prairie schooners, were small, four-wheeled vehicles with canvas tops and wooden bodies. They were light enough so that they would not sink easily into the soft prairie sod. Teams of oxen, rather than horses, often pulled the wagons. Horses were faster but not as strong or hardy as oxen.

Some pioneers, including women, traveled west alone. Others traveled in small groups, either on foot or on horseback. The most common arrangement was for several families to travel together in an organized wagon train. An experienced leader, or an elected head assisted by guides, would take command of the group.

**Land Routes: Santa Fe Trail and Oregon Trail**

Between 1840 and 1860, more than 250,000 people went west. Most settlers went to the Oregon Territory and California. The most famous route was the Oregon Trail, which began in Independence, Missouri, and crossed 2,000 miles of plains, mountains, and rivers. In southern Idaho, the trail diverged. Those wanting to go to California followed the California Trail through northern Nevada into California’s Sacramento Valley. The ruts cut by thousands of wagon wheels can still be seen along parts of the Oregon Trail.

The even older Santa Fe Trail went from Independence, Missouri, to the former Spanish capital of Santa Fe. It was first used in 1821 and continued as a major trade route until 1880, when a railroad line was opened. The trail was relatively short—780 miles—on open plains across Kansas and up the Arkansas River or across the desert. The Santa Fe Trail, unlike the Oregon Trail, was basically a trade route.

**Mormons: Brigham Young, Salt Lake City**

The Mormons are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The church was founded in 1830 by Joseph Smith, who claimed to have received revelations from God on golden tablets. The teachings, known as the Book of Mormon, became the basis of the Mormon faith. Mormons believe the Bible and the Book of Mormon are the “Word of God” and that the president of the church is a prophet of God. One of their most publicized practices was the practice of polygamy, having more than one spouse at a time.

Smith and his followers moved from their original home in New York State to Ohio because they were attacked for their religious beliefs. After again being persecuted, they moved to Missouri, but controversy and resistance followed them and they were forced to move a third time. In 1844, after settling in Nauvoo, Illinois, conflict again broke out and Smith was killed. Under the leadership of Brigham Young in 1847, the Mormons moved far west to the Great Salt Lake Basin in what is now Utah. At the time, the area was part of Mexico.

Considered unsuitable for agriculture, the area was passed over by other pioneers, but the Mormons irrigated the desert and established farms. They built a prosperous community and in 1849, after the Mexican-American War, they formed the state of Deseret with Young as governor. The same year, the people of Deseret petitioned the United States Congress for admission as a state. Congress, however, was in the midst of the controversy over whether to allow the spread of slavery into the territories and denied the request (see “The Civil War: Causes, Conflicts, and Consequences,” on pp. 264–296). Congress also had a problem with the Mormon practice of polygamy. The following year, the Compromise of 1850 was worked out and Deseret was recognized as the Utah Territory. However, Utah did not become a state until 1896, after the Mormons had banned polygamy.
Gold Rush and the '49ers

In January 1848, John Sutter hired James Marshall to build a sawmill on the American River, which ran through Sutter's property near Sacramento, California. As he worked, Marshall noticed in the riverbed shiny flakes that looked golden in the light. When he examined them more closely, he saw they were gold. Though the two men tried to hide Marshall's discovery, word got out and the rush to find gold was soon on.

Californians took to the rivers and streams looking for gold. Much of it was easily found in streams and riverbeds by panning. Miners literally used pans with small holes poked through their bottoms. They let the water flow through the holes, and the heavy gold sank to the bottom of the pans.

By the following summer, 100,000 people arrived in California—not just from the east coast of the United States but from Europe and much of the Pacific Basin, especially China, as well. Most came overland by horse and wagon train, but many came by boat. Some sailed around Cape Horn at the tip of South America and up the coast, while others sailed to Panama, trekked overland, and took a ship again from the west coast of Central America.

The '49ers, as the miners were called, were an enterprising group of men and women. Most miners were young men who expected to make their fortune and then return home. Some family men brought their wives and children along, expecting to stay. Single women, hoping to find gold or to earn money cooking or doing laundry for the miners, traveled to California as well. Some free blacks came, as well as some southerners who brought their slaves to mine for them. Even though few miners found a substantial amount of gold, many stayed for the climate and the rich farmland.

Native American Resistance

From the beginning, the new United States' dealings with Native Americans resulted in a string of conflicts, misunderstandings, epidemics, skirmishes, wars, broken treaties, and unfulfilled promises. At first, the federal government recognized Native Americans as sovereign nations and negotiated treaties with them for their land. Sometimes these treaties were freely negotiated, and other times they were the result of wars. The Treaty of Greenville (1795) is an example of a treaty that was forced on the Native Americans as a result of war. The treaty, by which the native peoples of the Old Northwest (Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan) gave up most of their lands, was an outcome of the Battle of Fallen Timbers (1794). The Treaty deprived Natives of claims to roughly two-thirds of the land of modern-day Ohio. Federal troops under General Anthony Wayne defeated a force of Shawnee, Miami, Ottawa, Potawatomi, Ojibwa, Fox, and Sauk near what is today Toledo, Ohio. Later, the War of 1812 would break the back of Native resistance in the rest of the region.

As more settlers pushed the frontier back by moving west and south from the original thirteen states, they came in contact with more Native Americans. Many European Americans considered the Native Americans uncivilized, and saw them as obstacles standing in the way of settlers' ambitions. The settlers continued to push the Native Americans westward. Sometimes the army tried to prevent settlers from encroaching on Native American lands, but at other times the army