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# Preface

These two volumes on the history of the American West first came about because of a really good idea that did not work. Twenty years ago, the two of us agreed to sign up for an innovative project aimed at tying regional history to the broadest sweeps of US history. The elegant intention for a two-volume annotated reader on the West was that it would supplement American history survey courses taught at colleges and universities *in* the West.

Broad-brush national issues—war, slavery, conquest, labor, gender and the family, cities, etc.—would be elaborated upon by documents and images drawn from, and interpreted within, western settings. Students learning about Prohibition, for example, would address that topic and its long history by reading temperance and Prohibition sources alongside stories from western places: Colorado, California, Wyoming, Oregon, and others. Specific settings would shed light on the overriding topic, and students in the West would get to know their region's history better and more broadly.

Good idea, right? It was. And the first edition of these two volumes offered the two of us, friends and colleagues now for half our lives, a great opportunity to work on something together.

So what happened? The easy answer is that, for whatever reason or reasons, the survey courses on campus in the US West did not much bend to the regional illumination our books offered. Maybe the survey-course instructors did not want to alter the way they taught their

courses. Maybe a textbook-driven syllabus could not easily accommodate two additional volumes of readings and exercises. Maybe the innovative idea required a bit more public relations energy than a busy publisher could be expected to provide.

But the books did not fail. They just hit a different target than the one we first imagined. Not long after they were published in 2000, we began to hear from our western history colleagues all over the country, who told us that our two volumes were a hit in their courses. Not their US survey courses but their western, or various versions of regional, history courses. The documents and images brought the West's complex, chaotic history to life and to the ground. Voices of real people could be heard in the primary source records we had mined for the books. And our brief annotations and introductions helped our colleagues by adding context and scholarly perspective to history's themes, moments, and episodes.

The "hook" was unintended, but no less gratifying because of it. The books got out there, they got taught, and our colleagues told us that they liked using them.

So here we are, two decades later, launching them again. We're different, our students are different, the concerns of historians who focus on the West have changed, so these books are different. With a new publisher, everything had to be rethought, reorganized, and revised in light of how much the field of western history has changed in this century.

It still makes sense to pull the long history of the West apart, to make this a two-volume reader. There is an early West and a later West, though the dividing line is a slippery concept. We opted, once again, for a division deep into the American period, roughly at the Civil War moment. We expect that the books will be taught apart and together. One aspect of western history that has invigorated the field in recent times has been the brilliant scholarship illuminating the indigenous histories of the West, before and after Spanish contact, before and after American conquest. We have been careful to bring much of that work to bear in our documents, short essays, and bibliographies, which close each chapter in both volumes.

The West has grown since we wrote the first edition of these books. Western historians who were once pretty content with the continental and national outlines of the American West must now, thanks again to bold, new scholarship, look beyond conventional boundaries of the West as a trans-Mississippi or trans-Rockies terrestrial place. Our West, and our students' West, is capacious and boundary-breaking, because the human beings who lived there and the ideas they carried with them crossed borders. We incorporate a West that is not defined by terra firma but is instead oceanic. The rise of transnational and Pacific histories within the western historical canons of scholarship has added much to our field. Now we ask how the West looked, and how people lived their lives, in and around "the great Ocean" that borders the western edges of a West we ought no longer delimit at high tide.

There are other ways in which the West has grown richer as a field of historical inquiry. Our field's embrace of environmental history, long strong, has only gotten more ambitious and interesting, and those prisms of analysis and those stories are reflected in these pages. West-

ern history has long been a field in which breakthrough scholars have helped us better understand such concepts as gender and masculinity. Researchers whose work addresses sexuality have added magnificently to those foundations, and we are indebted to them here, just as we are to historians and others who address LGBTQ histories in the archives and narratives of western America. They bring us a stunningly human West, where people learned new things about themselves, did awful things to each other, and sometimes took great care. Throughout this project, our aim has been to make these books speak to a new western audience, using up-to-date scholarship, and simultaneously to relay to students just how exciting it is to be working in western history at this moment in American historical writing. Our archives grow, the people in them change, and our access to that knowledge gets easier every day. The stories and puzzles they yield have never been more compelling.

We also find obligation in opportunity. We have tried to bring contemporary concerns and problems into sharper view by way of context and history. The West is a troubled place in early twenty-first-century America. It is a place where many of the nation's uncertainties and tensions seem to get wrestled with first out in the open, in ways both inspiring and repulsive. Our West, and the West of the students who will read these volumes, has—as it always has—problems atop possibilities, troubles atop triumphs. But the stakes seem, to us, higher now. What the West will do or not do, what the West will collectively say to the nation and to the world, matters greatly. Think of challenging issues in contemporary America: immigration, the environment, the carceral state, native sovereignty, global change, race and racism, gender and power. These are not just western issues—of course not. But they have western valences, they have western contexts, and that particular

history ought to help us all to better understand them.

So in a way we have come full circle. We're still friends, we still disagree about aspects of the West and its history, but we care about it deeply. This little two-volume project about the history of the region reflects our passion and experience. We still believe, as we did twenty years ago, that the West provides a sharply focused lens to view national and international issues. And it remains a distinctive region because of its physical setting and particular histories. We hope that in learning about that region and its wild history you will be shaped by the West. We hope you take that knowledge far beyond your classrooms.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Because western history and the West have not grown simpler over the years, it took us a while to reimagine these volumes and to wrestle them into useful shape and size. We are very grateful to Niels Hooper at the University of California Press for thinking these volumes were a good idea and for not saying too much when they took longer than we ever thought they would. Bradley Depew, Niels's able assistant, has shaped these volumes and corralled the authors.

Copyeditors Ann Donahue and Lindsey Westbrook did wonderful work in correcting errors, finding inconsistencies, and making the volumes look terrific.

We owe a lot to reviewers, who looked at initial proposals and then first and second drafts of both volumes. As experienced teachers and western scholars, they gave us excellent and detailed advice that pushed us to reconfigure these volumes. Susan L. Johnson, from the University of Wisconsin; Adam Arenson of Brooklyn College; Greg Hise from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas; and Shana Bernstein of Northwestern University all read carefully and convinced us to make significant changes. We can't thank them enough, and we hope these volumes begin to represent their efforts. In Southern California, Bill would like to thank Taryn Haydostian, Elizabeth Logan, Brian Moeller, Erin Chase, and Aaron Hodges for their efforts in tracking down images, rekeying documents, and getting permissions. In Oklahoma, Anne would like to thank the staff at the Western History Collection, Laurie Scrivener, Curtis Foxley, and History 1493, for test driving documents and ideas.

William F. Deverell, University  
of Southern California

Anne F. Hyde, University of Oklahoma





# Introduction

This document collection is many years, we might say hundreds of years, in the making. It is the product of centuries of historical change and upheaval, triumph and tragedy, in the region we now call the American West. It offers hundreds of voices from the past to represent a range of human beings that enable you to see both glimmers of yourself in the past and worlds and ideas that are breathtakingly different.

As we think about how these will be used in classrooms, by you and your classmates, we are confident in two major ideas. The first is that you, your classmates, and your instructors will shape these volumes by your collective ideas, wrapped around history and region. We know also that reading and thinking about the history of the West is best done if you can sit with the words and images of the people who are no longer around. Some of these are written documents that have been translated many times, but some are objects, photographs, maps, or buildings. We have an obligation as historians to guide you in that work, almost to sit alongside you as you read.

The West we take you through is far more than what eventually becomes the US West. Those borders and that idea of a region didn't always exist. Some of your experiences will tilt earlier, to a West not yet conquered by Anglo-America, to a West of overlapping claims, global

ambitions, and Native systems of governance, both roving and rooted in western places and spaces. Other classes, other students of the West, will find more to grapple with in a “later West,” when conquest morphed into the colonialism of taking gold, oil, coal, or water on unprecedented scales, when cities arose to marshal commodities, people, and capital. And some of you will focus more attention on the West of the most recent vintage, the West of your own lifetimes, a West of roiling demographic and political change (not so new, actually), a West at the center of some of the most vexing and divisive issues in contemporary American life.

So we take you to places where different ideas about how people should live and who should control resources bump up against each other. Sometimes that makes a border, sometimes a frontier, sometimes a war zone, or sometimes a place of peaceful diplomacy. In moving through these zones of contention or collaboration, the people actually there do the speaking. Our job is to ask you to think about this or think about that as you read. We frame the documents and pictures within the context of their making, and we introduce you to the circumstances that led to that letter or that law or that photograph.

The real meaning of all this is in the exchanges you have with the western past. If we know what we are talking about, our annotations, captions, and minilessays will help you as you move through western time and space. But it is your give and take with the actual sources of history that we hope this book inspires. The past is both like and utterly unlike the present we inhabit. Listen to the voices of the West. See how language is the same, yet different. Understand the circumstances people, groups, and nations found themselves in, how they made decisions, what those decisions ultimately meant. Ask questions of these sources—why did this happen? What might have happened differently? How can two people see the same moment so divergently? What were the best ideas of the past? What were the worst? How does the past, and all those decisions made by people who came before us, still influence the present and the future?

Where does the past stop, and where does the present begin? And what is our present other than the future’s past?

History offers fascinating terrain to exercise your ideas and come up with new ones. It is hard work, the answers are never easy to come by, and history has neither a neat beginning nor a neat end. The West, only one of an infinite number of ways in which to carve up the past, is a place that has fascinated us for the entirety of our careers. We hope that this same excitement, along with ideas we haven’t even thought of, accompanies you as you think your way through these volumes.