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Making the White Man's West

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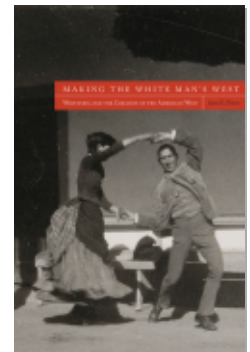
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THE POLITICS OF WHITENESS AND WESTERN EXPANSION, 1848–80

Anglo-Americans, from Thomas Jefferson at the beginning of the nineteenth century to Joseph Pomeroy Widney at the century's end, envisioned the West as more than an ordinary place. They dreamed of it as home to a rugged, independent, white population. For Jefferson, the West would be home to his ideal yeoman farmers, noble tillers of the soil and keepers of the sacred charge of freedom; for Widney, the Engle-Americans, as he called them, would complete the march to the setting sun that had begun on the steppes of Russia in a time before time. This geography of the imagination, these dreams of a whites'-only West, however, bumped up against a stubborn reality: the region remained racially diverse and could easily become even more so. Transforming it into the white man's West would require work. Creating a refuge for whites, in no small measure, meant encouraging the right people and discouraging those considered wrong. To do this, Anglo-American settlers would turn to the power of government.

Initially, governmental power had been considered a tool to remove undesirable and anomalous peoples, like free African Americans and eastern Indians,

from the settled sections of the republic. While efforts to remove free blacks never came to fruition, the government did embark on a controversial and costly policy of Indian removal, and yet little more than a decade after moving eastern Indians to the Indian Territory—consigning them to the margins of society—the United States acquired California and the Southwest; the periphery had now become the center. The attempt to spatially segregate Indians and free African Americans had failed, but in its place developed the notion of the West as an ideal location for white Americans, especially those of Anglo ancestry. In a very real sense, this was the antithesis of the earlier idea of segregating undesirable racial groups in the West. Now the region should, as much as possible, be a reserve of real Anglo-American whites.

The introduction of slavery and free blacks, however, threatened this vision. By the 1850s the dual questions of where to expand and whether to allow slavery's extension into the West precipitated a crisis ultimately resolved at the cost of more than half a million American lives. Slavery would not take hold in the West, but neither would efforts to prevent blacks from settling in the region prove successful. Nevertheless, whiteness played a powerful, if inconclusive, role in preventing the arrival of both slaves and free blacks in the antebellum period, and, in the process, westerners tried to escape the cultural and political crisis that inexorably pulled the nation toward civil war.

The new Republican Party championed the exclusion of slavery from the western territories in the 1850s. In control of the North and the West under Republican president Abraham Lincoln, the United States set out to destroy slavery. Indeed, the Civil War and the passage of the 1862 Homestead Act during the war forever ended the question of slavery's expansion. It also meant that the western territories and states would have a tiny African American population, since these newly free peoples lacked the resources required to make a western journey and thus remained in the South after the war.

Yet the low numbers of African Americans in the West when compared with the South were not merely a result of the echoes of slavery. Westerners themselves had long sought ways of preventing African Americans from settling in the region. Taken together, therefore, the relative absence of blacks in the West resulted from economic and social concerns. Few blacks could afford to emigrate, and westerners did little to welcome them.

These issues, however, had surfaced long before the emergence of the Republican Party in the 1850s. Indeed, in the nation's very infancy, the

character of future settlement in the trans-Appalachian West begged for some consideration. Expansion emerged as one of many pressing issues for the new nation, and one of the few successes of the nation's first government—the Articles of Confederation—was a land policy that effectively addressed the issue. The Northwest Ordinance outlined the process by which new states would be added to the nation and significantly forbade slavery north of the Ohio River.¹ Slaves did find their way into the Northwest Territory, often as vaguely defined servants, and legislatures in Indiana and Illinois tried unsuccessfully to legalize slavery in their respective states in the 1820s.² The Ohio River, however, held as a boundary between free and slave states and set a precedent for the confinement of slavery.

Crossing the Mississippi, however, changed the dynamics of expansion and the issue of slavery. Without the convenient North-South boundary of the Ohio River, no obvious line could be drawn between free and slave. This left the Louisiana Territory open for definition. What should be done with the territory's expansive lands? Would slavery be allowed anywhere, or would it be limited somehow by geographical boundary or political definition?

The admission of Missouri to the Union brought the issue of expansion and slavery into sharp relief and led to the first real debate over slavery's extension into the West. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 solved the issue of Missouri's admission to the Union, allowing it to enter as a slave state and creating Maine as a free state to preserve the delicate balance of power in the US Senate. In addition, a line extending west from the Arkansas-Missouri border (the 36-degree, 30-minute parallel) divided the Louisiana Territory into a free North and a slave South. The Senate debated the Missouri Compromise bill as one piece of legislation, attracting overwhelming northern and southern support. In the House, however, members treated each provision of the compromise separately. The Missouri Compromise line, forbidding slavery in the northern (and largest) part of the territory, drew strong support from northern congressmen but, somewhat surprisingly, was favored by a slim majority (39 to 37) of southern congressmen as well. Thus even southern congressmen, albeit by a slim majority, approved of banning slavery from the vast majority of the Louisiana Purchase.³ Why they did so remains unclear, and a generation later southern politicians would decry the compromise line and vociferously oppose any effort to prevent the extension of slavery. The geographer Donald W. Meinig offers one explanation for southern support.

He argues that Americans still only vaguely understood the dimensions of the western territory in 1820, and southern politicians assumed that at least a few more slave states could be gleaned from the territory. Most important, they wanted to add Missouri to the Union as rapidly as possible, and the compromise accomplished that.⁴

The Missouri debate had temporarily inflamed passions on the issue of slavery, but the compromise cooled the rancor. The presence of two national, rather than sectional, political parties helped Congress arrive at a solution. As Martin Van Buren astutely observed in 1827, attachment to national political parties could furnish "a complete antidote to sectional prejudices by producing counteracting feelings."⁵ Such had been the case even in the 1820 crisis. The annexation of Texas in the 1840s, though also hotly contested, similarly remained largely partisan and not sectional, with the Whigs opposed to its annexation and the Democrats mostly in favor. Typically, these national parties largely stayed away from the slavery issue, with both Whigs and Democrats focusing on local and sectional issues and coming together every four years for the presidential election when they would shift to issues of national importance. This invariably led northern Whigs and Democrats to commit to free soil, while their southern counterparts could remain in support of slavery. For a long time, this division worked.⁶

The Mexican-American War, however, brought the slavery debate into sharper relief. President James K. Polk, a Democrat, provoked a war with Mexico in 1846 with the hope not only of keeping Texas but of acquiring much of the Southwest and California as well. By starting the war with Mexico, historian Michael F. Holt declares, "Polk had pried open the lid on a Pandora's box."⁷ Northerners saw the war as an effort to expand slavery, and the carefully created national parties buckled under the strain.

In August 1846, a few months after the commencement of hostilities, President Polk asked Congress to appropriate \$2 million to pay Mexico for any land the United States might gain from the war. Northern Democrats, seeking to distance themselves from President Polk and his southern Democratic allies, promised to support the bill only if it included a provision to bar slavery from any territory conquered from Mexico. In this way they hoped to deflect the ire of northern free-soil voters in upcoming elections. David Wilmot, an obscure Democratic congressman from Pennsylvania, introduced the proviso that would forever bear his name. Echoing Jefferson's Northwest

Ordinance Wilmot wrote, “As an express and fundamental condition to the acquisition of any territory from the Republic of Mexico . . . neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall ever exist in any part of said territory.”⁸ In the House, Wilmot’s Proviso passed easily on a sectional vote of 134 to 91. All but four northern congressmen voted in favor of it and all southern representatives, regardless of party, opposed it. The proviso would die at the hands of southerners in the evenly divided Senate, but it resurfaced continually in the next several sessions—much to the consternation of southern politicians. The Mexican-American War and the Wilmot Proviso split the Whigs and Democrats along sectional lines, propelling the nation toward a long-delayed reckoning with the “peculiar institution” of slavery.⁹

Although far removed from the center of the increasingly vociferous debates over slavery in the 1840s and 1850s, the turmoil nonetheless pulled the West into the growing controversy. Westerners hardly had monolithic views, and gauging them is difficult, but clearly many people opposed the extension of slavery into the West, and many also rejected the prospect of having free blacks in their midst. The debates over both slavery and the presence of African Americans played out in the two Pacific Coast states that gained admittance to the Union before the Civil War: California and Oregon.

Debates over the future of California reflected Westerners’ attitude toward both slavery and the presence of African Americans. Slaves had been brought into the newly acquired territory following the discovery of gold in 1848. Free blacks likewise journeyed to California in search of fortune. One correspondent for the *New York Tribune* claimed that in the goldfields “the Southern slaveholder [works] beside the swarthy African, now his equal.”¹⁰ The reporter no doubt exaggerated (or did not bother to ask either the southerner or the “swarthy” African their opinions), but clearly both enslaved and free blacks toiled in the goldfields alongside white, American Indian, and Asian miners. Indeed, Anglo-America miners appear to have deeply resented the presence of slaves in the goldfields. In the gold-laden streams of California, as individual miners worked against slave owners with several slaves at their command, the abstract debates over free labor versus slave labor became tangible. William Manney’s four slaves, for example, panned an amazing \$4,000 in gold in a single week.¹¹ Walter Colton declared that white miners “know they must dig themselves: they have come out here for that purpose, and they won’t degrade their calling by associating it with slave labor.” They

cared little about “slavery in the abstract, or as it exists in other communities; not one in ten cares a button for its abolition, nor the Wilmot Proviso either: all they look at is their own position; they must themselves swing the pick, and they won’t swing it by the side of negro slaves.” Colton concluded that miners saw California as a “new world, where they have a right to shape and settle things in their own way. No mandate, unless it comes like a thunderbolt straight out of heaven, is regarded.”¹² Having slaves compete against free men seemed patently unfair.

The 1849 state constitution agreed with this view, its framers writing, “Neither slavery, nor involuntary servitude . . . shall ever be tolerated in this State.” The state’s suffrage requirements, however, conspicuously omitted African Americans. The law enfranchised all white males over twenty-one, as well as “every white male citizen of Mexico, who shall have elected to become a citizen of the United States.” The constitution even allowed for the possibility of “admitting to the right of suffrage, Indians or the descendants of Indians, in such special cases as such proportion [a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority] of the legislative body may deem just and proper.”¹³ Similarly, the law forbade blacks from serving as members of the state’s militia. These restrictions, however, turned out to be far more moderate than many of the delegates wanted, and an effort to exclude blacks from California nearly found its way into the constitution.¹⁴

One delegate to the California Constitutional Convention, M. M. McCarver, offered a “negro exclusion clause” that drew a great deal of support. The amendment declared, “The Legislature shall, at its first session, pass such laws as will effectually prohibit free persons of color from immigrating to and settling in this State, and to effectually prevent the owners of slaves from bringing them into this State for the purpose of setting them free.” Representative Oliver M. Wozencraft, in support of McCarver’s amendment, declared that blacks’ inherent inferiority and propensity for servitude would only degrade the value of free labor in the new state. Black exclusion would therefore protect the value of white labor. He declared, “If there is one part of the world possessing advantages over another where the family of Japhet [a son of Noah and considered by some the first European] may expect to attain a higher state of perfectibility than has ever been attained by Man, it is here in California. All nature proclaims this a favored land.” The land would bless the efforts of whites, while blacks, Wozencraft asserted, would

be better off living in the “boundless wastes” of Africa where God had first created them. Delegates withdrew the amendment out of fear that an exclusion clause might hurt efforts to get the state’s constitution approved by the US Congress, but only on the promise that the legislature would take up the issue soon after statehood had been granted.¹⁵

California’s first governor, Peter Burnett, introduced the issue of Negro exclusion soon after coming to office in 1849. During his inaugural speech on December 20, 1849, Burnett opened with a warning for his fellow Californians. Because of the state’s natural advantages, most notably gold, California would “be either a very great or a very sordid and petty state.” History, Burnett explained, showed that “in all those countries where rich and extensive mines of the precious metals have been heretofore discovered, the people have become indolent, careless, and stupid. This enervating influence operates silently, steadily, and continually, and requires counteracting causes, or great and continued energy of character in a people to successfully resist it.”¹⁶ Burnett hoped industrious Americans could resist the fate of lesser nations and maintain their vigor in the face of golden wealth.

Wise legislation, especially at the dawning moment of the state’s admission to the Union, would forever determine the course of California’s destiny, the governor warned. In Burnett’s opinion, Californians needed to carefully select which groups would be allowed into the Golden State. Burnett warned about the dangers of Chinese immigration, noting that while hardworking and honest, they would never break their ties to the mother country. Further, their presence drove down wages for whites, accustomed as they were to surviving on next to nothing (a complaint that would be leveled repeatedly at the Chinese), and in time they could potentially overrun the state. “Were Chinamen permitted to settle in our country at their pleasure, and were they granted all the rights and privileges of whites, and the laws were impartially and efficiently administered, so that the two races would stand *precisely* and *practically* equal in *all* respects, in one century the Chinese would own all the property on this coast,” Burnett claimed.¹⁷ Far from banning the Chinese, however, Burnett would later argue for an amended treaty to replace the Burlingame Treaty that would ensure that Chinese merchants stayed only temporarily, thereby giving California a much-needed labor force while still ensuring that the Chinese would not become permanent residents.

Burnett next turned his attention to the presence of free blacks, advocating strongly for Negro exclusion. Taken together, Burnett wished to maintain the dominance of Anglo-Americans in a state already the most diverse in the nation. The efforts of Burnett and others to limit the presence of blacks in California, however, came to little, as the legislature never acted to exclude blacks, who proved to be a statistically insignificant and therefore non-threatening group. After 1852, legislators instead turned to efforts to stymie the more worrisome Chinese immigration.¹⁸ Legislating whiteness proved difficult, but nevertheless attempts to exclude blacks and the Chinese spoke volumes about the future Californians envisioned for their state.

Even in remote Oregon, the issue of slavery and black residence proved divisive. Slavery had been prohibited under an act of the 1844 provisional government and again in 1848 when the federal government created the Oregon Territory. By the 1850s, however, the issue had come to prominence, mirroring the national debate. Many Oregonians disliked the presence of African Americans, whether free or enslaved, in their territory and sought to exclude them.¹⁹ Perhaps in this way, many believed they could avoid the evils of slavery and the presence of an inferior group of people as well.

Excluding children, most Oregonians had emigrated from older sections of the country—many from the Midwest. According to the 1860 census, 23 percent of Oregon's population hailed from the Old Northwest and another 17 percent from the border states of Missouri, Kentucky, and Tennessee. A full 43 percent were either foreign-born or children born in the West; the remainder were from the Deep South (5 percent), New England states (4 percent), and Mid-Atlantic states (8 percent). The majority of whites from Missouri, Kentucky, and Tennessee also owned no slaves. Thus, in a very real sense, Oregonians reflected the attitudes of midwesterners in their desire to prevent both slavery and the presence of blacks.²⁰

The provisional government set the tone for Negro exclusion and the prohibition of slavery. The impetus for excluding blacks came after a dispute between James Saules, an African American settler, and a Wasco Indian named Comstock turned violent. After an exchange of bullets and arrows, Comstock lay dead. Local whites blamed Saules for the altercation and threatened his life. In response Saules, who had married an Indian woman, warned that he could turn the Indians against the whites. The Comstock affair seemed to prove that blacks, especially those who made alliances with

Indian peoples, posed potential danger and should be prevented from emigrating to Oregon.²¹ Hailing from American culture like Anglo-Americans but embittered and envious of their social betters and willing to mix and fraternize with Indians, African Americans like Saules represented a dangerous group, Oregonians believed, that, as Saules claimed, could stir up trouble between the groups. Better, many felt, to limit their presence in the territory.

In June 1844 the provisional government took up the issue and outlawed slavery, giving slave owners three years to free their slaves. It ordered free blacks and mulattoes to leave the territory within two years or face periodic floggings. The flogging provision, however, proved too controversial, and in December the government changed the punishment to indentured servitude under a white man, a provision modeled on an 1819 Illinois act.

The Oregon act had been introduced by a Missourian named Peter Burnett—the same Burnett who would follow the Gold Rush to California and become that state’s first governor. Burnett had come to dominate the legislative committee.²² In a letter dated December 25, 1844, he explained that Oregon offered settlers an opportunity to right the failings of other societies. He bragged that Oregonians rarely engaged in drinking, quarreling, and gambling, and he declared that the exclusion of blacks would “keep clear of that most troublesome class of population. We are in a new world, under most favorable circumstances, and we wish to avoid most of those evils that have so much afflicted the United States and other countries. Availing ourselves of the peculiarities of our favored condition, we are determined, if we can, to improve upon the best systems that have existed, or now exist.” The result, Burnett explained, was a vigorous white population “from various places; some from the commercial shores of Great Britain, some from the free pure air of the U. States, some from the cold region of Canada.” He admitted that these disparate groups held different customs and views, “and yet we have the utmost harmony. National and sectional prejudices do not seem to exist.”²³ That would not remain the case, however.

Burnett’s exclusion law proved short-lived, and the following year, led by Jesse Applegate, a farmer recently removed from Missouri, the legislature repealed the act. In September 1849 the issue resurfaced when legislators passed a new bill to prohibit free blacks and mulattoes from settling in Oregon. The justification for the act reiterated the alleged cause of the

Comstock affair, arguing that “it would be highly dangerous to allow free Negroes and mulattoes to reside in the Territory, or to intermix with Indians, instilling into their mind feelings of hostility toward the white race.”²⁴ Given relations between whites and Indians in the Northwest, Indians certainly did not need blacks to instill feelings of hostility in them, but Oregonians feared the feasibility of an alliance between the two non-white groups. However, excepting James Saules, little proof exists that African Americans held any sway over native peoples whatsoever. More likely, Oregonians, like Burnett, sought to ensure the “utmost harmony” in the state’s population by keeping it as white as possible.

As the venom of the slave issue spread through the body politic in the 1840s and 1850s, even far-off Oregon was not immune. Efforts to organize it into a territory foundered over the issue. It took nearly a year and a half for Congress to finally create a bill to organize the Oregon Territory—usually a fairly sedate and mundane task—but in the tense climate of the Mexican-American War and slavery’s expansion the task became anything but mundane. Northerners hoped to explicitly exclude slavery in the territory, believing it an essential precedent for future territories and states in the West. David Wilmot, for example, asserted that if slavery stretched to the Pacific Ocean, it would ensure “the ultimate subjugation of the whole southern half of this Continent and its dominion.”²⁵ Similarly, Julius Rockwell, a congressman from Massachusetts, argued during the 1848 debates in favor of creating the Oregon Territory with an explicit prohibition of slavery. He explained, “The Territory of Oregon, by reason of its high northern latitude, may be justly thought to stand upon different grounds in relation to slavery from the other Territories [acquired following the Mexican-American War]. But none of these free Territories, I wish it distinctly understood, shall ever, so far as my vote is concerned, be organized without this restriction.”²⁶

Fear of such a precedent, however, worried southern congressmen. The stakes of the debate really had little to do with Oregon, which few people thought suitable for slavery, and everything to do with the settlement of the vast territory soon to be taken from Mexico. Finally, in 1848 the bill creating the Oregon Territory, a bill that implicitly banned slavery, passed the House and Senate by a narrow margin.²⁷

Even some northern lawmakers felt the West should be free not only of slavery but also of the presence of blacks. During debates on western

expansion in the 30th Congress, John Adams Dix, a senator from New York, addressed the issue of slavery and the future of the West in a long speech on June 26, 1848. After a lengthy legal analysis of whether Congress had the authority to specifically bar slavery from newly acquired territories, Dix spoke about a grand vision of the West as a land destined to be settled by whites. He argued that those who maintained that spreading slavery would not increase the number of blacks grossly underestimated the power of human beings to reproduce and that in a climate as good as Oregon's, it was inevitable that a substantial black population would increase dramatically. Dix claimed to "foresee in our political organization the foundations of an empire increasing more rapidly, and destined to expand to broader limits, than the Roman Republic; not an empire, like the latter, founded on brute force; but an empire founded on peace, and extending itself by industry, enterprise, and the arts of civilization." Dix thought it was America's mission to accept "the surplus of the over-peopled and over-governed countries of Europe" and "instruct them in the arts of peace, and to accelerate the march of civilization across the continent." America would continue to grow, Dix predicted, reaching at least 100 million people by 1900.²⁸

Yet, Dix asked, what would be the racial makeup of that population? The "earth is peopled . . . [by] four grand divisions—the Asiatic, the Caucasian, the Ethiopian, and the Indian. The whole surface of Europe, with some inconsiderable exceptions, is occupied by the Caucasian race . . . [which] laid the foundations of nearly all the civilization the world contains." Ultimately, Dix argued, Europeans roughly equaled each other in talent and intellect, and God wanted them to settle the West and transform the United States into a powerful nation: "It is in the vast and fertile spaces of the West that our own descendants, as well as the oppressed and needy multitudes of the Old World, must find the food they require, and the rewards for labor which are necessary to give them the spirit and independence of freemen. I hold it to be our sacred duty to consecrate these spaces to the multiplication of the white race."²⁹

Speaking in the House the day following Dix's speech, Congressman Julius Rockwell argued that exporting slavery would inevitably lead to the development of a free black population in the far West. He noted that slave owners, including those in Congress, held up the allegedly degraded condition of free blacks as proof that they qualified only for slavery. "It is said with great force,"

Rockwell began, "that slavery in the slave States must not be interfered with, because, among other reasons, the white and black races in numbers so nearly equal can never exist together in a state of freedom; because the emancipation of the black race implies destruction to one race or the other." If such became reality, Rockwell continued, "What do you propose to do? You propose to put that institution into these free Territories, and forever subject them to that condition of things; to plant an institution there which must exist forever, because it can never safely be removed."³⁰ Once established in the West, he warned, slavery could never be destroyed, since the two races could not coexist. Barring slavery, therefore, would also prevent large numbers of free blacks from ever living in Oregon and would prevent the same conditions that many argued made emancipation impossible in the South.

During the 1850s Oregonians continued to reject both slavery and the presence of blacks. Samuel Thurston, Oregon's territorial delegate to Congress, spoke out against an Ohio congressman's proposal to open the Oregon Territory to African American settlement during debates over passage of the 1850 Oregon Donation Land Law. Asahel Bush, a newspaperman and friend of Thurston's, quoted the delegate as saying, "The people of Oregon were not pro-slavery men, nor were they pro-negro men; there were but few negroes in the territory and he hoped there never would be more; the people themselves had excluded them and he trusted that Congress would not introduce them in violation of their wishes."³¹

In 1853 the Oregon territorial supreme court ruled that Nathaniel Ford, a migrant from Missouri who had brought several slaves with him, must free his slaves. In 1854 and again the following year, the territorial legislature entertained bills to exclude blacks and mulattoes from the territory in an effort to ensure that Oregon remained for whites only. One member of the territorial house declared: "Niggers . . . should never be allowed to mingle with the whites . . . If niggers are allowed to come among us and mingle with the whites, it will cause a perfect state of pollution . . . I don't see that we should equalize ourselves with them by letting them come among us."³² Oregonians, by and large, endorsed the principle of "popular sovereignty" as outlined in Stephen Douglas's 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act, seeing it as an avenue for giving them increased control over their own affairs. Many, like Delazon Smith, a territorial representative from Linn County, argued that Oregonians could support the concept of popular sovereignty and still remain opposed to slavery.³³

Finally, in 1857 Oregonians voted overwhelmingly in favor of organizing a state government and applying to Congress for statehood. This step led to a final reckoning with the issue of slavery in the Oregon country. The national situation had grown more divisive with the election of the pro-slavery Democrat James Buchanan to the presidency, bloodshed over popular sovereignty in Kansas, and the US Supreme Court's decision in the Dred Scott case. As Oregon politicians jockeyed for position ahead of the necessary constitutional convention, these national events focused Oregonians' attention on the issue of slavery.

While Oregon had a vocal group of pro-slavery advocates (perhaps one-third of the state's population, according to anti-slavery editor William L. Adams of the *Oregon Argus*, a number almost certainly exaggerated) and some strongly anti-slavery agitators, in general, Oregonians rejected both slavery and the presence of free African Americans. Asahel Bush, who founded the Democratic *Oregon Statesman* (with Thurston's covert financial backing), argued that Oregonians, a practical lot, cared little for the debate over the morality of the institution.³⁴ As one letter opined in the *Statesman*, Oregon's cool and wet climate was not conducive to slave labor.

George H. Williams, the territory's chief justice and a leading Democrat, wrote an influential and widely circulated letter in which he argued that slavery could not flourish in Oregon's climate. He noted, for example, "New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Jersey, and New Hampshire ascertained by actual trial that slavery was detrimental to their interests, and therefore abolished it"—states with cool climates like Oregon's where labor-intensive cotton and similar crops could not be grown.³⁵ Williams claimed that slaves did not work hard since no incentive motivated them to do so, and they cost far more than it cost to hire free laborers for a few months during the growing season. Further, Williams asserted, the climate might actually be hazardous to African American slaves, since their ancestors originated in hot and sunny Africa. One winter's work in Oregon's cold rain could very well kill them.³⁶

Controlling slaves would also be a problem, Williams warned, since they could easily flee the state and take refuge in the free state of California, in Canada, or among Indian tribes, just as fugitive slaves had once taken shelter among the Seminole of Florida. Even worse, Williams argued, census numbers revealed that settlers to the Midwest preferred to settle in free territories.

Emigrants rarely came as men of means, but they were men “whose limbs are made sinewy by hard work; who go to new countries to get land and homes and who expect to depend chiefly upon their own labor. Slave states are objectionable to such men.”³⁷ Oregon needed these hardworking, independent, and ambitious men, but such men would not compete with slavery. Similarly, foreign immigrants looking to escape poverty and oppression in Europe could be expected to find homes in Oregon. These immigrants tirelessly built farms, canals, and railroads—developing every place they settled—but they would not deign to work beside slaves. Establish slavery in Oregon, Williams cautioned, and “you will turn aside that tide of free white labor which has poured itself like a fertilizing flood” on the free states and territories.³⁸ Worse yet, laboring whites and enslaved blacks would invariably mix, and each would learn the bad habits of the other. “Taking everything into consideration,” Williams concluded, “I ask if it is not the true policy of Oregon to keep as clear as possible of negroes, and all the exciting questions of negro servitude. Situated away here on the Pacific, as a free state, we are not likely to be troubled much with free negroes or fugitive slaves.”³⁹ Williams argued that Oregon therefore should be reserved for whites.

Similarly, the *Oregon Statesman* in August 1857, with the constitutional convention looming, argued that slavery fit in the South and that southerners should keep the black and white races separate through slavery because “the wisdom of man has not yet devised a system under which the negro is as well off as he is under that of American slavery. Still, we think that our climate, soil, situation, population, etc., render it, to any *useful* extent, an *impossible* situation for Oregon.”⁴⁰

Those in favor of slavery certainly had supporters, including Democrats Joseph Lane (Oregon’s territorial delegate following Thurston’s death in 1851) and Matthew P. Deady, like Williams a territorial supreme court justice.⁴¹ Their argument rested on the belief that slavery would prevent the chronic labor shortages plaguing the region, especially when news of a gold strike somewhere caused many hired hands to flee to the goldfields. Further, some claimed, Oregon’s climate did not differ markedly from that of Virginia, Kentucky, or Missouri—all places with slaves (a markedly different interpretation of Oregon’s climate than that of Williams).

Oregon’s constitutional convention convened on August 17, 1857. The territory’s prominent Democrats led the convention, including Deady, who was

chosen president. The presence of blacks, whether free or enslaved, occupied a great deal of attention in the sessions. Thomas Dryer, the Whig editor of the *Oregonian* and a convention delegate, declared that he would “vote to exclude Negroes, Chinamen, Kanakas [Hawaiians], and even Indians” from Oregon.⁴² Indeed, delegates drafted articles of the constitution intended to deny citizenship to blacks, mulattoes, and the Chinese, as well as to prevent Chinese immigrants from purchasing real estate. These issues and that of slavery, however, threatened to derail the convention. The delegates therefore decided not to address the issues of slavery and the presence of free blacks and instead to send them directly to the people.

In November 1857 Oregonians weighed in on the constitution, the issue of slavery, and the presence of blacks. They voted overwhelmingly for statehood and in favor of excluding slavery, by 7,227 votes to 2,645 votes. Oregonians also prohibited free blacks from settling in the fledgling state by a stunning margin of 8,640 to 1,081.⁴³ Statehood, though, waited for more than a year, as Congress bickered about admitting Oregon in a time of acrimonious debate, but the results of the election on Oregon’s fate showed, perhaps better than any other measure, how Oregonians felt about the institution of slavery and the presence of blacks in their midst. Oregon would strive to be a free state but also a white state.

Peter Burnett, reflecting late in life on his prominent role in debates over Negro exclusion in both Oregon and California, explained that he always staunchly opposed slavery. From the vantage point of the 1880s and advanced age, he justified exclusion as part of a belief that the West would be different from and better than the older regions of the country and that racial purity would be a key part of that superiority. He noted, “One of the objects I had in view of coming to this coast was to aid in building a great American community on the Pacific; and, in the enthusiasm of my nature, I was anxious to aid in founding a State superior in several respects to those east of the Rocky Mountains. I therefore labored to avoid the evils of intoxication [by supporting prohibition efforts], and of mixed-races, one of which was disfranchised.”⁴⁴ Being staunchly anti-slavery, however, was only half of the equation, a fact that Burnett carefully left out of his reminiscences, for he, like many other westerners, attempted to use whiteness to create a uniform society.

As Oregon and California worked to prevent the presence of both slavery and free blacks, national leaders continued their march toward war. As late as

1850 cooperation remained possible, but it had become increasingly difficult, as the motley provisions that composed the California Compromise of 1850 demonstrated. Lacking a new slave state to offset California's admission to the Union as a free state, northerners offered several provisions, including efforts to strengthen the fugitive slave law, to win enough support to pass the legislation.

By the mid-1850s such forced cooperation became impossible as the debate over slavery grew increasingly hostile. Most northerners came out against the expansion of slavery, while their southern counterparts remained in favor of expansion. Southern partisans believed slave owners had the right to take their slaves anywhere, since the legal system recognized them as private property. Navigating this split proved to be fraught with difficulty. Illinois senator Stephen Douglas, seeking to address the issue and propel himself into the national spotlight, offered the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854. Essentially, the act created two separate territories, Kansas in the south and Nebraska to the north. He advocated a system called popular sovereignty in which the voters would decide for themselves whether to allow slavery. He assumed that Kansas (directly west of the slave state Missouri) would endorse slavery and that the Nebraska Territory would not, sustaining a teetering balance for a bit longer. Opposition to this act (and to the broader 1857 Dred Scott decision by the US Supreme Court, which effectively allowed slavery anywhere) gave birth to the Republican Party, whose issues and support were sectional, not national. As popular sovereignty in Kansas demonstrated, however, not even the voters could solve this problem.

Facing its second presidential election campaign in 1860, the Republican Party chose Abraham Lincoln as its candidate. While Lincoln stressed that he would not interfere with slavery where it already existed, he nevertheless advocated for the territories in the West to be preserved as "free soil" and free of the institution of slavery. Southerners feared as well that Lincoln's triumph in the 1860 election repudiated their rights and standing as equal members of the Union. A bare majority of northern voters had overridden their values, beliefs, and key economic institutions; and the constitution, they contended, included protection of minority views from such a tyrannical majority. This new president and his party, southern secessionists claimed, desired their subjugation and the destruction of the southern economy and way of life. As one Mississippi newspaper editor claimed, "The domination of Black Republicanism is wholly

inconsistent with every idea of a free or beneficent government.” As for Lincoln he asked, “Can a man be said to be [a] constitutionally elected president, the very object of whose election is to *destroy* the Constitution?” Southern fire-eaters argued that dissolving the Union and seceding was the only logical way to preserve the fundamental principles of the revolution on which the nation was founded.⁴⁵ During the first six months of 1861, the nation tore itself in two.

Ironically perhaps, secession sealed the fate of the West as free soil. Issues, such as the Homestead Act and location of the transcontinental railroad, long mired in sectional politics, could now be easily resolved since the West remained firmly in the hands of the federal government and the United States. Northerners rather than southerners determined the course of the new western empire, championing both free labor and whiteness in the process.

The Homestead Act in particular had been a long time coming. Northern politicians before and during the Civil War offered a vision of the West as populated by Jefferson’s yeoman farmers, whose own strong hands provided their only source of labor. This would be a free West, where no person received an unfair advantage by drawing off the labor of slaves. Assumptions about free labor drove the creation of a homestead law. In the past, the prospect of a homestead law had been supported by both northerners and southerners, but a law had never come to fruition. Indeed, Democrats had long advocated a policy of allowing settlers to claim sections of the public domain. Southern politicians like Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, James Walker of Mississippi, and, later, Tennessee’s Andrew Johnson argued in the 1830s and 1840s for a policy that would help settlers procure farms in the West. Opposition to a homestead policy in those years came not from the pro-slavery South but rather from the Northeast.⁴⁶

The dynamics behind a homestead law changed when homesteading by yeoman farmers became equated with “free labor.” The belief that the West should be reserved as “free soil” helped destroy the second-party system, creating a split in political views along sectional lines, a split personified by the rise of the Republican Party. The Republicans’ support of free soil turned the Old Northwest away from the Democrats and, in turn, forced the Old Southwest, long a supporter of homesteading, into an alliance with the Southeast.⁴⁷ This realignment doomed the passage of the act until the Civil War.

In their attacks on slavery and its extension, it became almost axiomatic for northern critics of slavery to denounce the institution as an evil not only

for slaves but also for whites. Slavery degraded and debased labor in areas where it thrived, and few whites of any social class would work, they claimed. Republicans like William H. Seward and Frederick Law Olmsted invariably denounced southerners as lazy, shiftless, and eager to make their slaves work. Northerners pointed to that reluctance to work as a major cause of the South's alleged economic backwardness. Olmsted in particular made something of a cottage industry out of touring the South and denouncing it as inferior to northern society.⁴⁸ He rejected the common belief that beneficent climates would cause white racial deterioration and instead pointed an accusing finger at slavery in his 1857 Texas travelogue *A Journey through Texas*.

Like much of the Southwest, Texas had both a warm climate and a multiracial society. Touring the state in 1853–54, Olmsted marveled at its fertility, declaring, “The labor of one man in Texas will more easily produce adequate sustenance and shelter for a family . . . than that of two anywhere in the Free States.”⁴⁹ Labor in Texas, however, did not always mean merely subsistence for small families, the northern abolitionist stressed. Many Texans engaged in cotton production, and cotton, with few exceptions, meant slavery. Some thought the heat and humidity of Texas, like elsewhere in the South, weakened and exhausted whites. Supposedly, only peoples of African descent could endure it. Southerners therefore considered slavery an economic and environmental necessity.⁵⁰ Olmsted dismissed this argument, writing, “Nor did we . . . have reason to retain the common opinion . . . that the health of white people, or their ability to labor, was less in the greater part of Texas than in the new Free States.”⁵¹ Whites, he observed, could be seen in the cotton fields alongside slaves, and their health did not seem adversely affected.

Yet Texas, Olmsted asserted, was underdeveloped even by the meager standards of the frontier. He described fertile fields that lay fallow, homes of rude and haphazard construction, neglected livestock, and a poor, backward, uncouth, anti-intellectual white citizenry—all typical effects associated with climatic degeneration, or so conventional wisdom asserted.⁵² Such striking poverty in a land of abundance did seem to make a case for climate-induced, white racial degeneration, but Olmsted differed with the “common opinion” and concluded that climate did not account for the inferior quality of Texas’s white population. The pernicious influence of slavery, however, did. Olmsted described the son of a northerner who had settled in Texas as being “without care, thoughtless, with an unoccupied mind.” He dwelled in a hovel on

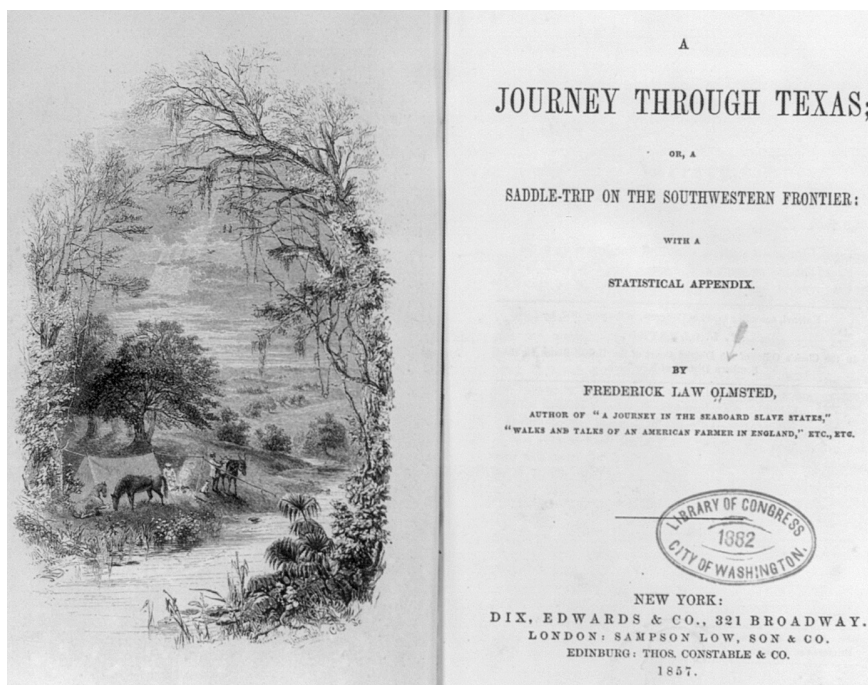


FIGURE 5.1. Frederick Law Olmsted, before earning fame as a landscape architect, spent much of his youth touring Europe and the United States. His 1857 travelogue, *A Journey through Texas*, discounted the common belief that beneficent climates would lead to white racial degeneration and blamed slavery for the lack of development in Texas. Frontispiece to Frederick Law Olmsted’s *A Journey through Texas*. Courtesy, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

a neglected farm, living a pointless and wretched existence. “Educate him where you please,” Olmsted continued, “in any country not subject to the influence of slavery, how different would have been his disposition, how much higher . . . his hopes, aims, and life.”⁵³ Slave owners relied on their slaves for everything, and those without slaves saw no reason to try to compete against the slaveholders, thus making all classes lazy. Unfortunately, this inferior condition prevailed among most Texans, Olmsted concluded.

Recent European immigrants contrasted starkly with the downtrodden, lazy whites. Olmsted marveled at the progress made by German immigrants in Texas, who, he felt, embodied the transformative power of free labor and

hard work. At a typically neat and ordered homestead, Olmsted met a farmer who proudly exclaimed that upon finishing the day's fieldwork, he still had the time and energy to construct a home made from native stone. Olmsted deadpanned, "I could not see that the climate was to be accused of having in any degree paralyzed his ambition or his strength."⁵⁴ The quality of the homes and farms of German immigrants so impressed him that he titled his chapter on their settlement at Neu Branfels "An Evening Away from Texas."⁵⁵

Instead of a land of plenty, frontier Texas exemplified a wasteland where American vigor—the hallmark of the nation's development—had fallen victim to the evils of slavery. Expanding slavery, Olmsted warned, meant creating more places like frontier Texas, but, contrary to popular opinion, climate could not account for Texas's arrested development.

In contrast to the degenerate South, the Republican Party offered free labor as ideal for the continuation of American democracy and the settlement of the West. Coupled with cheap western land, free labor would transform the West from a wilderness into a landscape of settled, orderly towns, providing economic growth and upward mobility for working-class Americans. In contrast, Republicans countered, the South persisted as an economically stagnant expanse dominated by wealthy slave owners who ruled at the expense of degraded poor whites and uneducated slaves.⁵⁶ For the ultimate success of the nation and the continuation of democracy, therefore, new territories in the West had to be populated by free men and not slaves.

The influential newspaper editor Horace Greeley, like Olmsted, sought a future West populated by free white yeoman farmers, unencumbered by unfair competition from slavery. He wrote, "The public lands are the great regulator of the relations of Labor and Capital, the safety valve of our industrial and social engine." He advised the poor and unemployed to leave the crowded, filthy cities and "go straight into the country—go at once."⁵⁷ Republicans, including Greeley, felt that the settlement of western lands by free yeoman farmers would effectively contain slavery.⁵⁸ Such advice, although seemingly prosaic, had calculated political undertones and unforeseen ramifications for the racial makeup of the region.

The Civil War rendered debates over slavery like those in California and Oregon, as well as the tension between free labor and slave labor in the territories, moot. The sectional deadlock that had long prevented Congress from acting on critical western issues disappeared. Having seceded, the South

essentially forfeited the ability to shape the West. With little opposition, northern Republicans set about passing legislation designed to integrate the West into the nation. While they did not promote whiteness per se, they certainly promoted free labor.

Two fundamentally important acts spurred the first transcontinental railroad, on a route through northern territory, and the settlement of the West's land by settlers. The Homestead Act, signed into law in May 1862, opened the public domain to any citizen or immigrant "who shall have filed his declaration of intention to become [a citizen] as required by the naturalization laws of the United States."⁵⁹ This law, therefore, applied to native-born whites, immigrants from European nations, Hispanics (granted citizenship under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo), and African Americans after ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment. It also expressly forbade Confederates or anyone who had ever "borne arms against the United States Government or given aid and comfort to its enemies" from acquiring land under the act.

To claim the 160 acres promised under the act, settlers were required to pay a small filing fee and then to reside on and improve the land for five years. Alternatively, settlers could buy the land for \$1.25 an acre after six months of residence. To be sure, several problems plagued the system, and settlers found that much of the best land had already been awarded to the states or railroad companies, but it did offer the possibility of owning a farm of one's own, a prospect that at the time defined the American dream. Given the generous terms required to claim land under the act, many people decided to go West.⁶⁰

Go they did. From the 1870s through the early decades of the 1900s, western states exploded in population. Between 1862 and 1913, over 2.4 million people filed claims under the Homestead Act.⁶¹ The throngs of emigrants included a considerable number of African Americans. For them, earning their freedom during the Civil War signified only the first step in achieving a better life. Following the Civil War, southern African Americans desired a chance for economic as well as political freedom, but as the federal government lost the will to enforce its policies of reconstruction, which gave free blacks some semblance of social and economic power, segregation began to take hold. African Americans sought ways of protecting their rights and of fostering a sense of community, and they could do so by leaving the South for friendlier regions. According to the historian Steven Hahn, an "interest in emigration arose as one of several strategies designed to create or reconstitute freed communities

on a stable foundation.”⁶² Emigration sentiment grew strongest in the Deep South, especially areas “where freedpeople labored on cotton plantations, had made major efforts . . . to organize themselves into stable communities, but then suffered, or were threatened by serious reversals” because of the rise of so-called white Redemption in the South.⁶³ As the members of the Colonization Council, an African American colonization organization, explained in an appeal to President Ulysses S. Grant, they wanted “to be removed to a territory where they could live.”⁶⁴ The African nation of Liberia, created in the antebellum period by American blacks and the American Colonization Society, attracted some, but the distance and expense proved prohibitive. Emigration therefore took on a more regional tint.

Many western states experienced an increase in the number of African Americans in the 1870s and 1880s. California, for example, had 6,018 “colored” residents in 1880, but by 1900 the population had grown to 82,326. Colorado’s black population in 1880 stood at 2,435, and by 1900 it had grown nearly five-fold, to over 10,000. Oregon’s black population grew from a mere 487 in 1880 to nearly 19,000 by 1900. Impressive increases, but they are minuscule compared with the numbers of African Americans in the South. In 1900 Alabama’s black population numbered over 800,000, Mississippi’s was nearly 1 million, and Georgia had over a million blacks.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, African Americans headed West in greater and greater numbers.

African Americans founded all-black towns from Oklahoma to California, but Kansas in particular attracted thousands because of its proximity to the Deep South and reputation for tolerance.⁶⁶ As is the case for all immigrants, push and pull factors propelled them in search of new homes. Increasing disfranchisement, segregation, and violence in the South pushed African Americans; and the expectation of owning farms and building communities where they could govern themselves and live relatively free from the problems found in the states of the former Confederacy pulled them. “Kansas,” in the words of historian Quintard Taylor, “became to the freeperson what the United States was to the European immigrant: a refuge from tyranny and oppression.”⁶⁷ The so-called Exodusters began arriving in the Sunflower State in the late 1870s, and the first wave included many with the means and ability to pay their way. Stories and rumors, however, built Kansas into an almost biblical land of milk and honey, and the small movement of African Americans into the state grew to a crescendo in 1879–80. The throng of

emigrants—totaling perhaps 30,000—was largely destitute, and they overwhelmed the cities of Kansas.⁶⁸

Promoters and developers, as in all such rushes, played a large role in attracting African Americans to Kansas, but railroad promoters remained conspicuously absent from efforts to recruit them. Two black ministers from Tennessee, William Smith and Thomas Harris, along with W. R. Hill, a white Kansas land speculator, founded the all-black community of Nicodemus in central Kansas. Hill's ambitions kept him busy, and he laid out the mostly white town of Hill City in 1878, a year after founding Nicodemus.

Nicodemus became a symbol of hope for many southern blacks, and stories of the place as a utopian society soon emerged, but the town struggled like other frontier communities. Willianna Hickman, a Kentucky woman who emigrated to Nicodemus with her family, found most of the town's residents living in dugouts. Approaching the rough town, she began to cry.⁶⁹ Nicodemus would grow for several years, but by the mid-1880s blizzards, crop failures, and the Union Pacific Railroad's decision to bypass the town doomed it to irrelevance.⁷⁰

Similarly, Benjamin "Pap" Singleton, the so-called Black Moses, recruited "Exodusters" throughout the South, establishing colonies in Kansas and Colorado.⁷¹ Edwin McCabe, a former resident of Nicodemus, created the all-black town of Langston in Oklahoma.⁷² These towns owed their beginnings largely to the work of local speculators and African Americans leaders who hoped to improve the condition of their race. Powerful railroads, which were heavily promoting their lines to European immigrants, played no role in erecting black towns.

In ways both conscious and unconscious, westerners clearly shaped the character of the western population. Efforts in Oregon and California, for example, to exclude African Americans reflected white attempts to legislate whiteness, but less obvious if no less real were efforts by railroads and promoters to ignore tens of thousands of southern blacks. Following the Civil War, the black population of the West grew in real and appreciable ways, but that augmentation would certainly have been greater had westerners been willing to embrace more black emigrants.

Opposition to black settlement in the 1840s and beyond illustrated a remarkable transformation in Anglo-Americans' views of the West. The early, negative assessments of the region by Zebulon Pike and Washington Irving had

given way to a belief in the West as destined to be free of Peter Burnett's "troublesome class of population." Many Anglo-Americans now saw the West as an ideal location in which to settle, a region free from undesirable immigration and the taint of slavery. How this transformation occurred, however, how the West came to be seen as a refuge from the aftermath of slavery and the dangers of non-Anglo immigration, constitutes a story in itself.

NOTES

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2. For a discussion of the slavery issue in the Old Northwest, see Eugene H. Berwanger, *The Frontier against Slavery: Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967), 7–29.
3. Michael F. Holt, *The Fate of Their Country: Politicians, Slavery Extension, and the Coming of the Civil War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 6.
4. Meinig, *Shaping of America*, 453–54.
5. Quoted in Holt, *Fate of Their Country*, 7.
6. *Ibid.*, 7–9.
7. *Ibid.*, 18.
8. *Ibid.*, 20.
9. *Ibid.*, 19–35.
10. Quoted in Rudolph M. Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 18.
11. Berwanger, *Frontier against Slavery*, 61.
12. Walter Colton, *Three Years in California* (New York: S. A. Rollo, 1859), 374–75.
13. "Constitution of the State of California, 1849," Archives, California Secretary of State, <http://www.sos.ca.gov/archives/collections/constitutions/1849/full-text.htm> (accessed July 12, 2012).
14. Berwanger, *Frontier against Slavery*, 60.
15. J. Ross Browne, *Report of the Debates in the Convention of California on the Formation of the State Constitution in September and October, 1849* (Washington, DC: John T. Towers, 1850), 47–50, Archives, California Secretary of State, <http://www.archives.cdn.sos.ca.gov/1849/pdf/convention-debates-reports.pdf> (accessed July 12, 2012). On the belief that Europeans are descendants of Noah's son Japhet, see Colin Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600–1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 28–30, 52.

16. Peter H. Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer* (New York: D. Appleton, 1880), 351–52.
17. *Ibid.*, 354–55; italics in original.
18. Berwanger, *Frontier against Slavery*, 60.
19. *Ibid.*, 78; Quintard Taylor, “Slaves and Free Men: Blacks in the Oregon Country, 1840–1860,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 83, no. 2 (Summer 1982): 153–70.
20. Berwanger, *Frontier against Slavery*, 78.
21. Taylor, “Slaves and Free Men,” 153–70.
22. *Ibid.*
23. Peter Burnett, “Letter from Peter Burnett,” dated December 25, 1844, *Jefferson [Missouri] Inquirer*, October 23, 1845.
24. Taylor, “Slaves and Free Men,” 153–70, quote on 157.
25. Quoted in Berwanger, *Frontier against Slavery*, 81.
26. *Congressional Globe*, 30th Congress, Session 1, Appendix, 793, Library of Congress, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwgcglink.html#top> (accessed July 12, 2012).
27. Robert W. Johannsen, *Frontier Politics and the Sectional Conflict: The Pacific Northwest on the Eve of the Civil War* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1955), 17–19.
28. *Congressional Globe*, 30th Congress, Session 1, Appendix, 865.
29. *Ibid.*, 866.
30. *Ibid.*, 792.
31. Barbara Mahoney, “Oregon Voices, Oregon Democracy: Asahel Bush, Slavery, and the Statehood Debate,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 110, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 202–27.
32. Quoted in Johannsen, *Frontier Politics and the Sectional Conflict*, 23. Original quote from *Portland Weekly Oregonian*, January 6, 1853.
33. Johannsen, *Frontier Politics*, 24–30.
34. On Bush’s career, see Mahoney, “Oregon Voices.”
35. George H. Williams, “The Free State Letter of Judge George H. Williams,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (September 1908): 258.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*, 265.
38. *Ibid.*, 265–66.
39. *Ibid.*, 272.
40. Johannsen, *Frontier Politics*, 32–38; italics in original.
41. Mahoney, “Oregon Voices.”
42. Quoted in *ibid.*, 222.
43. Williams, “Free State Letter of Judge George H. Williams.”

44. Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, 221–22.
45. Quoted in Michael A. Morrison, *Slavery and the American West: The Eclipse of Manifest Destiny and the Coming of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 255–62, quotes 258–59; italics in original.
46. Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 168–69.
47. *Ibid.*
48. Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 41–48.
49. Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey through Texas, or, A Saddle-Trip on the South-western Frontier* (New York: Mason Bros., 1857), xiii.
50. See Conevery Bolton Valenčius, *The Health of the Country: How American Settlers Understood Themselves and Their Land* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 2002), 237.
51. Olmsted, *Journey through Texas*, xiii.
52. The belief that lower-class, rural whites were lazy, stupid, and inferior to their social betters has a long history. See Matt Wray, *Not Quite White: White Trash and the Boundaries of Whiteness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).
53. Olmsted, *Journey through Texas*, 122–23.
54. *Ibid.*, 279.
55. *Ibid.*, 142.
56. Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 40.
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58. Cross, *Go West Young Man*, 28.
59. "Homestead Act," Avalon Project, Yale University, New Haven, CT, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/homestead_act.asp (accessed July 12, 2012).
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61. Walter Nugent, *Into the West: The Story of Its People* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), 131.
62. Steven Hahn, *A Nation under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2003), 322.
63. *Ibid.*, 331.
64. Quoted in *ibid.*, 320.
65. "Historical Census Browser," University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/index.html> (accessed July 12, 2012).
66. For a discussion of African American settlement in the trans-Mississippi West, see Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American*

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67. Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 137.

68. Athearn, *In Search of Canaan*, 3–6.

69. Crockett, *Black Towns*, 1–8.

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71. *Ibid.*, 137–38; Roy Garvin, “Benjamin, or ‘Pap,’ Singleton and His Followers,” *Journal of Negro History* 33, no. 1 (January 1948): 7–23.

72. Crockett, *Black Towns*, 16–26; Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 140–46.

