

Home and Abroad: The Two “Wests” of Twentieth-Century United States History

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For nearly three centuries the dominant fact in American life has been expansion. With the settlement of the Pacific coast and the occupation of the free lands, this movement has come to a check. That these energies of expansion will no longer operate would be a rash prediction. . . .

Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Problem of the West,” *Atlantic Monthly* (1896)¹

Where lies the twentieth-century American West? The question goes beyond simple geography to historical sensibility. Take the case of oil extraction in the Amazon region of Ecuador since the 1960s. The similarities between petroleum development there and contemporaneous activities in Alaska, America’s “last frontier,” underscore the profound connections between western development and the role of the United States in international capitalist expansion. Many of the processes, people, and institutions that actively shaped the

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1. Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Problem of the West,” *Atlantic Monthly*, LXXXVIII (1896), 296.

Ecuadorian story are well-known from the drama scripted by U.S. expansion through North America. Their reappearance in Ecuador, as well as in Alaska, raises questions about how we frame our narratives of western history. Let me illustrate my point by beginning with a brief, close look at Ecuador and Alaska.²

In 1967, the year before Atlantic-Richfield struck oil in Alaska, Texaco and Gulf discovered substantial quantities of oil in the remote Ecuadorian Amazon. Lago Agrio, Ecuador—named after Sour Lake oilfield in Texas—was located, like Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, on a distant resource frontier historically isolated from national economic and population centers. Standard Oil companies had earlier prospected in both the Amazon and the Arctic in the 1920s but had abandoned the search due to unsatisfactory yields and the high cost of working in such rough, inaccessible regions. Tightening post-1950s oil markets brought petroleum companies back to both areas.

2. No one source covers the following discussion of the Ecuadorian Amazon and Alaska. See, among others, Judith Kimerling, "Disregarding Environmental Law: Petroleum Development in Protected Natural Areas and Indigenous Homelands in the Ecuadorian Amazon," *Hastings International and Comparative Law Review*, XIV (1991), 849–903; Jorge E. Uquillas, "Social Impacts of Modernization and Public Policies and Prospects for Indigenous Development in the Ecuadorian Amazon," in Debra Schumann and William Partridge, eds., *The Human Ecology of Tropical Land Settlement in Latin America* (Boulder, 1989), 407–431; William T. Vickers, "Indian Policy in Amazonian Ecuador," in Marianne Schmink and Charles H. Wood, eds., *Frontier Expansion in Amazonia* (Gainesville, Fla., 1984); R. J. Bromley, "Agricultural Colonization in the Upper Amazon Basin: The Impact of Oil Discoveries," *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, LXIII (1972), 278–294; David Stoll, *Fishers of Men or Founders of Empire?: The Wycliffe Bible Translators in Latin America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), chap. 9; Norman E. Whitten, ed., *Cultural Transformations and Ethnicity in Modern Ecuador* (Urbana, Ill., 1981); Paul Sabin, "Searching for Middle Ground: Native Communities and Oil Extraction in the Northern and Central Ecuadorian Amazon, 1967–1993," *Environmental History* (forthcoming); Robert Arnold, et al., *Alaska Native Land Claims* (Anchorage, 1976); Thomas R. Berger, *Village Journey: The Report of the Alaska Native Review Commission* (New York, 1984); Mary Clay Berry, *The Alaska Pipeline: The Politics of Oil and Native Land Claims* (Bloomington, Ind., 1975); Peter Coates, *The Trans-Alaska Pipeline Controversy* (London, 1993); Joseph G. Jorgensen, *Oil Age Eskimos* (Berkeley, 1990); Lael Morgan, *And the Land Provides: Alaskan Natives in a Year of Transition* (Garden City, N.Y., 1974); Donald Worster, "Alaska: The Underworld Erupts," in Worster, *Under Western Skies: Nature and History in the American West* (New York, 1992), 154–224; Mark Panitch, "Alaska's Pipeline Road: New Conflicts Loom," *Science*, CLXXXIX (July 4, 1975), 30–32.

Then, following the oil discoveries, consortia of U.S. companies developed their concessions in Ecuador and Alaska by building pipelines to the Pacific Ocean and major new roads. As with railroads in the nineteenth-century American West, the line built by Texaco and Gulf in Ecuador enabled hundreds of thousands of nonnative settlers to colonize the formerly remote Amazon rainforest. The colonists quickly stripped the rainforest to produce coffee, cattle, and tropical fruits for export to Ecuadorian cities and foreign markets.

In addition to extraction from the hinterland, nonnative colonization, deforestation, and infrastructural development, other familiar forces from the American West shaped the great wave of change sweeping the Amazon. Like Marcus and Narcissa Whitman among the Cayuse in Oregon territory, U.S. Protestant missionaries worked to convert the Amazon's indigenous peoples and to convince them to settle permanently in villages. There, the Americans argued, they would enjoy unprecedented access to schools, health services, and transportation as well as Christianity. Simultaneously, Americans pursued more secular activities. In Ecuador, as in Alaska and in the nineteenth-century trans-Mississippi West, travelers sought adventure in a harsh yet stunningly beautiful landscape. They pumped money into new "eco-tourism" operations, pursuing glimpses of screaming monkeys and pink dolphins, as well as encounters with "natives." American reformers—through non-governmental organizations and the U.S. Agency for International Development—struggled to protect indigenous peoples and the "pristine" environment. They funded emerging environmental and indigenous groups and, in the early 1990s, even assisted with a legal suit against Texaco in a U.S. trial court. In keeping with the tradition of Native American pilgrimages to the U.S. capital, the controversy over oil development and native land claims brought Huaorani leaders in traditional dress to testify before various public agencies in Washington, D.C. White House officials also traveled to the Amazon to wear the feathered crowns of the Huaorani and to broker an agreement that would allow oil production to proceed as planned. American writers proffered popular nonfiction accounts about Ecuador, including Judith Kimerling's *Amazon Crude* and Joe

Kane's *Savages*.³ The books resembled similar literature about the Alaskan pipeline or the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge, sparking widespread outrage over oil development and prompting sympathetic efforts on behalf of aboriginal peoples threatened by the insatiable U.S. demand for oil.

Both Ecuador and Alaska witnessed American oil extraction in their hinterlands, volatile U.S. environmental politics, insistent native land claims, swift changes within native communities, nonnative colonization and missionary activity, environmental degradation of fragile lands, and American adventure tourism and reformist exposés. Because of the strong U.S. presence in both places, these developments are connected not only by parallel experiences of the sort noted in "comparative frontier" studies but also—and more importantly—by a direct *lineage* between earlier American Wests and later developments in both Alaska and northeastern Ecuador.⁴ Experiences like those of Ecuador with oil suggest that purely regional definitions of the "West"—definitions that demarcate a geographic area within U.S. national borders or within the trans-Mississippi regions of North America—cannot adequately frame studies of twentieth-century western history. The Ecuadorian story also lies partly within the domain of U.S. history and the grand narrative of the American West.⁵ When his-

3. Judith Kimerling, *Amazon Crude* (Washington, D.C., 1991); Joe Kane, *Savages* (New York, 1995).

4. For a sampling of the comparative-frontiers historiography, see Herbert Heaton, "Other Wests Than Ours," *Journal of Economic History*, Supplement VI (1946), 50–62; Owen Lattimore, *Studies in Frontier History: Collected Papers, 1928–1958* (London, 1962); Walker Wyman and Clifton Kroeber, eds., *The Frontier in Perspective* (Madison, Wisc., 1957), part I; Dietrich Gerhard, "The Frontier in Comparative View," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, I (1959), 205–229; Marvin Mikesell, "Comparative Studies in Frontier History," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, L (1960), 62–74; Howard Lamar and Leonard Thompson, eds., *The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared* (New Haven, 1981); recent articles by David A. Chappell, David Harry Miller, and Kevin Mulroy in "Forum: The Formation of Ethnic Identities in Frontier Societies," *Journal of World History*, IV (1993), 267–324; Walter Nugent, "Frontiers and Empires in the Late Nineteenth Century," in Patricia Nelson Limerick, Clyde A. Milner II, and Charles E. Rankin, eds., *Trails: Toward a New Western History* (Lawrence, Kan., 1991), 161–181.

5. Placing this Ecuadorian tale within the context of U.S. western history does not imply that Ecuador (or any other nation) should be viewed as simply a hinterland of the United States. Furthermore, other metropolitan centers have

torians concentrate exclusively on the modern American West, with its fixed boundaries, they risk losing sight of other central actors and processes. By the late nineteenth century, many American miners, missionaries, capitalists, travel writers, adventurers, diplomats, and soldiers had moved from the American West into new frontiers.⁶ To understand better the role of expansion and frontiers in American history, western historians need to set off in pursuit. This essay seeks to justify such a new departure and to provide a tentative map for the journey.

* * *

The "frontier" or "process" school provides a basic but incomplete guide for taking western history into the international arena. According to those who define the frontier according to processes of cultural, political, and economic interaction, the United States has seen a succession of "Wests" beginning with the eastern seaboard. Certain parallel processes have typified each one, as William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin outline in their recent essay, "Becoming West." The parallel processes include such characteristic changes as "species shifting," "market making," "land taking," "boundary setting," "state forming," and "self shaping."⁷ They differ from those described in Frederick Jackson Turner's famous thesis, abandoning his linear, ethnocentric, and romantic perspective for one that is more complex, indeterminate, and inclusive. Only during the nineteenth century did West-as-region and West-as-frontier clearly coincide when the trans-Mississippi West became the primary site for the interactive processes at the core of western history. Before and after, region and process fit imperfectly.

What renders this later version of the process school in-

similar relationships with their hinterland areas. In this essay I privilege the American story to highlight the connection to the history of United States expansion.

6. On the long and somewhat messy history of the word "frontier" and for a consideration of the term's continuing utility, see Kerwin Lee Klein, "Reclaiming the 'F' Word, Or Being and Becoming Postwestern," *Pacific Historical Review*, LXV (1996), 179-215; Stephen Aron, "Lessons in Conquest: Towards a Greater Western History," *Pacific Historical Review*, LXIII (1994), 125-147.

7. William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin, "Becoming West: Toward a New Meaning for Western History," in Cronon, Miles, and Gitlin, eds., *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past* (New York, 1992), 3-27.

complete, however, is that it does not take into account U.S. international expansion in the twentieth century. The desire of Cronon, Miles, and Gitlin to ground western history in changing human relationships with nature leads them to locate these successive American Wests on the North American continent: “the continent itself has been both the principal object of human struggle and the stage on which that struggle has taken place.”⁸ Their emphasis sharply limits our study of U.S. frontiers in the twentieth century, as Americans ostensibly ran out of land onto which to expand. Some western historians extend their analysis to Hawai‘i and Alaska, but beyond these concessions, the process of “westering” supposedly ended, if not in the 1890s with the “closing” of the frontier, then sometime soon afterward.⁹ According to Cronon, Miles, and Gitlin, “The West as we know it today is not just a region; it is also the last frontier.” Gradually, the West would “become a region not of moving on but of settling in.” Or, as Cronon writes in another essay, the American West is a place that “changed in location for a while and then more or less settled down with more stable boundaries.”¹⁰

Thus, the scholars who have emphasized the frontier as process confine that process to national borders and geographical contiguity. On reaching the twentieth century, they seem to jettison their central insight—that their story is about “part of the worldwide expansion of European economies and nation-states that traces back to the fourteenth century and before.”¹¹ They are well beyond the naive view that European and American expansion ceased in the 1890s or soon afterward, but they fail to acknowledge two twentieth-century “Wests”—

8. *Ibid.*, 8.

9. John Whitehead, “Hawai‘i: The First and Last Far West,” *Western Historical Quarterly*, XXIII (1992), 153–177; Victoria Wyatt, “Alaska and Hawai‘i,” in Clyde A. Milner II, Carol A. O’Connor, and Martha A. Sandweiss, eds., *Oxford History of the American West* (New York, 1994), 564–601; William Cronon, “Kennecott Journey: The Paths Out of Town,” in Cronon, Miles, and Gitlin, eds., *Under an Open Sky*, 28–51. In his call for a new “coherent history of the twentieth-century West,” Howard Lamar observes: “every American . . . knows that frontier days and westering in the historic sense of expansion and settlement have long been gone.” Howard R. Lamar, “Westering in the Twenty-first Century: Speculations on the Future of the Western Past,” in *ibid.*, 258–259.

10. Cronon, Miles, and Gitlin, “Becoming West,” 24, 25; William Cronon, “The West: A Moving Target,” *Western Historical Quarterly*, XXV (1994), 477–478.

11. Cronon, Miles, and Gitlin, “Becoming West,” 9.

one an increasingly complex and developed region of the United States, and the other a shifting international frontier of economic, environmental, political, and cultural interaction.¹²

The Mixed Legacy of the “Wisconsin School”

Following the lead of Fred Harvey Harrington and William Appleman Williams, diplomatic historians have increasingly linked twentieth-century U.S. imperialism to the history of the American West. In *God, Mammon, and the Japanese* (1944), Harrington uncovered a fascinating world of American international investment, resource extraction, missionary activity, and diplomacy. He showed how Horace Allen, a lowly medical missionary in Korea, became a classic intermediary of the U.S. international frontier, using his position to arrange mining and railroad concessions for American investors and to create (in the words of a Harrington chapter title) “A Cripple Creek All of Our Own” in the Far East.¹³ Harrington’s students Walter LaFeber and William Appleman Williams followed his lead in detailing U.S. missionary activity and foreign investment in mines, railroads, and other ventures. LaFeber saw American expansion into Alaska, Hawai‘i, and the Philippines as part of a larger quest to control the Pacific trade with Asian countries. Williams envisioned foreign trade as a new frontier and probed the role of overseas expansion in the domestic political economy.¹⁴

12. Walter Prescott Webb broadened Turner’s thesis to encompass European expansion around the world. He thought the worldwide depression of the 1930s signaled the end of the long frontier boom. “Most of the talk about new frontiers,” Webb wrote, “may be thought of as nostalgia.” Webb, *The Great Frontier* (1951; Lincoln, Neb., 1986), 282; William H. McNeill adapted Webb’s framework in *The Great Frontier: Freedom and Hierarchy in Modern Times* (Princeton, N.J., 1983). The metropolitan expansion described so elegantly for nineteenth-century Chicago by William Cronon continued in many ways into the larger international arena, binding people, economies, and natural resources across national boundaries, continents, and oceans. Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York, 1991). In an earlier work, Cronon examined the New England colonies within a similar context of metropolitan expansion. Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York, 1983).

13. Fred Harvey Harrington, *God, Mammon, and the Japanese: Dr. Horace N. Allen and Korean-American Relations, 1884–1905* (Madison, Wis., 1944), chap. 9.

14. William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (rev. ed., New York, 1962); Williams, *The Roots of the Modern American Empire: A Study of the Growth and Shaping of Social Consciousness in a Marketplace Society* (New York, 1969);

Harrington's students at Wisconsin also investigated the way that economics and frontier ideology shaped U.S. foreign policy. Williams thought that the "single most important aspect of twentieth-century American diplomacy" could be summed up in an observation by presidential adviser William S. Culbertson: "Our economic frontiers . . . are no longer coextensive with our territorial frontiers."¹⁵ Williams's *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (1959) propelled many diplomatic historians on a trajectory away from Harrington's preoccupation with the details of empire and into the realm of ideology and foreign policymaking. He joined LaFeber and others in identifying a conscious striving for empire among U.S. intellectuals and politicians of the late nineteenth century. Brooks Adams, Theodore Roosevelt, Josiah Strong, and Alfred Thayer Mahan, among others, bemoaned the supposed closing of the American frontier and sought new economic frontiers in Asia and elsewhere. According to Williams, they

thought about American relations with the rest of the world in terms of the continuing need to expand in order to sustain the dynamic relationship between expansion, prosperity, democracy, and domestic well-being (and order), and they acted on that conception of the world. In their view, the new frontiers would be supplied by the continued overseas expansion of the American marketplace, and they formulated their foreign policies in order to create and maintain the momentum required to achieve that broad objective.¹⁶

The widespread belief in the necessity of continued American expansion and the need for markets, declared Williams, combined to undergird an aggressive foreign policy in Cuba, Venezuela, the Philippines, and China.

While the Wisconsin school highlighted economic inter-

Williams, *History as a Way of Learning: Articles, Excerpts, and Essays* (New York, 1973); Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860–1898* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1963). Ironically, as an anonymous editorial referee reminded me, Williams ignored how Turner himself became a "rash prophet," predicting an end to expansionism and a turn to regionalism. Williams himself made a similar turn later in his career. Williams, "Radicals and Regionalism," *Democracy*, I (1981), 87–88.

15. Williams, *Tragedy*, 193.

16. Williams, *Roots of the Modern American Empire*, xiv.

ests that shaped American foreign policy, diplomatic historians today are increasingly looking beyond economics to the broader social, cultural, and environmental context of foreign policy.¹⁷ They have examined the U.S. experience in the American West for precursors to later international actions. Many have seen continuities in racial and gender imagery in the nation's "foreign policies of domination."¹⁸ In particular, interactions between the U.S. government and Native American peoples are emerging as fair territory for diplomatic historians.¹⁹

17. Robert J. McMahon, "The Study of American Foreign Relations: National History or International History," in Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson, eds., *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge, Eng., 1991), 15; Akira Iriye, "Culture and International History," in *ibid.*, 214–225; Iriye, *The Globalizing of America, 1913–1945* (Cambridge, Eng., 1993); Thomas G. Paterson, "Defining and Doing the History of American Foreign Relations: A Primer," in Hogan and Paterson, eds., *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, 36–54; David Engerman, "Research Agenda for the History of Tourism: Towards an International Social History," *American Studies International*, XXXII (1994), 3–31; Eileen P. Scully, "Taking the Low Road to Sino-American Relations: 'Open Door' Expansionists and the Two China Markets," *Journal of American History*, LXXXII (1995), 62–83.

18. Emily S. Rosenberg, "Walking the Borders," in Hogan and Paterson, eds., *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, 32. See also Walter LaFeber, *The American Search for Opportunity, 1865–1913* (Cambridge, Eng., 1993), 53–59; Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven, Conn., 1987); Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981); Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800–1890* (New York, 1985); Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York, 1992); Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building* (Minneapolis, 1980).

19. See, for example, Walter L. Williams, "United States Indian Policy and the Debate over Philippine Annexation: Implications for the Origins of American Imperialism," *Journal of American History*, LXVI (1980), 810–831; LaFeber, *American Search for Opportunity*, 53–59; Victor G. Kiernan, *America, the New Imperialism: From White Settlement to World Hegemony* (London, 1978). Recent exchanges on the "H-Diplo" e-mail listserv have discussed the relevance to diplomatic history of what previously fell under "Indian-White" relations. See comments made by James Cox, "Re: Native Americans and Diplomatic History," in H-Diplo [h-diplo@msu.edu], Dec. 7, 1995; and Mark Lytle, "Re: Native Americans and Diplomatic History," *ibid.*, Dec. 2, 1995. See also such writings as Francis Jennings, *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies from Its Beginnings to the Lancaster Treaty of 1744* (New York, 1984); Jennings, *Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies, and Tribes in the Seven Years War in America* (New York, 1988); Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (New York, 1991); Richard White, "The Winning of the West: The Expansion of the Western Sioux in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Journal of American History*, LXV (1978),

Though western regionalists may not realize it, the fields of diplomatic and western history are perhaps closer than they have been in decades. Most notably, senior diplomatic historians have recently called for closer connections between the two fields. In a survey of late nineteenth-century U.S. foreign relations, LaFeber notes that “to study this West in the post-1865 years without tying it to post-1890s foreign policy—and vice-versa”—means “flattening and distorting the era.” Edward Crapol similarly underscores the potential for a “bridge” between diplomatic historians and the “work of historians of the American West who have documented how white settlers (temporarily) and Indians (permanently) suffered a fate similar to that later endured by indigenous peoples on the periphery of the overseas empire—they were treated as colonials and inferiors by the metropolis.” At the same time, diplomatic historians claim for themselves some of the impetus for the New Western History, with admirers of Williams contending that his work has strongly influenced John Mack Faragher, Patricia Nelson Limerick, Richard White, and others.²⁰

Although the Wisconsin school of diplomatic history blazed the trail out of North America into twentieth-century international frontiers, two historiographical tendencies have left the connection between western history and international expansion tenuous and underdeveloped. Most significantly, Williams, LaFeber, and others have characterized American expansion as principally about the pursuit of *markets*. By emphasizing exports, they have generally paid less attention to U.S. investment in foreign infrastructure and the extraction of raw

319–343; Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1992); James Merrell, *The Indians' New World: The Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal* (New York, 1989). The international experience comes alive in Richard White's “*It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own*”: *A New History of the American West* (Norman, Okla., 1991), particularly parts one and two. D. W. Meinig's historical geography, *The Shaping of America* (2 vols., New York, 1986 and 1993), also offers a distinctly international perspective on European expansion into North America.

20. LaFeber, *American Search for Opportunity*, 54; Edward Crapol, “Coming to Terms with Empire: The Historiography of Late Nineteenth-Century American Foreign Relations,” *Diplomatic History*, XVI (1992), 573–597 (quote on 593–594); Paul M. Buhle and Edward Rice-Maximin, *William Appleman Williams: The Tragedy of Empire* (New York, 1995), 245–246.

materials, practices that have underpinned the western economy. Moreover, because American frontiers are seen through the lens of *diplomacy*, many social, cultural, and economic developments have not been adequately studied. Internal frontiers, hinterland areas within the territorial United States, similarly fall outside the purview of diplomatic historians.

Writing at the height of the Cold War, Williams, LaFeber, and their cohort sought to explain the origins of an "imperial" American *foreign policy*, largely ignoring considerations unrelated to diplomacy. This emphasis powerfully shaped their narrative framework in which a perceived crisis of overproduction in the 1890s created anxiety among American elites whose pursuit of markets for exports had spurred American imperialist policies.²¹

With the switch from continental expansion to the search for markets abroad, a change of economic actors occurred. In place of the western miner, investor, missionary, builder, traveler, or settler, the salesman of American products now assumed the central role in American imperialism. As LaFeber observed in *The New Empire* (1963), "instead of searching for farming, mineral, or grazing lands, Americans sought foreign markets for agricultural staples or industrial goods," thereby "translating the fact of the closed landed frontier into the necessity for discovering a new commercial frontier."²² Williams similarly claimed that the nation's movement into empire had its roots in the Midwest and the farmers' search for markets. That, in turn, led to their demands for a "militantly expansionist foreign policy between 1860 and 1893."²³ Many recent diplomatic historians have generally accepted this reworked Turnerian framework, beginning their narratives at the Turnerian moment in the 1890s and highlighting exports of raw materials, technology, industrial goods, and mass culture as the defining aspect of the U.S. movement abroad.²⁴

21. A more recent and expansive consideration of frontier anxiety can be found in David Wrobel, *The End of American Exceptionalism: Frontier Anxiety from the Old West to the New Deal* (Lawrence, Kan., 1993).

22. LaFeber, *New Empire*, 1, 71.

23. Williams, *Roots of the Modern American Empire*, xxiii.

24. Emily S. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890–1945* (New York, 1982). More than previous followers of Williams, Rosenberg attends to cultural interactions and discusses the pursuit of raw materials by Americans and the rise in American investment abroad. Yet connections to the American West are still tenuous in her book, with the common theme of expansion the only secure connection.

The American role abroad extended beyond exports, however. One “tragedy” of Williams’s *Tragedy of American Diplomacy* was that, while he opened the field of diplomatic history to a potentially wide range of interactions, he reduced diplomatic relations principally to the pursuit of markets. To be fair, Williams recognized the extensive range of American economic activities abroad, and his prolific writings provide many glimpses of the international economic “West.” In *Empire as a Way of Life*, for example, Williams quoted President William Howard Taft’s description of how the United States had moved beyond internal development: “our surplus energy is beginning to look beyond our own borders, throughout the world, to find opportunity for the profitable use of our surplus capital, foreign markets for our manufactures, foreign mines to be developed, foreign rivers to be turned into electric power and light.” Yet Williams went on to emphasize Taft’s “marketplace orientation” and quoted him on the government’s obligation to “preserve to the American people that free opportunity in foreign markets which will soon be indispensable to our prosperity.”²⁵ In theory, “markets” could include trade and investment in raw-materials production and infrastructure development, as well as cultural exchange and interaction, but to Williams markets largely meant outlets for U.S. exports of grain and manufactures.

Those emulating Williams followed his lead, thereby leaving the links with the American West tenuous, or nonexistent, or lost in metaphorical comparisons of “expansion.” Crapol, for example, has recently discussed the “dual traditions of colonialism and oceanic commercialism,” implying that earlier continental expansion differed fundamentally from America’s emerging overseas empire, which was largely based on trade.²⁶ Moreover, the understandable *diplomatic* focus of foreign-relations historiography limits its access to western historians because of its attempt to tie economic, cultural, or environmental considerations to the U.S. State Department. Even Eileen Scully’s remarkable venture into the social history of American

25. William Appleman Williams, *Empire as a Way of Life* (New York, 1980), 132, 133.

26. Crapol, “Coming to Terms with Empire,” 593–594.

prostitution in China's treaty ports returns to this theme, as she examines how State Department officials tried to regulate this illicit activity on the "farthest-flung outposts" of the Pacific frontier. Similarly, LaFeber's recent observations about connections between the West and diplomatic history were made in the context of American foreign policy.²⁷

Taking our cues from the process school of western history and the Wisconsin school of diplomatic history, we need a scholarly bond between the American West and U.S. international expansion that is as strong as the actual historical connection. There are two twentieth-century American "Wests," one a region located in the western United States and the other a shifting international economic, cultural, and political frontier. In a sense, these two "Wests" have been the dual fields of the *Pacific Historical Review*, whose longtime masthead declared that it was a "journal devoted to the history of American expansionism to the Pacific and beyond, and the postfrontier developments of the twentieth-century American West." The relationship between these two "Wests," however, has rarely been explored explicitly in that journal or elsewhere.²⁸ The connections between western and American international history remain weak within the historical profession generally. And while some monographic works explore portions of what is raised here—indeed, this essay could not have been written otherwise—textbooks and survey courses largely ignore the links. Western historians seldom look abroad for the continuation of their stories, and diplomatic historians have directly en-

27. Scully, "Taking the Low Road," 66; LaFeber, *American Search for Opportunity*; LaFeber, *American Age: United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad since 1750* (New York, 1989), chaps. 5 and 6. See also Joseph A. Fry, "From Open Door to World Systems: Economic Interpretations of Late Nineteenth-Century American Foreign Relations," *Pacific Historical Review*, LXV (1996), 277–303; Robert J. McMahon, "National History or International History," in Hogan and Paterson, eds., *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, 11–23. It is beyond the scope of this article to deal comprehensively with the many recent writings in American diplomatic history.

28. Norris Hundley has recently emphasized this relationship more explicitly in the journal. See Hundley, "What Manner of Monument: The *Pacific Historical Review* and the Profession," *Pacific Historical Review*, LXV (1996), 1–26, and the new statement of purpose for the November, 1996, issue, which added the study of "the interconnections between American overseas expansionism and the recent West."

gaged western history infrequently, if at all. Yet, as the flows of capital, raw materials, and American wanderers suggest, this past of the American West is truly unbroken, and it remains so today.

Flows of Capital and Raw Materials

“The East had the financial surplus, the West the natural wealth,” wrote historian Gene Gressley in 1972. “The merging of these two components in the late nineteenth century is what the history of the West is all about.”²⁹ In this manner, we can define the “West” partly as both a frontier for capital investment and a source of raw materials. The constraints and opportunities of investment and extraction shaped the European colonial enterprise in North America, establishing a pattern of development for the American West. By the late nineteenth century, the trans-Mississippi West alternately faced droughts and floods of investment capital for economic enterprises. Western interest rates could go as high as twenty-four percent, while loans in the East paid only about eight percent. Entrepreneurs in the West relied largely on the East and Europe for their capital, while capitalists looked to the West for profitable, albeit risky, investment opportunities.³⁰ Scottish mortgage and investment companies, for example, made massive, speculative purchases of real estate from the land-grant railroads that they then sold to farmers or for town sites. Their investments in American cattle also paid off splendidly until the overproduction of the mid-1880s. As an illustration, the Scottish-financed Prairie Cattle Company, launched in 1880, ended its first year paying the spectacular dividend of 19.5 percent.³¹

At the end of the nineteenth century and early in the

29. Gene Gressley makes passing reference to western capitalists who ventured into Mexican lumber and worldwide real estate and mining development, but he does not pursue the subjects in this brief monograph. Gene Gressley, *West by East: The American West in the Gilded Age* (Provo, Utah, 1972), 8–9, 33.

30. See, for example, White, “*It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own*,” 260. Gold-rush capital constituted somewhat of an exception, since much of it stayed in California and financed many enterprises throughout the West.

31. W. Turrentine Jackson, *The Enterprising Scot: Investors in the American West after 1873* (Chicago, 1968), 300; Jackson, “British Interests in the Range Cattle Industry,” in Maurice Frink, W. Turrentine Jackson, and Agnes Wright Spring, *When Grass Was King* (Boulder, 1956), 133–332.

twentieth, Scottish investment companies, along with other capitalists in the northeastern United States and western Europe, increasingly looked beyond the American West for new investment fields. They did so not because the frontier of “free land” had closed but because the opportunities for capital were changing. As W. Turrentine Jackson observed about the transition for the Scottish companies: “Everywhere they encountered competition from domestic investment capital, which meant a lowering of interest rates. Many Scots began to channel the new funds available for investment elsewhere—to South America and to South Africa—in search of greater profits in nations with less highly developed economies.”³² The investment frontier was in motion.

Americans had accumulated sufficient capital to dominate the domestic economy and to begin major foreign investment in Europe and elsewhere. Europeans bemoaned an “American invasion” of capital and products that reflected the U.S. move from periphery to core—from hinterland to metropolis—in a larger global economy.³³ The “core” role of industrial producer paralleled England’s experience of exporting industrial goods to the colonies (later to the states) in exchange for raw materials. Like England, the United States now occupied a complex place in a “world system” in which metropolitan and hinterland activities coexisted.³⁴

32. Jackson, *Enterprising Scot*, 276. This story of declining rates of interest is consistent with Lance Davis’s account of declining differentials with the emergence of a national capital market in the United States in the late nineteenth century. Lance Davis, “The Investment Market, 1870–1914: The Evolution of a National Market,” *Journal of Economic History*, XXV (1965), 355–399; Michael Edelstein, “Foreign Investment and Accumulation, 1860–1914,” in Roderick Floud and Donald McCloskey, eds., *The Economic History of Britain since 1700*, vol. 2: 1860–1939 (Cambridge, Eng., 1994), 173–196; Barbara Stallings, *Banker to the Third World: U.S. Portfolio Investment in Latin America, 1900–1986* (Berkeley, 1987).

33. Mira Wilkins, *The Emergence of Multinational Enterprise: American Business Abroad from the Colonial Era to 1914* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), 70–73; Wilkins, *The History of Foreign Investment in the United States to 1914* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989).

34. For a controversial social-scientific effort to model this “world system,” see Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York, 1974); Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System II: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600–1750* (New York, 1980); and Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System III: The Second Great Era of Expansion of the Capitalist World-Economy, 1730–1840s* (San Diego, 1989). See also Theda Skocpol, “Wallerstein’s World

As the U.S. economy made the transition from raw-materials production to industrial sales abroad, the earlier investment patterns in the American West were replicated in the international arena. In addition to the Scots, who increasingly bypassed the western United States to invest elsewhere, U.S. capitalists, many with experience in the West, participated in the transnational migration of capital. With the completion of the transcontinental railroads, U.S. railroad investors looked elsewhere for new opportunities, particularly to nearby Mexico during the rule of Porfirio Díaz from the 1870s to 1910. A group of Boston capitalists organized the Sonora Railway Company in an effort to extend the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe to the Pacific, thereby creating an alternate route to the West. Meanwhile, Collis Huntington and Southern Pacific interests negotiated for a separate concession, as did Jay Gould and E. H. Harriman. These new lines, like the earlier ones in the American West, opened vast acreage for agricultural and mining developments, engendering agrarian and labor conflicts. As for mining, Mira Wilkins writes, "To read the *Engineering and Mining Journal* or *Mineral Industry* of that period is to learn about the opening of mines and smelters in Chihuahua, Sinaloa, Durango, San Luis Potosí, Aguascalientes, Michoacán, Zacatecas, Puebla, Guerrero, and elsewhere." Backed by Boston and New York financiers, American syndicates bought abandoned Mexican mines and brought them back into operation.³⁵

Capitalist System: A Theoretical and Historical Critique," *American Journal of Sociology*, LXXXII (1977), 1075–1090; Steve J. Stern, "Feudalism, Capitalism, and the World System in the Perspective of Latin America and the Caribbean," *American Historical Review*, XCIII (1988), 829–872. Influenced by Wallerstein, Harold Innis, Eric Wolf, and others, many recent western historians have placed their work in relation to a model of core and periphery, or hinterland and metropolis. See Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, xvi and 449, n. 24; Cronon, "Revisiting the Vanishing Frontier: The Legacy of Frederick Jackson Turner," *Western Historical Quarterly*, XVIII (1987), 157–176; Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln, Neb., 1983), introduction; White, *Middle Ground*, 483; William Robbins, *Colony and Empire: The Capitalist Transformation of the American West* (Lawrence, Kan., 1994), chap. 1; Harold Innis, *Problems of Staple Production in Canada* (Toronto, 1933); Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley, 1982).

35. Wilkins, *Emergence of Multinational Enterprise*, 116. See also *ibid.*, 113–134; John Coatsworth, "Railroads, Landholding, and Agrarian Protest in the Early Porfiriato," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, LIV (1974), 48–71; John Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley, 1987); Thomas Schoonover, *Dollars over Dominion: The Triumph of Liberalism in Mexican-United States Relations, 1861–1867* (Baton Rouge, La., 1978); Schoonover, "Dollars

Trends in mining held true for agricultural production, cattle ranching, and petroleum. "The border became meaningless" to U.S. investors, writes Wilkins. The Mexican Revolution in 1910 and the expropriation of the foreign oil companies by Mexico in 1938 would prove the enduring significance of the border, but this lay beyond the *Porfiriato's* economic boom. Until those days of reckoning, Americans poured money into Mexico, just as the Scots and other Europeans had earlier done in the American West. They acquired million-acre ranches and plantations as well as a lion's share of Mexican oil. By 1911 Mexico had risen to third place in world oil production, and Americans owned more than half of that nation's output.³⁶

Many western historians have ended their narratives at the United States' borders with Mexico and Canada, while others have followed western expansion into these neighboring countries.³⁷ Few, however, have pursued contemporaneous U.S. cap-

over Dominion: United States Economic Interests in Mexico, 1861–1867," *Pacific Historical Review*, XLV (1976), 23–45; David M. Pletcher, *Rails, Mines, and Progress: Seven American Promoters in Mexico, 1867–1911* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1958); Pletcher, "Mexico Opens the Door to American Capital, 1877–1880," *The Americas*, XVI (July 1959), 1–14; Marvin D. Bernstein, *The Mexican Mining Industry, 1890–1950: A Study in the Interaction of Politics, Economics, and Technology* (Albany, N.Y., 1965).

36. Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution* (2 vols., New York, 1986); John Womack, *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* (New York, 1968); Friedrich Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States, and the Mexican Revolution* (Chicago, 1981); Nora Hamilton, *The Limits of State Autonomy: Post-Revolutionary Mexico* (Princeton, N.J., 1982); Wilkins, *Emergence of Multinational Enterprise*, 120–124.

37. For a sampling of those who have followed the story into Canada and Mexico, see Paul F. Sharp, "When Our West Moved North," *American Historical Review*, LV (1949), 286–300; Robbins, *Colony and Empire*; David Weber, *The Mexican Frontier, 1821–1846: The American Southwest under Mexico* (Albuquerque, 1982); Albert L. Hurtado, "Parkmanizing the Spanish Borderlands: Bolton, Turner, and the Historians' World," *Western Historical Quarterly*, XXVI (1995), 149–167; Oscar J. Martínez, *Troublesome Border* (Tucson, 1988); Martínez, *Border People: Life and Society in the U.S.–Mexico Borderlands* (Tucson, 1994); Ellwyn R. Stoddard, Richard L. Nostrand, and Jonathan P. West, eds., *Borderlands Sourcebook: A Guide to the Literature on Northern Mexico and the American Southwest* (Norman, Okla., 1982); Kenneth S. Coates and William R. Morrison, "Soldier-Workers—The United States Army Corps of Engineers and the Northwest Defense Projects, 1942–1946," *Pacific Historical Review*, LXII (1993), 273–304; James G. Snell, "The Frontier Sweeps Northwest: American Perceptions of the British American Prairie West at the Point of Canadian Expansion (circa 1870)," *Western Historical Quarterly*, XI (1980), 380–400. Note also the many papers delivered at a 1996 conference, "'On Brotherly Terms': Canadian-American Relations West of the Rockies," sponsored by the Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest and the Canadian Studies Center, University of Washington.

ital flow into overseas frontiers, such as those in Chile, Venezuela, and elsewhere. "The Americans who invested in Chile were interested in *any* good proposition," notes Wilkins, "whether it lay in the arid lands bordering the Andes, in the Russian Caucasus, in Northern Mexico, or in the hills of Montana."³⁸ By 1914 the Guggenheim mining group had spent nearly \$169 million in getting the Chilean mines off to a roaring start. Similarly, just after U.S. oil companies had moved into Mexico at the turn of the century, American and British geologists and oil drillers were prospecting unmapped areas of Venezuela, traveling by canoe and mule among the native peoples of the region. The conflicts of the "West" went with them, resulting in a U.S. oil driller being killed by an arrow in Venezuela in the 1920s. By 1929 U.S. investments in Chilean copper and Venezuelan petroleum had surpassed American efforts in both those industries in Mexico.³⁹ Americans also investigated the Ecuadorian and Peruvian Amazon for petroleum in the 1920s, with one Standard Oil of California executive comparing those efforts with contemporaneous experiences in Alaska.

It is all in the game. The drilling for oil in new fields[,] whether in the heart of Alaska, in the jungles of South America, deserts of Persia or among the orange groves or in the pretty suburban towns of California, is after all a very similar job. They only differ in the degree of hardships and cost of the work. But it must be done, if new fields are to open up. We shall continue to "wildcat," perhaps again in Alaska, one cannot tell.⁴⁰

38. Wilkins, *Emergence of Multinational Enterprise*, 179, 187.

39. Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power* (New York, 1991), 233–237; Ralph Arnold, *et al.*, *The First Big Oil Hunt: Venezuela, 1911–1916* (New York, 1960); U.S. Senate Special Committee Investigating Petroleum Resources, *Hearings on American Petroleum Interests in Foreign Countries*, 79 Cong., 1 sess. (1946), 330–383.

40. Anonymous official quoted in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 24, 1926, p. 5. In the Ecuadorian example, the Leonard Exploration Company, a Standard Oil subsidiary, explored the Ecuadorian Amazon for petroleum in the 1920s. While both that company and its successor, Royal Dutch Shell, failed to find commercially exploitable oil reserves, the concessions brought a short-lived boom to the central region of the Ecuadorian Amazon and led to the construction of the first motor road into that area, opening it up to traders and colonists. The Texaco-Gulf consortium entered the Ecuadorian scene following its activities across the border in southeastern Colombia in the 1960s. Leonard Exploration's activities are discussed in Jaime Galarza Zavala, *El festín del petróleo* (2d. ed., Quito, Ecuador, 1972), 79–80.

As Standard Oil's exploration plans suggest, American investors in extractive industries contemplated an international field for investment, rather than limiting themselves to a "Greater American West," with its implied geographical contiguity.⁴¹ Standard Oil of California's international ventures also underscored the widening geographic range of western-based capitalists and corporations—from Collis Huntington's and George Hearst's investments in Mexico to the worldwide operations of Standard Oil, Kaiser, Bechtel, and the Bank of America.⁴²

The continuity of U.S. corporate entities and investment patterns highlights a crucial connection between the western petroleum booms and the development of Ecuadorian oil by Texaco and Gulf in the 1960s. Although rarely noted, the quest for oil in Ecuador transformed its Amazonian provinces in ways remarkably similar to oil extraction in Alaska. Previously isolated indigenous communities became integrated into national societies and into international markets through infrastructure, employment, cultural exchange, political institutions, and environmental change. Community bonds weakened as people left traditional subsistence pursuits to seek cash employment and to become consumers in an international market of goods. At the same time, indigenous peoples organized to resist externally dictated developments that threatened their traditional cultures. The struggle over land proved pivotal. In Alaska, the passage of the Alaskan Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) in 1971 helped pave the way for congressional approval of the trans-Alaska pipeline in 1973. No such settlement—however unsatisfactory ANCSA might have been—accompanied Texaco and Gulf's earlier activities in Ecuador, but land claims similarly dominated the concerns of Ecuadorian native peoples, who found their lands colonized by highland settlers and polluted without compensation by oil companies. In both cases, the effective mobilization by indigenous political groups showed how

41. For a discussion of the concept of a "Greater Western History," see Aron, "Lessons in Conquest," 125–147.

42. Gerald Nash, *A. P. Giannini and the Bank of America* (Norman, Okla., 1992), 141–143; Mark Foster, *Henry J. Kaiser: Builder in the Modern American West* (Austin, Tex., 1989), esp. chap. 10; Robert L. Ingram, *The Bechtel Story: Seventy Years of Accomplishment in Engineering and Construction* (San Francisco, 1968); Richard Walker, "Another Round of Globalization in San Francisco," *Urban Geography*, XVII (1996), 60–94.

U.S.-native relations had changed since the military campaigns against the western tribes in the late nineteenth century.⁴³

Oil extraction and regional development had parallel consequences in northeastern Ecuador and Alaska. Local populations—the Siona-Secoya, Huaorani, and Quichua in Ecuador, and the Athapascans in Alaska—tried to take advantage of opportunities for employment and improved health while resisting threats to their subsistence economy and cultural integrity. Other agents in the story include the people of New York, California, and elsewhere whose way of life demanded the development of oil resources thousands of miles away. The mediators between the consumers and the residents of the producing region—between metropolis and hinterland—included oil workers, business leaders, diplomats, tourists, missionaries, human-rights advocates, and environmentalists. These intermediaries provided a human face to the flows of capital and raw materials. That their faces were often *American* will not surprise readers familiar with Latin American history or U.S. diplomatic and business history. Yet the connection between their experiences and those of similar “mediators” in the history of the American West has been scarcely recognized by scholars. Beyond the patterns of investment and the processes of change that investment stimulated, the West can also be characterized as the place where American intermediaries encountered foreign peoples and landscapes.

American Intermediaries

“On leaving college,” recalled Herbert Hoover, “I needed at once to find some person with a profit motive who needed me to help him earn a profit. I went to the gold mining districts of Nevada City and Grass Valley, where I had some experience with [the U.S. Geological Survey] the previous summer, and began the search.”⁴⁴ Following this initial foray into western mining in 1895, the future President of the United States spent

43. For the Ecuadorian and Alaskan cases, see note 2. For an account of similar developments in northwestern Canada, see Paul Sabin, “Voices from the Hydrocarbon Frontier: Canada’s Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry (1974–1977),” *Environmental History Review*, XIX (1995), 17–48.

44. Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover: Years of Adventure, 1874–1920* (New York, 1951), 25.

the next twenty years following the mining frontier as it shifted from California to locations throughout the world. An American mining engineer trained in the West at Stanford University, Hoover found employment with the British firm of Bewick, Moreing and Company, underscoring the historic relationship of U.S. and European capital in the western mining industry. Hoover's early career also illustrated the international nature of the mining business as his assignments (and those of others like him) carried him to foreign lands, expanding the West far beyond U.S. borders and the North American continent. Work for the company took Hoover from California's goldfields to western Australia (1897–1899), then to China (1899–1902), and eventually on five trips around the world in seven years to oversee investments in India, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Egypt, and Burma, among other locations. When he left the British company in 1908 to establish his own engineering firm, he initiated projects with a global range: Russia, Burma, Korea, Canada, and China.⁴⁵

Hoover's experiences typified those of many U.S. mining engineers after the turn of the century, as their employers expanded internationally to search for new sources of raw materials. Especially revealing are a sampling of oral histories dictated by such professionals and on deposit at the Bancroft Library: "Mining Engineer in the Americas, India, and Africa, 1933–1983," "Mining Geologist on Four Continents," "A Mining Engineer in Alaska, Canada, the Western United States, Latin America, and Southeast Asia," and "An Entrepreneur in Mining in North and South America, 1930s to 1990s."⁴⁶ So

45. Hoover, *Memoirs*, chaps. 4–8; George H. Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Engineer, 1874–1914* (New York, 1983). William Robbins uses Hoover to illustrate connections between the American West and global capitalism. William G. Robbins, "Laying Siege to Western History: The Emergence of New Paradigms," in Limerick, Milner, and Rankin, eds., *Trails*, 182–214 (quotation on 182).

46. Hedley S. Fowler, "Mining Engineer in the Americas, India, and Africa, 1933–1983" (Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1992); Philip Read Bradley, Jr., "A Mining Engineer in Alaska, Canada, the Western United States, Latin America, and Southeast Asia" (Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1988); George Conrad Heikes, "Mining Geologist on Four Continents" (Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1992); James M. Orr, "An Entrepreneur in Mining in North and South America, 1930s to 1990s" (Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, University of California,

many engineers had moved into Mexico by the turn of the century that the American Institute of Mining Engineers held its annual meeting there in 1901. The itineraries of these American workers (and their colleagues in petroleum and other industries) are particularly significant for the capital investment they represented and the contacts they fostered with the people and landscapes they encountered. This capital and these contacts had impacts not unlike those produced earlier by the West's extractive industries. The Bancroft oral histories, unfortunately, display the weaknesses of many business histories and narrowly detail the personal lives and business affairs of the interviewees. Nonetheless, they also provide glimpses of the interactions among capital, labor, indigenous peoples, and the environment; the cultural misinterpretations and negotiations; and the sense of traveling the outer bounds of the known world (for Americans)—all hallmarks of the U.S. experience in earlier "Westes" where miners and other laborers helped blaze the way.

American missionary activity and western reformist and adventure writing provide two more bridges between the well-known nineteenth-century West and its twentieth-century offspring. By the turn of the century, U.S. missionaries, ever present on the "frontiers" of North America, were also proselytizing abroad—in Asia, Africa, and throughout Latin America. Though new institutions emerged, such as the Student Volunteer Movement, the larger mission framework mirrored that on previous continental religious frontiers. Sites of "foreign" missions, such as Hawai'i and Oregon territories, often became part of the United States, while other missionary destinations remained independent. On the edges of U.S. expansion, missionaries and their children helped shape American understandings of and policies toward foreign people. Both in the West and later abroad, the "foreign" missions, as Sydney

Berkeley, 1995). See also Morris B. Parker's *Mules, Mines and Me in Mexico, 1895–1932* (Tucson, 1979); Enid de Waal, "American Technology in South African Gold Mining before 1899," *Optima*, XXXIII (1985), 80–85; appropriate interviews in T[homas] A. Rickard, *Interviews with Mining Engineers* (San Francisco, 1922); Wilkins, *Emergence of Multinational Enterprise*, 118. Wallace Stegner captures the early migration in his well-known *Angle of Repose* (Garden City, N.Y., 1971), in which a mining engineer and his wife are living in Mexico around 1880, managing a mine, and investigating mining opportunities.

Ahlstrom writes, altered the “life and church of Christians at home.”

The missionary on furlough was the great American window on the non-Western [European] world. Through him, the aims of the missionary movement, as well as the cultural stereotypes which underlay it, became fundamental elements of the American Protestant’s world outlook. India, Africa, China, and Japan came to be regarded as spiritual provinces of the American churches.⁴⁷

The experiences and reports of missionaries thus opened American eyes to sharply contrasting ways of life and also warned Americans of the dangers of wavering in their Christian faith. And just as nineteenth-century missionaries in the West influenced and executed government policy—overseeing the “peace policy” in the 1870s or working with U.S. officials eager to annex the Oregon territory—their twentieth-century international counterparts helped shape American political and commercial relations. Josiah Strong linked the two missionary endeavors. He developed his vision of the nation’s world-evangelizing role while serving as a missionary in 1871–1873 in Cheyenne, Wyoming, where he led temperance and antiprostitution campaigns. In *Our Country* (1885), Strong called for greater missionary efforts in the American settlements in both the West and foreign lands. As LaFerber and other diplomatic historians have noted, Strong, even before Frederick Jackson Turner, declared that the disappearance of public lands threatened democracy, but, unlike Turner, he believed that an expansionist foreign policy would offset the threat.⁴⁸

The global Protestant mission advocated by Josiah Strong resulted in missionaries being sent to Ecuador as early as the 1890s. Within a half century they were in the Amazon region where they persuaded many Siona-Secoya, Cofán, and Huao-

47. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, Conn., 1972), 865–866.

48. Harrington, *God, Mammon and the Japanese*; Clyde A. Milner II, *With Good Intentions: Quaker Work among the Pawnees, Otos, and Omahas in the 1870s* (Lincoln, Neb., 1982); Dorothea R. Muller, “Church Building and Community Making on the Frontier—A Case Study: Josiah Strong, Home Missionary in Cheyenne, 1871–1873,” *Western Historical Quarterly*, VIII (1979), 191–216; Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis* (New York, 1885); LaFerber, *New Empire*, 72–80.

rani Indians to settle near missions and to help build jungle airstrips, schools, and facilities for health services and religious instruction. Missionaries often worked closely with other U.S. interests, as when the Summer Institute of Linguistics, an American religious organization, helped to pacify and concentrate geographically hostile Huaorani Indians, thus removing them from the path of U.S. oil companies.⁴⁹ The mission to the Amazon affected popular culture at home even as it brought changes to the Amazon. In 1956, after Huaorani men speared to death five missionaries who had sought to convert them, the missionary goal of reaching these Bible-less people sparked the fascination of Americans. *Life* magazine publicized the “martyrdom” of the “young and brave . . . missionaries, slain by the savage . . . Indians.” Relatives of the slain missionaries remained in Ecuador to “bring the word of God” to these Bible-less people. Within a year and a half they were appearing with their sole Huaorani convert, Dayuma, on Ralph Edwards’s television show, *This Is Your Life*.⁵⁰

Some members of the missionary movement also sought to protect natives from the destructive activities of oil companies in the Amazon. In 1984 Randy Borman, the son of two missionaries working on behalf of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, relocated a group of Cofán away from the pollution, colonization, and cultural devastation that oil industry

49. The Summer Institute of Linguistics is the overseas arm of the United States-based Wycliff Bible Translators, the world’s largest Protestant missionary organization with more than 3,900 volunteers working around the world (about a thousand of them in Latin America) in 1982. *New York Times*, May 16, 1982, sec. 1, p. 24; Stoll, *Fishers of Men*, chap. 9; William T. Vickers, “The Jesuits and the SIL: External Policies for Ecuador’s Tucanoans through Three Centuries,” in Søren Hvalkof and Peter Aaby, eds., *Is God an American? An Anthropological Perspective on the Missionary Work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics* (Copenhagen, 1981), 51–61; Scott S. Robinson, “Fulfilling the Mission: North American Evangelism in Ecuador,” in *ibid.*, 41–50; Kane, *Savages*.

50. *Life*, XL (Jan. 30, 1956), 10–19; Stoll, *Fishers of Men*, 287. See also *Time*, LXVII (Jan. 23, 1956), 30; *Life*, XLII (May 20, 1957), 24–33, XLV (Nov. 24, 1958), 23–29; *Newsweek*, L (Oct. 7, 1957), 109–110. Prominent Christian writers—including *Life* author Elisabeth Elliot, whose husband was among the slain missionaries—seized the story as a symbol of the missionary challenge. Elisabeth Elliot, *The Savage My Kinsman* (New York, 1961); Elliot, *The Shadow and the Almighty: The Life and Testament of Jim Elliot* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1958; 1970); Ethel Emily Wallis, *The Dayuma Story: Life under Auca Spears* (New York, 1960); Wallis, *Aucas Downriver: Dayuma’s Story Today* (New York, 1973).

activities had brought to their homeland. At the same time, however, Borman and his Cofán followers became resolutely modern: They developed ecotourist facilities and negotiated with the petroleum companies for solar panels, ultralight aircraft, and other products. Described by one American author as an “honest to god Kurtz figure,” Borman’s successes revealed the strength of his intermediary role, drawing on his fluency in Cofán, Spanish, and English; his high educational achievement; and the power of his U.S. citizenship and connections.⁵¹

The Conradian imagery used to describe Borman may indicate little about the realities of his life, but it does point to the travel and adventure writers who accompanied missionaries to these international locations. Authors plied their craft much as Mark Twain, John Muir, Helen Hunt Jackson, George Catlin, and others had done in the West.⁵² Some wrote principally to entertain and make money; others to produce anthropological laments about the decline of ancient cultures; and still others to criticize the changes that Americans brought overseas. Peter Matthiessen, after publishing *Wildlife in America* (1959), traveled to wilderness areas throughout South America, writing a series of long articles for his sponsor, *The New Yorker* magazine.⁵³ During the next thirty years, his travels and work ranged widely, taking him to such places as Nepal, an experience that inspired *The Snow Leopard* (1978). The book relates Matthiessen’s journey to the Crystal Monastery and, in the process, probes his memories and the relationship between his American self and the foreign world in which he found himself. In the 1980s he returned to the regional West, author-

51. Mike Tidwell, *American Stranger: A Rainforest Chief Battles Big Oil* (New York, 1996), 15. Borman’s story is also discussed in Kane, *Savages*, 191–196.

52. See, for example, Mark Twain, *Roughing It* (Hartford, Conn., 1872; 1875); John Muir, *The Yosemite* (New York, 1912); Helen Hunt Jackson, *A Century of Dishonor: A Sketch of the United States Government’s Dealings with Some of the Indian Tribes* (New York, 1881); Jackson, *Bits of Travel at Home* (Boston, 1878); Harold McCracken, *George Catlin and the Old Frontier* (New York, 1959). Less well-known is Catlin’s extraordinary sojourn through South America, where he searched for gold in the Crystal Mountains and painted portraits of native peoples. Marvin C. Ross, ed., *George Catlin: Episodes from Life among the Indians and Last Rambles* (Norman, Okla., 1959).

53. Peter Matthiessen, *Wildlife in America* (New York, 1959); William Dowie, *Peter Matthiessen* (Boston, 1991), 9. The articles were republished in *The Cloud Forest* (New York, 1961).

ing several books on Native Americans that sharply criticized their treatment by the U.S. government. In 1989 in “homage” to George Catlin, he edited for publication that traveler and painter’s *North American Indians*.⁵⁴

Matthiessen, like Catlin before him, exemplified the traveler-reformer wandering the boundaries of American expansion and reporting to Americans back home. In a similar manner, Joe Kane’s *Savages* (1995)—a firsthand account of the Huaorani, as their homeland was being threatened by oil extraction—recounts his meeting with the “other,” as the title baldly suggests. Matthiessen and Kane write on behalf of foreign peoples whom they only partially understand, yet whom they seek to represent to other Americans in ways calculated to elicit sympathy in their struggle against Euro-American culture. This approach resonates with earlier writings by Bartolomé de las Casas, George Catlin, Helen Hunt Jackson, and others about the conquest of the New World and the American West.

The tradition of foreign travel, observation, and writing—described in the *New York Times Book Review* as “another sojourn in an indigenous culture”—has taken a more academic turn in the twentieth century, with the rise of the social sciences.⁵⁵ Among the remarkable exemplars of this transition was Asia-specialist Owen Lattimore. Raised partly in China where his American father taught English and French, Lattimore became fluent in Chinese and grew to like adventuring alone in interior China and Manchuria, where he traded with wool merchants and negotiated with government officials. In the late 1920s, accompanied at times by his wife, he became a full-fledged explorer, wandering extensively along the long border between China and the Soviet Union and authoring numerous accounts of his adventures for American audiences.⁵⁶

54. Dowies, *Peter Matthiessen*, 107; Peter Matthiessen, *The Snow Leopard* (New York, 1978); Matthiessen, *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse* (New York, 1983); Matthiessen, *Indian Country* (New York, 1984); Matthiessen, ed., *North American Indians*, by George Catlin (New York, 1989), vii.

55. *New York Times Book Review* (Dec. 15, 1996), 40.

56. See, for example, Owen Lattimore, *The Desert Road to Turkestan* (London, 1928; Boston, 1929); Lattimore, *High Tartary* (Boston, 1930); Lattimore, *Manchuria: Cradle of Conflict* (New York, 1932); Lattimore, *The Mongols of Manchuria* (New York, 1934). Eleanor Lattimore’s account of her journey to find her husband on the Soviet-Chinese border can be found in *Turkestan Reunion* (New York, 1934).

Upon Lattimore's return to the United States and appointment to a professorship at Johns Hopkins University, he wrote and taught extensively about the history, politics, and culture of the Sino-Soviet borderlands. In the process he became a leading scholar of comparative frontiers, even coining a memorable put-down of Frederick Jackson Turner, whom he described as "an acute observer; but what he saw so clearly, he saw while standing on his head. In large measure, when he thought he saw what the frontier did to society, he was really seeing what society did to the frontier."⁵⁷ Lattimore also played the role of foreign policy expert, advising Chiang Kai-shek during World War II and becoming an impassioned advocate for the Mongols whom he saw as an oppressed and little-understood minority. In the 1950s Lattimore was blamed for the "loss of China" to the Communists, an accusation that overshadowed his accomplishments and left him reduced in the public's mind to a target of McCarthyism.⁵⁸ In reality, Lattimore appears to have been a Renaissance man of the twentieth-century international "West" who played a host of intermediary roles not unlike those of other American adventurers, writers, capitalists, missionaries, reformers, and diplomats who migrated from the continental United States onto a shifting international frontier.

On Adventuring in the Borderland between Western and Diplomatic History

Twentieth-century American frontiers have fallen through the interstices of two fields in U.S. history. Diplomatic historians have tentatively linked the West and overseas expansion, but their conception of "dual traditions" of expansion and their focus on foreign policy have limited their vision. Similarly, recent scholarship on the American West has only feebly acknowledged the significance of twentieth-century U.S. expansion overseas. Instead, many western historians expend

57. Lattimore, *Studies in Frontier History*, 490. See also Lattimore, *Mongol Journeys* (New York and London, 1941); Lattimore, *et al.*, *Pivot of Asia: Sinkiang and the Inner Asian Frontiers of China and Russia* (Boston, 1950); Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* (New York, 1940).

58. Robert P. Newman, *Owen Lattimore and the "Loss" of China* (Berkeley, 1992).

considerable energy debating the boundaries of the regional West and the extent to which aridity, ethnic diversity, the federal government, or something else has distinguished the area from the rest of the nation.⁵⁹ Others care little about such questions and are more interested in bringing the West into a national conversation about the historical experiences of ethnic groups, labor, cities, and the environment, among other topics.⁶⁰

The time has come for historians—especially western historians, whatever their proclivity—to acknowledge forthrightly and to study “westering” as it extended overseas. Many of the central concerns of western historians, including intercultural exchange, economic expansion, and environmental change, have increasingly occurred outside of the continental United States. By the early twentieth century (as in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries), the regional West was not the primary site for activities occurring along the far reaches of American society. By coming to terms with this change, students of the United States’ international frontiers can explore the fundamental continuities, as well as the disjunctures, between the process of American expansion in the nineteenth century and that process in the twentieth century.

59. See, for example, White, “*It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own*”; Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York, 1987); Donald Worster, “New West, True West,” in Worster, *Under Western Skies*, 19–33; Michael Steiner, “Frederick Jackson Turner and Western Regionalism,” in Richard Etulain, ed., *Writing Western History: Essays on Major Western Historians* (Albuquerque, 1991), 103–135; Elliott West, “Walter Prescott Webb and the Search for the West,” in *ibid.*, 167–191; Susan Rhoades Neel, “A Place of Extremes: Nature, History, and the American West,” *Western Historical Quarterly*, XXV (1994), 489–505; David M. Emmons, “Constructed Province: History and the Making of the Last American West,” *ibid.*, XXV (1994), 436–459; Michael McGerr, “Is There a Twentieth Century West?” in Cronon, Miles, and Gitlin, eds., *Under an Open Sky*, 239–256; and David M. Wrobel, “Beyond the Frontier-Region Dichotomy,” *Pacific Historical Review*, LXV (1996), 401–429.

60. See, for example, Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry* (Albuquerque, 1987); Philip J. Ethington, *The Public City: The Political Construction of Urban Life in San Francisco, 1850–1900* (New York, 1994); Dana Frank, *Purchasing Power: Consumer Organizing, Gender, and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1919–1929* (New York, 1994); George Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900–1945* (New York, 1993); Scott Bottles, *Los Angeles and the Automobile: The Making of the Modern City* (Berkeley, 1987).

International overseas expansion seems to have differed in many significant ways from the continental expansion of the nineteenth century and earlier. In the twentieth century the United States never gained full political control of the areas that are discussed in this essay. For some western historians the lack of political control undermines any attempt to see a connection between U.S. activities abroad and the earlier continental frontiers. According to Howard Lamar and Leonard Thompson, frontiers between societies open in ambiguity and close with one of those societies achieving political dominance.

We regard a frontier . . . as a territory or zone of interpenetration between two previously distinct societies. Usually, one of the societies is indigenous to the region, or at least has occupied it for many generations; the other is intrusive. The frontier “opens” in a given zone when the first representatives of the intrusive society arrive; it “closes” when a single political authority has established hegemony over the zone.⁶¹

In a similar vein, Stephen Aron emphasizes the sequence of “conquest, colonization, and capitalist consolidation” as the essence of an American frontier, while Cronon, Miles, and Gitlin identify “boundary setting” and “state forming” as two of their six characteristics of the frontier process.⁶²

Clearly, twentieth-century U.S. expansion differs from the earlier continental land-grabs involving native peoples or Mexico. Nonetheless, the refusal of the United States to establish political sovereignty over areas abroad (or its decision to relinquish such control, as with the Philippines) has not prevented Americans from powerfully asserting their presence—as they have, for example, in their interaction with the peoples of Ecuador. “Closure” need not mark a frontier—why does a frontier need an ending?—but intensive oil extraction in Ecuador *has* coincided with the definitive assertion of political authority by the national government of Ecuador over its Amazon territories. Native peoples who previously crossed freely over national borders are now incorporated within the nation; the is-

61. Lamar and Thompson, eds., *Frontier in History*, 7.

62. Aron, “Lessons in Conquest,” 127; Cronon, Miles, and Gitlin, eds., *Under an Open Sky*, 15–18.

suance of Ecuadorian identity cards to these people over the past twenty years symbolizes Ecuador's sovereignty. At the same time, the American presence through its petroleum entanglements suggests that western historians could study with profit how the experiences of Ecuador and similar areas resonate with life on earlier U.S. "Wests." For those who have been there, the muddy, oil-soaked streets of Ecuador's Amazon boomtowns resemble nothing so much as earlier western outposts.

More problematic than the absence of U.S. sovereignty is the lack of extensive American settlement and community-building on these extracontinental frontiers. Most Americans overseas did not create agricultural communities, and hence the home-building processes that Cronon, Miles, and Gitlin discuss are generally not found. The missionary movement seldom sent "home missions" to newly settled communities, because few such communities existed.⁶³ Still, there are many similarities. Americans did establish mining communities and large agricultural estates that resembled their efforts in the United States. Massive investment (as, for example, in Mexico before the revolution) accompanied these activities, just as it did the creation of oil towns in the Amazon, mining towns in Chile, and plantations throughout Central America. Generations of missionaries have traveled outside the United States to convert the "heathen," continuing a religious effort that began with colonial settlement. American travelers and activists similarly transferred their exploratory and reformist urges to remote areas around the world.

By examining the relationship between western expansion and American activities overseas, historians will confront intriguing questions central to defining the American experience. What role have inexpensive raw materials played in the

63. J. Valerie Fifer's study of American perceptions of the Southern Cone of South America underscores many of the differences between the West and American international expansion in the late nineteenth century. Though such areas did not prove to be replicas of the West, American expansion into Chile, Argentina, and elsewhere in Latin America still displayed many continuities. J. Valerie Fifer, *United States Perceptions of Latin America, 1850-1930: A "New West" South of Capricorn?* (New York, 1991). For another discussion of failed American efforts to expand into Latin America, see John McCardell, *The Idea of a Southern Nation: Southern Nationalists and Southern Nationalism, 1830-1860* (New York, 1979), chap. 6.

American economy?⁶⁴ What has been the significance of the investment frontier to European and American capital? How has the search for employment or adventure in foreign lands and among foreign people shaped the cultural and psychological identity of Americans? How have American activities abroad influenced patterns of migration from and to those far-away places? What has been the relationship between the highly capitalized American-based multinationals and U.S. society and politics? How has twentieth-century expansion affected the transformation of the American West, particularly its remarkable movement from hinterland to metropolis? Finally, what does continued U.S. expansion tell us about the nature of the American experience? The “problem of the West” that Frederick Jackson Turner brought to the fore a century ago can only be our “problem of American development” if we stretch the category of West to stand for American expansion generally.⁶⁵ However we label our overarching tale, histories of the American West and America’s twentieth-century international frontiers must be told together.

64. William Cronon explores this question in *Nature's Metropolis* and *Changes in the Land*, building on the tradition begun by Turner's grand claims for “free land” and subsequently developed by David M. Potter, *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character* (Chicago, 1954); Webb, *The Great Frontier*; and other scholars. See also Gavin Wright, “The Origins of American Industrial Success,” *American Economic Review*, LXXX (1990), 651–668. William Appleman Williams considers the marginal impact of foreign sales and natural resources in *Tragedy*, 45–47.

65. Turner, “The Problem of the West,” 289.