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The Early West: A Series of Struggles

After the Revolutionary War was over the newly acquired western lands lured many Americans hoping for a new start and a chance at prosperity. With the Proclamation Line of 1763 abolished and American control of continental lands up to the Mississippi River established many former colonists believed success was to be had just over the Appalachian Mountains. Unfortunately, though there was knowledge of the difficulties, for many of these new settlers life in the Ohio River Valley was a struggle. Food shortages, assault from Native Americans, and the continued British presence made survival, let alone prosperity, extremely difficult (Batchelor “Living In The West”).

Food shortages presented a particularly acute problem for western settlers. In the cold winter of 1805, for example, it was difficult for western settlers in the Ohio River Valley to find ample food (Batchelor “The Early West”). One author described the situation eloquently when she stated, “It was hecka cold” (Boerin 234). Nevertheless, there is ample evidence from period sources that many succeeded, despite the difficult times:

We had made it through the long winter and were jubilant. There was no reason why we wouldn't be making it out west now. Our little sod house had been just perfect for us, though a bit cramped with the nine of us sharing its one room. Still, Billy made it through the consumption and Jane helped keep our spirits up by making dolls out of corn husks. (Sham 120)

Works Cited

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