

The American Frontier existed for several hundred years. Beginning with the arrival of the first explorers at the end of the fifteenth century, pioneering became the trademark of the New World. After the appearance of the first settlers on the eastern seaboard, and during the later exploits into the wilderness that awaited in the interior of the New World, pioneers had to face challenges posed by nature and the unfamiliar environment inhabited by native tribes. In the nineteenth century, the Frontier gained a new significance, as it was pushed ever westward with the incessant march of pioneers over the continent; until in 1890 it was declared by the Bureau of the Census that "at present the unsettled area has been so broken into by isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to be a frontier line."r Thus the Frontier was closed. Precisely the time of the nineteenth century when the trickle of westering emigrants changed into a stream of people flooding across the Great Plains into the trans-Mississippi West, roughly from 1840 to 1880, is of interest when discussing the emergence of permanent settlements and communities in the West. This is the time of the mythic West, so central to the formation of the American nation, as discussed by Frederick Jackson Turner in his famous essay "Significance of the Frontier in American History".