



Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier

Ray Allen Billington, Martin Ridge

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When it appeared in 1949, the first edition of Ray Allen Billington's *Westward Expansion* set a new standard for scholarship in western American history, and the book's reputation among historians, scholars, and students grew through four subsequent editions. This abridgment and revision of Billington and Martin Ridge's fifth edition, with a new introduction and additional scholarship by Ridge, as well as an updated bibliography, focuses on the Trans-Mississippi frontier.

Although the text sets out the remarkable story of the American frontier, which became, almost from the beginning, an archetypal narrative of the new American nation's successful expansion, the authors do not forget the social, environmental, and human cost of national expansion. While most Americans take pride in the nation's frontier heritage and its associated myths, they also share that history with others--especially with people of color--in whose collective memories the story of the American west is rendered both dark and painful. *Westward Expansion* encourages an understanding of American "westering" that is mindful of the racism and excessive nationalism that frequently marred the Western frontier experience. At the same time, the authors understand a sense of optimism, a profound faith in individuals' own abilities, the willingness to innovate, and an abiding trust in democracy to be the transcendent values of the frontier experience, traits that continue to influence the character of America's people long after the close of the western frontier.

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