

# THE FORMING OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



## INTRODUCTION

The population of the US grew quickly in the 100 years after the American Revolution. Cities and farms in the northeast continued to grow and expand, and after explorers ventured into the west, large numbers of people seeking new land, homes, and opportunities began to move across the continent. However, even as the new nation was taking shape, tensions

rooted in the past began to erupt in conflicts:

- The expansion of settlers into the west increasingly affected Native Americans who inhabited the land.
- The American Revolution did not permanently solve the problems between Britain and the US.
- Within the US itself, people disagreed strongly about a number of ideas, such

as who had rights and how the country should be governed.

This section discusses three events that were connected with these conflicts and contributed to the forming of the US:

- westward expansion
- the War of 1812
- the American Civil War

### Note to the teacher

This section focuses on general westward expansion of pioneers and settlers, not on the history of individual US states. More information about that topic can be found in a later section of the manual.

This section also uses terms relating to government. Before presenting activities in this and the following sections, the teacher may wish to introduce or review information about the responsibilities of the various levels of government in the US. Information and activities about government, politics, and citizenship can be found in the last section of this manual.



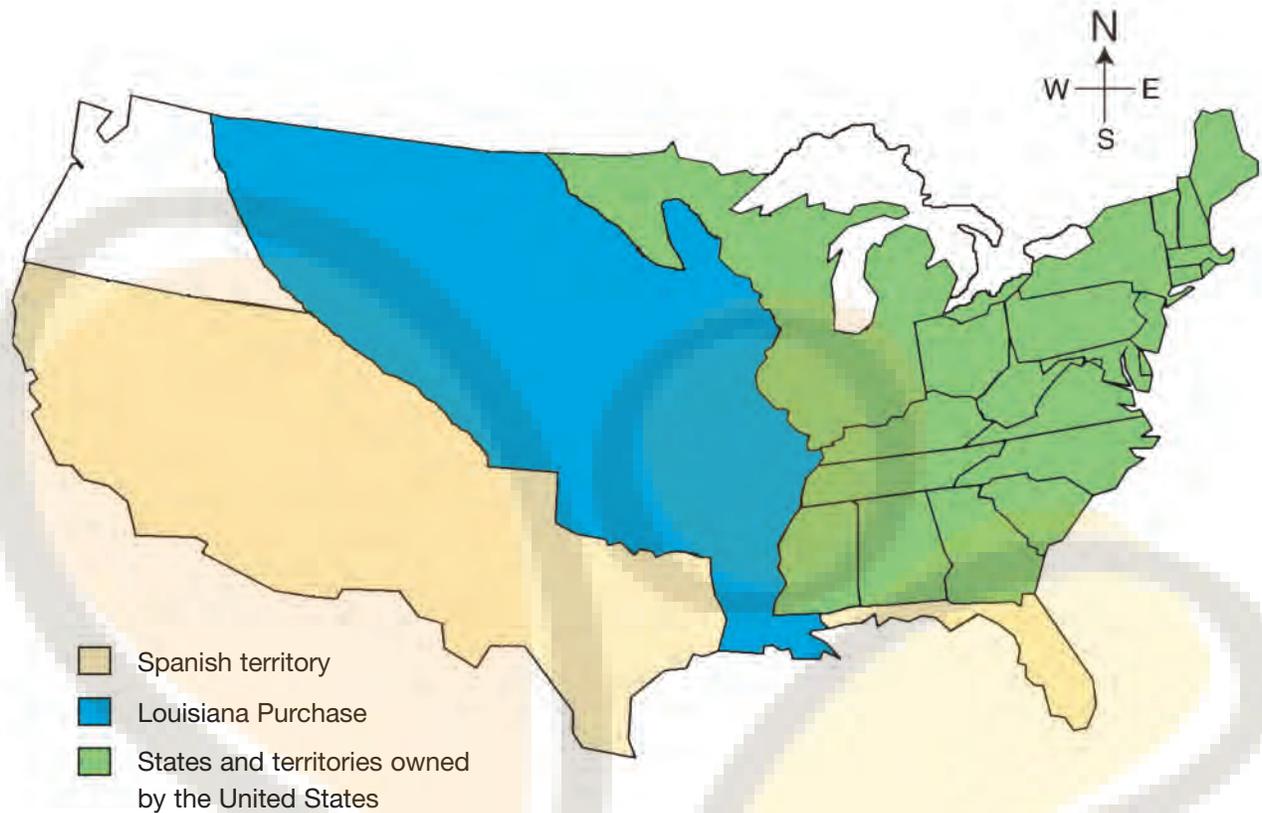
## WESTWARD EXPANSION

### Background Information

By the late 1700s, the US had established itself along the east coast and as far west as the banks of the Mississippi River. Spain had laid claim to the west coast in present-day California and built over 20 missions in the area. Although large numbers of Native Americans lived in the land that lay between the two coasts, it had not been explored to any great extent by Europeans or American colonists. This area was called the West.

The expansion of the US into the West is a story that involves many significant people and events. This section focuses on eight:

- Louisiana Purchase
- Corps of Discovery
- pioneers
- Trail of Tears
- Texas rebellion



*The US doubled in size after the Louisiana Purchase*

- Mexican American War
- California Gold Rush
- reservations and resistance

## Louisiana Purchase

Some Europeans and colonists considered the West to be a wild, mythical place, while others felt that it offered exciting opportunities for freedom as well as wealth. Governments of the US and several European countries were intrigued by the West because they hoped it contained a waterway that linked the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The nation that found a route through the vast North and South American continents rather than around them would gain great wealth and trading power.

In 1803, President Thomas Jefferson increased US strength in the West by negotiating the **Louisiana Purchase**, territory making up the western part of the Mississippi Valley that was purchased by the US from France. The US paid France \$15 million for 500 million acres (200 million ha) of the land France had claimed between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains. With the purchase, the US doubled in size, extending from the Gulf of Mexico in the south to the border with Canada in the north, then west from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains. The US also gained control of New Orleans, an important port for trading with Europe. New Orleans' location in the center of the Gulf of Mexico gave ships access not only east to the Atlantic Ocean, but also north into the center of the continent.

## Corps of Discovery

While he was negotiating the Louisiana Purchase, President Jefferson was also working on another way for the US to expand west. In 1804, Jefferson formed the **Corps of Discovery**, an expedition party created to explore the West for scientific and commercial reasons and led by US army officers Meriwether Lewis (1774–1809) and William Clark (1770–1838). Important goals for the expedition involved learning about the land's geography and climate, the Native Americans living there, and the plants and animals. However, the most important goal was to find a waterway that linked the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.



*A US stamp honoring the Corps of Discovery*

Like many people of the time, Jefferson and the expedition leaders hoped that if they explored north and west, they might even find the fabled **Northwest Passage**, the route said to connect the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. Until the mid-1800s, many explorers searched for this route, but did not go far enough north or met with some mishap on the way. Today, the Northwest Passage refers to an ocean passage along the northernmost coast of North America, through the Canadian Arctic.

## Did you know?

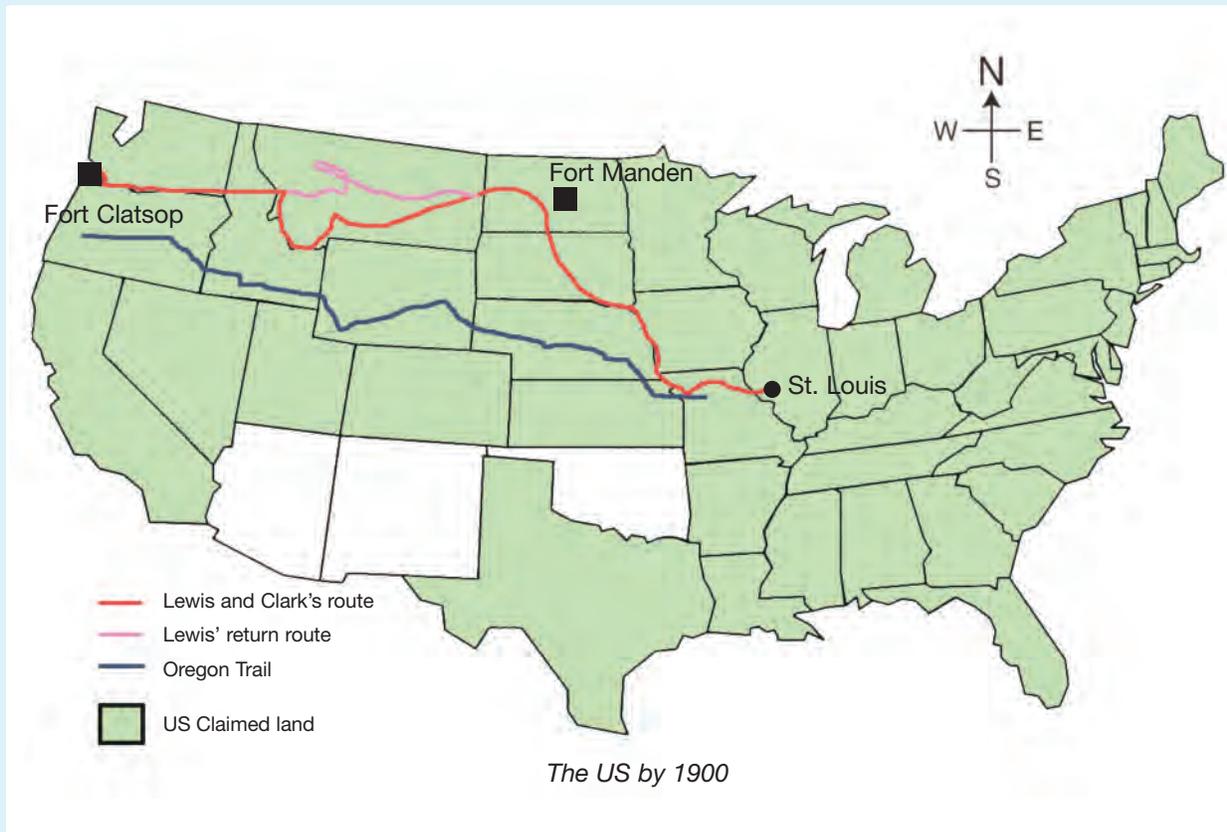
While each crew member of the Corps of Discovery contributed to the extraordinary journey, two members, York and Sacagawea, gave the expedition added historical significance:

- York (c. 1770–1831), who came on the journey as the slave of William Clark, was the only African-American crew member. He is documented as the first African American to cross continental North America.
- Native American Sacagawea (c. 1787–1812) was the expedition's only female member. A member of the Shoshone nation, she made the journey with her baby, who was only 55 days old when the expedition began. Sacagawea was a valuable member of the Corps, acting as both interpreter and guide.

For over two years, the Corps journeyed over 8,000 miles (about 13,000 km) by boat, foot, and horse, across land never before seen by Europeans. The expedition members formed their route by following the waterways. They sailed the Missouri, Snake, Columbia, and Yellowstone Rivers. They explored areas of what are now known as Missouri, North Dakota, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, Montana, Idaho, then crossed the Rocky Mountains into Oregon and Washington.

## ACTIVITY 1

# Locating What States Made Up the US by 1900



### Purpose

To locate on a map what states made up the US by 1900, after 100 years of large numbers of people moving westward.

### Material

Map of the US today (states, boundaries, and major rivers shown).

Map, The US by 1900.

Blank map of the US (state boundaries shown, but no labels or rivers), one per student.

Coloring pencils.

US History journals and pencils.

### Presentation

- Most Montessori teachers present this concept in Year 4 or 5.
- Announce that the students will have an opportunity to see how the US had expanded by 1900.
- Demonstrate the map of the US today. With the students, point to and name each of the 50 states that make up the US today.

- With the students, review what made up the 13 colonies that became the original 13 states. (Virginia, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia.)
- On the map of the US today, ask the students to locate and trace the Mississippi River. Point out that at the beginning of the 1800s, the US states were located east of the Mississippi River.
- Demonstrate the map, The US by 1900. Invite the students to identify the states that were not yet states in 1900, according to the map. (Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, Alaska, and Hawaii.) Point out that during the 1800s, there was a movement of large numbers of people into the lands west of the Mississippi River and that this expansion

westward had created most of the states of central, northern, and western US by 1900. Name the two lines on the map (Oregon Trail and the route taken by the Lewis and Clark expedition), saying that these routes will be explored in another activity investigating westward expansion.

- Distribute the blank maps.
- Ask the students to color and label each map with the names of the states as of 1900, leaving the areas that were not states blank. After completion, the maps can be attached to the students' journals.

### Extension

- Research the date before 1900 when each state officially joined the US as a state, then add the information to the map.