

The Enduring Vision

A History of the American People



Volume 1: To 1877

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Joseph F. Kett • Thomas L. Purvis
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PREFACE

The Enduring Vision

This is the story of America and of the visions that Americans have shared. The first vision was of the land itself. For the prehistoric adventurers who crossed the land bridge from Asia, for the Europeans who began to arrive in the sixteenth century, and for the later immigrants who poured in by the tens of millions, North America offered a haven for new beginnings. If life was hard in the Old World, it would be better in the New. And once here, the lure of the land continued—away from the crowded city, beyond the rim of settlement. If times were tough in the East, they would be better in the West. New Englanders migrated to Ohio; Ohioans migrated to Kansas; Kansans migrated to California. Southern blacks after the Civil War dreamed of new opportunities elsewhere:

*I got my ticket,
Leaving the thicket,
And I'm a-heading for the Golden Shore!*

Even today, the land itself remains part of the vision. Indeed, it becomes more precious as we realize its vulnerability to pollution and exploitation. In this way, we share a link with those who went before us who also cherished this continent's forests, mountains, lakes, and rivers.

But the vision involves more than simply a love of the land. It also entails a commitment to an ongoing social and intellectual process: the process of creating a just social order. In pursuing this goal, we have experimented with new social forms and engaged in bitter debates. As the French immigrant Michel Crèvecoeur wrote in 1782: "The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles, . . . new ideas, and . . . new opinions."

Central to the American vision of the good society is the notion of individual freedom. To be sure, our commitment to freedom as frequently faltered in practice. The Puritans who sought freedom of worship for themselves often denied it to others. Southern whites who cheered the Declaration of Independence lived by the labor of black

slaves. Many a capitalist tycoon conveniently forgot that economic exploitation can extinguish freedom as effectively as political tyranny or military force. And through much of our history, women—one-half the population—were relegated to second-class status. Yet the battered vision endured, prodding a sometimes reluctant nation to confront and explore its full meaning.

But freedom can be an empty and cheerless thing unless one is also part of a social group. The novelist O. E. Rolvaag, describing the emotions of a nineteenth-century Norwegian immigrant farm woman on the Great Plains, captured this feeling of social isolation:

A sense of desolation so profound settled upon her that she seemed unable to think at all. . . . She threw herself back in the grass and looked up into the heavens. But darkness and infinitude lay there, also—the sense of utter desolation still remained. . . . Suddenly, for the first time, she realized the full extent of her loneliness. . . .

Thus the vision must also be one of community. John Winthrop, addressing a group of English immigrants aboard the *Arbella* on their way to America in 1630, eloquently summed up this dimension of the vision: "We must delight in each other, make others' conditions our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together: always having before our eyes our commission and community . . . as members of the same body."

The family, the town, the neighborhood, the church, and the nation itself have been ways by which Americans have woven into their lives a web of social meaning. And *community* is not just a high-sounding abstraction; it has political implications. If we are not just a fragmented collection of self-absorbed individuals but also a *people*, what obligations do we owe each other? What limitations on our freedom are we willing to accept in order to be part of a social group? In struggling with tough questions like these, we have further defined our vision of America.

Finally, this vision is one of renewal and new beginnings. The story of America is part of the human story, and thus it has its dark and shameful passages as well as its bright moments of achievement. Arrogance, injustice, callous blindness to suffering, and national self-delusion have all figured in our history. But balancing the times when we lost our way are the moments when we found our bearings and returned to the hard task of defining what America at its best might truly be.

This, then, is the essence of the vision: a vision not of a foreordained national destiny unfolding effortlessly but of a laborious, often frustrating struggle to define what our common life as a people shall be. For all the failures and the wrong turns, it remains a vision rooted in hope, not despair. In 1980 Jesse de la Cruz, a Mexican-American woman who had fought for years to improve conditions for California's migrant workers, summed up the philosophy that kept her going: "Is America progressing toward the better? . . . We're the ones that are gonna do it. We have to keep on struggling. . . . With us, there's a saying: *La esperanza muere al último*. Hope dies last. You can't lose hope. If you lose hope, that's losing everything."

No sentiment could better sum up the enduring vision of American history.

Introduction

In writing *The Enduring Vision*, our aim has been twofold: to do full justice to the history of public events, with maximum chronological clarity, and to bring into the story the rich findings of research into social and cultural history over the past few decades. In short, we set out to trace the interaction of public and private spheres in the American past. Times were ripe for such a venture. History is enjoying a long overdue resurgence in the undergraduate curriculum. Students come to American history eager for a compelling narrative, ready to encounter the grand sweep of the nation's past and to ponder America's identity as a nation. Their teachers reached intellectual maturity during and after the enormous expansion of history's domain that began in the 1960s with the absorption of social-science theory and a determination to study

previously neglected social groups. The dual purpose of inquiring rigorously into a problem and of telling a story with grace and conviction has always guided the greatest practitioners of the craft of history. We have made it our purpose as well.

Our book maintains a reasonable level of rigor. We have not hesitated to take up challenging topics. But we have *explained* these matters clearly and shown how they are essential to understanding American history. Every step of the way, we and our editors have asked hard questions: what do college students beginning the study of American history need to know, and how does *this* particular piece of evidence fit into the picture?

Throughout, we have sought to describe the experiences and perspectives of ordinary people as well as to account for the motivations of history's great figures. Our view of history is neither rigidly "top-down" nor "bottom-up"; rather, we see a constant interplay between communities, regions, and nation. As frequently as possible, we introduce students to real people from the past and allow these participants to speak for themselves. The revealing anecdote or pungent quotation can be worth many words of abstract explanation, and we have ransacked our sources to find fresh material that piquantly captures the mentality of the era. Above all, we realize the importance of encouraging students to judge historical events with the values of the past in mind. There is no better way to foster respect for history.

Every working historian knows how difficult is the challenge of combining analysis and narrative. Our solution has been to break the narrative down into manageable, chapter-length chunks and to "stop the music" where appropriate in order to analyze the forces underlying events. We have tried to ensure that the reader always knows how private social interactions fit into larger patterns of public events yet never sees those events merely as a random progression of "facts" without social or cultural context.

We have tried to give our book character, to avoid impersonal blandness of style, to employ humor where appropriate, to communicate a sense of drama, and to evoke sympathy for those who have suffered. We hope that students will find the book's brisk, lively style readable and engrossing. But we also recognize that a textbook must "work" in hundreds of different courses, whose teachers

may vary tremendously in pedagogical approach or interpretation. Here again, we felt an obligation to be as inclusive as possible. We have advanced our own views of controversial questions in such a way that instructors who think otherwise can engage our textbook in constructive debate. By thus seeing that the study of history is an ongoing inquiry rather than a handing-down of revealed truth, students can only be the gainers.

Plan of the Book

Our approach should be apparent from the opening pages. The Prologue offers a unique survey of the geographical foundations of American history—landforms, river systems, natural regions, climate, and vegetation. The theme of human interaction with the environment first appears here as well, as we describe precontact native American life. Chapter 1, analyzing the encounter and contrasting the cultures and societies of native Americans, West Africans, and Europeans, allows each people to speak for itself and offers a detailed, integrated portrait of native American history and culture. Against this comparative backdrop, we then take up the narrative of the planting of North America's first colonies. Chapters 2 and 3 discuss colonial society and culture in narratives that interlace chronological, regional, and topical presentations. Chapter 2, for example, contrasts New England, the English Caribbean, and the Chesapeake colonies throughout the seventeenth century; Chapter 3 introduces the Restoration colonies and the French and Spanish experiences, brings colonial society to maturity in the era of the Great Awakening and the Enlightenment, and discusses everyday life through the prism of family experiences over the life cycle.

The forging of the American nation is the theme of Chapters 4–6, from the onset of the imperial crisis to the Revolution and the Federalist decade. Here we rely primarily on narrative interspersed at key points with social analysis. Our story is essentially one of American unity in resistance to perceived British encroachments, and of civil war when the issue became independence and the disruption of traditional loyalties. The treatment of the Federalist era (Chapter 6) goes well beyond the usual dry survey of partisan bickering by studying the

new nation region-by-region and stressing that the Republic's very survival was a matter of serious doubt.

The antebellum section—Chapters 7–12—begins with a chronological overview of political history from Jefferson to the Monroe Doctrine (Chapter 7), followed by a comprehensive social and economic introduction to the age of Jackson (Chapter 8). In Chapter 9 we take an innovative approach by treating Jacksonian political and reform movements as interlocking public and private attacks on social ills. We turn to the Old South in Chapter 10, offering a comprehensive portrait of this distinctive, self-sufficient, and viable region whose white citizens were deeply convinced that they had built a society worth defending. Chapter 11 provides a unique treatment of antebellum culture (using the word in its broadest sense) and of the rhythms of pre-Civil War daily life. Finally, Chapter 12 ties together a dual theme: the social change resulting from the great wave of immigration in the 1840s, and the expansionism of Manifest Destiny.

In Chapters 13–15 we consider the crisis of the Union, spanning the 1850s, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. The presentation strives to maintain a sense of drama and contingency—never, for example, assuming that northern victory and southern defeat were foreordained. In Chapter 14 we consider at length the war's powerful impact on the home front and on American culture, and in Chapter 15 we show how persistent racist assumptions and a preoccupation with other national issues eventually caused the North to lose interest in defending southern blacks' rights against the “redeemers.”

We cover the post-Civil War decades in Chapters 16–20, whose unifying theme is the extraordinary social and cultural change triggered by industrial capitalism. Chapters on the West (16), industrialization (17), urbanization and immigration (18), and daily life (19) precede Chapter 20's narrative of Gilded Age politics and turn-of-the-century expansionism. However, Chapter 20 can also be read first without loss of continuity. Throughout, we have spotlighted the cultural ramifications of social change; explored the ways in which public and private issues intertwined; and stressed the autonomy of immigrants, workers, rural people, women, blacks, and native Americans.

In Chapters 21–25 our theme is the consequences of industrialization and urbanization, from progressivism to the New Deal. Chapter 21 presents progressivism as a multistranded movement, offering a variety of responses (not all of them benevolent) to the new industrial order. The treatment of World War I (Chapter 22) and of the 1920s (Chapter 23) comments at some length on the nation's cultural response to war and perseverant social tension. Finally, two chapters on the 1930s (24 and 25) assess the Great Depression as the most serious crisis yet faced by American industrial capitalism. In Chapter 24 we discuss the New Deal not as an array of alphabetical agencies but as the cradle of the modern welfare state; and Chapter 25's treatment of daily life and culture in the 1930s continues the text's approach of emphasizing the influence of individuals and communities on national social and political change.

The final cluster of chapters (26–31) extends from World War II to the present. Chapter 26 deals extensively with the home-front experience during World War II, integrating it into the narrative of military campaigns and global politics. We see in the immediate postwar years (Chapter 27) the end of American isolationism, a preoccupation with communism, and the nation's not always successful attempt to assimilate the New Deal; and in the 1950s (Chapter 28), an era of mature industrial society in which daily life assumed its essentially contemporary form through suburbanization and the expansion of leisure. The discussion of the tumultuous years from Kennedy's inauguration to Nixon's downfall (Chapters 29 and 30) focuses on modern industrial society's entrapment in Vietnam and ability to absorb the civil-rights revolution. We end the book not with the usual miscellaneous catalogue of unresolved contemporary problems but with an interpretation of recent history as the nation's gradual coming-to-terms with a sense of limits: the rise of ecological consciousness, the waning of global dominance, and the challenge of competing technological societies. By striving to put the recent past into a longer perspective, we are also in a position to round off the coverage of modern America with a unique Epilogue—a brief summing-up of our view of the lessons of history, and an assessment of challenges that the nation's next generations will face.

Special Pedagogical Features

A range of useful and appealing study aids has been built into *The Enduring Vision*. Each chapter begins with a vivid vignette of a person or event that both swiftly draws the reader into the atmosphere and issues of the times and establishes the chapter's major themes. In every chapter there also appears an absorbing two-page illustrated essay, "A Place in Time," which explores in depth a single community's experiences in the era under consideration. Tables and chronological charts on special topics occur regularly throughout the text; and each chapter closes with a "Conclusion," an illustrated "Chronology" of pivotal events and developments, and a wealth of suggestions for further reading. The Appendix provides statistical tables; handy reference lists; and the text of the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the Constitution (with its amendments).

The text's elegant full-color design features some 670 photographs and cartoons, over 100 maps, and 37 graphs. In the photographs we have taken care to avoid reproducing tired, overused images and have concentrated on historically accurate illustrations that, with rare exception, are contemporaneous with a chapter's time period. A special focus of the photographic selections has been material culture—the clothing, tools, housing, and other artifacts left by the peoples of the past. The strikingly beautiful quilts that grace *The Enduring Vision's* covers reflect our fascination with this rich source of information about the daily lives of those gone before. The map and graph program encompasses exceptionally clear, accurate, and up-to-date illustrations, each accompanied by an explanatory caption.

Supplementary Program for The Enduring Vision

An extensive ancillary program accompanies *The Enduring Vision*. It has been designed not only to assist instructors, but to develop students' critical-thinking skills and to bolster readers' understanding of key topics and themes treated in the textbook.

The *Student Guide*, by Barbara Blumberg of Pace University, features (for each text chapter) review outlines, a statement of the central issues

to understand, a vocabulary-building section, identifications, map exercises, sample test questions, and provocative exercises tracing the text authors' use of various historical sources. The *Instructor's Guide*, by Robert Grant of Framingham State College, offers innovative essays and handout masters centered on creative teaching techniques; summaries of each text chapter's main themes; and ideas for lecture, additional instruction, print and nonprint resources, and use of *Enduring Voices: Document Sets to Accompany The Enduring Vision*. In *Enduring Voices*, edited by James Lorence of the University of Wisconsin, Marathon Center, we provide a most unusual instructional resource. The package comprises sixty-two sets of primary-source documents for use with the text; the instructor may freely photocopy these materials for classroom discussions, course projects, or as parts of examinations. Each documentary set presents a variety of examples of primary documentary evidence—including excerpts from letters, diaries, contemporary fiction, speeches, and petitions, as well as song lyrics and advertisements—highlighting a topic or theme developed in the parallel text chapter. Rounding out the supplementary package are the *HeathTest Plus Computerized Testing Program*, which allows instructors to create customized problem sets for quizzes and examinations, and the accompanying *Test Item File*, in convenient printed format. Almost 3,000 questions, prepared by Kenneth Blume of Union College and the Albany College of Pharmacy, are available in the testing program. Finally, we have produced a large *Overhead-Transparency and Slide Package* comprising about 85 full-color illustrations based on text maps and graphs. In the supplements as in the textbook, our goal has been to make teaching and learning enjoyable and challenging.

Acknowledgments

Writing a textbook, especially one with multiple authors, is a team effort. *The Enduring Vision* has been five years in the making, and as we have planned the project, critiqued one another's chapters, responded to reviewers' suggestions, and

watched our publisher produce the book, we have all felt a growing appreciation of the word *teamwork*. We want to take this opportunity to thank a number of individuals whose crucial role could never be appreciated by those who have not participated in such a project.

Sylvia Mallory, Senior Developmental Editor, has thrown heart and soul into the project since it was launched. She is a gifted stylist with a keen sense of how a chapter ought to flow and a realization (to quote Mark Twain) that the difference between the right word and an almost right word is like the difference between lightning and a lightning bug. She can put herself in the place of a student reader and spot where a passage will be obscure, while at the same time preserving the essence of a sophisticated idea. She worried about every detail, not only in the manuscript but also in the design, the illustration program, and the conceptualization of the supplementary materials. Through it all, she kept good humor, and we finish the job even better friends than when we began it. We also wish to thank Linda Halvorson and James Miller, successively Senior Acquisitions Editors. The first persuaded us to sign on (no mean feat), while the second cajoled us to get the job done on time. Rosemary Jaffe, Senior Production Editor, toiled with tremendous persistence—often long after closing hours—to shepherd the textbook through production, and meticulously kept track of innumerable details. In working with her during the year of actual production, we have greatly appreciated her enthusiasm and tact. Senior Designer Henry Rachlin contributed the book's clean, open, and arresting layout, whose excellence speaks for itself. Photo researcher Martha Shethar helped collect an array of fresh and intriguing illustrations—many of them real rarities—from which we had a hard time making final selections. Developmental Editor Patricia Wakeley worked with the supplements author team to produce what we believe is the fullest, most carefully executed set of ancillary materials available. Production Editor Cormac Morrissey contributed meticulous attention to the myriad details of producing the supplements. Permissions Editor Margaret Roll spent many a long day securing rights to reproduce copyrighted material. At the end of the production process, Michael O'Dea, Manager of Manufacturing, worked his customary miracles

to get the bound books delivered on time. Marketing Manager James Hamann shared with us the insights of his many years' experience in selling history textbooks.

Special words of thanks go to our many colleagues around the country who read and commented on the chapters, often at great length and with great insight. Ours was the final responsibility for sifting through their (occasionally contradictory) suggestions, but we want each of them to know that we have deeply appreciated their work. Many of them will see the stamp of their ideas in the book.

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PROLOGUE

American Land, Native Peoples



“The land was ours before we were the land’s.” So begins the poem “The Gift Outright,” which the aged Robert Frost read at John F. Kennedy’s inauguration in 1961. Frost’s poem meditates on the interrelatedness of history, geography, and human consciousness. At first, wrote Frost, North American settlers merely possessed the land; but then, in a subtle spiritual process, they became possessed by it. Only by entering into this deep relationship with the land itself—“such as she was, such as she would become”—did their identity as a people fully take shape.

Frost’s poem speaks of the encounter of English colonists with a strange new continent of mystery and promise; but of course, what the Europeans called the New World was in fact the homeland of the native American peoples whose ancestors had been “the land’s” for at least fifteen thousand years. Native Americans had undergone an immensely long process of settling the continent, developing divergent cultures, discovering agriculture, and creating a rich spiritual life tightly interwoven with the physical environment that sustained them. Although the native Americans’ story before the Europeans’ incursion is recorded in archaeological relics rather than written documents, it is nonetheless fully a part of American history. Nor can we grasp the tragic conflict between Old and New World peoples that began soon after Columbus’s arrival in 1492 without understanding the conti-

nuities of native American history before and after contact with whites, or without appreciating the Indians’ tenacious hold on their ancestral soil, forests, and waters.

This Prologue has a dual purpose. The first is to recount how the earliest Americans—the Indians—became “the land’s.” The second purpose is to tell the story of the land itself: its geological origins; its reshaping by eons of lifting, sinking, erosion, and glaciation; the opportunities and limitations that it presents to human endeavor. By weaving together the strands of geography and Indian experience, we shall consider as well the ultimate dependence of human beings on their environment.

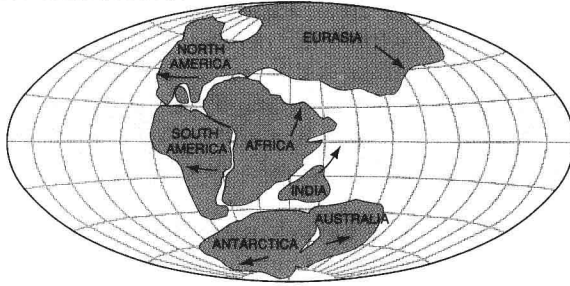
To comprehend the American past we must first know the American land itself. The patterns of weather; the undulations of valley, plain, and mountain; the shifting mosaic of sand, soil, and rock; the intricate network of rivers, streams, and lakes—these have profoundly influenced United States history. North America’s fundamental physical characteristics have shaped the course of human events from the earliest migrations from Asia to the later cycles of agricultural and industrial development, the rise of cities, the course of politics, and even the basic themes of American literature, art, and music. Geology, geography, and environment are among the fundamental building blocks of human history.

An Ancient Heritage

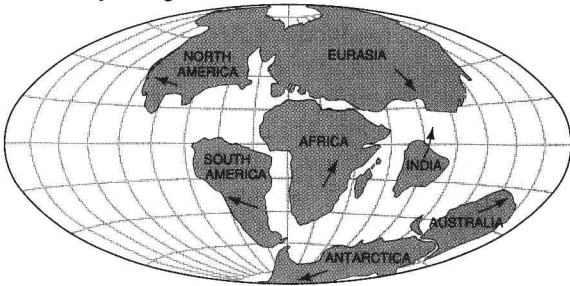
It is sobering to begin the study of American history by contrasting the recent rise of a rich, complex human society on this continent with the awesomely slow pace by which the North American environment took form. Geologists trace the oldest known rocks on the continent back some 3 billion years. The rocky “floor” known as the Canadian Shield first became visible on the surface of the northeastern United States and Canada during the earliest geologic era, the Precambrian, which ended 500 million years ago. Halfway between that remote age and the present, during the Paleozoic (“ancient life”) era, forests covered much of what would

eventually be the United States. From this organic matter, America’s enormous coal reserves would be created, the largest yet discovered in the entire world. Only at the close of the Paleozoic, about 225 million years ago, did the continent become in a sense the “New World” by starting to split off from the single landmass that previously had encompassed all the earth’s dry land surfaces. By a process known as plate tectonics—which continues today, at the rate of a few centimeters a year—the North American continent slowly began moving westward. At roughly the same time, the Appalachian Mountains arose in what is now the east-

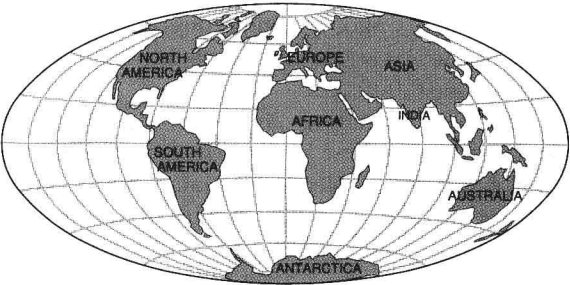
200 million years ago



100 million years ago



Present



Movement of the Continents

(Top) The giant supercontinent of Pangaea; (center) continental positions 100 million years ago; (bottom) present position of the continents.

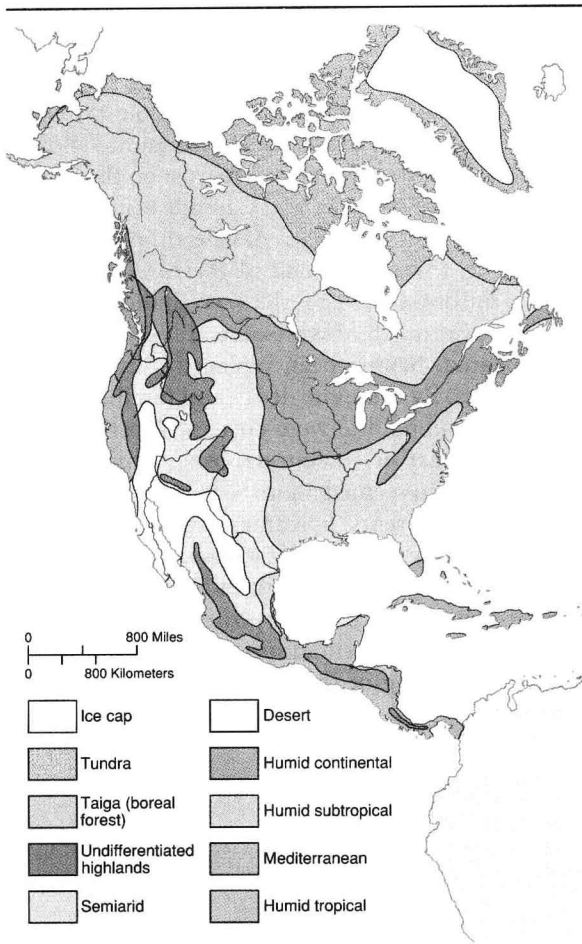
ern United States. Animal life had not as yet emerged from the sea. So enormous a gulf of time separates the origins of North America from the beginning of human history that, if those 225 million years were compressed into the space of a single twenty-four-hour day, everything that has happened since the Indians' ancestors first migrated here would flash by in the last half-second before midnight, and the New World's history since Columbus would occupy about five-thousandths of a second. In considering the sweep of geologic time, one inevitably

wonders how ephemeral human history itself may yet prove to be.

Many millions of years after North America's initial separation, during the Mesozoic ("middle life") era—the age of the dinosaurs—violent movements of the earth's crust thrust up the Pacific Coastal, Sierra Nevada, and Cascade ranges on the continent's western edge. As the dinosaurs were dying out, toward the end of the Mesozoic some 65–70 million years ago, the vast, shallow sea that washed over much of west-central North America disappeared, having been replaced by the Rocky Mountains. By then, the decay and fossilization of plant and animal life were creating North America's once great petroleum deposits, which even a generation ago seemed almost limitless. Within the last 50 million years, volcanic eruptions raised the cones that now form the Hawaiian Islands, twenty-five hundred miles southwest of California. Active Pacific-rim volcanoes and powerful earthquakes all over the continent dramatically demonstrate that the molding of the American landscape still continues.



Volcanic Eruption, Hawaii



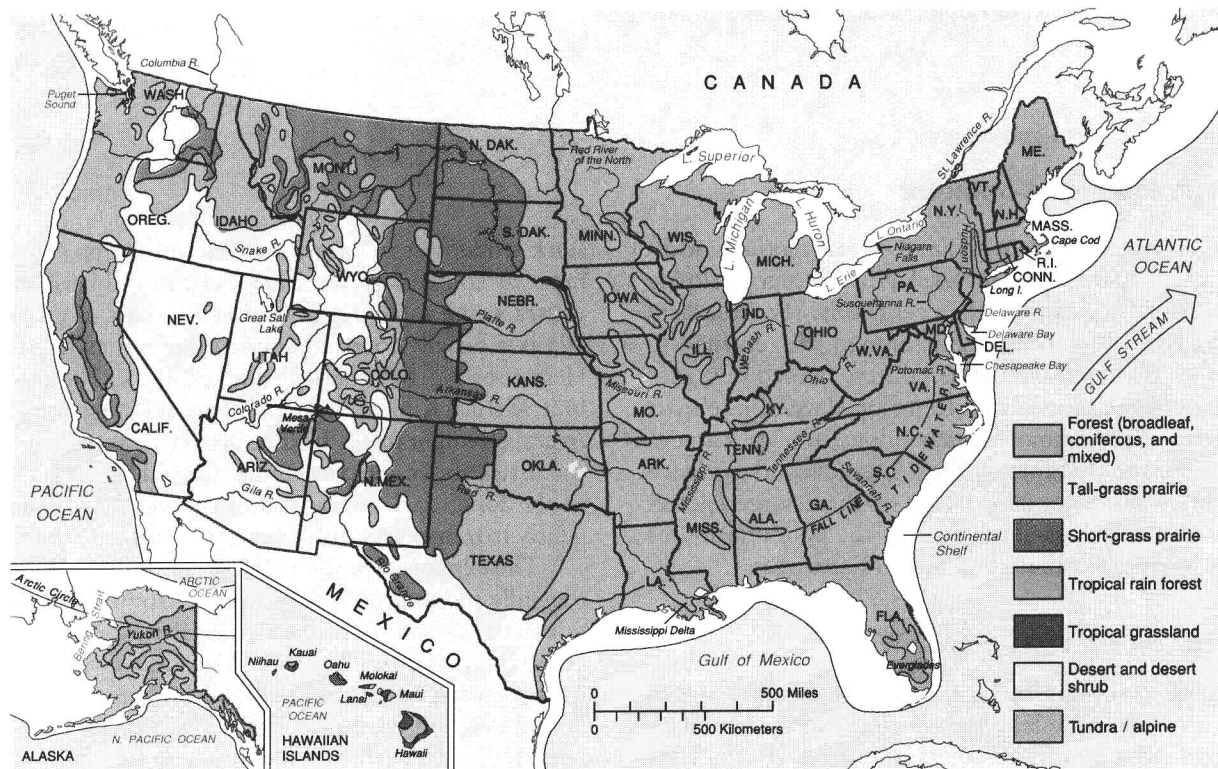
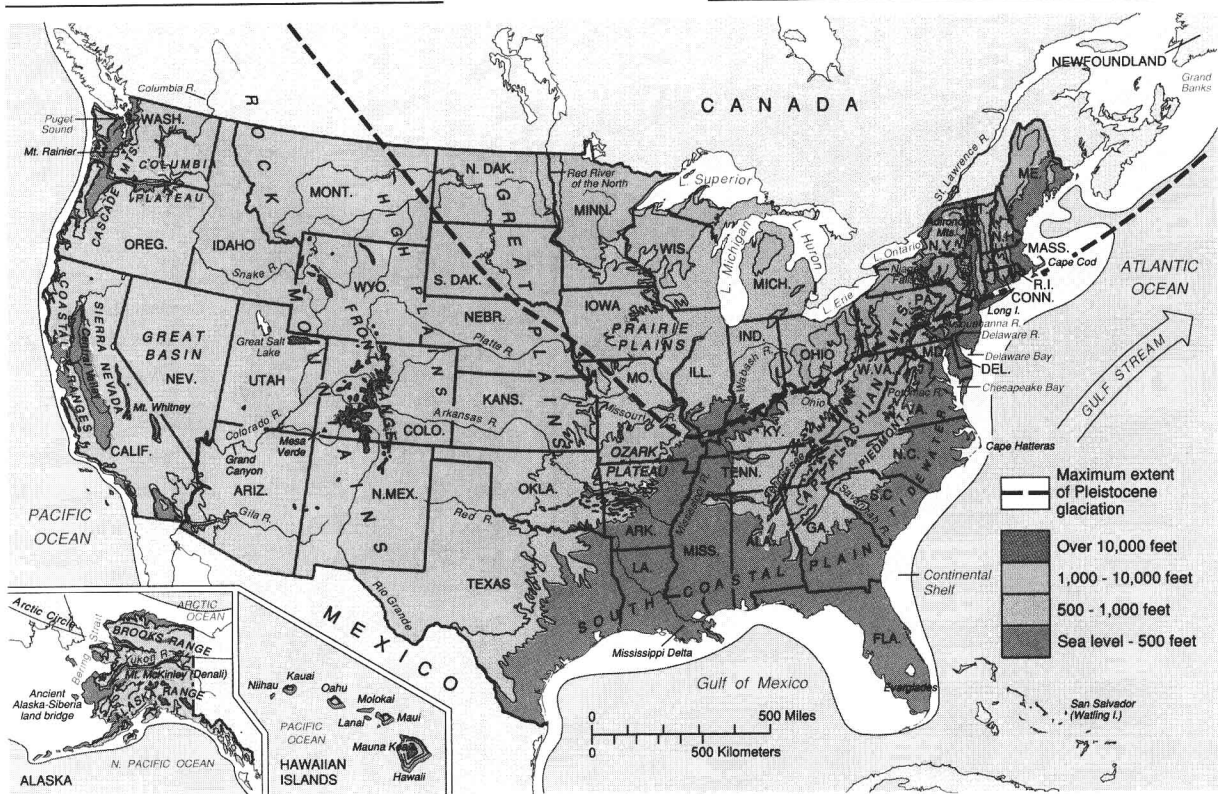
North American Climatic Regions

Between 2 million and ten thousand years ago, four great glaciations left a tremendous imprint on the land. The Ice Age staggers the imagination. A carpet of ice as thick as thirteen thousand feet extended over most of Canada and crept southward into what is now New England, New York State, and much of the Midwest. As the last ice caps retreated, water formerly locked in the ice sheets flooded shallow offshore regions like the land bridge that linked Alaska and Siberia. The climatic changes triggered by the melting ice drastically affected North American plant and animal life and helped turn the Southwest into a desert. Glacial runoff filled the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River basin. Ice and rocky debris

pockmarked the terrain over which the glaciers had spread, and areas adjacent to the ice sheets were covered with thick deposits of glacial outwash—sediment carried by streams from melting inland glaciers. Several thousand years passed before the Midwest and New England ceased to resemble present-day northern Alaska in climate and vegetation.

Like the slow but relentless shaping of landforms, the origins of the human species extend back to the mists of prehistoric time. Some 5 million years ago, direct human ancestors first evolved in the temperate grasslands of Africa. Between three hundred thousand and one hundred thousand years ago, *Homo sapiens* evolved and began migrating throughout the Old World. Then, late in the Ice Age, hunting bands pursuing large game animals reached northeastern Asia and the Alaska-Siberia land bridge. As the glaciers retreated, small hunting bands followed a corridor southward along the mountain slopes of northwestern Canada. Some of this movement occurred perhaps as early as forty thousand years ago, but most migration into the heart of the Americas can be dated very roughly to 20,000–10,000 B.C.

Almost all native American peoples were descended from these original migrants who ventured across the Alaska-Siberia land bridge. A few, however, were the offspring of more recent arrivals. Some four thousand years ago, for example, Eskimos and Aleuts from Siberia began paddling their kayaks to North America. These hardy peoples settled the coasts of the Bering Sea and the Arctic Ocean. Around the polar seas, they established a way of life based on small communities of remarkable resourcefulness and endurance. Most Eskimo peoples traded extensively with the Indians dwelling inland, but a few were so isolated that, as recently as the early twentieth century, some learned to their astonishment that they were not the only human beings on earth. Far more inviting to migrants, but even more isolated, were the Hawaiian Islands. About A.D. 400 and again about 1000, Polynesians from the South Pacific reached Hawaii in giant outrigger canoes. Part of the vast migrations then peopling the Pacific Islands, the Hawaiians created a vigorous warrior society that flourished undisturbed by outsiders until the English sea captain James Cook found his way there in 1778.



Above, Physiographic Map of the United States Below, Natural Vegetation of the United States