

3 Touring American History Explorer

When you start **American History Explorer**, its Opening Screen appears, giving you 11 methods to begin exploring the program's extensive data files. The unique screen, introduced by a narrated overview of the features, doesn't require the usual menus and buttons of a Windows application. You simply point your cursor at the item you want, and when the cursor changes to a hand, click the mouse button. Even the program title accesses information!

While some people enjoy this freedom to explore the program and its database on their own, you may prefer a more systematic approach to learning the features. If so, this quick tour is designed as your guide. The tour gives you step-by step instructions for becoming familiar with basic features of the program. Then you can use Chapters 4 -7 to build on your knowledge. (The tour assumes you've read Chapter 1, so you may wish to review that information before you begin.)

During the tour, you'll :

- * Trek down a time line to access various types of information about a segment of American history
- * View a short video
- * Access a Year article and one of its linked articles
- * Open a map
- * Zoom in for a close-up of the map
- * Measure the distance between two points on the map
- * View a narrated slide show about the map
- * Print a map
- * Tips for scrolling on a time line
- * Learn about the life of an early American president

Before you start the tour, you may wish to print this chapter, so you can keep it next to your computer. To do so, select Print from the File menu at the top of this screen and click OK.

Trekking Down a Time Line

For this tour, we'll use the Time Trek feature -- the main passageway to all the wonders of **American History Explorer!** Each of these eight multimedia time lines provides multiple resources for information on a period of time in America's history. You'll probably want to start at the beginning -- with the Exploration period. For this exercise, though, we'll explore the Expansion period --looking at how the country grew from 1820 to 1860.

To begin,

1. Go to the Opening Screen and click on the Time Trek feature.
2. From the eight time blocks, choose Expansion. You can click on the word "Expansion" or on the corresponding illustration. (If you don't recognize the portrait, you should after this exercise!)

Elements of a Time Line

When the time line opens, you'll notice a couple of elements that are common to all eight time lines.

Title and Video Bar

The title and video bar, at the top of your screen displays the title and period of the time line. It also shows the icon of any video associated with the period. At the right edge of this bar is the "curl" that takes you back to the previous screen. It's the only way to exit a time line.

Main Time Line

The main time line, which spans the center of the screen, is an illustrated, interactive time line. It allows you to access maps, historic documents, presidential profiles, and Year articles, which are explained later in this chapter.

Viewing a Video

To see how easy it is to view a video from a time line, click on the Movie Theater icon with the teepee. The program will automatically begin a video on Native Americans. When the video is finished, the program returns you to the time line. To end a video before it is finished, click on the curl at the bottom of your screen.

Viewing a Year Article and One of Its Linked Articles

Each of the years etched on the main time line bar can be clicked to view a Year article with links to other articles on the events, places, and people who influenced American history during that year.

Move your cursor onto the year 1820. When the cursor changes to a hand, click to view a list of articles associated with 1820 and 1821. Scroll down the list until you reach Missouri Compromise. Double-click on this topic to open a linked article.

Within the Missouri Compromise article, you'll see colored text, such as the words "slavery," "Missouri," "Maine," and "Louisiana Purchase." These "text links" can be clicked to open additional linked articles. For now, however, we'll stay with the Missouri Compromise.

Viewing a Linked Picture

Also in the article are little pictures. These picture symbols or icons indicate that a picture is linked to the article. Usually the picture refers to the text immediately preceding the picture icon. To view a picture about the Louisiana Purchase, click the picture icon after the word Purchase. To close the picture, double-click on the Control-menu box in the top left hand corner of the picture window. You'll be returned to the Missouri Compromise article.

Closing an Article

Once you have an article open, you can perform various editing functions, such as copying it, adding text, and deleting text. For many of these operations, you must have selected the Read/Write installation option. (See pages 1-2 and 1-3.) These functions are explained in Chapter 5, *Working with Articles*.

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You can close an article by clicking the Close Article icon (the closed book, second from the left on the icon bar) or double-clicking the Control-menu box in the top left corner of the Article window. (You can also choose Close from the Article menu, if you used the Read/Write installation option.)

Opening a Map

Maps, articles, historic documents, and presidential profiles are all available from the main time line bar of any time line. Any of these features can be accessed by simply clicking on the appropriate rectangle. (Watch your cursor and click when it changes to a hand on the item you want.) Practice by moving your cursor to the Missouri Compromise map symbol and clicking on it.

When the map opens, scroll so you can see the Missouri Compromise Line. It's a black line across what is now Oklahoma and Missouri. (If your legend disappears as you're scrolling, you can make it reappear by clicking the Legend icon on the icon bar -- to the right of the printer icon. You may have to click the legend's title bar and drag it to a different location in order to see both the legend and the Missouri Compromise Line.)

Zooming In on a Map

To more easily view details on a map, you may wish to "zoom in" for a close-up view. To zoom, click the Zoom icon, just left of the question mark on the icon bar. (If you used the Read/Write installation option, you can also select Zoom from the Options menu of the Map window.) When the Zoom Map dialog box appears, scroll the zoom bar down to zoom in and click OK. The dialog box closes and the map will be redrawn automatically.

Measuring Map Distances

To measure the length of the Missouri Compromise Line, click your mouse button on one end of the line and hold down the left mouse button as you drag the cursor to the other end of the line. Release the mouse button and read the distance in the center of the status bar at the bottom of the Map window. See page 6-2 for details on measuring map distances and page 1-9 for setting distance units (miles or kilometers).

Viewing a Map Slide Show

Each map in American History Explorer is associated with a slide show that presents an overview of the subject illustrated by the map. To view a slide show about the current map, just click the Slide Show icon (left of the hot air balloon) on the icon bar. A slide show on the Missouri Compromise begins automatically.

Controlling a Slide Show

You can control a slide show by clicking on the reverse, pause, play, and fast forward buttons at the bottom of the screen. To exit a slide show before it is finished, double-click the Control-menu box in the top left corner of the slide show window.

Printing a Map

At any time you can print a map. Just click on the Print icon on the icon bar or (if you chose the Read/Write installation option, select Print from the map menu. In the Print dialog box that appears, select your settings, then click the Print button.

Scrolling on a Time Line

To move from one end of a time line to the other, place your cursor on the main time line bar and move it until it bumps the edge of the screen. Keep the cursor above the dates, unless you want to open the Year articles. Watch the shape of the cursor. If it changes to a hand, you know you're on a hot spot and the program is likely

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to stop and open an article or another feature. If the cursor changes to a solid white arrow or an hour-glass, you know you're scrolling "non-stop."

Viewing a Presidential Profile

Some of the most interesting material in American History Explorer relates to the country's first presidents. As our last stop on this tour, we'll check out President James Buchanan. Scroll to the end of the time line and click on the Hall of Presidents icon for President Buchanan. This takes you immediately to the president's portrait where the program narrates a brief description, such as a nickname, of the president.

From the Hall of Presidents, you can scroll right or left to listen to descriptions of other presidents. Just bump the cursor against the edge of the screen, as you do to scroll on a time line.

To access more information about the president, click on his portrait or nameplate. The program presents four options. You can view a map of how the country voted in his election, read a list of facts and trivia about his life, view a narrated slide show about his life and presidency, or compare how he measures up to his peers. For details on these features, see Chapter 4.

Exiting the Hall of Presidents

When you've finished viewing information about the president, click on the curl at the bottom of the screen to go to the preceding screen. Click on the curls as many times as necessary until you reach the time line.

On Your Own

Now that you're back on the Opening Screen, you may wish to explore some of the other features. However, you're never really on your own! For instructions on performing a search with the Finder feature or using any of the other multimedia functions, see Chapter 4. To learn about Working with Articles, see Chapter 5. Refer to Chapters 6 and 7 for information on Working with Maps and creating and editing maps. If you can't find answers to your questions, see *Finding Help* at the end of Chapter 1 for details on accessing the online help and the Parsons Technology Product Support staff.