighteenth century to the 1890's when free lands disappeared." He told the story from an Anglo-centric perspective. Little was said about minorities except as they influenced the Anglo-American advance. Women were mentioned only in general terms, not as individuals.²⁸

In some ways, however, Clark anticipated a more recent approach to western history. His book was a synthesis of political, economic, social, and cultural history. His narrative offered colorful detail and interesting information about the daily life of a variety of people. He added interest by including excerpts from contemporary accounts. There was an entire chapter on "Frontier Arts and Sciences," which included information on newspapers and periodicals, books and authors, artists and actors, scientists, and education. There was considerable information on the influence of religion and religious denominations. While Clark was enthusiastic about the sense

²⁷Allan G. Bogue, "The Significance of the History of the American West: Postscripts and Prospects," Western Historical Quarterly 34 (February 1993): 60; Thomas D. Clark, Frontier America: The Story of the Westward Movement (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), v, 24.

²⁸Ibid., v.

of progress that America's frontier spirit created, he lamented the plunder of natural resources: "Soils were dredged of their fertility" and "deep gullies gashed the face of the earth," as "many frontiersmen prostituted nature's bounty."²⁹

Clark made an obvious effort to take a balanced view on the plight of American Indians. He pointed out that while "Indian and European cultures were in direct conflict," much of the trouble was brought on by "racial differences and prejudices." Whites "looked upon the Indian as savage and heathen," and "his occupation of the land was considered a barrier to white Christian occupation." Throughout the American frontier experience Indian wars "were provoked by both sides." In a chapter on "The Indians' Last Frontier" Clark went into considerable detail to explain that both sides contributed to the ongoing conflict between plains Indians and settlers. Some whites were naive and some hated Indians. At the same time "the Indians themselves were hard to satisfy" and sometimes took advantage of Indian agents. In the end Clark concluded that while the plight of the Indians was "full of bloodshed and social injustice . . . it was one of the inevitabilities of frontier expansion."³⁰

Frontier America was comprehensive and highly readable. The book had no color plates, but it included interesting

²⁹Ibid., 22.

³⁰Ibid., 10, 709, 724.

black and white illustrations. Many were reproductions of early prints, and a few were actual photographs of nineteenth century frontier life. Scattered throughout the text was a series of maps. There was also a chapter-by-chapter bibliography and an appendix including a list of Presidential terms, a chronology of key events in American history, and a chart showing population growth of the United States.

In the post-World War II era, western historical writing, like historical writing in general, reflected changing times. Younger scholars tended to be less cynical than scholars of the interwar years, and they took a new world view. Scholars began to take a broader view of the history of the American West, considering it in its relationship to world history. In addition, more historians began to view the West as a distinct region, rather than as a process. There was also new interest in applying the methods of social science to western history. While some scholars continued to criticize the Turner thesis, others took a more positive view, seeing it at least as a valid place to begin the search for a fuller understanding of the significance of the American West. Three scholars in particular had an important influence on the reorientation of frontier and western history. Earl Pomeroy challenged the Turnerian view, demonstrating that instead of the West influencing the East, in many ways the East had shaped the

West. Henry Nash Smith prompted new interest in the study of the mythical West, and Ray Allen Billington sought to apply the principles of social science to a defense of the Turner thesis.

Textbooks, to varying degrees, reflected the new trends in western history. Billington's Western Expansion, published in 1949, was the epitome of a neo-Turnerian work, revising and redefining the Turner thesis, but accepting, defending, and promoting the broad concepts of Frederick Jackson Turner. When Robert Riegel issued a second edition of his America Moves West in 1947 he not only accepted Turnerian thinking, as he had done in his original 1930 edition, but he added a new concluding chapter to take a bold stand for the broad tenets of Frederick Jackson Turner. Interestingly, Riegel's second edition also gave a more direct recognition to the role of the mythical West. When Thomas D. Clark published his Frontier America in 1959 he generally, albeit cautiously, accepted the Turner thesis. However, in a somewhat different vein, Clark synthesized a considerable amount of political, economic, social, and cultural history; lamented the plunder of natural resources; and attempted to present a balanced view on the plight of American Indians. In this regard he anticipated post 1960 trends.

CHAPTER 5

NEW DIRECTIONS: 1960-1997

The years following 1960 brought significant changes in America. As the United States faced new crises in foreign and domestic affairs the spirit of optimism which characterized the post-war era was overshadowed by a spirit of pessimism and negativism. This was especially true among the baby boomer generation born after World War II. The baby boomers came of age in an era marked by social unrest and uncertainty. During the civil rights movement the nation was torn by racial division. Conflict over America's involvement in the Vietnam war became an especially divisive issue which fragmented American society.

The historical profession reflected the change and turmoil of this era. Between 1960 and 1975 college and university enrollments continued to increase, and history departments continued to grow. During the 1950s and 1960s the number of Ph.Ds in history nearly quadrupled. By 1970 the American Historical Association boasted 20,000 members.¹

¹Gerald D. Nash, Creating the West: Historical Interpretations, 1890-1990 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 71; Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, Telling the Truth About History (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994), 146.

As the historical profession grew, it changed in significant ways. Continuing interest in the social sciences led historians to explore interdisciplinary approaches to research and spurred the American studies movement, which combined interests in history and culture. Related to the interest in social science techniques was the development of the "new" social history. Unlike earlier social historians, who concentrated on narrative descriptions of the life of ordinary people, the "new social historians" were interested in precise analysis of social groups.

Several factors led to increased specialization in historical research. More females, blacks, and other minority scholars entered the historical profession and pursued interests in shedding light on neglected peoples in America's history. The social protest movements of the 1960s also prompted historians to explore new avenues of insight into American life. Computer technology allowed scholars to employ new quantification techniques.²

The 1960s also produced New Left historians. These young scholars, disenchanted with the course of events during their lifetime viewed social and economic conflict as prominent themes in American history and sought to use history as a basis for reforming society.

²Appleby, 147, 148.

During this era interest in western history proliferated, both within the ranks of academia and among much of the general populace. Indeed historian Wilbur Jacobs said that by the 1960s western history "was in the midst of a renaissance." In this atmosphere of enthusiasm Ray Allen Billington took a leading role in organizing the Western History Association, which was founded in Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1961. The founding of the Western History Association both evidenced and promoted the popularity of western history. For many years the organization published a popular magazine, American West, as well as its more standard scholarly journal, Western Historical Quarterly.³

The field of western history expanded rapidly, with a host of new scholars entering the specialty. Wilbur Jacobs recalled that by the 1960s hundreds of new scholars were teaching western history courses and were directing candidates for Ph.D.s in the field. Gerald Nash averred that in 1890 there were fewer than two hundred western historians; by 1990 there were more than two thousand.⁴

Growth in the field of western history brought both continuity and considerable change. The leading role played by Ray Allen Billington insured that Turnerian thought would continue to attract followers. Billington published an

³Wilbur R. Jacobs, On Turner's Trail: 100 Years of Writing Western History (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 195.

⁴Ibid.; Nash, 262.

array of essays and books to explain and defend Turner's concepts. Nevertheless, many newer scholars rejected or ignored the Turner thesis. Boltonian studies were prominent at the University of California at Berkeley, and on the west coast in general. Many Ph.D. graduates of the University of Texas pursued a track that followed Walter Prescott Webb's middle ground between the Turnerian and Boltonian schools of thought.

Meanwhile, western history was changing in other ways. The rise of "new" social history helped to create interest among western history scholars in pursuing studies of minority groups, class, and gender. In the 1960s blacks, women, and American Indians received considerable attention. By the 1970s scholars began to give more attention to Hispanics, Asians, and various immigrant groups.⁵

After 1960 a growing number of historians came to view the frontier as a region rather than as a process. In the previous decade scholars such as James Malin and Earl Pomeroy had emphasized the role of cultural influences in shaping the West. In the decades after 1960 their work continued to be influential. Other scholars also emphasized cultural influences that had made the West a distinct region. The interest in the cultural distinctives of the

⁵Frederick C. Luebke, "Ethnic Minority Groups in the American West," in Historians and the American West, ed. by Michael P. Malone (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 403.

West contributed to the fact that the emphasis on frontier history gradually gave way to an emphasis on western history.

This era also brought new interest in the urban West and the twentieth century West. Beginning in the 1960s, the growing number of urban dwellers, along with concern over American social problems, such as poverty and racism, encouraged a growing interest in urban history. By the 1970s there was growing interest in the role the West had played in the development of twentieth century America. No doubt this new interest was prompted in part by a desire to make western history relevant to the current generation and in part by demographic growth which had given the West a decisive role in American politics. Scholarly interest in the twentieth century West was especially sparked in 1973 when Gerald D. Nash published The American West in the Twentieth Century: A Short History of an Urban Oasis. Soon other scholars were pursuing related investigations.

In the decades following 1960 the longstanding interest in the mythic West also grew apace. The movement was spurred by American studies scholars, who explored the relationship between America's culture and its history. But the mythic West took on the pessimistic and negative tones of the era. Some of the scholars who studied the western myth were of the New Left and were critical of American society. Especially influential was literary critic Richard

Slotkin, who in 1973 published Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, in which he condemned the use of traditional American values as justification for the displacement of native peoples. In 1982 historian Brian Dippie published another influential work, The Vanishing American, in which he argued that the myth of the West had been used to justify the displacement of American Indians. Meanwhile, in the 1970s cultural historian Richard Etulain urged scholars to pursue the study of the mythic West.⁶

The decade of the 1980s brought several new trends in western history. One of these was a new interest in the role of environment. For several decades historians had emphasized the role of culture in shaping the American West, almost to the exclusion of environmental concerns, but in the 1980s came a new environmental awareness. Americans were awakened to environmental problems being created in their generation by water and air pollution, nuclear waste, strip mining, and the general destruction of wildlife and natural resources. As a consequence, historians began to document the environmental waste and destruction of earlier generations. A leader in sounding the alarm was Donald Worster, who in 1979 published Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s, in which he exposed environmental destruction brought on by economic exploitation. He

⁶Nash, 237, 239, 243.

followed this work in 1986 with an even more influential one, Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West. Interest created by these studies and others like them helped lead to the development of the new field of environmental history.¹

A second new trend in the 1980s was an attempt to bring a unifying synthesis to western history, which like American history in general had become fragmented through extensive specialization. Accompanying the desire to synthesize western history came a new interest in a truly multicultural approach to the study of peoples in the American West.

The most significant new trend to come out of the 1980s was the rise of New Western History. In the mid-eighties a new generation of historians launched a direct attack upon Frederick Jackson Turner and his frontier legacy. These historians quickly spurred a debate so lively and sometimes caustic, that it caught the attention not only of professional historians but also of many laymen. In September 1989 the National Endowment for the Humanities sponsored in Santa Fe, New Mexico an exhibit, "Trails Through Time," and a symposium, "Trails: Toward a New Western History." At that symposium scholars presented papers intended to examine and clarify the New Western History. In 1991 those papers, with additional ones, were

¹Gilbert C. Fite, "The American West of Farmers and Stockmen," in Historians and the American West, 218.

published as a collection of essays Trails: Toward a New Western History.⁸

Perhaps the classic statement of the tenets of New Western History was made by Patricia Limerick, in her Trails essay "What on Earth is the New Western History?" Limerick explained that New Western Historians reject Turner's view of the frontier as a process and view the West as a place, a distinct region, generally the area west of the Mississippi River. Limerick claimed that New Western Historians even reject the use of the term "frontier" because the term is "nationalistic and often racist (in essence, the area where white people get scarce)." Limerick also explained that New Western Historians reject the idea that the frontier ended in 1890, or in any year. New Western Historians see America's western experience not as one of progress but one of "invasion, conquest, colonization, exploitation, development, expansion of the world market." Limerick also acknowledged that New Western Historians "surrender the conventional, never-very-convincing" claim of objectivity.⁹

Allan Bogue summed up the thinking of the New Western Historians, saying that according to them the traditional

⁸Allan G. Bogue, "The Significance of the History of the American West: Postscripts and Prospects," Western Historical Quarterly 34 (February 1993): 57.

⁹Patricia Limerick, "What on Earth is the New Western History," in Trails: Toward a New Western History, ed. Patricia Limerick, Clyde A. Milner, and Charles Rankin (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 86.

view of America's western history "has been too much a triumphal story of an advancing empire, the development of a mythic garden, and of the nineteenth century. Now we must look at the grimmer side of a story of conquest, count the human and environmental waste involved, study the victims of the advance of empire and those neglected in the story telling, analyze intercultural relations, and examine the twentieth-century West."¹⁰

While advocates of New Western History reject Turner's frontier thesis, not all reject his thinking as irrelevant. For example, environmental historian William Cronon has spoken of modern historians' debt to Turner: "In his commitment to ignoring the walls between disciplines, in his faith that history must in large measure be the story of ordinary people, in his emphasis on the importance of regional environments to our understanding the course of American history--in all these ways, he remains one of the pathfinders whose well-blazed trail we continue to follow." While New Western Historians have outwardly rejected the Turner thesis, Wilbur Jacobs has concluded that "the new western historians are not always far adrift from the Turnerian mainstream," and "Turner may still be the

¹⁰Bogue, 58.

intellectual bridge between the old westerners and the new."¹¹

Since 1960, the history of America's western experience has seen considerable change, expansion, and even turmoil. By the mid-1990s a few scholars, such as Clyde A. Milner II, were looking beyond New Western History and anticipating a new century and a "newer" western history. In Milner's words, "The debate over the history of the American West has become as energetic as the older debate over the meaning of the frontier in American history."¹²

NEW EDITIONS OF EARLIER TEXTBOOKS

Frontier and western history textbooks published after 1960, as would be expected, reflected in varying degrees, the thinking of their times. However, most of the textbooks published during the early years of this era, and even a few of the more recent ones, were new editions of older works and were quite traditional and Turnerian in approach.

¹¹William Cronon, "Revisiting the Vanishing Frontier: The Legacy of Frederick Jackson Turner," Western Historical Quarterly 18 (April 1987): 157-176, reprinted in Major Problems in the History of the American West, 2d ed., ed. Clyde A. Milner II, Anne M. Butler, and David Rich Lewis (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997), 12; Jacobs, 227, 229.

¹²Clyde A. Milner II, "Introduction: Envisioning a Second Century of Western History," in A New Significance: Re-envisioning the History of the American West, ed. Clyde A. Milner II (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), xii.

For example, in 1956 Robert Riegel published a third edition of America Moves West, but the format and tone of the work remained unchanged. In 1964 Riegel published a fourth edition, co-authored by Robert Athearn, who spent his entire career teaching history at the University of Colorado. Athearn had attended the University of Minnesota, where he studied under and was strongly influenced by Ernest Staples Osgood, who had been a student of Frederic L. Paxson. Athearn's doctoral studies were interrupted by service as an officer in the U. S. Coast Guard (1942-1945) during World War II, but he returned to the University of Minnesota and completed his Ph.D. in 1947. Usually considered a social historian, he wrote on such topics as regional history, black history, the mythic West, and the twentieth century West.¹³

Like earlier editions, virtually all of this fourth edition was about Anglo-Americans, and there were few references to women. Much of the book was taken verbatim from earlier editions. However, parts were reorganized and rewritten, and there were some significant changes. Most of the anecdotal folk tales of the earlier editions were removed to make room for new material. In the words of Richard Saunders, Jr., this fourth edition "eliminated most of what made the earlier editions fun." The authors added a

¹³Elliott West, "Robert G. Athearn," in Historians of the American Frontier: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook ed. John R. Wunder (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 27-35.

considerable amount of new material on the colonial period. In this fourth edition the story of westward expansion began with the colonists moving inland from the seaboard to expand the original British colonies. The 1964 edition made some concessions to comply with the trends of the times. The authors deleted the incisive language about the origin of the Mormon religion. The book still mentioned that Joseph Smith was "a man of strong passions" who "sometimes drank to excess." But in the words of Richard Saunders, Jr., this new edition described the Mormons as "just another denomination on the smorgasbord of denominations."¹⁴

The fourth edition made an obvious attempt to take a more balanced view of the American Indian:

The Indian has been misunderstood by his friends as well as by his enemies. His friends have drawn him as an impossibly noble savage, animated always by bravery, generosity, sagacity, and sensitivity; his enemies have painted him as sly, cruel, bloodthirsty, untrustworthy, and depraved. Actually he was a man like other men, by turns generous and selfish, kind and cruel. He was sometimes able and sometimes stupid. Generally he was fun-loving and reasonably garrulous, with strong family devotion. His way of life was different from that of the white, but adapted to his circumstances. His cultural elimination now appears as a tragedy, even though it was inevitable.

The book also said that while the Americans of the late nineteenth century spoke of the "Indian problem," in

¹⁴Richard Saunders, Jr., "Robert Edgar Riegel," in Historians of the American Frontier: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook, ed. John R. Wunder (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 516; Robert E. Riegel and Robert G. Athearn, America Moves West, 4th ed., (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1964), 392.

reality, "The problem was one of their own creation, not that of the natives."¹⁵

The fourth edition contained more maps than earlier editions. It was also the first edition to include illustrations. Instead of being interspersed throughout the book, the illustrations were collected in two portfolios. Most were reproductions of works by nineteenth-century artists and were common illustrations, found in a host of traditional history textbooks, offering a stereotyped view of cowboys, Indians, mountain men, and pioneers. But some of the pictures used were reproductions of nineteenth-century photographs, lending more realism to the topic.

In 1969 Thomas D. Clark published a second edition of Frontier America, but it was essentially a reprint of the original 1959 edition. Aside from an updated bibliography, the only notable changes were in the preface and the last chapter. Clark removed the original preface and replaced it with a new one which, unlike the original, made no direct mention of the Turner thesis. In the original preface Clark had been careful in his endorsement of Turnerian thought, saying, "No particular claims are made that the general process of American expansion nurtured and matured the American democratic process. That the American political and social systems were vitally influenced by the westward movement, however, seems beyond reasonable question." But

¹⁵Riegel and Athearn, 4th ed., 92, 471.

in the new preface he was even more qualified. He was still confident that the westward movement had broad influences on American development. But he said, "Democratic principles come to have more meaning in their spread and adaptations than any original contributions arising from the pioneering experience."¹⁶

In the second edition the last chapter was unchanged except that Clark extended the conclusion by several pages to relate the westward movement to the second half of the twentieth century. In these new concluding paragraphs Clark dealt with several influences of the pioneering experience upon modern America, but he showed special interest in the despoilment of natural resources: "As a corrupting influence, few people in the history of civilization were exposed to such temptations of greed and avarice as were those who approached the great landed and mineral frontiers on this continent." He was pleased that, "Modern conservation policies attempt in limited fashion to correct mistakes of earlier policies and misuses." By revising his preface and his concluding remarks, Clark put more distance between himself and Frederick Jackson Turner.¹⁷

¹⁶Thomas D. Clark, Frontier America: The Story of the Westward Movement (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), v; Clark, Frontier America, 2d ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), v.

¹⁷Clark, 2d ed., 763, 762.

During these years Ray Allen Billington's massive Westward Expansion continued to be popular and went through four new editions. Despite Billington's claim that the purpose of the second edition, which appeared in 1960, was "to incorporate and appraise the newer viewpoints on the frontier," little change was made except in a few specific details of fact and in the updating of the bibliographic essay. By the time Billington published the third edition in 1967 he had fine tuned his definition of Turner's geographic frontier. He said that while "one would like to believe, with Frederick Jackson Turner, that the West was subdued by a procession of frontier types, each following the other in an orderly pattern of conquest," the actual process was "too complex to fit such a neat formula." Whereas the earlier editions had described the frontier as a series of westward moving zones, this third edition said, "The frontier can be pictured more meaningfully as a vast westward-moving zone, contiguous to the settled portions of the continent, and peopled by a variety of individuals bent on applying individual skills to the exploitation of unusually abundant natural resources." The third edition also made an interesting change in explaining that the fur traders were normally the first group to enter the Anglo-American frontier. The first two editions had introduced the fur trade by speaking of the frontier as the "domain of the fur traders." But the third edition introduced the fur

traders as the first to make an "assault on nature." While Billington rethought his description of the advancing frontier, the third edition changed little in tone or viewpoint.¹⁸

The fourth edition of Westward Expansion, which appeared in 1974, contained the most notable changes of any of the editions, although even those changes were more in form than in substance. Billington responded to the 1960s emphasis on minorities. In the preface he said, "I have, with considerable reluctance, identified the heroes or villains of expansion as Negroes or Mexican-Americans when those designations applied." But he could not "resist a lingering hope that the tide will turn again, and that all men will be recognized as part of the family of mankind, all equal, all deserving of recognition for their exploits or ideas, rather than because of race, color, creed, or nationality."¹⁹

The 1974 edition was the first to include in the index entries on Mexican Americans and Negroes. The entries on Mexican-Americans were a bit misleading, since most of them

¹⁸Ray Allen Billington, Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier, 2d ed., (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), ix, 3; Billington, Westward Expansion, 3d ed., (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), 8, 3, 4; Billington, Westward Expansion, 1st ed., (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), 3.

¹⁹Ray Allen Billington, Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier, 4th ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1974), vii.

had to do with Mexicans in territory that would eventually become part of the United States, not Mexicans who considered themselves to have any allegiance to the United States. The entries on Negroes, and a separate entry on Buffalo Soldiers, were more notable. Billington added to the fourth edition more than two paragraphs on Buffalo soldiers; one paragraph on Negroes who migrated from the South to Kansas after the end of Reconstruction ("the Exodusters"); a paragraph on Negroes involved in the fur trade, including James Beckwourth; and a paragraph on Negro cowboys. He also added references to Negro settlers in the Old Northwest, Negro influence on the Seminoles in Florida, the role of Negroes in the social order of the Old South, and the failure of Negroes to support Populism.²⁰

The 1974 edition of Westward Expansion also made obvious changes in the treatment of American Indians. Billington added a new chapter on the culture of Woodland Indians, in which he summed up those Native Americans in a positive manner: "The Indians who peopled the North American woodlands were culturally advanced, largely peaceful in intention, ably governed, spiritually well-assured, and far better adjusted to their environment and its preservation than the Europeans who displaced them." Billington's other changes in regard to Indians were more simplistic and

²⁰Ibid., 578, 579, 613, 614, 385, 386, 593, 296, 304, 313, 643.

amounted to deleting terms with prejudicial connotations. For example, in earlier editions the attempt by Indians in 1622 to drive English settlers from Virginia had been a "massacre," but in the fourth edition it became an "uprising," and what in earlier editions had been the "savage Apache" became the "powerful Apache."²¹

In the preface to the fourth edition of Westward Expansion Billington expressed gratitude to historian Wilbur Jacobs for having read the chapter on the role of Indians in America's westward expansion and having saved Billington "from many grievous errors by his informed criticism." It is interesting to note that as Jacobs later recalled, he and fellow historian Francis Paul Prucha, at the request of Billington and Billington's publisher, had "excised many of the references to 'savage' and 'barbaric Indians' from the fourth edition."²²

In the early 1980s the aging Billington produced yet a fifth edition of Westward Expansion. (Billington died in 1981 and the fifth edition was published in 1982.) But Billington undertook this project in collaboration with his colleague and former student Martin Ridge. In the preface Billington claimed credit only for the revised bibliography; he said the revisions in the text itself were the work of Ridge. Be that as it may, the revisions in the text were

²¹Ibid., 23, 53, 564; 3d ed. 41, 654.

²²Billington, 4th ed., vii; Jacobs, 198.

relatively minor. The chapter titles and basic organization remained essentially the same. The story remained largely Anglo-American in orientation. In the introduction Ridge said, "The history of the American West is, almost by definition, a triumphal narrative for it traces a virtually unbroken chain of successes in national expansion." Ridge also said, "In the largest sense this book remains Ray Allen Billington's Westward Expansion. Anyone who seeks a different interpretation of the American frontiering experience need look elsewhere."²³

Most of the changes in the fifth edition were stylistic, but a few were more significant. One interesting change was that after four editions "the red man" became "the Indian." One other notable change was evident in the fifth edition. The book's concluding statement on the significance of America's frontier experience, which had stood through four editors, was now expanded to more emphatically emphasize what Americans must learn from their nation's development:

The hardy men and women who through three centuries conquered the continent have played their role in the drama of American development; the new generation must escape the prejudices of an outworn past and build on the lasting values of the frontier experience. It is now clear that social democracy, economic opportunity, and political freedom are not contingent on national expansion, nor must the ecological structure be permanently damaged to maintain a satisfactory standard

²³Ray Allen Billington and Martin Ridge, Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier, 5th ed. (New York: Macmillan Co., 1982), viii, ix.

of living for the American people. There are more rational long-term solutions to the problems faced by this generation and those to come. There must be a recognition that the strong desires of individuals do not transcend the requirements of society. The pioneers of the future will need more than primitive tools and ambitions to blaze the trail into the newer world of cooperative democracy that is America's future; they must retain their sense of optimism, their profound faith in themselves, their willingness to innovate, and their abiding trust in democracy, for on the new frontier men and women shall go forward together or they shall not go forward at all.²⁴

The times had changed, and Westward Expansion admonished the American people to be willing to change. Albeit, after going through five editions over a period of more than three decades, Westward Expansion itself had changed relatively little.

Meanwhile, in 1970 there appeared a third edition of Western America, which had originally been published in 1941 by LeRoy Hafen and Carl Coke Rister. After the publication of the second edition in 1950, Rister had died. While his name remained on the title page, the third edition was really the work of Hafen, who had become professor of history at Brigham Young University, and a new co-author, W. Eugene Hollon, a western historian at the University of Toledo.

While the third edition followed the general format of the first two, it did make definite changes to accommodate the new trends and interpretations in western history. Some of the original chapters were reduced or combined so that

²⁴Ibid., 697-698.

new ones could be added. While the earlier editions had included some social and cultural history the new edition provided "a fuller discussion of cultural development." The earlier editions had concluded at about 1890, but this edition carried the story well into the twentieth century, relating westward expansion to contemporary events. The book included information about "the tremendous expansion of industrial and military establishments throughout the American West, especially since World War II."²⁵

There was a notable new chapter on "The Rise of Western Cities." It dealt with factors of urban growth, sketched the rise and development of some leading western cities, and devoted a brief section to modern urban problems. The authors gave greater attention to the natural setting, adding a new chapter "surveying the work and contributions of the early naturalist-explorers and scientists in collecting and classifying the flora, fauna, and natural resources of the West." They also expanded several sections in order to give "greater emphasis upon conservation and utilization of natural resources." It is also notable that in this third edition Western America became the first

²⁵LeRoy Hafen, W. Eugene Hollon, and Carl Coke Rister, Western America: The Exploration, Settlement, and Development of the Region Beyond the Mississippi, 3d ed., (Englewood Cliffs, New Jer., 1970), vii.

western history textbook to broaden its view of the West to include Hawaii and Alaska.²⁶

The authors also revised their account of the American Indians, who "from prehistoric times to the present, have been given fuller and more sympathetic treatment." The earlier editions had left "the full description and study of the Indians who inhabited Western America when the white man came" to "the ethnologist and anthropologist," making only "a few generalizations" to assist "the historical student who wishes to understand the environment that the white man encountered in different areas." But the third edition had a new first chapter on "Aboriginal Inhabitants of Western America," which opened by saying, "The prehistoric inhabitants of America, and especially their successors whom we call Indians, are a significant part of our heritage."²⁷

The new edition also added what the authors described as "a brief recognition" of "the Negro in the West and his role as a cowboy and as a soldier," although, the recognition was indeed "brief." The Negro cowboy got two

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷LeRoy Hafen and Carl Coke Rister, Western America: The Exploration, Settlement, and Development of the Region Beyond the Mississippi, 1st ed., (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1941), 7; Hafen and Rister, Western America, 2d ed., (Englewood Cliffs, New Jer.: Prentice-Hall, 1950), 7; Hafen, Hollon, and Rister, 3rd ed., vii, 7.

paragraphs at the conclusion of the chapter on "The Livestock Industry."²⁸

The authors summarized the third edition well: "It neither follows blindly nor refutes completely the Turnerian thesis relative to frontier Democracy and institutions. Rather, it is a chronological record of the geographical, political, economic, and social development of the United States." In the third edition maps were revised and expanded. Interestingly, the two color maps and the picture illustrations used in the earlier editions were deleted. The illustrations used in the third edition consisted of black and white maps, graphs, and statistical tables. Overall, in spite of definite revisions, which recognized that western history was changing, the book remained quite traditional and Anglo-centric.²⁹

NEW TEXTBOOKS OF THE 1960S

Most of the frontier and western history textbooks published during the 1960s were new editions of older works and were quite traditional and Turnerian in approach. While the authors made certain revisions in the new editions in an attempt to "tip their hats" to new scholarship, the books changed little in tone and format. Finally in the latter

²⁸Hafen, Hollon, and Rister, Western America, 3d ed., vii, 438.

²⁹Ibid., vii, viii.

1960s, two new western history textbooks were published, which to a greater degree reflected the new interest in social and cultural history.

However, even the first of these new textbooks was quite traditional; this was America's Western Frontiers: The Exploration and Settlement of the Trans-Mississippi West, produced in 1967 by British scholar John A. Hawgood, professor of history at the University of Birmingham, England. Hawgood's book presented a narrative account that dealt primarily with the nineteenth century expansion of the United States, although it carried certain topics to mid-twentieth century developments. His story was essentially a chronological succession of topics with each chapter centering on a particular theme, such as the fur trade, westward migration by wagon trails, the mining boom, the transportation revolution, the rise of the cattle business, and the development of farming.

Hawgood was a gifted writer and a good storyteller, with a British flair that gave his book an air of distinction. His frequent references to literature and frontier poetry and ballads, along with his sense of humor and his knack for unique phraseology, make for interesting reading. The reader learns a host of interest-catching tidbits stated in a folksy way. For example mountain man Jim Bridger lived to a ripe old age and "went over the final divide" in 1881, and on the one hundredth anniversary of

Bridger's birth his admirer General Grenville M. Dodge gave in his honor an oration "barely this side of idolatry." And mountain man Jim Beckwith was "liquidated by poison, probably by one of his own squaws."³⁰

Hawgood's book had some features to distinguish it from older works. It was the story not of America's entire frontier experience but specifically of the trans-Mississippi West. It started with an introductory section on Indian civilizations of "The Pre-Columbian West," which was followed by two chapters with considerable information on early Spanish and French explorers and colonizers in the southern and western portions of North America. The book was unique in its inclusion of numerous and sometimes extensive first-hand accounts from such sources as newspapers, diaries, and letters. Hawgood also added interest and insight with numerous personal notes, usually in footnotes, about his own extensive travels in the American West. In an epilogue entitled "Other People's Far Wests" Hawgood briefly compared America's frontier experience with that of Canada and encouraged further comparative studies of America's frontier experience to those of other nations, both in modern times and in ancient and medieval times.

³⁰John A. Hawgood, America's Western Frontiers: The Exploration and Settlement of the Trans-Mississippi West (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 109, 110.

Hawgood's book contained considerable social and cultural history. Neatly woven into the story were colorful accounts of numerous frontier characters—heroes and villains, lawmen and outlaws. Hawgood also included a few women omitted from many earlier textbooks, such as Narcissa Prentiss Whitman, Jessie Fremont, and even the immigrant cosmetic manufacturer Helena Rubenstein. There was a brief reference to the numerous Chinese miners in California, and the last chapter described various ethnic peoples from Europe and their role in developing the American West.³¹

Hawgood's book made more extensive use of black and white illustrations than had earlier textbooks. There was a good selection of maps. In addition to using numerous photographs, the book reproduced a considerable variety of mostly pre-twentieth century paintings and drawings from various libraries, art galleries, and museums. Hawgood concluded the book by tying America's frontier experience to his own times, suggesting the "atomic frontier" as an example of the fact that, "New frontiers can open . . . even in the second half of the twentieth century."³²

In spite of its interesting features, Hawgood's book presented a basically traditional viewpoint. It focused almost exclusively on Anglo-Americans. Blacks were ignored,

³¹Ibid., 147, 148, 150, 151, 156, 172, 177, 178, 395, 180.

³²Ibid., 410, 411.

except for a reference to the enslavement in the American South of "the willing, cheerful, malleable, and prolific Negro." Hawgood took a traditional view of American Indians, dealing with them primarily in a chapter about "The Indian Problem and its Solution." He spoke sympathetically of the Indians, saying, for example, that the American people developed "an almost pathological hatred of the Apache," and implying that at Wounded Knee it took little provocation for the "trigger-happy 7th Cavalry, whose motto was 'Remember Custer,'" to turn their Hotchkiss guns on "the unfortunate Sioux." But he saw the final demise of the Indians as an inevitable development.³³

Hawgood spoke well of Frederick Jackson Turner. He summarized the serious criticisms of Turner which had arisen in the 1930s and 1940s, and he acknowledged that the safety valve theory had been discredited. But he argued that in general terms "the Turner hypothesis" still remained "a valuable asset to the historian." He said it is too easy to criticize Turner's short comings and "to forget his many words of wisdom, and the inspiration he gave to others." In essence Hawgood was sympathetic to the Turnerian view.³⁴

Finally a textbook with a somewhat different approach appeared in 1969 when Kent L. Steckmesser, a historian at California State College at Los Angeles, published The

³³Ibid., 274, 300, 307, 308.

³⁴Ibid., 387, 393.

Westward Movement: A Short History. A student of American studies, with an interest in the mythical west, Steckmesser brought a fresh approach to western history.³⁵

In some ways The Westward Movement took a traditional approach. It was a narrative chronology, and it was traditional in its time frame, being "a concise history of the Westward movement in America from 1607 to 1890." The book did not evidence the negativism and pessimism characteristic of the 1960s, and it took an Anglo-centric approach, speaking approvingly of the hearty and courageous Anglo-American pioneers. Steckmesser said little about minority groups and mentioned only notable women, such as Helen Hunt Jackson and Annie Oakley. Steckmesser devoted one chapter to "The Spanish Frontier." There he referred to the residents of Santa Fe as "lazy natives," but the context makes it difficult to tell whether this was intended to imply his own opinion or merely to relate the opinion of the Anglo traders. Several chapter subtitles were Anglo-centric in connotation: "The Indian Threat," "The French Threat," and "The Indian Barrier."³⁶

³⁵Bogue, "Significance of the History of the American West," 61; Richard Maxwell Brown, "Historiography of Violence in the American West," in Historians and the American West, 234.

³⁶Kent Ladd Steckmesser, The Westward Movement: A Short History (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1969), v, 401, 209.

However, the book also had clearly innovative qualities. Steckmesser stated his purpose and his perspective in the opening lines of the preface: "This book . . . is designed as a basic text for an undergraduate course in westward movement, and as supplementary reading in social history, American studies, and the Western aspects of general American history." He claimed to write "from a humanistic point of view," with emphasis upon "biography, social institutions, and folkways." And indeed the book lived up to the claim.³⁷

A gifted writer, Steckmesser wove the essential details of political and economic history together with social history to create an interesting and smooth flowing chronological narrative. He demonstrated ability as a good storyteller, capable of sprinkling his history with humor and human interest. He was adept at using pithy statements with attention-catching details. For example, the Delaware Prophet of the Indiana Territory was "a half-mad medicine man," and the Texas hero Stephen Austin had been rather well educated although it "had not done much for his spelling." Steckmesser incorporated literature and folksy frontier poetry into his narrative. His wide ranging accounts included information on education, frontier religion and

³⁷Ibid., v.

camp meetings, and accounts of numerous colorful personalities, including wild west lawman and outlaws.³⁸

Steckmesser was sympathetic to the plight of the Indians, from those of colonial days, at whom fearful settlers "struck blindly," to the plains Indians of the last West. In a chapter on "The Last Indian Wars" Steckmesser went into considerable detail to demonstrate that throughout the nineteenth century, United States Indian policy was ill conceived and blundering, with "a certain somber unity." When Indians retaliated against repeated ill treatment they were "crushed by the Army." Steckmesser said that while "the late nineteenth century generation of Americans condoned and praised the exploits of its Indian-fighting Army . . . to a modern generation, these wars appear to be not epics but tragedies."³⁹

In most regards the book's illustrations were traditional. All maps and picture were black and white. Many illustrations were reproductions of nineteenth century works, and many were reproductions of original photographs. In one instance though, the use of an illustration was innovative. The caption under a well known painting of "Custer's Last Stand" pointed out that "Custer's use of a

³⁸Ibid., 54, 215.

³⁹Ibid., 55, 345.

sword is one of the historical inaccuracies in the painting."⁴⁰

Steckmesser claimed that his view was "neo-Turnerian" and that he accepted "the basic thesis," along with "many of the major modifications suggested by scholars in recent years." He said that, "Frontier conditions tended to breed that political and social democracy praised by historian Frederick Jackson Turner." In addition, he stated bluntly that, "In 1890 the American frontier came to an end." But he also recognized that "some of the problems of the frontier period remained after 1890, and the institutions that were formed during the westward movement have been important in the contemporary or trans-Missouri West."

The last section of the last chapter was entitled "Mr. Turner and his Thesis." Here Steckmesser gave a biographical sketch of Turner and a good historiographical overview of the Turner thesis through the 1960s. Interestingly, this section on Turner was placed purposefully right after a section on "An American Myth," because Steckmesser saw the Turner thesis as being, in some respects, a part of the myth. According to Steckmesser, "Determining the truth of the Turner thesis is about as easy as measuring the density of fog." He claimed that "much of the criticism" of Turner had been "hairsplitting." On the other hand, "Critics have been more on target when they have

⁴⁰Ibid., 402.

fired at Turner's claims for nationalism and democracy." After acknowledging the validity of some of the criticism of the Turner thesis, Steckmesser implied he was inclined to believe that the thesis "tells us more about American assumptions and beliefs than about the actual frontier," that "it must be judged more as a statement of faith than as a record of truth." He concluded, "It does seem that the West has been a state of mind as well as a fact of history."⁴¹

NEW TEXTBOOKS OF THE 1970S

While the western history textbooks published in the 1960s demonstrated moderate change from earlier works, the decade of the 1970s produced a series of textbooks which more clearly reflected new scholarship. These new books demonstrated an even stronger interest in social and cultural history and a new interest in the plight of minority groups. They tended to be less Turnerian, and several took into account the twentieth century West.

The first of these new texts appeared in 1973, when Robert V. Hine, a western history scholar at the University of California at Riverside, published The American West: An Interpretive History. This was the most distinctive western history textbook to be published up to that time. Reflecting the influence of American studies, Hine produced

⁴¹Ibid., v, 25, 395, 406, 407.

a cultural study which presented the American West as "part economic and social fact, part myth," with "a history peculiarly revised by dream." The characters in Hine's drama were "the native races, followed by motley actors--transient adventurers and land-craving settlers--spilling over from old cultures and helping to begin a new history." Hine's work was "an interpretive account" which made "no pretense at objectivity or comprehensiveness." In the words of Allan Bogue, Hine "dotted his text with revisionary evaluations."⁴²

Hine presented a narrative account of America's westward-moving people. While he concentrated heavily on the nineteenth century West, his story went all the way back to pioneers who began to move west from "the Atlantic beaches." Hine's story was loosely chronological, beginning with early activities of the Spanish and the French in the New World and ending with the turn of the twentieth century, but his story was built around a series of themes and focused on people rather than events. According to Hine the American frontier demonstrated four distinguishing characteristics: "rapid growth, dynamic expansion, violence, and disdain for authority."⁴³

⁴²Robert V. Hine, The American West: An Interpretive History (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973), vii, viii; Bogue, "The Significance of the History of the American West," 61.

⁴³Hine, The American West, vii, 320.

In many ways Hine reflected the historical emphasis that had become prominent in the 1960s and early 1970s. He said less about Frederick Jackson Turner than had earlier textbook writers. When in scattered references he did mention Turner he was rather ambivalent. He said that Turner "defined the West in a confusing variety of ways" and that "because of his ambiguity, his theories fit the mood of romantic nationalism." He also related that during the Great Depression criticisms of Turner mounted, but Hine did not personally take issue with Turner's ideas. He credited Turner with being right on several issues and being accurate in his predictions: "Turner prophesied that the nation without the frontier would turn to overseas adventures. Within a decade, he was proved right as America annexed Hawaii, challenged the disintegrating Spanish empire, took economic dominion over Cuba, and annexed outright the Philippine Islands, Puerto Rico, and Guam." Turner also accurately pointed out the frontier's "constant return to primitive social conditions." In general Hine spoke favorably of Turner but chose not to emphasize his thesis as many earlier writers had.⁴⁴

Hine dealt with a wide variety of topics, including transportation, education, religion, and the plunder of natural resources. He clearly included the topics that had come into vogue in the 1960s and early 1970s. There were

⁴⁴Ibid., 322, 108, 119.

chapters on "The Cowboy and the Cult of Masculinity," "The Search for Community," "The Image of the West in Art," and "Violence." A chapter on "The Western Hero" dealt with both real and mythic frontier heroes from the days of James Fenimore Cooper to the western movie heroes of the twentieth century, including a picture of Gary Cooper as he appeared in one of his last westerns, "High Noon." A chapter on "Racial Minorities" devoted some dozen pages to American Indians, approximately six pages to blacks, approximately five pages to Americans of Mexican descent, approximately five pages to Chinese, and approximately one page to Japanese. While there was no specific section on women, Hine included the names and activities of more women than had most textbooks up to that time.⁴⁵

Hine made America's western experience relevant by relating it to events of the 1970s. For example, he said that by 1850 the controversy over slavery "was an overriding issue, like the VietNam war in 1970." And after describing the limited progress of conservation in the early twentieth century, he said it took "the Depression, the New Deal, and, later, pollution alarms in areas like Los Angeles, New York, and Lake Erie" to again bring conservation to a prominent place on America's agenda.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Joan M. Jensen, "The Gentle Tamers Revisited," Pacific Historical Review 49 (May 1980): 77, n.10.

⁴⁶Hine, 109, 189.

In keeping with the tone of the time Hine took a rather negative approach to his subjects and tended to bring out the darker side of many aspects of frontier life. For example, while westerners were proud of an educational system which they claimed rivaled that of the East, western education did not promote intellectualism and culture: "Practicality and utility were more often the dominant notes than were scholarship, intellect, and creativity."⁴⁷

Hine repeatedly pointed out racial discrimination in the West. He asserted that from the beginning all European cultures took a demeaning view toward Indians. Like Columbus, the Spanish conquistadors were "sure of their culture, their God, their Church, and their superiority." And "in practice the encomienda tended more toward exploitation than toward education." The English commander Lord Jeffrey Amherst was "a vigorous hater of Indians who later proposed the distribution of small-pox infected blankets to exterminate the red vermin." As far as white traders were concerned, "Indians who fit well into the fur trade were good Indians; those who did not were bad."⁴⁸

Hine also emphasized discrimination against blacks: "Black troops rated good marks from the army for discipline, courage, low rate of desertion, and high morale." But they "were segregated, received less pay than white soldiers, and

⁴⁷Ibid., 250.

⁴⁸Ibid., 2, 9, 35, 36, 57.

were commanded by whites." Blacks in general were accused of being "a bad influence on Indians" and were discriminated against all over the West, both in areas populated largely by settlers from the South and in areas populated primarily by people from the North. In spite of the fact that blacks "contributed to every phase of western development" they were left out of the cultural mix and have even been left out of the western myth.⁴⁹

Hine also referred to discrimination against other groups. Chinese faced such lasting discrimination that, for example, in Great Falls, Montana, "not until World War II was a Chinese restaurant possible, and even then the restaurant opened only because servicemen from a nearby army base were hungry for chop suey." In regard to racial discrimination in general, Hine said, "Even if we assume for the sake of argument that the melting pot was a reality, we must admit that the frontier did not assist assimilation." He continued that while "the West seemed ready to welcome anyone," in reality, "it was hospitable to none but its own narrowly defined kind." He concluded that on the western frontier "hopes for assimilation of racial minorities were justified only in the earliest period of an immature economy."⁵⁰

⁴⁹Ibid., 195, 206, 210, 205.

⁵⁰Ibid., 217, 220, 221.

Hine used illustrations effectively to contribute to a negative view of the West. As compared to earlier textbooks, his included an unusually large number of pictures, although many had been used in earlier works. Picture credits alone, in small type, filled more than one and one half pages of the front matter in The American West. All of Hine's illustrations were black and white. Some were reproductions of nineteenth century drawings and paintings, but many were photographs. The illustrations gave an accurate portrayal of western life, but they tended to accentuate the negative. They illustrated the plunder of natural resources, the slaughter of wildlife, the exploitation of minority laborers, violence, and vigilante justice.⁵¹

While Hine took an often negative view of America's westward movement, and often painted a less-than-pretty picture of frontier life, he generally did not cast blame and did not become cynical. For example, in regard to the plunder of natural resources he said that "to a farmer, quite understandably, trees were overgrown weeds," and while acknowledging a general lack of conservation of natural resources he said, "It is wrong to condemn men for not doing what later generations have learned to do." In seeking a realistic view of the Mexican War Hine said, "The fundamental realities behind the Mexican War were America's

⁵¹Ibid., 180, 181, 183, 185, 215, 313, 305, 306.

aggressive outlook and Mexico's suspicion and the hostility that resulted from it." In regard to political and religious discrimination against Mexicans in the Southwest, Hine explained, "It was not easy for Americans to understand a people who sent four Roman Catholic priests to their territorial legislature and addressed their leading citizens by the title 'Don.'" In spite of general hardships and inequities faced by frontiersmen Hine concluded that "the West was a more promising land than many of the places from which its people had come."⁵²

Another new textbook appeared in 1974, when Richard Bartlett, a historian at Florida State University, published The New Country: A Social History of the American Frontier, 1776-1890. This was the first textbook to consider America's westward movement from a substantially different perspective. Yet, while Bartlett took an innovative approach to telling the story of America's westward movement, his story was rooted in a traditional view of the American experience.

Bartlett took an interesting view of the Turner thesis, although he said relatively little about it. He said the Turner thesis had been so influential that "at least two generations of Americans came to believe that America was different, and better, than the rest of the world because its people had passed through the frontier experience."

⁵²Ibid., 177, 179, 97, 108, viii.

While the thesis had faced many critics, he believed, "It is accurate to say that most American historians still subscribe to it, at least in part." Bartlett claimed, "I too accept the Turner thesis." And indeed his Turnerian thought is evident from the fact that his book was not just a study of the West but a study of the entire process of frontier advance, from the year of America's independence to 1890, the year which he said marked the "frontier's end." However, Bartlett came to believe that years of strict adherence to the thesis had caused historians to view the frontier from a limited perspective and "was distorting the meaning of the great westward movement, hardening some myths and legends, and ignoring the wider view." Bartlett was determined to present the westward movement in a fresh way.⁵³

Bartlett's was the first western textbook to be called a social history, and it did indeed concentrate on people. His approach was narrative but not primarily chronological. In his first chapter Bartlett summarized a chronological succession of frontiers, "the sweep across the continent," from the Appalachian Mountains to the Far West. Then in a series of thematic chapters he developed a description of various aspects of frontier life: demography, agriculture, technology of industry and transportation, and various

⁵³Richard A. Bartlett, The New Country: A Social History of the American Frontier, 1776-1890 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 446, vi.

aspects of family and community life. He developed a wide range of social and cultural topics, including much about everyday life and about the nature of frontier society. It is noteworthy that one full chapter dealt with "Despoilment: The Rape of the New Country" and another entire chapter was dedicated to "The Urban Frontier."

In keeping with his theme of social history Bartlett did more than earlier frontier historians had done in including non-Anglo-Americans in the story of westward expansion. In a chapter entitled "The Basic Mix" he at least mentioned a wide variety of European peoples who migrated to colonial America and who, along with their descendants, became a part of the frontier experience. Also, in a bit less than three pages he summarized the experience of Africans in America, from the introduction of slavery in colonial times to the close of the nineteenth century. He alluded to black military personnel, including those who fought plains Indians, and also mentioned Negro cowboys. He also devoted approximately five pages to the plight of the Chinese who came to the Pacific Coast as virtual slave labor, acknowledging that they made an important contribution to American expansion and that some "made good" for themselves. However, in spite of dealing briefly with various cultural and ethnic groups, Bartlett focused throughout the work on the dominance of Anglo-American culture. He summarized the people involved in

westward expansion as being "a polyglot population, most from European peasant stock, but in which the English-speaking percentage carried the day in language, law, and government." He concluded that the various groups involved "are not so important individually as the story of their acculturation and adjustment to the new country."⁵⁴

While all illustrations in The New Country were black and white, Bartlett used them to advantage in developing his themes. Several maps were two-page spreads. Some of the pictures were reproductions of works by nineteenth century American artists, but many are photographs, carefully chosen, with accompanying captions, to illustrate frontier culture. There was a photo of an Illinois county courthouse illustrating "the adaption of the New England architecture and town planning to the Midwest." There was a picture of a Jewish synagogue in San Francisco, illustrating a Jewish presence in that area. The illustrations of frontier people include a picture of a Scandinavian family in Wisconsin, a Mormon family in Utah, and Chinese miners in California. The illustrations also included "a late-nineteenth-century dime novel showing a black cowboy rescuing the white hero."⁵⁵

The New Country gave a bit more attention to women than earlier textbooks had done, although Bartlett opened his

⁵⁴Ibid., 127-130, 165-170, 448.

⁵⁵Ibid., 122, 162, 159, 184, 167, 130.

chapter on "Men, Women, and Families" by emphasizing that frontier regions always had "an overwhelming preponderance of males." He said that, "No one has ever questioned, let alone analyzed, the masculinity of the frontier society. Since it is as obvious as the sun in the daytime, the subject has not been discussed." Nevertheless, he devoted some space to the roles played by women as pioneer and farm wives and as military wives. He pointed out the political influence females exercised through the suffrage movement and the role they played as enforcers of moral and social order through such groups as the Anti-Saloon League and the WCTU.⁵⁶

In addition to dealing with women in general, Bartlett mentioned a greater number of specific females than had earlier textbook writers. Examples include the well known Mary Elizabeth Lease; Carrie Nation; and Narcissa Prentiss; as well as lesser known characters such as Virginia Reed Murphy, a survivor of the Donner party; Jessie Benton Fremont, wife of John C. Fremont; and Catherine Margaret Haun, wife of a U.S. senator from California. Bartlett also shared insight into the lives of a few unknown women, such as Carrie Adele Strahorn, who accompanied her husband in his western travels as a representative of the Union Pacific Railroad. Nevertheless, after summarizing the political, social, and moral significance of frontier women Bartlett

⁵⁶Ibid., 343.

concluded, "The new country woman's primary task, however, was to care for her family."⁵⁷

Bartlett took a sympathetic but traditional view of American Indians, dispensing with them in the first two sections of the first chapter. He acknowledged that "even more than the traders who cheated and debauched the Indians, the white man's lust for the land was responsible for most of the conflict between the races." He refuted "the myth of Indian invincibility," arguing that, contrary to popular belief, the Indians never had the technology to be much of a deterrent to white advance on the frontier. Bartlett concluded that the real problem posed by the Indian was "how to get him off the white-coveted lands with as little bloodshed as possible, and with a semblance of Christian humaneness, to remove him without tarnishing too much the ideals of the Republic."⁵⁸

In the final analysis, while Bartlett took an innovative approach, he evidenced a rather traditional, Anglo-centric view of America's westward movement. He spoke approvingly of the Anglo-American "sweep across the continent," which was "inevitable." By virtually ignoring politics Bartlett was able to view American expansion "not as a myriad of incidents, but as a great sweep westward, unbroken, inevitable, of epic proportions." He viewed great

⁵⁷Ibid., 349, 351, 356, 354, 360.

⁵⁸Ibid., 59, 16, 18.

political events, even wars and Indian treaties as "mere incidents washed away by the flood tide of the white man's advance."⁵⁹

It was also in 1974 that Joseph A. Stout, Jr. and Odie B. Falk, historians at the University of Oklahoma, specializing in the Southwest, published A Short History of the American West. This book was "Western" rather than "frontier in scope," focusing on the area west of the Mississippi River. The authors acknowledged their debt to Frederick Jackson Turner but said their book was "more in the tradition of Herbert Eugene Bolton, who saw the West as an arena for contending colonial European powers, and of Walter Precott Webb, who tried to explain the American pattern of Western settlement in geographic, technological, and social terms."⁶⁰

True to its title, this book was "a short history," 281 pages of text, with no pictures and twenty simplistic-but-adequate maps. The book was an essentially chronological narrative consisting of five chapters, four of which were divided into subsections. The first chapter dealt with Spanish and French exploration and colonization in the West. The second dealt with "American Penetration of the West" from the early nineteenth century until the conclusion of

⁵⁹Ibid., 448, vi.

⁶⁰Joseph A. Stout, Jr. and Odie B. Faulk, A Short History of the American West (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), x.

the Mexican War. The third chapter dealt with "Consolidating American Control" from the Compromise of 1850 through the Civil War. The fourth chapter summarized American development of the West in the last half of the nineteenth century and carried the story of statemaking into the early twentieth century. A very brief fifth chapter related the political, economic, and social status of the mid-twentieth century West to its nineteenth century roots.

In this brief history Stout and Faulk covered a wide variety of topics, including numerous colorful and legendary outlaws and lawmen, but, consequently, they gave little detail about anything. The book was a brief catalog of information, without much focus. For example, the authors took an equivocal stance on plains Indians. They said that the overall plan of the federal government was "to crowd the Indians onto the smallest possible amount of land" and that by the end of the nineteenth century the natives were left with "no hope and little pride." On the other hand, they said "many of the Plains Indians needed little excuse for their raiding." Because of the nature of Indian society, in which war chiefs "gained their positions by being successful warriors," and an Indian's "wealth was measured by the number of horses and mules he possessed, . . . a brave gained economic, political, and even social position by being a successful thief and murderer."⁶¹

⁶¹Ibid., 208, 219, 209.

Stout and Faulk ignored women and all minority groups, except in the last chapter, where, in the context of problems created by urbanization and industrialization, the authors devoted a few pages to discrimination faced by twentieth century Indians, Hispanic Americans, Blacks, and Orientals. While A Short History of the American West provided an overview, it was too brief and general to give a definite perspective on western history.

A textbook with a distinct approach appeared in 1976. In that year Arrell Morgan Gibson, another historian at the University of Oklahoma, produced The West in the Life of the Nation, which the preface proclaimed to be a narration and interpretation of "the saga of Western America from prehistoric times to 1976." The book clearly showed the influence of recent scholarship but was only moderately different in its overall viewpoint toward America's history.⁶²

Gibson attempted "to place Turner's provocative and controversial insight in the historiographic perspective where it properly belongs, not as an absolute but a relative and very useful concept for studying frontiers and the American West." Gibson argued that the West had "been the prime determinant of national economic direction and development and the principal source of national wealth and

⁶²Arrell Morgan Gibson, The West in the Life of the Nation (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Company, 1976), vii.

strength." While he acknowledged that "Westerners did refine and expand the democratic processes," he rejected the Turnerian view that "the pioneering experience was the ultimate force in creating distinctly American culture, institutions, values, and national character." Gibson also rejected the idea that the frontier had ended in 1890. On the other hand Gibson accepted and expanded Turner's concept of successive frontier stages. To Turner's "fur-trade frontier, mining frontier, stockraising frontier, and agricultural frontier," Gibson added "the overland-trader frontier, the maritime-trader frontier, the missionary frontier, and the civilized-Indian frontier." Each of these played an important role in the organization of his book.⁶³

The organization and content of The West in the Life of the Nation reflected Gibson's concepts. While the book was a history of "the West," it was a history of the entire frontier advance westward from the Appalachian Mountains. Gibson put great emphasis on the role of geography in westward expansion, devoting parts of several chapters to factors of geography and climate. Using novel organization he proposed two Wests, the "Old West," stretching from the Appalachian Mountains to the western boundry of "the first tier of states west of the Mississippi River," and the "New West," stretching beyond the western border of Missouri. Gibson "extended the concept of Western America in time and

⁶³Ibid., viii, ix.

space." Thus he included Alaska and Hawaii in his study and devoted the last three chapters of the book to carrying the story of the West well into the twentieth century.⁶⁴

Gibson attempted to show that he rejected "the ethnocentric Turnerian view that the continental conquest was a predominantly Anglo-American effort." Early in the book he included in "The Natural Setting" information on "The Aboriginal Inhabitants of the West," devoting separate sections to "American Indians," "Polynesians," and "Alaskan Peoples." He also devoted special attention to the roles of the Spanish, the French, the British, the Russians, and even the Dutch in the development of America. Gibson's background as a specialist in American Indian history was evident in that there were several sections on the Indians of the Old West and a separate chapter on the Indians of the New West.⁶⁵

Several chapters on pioneer society dealt with a wide variety of social and cultural topics and emphasized the ethnic diversity of peoples. Gibson pointed out that in the Old West pioneer society included not only people from a wide variety of European descents but also black slaves, free blacks, and local Indians. Pioneer society of the New West, said Gibson, "although dominated by Anglo-Americans, was seasoned with varied European elements of recent origin,

⁶⁴Ibid., ix, vii.

⁶⁵Ibid., viii.

a mixed Oriental community, a growing Black community, a substantial Mexican-American community, and a large Indian community." Gibson devoted several pages to demonstrating that non-Anglos made significant contributions to society. Blacks were mentioned in regard to agriculture, military affairs, and twentieth century urban growth, and even received a separate listing in the index. Other entries in the index included "Oriental community," and "Mexican-Americans," although only a few pages were listed for each.⁶⁶

Gibson's book might be said to contain hints of the negativism that grew out of the 1960s. For example, while Gibson mentioned few particular women, he described the difficult life of the typical pioneer woman and stated bluntly, "Pioneering constituted a gross exploitation of women." In regard to cultural and ethnic diversity in the New West Gibson described the exploitation of non-Anglos in railroad construction and other manual labor: "The Anglo-American community compiled a grim record of repressing peoples of unlike physical and cultural attributes. Following a cruelly ambivalent course, they imported workers from other nations and the eastern United States, exploited them, then rejected and suppressed them when their cheap, unskilled labor was no longer required." One chapter of the book was entitled "Plundering the New West's Natural Bounty"

⁶⁶Ibid., 551.

and included not only mineral and timber exploitation but also livestock, hide, and crop production.⁶⁷

Most of the illustrations used in The West in the Life of the Nation were similar to those used in earlier textbooks, although there were a few exceptions. The book included some photographs of the twentieth century West, one of which was a Hawaiian child holding a political banner. In the chapter on exploitation of natural resources there was a photograph of eroded terrain at Virginia City, Nevada. Interestingly, the first full-page photograph in the book was a stereotypical "Pioneer Woman Statue" in Ponca City, Oklahoma.⁶⁸

While Gibson expanded his view of the western frontier to include more territory and more peoples than earlier textbooks had done, his work was nevertheless rather traditional, with Anglo-centric overtones. His chapter on the American Indians of the New West was entitled "Pacification and Consolidation of the Western Tribes" and included sections on the "taming" and "conquest" of various Indian tribes. Gibson viewed America's westward movement as a great chronological narrative: "The magnificent spectacle of the emergent American nation breaching the Appalachian barrier and, like a human floodtide, surging with incredible velocity and irrepressible force westward across the

⁶⁷Ibid., 202, 551.

⁶⁸Ibid., 596, 472, 2.

continent into the Pacific Basin, ranks with the grandest epics of human history." In the final analysis, Gibson's textbook presented a broader view of the American West but one that was not radically different from those that had preceded it.⁶⁹

Last to be published of the traditional westward expansion textbooks was Frederick Merk's History of the Westward Movement. Frederick Merk had close ties to Frederick Jackson Turner, and like Turner, he was a native of Wisconsin. After graduation from the University of Wisconsin, Merk went to Harvard where he was first Turner's graduate student, then his colleague, and eventually his successor. While Merk was still a graduate student he assisted Turner in teaching his famous course on the westward movement. Beginning in 1921 Turner taught the first half of the course and Merk taught the second. When Turner retired in 1924 Merk took full responsibility for the course, which he taught for the next 33 years. Merk became a well liked professor and his popular course on the "History of the Westward Movement" was known affectionately to generations of students as "Wagon Wheels." In the words of Thomas C. McClintock, "Of the most distinguished historians of the American frontier who were members of the generation immediately following that dominated by Frederick Jackson Turner, the one most closely associated with him was

⁶⁹Ibid., ix.

Frederick Merk." After Merk's retirement from Harvard in 1957 he published a series of works on American westward expansion and diplomatic history. History of the Westward Movement was his last work, completed in 1977 when he was ninety years old. It was published posthumously in 1978.⁷⁰

In a sense History of the Westward Movement was an anachronism. It took little notice of the historical trends of the 1970s. Indeed some scholars said it was the textbook that probably best fit Turner's mold. According to Wilbur Jacobs, "Merk over a period of years treated his students to virtual duplications of Turner's lectures," and much of History of the Westward Movement was "primarily a printed version of Merk's classroom lectures, many of them with clear echoes of Turner."⁷¹

History of the Westward Movement was a traditional chronological narrative account of America's westward movement from its beginning on the Atlantic coast in the early 1600s to the settling of the Great Plains at the end of the nineteenth century. Merk praised this westward movement as "the greatest migration of peoples in recorded history. It was magnificent in its achievements," and "it replaced barbarism with civilization." Merk's story was a

⁷⁰Thomas C. McClintock, "Frederick Merk," in Historians of the American Frontier, 426-428; Frederick Merk, History of the Westward Movement (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), xvii.

⁷¹Bogue, 62; Jacobs, 173, 160.

detailed account (617 pages of text plus a chapter-by-chapter bibliography) with emphasis on Anglo-Saxon achievement. There was a chapter entitled "The French and Indian Barrier." The story was organized so as to emphasize sections and the frontier. Women and minority groups were virtually ignored, although Negroes were mentioned as migratory farm workers. Merk's text contained no pictures. But he, like Turner, made extensive use in his lectures of charts and maps, and many of those charts and maps were incorporated into his textbook.⁷²

In some other ways Merk's book departed from the Turnerian mold. It did give some space to Indians. Merk opened the book with two chapters on pre-European Indians, in which he summarized "Indian Background" and "Indian Culture," concluding that "The Indians north of Mexico were a backward society." Merk mentioned Indians other places in the book as they related to Anglo-American political and economic issues. The fact that "Indians were rising steadily on the ladder of civilization," was a frequent concern to whites "who had designs on the tribal lands."⁷³

Merk's book also departed from what is generally accepted as the Turnerian mold in regard to its scope. Merk said that Turner's 1893 essay had been misunderstood. Turner had not claimed that "the frontier in all its aspects

⁷²Merk, 616, 593.

⁷³Ibid., 14, 184.

had ended," but merely that "the line of the continuous frontier had ended." Merk claimed that the frontier still existed but that "increasingly" it was in "the realms of science and technology, of man's control over the environment, and of the relations of man to his fellow man." On this basis, Merk devoted his last thirteen chapters to carrying his story well into the twentieth century. In these chapters Merk dealt largely with economic and technological developments, especially in regard to land use. In fact, he was willing to devote an entire chapter to the Tennessee Valley Authority and its role as a model for western water development. He lauded the westward movement for having "unlocked the bounties of nature" and making them "a blessing to mankind." But, interestingly, he also admitted, "Conquest, speculation, exploitation, and violence were all part of this crusade into the wilderness."⁷⁴

In essence, Merk's History of the Westward Movement was a traditional, Turnerian-style textbook. But he continued certain aspects of the frontier story into the twentieth century.

NEW TEXTBOOKS OF THE ERA OF NEW WESTERN HISTORY

The decade of the 1980s gave birth to the New Western History perspective, which rejected the Turnerian legacy and the idea that there was a frontier which came to a close at

⁷⁴Ibid., 616, 617.

the end of the nineteenth century. A distinct characteristic of New Western Historians was their decision to virtually ignore the trans-Appalachian West, focusing almost exclusively on the trans-Mississippi West. Perhaps the major characteristic of New Western Historians was their emphasis on conquest. Certainly the conquest theme was not new to western history. In a way it is Turnerian, and Walter Prescott Webb used it extensively. But the New Western Historians gave conquest a new significance, making it an integral part of their understanding of history. Not all of the western history textbooks published since the 1980s have taken an exclusively New Western History perspective, but all of them show its influence.

In 1987 Patricia Limerick published The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West, the first book-length history of the West from a New Western History perspective. A native of California, with a Ph.D. in American studies from Yale, and a professor of history at the University of Colorado at Boulder, Limerick was one of the original advocates of New Western History, and her Legacy of Conquest serves as a ground-breaking work in this new way of looking at western history.

In her introduction, significantly entitled "Closing the Frontier and Opening Western History," Limerick rejects the Turnerian view of the West and proposes a new approach. She rejects the concept of the frontier and the idea that

1890 brought a turning point in western history: "When western historians yielded to a preoccupation with the frontier and its supposed end, past and present fell apart, divided by the watershed of 1890." According to Limerick, Turner saw the frontier as a unifying process because he was "ethnocentric and nationalistic. English-speaking white men were the stars of his story."⁷⁵

As her subtitle, The Unbroken Past of the American West, implies, Limerick views the West as a distinct region with a history of conquest which binds its past and present into a unified whole. In her view western history is "a study of a place undergoing conquest and never fully escaping its consequences." Limerick argues that the New Western History concept gives western history a new and broader significance: "Under the Turner thesis, Western history stood alone." But "with its continuity restored, Western American history carries considerable significance for American history as a whole. Conquest forms the historical bedrock of the whole nation, and the American West is a preeminent case study in conquest and its consequences."⁷⁶

In keeping with Limerick's views, Legacy of Conquest presents a history of the trans-Mississippi West during the

⁷⁵Patricia Nelson Limerick, The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1987), 18, 21.

⁷⁶Ibid., 26, 27, 28.

nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Rejecting a chronological approach Limerick employs a series of themes in what one scholar describes as an attempt "to provide an interpretive stance for the whole sweep of Western history." Limerick sees the history of the West as a unified whole, in which the past has great relevance to the present. She argues that the problems faced by the West today are a direct result of decisions made and actions taken in the nineteenth century. She also points out that, "In the second half of the twentieth century, every major issue from 'frontier' history reappeared in the courts or in Congress."¹⁷

The book is divided into two parts of five chapters each. Part one, "The Conquerors," presents the conquest of the West by white Americans, and part two, "The Conquerors Meet Their Match," focuses on challenges faced by the white invaders of the West. Throughout the book Limerick makes much of the role of women and minority groups (Indians, Hispanics, Asians, Blacks, and Mormons), and of the role of nature, natural resources, and wildlife.

Legacy of Conquest clearly reflects the impact of recent historical interpretation. Limerick denies being a "product of 1960s sensibility," saying her point of view is probably "closer to Eleanor Roosevelt's than to Angela Davis's." Nevertheless, she presents a very negative view,

¹⁷Nash, 274; Limerick, Legacy of Conquest, 31.

presenting a story of ongoing suppression of minorities and relentless waste and destruction of natural resources. In the words of one scholar "Limerick provocatively notes the persistence of these attitudes and actions well into the twentieth century."⁷⁸

Limerick faults white conquerors of the West more for ignorance and thoughtlessness than for premeditated maliciousness, but she concludes that the results were nonetheless unmitigated disasters. For example, she says the Indian removal program of the 1830s was "paternalism" but that nonetheless it "found its place as one of the greater official acts of inhumanity and cruelty in American history." She also says that in promoting the Dawes Act of 1887, "the so-called Friends of the Indian acted in ways that one might more logically expect from enemies."⁷⁹

In keeping with the new trends in social history Limerick introduces her reader to a variety of little known common people who played a role in conquering the West. But in the process she ignores many of the standard personalities and events of western history. The emphasis of the book is on ideas, issues, and personalities. It

⁷⁸Limerick, Legacy of Conquest, 11, 12; Richard Etulain, "Conclusion, Visions and Revisions: Recent Interpretations of the American West," in Writing Western History: Essays on Major Western Historians, ed. Etulain (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 345.

⁷⁹Limerick, Legacy of Conquest, 194, 196.

contains no maps or artistic rendering; all illustrations are photographs.

Legacy of Conquest is more than a history; it is a call to action. Limerick laments that the old attitudes live on in the West: "When Anglo-Americans look across the Mexican border or into an Indian reservation, they are more likely to see stereotypes than recognizable individuals or particular groups." She calls for change: "Indians, Hispanics, Asians, blacks, Anglos, businesspeople, workers, politicians, bureaucrats, natives, and newcomers, we share the same region and its history, but we wait to be introduced. The serious exploration of the historical process that made us neighbors provides that introduction."⁸⁰

While Legacy of Conquest was the first textbook to represent the New Western History perspective, a nontraditional text of a different type was published the following year. In 1989 appeared Major Problems in the History of the American West, edited by Clyde A. Milner II, professor of history at Utah State University and editor of the Western Historical Quarterly. This volume is a part of the Major Problems in American History Series (published originally by D.C. Heath and more recently by Houghton Mifflin), which is designed to encourage critical thinking

⁸⁰Limerick, Legacy of Conquest, 349.

by presenting both primary sources and scholarly essays on a variety of topics.

Major Problems in the History of the American West

takes an inquiry approach to historical study. While its fifteen thematic chapters appear in an essentially chronological order, it is in no sense a traditional textbook, and it provides no chronological narrative. It is a collection of readings. The first and last chapters "consider how to interpret the history of the West and where the concept of the frontier may fit." Frederick Jackson Turner's essay on "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" appears as the first essay. This is followed by an essay in which historian Donald Worster rejects the frontier approach and advocates a regional approach to the study of the West. The concluding chapter of the book presents two essays, one by urban studies scholar Frank J. Popper, and one by environmental historian William Cronon, dealing with the issue of whether or not Turner's frontier has closed and its significance to contemporary historical study.⁸¹

The remaining thirteen chapters center around diverse and rather broadly defined themes, such as "Fur Trade and Commerce," "Racism and Westward Expansion," "Overland Migration and Family Structure," "The Popular Imagination,"

⁸¹Clyde A. Milner II, ed., Major Problems in the History of the American West (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1989), vii.

"Cultural Complexities," and "The Changing West." Each chapter includes several primary sources and two or three historical essays, most of which were published within the three decades prior to 1989. In the first few chapters several of the primary sources and essays relate to colonial America or the trans-Appalachian West of the early nineteenth century, but most of the book is devoted to the trans-Mississippi West rather than to the early frontier. Many chapters of the book carry the discussion of issues into the twentieth century, often into the 1980s.

Major Problems in the History of the American West reflects the historical thinking of the 1970s and 1980s. Often the readings present conflicting views. Various themes run across chapters. In addition to dealing with standard topics, such as mountain men and cowboys, various chapters speak to issues involving women, Indians, blacks, Hispanics, and Asians. Few chapters in Major Problems in the History of the American West deal with traditional political issues. Many relate to social and cultural history and a few touch on environmental issues. The chapter on "The Popular Imagination" includes fictional views of the West as presented in literature and film.

The only illustrations included in the work are two political cartoons and six maps, all of which are in black and white. Major Problems in the History of the American

West presents various views of the American West but no narrative history to bind those views together.

In 1997 Houghton Mifflin produced a second edition of Major Problems in the History of the American West. In editing this new edition Clyde A. Milner II was joined by Anne M. Butler and David Rich Lewis, his colleagues in the history department at Utah State University and also fellow editors of the Western Historical Quarterly. While the approach of the second edition is basically the same as that of the first, the new work is shorter and is extensively reorganized to take into account the scholarship of the 1990s. Many of its documents and historical essays reflect more recent scholarship than did those of the first edition.⁸²

The new edition's introductory chapter includes not only Turner's essay on "The Significance of the Frontier" but also a selection from Patricia Limerick's The Legacy of Conquest and her Trails essay "What on Earth is the New Western History?" The new edition takes a largely regional approach, virtually ignoring the trans-Appalachian frontier and concentrating on the trans-Mississippi West. It includes material on Alaska and Hawaii. It also includes more material dealing with the twentieth century. The editors "expanded the consideration of environmental topics

⁸²Clyde A. Milner, Anne M. Butler, and David Rich Lewis, ed., Major Problems in the History of the American West, 2d ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997), vii.

and social history" and gave careful attention to "the significance of the West's diverse population," especially "Native Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans, and immigrants from Asia and Europe." One chapter highlights the urban West. The new emphases are reflected in two chapters which included "Photo Documents," a series of photos, each accompanied by an extended caption which offers commentary and raises questions for consideration.⁸³

In 1991 Richard White, who was then professor of history at the University of Washington and who has recently moved to Stanford, published "It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A History of the American West. The book jacket calls it "a new history of the American West," which is certainly an appropriate description. Indeed Walter Jacobs says "a new era in western history began" with White's publication of this work, "the ultimate anti-Turnerian volume."⁸⁴

White's text is New Western History par excellence. It makes no mention of Frederick Jackson Turner and does not use the term frontier. It even avoids mention of Turner's disciple Ray Allen Billington and his renowned Westward Expansion. White relies heavily upon recent scholarship. His suggested readings at the end of each chapter list only

⁸³Milner, Butler, and Lewis, Major Problems in the History of the American West, 2d ed., vi, vii.

⁸⁴Jacobs, 203.

works published in recent decades, most of them published in the 1970s and 1980s.⁸⁵

White gives the American West a unity of both place and time. He defines the West as a specific region whose history has a specific beginning. His West lies between the Missouri River and the Pacific Ocean. It does not include Alaska or Hawaii. It began with the European invasion of North America: "The American West is a product of conquest and of the mixing of diverse groups of peoples. The West began when Europeans sought to conquer various areas of the continent and when people of Indian, European, Asian, and African ancestry began to meet within the territories west of the Missouri that would later be part of the United States."⁸⁶

White presents the history of the American West from the time of the first European explorers through the 1980s. His work is narrative, but it is also highly interpretative. His twenty-one chapters are somewhat chronological, but they are divided into six thematic parts: "The Origins of the West," "The Federal Government and the Nineteenth-Century West," "Transformation and Development," "The Bureaucratic

⁸⁵Jacobs, 205; Richard Lowitt, review of "It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A History of the American West, by Richard White, in Pacific Historical Review LXII (February 1993): 89-90.

⁸⁶Richard White, "It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A History of the American West (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 4.

Revolution in the West," "Transforming the West," and "The Modern West." White's work views the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as a time of transition in the West, but the year 1890 has no particular significance. More than 200 pages of the book deal specifically with the twentieth century, but even in earlier chapters many themes are carried into the twentieth century.

White's work clearly reflects the scholarship of recent decades. His story is a negative one, a story of invasion and of conquest and plunder of native peoples and natural resources. As the title, "It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own", suggests, White portrays the history of the West as a series of ongoing conflicts among special interest groups, each promoting in its own advancement, regardless of the consequences for others. Oftentimes all of these groups find themselves at the mercy of outside forces: "For most of its history the West has been a collection of politically and economically weak localities that have sought to grow or survive by making accommodations with powerful outside forces. The most significant of these forces have been the federal government and eastern corporations." As time progresses, urbanization comes to play a more significant role in the drama. An important theme throughout the story is the environmental havoc created by a struggle for wealth and power.⁸⁷

⁸⁷Ibid., 633.

While political and economic conflict play an important role in White's book, he embraces the new social history. He interweaves a broad spectrum of themes relating to race, class, gender, urbanization, and the environment. He includes much information about the role of culture, custom, and religious belief. He presents a plethora of topics as diverse as western literature, the civil rights movement, the energy crisis, foreign immigration, and the role of the New Right.

White's New Western History approach is supported by a good selection of illustrations, all in black and white. There is a good collection of maps and tables. The multicultural emphasis is reflected in the picture illustrations, most of which are photographs and which represent a wide variety of western peoples. In content, organization, and illustration "It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own" qualifies as the epitome of a New Western History.

In the 634 pages of his text White does a masterful job of interweaving a wide variety of topics and perspectives. Yet, in covering such a broad range of subjects, White omits much information found in traditional texts. As Allan Bogue suggests, some would consider White's book "a salad bowl of middle range generalizations."⁸⁸

⁸⁸Bogue, 64.

In 1994 the Oxford University Press produced The Oxford History of the American West, edited by Clyde A. Milner II and Carol A. O'Connor, husband and wife and historians at Utah State University; and Martha A. Sandweiss, director of the Mead Art Museum and associate professor of American Studies at Amherst College. The Oxford History of the American West is one of a wide variety of Oxford histories produced in recent years. In this massive volume (833 pages of text) a team of twenty-eight scholars take on a substantial task, which is, in the words of one reviewer, "placing the West within the larger history of North America."⁸⁹

While The Oxford History of the American West does not specifically set out to be revisionist, its wide variety of interpretations and ideas reflects the course of scholarship since the 1960s. Most of the twenty-three chapters are written exclusively by one of the twenty-eight contributing authors; a few are written by two authors; and one chapter is the work of three authors. The chapters reflect the authors' personal backgrounds and perspectives. While the book has an overall unity, each chapter can also stand alone as a self-contained narrative and interpretative essay.

⁸⁹James P. Ronda, review of The Oxford History of the American West by Clyde A. Milner II, Carol A. O'Connor, and Martha A. Sandweiss, Western Historical Quarterly 26 (Spring 1995): 75-76.

This volume recognizes but does not conform to the ideas of Frederick Jackson Turner. Various contributing authors mention Turner's concepts, and some do so in a positive light, but none embrace a traditional Turnerian view. The editors explain: "This volume does not ignore the concepts of Frederick Jackson Turner or his intellectual legacy, but its assembled authors make their own case for the significance of the history of the American West in all centuries under examination. It is a significance not based on one thesis but built on the authors' own thoughts and the work of numerous other scholars."⁹⁰

The Oxford History of the American West begins the story of the American West in the time before native peoples encountered Europeans and carries the story into the 1990s. While portions of the book deal with the English colonies in North America and the early trans-Appalachian frontier, this material is primarily intended to serve as background. The emphasis is on "a West firmly located beyond the Mississippi River". The volume views the West "primarily as a distinct place whose historical interpretation follows no one master narrative and no single factor of plot. Instead many narratives, themes, and ideas, like the many peoples of the region, are brought together." Alaska and Hawaii play

⁹⁰Clyde A. Milner II, "Introduction: America Only More So" in The Oxford History of the American West, by Clyde A. Milner II, Sandra A. O'Connor, and Martha A. Sandweiss (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 4.

significant roles in the story and even merit one chapter of their own.⁹¹

The first three sections of the book are generally chronological. The first, "Heritage," presents native Americans and their introduction to Europeans, primarily Spanish, French, and English. The second section, "Expansion," deals primarily with United States expansion into the West in the nineteenth century, but many aspects of the story are carried into the twentieth century. The third section, "Transformation," focuses on the ramifications of twentieth century industrialization and urbanization. The fourth section of the book, "Interpretation," is thematic and deals with how the West has been viewed by scholars and in the popular imagination. It includes the West as presented in history, literature, art, film, and music.

A number of significant themes run throughout the book. Four especially prominent ones noted in the introduction are the persistence of Native Americans and their culture, the ongoing impact of the federal government, the exploitation of natural resources, and the development of a multicultural population. Enhancing the various themes of the book are a multiplicity of color and black-and-white illustrations. In the words of the book's editors the illustrations serve an "idealistic purpose. They are a distinct contribution to each chapter's contents, often presenting information not

⁹¹Ibid., 2.

incorporated into the text." Many of the illustrations are reproductions of classic paintings and photographs.⁹²

The Oxford History of the American West is a monumental compendium of information. While it presents political history, it offers an abundance of social and cultural history. It tells the stories of women as well as men and takes a multicultural approach to the peoples of the West. Unlike the New Western History books, which tend to be negative in tone, this work takes a rather positive approach. While it covers an array of topics it omits much detailed information on specific subjects. In the words of the editors the volume "is meant to serve as a reference work for readers who desire interpretation of large topics instead of exhaustive details about all topics."⁹³

In the decades following 1960 writing on western history proliferated and took new directions. The writing began to reflect the negativism and pessimism of the era. As more historians came to view the frontier as a region, rather than as a process, there was greater emphasis on the trans-Mississippi West. There was increased interest in social and cultural history, new interest in urban and

⁹²Ibid., 5, 6; Clyde A. Milner II, Sandra A. O'Connor, and Martha A. Sandweiss, preface to The Oxford History of the American West, xi.

⁹³Milner, O'Connor, and Sandweiss, preface to The Oxford History of the American West, xi.

twentieth century history, an expanded interest in the mythic West, and a growing interest in the environment.

To varying degrees the western history textbooks began to reflect the new directions in western history. Most of the textbooks published during the early years of this era were new editions of older works and were quite traditional, Turnerian or neo-Turnerian in approach. But by the early 1970s Kent L. Steckmesser's The Westward Movement, Robert V. Hine's The American West, and Richard A. Bartlett's The New Country reflected a definite interest in society, culture and ordinary people, including minority people. In 1987 Patricia Limerick's Legacy of Conquest made a bold statement for New Western History. In 1991 Richard White's It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own presented a more comprehensive and integrated New Western History, with a multicultural approach, and without even a mention of Frederick Jackson Turner. By the mid-1990s The Oxford History of the American West attempted to synthesize the broad fields of knowledge and the varying new perspectives regarding the history of the American West.

CONCLUSION

During the course of the twentieth century college textbooks on the history of the American frontier and the American West have, to varying degrees, reflected the historiographical thinking of their times. They have evolved from narrative chronologies of Anglo-American westward expansion to complex syntheses of the American West's development into a distinct society. A central feature of the texts has been the way in which they have dealt with the concepts put forth by Frederick Jackson Turner.

From the time Turner presented his famous thesis in 1893 until the 1930s, Turner's way of viewing the frontier movement was almost universally accepted. Frederic Paxson, the author of the first two textbooks on the American frontier, was clearly a Turnerian. Both his The Last American Frontier, published in 1910, and his History of the American Frontier, published in 1924, were Turnerian in view. Both books were Anglo-centric chronological presentations, which focused almost exclusively on political history and brought the frontier to a close in 1890. The third frontier textbook to be published, Robert Riegel's America Moves West, produced in 1930, demonstrated the same Turnerian characteristics as Paxson's works, although Riegel

did add some social history, giving considerable information about ordinary Anglo-Americans involved in the westward movement.

Between 1930 and 1945, with economic depression and world war contributing to a spirit of pessimism about America's goals and accomplishments, the Turner thesis came under severe criticism. Walter Prescott Webb, in The Great Plains, published in 1931, emphasized the role of climate and geography in making the American West a distinct region; consequently, he strongly suggested the frontier was a place, rather than a process. T.P. Abernethy, in his From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee, published in 1932, as well as in other publications, argued that economic equality and political democracy were often nonexistent on the frontier. Other historians in this era criticized the Turner thesis because it did not promote the theory of economic determinism and because it was too narrow and too nationalistic in scope, lacking an international view.

Despite the challenges to the Turner thesis between 1930 and 1945, many scholars, including the textbook writers, continued to embrace it. The two western history textbooks published during this era were innovative in certain ways. The West in American History, published by Dan Clark in 1937, was the first book of its kind to refer in its title to "the West;" it was not strictly chronological; and it was largely a social history. Western

America, published in 1941 by LeRoy Hafen and Carl Coke Rister, showed the influence of Herbert Eugene Bolton and Walter Prescott Webb. It was the first college textbook to focus exclusively on the trans-Mississippi West, and it gave considerable space to the early achievements of the Spanish and the French in the American West. But, these innovations notwithstanding, these textbooks were essentially based upon Turnerian thought.

In the post-World War II era, 1945-1960, characterized by a fresh spirit of optimism, a new national pride, and a changing world view, the Turner thesis was renewed and revised. Turner's ideas faced new challenges. Some scholars put a stronger emphasis on the frontier as a region rather than as a process. Earl Pomeroy pointed out that instead of the West shaping the East, the East had done much to shape the West. Henry Nash Smith promoted the concept of the mythical West. Yet, many neo-Turnerians were determined to fit the Turner thesis into the new scholarship of the era. Their thinking was reflected in the textbooks published during these years.

Ray Allen Billington was the epitome of the neo-Turnerian. His works, including his famous textbook, Westward Expansion, first published in 1949, attempted to employ the latest scholarship in a defense of the broad tenets of Turnerian thought. Robert Riegel, in the second and third editions of his America Moves West (1947, 1956),

took a bolder stand for the Turner thesis than he had in his original edition. LeRoy Hafen and Carl Coke Rister, in the second edition of their Western America (1950), continued to take a Turnerian view. Even the new textbook published at the end of this era, Thomas D. Clark's Frontier America (1959), generally fit the Turnerian mold, although Clark stopped short of openly defending the Turner thesis and anticipated the future by synthesizing political, economic, social, and cultural history, and by including a variety of peoples and topics in his story of westward expansion.

In the era following 1960, western history writing, reflecting historical scholarship in general, took a number of new directions. Disenchantment with America's direction gave rise to a spirit of negativism and pessimism. As more historians came to view the frontier as a region, rather than as a process, there was greater emphasis on the trans-Mississippi West. There was increased interest in social and cultural history, new interest in urban and twentieth century history, and an expanded interest in the mythic West. New interests, coupled with new research technology, led to new quantification and specialization. The 1980s brought new interest in the role of environment. The latter 1980s gave rise to the New Western History, which rejected the Turner thesis completely and viewed the West as a distinct region with a unity of both space and time.

Most of the western history textbooks published in the 1960s and early 1970s were new editions of earlier works and were generally traditional and Turnerian in approach, although in revised form they gave a bit fuller and more balanced attention to Indians and other minority groups, carried the story of the West farther into the twentieth century, and gave some attention to the rise of an urban West and to environmental concerns. Even the first new text to be published in the 1960s, John A. Hawgood's America's Western Frontiers, published in 1967, was quite traditional, although it gave more attention to social and cultural history than had older works.

Western history textbooks with a distinctive approach appeared in the 1970s. The new trend was foreshadowed in 1969 when Kent Steckmesser published The Westward Movement. While Steckmesser labeled himself a neo-Turnerian, he wove a good deal of social history into his political and economic history to create an interesting narrative chronology of America's westward movement from 1607 to 1890. Then in 1973 Robert Hine published The American West: An Interpretive History, which as the subtitle noted, was an interpretive work. Hine focused on social and cultural issues, including discrimination against minorities, and used numerous picture illustrations to accentuate the negative. In 1974 Richard Bartlett published The New Country, the first study to consider America's westward movement from a substantially

different perspective. The first work to be called a social history of the westward movement, it focused on people rather than on events and was organized largely by themes rather than by chronology. Bartlett included a bit more information about women and minority groups than had earlier writers, and he also used picture illustrations to demonstrate the role of minority groups on the frontier.

The last half of the 1970s was an interlude that brought the publication of two rather traditional textbooks. In 1976 Arrell Gibson published The West in the Life of the Nation, which expanded the West to include Alaska and Hawaii and which devoted more space to minority peoples, but which was otherwise rather traditional. Frederick Merk's History of the Westward Movement, published in 1978, was somewhat of an anachronism, very much like what Turner might have written, except for the fact that Merk carried the story well into the twentieth century.

But if the last half of the 1970s proved to be an interlude, the 1980s ushered in dramatic changes in western history textbooks. In 1987 Patricia Limerick published Legacy of Conquest, the first book-length history of the West from a New Western History perspective. Limerick rejects the Turner thesis; she rejects the concept of the frontier and the idea that 1890 brought a turning point in western history. She views the trans-Mississippi West as a distinct region with a history of conquest which binds its

past and present into a unified whole. She abandons the chronological approach and employs a series of themes to tell a story of ongoing suppression of minorities, waste of natural resources, and destruction of the environment.

In 1989 appeared Major Problems in the History of the American West, edited by Clyde A. Milner II, which takes an inquiry approach and offers no chronological narrative but presents a series of thematic readings, often with conflicting views. Most of the book is devoted to the West as a region, and many of the themes are carried well into the twentieth century.

Then in 1991 Richard White produced "It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own", the ultimate New Western History textbook, which makes no mention of Frederick Jackson Turner and does not use the term frontier. White presents a narrative but highly interpretive account of the American West from the time of the first European explorers through the 1980s. While political and economic issues play an important role in White's book, he embraces the new social history, interweaving themes relating to race, class, gender, urbanization, and environment, to tell a story of invasion, conquest, plunder, and discrimination against minority peoples.

In 1994 appeared The Oxford History of the American West edited by Clyde A. Milner II, Carol A. O'Connor, and Martha A. Sandweiss. This massive volume, a collection of

writings by twenty-eight scholars, begins the epic of the American West in the time before native peoples encountered Europeans and carries the story into the 1990s. It synthesizes broad areas of knowledge into a compendium of information presenting the West and its peoples in the light of recent scholarship.

College textbooks on the history of the American West have changed considerably since Frederic Paxson published The Last Frontier in 1910. Changes have been especially notable in the last two decades. Several significant conclusions can be drawn about the current state of these textbooks.

Clearly, the new textbooks have departed from the traditional format. They tend to make less of Frederick Jackson Turner and his frontier concepts. Instead of being strictly chronological in organization, the new books combine chronological and thematic approaches to history. While the newer books give some attention to America's early trans-Appalachian frontier they mainly focus on the development of the trans-Mississippi West.

In several ways newer textbooks have become more inclusive. Instead of concluding at 1890 they carry the account of America's western development well into the twentieth century. Instead of focusing almost exclusively on Anglo-Saxon Protestant males the books include more information in regard to females and in regard to minority

peoples and their cultures. Instead of limiting themselves to traditional political and economic history the books deal significantly with other topics, such as social, cultural, and environmental history. Instead of concentrating on relating events, the recent textbooks have been highly interpretive, focusing on the significance of the past.

While the newer books present a broader view of America's western expansion, they also evidence certain shortcomings. Three problems with the newer textbooks are interrelated and can be traced to the trend among professional historians toward specialization.

Perhaps the most serious problem is that in the process of making the textbooks more inclusive, the chronological narrative has been abandoned, making these thematic textbooks much harder to teach. The grand story of America's history has been lost. Bernard Bailyn, in his presidential address to the American Historical Association in 1981, called upon historians in general to return to the narrative format, calling it "the great challenge of modern historical scholarship." He lamented, "Narratives that once gave meaning to the details have been undermined and discredited with the advance of technical scholarship." Bailyn did not deny the benefits of specialization and analysis, but he insisted that "in the end . . . historians must be, not analysts of isolated technical problems abstracted from the past, but narrators of worlds in

motion--worlds as complex, unpredictable, and transient as our own."¹

By the mid 1980s other historians began calling for a return to the narrative tradition in U.S. history in general and in western history in particular. For example William Cronon laments that social historians are omitting much traditional history: "The result is a history which distorts by omission, ignoring the political struggles which past Americans would have numbered among their most central concerns." He contends that "the 'new' historians went overboard in condemning not just traditional 'great man' history, but narrative history as well. However elegant our research models, however sophisticated our theories, historians at some basic level must remain storytellers. . . . If they shrink from that task, they run the risk of becoming irrelevant to their larger audience by writing unreadable books and teaching unlearnable courses." Historian Susan Rhoades Neel has concluded, "The great challenge for western historians is to find a new way of telling the story of the West, of ordering and signifying the facts, that is at once reflective of the new visions

¹Bernard Bailyn, "The Challenge of Modern Historiography," American Historical Review 87 (February 1982): 7, 24.

they have of and for America and yet as compelling in its 'movement' as Turner's frontier thesis."²

The western history textbooks of the 1980s and 1990s are certainly lacking in the chronological narrative. Limerick's Legacy of Conquest is built around a series of themes. Major Problems in the History of the American West is simply a collection of readings. In "It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own" Richard White clearly makes a valiant effort at telling the story of the development of the American West, and he uses the narrative form, but with such a breadth of information and such a diversity of themes, all strung together, the chronology, and thus the unified story, is lost. The Oxford History of the American West takes a narrative approach, but its collection of narratives by numerous historians turns out to be a series of stories, not one story. The chronological flow is lost.

The abandonment of the traditional narrative opens the door to a second problem, which Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. has described as creating a "cult of ethnicity." As Susan Rhoades Neel has pointed out, "Turner's narrative structure gave the disparate pieces of the past an order and coherence, connecting America's many places to a national

²William Cronon, "History Behind Classroom Doors: Teaching the American Past," The History Teacher 19 (February 1986): 205, 208-209; Susan Rhoades Neel, "A Place of Extremes: Nature, History, and the American West," in A New Significance: Re-envisioning the History of the American West, ed. Clyde A. Milner II (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 118.

culture through a common story." But the more recent western history textbooks, taking a multicultural approach, have tended to emphasize the separateness and distinctiveness of minority groups. As Schlesinger has pointed out America has traditionally been a melting pot, where the idea was "not to preserve old cultures, but to forge a new *American* culture," but recent multicultural history has the potential to divide Americans and bring about "the fragmentation, resegregation, and tribalization of American life."³

A third problem with recent western history textbooks is a general tendency toward negativism and pessimism. Fortunately, The Oxford History of the American West is an exception to the negative trend, demonstrating it is possible to base a work upon recent scholarship and yet take a relatively positive approach. In other recent western history textbooks, however, conflict and exploitation are recurring themes. Of course this is a problem common to many American history textbooks in recent years. In the words of William Cronon, "There is no longer so strong a sense as there once was that American history is a story of inevitable improvement and progress." In regard to western history in particular Gerald Nash has issued a solemn warning: "If historians are keepers of a nation's soul, the

³Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Disuniting of America (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1992), 16, 13, 18; Neel, "A Place of Extremes," in A New Significance, 118.

custodians of its sense of identity, one-sided indictments can serve the function of destroying the very fabric of national identity. To teach America's youth exclusively about the alleged depravity of the Western experience is to do a disservice to the profession."⁴

In the final analysis, the pendulum has swung from one extreme to another. For much of the twentieth century western history textbooks focused on Anglo-American males, taking little note of females, peoples of color, or environmental issues. They told the saga of heroic white men advancing westward to civilize the North American continent. By the late 1980s, with the influence of social history and New Western History, textbooks incorporated much information about women and minorities and about the environmental consequences of westward expansion, but in the process they excluded many of the characters and events found in traditional textbooks. The newer texts focus on human and environmental exploitation. In addition, they often delve into such detailed information about the West that only students who are themselves westerners can relate to it; the significance of the West in the overall story of American history is lost. Textbook writers abandoned the story of romance and adventure, leaving the typical undergraduate student with a heritage to which he cannot

⁴Cronon, "Behind Classroom Doors," 205; Gerald D. Nash, Creating the West: Historical Interpretations, 1890-1990 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 276.

relate and in which he can take little pride. At present there is no really suitable western history textbook on the market.

What is needed in western history textbooks today is a more balanced approach. The ideal would be a return to the chronological narrative which presents an epic story of America's westward expansion, a textbook based upon current research but written in a format reminiscent of Riegel's America Moves West or Billington's Westward Expansion. A text rooted in traditional political and economic history but with moderate additions of social and cultural history, including significant minority figures, might give undergraduate students a story to remember, and to identify with, and yet might spark interest in learning more about the role of persons other than white Anglo-Saxon Protestant males. In the words of Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "History is to the nation rather as memory is to the individual." A balanced approach in textbooks could help to produce college graduates with a balanced view of their national heritage.⁵

⁵Schlesinger, 45.

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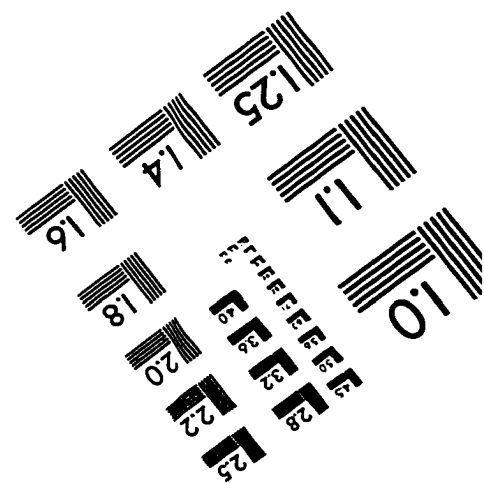
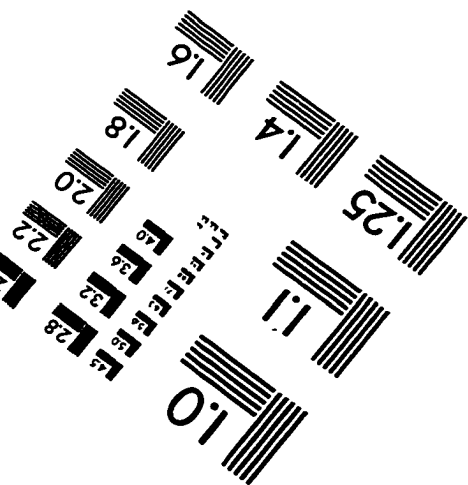
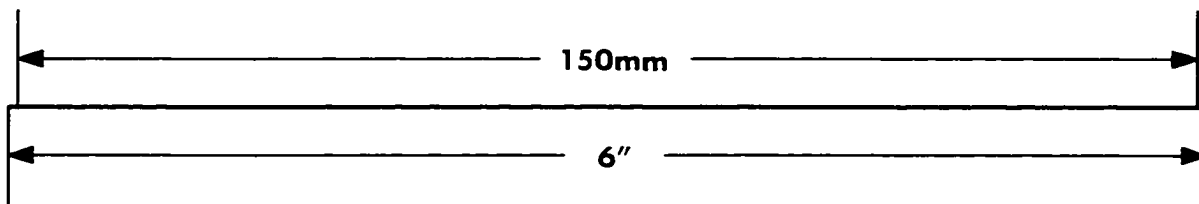
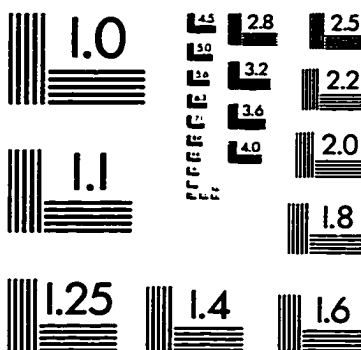
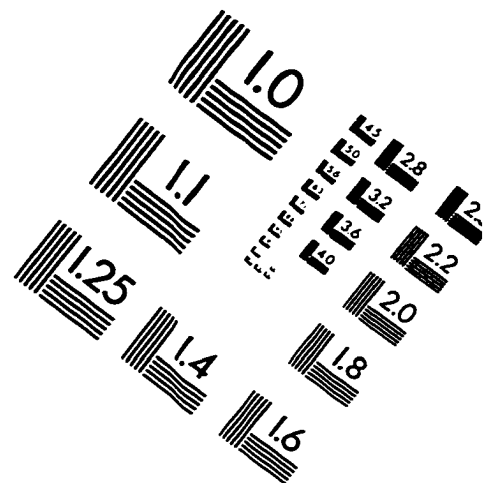
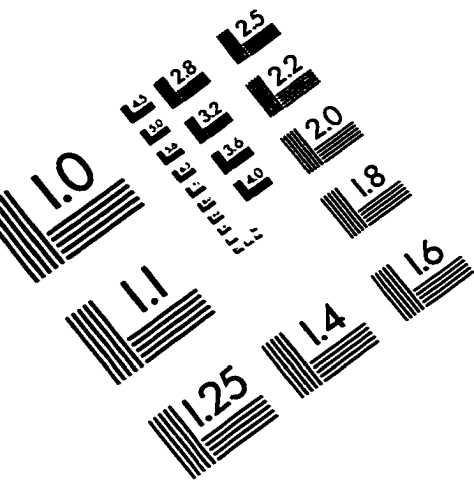
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