Manifest Destiny

   Manifest Destiny is a term referring to the American belief that it was their destiny to expand the country westward all the way to the Pacific Ocean.

   The original United States consisted of the thirteen colonies on the North American east coast. Between 1700 and 1775, the number of colonists increased by over two million, and people needed more space to farm and hunt. After the American Revolution, as the country grew, people began to expand beyond the Appalachian Mountains into the west.

   The first area to be settled was the Northwest Territory, comprised of what is now the states of Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois. President Thomas Jefferson's purchase of the Louisiana Territory from the French in 1803 further expanded westward and doubled the size of the country. A war with Mexico ended with the United States gaining Texas and California, and a treaty with Great Britain added the Oregon Territory. By 1890, the west had been fully explored, and the country included 44 states. Only Utah, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Arizona out of the 48 contiguous states on the North American continent had yet to be admitted.

Do you think it was America's "destiny" to expand westward and claim the entire North American continent? Why or why not?

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