

# ECONOMIC BEGINNINGS OF THE FAR WEST

## CHAPTER I

### LOUISIANA

THE acquisition of Louisiana Territory got rid of some long-standing difficulties and opened to American enterprise vast possibilities of extension. Both banks of the Mississippi were now controlled by the United States, and the free navigation of that great waterway was assured for all time. Not only the Father of Waters, but his western tributaries, the Missouri, the Platte, the Arkansas and Red rivers, were brought within reach of our restless frontiersmen, and they made haste to avail themselves of this outlet for their energy. In the *Account of Louisiana*, compiled at the suggestion of President Jefferson in 1803 and widely distributed throughout the country, there was gathered for the information of the curious all that was then known of the population and resources of the new acquisition. According to the Spanish census of 1799, there were in the settlements along the Mississippi and Red rivers forty-two thousand three hundred and seventy-five souls, of whom two-thirds were whites and one-third slaves or freedmen. New Orleans was a town of ten thousand inhabitants, where four-fifths of the whites were French creoles and the remainder English and Americans. The people of Baton Rouge, Iberville,