

Document Set: Perspectives on Westward Expansion

Document 1.1: From “Annexation” by John O’Sullivan, 1845

The following quote is taken from an editorial that appeared in 1845, shortly after Texas became part of the United States.

“...our manifest destiny [is] to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.”

Source: O’Sullivan, John. Excerpt from “Annexation,” *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 17 (July 1845): 5–10.

http://www.historytools.org/sources/manifest_destiny.pdf.

Document 1.2: From “Account of Trip to California” by Andrew Jackson Grayson, 1846

The following text comes from a letter written by Andrew Jackson Grayson, the man shown in *The Promised Land – The Grayson Family*. You may notice many misspellings and punctuation errors. They were part of the original letter and have not been changed here. In the excerpt, Grayson describes the last part of his family’s journey to California.

“After several days of hard work winding and cutting our way through the dense forest and mountains we finally reach the main barrier of the Sierra Nevada Mts. it seemed that here it was almost imposable to get any farther—for a precipitous mountain presented it self before us disputing our further progress but undaunted we set to work to over come this difficulty—and which by the aid of a windliss and our oxchains we succeeded in—hauling the waggons up at the end of three days and for the first time we encamped upon the western slope of the Siera Nevada Mts But this was an encampment of gloom—for death had visited us, the wife of Mr. James Savage (Maj Savage) died that night, which filled our hearts with sorrow for poor Savage our worthy fellow travler—We Buried her the next day beneath the dark Firs of the Sierra—whilst the snow was in Solom Silence slowly falling around us—filling our hearts with dark fobodings, and warning us to hasten our journey

“I hear proposed to leave the waggons and the main body and proceed on alone taking my wife and child with me

TERRA

FOUNDATION FOR AMERICAN ART
terraamericanart.org

“By so doing I contemplated reaching California as soon as possible and returning with aid, should the balance of our party be unable to get through with their waggons before the snows would make the route impassable

“So on the 3rd or 4th of October, after packing an old gray horse with blankets buffalo robes some camping utensils, etc and mounting my wife Frank on top of the whole pack with little Ned in her arms, my self on foot we set out upon our lonely journey through the dark forests of the mountains—

“The mountains were full of deer and other game—indeed I could kill a deer almost when I pleased—but we felt I must confess rather lonely the first few nights after leaving the waggons

“The appearance of the mountains however as we advanced westward gave indication of our nearer approach to the Valley

“After traveling on in this way for several days we at length on the 12th day of October 1846 we beheld for the first time the long sought for plains of California Never had my eye rested upon so beautiful a scene and one so welcome—before us was the great Sacramento and Feather river Valleys through the center of which we could see the dark lines of timber marking the course of the rivers, whilst farther to the west in the dim distance we could discern the mountains of the Coast range the seen was grand. The sun was getting low and we encamped here for the night, by a small running spring—and called it the happy camp ground.”

Source: Grayson, Andrew Jackson. “Account of Trip to California,” 1846. Bancroft Library, UCLA.

Document 1.3: Statement by Satanta, Chief of the Kiowas

“A long time ago this land belonged to our fathers; but when I go up to the river I see camps of soldiers here on its bank. These soldiers cut down my timber; they kill my buffalo; and when I see that, my heart feels like bursting; I feel sorry.”

Source: Satanta, Chief of the Kiowas, 1867. U.S. Bureau of Ethnography Annual Report, 17th, 1895–96.

<http://www.smithsoniansource.org/display/primarysource/viewdetails.aspx?TopicId=&PrimarySourceId=1018>

Document 1.4: From “An Indian’s View of Indian Affairs” by Chief Joseph, 1879

Chief Joseph was the leader of the Nez Perce, a tribe in the Pacific Northwest. When white settlers first arrived in the area, the Nez Perce lived in peace with them. In 1855, Chief Joseph’s father signed a treaty with the U.S. government that established a large Nez Perce reservation from Oregon to Idaho. But when gold was discovered on Nez Perce lands, many more white settlers arrived. In 1877, the U.S. government used questionable methods to take almost six million acres of land from the Nez Perce. Chief Joseph and his people resisted, but in the end they were forced to surrender. The Nez Perce were moved to reservations in Kansas and Oklahoma, where many died as a result of the harsh living conditions. In 1879 Chief Joseph traveled to Washington, D.C. to plead for his tribe. The following excerpt is from an article that presented his reflections on the unjust treatment of the Nez Perce.

“When my father was a young man there came to our country a white man (Rev. Mr. Spaulding) who talked the spirit law. He won the affections of our people because he spoke good things to them. At first, he did not say anything about white men wanting to settle on our lands. Nothing was said about that until about twenty winters ago, when a number of white people came into our country and built houses and made farms. At first our people made no complaint. They thought there was room enough for all to live in peace, and they were learning many things from the white men that seemed to be good. But we soon found that the white men were growing rich very fast, and were greedy to possess everything the Indian had. My father was the first to see through the schemes of the white men, and he warned his tribe to careful about trading with them. He had suspicion of men who seemed so anxious to make money. I was a boy then, but I remember well my father’s caution. He had sharper eyes than the rest of our people....

“For a short time we lived quietly. But this could not last. White men had found gold in the mountains around the land of the winding water. They stole a great many horses from us, and we could not get them back because we were Indians. The white men told lies for each other. They drove off a great many of our cattle. Some white men branded our young cattle so they could claim them. We had no friend who would plead our cause before the law councils. It seemed to me that some of the white men in Wallowa were doing these things on purpose to get up a war. They knew that we were not strong enough to fight them. I labored hard to avoid trouble and bloodshed. We gave up some of our country to the white men, thinking that then we could have peace. We were mistaken. The white man would not let us alone. We could have avenged our wrongs many times, but we did not. Whenever the Government has asked us to help them against other Indians, we have never refused. When the white men were few and we were strong we could have killed them all off, but the Nez Percés wished to live at peace....”

Source: Chief Joseph. From “An Indian’s View of Indian Affairs.” *North American Review* 128:269 (April 1879): 412-33.

<http://www.washington.edu/uwired/outreach/cspn/Website/Classroom%20Materials/Reading%20the%20Region/Texts%20by%20and%20about%20Natives/Texts/9.html>