Manifest Destiny: Meaning Of The Idea And Its Development

Manifest Destiny is an image drawn by John Gast that shows Columbia, a female figure of America leading Americans to the West and into the future. This image by Gast was drawn to describe the term that was coined during the 1840s regarding the belief that it was a time for America to expand Westward. The expansion westward was intending to fill the American content. In the image by Gast, Columbia is seen carrying her roman garb (SAAM). This can be interpreted as her carrying the values of republicanism. The picture also depicts the progress America is expected to make as time goes by in terms of things like technological advancement and innovations.

The advancements of America also meant a reduction in the numbers of the Native American people as the picture shows them and their animals getting driven into darkness. From a historical perspective, this picture got drawn at a time when the European American settlers believed that they were destined to continue conquering the rest of the American continent and even go beyond that and expand into newer civilizations as a way of showing their greatness and strength (SAAM). The picture was also drawn at a time when not everyone believed in the so-called American Destiny to conquer the rest of the continent and chase away natives. Some people saw this as a betrayal to the core American values in existence at that time. Various debates took place over the expansion, economics and manifest destiny. Considering there were debates and that not everyone shared the same sentiment, especially when it came to the idea of Manifest Destiny, this shows that there was a certain weakness within the American system (Pratt).

Additionally, some of the ideas surrounding the Manifest Destiny were things like native American removal, something that is also evident in the picture. From the painted image, one can see the Native Americans getting driven into darkness as the European Americans continue to conquer the rest of the American continent and expand westwards (SAAM). It is difficult to understand how these were European immigrants who were thinking that it was their destiny to rule and develop over land that did not belong to them because they initially came as immigrants. They had forced themselves into settling by conquering the areas and also wanted to drive away more of the Native American populations to expand their reach and territory all over the American continent (Pratt).

Also, from a historical perspective, the background of this phrase can be traced to the 17th century at a time when the first European Immigrants visited America. The puritans among these immigrants had the belief that if they would survive this new environment and adjust to these surroundings, then it would be a sign from God (Khan Academy). This would mean that God has approved their presence in this new environment and that they have been given the authority to conquer this new world. Even though this term is traceable to the 17th century, it became conventional in the 19th century through a journalist named John Louis O’Sullivan. O’Sullivan quoted that it was their manifest destiny to spread across the whole continent. He continued to say that these actions were justified for the development of the great experiment of liberty and the federated self-government entrusted to them (Khan Academy). This statement by O’Sullivan shows the belief these European settlers had when it came to expansion and their

survival even if it meant the violent displacement of the original settlers in these lands, as shown in the image.

Manifest destiny is a picture by John Gast that described the belief by European American settlers that it was their destiny to proceed westwards and conquer the rest of America as a mandate by God. The colonists were to advance westward and displace native Americans making these lands their own. From what I have read and seen, the picture represents a call to American settlers from Europe to rally up and conquer the rest of America and the world, if possible. This picture was a sign of motivation for people in the past.

The Critical Period

The critical period is a picture describing some of the events that took place in America during the time from 1783 to 1789. This is also the title of the book by John Fiske that described historical events in the USA from the time the revolutionary war ended until the time a federal constitution got developed and adopted. Both the picture and the book describe a time in history significant to the United States. This is a time when the country had attained independence, and it was focusing on forging forward to create a nation that was stable and properly governed (Digitalhistory).

After winning the revolutionary war, the critical period describes an important time in the history of America because the Americans had established a peace settlement, and all that was left is the establishment of stable and working governments. This period between 1783 to 1783, the Americans were putting in as much effort to help establish their republican ideals all over the country (Johnson). The milestones in America's forge for a greater future involved the creation of new and improved state governments in the majority of the states. Additionally, voting rights and officeholding rights also got modified during this period. During this time, people even got allowed to choose the types of churches that they supported with their tax money, something that was not in existence before the revolutionary war and America's independence.

In addition to the progress the country was making, states began adopting bills of rights. These bills advocated for the freedom of speech, assembly, and press. Additionally, people were also given the right to trial by a jury system. Other noticeable aspects of this redevelopment period were the opening of western lands for settlement and a significant increase in opportunities for women such as the availability of education (Digitalhistory). On the other hand, during this time, northern states began abolishing slavery while others adopted emancipation plans. Southern states exhibited the highest rates of slavery, but it also became easier in this region for owners to provide slaves with their freedom. In their quest for further progress and overall stability of the country legislators also developed a new constitution in 1787 as a way of establishing compromises between the northern and southern and smaller and larger states.

From the picture, it is evident that this was a rocky period in the history of America because a lot needed to be done for the country to prosper. The image shows a boat filled with members of the new government traveling down a rocky river. This indicates that the process of establishing a stable country was not an easy one because of the many things to consider and address. The nation was also at risk of falling into anarchy if things failed to go as planned.

Bleeding Kansas

The bleeding Kansas Southern Chivalry – Argument vs. clubs is a cartoon image drawn by John Magee that shows the Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner getting violently assaulted. The person attacking the Senator is a representative from South Carolina named Preston S. Brooks (Knowitall). This picture establishes the tensions that erupted after the Kansas-Nebraska act showing the violent struggles that existed between the pro and anti-slavery advocates who lived in Kansas during the 1850s (Knowitall). Bleeding Kansas as an image and a term that developed in the 1850s foreshadows the violence that took over Kansas because of the future of slavery during the Civil War.

The term bleeding Kansas originates from the description of the situation that took place during the settling of the Kansas territory. This is mainly the violence that occurred in the region between the pro and anti-slavery advocates (Khan Academy). In 1854, there was a Kansas-Nebraska Act that got established. This act was geared towards overturning the Missouri Compromise when it comes to the use of latitude as a way of determining the boundaries between slave and free territory. In place of the use of latitude, the act promoted the idea of popular sovereignty. Therefore, it fell upon the residents of the region to determine whether the region would function as a free state of a slave state (Khan Academy). Considering this is a region that housed both people who were for slavery and those that were against it, conflict was bound to rise. Besides, more groups of both pro-slavery and anti-slavery settlers started moving to this region so that they could influence the slavery situation in the region. Pro-slavers sought to make the region a slave state while anti-slavers wanted this are to be a free state.

The struggle of these two parties in influencing the decision brewed violence, which soon erupted between both parties as they struggled to gain control of the region. John Brown is one of the abolitionists who acted as the leader of the anti-slavery group, and he is famous for the raid he conducted on Harpers Ferry (Ohio History Central). The label Bleeding Kansas, according to various sources, is said to have gotten coined by Horace Greeley’s New York Tribune (Khan Academy). This term was initially used to refer to the strife-ridden territory commanded by antislavery publicists. However, in 1854, when both the Nebraska and Kansas territories got opened, a political crisis was imminent. This I because the two regions advocated for popular sovereignty, something that was responsible for provoking this political crisis, especially in Kansas. This crisis is also documented to have spread across the nation. The situation at Kansas caused the development of rival governments as 1855 came to an end (Khan Academy). The two governments consisted of pro-slavery individuals originating from Missouri and the other group consisted of anti-slavery advocates.

This issue of slavery generated much conflict between the two factions, and at one point during late 1855, pro-slavery Missourians decided to cross the border and cause menace at the town called Lawrence. This town was a stronghold for the anti-slavery group. The town got looted in 1856 by these ruffians, further escalating the conflict between these two groups (Ohio History Central). John Brown decided on orchestrating the murders of 5 pro-slavery settlers living around Pottawatomie Creek. This act was in retaliation to the raid on Lawrence town. As a result, the region fell into violence that lasted for around four months. The only way of reducing this conflict involved introducing federal troops to help calm the situation at the borders between these two groups (Khan Academy). However, Kansas had shed much blood, and in 1858 the region was still suffering. This is because, in 1958, five free-state individuals got murdered resulting in disorder in several counties. This violence then progressed through minor conflicts here and there up until 1861.

Apart from the history behind the topic bleeding Kansas, the picture, in this case, represents an act of violence against Charles Sumner by senator Preston brooks. Charles Sumner was an anti-slavery advocate known for his speech called “Crime against Kansas.” The speech delivers by Sumner was addressed to pro-slavery advocates where Sumner insulted Senator Andrew Butler and compared slavery to prostitution. Butler was an elderly person, and he saw no reason to confront Senator Sumner. However, his nephew, Senator Brooks, took matters to his own hands by assaulting Sumner to seek revenge for Sumner’s insult on his family (Khan Academy). The picture shows Senator Brooks beating up Sumner with a cane while he laid on the senate floor. As a result, the effects of the thorough beating left Senator Sumner, both physically and mentally affected for an extended period.

Bleeding Kansas is, therefore, an image and a time in history that represents the violence that erupted in Kansas over the differences in views between anti-slavery and pro-slavery groups. Both groups were seeking to establish dominance in Kansas to promote their agendas over slavery. To me, this picture shows how brutal individuals can be when expressing their agendas. On the other hand, this picture in the past may have acted as a warning to people who dispute with factions that have greater dominance.

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