

Postscript

Closing Frontiers

The World's Columbian Exhibition was held in Chicago in 1893 — a year late, thanks to delays — celebrating the 400th anniversary of the discovery of the Americas by Columbus. To combine business with pleasure, many organizations scheduled meetings in Chicago at this same time so those attending could take in the Exhibition.

Among these groups was an international congress of historians, and among those invited to speak was Frederick Jackson Turner, at 32 a full professor of history at the University of Wisconsin. To this assembly he presented his now-celebrated essay, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." In it he laid out a theory, later to be called the "frontier thesis" of historical interpretation, in which American culture and institutions were not seen as just extensions of the European. Rather, he saw the existence of a constantly moving and expanding frontier, together with free land under the Homestead Act, as prime factors in the development of American institutions.

Professor Turner was also interested in the immigration of his time. In the September 25, 1901 edition of the *Chicago Record-Herald* he wrote:

The immigrant of the preceding period was assimilated with comparative ease, and it can hardly be doubted that valuable contributions to American character have come from this infusion of non-English stock into the American people. But the free lands that made the process of absorption easy have gone. The immigration is becoming increasingly more difficult of assimilation. Its competition with American labor under existing conditions may give increased power to the producer, but the effects upon American social well-being are dangerous in the extreme.

Copies of Frederick Jackson Turner's essay, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," which runs to 15 pages in **THE SOCIAL CONTRACT** format, are available from our editorial offices for \$2.00 which includes postage and handling.

Frederick Jackson Turner