

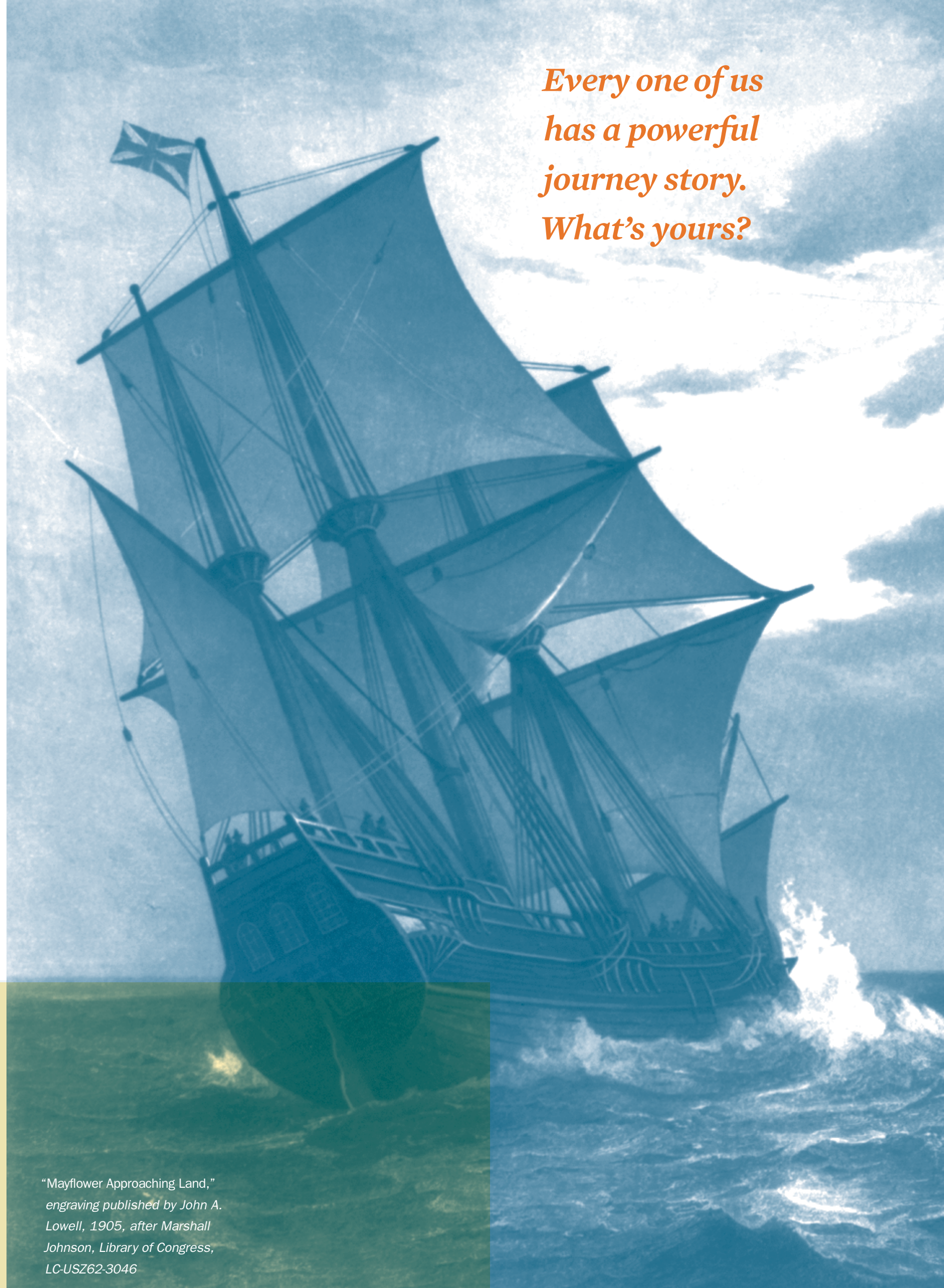
JOURNEY STORIES

FOR CENTURIES, movement has shaped this land. Our nation's history is a patchwork of many stories, woven over time from the treks—voluntary and involuntary—of people who traveled and created new lives. They came from around the world, encountered well-established Native American civilizations, and moved state-to-state, and across the entire continent.

No matter the country of origin or reason for coming here, from our earliest days as a nation, Americans have been intensely mobile, and we still are. Over four centuries, as we have built our society, Americans have moved to survive, to find work, to escape oppression, and to pursue their dreams.

Travel—over roads, rails, rivers, trails and even the skies—has shaped our cultural and economic landscape. In many ways, our Journey Stories define us.

*Every one of us
has a powerful
journey story.
What's yours?*



"Mayflower Approaching Land,"
engraving published by John A.
Lowell, 1905, after Marshall
Johnson, Library of Congress,
LC-USZ62-3046

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In November, 1620, the first English Pilgrims arrived in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Their grueling 66-day journey on the *Mayflower* transported about 100 people, half of whom would die in the first winter.

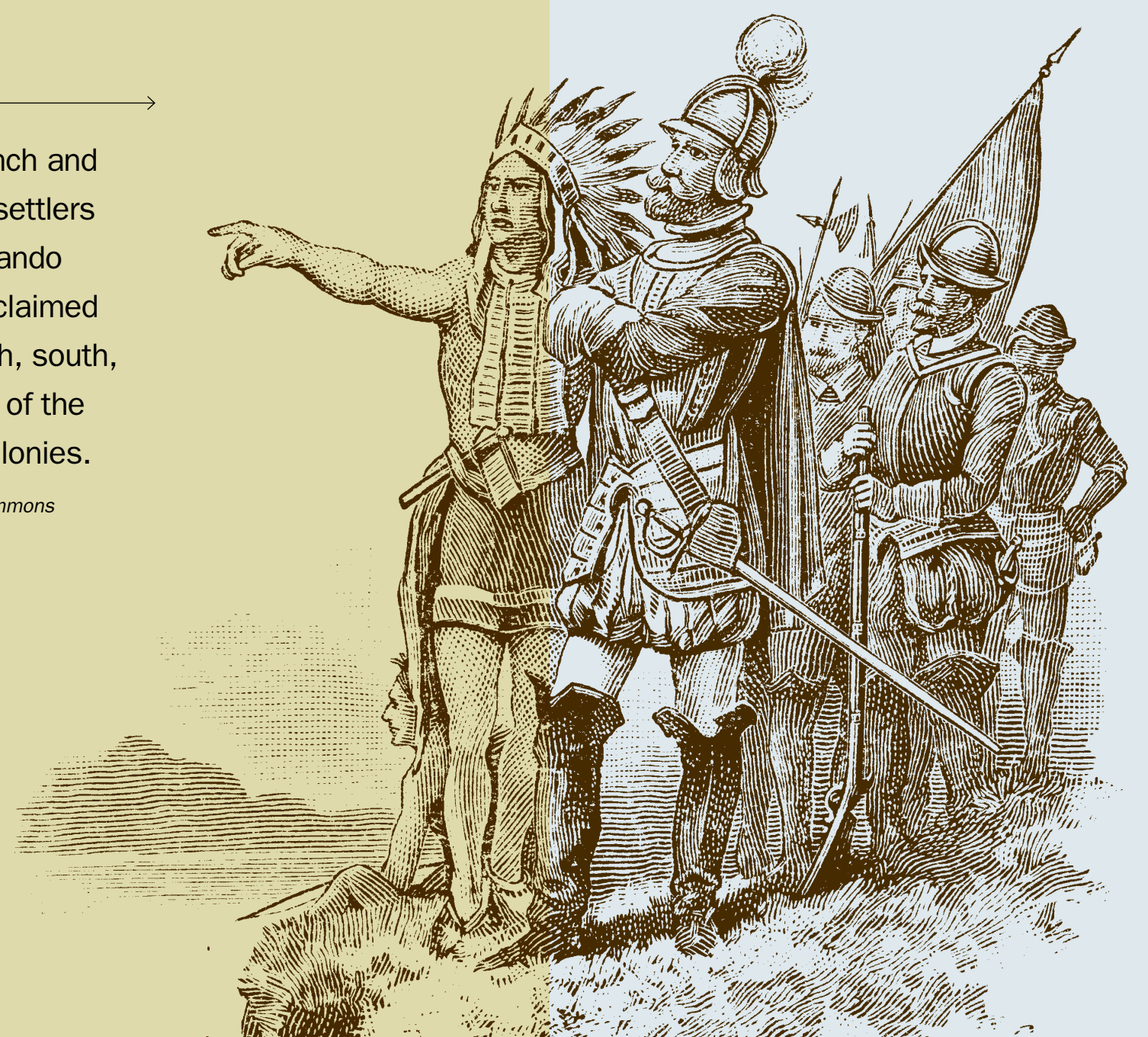


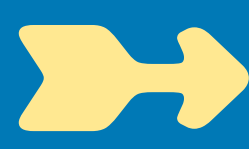
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An elder member of the Algonquian village of Pomeiooc. Native American civilizations were already well established and tribes often taught survival skills to colonists.

*The Mariner's Museum,
Newport News, VA*

→
Early French and Spanish settlers like Hernando De Soto claimed land north, south, and west of the British colonies.

Wikimedia commons





FORGING

A PATH



Gateway to the West - Daniel Boone Leading the Settlers Through the Cumberland Gap, 1775 by David Wright, 2004

AS THE POPULATION on the East Coast increased, American settlers pushed at the western boundaries of the colonies and, later, of the new nation. Their long, arduous journeys often came at great sacrifice as they explored new lands. These pioneers boldly forged roads, bridges, ferry crossings, and, by 1800, canals.

Daniel Boone leads pioneers through the Cumberland Gap on the Wilderness Road. Between 1774 and 1796, some 200,000 people courageously made their way through Virginia to eastern Kentucky and Tennessee.



Library of Congress

IN THE 20TH CENTURY new generations of settlers also bravely found their way in unfamiliar territory. Ellis Island and Angel Island immigration stations were the starting points for millions, who faced hostility, harsh conditions, and other challenges as they fanned out to settle across the U.S.

About 12 million people came to the U.S. through Ellis Island, New York—an estimated 40% of all current U.S. citizens can trace at least one of their ancestors to Ellis Island.



National Archives and Records Administration

Between 1910 and 1940 the Angel Island immigration station in San Francisco processed a million Asian immigrants, many of whom became farmers and laborers.

*“My grandmother told me that when she was young...
Our people traveled over the whole country between the
Elk River (MN) and Mexico.”*

IRON TEETH
TSISTSISTAS (CHEYENNE)



Indians Traveling The W. Duncan MacMillan Foundation

European pioneers built upon the well-established trails of the Native Americans and Mexicans—highly mobile societies already on this land for generations. New immigrants' settlement patterns displaced many native populations.



Smithsonian
Journey Stories was organized
by the Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service.

FORCED → RELOCATION



AS THE NATION GREW, it expanded its borders into territory held by American Indians, France, and Mexico, claiming millions of acres for the U.S. With this expansion, Native American tribes were continually forced to move as more and more of their ancestral lands were claimed. In 1848, after losing the Mexican American War, Mexico was forced to cede an enormous area of land to the U.S., and international borders were abruptly moved. Native Americans and Mexicans living there suddenly found their lands claimed by the U.S.

Between 1830 and 1850, the Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, Seminole, and Cherokee people were forcibly removed by U.S. Army troops from their traditional lands in the Southeastern United States, and relocated farther west. In the winter of 1838–39, several Cherokee groups journeyed almost 1,000 miles to eastern Oklahoma, along routes later called “The Trails of Tears.” Approximately 4,000 died along the way from pneumonia, malnutrition, and exposure.

Courtesy of Peggy Tiger. Reproduction of Trail of Tears (1966) by Jerome Tiger (Creek-Seminole), from the collection of the Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma



Map image by Kballen, Wikimedia Commons

“We didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us.”

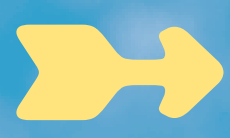
CAUTION!!
COLORED PEOPLE
OF BOSTON, ONE & ALL,
 You are hereby respectfully CAUTIONED and advised, to avoid conversing with the **Watchmen and Police Officers of Boston,**
 For since the recent **ORDER OF THE MAYOR & ALDERMEN,** they are empowered to act as **KIDNAPPERS AND Slave Catchers,**
 And they have already been actually employed in **KIDNAPPING, CATCHING, AND KEEPING SLAVES.** Therefore, if you value your **LIBERTY,** and the *Welfare of the Fugitives* among you, *Shun* them in every possible manner, as so many **HOUNDS** on the track of the most unfortunate of your race.
Keep a Sharp Look Out for KIDNAPPERS, and have TOP EYE open.
APRIL 24, 1851.

Caution poster, Boston. Library of Congress

ALTHOUGH THE UNITED STATES ended the legal importation of slaves from Africa in 1808, the rise of cotton made the internal slave trade a lucrative business. In the 19th century, enslaved people in the North and upper South were re-sold and forced to migrate to cotton plantations in the deep South in huge numbers. Approximately one million enslaved people were “sold down the river,” and forcefully relocated, often far away from their families.



Picking Cotton, Savannah, Georgia. Library of Congress



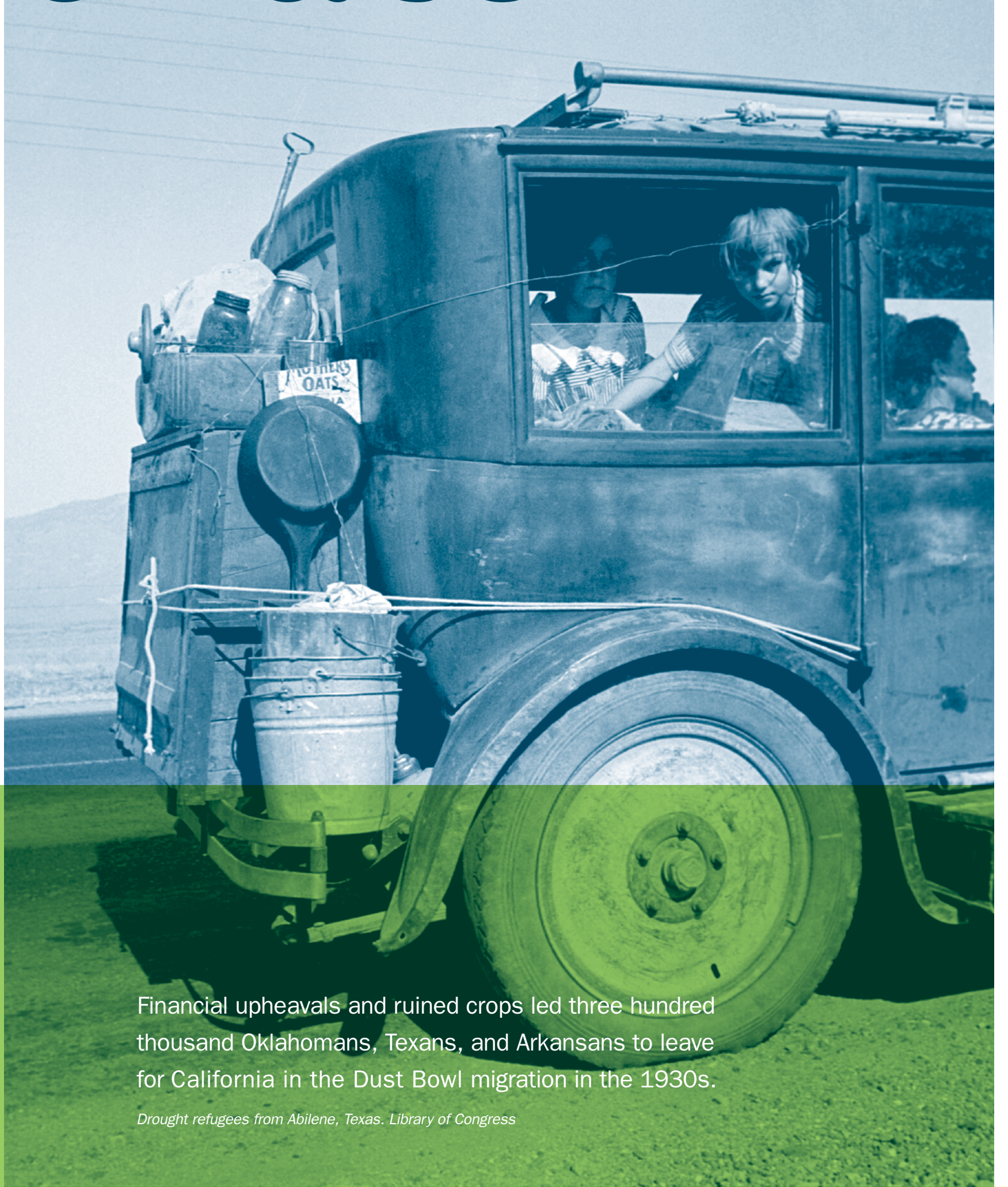
JOURNEYS FOR FREEDOM & SURVIVAL

THROUGHOUT OUR HISTORY, millions of Americans have migrated to escape enslavement, to flee oppression, and to survive natural disasters. In the 19th century, a small number of slaves escaped their plantations via the Underground Railroad, fleeing North or to other parts of the South. Between 1910 and 1970, that exodus continued, as millions of African Americans in the South moved to Northern, Midwestern, and Western states in the Great Migration.



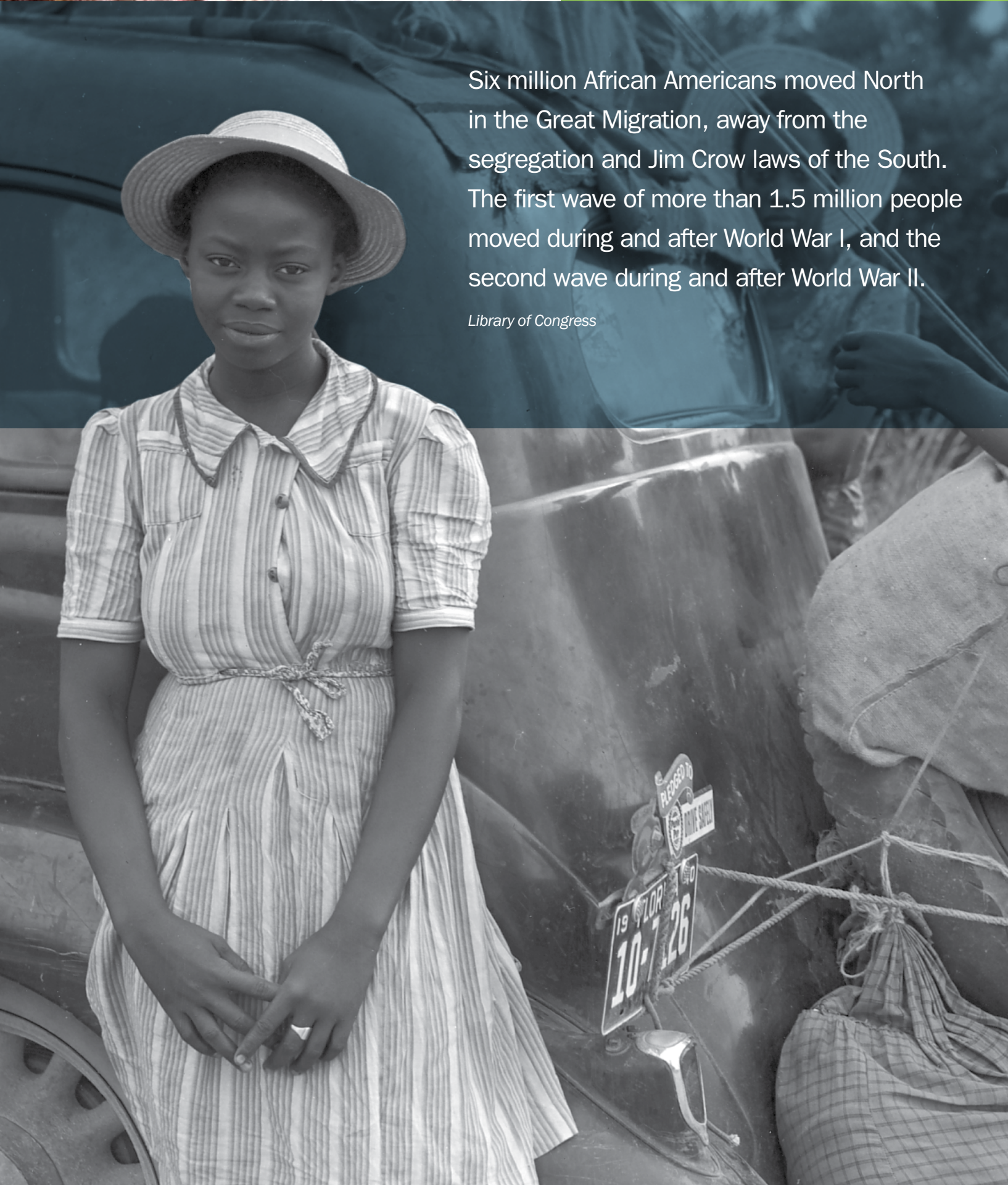
Some slaves escaped to the North via the Underground Railroad. Not a railroad at all, it was actually a clandestine and well-organized network of mostly nighttime walking routes.

Library of Congress



Financial upheavals and ruined crops led three hundred thousand Oklahomans, Texans, and Arkansans to leave for California in the Dust Bowl migration in the 1930s.

Drought refugees from Abilene, Texas. Library of Congress



Six million African Americans moved North in the Great Migration, away from the segregation and Jim Crow laws of the South. The first wave of more than 1.5 million people moved during and after World War I, and the second wave during and after World War II.

Library of Congress

“This is our home and...we are not going to leave, unless we are driven by want and lack of freedom.”

AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE TO THE ATLANTA INDEPENDENT, MAY 1917

RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS triggered the western migration of Mormons to Utah in the mid-19th century. Decades later, in the 1930s, nationwide economic depression, coupled by a terrible drought and dust storms, led tens of thousands of families to pack their cars and head to California in the Dust Bowl migration.

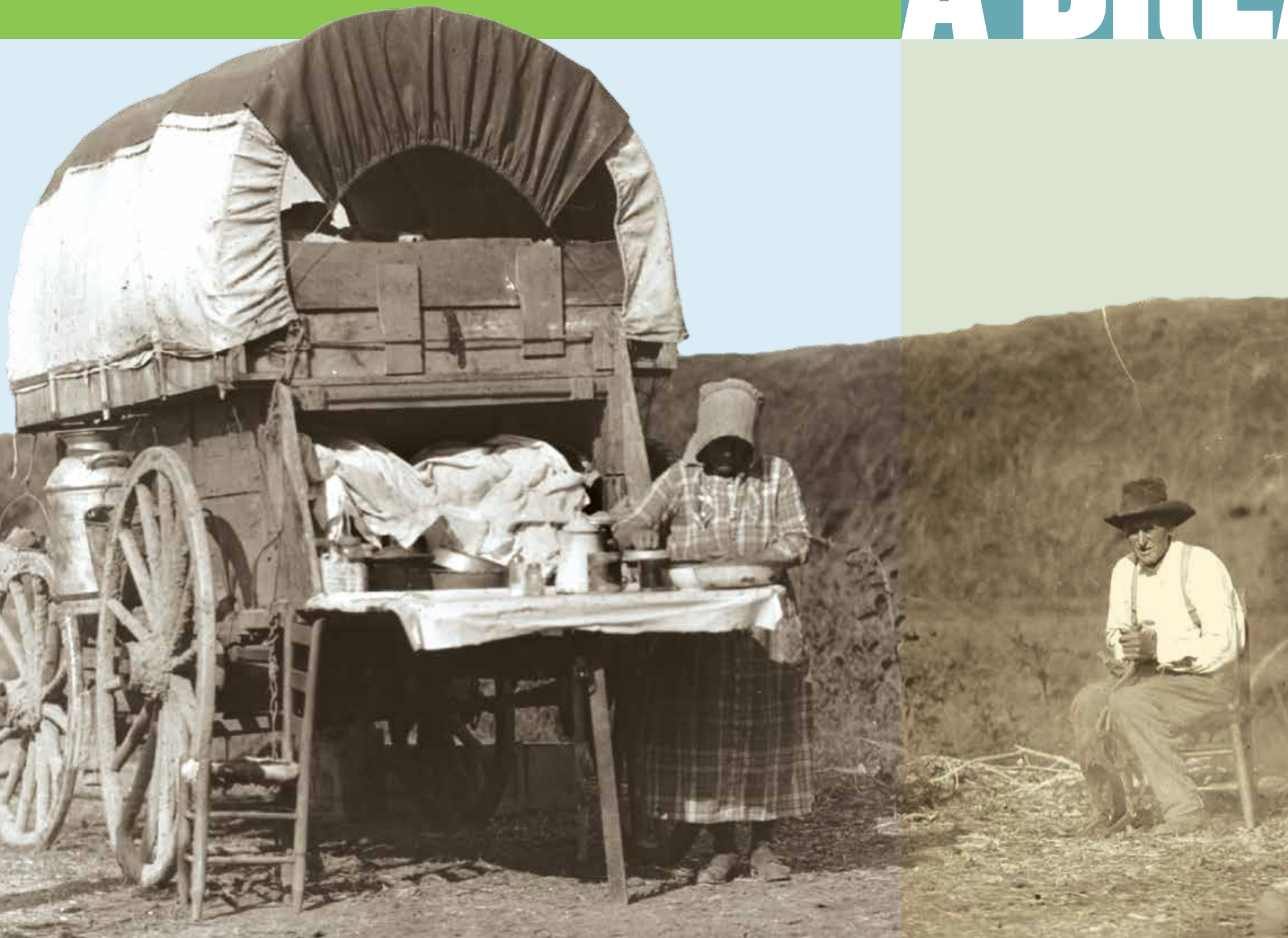


Starting in 1846, more than 70,000 Mormons traveled west to new settlements and religious freedom in Utah.

Courtesy of the Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints



➔ PURSUING A DREAM

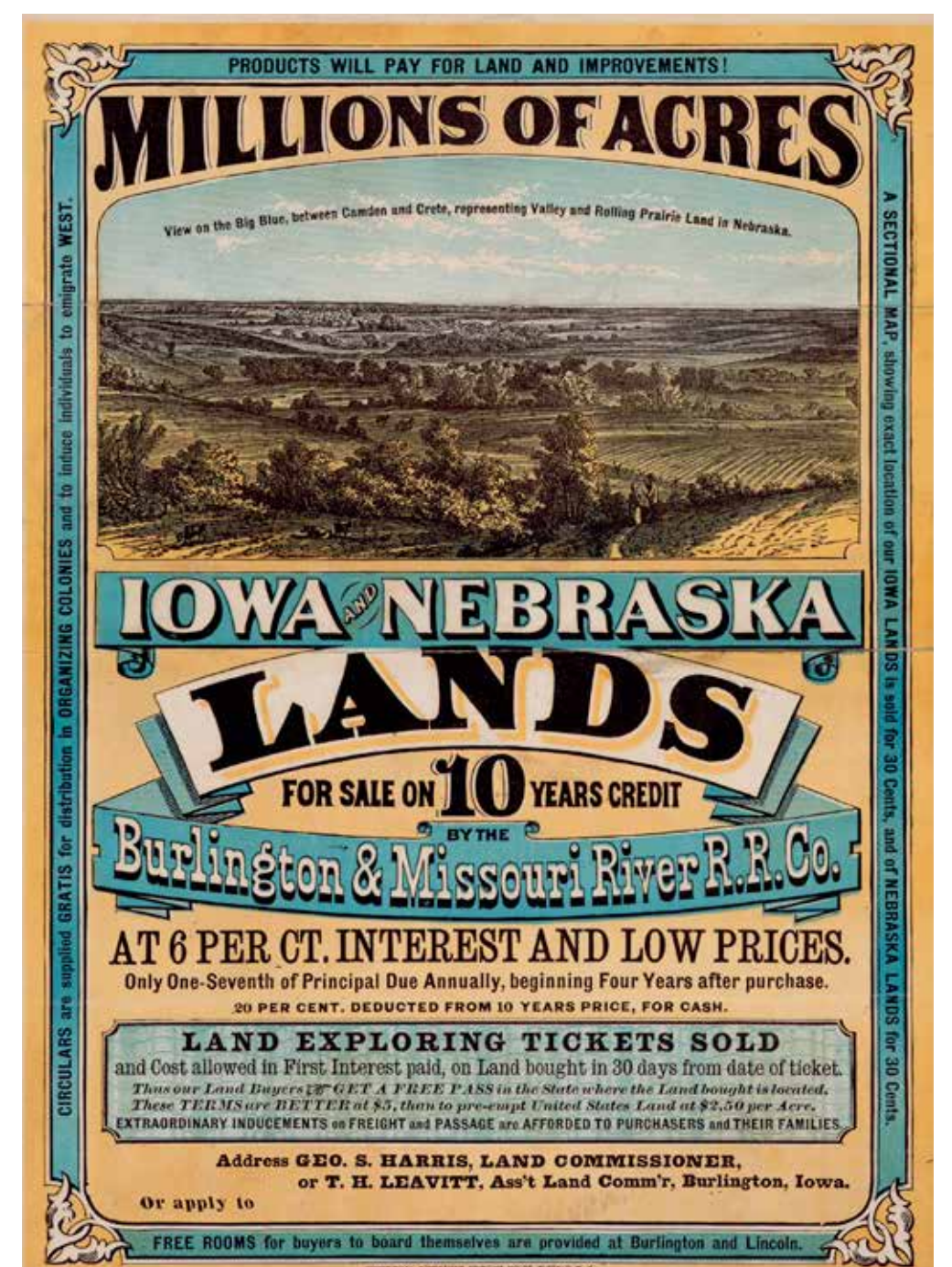


“The horses’ hoofs clopped with a dull sound, the wagon wheels went crunching...all around there was nothing but empty and silent space.”

Laura Ingalls Wilder, *Little House on the Prairie*, 1935

THE SEARCH FOR A BETTER LIFE IN

America is deeply connected to our mobility as a nation. In the 19th century, as our nation grew, roads proliferated and canals were built. Plantations spread throughout the Southeast and railroads connected the entire country. Some emigrants dreamed of cheap, fertile lands to the west, and many followed the Gold Rush into California. Families joined wagon trains, bought supplies, and turned old traders’ routes into trails on these journeys.



Facing unfamiliar obstacles and physical hardship, thousands of emigrant families headed to Oregon and California in wagon trains. Traffic on the Oregon/California Trail peaked in the 1850s with more than 1,200 emigrant wagons passing into Oregon annually.

Library of Congress

With the government’s Homestead Acts and railroad land grants, the dream of land ownership came true for many thousands willing to move west in the 1800s. These programs offered free or very low cost land, and opened the western plains to settlement.

Library of Congress

THE 20TH CENTURY SAW GREAT TRANSFORMATIONS

and rapid changes in technology, mobility and commerce. Railroads ruled for the first 25 years, and electric streetcar systems proliferated in American cities. The automobile and the interstate highway system made long-distance migrations easier for everyone. Americans continued on a highly mobile pursuit of their dreams.

After World War II, millions moved to the suburbs, which featured an automobile-centered, non-urban way of life. In 1940 roughly 22 million Americans lived in suburban areas, like Levittown, Pennsylvania. By 1970 the number of suburbanites had tripled.



Levittown, 1951. George D. McDowell Philadelphia Evening Bulletin Photographs Collection, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries, Philadelphia, PA.



MOVING TO WORK →

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY witnessed a number of consequential migrations that helped reshape culture, politics, or economic structures. In the 1930s, driven by drought and the Depression, migrant laborers and agricultural workers by the thousands moved to find work in the fields and factories of other states. World War II set off the largest sequence of relocation in American history, with 16 million Americans called to service and sent to bases around the country; and tens of millions more, many of them women, leaving small towns and farms to take jobs in defense industries.

The migration from farm to city was huge: A nation of farmers became a nation of urbanized workers in the 20th century, and by 1970, the rural population was just 27%.

Dora Miles and Dorothy Johnson assemble the bulkhead of a transport plane. During World War II, many women moved to work in aircraft plants, and tens of millions of Americans moved long distances, to old industrial centers as well as to shipyards and plants on the Pacific and Gulf coasts.



Library of Congress

“We had heard the news of Pearl Harbor...I went to San Diego, my friend stayed in Los Angeles with her sister. We both went to work in the airplane factories.”

IDA LEMLER ROSELAND, 1943



For decades, migrant farmers have eked out a living traveling across the country, following seasonal harvests in places like the southern New Jersey berry fields, the cotton fields of Arizona, and the fruit belt of southwestern Michigan. In 2000 the Department of Labor estimated there were 13 million migrant workers in the U.S.

Photo by Leonard Nadel, 1956.
Smithsonian National Museum
of American History



Electric trolleys on city streets, like in downtown New Orleans, were critical for workers in the 20th century. Public transportation technology continued to advance, and by 2000, more than 128 million Americans commuted by bus, rail, or both.

Historic New Orleans Collection,
accession no. 1979.325.5078. Detail.

MODERN



MOBILITY



In the 1950s air transport began to grow but was still primarily for the wealthy. With the advent of the jet airliner, which radically reduced costs, air travel became increasingly popular. At Los Angeles International Airport, an American Airlines DC-6, about 1950.

Los Angeles World Airports

AMERICANS ARE MARKED BY THEIR mobility. We travel more miles in an average lifetime than the citizens of any other country. In the past few decades we have seen the biggest changes ever in our mobility. We commute, travel on business, travel for fun and family. We also pull up stakes and move in pursuit of new opportunities or to find like-minded communities. Meanwhile, people from distant shores travel here to become Americans, as they have for nearly 400 years.

“Nearly every American hungers to move.”

JOHN STEINBECK,
*TRAVELS WITH CHARLEY:
IN SEARCH OF AMERICA*



The automobile redefined freedom. Taking the car out for pleasure, either long or short distances, became popular. Middle class people in ever greater numbers could enjoy automotive experiences that had before only been available to the wealthy.

The Rosen family vacations in New Mexico, 1969. Photo by Louis Rosen.

A new American citizen proudly waves a flag, September 2007.

Courtesy J. Emilio Flores



The deindustrialization that turned north-central states into the Rust Belt in the 1980s sent millions looking for opportunity elsewhere. The South, or the Sun Belt, became the nation’s principal population-importing region. Millions, including many retirees, moved in force to places like Florida (shown above is Fort Lauderdale), Arizona, and southern California.

Shutterstock

