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Parallel Tracks: American Transcontinentalism and the Specter of Canada

By

Kathryn Ann Eigen

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

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in

History

in the

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of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor David Henkin, Chair

Professor Kerwin Klein

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Parallel Tracks: American Transcontinentalism and the Specter of Canada

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by Kathryn Ann Eigen

Abstract

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Between 1840 and 1898, the United States and Canada reconfigured their geographic and demographic contours. In only the first few decades of this period, the United States added over one million square miles to its territory, gaining tens of thousands of new citizens through these annexations, while African-American men were, at least officially, granted citizenship and the franchise in the wake of the Civil War. In Canada, the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada were united with provinces as far away as British Columbia, and millions of British citizens became members of the new nation of Canada. My project explores the effects of these shifts on American national self-perception. While I analyze events and ideas in both the United States and Canada, the core of my argument is about the United States. Canadian expansion and unification was a continual backdrop to American attempts to dominate the North American continent, serving as both competition for continental domination and as a comparison for new U.S. policies and governmental forms.

Through their acquisition and incorporation of the Far West, the United States and Canada transformed themselves into what I call transcontinental nations. I use this term to emphasize the significance of the acquisition of the Pacific Coast to the development of the nineteenth-century North American nation. A distinctly North American form, the transcontinental nation was created out of the geographic circumstances that led European settlement to begin on the Atlantic Ocean and offered access to the Pacific only by crossing a continent. At the same time, the transcontinental national form was not only geographically determined, but was also fuelled by the nationalistic desire for territorial expansion and international influence that could be gained by settling lands on the Pacific Coast combined with a determination to avoid previous examples of states built over such distances and with such imperialistic goals.

Rather than presenting a conventional comparative study, my dissertation explores changing ideas about U.S. national identity through a focus on the similarities and

differences between the development of the United States during the period from 1840 and 1898 and parallel events in other former British settler colonies, particularly Canada. The period between 1848 and 1898 is often seen as a gap in US expansionism, a hiatus between the Manifest Destiny of the early nineteenth century and the formal and informal imperialism of the twentieth. By looking at the parallel processes in the United States and other former British settler colonies, it becomes obvious that during these decades the expansionist energy had not dissipated, but had merely been refocused. The consolidation of transcontinental nations represented a shift in this energy from piecemeal territorial acquisition to concentrated national consolidation. Putting the United States in context with Canadian expansion allows me to avoid the pitfall of treating U.S. expansion as if it were exceptional and puts American territorial growth within the context of its origins in the first decades of British colonialism in North America. It also reflects the substantial parallels between the nineteenth-century transformation of the United States and other former and current settler colonies of the British Empire. Finally, comparing the United States with Canada and other British settler colonies allows me to sidestep an anachronistic consideration of United States expansion in the nineteenth century within the context of its eventual divergence from other nations in the twentieth.

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Introduction

... our national birth was the beginning of a new history,
the formation and progress of an untried political system,
which separates us from the past and connects us with the
future only.

"The Great Nation of Futurity"
Democratic Review (1839)

"The Great Nation of Futurity," an editorial printed in the same journal that was to coin the term "Manifest Destiny" only a few years later, depicts the creation of the United States as a complete break with the past and a turn toward the future.¹ The article's framework denies the continuing significance of America's British imperial origins and presents a nation unfettered by foreign legacies and influences. While my project works to demonstrate the falsehood of that very sense of American exceptionalism, I do believe that an expansive idea of the futurity of the United States was essential to the recreation of its national identity in the nineteenth century. American nationalists believed that by creating a nation with an imperial potential for expansion and international influence, they were relegating the British Empire to the past and creating the future. In the mid-nineteenth century, after the U.S. had established settlements along the Pacific Ocean and finally seemed to be approaching its goal of dominating the North American continent, ideologues of American expansionism believed that this new nation had been finally realized. At the same time, however, just to the north, the remnants of British North America were themselves unifying into the dominion of Canada. As both a reminder of the American past and a potential competitor for the domination of North America, Canada stood as a constant backdrop to U.S. national development between 1840 and 1900.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, many of the geographic, demographic, and political shifts in the United States were echoed by Canada to the north. For historians of today, used to looking at the two nations through the lens of their later divergent histories, such parallels are easily overlooked. However, these similarities were very apparent to politicians and observers of the time. Between 1840 and 1898, both the United States and Canada reconfigured their geographic and demographic contours. In only the first few decades of this period, the United States added over one million square miles to its territory, gaining tens of thousands of new citizens through

¹ This editorial, along with one in 1845 that coined the phrase "manifest destiny," were published without a byline, but have long been credited to John L. O'Sullivan. In 2001, Linda Hudson used computer analysis to persuasively argue that the articles were instead written by Jane McManus Storm Cazneau, who wrote under the name "Montgomery." Linda S. Hudson, *Mistress of Manifest Destiny: A Biography of Jane McManus Storm Cazneau, 1807-1878* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2001).

these annexations, while African-American men were, at least officially, granted citizenship and the franchise in the wake of the Civil War.² In Canada, the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada were united with provinces as far away as British Columbia, and millions of British citizens became members of the new nation of Canada.³ My project explores the effects of these shifts on North American national self-perception. In her discussion of American empire, Amy Kaplan describes "[t]wo historically different yet interrelated definitions of empire" which she delineates as the "external subjugation of colonies" and "internal national consolidation."⁴ By treating these definitions separately within the specific historical context of the period between 1840 and 1898, I examine the development of North American nationalism in a way that takes seriously both the common current within these two ideologies and the ways that nineteenth-century North Americans often defined them in opposition.

While I analyze events and ideas in both the United States and Canada, the core of my argument is about the United States. My project examines the nineteenth-century U.S. sense of what it meant to be a North American nation within a global system dominated by revitalizing empires and emerging nations. Throughout most of the nineteenth century, the United States and Canada rejected both the option of overseas expansion and the possibility of keeping new lands as subordinate colonies. Frederick Cooper describes the nationalistic character of the United States as, in part, an act of will, writing of "the American state's refusal of ... an image of itself as a colonial regime, of *keeping* conquered territories as nonequivalent parts of the polity."⁵ This refusal, which permeated discussions of the American nation within both government and popular discourse, was essential to the expansive character of U.S. nationalism between 1840 and 1898.

My focus is on the origins and evolution of U.S. national identity during the nineteenth century and on the ways that the United States was determined to describe the ideological foundations of its expansionism as nationalist rather than imperialist. By doing this, I do not seek to ignore the increasing global power of the United States in the late nineteenth century or to whitewash or minimize the racist, colonialist, or genocidal aspects of the U.S. conquest of the North American continent. On the contrary, I want to

² My rough estimate of added territory is based on the combined size of the Mexican Cession of 1848 (about 500,000 square miles) and the Alaska purchase of 1867 (about 600,000 square miles). While a large percentage of the population of the Mexican Cession was Mexican citizens, they were granted U.S. citizenship under the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. An even larger percentage of the population of the Mexican Cession and nearly the entire population of Alaska were Indian and therefore were not granted citizenship.

³ To be Canadian now meant to be a member of the transcontinental Canadian nation. Although the term was used to indicate national membership, the creation of a class of Canadian citizenship separate from British imperial citizenship would not occur until 1947. Between 1910 and 1947, the classification of Canadian citizen was used to describe British nationals who lived in Canada.

⁴ Amy Kaplan, "'Left Alone with America': The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture," in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, ed. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 18.

⁵ Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 195.

focus on ideas of empire that were in circulation during the nineteenth century and trace their influence on the creation of a nineteenth-century U.S. nationalism that rejected imperialism, not the twentieth century U.S. nationalism that would accept it, albeit in a transformed version. While the continuities of westward expansion and national development can easily be traced from the seventeenth through the nineteenth century, I believe that the parallel growth of the U.S. and Canada and the determined continentalism of the United States before the 1890s demonstrate that the changes in U.S. expansionist policy in 1898 were not inevitable. In other words, I argue that there is not an inexorable through-line between the westward progression of the United States, including the Mexican American War and the slaughter of American Indian populations, the overseas imperialism beginning with the Spanish American and Philippine American wars at the turn of the twentieth century, and the vast economic, military and cultural influence of American twentieth century imperialism.

Through its acquisition and incorporation of the Far West, the United States itself into what I call a transcontinental nation.⁶ I use this term to emphasize the significance of the acquisition of the Pacific Coast to the development of the nineteenth-century American nation. A distinctly North American form, the transcontinental nation was created out of the geographic circumstances that led European settlement to begin on the Atlantic Ocean and offering access to the Pacific only by crossing a continent. At the same time, the transcontinental national form was not only geographically determined, but was also fuelled by the nationalistic desire for territorial expansion and international influence that could be gained by settling lands on the Pacific Coast combined with a determination to avoid the fate of previous states built over such distances and with such imperialistic goals.

My project focuses on the settlement of the Far West not only because its acquisition created the transcontinental nation, but because it was in part through this region's consolidation that the United States developed and exercised new national powers.⁷ The creation of transcontinental relations required the federal government to set

⁶ My terms "transcontinental nation" and "transcontinental nationalism" are reminiscent of the idea of continentalism as a U.S. political philosophy. This term has been used two distinct senses both historically and historiographically. Charles Beard used the term continentalism for his belief that the United States, having no stake in events in Europe and the rest of the world, should adopt a policy of nonintervention, and the term has been picked up by some political scientists to refer to a particular strand of U.S. isolationism, one that is traced in part to the Monroe Doctrine. In more recent decades, the term has been used to describe the domination of the United States in North America and the U.S. belief wish to politically conquer the continent. See D. W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*, vol. 2, *Continental America, 1800-1867* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993). , Charles Vevier, "American Continentalism: An Idea of Expansion, 1845-1910," *The American Historical Review* 65, no. 2 (1960). The term has also been frequently used by scholars, especially in Canada, to discuss transcontinental links between Canada and the United States and to explore various forms U.S. influence on Canada. For example, see Allan Smith, *Canada—An American Nation? Essays on Continentalism, Identity, and the Canadian Frame of Mind* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).

⁷ The delineation of the Far West as a region has been as controversial in U.S. historiography as the delineation of the West itself as a region. I use the tern Far West to indicate the network of European

up boundaries, manage diverse populations, and regulate communications and transportation technology. By developing vigorous settlements along the Pacific Coast, the United States and Canada were turning away from the Atlantic world where they had first developed as settler colonies. The transcontinental nation reshaped the United States and Canada not only because of the quasi-imperial international stature it offered, but also because of the changes that that it required in national infrastructure and national governance.

The development of the transcontinental nation was also shaped by the conflict between what the form offered for the country, including opportunities for immigration and migration, the expansion of federal power, and the expansion of the domestic economy and international trade, and what it threatened, including an increase in the non-white population, the creation of an imperial national government, and the rise of a business and financial oligarchy. The tension between possibility and peril delineate my chapters. I explore changing perceptions of people who were seen as outside the national community, particularly the indigenous (North American Indians) and the enduringly foreign (Chinese immigrants). I also examine new conceptions of federal governance and analyze the discourse about two possible excesses: the risk of national division and the risk of federal tyranny.

Rather than presenting a conventional comparative study, my dissertation explores changing ideas about U.S. national identity through a focus on the similarities between the development of the United States during the period from 1840 and 1898 and parallel events in other former British settler colonies, particularly Canada. The period between 1848 and 1898 is often seen as a gap in US expansionism, a hiatus between the Manifest Destiny of the early nineteenth century and the formal and informal imperialism of the twentieth. An examination of the parallel processes in the United States and other former British settler colonies reveals that during these decades expansionist energy had not dissipated but had merely been refocused. The consolidation of transcontinental nations represented a shift in this energy from piecemeal territorial acquisition to concentrated national consolidation. Considering the United States in relation to other settler colonies allows me to avoid the pitfall of treating U.S. expansion as if it was exceptional and puts U.S. American territorial growth within the context of its origins in the first decades of British colonialism in North America. In addition, comparing the United States with other British settler colonies allows me to sidestep an anachronistic consideration of United States expansion in the nineteenth century within the context of its eventual divergence from other nations in the twentieth.

I compare the United States with Canada in part because of their common origins and similar geographic position. Their similarities were also shaped by proximity, which

American settlements in California, Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia during the mid- to late nineteenth century, and I use this term, Pacific slope, and Pacific Coast region interchangeably. I also speak of the Far West to distinguish the areas I have studied from the U.S. Great Plains and the Canadian Prairies, two other Western regions with many historical parallels and transcontinental connections, but with a very different history.

led to transnational competition and a continual flow of ideas back and forth across the border. At the same time, there were also surprising historical parallels between them. Both began their settlement of the Far West in the 1840s. Even as the United States was consolidating the new lands of the Mexican Cession that same decade, the remaining British North American colonies were beginning their first steps toward confederation. In 1841, the colonies of Upper Canada (later Ontario) and Lower Canada (later Quebec) were joined in a legislative union. The Dominion of Canada was established in 1867 and, with the exception of the largely unsettled prairies and the maritime colony of Newfoundland, all of British North America had become part of Canada by 1873. At the same, the United States was undergoing its own reunification in the aftermath of the Civil War, a reunification which would fully integrate the former Confederate States into a strengthened federal government by the late 1870s. Furthermore, the rise of a Republican government during the Civil War allowed the U.S. federal government to make new commitments to an expansionist policy, mirroring the spread of Canada across the continent. These parallel paths continued into the late nineteenth century. While by the 1880s European empires, including Britain, would be participating in a new rush to imperialism in Africa, the United States and Canada continued to be focused on building transcontinental nations in North America.

My research has concentrated on the westward expansion of both nations. Not only does the examination of the U.S. and Canadian incorporation of the Far West present many parallels, but it also provides a microcosm of many of the broader events in both nations. The late nineteenth-century Far West saw the first of a new era of Indian wars and reservations, wars that would spread and expand to the U.S. Great Plains and the Canadian prairies. The consolidation and rule of lands spanning a continent was a huge challenge, and in the nineteenth century new technologies, communications techniques, finance techniques, business organizational techniques allowed this to occur. It was these new technologies, for example, that connected the far distant regions along the Pacific Coast with the centers of population and government far to the east and allowed Canada to overcome its geographic difficulties which had previously prevented a substantial western settlement movement.⁸ In addition, the transcontinental railroad, which knit the Atlantic and the Pacific coasts together, spurred changes in finance, government cooperation with business, industrial organization, and government regulation. The integration of the Far West was, in a great many ways, inextricably connected to the development of the United States and Canada as a whole.

My research centers on the rhetoric and ideology surrounding national development and westward expansion in the United States and Canada between 1840 and 1898. I have examined governmental and individual actions, laws and the agitation for or against them, and new infrastructure and reactions to it. Throughout this analysis, I have delineated on the ideas and concepts that made these actions and reactions seem natural and necessary. My work incorporates three distinct yet interrelated groups of

⁸ Among British Settler colonies, the challenge of uniting far distant coastal settlements was unique to the United States and Canada. For example, in both Australia and South Africa, the distance between the east and west coasts could be traversed easily by a fast ship.

sources. I have considered governmental sources, especially on the debates, proclamations, and laws of federal, state, and provincial governments. I also examined public sources, particularly newspapers and published works on the history and growth of the U.S. and Canada. Finally, I also looked at private and semi-private sources, such as letters, reminiscences, and journals. In all of these diverse sources, I found a surprisingly consistent set of ideas about the opportunities and perils of the transcontinental nation.

National and Transcontinental Development

Between 1840 and 1898, the United States reconceptualized the contours of the national form through its territorial reach alone. Its goals and priorities for national development diverged from the original U.S. nationalism that had been created by the American Revolution in 1776, the Central and South American nations that had been created by revolution between 1800 and 1830, and the wave of nationalist movements sweeping through Europe. As Benedict Anderson points out in his classic study of nationalism as an imagined community, by the time that nationalist movements began in Europe, the nation became something that could be "consciously aspired to," and so by the mid-nineteenth century, the United States could model itself on a number of different national and imperial forms.⁹ I argue that their most important models were each other, other former and current British settler colonies, and the British Empire itself. In its national transformation in the 19th century, the United States was reshaping an existing political unit, and in some ways the transcontinental nation that it was becoming continued the expansion and immigration that had been the project of the original British settler colonies.¹⁰ At the same time, both the United States and the new Dominion of Canada nations reflected the desire to concentrate both the power behind their westward expansion and the benefits it accrued on the North American continent. Although Canada was a semi-independent part of the British Empire and the United States was independent nation, both countries sought to transform the political map of North America, and in so doing, reshape international power relations.

In this project, following the dominant usage in the sources I have examined, I use the term nation to refer to a political unit, not an ethnic or cultural group. Therefore, for the national forms that I am describing, Ernest Gellner's classic definition of nationalism as "a principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent" is not particularly useful, since the political and the national unit were identical by definition.¹¹ The use of "nation" as a near-synonym for a political and demographic unit in nineteenth-century North America did not rob the word of power, however. While the term nationalism was not always at the center of rhetorical efforts to describe the changes in the United States between 1840 and 1898, the nation as a political unit had significant

⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. ed. (London; New York: Verso, 2006), 67.

¹⁰ Although the Canadian Dominion was not formed until 1867, Ottawa and Quebec, the two most populous provinces, had first been unified in 1841. Furthermore, except in the case of British Columbia, all of the new provinces had been culturally and economically connected as British colonies.

¹¹ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 1.

cultural and ideological power.¹² It was in part through speaking of the nation that the United States and Canada defined both their national community and their place in the world. In addition, unlike European nationalism, the nation in North America, at least ideally, was coextensive with the existing territorial and demographic contours of the country at any moment in time, not to the boundaries of some idealized past or future. Although this made the possibilities for national growth potentially limitless, it also opened the way for territorial or demographic changes to fundamentally alter or destabilize the nation.

Just as early settlers in British North American colonies saw themselves as making better use of the land than its native inhabitants, enthusiasts for national expansion in the U.S. believed that the new transcontinental nations would make better use of the Far West than imperial powers had. Unlike in Europe and many other nations throughout the globe, such as Japan and China, where the connection between the nation's people and its territory was seen as having historic or prehistoric roots and a genealogical component, in the former British settler colonies the relationship between the inhabitants of a nation and its territory was created by migration and annexation. This link was solidified and justified by what its white settlers saw as the productive use of the territory, whether this productive use came from farming, resource extraction, or trade. The United States and Canada had been created by territorial expansion and migration within the British Empire, but in the second half of the nineteenth century their leaders increasingly saw expansion as a national, not a regional or provincial effort. Furthermore, growth, both in the economic and in the territorial sense, not only benefitted the nation as a whole, but was essential to its existence and identity. Stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific was, in the eyes of contemporary North American commentators, a sign of the strength of the nation, while the creation of connections to the Far West and the incorporation of these lands into the nation as a whole was a sign of its stability.

The challenge of governing a newly reunified (or in the case of Canada, newly unified) transcontinental nation required the full use of the recently increased powers of the U.S. and Canadian federal governments. In the United States, the regulatory powers of the federal government increased dramatically in the second half of the nineteenth century. The United States strengthened the powers of its national government in the wake of the Civil War, while the federalist system created in Canada by the British North American Act of 1867 granted far more power to the national government than to the provinces.¹³ In his classic work on the development of the American state, Stephen

¹² Many of the developments that I describe were not called "nationalism" between 1840 and 1890. Canada was founded as a dominion, not a nation, and while some leading figures did specifically encourage a sense of Canadian nationalism, many did not. In the United States on the other hand, references to the American nation were commonplace, but the most prominent use of the term "nationalism" in the late nineteenth century was to describe advocates of the "national system" of collective ownership propounded by the author and socialist Edward Bellamy. See Daphne Patai, *Looking Backward, 1888-1888: Essays on Edward Bellamy* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).

¹³ Ronald L. Watts, "The American Constitution in Comparative Perspective: A Comparison of Federalism in the United States and Canada," *The Journal of American History* 74, no. 3 (1987).

Skowronek describes the growth of a "patchwork" of national powers in the late nineteenth-century United States arising because of necessity, primarily because of industrialization.¹⁴ Two of these areas of national authority were immigration and railroad regulation, which were necessary, in large part, because of the addition of the Far West to the United States. In Canada, the creation of the dominion gave the new federal parliament sweeping authority, including the ability to disallow provincial laws and to assume any powers that were not specifically allocated elsewhere.

While a strengthened national government was presumed to be necessary to govern the transcontinental nation, the countervailing power of the states and provinces was seen as essential to ensuring that new lands were given equal status with old. Both the United States and Canada were based on a federal system of government which split power between the national and state or provincial governments. Federalism had been a key political philosophy that shaped the United States, although the power given to the national government had increased after the Civil War, and the federal form of government was important in convincing diverse British colonies to join in confederation. Nevertheless, as the nation sprawled and the states and provinces became further away from the national capital and each other, the possibility of diverging interests increased.

Although a transcontinental reach was seen as essential to the character of these new North American nations, it was also a mixed blessing, since it brought risks of national dissolution. The acquisition of the Far West and the distance between new settlements along the Pacific Coast and the centers of government in the East seemed, to many commentators, to threaten national unity. Unlike late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century territorial additions, the acquisition of the Far West incorporated non-contiguous territories. The distance between the centers of U.S. and Canadian population in the East and the new settlements in the Far West made the expansion seem almost imperial. In the first decades of settlement, both the U.S. and Canada feared the Pacific Coast regions of both nations would join together into a separate republic and reject the governance of Washington, D.C., and Ottawa.

The transcontinental nation also potentially pushed the demographic limits of the nation as a community, since even if geographic boundaries could be infinitely elastic, demographic boundaries might not be. The United States and Canada, both as colonies and as nations, were geographically and demographically elastic and did not have the inherent ties of genetics or history to draw their national body together. Nonetheless, the United States in particular was committed to a creating a nation that was economically, culturally, and governmentally cohesive.¹⁵ The theorist Benedict Anderson has defined the essence of a nation as "deep, horizontal comradeship" among its members, and the achievement of creating a nation that reached from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean only increased the perceived need for such comradeship to knit together a geographically vast

¹⁴ Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877-1920* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

¹⁵ The issue of the relationship between the French Canadian province of Quebec and the other Canadian provinces has been a question for Canadian national unity since the founding of the Dominion, but separatist movement would not begin until well into the twentieth century.

nation.¹⁶ In addition, the Pacific Coast of North America had long been a multinational and multiracial region, and was increasingly so in the wake of precious metal rushes in the 1840s and 1850s. The inclusion of these lands brought new Native North American groups and Asian immigrants into the U.S. and Canadian nations, and California added former Mexican citizens to the United States. As settler colonies, the United States and Canada had tried to push aside non-white groups and set up a new European society. Now, within continent-spanning nations, these non-white peoples were residents of the national territory with an uncertain and possibly contradictory place within the nation comradeship. Particularly for the United States, but also, increasingly, for Canada as well, non-white peoples stood as a sign of the limits of the national body even as they were already inextricably within it.

The Transcontinental Nation and Empire

By crossing a continent and seizing land from its native inhabitants, the United States and Canada invited comparisons to historical and contemporary imperial states. Indeed, when U.S. and Canadian leaders spoke of expansion to the Pacific, they framed their goals in imperialistic terms, writing of resource extraction and the extension of trade. At the same time, the United States in particular rejected the possibility of becoming an empire itself. The origin of the U.S. and Britain as settler colonies had a large influence on their nineteenth-century national development, and their perception of the benefits and drawbacks of the British Empire also shaped their national goals. With its territorial sweep and access to two oceans, the transcontinental nation provided many of the benefits of imperialism to the United States and Canada. Nevertheless, the imperial form remained both a challenge and a warning to these two nations. For the United States, Canada was not only a potential rival for North American dominance, but a manifestation of the British imperial power they had tried to eliminate from the continent.

As settler colonies, the United States and Canada had been intended in part to be miniature recreations of Britain. They were designed to transmit the value of the land to the imperial metropolis, but they were also intended to be attractive to prospective settlers by offering them opportunities they would not receive in Europe. While in other colonies the European population could be sparse and localized, in settler colonies taking possession of the land was essential. Jürgen Osterhammel has described the British Empire's North American possessions as "colonies without colonialism" because of the efforts to push aside Indian populations and establish completely separate settlements.¹⁷ In other words, the indigenous inhabitants of a settler colony were "a major problem to be solved."¹⁸ All of these features created settlements that connected the success of the society to both the success of the settler and the complete possession of the land.

¹⁶ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

¹⁷ Jürgen Osterhammel, *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, trans. Shelley Frisch, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2005), 17.

¹⁸ Julie Evans et al., *Equal Subjects, Unequal Rights: Indigenous People in British Settler Colonies, 1830-1910* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2003), 3.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, British settler colonies began to gain control over their own governance, either because of rebellion, as in the case of the United States, or because it was useful for Britain to cede responsibility for colonial affairs to the colonies themselves. With this increased responsibility, the British settler colonies, both former and current, set up systems of responsible government that sought to increase their independent authority and the global presence of their nation. Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson describe settler colonies as developing the "feeling of being colonized – of being European subjects but no longer European citizens."¹⁹ Even for colonies such as Canada, which remained a part of the British Empire, the expressed goal was to "develop a new British Empire in North America" rather than to expand the power and reach of London.²⁰

In their moves to detach from the British Empire in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, North American white settlers were creating a new kind of identity as colonizers. In her taxonomy of colonialism, Anne McClintock describes colonies like the United States and Canada as "break-away settler colonies," which are distinguished by the "displac[ement] of colonial control from the metropolis to the colony itself."²¹ By the late nineteenth century this colonial authority had been amalgamated into a national identity. Expansionism was central to white settler states because it established and recapitulated their authority over the North American continent. When the development of North American nations is considered in this light, British North America is seen as the object of British imperialism, and the processes that created the United States of America and the Dominion of Canada moved the colonial people of North America from the objects of British colonialism to the subjects of a new process of independent nation-building.

At the same time, referring to the United States and Canada as settler societies and describing their governments as postcolonial formations emphasizes their citizens' origins as colonial subjects rather than as colonizers. Joyce Chaplin has argued that "the label postcolonial makes little sense as a description of the United States, since the Revolution removed British imperialism only, not white colonization in America.... To apply the label postcolonial to the white settlers who made themselves independent of Britain is again to fetishize their experience as the center of North American history."²² Furthermore, as Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson have pointed out, the very term "settler

¹⁹ Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson, "Settler Colonies," in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 363.

²⁰ Canada was not alone in this desire. For example, Michael Adas argues that Australian expansionists believed that the nations "would inherit the global mission of the British Empire." Michael Adas, "From Settler Colony to Global Hegemon: Integrating the Exceptionalist Narrative of the American Experience into World History," *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 5 (2001): 1714.

²¹ McClintock includes the United States, South Africa, Canada, and New Zealand in this classification, arguing that they "have not undergone decolonization, nor with the exception of South Africa, are they likely to in the near future." Anne McClintock, "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term "Post-Colonialism"," *Social Text*, no. 31/32 (1992): 89.

²² Joyce E. Chaplin, "Expansion and Exceptionalism in Early American History," *The Journal of American History* 89, no. 4 (2003): 1453-4.

colony" refers to "the very obvious majority white populations without taking account of the physical violence and representational erasure done to indigenous communities in order to achieve that 'whiteness.'"²³ The settlers of North America were also its colonizers. The leaders of the American Revolution may have seen themselves as victims of the British imperial system, but they, along with the other leading citizens of British North America and the Caribbean, were also the leaders of a continuing effort to claim North America for Europe. The slaughter and removal of native inhabitants and the import and enslavement of African labor were at the heart of this process.

As the United States and Canada, in their quite different ways, became increasingly free of British governance, the idea of creating an empire rather than a nation was not a complete anathema to leaders in the United States and Canada, particularly in the early nineteenth century. After escaping what they viewed as the tyranny of the British Empire, United States leaders did not reject the possibility of creating their own superior version of empire in North America. Within a few decades of the country's creation, Thomas Jefferson had doubled its territory through the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. A few years later, Jefferson wrote to James Madison of his hope that that the United States would become an "empire for liberty" and declared that "no constitution was ever before so well calculated as ours for extensive empire and self-government."²⁴ However, while many Canadian commentators saw the confederation of British America as a chance to duplicate the British Empire in North America, for the most part both the term "empire" and the imperial form were used to contrast the American state with past and current expansionist powers. Although territorial growth was central to U.S. ideology throughout the nineteenth century, such annexation remained, until the last few years of the century, almost exclusively confined to the North American continent. In the 1880s, as European empires scrambled for colonies in Africa to revitalize their global power, the United States remained completely uninterested.

While the development of the United States as a transcontinental nation has often been seen by scholars as a forerunner to the overseas imperialism that found its first expression in the Spanish American War of 1898, an exploration of the similarities between the United States and Canada from 1840 to 1898 proves that this was not the case. While both Canada and the United States saw the acquisition of lands in the Far West as a chance to expand their international influence, the creation of a transcontinental nation did not necessarily presage overseas expansion, as the history of the Canadian twentieth century reveals. Despite their interests in increasing their presence in the Pacific Ocean, neither the United States nor Canada made any serious and sustained efforts to expand outside of North America. Although the adventures of mid-nineteenth century filibusters are evidence American interest in overseas expansion, their efforts were confined the hemisphere, largely unsuccessful, and mostly ended after the Civil

²³ Johnston and Lawson, "Settler Colonies," 362.

²⁴ Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, April 27, 1809, quoted in Walter Nugent, *Habits of Empire: A History of American Expansion*, 1st ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008).

War.²⁵ Furthermore, as Eric Love has demonstrated, attempts at overseas imperialism by the United States between 1865 and 1900 met with little success.²⁶ My own research supports Love's argument that domestic racism, rather than encouraging imperialism and justifying it with a doctrine of white superiority, served primarily as a force against the extension of national governance beyond North America.

Because of this evidence, my consideration of the period from 1840 to 1898 is in part a response to theorists who have argued for a continuous thread of imperialism in United States history that stretches from manifest destiny to imperial expansion. Some of these scholars have studied the ideology of Manifest Destiny and found in it the seeds of American imperialism in 1898 and beyond.²⁷ Others have focused on the continuities of westward and overseas expansion. Shelly Streeby, for example, wants to “trouble the distinction between the ‘continental frontier’ of 1848 and the ‘imperial frontier’ of 1898.”²⁸ Still others have directly connected U.S. expansionism to both overseas colonialism and to U.S. cultural and economic imperialism in the twentieth century.²⁹ Although I argue that the years between 1840 and 1898 were not merely a waiting period that directly and inevitably led to twentieth-century U.S. imperialism, I am indebted to scholars who have compared the two ideologies and to those who have compared U.S. expansion into the West with the spread of U.S. international economic and cultural influence. However, I argue that while these ideologies are not fundamentally identical, they are also points on a chronological continuum.

The Transcontinental Nation and Expansion to the Far West

As an investigation of the idea of the Far West and its connections to the new national ideals of between 1840 and 1898, my work is connected to over a century of historical research on the United States and Canada that examines the importance of westward expansion to national development. Although few historians, at least until recent decades, have compared the westering experiences of the United States and Canada, the historiography of the West has had a long tradition in both countries. The U.S. historian Frederick Jackson Turner and the Canadian historian Harold Innis, who are widely credited with founding the discipline of Western history in their respective nations, not only focused on the West as a region but on what they saw as its crucial

²⁵ See Robert E. May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld: Filibustering in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). , Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

²⁶ Eric T. L. Love, *Race over Empire: Racism and U.S. Imperialism, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). The United States acquired Alaska in 1867, but although the large territory was not contiguous with the United States, it was on the North American continent. Furthermore, the acquisition was not met with widespread governmental or public approval.

²⁷ See Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire of Right*, 1st ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995).

²⁸ Shelley Streeby, *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 9.

²⁹ See Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993). , William Appleman Williams, "The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy," *The Pacific Historical Review* 24, no. 4 (1955).

influence on the nation as a whole.³⁰ Despite the fact that both historians have been attacked as much as they have been analyzed, Turner's frontier thesis and Innis's metropolitan thesis remain broadly influential in Western historiography.³¹ While I agree with later historians who objected to the reduction of a huge and diverse region to a process that acted on national consciousness, I argue that both the ideological importance of westward expansion and its concrete effects on national development remain crucial subjects for historical study.

The importance of territorial growth was implanted in British North America from its beginnings. While land acquisition remained limited in the colonies that would become Canada, this early expansionist urge only grew stronger in the United States. The hunger for new territory carried the U.S. all the way to the Far West. The earliest U.S. settlers in the Far West saw themselves as supplanting a useless British rule. In 1845, an editorial in the *New York Morning News* argued that under British rule Oregon was "a mere hunting ground for furs and peltries," while U.S. settlement would quickly create "a noble young empire of the Pacific"³² Another paper would argue of California that "it is the power, wealth, and the energies of the American people only which can develop the natural resources and turn to profitable use the geographical advantages of the golden territory."³³

The subsequent creation of transcontinental nations was fueled by the U.S. and Canadian desire to use their westward expansion to match the international influence and economic benefits of imperialism, and access to the Pacific Ocean was seen as the key to this goal. Once North American nations straddled the continent, expansionists believed that their trading advantage would be so great that the U.S. would be able to force Europe, as a congressman predicted in 1849, to "bow to Asia, and Asia to Europe, across

³⁰ Turner's most influential works have been published in Frederick Jackson Turner and John Mack Faragher, *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" and Other Essays* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 31. For more on the influence of Turner's frontier thesis in U.S. historiography, see Ray Allen Billington, *The Genesis of the Frontier Thesis: A Study in Historical Creativity* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1971). , Williams, "The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy." The most well known explication Innis's thesis was published in Harold Adams Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History*, Rev. ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956). It is further explicated in J.M.S. Careless, "Frontierism, Metropolitanism, and Canadian History," *Canadian Historical Review* 35 (1954).

³¹ For comparisons of the two theories and their legacies, see R. Douglas Francis, "Turner versus Innis: Bridging the Gap," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 33, no. 4 (2003), Elizabeth Jameson and Jeremy Mouat, "Telling Differences: The Forty-Ninth Parallel and Historiographies of the West," *Pacific Historical Review* 75, no. 2 (2006), Frances W. Kaye, "An Innis, not a Turner," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 31, no. 4 (2001). For a critique of the focus of Turner and his followers on the West as frontier rather than region, see Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A History of the American West*, 1st ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991). , Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2006).

³² *New York Morning News*, December 27, 1845, in Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History* (New York: Knopf, 1963), 32.

³³ *Washington National Intelligencer*, January 22, 1849, in Peter Browning, ed. *To the Golden Shore: America Goes to California, 1849* (Lafayette, CA: Great West Books, 1995), 110-1.

our bosom."³⁴ Furthermore, the potential advantages of the settlement of the Pacific Coast included more than just trade. One Eastern newspaper wrote that the United States would not only "be the grand highway over which nearly all Europe will exchange commodities with nearly all Asia," but "peace-makers and peace-keepers of the earth," not "by war, blood and devastation" but "by peace and mutual aid and prosperity."³⁵ Meanwhile, when the Dominion of Canada was negotiating its terms of union with British Columbia, politicians argued that the colony and its access to the Pacific were essential "if ever this Dominion was to be a powerful nation in the future."³⁶

The discourse about the importance of westward expansion was one of the most notable similarities between the United States and Canada during the nineteenth century. Although this rhetoric has been carefully examined in the U.S. case, American historians have rarely turned to Canada to hear the echo of it to the north. Even for those who have examined Canadian expansionism, the dominance of this rhetoric in the United States and the lesser incidence of it in Canada have made many scholars underestimate the close similarity of such ideology in both nations. Therefore, U.S. historians have often treated Canadian expansionist sentiment as a weak reflection of Manifest Destiny. Canadian leaders were indeed uncertain of the desirability of territorial growth, as extensive debates on the question of whether British Columbia should join the new Dominion demonstrate.³⁷ Despite these hesitations, westward growth generally received solid political and ideological support in Canada, and the greatest enthusiasts for Canadian expansion rivaled their U.S. counterparts in rhetorical fervor.

The nature and goals of North American expansion shifted in the mid-nineteenth century. In the wake of new territorial acquisitions between 1840 and 1870 and national consolidation in the 1860s and 1870s, both the United States and Canada gave additional powers to their national governments and prioritized the successful and productive incorporation of new territories into the nation. These expansionist efforts were integrally connected with broader forces of national development. Most nationalist movements in both South America and Europe had been divisive forces, paring down larger political units into smaller nationalities. In contrast, North American transcontinental nations tended toward unification and expansion, in a fashion more similar to empires than to other nations. Enthusiasm for territorial annexation waned in favor of efforts to use new communications, agricultural, and business technologies to make full use of acquired lands. In place of the open-ended project of extension toward a constantly-moving frontier, both the United States and Canada shifted their efforts toward the incorporation of previously claimed territories. Such a shift was merely a redirection of expansionist energies, however, not their end.

³⁴ 31st Cong., 1st Sess. (1850), House Report No. 140, 3.

³⁵ Philadelphia Public Ledger, June 7, 1849.

³⁶ Canada. House of Commons, *Debates of the House of Commons, 1871* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1871), 663, quoted in Forrest D. Pass, "Agrarian Commonwealth or Entrepôt of the Orient? Competing Conceptions of Canada and the BC Terms of Union Debate of 1871," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Associate* 17, no. 1 (2006): 32.

³⁷ See *Ibid.*

Although the westward progress of both the United States and Canada was arrested by their arrival at the Pacific Ocean, their expansionist ideology remained strong. Between 1840 and 1898, the United States and Canada were continuing the process that had only been started by territorial acquisition. In the wake of territorial acquisitions, both countries worked to take full advantage of these acquisitions by bringing them fully into the nation. Settlements along the Pacific were not enough to truly create a transcontinental nation – both the United States and the British Empire had fur trading outposts along the Pacific Coast by the first years of the nineteenth century. It was not until these countries could really incorporate the Far West through migration, the spread of governmental authority and the integration of the economies that the expansionist process would be complete.

Each chapter of my dissertation examines a specific aspect of the transcontinental nation and its contradictions. My first chapter analyzes Indian policy for the Far West. The transformation of a settler society into a transcontinental nation created new challenges for U.S. policy, since reaching the end of a continent removed the option of pushing native groups further westward. Policy for the Far West focused on preventing the Indian presence from interfering with American efforts to make full use of their newly-acquired land. The primary method of doing this between 1840 and 1880 was through the establishment of reservations. These reservations served as a compromise, setting aside pieces of land to remain outside of national development in order to free the rest of the land for white use. However, the rapid settlement of the far western U.S. and the drive and impatience of the settler population led to a series of wars throughout the Far West during the 1850s. British Columbia escaped this violence. To some Americans, this was a sign that Canada was not pressing forward with its expansion and would not match U.S. power on the North American continent. For others, however, the relative peace of race relations in British Columbia aroused fears that Canada had found a more successful strategy for establishing and governing transcontinental nation. Ultimately, the two countries' Indian policies began to converge in the last decades of the nineteenth century, ending American fears that Canada's more peaceful Indian policy demonstrated a superior method of governing its transcontinental nation. Both countries passed legislation to withdraw independent and separate status from Indian groups and individuals and assimilate them within the general population. At the same time, wars of extermination reached a new height, particularly in the U.S. Great Plains and the Canadian Red River region.

Chapter 2 looks at transnational regional unity along the North Pacific Coast, particularly in the first decades of U.S. and British settlement in the region, as well as at the development of a regional cultural and economic network along the Pacific Coast with San Francisco at its center. The movement of political leaders, merchants, raw materials, and immigrants within the Pacific Region and across the ocean to Asia increased the international influence of the Pacific Coast and connected the United States and Canada to the Pacific Rim. I contend that this regional network also undermined U.S. and Canadian nationalist projects of expansion by weakening efforts to establish ties

between the rapidly growing Pacific Coast settlements and centers of government in the East. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, both the U.S. and Canada also faced movements that advocated the creation of a Pacific republic in the Far West out of both Canadian and U.S. settlements, movements that arose from the belief that a transcontinental nation was unsustainable. Such movements were fueled by the strength of the transnational networks along the Pacific Coast, centered on San Francisco, which funneled communication and trade through that city and kept the rest of the Pacific Coast largely detached from eastern North America.

My third chapter examines the incorporation, and governance of the Pacific Coast of North America, as well as focusing specifically on the building of railroads that spanned the North American continent. The creation of the transcontinental nation became a tug-of-war between the power and possibilities that the national form offered and the perils that it presented. The vast increase in territory offered the possibility of economic growth and international trade, but also put national unity at risk. This chapter examines the efforts of the U.S. and Canadian federal governments to fully incorporate the Pacific Coast, and the ways that Canada, which although now a united dominion was still a member of the British Empire, served as a comparison for the United States. In both the United States and Canada, conflicts between the federal government and regional settlers were often caused or exacerbated by the vast distance between the Pacific Coast settlements and centers of governmental and economic power to the east. For each nation, therefore, the effort to construct a railroad from the Atlantic to the Pacific took on a particular significance, coming to represent the federal government's commitment to its expansion and ability to take full advantage of this expansion's possibilities. Modern transportation and communications technology, of which the railroad was the most important example, made the sprawling transcontinental nation possible. At the same time, the changes in governmental responsibility caused by such transportation networks shaped the structures of the transcontinental nation. The railroad, which was a cooperative effort between business and government in both nations, was the most important concrete and symbolic example of the new links between eastern and western lands and of the viability of the transcontinental nation. It also became a race between the two nations to see who could build a successful network first.

Chapter 4 deals with the decision to restrict the immigration of Chinese people to the United States and Canada. For both nations, this was an effort to shore up the boundaries of the transcontinental nation and keep a group that was seen as incapable of joining the nation from settling on national territory. These laws were the first either nation had passed to restrict immigration based on race or national origin. Like Canada and the United States, other British settler colonies such as Australia and South Africa also restricted Asian immigration. These colonies had been created and developed through immigration, but abandoned open immigration policies when they feared they would seriously threaten national homogeneity. In the United States and Canada, Chinese immigration and objection to it both came from the settlement of the Pacific Coast. White settlers fervently petitioned state, provincial, and national governments to stem what they saw as an escalating crisis. Although Washington, D.C., and Ottawa were at

first unwilling to provoke a diplomatic disagreement and potentially compromise the riches of the China trade, ultimately both national governments came to agree that maintaining the boundaries of the national community trumped even international treaties.

Chapter One

Claiming the Land: Wars and Reservations in the Far West

In the mid-nineteenth century, the U.S. Indian Service faced a new and seemingly monumental obstacle. As Secretary of the Interior A.H.H. Stuart reported to Congress in 1851, U.S. settlement along the Pacific Coast meant that Indian tribes, previously pushed ever-further westward by the tide of settler migration, were now "encompassed by an unbroken chain of civilization." Stuart bluntly informed the legislature that "the only alternatives left are, to civilize or exterminate them" and declared that the task now facing the federal government was "to decide upon the means necessary to be adopted to effect the contemplated revolution in the Indian character and destiny" to complete this civilization.¹ In practice, of course, the future of Indian policy in the United States was neither so dichotomous nor so straightforward. The development of the U.S. into a transcontinental nation reshaped American growth from a westward territorial progression to an effort to consolidate its domination of the continent by incorporating the Pacific Coast. In this new national environment, Indian policy was charged not only with reshaping Indian destiny, but with ensuring the successful fulfillment of the American destiny in the Far West. The requirements of meeting this charge would be far more complex than Stuart had predicted.

Crucially, the "unbroken chain" that surrounded Indians in the Western United States included the British colonies to the north, which would soon join together into the Dominion of Canada. Canadian expansion and unification was a continual backdrop to American attempts to dominate the North American continent, and American understanding of its own transcontinental project was fundamentally shaped by comparisons to and critiques of Canadian attempts to develop and incorporate its own Pacific possessions.² This chapter examines violence between Far Western settlers and Indians and the establishment of reservations as reflective of a new conception of the U.S. nation and its relationships with its territory and population. It also reveals how American observations of Indian relations in the Canadian Far West served to promote or disparage aspects of American Indian policy, and thereby helped to shape its reconfiguration.

Reaching the Pacific Coast signaled the end of several centuries of U.S. Indian policy largely based on driving Indian groups away from the western edge of white expansion. The ideology of Manifest Destiny had envisioned the U.S. domination of

¹ A. H. H. Stuart, "Report of the Secretary of the Interior," in 32d Cong., 1st sess., Senate Ex. Doc. 1 (1851), 503.

² Throughout this chapter, for the sake of convenience, I have occasionally used the word Canada to refer to the political units that would become the Dominion of Canada in 1867, even for the period before 1867. This term was commonly used as early as the sixteenth century for the French, later British, settlements in North America along the St. Laurence River and north of the Great Lakes. I have used more specific terms when referring to the colonies of Upper and Lower Canada, which were joined into the Province of Canada in 1841 and which would be re-divided as the provinces of Ontario and Quebec in 1867.

North America, and this goal had been provisionally accomplished when American settlement reached the Pacific Coast and treaties with Britain and Mexico in the 1840s had halted expansion to the north and the south. However, the principles of Manifest Destiny also entitled and required Americans to bring U.S. lands to their fullest potential. The transcontinental nation, by exploiting the rich resources of the Far West and allowing the United States to dominate not only the North American continent, but become a trading link between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, would accomplish this. The Far West had been claimed by multiple nations and empires for over a century and by the United States for decades, but to American observers it remained a veritable wasteland.

The creation of a transcontinental nation exposed flaws in existing Indian policy within the United States and tested the ability of the federal government to create a new policy for the Far West. Indian displacement was fundamental to the integration of the vast lands stretching to the Pacific Ocean into the United States, particularly since Indian possession of this territory was, in American eyes, directly responsible for the region having remained a wasteland. During the 1820s the policy of Indian removal had become the dominant American Indian policy and arguably the first clearly articulated unified national Indian policy, but once the nation became transcontinental, a policy of westward removal became impossible. In addition, transcontinentalism was based not only on American possession of land but on the creation of a national network that knit the continent together and integrated the entire national territory. Groups of people and areas of territory within the transcontinental nation that were not a part of it threatened to prevent nationalization, and therefore Indian land claims were doubly threatening. Furthermore, since Far Western settlers were thought to be serving as agents of the U.S. nation in their development of the Pacific slope, when any Indian group blocked the progress of one settler, they blocked the progress of the entire nation.

The creation of an Indian policy for the Far West was fundamental to the framing of the transcontinental nation, and the challenges of implementing this new policy highlighted the risks of such an expansion. The most obvious evidence of failure of early federal Indian policy along the Pacific Coast was the string of wars that spread throughout the region in the mid-nineteenth century. These violent clashes between settlers and Indian groups plagued the Far Western United States during the first years of settlement and further underscored the unfeasibility of existing policies in the transcontinental nation. Ranging from brief skirmishes to wars lasting a year or more, they were mainly fought by volunteer armies, often with support and funding from the state or territorial government. Federal government officials, who had barely begun to establish official relations with Indian tribes, blamed Far Western settlers for the conflicts and labeled them as greedy and violent. Settlers and their state representatives, on the other hand, accused the federal government of abandoning the Far West to Indian predations, or actively preventing volunteer battalions from defending their settlements.

In order to stem the violence and allow settlers to make full use of the land, the U.S. federal government turned to the reservation as its new instrument of Indian relations in the Far West. Reservation policy, as described in 1848 by Commissioner of Indian Affairs William Medill, called on the federal government "to colonize our Indian

tribes beyond the reach, for some years, of our white population; confining each within a small district of country."³ These reservations, particularly in the Far West, were not intended as permanent land transfers but as centers for training and reeducation in farming and other "civilized" methods of living. The federal government was forced to bring in supplies, and at times, Indian agents were forced to allow residents to leave the confines of the reservation so that they could hunt and gather enough food to survive. However, reservations acted as a type of compromise in which United States conceded certain areas of land and allowed them to remain unproductive in return for unimpeded access to the rest of the land.

The reshaping of Canada into another transcontinental North American nation served as gauge for the United States to mark the progress of its own transcontinental ambitions, and parallels in the two nation's Indian policies made comparisons in the outcomes of these policies particularly stark. As Philadelphia lawyer and politician James W.M. Newlin wrote in 1881, it was difficult for American observers not to notice that "[t]he Canadian Government fulfils its plighted faith, gives the Indian personal rights, protects him by wise laws,... and the result has been peace and prosperity, both to the Indians and the settlers."⁴ In his 1860 annual message, when writing of efforts to build the transcontinental railroad, the Governor of California ominously reminded the state legislators that they "should remember that we have a rival, owning large possessions upon this coast, who has the activity, the energy, and the necessary means to construct this work."⁵ In white-Indian relations, however, the contrast between the United States and Canada was particularly stark. For some observers, like Newlin, Canada provided evidence of what had been done wrong in the United States. Other American commentators argued, however, that Canada had purchased this peace at the price of its future glory as a transcontinental nation. For example, they would point to the continuing prominence in the Far West of the Hudson's Bay Company, an imperially chartered company that did not encourage settlement, to demonstrate that Canada had not committed to matching U.S. power on the continent. Even the clashes between settlers and Indians in the American Far West were seen as evidence that the United States, unlike Canada, was willing to take the steps necessary to be the dominant nation in North America.

Within a few decades, and to the relief of some American observers, it became obvious that Canada's westward expansion would not escape the interracial violence that the United States had encountered. Violent clashes in the Far West were only a preview of the wars that would sweep through the American Plains in last decades of the nineteenth century, but equally violent confrontations would strike the Canadian Prairies, particularly in the Red River Valley. Both nations moved towards a policy of allotting tribal lands to individual Indians and attempting to forcibly acculturate Indian groups into

³ William Medill, "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs," in 30th Cong., 2d sess., House Ex. Doc. 1 (1848), 386.

⁴ James W. M. Newlin, *Proposed Indian Policy* (Philadelphia: 1881).

⁵ John B. Weller, "Message from the Governor," in *Journal of the Eleventh Session of the Legislature of the State of California*. (Sacramento: C.T. Botts, State Printer, 1860), 66.

white society, although these policies were unevenly implemented and ineffectively administered. Ultimately, their parallel projects of transnational growth led them into similar policies toward Native North Americans.

This chapter examines the reshaping of U.S. Indian policy in the wake of American expansion to the Pacific Coast and highlights the influence that competition with and fear of Canadian development had on this policy. After a description of the growth of North American Indian policy before 1840, I look at new ideas of the relationship between land and nation and explore American efforts to reshape Indian policy to promote the occupation of national land by national citizens. I then reconsider the series of Indian Wars in the U.S. Far West in the mid-nineteenth century and how they reshaped Indian policy and kindled American fears that British Columbia's policy might be superior. Finally, I explore the ideology behind the use of reservations in Far Western Indian policy and perceptions of the role these reservations played in promoting the transcontinental nation.

The Development of Indian Policy in North America

Indian policy throughout North America had been shaped by the organization of the first British colonies along the Atlantic coast as settler colonies. While in other types of colonies the European population could be sparse and localized, in settler colonies taking possession of the land was essential to the colonial project. European immigrants to North America focused for the most part on making use of the land and its resources, and in doing this pushed aside the native inhabitants of the continent.⁶ For the first two hundred years of British settlement in North America, colonists moved gradually westward, forcing Indian groups to migrate before them. The colonies that would become the United States and Canada were founded as outposts of the British Empire, and therefore theoretically received direction about their relationship with North American Indians from London. In practice, however, colonies were largely left on their own to gain land title from Indian groups and settle any disputes. For the most part, they followed the British imperial custom of recognizing the prior claim of Indian groups to the land. The treaty, a staple of British imperial policy, became the mode by which individual colonies and disparate Indian groups settled disagreements, most crucially over land. These treaties were intended to make room for European settlement while preventing violent clashes as settlers moved further inland.

The colonies that would become the United States began to develop an Indian policy separate from the rest of British America in the mid-eighteenth century. The last of the imperial wars ended in 1763, and this, for the most part, ended the long tradition of military alliances between European empires and North American Indian tribes, although the practice would be revived by the United States and Britain during the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. At the same time, the British Empire established a barrier in the future United States between rapidly expanding white settlement and Indian lands. The Royal Proclamation of 1763, which was passed in the wake of a pan-Indian uprising

⁶ While settlers in the southern colonies experimented with Indian slave labor during the seventeenth century, African slavery became the dominant form of bound labor within the British colonies.

led by the Ottawa leader Pontiac, guaranteed North American Indians the unimpeded right to land west of the Appalachian Mountains. The Proclamation also forbade British colonists from settling on this land and prohibited anyone other than the Crown from purchasing land from Indians.⁷ Disagreements about Indian policy fed the colonial resentment that led to the American rebellion against the British Empire, since land speculators were angry about restrictions placed on their expansion westward in 1763.⁸ In 1776, the American Revolution permanently split the new United States from the Indian policy of the British Empire. The Articles of Confederation first gave the authority over Indian relations to the federal government, and in 1789, the Northwest Ordinance declared that "[t]he utmost good faith shall always be observed towards Indians; their land and property shall never be taken from them without their consent." Under the U.S. Constitution, while the power of the federal government over Indian policy was not explicitly reaffirmed, Congress was given power to regulate trade with Indian tribes and to make treaties. Meanwhile, north of the new United States, the remaining colonies of British North America continued to ally with Indian tribes along their southern border until the War of 1812. The Proclamation of 1763, which remained in force in Canada, formed a legal basis for Indian land rights. While native people within the British Empire were by law and custom given the full legal rights of any imperial subject, in practice, Indian policy in pre-Confederation British North America was decentralized and emphasized land acquisition over Indian rights. Even in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, however, British North America was determined to distinguish its mode of governance from that of the United States and ensure that its policy toward westward expansion and Indian relations worked toward order and the avoidance of conflict.⁹

During the first half of the nineteenth century, Indian policy in both the United States and Canada focused on the pacification and removal of Indian tribes. In the United States, the War Department was put in charge of persuading, bribing, or forcing Indian tribes near expanding areas of settlement into signing treaties agreeing to removal. Such efforts manipulated American recognition of Indian sovereignty into a tool to justify the confiscation of Indian lands. In the 1820s, removal efforts were briefly stymied when the Cherokee used their presumed sovereignty to sue in the U.S. Supreme Court to establish their rights over their territory. Although the Cherokee ultimately won their court case, the administration of Andrew Jackson refused to recognize the victory and subjected the Cherokee and neighboring tribes to a forced removal to lands over 1,000 miles to the west.¹⁰ In Canada, Indian groups ceased to be seen as valuable military allies by the

⁷ Colin G. Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁸ For more on the role of land speculation in the American Revolution, see Woody Holton, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), Chapter 1.

⁹ Sidney L. Haring, *White Man's Law: Native People in Nineteenth-Century Canadian Jurisprudence* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 16-19.

¹⁰ Ronald N. Satz, *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 1-6, 47-50, 99-101.

1820s, and the imperial government in London pressured the colonies to cut the administrative costs of its Indian relations, particularly by cutting down the presents that had long been central to the relationship between British North American settlers and Indian tribes.¹¹ A policy of attempting to acculturate the tribes and absorb them into Canadian society, in large part to move into their lands, began in the colony of Upper Canada, but soon became the model for all of Eastern British America.¹²

Until the 1840s, the Far West was largely outside the area of concern for U.S. and British North American Indian policy. Both the United States and the British Empire claimed Oregon Country, but neither had sufficient interests in the region to force a boundary resolution, so they held the land in common. Before the mid-nineteenth century, both the United States and Britain interacted with Pacific Coast Indians through relatively egalitarian commercial exchanges. Although multiple empires and nations claimed overlapping areas of the North American Pacific Coast, the European population remained small well into the nineteenth century. The Spanish missions, which had been designed to convert and civilize the Indian populations of California, were secularized by the new Republic of Mexico in 1834 and slowly became less important to the regional economy and culture. Far to the north, the Hudson's Bay Company had controlled the fur trade in the British Pacific Northwest since 1821, the year it had merged with its greatest competitor, the Northwest Company. While the fur trading, and increasingly, the farming and fishing enterprises of the HBC dominated the economy of the Pacific Northwest, with some competition from American fur traders, the regional economy was small and the European population tiny and scattered. Despite the relatively small white population in the Far West, by the mid-nineteenth century, many Indian groups of the Pacific Coast were far better integrated into the economy and society of the region than their counterparts in the rest of the United States and Canada. In California, Indians were used as forced labor, a process that would legally continue after the region became a U.S. state and well into the 1860s.¹³ In the Northwest, although the fur trade had reshaped the native economy, the Hudson Bay Company's relationship with Indian tribes was to a large degree cooperative, since it was as dependent on the Indians for supply as the Indian trappers were on the traders for a market for their furs.¹⁴

The peripheral position of the Far West in North American Indian affairs changed drastically in the mid-nineteenth century. In the United States, the rapid settlement of Oregon and California in the late 1840s and 1850s stretched the resources of both the federal government and the regional and state governments. The flood of settlers, many of whom came from Eastern regions with little Indian contact in recent decades, believed

¹¹ Roger L. Nichols, *Indians in the United States and Canada: A Comparative History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 176.

¹² *Ibid.*, 185-89.

¹³ For more on the 1850 law and Indian labor in California, see Michael Magliari, "Free Soil, Unfree Labor: Cave Johnson Courts and the Binding of Indian Workers in California, 1850-1867," *The Pacific Historical Review* 73, no. 3 (2004), Albert L. Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

¹⁴ Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977), 34.

that the current inhabitants of the lands along the Pacific Coast could and should be easily vanquished. When the federal government failed to act quickly enough to ensure that Indian groups would not block American access to land, the settlers and their newly (and hastily) formed state and territorial governments were willing to take matters into their own hands. For this and other reasons, the American arrival in the Far West was devastating for North American Indians. In California, for example, while disease and other factors had reduced the Indian population from a pre-contact estimate of over 300,000 to about 150,000 in 1848, this population would dip to below 30,000 by 1860.¹⁵ These losses were driven by disease, warfare, forced relocation, environmental and ecological change, and many other factors stemming from the rapid American settlement of the state.

In British Columbia to the north, Indian population declines were much less steep. James Douglas, chief factor of the HBC and later governor of the colonies of Vancouver's Island and British Columbia, argued that the interracial violence in the United States was caused by the fact that "[t]he Americans do not understand Indian character, and have invariably treated that people in such a manner as to arouse their worst passions."¹⁶ In its attempts to establish for itself an identity in opposition to the rapidly growing United States, British Columbia trumpeted its relative racial peace, and used such rhetoric to distinguish British colonialism from U.S. expansionism. Historians have traditionally agreed, seeing Canadian Indian policy as a whole as more successful and humane than that of the United States, though more recent scholarship has called this image into question, especially for British Columbia.¹⁷ Geographer Cole Harris, however, has argued that the lower incidence of violence in British Columbia came from the monopoly position of the HBC and the ability that this gave them to "fall back on non-violent strategies of control, notably marriages, its politics of divide and rule, and the bluster and theatre of trade."¹⁸ The relatively small white population in the region was another important reason for the relative absence of inter-racial violence. The non-Indian population of British Columbia at the time of Union with Canada in 1871 numbered only around 10,000, and most of this population was concentrated on Vancouver Island and along the southern coast of the Pacific. The Indian population, which probably numbered around 30,000-40,000, was far more scattered, and in comparison with the American territories, competition over specific areas of land had been far less heated.

¹⁵ Sherburne F. Cook, *The Conflict Between the California Indian and White Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 236. , Hurtado, *Indian Survival*, 1.

¹⁶ James Douglas to Admiral R.L. Baynes, August 17, 1859, Letters relating to the Occupation of San Juan by the Troops of the United States of America, British Columbia Archives.

¹⁷ For an example of earlier views of Canadian Indian policy as largely peaceful and benign, see Paul F. Sharp, "Three Frontiers: Some Comparative Studies of Canadian, American, and Australian Settlement," *The Pacific Historical Review* 24, no. 4 (1955): 373. For a critique of the theories of Sharp and other historians as applied to British Columbia, see Robin Fisher, "Indian Warfare and Two Frontiers: A Comparison of British Columbia and Washington Territory during the Early Years of Settlement," *The Pacific Historical Review* 50, no. 1 (1981): 31-2.

¹⁸ R. Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), 63.

The sense in the United States of the importance of the rapid settlement of the Far West was far more pressing. For the United States, the creation of a transcontinental nation also meant the fulfillment of its Manifest Destiny. This expansionist philosophy not only predicted the inexorable movement of U.S. citizens westward, but it also required the displacement of Indian groups in front of the westward tide, whether by war or treaty. Reaching the Pacific Ocean necessitated a revamping of Indian policy. Indians could not be pushed further west, because there was no further west. All land was now within the nation, and American settlers in the Far West were not expanding the reach of the nation, but incorporating its newest acquisitions. Increasingly, treaties with Indian tribes came to be seen as stopgap measures at best, designed to deal with the fading remnants of Indian groups. Building and strengthening a transcontinental nation required new policies.

Land, Citizenship, and Indian Policy in the Transcontinental Nation

The reconfiguration of Indian policy was essential to the creation of the transcontinental nation. Indian groups could no longer be pushed westward and out of the way of white American expansion. The federal government was called on to ensure that land was transferred as smoothly as possible to American citizens and that the ostensibly inevitable tide of expansion was properly and efficiently directed. Cast in this shadow, Indian policy in British Columbia, while it did not face the conflicts that American policy did in the mid-nineteenth century, appeared as a failure to U.S. Indian authorities because it did not promptly and aggressively ensure white land rights and the fullest and fastest development of the Far West.

The American vision of the transcontinental nation was shaped by a new conception of the relationship between national population and national territory. In the envisioning of the transcontinental nation, the connection between the people and the nation was not based in history or pre-history, as it was in European nations, but was created by incorporation. Migrants to the Far West, whether farmers, miners, or merchants, were bringing the land into the nation by purchasing and improving it. Within this ideological system, Indian policy was an essential tool to ensure the rapid economic growth of the Far West. Lands retained by Indians were not only outside the control of settlers, but they would remain unaffected by the transformation of the Far West into the U.S. gateway to the Pacific. Furthermore, by developing the Far West before Canada, which did not have such an aggressive Indian policy, the United States could monopolize the advantages of the transcontinental nation.

Transcontinentalism also altered the place of the West within the nation. With the acquisition of the Pacific Coast, the U.S. West was still agricultural, but it was also the springboard for the American domination of world markets. While many settlers still came to the Far West for agricultural purposes, the acquisition of the Pacific Coast was crucially important for the trading and transportation opportunities it provided. In addition, the first real wealth of the Far West was mineral, and the Gold Rush of 1848 was followed by other precious metal rushes throughout the region. In the eyes of American settlers, this modern and profitable land use, which built the wealth of the

nation, was in sharp contrast to the land use by Indian tribes. In his discussion of the Indian defeat at the hands of Oregon volunteers during the Cayuse War, a new settler proclaimed that "those who prefer negroes and indians to whites, and a vast, howling wilderness inhabited only by coyotes, wolves, panthers, and living beings in human shape more savage still, to beautiful cultivated fields, and large flourishing commercial cities inhabited by intelligent civilized man, have great cause to grieve over the loss of Pu-pu-mox-mox."¹⁹ In other words, for enthusiastic Far Western migrants, the death of Indian leaders was merely a necessary and not particularly regrettable step in the transformation of wilderness into civilization.

In light of these perceived connections between land and national development, previous U.S. Indian policies seemed increasingly counterproductive. These old policies had not only kept land out of settler hands, but had, according to critics, encouraged Indians themselves to remain nonproductive and had even rewarded them for that by giving them excessive lands and therefore enabling their idleness. In his account of the history of relationships between European settlers in America and Indian groups, George Ellis spoke of the grave error of "assigning to these treaty tribes, as reservations, altogether too extensive regions of territory" which worked "to encourage the expectation that they may continue to live by their old methods of the chase, without labor" and "to confirm their old habits of holding it in common and trusting their livelihood to its natural products."²⁰ In 1874, former Indian Commissioner Francis Walker wrote that "[t]he United States, for their own convenience, have allowed this self-government, because to reduce the savages to the condition of submitting to civilized laws would have involved a great expense of blood and treasure."²¹ As the American civilization that Walker discussed expanded throughout the continent, concerns about excessive effort seemed less pressing. Self-government allowed Indian groups to potentially block U.S. expansion, a far more serious possibility.

During the process of incorporating the Far West, the United States abandoned ideas that had been the basis of its Indian policy for centuries. Most importantly, they officially abandoned the conception of Indian groups as separate nations within the U.S. In 1871, through an addendum to an Indian appropriations bill, Congress ended the centuries-old policy of treaty-making, declaring that "hereafter no Indian nation or tribe within the territory of the United States shall be acknowledged or recognized as an independent nation, tribe, or power with whom the United States may contract by treaty."²² This was a confirmation of a shift in policy that had been happening for decades. Indian lands were no longer in any real sense outside of U.S. territory, and therefore their political and social structures seemed increasingly invalid.

¹⁹ Benjamin Franklin Dowell to Samuel Dowell, Jan. 31, 1856, Benjamin Franklin Dowell journal and letters, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

²⁰ George E. Ellis, *The Red Man and the White Man in North America, from its Discovery to the Present Time* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1882), 551.

²¹ Francis A. Walker, *The Indian Question* (Boston: J.R. Osgood, 1874), 129.

²² British Columbia Legislative Council., *Debate on the Subject of Confederation with Canada, Reprinted from the Government Gazette Extraordinary of March, 1870* (Victoria: Government Printing Office, 1870), 566.

In the rush to settle the Far West, Indian agents increasingly treated the expansion of American power and its perceived trappings of civilization and modernity as a tide that could not be held back. By organizing the clearing of Indian lands, the federal government was merely reacting to this inevitability. In his report 1858 on Indian wars in Oregon, government agent J. Ross Browne wrote that while "humanity" required that the United States grant Indian groups "certain rights," removal "to some more convenient location" would always and inevitably be necessary, since "[c]ivilization cannot be held back upon grounds of priority of possession."²³ Former Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz agreed when he wrote in 1881 that "[t]he greatest danger hanging over the Indian race arises from the fact that, with their large and valuable territorial possessions which are lying waste, they stand in the way of what is commonly called 'the development of the country.'"²⁴ This danger became increasingly pressing as "development" swallowed larger portions of land.

In comparison to the United States, the colony of British Columbia experienced little difficulty in its relationships with Indian tribes in the mid-nineteenth century. As the American Far West was rapidly settled, the British Empire was proceeding far more slowly with the settlement of its Pacific lands. Unlike California and Oregon, where the first wave of settlers were largely left free to establish their own relations with Indian tribes, race relations in British Columbia were regulated by the power of the Hudson's Bay Company over the commercial and governmental life of the new colony. The slow growth of the region and the predominance of the HBC made establishing and maintaining relationships with British Columbia's Indians a far less difficult task than it had been for American Indian agents to the south. Although facing pressures both from the imperial government and from Company officials in London to increase settlement and solidify white land claims, James Douglas had been largely free to establish racial policy in the colony. The legacy of the Hudson's Bay Company and Douglas's continuing authority maintained British Columbia's distinctive Indian policy into the 1860s. Until the end of his tenure as Governor in 1864, he remained opposed to the American system of removing Indians from their land, convinced that it was the surest path to violence, and he worked to ensure that reserves included a tribe's traditional lands.²⁵ Repeatedly he instructed surveyors to comply with "the wishes of the natives themselves, with respect to boundaries," as long as native claims were reasonable.²⁶ Unlike most of the leaders of frontier settler societies, Douglas's fur trade experience encouraged him to deal with Indians as a part of the colonization process rather than as an obstacle to it. His conception of Indian-white relations also made him disinclined to

²³ "Letter from the secretary of the interior, transmitting . . . the report of J. Ross Browne, on the subject of the Indian war in Oregon and Washington territories," in 35th Cong., 1st Sess., Senate Ex. Doc. 40 (1858), 5.

²⁴ Carl Schurz, "Present Aspects of the Indian Problem," *North American Review* 133, no. 296 (1881): 23.

²⁵ Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 151.

²⁶ For example, see Governor James Douglas to the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works, Apr. 27, 1863, in British Columbia, *Papers Connected with the Indian Land Question* (Victoria, B.C.: R. Wolfenden, 1875), 25-26.

formalize this relationship through treaties, and despite urging from the British government, formal treaties remained rare.

In political and popular discourse, the United States painted the Hudson's Bay Company as an old-fashioned imperialist obstruction to the Canadian transcontinental project. Enthusiasts of the American transcontinental nation argued that the ease of British Columbian Indian affairs came not from a superior approach to Indian relations, but from a lack of initiative and aggression. In his 1882 study of Indian-white relations in North America, prominent clergyman and amateur historian George Ellis argued that the British, "in the long lethargy and apathy as to any extension of their colonization, were spared all this strife."²⁷ The U.S. saw the continuing influence of the HBC over Indian affairs in the British North American Far West as a sign that Canada was not really capable of creating a transcontinental nation. In a later description of HBC policy in Northern Canada, scientist and explorer William Dall argued that through their efforts to cooperate with Indian groups, "[t]he self-respect of the white man was sacrificed to the desire of obtaining furs."²⁸ Even those commentators who believed that Canadian Indian policy had succeeded in keeping race relations peaceful often argued that as Canada developed, they would face the same problems as the U.S. currently did. In 1881, in response to the idea that Canada had a more humane and successful Indian policy, U.S. Indian commissioner Carl Schurz argued that "[w]hen in the British possessions agricultural and mining enterprise spreads with the same energy and eagerness as in the United States, when railroads penetrate their Indian country, when all that is valuable in it becomes thus accessible and tempting to the greed of white men, when game becomes scarce and ceases to furnish sufficient sustenance to the Indians, the Canadian authorities in their management of Indian affairs will find themselves confronted with the same difficulties."²⁹ The peaceful race relations in Canada were thereby used to justify and even glorify the more aggressive and contentious U.S. policy.

The influence of new views of the land changed how North American nations acquired lands formerly claimed by Indian tribes. In contrast to their previous custom, neither the United States nor Canada recognized Indian title in the Far West. This was partially due to the rapidity of settlement in the U.S. and the lingering authority of the Hudson's Bay Company in British Columbia, both of which delayed federal surveying and title efforts. However, the unusual failure to recognize and deal with Indian land claims before settlement also represented a shift within both nations toward an emphasis on the importance of the unity of national territory and the productive use of this territory by its people. Now that the United States had claimed land from the Atlantic to the Pacific, they had claimed all the land within this stretch. While rhetorically the United States continued to recognize Indian land rights, the actual settlement of the Far West did not abide by this rhetoric. For example, when U.S. emigrants to Oregon country decided to organize a provisional government in advance of U.S. possession of the land, one of its first acts in 1843 was to declare that

²⁷ Ellis, *The Red Man and the White Man*, 479.

²⁸ William Healey Dall, *Alaska and its Resources* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1870), 114.

²⁹ Schurz, "Present Aspects of the Indian Problem," 6.

[t]he utmost good faith shall always be observed towards the Indians. Their lands and property shall never be taken from them without their consent; and in their property, rights, and liberty, they shall never be invaded or disturbed, unless in just and lawful wars, authorized by the representatives of the people.³⁰

Despite this declaration, neither the provisional government nor the U.S. territorial government made any systematic efforts to account for Indian land claims when distributing land to new settlers. The Oregon Donation Land Act of 1850 granted land to settlers who arrived in the region by a certain date, and did not include any requirement to secure title to the land from the Indians currently living on it or to limit white settlement to those areas that were not occupied by Indian tribes. Ideas of a prior Indian claim to North American lands were gradually receding into the realm of rhetoric.

The American claim to the lands in the Far West was bolstered by the idea that U.S. citizens were particularly qualified for the task of building the transcontinental nation. In debates on U.S. claims to Oregon Country, Richard Young, a senator from Illinois, argued that "[n]one but individuals living on the soil, and cultivating it for themselves, can fully realize its benefits. Our citizens are peculiarly suited for that purpose."³¹ Commentators explicitly contrasted the collective ownership of land by Indian tribes with the purportedly productive consequences of private property in the United States. Although the lands gained by the United States in the 1840s were annexed by the nation as a whole, they were seen as being incorporated into the United States by individual ownership and developments. State legislators argued California "should be wholly occupied by a homogenous population, all contributing, by their character and occupation, to its strength and independence."³² By migrating to the Pacific Coast for mining, agriculture, or trade, settlers were acting as agents of the nation. Therefore, Indian interference with the nation's "progress" was not just an interference with one person's success, but an attack on the nation as a whole.

Native peoples of the Far West were explicitly contrasted to visions of white American migrants to the Far West. Furthermore, they were explicitly equated with the land they occupied and described as wild and undeveloped. Just like the supposedly untouched land, Indians were seen to be vanishing in the face of American development. Indians were spoken of in terms that connected them to other obstacles to settlement, such as difficult terrain or lack of irrigation. Furthermore, as the national transcontinental community coalesced, Indians were firmly placed outside of it, both ideologically and legally. In the 1884 case of *Elk v. Wilkins*, the U.S. Supreme Court confirmed that Indians who lived within tribes were subject to a foreign political authority and were not citizens. However, it also ruled that Indians who had left tribal

³⁰ Report of Legislative Committee, upon the Judiciary, Oregon Territory, July 5, 1843, in Oregon Legislative Assembly, *The Oregon Archives, including the Journals, Governors' Messages, and Public Papers of Oregon* (Salem, OR: Asahel Bush, 1853), 29.

³¹ *Congressional Globe*, 27th Cong., 3d sess. (1843), 221.

³² Majority report, February 11, 1852, *Journal of the Senate*, 3rd sess., 597-600.

authority did not gain citizenship by doing so, since no one could "become a citizen of a nation without its consent." As the dissenting opinion pointed out, if Indians who had left tribes were not given citizenship, they would have "no nationality whatever."³³ This reflected the current belief that Indian people and Indian land were permanent contradictions within the transcontinental nation.

In Canada, the United States saw a mirror of its own transcontinental efforts, but failed to see a mirror of its own Indian policy. Although they lamented the difficulties that their own Indian policy faced in the Far West, commentators used the comparison to Canada to justify their own policy as the most effective at quickly and firmly ensuring the stable settlement of the Pacific Coast.

White-Indian Violence in the Far West

Violent clashes between settlers and Indian groups in the American Far West made the United States fear that rapid settlement, while good for the success of the transcontinental nation, would prevent the establishment of stable government along the Pacific Coast. In the 1850s, throughout California, Oregon, and Washington, settler battalions fought off perceived Indian encroachments, despite the efforts of federal agents and military leaders to quell this unrest. The most striking difference between white-Indian relations in the U.S. and Canadian Far West between 1840 and 1898 was the comparative lack of violence in British Columbia. While some U.S. commentators predicted that white-Indian violence would arrive in British Columbia with greater population and further economic development, others accused Hudson's Bay Company officials of stirring up their Indian allies against the United States.

When migrants from the eastern United States arrived and settled in the Far West, they were very far from existing military and Indian service infrastructure. The fact that Indian title was not established in advance in these regions and that settlers were scattered throughout the region, particularly in California, made disagreements between local Indian groups and newly arrived Americans even more likely. The Indian Wars of the Far West, however, were shaped by the prominence of volunteer armies and the anger of state, territorial, and local officials at the failure of the federal government to support them in their efforts to remove Indians from the vicinity of white settlements. They were also a result of the urgency and rapidity of Far Western settlement, and the mixing of populations that resulted. Because of the distance, the federal government was slow to bring Indian agents and military power to the region. Land title was not settled, and treaties and official relations had not been established with any of the Indian groups. Particularly in California, Indian groups were scattered among the population and not organized into unified tribes. They had been intermixed by their involvement with the pre-U.S. economy and society. In Oregon, an atmosphere of conflict between Indian groups and settlers began with the first days of American settlement and would continue for decades.

³³ *Elk v. Wilkins*, 112 U.S. 94 (1884).

The violence began in the first years of U.S. settlement. The Cayuse War, which began before the United States had even organized Oregon Country into a territory, set the tone for the next several years of white-Indian relations in the U.S. Pacific Northwest. In 1847, the Whitmans, a missionary family living near what would become Walla Walla, were killed along with a dozen other white settlers by a group of Cayuse Indians. Marcus Whitman, one of Oregon's earliest American settlers, had become unpopular among the Indians due to his zealousness and abrasive style, but his death instantly made him a legendary martyr to the cause of the advance of white civilization.³⁴ The provisional legislature of Oregon called for volunteers and organized a company known as the Oregon Rifles. The members of the company bought supplies from the Hudson's Bay Company on their own credit with the promise of repayment from the legislature, because the HBC would not extend credit to the provisional government. The volunteer campaign that followed was relatively nonviolent by the standards of later Oregon Indian Wars, but met with little success, and ended only when the Cayuse surrendered the Whitmans' killers, who were tried and executed in the summer of 1850.

The peace in the wake of the Cayuse War lasted only a few short years, however. Fighting broke out again in the southeastern region of the Oregon Territory. A series of battles, which came to be known as the Rogue River War, began with intermittent clashes between travelers through the Rogue River valley and area tribes. These conflicts began in 1852, when gold was discovered in the mountains near the Rogue River Valley. Violence escalated until a force comprised largely of volunteers, led by former territorial governor Joseph Lane, clashed with the Indians in 1853 and sporadically over the following years. The Rogue River war became nationally controversial because of the conflict it caused between federal and state authorities. In the first years of fighting, Captain Smith, the military leader of nearby Fort Lane, intervened to prevent violence between area Indians and armed settlers, even to the point of protecting Indian women and children behind the walls of the fort.³⁵ General Wool, the commander of the Army of the Pacific, opposed the actions of the Oregon volunteers in southwest Oregon, and refused to support their fighting with army regulars. He argued that "[a]s long as individual war is permitted and paid for by the United States, which is expected by all the citizens of Oregon, we shall have no peace, and the war may be prolonged indefinitely."³⁶ In January of 1856, the Oregon state legislature passed a memorial asking the President to recall General Wool, charging that he had "departed from his inactive policy only to censure the governor and the people of this territory for their commendable zeal in defending their country and to thwart all their efforts to procure supplies and the means of subsistence for the Oregon volunteers that are now in the field" and labeling him "an intermeddler between the people of Oregon and the government of the United States."³⁷

³⁴ For example, see Edward Gaylord Bourne, "The Legend of Marcus Whitman," *The American Historical Review* 6, no. 2 (1901).

³⁵ E. A. Schwartz, *The Rogue River Indian War and Its Aftermath, 1850-1980* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 80-86.

³⁶ General John E. Wool to Lieutenant Colonel L. Thomas, January 19, 1856, 34th Cong., 1st sess. Senate Exec. Doc. 26.

³⁷ quoted in *Pioneer and Democrat* (Washington Territory), Mar. 7, 1856.

Volunteer battalions continued to remain important in other Far Western Indian wars, as well. In Washington Territory, which had split from Oregon Territory in 1853, a group of battles collectively known as the Yakima War were provoked by attempts to enforce a series of treaties negotiated by Governor Isaac Stevens in between 1853 and 1855, as well as by lingering hostilities in the region stemming from the Cayuse War. The violence erupted after a group of tribes, led initially by the Yakima chief Kamiakin, refused to move to the lands designated for them by the U.S. government. The federal army moved into action when Yakima warriors killed Andrew Bolom, an Indian agent, in 1855. This war, unlike those fought in southeast Oregon, was fought partially by army regulars, since the pan-Indian military effort was sufficient to persuade the army to take control of the fighting. However, volunteers under popular territorial Governor Joseph Lane were particularly active in the fighting, often without the consent or even the knowledge of army regulars. General Wool wrote frankly to his command in Washington, D.C., of his belief that "Governor Stevens is crazy, and does not know what he is doing."³⁸ Wool also worked to block Stevens from supplying his volunteers on credit from the federal government, instructing his quartermaster to inform a San Francisco merchant that there was "no war in Washington Territory in which Governor Stevens is engaged, as there are sufficient United States troops in the Territory to quell Indian hostilities" and that "[a]ny contract that Governor Stevens may make under these circumstances will be illegal, and in [Wool's] opinion will not be sanctioned by Congress."³⁹ The battles and skirmishes that followed involved Indians from many tribes, including the Yakima, Walla Walla, Umatilla, Coeur d'Alenes, Spokanes, Palouses, Northern Paiutes, and Cayuse. The Indians allies successfully held off federal and volunteer troops until they were decisively defeated in a battle near Spokane, Washington in 1858.

In California, the most rapidly settled region of the Far West and the center of American settlement on the Pacific Coast, white-Indian wars were spurred by conflicts over land in the mining regions. Indians made up a large percentage of miners during the first years after the gold discoveries, but were soon pushed out of the mines or made to labor for white miners. Tens of thousands of miners poured into lands formerly occupied by Indian tribes, displacing them and destroying their means of subsistence. These miners responded to Indian stock raids and other attacks with concerted violence. In late 1850 and early 1851, a series of Indian raids on the Southern Mines killed a number of white settlers and made away with hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of cattle and other livestock. Responding to widespread demands from settlers, the state authorized bond issues to fund volunteers to fight in the region, a levy amounting to \$1.1 million by 1852. The Mariposa War itself lasted several months, as two hundred volunteer soldiers, all recent migrants to the region, combed the mountains for mixed groups of Indians.⁴⁰

³⁸ General Wool to Lieutenant Colonel L. Thomas, Aug. 4, 1856.in "Message of the President of the United States...", in 34th Cong., 3d sess., Senate Ex. Doc. 1 (1856).

³⁹ Major O. Cross to Messrs. Tandler and Co, July 30, 1856.in "Message of the President, 1856."

⁴⁰ Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), 227-30.

The federal government and Far Western settlers each blamed the other for the pervasive conflict along the Pacific, and their rhetoric reveals much about new views of Indian policy and the place of Indians in the transcontinental nation. Settlers thought that the federal government was not protecting their interests, their lives, and their rights as settlers and pioneers. In the mining districts settlers saw treaties as designed to reward those "savages" who were attacking them:

Make a treaty with them before they are punished? No, Sir – never! The people on the frontier are all opposed to it.... It is very well for those at a distance and in a safe place, to talk in this way; but let them come and live on the frontier in small parties, as we are obliged to do that are out there; let them see their friends go out in the morning, well and strong, and before night be brutally murdered – stuck full of arrows – some others skinned and their ears cut off...⁴¹

The federal government, on the other hand, thought that the settlers were threatening the stability of the transcontinental nation by taking matters into their own hands and accused them of being greedy and violent.⁴² The *Alta California*, which was generally supportive of federal Indian agents, blamed white settlers for the frontier clashes, describing them as "the lowest class of the white population" and arguing that their greed caused them to provoke Indian reprisals.⁴³

The debate between federal and local authorities over the proper Indian policy in the Far West was concentrated and extended by ongoing debates about the funding of the wars. The Rogue River War was the most contentious, but debates circled around many such conflicts. Battles over the funding and proper accounting of the Rogue River Wars continued for decades after their conclusion and retained the same vehement rhetoric. In 1860, a forty-eight page memorandum to Congress by C.S. Drew, a former adjutant of a volunteer regiment, passionately insisted that "if Oregon's friends would but display half the effort to render a true history of these Indian matters, that her enemies make to establish a false one, neither Congress or the country could long be deceived respecting them."⁴⁴ Similarly, when California authorized funding the volunteer militia in 1851, the state's Governor, John McDougal, argued that the federal government, "under the political compact of the confederation of the States, is bound to protect them from invasion, insurrection, or rebellion." Since he believed that "Congress has always shown a liberal disposition in the payment of all expenses incurred by any of the States in putting down Indian disturbances," he expected that they would "promptly assume all the expenses attendant upon the expeditions that have heretofore or may hereafter be called

⁴¹ C. D. Gibbes to editors, February 15, 1851, in *Stockton Times*, February 19, 1851, in George Harwood Phillips, *Indians and Indian Agents: The Origins of the Reservation System in California, 1849-1852* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 157.

⁴² For examples of this rhetoric, see Schurz, "Present Aspects of the Indian Problem."

⁴³ Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 117.

⁴⁴ "Communication from C.S. Drew ... giving an account of the origin and early prosecution of the Indian War in Oregon," in 36th Cong., 1st Sess., Senate Misc. Doc. 59 (1860).

into the service of the State."⁴⁵ After the legislature approved funding for troops to be called out by the governor, McDougal promptly wrote to President Fillmore asking for monetary aid from the federal government. In his response, Secretary of War C. M. Conrad declared that he believed that the Indian attacks in the Southern mines had been provoked by white settlers and would be quelled when treaties established boundaries between white and Indian populations. Furthermore, he responded to McDougal's argument that regular troops were not needed and that the federal government should fund volunteers by declaring that "[e]xperience has shown that volunteers are everywhere more expensive than regular troops" and that funding volunteers raised the strong possibility that "the love of adventure with some and high pay with others, would operate as inducement to perpetual collisions with the Indians."⁴⁶ Despite this repudiation, the state government of California, and later, the territorial government of Oregon, continued to support the volunteer troops while demanding federal funding to pay and equip them. For its part, the federal government continued to insist that federal troops would not be necessary if individual settlers and volunteer troops ceased to provoke Indian violence.

Indian-settler violence in the Far West seemed to call into question the viability of the transcontinental nation in the United States, particularly since British Columbia was not having the same problems. Although the U.S. military and local militias clashed with several Indian groups across Oregon and Washington, none of this violence crossed the forty-ninth parallel. James Douglas wrote that when "the whole of Washington Territory was engaged in War with the Indian Tribes," "a feeling of perfect security prevailed everywhere" in British Columbia."⁴⁷ Even Americans cited the Indian policy to the north as an example of what their own country had done wrong. A U.S. army officer fighting Indians in Washington Territory wrote that "the Indians looked upon the members of the Hudson Bay Company as simply coming among them for purposes of trade, and not with the view of taking their land and removing them to reservations, as has always been the custom of the Americans, or 'Bostons' as they called them; hence they very naturally look upon the former as friends, and the latter as enemies."⁴⁸ One of Oregon's prominent early leaders wrote that the HBC "cultivated Indian life; and aided the Indian instead of removing him" while Americans "would occupy the hunting grounds of the Indian for agriculture, and as a necessary consequence the elk and the deer were driven out and killed."⁴⁹

Such ideas of the superiority of Canada Indian policy remained pervasive among later commentators. In her 1881 indictment of U.S. Indian policy, *A Century of*

⁴⁵ Message of the Governor, March 15, 1851, *Journal of the California Assembly*, 2nd sess., 1368 in Phillips, *Indians and Indian Agents*, 65.

⁴⁶ Gov. John McDougal to President Millard Fillmore, March 1, 1851, in 32d Cong., 1st sess., House Exec Doc. 2, Serial 634, 138-40, in *Ibid.*, 65-66. C.M. Conrad to Gov. John McDougal, Washington, D.C., April 30, 1851, in ———, *Indians and Indian Agents*, 66.

⁴⁷ James Douglas to Admiral R. L. Baynes, Aug. 17, 1859, Letters relating to the Occupation of San Juan by the Troops of the United States of America, British Columbia Archives.

⁴⁸ Rodney Glisan, *Journal of Army Life* (San Francisco: A. L. Bancroft, 1874).

⁴⁹ Lafayette Grover, Notable things in a public life in Oregon, ms., Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Dishonor, Helen Hunt Jackson declared that "Canada has had no Indian wars" and argued that this was because "they make fewer promises, but they fulfil them" and "all their efforts are toward self-help and civilization."⁵⁰ In 1890, Hubert Howe Bancroft, one of the first major historians of the Pacific Coast, contended that "nowhere in the history of colonization were native nations worse treated than in the United States, or better treated than in British America."⁵¹ Historians have long since demonstrated that Canadian Indian relations were far from free of violence, deception, and tragedy. These dichotomous views of the two policies, however, remained powerful throughout the nineteenth century and beyond.

Far Western settlers, however, had a different perspective on how British Columbia had kept its lands peaceful. In the Pacific Northwest, a region dominated only a decade before by the Hudson's Bay Company, settlers held the HBC partially responsible for provoking and supporting Indian violence against U.S. settlers. George Ellis would later argue that "from the acknowledgment of our independence to this day, whenever we have had border troubles with the savages, they have invariably found aid and comfort, arms and supplies, from our brethren on the other side of that border."⁵² Oregon Indian groups, particularly the Yakima and the Cayuse, had long relationships with the Hudson's Bay Company. In northern Oregon Territory, the continuing power of the HBC in regional affairs and the Company's connection to Indian groups was viewed by American settlers as a threat. The perception that these Indian tribes were allied with the British Empire, a perception with little basis in reality, was used by the leaders of Washington Territory to encourage the federal government to become further involved in the region's conflict. Citing fears that the war would expand to the Pacific Coast, the territorial legislature asked for a warship to be sent to Puget Sound to protect against "frequent incursions of hordes of warlike Indians from the British and Russian possessions north, which have caused the death of many of our citizens, and the loss of much property."⁵³ Although relations between early U.S. settlers and the Company had been generally amicable, the Indian fighting in Oregon and Washington Territories led some American settlers to blame the HBC for their problems.⁵⁴ Americans engaged in fighting with the Indians also frequently noticed the fact that the guns used by Indians had often been purchased from the HBC, and blamed the Company for stirring up enmity toward the United States among the Oregon Indians.⁵⁵ One settler wrote that "the officers and servants of the Hudson's Bay Co. [taught] the Indians that the Americans were

⁵⁰ Helen Hunt Jackson, *A Century of Dishonor: A Sketch of the United States Government's Dealings With Some of the Indian Tribes* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1917), vii.

⁵¹ Hubert Howe Bancroft, *Essays and Miscellany* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1890), 71.

⁵² Ellis, *The Red Man and the White Man*, 482-3.

⁵³ "Resolution of the Washington Territorial Legislature, sent to the Secretary of the Navy," February 1, 1855, in 34th Cong., 1st sess., Senate Exec Doc. 26.

⁵⁴ For a discussion of relations between American settlers and the HBC during the joint occupation, see William R. Swagerty, "'The Leviathan of the North:' American Perceptions of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1816-1846," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 104, no. 4 (2003).

⁵⁵ For example, see Lawrence Kip, *Army Life on the Pacific: A Journal of the Expedition against the Northern Indians...* (Redfield, NY: Edward O. Jenkins, 1859), 12, 60.

intruders upon the rights of the English and Indians; that the Americans would occupy their lands without remunerating them for the homes of their fathers."⁵⁶

Far Westerners argued that only the complete removal of Indian groups from lands desired by white settlers would ensure both peace and the most productive settlement. In 1857, the governor of California argued that "[s]o long as the Indians remain within our borders, whether established on reservations or not, must we expect to witness sudden outbreaks among them, in the end involving expenditures of treasure incalculable – the destruction of human life, the insecurity of property, and retarding the growth and prosperity of our State."⁵⁷ Ultimately, however, such an exile was impossible.

The Rise of the Reservation

Convinced of the impossibility of removing all Indian groups from the Far West and eager to stop the battles throughout the region, the U.S. Indian service turned to the reservation as the chief new instrument of Indian policy. Indian agents had high hopes for the new Far Western reservations, seeing them not only as tools to separate Indian groups from white settlers, but as a possible way to change undesirable aspects of Indian culture and society. Ultimately, poor planning, poor funding, and local opposition helped to doom the reservation in the United States, although establishing reserves remained one of many policy possibilities well into the twentieth century. At the same time British Columbian officials succeeded in preventing the Dominion Government from expanding and formalizing land grants to the new province's Indian population. The contrast between American and Canadian Indian policy was thus diminished, and Canadian policy no longer served as a potential reminder of U.S. failures.

The reservation ended up providing a solution, albeit temporary, to the problems of U.S. Far Western Indian policy, and a compromise in the effort to Americanize the Far West. Reservation policy required the United States to cede some part of Far Western land and allow it to remain unproductive in return for unimpeded access to the rest of the land. Within the reservation, instead of merely being separated from areas of white settlement, Indian groups were now made entirely dependent on the federal government. Ironically, supporters of reservations argued that this dependence was designed to make them independent later, after they had been remade as individualistic farmers. In a further irony, the effort to acculturate them to American society was seen as requiring the complete separation of reservations from white settlement.

The creation of reservations had many similarities with the earlier U.S. policy of Indian removal, which had dominated efforts to claim Indian land before white settlement crossed the Mississippi River. Both policies focused on moving Indian groups away from the expanding edge of American settlement. Under the policy of Indian removal, the transfer of Indian groups to areas beyond American settlement was often called

⁵⁶ Dowell, 1856, Benjamin Franklin Dowell journal and letters.

⁵⁷ J. Neely Johnson, "Message from the Governor," in *Journal of the Eighth session of the Legislature of the State of California*. (Sacramento: James Allen, State Printer, 1857), 26.

colonization.⁵⁸ The use of this term continued even when the Indian colonies were no longer able to be created far away from the western edge of American settlement. Using the term colonization to refer to the lands that Indian groups were forced to be removed to continued to cite the fact that these lands were selected to be self-contained and distant from white settlement. However, reservation policy focused on ensuring that land grants were small and under federal control and using removal to reservations as a means to break up Indian political and social organizations. For example, the 1876 Annual Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners referred to an effort in the Black Hills "to disintegrate these Indians, to colonize small bands or individual families in Dakota or the Indian Territory."⁵⁹

Federal Indian policy in general was seen as a duty of the federal government toward the Indian population, who were increasingly seen as wards or dependents of the United States. In an address to the California Legislature, Indian agent Oliver Wozencraft asked legislators objecting to Indian treaties "what particular objections are there to the Indians having lands sufficient for their support? Would their producing impoverish us?"⁶⁰ To Indian agents, these lands were seen as a necessary sacrifice for the settlement of the Far West. However, the creators of American Indian policy also hoped that reservations would end white-Indian conflict by changing Indian character. In 1853, the *Alta California* proclaimed that reservations would transform the state's native population.

Five years after the first settlement is made and put into successful operation the Indian affairs of California will cease to be an item of expense to the General or State Government; all hostilities will be over; the whites will be entirely free from annoyance by the Indians; the Indians will be transformed from a state of semi-barbarism, indolence, mental imbecility, and moral debasement, to the condition of civilization, Christianity, industry, virtue, frugality, social and domestic happiness and public usefulness.⁶¹

Such hopes for the reservation contrasted with the more general image of reservations as barren and unproductive, but these ideas of the potential of federal stewardship of Indian ways of life continued to be prominent. John Findlay has argued that in the 1850s, reservations were designed to resemble the nineteenth century asylum, "special environments in which those regarded as deviant might be isolated, concentrated, and

⁵⁸ In an interesting use of this term, Supreme Court Justice James Wayne, in an 1854 address before the African Colonization Society, used the example of Indian colonization as a precedent for the colonization of free African Americans to Africa. *Thirty-Seventh Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, (Washington, D.C.: C. Alexander, 1854), 41.

⁵⁹ *Seventh Annual Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1876), 13.

⁶⁰ Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1986). Quoted in Phillips, *Indians and Indian Agents*, 165.

⁶¹ *Alta California* (San Francisco), Sept. 22, 1853.

resocialized through discipline and routine, and then integrated anew into the larger world."⁶² Some Indian agents expressed the goals of the reservation in tones far more grim than those of the editors of the *Alta*. In his annual report for 1850, Indian Commissioner Luke Lea recommended that for "the application of this policy to our wilder tribes, it is indispensably necessary that they be placed in positions where they can be controlled, and finally compelled by stern necessity to resort to agricultural labor or starve."⁶³

The reservation policy was seen as a way to end interracial violence, and was presented to Indian groups as such. When federal Indian agents arrived in California to negotiate with Indian tribes, they saw their mission as ending white-Indian violence in the state. One of the first California agents, Oliver Wozencraft, later remembered his efforts to form treaties with numerous Indian groups as straightforward and successful. In a typical account of a meeting with a group of Indians, he writes, "We found an interpreter, and told them the object of our mission was to provide for them to live as the white people were living, and if they did not stop their hostilities on the whites, we would bring the soldiers up there, and wage war on them all."⁶⁴ According to Wozencraft, the Indian tribes that he approached in this way were eager to trade their lands for federal protection and the promise of annual support. In 1853, after victory in the first battles of the Rogue River War, militia leaders forced on the Indians a treaty that agreed to their temporary removal to a one hundred square mile area known as Table Rock Reservation, "until a suitable selection shall be made by the direction of the President of the United States, for their permanent residence and buildings erected thereon and provisions made for their removal."⁶⁵ After Joel Palmer, who was Indian commissioner for Oregon during the crucial period from 1853 to 1856, brokered an early truce between Indian groups and volunteer armies that created Table Rock Reservation, he argued to his supervisors "these Indians cannot long remain on the reserves in the heart of the settlements granted them by treaty, even should Congress confirm those treaties" and that Indian groups must be moved to lands where they could "be guarded from the pestiferous influence of degraded white men, and restrained by proper laws from violence and wrong among themselves."⁶⁶

Like many other Far Western reservations, however, the Table Rock reservation was short-lived. In October, 1855, at news that encampments of Rogue River Indians who had been allowed to leave the reservation in 1854 after an outbreak of sickness were

⁶² John M. Findlay, "An Elusive Institution: The Birth of Indian Reservations in Gold Rush California," in *State and Reservation: New Perspectives on Federal Indian Policy*, ed. George Pierre Castile and Robert L. Bee (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1992), 18-19.

⁶³ Luke Lea, "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs," in 30th Cong., 2d sess., Senate Ex. Doc. 1 (1850), 35-6.

⁶⁴ Oliver Wozencraft, Indian Affairs, 1849-50, a dictation recorded for H.H. Bancroft, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, CA.

⁶⁵ "Stipulations of a Treaty made and entered into at Table Rock....," September 10, 1853, *Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-81*, National Archives Microcopy 234, roll 608, quoted in Schwartz, *The Rogue River Indian War*, 59.

⁶⁶ Joel Palmer, "Report of Superintendent Joel Palmer," in *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1853* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1853), 209.

refusing to return, a group of volunteers attacked an encampment, killing, by one newspaper account, forty Indians, over half of whom were women and children. Over the next several months, groups of Rogue River Indians, ultimately numbering around 400, gradually retreated to the coast, fighting sporadically along the way. Although they continued to win skirmishes with volunteer troops, by the summer of 1856, the main force was surrounded in the coastal mountains, and surrendered, agreeing to be removed to the Coast Reservation that had recently been established. Gradually, most of the groups of Indian combatants were rounded up and brought to live on the reservation, joining thousands more Indians from the region who had remained at peace with the white settlers and had agreed to be removed to the reserve. Palmer worked hard to convince Indian groups that moving to the distant reservation was the best option in the face of white expansion. In 1854, he wrote to "the Chiefs and Head Men of the Tualatin Band of Calapooia Indians" to explain that "whites are determined to settle on your land. We cannot prevent them and in a few years there will be no place left for you. Then what will you do? Will you live in the mountains like wolves?" He signed the letter "Your friend, Joel Palmer."⁶⁷ While historians have estimated that the Indian groups who would fight in the Rogue River War had numbered about 9,500 in 1851, in 1857 Indian Service agents counted only 1,943 people living at the Coast Reservation.⁶⁸

In the Far West, many state authorities saw the federal government's efforts to establish reservations as a sign that the government placed the protection of Indian groups above their duty to protect white settlers. In some cases, those state officials who took it upon themselves to lead volunteer troops against Indians were also given responsibility by the federal government for making treaties and establishing reservations. Both Joseph Lane and Isaac Stevens, the first territorial governors of Oregon and Washington, also began their careers as governor with a joint appointment as Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the territory. Stevens's expressed goal when establishing treaties with Indian groups in Washington Territory was "to admit as few reservations as possible with the view of finally concentrating them into one."⁶⁹

While reservation policy would remain a part of Indian policy in the United States, many of the first reservations established in the Far West, like the Table Rock Reservation, were notable for their lack of success. While many reservations in the Far West were established and populated by treaty, many others, particularly in California, were simply created as places to send Indians without any promises that they would be permanent. California Indian agents experimented with alternate forms of reserves such as establishing reservations under military control, establishing work farms, and directly contracting out Indian labor.⁷⁰ These and other reservations were not seen during the nineteenth century as providing a permanent place for Indians, by either non-Indians or

⁶⁷ Joel Palmer, Letter to the Tualatin Band, March 21, 1854, reel 4, Oregon Superintendency Records, 134, quoted in Terence O'Donnell, *An Arrow in the Earth: General Joel Palmer and the Indians of Oregon* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1991), 167.

⁶⁸ Schwartz, *The Rogue River Indian War*, 148-9.

⁶⁹ Isaac Stevens to Charles Maypenny, December 30, 1854, quoted in Kent Richards, "The Stevens Treaties of 1854–1855: An Introduction," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 106, no. 342-351 (2005).

⁷⁰ Findlay, "An Elusive Institution," 30.

by the Indians themselves, and both administering the reservations and keeping whites off of them proved to be very challenging. Settlers refused to stay off the land assigned to Indian groups, while Indians found it nearly impossible to survive on the often inefficiently managed reservations.⁷¹ As the reservations continued to be an expense for the government, even while the Indians living on them continued to dwindle in numbers and the settlers of California ceased to fear Indian violence, keeping the reservations became increasingly unpopular. Of the six reservations founded between 1852 and 1855, all closed within ten years, and while another six were founded between 1856 and 1870, three were shut down by 1871. Many agents were disappointed by the failure of reservations to live up the goal of Indian acculturation into American society. In an 1887 report on the state of Indian Reservations an agent for the Indian Rights Association noted that "[u]nder this beautiful system of things" Indians were led to believe that it was better "to lead a half-gypsy sort of life" with "a half-brute dialect, than to become ordinary, hard-working citizens."⁷²

Reservations were challenged by Far Westerners, who resented having land taken away from them and given to people that they believed were "incapable, by habit or taste, of appreciating its value."⁷³ Just as Far Western states and territories had taken it on themselves to organize battalions to fight what they saw as Indian predations, they also thought that they should have the responsibility of deciding where and how Indians should live in their state. In California, which had become a state before federal Indian agents even arrived, the legislature argued that there was no precedent for establishing federal reservations in a state "after its independent organization and admission to the rights and powers of a member of the family of States."⁷⁴ The legislature also objected to the power of the federal government over reservations lands, suggesting that the government could not provide stable regulation from such a distance and that this authority should be delegated to the state.⁷⁵ A Sacramento paper argued that Indian agents were "forming plans which, if consummated, will transfer to the Indians fully one-half of all the arable or mineral lands in California, which belong to the General Government."⁷⁶ The belief among California settlers that the Indians were destined to fade away before the push of white expansion led some to see federal Indian policy "as being at war with the interests of the people and of the Indians themselves." The same article in the *Los Angeles Star* argued that federal policy "crazed the heads of the leaders of the different tribes" and "induced pride, self-importance and clan-ships, which had

⁷¹ Phillips, *Indians and Indian Agents*, 109-31.

⁷² Jonathan Baxter Harrison, *The Latest Studies on Indian Reservations* (Philadelphia: Indian Rights Association, 1887), 142.

⁷³ Majority report, February 11, 1852, *Journal of the California Senate*, 3rd sess., 597-600.

⁷⁴ *Journal of the House of Assembly of California, at the Eleventh Session of the Legislature*, (Sacramento: C.T. Botts, State Printer, 1860), 715.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Sacramento Placer Times & Transcript*, July 30, 1851, quoted in Phillips, *Indians and Indian Agents*, 160.

almost ceased to exist."⁷⁷ An 1859 petition from Tehama County residents argued that "[i]n the establishment of the present system of reservations in California it was the intention and belief of its projectors that within three years the Indians would maintain themselves by their own labor" and that the lands of the Nome Lackee Reservation "are among the best in our State and capable of subsisting a valuable community of settlers who would afford within themselves a much purer and better protection against ... attacks than any that has heretofore or is likely hereafter to be extended to us by the General Government."⁷⁸

Both those commentators who thought that American Indian reservations were inhumane and ineffective and those settlers who objected to federal control of Far Western Indian policy could point to British Columbia as a counterexample to U.S. efforts. Although the region's status as a far-distant British colony during its first years of settlement proved initially beneficial for Indian groups, the lack of formal policy made these groups vulnerable to the exploitation of provisional officials when British Columbia joined the Dominion of Canada in 1871. Douglas made a few treaties in the 1850s, but for the most part the colony of British Columbia did not make treaties. The government also granted Indians very few reserves, instead attempting to satisfy Indian land claims without formally recognizing their right to the land.⁷⁹ Still, with low population density and ample land, they were able to do so without major objections from settlers and without dislocating many tribes.

Ultimately, however, British Columbia's Indian policy eroded Native land rights even more effectively than U.S. policy. While under Douglas the lack of formal reserves was coupled with a policy that allowed Indians to claim land under the same terms as white immigrants and ultimately join the society of British Columbia on equal terms, subsequent policy-makers explicitly denied Indians this right, and reduced the size of the few reserves that had been created.⁸⁰ After joining the Dominion of Canada, British Columbia reconfigured its Indian policy and fought with the federal government over the amount of land to allocate for the reserves. The original Order in Council of 1873 that established British Columbia's new provincial Indian land policy provided for eighty acres to be granted to every Indian family of five persons, but the British Columbian government argued that "under the Terms of Union the local Government are only bound 'to give tracts of land of such extent as had hitherto been the practice of the local Government to appropriate for that purpose,' – ten acres for every family of five

⁷⁷ Los Angeles Star, August 14, 1852, quoted in John Walton Caughey, "Introduction," in *The Indians of Southern California in 1852: The B.D. Wilson Report and a Selection of Contemporary Comment*, ed. John Walton Caughey (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1952), 75.

⁷⁸ United States National Archives, Office of Indian Affairs, RG 75, letters received, California, 1859, in Robert Fleming Heizer, *The Destruction of California Indians; A Collection of Documents from the Period 1847 to 1865 in Which are Described Some of the Things That Happened to Some of the Indians of California* (Santa Barbara, CA: Peregrine Smith, 1974), 138.

⁷⁹ I. W. Powell, *Report of the superintendent of Indian Affairs, for British Columbia, for 1872 & 1873* (Ottawa: I.B. Taylor, 1873), 25.

⁸⁰ Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849-1989* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1990), 41-2.

persons."⁸¹ This new British Columbian policy began even before confederation, spearheaded by British Columbia's new Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works, James Trutch, who would become Lieutenant-Governor of the province in 1871. Trutch wrote in an 1867 report on Indian reserves along the lower Fraser River that "[t]he Indians have really no right to the lands they claim, nor are they of any actual value or utility to them; and I cannot see why they should either retain these lands to the prejudice of the general interests of the Colony, or be allowed to make a market of them."⁸² In 1872, Trutch advised Sir John A. Macdonald, then both Prime Minister of Canada and Minister of the Interior, that a treaty policy would not work in British Columbia, since "we have never brought out any Indian claims to lands nor do they expect we should." He argued that any effort to start buying land claims "would go back on all that has been done here for 30 years past" and that "[o]ur Indians are sufficiently satisfied and had better be left alone as far as a new system towards them is concerned."⁸³

Ultimately, those Americans who had predicted that with more extensive settlement, British Columbia would face the same problems that the U.S. Far West were proven correct. While British Columbia would never establish reservations the way that the United States had in the mid-nineteenth century, by the 1870s both nations had fallen into a parallel policy and were increasingly working to restrict Indian land grants. Only a few decades earlier, British Columbia had seemed to many to have a model Indian policy, so much so that an early report on the situation in the new province argued that its peaceful race relations would be an asset to Canada.⁸⁴ By the time the report had even been written, however, British Columbia was on its way to developing the most restrictive Indian policy in Canada.

Meanwhile, as the federal governments of both the United States and Canada strengthened their hold on the transcontinental nation, they moved to consolidate and standardize their national Indian legislation. The Indian Act of 1876 consolidated the laws and policies of Canada. Central to its provisions was the establishment of routes for Indians to become citizens. Later acts would give the Canadian government increased powers to encourage assimilation, including the power to depose elected chiefs who were considered undesirable, to forbid traditional ceremonies and other practices, including the

⁸¹ David Laird, Department of the Interior, "British Columbia Reserves," March 1, 1874, in British Columbia, *Papers Connected with the Indian Land Question*, 130-1.

⁸² Joseph W. Trutch, "Lower Fraser River Indian Reserves," August 1867, in *Ibid.*, 42.

⁸³ Dennis Madill, *British Columbia Indian Treaties in Historical Perspective* (Ottawa, Canada: Research Branch, Corporate Policy, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1981), 34.

⁸⁴ The report used a now-typical comparison to the United States to make its claim, declaring that for British Columbia's Indian groups, "the person of the British subject—'King George Man'—as they call him, is sacred, but such is not the case with the American from the United States. For one reason or for another, whether because they believe that the Indian races have been illtreated in the American Union, or because they are impelled by some other motive, the Indians of Columbia are not partial to Americans." Canada. Department of Public Works, *Report of the Hon. H.L. Langevin, Minister of Public Works* (Ottawa: I.B. Taylor, 1972), 28.

potlatch in British Columbia, and to force Indian children to attend boarding schools.⁸⁵ In 1887 the United States passed the Dawes Act, which allowed reservation lands to be broken up into small allotments that could then be distributed to individuals and families. These lands would be held in trust by the federal government and could not be sold for twenty-five years, but unallotted land was made available for sale to white settlers. This act and subsequent related acts established schools to teach Indian farming techniques and boarding schools to teach Indian children and acculturate them into white ways of life. Indians who "adopted the habits of civilized life" would be granted U.S citizenship.

Other events in the late nineteenth century underscored the growing similarity of the Indian policy of both transcontinental nations. The violence in the United States Far West proved to be only a prelude to violence in the intermountain West of both nations. Unlike the violence of mid-century, this was not confined to the United States. The fighting in both countries was controlled at the federal level, but stretched on for years. Still, few in the United States now worried about the comparison of their Indian policy to that of Canada. While the low population density in the Canadian West and the corresponding lack of a feeling of necessity to pursue an aggressive Indian policy kept the region relatively peaceful into the 1880s, uprisings in the Red River Valley and subsequent violence and repression demonstrated that the policy of acculturation and domination in both transcontinental nations would lead to similar results.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Andrew Armitage, *Comparing the Policy of Aboriginal Assimilation: Australia, Canada, and New Zealand* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1995), 77-79.

⁸⁶ Jill St. Germain, *Indian Treaty-Making Policy in the United States and Canada, 1867-1877* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 163-6.

Chapter Two

Regional Sentiment and Transnational Exchange in the Far West

By the end of 1860, after years of escalating sectional dispute, the Southern states were on the brink of secession, and the United States was poised for war. Along the Pacific Coast, however, in a region that had belonged to the United States for little more than a decade, some of the residents were also considering the possibility of their own secession. In 1861, the Sonora *Democrat* proclaimed that,

[w]e are for a Pacific Republic, if, unfortunately, the Confederacy should be disrupted. We believe it to be the true policy of California, in such an event, to cut loose from both sections, and not involve herself in the general ruin. She has all the elements of greatness within her borders. Situated thousands of miles from the distracted States, she would be an asylum of peace and safety in the eyes of the people of the older States, and many thousands would flock to her shores,—the effect of which must be to build up on the Pacific a mighty, prosperous, and independent nation.¹

Invoking Thomas Jefferson's prediction that the Pacific slope of North America was destined to be a "great, free and independent empire," the advocates of a Pacific Republic argued that the Pacific Coast was too far from Washington, D.C. to be fairly ruled by that distant capital. Although the settlement of the Pacific Coast of North America, particularly by the United States, was the culmination of decades of a nationalistic drive for expansion, regional ties developed faster than transnational ties, enough so that at times the region seemed not only distant from the centers of North American populations and political authority to the east, but on the verge of separation from them. Movements to create independent nations along the North Pacific Coast, though they were scattered and never gained wide support, demonstrate the continuing autonomy of the region throughout the nineteenth century.

The annexation of lands along the Pacific offered the United States the chance to span the North American continent. In order to make this new expanded state a unified nation rather than a sprawling and divided empire, the federal government would have to stretch economic, political, and cultural ties across thousands of miles. However, the early commercial development of the Far West enriched regional ties at the expense of connections across North America. Increasing settlement and economic development often reinforced transnational north-south links at the expense of east-west transcontinental links. This chapter explores the development of the Far West after 1848 and argues that regional unity, the growth of urban networks, and transnational linkages created a local autonomy that challenged American federal authority.

¹ Quoted in *Alta California* (San Francisco), Jan. 8, 1861.

Although the North Pacific coast stood at the crossroads of nations and empires before 1848, after the Gold Rush the United States became the dominant economic power in the region. Therefore, while British North American settlers served as trading partners, they were far more dependent on San Francisco and other American settlements for supplies, transportation, and information than the United States was dependent on them for markets. The links between British Columbia and the rest of Canada, both economically and socially, were weaker than those connecting California, the Pacific Northwest, and the rest of the United States. The transnational links between the United States Far West and British Columbia, therefore, increased British and Canadian fears that the colony (and later, province) might choose to become a part of the United States. South of the border, the markets that British Columbia provided allowed the American Northwest further economic independence from the eastern United States.

In part, this chapter examines the tension between nationalism and regionalism during the particular era of westward expansion. Within U.S. historiography, the term regionalism is primarily used in two ways – first, to describe the cultural and demographic regions that internally divide nations and second, to describe the borderland regions that reveal the porous nature of national boundaries and destabilize the conception of the nation-state. The Pacific slope during the period that I study formed a region in both senses of the word.² The Far Wests of the US and British North America were distinct regions within their larger national and imperial contexts, regions that had much in common and developed in parallel ways. However, encouraged in part by their common development and common relationship to and distance from their federal governments, California, the Pacific Northwest, and British Columbia also formed a single transnational region. Although within the American ideology of the transcontinental nation, the settlement of the Far West was the culmination of a national project, the region that was created through this sentiment had both non-national and transnational dimensions.

History of the Transnational Far West

In order to expand across a continent and gain access to the fabled riches of the Pacific trade, the United States sent settlers hundreds of miles beyond the existing western frontier of settlement. This interest in the opportunities offered by the Pacific Rim dated to the nations' foundation. In 1784, just after the United States had won independence from Britain, the *Empress of China*, a retrofitted ship built as a war privateer, became the first of many American ships to enter the China trade.³ When lands along the Pacific Coast became available, they were seized upon with equal speed. However, when the first American settlers arrived in Oregon Territory in the 1840s, the area had been only recently divided between the United States, Mexico, and the British

² My thoughts on the questions of space, region, and history have been influenced by Richard White, "The Nationalization of Nature," *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (1999), David M. Wrobel, "Beyond the Frontier-Region Dichotomy," *The Pacific Historical Review* 65, no. 3 (1996).

³ Donald D. Johnson and Gary Dean Best, *The United States in the Pacific: Private Interests and Public Policies, 1784-1899* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), 9-12.

Empire after spending decades as a crossroads of European imperialism. Although there were few settlers along the North Pacific before 1848, they were almost all a part of a regional economy largely based on the fur trade in the north and the hide trade in the south. The Hudson's Bay Company dominated the economic system in the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia. Its only settlements were scattered forts serving the needs of the company's trappers and traders.⁴ California to the south remained until 1848 a distant, scarcely populated frontier, of the Spanish Empire until 1821, and after that, of Mexico. The Mexican government encouraged economic development and, during these decades, the number of foreigners in the area increased, but California still remained a sparsely populated economic periphery.⁵ The first goal of American settlement, therefore, was to consolidate its own national authority in a region that had been largely outside of all imperial and national authority.

During the 1840s, the trickle of American pioneers in the region did little to connect it to the rest of North America, and the social, cultural, and economic interconnections on the North American Pacific Coast persisted. The first structures of government developed in cooperation with these existing transnational ties. The power of the HBC straddled the forty-ninth parallel until it became the U.S.-Canadian border in 1846, and the company retained economic influence in the U.S. Pacific Northwest for years afterward. After American settlers in Oregon formed a provisional government in 1843, the Hudson's Bay Company, which had been the major employer and economic entity in the region, agreed to become a party to this government and pay taxes to it.⁶ Even after the U.S. took sole possession of the lands south of the forty-ninth parallel in 1846, the HBC was allowed to retain rights to the portion of its lands and businesses that were now in the possession of the United States.⁷ In California, the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican American War, guaranteed property protection and civil rights to Mexican nationals. Although their political and economic power declined rapidly, these new U.S. citizens, known as Californios, remained a strong political and social presence in the state throughout much of the nineteenth century, particularly in the south.

The distance of the Pacific Coast from centers of power stretched the abilities of government to rule, particularly in the United States, where the federal, republican

⁴ For more on the history of the Hudson's Bay Company, see Peter Charles Newman, *Company of Adventurers: How the Hudson's Bay Empire Determined the Destiny of a Continent* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2005). , Harold Adams Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).

⁵ Steven W. Hackel, "Land, Labor, and Production: The Colonial Economy of Spanish and Mexican California," in *Contested Eden: California Before the Gold Rush*, ed. Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Richard J. Orsi (Berkeley: Published in association with the California Historical Society by University of California Press, 1997).

⁶ The decision of the HBC to become a party to the "articles of compact" was couched in language designed to allow British subjects to become part of a non-British government. See Malcolm Clark, *Eden Seekers: The Settlement of Oregon, 1818-1862* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), 173-6.

⁷ James Douglas to Captain Shepherd of H.M.S. Inconstant, May 29, 1849, Colonial Office correspondence with Hudson's Bay Co. with regard to Vancouver Island 1822-1880, British Columbia Archives.

structures of government had been designed to administer contiguous stretches of land. The long journey to California and Oregon, one often undertaken by sea, made emigration to these areas unique, such that one newspaper editor argued that "the settlement of California, which is now going on so rapidly, resembles, in many of its features, the colonizing of the old Atlantic States, in gone-by times."⁸ As Carey McWilliams pointed out in his pioneering study of California, "[m]easured in terms of comfort, money, and time, California was actually nearer to China and South America, prior to 1869, than it was to the Mississippi."⁹ Even though the need for fast links between the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts became urgent after the announcement of gold discoveries in 1848, the journey remained a lengthy one. The path that previous settlers had taken to Oregon was insufficient, since few adventurers were willing to undertake the long journey overland, much less wait for a party to be formed and outfitted. The sea route became clogged with travelers. They had to choose between a trip around Cape Horn on a clipper ship, which often took only 100 days, or a three-part journey consisting of a sea voyage to Panama, a 75-mile trip across the isthmus, and another trip by ship to San Francisco. After 1855, the trip across Panama could be taken by railroad, allowing this journey to be made in as little as a month, assuming the traveler could quickly catch a ship to San Francisco. Because of the expense of the journey by ship, however, many continued to choose the overland route. The average length of this trip was only around 120 days, but this figure did not include the time spent outfitting for the journey or the travel time to the gateway cities for these overland routes, places such as Independence, Missouri, and Omaha, Nebraska. Although the transcontinental railroad would reduce the travel time between coasts to around ten days in 1869, during the crucial first decades of Far Western growth, moving people and goods between the North American coasts was costly and slow. The travel time for news and other forms of communication was equally long until the completion of the transcontinental telegraph in 1861, and this delay further increased the difficulty of governance from a distance.

When the interest in Oregonian settlement and the California Gold Rush prompted a population expansion in the Far West in the late 1840s, the rush of settlers outpaced the further extension of governmental authority. Oregon settlers established a provisional government in the 1840s to rule over them in the absence of American authority, and less than a decade later, Californians, tired of waiting for Congress to establish a territorial government for them, called a constitutional convention on their own and submitted a petition for statehood. The hamlet of Yerba Buena in San Francisco Harbor, with a population of only a few hundred in the mid-1840s, grew to over 30,000 by 1852. Such rapid changes were outside the day to day control of a government that was thousands of miles away.

The Development of a Far Western Region

⁸ *New York Herald*, Feb. 19, 1849.

⁹ Carey McWilliams, *California: The Great Exception* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 41.

Despite, or perhaps because of its distance from Eastern centers of government, the Far West developed rapidly in the wake of the California Gold Rush. Too far away to simply be an outgrowth of previous American settlement, the Far West developed early independence out of necessity. While underdevelopment and a common economy had connected the pre-1848 Pacific slope into a transnational region, the expansion that followed 1848 recreated this region as a rapidly-growing Pacific-based center of trade and production. California became the center of this burgeoning region. Lord James Bryce, in his contemporary account of *The American Commonwealth*, wrote that California had "more than any other [state] the character of a great country, capable of standing alone in the world."¹⁰ This capability was demonstrated during the Civil War, when the disruption of imported goods spurred California to further develop its agricultural production and manufacturing.¹¹ California, which became a state only two years after it was acquired by the United States, was the conduit through which information, money, and people flowed. As the *Alta California* pointed out in 1872, in the last twenty-five years California had "not only [founded] a State here but have brought into life other States and Territories" and had engaged in "the building up and peopling of half of a great continent."¹² The state was highly urbanized, allowing its largest city, San Francisco to permeate the countryside through a network of smaller cities that served as transportation hubs and transshipment centers for mines and agricultural products. As early as 1860, San Francisco, with a population of 56,000, was the fifteenth largest city in the United States, and the state's total population had reached 390,000.

The economic, cultural, and social changes within California quickly spread to the rest of the Pacific slope. The scattered population and sprawling economy of the fur trade had made the Far West a mobile region, and the first decades of settlement only increased this tendency. The California Gold Rush brought an international population to Northern California, and while many of these miners returned to their origins as the boom died down, others moved to different areas of the Far West in search of opportunity. This pattern of large-scale population shifts caused by precious metal discoveries continued throughout the population, both for successful finds such as the Comstock silver lode and the Klondike fields and for less successful strikes such as the Fraser River strike in British Columbia and the Rogue River strike in Eastern Oregon. The independent mining population of the region remained in near-constant motion, chasing the next strike as earlier strikes proved disappointing or were taken over by companies with more advanced technology. The mining industry also increased mobility for a new group of engineers

¹⁰ James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, 2nd ed., vol. II (New York: Macmillan, 1891), 388.

¹¹ David Alan Johnson, *Founding the Far West: California, Oregon, and Nevada, 1840-1890* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 239-40.

¹² Quoted in Rodman W. Paul, *California Gold: The Beginning of Mining in the Far West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1947), 196.

and technicians who brought expertise and California-made equipment to precious metal mines up and down the coast.¹³

The growing economy and society of California drew the rest of the Pacific slope into its orbit. The settlement of Oregon Territory, although it began before the Gold Rush brought population to California, became increasingly tied to the rapid development of California. Such a connection between the two territories did not seem inevitable in the early 1840s. Oregon Territory, which had come to the attention of U.S. settlers even before California had, saw itself as separate from its southern neighbor, despite the views of many outside the territory. A popular joke of the 1850s emphasized the differences between the two regions, telling of "one of the crossroads of the western trail, a pile of gold-bearing quartz marked the road to California; the other road had a sign bearing the words 'To Oregon.' Those who could read took the trail to Oregon."¹⁴ Oregon's growth before 1848 had been much quicker than California's, but in the wake of the Gold Rush California quickly surpassed it, leading Oregon's pioneers, many of whom would stay active in Oregon's political life for decades, to complain that California was shown favoritism by the federal government. Although the development of California and Oregon would become closely connected, the differences that Oregonians pointed to had some basis in fact, especially during the early years of settlement. Oregon in the 1840s had remained quite isolated from California, and until the mid-1840s, the Hudson's Bay Company fort at Vancouver provided not only a source to international markets and supplies from outside the region, but also a source of defense.¹⁵ Oregon's political and social life was shaped by a farming, pioneer ethos and by face-to-face relationships between its leading settlers, who remained in power until and after statehood in 1857.¹⁶

Despite the differences between the two settlements, they quickly became a part of a common regional economy. Although early settlement in Oregon had been largely isolated, in the 1850s the booming market for agricultural products in California drew Oregon into a regional economy and boosted the territory's prosperity. By the 1850s, large parts of the territory, particularly outside the regions of early settlement in the Willamette Valley, had become largely dedicated to commercial rather than subsistence farming. Furthermore, although different settlement, mining, and agricultural patterns distinguished California and Oregon, the two areas were made similar by their common distance from the rest of the United States and their location on the Pacific Coast. As Norman Graebner has argued, shared mercantile interests "fused Oregon and California into one irreducible issue and created a vision of empire that encompassed both

¹³ David J. St. Clair, "The Gold Rush and the Beginnings of California Industry," in *A Golden State: Mining and Economic Development in Gold Rush California*, ed. James J. Rawls and Richard J. Orsi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 196-202.

¹⁴ recounted in Dorothy O. Johansen, "A Working Hypothesis for the Study of Migrations," *The Pacific Historical Review* 36, no. 1 (1967): 8.

¹⁵ Johnson, *Founding the Far West*, 50.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

regions."¹⁷ The combination of the busy and rapidly growing port city of San Francisco and the dispersed farms of largely-rural Oregon only seemed to emphasize the range of possibilities offered by the new region.

The Far Western regional economy was further detached from U.S. federal governance by its transnational character, which gave it further economic independence from the rest of the United States. Even across an international boundary, the development and fortunes of British Columbia were closely tied to the growth of the U.S. Far West. The growth of British Columbian cities such as Victoria and Port Townsend was linked to American investment, and the 1858 Fraser River gold rush drew on a culture and infrastructure of mining that had been created by its California counterpart. More ominously to British observers, because United States communications networks in Western North America and along the Pacific were far more developed than their Canadian counterparts, especially at mid-century, British Columbians were to a large measure dependent on Americans not only for the transportation of goods and people, but also for transportation of mail and news. Such dependence became particularly significant during times of conflict with the United States, when communication between governmental and military officials was both most crucial and most threatened. A letter of 1859, written by a Rear Admiral posted on the Pacific to the Secretary of the Admiralty during the heat of conflict between the United States and Britain over sovereignty in the San Juan Islands, declared that

[i]n the event of a conflict Vancouvers [sic] Island would be completely isolated, dependant on the United States for the conveyance of our mails, no Despatch could be forwarded to England except a Ship of War was specially sent with it to Panama, a passage of between 30 and 40 days. Supplies of all sorts would be stopped from the opposite shore, which would equally affect British Columbia.¹⁸

The economic integration of British Columbia helped the growth of the settlement, but its ties to the U.S. presented a potential threat to its independence. For the US Far West, however, drawing BC into its economic sphere of influence was a sign of its growing power along the Pacific Rim.

The distance between Atlantic and Pacific coasts of the United States was political and ideological as well as literal. Westerners saw their own politics as national and condemned what they saw as the sectionalism of other states. In an 1859 memorial asking for the construction of a transcontinental railroad, the writers argued that California, Oregon, and Washington Territory were "national in sentiment, and in action; and have no connection with the local difficulties that excite and tend to divide the

¹⁷ Norman A. Graebner, *Empire on the Pacific: A Study in American Continental Expansion* (New York: Ronald Press Co., 1955), vi.

¹⁸ Admiral R. L. Baynes to the Secretary of the Admiralty, Aug. 19, 1859, Occupation of the Island of San Juan by the Troops of the United States of America, and the Proceedings of Rear Admiral Sir R. L. Baynes, K.C.B. for establishing a Joint Military Occupation, 1859 and 1860, British Columbia Archives.

Eastern States of our Union.¹⁹ Despite the territorial and national borders that divided them, settlers of the Far West saw themselves as engaged in a common project. While the growth of the region certainly bred competition, national disputes over slavery often did not survive the journey west.

When the United States was split by Civil War barely a decade after the acquisition of the Pacific Coast, this ideological distance increased. Although movements for the outright secession of the Pacific slope attracted only a few supporters, a wider sense of independence from the rest of the Union prevailed. The creation of Pacific Coast territories and states had been caught up in the sectional conflict, but the region itself was at the periphery of the war effort. The growing sectional split between the two major parties, especially after the breakdown of the Whig party in the mid-1850s and the emergence of the Republican Party in 1856, had made national politics into sectional politics, but the state and territorial governments along the Pacific stood largely apart from this split. For the most part, the Far West supported the North and advocated the preservation of the Union, especially as the war persisted.²⁰ Even California, which already had a population of nearly 400,000 in 1860, had relatively minor participation in the war effort.²¹ The Civil War shifted the greater United States away from a concern with expansion, but Far Westerners still saw themselves as the vanguard of this project.

Regionalism and Urban Development

As regional connections in the Far West developed, links among new cities increasing formed the nervous system of this transnational region. This urban network, which centered on San Francisco and radiated to peripheral cities in the region rather than connecting back to the East Coast, was a crucial part of regional autonomy. Before 1848, transportation and trade along the North Pacific had been centered on a few isolated outposts, and links to the wider world were infrequent and irregular. This preexisting dearth of demarcation was furthered after 1848 by urban connections that freely crossed these borders. Whether as transshipping centers or as resource extraction points, cities, large and small, were at the center of western development. As one visitor reported home,

¹⁹ Pacific Railroad Convention, *Memorial to the President...* (San Francisco, 1859). Earl Pomeroy explores this idea in Earl S. Pomeroy, *The Pacific Slope: A History of California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Utah, and Nevada* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991). David Wrobel notes the existence of such ideas of the West as a unifying region during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, but it is interesting to note that such sentiments were discussed far earlier. Wrobel, "Beyond the Frontier-Region Dichotomy," 417.

²⁰ For examples of these views see *Seattle Gazette*, "Constitutional and Conditional Unionists" June 4, 1864, and *Pioneer and Democrat*, (Washington Territory) "Letter from the National Capital," Feb. 15, 1861.

²¹ California's strongly Democratic polity led Union military forces to quickly take control of the region to prevent any unrest and to station troops in southern California, an area with widespread Confederate sympathy, but the state government remained for the most part pro-Union. Distance made it far too expensive for the Union to levy large numbers of troops from along the Pacific Coast, although some volunteers traveled at their own expense to join the fighting. Leonard L. Richards, *The California Gold Rush and the Coming of the Civil War*, 1st ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 232-4.

in the Far West, "[e]very Town is a City."²² The importance of commercial farming in agricultural areas throughout the Pacific slope encouraged the development of networks of towns of various sizes for transportation and other market linkages. Although the largest among these cities, most notably San Francisco, served as links between the East and the Far West, they were also the hub of connections that permeated the Pacific slope. This pattern made the region dependant on San Francisco and other regional centers rather than on centers of government to the east.

Cities not only shaped the Pacific slope's economy and patterns of growth, but also its culture and identity. Urban boosters, who had already made their mark on the Midwest, worked to give individual cities a distinct identity and a sense of civic pride. Furthermore, cities were not only mechanisms for organizing population and trade. For the enterprising booster, they were also a means of controlling markets and, hopefully, making profits off real estate speculation.²³ The developed Far West was a highly mobile commercial society, and throughout the nineteenth century the connections that drove its growth were routed through San Francisco. Although San Francisco was only a small settlement of about 1,000 in 1848, it soon became the center of an urban network extending not only throughout California, but all along the North Pacific coast. The city's status as the entry point to the gold fields caused its population to burgeon overnight, and the first U.S. census in 1852 recorded 36,000 residents of San Francisco. Until the transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869, it reigned supreme over a largely isolated economy, and the resulting reduction in travel times only somewhat diminished its dominance. There was no city to rival San Francisco's power as a commercial network closer than Chicago throughout the nineteenth century, and in addition to its commercial power, the city also became a major manufacturing center. In his study of urban political life in San Francisco in the mid-to late nineteenth century, Philip Ethington describes San Francisco as a "small republic" before the Civil War. "Isolated from the national polity by thousands of miles," Ethington argues, "it might as well have been an autonomous city-state."²⁴ However, like many cities-states before it, San Francisco was far from autonomous from the lands surrounding it. The city had been built as an entry point and commercial and manufacturing center for the inland gold fields, and by the time the first rush of wealth and population had died out in the mid-1850s, it had ensconced itself in the regional economy.

San Francisco dominated the urban landscape of the Far West during the nineteenth century, becoming the city on which all other cities depended. A contemporary commentator described San Francisco as "a New York which has got no Boston on one side of it, and no shrewd and orderly rural population on the other, to keep

²² Daniel Leach, diary entry, January 8, 1885, *Trips to California, 1884-1890*, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, CA.

²³ Robert O. Self, "City Lights: Urban History in the West," in *A Companion to the American West*, ed. William Francis Deverell (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 415.

²⁴ Philip J. Ethington, *The Public City: The Political Construction of Urban Life in San Francisco, 1850-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 58.

it in order."²⁵ In 1880, its population was larger than the combined population of Oregon and Washington.²⁶ Smaller cities like Portland or Seattle would not establish direct links to other major Pacific Rim cities until the late 1870s, and so were dependent on San Francisco for supplies. After a struggle among various new settlements in Oregon Territory, however, Portland was able to establish itself as a regional center that would remain second only to San Francisco throughout the rest of the century.²⁷ Like San Francisco, it was the gateway to a transportation and economic network, although Portland's network was much smaller, and, significantly, remained dependent on San Francisco for most of its manufactures.²⁸ Portland also served as a transshipping node for a series of smaller towns in the Pacific Northwest that collected agricultural products and precious metals for shipment. Portland's ties to the interior of the country via the Columbia River gave it an edge over Seattle, which had a far superior deep water port but no water path inland and steep mountains dividing it from Eastern Washington. Seattle remained a satellite of San Francisco until it was linked directly to the East by railway. After this connection it grew rapidly, and Washington had surpassed Oregon's population by the time it became a state in 1889.

San Francisco also dominated the regions of California to the south. Los Angeles, which would eclipse its northern rival by 1920, remained small until the end of the nineteenth century, with a population of only 11,000 in 1880. The biggest town in Southern California, it was the center of a rancho economy that dated from the Spanish imperial period, but it continued to be, for the most part, detached from San Francisco and much less affected by the Gold Rush than other Pacific Coast regions. As late as 1870, the southern third of California had less than six percent of its population.²⁹ The population boom to the north did spur a boom in cattle market, but this boom was brief, as the supply grew rapidly and outstripped demand, sending prices plunging.³⁰ The failure of the cattle market hastened the transition of the region to commercial farming, which would gradually tie Southern California in to the regional economy of the Pacific slope.³¹ The arrival of railroad in 1876 furthered these connections to San Francisco. The southern transcontinental line was not completed until the mid-1880s, and it was only then that Los Angeles was directly connected to East and Midwest and began to grow independently.

Meanwhile, in the north, British Columbia's population remained small and minimally urbanized. Victoria, the colonial capital, had seen itself as a potential

²⁵ Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, 388.

²⁶ Pomeroy, *The Pacific Slope*, 125.

²⁷ Eugene P. Moehring, *Urbanism and Empire in the Far West, 1840-1890* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2004), 173.

²⁸ D. W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*, vol. 3, *Transcontinental America, 1850-1915* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 76-9.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

³⁰ Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

³¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

challenger to San Francisco as the leading city of the North Pacific Coast. A correspondent for the San Francisco *Alta California* reported in 1858 that the city "in some respects may be called San Francisco in miniature," but these few years would be the highpoint of Victoria's economic growth for several decades.³² After the 1858 gold rush in British Columbia proved to be a failure, Victoria even failed to outgrow Portland, and by 1900 the capital would be surpassed in many respects by Vancouver. Throughout the nineteenth century, Victoria remained merely a distribution point for goods traveling from San Francisco and other U.S. cities. A large percentage of the U.S. migration to British Columbia consisted of merchants and other businessmen who had made a profit in post-Gold Rush San Francisco and hoped to do the same in Victoria.³³ Many of those men would remain in Victoria, becoming part of the city's elite. These men would be blamed for the spread of support for the annexation of British Columbia by the United States in the late 1860s.³⁴

San Francisco's initial dominance of the urban landscape was furthered by the efforts of its population. Far Western transportation networks, whether formed by riverboat, railroad, stagecoach, or freighting team, centered on San Francisco. The city's location allowed for river access inland to the mining regions, and river towns such as Sacramento and Stockton grew to serve as way stations between the gold fields and San Francisco.³⁵ The natural advantages of geography, however, were quickly supplemented by active expansion and investment. By the mid-1850s, network of clipper ship transports from the East and river steamers inland ensured that San Francisco would remain a trading hub.³⁶ The city's growth as a trading hub was so rapid that as early as 1852, it ranked fourth in the United States as a center for foreign trade, behind only New York, Boston, and New Orleans. Powerful transportation companies based in San Francisco, such as the Pacific Steamship Company, the Wells, Fargo and Company, and the Central Pacific Railroad, dominated and structured the regional economy.³⁷

San Franciscans saw the development of the North Pacific Coast as synonymous with the growth of their city's power. The 1862 *Hand-Book Almanac for the Pacific States*, published in San Francisco, declared that precious metal rushes and population growth in the Pacific Northwest would expand San Francisco's economic power by

³² Quoted in Robert E. Ficken, "The Fraser River Humbug: Americans and Gold in the British Pacific Northwest," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (2002).

³³ Willard E. Ireland, "British Columbia's American Heritage," in *Historical Essays on British Columbia*, ed. J. Friesen and Harry K. Ralston (Toronto: Gage Publishing, 1980), 114.

³⁴ Stella Higgins, "British Columbia and the Confederation Era," in *British Columbia & Confederation*, ed. W. George Shelton (Victoria: Morriss Printing Co., 1967), 19.

³⁵ A. C. W. Bethel, "The Golden Skein: California's Gold-Rush Transportation Network," in *A Golden State: Mining and Economic Development in Gold Rush California*, ed. James J. Rawls and Richard J. Orsi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 256-7.

³⁶ Roger W. Lotchin, *San Francisco, 1846-1856: From Hamlet to City* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 31-2.

³⁷ Meinig, *Transcontinental America*, 47.

creating important new markets.³⁸ To a large degree, however, the reverse was true – the concentration of economic power in San Francisco also fueled the growth of the entire Pacific slope. The relative autonomy of the Far West was dependent on locally-generated wealth in San Francisco, which enabled investment to occur largely independent from Eastern financial centers.³⁹ Historian David Igler has argued that San Francisco's regional influence was built off its "centralization of finance capital, legal offices, and corporate boardrooms."⁴⁰ It was through these mechanisms that San Francisco's most ambitious businessmen were able to shape not only the city, but the region around them through investment, land deals, manufacturing and distribution, and trade.⁴¹ The Gold Rush rapidly built San Francisco's store of capital, and the efforts of its leading businessmen and its position of power in the Far West ensured that the profits of subsequent precious metal finds, such as the silver extracted from the Comstock Lode in Nevada in the 1860s and 1870s and the gold found in the Klondike in 1897, would be funneled through San Francisco. Some of these connections were the direct result of San Franciscans' efforts. For example, mining and development around the Comstock Lode were largely directed by San Francisco-based capitalists, particularly William Ralston.⁴² Others were not, such as in 1858, when the Fraser River gold rush sparked a rush of treasure seekers to far-distant British Columbia. Despite San Francisco's distance, the gold rush poured money into the city's economy.⁴³

Driven by its transportation connections and access to capital, San Francisco became the unchallenged commercial center of the North Pacific Coast. Eugene Moehring described the process as turning a "traditional Indian hunting and fishing zone into a giant capitalist funnel pouring a steady stream of wood, trout, salmon, and precious metals" into Pacific Coast urban centers.⁴⁴ As the economy of the Pacific coast became increasingly based on commerce, San Francisco's influence only increased. Even Oregon, which had been founded on agrarian ideals, moved quickly to commercial agriculture.⁴⁵ In addition, even though in the first years of the Gold Rush California was forced to import nearly all of its food supplies, the state quickly moved beyond self-sufficiency into a major exporter of agricultural goods. Crops such as wheat went not only to other areas of the Pacific slope but to the East Coast, the Pacific Islands, Asia,

³⁸ *Hand-Book Almanac for the Pacific States: An Official Register and Business Directory* (San Francisco: H.H. Bancroft & Co., 1863), 274-275, cited in Moehring, *Urbanism and Empire*, 38.

³⁹ D. W. Meinig, "American Wests: Preface to a Geographical Interpretation," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 62, no. 2 (1972): 167.

⁴⁰ David Igler, "The Industrial Far West: Region and Nation in the Late Nineteenth Century," *The Pacific Historical Review* 69, no. 2 (2000): 179.

⁴¹ David Igler details one firm's success in this project in ———, *Industrial Cowboys: Miller & Lux and the Transformation of the Far West, 1850-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

⁴² Gray A. Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 38-43.

⁴³ Rodman W. Paul, "After the Gold Rush: San Francisco and Portland," *The Pacific Historical Review* 51, no. 1 (1982): 10.

⁴⁴ Moehring, *Urbanism and Empire*, 185.

⁴⁵ Pomeroy, *The Pacific Slope*, 95.

Australia, and New Zealand.⁴⁶ San Francisco's rapidly growing manufacturing sector made it more than just a commercial city, however. Areas within the Far Western urban network became increasingly dependent not only on the city's transportation connections and transshipping services, but on its products as well. By 1880, one-third of San Francisco's population was engaged in manufacturing, and the city ranked ninth nationally as a manufacturing center.⁴⁷ As geographer Richard Walker has recounted, San Francisco's broad manufacturing base included "sectors such as food, led by sugar, canning, lumber and wood products, metals, leather, clothing, textiles, shoes and cigars."⁴⁸

San Francisco's entrepreneurs were not only quick to invest in the development of the Far West, but also to spread branches of San Francisco based companies throughout the urban network, directly knitting the transnational economy together. The most important of these were transportation companies, mining companies, and banks, and these companies further drew the region into San Francisco's orbit and created economic connections that spanned national boundaries. Other businesses, such as fishing and canning, naturally straddled the U.S.-Canadian border. The western edge of the border, cutting through the San Juan Islands, was not finally resolved until 1871, and debates over fishing rights continued even after the border had been resolved.⁴⁹

San Francisco was also the hub of information distribution in the region. In 1880, San Francisco had twenty-one daily papers, the third highest number in the nation, and had the third-highest per capita circulation rate.⁵⁰ Daily and weekly papers proliferated in the smaller cities throughout Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia. Particularly in the early years of settlement, these papers largely depended on news from San Francisco. It was often quicker for the editors of these papers to get their news from the San Francisco papers than to wait for dispatches from the East. By the late 1850s, San Francisco papers, particularly the *Evening Bulletin*, began to develop increasingly elaborate news gathering networks, using correspondents and other agents around the world, that presented news specifically tailored to the California market. Although this freed them from merely reprinting articles in full from Eastern papers, as had been the previous practice, it made these papers targets for other local and regional papers searching for news. The pages of the *Evening Bulletin* frequently accused other papers of "stealing our news," but these thefts furthered the dissemination of San Francisco-generated information across the region.⁵¹ In an even more direct connection, the first

⁴⁶ James Gerber, "Gold Rushes and the Trans-Pacific Wheat Trade: California and Australia, 1848-57" in *Pacific Centuries: Pacific and Pacific Rim History Since the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Dennis Owen Flynn, Lionel Frost, and A. J. H. Latham (London: Routledge, 1999).

⁴⁷ Richard Walker, "Industry Builds the City: The Suburbanization of Manufacturing in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1850-1940," *Journal of Historical Geography* 27, no. 1 (2001): 38.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Lissa Wadewitz, "Pirates of the Salish Sea: Labor, Mobility, and Environment in the Transnational West," *Pacific Historical Review* 75, no. 4 (2006).

⁵⁰ Ethington, *The Public City*, 20.

⁵¹ Carter John Denton, "Before the Telegraph: The News Service of the San Francisco Bulletin, 1855-1861," *The Pacific Historical Review* 11, no. 3 (1942).

newspaper in Victoria was founded by San Francisco newspapermen who brought a press to the city in 1858. The *Victoria Gazette* received the bulk of its information from San Francisco sources, and about a third of its advertising came directly from that city.⁵² Newspapers throughout both Oregon and British Columbia reprinted articles from San Francisco newspapers and printed information gathered by these newspapers' correspondents in the Eastern U.S., and abroad. The practice was reciprocal, however, as San Francisco papers reprinted freely from papers such as the *Oregonian Statesman*, the *Victoria Gazette*, and the *Olympian Pioneer* to construct stories of events in other regions of the Far West.⁵³

The rapid settlement of the Pacific Coast and the reach of the settlement into remote gold fields spurred the original development of transportation connections, and an accident of geography placed San Francisco at the center of these links. Just as quickly, however, these connections began to be used for more than just the transportation of precious metals and supplies. Through the deliberate efforts of prospectors, urban boosters, land speculators, and merchants, these links drew even the farthest reaches of the Pacific slope into a commercialized and industrialized economy.

Regionalism and the Challenges of National Integration

The internal connections along the Pacific slope strained the area's transcontinental ties to the east. The growth of a transnational region along the Pacific Coast was so dramatic during the early years of settlement that many commentators thought that the region might seek to become independent rather than remaining a part of other North American nations. In the United States, despite economic and ideological independence, the idea of politically detaching the Far West from the rest of the nation never received much support. A large majority of settlers in California, Oregon, and Washington had emigrated from lands east of the Mississippi. Despite their sense of the unique opportunities that would be provided by emigration to the Pacific slope, these settlers had arrived expecting the region to remain a part of the United States, and this expectation remained even if they often objected to aspects of federal government rule. In British Columbia, however, movements to remain separate from Canada gained more ground. Early immigrants to British Columbia came to settle in an independent colony, and many came directly from Britain or the United States rather than from other parts of British North America. Becoming a part of a transcontinental nation was not even an option for the colony until the Dominion of Canada was created in 1867. Particularly during debates about the desirability of joining Canada, British Columbia's political leaders seriously considered not only the option of remaining an independent colony, but also that of becoming a part of the United States. These BC connections strengthened the regional unity and authority that linked the US Far West to the Pacific Rim rather than to Washington, D.C.

⁵² Ireland, "British Columbia's American Heritage," 114-5.

⁵³ Lewis J. Swindle, *The Fraser River Gold Rush of 1858, as Reported by the California Newspapers of 1858: Was it a "Humbug?"* (Victoria, B.C.: Trafford, 2001).

Support for a separate Pacific Republic in the United States, although it was very limited, was enduring. Such plans received scattered support as the population of the region began to boom in the 1850s, and enthusiasm for the possibility became far more widespread in the years leading up to the Civil War, as the eastern United States stood at the brink of political collapse. Some supporters of separation argued that the proposed Pacific Republic should include areas of northern Mexico, while others believed that British Columbia, at that time still a crown colony of Great Britain, was destined to join. An 1855 Washington Territory newspaper report discussed rumors of a plan in California to unite that state with Utah, Oregon, and Washington in an "independent Government on the Pacific," and argued that an independent republic was needed in order "to bring nearer home to the people on the Pacific the powers of government, to secure independence, to cut off overland connection, and to make the new republic the depot of Asiatic trade."⁵⁴ However, fears that the taxes required to establish an independent government would be ruinous and that the Pacific regions would be unable to provide for their own defense against Indians led to condemnation of the plan.⁵⁵ In an 1859 resolution demanding the swift completion of a transcontinental railroad, delegates threatened that if such a railroad was delayed, "a new generation, bound by no ties of birth to the older states," would come to feel only "coldness and indifference" toward the Union.⁵⁶ In the East, commentators had long feared that the distance between the newly growing settlements on the Pacific Coast and the rest of the United States and Canada was too great for the two to continue as a single country, and feared that California and Oregon, once populous enough, would become independent. In 1849, the *New York Herald* asked, "What will this general and overwhelming spirit of emigration lead to? Will it be the beginning of a new empire in the West—a revolution in the commercial highways of the world—a depopulation of the old States for the new republic on the shores of the Pacific?"⁵⁷

One plot for separation grew out of both the distance of the Far West from the rest of the Union during the Civil War and transnational links between the United States and British Columbia. An 1862 article in the Washington Territory *Overland Press*, which would be reprinted in British Columbia's *Victoria Daily Press*, reported that John Adair, Jr., a West Point graduate, had resigned his commission and moved to Canada to encourage British Columbia to secede and join a soon-to-be-formed Pacific Republic, which would become part of the Confederacy.⁵⁸ Rumors that the Pacific Republic movement was a Confederate plot, which associated it with other Confederate plans to expand across the Southwest into the Pacific, probably doomed the short-lived independence movement to failure, since the majority of settlers in California and Oregon supported the Union. To fulfill the prophecy of Thomas Jefferson was one thing, but to

⁵⁴ *Pioneer and Democrat* (Washington Territory), June 15, 1855, Apr. 14, 1855.

⁵⁵ *Washington Standard* (Olympia), Jan. 12, 1861, quoted in Robert W. Johannsen, "The Secession Crisis and the Frontier: Washington Territory, 1860-1861," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 39, no. 3 (1952): 428.

⁵⁶ Pacific Railroad Convention, *Memorial to the President...* (San Francisco, 1859)

⁵⁷ *New York Herald*, Jan. 11, 1849.

⁵⁸ *Victoria Daily Press*, Aug. 29, 1862.

engage in traitorous plotting was quite another. However, the popularity of such rhetoric reveals that conceptions of the Pacific Coast as unique and independent were reflected in opinions about its proper governance.

In Canada, on the other hand, fears of British Columbia's secession to the United States or annexation by the larger nation were more frequent and long lasting. British Columbia's growth, although it lagged behind the U.S. Far West, came in large part as a result of its position near this rapidly developing region. The Fraser River gold rush of 1858 had brought many from the United States north to the colony, and had laid the foundation for close connections between the United States and British Columbia. The urban centers of British Columbia contained a significant American population, many of whom had transnational business interests that would be more easily conducted if British Columbia joined the United States.⁵⁹ While British Columbia was still a colony, the communications and transportation hindrances caused by its low population, economic underdevelopment, and distant location seemed nearly insoluble, but joining with far away Canada did not seem to all to be an ideal solution. Particularly in the wake of a large influx of American citizens into Canada during the Fraser River gold rush, many on both sides of the border believed that it was possible that British Columbia might join the United States rather than remaining a British colony or joining Canada. British Columbia had often been the target of expansionist sentiment, since U.S. interest in the region had been ignited in the 1840s, sustained by the close ties between British Columbia and U.S. settlements in Oregon and California, and reignited after the American annexation of Alaska in 1867 increased U.S. investment along the Pacific. Allen Francis, American consul in Victoria, reported optimistically that "the people of Vancouver Island, and of British Columbia, are almost unanimous in their desire for annexation to the United States."⁶⁰ Americans also eyed the fertile Canadian prairies, which until 1869 were almost completely unsettled and under the absentee control of the Hudson's Bay Company.⁶¹ While Americans, particularly government officials and newspaper editors, viewed the annexation of British Columbia with interest, colonial officials often dismissed the matter. However, as Confederation approached, the debate over the question of British Columbia's annexation to the United States became more of a concern. Anthony Musgrave, Governor of British Columbia, wrote to Britain's Minister to Washington in 1870, saying

It was known some time ago that a foolish Petition to the President of the United States, was said to have been entrusted to Mr. Colyer, from about forty foreign residents in Victoria, but the matter was only regarded as affording some

⁵⁹ Meinig, *Transcontinental America*, 340.

⁶⁰ Allen Francis to William Seward, September 15, 1866, cited in Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 93.

⁶¹ For more on U.S. expansionist sentiment toward the Canadian prairies, see James G. Snell, "The Frontier Sweeps Northwest: American Perceptions of the British American Prairie West at the Point of Canadian Expansion (Circa 1870)," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (1980).

amusement; and indeed was of so little importance that I did not think it necessary even to mention it to the Secretary of State in my Despatches.⁶²

British Columbia's ties to the rest of British North America were further attenuated by its more direct connections to Britain itself. In a speech against federation delivered to the Legislative Council of British Columbia in March 1870, Dr. John Sebastian Helmcken declared, "the people of this colony have, generally speaking, no love for Canada; they care, as a rule, little or nothing about the creation of another Empire, Kingdom, or Republic; they have but little sentimentality and care little about the distinctions between the forms of Government of Canada and the United States."⁶³ Unlike the U.S. Pacific Coast, where most of the population had come from the Eastern United States, few in British Columbia had originally come from Canada. Furthermore, the first census of the region in 1881 revealed that almost as many of the white population had come from Britain as had been born in British Columbia. Even more significantly for the connections between British Columbia and the Dominion of Canada, nearly as many white inhabitants had been born in the United States as had been born in eastern Canada.⁶⁴ The political leaders of the province had and would continue to have even closer ties to Britain. Between 1871 and 1898, eight of the ten premiers of British Columbia had been born in Britain, compared with one of thirty-three in the five eastern provinces.⁶⁵ Victoria was dominated by British-born merchants and businessmen. Even in the extractive industries of the island, such as the coal mines around Nanaimo, British working-class immigrants made up the largest part of the workforce.⁶⁶

Despite Canadian fears, there was no serious or concerted effort in the United States to annex British Columbia. In large part, this was because to some American supporters of annexation, such a future seemed inevitable with little or no effort by the U.S. A union between the U.S. and Canada seemed predestined and as more and more Canadians would come to desire it, the union would become inevitable. The attention of most advocates of U.S. expansion during the middle decades of the nineteenth century was focused southward to Central and South America or across the Pacific to Asia, while the strife of the Civil War absorbed, at least temporarily, the efforts of those who wanted

⁶² Anthony Musgrave to Edward Thornton, February 23, 1870, British Columbia Governor's Papers, British Columbia Archives.

⁶³ British Columbia Legislative Council, *Debate on the Subject of Confederation with Canada, Reprinted from the Government Gazette Extraordinary of March, 1870* (Victoria: Government Printing Office, 1870), 13.

⁶⁴ R. Cole Harris, "A Population Geography of British Columbia in 1881," in *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change*, ed. R. Cole Harris (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 140.

⁶⁵ Garth Stevenson, *Ex Uno Plures: Federal-Provincial Relations in Canada, 1867-1896* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 157.

⁶⁶ John Douglas Belshaw, *Colonization and Community: The Vancouver Island Coalfield and the Making of the British Columbian Working Class* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 5.

to expand U.S. boundaries by force.⁶⁷ Senator William Gwin of California argued that the purchase of Russian America would "displease to the last degree Great Britain and to weaken that power upon the Pacific by the sale of Alaska to the United States. Thereby, British Oregon would be isolated by the American barriers both on the northern and southern sides."⁶⁸ However, the focus in U.S. news reports was almost always on the Canadian desire to be annexed, sometime even to the exclusion of the U.S. desire for the land. In 1867, the *New York Times* reported that "[t]he entire Press of Vancouver's Island" was "unanimous in representing that annexation is now the only possible remedy for the political grievances of the Colony," although the paper admitted that this "agitation is not fierce or noisy."⁶⁹ Popular sentiment declared that this unification was not only desired by British Columbians, but was inevitable because of the superiority of the U.S. state. A Minnesota paper wrote in 1870 that

Canada may indulge while it may in the gratification of extending its barren scepter over the solitudes of the northwest. But when those solitudes become prosperous communities no power on earth can prevent them from gravitating towards the sun from which they draw all their light and heat—the great republic on whose bosom nature has placed them.⁷⁰

The establishment of the Dominion of Canada, although it did not precipitate such a complete break with the British Empire as the American Revolution had a century before, was seen by some U.S. settlers as paving the way for differences between the United States and Canada to lessen, and perhaps, for Canada to ultimately join to United States.

The slow growth of transcontinental connections only slightly weakened the internal regionalism of the Far West. When the Canadian Confederation was formed in 1867, it offered a political future for British Columbia as the Western terminus of a new Canadian transcontinental nation. Union with Canada would free London of direct responsibility for British Columbia while indirectly reconsolidating the power of the British Empire in North America. Despite its efforts at nationalizing the province, however, the consideration of confederation actually reawakened the question of annexation as a serious possibility. While the British Government supported British Columbian entry into Confederation, they left British Columbia to make its own decision. In 1865, *The Times* of London reported that the imperial government wouldn't oppose British Columbia efforts to join the United States as long as the colony wasn't taken by

⁶⁷ For more on nineteenth-century filibustering, see May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld*, Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*.

⁶⁸ Quoted in Hallie M. McPherson, "The Interest of William McKendree Gwin in the Purchase of Alaska, 1854-1861," *The Pacific Historical Review* 3, no. 1 (1934): 37.

⁶⁹ *New York Times*, June 26, 1867.

⁷⁰ *St. Paul Daily Press*, Apr. 20, 1871, quoted in Snell, "The Frontier Sweeps Northwest."

force.⁷¹ In his study of movements for the annexation of Canada to the United States, Donald Warner argues that British Columbia's leaders discovered that the discussion "of confederation was operating to revive the specter of annexation which it was designed to destroy."⁷² Ardent supporters of Confederation accused the United States of plotting to acquire British Columbia, despite the fact that the United States for the most part showed little interest in the colony.

The building of transcontinental railroads, like the creation of the Dominion of Canada, was an effort to solidify the east-west ties of national unity and slow the growth in the Far West of north-south regional ties.⁷³ The U.S. railroad, however, which was completed in 1869, at first strengthened regional ties. The railroad terminated across the bay from San Francisco, boosting the city's status as a regional metropolis. Branch lines spread out to connect the city to the rest of the region by rail, and these links often arrived before competing transcontinental lines, forcing other cities to connect eastward through San Francisco. As one prominent Oregon resident wrote to another in 1863, "the speedy construction" of a direct link to the East was essential for the Pacific Northwest's development, since "with it Oregon will be great independent and prosperous – without it we will be a mere appendage like Nevada to the 'Golden State.'"⁷⁴ Before this direct rail link to the East was created, the Pacific Northwest remained a prosperous but small satellite of California. British Columbia, which joined the Dominion of Canada in 1871 on the condition that the federal government would build a transcontinental line, continued to be dependent on the U.S. railroad system until that line was completed in 1885.

Even after the Canadian transcontinental line had been built, British Columbia still remained very much a part of networks along the Pacific Coast. Despite this, when designing their own transcontinental line, the Canadian government worked to disrupt Pacific Coast urban networks, demonstrating an awareness of their power to separate the Far West from the rest of the nation. Although Victoria had been the principle city of the colony of British Columbia, by designating Vancouver as the new terminus of the transcontinental railroad, the federal government moved towards building a British Columbian metropolis with more ties to the East and Britain and fewer ties to the United States. The nationally-chartered Central Pacific Railroad virtually created Vancouver out of a settlement of less than 400, and had a major influence on its layout and land-use pattern, due primarily to a grant of ten square miles in the city center that made it the city's largest landowner well into the twentieth century.⁷⁵ Even though Seattle and

⁷¹ *The Times* (London), Dec. 5, 1865, quoted in David E. Shi, "Seward's Attempt to Annex British Columbia, 1865-1869," *The Pacific Historical Review* 47, no. 2 (1978): 219.

⁷² Donald F. Warner, *The Idea of Continental Union: Agitation for the Annexation of Canada to the United States, 1849-1893* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1960), 99.

⁷³ The transcontinental railroads will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

⁷⁴ Jesse Applegate to James W. Naismith, November 15, 1863, James Willis Nesmith Papers, Oregon Historical Society Archives, Portland, Oregon.

⁷⁵ Norbert MacDonal, *Distant Neighbors: A Comparative History of Seattle & Vancouver* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 21-2, 27-9.

Vancouver had very similar timelines of development, because of the power that the Canadian legislature gave the CPR, governmental authority had far more influence in Vancouver than in Seattle.⁷⁶ The CPR also established Vancouver's first transpacific steamship service, building on the connections between the city and Asia created by the lumber trade.⁷⁷ Vancouver was more deliberately designed to match San Francisco and create a metropolis.⁷⁸ Despite these efforts in the last decades of the nineteenth century, Vancouver, like Victoria remained in the orbit of San Francisco well into the twentieth century.

Regional links that shaped early U.S. and Canadian settlement along the Pacific Coast were essential to Far Western growth. Although they often worked to increase rather than decrease the distance between new Far Western states, territories, and provinces from their national governments far to the East, it was such links that allowed the region to develop despite its distance from the rest of American settlement. Early development and early settlement promoted development itself without emphasizing connections back to the Eastern United States or the establishment of federal authority. Therefore, it would take several decades for the federal government to link what by then had become a heavily populated, economically developed region back eastward through transcontinental connections.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 19-20.

⁷⁷ Robert A. J. McDonald, *Making Vancouver: Class, Status, and Social Boundaries, 1863-1913* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996), 44.

⁷⁸ MacDonal, *Distant Neighbors*, 33.

Chapter Three

Spanning the Continent: Federal Governance, the Transcontinental Railroad and the Development of a New Nation

The United States shaped itself into a transcontinental nation by extending authority over the Far West and sending settlers to populate these newly acquired lands. Annexation and settlement, however, did not complete the process of integrating distant acquisitions on equal terms with the rest of the United States and bridging the gap between old and new frontiers. The distance between existing settlements and territory along the Pacific coast raised the issue of whether the American federal government could extend its rule over such far-away lands without losing authority or reducing them to colonial status. The federal project of establishing governance over these lands would be a crucial test of the viability of the transcontinental nation. This chapter explores two areas of federal governance that became crucial to the growth and stability of the transcontinental nation: the system for adding new territories and states, and the transcontinental railroad. In addition, it examines the similar challenges that faced Canada in its assimilation of British Columbia, and argues that while the United States saw the new dominion as a competitor, particularly as it moved to build a transcontinental railroad, Canada remained always several steps behind.

The annexation of lands along the Pacific stretched the limits of the U.S. territorial system, which had been designed to add new lands to the nation. Settlers of the Far West, who were to become officially a part of the United States under this system, complained alternatively of tyranny and abandonment by the federal government, comparing the attitude of the United States toward its most distant territories to the British Empire during the eighteenth century. At the same time, the system itself had been placed under strain. In the United States in the mid-nineteenth century the addition of territory, coupled with divisions over the issue of slavery, tested the foundations and the unity of the republic. While California and the Pacific Northwest were intended to come into United States on equal terms with states like Massachusetts and Ohio, the United States had never incorporated noncontiguous settlements before, and rarely incorporated new lands so quickly as states. California would skip the territorial period altogether, ultimately becoming a state only two years after its land had been annexed.

The building of the transcontinental railroad was a completely different undertaking altogether, relying in part on new technology rather than long-established tradition. Ideas for the necessity of transportation across the continent had been floated in Congress as early as the 1840s, and within a few years of the Gold Rush, calls for the establishment of a rail system to California had become nearly deafening. The planning, funding, and building of the railroad in the United States, however, was an unprecedented balancing act of sectional politics, cooperation between government and business, and labor relations. After the transcontinental line was opened in 1869, it proved it to be as

valuable to the success of the sweeping new American nation as its boosters had predicted, and other parallel lines soon followed. The federal involvement in planning the line and cooperation between business and government that it entailed, however, demonstrated the new governmental needs of the transcontinental nation.

The U.S. federal government had to work quickly to try to ensure that basic governmental structures in the Far West kept up with the pace of settlement. The most crucial federal responsibility during the early years of settlement was to establish and regulate a policy toward land titles and land distribution. The presence of claims not only from Indian tribes but from Mexican citizens made land rights in California more complicated than in many other Western states. In the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the United States had explicitly promised to protect existing property rights. Immigration to the state rapidly increased the necessity of working out conflicting land claims, but it was not until 1851 that Congress passed the California Land Act, which established a judicial commission to resolve land disputes. The federal delay in establishing a forum to confirm land claims was compounded by the fact that the judicial process was slow and full of controversy. The average length of time between the submission of a claim and its final and complete resolution was seventeen years.¹ Furthermore, the early decisions of the commission, reported in 1852 and widely printed in California newspapers, were largely supportive of Mexican claimants. This angered many of California's new arrivals, who viewed Mexican claims as having largely been abrogated by the Mexican American War and feared that the government would begin taking away gold claims. In an 1850 memorial to Congress, a group of settlers complained that despite the U.S. conquest of the land, Mexicans were still being allowed to maintain a land monopoly.² Responding to increasing public sentiment against the land courts, the California legislature passed laws protecting squatters in 1856 and 1858, but these were quickly struck down, one by the California Supreme Court and one by the U.S. Supreme Court. Although the system was sometime accused of being unfair, more common were attacks on its slowness. As late as 1871, the U.S. Surveyor General for California wrote that "[u]nfortunately for the prosperity of California, many delays have occurred in the definitive settlement of the boundaries of Spanish Grants."³ The resolution of land rights was particularly essential in the face of California's rapid population growth, and federal delays in this area provoked a great deal of complaint from the state's residents.

¹ Karen B. Clay, "Property Rights and Institutions: Congress and the California Land Act of 1851," *The Journal of Economic History* 59, no. 1 (1999): 138. Despite these problems, Clay argues that the California Land Act was the best balancing of the conflicting pulls of federal and local interests and of owner and squatter demands, and that it was more efficient at resolving lands claims with speed and economy than any previous U.S. system.

² *Alta California* (San Francisco), May 24, 1850.

³ U.S. Surveyor General. "Report of the Surveyor General of California." Report of the Commissioner of the General Land Office for the Year 1871. Washington, DC: GPO, 1871, quoted in Clay, "Property Rights and Institutions: Congress and the California Land Act of 1851."

The federal government also worked to establish the necessary infrastructure to develop the Far West. In his study of federal efforts in California, Robert Chandler summarizes the actions of the national government as follows: "[b]y the mid-1850s, the federal government had authorized subsidies for the operation of steamships, stagecoaches, telegraphs, and railroads; the exploration, surveying, and distribution of public lands; the building of forts, harbor defenses, lighthouses, and dry docks; and the establishment of a rudimentary postal system and branch mint."⁴ Despite such numerous subsidies, Californians felt underserved by the federal government. In an 1854 speech, California Congressman James McDougall argued that "we have not had, and we have not now, anything more than the mere shadow of a government under the Federal Constitution."⁵ The lack of further federal action was caused in part by the skyrocketing costs in California as a result of the Gold Rush, which made even the most routine actions seem ruinously expensive to Congress. In 1850, Jefferson Davis, then Chairman of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, wrote to the Navy Agent in San Francisco that "[t]here is I believe a good disposition in Congress toward California but the extravagant expenditures there may check the inclination to extend improvements. There is some danger of this when half a million is required to build an ordinary ware house for the Customs and some \$150,000 for three or four light houses which here might be set up for \$5000 each."⁶ Some federal failings, such as the slow coining of money, Californians were able to work around, while others, such as the delay in working out the confused land titles caused by the legacy of Mexican titles and rapid immigration, caused serious problems for the settlement of the state.

The rhetoric of the importance of Western expansion shaped the relationship between the federal government and the Far West and justified demands from state, territorial, colonial, and provincial governments for increased federal funding and assistance. The connections between the federal government and the Western states have been a topic much explored by historians, particularly in the United States, although much of this research has focused on the intermountain areas during the twentieth century.⁷ However, from the first years of settlement, political leaders along the Pacific Coast made effective use of the Western ideal to gain money and other resources from the national government. What Patricia Limerick has argued for the West as a whole, that "Westerners centralized their resentments much more effectively than the federal government centralized its powers," was certainly true for the Far West at mid-century.⁸ Western boosters also used old fears of the British Empire to press for an increase in border defenses in the Pacific Northwest. The Hudson's Bay Company, as an active

⁴ Robert J. Chandler, "An Uncertain Influence: The Role of the Federal Government in California, 1846–1880," in *Taming the Elephant: Politics, Government, and Law in Pioneer California*, ed. John F. Burns and Richard J. Orsi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 225.

⁵ *Congressional Globe*, 33rd Cong., 1st sess. (1854).

⁶ Jefferson Davis to John Wilson, December 5, 1850, John Wilson Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, CA.

⁷ For example, see White, "It's Your Misfortune"., Karen R. Merrill, "In Search of the "Federal Presence" in the American West," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (1999).

⁸ Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*, 44-5.

remnant of the British Empire at its most mercantilist and as the entity that had controlled the Pacific Northwest for so many years, was seen as a particular threat. Although the United States expansionist juggernaut loomed far larger for British North America than the British North American colonies did for the United States, Oregon and California were willing to use the threat of their northern neighbor to ask for defense and development aid from the federal government.

The Territorial System and the Challenge of Transcontinentalism

The U.S. incorporation of western lands, including those on the Pacific Coast, was governed by Congress under the territorial system, which had been established in 1787 by the Northwest Ordinance to regulate the acquisition of new territory.⁹ The system would be tested by the demands of incorporating new lands into a transcontinental nation. It was designed to allow for the incorporation of new lands on an equal basis with old, but only after a territorial period, which would prepare the region and its settlers for U.S. political life. Allowing for a territorial period eased most fears that the acquisition of new lands would damage the United States system of government, at least as long as the new territory was seen as empty, populated only by Indian tribes who could be pushed aside by white expansion. Territorial status was designed to ensure that the United States itself would not grow too quickly or include states that were not yet ready. During the territorial phase, a region was under the control of the federal government, which made all territorial appointments. As Earl Pomeroy argued in 1944, the territory "carried not only national authority in facilitating settlement, but also American forms and ideas of self-government."¹⁰ Since California never would have a territorial period and Oregon only had a short one, the Far West was only partially subject to the territorial model of incorporation.

As home to the first attempts to establish U.S. administration on the Pacific Coast, California, Oregon, and Washington stood as important test cases for the establishment of new U.S. forms of governance within a transcontinental nation, and called into question the role of the federal government would play within this nation. The Pacific slope became a part of the United States at a time when relationships between the federal government and the territories were in a period of flux. Between the early nineteenth century and the beginning of the Civil War, western expansionism had become inextricably tied with the issue of slavery. The geographic division between slave states in the South and free states in the North had been formalized by the Missouri Compromise in 1820, and the addition of new land to the United States became charged by the question of which section would gain more land, states, and, crucially,

⁹ For a discussion of the U.S. territorial system, see Earl S. Pomeroy, *The Territories and the United States, 1861-1890: Studies in Colonial Administration* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969). Jack Ericson Eblen, *The First and Second United States Empires: Governors and Territorial Government, 1784-1912* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1968). , Gary Lawson and Guy Seidman, *The Constitution of Empire: Territorial Expansion and American Legal History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004).

¹⁰ Earl S. Pomeroy, "The Territory as a Frontier Institution," *Historian* 7, no. 1 (1944): 41.

Congressional votes. Debates over expansion and territorial organization, which increasingly centered on the issue of the legality of slavery, had been resolved, at least temporarily, by balancing the admission of free and slave states. Such a requirement for balance actually, at times, increased the desire for the admission of new territories in order to allow for the admission of two at a time. Debates over the inclusion of states into the Union were often also contentious, since it was at the point of statehood that the U.S. federal government gave up its right to control and shape these lands. Statehood bestowed on a region equal status with the rest of the United States. Although California's advance to statehood provoked a particularly virulent debate between slavery and anti-slavery forces, one that was only ended by the Compromise of 1850, it became a state very rapidly and thus claimed this equal status.¹¹

Although the territorial system was seen as providing a method of integrating the inhabitants of newly-acquired lands into the U.S. political system, territorial citizens along the Pacific argued that it divided them from the national political process. Officially, the representative of a territory in Congress was a single territorial delegate without voting privileges. The role of these delegates, who were seated in the House of Representatives, was informal and loosely defined, and they were rarely recognized within Congress as a group with common interests.¹² Political development within the territories was also slow and halting. As Kenneth Owens has shown, most territories were strongly dominated by one party and by a small elite group, and Owens argues that this dominance made territorial government more efficient and increased ties between the territories and the national political parties.¹³ This was the case both in Oregon, which was dominated by Democrats from the early 1850s, and later in Washington, which was largely controlled by the Republican Party from the 1870s until statehood in 1889. Still, territorial interests were often able to make themselves heard on a national scale. Such Pacific Northwest governors as Joseph Lane and Isaac Stevens served as powerful advocates for regional interests within the federal government. Both Oregon and Washington territories used such paths to ensure themselves a place in national debates before they reached statehood.

Oregon's objections to the territorial system were rooted in its earlier history of self-governance. During the early 1840s, the American settlers of the region had set up a provisional government, despite the fact that the border between the United States and Great Britain had not been finalized. Although its establishment explicitly anticipated the

¹¹ For more on the protracted and divisive battle to admit California as a state, see Richards, *The California Gold Rush and the Coming of the Civil War*.

¹² Territorial delegates were recognized, in a small way, by the House of Representatives in 1874 with a grant of stationary and a clerk to "the territorial Delegates, as a committee." *House Journal*, 43rd Cong, 1st Sess. (1874), 819.

¹³ Owens argues that one-party systems were so widespread because "the two-party system was a less effective agency for representing to the federal government and other nonterritorial agencies the concerns and demands of the territory's political community." Kenneth N. Owens, "Pattern and Structure in Western Territorial Politics," in *The American Territorial System*, ed. John Porter Bloom (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1973), 170.

expansion of the U.S. rule to the region, the provisional government emphasized the ability and right of the early Oregon settlers to self-rule. A prominent early settler, in a speech given before division along the forty-ninth parallel allowed the U.S. to extend its rule to the region, told the citizens of Oregon that "[y]ou were created to govern, not to be governed."¹⁴ Relations between the provisional government and the Hudson's Bay Company, which controlled the territory north of the Columbia River, were initially somewhat hostile, especially in 1844, when the provisional legislature, in a largely empty gesture, passed a measure extending their authority to 54°40' latitude. By 1845, however, the two sides were willing to declare a truce, and the HBC agreed to cooperate with and pay taxes to the provisional government in return for recognition of its control above the Columbia River.¹⁵ The provisional government, acting without national authority, increased the transnational links in the Pacific Northwest.

Oregonians also argued against the legitimacy of the territorial system itself, making the territory's new and thriving newspapers the forum for these debates. An 1851 editorial argued that "[s]ince all Territorial systems of government are repugnant to the true spirit of our Constitution, never was it intended to govern men able to govern themselves, and never can such a system be imposed long on Americans, who have the spirit of freedom established by their fathers."¹⁶ Six years later, prominent settler Jesse Applegate wrote to the *Oregon Statesman* that "[i]t is a curious fact that our territories are governed on almost the precise plan of the British Colonial System resisted by our ancestors in the war of the Revolution. And the rights of self government which they so nobly asserted to the world, and defended against the whole force of the British Empire has been withdrawn from the people of their own territories."¹⁷ Much of the national political effort of Oregonian leaders was directed at the reform of the territorial system. The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 had significant and lasting effects on the national political development of the United States, but it was also an important political issue in Oregon and Washington Territories. Both had been agitating for greater local control within territorial governments, and the popular sovereignty offered in the Kansas-Nebraska Act seemed to be a crucial first step in this direction. By attacking the territorial system on the grounds that it forced them into subservience, Oregon questioned the very basis of a system that was supposed to inculcate political virtue and prepare regions for future equality. Oregon was also questioning the suitability of the system for the transcontinental nation, since the Pacific edge of the U.S. was both distant from Washington and essential for national development.

The Dominion of Canada, created in 1867, stretched from sea to sea only three years later, but unlike the United States, had no tradition or established mechanism of expansion. Although British Columbia did not connect the new Dominion of Canada to

¹⁴ Address of William Green T'Vault, July 3, 1846, *Oregon Spectator* (Oregon City), July 23, 1846.

¹⁵ Frederick Merk, "The Oregon Pioneers and the Boundary," *The American Historical Review* 29, no. 4 (1924): 689-90.

¹⁶ *Oregon Weekly Times* (Portland), Dec. 20, 1851.

¹⁷ Jesse Applegate to editor of the *Oregon Statesman* Asahel Bush, Nov. 16, 1857, Bush Family Papers, Oregon State Archives.

the Pacific Ocean until 1871, the new nation's ultimate goal of expansion had already been enshrined in its motto, "a mari usque ad mare." Canada became a transcontinental nation within a few years of its creation, but the political, economic, and transportation links required to unify it were not in place. The colonies of British North America had always straddled the continent, but the administration of these colonies had done little to connect them. Canada not only faced many of the same challenges that the United States did, but additional ones, as well.

The union of British Columbia with the new Confederation to create a transcontinental nation was not inevitable. British Columbia was a far-distant colony of Britain, thousands of miles from the rest of the British North American colonies. It was more closely connected in population and governance to Britain itself, and its communications and economic links connected it to the U.S. Pacific states and territories. Unlike the U.S. Pacific Coast, where most of the population had come from the Eastern United States, few in British Columbia had originally come from Canada. The first census of the region in 1881 revealed that almost as many of the white population had come from Britain as had been born in British Columbia. Even more significantly for the connections between British Columbia and the Dominion of Canada, nearly as many white inhabitants had been born in the United States as had been born in eastern Canada.¹⁸ The political leaders of the province would have even closer ties to Britain. Between 1871 and 1898, eight of the ten premiers of British Columbia had been born in Britain, compared with one of thirty-three in the five eastern provinces.¹⁹ The continuing detachment of British Columbia from the rest of Canada, both physically, socially, and culturally made its governance challenging for the new Dominion.

Unlike in the United States, where the ideal of westward expansion was widely popular, many of the political leaders of the new Dominion were unsure of the desirability of further growth. While for some Canadian politicians, the possibility of creating a transcontinental nation was one of the chief advantages of Confederation, the distant and underpopulated colony of British Columbia did not seem to many to be the ideal Pacific outpost. Images of that colony in the East were of a rocky and unproductive backwater, dependent on the Empire for support and dominated by the Hudson's Bay Company. Furthermore, although the Fraser River gold rush and continuing immigration had developed British Columbia into more than an HBC outpost, the rush had largely been a disappointment, and population growth in the colony had stagnated.

Unlike the United States, Canada had no system for the gradual incorporation of new lands that delayed their advancement to equal status. During debates over the Terms of Union, a member of the Canadian Senate argued that a system like the American territorial system might make it easier to add new lands to the Dominion.²⁰ Furthermore, since the existing provinces were contiguous, the isolation of British Columbia from England and from its other North American colonies was a source of concern for both

¹⁸ Harris, "The Resettlement of British Columbia," 140.

¹⁹ Stevenson, *Ex Uno Plures*, 157.

²⁰ Canada. Senate, *Debates of the Senate, 1871* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1975), 250-2.

colonial and Dominion leaders, especially as the U.S. presence on the Pacific Coast began to increase rapidly. As the U.S. settlement in California began to dominate regional trade and communications, British Columbia became increasingly drawn into the U.S. orbit. The dominance of the United States over communications in the Pacific Northwest also threatened British Columbia's independence. Because U.S. transportation networks in Western North America and along the Pacific were far more developed than their Canadian counterparts, especially at mid-century, British Columbians were to a large measure dependent on Americans not only for the transportation of goods and people, but also for transportation of mail. British Columbia was caught between its ties to Britain, to the United States, and to the newly formed Confederation of Canada. Although the colony's ties to the Confederation remained weak, becoming Canada's westernmost frontier rather than California's northernmost outpost held some attraction. An 1869 dispatch from the Colonial Office of Great Britain to British Columbia not only argues for the potential commercial advantages of Confederation, but reveals the comparisons with the United States that underpin such an argument, declaring that "[t]he San Francisco of British North America would under these circumstances hold a greater commercial and political position than would be attainable by the Capital of the isolated Colony of British Columbia."²¹

Although Canada's model for many of its ideas of a developing transcontinental nation was naturally the United States, many of the challenges it faced were quite different. The transcontinental movement of the United States had been building for a half-century, fed by large-scale immigration, while in Canada, the conception of a transcontinental nation and its realization, at least in terms of land mass, occurred within only a few years. The integration of British Columbia and the Prairies required massive surveying, even to complete something as time-pressing as providing railway links. George Grant, a member of the original 1872 expedition to scout possible routes for the transcontinental line wrote ruefully that "we must do, in one or two years, what had been done in the United States in fifty. To us the ground was all new."²² The creation of a transcontinental dominion also led to an increased sense of national competition with the United States, particularly for immigrants to populate not only British Columbia, but the Prairies as well.²³ Joseph Trutch complained that slow immigration to British Columbia was the fault of "the United States, through which all immigrants to British Columbia have to pass. We know what is done in San Francisco to prevent those immigrants from

²¹ Great Britain. Colonial Office, *Despatch no. 84 to British Columbia, August 14, 1869.*, British Columbia Archives.

²² George Monro Grant, *Ocean to Ocean: Sandford Fleming's Expedition through Canada in 1872* (Toronto: James Campbell and Son, 1873), 6.

²³ Doug Owram examines the increasing use of the word "prairie" to describe the Canadian West, except for British Columbia, and the increasingly positive spin that was put on that word. Doug Owram, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 110-1.

coming to us,--how our country, government, and institutions are misrepresented."²⁴ Although the path to the creation of a transcontinental nation had been quite different in Canada than it had been in the United States, the rhetoric that began to surround it, as well as the problems that the Dominion faced in its governance of British Columbia, became increasingly similar.

The entry of British Columbia into the Canadian confederation was, for many in the government, a chance to combine the best of both the United States and the British Empire into one nation. At a dinner celebrating the planned entry of British Columbia into the Confederation, correspondents of the *Montreal Gazette* noted the mottos decorating the room: "Westward the march of Empire takes its way," "The Star of Empire glitters in the West," and "One Queen, one Flag, one Destiny, one Empire."²⁵ Expansion to the Pacific Ocean had been a goal of the United States almost since the nation's inception, and now Canada also had the chance to build a vast, transcontinental nation. Despite the similarity to American ideas of expansion and competition for immigrants, Canadian expansion was always explicitly imperial as well as nationalistic. A British Columbian newspaper account celebrating union with Canada described the event as "joining hands with Canada in the grand and patriotic work of building up a second British Empire on this continent."²⁶ Even calls for immigration to the new Canadian nation often echoed imperial sentiments, as when a publication of the Canadian Department of Agriculture proclaimed that the immigrant "would have the satisfaction of feeling that he is assisting to build up a great British Empire, having for its seat the northern half of the continent of North America."²⁷ This combination of imperial and national themes shows not only the continuing ties between Canada and the British Empire, but also the growing importance of ideals of westward expansion that were very similar to those held in the United States.

Eastern U.S. and Canadian political leaders saw expansion to the Pacific Coast as the beginning of a new stage of their respective nations' history. While the early regional political leaders agreed, they saw the story of the Far West as one they would write for themselves, albeit with federal assistance. This conflict heralded the beginning of a new era of North American expansionism, and put the role of the federal government in the new transcontinental nation-state to the test. Despite their different political structures, the United States and Canada both faced parallel federal-local conflicts and used similar rhetoric to describe the importance of the transcontinental nation and the crucial role the Pacific slope played in it. However, the greater enthusiasm for expansion in the United States not only sped Eastern immigration to the Far West, it also encouraged government funding for projects to connect the nation together, increasing its political and economic success.

²⁴ *British Columbia and the Canadian Pacific Railway. Complimentary dinner to the Hon. Mr. Trutch, surveyor-general of British Columbia...* (Montreal: The Gazette Printing House, 1871).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁶ *British Colonist* (Victoria), July 20, 1871.

²⁷ quoted in O'wram, *Promise of Eden*, 129.

Building the Transcontinental Railroad

In both the United States and Canada, conflicts between the federal government and regional settlers were often caused or exacerbated by the vast distance between the Pacific Coast settlements and centers of governmental and economic power to the East. For each nation, therefore, the effort to construct a railroad from the Atlantic to the Pacific took on a particular significance, coming to represent the federal government's commitment to its expansion and ability to take full advantage of this expansion's possibilities. Modern transportation and communications technology, of which the railroad was the most important example, made the sprawling transcontinental nation possible. At the same time, the changes in governmental responsibility caused by such transportation networks shaped the structures of the transcontinental nation. The railroad, which was a cooperative effort between business and government in both nations, was the most important concrete and symbolic example of the new links between Eastern and Western lands and of the viability of the transcontinental nation.

The possibility of such a link had been a precondition for the incorporation of the Pacific slope. As settlers moved into lands along the Pacific Coast, they were dependent on the government and on private enterprise to provide links for communication and transport. A railroad to join Oregon or California to the United States and unite the nation with the Pacific was discussed as early as the 1830s, long before the United States had solid claim to either region, and the promise of a transcontinental railroad was one of the major demands of British Columbian leaders before the colony joined the Canadian Confederation.²⁸ An undertaking of that magnitude required the direction of the federal governments of both countries, as well as large amounts of financial assistance.

Those in Canada and the United States who lobbied for the completion of the transcontinental railroad argued that it was essential to securing the connections to civilization for the Pacific Coast regions. The railroad would both link the Atlantic trade with the Pacific and provide the means for European-descended settlers to flood into the far-distant lands. Like Henry George, writing in 1868, railroad advocates believed that the "railroad will not merely open a new route across the continent; it will be the means of converting a wilderness into a populous empire."²⁹ The qualities connoted by civilization – economic development, urbanism, and infrastructure, for example, would not be completely new to the Pacific Coast region. The fur trade and its trading networks had begun drawing the North Pacific Coast into the international economic community

²⁸ For further details of the history of the transcontinental railroad in the United States, see John Hoyt Williams, *A Great and Shining Road: The Epic Story of the Transcontinental Railroad* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1996). and William Francis Deverell, *Railroad Crossing: Californians and the Railroad, 1850-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). For the history of the Canadian transcontinental railroad, see Harold Adams Innis, *A history of the Canadian Pacific Railway* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971). John A. Eagle, *The Canadian Pacific Railway and the Development of Western Canada, 1896-1914* (Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989). and A. A. den Otter, *The Philosophy of Railways: The Transcontinental Railway Idea in British North America* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

²⁹ Henry George, "What the Railroad will Bring Us," *Overland Monthly and Out West magazine* 1 no. 4 (Oct. 1868): 297.

during the eighteenth century, and the Gold Rush had greatly accelerated this process. San Francisco had become the center of a trading and communications network that came to include British Columbia, Oregon, and Washington. The businesses and political leaders that shaped this network, however, had presumed that the railroad would soon connect them to the centers of settlement to the East. In Canada, despite delays in construction, both British Columbians and national leaders saw the railroad as both a symbol of and a necessity for the nation's growth.

The necessity of the railroad placed California, Oregon, and British Columbia in similarly colonial positions with respect to their federal governments, precluding, to some degree, the development of a transcontinental nation (rather than another, less equal model). The lack of a railroad slowed the economic and political integration of these regions, and the railroad took on an important symbolic value for residents of the Far West, one that may well have outstripped its practical benefits. In 1856, the San Francisco *Alta California* argued that all of the new state's political energy should be focused in one direction, declaring that "[t]he railroad is of more value to us than the election of forty Presidents."³⁰ British Columbia was able to use the influence it wielded in negotiations over joining Canadian Confederation in 1871 to make the completion of a railroad to the Pacific into a requirement in the Terms of Union. John William MacDonal, who represented British Columbia in the Canadian Senate for over forty years, would recall later that "[t]he chief advantage of Confederation with Canada was the promise of the Railway."³¹

The United States began to plan for its first transcontinental railroad even before it gained territory in the Far West. The dream of connecting the United States to the Pacific had existed since the nation's founding, and as railway lines began to crisscross the U.S. landscape in the 1840s, this technology became seen as the means to fulfill this dream. Proposals for the U.S. transcontinental railroad were seriously considered by Congress as early as 1845, when Asa Whitney proposed a plan for the government to fund its construction.³² Despite overwhelming enthusiasm for the idea of a transcontinental railroad, its building was delayed both by the seemingly impossible magnitude of the project and by political and sectional conflict. The railroad would provide an economic boost not only to the Far West, but to the region through which it traveled. When Jefferson Davis, then Secretary of War, presented a report of efforts surveying four possible routes to Congress in 1855, he recommended the southernmost one. In so doing, he passed over the recommendation of Isaac Stevens, who, on his way to become the first Governor of Washington Territory, commanded the survey of the potential route by way of the Missouri and Columbia Rivers. In his report, Stevens had declared that "Nature has clearly indicated the northern pathway."³³ Such sectional

³⁰ *Alta California* (San Francisco), Aug. 7, 1856, quoted in Pomeroy, *The Pacific Slope*, 75.

³¹ William John Macdonald recollections, in *British Columbia Sketches*, Victoria 1878, Bancroft Library.

³² For the earlier history of ideas for the railroad, see Richard V. Francaviglia and Jimmy L. Bryan, Jr., "'Are We Chimerical in This Opinion?' Visions of a Pacific Railroad and Westward Expansion before 1845," *The Pacific Historical Review* 71, no. 2 (2002).

³³ *Pacific Railway Surveys*, Vol. I, "Report by I. I. Stevens," 114.

conflict delayed Congressional efforts to decide on a plan for the railroad, and ultimately, it was not until the Civil War, when Southern legislators left Congress, that the question of the route was decided.

While Congress debated, Pacific Coast residents waited impatiently, believing that the railroad should have been constructed with far more speed. In a speech in Congress in 1854, California Representative James McDougall argued that "the want of a railroad to the Pacific operates a direct loss to the people of the United States in time, property, and money, each year equal to the annual expenses of the Federal government."³⁴ It was broadly agreed among Congressmen that the railroad would "place our government in a just and merited position among the leading nations of the earth" and that "Providence has reserved us for such a destiny and such a history as this."³⁵ President Buchanan argued for the legality of government assistance for the railroad by declaring that it was necessary both for the military and the post office, but these justifications were always secondary to arguments for the railway's commercial benefits.

The difficulties of who would build the railroad and how it would be funded seemed to many in Congress to be nearly insoluble, despite widespread belief in the importance of the construction of the transcontinental link. These questions of responsibility and funding were at the center of questions of the viability of the transcontinental nation. The funding of infrastructure projects in the United States had been a controversial issue in federal and state politics throughout the early nineteenth century.³⁶ While state subsidies for transportation projects had become fairly common in the United States, a project of the magnitude of the transcontinental railroad, which stretched across numerous states and territories, many of them sparsely inhabited by white citizens, was seen as something that could only be built under the supervision and with the help of Congress. Ultimately, the Republican domination of Congress during the Civil War allowed for a decision on the funding issue. The 1860 Republican platform had called for the building of the railroad with the help of land grants and subsidies, on the grounds that the railroad was "imperatively demanded by the interests of the whole country."³⁷ After extensive debate about the details of the subsidies, in 1862 the federal government committed to support the railroad through extensive land grants along the line and with government bonds. The railroad was built by two privately chartered companies, the Union Pacific, which built west from Omaha, and the Central Pacific, which built east from Sacramento. A further bill in 1864 doubled their land grant and

³⁴ *Congressional Globe*, 33rd Cong., 1st sess., 865.

³⁵ *Congressional Globe*, 37th Cong., 2d sess. (1862), 1701.

³⁶ For a history of these debates, see John Lauritz Larson, *Internal Improvement: National Public Works and the Promise of Popular Government in the Early United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

³⁷ National Republican Convention Party Platform, May 17, 1860 (Chicago, Press & Tribune Office [1860])

allowed the companies to double their capital by issuing their own bonds.³⁸ The two lines famously met and completed the cross-country rail link in May of 1869 at Promontory Summit in Utah Territory. After decades of debate, however, the 1862 bill had finally succeeded in securing the railroad's construction, and it was this success that was most immediately important to California's citizens.

Leaders in the Pacific Northwest, meanwhile, believed that it was essential for their region to be connected to the East directly by rail link, in order to prevent a further increase in California's regional domination. Isaac Stevens, the first governor of Washington Territory, completed the northernmost of the Pacific Railway surveys on the way to take up his post, and fought hard to have the route to the Pacific Northwest selected. In 1863, Jesse Applegate wrote to James Nesmith, then a U.S. Senator for Oregon, that "[i]t is by the building of the Northern Branch of the Pacific R.R. only that Oregon will become a great, prosperous, and independent State."³⁹ In 1864, Congress had already passed legislation chartering and funding another link, the Northern Pacific, from Minnesota to Oregon. This railway, however, plagued by financial troubles and years of bankruptcy, would not meet local Oregon lines, joining Portland and the Great Lakes, until 1883. The gradual arrival of railroad links to cities in the Pacific Northwest transformed the regional economy, greatly increasing the growth of urban areas such as Seattle and Tacoma. As described in chapter 2, earlier rail links had connected the Pacific Northwest only to California, and in so doing had increased the regionalism of the Far West at the expense of its transcontinental connections.

The U.S. transcontinental railroad was as important for its symbolic value as for its practical use. An early issue of the *Overland Monthly*, a San Francisco monthly magazine, called the railroad "a work that unites two extremes of a great country, that links widely-separated States, that annihilates geographical and sectional divisions, that marries the business and society of the east and west, and establishes a new highway for the commerce of Asia."⁴⁰ However, many of the tremendous advantages that most believed the railroad would offer California never materialized. Instead, the arrival of the railroad coincided with an economic downturn that lasted throughout the 1870s. The state was now linked the economies of the Midwest and East, and the problems of the Panic of 1873 only fed the state's already volatile economy.⁴¹ The railroad did perform the function of linking the East and West of the United States together, shortening the travel time from New York to San Francisco from months to barely more than a week.

Canada's transcontinental railroad also took nearly two decades to complete, despite the fact that the promise to build it had been one of the most important preconditions for British Columbia's agreement to the Terms of Union. Building it was

³⁸ For details of the debates over government funding and oversight of the railroad, see Heather Cox Richardson, *The Greatest Nation of the Earth: Republican Economic Policies during the Civil War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), Chapter 6.

³⁹ Jesse Applegate, to James Nesmith, Nov. 15, 1863. James Willis Nesmith Papers, Oregon State Archives.

⁴⁰ B.P. Avery, "The Building of the Iron Road," *Overland Monthly* 2, (May 1869): 469-78, quoted in Deverell, *Railroad Crossing*, 22.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

also a far greater task than building its own transcontinental link had been for the United States, since Canada's existing rail network was much smaller, making the distance that the new line had to cross one thousand miles longer than the comparable stretch in the U.S.⁴² In Canada, the existing connections between the Dominion capital of Ottawa and the new province of British Columbia were even more scarce and tenuous than those in the United States. Furthermore, the new Confederation had to develop its railway system to the East as well as to the West. The first great Dominion railway project was the Intercolonial Railway connecting Ottawa to Halifax, Nova Scotia. The railway was made a condition of Confederation in 1867, and began construction the same year, although the entire length was not opened until 1876. Unlike the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Intercolonial was operated directly by the Dominion government. When British Columbia entered the Confederation in 1871, both the federal government and the new province believed that the construction of a railroad connecting the new province to the rest of Canada was essential, but the task was far more daunting than the prospect of building the Intercolonial had been, requiring the construction of thousands of miles of new track through largely unsurveyed land.

The completion of the U.S. transcontinental line in 1869 put increased pressure on the Canadian government to improve its railway system and increased the competition between the two North American transcontinental nations. The greater development of the railway network in the United States meant that travelers and goods, in both the east and the west, often moved through the U.S. system. The spread of American railways to the West Coast and ultimately to the Pacific Northwest increased Canadian perceptions of U.S. encroachment into their territory. This fear was not unfounded, as promotional materials for the Northern Pacific Railroad warned that if Canada built a railroad to British Columbia before the United States could, "such a road would preclude the idea of political relations between that people and our own."⁴³ In an early discussion of the transnational influence of the railroads, Leonard Irwin argued that the efforts of the Northern Pacific Railroad to control British North American railroads and increase U.S. power north of the border was a key factor in persuading Canadians of the necessity of confederation.⁴⁴ When the Dominion House of Commons was discussing the final funding of the nearly complete railroad in 1885, an advocate of the railroad celebrated the fact that soon "our immigrants will be able to go from the seaports of Canada to the North-West or to British Columbia without their being tampered with by American

⁴² Meinig, *Transcontinental America*, 329.

⁴³ Northern Pacific Railroad Company, *Statement of Its Resources and Merits as Presented to the Pacific Railroad Committee of Congress, House of Representatives* (n.p., 1868), 14, quoted in Shi, "Seward's Attempt."

⁴⁴ Leonard Bertram Irwin, *Pacific Railways and Nationalism in the Canadian-American Northwest, 1845-1873* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968).

immigration agents" and complained that "we have had the greatest difficulty keeping [immigrants] from being enticed away by American agents."⁴⁵

Like the Americans, the Canadians had high hopes for the possibilities offered by the building of a transcontinental railroad, seeing it as an essential ingredient of the transcontinental nation. Enthusiasm was particularly high in British Columbia, which was promised a railroad linking it to the eastern Provinces as a condition of the Terms of Union. A report on the status of the new province proclaimed:

The Canadian Pacific Railway is the most extensive public undertaking, in connection with British Columbia, that Canada has promised to see carried into effect, and it is also that from which we may expect to reap the greatest advantage, for by it all the Provinces of the Dominion will be united, and form one and the same nation, in the true sense of the word. The trade of Europe and Asia must necessarily be attracted to that road, and moreover, in making accessible the vast and beautiful territories of the North-West and Columbia, the emigration of Europe, and, it may be, Asia, will see thrown open to it an easy route by which to reach those valuable prairies and rich mineral lands, bringing in its train that reinforcement of population and riches of which we stand in need.⁴⁶

Articles proudly proclaimed the greatest advantage of the transcontinental railroad – although the Canadian network might be smaller and later-built than the American, it would span the continent along a shorter route further north. The distance across the Pacific Ocean from Victoria was also significantly shorter than the distance from San Francisco.

Despite such enthusiasm, and despite the promise of the Terms of Union, political conflicts in Ottawa delayed the beginning of construction. Scandals over the distribution of railroad contracts helped bring down the administration of John A. MacDonal in 1873. Despite efforts by representatives from British Columbia, the subject of the railway was not seriously taken up again until MacDonal returned to power in 1878. British Columbians were angry about the delay. Trutch wrote to MacDonal that "unless a change of policy be adopted towards us this community will become so alienated from its loyalty to Canada as to be a source of weakness to the Dominion."⁴⁷ When the Canadian Pacific Railway company was finally chartered in 1881, it was more heavily subsidized than the two American railroad companies had been, with a subsidy of 25 million dollars and a land grant of 25 million acres, approximately equal to the land grants for the first U.S. transcontinental railroad. The CPR was also exempted from property tax for the next 20 years. The last spike on the railroad was driven in November

⁴⁵ *Official report of the debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada: third session, fifth Parliament ... comprising the period from the sixteenth day of June to the twentieth day of July*, (Ottawa : MacLean, Roger, & Co., 1885) 2564-5.

⁴⁶ Canada. Department of Public Works., *Report of the Hon. H.L. Langevin, Minister of Public Works* (Ottawa: I.B. Taylor, 1972).

⁴⁷ quoted in Margaret A. Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History* (Toronto: Macmillans, 1958), 269.

1885, but the great span of land had been crossed by tracks so quickly that months of improvements had to be completed before the first train could cross North America, which it did the following summer.

The building of the transcontinental railroad was a significant Canadian commitment to the development of a unified, transcontinental nation. Subsequent Canadian histories of the CPR argued for its nation-building character, and explicitly stated the necessity of the transcontinental railway in creating a viable North American nation separate from the United States.⁴⁸ A.A den Otter argues, in contrast, that ultimately the railway undermined the national unity that it had been seen as promoting by building up animosities between central and peripheral regions in Canada and strengthened lines of communication to the United States.⁴⁹ Whatever the railroad's effect on the unity or division of Canada, the connection of British Columbia to Ottawa by rail was an important step in the integration of the province. It was also important in the building of the Canadian West. The CPR traveled mainly through unoccupied land, but within a few years of its completion, the company began intensive campaigns to bring immigrants to these lands.⁵⁰ Furthermore, a clause in CPR charter gave it an exclusive monopoly on the territory south of its main line for twenty years, preventing the construction of lines linking the Canadian transcontinental line to the United States. Therefore, unlike earlier transportation links that connected the Canadian West south to the United States, the Canadian transcontinental railroad was an instrument of transcontinental nationalism that strengthened east-west ties within the Dominion.

The railroad also had unintended but even more lasting effects on both the United States and Canada. The decision to turn over the building and maintenance of the railroad to private companies created new, powerful business monopolies in western North America. Over the following decades, as long as the railroads remained the only fast method of transporting people and goods across the country, the citizens and businesses of the Pacific Slope would battle with the railroads over rates, and would often call on the federal government to intervene on their behalf against the railroad monopolies. The building of the railroad would also permanently change the populations of both the United States and Canada along the Pacific Coast. Precious metal rushes in San Francisco, the Fraser River Valley, and elsewhere had already established a multi-national and multi-racial population on both coasts. The building of the Western branches of the transcontinental railroad, however, depended on massive amounts of labor, and the vast majority of that labor in both countries was Chinese. By the 1880s, the issue of Chinese immigration would come to dominate the politics of the Pacific Coast. Ultimately, as one of the largest governmental subsidies to any region during the

⁴⁸ For example, see Pierre Berton, *The National Dream: The Great Railway, 1871-1881* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1974). and Hugh Aylmer Dempsey, ed. *The CPR West: The Iron Road and the Making of a Nation* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1984). For an insightful critique of the idea of Canadian idea of the railway as nation-builder, see the first chapter of Otter, *The Philosophy of Railways*.

⁴⁹ Otter, *The Philosophy of Railways*, 15.

⁵⁰ See Eagle, *The Canadian Pacific Railway and the Development of Western Canada, 1896-1914*.

nineteenth century, the railroad ended the first stage of conflict between the federal government and the settlers of the Pacific Coast by resolving the settlers' most crucial demand. Despite the efforts of the U.S. and Canadian federal governments to satisfy the requests from their new Far Western states and provinces, it was ultimately technological development, in the form of the transcontinental railroad, that proved to be the most important factor in the effort to integrate these far-distant regions.

Although Canada and the United States built transcontinental nations within a few decades of one another, the process leading to each country's consolidation and the political structures that formed each nation were very different. However, an examination of the ideology that shaped and emerged out of each country's westward expansion, as well as an exploration of the conflicts between federal and local governments in the years following expansion, reveals important similarities. Disagreements between federal officials and local governments and populations grew the out of the gap between the ideal of the role of the federal government in Western expansion and the reality of the limitations of the ability of a distant Eastern capital to establish government in regions along the Pacific. Such disagreements restructured not only the relationship between the U.S. and Canadian federal governments and the Far West, but the very nature of national governance in North America. Although the similar efforts of the United States and Canada are most obvious when examining the political challenges that the two countries faced in the second half of the nineteenth century, the greater commitment of the U.S. government to westward expansion and the popular support that it was able to harness stood as harbingers of the later differences between the two nations.

Chapter Four

Reinforcing the Borders: Immigration and Exclusion at the End of the Nineteenth Century

The decision of the U.S. Congress to restrict Chinese immigration was an effort to shore up the boundaries of the transcontinental nation and keep a group that was seen as incapable of joining the nation from settling on national territory. However, it was also an effort that was in contradiction, in many ways, to many of the goals of forming and expanding the transcontinental nation. Excluding immigrants that had increasingly become identified, albeit in negative ways, by their hard work and frugal living, was inconsistent with the contemporaneous rejection of Indian groups for their perceived wasteful and lazy disuse of land. This inconsistency, as an examination of the debates surrounding Chinese exclusion demonstrates, reveals the contradictions within the ideology of the transcontinental nation. To politicians in Washington, D.C., concerned about both the growth of the nation and the health of its trading links to China, the relatively small number of Chinese immigrants in the Far West was a matter of passing concern, particularly as long as Chinese laborers served to aid in projects such as the transcontinental railroad. The people of the Far West, however, steeped in years of rhetoric on the possibilities that the transcontinental nation offered for the United States and its citizens, saw the Chinese as a threat to this formulation. This apprehension was powerful enough at the regional level to cross international boundaries and make the movement for Chinese exclusion a transnational movement.

The immigration of people from China to the United States was outlawed only thirty years after the first stirrings of opposition to it and little more than a decade after the growth of a serious opposition movement. The fact that this was done over serious reservations from many in the federal government reveals not only the continuing power of ideas of homogeneity to the transcontinental nation, but the power of the regional ties along the Far Pacific Coast. The movement to restrict Chinese immigration began in San Francisco but spread into the Pacific Northwest and even across the international border into British Columbia. Throughout the Far West, images of Chinese immigrants as laborers who were fundamentally incompatible with U.S. workers became so powerful that they were able to dominate national discussions of the issue of Chinese immigration and ultimately influence federal laws. The British North American colonies had been created and developed through immigration, but both the United States and Canada abandoned open immigration policies when they feared they would seriously threaten national homogeneity.

While the policing of Indian populations was not a new issue for the United States and Canada, the inclusion of Asian immigrants into the national community was. The United States and Canada faced the prospect of becoming countries that kept out immigrants for the first time, an event that was a direct result of their stretching across

the nation and becoming transcontinental nations. Indian policy for the transcontinental nation had been a problem because of the establishment of the Pacific Coast as a western boundary and the necessity of finding a place and definition for the Indian groups, who were not a part of the nation, within these boundaries. Chinese exclusion became an example of the permeability of the Pacific Ocean as a western border, as well as permeability of the newly-established westernmost portions of the borders with Canada and Mexico. In the United States, despite the fact that there had been no official ruling on the citizenship status of Chinese immigrants, they were automatically denied citizenship, an instinct that was given official judicial sanction in 1878 when the federal courts in San Francisco denied the suit of several Chinese men who wished to be naturalized. With this ruling, the Chinese became the first immigrant group to be officially denied the ability to become citizens.

The movement to exclude the Chinese from North America and the laws and regulations that accomplished this goal were both transnational regional formations, like other aspects of the transcontinental nation. Ideas about Asian immigration and the proper method for the national government to deal with it crossed borders. One of the earliest historians of the Pacific Coast, Hubert Howe Bancroft, argued that the anti-Chinese movement in the United States led to that in British Columbia, since "had no steps been taken in the one case they would not have been taken in the other."¹ The immigrants themselves also crossed borders, particularly after they were excluded from the United States in 1882. Since Asian immigration to British Columbia was only limited by a fifty dollar head tax between 1885 and 1900, many newcomers from Asia would arrive in British Columbia and slip south over the border to the United States. In this way, Asian immigration tended to strengthen the regional links between the Far Western U.S. and Canada. By the last decades of the nineteenth century, the common task of regulating the movements of Asian groups into and within North America had also drawn the United States and Canada into transnational cooperation about their immigration policy.

Introduction: Chinese Immigration in the Far West

The arrival of increasing numbers of immigrants from China in the United States after the California Gold Rush turned the Pacific Coast's proximity to Asia from an asset to a liability. Connections with Asia had been foundational to the American goal of transcontinental nationalism. In 1850, Jefferson Davis, then Secretary of War, wrote to a California senator:

That you are destined to be a commercial people cannot be doubted, but this like a tree is gradual of growth and situated as you are looking out upon Asia, it will take some time to reconcile prejudices and to open the way to a fine intercourse with a strange and to some extent anti commercial people. All this will be

¹ Hubert Howe Bancroft, *Retrospection: Political and Personal* (New York: The Bancroft Company, 1912), 353.

brought about in time; it may, probably, will work out a change by reinvigorating those ancient and stationary people.²

The Pacific connection with Asia and its people was greatly desired as a source of commercial wealth. Not only did most believe that this trade would benefit the U.S. economy, but popular opinion, especially in the early to mid-nineteenth century, felt that contact with the United States would benefit the Asian people by drawing them into international networks of trade and providing a Western influence, as Davis's letter demonstrates. To Far Westerners, who saw the Pacific Coast as land that lay open for their arrival and development, immigration from across the Pacific was both unexpected and potentially threatening. The creation of transcontinental nations was the culmination of centuries of westward movement by European peoples, and the mass migration of Chinese laborers to the Pacific slope seemed to be an unnatural reversal of this westward flood.

During the early years of the Gold Rush, the Chinese were far from the only non-Americans who flooded to California, and they were not really differentiated from the rest of the immigrants at first. Chinese immigrants were drawn to the North American Pacific slope in the mid-nineteenth-century by precious metal rushes and other economic opportunities, just as other immigrants to the region were. While emigration from China had been quite rare before the nineteenth century, the gradual, unwilling opening of China to Western trade and influence, along with great population increases and accompanying rice shortages, made emigration a far more attractive option.³ Most Chinese immigrants to the United States came from Guangdong (Canton) Province in southeastern China. In 1850, there were still only 660 persons of Chinese descent in California, but by 1860 that number had ballooned to 35,000. A Gold Rush journal from December 1850 noted that the Chinese men mining nearby were "apparently of good 'blood' and very polite towards us. The miner's response to his neighbors was to "ask them hundreds of questions about their native land," since "they are intelligent and one of them speaks good English."⁴ Less than two years later, reflecting a shift in attitude towards Chinese immigrants that was very typical among miners during those few years, a miner wrote to his parents that "Chinamen....are coming by thousands all the time" and that "miners in a great many places will not let them work." He recounted that "[t]he miners hear [sic] drove off about 200 Chinamen about two weeks ago but they have com [sic] back about as thick as ever."⁵ While the first migrants came almost exclusively to San Francisco or the gold fields, Chinese immigrants soon began to move from California into other areas of the Pacific Coast, first following precious metal rushes and then

² Jefferson Davis to John Wilson, Dec. 5, 1850, John Wilson Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, CA.

³ Bill Ong Hing, *Making and Remaking Asian America through Immigration Policy, 1850-1990* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 20-1. , Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), 11-13.

⁴ Timothy Coffin Osborn, Dec. 26, 1850, Journal, June 14, 1850 - Jan 1, 1855, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, CA.

⁵ Robert W. Pitkin to his parents, Aug. 16, 1852, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, CA.

entering other occupations. Their population in the Pacific Northwest remained far lower than in California, but the lower overall population made their presence seen even more significant. While the earliest anti-Chinese sentiment was focused in the mining region and the rest of the state remained largely indifferent, this began to shift as the Chinese population itself moved out of the mining district.

As Chinese immigrants spread throughout the rapidly developing transnational region along the Pacific Coast, they took up similar occupations and, increasingly, lived in relatively isolated urban enclaves. They also increasingly faced similar prejudices. Although anti-Chinese sentiment developed first and most strongly in California, it became a regional formation within a few decades. The 1880 census reported over 3000 Chinese in Washington Territory, a number almost equal to the surviving Indian population. In the 1870s and 1880s, as railroad construction in Oregon and Washington boomed, Chinese laborers followed these jobs and entered the region en masse. Unknown numbers of Chinese would also enter through Canada in the wake of the 1882 Exclusion Act, with many remaining in the Pacific Northwest. Beginning in 1870, Chinese immigrants also became the primary source of labor in salmon canneries.⁶ The first Chinese immigrants to British Columbia arrived in 1858 in the wake of the Fraser River gold rush. The Chinese miners would soon become predominant in the Lower Fraser region, taking over claims from white miners who left to seek newer, richer lands.⁷ Because of the much lower population of British Columbia, Chinese immigrants were able to purchase land in greater numbers than they had been able to in the United States, and moved into professions such as market gardening and laundry services. Far more than in the United States, the Chinese population of urban British Columbia was also in great demand to serve as servants and cooks.⁸ Labor shortages and an abundance of mining land minimized views of the Chinese as competitors for white laborers, and early public views of the Chinese presence for the most part focused on the economic benefits of their presence.⁹ By the 1870s, Chinese labor had become firmly entrenched throughout the Far West.

Although nothing in U.S. law required that Chinese immigration be legalized before it was permitted, such immigration would be actually given a legal foundation through treaty with China. Treaties giving the United States trade equity with European nations had also guaranteed basic rights to citizens of either nation who were resident in the other. Such early treaty provisions were greatly strengthened in the United States by the Burlingame Treaty of 1868, which was generally favorable both toward Chinese immigration and toward the possibility of Chinese-U.S. cooperation. In this treaty, the United States granted China most favored nation status and recognized China's rights to

⁶ Chris Friday, *Organizing Asian American Labor: The Pacific Coast Canned-Salmon Industry, 1870-1942* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1994).

⁷ Robert Edward Wynne, *Reaction to the Chinese in the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia, 1850 to 1910* (New York: Arno Press, 1978), 123-4.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁹ Patricia Roy, *A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989), 5-8.

its territory and to manage its internal affairs. More importantly for the Pacific Coast, however, the treaty recognized the rights of citizens of either country to reside in the other, citing "the mutual advantage of the free migration and emigration of their citizens and subjects, respectively for purposes of curiosity, of trade, or as permanent residents."¹⁰ The British Empire had made a similar agreement with China in the Treaty of Nanking in 1842. Although the treaty did not explicitly permit emigration, it stated that "their respective subjects...should enjoy full security and protection for their persons and their property within the Dominions of the other."¹¹ Under this treaty, Chinese immigrants were allowed to settle in British North America, although none would do so until the 1850s.

Early opposition to Chinese immigration did little to disturb national diplomatic efforts such as the Burlingame Treaty. Anti-Chinese sentiment was concentrated in the Far West, and early efforts at restricting immigration came at the state and provincial level, but almost all of these efforts were declared unconstitutional by the federal government. Opposition to Chinese immigration did not start to gain serious momentum as a national political cause until after the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. For example, there was little organized American objection to the Burlingame Treaty of 1868 between the United States and China, which in attempting to secure the unimpeded right for Americans to settle in China promised the same for Chinese nationals wishing to settle in the United States. By the 1870s, anti-Chinese sentiment dominated the Far West, particularly California. A nationwide depression in the middle of the decade also hit the state particularly hard. In an 1879 referendum, Californians voted 150,000 to 900 to end Chinese immigration to the United States. The strength of the movement in the Far West was echoed by a spread in the movement nationally.

The widespread opposition to Chinese immigration and the push to exclude Chinese immigrants from coming to the United States altogether were unprecedented in North American history. Although waves of anti-immigrant sentiment, notably against Irish Catholics, had swept through the United States beginning in the 1840s, they resulted in no major changes in national immigration policy, and were never wholly embraced by either major party.¹² A large percentage of these new nineteenth-century immigrants, particularly those from Germany, settled with little difficulty into the new farming lands in the Midwest. Others, notably those from Ireland, became a prominent presence in the cities of the East Coast, and by the 1850s, of San Francisco, as well. British North America had relatively little immigration before the late nineteenth century either in the Far West or throughout Canada. While the arrival of refugees from the Irish famine had sparked a wave of virulent anti-Catholicism in the British North American colonies in the 1840s, this nativist rhetoric spurred only condemnation of the immigrants rather than

¹⁰ Burlingame Treaty (1868)

¹¹ Treaty of Nanking (1842)

¹² For a discussion of earlier nativist movements, see Tyler Anbinder, "Nativism and Prejudice Against Immigrants," in *A Companion to American Immigration*, ed. Reed Ueda (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006).

efforts to restrict their arrival.¹³ After the Dominion was established, its first immigration laws in 1869 had very few restrictions on immigration. Although the laws excluded those with physical disabilities, criminal tendencies, or the inability to support themselves, even these provisions were inconsistently enforced.¹⁴ However, this policy of encouraging immigration was not very successful in the early years of Canadian nationhood. During each decade from the founding of Dominion to the end of the century, more people left Canada than immigrated to the new country, and many of the out-migrants went to the United States.¹⁵ Because of the scarcity of Canadian immigration law in the nineteenth century, the controversy surrounding Asian immigration was a foundational event in the establishment of immigration rules for the new confederation.

Ultimately, the overwhelming Far Western support for the ending of Chinese immigration and the spread of this sentiment throughout the country convinced the U.S. federal government that the issue required legislation. The unanimity of California in particular and of the Far West as a whole against further Chinese immigration was so strong that passage of an exclusion law seemed inevitable to even those who thought it was unnecessary. Even the New York Chamber of Commerce, writing in 1889 in support of improving U.S. relations with the Chinese government, although they believed that Chinese immigration had been both impolitic and unnecessary, agreed that "there can be no question as the propriety of terminating that immigration so far as it may be offensive to that important part of this nation which it most closely affects."¹⁶

By the late 1870s, the federal government's fear of offending the Chinese government was the last major roadblock in the way of restrictions on Chinese immigration. When an exclusion bill passed Congress in 1879, Hayes ultimately decided to veto the bill, and Congress was unable to muster the votes to override. Hayes objected to the bill on two main grounds – the initial period of exclusion, which was set at twenty years, and the fact that the bill violated the existing treaty terms with China. However, Hayes also authorized the renegotiation of the Burlingame Treaty, which made it nearly inevitable that Chinese immigration would be restricted. The Chinese Exclusion Act, passed in 1882, declared that "in the opinion of the Government of the United States the coming of Chinese laborers to this country endangers the good order of certain localities

¹³ British North American native identity outside of Quebec was far more tied in to Protestantism than that of the United States. For example, Catholic men only received the right to vote in all of the British North American colonies in 1830. For more on the effects of anti-Catholicism on Canadian politics, see Scott W. See, "'An Unprecedented Influx:' Nativism and Irish Famine Immigration to Canada," in *Fleeing the Famine: North America and Irish Refugees, 1845-1851*, ed. Margaret M. Mulrooney (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), Lucy E. Salyer, *Laws Harsh as Tigers: Chinese Immigrants and the Shaping of Modern Immigration Law* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 3.

¹⁴ Ninette Kelley and M. J. Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 62-3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁶ New York Chamber of Commerce, *The Chinese exclusion act. Report and resolutions adopted by the Chamber of commerce of the state of New York, December 5, 1889* (New York: [Press of De Leeuw & Oppenheimer], 1889), 22.

within the territory"¹⁷ The new bill secured large majorities in both branches of Congress, passing the House by 201 votes to 37 and the Senate by 32 to 15. In 1892, the U.S. Congress passed the Geary Act, which renewed the 1882 restrictions on Chinese immigration for an additional ten years and placed the burden on resident Chinese to prove their right to remain in the United States. When the immigration restrictions came up for renewal again in 1902, they were made permanent. The Chinese had become the test case for immigration restriction in the United States, and this first exclusion based on race would be followed by many others.

Chinese Immigration and the Far West

The establishment of the transcontinental nation and the creation of the U.S. Far West opened the way for Chinese immigration to the United States, but also for the Far West to become the center of a movement that labeled the Chinese a subhuman race and sought to exclude them from the country. Anti-Chinese sentiment helped to shape the Far West into a unified, distinctive, transnational region, as the anti-Chinese movement spread up and down the North Pacific Coast. Furthermore, between the 1850s and the 1870s, it increased the political divisions between the Far West and the federal government of not only the United States, but Canada as well, as California and later other areas such as Oregon and British Columbia began to pass their own laws to try to stop Chinese immigration by themselves, since the federal government would not.

The first U.S. efforts against the new immigrants from Asia were focused on keeping Chinese, and, to a lesser degree, other non-Americans, from competing against Americans in the mines of the California Gold Rush. The Foreign Miners License Tax, passed by the state of California in 1850, was directed against all citizens not native-born, but the first attempt at this tax, which levied the prohibitive sum of \$20 a month, was a failure, and was repealed in 1851. The following year, the California legislature passed the measure again, this time at the rate of \$3 per month. This time, the measure was almost exclusively enforced against Chinese miners, and tax collectors, who were paid a share of their proceeds, were often aggressive and even violent toward Chinese. Furthermore, they often levied the tax against all Chinese who were resident in the mining district, not just those who were miners.

The anti-Chinese efforts in California were further fed by growing anti-Chinese sentiment among the state's working class. Support for the Workingman's Party, along with widespread anger at the growing power of railroads and other corporation, grew to such a degree that discontented office holders were able to call a convention to revise California's constitution. More than one-third of the delegates to the constitutional convention were members of the Workingman's Party. The new constitution, passed in 1879, declared that "[t]he presence of foreigners ineligible to become citizens of the

¹⁷ Chinese Exclusion Act, May 6, 1882, U. S. Statutes at Large, Vol. XXII, 58 ff.

United States is declared to be dangerous to the well-being of the State, and the Legislature shall discourage their immigration by all the means within its power."¹⁸

Like this tax on foreign miners, most measures against the Chinese in California focused not on immigration and citizenship, but on the smaller things over which state and municipal authorities could claim authority. For example, a San Francisco newspaper reported in 1873 that

[i]t is generally known ... that to deprive a Chinaman of his queue is to humiliate him as deeply as is possible.... [so] it is believed, if they were prevented from wearing their tails here and if after death their bones were denied transportation to their native land, the immigration of these superstitious people would be effectually stopped.¹⁹

Ignoring a petition of protest from five of the city's Chinese residents, the San Francisco board of supervisors passed this recommended measure, along with another forbidding the return of the remains of Chinese immigrants to China. In 1874, the state went further in attempting to sidestep federal immigration laws by passed by requiring that the Commissioner of Immigration in California discover if any non-citizen passenger disembarking at the state's ports "is lunatic, idiotic, deaf, dumb, blind, crippled, or infirm ... or is likely to become permanently a public charge, ...or is a convicted criminal, or a lewd or debauched woman." Any passenger fitting these or a number of other descriptions would only be allowed to enter the United States if the ship's owner would provide a bond of five hundred dollars in gold, to "indemnify ... this State, against all costs and expenses which may be ... incurred for the relief, support, medical care, or any expense whatsoever, resulting from the infirmities or vices herein referred to."²⁰ This law was ultimately declared unconstitutional by U.S. Supreme Court in *Chy Lung v. Freeman* in 1876. As these and other laws were struck down, California's state legislature worked feverishly to find a way to restrict Asian immigration to the state that would not be rejected on the grounds that it interfered with the powers of the federal government. Efforts included measures to tax immigrants who were ineligible to citizenship, to forbid the landing of Chinese immigrants, and to require shipmasters to post bond for each alien passenger. All of these efforts were nullified by the California

¹⁸ E. B. Willis and P. K. Stockton, *Debates and proceedings of the Constitutional convention of the state of California, convened at the city of Sacramento, Saturday, September 28, 1878*, vol. II (Sacramento, CA: State Office, J.D. Young, Supt. State printing, 1880), 727.

¹⁹ *Evening Bulletin* (San Francisco), May 27, 1873, quoted in Charles J. McClain, *In Search of Equality: The Chinese Struggle against Discrimination in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 48-9.

²⁰ *Amendments to the codes of California. Passed at the twentieth session of the legislature 1873-4.*, (San Francisco, CA: A.L. Bancroft & Co., 1874), 241-43.

Supreme Court, which ruled that they conflicted with Congress's exclusive power to regulate interstate commerce.²¹

As the anti-Chinese movement grew in strength in California, it also spread into Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia. Oregon and Washington adopted anti-Chinese laws from the outset, despite the near lack of Chinese residents until after 1860. San Francisco was the center of organized anti-Chinese activism, and the Pacific Northwest remained on the outskirts. The Oregon state constitution convention in 1857 debated excluding the Chinese from the state entirely, but settled for denying Chinese immigrants the right to the franchise and the right to own mining claims or land. By the 1870s cities such as Portland had slowly growing Chinese communities, and Chinese laborers had moved north to follow the mining strikes and to work in railroad construction. It was not until later decades that a number of small cities in Oregon and Washington would become the site of anti-Chinese vigilante action when they expelled their Chinese populations, although the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 had already prevented further immigration.

Anti-Chinese sentiment in British Columbia was slower to arrive and, for a time, less vigorous than in the United States. The Victoria correspondent for the London *Times* reported in 1860 that the new Chinese arrivals "have the same protection as all other person, and in the mines they are allowed the same rights, liberties, and privileges as all other miners, and the great bulk of the population is very glad to see them coming into the country."²² Although there were fewer Chinese immigrants in British Columbia than in the United States, the white population in B.C. meant that the percentage of Chinese in the province was higher, rising above twenty percent in the 1880s.

By the time that British Columbia entered Confederation in 1871, however, anti-Chinese sentiment had grown. The initial report on the new province said that "[t]he Chinese population is regarded with no greater affection in Columbia than in California, but is, at any rate, in the former country, not ill treated. The Chinese are an industrious, clean and laborious community."²³ At the same time, other sources attest to the growing anti-Chinese sentiment in the new province. As historian Patricia Roy recounts, by 1872 provincial newspapers were declaring that with effort the white population could "hold their own against the Mongolian race," while by 1885 the same paper was reporting that increasing Chinese immigration was threatening to "overwhelm and destroy the fabric of society."²⁴ In the late 1870s, organized labor began to agitate against Chinese immigration, echoing stronger and more successful efforts in the United States, although their efforts made little headway.²⁵ The anti-Chinese rhetoric in British Columbia echoed much of the U.S. rhetoric. Most notably, the use of the word "slave" to describe Chinese laborers was, if anything, more common in anti-Chinese slogans north of the forty-ninth

²¹ Elmer C. Sandmeyer, "California Anti-Chinese Legislation and the Federal Courts: A Study in Federal Relations," *The Pacific Historical Review* 5, no. 3 (1936): 190.

²² *The Times* (London), June 26, 1860, quoted in Roy, *A White Man's Province*, 3.

²³ Canada. Department of Public Works, *Report of the Hon. H.L. Langevin, Minister of Public Works*, 23.

²⁴ *Victoria Standard*, Feb. 26, 1872 and June 24, 1882, quoted in Roy, *A White Man's Province*, 38.

²⁵ Wynne, *Reaction to the Chinese*, 341-3.

parallel. In early February 1887, an anti-Chinese pledge that was requested of Vancouverites asked them to refuse to deal with the Chinese or anyone who employed them on the grounds that "[t]o appreciate freedom we must prohibit slave labor."²⁶ In 1878, British Columbia's legislative assembly passed a heavy poll tax on Chinese settlers, but this measure was declared unconstitutional by the provincial supreme court and was ultimately disallowed by the federal parliament.²⁷ Laws restricting the entry of Chinese immigrants, passed in 1884 and 1885, were also quickly disallowed by the federal government on the grounds that they were outside the scope of provincial powers and would interfere with trade and commerce.²⁸

In pushing these efforts, the state, territorial, and local authorities of the U.S. and Canadian Far West were working largely against the federal government. First, they were working against a general national policy that migration and immigration were essential to the strengthening of any newly established society. Particularly in the 1850s and 1860, there was a labor shortage in California, driven by the rapidly growing economy, the draw of the gold fields, and the highly mobile population, many of whom were traveling back to the East. The building of the transcontinental railroad during this 1860s only increased the regional need for low-cost labor. By trying to restrict the entry of Chinese immigrants, Californians were potentially interfering with the state's growth. They were taking away federal authority over immigration and taking that authority into their own hands.

The question of Asian exclusion reshaped the parameters of frontier expansion in North America by uniting the Far West both against a group immigrants viewed as foreign and against federal efforts to prevent their exclusion. One of the most important aspects of successful expansion was the ability to attract settlers, and in some ways, the Far West epitomized this expansionist ideology, both in the speed of its settlement and in the ability of certain groups of immigrants, such as the Irish, to find opportunities that they could not in the East. The potential incorporation of Chinese immigrants into the Far Western population however, revealed the assumptions of a common purpose and a homogenous population that were essential preconditions of the transcontinental expansion.

Chinese Immigration and Labor

Local and state governments in California, the Pacific Northwest, and British Columbia pushed for the elimination of what they perceived as a non-white threat to the full development of white American society. In this case, the threat was not based on occupied land but instead on the threat of an incoming foreign population. The general stereotypes of the Chinese that were deployed during the second half of the nineteenth century were not new, but they were deployed in new ways in both regional and national

²⁶ *Daily British Colonist* (Victoria), Feb. 11, 1887, quoted in W. Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy toward Orientals in British Columbia*, 3rd ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 45.

²⁷ Stevenson, *Ex Uno Plures*, 174.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 174-5.

anti-Chinese efforts. The problem that Chinese immigration posed for the transcontinental nation was most importantly framed around the question of labor, namely, how Chinese labor was fundamentally and irretrievably different from white American labor. The rhetoric that developed to support the opposition to Chinese immigration in the Far West that was brought to the U.S. Congress and the Canadian Parliament and to the East of both nations through the press and pamphlets centered on this argument. The Chinese immigrant population was basically envisioned by Far Western anti-Chinese activists, and later, by much of the nation, as being synonymous with their labor. In public discussions of the "Chinese question," nearly everything that made the Chinese racially and culturally alien to nineteenth century Americans viewed through the lens of the labor.

In American labor history, the question of the role of racism and white California laborers in bringing about exclusion has been a controversial one.²⁹ It is true that the California labor movement helped to spearhead the Chinese Exclusion movement. It is also true that ideas of Chinese as workers of a fundamentally different kind than American workers pervaded discussions of Chinese immigration, both pro and con. These discussions were not coming exclusively or even primarily from Far Western labor unions, however, and this section is not concerned with tracing their precise origins or placing blame for the often deeply racist nature of these images. The more important question is how these images of Chinese laborers were deployed to demonstrate how unfit this group of immigrants was to become a part of the American national body.

Chinese immigrants were distanced from other immigrant populations in the white mind because of the widespread view of them as virtually or literally enslaved labor, either to Chinese leaders or to the white capitalists they worked for. This was particularly the case in the late 1860s, when those who objected to Chinese immigration portrayed them as laborers coming in large gangs that were directly and explicitly compared to African American enslaved labor. Chinese laborers were indeed working under the "coolie" system of unfree labor throughout the Western hemisphere, particularly in Peru and the West Indies. In the United States, however, almost no immigrants entered under labor contract, although many contract laborers immigrated to Hawaii. Those who traveled to the United States came for the most part under the credit-ticket system, in which a broker loaned the immigrant money for a ticket, which was then paid back with interest from money earned in the United States.³⁰

However, in the United States, the idea of the Chinese as fundamentally unfree also tapped into not long buried fears of the competition offered to free labor by an unfree labor system. The growing popular belief that a slave system was fundamentally incompatible with free labor and was seeking to expand and supersede that system had been one of most important underlying causes of the Civil War, and the growing use of

²⁹ For a relatively succinct summation of the debates that is largely critical of labor historians, see Stanford M. Lyman, "The 'Chinese Question' and American Labor Historians," *New Politics* 7, no. 2 (Winter 2000).

³⁰ For more on ideas of coolie labor and the realities of imported Asian labor in the United States, see Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), Chapter 2.

Chinese labor touched this nerve. In 1879, the *San Francisco Chronicle* wrote that "[w]hen the coolie arrives here he is as rigidly under the control of the contractor who brought him as ever an African slave was under his master in South Carolina or Louisiana."³¹ However, for some commentators, particularly those from outside of the Far West, the existence of the Chinese as a labor force was a much an opportunity as a threat. The prominence of Chinese labor on the transcontinental railroads of both the United States and Canada made the federal governments of both nations see their presence as nearly indispensable, at least while the railroads were still in construction. In 1869, an article in *Overland Monthly* magazine went further, arguing that Chinese workers could remedy what the author referred to as "the large deficit of labor at the South" and compared the labor of the two races by declaring that "[w]hat Chinese lack in bodily strength, they make up in persistency and application."³² For some commentators, the Chinese offered an alternative to African chattel slavery that was highly desirable. In 1852, the *New York Times* reported that "[f]or the reckless, indolent abandon, and passion for amusement, characteristic of the African, he substitutes the Asiatic gravity and consistency of purpose. His only passion is avarice, and it begets an unresting devotion to labor."³³

Within the ideal of the transcontinental nation, laborers who migrated to the Far West to help in its development were doing so in the interests of the entire nation. In contrast, attacks against Chinese immigrants often emphasized fact that many of the Chinese men who came to the United States did not plan to remain, but wanted to make money and return to China. This transient aspect of Chinese immigration was used to buttress arguments that the Chinese were incapable of assimilating into U.S. society. It was also used to counter arguments that Chinese immigration was an economic benefit to the U.S. by providing a source of cheap labor. Opponents of Chinese immigration argued that since Chinese workers primarily consumed Chinese goods and sent much of their money back to China, they were robbing the U.S. economy. Such arguments were also connected to a belief that Chinese laborers were unfair competition not only because they were paid lower wages, but because they were satisfied with these wages, since they were believed to be constitutionally capable of surviving on less money and most did not have families to support. Senator John F. Miller of California called Chinese workers "automatic engines of flesh and blood...with such a marvelous frame and digestive apparatus that they can dispense with the comforts of shelter and live on the refuse of other men." The Chinese had only become this way through "long training" and "heredity," and therefore it was physically impossible for white American workers to compete with them.³⁴

The general isolation of Chinese residences and areas of social activity from the rest of society in the West fed the limitation of ideas of them as mainly related to labor.

³¹ *San Francisco Chronicle*, Mar. 6, 1879.

³² Charles Wolcott Brooks, "The Chinese Labor Problem," *Overland monthly and Out West magazine* 3, no. 5 (Nov. 1869): 415.

³³ *New York Times*, May 3, 1852.

³⁴ *Congressional Record*, 47th Cong., 1s sess. (1882), 1484.

The organization of the Chinese community in the North American Far West, which was increasingly centered in San Francisco, was described by many as a conspiracy against the United States. The Chinese *huiguan*, or district associations, also known as the Six Companies, began to form in the 1850s to represent and organize Chinese interests in California, and served as quasi-governmental organizations.³⁵ A member of the organization would meet new immigrants at the docks and offer them shelter and food until they found a job. The Companies also provided recreation and meeting facilities for their members, took responsibility for returning the bodies of dead members to China for burial, and kept a register of Chinese in the United States.³⁶ They also came to provide the local government in San Francisco's Chinatown, and became advocates of the Chinese community in the white world. Partially due to racial prejudice and partially due to community ties, Chinese urban settlers tended to live in semi-isolated communities, and those within cities were commonly known as Chinatowns. Chinatowns were increasingly associated with urban blight and the spread of disease, feeding off stereotypes of the Chinese as dirty. Stereotypes surrounding Chinatowns and their impact on the city were interwoven with ideas of them as laborers, but because of their political, social, and geographic isolation, work was the most common way that white Westerners interacted with the Chinese.

In the 1870s, anti-Chinese sentiment in California increased dramatically among the working class, strengthening the emphasis on Chinese labor as a poison to the Far West. A severe economic downturn throughout the United States hit California hard, and a strong working-class movement coalesced around anti-Chinese sentiment and opposition to Chinese immigration. An earlier surge in labor organization during the prosperity of the 1860s had also led to a campaign against Chinese immigration, but the growing economy and the importance of Chinese labor to railroad construction made this movement short-lived.³⁷ The Workingman's Party, lead by Dennis Kearney became the heart of the growing anti-Chinese movement in the late 1870s and gained prominence in state politics. However, the emphasis on labor as the key feature of Chinese immigrants to the United States that made them unsuitable predated the rise of strong, active working class opposition to such immigration, and spread far beyond the working class movement. As the anti-immigration movement became increasingly nationalized, the Chinese as laborers and the problems that the Chinese would cause for American labor were at the heart of the anti-Chinese message for nearly all groups that opposed their immigration, whether they were working class organizations or not.³⁸

³⁵ The *huiguan* splintered and united throughout the nineteenth century and to the present day, but the historical custom remains to refer to them as the Six Companies.

³⁶ Lawrence Douglas Taylor Hansen, "The Chinese Six Companies of San Francisco and the smuggling of Chinese immigrants across the U.S.-Mexico border, 1882-1930," *Journal of the Southwest* 48, no. 1 (2006): 41.

³⁷ Wynne, *Reaction to the Chinese*, 11-13.

³⁸ Unlike the American Indians who were seen by most nineteenth-century social scientists as dying away before the advance of white European civilization across North America, Chinese immigrants potentially, according to some, could have a competitive advantage over European Americans. "The accumulated

At the national level, ideas of the abnormality of Chinese labor and harm that it would cause to the white labor market were used not only with great effectiveness, they were successfully connected with more general concepts of the harm that an influx of Chinese laborers might bring to the American economy as a whole. Particularly powerful was the idea that the Chinese might contribute to the economy through their labor, but by keeping it within their communities or sending it home to China, they were sapping the economy as a whole. As one California emigrant wrote to her family in Holland, "[e]migrants do not act like the Chinese; they earn money, but that money they put back into circulation – in the buying of the necessities of life, the purchase of land, or by investing it in one or other enterprise."³⁹ Such letters demonstrate the wide circulation of conception of Chinese immigrants as entirely separate from other groups who arrived in the United States, to the point of not being considered immigrants at all.

Even those in favor of allowing Chinese immigration to continue focused on framing the issue around the Chinese people as laborers, contending that the cheap labor of the Chinese was beneficial to the United States. Advocates of Chinese immigration argued that they were ideally suited for hard labor, that they were methodical, hard-working, and uncomplaining. One advocate of continued immigration argued that "we have much to learn from Chinese industry and frugality."⁴⁰ Such men agreed that the Chinese could live on lesser wages, but saw this as a benefit to American economic growth. National and even Far Western defenders of Chinese immigration called on the Chinese record of laboring on the railroads as proof that they had been successfully incorporated into the American economic system without threatening its stability. Even a Californian hesitant about the desirability of further immigration admitted that it could not "be denied that the Chinese have been of great service in the development of the State, and under proper conditions, the most rabid anti-Chinese man would probably be glad to have them stay."⁴¹

Within the ideology of the transcontinental nation, objections to Chinese immigration were framed as objections to a disruption in both the homogeneity of the national population and the unity of the national project. Far Westerners, however, felt the presence of Chinese laborers far more acutely than the rest of the country. Although neither their portrayal of Chinese immigrants nor their reasons for calling for an end to Chinese immigration were new, they framed these reasons within the ideology of the transcontinental nation. Their political power and the strength of their rhetoric was such

experience of countless ages, is, therefore, stored up in the Chinaman's food-getting and food-saving capacity, and those ages properly and fairly represent his advantages over our race in the battle for the survival of the fittest." M. J. Dee, "Chinese Immigration," *The North American Review* 126, no. 262 (May 1878): 525.

³⁹ Helena Daniels to her family, May 26, 1893, translated from Dutch by Jack Boas, Helena Adrianna Knitscheer Daniels Papers, California Historical Society, San Francisco, CA.

⁴⁰ Elliot C. Cowdin, *Chinese immigration. Maintain the national faith. Speech of Mr. Elliot C. Cowden before the Chamber of Commerce of the state of New York, February 27th, 1879* ([1879]).

⁴¹ Francis E. Sheldon, "The Chinese Immigration Discussion," *Overland monthly and Out West magazine* 7, no. 38 (Feb. 1886): 116. The author argues that Chinese workers will not be content to remain cheap labor and that cheap labor in such numbers was no longer needed after the state's initial development phase.

that even though their opponent could also use ideas from transcontinental nationalism against them, the anti-Chinese movement quickly came to dominate national ideology.

Part Three: Chinese Immigration and Federal Governance

Although Washington, D.C., and Ottawa were at first unwilling to provoke a diplomatic disagreement and potentially compromise the riches of the China trade, ultimately, both national governments agreed to end Chinese immigration, partially because of overwhelming demand from the Far West and partially because of increasing national support for such a law. As an increasing percentage of California's electorate came to see Chinese immigration as the central problem facing their state, they put pressure on the federal government to do what they had already prevented the western states from doing on their own – prevent or at least severely restrict further Chinese immigration. Despite the efforts of the state and provincial governments, the federal governments of the United States and Canada held onto and even expanded their authority over immigration. However, doing this required both a shift in the American treaty relationship with China and a change in federal powers over immigration. Unlike in other debates about governance within the transcontinental nation, the federal governments won in part by submitting to the goals of the Far West while rejecting its efforts to take this authority upon themselves. In this way, federal authority transformed a regional issue into a national issue, and reunified the transcontinental nation by giving Far Western demands national sanction.

For those Eastern leaders who saw the transcontinental nation as an opportunity for the United States to serve as a bridge between the Atlantic and the Pacific, anti-Chinese activists were unnecessarily threatening U.S. economic growth. The main opposition within Congress to Chinese exclusion came from the Northwest, where many of the merchants with trading interests in China were based. However, the fervor and ferocity of the political activity in opposition to Chinese immigration in the Far West and by the Far Western representatives in Congress overwhelmed both those who felt differently on the issue and those who were largely indifferent. One Eastern commentator argued that anti-Chinese activists were growing to dominate because "politicians dare not advocate any but anti-Chinese doctrines, because prejudice is so much more active in nature than justice, that the Chinese haters are very active and bitter, while those who feel differently, do not feel so strongly on the subject."⁴² Once the immigration provisions of the Burlingame treaty were renegotiated in 1880 and the initial period of exclusion was reduced to ten years, President Arthur, who had vetoed an earlier bill, agreed to sign the 1882 version, and it passed Congress by an even larger margin

⁴² Eli Huggins to Fanny Huggins, Apr. 29, 1879, Eli Huggins Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, CA.

than before.⁴³ Although the bill would not become permanent until 1901, once it did, restrictions on Chinese immigration would not be fully lifted again until 1965.⁴⁴

The regional nature of the question of Chinese immigration and the anti-immigration movement was such that Canada could not help but be drawn into the issue along with the American federal government. British Columbian anti-Chinese activists worked in tandem with those in the United States to argue in favor of immigration restriction. When the United States passed the first Chinese exclusion act in 1882, B.C. politicians argued that it would lead to a diversion of immigration to the Canadian Far West now that the United States was closed to new immigrants. However, those in British Columbia who supported exclusion argued that a movement towards the tightening of borders, such as the United States was making, was a movement that was essential to building a unified modern nation. Amor DeCosmos, a British Columbia member of the House of Commons, in debate on Chinese exclusion, argued that the old legal tradition that the British Empire was a place of equal freedom and citizenship for all was outdated. He declared that, "[a] country with such vast territory as Canada possessed today, must take larger views than obtained a few years ago, when it was but a few scattered isolated Provinces, and had not grown up into a vast nationality."⁴⁵

The United States and Canada would ultimately end up with very similar laws regarding Chinese immigration, but at first their national policies diverged. Although in British Columbia, anti-Chinese sentiment had grown strong by the early 1880s, an official commission from the national government sent to investigate the situation mainly argued in favor of continued immigration. Since the United States had recently restricted Chinese immigration, the report argued that if British Columbia accepted Chinese immigration "her wealth positively and above all relatively to California would develop at a ratio not short of mathematical; she would literally shoot ahead as one of the great seats of commerce and industrial activity; and, her position achieved, she could then apply herself to the political and social problem, and by the aid of the Dominion Parliament deal with that."⁴⁶ Most importantly, given the recent exclusion of Chinese from the United States, Canada as a nation stood to gain if its citizens could be more tolerant. "British Columbia has a great opportunity, by welcoming Chinamen, and thus securing not only cheaper labor than California, but conciliating the good will and fixing the attention of a people...whose commerce is of great value."⁴⁷

⁴³ For more detail on the negotiations between Congress and the Presidency, see Shirley Hune, "Politics of Chinese Exclusion: Legislative-Executive Conflict 1876-1882," *Amerasia* 9, no. 1 (1982).

⁴⁴ The Magnuson Act (1943), passed during World War II when China was an ally of the United States, allowed Chinese immigration and the naturalization of Chinese residents. However, Chinese immigration was still restricted by the quotas set by the Immigration Act of 1924.

⁴⁵ *Debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada : first session, fourth Parliament ... comprising the period from the eighth day of April, 1879 to the fifteenth day of May, 1879*, vol. II (Ottawa: Citizen Printing and Publishing Co., 1879), 1264.

⁴⁶ Canadian Royal Commission on Immigration, *Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration report and evidence* (Ottawa: Printed by order of the Commission, 1885), cxxii-cxxiii.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, cxxii.

When the anti-Chinese sentiment in British Columbia and nationwide grew too strong to resist and Canada established laws restricting the entry of Chinese into the nation, unlike the United States, the legislature began by only passing a head tax on each Chinese immigrant who entered. The pressure was a combination of the anti-Chinese movement in British Columbia and the feeling in the United States that the legal immigration of Chinese workers to Canada just led to the illegal smuggling of these immigrants into the United States. Even Canadian commentators who were generally favorable to Chinese immigration saw the strong anti-Chinese movement in the U.S. Far West and feared "the present of California may prove the likeness of the future of British Columbia."⁴⁸ Even more unsettling was the restriction of Chinese immigration to the United States in 1882. Canadians believed that left without the United States as an option, Chinese immigrants to North America might stream into British Columbia. In 1885, the Canadian parliament passed a law requiring a head tax of \$50 on each Chinese immigrant and restricting the number of Chinese passengers that each ship could carry. This amount would be increased to \$100 in 1900 and \$500 in 1903. Outright exclusion, however, was not passed in Canada until 1923.⁴⁹

Although the passage of Chinese exclusion in the United States had been, in part, the imposition of the will of the Far West on the entire nation, the federal government's refusal to let state governments take control of immigration concentrated new powers at the national level. When the U.S. policy towards immigration became one of restriction in the wake of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, the first administrative structures to regulate immigration had to be built. The US strengthened and centralized its authority over both Chinese immigrants, who were policed, and other immigrants, who were regulated separately under a Bureau of Immigration, formed in 1891. The next year, Ellis Island would be set up as an East Coast processing center for immigrants from Europe. As Roger Daniels has described, the new Bureau of Immigration was set up not to aid immigrants, but to control and regulate them.⁵⁰ Canada would follow with its own system of laws for the national regulation of immigration in the early twentieth century, which supplemented and modified an earlier system that had been based on attracting immigrants.⁵¹ The new system also centralized the administration immigration efforts in Ottawa.

The changing legal status of Chinese immigration in the United States and Canada affected the flows of immigrants to other nations. Most notably, Chinese immigration to Canada was dramatically affected by U.S. exclusion in 1882, which redirected the flows of immigrants. However, even after both the United States and Canada passed restriction

⁴⁸ Ibid., xi-xii.

⁴⁹ More detail on the changes in Canadian immigration law can be found in Roy, *A White Man's Province*.

⁵⁰ For more on early U.S. immigration policy, see Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants since 1882* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), Chapter 1. Lucy Salyer argues that previous Chinese successes in court were responsible for the decision to place control over immigration in the hands of an administrative bureau largely outside the constraints of judicial review. Salyer, *Laws Harsh as Tigers*.

⁵¹ Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 114-21.

on immigration, the differential in these restrictions continued to lead to smuggling. Furthermore, Americans complained that the differential between their own immigration laws and those in Canada undermined efforts to control immigration into their own nation. Since Chinese immigrants could pass from Canada to the U.S. with relative ease, and since they could delay paying the head tax for 90 days, U.S. immigration officials claimed that Canadian immigration laws "practically nullified . . . the effective work done by the border officers."⁵² Congress asked President Grover Cleveland in 1890 to negotiate treaties with both Canada and Mexico in order to prevent the illegal entry of any Chinese into the United States.⁵³ However, Chinese immigrants intercepted at the U.S. border with Canada or Mexico attempting to cross into the United States were only sent back to those countries, offering the opportunity for further attempts at illegal immigration. In 1883, the *New York Times* reported that it was "a fact well known to the residents of British Columbia that at the present time Chinamen are crossing the [United States] border in batches of 20 or 30"⁵⁴ Contemporary estimates of the number of Chinese entering the United States from Canada or Mexico ranged from 1,500 to 2,500 annually.⁵⁵ A later scholar has estimated that over 17,300 Chinese immigrants entered the United States through the illegally from both countries between 1882 and 1920.⁵⁶

Transnational immigration led to incidents of racial passing that demonstrate the complex racial order of the Pacific Coast. Erika Lee has found that "In 1904 the *Buffalo Times* reported that it was not uncommon for white "smugglers" to disguise the Chinese as Native Americans crossing from Canada to the United States in pursuit of trade. They would be dressed in "Indian garb," given baskets of sassafras, and rowed across the border in boats."⁵⁷ Patrick Ettinger has discovered incidences of smuggling along the Mexican-U.S. border prior to 1917, in which "Chinese, Greek, Lebanese, and other migrants often posed as local Mexicans, against whom no border-crossing restrictions were being enforced."⁵⁸ Labor needs on both sides of the U.S.-Canadian border helped to encourage smuggling. Cannery workers were in high demand both nations in the 1890s and early 1900s, but immigration laws and governmental interdiction soon spurred the emergence of transborder Chinese smuggling systems. Although Chinese labor contractors certainly orchestrated some of these movements, the limited sources available suggest that individuals also moved across the border of their own volition. For instance, a B.C. newspaper reported that many Chinese cannery workers crossed the border in the 1902 season, "owing to the reported big bonuses offered by Puget Sound canneries for

⁵² "Report of the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization," in *Reports of the Department of Commerce and Labor, 1910* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), 297.

⁵³ "Chinese Laborers from Canada and Mexico," in 51st Cong., 1st sess., House Rep. 1925 (1890), 1-2.

⁵⁴ *New York Times*, Oct. 22, 1883.

⁵⁵ Patrick Ettinger, "'We sometimes wonder what they will spring on us next': Immigrants and Border Enforcement in the American West, 1882-1930," *The Western Historical Quarterly*, no. Summer 2006 (2006): 163.

⁵⁶ Erika Lee, "Enforcing the Borders: Chinese Exclusion along the U.S. Borders with Canada and Mexico, 1882-1924," *The Journal of American History* (2002): 55.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*: 61.

⁵⁸ Ettinger, "Immigrants and Border Enforcement," 177.

them, and no questions are asked."⁵⁹ Since both countries had immigration restrictions by this time, Chinese workers entered covertly, with forged papers, or with real documents that belonged to someone else. Many Chinese sought the assistance of local Indian reservations.⁶⁰ After catching twenty Chinese laborers attempting to enter the country illegally in 1890, James Swan, a local U.S. government employee, urged Congress to fine them each \$100. As it was, he observed, they were simply sent back to Canada at the expense of the American government and would undoubtedly try again. "The Marshall told me today," Swan wrote his superiors, "that he knows a Chinaman who has been sent to Victoria three times."⁶¹

As Erika Lee has shown, debates over Chinese immigration were a early example of the difference between border regulations on the Canadian border and those on the Mexican, since along the Canadian border "U.S. efforts centered on "border diplomacy" based on a historically amicable diplomatic relationship and a shared antipathy for Chinese immigration" while along the Mexican border efforts "relied less on cooperation with Mexico and more on border policing, a system of surveillance, patrols, apprehension, and deportation."⁶²

In 1903, Chinese immigration to U.S. through Canada began to decline because of the new Canadian head tax on Chinese immigration. It also was lessened by new regulations of the U.S. Bureau of Immigration. Beginning in 1894, the bureau made an agreement with the Canadian government that allowed U.S. immigration inspectors to enforce U.S. immigration laws at Canadian seaports and other designated entry points. All immigrants bound for the United States, Chinese as well as non-Chinese, were inspected for their eligibility to enter, and those who passed this inspection were issued certificates to present to border officers when entering the United States. Immigrants who failed to pass were returned to Canada.⁶³ A later, more effective law made the Canadian Pacific Railroad directly responsible for enforcing these regulations.

Debates over Chinese immigration did more than simply create a new immigration policy based on race and national origin for the United States. Significantly, it was a decision based on Chinese immigration law expanded that Congress' powers over immigration beyond merely those that had been extrapolated from the Interstate Commerce Clause. This decision granted Congress sovereign authority over their territory on the grounds that this power was essential to being a nation. In so doing, the Supreme Court legislated the connection between territory, nationhood, and citizenship that was an essential part of the transcontinental nation. Once the United States stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific and ceased its continental expansion, the borders that had been formerly sites of expansion became sites of defense. The issue of Chinese

⁵⁹ quoted in Wadewitz, "Pirates of the Salish Sea: Labor, Mobility, and Environment in the Transnational West," 598.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ quoted in Ibid.

⁶² Lee, "Enforcing the Borders," 56.

⁶³ Ibid.: 75.

immigration brought to life the issue of the Pacific Ocean as a border to be defended as well as the endpoint of westward expansion. After exclusion, policing the smuggling of Chinese immigrants became a reason for the U.S. to look to the permeability of its borders with Canada and Mexico. More than that, however, it demonstrated the limits of American residency. It was not enough to simply not naturalize non-white immigrants – by coming on American territory, they threatened the American community.

Epilogue

The Twilight of the Nineteenth Century and the American Turn toward Empire

The career of army officer Eli Huggins marked the high point of American transcontinental development. His first assignment as an army officer was a posting to the Pacific coast in the 1866. Although the early excitement of the Gold Rush had waned by this time, after he arrived in Washington Territory Huggins wrote excitedly to his family about the opportunities that the American nation was gaining through the settlement of the West and the Pacific Coast.¹ His army career would later bring him to areas across the West, including Alcatraz Island, Washington Territory, the San Juan Islands, Montana Territory, and the newly acquired Alaska Territory. Throughout all of these assignments, he wrote enthusiastically of American expansion. In the last years of his career, however, Huggins would serve in China, as a part of the multi-national force that put down the Boxer rebellion, and in the Philippines, as governor general of a Filipino province. Then, however, the tone of his letters would change. He compared American actions to those of a young man on a drunken spree, and longed for a return to when the US was "the most glorious country under the sun."

In the United States, transcontinental nationalism represented both a determination not to expand abroad and a rejection of European forms of empire. Huggins' career and writings exemplify this aspect of the ideology of transcontinental nationalism, which differentiated sharply between continental and overseas expansion. He was born in the 1840s, and grew up when Western lands stretching to the Pacific already belonged to the US, at least in name. He believed that the US should move into "empty" spaces on the same continent, like the Pacific Coast region and Alaska, and that part of his duties as an army officer involved gathering information on these new lands for the federal government. However, Huggins believed that by moving beyond the continent to establish interests in Cuba, China, and the Philippines that the United States was overreaching, moving into unsuitable places which could not be idealized as empty. He wrote to his sisters from the Philippines that "I am not in harmony with my environment over here. In fact, there is a horrible jangling discord." In this belief, he was in disagreement with public opinion of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, at the dawn of the American age of imperialism. Huggins was in agreement, however, with political leaders of earlier decades, during the time I have called the era of transcontinental nationalism, who had seen the continental sweep of the United States as a chance to gain international economic and political influence without military engagement. Having been firmly inculcated with the values of transcontinental citizenship, Huggins did not give them up at the end of his career.

¹ This and all subsequent quotations are from the Eli Huggins Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, CA.

Transcontinental nationalism succeeded the era of Manifest Destiny, which had called for U.S. territorial expansion across the Pacific Coast and which had reached its height in the mid-1840s with the Mexican American War and the Oregon Treaty. It would in turn be succeeded by the imperialist era, which most historians have dated from the beginning of the Spanish American War in 1898. In contrast to both earlier and later decades, the ideology transcontinental nationalism focused on the necessity to make full use of the possessions that the United States had already gained in earlier decades and on the opportunities offered by the fact that the United States now stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific. At the same time, it was firmly based in a rejection of the option of overseas expansion and the possibility of keeping new lands as subordinate colonies. Transcontinental nationalism was an expansionist ideology that was not focused on acquiring more land – quite the opposite, in fact.

As my work has demonstrated, however, in its rejection of imperialism through the transcontinental nation between the 1840s and the 1890s, the United States was not reacting in a vacuum, or somehow to its own future actions in 1898. The imperial form that the United States wished to avoid was European, and more specifically, British, and although the United States had split from the British Empire decades earlier, the Empire remained on the North American continent. Canada was unified as a Dominion in 1867 and reached the Pacific Ocean in only three years with the addition of the province of British Columbia in 1871. The new Dominion stood as the continuation of the British Empire on the North American continent, and therefore remained a continual backdrop to US efforts to create a transcontinental nation. Even more important for my project, however, American understanding of its own transcontinental project was fundamentally shaped by comparisons to and critiques of Canadian attempts to develop and incorporate its own Pacific possessions. The rhetoric of the transcontinental nation was less concerned with Canada, since it included a belief in the unique destiny of the United States to dominate the continent. The United States might even acquire Canada along the way, but additional land was not necessary for political and economic dominance. Canadian rhetoric often mirrored U.S. rhetoric of transcontinental nationalism, although the anti-imperialism of U.S. rhetoric was largely absent.

While there were certainly continuities over the period between the fulfillment of Manifest Destiny in the 1840s and the imperialist move beyond the continent in the 1890s, transcontinental nationalism was a fifty-year period when the national ideology for the most part regarded continental supremacy as sufficient, and indeed, as superior to overseas empire. This ideology shaped both the integration of the west during these years and the recreation of the American nation that accompanied it. Transcontinental nationalism focused on national consolidation, and it was this national consolidation, rather than the brief period of imperialism at the turn of the century, that would remain far more central to American national development into the twentieth century.

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