AT A GLANCE:
MANIFEST DESTINY FROM THE AMERICAN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

Newspaper editor John L. O'Sullivan first coined the phrase "manifest destiny" in an 1845 editorial wherein he argued that it was America's "manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions." Historians have since used the term to characterize the expansionistic exuberance that typified the 1840s. By that point, white Americans had come to believe that both geographic expansion and population growth were a part of the national character. The United States had doubled in size with the addition of the Louisiana Purchase territory in 1803. James K. Polk ran for the presidency on an expansionist platform, and the U.S. would nearly double in size again with the annexation of Texas in 1845, the settlement of the Oregon boundary dispute with Britain in 1846, and the acquisition of what would come to be called the American Southwest following the U.S.-Mexican War in 1848. During the same time period, the population of the United States quadrupled. As O'Sullivan articulated it, and many Americans came to believe it, God seemed to destine that the United States span North America from coast to coast. As settlers spread across the continent to occupy these new lands, they brought Anglocentric worldviews that caused them to perceive the indigenous peoples they encountered in negative terms, which ultimately produced devastating land and population losses for Native Americans. In Utah, the story was no different.

Even though "manifest destiny" is most specifically applicable to the United States in the 1840s, it can be broadly defined to include any nation's imperialistic and expansionistic thrusts. In this regard, Indians in the area that would come to be called Utah, encountered expansionistic ideals first with the Spanish imperialists and then with English, American, and French fur traders and trappers (for more information on this earlier period see "Rethinking First Contact: The Effects of European Arrival on the Established Cultures of North America"). Then, in the 1840s, non-Indian emigrants began to traverse Utah on their way to the West Coast. In 1841, a portion of the Bartleson-Bidwell Party became the first non-Indians to bring overland wagons through Utah. Government explorer John C. Fremont was not far behind. Fremont was married to Jessie Benton, daughter of Senator Thomas Hart Benton from Missouri, an ardent expansionist who ensured that his son-in-law's explorations were well funded and that they would enjoy immediate government publication. Three of Fremont's five western explorations took him to Utah, and his findings were published and widely read. Fremont greatly expanded the available knowledge about western lands and their potential for settlement. Before departing for the West from Illinois members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (commonly called the Mormons) read Fremont's report and used it to determine potential settlement locations.

In 1846, one year before the Mormon migration, an enterprising western promoter named Lansford W. Hastings persuaded four overland parties to leave the well-worn Oregon/California trail and take a proposed "cutoff" across the south end of the Great Salt Lake and the salt des-

ert. It proved an ill-conceived plan, as the area was not conducive to wagon travel. The last of the groups Hastings attracted to his cutoff was the ill-fated Donner Party, but the less-well-known Lienhard Party preceded the Donner group across Utah. Heinrich Lienhard, a young Swiss immigrant for whom the party was named, wrote in his journal of the impressive natural resources that the Salt Lake Valley seemed to offer. He suggested that he might have been tempted to stay and settle "had there been a single family of white men to be found living here."

The perceived isolation of the Great Basin, kept most overland immigrants moving westward, while it was that very isolation that attracted the Mormons to stay. Both perspectives failed to recognize the region's Native American peoples as having long-standing claims and deep cultural ties to the land. America's agents of manifest destiny tended to ignore or dismiss Indian occupation, choosing instead to see the West as a blank slate waiting to be "civilized." Because the Protestant majority in America viewed the Mormons themselves as uncivilized, heathen, and barbaric, the Utah manifest destiny story sometimes diverged from the national narrative, but it was also bleakly conventional.

Mormons differed from other overland migrants in important ways. They were, on average, poorer than the middle-class migrants who went to California and Oregon, they were not voluntary migrants but were forced from their homes, and they migrated as an entire people. Rather than agents pushing American progress, individualism, and acquisitiveness forward, Mormons saw themselves as builders of a communal and godly kingdom. They were religious refugees seeking isolation and a place where they could withdraw from the world, economically, as well as spiritually. Despite these differences, the end result for the Native Americans was the same: they suffered loss of land and population and were removed to reservations.

As historian John R. Alley argues, both the Utes and Southern Paiutes initially welcomed Mormon settlers but for different reasons. The Utes saw Mormons as permanent trading partners. No longer would they have to go to Spanish settlements or wait for caravans along the Old Spanish Trail. The Southern Paiutes also invited the Mormons to settle because they saw the Mormons as a potential buffer against Ute slave raids and hoped to gain access to Euro-American material goods which the Utes had long used against them.

Utah's indigenous people did not fully understand the sheer numbers of Mormon settlers that would pour into the Great Basin during the last half of the nineteenth century. The Mormon doctrine of "the gathering" motivated converts to migrate to Utah and brought an influx of settlers from the eastern United States, Canada, Britain, and northwestern Europe. By 1860 over 42,000 Mormons had migrated to Utah Territory. They soon spread out across the Great Basin to occupy traditional Native American hunting, fishing, gathering, farming, and camping locales. By the time of his death in 1877, Brigham Young had directed the founding of over three hundred Mormon communities in the Intermountain West, making him one of America's foremost colonizers.

Native Americans experienced this colonization as a devastating series of events that dramatically changed their ways of life. Mormon settlers

brought diseases for which native peoples had no immunity. Mormon settlement also produced crippling land loss and diminished access to and availability of natural resources. As the Mormon population increased, the Native American population diminished. An estimated 20,000 Native Americans occupied Utah on the eve of the Mormon arrival; by 1900 the native population had dropped to about 2,000—a ninety percent decline over fifty years. It would not be until the mid 1980s that the population of Utah's indigenous peoples would recover to its pre-settlement level.

Naturally, conflict erupted between Mormons and Native Americans. After Mormons occupied Utah Valley in 1849, settlers and Indians fought. Brigham Young authorized a limited extermination before he finally concluded in 1852 that "it is cheaper to feed the [Native Americans] than it is to fight them." Even still, the Mormon attempt to curtail the Ute slave trade and settlers' pressure on Ute lands and resources erupted into the Walker War. The Black Hawk War, which involved the Utes and some Navajos and Paiutes, followed. Although Utah's tribes were able to resist for a time, eventually all were removed from their ancestral lands and confined to reservations. The devastating ramifications of manifest destiny played out across Utah and reverberated into the twentieth century.

Viewed from the Indian perspective, the story of manifest destiny is tragic. However, it also demonstrates Indians' remarkable resilience and persistency. In the twenty-first century, Utah's Native American population is growing. In 2005 about 33,000 Native Americans lived in Utah, comprising about 2 percent of the state's population. Tribes occupy about 4 percent of the land in the state.