

## Movement and Visual Impairment: Research across Disciplines

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westward movement, the populating by Europeans of the land within the continental boundaries of the mainland United States, a process that began shortly after the first colonial settlements were established along the Atlantic coast. The first British settlers in the New World stayed close to the Atlantic, their lifeline to needed supplies from England. By the 1630s, however, Massachusetts Bay colonists were pushing into the Connecticut River valley. Resistance from the French and Native Americans slowed their movement westward, yet by the 1750s northern American colonists had occupied most of New England.

In the South, settlers who arrived too late to get good tidewater land moved westward into the Piedmont. By 1700 the Virginia frontier had been pushed as far west as the fall line—the point upstream at which the rivers emptying into the Atlantic became unnavigable. Some pioneers climbed beyond the fall line into the Blue Ridge Mountains, but the major flow into the backcountry regions of Virginia and the other southern Atlantic colonies went southward rather than westward.

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Germans and Scots-Irish from Pennsylvania moved down the Shenandoah Valley, largely between 1730 and 1750, to populate the western portions of Virginia and the Carolinas. By the time of the French and Indian Wars, the American frontier had reached the Appalachian Mountains.

The British Proclamation of 1763 ordered a halt to the westward movement at the Appalachians, but the decree was widely disregarded. Settlers scurried into Ohio, Tennessee, and Kentucky. After the American Revolution, a flood of people crossed the mountains into the fertile lands between the Appalachians and the Mississippi River. By 1810 Ohio, Tennessee, and Kentucky had been transformed from wilderness into a region of farms and towns.

Despite those decades of continuous westward pushing of the frontier line, it was not until the conclusion of the War of 1812 that the westward movement became a significant outpouring of people across the continent. By 1830 the Old Northwest and Old Southwest—areas scarcely populated before the war—were settled with enough people to warrant the admission of Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Alabama, and Mississippi as states into the Union.

During the 1830s and 1840s the flood of pioneers poured unceasingly westward. Michigan, Arkansas, Wisconsin, and Iowa received most of them. A number of families even went as far as the Pacific coast, taking the Oregon Trail to areas in the Pacific Northwest. In 1849 fortune seekers rushed into California in search of gold. Meanwhile, the Mormons ended their long pilgrimage in Utah.

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Between the Gold Rush and the Civil War, Americans in growing numbers filled the Mississippi River valley, Texas, the southwest territories, and the new states of Kansas and Nebraska. During the war, gold and silver discoveries drew prospectorsâ€”and later settlersâ€”into Oregon, Colorado, Nevada, Idaho, and Montana.

By 1870 only portions of the Great Plains could truly be called unsettled. For most of the next two decades, that land functioned as the fabled open range, home to cowboys and their grazing cattle from ranches in Texas. But by the late 1880s, with the decline of the range cattle industry, settlers moved in and fenced the Great Plains into family farms. That settlementâ€”and the wild rush of pioneers into the Oklahoma Indian Territoryâ€”constituted the last chapter of the westward movement. By the early 1890s a frontier had ceased to exist within the 48 continental states.

## Reference

[The Art of Healing Latinos: Firsthand Accounts from Physicians and Other Health Advocates](#)

[Microbiology Essentials \(Essentials Study Guides\)](#)