

# The Closing of the Western Frontier

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## Essential Questions

1. What national issues emerged in the process of closing the western frontier?
2. Why does the West hold such an important place in the American imagination?
3. In what ways is the West romanticized in American culture?



# the Railroad builders

## Railroad Construction



## "The Big Four" Railroad Magnates



Charles Crocker



Collis Huntington



Mark Hopkins



Leland Stanford



### 1st TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD

May 10th. 1869.  
**GREAT EVENT**  
Rail Road from the Atlantic to the Pacific  
**GRAND OPENING**

**UNION PACIFIC**  
PLATE VALLEY ROUTE  
**OMAHA**  
THROUGH TO SAN FRANCISCO

- May 10, 1869 at Promontory, Utah
- “The Wedding of the Rails”
- Central Pacific and Union Pacific



### HOMESTEAD ACT

- **Homestead Act** was a law developed in 1862 by Congress to promote settlement of the Great Plains.
- Age 21 and the head of the family could have **160 acres of land** if they improved it in five years
- Could buy it for a small amount of \$\$\$
- The US Government encouraged westward expansion and the **Homestead Act** allowed thousands of settlers to move west and start new lives.

0 150 300 miles  
0 150 300 kilometers

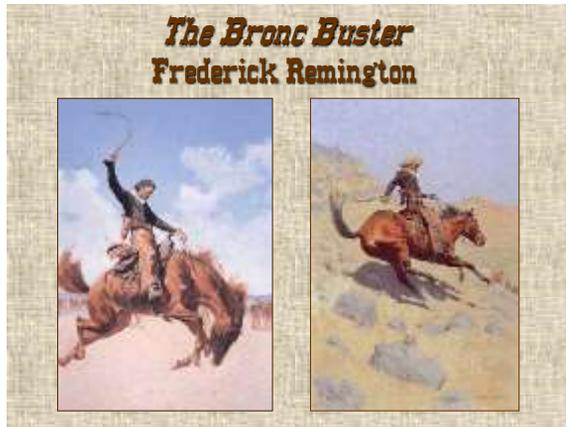
DAKOTA TERRITORY MINN. WIS.  
NEBRASKA TERRITORY IOWA  
KANSAS MO.  
INDIAN TERRITORY ARK.  
TEXAS LA.

**Population Changes in the West, 1850 to 1900**





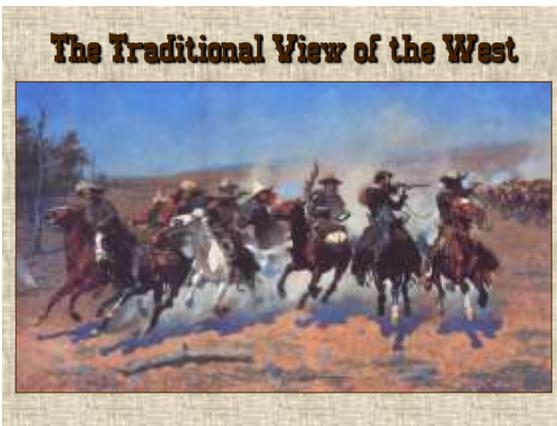
the  
cowboys



### Black Cowboys

100,000 Exodusters leave the South and get involved with the ranching industry in Texas and Oklahoma.





### Legendary Gunslingers & Train Robbers



Jesse James



Billy the Kid



### Legendary Gunslingers & Train Robbers



Jesse James



Billy the Kid



### Dodge City Peace Commission, 1890



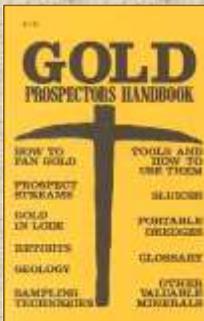
# the MINERS

### Mining Centers: 1900





### Prospecting



### Anaconda Copper Mining Co. (MT)

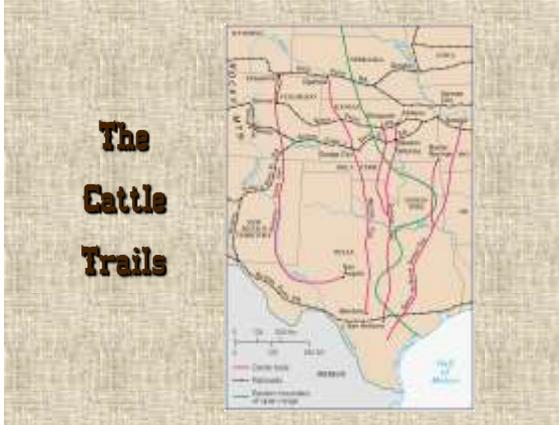


### Mining ("Boom") Towns-- Now Ghost Towns



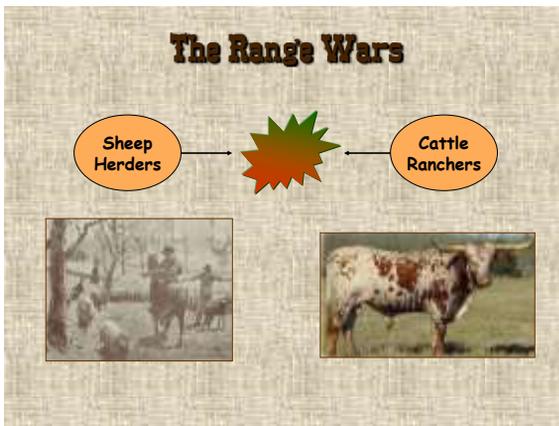
Calico, CA

### The Cattlemen & the Sheep herders



### LIFE ON THE GREAT PLAINS

- **Barbed wire fence** was a lifesaver because of the lack of wood in the dry plains of America.
- **Barbed wire** also solved the problems between farmers and ranchers.



### Minority groups in the West



### The Buffalo Soldiers & the Indian Wars



### The "Chinese Question"



- Exclusion Act (1882)
  - Oriental Exclusion Act
  - Chinese Exclusion Act

### The Tong Wars: 1850s-1920s



Began in San Francisco in 1875.

### African American & Chinese Populations: 1880-1900

State or Territory	Blacks		Chinese	
	1880	1900	1880	1900
Arizona Terr.	155	1,248	1,630	1,478
California	6,018	11,045	75,132	45,753
Colorado	2,625	6,579	412	569
Idaho	69	285	3,379	1,467
Kansas	43,107	82,003	19	39
Montana	348	1,523	1,702	1,738
Nebraska	2,265	6,268	18	188
Nebraska	488	134	3,416	1,353
New Mexico Terr.	1,015	1,619	97	343
North Dakota	113	288	NA	32
Oklahoma Indian Terr.	NA	36,534*	NA	34
Oregon	487	1,155	6,510	16,287
South Dakota	298	488	NA	168
Texas	393,034	625,722	130	838
Utah	332	671	310	572
Washington	325	2,514	3,186	3,629

NA—not available.  
\*Compared total for Indian and Oklahoman territories.

# The Farmers

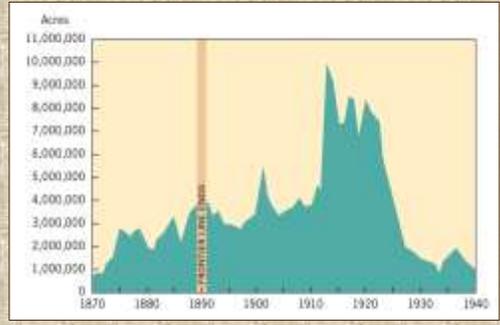
## LIFE ON THE GREAT PLAINS

- Settlers adapted to the difficult lifestyle of living on the Great Plains.
- Newer advancements in agricultural technology helped settle the Plains.

### Frontier Settlements: 1870-1890



### Homesteads From Public Lands



**1887  
Land  
Promotion  
Poster  
for the  
Dakota  
Territories**

### What is the Message of this Picture?



### The Realty--A Pioneer's Sod House, SD



### Rain Follows the Plow!



**Steel Plow** Allowed farmers to cut through dense, root-choked sod.



**Mechanized Reaper** Reduced labor force needed for harvest. Allows farmers to maintain larger farms.



**Steel Windmill** Powers irrigation systems and pumps up ground water.

**Newlands Reclamation Act (1902)**



**Francis Newlands**

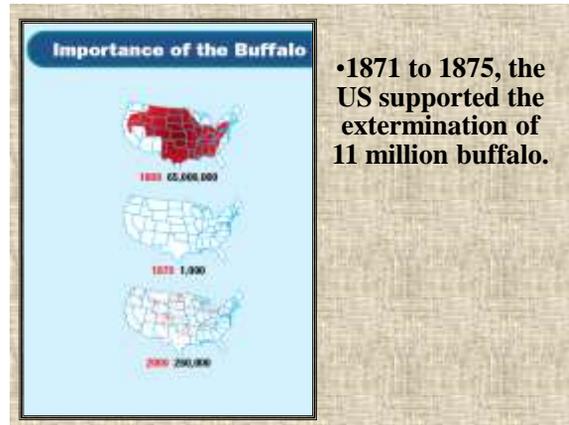
the  
plains  
indians

# INDIAN CONFLICTS

- ❖ Differences in land ownership
- ❖ Railroad
- ❖ Settlers trespassing on Indian Land
- ❖ Discovery of gold
- ❖ Slaughter of the buffalo
- ❖ Broken treaties

# U.S. INDIAN POLICY

- ❖ Negotiate treaties to sell land to US
- ❖ Americanization or assimilation
  - ❖ Adopt Christianity
  - ❖ White education
- ❖ Individual land ownership
- ❖ Adopt agriculture
- ❖ Take away food source to force to Reservations = tracks of land



• 1871 to 1875, the US supported the extermination of 11 million buffalo.

# U.S. INDIAN POLICY

• Take away the food source from the Native American and they will be forced to submit and go to the reservations.

## End of the Buffalo

• In an attempt to force the **Plains** Indians to become “more American”, the government sponsored the **slaughter** of the **buffalo**, which the Plains Indians depended on.

Examples:

- Buffalo population in 1860: approximately **13 million**
- Buffalo population in 1900: approximately **400**

*Buffalo skulls, mid-1870s, waiting to be ground into fertilizer.*



Slaughtered buffalo, 1872



Hide yard with 40,000 buffalo hides Dodge City, Kansas, 1878



### Tribes of the Great Plains

- ❖ Sioux
- ❖ Cheyenne
- ❖ Crow
- ❖ Arapaho
- ❖ Kiowa



Treaty of Ft. Laramie (1851)

Colorado Gold Rush (1859)

### Colonel John Chivington



*Kill and scalp all, big and little!*

**Sandy Creek, CO  
Massacre**

**November 29, 1864**

### Capt. William J. Fetterman

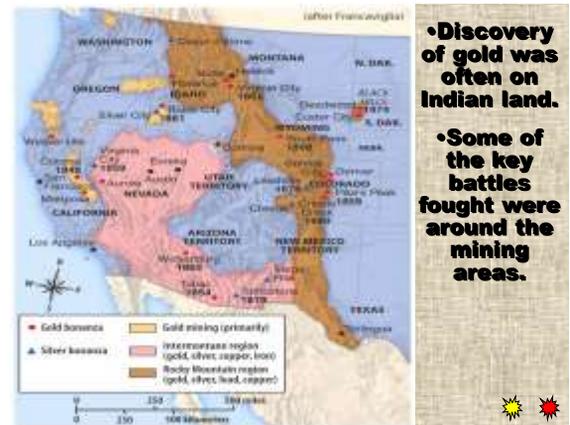


80 soldiers massacred  
December 21, 1866



## Gold Found in the Black Hills of the Dakota Territory!

# 1874



## U.S. Indian Policy

## Gold!

- Gold discovered in the Black Hills.
- Govt. tries to purchase the land, but the Sioux refuse.
- Gold fever and miners refuse to respect Sioux land.....
- Conflict erupts!

There goes the neighborhood!

### Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse

- Sitting Bull (Sioux) and Crazy Horse (Cheyenne) were two chiefs who refused to sign the treaty.
- They defiantly left the reservation.
- *"One does not sell the earth upon which the people walk"*



### Little Big Horn River, Montana - 1876



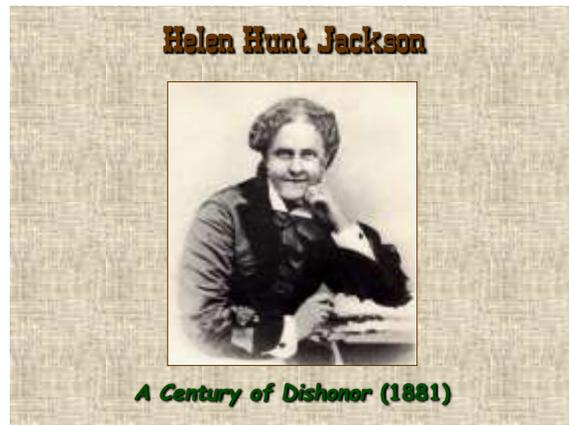
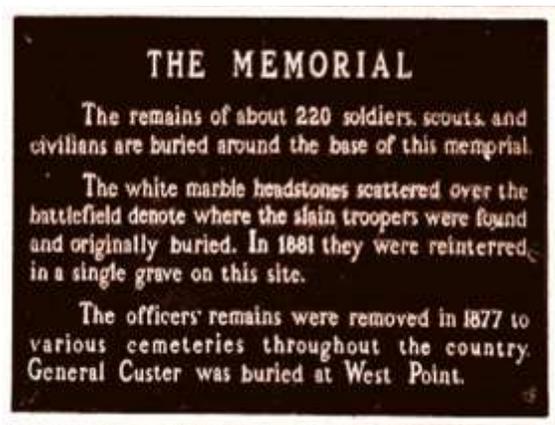
- George Armstrong Custer was sent to force the Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapaho back to their reservations.
- He was in command of the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry.
- June 26, 1876

### The Battle of Little Big Horn 1876



- ❖ He was heavily outnumbered and trapped.
- ❖ Custer & all 220 of his men died.
- ❖ **"Custer's Last Stand"** outraged Americans and led to govt. retribution.
- ❖ The Sioux and Cheyenne were crushed within a year.





**A CENTURY OF DISHONOR**



❖ Helen Hunt Jackson (1830-1885), activist for Native American rights and author of *Century of Dishonor* was published in 1881.

❖ Jackson also began work on a book condemning the government's Indian policy and its record of broken treaties.

❖ When Jackson sent a copy to every member of Congress with the following admonition printed in red on the cover: "*Look upon your hands; they are stained with the blood of your relations.*" To her disappointment, the book had little impact. ✨



# U.S. INDIAN POLICY

## Dawes Act of 1887

- ❖ Quicker **Americanization**
  - Assimilate, mainstreamed and absorbed into US society
  - Adopt Christianity and White education
  - Individual land ownership
- ❖ Abandon tribe, culture and become farmers
- ❖ Male claimed 160 acres of land
- ❖ Children would be sent to Indian schools ✨
- ❖ Farm land for 25 years.
- ❖ 1924 gain citizenship and right to vote
- ❖ Failed policy ✨
  - Indian resistance and corruption

## Dawes Severalty Act (1887): Assimilation Policy



Carlisle Indian School, PA

### Native American Schools

In an attempt to make Native Americans "live as white men", special schools were set up by the U.S. government for Native Americans.



Apache children on arrival at the Carlisle Indian School (Pennsylvania) wearing traditional clothing.



The same Apache children four months later.



Cheyenne woman named Woxie Hairy in ceremonial dress...



...and in wedding portrait with husband.

## Indian Assimilation Attempts

- Native American children were taken to off-reservation Indian schools where they would be taught white man's ways.



## Jacobus Franciscus "Jim" Thorpe ( Wa-Tho-Huk) (28 May 1888 – 28 March 1953 )

- was an American athlete. Considered one of the most versatile athletes in modern sports, he won Olympic gold medals in the pentathlon and decathlon, played American football collegiately and professionally, and also played professional baseball and basketball. He subsequently lost his Olympic titles when it was found he was paid for playing two seasons of minor league baseball before competing in the games.
- Thorpe was a multi-racial, part Native American Indian and part ancestral European American.
- Thorpe was named the greatest athlete of the first half of the twentieth century by the Associated Press (AP) in 1950. He ranked third on the AP list of athletes of the century in 1999. After his professional sports career ended, Thorpe lived in abject poverty. He worked several odd jobs, struggled with alcoholism, and lived out the last years of his life in failing health.
- In 1983, thirty years after his death, his Olympic medals were restored.

### Arapahoe "Ghost Dance", 1890



### Chief Big Foot's Lifeless Body Wounded Knee, SD, 1890



### Indian Reservations Today



### Geronimo, Apache Chief: Hopeless Cause



### The Ghost Dance Movement -1890

- Paiute medicine man Wovoka promised the return of the buffalo and Indian way of life.
- The religion prophesied the end of the westward expansion of whites and a return of Indian land.
- The ritual lasted five successive days, being danced each night and on the last night continued until morning.
  - Hypnotic trances and shaking accompanied this ceremony, which was supposed to be repeated every six weeks.



### GHOST DANCE

Telegram to Washington, D.C.  
Nov. 15, 1890

"Indians are dancing in the snow and are wild and crazy. I have fully informed you that the employees and the government property at this agency have no protection and are at the mercy of the Ghost Dancers. ... We need protection and we need it now ...nothing [short] of 1000 troops will stop this dancing."

Dr. Daniel F. Royer, Agent,  
Pine Ridge Agency

## GHOST SHIRT



Indian warriors fighting against the US wore Ghost Shirts which were to stop the penetration of American soldiers bullets.....It gave them supernatural powers as was believed.....

## The Ghost Dance Movement -1890

- Ghost Dance movement spread to Sitting Bull and the Sioux
- They religiously danced even after they were told to stop by reservation authorities.
- Military went to arrest Sitting Bull, where he was killed.
- Many Sioux followers left the reservation and became hostile



## Battle of Wounded Knee – Dec.1890



- 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry rounded up starving and freezing Sioux and took them to Wounded Knee camp.
- They attempted to confiscate all weapons.

## Battle of Wounded Knee – Dec.1890

- Violence erupted, 300 Indians and 25 whites lay dead.
- This is the last of the Indian conflicts.



Chief Big Foot

## Battle of Wounded Knee – Dec.1890



- The dead of Big Foot's people were buried in a mass grave. The still frozen stiff bodies were dumped unceremoniously into the hole.
- The United States handed out over twenty Congressional Medals of Honor to soldiers of the Seventh Cavalry who had participated in the battle.

## Chief Joseph, Nez Perce



Nez Percé tribal retreat (1877)



- Refused to recognize the authority of a 2<sup>nd</sup> treaty with the US Government reducing his tribal land.
- Refusing to go to the reservation, he led his tribe on a 1,400 march trying to get to Canada. Trying to meet up with Sitting Bull.
- Eventually surrendered.
- In 3 months, the band of about 700, 200 of whom were warriors, fought 2,000 U.S. soldiers in 4 major battles and skirmishes

## CHIEF JOSEPH

I am tired of fighting. Our chiefs are killed. Looking Glass is dead. It is cold, and we have no blankets. The little children are freezing to death. My people, some of them, have run away to the hills, and have no blankets, no food. No one knows where they are -- perhaps freezing to death. I want to have time to look for my children, and see how many of them I can find. Maybe I shall find them among the dead. *Hear me, my chiefs! I am tired. My heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands I will fight no more forever.*

"the Indians throughout displayed a courage and skill that elicited universal praise... [they] fought with almost scientific skill, using advance and rear guards, skirmish lines, and field fortifications."

*General William Tecumseh Sherman*

# the myth & legend of the west

## Facts, Myths & Legends of the West

- **The Wild West:** Some elements of the frontier myths were true.
- Yet, many wild towns of the West calmed down fairly quickly or disappeared.
- By the 1880s, the frontier had many churches and a variety of social groups.
- Major theatrical productions toured growing western cities.
- The East had come West.



### William "Buffalo Bill" Cody's Wild West Show



### William "Buffalo Bill" Cody's Wild West Show



**"Buffalo Bill" Cody & Sitting Bull**



**Legendary Female Western Characters**



**Calamity Jane**



**Annie Oakley**

***The Fall of the Cowboy*  
Frederick Remington**



what were the  
long-term effects  
of the westward  
experience?

**Destruction of the Buffalo Herds**



**The near extinction of the buffalo.**

**Yellowstone National Park**



**First national park  
established in 1872.**

### National Parks



### Conservation Movement



John Muir



With President Theodore Roosevelt

### Sierra Club

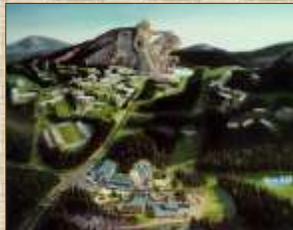


Founded in 1892

### Mt. Rushmore: Black Hills, SD

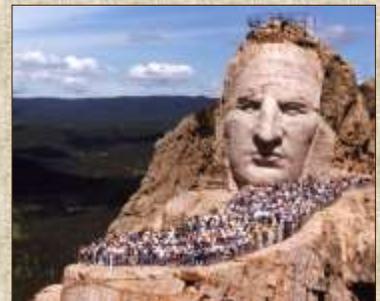


### Horczak Ziolkowski, Sculptor Crazy Horse Monument



His vision of the finished memorial.

### Crazy Horse Monument: Black Hills, SD



## Frederick Jackson Turner



*The Significance of the Frontier  
in American Society (1893)*

## TURNER THESIS

- With Indians on the reservation by 1890, the [United States Census Bureau](#) announced the official end of the frontier.
- The population in the West had become dense, and the days of free western land had come to an end.
  - In 1893, historian Frederick Jackson Turner claimed that the frontier had played a key role in forming the American character.
- The [Turner Thesis](#), stated that frontier life created Americans who were socially mobile, ready for adventure, bent on individual self-improvement, committed to democracy and able to withstand difficult times to accomplish the American Dream...



*Frederick  
Jackson  
Turner*

### **"RUGGED INDIVIDUALIST"**

The frontier created the American character of one who was self-sufficient, persistent and able to withstand difficult times to accomplish the American Dream...

