

# Manifest Destiny and the frontier

## Introduction

- **Frontier** : dynamic concept being the outer boundary that separates the settlers from the unknown, getting further and further to the West.
- **Manifest Destiny** : 19th-century belief that the United States was destined to expand its territory across North America, driven by a sense of national mission and divine providence.
- **Westward Expansion**: expansion to the West by the Settlers.
- The **roots of these concepts** can be found all the way back to the early settlers and they are indispensable to understand the entire history and ideology of America, to the extent that they are still present today in more modern forms

## I. The historical issues of the frontier

- The **Peak of the Frontier** was during the 19th century, it became a political project that galvanized the people to expand to the West. It led to discover new lands, resources...
- **Homestead Act**: act taken by Lincoln in 1862. It permitted to acquire large public lands at a low cost. It filled the lands.
- Because the lands belonged to the **Natives**, it led to conflicts and massacres.

## II. The ethos behind the Manifest Destiny

- **Manifest Destiny** was made popular by the author John O'Sullivan in a 1845 newspaper article.
- It was a **God-given mission** thus helps understanding the importance of religion in the country and the idealization of the puritans.
- The belief implied logically **white superiority** (they were chosen by god), it had regrettable consequences such as demonization of native Americans and even massacres.
- More than a goal, expansion is a **duty** in order to civilize the rest of the world and spread democracy. Manifest destiny fueled Westward expansion, colonization and even American imperialism since WW2.

## III. The impacts on today's America

- **Manifest Destiny** and the **Frontier** shaped the entire history of the USA, but still shapes the country.
- The **settlers** are now glorified as they built the country from scratches, offering their life. They are part of the national myth.
- It enhances **individualism** and **Social Darwinism**, hinting at the Survival of the Fittest in a society.
- It justifies **democracy**, **imperialism**, **capitalism**, **liberalism**.
- **American exceptionalism**: belief in inherent superiority and duty to spread influence, often through interventionism.
- It fuelled the **Space Race and conquest**.