

Advertisements encouraging emigration to the United States

Suggested age groups: KS2, KS3 and Lifelong Learners

Subject areas: History, Literacy, Art, Geography

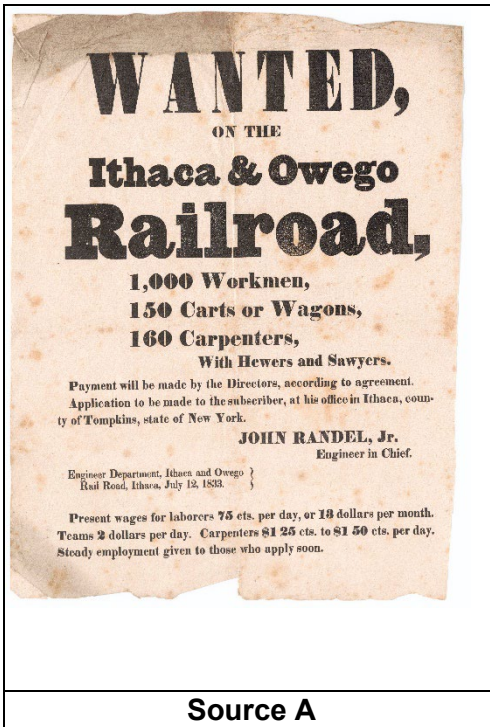
CONTEXT

People living in rural poverty in the early 19th century were attracted by the possibility of a higher standard of living in the United States. Posters such as these encouraged people to emigrate to improve their lives and possibly even make their fortunes. Fleeing crop failure, land and job shortages, rising taxes, and famine, many went to the USA because it was perceived as the land of economic opportunity.

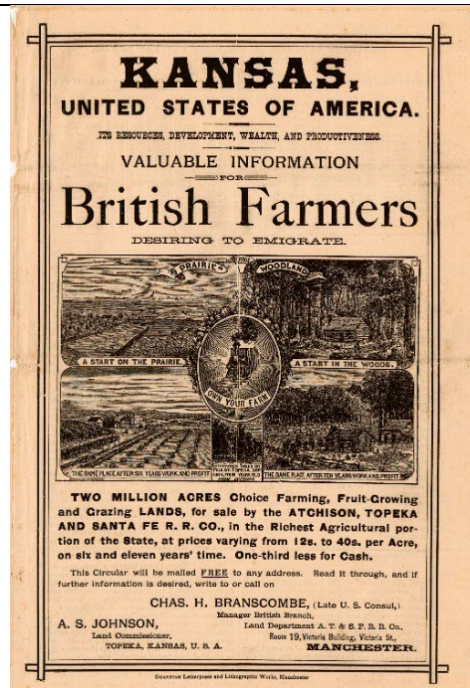
The USA was a vast country with lots of job opportunities. Thousands were needed to construct over 3,000 miles of railway lines linking the east and west coasts and other parts of America. Developing industries also required workers. In the 1830s wages in the USA could be double or treble that available in the UK.

There were millions of acres of farmland waiting to be developed. So, farm workers no longer needed here in the UK due to increased mechanization and loss of smallholdings in the enclosure movement, were needed in the USA. The possibility of acquiring free or buying cheap land was another attraction for British workers unable to afford to buy their own land in the UK.

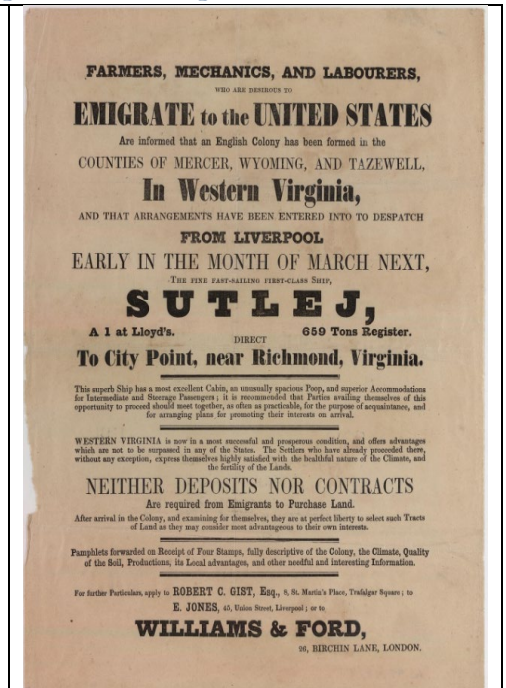
Many emigrants sailed from Liverpool, London, Portsmouth and other ports on sailing ships bound for a new life in the United States, Liverpool was the most popular port of departure for emigrants because it already had well established transatlantic links based on the import of cotton and timber. The voyage to the United States took about thirty-five to forty days depending on wind and weather. Most emigrants travelled in the cheapest class of accommodation, known as the steerage. This was similar to a dormitory with bunks down the sides and tables in the centre. It was frequently overcrowded with poor ventilation. Emigrating in a sailing ship could be unpleasant, particularly during a storm. Seasickness was a particular problem on the stormy North Atlantic westbound voyage, and diseases such as cholera and typhus frequently reached epidemic proportion as infection spread throughout the confined decks. Scores of emigrants died from these diseases.



Source A



Source B



Source C

SOURCE A

Ithaca & Owego Railroad poster (ref.no. Cobden Mss 393)

[Click here to view and save a hi-res pdf of the poster](#)

This poster is from the extensive Cobden Archives held at West Sussex Record Office. Richard Cobden (1804-1865) was born at Heyshott, near Midhurst, and became an MP, statesman, political campaigner and 'Friend of America'. Further information on his life and work is [here](#). It is possible he collected this poster, dated 1833, during his first visit to America in 1835.

SOURCE B

Kansas promotional leaflet extract 1880 (ref.no. MP 135)

[Click here to view and save a hi-res pdf of the extract](#)

[Click here to view and save a hi-res pdf of the whole leaflet](#)

This source is from West Sussex Record Office's Miscellaneous Papers (MP) collection. The collection contains thousands of records deposited by many different people. The records in the MP collection are mostly non-original and/or printed rather than unique manuscript (written) documents. The source is an extract from a folded leaflet published in 1880 to encourage British people, particularly farm workers, to emigrate to the USA

SOURCE C

Western Virginia poster c1849 (ref.no. Par 95/38/7)

[Click here to view and save a hi-res pdf of the poster](#)

This poster is one of a group of 5 records deposited in the parish records of West Grinstead. The others were receipts or records of money spent on transporting the Tourle family from West Grinstead to America via the London docks and a different poster with details for emigrants journeying to Canada and the west coast of America. This source is an appeal for emigrants with specific skills needed in West Virginia, undated but is probably around 1848-50.

ACTIVITIES

Key Question: What did America offer people wanting to emigrate from West Sussex in the early 19th century?

CHECK/ DISCUSS

- Read carefully these 3 sources. Use a dictionary to check the meaning of any words you are not sure about E.g., hewers, prairie, sawyer, (the word sawver was misprinted)
- What kind of documents are they?
- What was their purpose?
- Which of the three sources do you think does the best job of persuading people to emigrate to the USA? Explain why.
- Source A – What job did John Randel, Jr do?
Which job earned the most amount of money? Why?
- Source B - What was the land in Kansas suitable for?
Who was selling the land?
Who managed the British branch and where was he based?
- Source C – Where was the new English Colony formed?
Where was the Sutej departing from and arriving at?
If you sent for a pamphlet, what further information would you receive?

INVESTIGATE

- Locate Liverpool, Manchester, New York, Ithaca, Owego, Kansas, Topeka (Kansas), Mercere, Wyoming, West Virginia, Tazewell on maps of the UK, USA and world.
- Compile a list of reasons with information from these sources about why you think workers in the 1830s might want to emigrate to the USA.
- Research the development of railroads OR farming in the USA in the early 19th century and investigate how much they relied on emigrant workers
- Investigate USA currency in the early 19th century. If the UK's currency was pounds, shillings and pence what did the USA use? Can you explain how many cents there were in a dollar, what a dime was, any paper money...?

DO

Design a poster, using a similar style to the sources, encouraging people to emigrate to the USA in the early 19th century. Include as many reasons as you can. Think carefully about

- layout
 - wording
 - use of illustrations
 - useful facts
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- The Kansas poster is actually part of a folded leaflet. Look carefully at the [Kansas leaflet](#) encouraging people to emigrate to Kansas. Now create the pamphlet to be sent out by the new English colony in Source B to anyone interested in finding out more. Remember to include
 - Description of the new colony
 - Climate
 - Quality of the soil
 - Other products
 - Other information Eg housing, wage rates...

RESOURCES

<https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/archivesheet13>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/znhkpg8/revision/2>

<https://www.american-rails.com/beginning.html>

<https://www.history.com/topics/inventions/transcontinental-railroad>

<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/history-american-agriculture.pdf>