

The American West – the essentials!

The Early Settlement of the West C.1835-1862

The Plains Indians:

Indians lived in bands, in a tipi with 10-50 families in a band.

Men looked after the horses and hunted, women cooking and cleaning and tipi – RAISE CHILDREN

Old people valued.

Nomadic lifestyle – dependent on the buffalo – EVERY part was used and followed a buffalo dance (spoke to spirits)

Horses were VITAL – to hunt, travel after the buffalo and to show wealth.

Land was valued and respected. No-one could own the land as it gave them life itself.

War was seen as small raids to get horses or revenge. It did not happen in the winter – it was a summer activity. Indians took scalps as trophies and even after introduction of guns, counting coup (touching the enemy) was still considered very important.

Reservations were set up to give the Native Americans their own land – over time these became known as hostile areas.

In **1830 the Indian Removals Act**, established a Permanent Indian Frontier. Border between the Indians and whites.

The **Indian Appropriations Act 1851**- set up legally recognised Indian reservations

Migration and Early settlement

Manifest Destiny: White Am believed they SHOULD occupy the whole of the US. They believed it was their Manifest Destiny and God given duty to spread civilisation.

1837 – Economic crisis in the East which forced many white am to look for other places to live. They looked to the fertile lands in the West (California and Oregon)

The Gold Rush of 1849 – miners who went to California to search for gold (and make their fortune) By 1852 to population of California had grown from 15,000 to 250,000 by 1852.

In order to get to the West – families followed the Oregon Trail in waggons. There were MANY DANGERS lack of food supplies, drought, and harsh conditions.

The Donner Party 1846 – resorted to cannibalism in order to survive in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. They had taken a short cut which was unproven and had poor leadership. 46/87 survived.

Mormon migration 1846 – following the death of Joseph Smith and under the strict leadership of Brigham Young more than 16,000 Mormons settled in an area known as the Salt Lake. They followed polygamy (more than one wife)

Farming the Plains -Some families settled on the Plains. There were huge problems of living and farming including, lack of water, extreme heat in the summer, cold in the winter, grassland had never been ploughed before and was VERY difficult to plough. Wildfire and grasshoppers were also a problem as they destroyed crops.

Conflict and Tension

As the families travelled across and settled on the plains they came in to conflict with the Native am.

Fort Laramie Treaty 1851- Treaty agreed by US government and Plains Indians Nations (but NOT ALL tribes)

Separated the two sides and set up reservations. Plains Indians not attack and allow bridges and roads in order to receive a subsidy.

Problems of lack of law caused by lack of families, lots of men, lack of law officers and vast open wild spaces as well as the practice of carrying a weapon. Vigilante action was a response to this.

Response to the lack of law was, county sheriff who ran county law, the jail and had deputies. Township constable and city marshal- he was elected and ran the town jail. The courts investigated crime and death with a Grand Jury who passed sentences and indictments.

Development of the Plains C.1862-1876

The development of settlement in the west

The civil war 1861-1865 brought problems to the west such as displaced troops.

Building of the Central Pacific Railroad 1865 - to make more money the railroad company encouraged people to buy land by the railroad and in 1869 the two sides of the railroad Central Pacific and Union Pacific met at Promontory Point. This meant people could travel from one side of America to another and promoted another wave of migration on to the Plains and to the west coast. The men building the railroad needed feeding and buffalo meat was a common food – with a big impact on the Plains Indians.

Homestead Act 1862, Southern Homestead Act 1866, Timber Culture Act 1873, and Desert Land Act 1877 all provided cheap land to settlers which further promoted settlement on the plains and in the west.

Solutions to the problems of farming

Windmills – pump water from underground, **Dry farming** (trap moisture in the land) **John Deere** invented a strong steel plough, **railroads** brought building equipment and in **1874 Barbed wire** was invented which could protect cattle, livestock and crops.

Lawlessness remained because of x soldiers who were displaced (with weapons)

Stage coach and train robberies were common as these methods of travel expanded.

Ranching and the Cattle Industry

Cattle grew rapidly during the civil war as the men managing the herds were fighting far from Texas.

Abilene became an IMPORTANT cow town as cowboys could drive the cattle from Texas to Abilene, they could then put the cattle on to trains and ship them East (where they would sell for a much higher price)

1868 – Abilene prospered because cowboys got paid when they arrived and they spent their money on gambling, drinking and on prostitutes.

A cowboy was originally a skilled horseman from Spain/Mexico. The job of the cowboy was to patrol the area of cattle and brand the cattle. They were often lonely and not well paid. As more cattle were taken to cow towns such as Abilene the cowboy's role changed to one on the drives, herding for example.

Iliff, one of the earliest cattle ranchers – realised that cattle could survive on the Plains. Made his fortune selling meat to railroad builders.

Goodnight, discovered that Texas Longhorn could survive winter on plains and that the winter killed the disease carrying ticks which lived on the cattle. Experimented with cattle breeding and produced better quality meat.

McCoy, cattle rancher who set up Abilene by buying land, building stock pens, advertising the town as a cattle shipping point and signposting the town.

There was rivalry between the cattle ranchers and homesteaders over land, water and rustlers – these develop later in the period.

Changes in the way of life of Plains Indians

The settlement of the Plains destroyed buffalo hunting/grazing grounds which threatened the Native Am way of life. Buffalo were also killed as meat for the white population (building the railroad etc..) Buffalo hunting also became a popular sport. Leather Industry benefitted as hides could be shipped (via the train) to the growing markets in the east and west.

Sand Creek Massacre 1864 meant that the US government tried to reach a peace settlement with the Indians. 1868 2nd Fort Laramie Treaty which created the Great Sioux Reservation.

Little Crows War 1861-62 - Santee Sioux reservation was not suitable for farming and native am had to live on credit. Violence erupted and settlers were killed. The army moved in and Santee Sioux surrendered.

The Cheyenne wars 1864-67 - Gold was discovered in Colorado which was a hunting ground. However Miners were allowed to travel across the land. There was outbreaks of violence between the miners and native am in 1867 a Peace commission was set up which gave the Arapaho and Cheyenne a choice move to a reservation or be seen as hostile. The chiefs signed the Treaty of Medicine Lodge in 1867 – agreeing to move to a reservation.

Conflicts and Conquest C.1876-1895

Changes in farming, the cattle industry and settlement

Farming improved in this period due to a number of reasons

1. Railroad brought equipment which was cheaper than it had been previously (it had to be brought by hand)
2. James Oliver improved steel ploughs – allowed farmers to plough more land
3. Increased crops meant a surplus which could be sold for money which could be invested in better equipment
4. Droughts in 1870s and 1880s still brought problems

Changes to cattle industry - Refrigerated railcars meant that more cattle could be shipped further afield however overgrazing led to problems of open range ranching and the winter of 1886-87 meant that the open range days were over. The open range was replaced by smaller ranches.

The Exoduster movement was during the 1870s when freed black slaves moved to Kansas to escape racism, the KKK, intimidation and attacks.

The Oklahoma Land Rush 1893

First Oklahoma Land Rush was in 1889 when land which had previously been part of Indian Territory became open for settlement. The second Land Rush in 1893 largest America had ever seen. Many people were disappointed as the promised 100,000 plots of land turned out to be 42,000.

Conflict and Tension

As towns grew, sheriffs and marshals were employed to solve the town's violence. The famous example is of Virgil Earp (Town marshal) and his brothers Wyatt and Morgan who came in to conflict with outlaws such as Doc Holliday and the Clantons. After the famous shoot out at the OK corral (which the Earp's won) the town of Tombstone Arizona became much more peaceful.

The Lincoln County War 1878 – conflict between ranchers/miners/homesteaders

Brought about when John Tunstall by the House Cowboys. Billy the Kid and others set about avenging his murder. In total 30 people died before the conflict was over.

The Johnson County War 1892 – A war between cattle barons and homesteaders in Wyoming. The first killing took place in 1889 and it carried on until 1892. No charges were brought as the courts ran out of money. It did however reduce the power of the barons.

The Great Sioux War 1876-77 - A military expedition by the US military to protect railway and miners in the black hills led to war with the Sioux. The US government offered to buy the Black hills, which was rejected and led to the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

The Battle of the Little Big Horn 1876 - Great victory for American Indians under Crazy Horse as they had superior numbers and weapons- Winchester repeating rifles (compared to US cavalry and General Custer) Custer made major strategic mistakes. Led to outcry by US public who wanted further campaigns against the Sioux.

Wounded Knee Massacre 1890 - An American Holy man had a vision which declared that if Am Indians stayed peaceful and did the Ghost Dance then all the whites would go and the Buffalo would return. The Dance spread rapidly amongst the Indians n the reservations and when Big Foot refused to stop (as it had been banned) he was captured and arrested. Whilst his weapons were being taken from him one of his friends resisted and the US army opened fire. 146 Native Am were killed and 25 soldiers. Amongst the Indian dead were old people, women and children. **This was the end of the Plains wars.**

The Plains Indians: the destruction of their way of life

In order to destroy the Indian way of life the US government encouraged the extermination of the Buffalo (as Indian way of life depended on them)

Hunters sold the buffalo hide and the bones were transported to the east as glue, fertiliser etc...

Life on the Reservation

Reservation life was very difficult as the land was poor and they could not live their traditional way of life.

Problems included:

1. Some Indians who acted as agents as a link between the US and the tribes were dishonest and stole money from both sides.
2. Many suffered from diseases such as measles
3. Indians had little legal status
4. Religious feasts, dances and ceremonies (which were so important to their culture) were banned
5. Many native am children were sent away to boarding school to be educated in the white way. If families resisted their rations would be stopped.
6. The reservations destroyed their tribal structure, their self-belief and their community.

The Indians Appropriations Act 1871 was **the most EFFECTIVE piece of law** which destroyed the Indians as it marked the end of them being seen as a sovereign (their own) people.

1876 US tried peace by forcing Indians on to reservations

1887 – The Dawes General Allotment Act allowed reservations to be split into separate plots, which destroyed the power of American Chiefs and their tribal structure.