

Manifest Destiny and the Environmental impacts of Westward Expansion

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Abstract

Even before the founding of the Republic, Americans desired to expand Westward taking with them their unique civilization across the continent. By the 1840s this idea of the United States extending its boundaries was encompassed by the phrase Manifest Destiny. Americans not only considered Westward expansion a desirable objective but an endowment from God through which they could take their democratic republicanism across North America. The purpose of this article is to explore American interpretations of Manifest Destiny in the 1840s and 1850s and its environmental impacts on the Western territories, specifically the role which democratic society, Christianity, and capitalism played in transforming the land, nature, and relationships with Native peoples.

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“[W]e are commanded this day to love the Lord our God, and to love one another, to walk in his ways and keep his Commandments and his ordinance and his laws, and the articles of our Covenant with Him, that we may live and be multiplied, and that the Lord our God may bless us in the land whither we go to possess it.” – John Winthrop, onboard the *Arbella*, 1630.¹

“We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” – The Unanimous Declaration of Independence of the Thirteen United States of America, July 4, 1776.²

From the first settlers in Massachusetts (1620), through to the War of Independence (1776-1783) and beyond, Americans have seen themselves as an exceptional people. What made them exceptional was their widespread belief that they were God’s new chosen people or as Massachusetts Governor John Winthrop positioned “the God of Israel [is] among us, when tens of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies; when He shall make us a praise and glory...For we must consider that we shall be as a city on a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us.”³ By the nineteenth century American understandings of their own exceptionalism was the cornerstone of what it meant to be an American citizen. As academic Godfrey Hodgson has noted this idea was predicated upon ‘the belief’ that ‘the United States’ was ‘the richest and most powerful of’ all the world’s

¹ John Winthrop, ‘A Modell of Christian Charity, 1630’, accessed on 31/1/2014 at: <http://religiousfreedom.lib.virginia.edu/sacred/charity.html>

² ‘The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776’, in Paul S. Boyer, Clifford E. Clark, Jr., Hawley, Sandra McNair, Joseph F. Kett, Neal Salisbury, and Nancy Woloch, (eds), *The Enduring vision A History of the American People Volume One: To 1877*, Concise Fifth Edition, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006), A-1.

³ Winthrop, ‘A Modell of Christian Charity’.

nations and states whilst also being ‘politically and morally exceptional’ to all other peoples in the world.⁴

Thus, Americans from their very earliest beginnings believed that God had bestowed upon them a mission to spread their supreme civilization, in particular, freedom, whether in religion, commerce, or race. American religion was catered for by a variety of different Protestant Christian faiths such as Lutherans, Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists who would later compete with new Christian denominations including the Wesleyan Methodists and Anabaptists. According to academic Walter Russell Mead it was ‘American religion’ which helped ‘to create a distinct grand narrative that tie[d] the Abrahamic story of Israel and Christ together with the institution of capitalist modernity’ and therefore is representative of ‘a new call from God.’⁵

So with Christianity being the glue that bound American society and its citizens, capitalism would allow Americans to realise their freedom to an even higher level. This additional liberty was to be achieved by acquiring money to elevate an individual up the social ladder. The Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-American race represented the pinnacle of American freedom. Being white skinned meant that one had the capacity for civilization, Christian morality, and an upstanding citizen while at the same time giving back to other free white Protestant Americans. If however, a person or group of people fell out of this paradigm, then it was up to all white Americans to bring forth the benefits of their civilization and help these people to realise their own freedoms so long as these were in line with Protestant Christianity, American Republicanism and capitalism.

⁴ Godfrey Hodgson, *The Myth of American Exceptionalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 10.

⁵ Walter Russell Mead, *God and Gold: Britain, America, and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 258 & 298.

With Independence realised and the Republic formed in 1783, the United States of America covered approximately the area between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mississippi River. This young nation's ideal of freedom was attached to the belief in territorial expansion across the North American continent's Western regions. At this time Americans were largely involved in agriculture as small autonomous farmers. Thomas Jefferson, a Founding Father and a prominent political leader, realised this economic structure and the dream to own land were at American democracy's core.⁶ Jefferson believed that land ownership and the ability to produce goods from natural resources, would enable farmers to control their own labour and financial independence. North America's western section was considered to be a huge and empty land mass, into which expansion seemed the likely provider for American agrarian growth and the promise of freedom. During the nineteenth century the U.S.A. acquired its Western territories in several stages. First, Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase from France in 1803 effectively extended the country Westward beyond the Mississippi River to the Continental Divide.⁷ In 1811, John Quincy Adams, who had been appointed by President James Madison (1809-1817) as the first ever United States Minister to Russia, and would later become President himself (1825-1829), added his own interpretation of this sentiment: "The whole continent of North America appears to be destined by Divine Providence to be peopled by one nation, speaking one language, professing one general system of religious and political principles, and accustomed to one general tenor of social usage and customs."⁸

⁶ Eric R.Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 284.

⁷Carolyn Merchant, *The Columbia Guide to American Environmental History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 60 & 80.

⁸ John Quincy Adams, 'Letter to John Adams, August 31, 1811', in Walter A.McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader States: The American Encounter with the World Since 1776* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997), 78; & Paul S.Boyer, Clifford E.Clark Jr., Sandra McNair Hawley, Joseph F. Kett, Neal Salisbury, Harvard Sitkoff, and Nancy Woloch, (eds), *The Enduring Vision: A History of the*

By the 1840s, additional Western regions were incorporated into the nation, with Texas annexed in 1845, the Oregon territory by treaty with Britain in 1846, and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo following Mexico's defeat in 1848.⁹ These territories practically doubled the U.S.A. by 1,200,000 square miles, extending the country through to the Pacific coast. Western expansion across the continent was completed in 1853 with the additional land acquisition from Mexico along the Southern border, known as the Gadsden Purchase.¹⁰ American exceptionalism now needed to reach and appeal to a wider and more diverse population which now included far more white European immigrants. In 1845, John L. O'Sullivan, newspaper and magazine editor, captured the desired public sentiment when he explained American exceptionalism as being 'the fulfilment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.'¹¹

There has been a very substantial and detailed historical scholarship assembled over time dedicated to Manifest Destiny. Some of the more recent scholarship includes; David S. Heilder and Jeanne Heilder, *Manifest Destiny*, (2003), Godfrey Hodgson, *The Myth of American Exceptionalism*, (2009), and Amy S. Greenburg, *Manifest Destiny and American Territorial Expansion: A Brief History with Documents*, (2012). The Heilders' have attempted to present Manifest Destiny in a balanced fashion, showing that it was not a phenomenon that simply sprung up in the 1840s, and that 'American expansion did not achieve a robust dynamism until the middle of the nineteenth century ignores the forces that promoted territorial expansion as early as colonial

American People Volume One: To 1877, Concise Fifth Edition, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006), A-16.

⁹ Merchant, *The Columbia Guide*, 80.

¹⁰ Ray Allen Billington, *Western Expansion: A History of the American Frontier* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 585.

¹¹ John L.O'Sullivan, 'Manifest Destiny, 1845', in Mark S.Joy, *American Expansionism, 1783-1860: A Manifest Destiny?* (London: Longman, 2003), 111; & Charles H.Brown, *Agents of Manifest Destiny: The Lives and Times of the Filibusters* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press,1980), 16.

times.’ They also go to some lengths to reveal that Manifest Destiny in the 1840s and 1850s did not always have the universal support of all Americans. That while some ‘Americans, marvel[ed] over this spectacular achievement, both encouraged and proclaimed it as an obvious event’ that there were other ‘Americans [who] were not so sure’ and ‘decried the expansion as an enormous mistake and predicted it would have an extravagant price.’ The Heilders sum up this balance saying that it was ‘a testament to the vagaries of the American experience that both sides were right: the realization of this manifest destiny was a stunning triumph; the consequences of realizing it would be appalling.’¹² Hodgson evaluated that this phenomenon was ‘in ethical or philosophical terms’ a ‘manifest destiny of white Protestant Americans to “overspread” a continent that was far from empty.’ But he considers that the Americans who ventured west to fulfil their destinies ‘were also motivated in part by a sense of mission to bring Christianity and civilization to peoples seen by nineteenth-century white men as benighted, as well as by the same hunger for land and resources that drove Americans westward.’¹³ Amy Greenburg considers that ‘only the United States had Manifest Destiny.’ She supports both the Heilders’ and Hodgson’s position that ‘while Manifest Destiny was a creation of the nineteenth century, the concept of American exceptionalism (the belief that the United States occupies a special place among countries of the world) is actually older than the nation itself.’¹⁴

Despite the very large historiography about Manifest Destiny during the 1840s and 1850s, there appears to be a dearth of material that specifically focuses upon the three prongs of American republicanism, Christianity, and capitalism and how these ideologies impacted upon the Western environment and native peoples. This

¹² David S.Heidler, and Jeanne T.Heidler, *Manifest Destiny* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2003), xv & 1.

¹³ Hodgson, *The Myth of American Exceptionalism*, 61.

¹⁴ Amy S.Greenburg, *Manifest Destiny and American Territorial Expansion: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2012), 4.

becomes particularly noticeable when wanting to understand how these three driving forces of Manifest Destiny became mechanisms through which American settlers in the West viewed and transformed the environment and Indians they encountered. This article will look at Manifest Destiny both as an ideology and as a practice for settling and civilizing the West. In particular, I will explore how American settlers who moved West during the 1840s and 1850s used Manifest Destiny to direct and justify their use of these lands. To achieve this objective I will specifically investigate the roles played by American democracy, Christianity, and capitalism and how these ideals transformed the West's land, nature, and Indian peoples. For American republicanism I will be looking at the importance Americans placed on owning land as being representative of their democratic liberty. I will also explore how American Christianity by the mid-nineteenth century had splintered into a broad number of separate denominations was another motivational force for Manifest Destiny. Given the very large number of Protestant groups, I will limit my focus mostly to the Mormons in the southwest and other groups such as the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in the Oregon territory. With regards to capitalism I will analyse the effects that travel, farming, the railroad, and California's God Rush had on the West. However, before I can commence this investigation, I believe that it is necessary to describe the variety of environmental conditions and local peoples whom American pioneers encountered in the West.

The Western Environment and Peoples

Americans in the 1840s and 1850s moved to or through a large area that contained diverse environmental conditions and native peoples. One way to look at this Western region is to explore the Oregon Trail which many Americans would use to reach their destinations. The Oregon Trail was not a single track, path or trail, but many routes over which pioneers travelling in wagons journeyed. By 1843, thousands of Americans searching for new beginnings had made the 1,900 mile journey starting at Independence, Missouri. From here the

trail followed the Platte and South Platte rivers, where the pioneers travelled over South Pass into Fort Bridger in south-western Wyoming at the halfway mark. By this point they had been on the trail for about seventy days, and were now in desperate need of supplies. Luckily Fort Bridger had a trading post from which the travellers could purchase the required items. Departing Fort Bridger, the journey entered its final stages and headed northwest to Wyeth's Fort Hall by following the Snake, Boise, and Columbia rivers.¹⁵ But not all pioneers followed the track this way and with gold discovered in California in 1848, many other Americans diverted their passage at South Pass to head southwest crossing the Great Basin through Utah and Nevada onto Sacramento.¹⁶

American settlers encountered a large region between the Great Plains and the Pacific coast which was comprised of rolling prairies, grass-covered plains, towering mountains and dry deserts.¹⁷ In comparison to the lush forest vegetation of the Eastern U.S.A., few trees and rivers marked the landscape, except for some tree growth along streams and in elevated areas. Pioneer Alphonse B. Day travelling across the Prairie on the Oregon Trail in 1849 noted how his travelling companions 'passed over a verry pretty country but destitute of timber only on branches and they Scarce, we saw 12 dead horses & one mule this day.'¹⁸ Overall the West was an extremely dry region receiving an average annual rainfall of less than twenty inches. Another traveller, Josiah Greggs identified the difficult environmental conditions, most noticeably water shortages, saying how on one occasion his traveling band found 'but little water that night, and

¹⁵ Walter A. McDougall, *Throes of Democracy: The American Civil War Era 1829-1877* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008), 243.

¹⁶ Angie Debo, *A History of the Indians of the United States* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970),

¹⁷ Billington, *Western Expansion*, 405; & Boyer et. al, *The Enduring Vision*, A-17.

¹⁸ Alphonse B. Day, 'Diary entry for May 17-19, 1849', in *Trails of Hope: Overland Letters and Diaries, 1846-1869*, 8, accessed on 29/6/2013 at: <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/Diaries/id/31/record/11>

none at all the next day, we began by noon to be sadly frightened; for nothing is more alarming to the prairie traveller than a “waterscape”.¹⁹ From these conditions, the land was suitable for the sporadic bunchy grasses, scattered greasewood and sage-bush.²⁰ The dominant environment was referred to as the Great Plains and was distinguished by its plateau as formed by Eastward flowing streams from the Rocky Mountains to the Mississippi River. The Plains experienced severe and sometimes violent weather conditions from the blizzards that swept down from Canada producing low wind chill conditions and periodic droughts. A sub-humid climate was representative in most places across this region and was the habitat of various plant and animal life. The Plains environment is segmented by a variety of grasses which survived the semi-arid condition. In the Eastern section, tall grass exists of between three to six feet high, while further West grows short grass matting. To the South, lower rain levels produced desert grass which grows in clumps, separated in between by sun-baked soil. The Great Plains also supported a wide variety of animal life including antelope, donkey-eared rabbits, coyotes, wolves, and especially bison.²¹ The bison’s presence helped shape soil, water, and grassland ecologies while also providing the native North American nomadic hunting societies who lived in the West with food, clothing and tools.²²

Apart from the environmental conditions Americans journeying West also came into contact with the many different native tribes who lived here. Historian Robert Utley places Native American numbers in this region prior to the 1840s at approximately 360,000. He claims that ‘seventy-five thousand ranged the Great Plains from Texas to the British possessions’ while ‘the nomads of the southern

¹⁹ Josiah Gregg, in Max L.Moorhead, (ed.), *Commerve of the Prairies* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), 54.

²⁰ Donald Worster, *Under Western Skies: Nature and History in the American West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) 8 & 82-83.

²¹ Billington, *Western Expansion*, 406-409.

²² Merchant, *The Columbia Guide*, 15.

Plains shared their domain uneasily with some 84,000 Indians [The Five Civilized Tribes of the Creek, Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole] uprooted from their eastern homes by the U.S. government and swept westward to new lands.’ While ‘Texas claimed 25,000’, California and New Mexico another ‘150,000’ native peoples, and ‘the Oregon Country...was home to 25,000 Indians.’

Yet, while these Western peoples shared many cultural similarities, they considered themselves to be vastly different.²³ The West’s Native Americans included: the Shawnees (Ohio); Sauk and Fox (Wisconsin) who moved south and were allies with the Kickapoos and Potawatomis, Chippewas or Ojibwas (northern Minnesota, Wisconsin and Canada); the Cheyennes and Arapahos (Wisconsin and Minnesota moved to the buffalo plains); the Blackfeet (upper Missouri River and into Canada); the Winnebagos (Wisconsin); the Sioux (Minnesota moved to the northern buffalo plains); the Osages (Missouri); the Iowas, Otos, Missouris, Kansas or Kaws, Poncas and Omahas (Missouri River and its tributaries in Iowa and eastern Nebraska); the Crows (between the upper Platte and Yellowstone Rivers); the Mandans (two permanent villages on the Missouri River in North Dakota); the Paiutes (the Great Basin in Wyoming); the Utes (eastern edge of Great Basin to western and central Colorado); the Bannocks (southern Idaho); Hopi Pueblos (Arizona); the Commanches (south-western Kansas through to western Texas and eastern New Mexico); the Lipans (Texas); the Kiowa-Apaches and Navahos (Arizona and New Mexico); the Yuma, Mohave, Hualapai, Yavapai, and the Havasupai (deserts and canyons close to the lower Colorado River in Arizona and Nevada); the Flathead (western Montana); the Kalispels (Idaho and eastern Washington); the Spokanes (eastern Washington); Nez Perce (plateau country of central Idaho and eastern Oregon and Washington); the Walla Wallas and Palouses (northwest of Nez Perce); the Coeur d’Alene, Pend d’Oreille, Cayuse, Umatillas, Chinook, Squaxon,

²³ Robert M.Utley, *The Indian Frontier 1846-1890*, Revised Edition (Albuquerque, New Mexico: The University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 4-6.

Nisqually, and Puyallup (Oregon Country); the Yakimas (south-central Washington); and the Modocs and Klamaths (northern California and south-central Oregon).²⁴

Republican Democracy's Environmental Affects

Underlying Manifest Destiny was the promise that in the West Americans could realise their democratic independence via land ownership. The West held cheap plentiful lands abundant in rich resources.²⁵ Upon becoming President in 1845 James K. Polk (1845-1849) fully advocated Manifest Destiny stating:

As our population has expanded, the Union has been cemented and strengthened. A[s] our boundaries have been enlarged and our agricultural population has been spread over a large surface, our federative system has acquired additional strength and security....It is confidently believed that our system maybe safely extended to the utmost bounds of our territorial limits.²⁶

Americans considered the West to be the Great American desert, an empty space which needed to be occupied and exploited. However, the West was far from the empty unoccupied void pioneering and land hungry Americans believed it to be. In order to acquire this land they would have to deploy dubious and often deceitful methods and in so doing disrupt the the large Native American population who lived in the West.²⁷

²⁴ Debo, *A History of the Indians of the United States*, 9-12; & Utley, *The Indian Frontier 1846-1890*, 4.

²⁵ Worster, *Under Western Skies*, 19; & Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981, 83.

²⁶ James Knox Polk, 'Inaugural Address, Washington D.C., March 4, 1845', accessed on 28/6/2013 at: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/polk.asp

²⁷ Mark S. Joy, *American Expansionism, 1783-1860: A Manifest Destiny?* (London: Longman, 2003), xxvii.

Through land ownership, Americans saw themselves as being full and equal citizens.²⁸ On this basis the federal government looked to direct and allocate the sale of these public lands to settlers. However, the emigrants' speedy arrival in the 1840s and 1850s predated any organised government land distribution. The pioneers would not be deterred and quickly claimed possession by squatting on selected land until the government was ready to officially sell this land. Yet, while squatters sat and waited for their government they came into contact and conflict with Native Americans. One such example occurred in 1853 in western Iowa on the Nebraska border between squatters and some Omaha natives. While the Omaha were out hunting they encountered a large number of squatters who encouraged them to return to their camp. The camp was actually a farmhouse where squatters outnumbered the Omaha. Here, one squatter declared that he was 'unwilling for you [Omaha] to wander over this land.' Debate continued between the squatters and the Omaha, with one Native American replying: 'The land is not yours. The President did not buy it. You have jumped on it...Why do you consider me a fool? You are now dwelling a little beyond the bounds of the land belonging to the President.' The Omahas managed to return to their hunting the next morning only to be harassed and shot at by a large number of these squatters who chased after them on horseback. Somehow, the natives managed to not only hold their ground but turn their assailants around to cease any further attack on this particular occasion.²⁹

The Western wilderness' beauty and bounty became a vital ingredient for Manifest Destiny as the physical environment in which pioneers were settling provided raw materials upon which to further

²⁸ Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*, 50 & 63.

²⁹ Pathin-Nanpaji, 'An Encounter between Omaha Hunters and White Squatters in Iowa, 1853', in Amy S. Greenburg, *Manifest Destiny and American Territorial Expansion: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012), 74-76.

American civilization. The enthusiasm to transform and tame the *Wild West*, gave purpose and meaning to the pioneers' lives.³⁰ According to O'Sullivan in 1845, 'the Anglo-Saxon foot was already on [the]...borders' of the West, where 'the advanced guard' and 'irresistible army' of American pioneers had 'began to pour down upon these territories.' He went further by stating that these believers of Manifest Destiny brought with them 'the plough and the rifle, and marking its trail with schools and colleges, courts and representative halls, mills and meeting-houses.'³¹ Yet, despite this democratic vanguard, these new settlers possessed no knowledge of the grassland environment. This was initially caused by the wagon convoys whose wheels together with the hard hooped livestock scoured the earth. One traveller Josiah Gregg explained this mass migration noting how 'the wagons [were] usually drawn by eight mules or the same number of oxen. Of late years, however, I have seen much larger vehicles employed, with ten or twelve mules harnessed to each, and a cargo of goods of about five thousand pounds in weight.'³² Once at their destinations in Oregon, California and the Great Plains, settlers cut and burned the grassland and polluted the river habitats as they built settlements, farms, ranches and other enterprises.³³

Carrying their preconceived notions about dominating nature, these settlers transformed the native grassland ecology by planting crops such as wheat and corn. The overgrazing by domesticated animals combined with these crops to degenerate native species'

³⁰ Roderick Frazier Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, Fourth Edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), xi & 40.

³¹ O'Sullivan, John L., 'Annexation, 1845', in *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, Volume 17 Number 1 (July-August 1845), 5-10, accessed on 28/6/2013 at: <http://web.grinnell.edu/courses/HIS/f01/HIS202-01/Documents/OSullivan.html>

³² Gregg in Moorhead, *Commerce of the Prairies*, 24.

³³ Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 88; & Peter Coates, *Nature: Western Attitudes Since Ancient Times* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1998), 108.

habitats, including bison, wolves and coyotes.³⁴ Local animals, especially the bison, which grazed across the Great Plains in huge herds, were seen as restrictions to settlers progress and declared pests allowing for this creature to be systematically exterminated.³⁵ The bison populations were drastically lowered from this hunting but were also affected by the presence of cattle. Mormon pioneer Joseph Young expressed Americans fascination and fear of the bison noting the excitement when his group ‘first...saw buffalo’ close to their camp. Unfortunately it seems that the bison in this instance were just as curious as Young explains that ‘the buffalo...came into the camp [and] one Bull made a Brake on the herd’ leaving the pioneers no choice but to shoot and kill this animal.³⁶ The importance settlers placed on their cattle combined with the need to protect these animals, displays their poor temperament toward native animals. The introduced animals reduced the availability of food on the Plains as their dietary requirements and water consumption overlapped with the bison’s own needs for survival. Bison numbers were also decimated the transference of bovine diseases such as anthrax, tuberculosis and brucellosis.³⁷ However, the declining bison numbers would also impact upon Native Americans’ food supplies and existence.³⁸ This was especially the case for the Plains Indians who as nomads followed the bison herds across the grasslands, using these animals for food, shelter and clothing.

By the 1840s and 1850s, the hunger for Western land saw the federal government dedicated to removing or subduing Indians.

³⁴ Robert V.Hine, & John Mack Faragher, *The American West: A New Interpretative History* (New Haven, Connecticut:Yale University Press, 2000), 317.

³⁵ West, *The Contested Plains*, 47, 89-90 & 161-162.

³⁶ JosephYoung, ‘Diary entry for July 25, 1850, Platte River Nebraska’, 73, in *Trails of Hope: Overland Letters and Diaries, 1846-1869*, accessed on 29/6/2013 at: <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/Diaries/id/7677/rec/53>

³⁷ Dan Flores, ‘Bison Ecology and Bison Diplomacy: The Southern Plains from 1800-1850’, in *The Journal of American History*, Volume 78 Number 2 (1991):481.

³⁸ Hine and Faragher, *The American West*, 3.

Americans agreed that as the Indians' economy was based on hunting and gathering, they failed to improve the land and as a consequence these native peoples had abandoned their right of ownership over these lands.³⁹ In 1846, US Senator Thomas Hart Benton echoed these sentiments justifying dispossessing Native Americans saying:

Civilization, or extinction, has been the fate of all people who have found themselves in the track of the advancing Whites, and civilization, always the preference of Whites, has been pressed as an object, while extinction has followed as a consequence of its resistance....the Red races have often felt their ameliorating influence.⁴⁰

However, previous methods used to reduce and subjugate Eastern Indians would prove more difficult against these far more aggressive and better equipped Western tribes. This often resulted in bloody clashes between settlers and Native Americans and in turn would force the federal government to acquire Indian lands through negotiating treaties and other persuasive methods. Once these treaties were signed into effect the territories formerly inhabited by Native Americans officially became opened to thousands of settlers. This resulted in the Western land rushes where pioneers, under military supervision, would have to wait until a specified deadline to mark out their respective land claims.⁴¹ However, before the settlers could claim the lands, the federal government would need to appear to be acquiring it from the Indians. One technique employed was holding treaty councils with those Indians who stood in the path of white settlement. These treaties effectively forced natives to acquiesce to white occupation and ownership of their lands, as the Indians forfeited traditional hunting grounds in exchange for being relocated

³⁹ Joy, *American Expansionism*, 4.

⁴⁰ Thomas Hart Benton, 'The Destiny of the Race, Speech delivered to the United States Senate', in *The Congressional Globe*, May 28, 1846, accessed on 28/6/2013 at: <http://clio.missouristate.edu/FTMiller/LocalHistory/Docs/Benton/destinyoftherace.htm>

⁴¹ Billington, *Western Expansion*, 476-77.

to specified areas from which they were not permitted to stray beyond.⁴² The idea being that on these new sites the Indians would abandon to hunting on the Plains, stop fighting wars with each other and most importantly that they would cease all hostile actions towards settlers. On 17 September 1851, one such treaty occurred between the US government on one side and the Sioux, Cheyennes, Arapahos, Crows, Gros Ventres, Assiniboines, Arikaras, and Shoshonis on the other at Fort Laramie on the North Platte River.⁴³ Under the Fort Laramie Treaty, these Native Americans in return for agreeing to relocate would receive:

For the damages which have or may occur by reason thereof to the Indian nations,..., and for their maintenance and the improvement of their moral and social customs, the United States bind themselves to deliver to the said Indian nations the sum of fifty thousand dollars per annum for the term of ten years, with the right to continue the same at the discretion of the President of the United States for a period not exceeding five years thereafter, in provisions, merchandise, domestic animals, and agricultural implements, in such proportions as may be deemed best adapted to their condition by the President of the United States, to be distributed in proportion to the population of the aforesaid Indian nations.⁴⁴

This enticement to move off traditional hunting grounds and opening the land to settlers, meant that the federal government could keep the Indians bound by being reliant on the supply of financial aid and material supplies. While the Laramie Treaty did not allocate a title to the places where these Indians were relocated, this practice became known as reservations and by the end of the 1850s was widely implemented across the West.⁴⁵

⁴² Merchant, *The Columbia Guide*, 141.

⁴³ Debo, *A History of the Indians of the United States*, 165.

⁴⁴ 'The Fort Laramie Treaty, Article 7, September 17, 1851', accessed on 7/3/2014 at: http://www.uwyo.edu/robertshistory/fort_laramie_treaty_of_1851.htm

⁴⁵ Utley, *The Indian Frontier 1846-1890*, 51-60.

Regardless of possessing these lands, the settlers feared potential savagery from dispossessed Indians. In 1846, to combat this problem and ensure Indian subjugation continued, the U.S. Congress authorised a series of military bases be constructed near to new settlements. These forts were built at strategic locations along the Oregon Trail and manned by special army units to deal quickly with any Indian threat. However, these armed garrisons were so thinly spread across the frontier that they were little more than a token effort. The soldiers could not easily maintain the facilities or cover their areas of operation. The natives of course had the upper hand when it came to their intimate knowledge of the land and terrain. This allowed them to regularly evade capture as they knew where to hide and when and from where to strike.⁴⁶

Christianity's Environmental Impact

In the 1840s, American Protestantism and utopian beliefs were further fuelled by Manifest Destiny and Westward expansion.⁴⁷ Many Americans believed that through their Christian faith and their democratic principles that they were divinely empowered to expand their civilization.⁴⁸ In seeking to fulfil their mission in the West, American Christians equated themselves with the Israelites from the book of Exodus, perceiving that they were God's new chosen people destined for a new land.⁴⁹ They believed that just as God had led the Israelites out of their bondage in Egypt, He was now leading them from the inequity of the East and into the *Promised Land* of the West.⁵⁰ These Christian emigrants operated under such scripture as: 'Leave

⁴⁶ Utley, *The Indian Frontier 1846-1890*, 36-37.

⁴⁷ Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 5.

⁴⁸ Coates, *Nature*, 104.

⁴⁹ Billington, *Western Expansion*, 572.

⁵⁰ Charles M. Segal, and David C. Stineback, *Puritans, Indians, and Manifest Destiny* (New York: Putnam, 1977), 105.

this place, with the people you brought out...Go on to the land where milk and honey flow.⁵¹

While Americans believed the West to be their sanctuary they were also aware that this unknown territory contained dangers, chiefly the temptation of sin. But this strengthened the pioneers' resolve to follow in the Israelites' footsteps as God was testing them by the trials and tribulations they endured in the West.⁵² One group that wandered to the West with the intent purpose of establishing their own religious community were the Mormons, or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. These particular pioneers were not thought of as being Christian by the other American denominations and as such had endured significant persecution. In 1846, twelve thousand Mormons journeyed by covered wagon from Illinois, searching for an isolated location. The next year they discovered their new home in what is now known as the Utah desert but at this time was still Mexican territory. Yet, in this desert they were free to worship God in their own unique Christian way, including polygamy.⁵³ The Mormons held that the land belonged to God and that as His people they were to use it profitably. Underlying the Mormons' faith was the tenet that the entire group's welfare was more important than that of any individual.⁵⁴ In 1848, Levi Jackman described his devotion to the settlement and his brethren:

[I] pray that I may be enabled to do much good on the earth in assisting to build up thy kingdom [settlement in Utah] and when I shal have compleated my mision on this earth I pray that my last days may be among my friends and can nection and that my senses may remain bright that I may admisiter words of

⁵¹ 'Exodus 33:1-3', in *The Jerusalem Bible* (Popular Edition, London, 1968), 96.

⁵² Segal and Stinebeck, *Puritans, Indians, and Manifest Destiny*, 105.

⁵³ Greenburg, *Manifest Destiny and American Territorial Expansion*, 22.

⁵⁴ William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee*, New York, 1961, 299.

consolation to them as I bid adieu to this life these and all auther neaded blessing I ask in the name of Jesus Amen.⁵⁵

The West's wild nature presented an obstacle to progress, prosperity, power and godliness. Adhering to the Biblical belief that Satan ruled in the wilderness, the settlers further justified their providence to replace evil with the benefits of Christian society.⁵⁶ In their eyes, nature was a villain and as pioneers they were the heroes who would transform the untamed wilderness into civilization. Only when settlers had cleared the land and made it fertile for their crops could they consider their work to be successful.⁵⁷ The Mormons reflected this Christian mentality that it was God's wish that nature's desolation be converted into a lush agricultural garden. Emmeline B. Wells was an early Mormon pioneer and echoed this thought when she first saw the chosen settlement site in Utah:

This is the place where they intend to put in a crop. this afternoon I crossed the creek or river found the most beautiful spot I ever saw viewing it from the opposite bank the ground was covered with a carpet of green and interspersed with flowers which might have done honor to the Elysian bowers Today Br. Brigham told them from the stand that no one should return to Nauvoo with his counsel until they had done something towards helping build[ing] up this place to help those who stay and those who shall come after they made some arrangements for work bricking fence building log houses.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Levi Jackman, 'Diary entry for August 6, 1848', 58 in *Trails of Hope: Overland Letters and Diaries, 1846-1869*, accessed on 29/6/2013 at: <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/Diaries/id/7657/rec/18>

⁵⁶ Segal and Stineback, *Puritans, Indians, and Manifest Destiny*, 32.

⁵⁷ Joy, *American Expansionism*, 17-24, & 39-41.

⁵⁸ Emmeline B.Wells, 'Diary Entry for 1846', 75-76, in *Trails of Hope: Overland Letters and Diaries, 1846-1869*, accessed on 1/7/2013 at: <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/Diaries/id/7676/rec/54>

By 1850, the Mormons had used their resources to irrigate more than 16,000 acres of desert to grow their crops and constantly rebuilt dams by constructing bigger and stronger versions.⁵⁹ Under the guidance of their divine mission and interpretation of Manifest Destiny, Christians extended their faith into the West and helped to transform nature into civilization.⁶⁰

From their Christian mission, Americans would spread God's word to the Indians and convert these primitives.⁶¹ This Christian desire to bring Indians closer to God was inseparable from the forced requirement that the natives abandon their traditional hunting and gathering cultures by yielding to the federal government's treaties and relocations to reservations.⁶² This notion was strengthened by the moral opinion that hunting was incompatible with God's plan to use land for the creation of a civilization.⁶³ To commence the Indians' Christian conversion, missionaries were sent out among the Indian tribes to educate them about civilization.⁶⁴ However, those American settlers who pushed into the West under the mandate of civilising the Indians also inadvertently brought with them disease, guns, horses, cattle, and cut down trees to establish homesteads, all of which degraded the natives' environment. This impact was heavily felt by the Indians because of their interconnectivity and reliance upon this environment for their very way of life. This had an additional impact as European flora and fauna began to supersede the embattled native varieties to further reduce the native peoples' food sources.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Worster, *Rivers of Empire*, 77-80 & 110.

⁶⁰ Billington, *Western Expansion*, 540.

⁶¹ Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation* (New York: Knopf, 1963), 246.

⁶² Segal & Stineback, *Puritans, Indians, and Manifest Destiny*, 30.

⁶³ Albert K. Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny: A Study of Nationalist Expansion in American History* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1963), 77.

⁶⁴ Joy, *American Expansionism*, 11.

⁶⁵ Utey, *The Indian Frontier 1846-1890*, 11, 13-14.

Unfortunately for Native Americans, the increased contact with missionaries, would lead to higher incidents of diseases such as influenza, pneumonia, bronchitis, dysentery, measles, and small pox.⁶⁶ This was due to Indians lacking immunity to these diseases, which once contracted swept through native communities reducing their populations by millions.⁶⁷ One example of epidemic disease occurred in the Oregon territory in the winter of 1846-47 between the Cayuse and the Whitman Mission. This Mission came about due to the Nez Perce asking for Christian instruction in the mid-1830s. By 1836, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions dispatched a party led by Dr. Marcus Whitman and his wife Narcissa to the Nez Perce and other surrounding tribes including the Cayuse. The Whitmans established a Mission and for eleven years taught the natives how to worship God as Christians.⁶⁸ The winter of 1846-47 was brutal and compounded further by the natives' wild game perishing from the extreme cold and competition with American cattle as well as the occurrence of a very later salmon run. Suffering from cold and hunger, the Cayuse also became heavily infected with severe measles. Typical during times of such hardships, people look to place blame for their plight. This case was no different, as many Cayuse believed that the white missionaries in the area had deliberately infected them with this disease. On November 29, 1847, the Cayuse attacked the Mission giving no warning and killed the Whitmans along with eleven other men. Many other missionaries were wounded with some managing to escape to tell this tale. Apparently the Cayuse also took the remaining live women and children prisoners.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ West, *The Contested Plains*, 283.

⁶⁷ Utley, *The Indian Frontier 1846-1890*, 11, 13-14.

⁶⁸ Heilder, *Manifest Destiny*, 118-119.

⁶⁹ Debo, *A History of the Indians of the United States*, 154-155.

Capitalism and the Western Environment

By 1840, the US had caught the railroad bug as evidenced by the 3,000 miles of track built and in operation. This transportation was faster, less expensive to build, and able to journey farther and to a greater number of places across the US. Nine years later, the revenue railroads earned from freight exceeded the profits they made from passenger travel.⁷⁰ Railroads would eventually compliment capitalism and its expansion into the West. The railroad network's construction received massive federal government support directly in response to the American public's enthusiasm.⁷¹ Freight and passenger cars, carried far more cargo Westward than horse drawn wagons. While the railroads did not completely render other transportation methods obsolete they did provide the West with a dual function. First, by transporting more people and freight into the new communities, while also shipping Western agricultural produce, cattle and raw materials back to Eastern markets.⁷² About the railroad, O'Sullivan noted 'the projected rail-road across the continent to the Pacific' needed to 'be carried into effect' as it would bind 'together in its iron clasp our fast settling Pacific region with that of the Mississippi valley.'⁷³ The relationship between the railroad and capitalism in the West meant that the federal government would need to undertake detailed explorations to survey potential railroad sites, offer protection from Indian aggression, and use public lands to entice foreign and domestic investment.⁷⁴ This desired economic growth would be catered for by selling land along the railroads to settlers and other immigrants.

⁷⁰ Boyer et. al., *The Enduring Vision*, 183.

⁷¹ Mead, *God and Gold: Britain*, 154.

⁷² McDougall, *Throes of Democracy*, 150.

⁷³ O'Sullivan, 'Annexation?'

⁷⁴ Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 6 & 213.

Western farming, ranching, freighting, and other mercantile businesses provided many settlers with vast opportunities to become wealthy. The shared capitalist stimuli also triggered an agrarian demand for lands on the Plains. Here, farmers prepared fields alongside every available water source and extensively irrigated to grow corn, barley, oats, vegetables and hay for their cattle. Initially farmers used equipment such as wooden mouldboard ploughs with cast-iron shares and the all-iron prairie-breaker weighing 150 pounds to produce their crops, but this apparatus was inadequate for ploughing farther out West. This early failure combined with the high demand for Western crops back in the Eastern states as well as in Europe generated a massive wave of agricultural inventions in the 1850s ranging from ploughs, seeders, corn huskers, and reapers to butter churns, yokes, and beehives.⁷⁵ However, the employment of these inventions reduced the soil fertility and prevented regrowth of native grasses, and exposed existing trees and plants to harsh weather.⁷⁶

The West's growing capitalist economy brought about the Great Plains' environmental decline. The early settlers and merchants required pasture, water and other available resources. On the Plains pastoralism emphasised herding exotic cattle and other domesticated animals to be sold for meat, hides and wool.⁷⁷ These cattle, sheep and horses stocked the ranges drastically reducing bison populations from about thirty million to roughly ten million by the 1850s. As already discussed these dwindling numbers impacted the Plains' natural cycle, as the grasses were not be eaten and fertilised by the bison to restore nutrients to the soils and reproduce new plant life. Instead cattle grazing stripped these fields barren and did not replace soil fertility as these animals were shipped off to outside markets to be slaughtered.⁷⁸ Added to this impact, railroads cut deep scars into the landscape and

⁷⁵ McDougall, *Throes of Democracy*, 129-130.

⁷⁶ West, *The Contested Plains*, 68, 90, & 250.

⁷⁷ Worster, *Under Western Skies*, 37-40.

⁷⁸ Hine and Faragher, *The American West*, 317-320.

polluted the air along their routes with noise, ash and the potential danger for fire. These factors resulted in creating a strip of barren land which ran through the bison range permanently separating them into northern and southern herds.⁷⁹ The Indian nations watched as settler's industries exhausted the natural resources to displace them from their homes and destroy their culture.⁸⁰ The symbiotic relationship between Plains Indians and the bison meant that this animal's reduction would weaken Indian societies, making them far more reliant upon American civilization and trade networks.⁸¹ The bison decline also resulted in a drastic reduction in traditional practices of ceremonies as well as a sense of identity for those Plains Indians who hunted this game. Cheyenne Chief Yellow Wolf captured this impact when watching Americans enter his people's territory along the Arkansas River on August 26, 1846:

...is a man of considerable influence, of enlarged views, and gifted with more foresight than any other man in his tribe. He frequently talks of the diminishing numbers of his people, and the decrease of the once abundant buffalo. He says that in a few years they will become extinct; and unless the Indians wish to pass away also, they will have to adopt the habits of the white people, using such measures to produce subsistence as will render them independent of the precarious reliance afforded by the game.⁸²

The West's capitalist enterprises were further boosted by the emergent mining industry following gold's discovery in California in 1848.⁸³ The Gold Rush from the late 1840s likewise affected the Sierra Nevada Mountains as miners blasted out rocks, hunted native animals, cleared forests, and spoiled the rivers with debris depleting

⁷⁹ Debo, *A History of the Indians of the United States*, 165.

⁸⁰ Coates, *Nature*, 124.

⁸¹ Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (New Edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 291.

⁸² Yellow Wolf, 'Near Bent's Fort, Arkansas River, August 26, 1846', in Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier 1846-1890*, Revised Edition (Albuquerque, New Mexico: The University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 2.

⁸³ Merchant, *The Columbia Guide*, 67, 81, & 126.

fish stocks. In 1849, Edward Jackson journeyed through Gold country in California and even tried his own hand at mining noting how ‘I mined a little, & found to my satis faction, [*sic*] that gold is to be found in any place you are a mind to dig in these three vallies.’⁸⁴ With gold apparently plentiful in California, people’s greed for it increased, eventually leading to hydrologic mining in 1852 which involved blasting high power water onto hillsides to displace on a daily basis between fifty and one hundred tons of earth. This advanced mining denuded hillsides of their topsoil, polluted water systems and eventually low land farms.⁸⁵

The California Gold Rush witnessed thousands of miners flood into the territory to force the state’s admission to the Union two years later. The new state commenced its existence by instituting a brutal anti-Indian policy that legalized into indentured servitude native children and adults. California’s justices of the peace were further endowed with the power to sell these Indians’ services to the highest bidder, and simultaneously deny natives any legal recourse ruling their testimonies inadmissible in courts. Under this system, California’s Indians were taken into virtual slavery, most noticeably women to be used by miners.⁸⁶ Native American life on the gold fields were further impacted as their homelands were overran pushing them out into barren areas devoid of food.⁸⁷ Not surprising many miners displayed their lawlessness, especially when law enforcement was largely absent on the gold fields. In 1855, one hostile group of miners in northern California abused some local natives they came into contact with so badly that these Indians returned the violence in

⁸⁴ Edward Jackson, ‘Diary Entry for September 11-13, 1849, Yuba River Valley, California’, in *Trails of Hope: Overland Letters and Diaries, 1846-1869*, accessed on 1/7/2013 at: <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/Diaries/id/7658/rec/30>

⁸⁵ Merchant, *The Columbia Guide*, 19-20, 67-68, 83-86,& 90.

⁸⁶ Debo, *A History of the Indians of the United States*, 164-165.

⁸⁷ Hine & Faragher, *The American West*, 248.

kind sparking the Rogue River War (1855-1856).⁸⁸ As a young Army lieutenant, George Cook was stationed during the Gold Rush near the mining town Yreka, and witnessed Native Americans' mistreatment. He writes:

It was of no unfrequent occurrence for an Indian to be shot down in cold blood, or a squaw to be raped by some brute. Such a thing as a white man being punished for outraging an Indian was unheard of....The consequences was that there was scarcely ever a time that there was not one or more wars with the Indians somewhere on the Pacific coast.⁸⁹

Conclusion

Even before John L. O'Sullivan first coined the phrase of Manifest Destiny, the Western frontier for Americans was the place to take their democracy, religion and capitalism. By the 1840s and 1850s, Manifest Destiny entered into the common vernacular, providing hope for independence through land ownership and justifying the nation's mission to expand freedom. However, this push for freedom would come to radically alter the West's natural environment including the indigenous population and wildlife. The settlers who carved out their new civilization saw the West as a wilderness to be subdued. They encountered difficult environmental conditions from limited water sources and trees, and the low average annual rainfall. Instead of lush forest vegetation, settlers found rolling prairies, grass covered plains, steep and rough mountain ranges, and dry deserts. Here, the sub-humid environment was home to severe warm winds, freezing Northern blizzards, and frequent droughts.

⁸⁸ Debo, *A History of the Indians of the United States*, 158.

⁸⁹ George Cook, 'His Autobiography', in Ange Debo, *A History of the Indians of the United States* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), 158-159.

These new settlers' hunger for land drove them to create an imagined place that they would civilize by establishing farms, ranches and settlements. As the vanguard of American civilization transforming the West these settlers were rewarded by their national government with sponsorships for land improvements, guaranteed land rights, and water transportation.⁹⁰ However, in developing this new society, settlers through their ignorance, failed to work the grassland environment for long term sustainability. New farming technologies, combined with domesticated livestock, scoured the earth, burnt and cut grass, and polluted the few waterways. The cattle and sheep exhausted the food supply and transferred diseases such as anthrax and tuberculosis to drastically reduce local wildlife populations. These settlers also impacted on the Indian peoples, destroying their nomadic lifestyle as they could no longer freely hunt bison across the Plains. Native Americans were obstructed by barbed wire fences marking property boundaries and then via treaties that forced these peoples to live on reservations comprised of undesirable lands.

On these reservations, Indians were expected to adopt American civilization as they learnt to become farmers and Christians. Meanwhile, these tribal peoples were made dependent on the government's financial annuities and protection under established federal agencies.⁹¹ However, the combination of land greedy pioneers and resistant Indians led to further frontier violence. Realising this violence was having a direct impact on the newly settled lands, as well as the efforts to entice more settlers from the Eastern States to the West; the US government backed up the reservation system with its military forts stationed nearby to reservations and American settlements. While both the reservations and the garrisons were flawed and did not always improve the conditions between settlers and Indians, these two mechanisms were designed to provide protection and quell any Indian uprisings. Such installations in the

⁹⁰ Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment*, 62 & 112.

⁹¹ Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment*, 179, 284, & 326-330.

West acted during the 1840s and 1850s as symbols of American influence, control and forced civilization upon a growing number of native peoples.⁹²

Added to this mix was settlers' wide embrace of the various Protestant Christian religions, through which they equated their Western migration with the biblical story of Exodus. American settlers saw themselves as the new Israelites, chosen by God to go into the wilderness to improve the land as He commanded. The Mormons were one such group who followed this ideology, as they transformed the Utah desert with dams and irrigation construction. Yet, once settlers had successfully established their new communities, many turned their attention to saving the Indians by introducing them to Christianity. But this close and frequent contact between Christian missionaries and native people fatally exposed the latter to infectious epidemics including influenza, pneumonia, bronchitis and smallpox. Indians' high susceptibility to old world infections combined with frontier violence and the bison's mass slaughter all contributed to radically decimate their populations.⁹³ Overall, settlers could justify Indian dispossession and population decline by declaring the natives to be irredeemably savage from their refusal to embrace the benefits and opportunities of American Christian society.⁹⁴

Amidst this atmosphere, a dynamic capitalist market emerged in the West. This was especially noticeable with the development of railroads, which generated trade links back to the Eastern states. Western business enterprises became inter-reliant and inter-active. Together these new industries depleted soil fertility and made it difficult for native vegetation to regrow. Nature was further affected by capitalist industry as native species were extensively hunted for their pelts, hides and bones. The bison's disappearance across much of the Plains broke the natural cycle of eating the grass and fertilising

⁹² Billington, *Western Expansion*, 290-291, & 409.

⁹³ Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*, 198.

⁹⁴ Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 104.

the soil. Instead domesticated animals exhausted the vegetation and soils while also failing to replenish the land due to ranchers transporting this livestock to other locations to be slaughtered. The discovery of gold in California in 1848, also devastated the mountain ecologies as miners cleared forests, hunted native animals for food, and deposited debris into the rivers.

Capitalism's mass slaughter of bison, barbed wire fencing, windmill and rifle production, was the final toll for the nomadic Indian lifestyle. Capitalist enterprises pushed the remaining few Indians who had not already moved onto reservations, off of their traditional homelands and into areas devoid of food supplies. Hungry Indians raided American settlements for food and perpetuated the frontier violence which developed. The Western landscape had been altered dramatically. This Manifest Destiny would take on a life of its own, as American society, Christian faiths, and capitalistic economies altered the lands, nature and Indian peoples of the West.

About the Author

Darren Dobson holds an Honours Degree of Bachelor of Arts and Masters of Arts (History) from Monash University. His Masters Thesis was titled: 'A Fearful Excitement': The Baltimore Riot in American Civil War History and Memory. His research interests include 19th Century US History with a particular focus on the 1850s and the American Civil War.