

Cultural Fact

● The Frontier

The Frontier was a line that separated the East (civilisation) from the West (wilderness = unexplored land). It was the edge of what was known.

Throughout American history, with settlers expanding westward, this line constantly shifted from east to west.

The Frontier offered people an opportunity to strike out and succeed on their own.

It began in Jamestown in 1607 and at Plymouth Rock in 1620 and moved westward for nearly 300 years until 1890 when the United States declared that the Frontier was closed since the settlers had reached the Pacific coast.

Historian Frederick Jackson Turner (1861-1932) believed that the Frontier had created the American nation. For him doing things for oneself and standing alone against difficulties developed individualism and solidarity because settlers faced the same problems and had to help each other.

● “Manifest Destiny”

In the 19th century, the Frontier was linked to the concept of “Manifest Destiny” which had been coined in 1845 by John L. O’Sullivan, a magazine editor.

Expanding westward was like a religious mission given to a chosen people. It implied that the continued territorial expansion of the United States westward to the Pacific and beyond was inevitable.

Both the Frontier and Manifest Destiny concept shaped American history and identity.

