Mythologizing Westward Expansion: Schoolbooks and the Image of the American Frontier before Turner

LAURENCE M. HAUPTMAN

> The marvelous development of the West is without parallel in history. It is like a tale of magic.
>
> *A School History of the United States*
> William H. Venable
> (Cincinnati, 1872)

> Train up a child in the way he should go:
> And when he is old, he will not depart from it.
>
> *Proverbs* 22:6.

Educators have long been aware of the sizable impact of curriculum materials on the indoctrination of state values. The numerous school wars, book-burning controversies, and other political debates centering on schoolbooks attest to their historical importance. Although one cannot conclude that beliefs held by adults had their origin entirely in texts read as children, there is ample evidence to suggest an influence. The titles of two excellent studies of nineteenth-century schoolbooks reflect their significance in the United States—Ruth M. Elson's *Guardians of Tradition: American Schoolbooks of the Nineteenth Century* (1964) and Richard D. Mosier's *Making the American Mind: Social and Moral Ideas in the McGuffey Readers* (1947).[1] According to Elson, "Schoolbooks, central to the curriculum of the nineteenth century school, offered

Laurence M. Hauptman is associate professor of history at State University College, New Paltz, New York.

[1] Ruth M. Elson, *Guardians of Tradition: American Schoolbooks of the Nineteenth Century* (Lincoln, 1964); Richard D. Mosier, *Making the American Mind: Social and Moral Ideas in the McGuffey Readers* (New York, 1947).

both information and standards of behavior and belief that the adult world expected the child to make his own." [2]

Despite claims to the contrary, schoolbooks scrutinized the meaning of the frontier experience for more than a hundred years before Frederick Jackson Turner enunciated his famous thesis.[3] As Henry Nash Smith has affirmed: "Brilliant and persuasive as Turner was, his contention that the frontier and the West had dominated American development could hardly have attained such universal acceptance if it had not found an echo in ideas and attitudes already current." [4] Schoolbooks in diverse disciplines were actually harbingers of Turnerian thought exploring the significance of the rising American empire in first grade readers through college-level texts.[5] With few exceptions, throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they mirrored and rationalized the society-at-large's view about continental expansion. Not only were heroic western figures like Daniel Boone emphasized, but the frontier as process, place, and symbol was also clearly defined in terms of America's future.[6]

[2] Elson, *Guardians of Tradition,* 11. According to J. Merton England, "Education meant indoctrination—indoctrination in the familiar catalogue of moral virtues of Protestant, agrarian-commercial America: industry, thrift, practicality, temperance, honesty, plain living, patriotism and piety. These moral values were the props of the state. Without them the flourishing republic of the New World could not endure." J. Merton England, "The Democratic Faith in Schoolbooks, 1783–1860," *American Quarterly,* XV (Summer 1963), 194.

[3] One historian of the frontier experience in his college text has insisted: "The West as a theme in the American experience actually did not enter any elementary textbooks until after Frederick Jackson Turner set forth his thesis in the 1890's." Robert V. Hine, *The American West: An Interpretative History* (Boston, 1973), 243. This conclusion does not bear up under careful scrutiny of readers, spellers, geographies, and histories.

[4] Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (New York, 1950), 4.

[5] For the purposes of this study, over one thousand schoolbooks were analyzed for their treatment of the frontier. These were suggested as being popular by the following histories of American schoolbooks: Elson, *Guardians of Tradition;* John A. Nietz, *Old Schoolbooks* (Pittsburgh, 1961); Charles Carpenter, *History of American Schoolbooks* (Philadelphia, 1963); Monica Kiefer, *American Children through Their Books, 1700–1835* (Philadelphia, 1948). The schoolbooks surveyed were also considered as being widely used by the frequency of their editions. Different grade levels and different disciplines were selected for scrutiny to get as complete a picture as possible. The texts were scrutinized for what they said, implied, or covered up about the frontier process. It should be noted that only 6.7 percent of the total population of the United States had more than the first eight years of schooling before 1890. See Harry G. Good and James D. Teller, *A History of American Education* (3d ed., New York, 1973), 237.

[6] Schoolbooks "set out to create a useable past for republican America—an agreed-upon national myth" and "present a composite picture of a chosen people and

The symbolic importance of the frontier and its psychological and mythological overtones were perhaps the most enduring impact of schoolbooks on American students' minds in the hundred years before the Turner thesis.[7] Although there were occasional unflattering remarks and fears expressed about the West and the westerner, the frontier was generally presented to Americans as Xanadu, a mind-expanding experience as well as a semi-magical place symbolizing opportunity, civilization over savagery, predestination, material progress and freedom, and Arcadia. In time, the symbols became accepted as reality not only by students reading the schoolbooks but also by adults who were imbued with the same values through church sermons, dime novels, newspaper and magazine editorials, travelers' accounts, tourist guides, art, and literature. With every "winning of the west," the myth was reinforced and began to appear as a self-fulfilling prophecy inspired by the hand of the Creator. Soon it was impossible to separate myth from reality. By the end of the nineteenth century, the symbols, by then in Darwinian language, were transferred from the setting of continental America to include new frontiers and were thus employed to rationalize and justify America's outward thrust for world leadership.

The frontier as a "safety-valve," was widespread in American thought well before Turner's birth in 1861. As one eminent neo-Turnerian historian has written, the apparent "fluid society of western America bred an unquenchable hope and faith in the rags-to-riches formula that permeated all the land." [8] The writings of Crèvecoeur, Jefferson, Greeley, and Godkin all anticipated Turner. The frontier not only symbolized hope, however illusive, to those trapped at the bottom of the economic ladder, but also to those on the make in the unrestrained economic setting of the times. This view was common to American schoolbooks in the period.

From elementary readers and spellers to college history texts, the frontier was equated with opportunity. Soon after the War of 1812, practice sentences in spellers began using this theme.[9] Pictures of covered

a unique nation, especially favored by Providence and endowed with a world mission to spread democratic government and pure religion." England, "The Democratic Faith in Schoolbooks," 191.

[7] For a good analysis of how our mythological frontier heroes and their narratives were a reflection of the national character and our conception of the universe, see Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600–1860,* (Middletown, Connecticut, 1973).

[8] Ray Allen Billington, *America's Frontier Heritage* (New York, 1966), 37–38.

[9] Abner Alden, *An Introduction to Spelling and Reading* (10th ed., Boston, 1826), 41; Charles Northend, *Dictation Exercises* (New York, 1851), 11.

wagons moving westward as well as poems and essays in schoolbooks also conveyed this meaning. Success stories of poor individuals making good in the West became frequent. Later on in the nineteenth century, in the widely used Barnes' Historical Series, one author clearly set forth a basic Turnerian tenet about the frontier as safety valve: "The native operatives thrown out of [factory] employment [by Irish immigrants], turned to the West." [10]

On a more advanced level, the noted historian George Bancroft suggested that the "boundless West became the poor man's City of Refuge, where the wilderness guarded his cabin as inviolably as the cliff or the cedartop holds the eagle's eyrie." [11] Even the young Frederick Jackson Turner himself was exposed to this meaning of the frontier experience during his undergraduate days at the University of Wisconsin. In one of his courses, he was assigned a work by an Englishman, John A. Doyle. In Doyle's history, all the major outlines of the Turner thesis were suggested, including the frontier as the source for providing greater opportunity for self-advancement.[12]

The most extensive treatment accorded to the frontier experience in schoolbooks was in the realm of Indian life and Indian-white relations. John A. Nietz has estimated that more than two-thirds of schoolbooks before 1886 devoted some attention to the American Indian.[13] Much of what was treated centered around the need for the missionary impulse. It comes as no surprise or coincidence that this idea was fostered by American schoolbooks, since many were written by ministers or by those educated in New England and imbued with this religious missionary spirit.[14] Not all, however, pictured the American Indian as a cruel savage, although most works emphasized the warlike qualities of aboriginal life or contained pictures of Indians attacking whites.[15] Even the inherent

[10] Joel D. Steele, *A Brief History of the United States* (New York, 1885), 211. This appears to be the fourth edition.

[11] Quoted in Harvey Wish, *The American Historian* (New York, 1960), 82–83.

[12] For Doyle's *History of the United States* (1876) and its influence on Turner, see Ray Allen Billington, *Frederick Jackson Turner* (New York, 1973), 28–29.

[13] Nietz, *Old Schoolbooks,* 241–44.

[14] Elson, *Guardians of Tradition,* 7.

[15] See for example, S. Augustus Mitchell, *Mitchell's Primary Geography* (Philadelphia, 1840), 51, 71 (Indians attacking whites, John Smith); and his *An Easy Introduction to the Study of Geography* (Philadelphia, 1848), 51 (Indians attacking whites and scalping woman holding child); Roswell C. Smith, *Smith's First Book in Geography: An Introductory Geography,* (13th ed., New York, 1851), 86 (Indians attacking first settlers). Almost all readers, geographies, and histories contained similar pictures.

nobility of the Indians described in some schoolbooks did not change the overall conclusion. Whether the student read James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* or Francis Parkman's epic histories, the Indians were presented as a dying race that must give way to American progress either through force or by acceptance of the true light of Christian ideals.

The language and the information describing Indian life is most revealing. Besides constant references interchanging the nouns "Indians" with "savages," the books imply or directly assert that the natives lacked intelligence. Their shortcomings in this respect were variously manifested, including their lack of art, books, and manuscripts, their ineptitude in business that led to a loss of land, their limited understanding of government and politics, and their tendency to wander and roam.[16] The superiority of the American way was not questioned. Cultural relativism had not yet been born.

Schoolbooks casually asserted that Indians did almost nothing toward cultivating the fertile soil beneath their feet and that God had not designed this continent to remain a wilderness. In His good time He permitted the white man to find it.[17] Progress was defined as remolding a nation, and the Indian, in the words of Benson J. Lossing, had to give way, "rapidly melting like snow in the sunbeams" until extinction.[18] This theme—the destined use of the soil—was clearly reiterated in a widely used schoolbook written by Samuel G. Goodrich, the noted author of the Peter Parley series:[19]

Millions of acres are now teeming with rich products, such as hay, wheat, corn, rye, oats, barley, potatoes and other things, which were then only the abode of wild and savage beasts, or more savage men. The poor Indians in the country now occupied by the United States, had no books, no iron tools, no comfortable furniture; no roads but the rude paths of the woods; no ships

[16] See for example, G. P. Quakenbos, *Illustrated School History of the United States* (New York, 1858), 40–41; Jesse Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography,* (14th ed., Hartford, 1833), 120–21; Matthew F. Maury, *Elementary Geography* (rev. and abridged ed., New York, 1892), 57; Benson J. Lossing, *A Common-School History of the United States* (New York, 1872), 5–9.

[17] Benson J. Lossing, *A Centennial History of the United States* (Hartford, 1875), 16.

[18] Lossing, *Centennial History,* 16.

[19] Samuel G. Goodrich, *The American Child's Pictorial History of the United States* (Philadelphia, 1868), 23–25. Samuel G. Goodrich's Peter Parley series and his other schoolbooks were second only to McGuffey readers in their influence and their use. Daniel Roselle, *Samuel Griswold Goodrich: Creator of Peter Parley* (Albany, 1968), 67–68.

and no boats save canoes hallowed out from logs; they knew nothing of the Bible, and knew no God but the imaginary spirits of the winds, the mountains, the rivers, the bears, beavers and the like. They had no clothing but the skins of wild animals; no houses but tents or wigwams or sticks covered with leaves or sod, or the hides of beasts; they had no trades but war, fishing and hunting. . . .

Furthermore, there were herculean attempts to cover up the seedy history of Indian-white relations. Schoolbooks emphatically noted the differences between Cortez's and Penn's Indian policy, drawing clear value judgments about Spanish cruelty and whitewashing the English record.[20] In at least one schoolbook, in Parkman fashion, the French were blamed for the English troubles with the Indians.[21] Although alcohol and corrupting whites were noted on occasion, the reasons for Indian decline and dispossession were, on the whole, not adequately explained.[22] There is almost universal praise in the schoolbooks for the conquest of the wilderness and its aboriginal populations.

The exceptions to this prejudicial treatment are themselves noteworthy and further illustrate how the frontier was presented. In one text written in lesson-story format, an Indian was depicted as having been cheated, robbed, beaten, and turned out of doors. The moral of the story taught was that children and others should be kind to the Indians since they were dying off anyway, like a soon-to-be-extinct species of animal. It concluded by asserting the importance of teaching the Indians the ways of the Bible and the Son of God.[23]

Another exception was the McGuffey readers, which contained passages full of "noble savagery" jargon. Our cultural debts to Indians were emphasized repeatedly. The speech of the Cayuga sachem Logan was reprinted in several editions, stressing the eloquence of the great

[20] Joshua Leavitt, *Selections for Reading and Speaking for the Higher Classes in Common School* (Boston, 1849), 252–55.

[21] Noah Webster, *The Elements of Useful Knowledge* (4th ed., 4 vols., Hartford, 1802), I: 118.

[22] William C. Woodbridge blamed new diseases and "the habits of intoxication they learned" for Indian decline. He did not identify who brought the alcoholic beverages. Woodbridge, *A System of Universal Geography* (7th ed., Hartford, 1836), 278. Jedidiah Morse insisted it was the "hand of Providence." He added: "Comparatively few have perished by war. They waste and moulder away; they in a manner unaccountable disappear." Elson, *Guardians of Tradition*, 76.

[23] C. A. Goodrich, *The Child's History of the United States* (Boston, 1836), 148–50. C. A. Goodrich was Samuel's brother.

native leader. The outward hostility of the dominant society was exposed on numerous occasions. The removal of the Cherokee tribe was lamented, while Penn's Indian policy was lauded as an example of enlightened dealings with the red man.[24] As one historian has suggested: "It is in the presentation of these social virtues [toward the Indian] in interesting stories and lessons that one of the superiorities of the McGuffey readers lies." [25] Unfortunately, as in other schoolbooks, in the McGuffey readers the Indian's fate is a foregone conclusion: Civilization, however corrupt, triumphs over noble savagery.[26]

Schoolbooks, especially geographies, reflected the widespread belief in the inevitability of continental expansion. Early geographies were compendia of knowledge which often gave full descriptions of the frontier. In their pages, these gazetteers, which gave attention to history, geology, biology, anthropology, astronomy, and philosophy, explored the frontier—its people, flora, fauna, and economic potential.[27] They provided an important picture and conveyed a distinct message. They rarely hid their nationalistic overtones.[28]

Maps and written texts in geographies of the nineteenth century were clear expressions of the aims and direction of the United States in the period. Five years before the formal cession of the Floridas, geographies

[24] William Holmes McGuffey, *McGuffey's Eclectic Fourth Reader* (Cincinnati, 1838), 272–75, and his *Newly Revised Eclectic Fourth Reader* (New York, 1853), 115–16. See also Harvey C. Minnich, ed., *Old Favorites from the McGuffey's Readers* (New York, 1936), 357–58, 400–403.

[25] Mosier, *Making the American Mind,* 147–51. The McGuffey readers, the most famous of all nineteenth-century schoolbooks, had a mass circulation estimated to be 122 million. McGuffey had his impact primarily from 1870 to 1890, selling half of his influential readers in those two decades. McGuffey's influence was primarily on children on the moving frontier, as contrasted with Samuel G. Goodrich's books, which primarily affected children in the East. Roselle, *Samuel Griswold Goodrich,* 67–68.

[26] Minnich, ed., *Old Favorites from the McGuffey's Readers,* 357–58. The treatment of the American Indian has begun to change only recently. For modern critiques, see Rupert Costo and Jeannette Henry, *Textbooks and the American Indian* (San Francisco, 1970); and Arlene B. Hirschfelder, "The Treatment of Iroquois Indians in Selected American History Textbooks," *Indian Historian,* VIII (Fall 1975), 31–39.

[27] It should be noted that history as an academic discipline in the United States developed out of geography and that history was little valued as a school subject until the early nineteenth century. Nietz, *Old Textbooks,* 195–96; Carpenter, *History of American Schoolbooks,* 196–97; George H. Callcott, "History Enters the Schools," *American Quarterly,* XI (Winter 1959), 470–83, and his *History in the United States, 1800–1860* (New York, 1970).

[28] See for example, Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography,* 51.

were already claiming it for the United States.[29] As early as 1816, another geography referred to the Pacific Ocean as the western boundary of the United States.[30] A third geography treated Spanish Texas in the section on the United States, insisting that "the natural connection of Texas is more immediately with the United States than with Mexico." [31] Moreover, textbooks constantly referred to the economic and political (national security) advantages that would accrue to the nation through legal acquisition of more land or by employment of force. Their implications are clear: Why should European powers, Mexicans, or Indians interfere with or go against God's intended wishes by impeding the development of North America to its fullest potential?

Two authors of geographies deserve special attention: Jedidiah Morse and Arnold Guyot. Morse was a prominent minister with Yankee roots who had read most of the travelers' accounts of the time and had close contacts with missionaries, as well as considerable experience in the field and periodic government service as an investigator of Indian affairs. In his works he "recorded the thoughts, speculations, ideas, knowledge and ambitions of an extraordinary number of men in high places and in low." Consequently, he is generally considered the "father of American geography." In his texts, which were widely used well into the nineteenth century, Morse mirrored the intellectual, social, economic, and political climates of the age and country in which he lived.[32] At the center of his

[29] Daniel Adams, *Geography* (Boston, 1814), 191.

[30] Nathaniel Dwight, *A System of Universal Geography* (Northampton, Massachusetts, 1816), 156. As early as 1834 Samuel G. Goodrich incorporated Texas, California, and Oregon into the United States, making no reference to Mexican, British, or Russian claims. Goodrich, *Peter Parley's Method of Teaching about Geography to Children* (Boston, 1834), 32.

[31] Frederick Butler, *Elements of Geography and History Combined* (2d ed., Wethersfield, Connecticut, 1825), 163.

[32] Ralph H. Brown, "The American Geographies of Jedidiah Morse," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* XXXI (September 1941), 145–217; Preston E. James, "The Significance of Geography in American Education," *Journal of Geography,* LXVIII (November 1969), 474–75. See also James King Morse, *Jedidiah Morse: A Champion of New England Orthodoxy* (New York, 1939). Besides his geographies, Morse was the author of the famous *Report to the Secretary of War . . . on Indian Affairs* (New Haven, Connecticut, 1822). Commissioned by John C. Calhoun, it ranks with his major efforts in geography in its descriptive writing, its compilation of information, and its missionary bias. Morse believed that the Indians possessed the capabilities of being civilized but required government aid, education, and removal to prepared settlements in the West. See Bernard W. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jefferson Philanthropy and the American Indian* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1973).

thought was the image of the frontier. He presented westward expansion in linear fashion, much as Turner would do one hundred years later. Quoting an anonymous pamphlet, he foresaw the day when the frontier would "justify those descriptions of travelers which have so often made it the garden of the world, the seat of wealth, and the centre of a great empire." [33]

His works reflected the nationalism of the early Federalist period. This spirit is captured best at the front of his book, *Geography Made Easy* (1784). His purpose in writing it was to provide a cheap schoolbook to instill republican virtues since "our young people know more about Europe than they do about America." While Noah Webster was nationalizing our language,[34] Morse, Webster's contemporary, was imbuing the newborn nation with a sense of its destiny: [35]

it is well known that empire has been traveling from east to west. Probably her last and broadest seat will be America. Here the sciences, and the arts of civilized life, are to receive their highest improvement. Here civil and religious liberty are to flourish, unchecked by the cruel hand of civil or ecclesiastical tyranny. Here genius, aided by all the improvements of former ages, is to be exerted in humanizing mankind—in expanding and enriching their minds with religious and philosophical knowledge, and in planning and executing a form of government, which shall involve all the excellencies of former governments, with as few of their defects as is consistent with the imperfection of human affairs and which shall be calculated to protect and unite in a manner consistent with the natural rights of mankind, the largest empire that ever existed. Elevated with these prospects, which are not merely the visions of fancy, we cannot but anticipate the period, as not far distant, when the AMERICAN EMPIRE will comprehend millions of souls, west of the Mississippi. Judging upon probable grounds, the Mississippi was never designed as the western boundary of the American empire. The God of nature never intended that some of the best part of his earth should be inhabited by the subjects of a monarch 4000 miles from them. And may we not venture to predict, that, when the rights of mankind shall be more fully known, and the knowledge of them is fast increasing both in Europe and America, the power of European potentates will be confined to Europe, and their present American dominions, become like the United States, free, sovereign, and independent empires.

[33] Jedidiah Morse, *The American Geography* (2d ed., London, 1792), 463. See also Morse's *The American Universal Geography* (4th ed., Boston, 1802), I.

[34] Jedidiah Morse, *Geography Made Easy, Being an Abridgement of the American Universal Geography* (9th ed., Boston, 1804), iii-iv.

[35] Morse, *The American Geography*, 469.

Texts written by Europeans but extensively used in the United States often reaffirmed this millenial hope, this divinely sanctioned mission. The Swiss-born geographer Arnold Guyot, a disciple of Carl Ritter and friend of Alexander von Humboldt, was the author of many geographies used at all grade levels in the mid-nineteenth century. Eventually, he came to the United States and accepted the first chair in geography at an American university—the College of New Jersey (Princeton University)—a post he held until his death in 1880. One historian of schoolbooks has claimed that Guyot "brought to America the rudiments of geography as a science," while another has maintained that he was the "earliest geography teacher and compiler to advocate a wider use of maps." [36] To Guyot, it was clear that the physical attributes of the United States would lead the nation to take up the mantle of leadership carried by Europe for so long. Because of its "fruitful plains, its numberless rivers, the prodigious facility of communication, nowhere impeded by serious obstacles, its oceanic position," the United States was most worthy to receive the legacy of the Old World's civilization. Thus to Guyot, the United States was the frontier of Europe, the symbol of faith, hope, and regeneration of the western tradition, and, as he emphasized, the continuing spirit of the Protestant Reformation. The place of the United States in history was well assured, and its role was confirmed through geographical determinism.[37]

The need to extend the tremendous and unique material progress of the United States was emphasized throughout the history of American schoolbooks. Inspiring national pride through the use of the frontier metaphor is clear. Schoolbooks even at the earliest levels reproduced the patriotic orations of an Edward Everett or a Daniel Drake, which reinforced the frontier's association with the idea of progress.[38] Edward

[36] Nietz, *Old Textbooks,* 230; Carpenter, *History of American Schoolbooks,* 258–60. To Carpenter, "the modern method of teaching geography in schools was to a large extent brought about through the insistence of Guyot. . . . Arnold Guyot was the first scientist-scholar to participate in teaching geography and in writing about it in this country." For Guyot's influence, also see Jurgen Herbst, "Social Darwinism and the History of American Geography," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society,* 105 (December 1961), 539–40.

[37] See for example, Arnold Guyot, *The Earth and Man: Lectures on Comparative Physical Geography,* trans. C. C. Felton (Boston, 1849), 274, 299–305; and his *Physical Geography* (New York, 1873), 120–21. For the racial arguments used to justify expansion by early geographies, see Elson, *Guardians of Tradition,* 65–100.

[38] See for example, *McGuffey's Newly Revised Eclectic Fourth Reader,* 314.

Everett's discourse at Harvard in 1829 entitled "Western Emigration" was reprinted in a reader published in 1856:[39]

The rapid march of the population westward has been attended by circumstances in some degree novel in the history of the human kind . . . . The wilderness, which one year is impassable, is traversed the next by the caravans of industrious emigrants, carrying with them the language, the institutions, and the arts of civilized life . . . . It is the human family, led on by Providence to possess its broad patrimony . . . .

The idea that the development of the wilderness offered limitless possibilities for the nation as a whole was reiterated. According to a Samuel G. Goodrich history, where once only wolves, bears, and Indians had lived, forty million Americans now inhabit, including one great city totaling one million people.[40] McGuffey's message was similar. In the lessons of the readers, the frontier was presented as "a vast world set apart by nature for the prosperity and culture of the citizens who dared venture into her vast lands." [41] Another popular history text confidently boasted: "The great garden of the western world needed tillers, and white men came. They have thoroughly changed the condition of the land and the people. The light of civilization has revealed, and industry has developed, vast treasures in the soil . . . ." [42]

Those peoples, besides Indians, who stood in the way of this "material progress" were dealt with extensively. According to the texts, the Mexicans, although not "savages," were completely responsible for the friction between the United States and Mexico. Mexico had been an "unjust and injurious neighbor" and had committed "unredressed wrongs against person and property." Statesmen in the United States, well intentioned, put off going to war in order to try to negotiate.[43] From reading the schoolbooks, it is clear that the marriage of "cruel and treacherous" Spaniard and "savage" Indian had produced lazy, degenerate people handicapped by an enervating climate and with little hope of progress.

[39] G. S. Hillard, *First Class Reader* (Boston, 1856), 354–56.

[40] Goodrich, *The American Child's Pictorial History of the United States*, 23–25.

[41] Mosier, *Making the American Mind*, 34.

[42] Lossing, *Centennial History*, 16. For this "divinely inspired mission," see Samuel Read Hall and A. R. Baker, *School History of the United States* (new ed., Andover, Massachusetts, 1839), 4; Jesse Olney, *A History of the United States* (rev. ed., New Haven, 1851), v-viii.

[43] Emma Hart Willard, *Abridged History of the United States* (Cincinnati, 1852), 339–40; G. P. Quakenbos, *Primary History of the United States* (New York, 1866), 183–86.

Although the Mexican War was not universally hailed in the schoolbooks, the unanimity of treatment is extraordinary. The sharp divisions within the United States over the morality of the war was minimized. The military successes of the North Americans received large coverage. The North Americans were generally pictured as being constantly outnumbered but heroically triumphing.[44]

In one of the more peculiar treatments, Emma Willard praised the United States for purchasing the land conquered from Mexico during the war, and, at the same time, she recounted the horrors that befell the Mexican populace. She added her moral plea against war, yet defended the United States' actions against Mexico. In conclusion, she implied that the Mexican cession would be the safety valve in the United States for "the 300,000 immigrants, which come yearly to her shores . . . ." [45]

The Mexicans were not the only minority treated in this manner. The rationale of the United States policy of reconstructing Mormon Utah in the "American Way" was set forth in the schoolbooks even before it occurred in fact. Although the Mormons were not presented as lazy or differing from mainstream material progress, they were viewed as wayward Americans, imposters, criminals, and hypocrites. The sincerity of Mormon leaders' beliefs was frequently called into question.[46] Emma Willard, the noted proponent of higher education for women, questioned the Mormon claim to being a "chosen" people and insisted that "they degrade and demoralize women." [47] It is evident that the expansion of the land of freedom did not allow for dissenters, even on the frontier itself. In later works of the 1880s and 1890s, the Mormons were rehabilitated but only after their apparent acceptance of the American way.[48]

By the time of Turner, American schoolchildren had learned their lessons well about the meaning of the frontier experience. In daily assign-

[44] Leavitt, *Selections for Reading and Speaking,* 283–89; J. S. Denman, *Third Reading Book* (16th ed., New York, 1856), 236–37; Marcius Willson, *History of the United States* (New York, 1867), 361.

[45] Willard, *Abridged History of the United States,* 384–85.

[46] Samuel G. Goodrich, *A Comprehensive Geography and History: Ancient and Modern* (New York, 1855), 130–31; Arnold Guyot, *New Intermediate Geography* (New York, 1875), 52; Venable, *A School History of the United States,* 184; G. P. Quakenbos, *American History for Schools* (New York, 1879), 244; David B. Scott, *A School History of the United States* (New York, 1874), 288–89; Benson J. Lossing, *A Primary History of the United States* (New York, 1866), 219.

[47] Willard, *Abridged History of the United States,* 332.

[48] See for example, John Fiske, *A History of the United States* (Boston, 1894), 321.

ments students had been exposed to the frontier as a symbol of opportunity, as a place in which crusading heroes spread civilization over savagery, as a land of Canaan predestined by God for American development, and as a bellwether of material progress and freedom for the nation. One other association permeated the schoolbooks before Turner: the frontier as Arcadia. The Jeffersonian ideal—the belief that "sturdy yeoman farmers, shielded from the artificiality of commerce and city life, lived lives of quiet simplicity as the 'chosen people of God' "—by the end of the nineteenth century had been repeated, reinforced, and developed into a popular myth.[49] The dichotomy between rural good and urban evil was reflected in the 1890s in the Turner thesis and in Populism, both of which looked nostalgically upon the passing of the frontier, and with it, Virtue.

The frontier as Arcadia, the place where rural simplicity and happiness prevail, was especially emphasized in schoolbooks. While America became more urbanized and industrialized throughout the nineteenth century, the agrarian myth became reaffirmed and revitalized. Dr. Daniel Drake's oration on "The Patriotism of Western Literature," reprinted in many editions of the McGuffey readers, was the most vivid expression of the frontier as Arcadia. To Drake, the frontier was the most "American" part of the United States, away from foreign influences. He added:[50]

Hence a native of the West may be confided in as his country's hope. Compare him with the native of a great maritime city, on the verge of the nation; his birthplace the fourth story of a house, hemmed in by surrounding edifices, his playground a pavement, the scene of his juvenile rambles an arcade of shops, his young eyes feasted on the flags of a hundred alien governments, the streets in which he wanders crowded with foreigners, and the ocean, common to all nations, forever expanding to his views.

The questions of McGuffey's lesson were also most revealing: "Where is patriotism most found? What are the causes which encourage its growth in the West?" [51]

[49] Peter J. Schmitt, *Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Urban America* (New York, 1969), xv-xvii. Arcadia, the Jeffersonian ideal, and the agrarian myth have been written about extensively in American historiography over the last twenty-five years. See works by Richard Hofstadter, Leo Marx, Henry Nash Smith, Morton and Lucia White, and Roderick Nash.

[50] *McGuffey's Newly Revised Eclectic Fourth Reader,* 314.

[51] *McGuffey's Newly Revised Eclectic Fourth Reader,* 314.

By the Gilded Age, the "machine in the garden" was challenging the "pastoral ideal." Despite the new industrialization, most educators of the period had been brought up in or remembered an America that had cherished rustic virtues. Out of this setting came the nature-study movement in education which reached its height of influence from 1890-1910.[52] The fears of city life and "the uneasy fear that children could not grow up properly in an urban world" led not only to the spread of the Arcadian ideal but also to the call to return to the successful schoolbooks of the past, most notably the McGuffey readers.[53]

Schoolbooks were ideal vehicles for transmitting the mythology of the frontier. Within their pages, western supermen interacted within their wilderness environment to accomplish heroic feats. As Richard Slotkin has written, "myth-visions which are generated by the mind, ultimately affect both man's perception of reality and his actions." [54] Such was the effect of schoolbooks on children. The mythology of the frontier helped indoctrinate students with ideas and values cherished by the larger society of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It soon produced a cohesive faith, a highly developed metaphysics which rationalized the emergence of a "New World Colossus."

This new faith has had far-reaching consequences. By the turn of the twentieth century, the search for opportunity, the crusading spirit of civilization over savagery, the belief in national predestination, and the need to extend material progress and freedom had shifted from the "closed" American prairie to the world arena, leading the United States to "new frontiers." Meanwhile, domestic Arcadia has been paved over by interstate highways, strip-mined, or "developed." Only time will tell if the magic has disappeared from the frontier metaphor.

[52] William A. Bullough, " 'It is Better to be a Country Boy': The Lure of the Country in Urban Education in the Gilded Age," *Historian,* XXXV (February 1973), 183–95.

[53] In 1928, Henry Ford helped reissue a series of the McGuffey readers. Carpenter, *History of American Schoolbooks,* 84.

[54] Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence,* 6–7.