

exceeded the national average. Immigrants substituted family labor for the capital they lacked, they transplanted familiar peasant inheritance customs to help bind the next generation to the farm, they used the power of religion to ward off the blandishments of outside opportunity, and when land grew scarce, they exported daughter colonies to the next frontier.

Among those who may have been on the Oregon wagon train that Bierstadt encountered, for example, or one like it, was Franz Nibler, one of Henry G. Fillmore's Minnesota neighbors, a "good solid Backwoods man" of Bavarian birth recently discharged for illness from the Union army. Four years later he returned to lead seventeen families of his German Catholic neighbors and kin in a twenty-six-wagon train from Minnesota across the northern trail to Oregon. His companions were, by and large, married couples in their thirties and forties with six to eight growing children each—Bavarians, Eifelers, Alsatians, and Westphalians who had migrated a decade earlier to the new lands of Minnesota from older German frontiers in Ohio, Michigan, Missouri, and Wisconsin. The extended Schultheis family, for one, had emigrated from Bavaria to Missouri as early as 1836, from whence they trekked in a large family caravan of ox-drawn wagons to Minnesota in 1854. Once in Oregon's Willamette Valley, they became fillers-in for a time, establishing on land abandoned by early American settlers the nucleus of an enduring German Catholic settlement sheltered, like its Minnesota progenitor, beneath the towers of its Benedictine abbey. But when the undulating hills of eastern Washington's Palouse opened to settlement in the mid-1870s, younger members of the Schultheis family headed east to found yet another expansive German Catholic community on yet another frontier.

Family processes like these stretched archipelagos of ethnically defined European settlement islands across successive nineteenth-century Wests. Their family cultures varied from one another in detail and inevitably changed with time. Thus Norwegian families learned that they had to rely more on the labor of the nuclear family than they ever had in Europe; more of their children married, at younger ages, and fertility increased. Women's domestic duties thereby increased as well, while new kinds of farming altered the gendered division of labor in field and barn, and gradually, with time and increasing prosperity, old habits of prenuptial conception disappeared, and bourgeois fertility reduction began. Sharing a familiar patrimonial familism, posing no fundamental challenge to American domestic ideologies, European immigrants like these were able to carve out distinctive and enduring western domestic landscapes.

The pressures of prejudice helped deny other western family cultures the luxury of such relatively autonomous evolution, however, and weakened their ability to directly mediate the settlement process. For the Chinese, for example, it was the absence of family that defined their situation. They left their families behind when they responded to the lure of California gold, seeking as entrepreneurs or laborers the stake that would enable them to maintain or advance family interests back home. In this they differed little from their Yankee counterparts in the mining West or from later labor migrants like the Italians, who would show even less tendency to remain in America than the Chinese. The small numbers of Chinese women who arrived on America's western shore tended to come as prostitutes, perhaps after being sold to relieve their family of the

burden of a female mouth or to help finance the advance of more favored members. No more than 5 percent of the region's Chinese population before 1880 was female. Wives remained behind to serve the interests of the family at home, and single men who wished to marry usually had to recross the ocean to do so. The price of these long-distance family strategies was an American life lived in single-sex households and community institutions geared to the needs of single men. Kinship ties, however, forged familiar chains of migration and settlement, and the gradual establishment of local families—by 1880 a third or more of the women in most communities were now wives, though often considerably younger than their husbands, reflecting their relative scarcity—suggested that some of the Chinese were finding motive and means to remain. But from the beginning, they encountered virulent racism that culminated in 1882 in a series of federal exclusion acts effectively curtailing their ability not only to form families in America but even to return from visits to families back in China. It would be well into the twentieth century before a real second generation and a supportive family culture could emerge.

There was even less room for family autonomy among African Americans brought west as slaves before the Civil War. Recent studies suggest that migrant slaves were more youthful than the slave population as a whole, with as many as half still in their teens, but perhaps more evenly divided between males and females than westward-moving whites. "I do not wish families and only desire to purchase those who are YOUNG and likely," advertised a Missouri dealer in 1856. Regardless of whether slaves were sent west by traders or migrated with their owners, such westering almost by definition meant family disruption. Although some masters may have sought to keep slave families together, most apparently did not or could not. Both debt and death could force slave sales; when a master's estate was divided among the heirs, so too were the slaves, and when some family members moved west, so too might their share of the family slaves. Many slaves were hired out on the frontier, as elsewhere, and many frontiersmen owned or rented only a slave or two. Most slaves thus did their pioneering with few of the even minimal supports of family that they may have enjoyed farther east; westering required of them the arduous construction of new domestic ties.

Free blacks, however, shared many of the patrimonial values of white society and were able to participate to a limited extent in the agrarian settlement process. Thus in 1855, two decades after North Carolina-born Walden Stewart and his family settled in Illinois, he pulled up stakes once again at the age of sixty and moved with them north to the Wisconsin frontier, undoubtedly seeking not only more land for his growing family but also freedom from the increasing restrictions that Illinois was placing on people of color. Here they were soon joined by at least ten other black families, a number of them also from North Carolina, and here they prospered and remained, sharing school, church, and ultimately intermarriage with their immigrant neighbors. Similar patrimonial aspirations among relatively self-sufficient African-American farm families from the border South drew increasing numbers to colonies on the Kansas frontier after the Civil War, culminating in the 1879 "Kansas Fever" that for a brief period also spread to the more desperately poor of the lower South. The numbers of westering black families were always small, however, in comparison with those who remained within the South or later moved north. These families had fewer resources of their own than their

Seth Eastman's paintings of Indian life focus particularly on domestic genre scenes. Based on observations made during his tour of duty as an officer at Fort Snelling (Minneapolis) in the mid-1840s, this watercolor sketch of a Winnebago sugar camp suggests the important role played by women in domestic labor and production.

Seth Eastman (1808–75). Indian Sugar Camp. Watercolor on paper, ca. 1850. James J. Hill Reference Library, St. Paul, Minnesota.



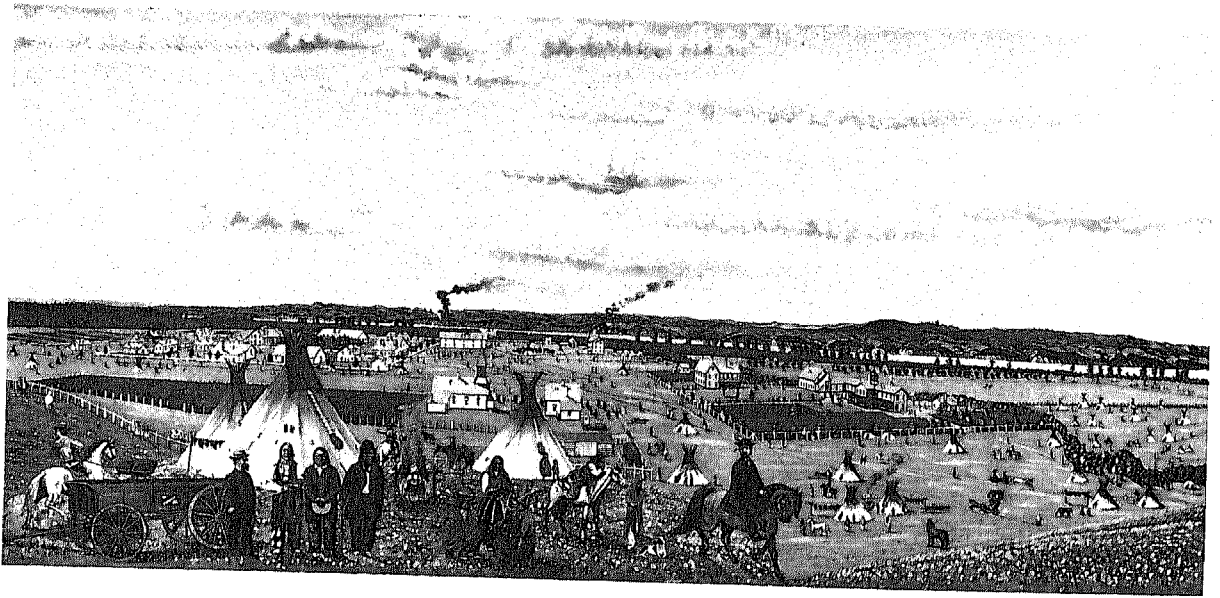
white counterparts and drew little institutional support from local society in the West; black homesteaders in the Nicodemus, Kansas, area, for example, were unable to find a local surveyor willing to survey their claims. Their communities, where they survived, could seldom prosper. The substantial African-American presence in the later-nineteenth-century West undoubtedly owed far more to labor-seeking migrants drifting from or with other members of their essentially proletarian families and living in households like the one in Tombstone in 1880 shared by a thirty-year-old South Carolina laborer, his young California-born wife, and eight other African-American men in their thirties and forties—blacksmiths, waiters, porters, laborers, cooks—all, like so many others in Tombstone at the time, without families of their own. The family trajectories of pioneers like these remain largely unstudied.

It was undoubtedly Native Americans, however, who felt the most concerted pressure on their family systems. It is difficult to generalize about the variety of family systems that Native Americans evolved before white penetration into the West. Several points are clear, however. First, few bore much relationship to the patrimonial logic rooted in family rights to privately owned land from which the European-American family system derived. Second, as Volley Maxey learned only too well, systems of kinship, marriage, and adoption, often more expansive, complex, and flexible than those of most European Americans, functioned as effective demographic and economic adaptive mechanisms to the uncertainties of low-technology lives. Third, common practices like polyandry, serial marriage, and women's physical labor, whatever their logic within Indian family systems, struck nineteenth-century European Americans not

only as alien but immoral, and inevitably provoked repression. And fourth, like their European-derived counterparts, these family systems were in a constant process of change and adaptation.

Although research has addressed the specific historical contours of such familial transformation, it has tended to focus much more on how various Indian family systems changed or resisted change than on how the family variably influenced adaptation. Often the first consequences of white contact for many Indian peoples, experienced at long distance, were new techniques of hunting and transportation made possible by the horse, or higher standards of living through trade, and family systems were frequently reshaped to take advantage of them. The woodland Winnebagos of eighteenth-century Wisconsin, for example, broke their large agrarian community into small and mobile family bands, the better to hunt for the furs desired by their white trading partners. Polygynous families organized around groups of co-wives emerged among the early-nineteenth-century Cheyennes as they abandoned agriculture and moved out onto the plains to hunt and trade, an adaptation both to the surplus of females that warfare created and to the need for more women to process the increased products of the hunt. The status of women changed with their exclusion from the hunt, and extrafamilial male sodalities took on a greater societal role. As Cherokees on the trans-Appalachian frontier adapted to closer contact with white settlers and markets in the period before federal removal policies, many exchanged their communalism, clans, and extended family life for agriculture and nuclear families while others, reflecting the same sort of logic that propelled white families to invade their lands, migrated westward across the Mississippi in an effort to preserve the old familial order. Indians in California who survived the initial American onslaught, with its particularly severe attacks on women through rape, prostitution, and disease, frequently had to take what refuge they could in proletarian strategies that left them working for Americans in nonfamily settings with little chance for family life or biological and cultural reproduction.

Native American family systems faced intensified pressures with coerced concentration on Indian reservations in the latter half of the century and again with the subsequent breakup of many reservations into individual land allotments toward the end of the century. For one thing, both federal policy and missionary persuasion aimed at forcing Native Americans into the nineteenth-century American mold of male-supported nuclear agrarian families and female domesticity, using both formal means like schools, supervision by matrons and agents, and Courts of Indian Offenses and even more effective tactics like excluding women from public discussion, channeling annuity payments only through heads of household, designing housing for nuclear families, providing men with wage labor on the agency, and implementing family-based allotment itself. Under such demands, for example, the extended, kin-linked Comanche bands broke up into more numerous, smaller residential clusters often composed of lineally extended family households, and the salience of family and kin increased over that of larger tribal groupings; the gender balance of power within the families and kin groups of the Teton Sioux shifted further in the male direction. The very ability of the family to reproduce itself was endangered when nutrition was compromised, as it so often was, through federal agents' efforts to force behavioral change by withholding



William Fuller, a carpenter and laborer at Crow Creek Agency, depicted local Indian life in the 1880s as heading inevitably toward a European-American model of domesticity. Tidy, fenced frame houses stand as a goal toward which tipi-dwellers might strive; Native Americans dressed in suits become the ideal for traditionally clothed men; and neat agricultural fields suggest a new future for a people whose livelihood had depended on hunting.

William Fuller (active 1860s–80s, South Dakota). Crow Creek Agency, Dakota Territory. Oil on canvas, 1884. Acquisition in memory of René d'Harnoncourt, Trustee, Amon Carter Museum, 1961–68. Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas.

rations or banning traditional medicine or through the sheer incompetence and corruption that plagued the reservation system. But federal policy also worked against intended familial consequences. Thus individual land allotment, in theory designed to anchor Indians irrevocably in the logic of the nuclear family, more often in practice proved a means of stripping their land from them altogether, lending new rationality to still vital traditions of extended family communal living and kin support as a strategy for shared survival. And increasing reliance on cash income from land leases or welfare payments that, thanks to American inheritance laws and domestic ideology, passed equally—or in the case of welfare, primarily to women—could mean that family balance shifted away from the male head.

Indeed, despite severe constraints, Native American family systems, like other western family traditions, were able to influence as well as be influenced by the currents of change, though we know much less than we should about the implications of differing family cultures for Indian negotiations of life in the modernizing West. Thus customs of fictive kinship, adoption, and marriage alliance proved potent means of integrating early traders into Indian society on essentially Indian terms. Through Indian wives, European Americans acquired both access to Indian trade and processors of the pelts and skins for which they traded. Their mixed-race families mediated relations between their two peoples in many areas of the West for generations, with family strategies that sometimes promoted the native relatives' gradual adaptation to newer ways but equally often depended on their ruthless exploitation; in contrast to the case in Canada, however, American circumstances and racial mores ultimately prevented them from consolidating an enduring peoplehood of their own.

But interracial alliances were not the only way that Native Americans could use the family to structure adaptation. Many Winnebagos, for example, converted their small family bands into successful instruments for resistance to removal, repeatedly slipping away from successive reservations in Iowa, Minnesota, and Nebraska to old camps in the forests of Wisconsin, until the government in the 1870s was finally forced to acknowl-

edge their right to claim Wisconsin homesteads of their own. Hopis conserved traditional, sedentary family forms in their densely settled high pueblos at the price of disease, high mortality, and ultimately labor migration and fertility reduction; their more flexible Navajo neighbors adopted pastoralism, then home manufacture and wage labor, maintaining high fertility and high population growth and, like their Hispanic and Mormon neighbors, supporting territorial expansion in the process. Band allegiances often structured settlement location and later allotment choices on Plains Indian reservations, and among the Crows, for example, the clan system provided valuable continuity in marriage regulation despite the unfamiliar reservation setting. Many Indians clearly found their flexible systems of marriage commitment a more rational response to the uncertain vagaries of modernizing life than the lifetime commitment that white society tried to impose and was indeed already in the process of abandoning for itself. Reservation life in effect lent Native American family cultures some of the protective isolation that other enduring western family traditions had also managed to find, but such protection was purchased at a daunting price.

Family Life in the West

There was, then, no single style of family life in the West. America's successive nineteenth-century Wests were shared by a variety of indigenous and colonizing family cultures. Nor could the meanings, functions, and roles that these cultures assigned to the family and to individuals by virtue of their family membership ever be assumed. In the West, as elsewhere, the contours of family culture were constantly evolving through the negotiation, contestation, and unconscious accommodation of family members, in their work sharing, at social gatherings, in bedrooms, even—as in the case of the Fillmores of St. Cloud, Minnesota—on the kitchen floor and in the courtroom.

Mary and Henry Fillmore must have entered their marriage in the early winter of 1853 with conflicting and confused sets of assumptions and aspirations. Mary Georgiana Stone was just sixteen, newly arrived on Minnesota's logging frontier with her family and other relatives from Wisconsin and before that Maine and the Maritimes. Perhaps part of the attraction of Henry Glezen Fillmore, the twenty-five-year-old trader whom she married at a little millsite on the Mississippi, was the éclat of his kinship with the nation's recently retired president. She clearly aspired to much of the life-style promised by the new domestic ideology of the middle class. She had taken dancing lessons in Wisconsin. She enjoyed fine clothes, furniture, and entertaining and was resentful when her husband's business reverses forced her to do heavy housework. Producing a son almost exactly nine months after her marriage, she soon induced her husband to conduct their sexual intercourse so as "not to beget her with child," though "through a mistake on her part of the effect of free and full sexual cohabitation immediately after her menstrual course" she bore a second son three years later. Not only did she seek to restrict her fertility but, Henry would later charge, she gossiped about her methods with her female friends. She was also, it seemed, careless enough in her general demeanor to lend credence to charges of adultery with the housepainter who lived two doors away.

If Mary Georgiana was not fully adept in the practice of the new domesticity, Henry was even less so. His family expectations seemed more old-fashioned; he wanted purity and probity of his wife, of course, but he also wanted more children and more work and

expressed his objections to her life-style in a decidedly ungentle fashion derived more, perhaps, from the rough world of the Indian trade than his patrimonial parents' home. Not only did he beat and curse her often, but once (he admitted) or twice (she charged) he even attempted to rape her on the kitchen floor in front of her children and his young female cousin, declaring, she said, "that he . . . had no other desire to gratify by such intercourse than the desire to abuse . . . and disgrace [her] in the eyes of his . . . family, and bring her . . . to scorn, and loathing." She was, he charged, "a damned whore" who had committed adultery, admitted to being raped by that dancing master in Wisconsin, and bragged that another man had fathered her second child. She resisted him, she said, because he had "a loathsome venereal disease," and once she found out (from her female support network, perhaps?) how such a disease was contracted, she left him in the autumn of 1860 and sought out the judge. After her divorce, Mary succeeded in raising at least one son in the entrepreneurial values to which she aspired and through him achieved a secure old age in the middle-class world of Kansas City. Henry became a horse doctor and lived out his life bereft of family in the male world of St. Cloud boarding houses.

The confusion of family models and practice within the Fillmore household mirrored the mosaic within their broader community. One young neighbor reveled in her companionate marriage, doting over her children, contributing sentimental prose and verse extolling frontier domesticity to a Philadelphia ladies' magazine, and cherishing the sensuously loving letters she received from her attorney husband when he was away. Another was a tough divorced feminist who edited an abolitionist newspaper. Still another was a former schoolteacher who worked with her pioneer husband to carve out a frontier farm for the family and a gracious, busy domestic sphere for herself and who reared their three sons to professional and business occupations. Yet just a few miles down the road were wooden-shoed German immigrant women in thatched-roof log cabins, carefully bargaining with time-honored peasant logic about dowries and family bonds of maintenance for aged parents, and mixed-blood women negotiating the exchange of one partner for another.

The varieties of family cultures to be found in the nineteenth-century West were all subject to the currents of economic and ideological change that were transforming the nation itself. They were influenced also in regionally distinctive fashion by the opportunities and constraints of the western environment, by the self-selection inherent in their migration or local persistence, and by the mutual need to coexist. The result was both regional variation and temporal change. The older agrarian Wests of the first half of the century were the locus classicus of the patrimonial family, with relatively little extractive industry to attract a permanent nonfamily work force, fairly even sex ratios from an early date, and few remaining indigenous families. In the South, slavery created the main variant family style; in the North, prosperity encouraged rapid acceptance of new entrepreneurial family styles for those who chose to remain. Frontiers incorporated after mid-century offered more varied opportunities to attract more varying kinds of families. There were greater numbers of entrepreneurial and proletarian families to be attracted; new family ideals had filtered even into farming families, and new machinery and labor availability permitted farming without large families; more immigrants were

arriving; and indigenous peoples had nowhere left to go. The result was a more variegated domestic landscape in the later Wests, more enclaves of variant family types, and more rapid shifts when, as we saw in Tombstone, one kind of economy replaced another and brought with it a new mix of family styles. Differing family economies were as often symbiotic as competing, as in the case of the farm families who clustered around the edges of mining, ranching, and logging regions to provide them with food and seasonal labor or the entrepreneurial and proletarian families of the towns that serviced the countryside. Yet their cultural incompatibilities were often real and have become the stuff of western legend.

Nineteenth-century observers were indeed more astute than early-twentieth-century commentators: families easternized the region more than they were westernized by it. Men, women, and children brought westward with them habits and aspirations nurtured in the East; like the women who struggled to preserve accustomed domestic ideals in their wagons on the Oregon trail, the settlers used these aspirations to filter and focus their adjustment to the west. Family life changed as people moved west, but it probably would have changed for them had they stayed home. The western women who complained most about loneliness, about being torn from relatives and kin, one suspects, were women who were migrating precisely because their husbands had already broken free of patrimonial ties. For so many others, migration in extended processions of kith and kin was a way of avoiding precisely what, like one Iowa pioneer, so many feared from the changes of the modernizing world: "a drifted family . . . a broken, distorted chain."

Perhaps what was most distinctive about family life in the West, then, was the new lease on life that the region offered a patrimonial logic that was rapidly becoming obsolescent in more settled areas. Fertility ratios were consistently higher on new frontiers than elsewhere, less perhaps because opportunity there encouraged families to have more children, as scholars have often argued, than because families enmeshed in strategies that rested on large numbers of children knew they had to seek the frontier. The West in this sense proved not so much the source of all that was new in American family life as a haven for much that was old, and it was the demographic inexorability of those old forms as much as the speculative entrepreneurship of the new that drove Americans westward. But the region also shared the nation's public aspirations for the new ideals of the middle-class companionate family, however much difficulty westerners like the Fillmores might have had in putting them into practice, and by the end of the century the accelerating pace of economic and cultural transformation was rapidly marginalizing other family styles.

Thus there is a final irony to be wrung from the John Ford saga of western domestication with which this chapter began. In the film, as in the real world of the late-nineteenth-century West, what was really conquered and banished was not so much savagery and anomic individualism as it was the domestic tradition of the extended, patrimonial families whose energies had engulfed and reshaped frontier after frontier in the American mold. It was, after all, Wyatt Earp who drove off into the sunset to rejoin his patrimonial kin group, while entrepreneurial Clementine—single, cultured, now career-oriented, and far from her family of origin—remained to inherit the new

community of strangers that foreshadowed the social organization of the twentieth-century West. It was "My Darling Clementine" who claimed both the movie's ending and its title.

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Finally, those interested in Wyatt Earp can find the film's script in Robert Lyons, ed., *My Darling Clementine: John Ford, Director* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1984). The best recent interpretation is Paula Mitchell Marks, *And Die in the West: The Story of the O.K. Corral Gunfight* (New York, 1989), supplemented for present purposes with older accounts as well as manuscript censuses, county histories, and other local sources; see also Patricia Jahns, *The Frontier World of Doc Holliday: Faro Dealer from Dallas to Deadwood* (1957; reprint, Lincoln, 1979). For the family in western art, consult Dawn Glanz, *How the West Was Drawn: American Art and the Settling of the Frontier* (Ann Arbor, 1982) and Ron Tyler et al., *American Frontier Life: Early Western Painting and Prints* (Fort Worth, 1987). Worry about a "drifted family" can be found in Alfred B. McCown, *Down on the Ridge: Reminiscences of the Old Days in Coalport and Down on the Ridge; Marion County, Iowa* (Des Moines, 1909), 124.

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*Frontispiece: Maynard Dixon (1875–1946). Open Range. Oil on canvas, 1942.
Courtesy of the Museum of Western Art, Denver, Colorado.*

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