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# Frederick Jackson Turner Reconsidered

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**DURING THE EARLY 1880s**, history's leading spokesman at the University of Wisconsin, William F. Allen, began to believe that a bright, enthusiastic, and attractive young student named Fred Turner had scholarly promise. Academic historians have been evaluating the career of a man named Turner ever since. In the judgment of peers it was a great success. Shortly after his return from graduate work at Johns Hopkins during 1888-89, the death of his revered teacher placed him in control of the history program at the University of Wisconsin. He became the major builder of a respected history department, a powerful campus politician at Madison, a highly influential member and shaper of his profession and a renowned scholar.<sup>1</sup>

Turner inspired an ever-growing circle of supportive former graduate students and, in retirement, confessed to Carl Becker, "I was interested in history, and in the companionship of men like yourself."<sup>2</sup> Despite his preference for working with advanced students, however, at the time of his death in 1932 some sixty percent of the leading history programs in the country were offering an undergraduate course similar to the History of the West that he first listed in the Wisconsin catalogue of 1895-96, and his published lists of references for the course guided legions of instructors. In addition, he was widely sought as a visiting professor and as a commencement speaker and highly respected in related disciplines. Dur-

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ing the 1940s the Council of the American Historical Association identified Turner and Francis Parkman as the two most eminent deceased historians of the United States.<sup>3</sup> In this essay we review the reactions of several generations of American historians to Turner and his ideas and consider what this story tells us about these ideas, the historian Turner and his career, historians as critics, and the processes of change within the history discipline.

For some twenty years after beginning graduate studies Turner demonstrated remarkable intellectual and scholarly productivity. During this period he melded ideas from many sources into a message—the frontier thesis—that was so persuasively argued and so attuned to its times that it became one of the great interpretations of American development, institutions and character. This message was linked to a substantial agenda of research which Turner urged upon students and peers. In this stage of his career he also made a significant editorial contribution and published a number of substantial articles as well as seeking a more popular audience for his ideas. The period culminated in 1906 in the publication of *The Rise of the New West, 1819-1829*, in the presentation of his first major paper on the subject of sectionalism in 1907, and his presidential address to the American Historical Association in 1910.<sup>4</sup>

Turner's mind did not atrophy after he moved to Harvard in 1910. He was active in the American Historical Association, was a trusted advisor of the Carnegie Institution, placed his historian's knowledge at the service of the country during World War I, faithfully counseled the students of Harvard and Radcliffe, published various editions of his *List of References*, fostered the western collections of the Harvard Library, and collaborated with colleagues in producing the *Guide to the Study and Teaching of American History*. He published something nearly every year, but the major project announced while still at Wisconsin—a study of the nation and its sections 1830-1850—remained unfinished when the end came in Pasadena in 1932. It was to be published posthumously as was the Pulitzer Prize volume of collected essays, *The Significance of Sections in American History*.

### The Essential Turner

The frontier thesis, as Turner presented it in his paper, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," before the American Historical Association in 1893 reflected the surging nationalism of the time, the accomplishments of a great region whose residents felt themselves too little respected for their achievements, the pride of a university seeking educational hegemony within that region, and the drive of a scholar eager

to stake his claim to a great area of history and to advance himself within his discipline.<sup>5</sup> Here Turner melded a number of basic concepts: there was the free land hypothesis, the idea of continuing sectional differentiation within the physiographic provinces of the country during and subsequent to the frontier era, and the suggestion of closure of opportunity, conveyed initially by the declaration that the disappearance of a continuous frontier line from the census population maps marked “the closing of a great historic movement,” an idea reiterated in the final sentence of the essay that declared “the first period in American history” had ended. (pp.1, 38). These themes Turner set within a framework of social theory that included the idea of social recapitulation beginning with imported institutional germs, developing through a series of stages that brought areas from a state of wilderness or savagery to that of advanced civilization, the concept of society as an organism experiencing continued growth and differentiation in its institutions, and displayed an array of regional economic and character types engendered by frontier conditions.

On first reading the essay of 1893 may appear to be a simple statement, keyed in its first paragraph to the observation of the Superintendent of the Census that a continuous American frontier line could no longer be mapped and a terse explanation of that finding’s relevance: “The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward explain American development.”(p.1) Thence Turner carries the reader through a discussion of the meaning of the term, “frontier,” the chronology and physiographic details of frontier advance, the various social and institutional processes involved, and their results, or in his words, “noteworthy effects” (p.22)—composite nationality, the promotion of individualism, and of most significance, democracy, and finally, “intellectual traits of profound importance”(p.37).

But we must remember that Turner qualified his message. The ringing declaration concerning free land is preceded by the statement that “Up to our own day American history has been *in a large degree* the history of the colonization of the Great West”(p.1; author’s italics). Later we are told that the paper’s “aim is simply to call attention to the frontier as a fertile field for investigation, and to suggest some of the problems which arise in connection with it.” (p.3) And Turner did note that there were social continuities between the older and the newer regions. “But with all these similarities” he observed, “there are essential differences, due to the place element and the time element.” (p.10) But he did not limit expansive assertion solely to his first paragraph. In calling for interdisciplinary research in the comparative study of frontiers, he assured his audience that they would be studying not merely American frontiers but the “record of social evolution.” (p.11)

There were in Turner's text epigrammatic statements, speculative comments, and pregnant asides that stand as subtheses. "Economic power secures political power," (32) he wrote, in explanation of the democratizing tendencies of the settlers on the cheap western lands. "Movement," he noted elsewhere, "has been [American life's] dominant fact, and unless this training has no effect upon a people, the American energy will continually demand a wider field for its exercise" (37)—suggesting that closed space might in the future have its effect upon foreign policy. The frontier, he wrote, had been "a gate of escape from the bondage of the past," (p. 38) or, as he would write elsewhere, a safety valve that might mitigate the effects of economic depressions or labor unrest.

During his later career the nature and significance of sectionalism became Turner's dominant interest. In 1914 he succinctly compared "two of the most fundamental factors in American history. The frontier is a moving section, or rather a form of society, determined by the reactions between the wilderness and the edge of expanding settlement; the section is the outcome of the deeper-seated geographical conditions interacting with the stock which settled the region. Sections are more important than states in shaping the underlying forces of American history."<sup>6</sup> In arguing the importance of the section in national decision making, Turner, with the assistance of his students, developed a form of electoral and roll call mapping analysis that was widely used by political historians.

### Turner on Turner

Did Turner reconsider Turner? He approved four different printings of the frontier essay; the Chicago presentation was followed by one at the annual meeting of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, both versions reaching print in 1894. Others followed in 1899 and 1920.<sup>7</sup> In the *Proceedings* of the Historical Society, Turner quoted Achille Loria's passage, "America has the key to the historical enigma which Europe has sought for centuries in vain," and continued, "He is right." For the readers of the *Annual Report* of the American Historical Association, however, he affirmed, "there is much truth in this."<sup>8</sup> This was to be the reading of 1920 as well. Most of Turner's amendments to the frontier essay appeared in the reprinting of 1899, designed for the use of schoolteachers, and he did not carry them into his collected frontier essays of 1920. But they did reveal an appreciation of the relation of western aridity to settlement that Turner is sometimes believed to have lacked. Other changes in the 1899 version reflected his growing interest in the shaping power of physiography.<sup>9</sup>

Addressing the members of the fledgling Geographic Society of Chicago in 1896, Turner noted the dangers in “attempt[ing] to find in a single historical movement the key to a nation’s” development, as in the conflict of Puritan and Cavalier or the slavery struggle. After more qualification, he proposed, however, that “American history finds its master key in the geographical fact of an expanding people occupying a vast and varied area of the New World.” In his presidential address to the American Historical Association in 1910 and later papers he inserted laundry lists of major forces in American history. But he was loath to admit that the frontier and the section were not somehow special. He began his lectures in History 17 at Harvard in 1913-14 by announcing flatly that “there is no key to American History” and then continued, “But the most important thing in our nation’s history, and that which most nearly approaches the long sought key, is the westward movement.” And in writing to Merle E. Curti in 1928 he found it unnecessary to qualify his earlier view of the frontier as the “‘thin red line’ that recorded the *dynamic* element in American history up to recent times.”<sup>10</sup>

During the early 1920s, Turner acknowledged that he had done little to describe the role of cities in the westward movement and acknowledged the importance of the subject. His research notes reveal other amplifications of his knowledge. He adjusted his commitment to John Wesley Powell’s scheme of physiographic provinces in line with current thought and incorporated a good deal of twentieth-century evidence into his later presentations on sectionalism. Rethinking, qualification, and change in Turner’s thought there certainly was, but the strong continuities are more obvious.

### First Generation Critics

There was some early criticism of Turner’s positions. Some scholars did not share the enthusiasm with which he emphasized the relation of physiography to American historical development. When Turner organized a session on the relations of geography and history at the meeting of the AHA in 1907, George L. Burr argued that “imput[ing] action or causation, influence or control, to things which are inert...involves a fallacy.” Others disputed Turner’s contentions at the meeting of the American Sociological Association in the same year that sectionalism would continue to be a major force in the American polity. Even before 1910 some historians apparently believed that political parties shaped national political outcomes more than did sectionalism.<sup>11</sup>

When *The Frontier in American History* appeared in 1920, Charles A. Beard questioned basic aspects of the 1893 paper in a review in the *New*

*Republic*. To Turner's free land and westward expansion as determining factors in American development, Beard wished to add slavery, labor, and capitalism. He did not believe that Americanization proceeded more rapidly on the frontier than elsewhere. Among other criticisms, Beard suggested that the social and political conflicts that Turner sketched as outgrowths of the westward movement were actually "economic group conflicts" and that Turner had omitted those between capitalists and organized labor.<sup>12</sup>

Clarence W. Alvord reviewed the book supportively in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* although suggesting that Turner's use of stage theory was not applicable to some frontiers. In the *American Historical Review*, Allen Johnson acknowledged the popularity of Turner's ideas but regretted that he "nowhere defin[ed democracy] in set terms... a word that appears on almost every page." In a treatise of 1926 dealing with the use of historical evidence, Johnson implicitly criticized Turner by arguing that recent examinations of sectionalism illustrated the danger of using "ruling theories" and criticized the electoral mapping methods used in such studies.<sup>13</sup>

In response to Beard, Turner told his distressed daughter that he was "an ex-Columbia professor, radical in tendency," who wished to project the current importance of "the struggle of capital and labor" backward to an era in which that aspect of American life was less salient.<sup>14</sup> Turner justified his emphasis on the West because historians to his day had been largely concerned with it merely as an object of national expansion. He explained to Arthur Meier Schlesinger that some "careless" readers had misunderstood his use of the word frontier—the frontier census line had disappeared by 1890 but not frontier processes. He responded to those who emphasized roots of democracy other than the frontier by explaining that he was concerned with *American* democracy. "My work, whether good or bad," he confided to Merle Curti in 1928, "can only be correctly judged by noting what American historians and teachers of history... were doing when I began."<sup>15</sup>

Still Turner had good reason during the nineteen twenties to feel that his work was widely respected. In 1918 Max Farrand described a "new history" which took "other than political and military events into consideration" and credited Turner with exerting "the greatest influence upon recent study... through his classes and in his writings." In his biography of Woodrow Wilson published two years later, William E. Dodd noted Turner's influence upon the young southerner and affirmed that the Wisconsinite had "influenced the writing of [American] history more than any other man of his generation." In the discussions of American historiography that they published during the 1920s, Arthur M. Schlesinger

and Harry E. Barnes credited him with giving “a new direction...to American historical research.” Turner had, wrote Barnes, “introduced more vitality and realism into the study of American history than any other American historian of this or any earlier generation.”<sup>16</sup>

During the late 1920s former students of Turner at the University of Colorado organized a conference there on the history of the Trans-Mississippi West and the resultant interchange of correspondence pleased Turner. However, he may also have noticed in the published papers that Carl O. Sauer attacked his approach to the frontier, advocating the perspective of cultural morphology instead and that a young Texan named Webb was apparently something of a bunch quitter.<sup>17</sup> In 1931 the President of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association was a former Turner student, Louise Phelps Kellogg, and the program of that year included a “survey...of the frontier thesis.” Frederick Paxson, John D. Hicks, and Solon J. Buck led the discussion, the latter asserting that the thesis had been “set forth...so cogently that as yet no one [had] been able to add very much to it, or to detract from it.” Essentially the panelists called for research that would further elaborate Turner’s ideas. Convention participants sent a congratulatory telegram to Turner.<sup>18</sup>

### The Critics: Second Stage

Even before Turner’s death a new generation of critics of his ideas was emerging and their critique was ultimately to be enshrined in the “problems” series that dichotomized American history as either this or that for innumerable American college students from the 1940s through the 1970s. Among the dissenters, Benjamin F. Wright Jr. challenged the assertion that the West made original contributions to the development of democratic government in the United States. Wright also noted Turner’s tendency to think primarily in terms of the Middle West, his propensity to write as though the frontier hypothesis had been fully proven, and his disregard of other major sources of American democracy.<sup>19</sup>

Reviewing *The Significance of Sections in American History* Louis Hacker found “amazing errors,” and stigmatized the great body of research stimulated by Turner’s work as “quite worthless.” Turner had ignored the growth of “monopolistic capitalism” and impending imperialism. The free lands engendered not a “unique ‘American spirit,’” but rather the agricultural base needed for the international transfers that helped build a “native industrial enterprise.” The frontier had also prevented class lines from becoming “fixed.”<sup>20</sup> George W. Pierson concluded that Turner’s definitions of key terms were inadequate, that his argument was often contradictory, that he ignored alternative sources of



frontier traits, and that he failed to marshal convincing evidence in support of his major contentions. Turner's deterministic theory of free land devalued human agency.<sup>21</sup> In his presidential address to the American Historical Association in 1946, Carlton J.H. Hayes maintained that the time had come "when our historians might profitably broaden their conception of the frontier" and work from the assumption that Americans were "a frontier of European or Western culture."<sup>22</sup>

James C. Malin pointed out that Turner was not a systematic thinker, that his commitment to a stage theory of social and economic development was mistaken, that his approach ignored many basic aspects of American development and was in effect a kind of "closed space" thinking. However he also believed Turner to be a creative genius and was unimpressed by many of the arguments of other critics. Innovators, he noted, often found it difficult to find appropriate wording and he maintained that apparent contradictions in Turner's argument represented "accurate historical reporting of contradictory behavior of men." Malin dismissed much of the criticism of "Turner's use of...terms and definitions" as "mere hairsplitting verbalism."<sup>23</sup>

During the 1930s economic historians rejected the suggestion that the frontier had provided a safety valve for American labor. Fred A. Shannon climaxed the attack in the mid 1940s by conducting a "post mortem" on the "safety valve" concept, firing a salvo of census statistics and concluding, "There never was a free land or even a Western safety valve for industrial labor."<sup>24</sup>

As the critique of Turner proceeded dual tracks developed. It was possible on the one hand to evaluate his work as description and explanation while on the other hand scholars sought to trace the evolution of his thinking or to place it within the history of ideas. The latter approach could jeopardize Turner's reputation as a creative thinker. For example, Fulmer Mood showed that both the concept of the frontier and that of the section had long histories prior to their use by Turner. Scholars speculated that Turner might have derived his ideas from Hegel, Woodrow Wilson or other writers. In 1884, the humorist, Bill Nye discoursed upon the "rusty, neglected, and humiliated empty tin can[s]" strewn across the West, concluding "There ain't no frontier any more" and James C. Malin used the passage in arguing that the closing of the frontier was very much in the air during the 1880s.<sup>25</sup> At the end of the 1940s, Lee Benson argued persuasively that Turner had borrowed the idea of the major significance of free land and other aspects of his argument from Achille Loria, the Italian political economists and also noted much discussion of the imminent exhaustion of the supply of public lands in the periodical press during the early 1890s.<sup>26</sup>

### Voices in Defense

Even before Turner's death students and followers had begun to defend his reputation. Carl L. Becker and Merle Curti prepared evaluations of Turner and his work during the late 1920s, both papers appearing in publications designed to illustrate the contributions and methods of American social scientists. Becker concluded that his mentor's transcendent impact upon students lay in his "lively and irrepressible intellectual curiosity; a refreshing freedom from personal preoccupations and didactic motives; [and] a quite unusual ability to look out upon the wide world in a humane friendly way, in a fresh and strictly independent way, with a vision unobscured by academic inhibitions." He suggested that Turner could not be typed; he was "just himself, a fresh and original mind that goes its own way careless of the proprieties, inquiring into everybody's business... forever the inquirer, the questioner, the explorer."<sup>27</sup> Turner believed, wrote Curti, that "the chief purpose of history is to aid in understanding the process by which interacting forces have made society." He emphasized Turner's commitment to interdisciplinary research—utilizing literature and art, as well as the social, natural and physical sciences. He mentioned Turner's commitment to the use of multiple hypotheses and described his use of physiographic analysis and mapping techniques. But Turner, argued Curti, did not believe that "historical laws are to be postulated," even his concepts of frontier and section were merely "keys to... understanding of the process by which man and his environment in America have reacted on each other." Curti also emphasized the number of Turner's successful students.<sup>28</sup> Both Becker and Curti were reacting in part to the charge that Turner had not been as productive a historian as he might have been. Theirs was a brilliant rearguard action in defense of their mentor. Nor did they lie, but they did not produce rigorous critiques of Turner's writings.

Other former students enlarged the defensive perimeter. Avery Craven admitted that there might seem to be elements of contradiction in Turner's writings. But said Craven, Turner's America was a society of contradictions, and the fact that Turner found grounds in the evidence of a "drift toward 'democracy and nationalism'" did not mean that he was unaware of countervailing influences. Craven cited Turner's presidential address to the American Historical Association as evidence that he was prepared to change his approach in dealing with an industrialized America. Critics had not been exposed to the man himself. Craven agreed that the basic frontier ideas were not new, but it was Turner who had understood when the time was ripe for their introduction into the history discipline.<sup>29</sup>

In 1943 Edward E. Dale reminisced of a modest, friendly, but immeasurably inspiring Turner. Although Professor Channing had told him that "Turner [was] a dear fellow, but...he has never written any big books," Dale believed that Turner "could say more in one brief essay than most historians did in an entire volume." He termed the criticisms of Turner's ideas by recent critics "unjustifiable and unduly severe." He noted that most of them were "younger men, generally from the East, who knew Turner very slightly if at all, and whose knowledge of the changing West [was] purely academic." They had misrepresented Turner's ideas. He concluded:

For so long as young hearts shall beat a little faster at the recital of the exploits and adventures of the trappers, argonauts, and cowboys...or so long as men and women thrill to the story of the pioneers driving their covered wagons out into the sunset...just so long will it be remembered that Turner first taught us the significance of these things.<sup>30</sup>

Although other Turner students were also his articulate defenders, a few expressed reservations. Thomas P. Abernethy, for example, found Andrew Jackson much less the frontier democrat than his mentor had pictured. But even scholars who had never experienced Turner's seminar magic defended him. "No one of intelligence can really believe," wrote Robert E. Riegel, "that the conquering of three thousand miles of wilderness did not leave some stamp on American history and on the American character."<sup>31</sup>

### **Ferment of the 1950s and 1960s**

The critics of the 1930s and 1940s used the words autopsy and post mortem in describing their activities. But criticism continued during the 1950s and 1960s, a time during which neo-Turnerianism was born—if by that term we mean the belief that with some emendation the Turner message was still valid. First for the critics. Among them Earl Pomeroy drew upon his exhaustive knowledge of the development of the territorial system to argue that one learned far more about the development of western America from studying its institutional continuities than the changes attributable to frontier conditions. Some years later Robert Berkhofer Jr. maintained that the behavioral changes identifiable as adjustment to frontier conditions were typically short run in nature and relatively minor in influence when compared to the significance of the capitalistic values that the colonizing Europeans had brought to America.<sup>32</sup> During this period also various investigators reported efforts to examine

substantive aspects of the westward movement. The claim clubs were a prime exhibit in the Turnerian description of western democracy but detailed examination of claim club and county land records in Iowa showed an institution that mingled the objectives of speculators and settlers and allowed the coercive exploitation of late comers. Another researcher reported similar findings in a western mining region.<sup>33</sup>

Other scholars, less critics than testers of hypotheses, developed elaborate research designs to test the proposition that western challenges contributed to a unique American democracy. Studying state making in the Ohio valley, John Barnhart echoed Turner in contending that the uniquely American aspects of American democracy were mainly due to the influence of the frontier.<sup>34</sup> Merle Curti obtained foundation support to examine both whether it was “possible really to be objective in writing history” and “whether the most important effect of the frontier has been the promotion of American democracy.” After gathering and analyzing a great body of conventional and quantitative data bearing upon the early development of Trempealeau county, Wisconsin, Curti and his assistants concluded that the making of this community had been “a story of progress toward democracy.”<sup>35</sup>

Curti’s Trempealeau study in part reflected a growing interest among some American historians in behaviorism and the use of theory or methods borrowed from social science disciplines. Other frontier studies of the 1950s or 1960s also illustrated this trend. Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick suggested that the frontier would have been important in American development if it had done no more than promote democracy, and they sought to test that relationship. They developed a research model, “involv[ing] the establishment of new communities. Its variables...a period of problem-solving and a homogeneous population whose key factor [was] the lack of a structure of leadership.” Such a combination, they hypothesized, might prevail upon the frontier and produce an efflorescence of democratic activity and they verified this proposition by analysis of frontier society on several American frontiers.<sup>36</sup> Others also placed the frontier experience within the context of contemporary social theory. David Potter, Ray A. Billington, Robert R. Dykstra, and Bogue produced studies indicating that modern social theory when applied to frontier circumstances might indeed explain some of the results that Turner had claimed, but also Dykstra and Bogue suggested results compromising some aspects of frontier democracy.<sup>37</sup>

Others sought to place Turner’s ideas within the general framework of American thought—putting Turner in his place so to speak. Cushing Strout defined him as a precursor of the pragmatic revolt. David W. Noble identified Turner as a Jeremiah empowered to give Americans

the tragic message that industrialism had endangered the national covenant. At the end of the 1960s Richard Hofstadter found in Turner a flawed American progressive. Turner, he wrote, was impressed by “the achievement of America, [but] he had little countervailing response to the shame of it—to such aspects of Western development as riotous land speculation, vigilantism, the ruthless despoiling of the continent, the arrogance of American expansionism, the pathetic tale of the Indians, anti-Mexican and anti-Chinese nativism.” Such aspects of the westward movement did not “arouse his indignation,” or inspire him to use history “as an instrument of intellectual or social criticism.” Turner’s mind was bland.<sup>38</sup>

Working from the perspective of American Studies, Henry Nash Smith maintained in his book *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*, “Whatever the merits of the Turner thesis, the doctrine that the United States is a continental nation rather than a member with Europe of an Atlantic community has had a formative influence on the American mind and deserves historical treatment in its own right.” To Smith, Turner was the heir and most influential spokesman of the agrarian tradition. Perhaps the greatest significance of this fascinating book lay in its testimony that myths, symbols, images, and stereotypes of a particular time, could become embedded in American culture and be transmitted onward to subsequent generations, irrespective of their later utility. A number of scholars—Richard Slotkin and Robert V. Hine among them—carried the analysis of myth and the westward movement still further. Others also drew upon American Studies, notably William Goetzman, who stressed the significance of romanticism in fixing the attention of Americans on their western possessions.<sup>39</sup>

In the mid 1950s William Appleman Williams was to see in Turner’s proclamation of “closed space” a prophecy of open door diplomacy and more active relationships with foreign nations and markets. Scholars looked again at the safety-valve argument and now decided that in general terms there might indeed be reasons for accepting it. And meanwhile a great flow of publication continued to deal with the development of western America, much of it predicated on the understanding that the subjects under study were of regional and even national significance, irrespective of their relation to Turner’s ideas.<sup>40</sup>

### The Biographers

Meanwhile biographers were contributing to our understanding of Turner. Fulmer Mood had begun to plan a life of Turner as early as the 1930s but after publishing useful contributions he found his health failing

by the early 1960s. Wilbur R. Jacobs was one of the first scholars to use the great collection of Turner papers at the Huntington Library when officially opened for research in January 1960 and has published much of interest on Turner. In the editorial narrative in *The Historical World of Frederick Jackson Turner*, he argued that Turner was an “original thinker” but not “as self-pollenizing as we have been led to believe.” Despite the importance of Turner’s theories, Jacobs believed that more valuable “perhaps were his contributions to historical methodology, his insistence on the need for a more precise, more scientific, and less restricted approach to research than that practiced by earlier historians.” Jacobs found that Turner was by nature a man of “good sense and balanced judgment,” “unprejudiced,” “of modest good humor,” a kind, supportive, and patriotic man.<sup>41</sup> But in Jacob’s work one finds reservations unexpressed in the defense of Turner by his students. He argued that Turner’s invocation of the concept of multiple hypotheses misrepresented the ideas of its proponent Thomas C. Chamberlin. And he attributed Turner’s lack of productivity to the difficulties inherent in using Turner’s research materials and in his scholarly objectives rather than instructional obligations and that even more important was a “cast of mind” which made “writing... agony to him.”<sup>42</sup>

In 1949 Ray A. Billington published a textbook following the pattern, he wrote, that Turner might have used if he had written a text.<sup>43</sup> Billington was also present at the opening of the Turner Papers and soon decided to write a life of Turner. It appeared in 1973 and was justly acclaimed. *Frederick Jackson Turner: Historian, Scholar, Teacher* documents the development of Turner’s basic ideas and also portrays the many sides of his professional and private lives including struggles to balance his check book, his misleading relations with publishers and his efforts to give up smoking. But over all, Billington found a charming, caring man, whose probing mind bubbled with ideas and questions.

In general, argued Billington, the critics missed their mark. “The true Turner could be found only in the *professional* articles and papers that were his major interest.” Others failed to understand that Turner’s major concern was with *American* democracy rather than with democracy in general. And those who depended solely on the published Turner could not know of the updating in Turner’s thought. “To summarize his views on the frontier process” asserted Billington, “is to recognize that they would be accepted by most historians today.”<sup>44</sup>

Whereas Fulmer Mood believed that “the application” of the concept of sectionalism led “to an immense harvest in creative scholarship,”<sup>45</sup> Billington argued that Turner was overly enthusiastic about its importance. The map analysis that Turner helped to develop and publicize was,

he argued, inadequate to the task to which he set it. He believed that in his later years Turner misread the nation's future in prophesying the progressive development of sectional mechanisms. But one great idea, one infers, is surely enough. Billington has told us that he was "Turner's slave" before he finished his first tour of research in the Turner papers.<sup>46</sup> Some suspect that counsel for the defense became part of that role, but in the biography and other publications relating to Turner, Billington's contribution to scholarship was massive. He was the arch apostle of neo-Turnerianism.

Despite the critics and the continued objections of scholars of the "continuities" persuasion and detailed exposition of the shortcomings of the approach in some case studies, there was enough supportive research and theorizing generated during the 1950s and 1960s to justify widespread feeling that Turner's ideas still warranted careful study and that courses dealing with the westward movement were justified. With judicious concession and elaboration Turner's intellectual province was defensible. A survey of the early 1960s reveals that fifty-one percent of contacted institutions still offered a course in western history although interest was declining in schools to the east of the Mississippi.<sup>47</sup> The textbooks of the thirties and forties were revised and a new crop appeared from the mid-nineteen sixties to the mid-seventies reflecting the years of criticism since Turner's death, some carrying the story onward into the twentieth century. Perhaps, however, institutional inertia played some role in the persistence of the history of the American West. Thirty-year tenures, enrollments sustained by the fictional and tourist Wests, and the great expansion of history departments between 1945 and the early 1970s, allowing curricular revision by addition rather than replacement of courses, may all have sustained courses in the history of the West.

### The 1980s and Beyond

About forty percent of the institutions reporting in the AHA *Directory of American History Departments* for 1991-92 listed individuals with research interests in western history. Departments also reported specialists in Native American or Indian history or in agricultural or environmental history, areas once generally regarded as subareas within western history. The western tilt of interest in western history was by now far more pronounced than at the time of Turner's death. But institutional expressions of interest in western history as in the Western History Association and its publications and those of other midwestern and western historical societies were strong. And the flow of monographs and articles in western history generally was massive, some running in old

channels but much in streams and irrigation ditches relatively ignored by earlier generations of western historians—women’s history, urban history, environmental history, ethno-history, the workers of mine and forests, a more inclusive and thickly textured social history, as well as the West as myth, symbol, and literary and artistic artifact—to give outstanding illustrations.<sup>48</sup>

Historians continued to fashion historiographic niches for Turner. Commemorating the centennial of the Northwest Ordinance, Andrew R. L. Cayton and Peter S. Onuf asserted that although the Turner thesis was not “likely to inspire further interesting or important contributions to historical writing,” the continuing argument about it had shed “new light on the emergence of regional consciousness.” They described their work as “a deconstruction” of Turner’s narrative that “reveal[ed] what the frontier thesis *conceals*.” They proposed “to show how a vigorous enterprising middle class achieved a dominant, hegemonic position in the Midwest. Middle-class midwesterners were the original authors of the ‘thesis’ that Turner set forth in 1893.” Turner’s genius, they wrote,

lay...in his ability to fashion a particular story in the past that captured the imagination of a great many people who were very much like him...he provided a framework for debating the meaning of the past that...lasted for a century. If his story no longer makes as much sense now—if it sometimes seems ethnocentric, racist, sexist, dichotomous, or just plain superficial—it is only because our world is different from his. We need our own story.<sup>49</sup>

The art historians who prepared the interpretive essays accompanying the National Museum of American Art’s exhibition, “The West as America” practiced a more controversial deconstruction when they tried to reveal the rationalizations and justifications for American expansionism found in the artistic depiction of the westward movement. As for Turner himself, William Truettner, the editor of the collection, placed him in the niche assigned to him ostensibly by Richard Slotkin—that of a scholar whose work obscured the underlying entrepreneurial and metropolitan thrusts of expansion.<sup>50</sup>

Not all critics are ready politely to consign a deconstructed Turner to his historic era. Some would mobilize a posse, escort him to the borders of the discipline and say begone. In the most recent history of the American West neither Frederick Jackson Turner nor the word frontier appear in the index.<sup>51</sup> In fact, this text, *Your Misfortune and None of My Own* by Richard White, is an exceptionally fine piece of work and substantively the best introduction to the “new” western historians available. The “new” views and agenda were spelled out more specifi-



cally, however, in *Trails: Toward a New Western History*, edited by Patricia N. Limerick, Clyde A. Milner II and Charles Rankin, a book bringing together the views of various western historians on the past, present, and perhaps future of western history. *Trails*, we assume, should tell us if Turner stock is still listed on the historians' exchange and not merely represented by yellowing pages, dusty and deteriorating like the certificates of long deceased western mining companies, once symbolic of thriving enterprise and profits but now ignored and worthless.<sup>52</sup> The index of *Trails* lists thirty five page references to "Frederick Jackson Turner," thirty one entries under "Turnerian history," twenty eight under the heading "myth in Turnerian history" and one under "Turner bashing"—a category that the indexer might perhaps have expanded if allowed to make qualitative judgments. By way of comparison, there are forty page references to discussion of the "New Western History." Apparently Turner, his students, and their works have not been totally forgotten.

The editors of *Trails* tell us that Turner had bequeathed to the profession what "many historians regard as an interpretive straitjacket." Donald Worster, echoes Richard Hoftstader's judgment that Turner failed "to see the shameful side of the westward movement"; he wanted, wrote Worster "to leave out" "those unsmiling aspects" of western history. His work was merely a recitation of the "agrarian myth." It obscured the fact that the West was the site of the painful creation of a "multiracial, cosmopolitan" society and "in the forefront of America's endless economic revolution." But now "truth is breaking in." For "the old 'frontier school'" wrote Worster, the West was a "simple democratic place." But the "frank" new western historians are revealing that "the West has in fact been a scene of intense struggles over power and hierarchy, not only between the races but also between classes, genders, and other groups within white society." Old western historians, have "offer[ed] cover for the powers that be" and have "fail[ed] to see themselves as critical intellectuals." Turner's history was a "celebration of 'my people,'" by a historian playing "the subservient role of cheerleader or defender." Though indebted to the work of their predecessors the new western historians "are ready to perform a very different role in society."<sup>53</sup>

Although less denunciatory, other contributors to *Trails* were also critical of Turner's legacy. Peggy Pascoe argued that "shifting the frontier out of the limelight is the first step toward developing a New Western History." She noted correctly that Turner failed to place women in his West and hoped that none today would define the frontier as the meeting place of savagery and civilization as had he. She suggested that the frontier should now be viewed "as a cultural cross roads rather than a

geographic freeway” and that focusing on women at the western cultural crossroads would be a most fruitful approach.<sup>54</sup>

Patricia N. Limerick conceded a certain amount of “newness” to Turner. In his later writings he had referred to the federal government’s “vast paternal enterprises of reclamation in the desert,” and the revealed “dangers of modern American industrial tendencies” in the Rocky Mountain West. In his presidential address before the American Historical Association he argued that it was “important to study the present and the recent past, not only for themselves, but also as the source of new hypotheses, new lines of inquiry, new criteria of the perspectives of the remoter past.” The critics of the 1930s and 1940s thoroughly discredited the Old Western History based on Turner’s work, Limerick believed. Unfortunately Ray A. Billington and other misguided scholars created a “Restored Old Western History” postponing the possibility of developing “more inclusive models for the teaching and writing of western history.”

“The old frontier model relentlessly trivialized the West,” writes Limerick, and “worked against a recognition of the American West as...a region of significance with a serious history.” Thinking themselves “rigorously neutral, without ideology or bias,” the geritolized old westerners “placed their sympathies with English-speaking male pioneers and then called that point of view objectivity.” Both Turner and they, Limerick suggests, ignored major characteristics of the western experience beyond the Middle West—aridity, the continuing presence and resistance of Indian peoples, the Hispanic population element, Asian immigration and other Pacific Rim phenomena, unique problems relating to the public domain, undemocratic aspects of government and twentieth-century developments. Old Western Historians told a tale of “progress” and “improvement,” failing to “face up to the possibility that some roads of western development led directly to failure and to injury.” Limerick concluded “the most fundamental mission of the New Western History is to widen the range and increase the vitality of the search for meaning in the western past...that mission has been accomplished.”<sup>55</sup>

Primarily seeking to define environmental history, Richard White associates Turner with the best of the “the Old Western History,” and notes that the environment “was central to [his] explanations of the history of the West.” But Turner’s frontier separated nature and culture and his subjects were always intent on establishing a new society in the West. “Frontier blinders” constricted the view of the Old Western Historians. For the new breed, however, the approach is relational rather than essential. For Turner there had to be a “western type” of resident; but, argues White, the diversity of peoples in the West gave the lie to any such type. New Western Historians he explains “look initially at three

things...the contesting groups...their perceptions of the land and their ambitions for it...[and] the structures of power that shape the contest." The West of the new western historians is defined by "historically derived relationships,...not preordained qualities of the land itself or the qualities of any single set of occupants."<sup>56</sup>

Other contributors to *Trails* demonstrated varying degrees of galvanization. In general they are less dismissive of Turner, although all see the future of western history as something very different than its past form. For Michael P. Malone, Turner provided "the conceptual lodestone of...frontier/western historiography," but he was a historian of the frontier rather than the West. Malone argues for a "new [multifaceted] regional paradigm" in which "the enduring impact of both Turner's frontier and Webb's aridity must be taken into account." But he also argues, "western regional history is stigmatized because western historians rely on the frontier thesis advanced by Turner and modified by...Webb." The Turner paradigm he believes to be "timeworn [and] also the fundamental cause of the mischievous treatment of frontier and West—as if the terms were synonymous."<sup>57</sup>

To William G. Robbins "the old verities" of Turner's "grand thesis" seem "quaint and mythical." His was "an argument that fit the prevailing *mentalité* of the patriarchal, Anglo-Saxon-dominated world of the early twentieth century" and made the American frontier "a powerful environmental determinant...little influenced by outside forces...in shaping human inhabitants to accord with its own requirements." It was a model that was stridently positivist and exceptionalist in emphasis. Brian Dippie notes the significant achievements of historians who have pointed out the omissions of Turnerian history and the impressive bibliography that they have produced. "It has been a hard fall" he writes "from the heady days when Turner held a chair at Harvard and frontiering defined national history to the reproaches of [Earl] Pomeroy and [Roger] Nichols."<sup>58</sup>

Since some of the new issues or approaches seem to trace back well beyond the 1980s, the break between the new and the old western history is more difficult to identify than in the case of some new histories. But like the other new histories that have succeeded each other since the new economic and new political historians raised their banners in the 1950s, the new western history has been a revitalization movement. As in the case of the other new histories, the discipline will absorb the positive contributions and identify and reject the bizarre and the fraudulent. But the movement has contributed immeasurably and beneficially to both agitating and advertising the field.

Even as new western historians criticized the Turnerian heritage, William Cronon in 1987 found much that was still vital and useful in the

Turnerian legacy, if needing some restatement and elaboration. That restatement he saw as part of the Turnerian challenge—the need to explain different regional outcomes, to enhance our understanding of developing systems of social relations, to learn how differing definitions of regional environment have emerged, how differing visions of optimal use of those environments have interacted, and in broadest sum, how “nature and humanity transform each other.” He concluded that we continue to follow Turner’s example in “ignoring the walls between disciplines, in his faith that history must in large measure be the story of ordinary people, in his emphasis on the importance of regional environments to our understanding the course of American history.” Turner, Cronon concluded, fashioned a “rhetorical framework” which gave “American history its central and most persistent story.” In 1991 Cronon was willing to “safely declare the frontier thesis dead, or at least so badly flawed that any new formulation must be built on an entirely redesigned foundation.” Nevertheless, he wrote, “Whether one speaks of studying comparative frontiers, or colonization, or invasion, or even the legacy of conquest, one proposes to study process rather than region, and the best of Turner’s approach will still be very much alive.”<sup>59</sup>

In the same publication in which Cronon takes this position, Michael C. Steiner argued strongly in behalf of Turner’s sectional thesis as an important means of understanding American development both in the frontier and post frontier eras. The sectional thesis actually “anticipated many trends that are revitalizing the field” of western history, writes Steiner—“an emphasis upon the West as a distinct ‘place undergoing conquest’; a concern for common people ‘who stayed behind’ and inhabited the land; and an interest in a distinctive western ‘sense of identity’ and an emerging ‘cultural voice.’” “At the very least,” Steiner continues, “we should acknowledge Turner’s importance as ‘a remote ancestor’ to contemporary regional studies.” Also within this decade, political scientist Richard F. Bensele has maintained that sectionalism has indeed been a major force in determining the nature of modern American political development. In other works we now read of hinterland or periphery but scholars still emphasize regional differences. And as other scholars seek to develop the history of American myth or, like Donald K. Pickens, limn out the contours of American republican thought, or describe the evolution of politico-history like Dorothy Ross, they too confront Turner.<sup>60</sup>

### **And Again—Reconsideration**

So—several generations of historians have reconsidered Turner and to what end? Cohort by cohort the critics have agreed that Turner never

mustered sufficient evidence to prove definitively that the frontier process had the overall effect that he claimed for it. His model of proof was sadly underspecified. And sometimes he wrote as though the thesis or elements of it had long since been graven in stone. He was imprecise in definition, using words loosely; his frontier was sometimes boundary, sometimes region, sometimes historical era, and sometimes process. There were elements of contradiction in his argument that he did not take the trouble to resolve—in print at least. Fascinating corollaries stood in his work undeveloped. Elements in the argument of his sectional thesis were unsatisfactory. Turner professed to be interested in explaining American development in broadest terms but he really focussed on two or three major factors in that development. He repeatedly endorsed the technique of multiple hypotheses but he himself did not use it. He believed that interaction between humans and their environment shaped human behavior and thought but physiographic influences dominated his treatment of environment; and his conception of space made up of wilderness, zone of frontier processes, and civilization was a highly restricted view of the interaction of man, woman, and the natural world—all the more circumscribed because he viewed frontier processes primarily from the standpoint of one particular congeries of male participants. Much of the context of social and scientific theory in which he originally presented his ideas was in disrepute by the time of his death. Although he rightly prided himself on the introduction of economic and social dimensions into American history, his social dimension lacked the texture that the best western social history of today reveals. Turner urged investigation of literature, art, and the history of ideas; little of this appears in his own work. Although he used the word culture, or synonyms—he failed to exploit its analytical implications. Generation by generation the critics have identified missing elements in Turner's approach—substantive evidence, comparative analysis, other causal forces, the presence and activity of particular social and ethnic groups and—more recently—indignation. But as we have seen the Turnerian influence did not vanish after World War II. Acknowledged or not, his shade still hovered in many a class room of the 1970s and 1980s.

In the beginning the Turner legacy was at least fourfold—there were the basic ideas of frontier, section, and closed space, a course that served as the model for many other such curricular offerings, a research agenda designed to explore and test the theses and to fill a great void in historical knowledge, and a body of dedicated students and followers who cherished and sought to enlarge their inheritance. Remembering this, what meaning does the story of Turner and his critics hold for us?

Many have quoted or paraphrased the sentence from Turner's article on the significance of history of 1891 and restated with some qualification in 1910, "Each age writes the history of the past anew with reference to the conditions uppermost in its own time."<sup>61</sup> By that dictum Turner today should perhaps be forgotten but his resilience suggests that we sometimes read the rule too restrictively. Succeeding generations will quite properly ask new questions of the past. That does not mean that all of the old questions were wrong or are no longer relevant. In fact, Turner was dealing with issues that have continued to be of great interest. For example: Are we as Americans different in character and institutions from citizens of other nations and in what respects? What determines a nation's relations with other polities? How do communities grow and with what effect upon the participants? How do individuals interact with their natural environment? What factors shape economic, social, and political development? How should a nation manage its heritage of natural resources? Why and how do people migrate? What are the processes, benefits, and costs of cultural mingling? In the American case these are not merely theoretical queries—they involve a great human migration and massive impact upon the natural resources of a continent. Turner spoke to these fundamental questions in such a way that others have been able to use his ideas as starting points, way stations, or rejected launching pads, in their own efforts to read the meaning of the American past. If we drop our sights to the policy level in the United States, we can quote Patricia Limerick who wrote, "In the second half of the twentieth century, every major issue from 'frontier' history reappeared in the courts or in Congress."<sup>62</sup> As the issues have remained so has continued the relevance of studying their background.

There were personal and institutional factors involved in the resilience of Turner's ideas and reputation. His reputation in part survived during the first generation of criticism subsequent to his death because of the spirited defense that former students provided—a defense couched in intellectual terms but certainly fueled in part by the affection that many of those scholars held for him. That affirmation was remarkably prolonged—a reminiscent statement by a student was made as recently as 1987. And in turn some of the student's of Turner's students took up the cause. The task of Turner's defenders was made easier because the one-time tutor in oratory had used the wiles of the rhetorician in presenting his argument. It was aided as well, we suspect, by the imprecisions of definition, the pregnant asides, and the statements of qualification that Turner scattered through his work. There is a plasticity in Turner's presentation that has allowed scholars to use it as the basis for fresh starts. Much of the supportive literature of the years, 1945-1975 was based on redefinition of Turner's positions. Critics confronted a moving target.

Turner laid out a great research agenda and he, his students and others developed it. Though incomplete in our eyes, that program of research still serves as basic underpinning to much of the economic, political, and diplomatic history of western America today. His two monographs still demand respect. And try to imagine a current history of public land disposal and natural resource use without the contributions of Turner's students and their descendants—or the diplomatic history of American expansionism without the work of Frederick Merk, of a southwest without Herbert Bolton and his students, of an immigration bibliography without the work of Marcus Lee Hansen, or of pre-civil war political history without the studies of sectionalism written by his students or followers. As in the case of his basic ideas, Turner neither conceived nor promoted this agenda by himself but in his time he was its most winning advocate.

In so far as Turner's agenda of research remains unfinished it is of course outdated. But in reading his approach to those major questions that I have mentioned there are hints, implicit and explicit, of ways in which we might from our different vantage points contribute to greater understanding. His approach was interdisciplinary, reminding us of the rewards of such broadening. And there is much opportunity for those who wish to place Turner within the varied contexts of American intellectual development and ideology.

Turner was not the first American historian to study the American West nor did he work unaided. Turner and his students did not completely dominate the writing and teaching of western history in either his day or thereafter. Of the sixty-two deceased academics mentioned in John R. Wunder's bio-bibliographical sourcebook as making outstanding contributions to western history, sixteen obtained their degrees from either Wisconsin or Harvard universities. But of this number only five completed their doctoral work under Turner.<sup>63</sup> Of course numerous productive historians knew Turner as a teacher in some other respect but many scholars who had never sat in Turner's seminar also helped spread the course in the history of the West and contributed their writings to the historical literature of the field. It was they who wrote the early texts in the field.

Turner introduced the first formal university course in the history of the American West. The presence of that course in many curricula is perhaps the most obvious reminder of Turner in academia today. To generations of American students it provided an exercise in self identification, since it was often the only history course available that linked local or regional beginnings to the broader flow of American history. In many departments it still performs this function. But is the course in the history of the American West now adapted to modern needs? Will

subinfeudation—as in native American history, environmental history, agricultural history—continue until little is left? Will western historians abandon the objective or pretence of studying frontier processes comparatively and shrink their field to make a regional stand—perhaps a last stand—behind some midcontinental barrier? Will a new holistic formula emerge? Shall we continue to quibble about the difference between the perspectives of process and region? Must we all use the same format? These are *our* problems. We cannot fairly blame Turner for all that may have gone wrong in western history or praise him for everything that went right.

Perhaps the Turner critique tells us something about the historical profession and the nature of historical criticism within it. The historical analysis of one of our most revered scholars quite clearly was set within a research design that was flawed in many respects, fell far short of portraying western reality, exuded national and regional pride and reflected institutional promotion. But the arguments of the critics—often of considerable validity—have also been flawed by logic chopping, the presence of unstated premises, misunderstanding, regional chauvinism, self promotion and a lack of systematic rigor no less frustrating than that in Turner's own work. Turner stressed historical method as he understood it, and, as the years have passed, we as a profession have increasingly ignored methodology. Perhaps we should give more serious consideration to it than is the current custom.

And so we come to the end of one more reconsideration of Frederick Jackson Turner. Brian Dippie, as we have seen, has used the phrase, "long hard fall" in describing Turner's West. But Turner's mountain is still there—it appears considerably different than it did during the 1890s or 1920s and so it should, but an academic West lives—in New Haven and Albuquerque, in Bloomington and Madison, in Boulder and Los Angeles, and in many other points of the compass. We can be sure that it will be a different West in the future—at what cost and to what end is up to us.

## Notes

1. The fullest account of Turner's emergence is provided by Ray A. Billington, *Frederick Jackson Turner: Historian, Scholar, Teacher* (New York, 1973), pp. 34-131. See also Wilbur R. Jacobs (ed.), *The Historical World of Frederick Jackson Turner with Selections from his Correspondence* (New Haven, 1968).



2. Frederick Jackson Turner to Carl L. Becker, November 23, 1925. Unless otherwise noted quoted correspondence can be found in the Frederick Jackson Turner Papers, Huntington Library, although many letters are reprinted in Jacobs, *Historical World* and Billington (ed.), *"Dear Lady:" The Letters of Frederick Jackson Turner and Alice Forbes Perkins Hooper, 1910-1932* (San Marino, 1970) and *The Genesis of the Frontier Thesis: A Study in Historical Creativity* (San Marino, 1971).

3. Merle E. Curti, "Frederick Jackson Turner" presented to the Commission of History of the Pan American Institute of Geography and History (Mexico City) and republished in O. Lawrence Burnette Jr. (ed), *Wisconsin Witness to Frederick Jackson Turner: A Collection of Essays on the Historian and the Thesis* (Madison, 1961), pp. 175-204 commemorates this event.

4. *The Early Writings of Frederick Jackson Turner With a List of All His Works Compiled by Everett E. Edwards and an Introduction by Fulmer Mood* (Madison, 1938) lists Turner's publications year by year. For interesting unpublished writings see Wilbur R. Jacobs (ed), *Frederick Jackson Turner's Legacy: Unpublished Writings in American History* (San Marino, 1965).

5. In this section—essentially a review summary—I have inserted page citations in the text. All of these, unless otherwise noted are keyed to Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York, 1920) in which "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" occupies pp. 1-38.

6. Turner, *The Significance of Sections in American History* (New York, 1932), p. 183.

7. A comparative listing of the various versions of the four printings of the frontier essay under Turner's direction is given in *Early Writings*, pp. 275-92.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 284.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 277, 280-83, 284.

10. Turner, "Address, Geographic Society of Chicago" (1896) Turner Papers, File Drawer 14, Box A; Edward E. Dale, "Memories of Frederick Jackson Turner," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 30 (December 1943), p. 355. Turner to Merle Curti, August 8, 1928.

11. Turner, "Geographical Interpretations of American History," *Journal of Geography*, 4 (January 1905), p. 37; Turner, "Report of the Conference on the Relation of Geography and History," *American Historical Association, Annual Report, 1907* (Washington, 1908), p. 47. Burr had developed his views in a paper before New England teachers earlier in the year with an elegance that Turner's cryptic summary hardly suggests. See, George L. Burr, "The Place of Geography in the Teaching of History," *New England History Teachers' Association Twenty-Second Meeting* (Boston, 1908), pp. 1-13.

12. Charles A. Beard, "The Frontier in American History," *New Republic*, February 16, 1921, pp. 349-50.

13. C.W.A. (Clarence W. Alvord) *Review: The Frontier in American History*, *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 11 (March 1921), pp. 403-407; Allen Johnson, *Review: The Frontier in American History*, *American Historical Review*, 26 (April, 1921), p. 542 and *The Historian and Historical Evidence* (New York, 1926) pp. 160-62; see Dale *op.cit.* 347. John C. Almack, "The Shibboleth of the Frontier," *Historical Outlook* 16 (May 1925), pp. 197-202 was, however, highly critical of the frontier thesis.

14. Turner to Dorothy K. (Turner) Main, February 18, 1921. See also Beard to Turner, May 14, 1921 and Beard to Merle E. Curti, August 9, 1928. The latter letter is in the Turner Papers through the courtesy of Curti and in it Beard credited Turner with "restoring the consideration of economic facts to historical writing in America," and being

a leader in putting history on a scientific plane and a scholar of “fine talents and unwearying industry.”

15. Turner to Arthur M. Schlesinger, May 5, 1925; Turner to Curti, August 8, 1928.
16. Max Farrand, *The Development of the United States* (Boston, 1918), vii; William E. Dodd, *Woodrow Wilson and His Work* (New York, 1920), p. 28; Arthur M. Schlesinger, *New Viewpoints in American History* (New York, 1922), pp. 45-46, 70-71; Harry E. Barnes, *The New History and the Social Studies* (New York, 1925), pp. 66-67.
17. James F. Willard and Colin B. Goodykoontz, *The Trans-Mississippi West: Papers Read at a Conference Held at the University of Colorado, June 18-June 21, 1929* (Boulder, 1930).
18. John W. Oliver, *Report of Annual Meeting, Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 18 (September 1931), pp. 218-220.
19. Benjamin F. Wright, Jr., “Political Institutions and the Frontier” in Dixon Ryan Fox (ed.) *Sources of Culture in the Middle West* (New York, 1934), pp. 15-38, 28-29. Wright’s earlier, “American Democracy and the Frontier,” *Yale Review* 22 (December 1930), pp. 349-65 shocked Turner.
20. Louis M. Hacker, “Review: *The Significance of Sections in American History*,” *Nation* 137 (July 26, 1933), pp. 108-110.
21. George W. Pierson, “The Frontier and American Institutions: A Criticism of the Turner Theory,” *New England Quarterly*, 15 (June 1942), pp. 224-255, 248, 255. Among his other publications relating to Turner, Pierson’s “American Historians and the Frontier Hypothesis in 1941 (I),(II),” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 26 (September, December 1942), pp. 36-60, 170-185 is of particular interest.
22. Carlton J. H. Hayes, “The American Frontier—Frontier of What?” *American Historical Review*, 51 (January, 1946), pp. 199-216, 200, 204, 216.
23. James C. Malin, *Essays on Historiography*, (Lawrence, 1948), pp. 31-32, 12.
24. Fred A. Shannon, “A Post Mortem on the Labor-Safety-Valve Theory,” *Agricultural History* 19 (January 1945), pp. 31-37, 37.
25. Of Fulmer Mood’s many articles see particularly, “The Development of Frederick Jackson Turner as a Historical Thinker,” *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts: Transactions, 1937-1942*, 34 (Boston, 1943), pp. 283-352. Rudolph F. Freund, “Turner’s Theory of Social Evolution,” *Agricultural History*, 19 (April, 1945), pp. 78-87. Billington, *Genesis of the Frontier Thesis*, 183-193; Malin, *Essays on Historiography*, pp. 32-34.
26. Originally published in *Agricultural History*, Lee Benson’s articles are placed in broader context in *Turner and Beard: American Historical Writing Reconsidered* (Glencoe, 1960).
27. Carl L. Becker, “Frederick Jackson Turner,” in Howard W. Odum *et al.*, *American Masters of Social Science: An Approach to the Study of the Social Sciences through a Neglected Field of Biography* (New York, 1927), pp. 295, 316.
28. Merle E. Curti, “The Section and the Frontier in American History: The Methodological Concepts of Frederick Jackson Turner,” in Stuart A. Rice, *Methods in Social Science: A Case Book* (Chicago, 1931), pp. 354.
29. Avery Craven, “Frederick Jackson Turner,” in William T. Hutchinson, ed., *The Marcus W. Jernegan Essays in American Historiography*, pp. 252-270, 259, 261-262, 269.
30. Edward E. Dale, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 347, 355, 357.
31. For example, Joseph Schafer, “The Author of the Frontier Hypothesis,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 15 (September 1931), pp. 86-103 and “Was the West a Safety Valve for Labor? *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 24 (December 1937), pp. 299-314. Like Schafer, a number of other former students, including Curti and Craven

made more than one contribution to the Turner literature. But see Thomas P. Abernethy, *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee: A Study in Frontier Democracy* (Chapel Hill, 1932); Robert E. Riegel, *America Moves West* (2d edn, New York, 1947), p. 624.

32. Earl Pomeroy, "Toward a Reorientation of Western History: Continuity and Environment," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 41, (March 1955), pp. 579-600; Robert F. Berkhofer, "Space, Time, Culture and the New Frontier," *Agricultural History* 38 (January 1964), pp. 21-30.

33. Allan G. Bogue, "The Iowa Claim Clubs: Symbol and Substance," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 45 (September, 1958), pp. 231-253; Harwood Hinton, *Frontier Speculation: A Study of the Walker Mining Districts*, *Pacific Historical Review*, 29 (August, 1960), pp. 245-255.

34. John D. Barnhart, *Valley of Democracy: The Frontier versus the Plantation in the Ohio Valley, 1775-1818* (Bloomington, IN, 1953).

35. Merle E. Curti, *The Making of an American Community: A Case Study of Democracy in a Frontier County* (Stanford, 1959), pp. 1, 448.

36. Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, "A Meaning for Turner's Frontier: Part I: Democracy in the Old Northwest; Part II: The Southwest Frontier and New England," *Political Science Quarterly* 69 (September, December, 1954) pp. 321-353, 565-602, 330.

37. Bogue, "Social Theory and the Pioneer," *Agricultural History*, 34 (January 1960), pp. 21-34; David Potter, *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and American Character* (Chicago, 1954); Ray A. Billington, *America's Frontier Heritage* (New York, 1966); Robert R. Dykstra, *The Cattle Towns* (New York, 1968).

38. Cushing Strout, *The Pragmatic Revolt in American History: Carl Becker and Charles Beard* (New Haven, 1958); David W. Noble, *Historians Against History: The Frontier Thesis and the National Covenant in American Historical Writing Since 1830* (Minneapolis, 1965); David W. Noble, *The End of American History: Democracy, Capitalism, and the Metaphor of Two Worlds in Anglo-American Historical Writing, 1880-1980* (Minneapolis, 1985); Richard Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington*. (New York, 1969), pp. 104, 106.

39. Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (New York, 1949), p. 4. Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1800* (Middletown, 1973); Robert V. Hine, *The American West: An Interpretive History* (Boston, 1973); William H. Goetzmann, *When the Eagle Screamed: The Romantic Horizon in American Diplomacy, 1800-1860* (New York, 1966).

40. William A. Williams, "The Frontier Thesis: An American Foreign Policy," *Pacific Historical Review* 24 (November 1956), pp. 379-95. Ellen Von Nardroff, "The American Frontier as Safety Valve: The Life, Death, Reincarnation, and Justification of a Theory," *Agricultural History*, 36 (July 1962), pp. 123-142. Henry M. Littlefield, "Has the Safety Valve Come Back to Life?" *Agricultural History*, 28 (January 1964), pp. 47-49.

41. Jacobs, *Historical World*, ix, pp. 10, 20, 23, 51, 67, 193, 252.

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