

Summary: The People of the West

Early Peoples of the West

Many scientists think people first came to the West over 15,000 years ago. The Aleut and Inuit lived in the North. The Hopi and Navajo lived in the Southwest. They learned to use the resources where they lived. Those near the sea fished. Others hunted and farmed.

About 700 years ago, people we now call the Pueblo people lived near the Rio Grande. They irrigated land to grow crops. They gathered wild plants and hunted animals. They made baskets and pottery and traded them for salt, food, and animal hides. On the northwest coast, the Tlingit people gathered wild plants, hunted, and fished. They traded seal oil for furs and made blankets that showed stories. Pueblo, Tlingit, and other American Indian groups still live in the West.

Spanish Settlements

The Spanish conquered Mexico in 1519 and called it New Spain. Then they went north to look for gold. The Spanish took the Indians' land. The Spanish wanted Indians to give up their culture and become Christians, so they started missions.

In 1821, Mexico won independence from Spain. Texas split off from Mexico in 1836 and joined the United States in 1845. Mexico and the United States went to war the following year. The United States won. Mexico had to give the Southwest to the United States. Spanish and Mexican influence is still strong there. Many people speak Spanish. Many foods and festivals in the region come from Spain or Mexico.

More People Go West

Gold was found in California in 1848. Many people moved west in wagon trains hoping to get rich or buy cheap land. They took American Indian land. American Indians were forced to move to separate places called reservations. After Chinese immigrants helped build the transcontinental railroad in 1869, the West grew fast. In 1959, Hawaii and Alaska were the last two states to join the Union. Now there are 50 states.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

mission *noun*, a settlement for teaching religion to local people

wagon train *noun*, a line of wagons that carried settlers and their belongings

transcontinental railroad *noun*, train system that linked the East and the West



After You Read

REVIEW What did different groups who settled the West have in common? Underline a sentence that tells what the Aleut, Inuit, Hopi, and Navajo learned to use in the West.

REVIEW Why did the Spanish build missions in New Spain? Draw a box around the words that tell the answer.

REVIEW How did the transcontinental railroad affect population in the West? Circle the words that tell what happened to the population after the transcontinental railroad was built.