

SECTION 1

TAMING THE WESTERN FRONTIER

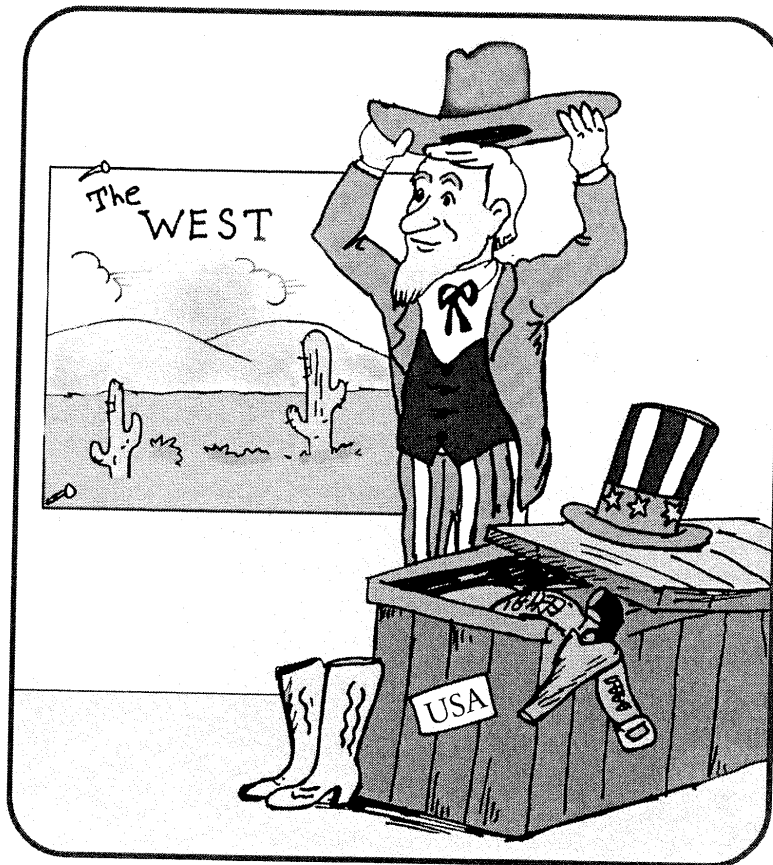
1865-1890

After the Civil War ended in 1865, a restless generation of Americans took the advice of New York *Tribune* editor Horace Greeley:

“GO WEST YOUNG MAN, AND GROW UP WITH THE COUNTRY.”

And so began the taming and settling of the West, one of the most colorful, dramatic adventure tales of America.

America's motto? asked English editor Charles Mackay—
“GO AHEAD!”

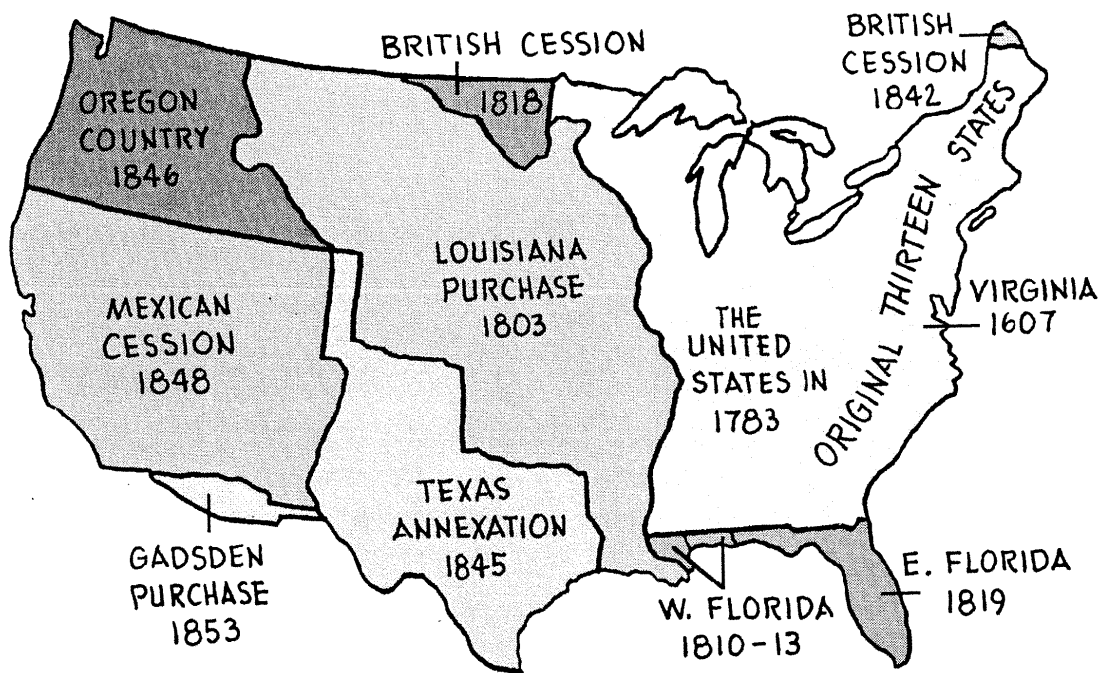


1-1 ★ THE WEST: WHERE IS IT?

"Few people even know the true definition of the term 'West';
And where is its location?

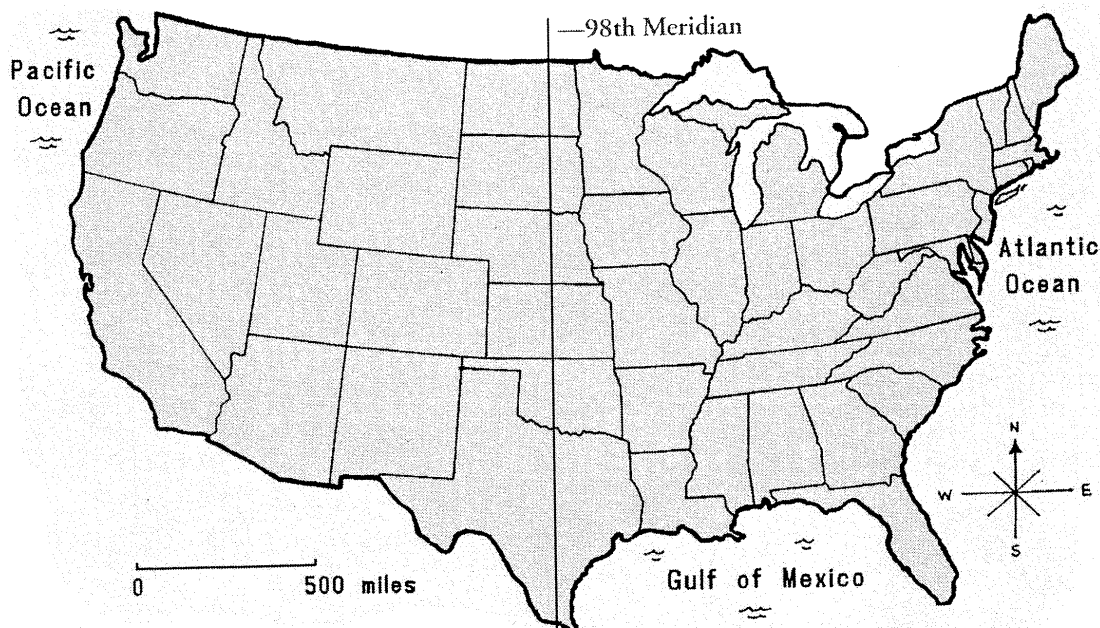
Phantom-like it flies before us as we travel...."—George Catlin, 1859

THE UNITED STATES EXPANDED WESTWARD UNTIL IT STRETCHED "FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA."
AS IT DID SO, AMERICANS THOUGHT OF THE WEST AS, WELL, FARTHER WEST.



DRAW A LINE WHERE YOU THINK THE WEST IS.

Historian Bernard De Voto characterized the West as beginning at the 98th meridian. Why?
Annual rainfall west of the 98th meridian is less than 20 inches,
beginning a semiarid region of the country
where grasslands replace woodlands.



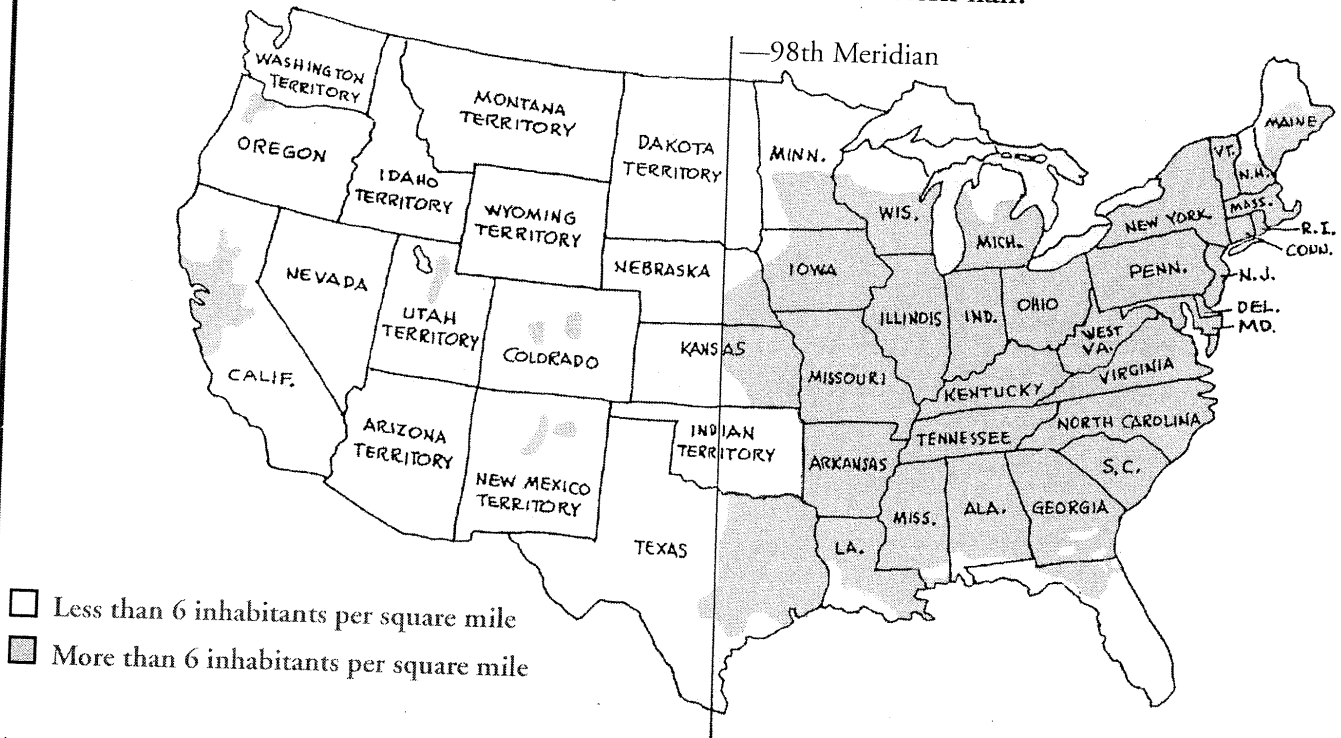
1-2 ★ 1876—THE WESTERN FRONTIER AND PATTERNS OF SETTLEMENT

frontier—the border of settlement

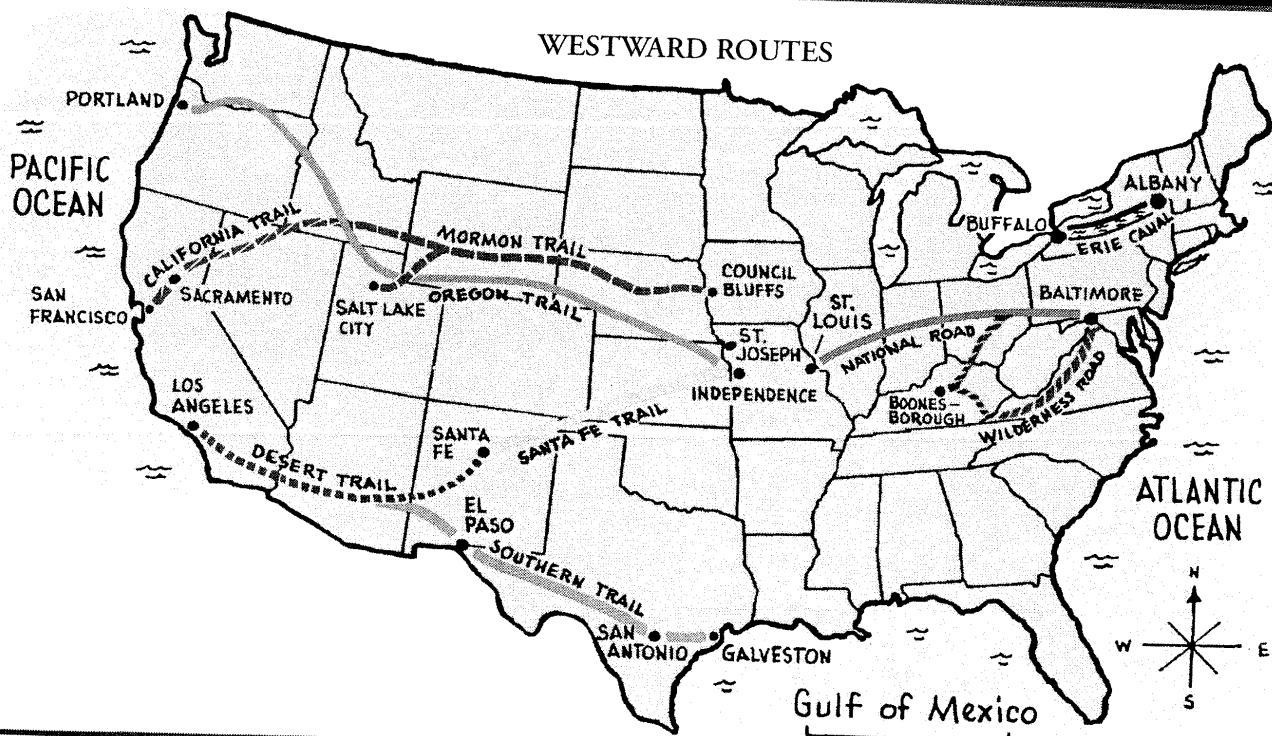
U.S. POPULATION: PATTERNS OF SETTLEMENT IN 1876

In 1876 the western frontier extended approximately to the 98th meridian. Then, between 1876 and 1890, the western population grew so rapidly that the 1890 United States Census Report declared the frontier closed, the country settled.

Why did it take 100 years to settle the eastern half of the country and only 14 years to settle the western half?



EARLY SETTLERS TRAVELED WESTWARD ROUTES TO THE FAR WEST, SKIPPING OVER THE MIDWEST. WHY?

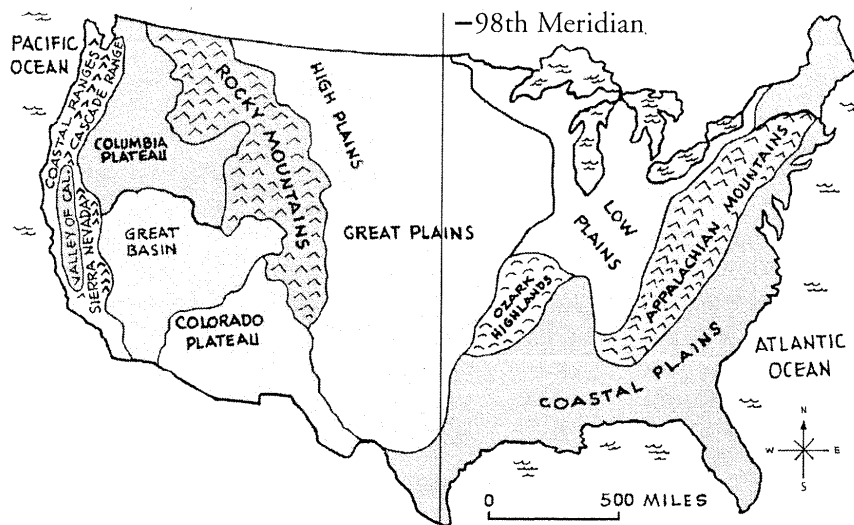


1-3 ★ THE GREAT PLAINS: A FEARSOME ENVIRONMENT

frontier—land that forms the furthest extent of an inhabited region

THE “GREAT AMERICAN DESERT”

For two centuries American pioneers had moved westward from one woodland frontier to another. But attempts to cross the Great Plains —called the “Great American Desert,” on early maps—were dangerous.



The Great Plains, a dry, level, treeless area, comprises one-fifth the area of the United States. It stretches from the 98th meridian westward to the Rocky Mountains and from Texas northward to the Canadian border.

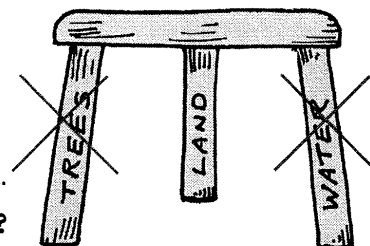
By the 1840s the western frontier had reached the edge of the Great Plains. Then it skipped 1,500 miles to the Pacific Coast, where the 1849 gold rush had drawn settlers to California. Why the skip? Why did the Great Plains remain practically uninhabited except by Native Americans from 1840 to the 1870s?

Historian Walter Prescott Webb described the problem in his book *The Great Plains*. “East of the Mississippi [River] civilization stood on three legs: land, water, and trees. West of the Mississippi, civilization stood on one leg: LAND.

The canoe, ax, and rifle were useless.” A plainscraft instead of a woodcraft was needed.

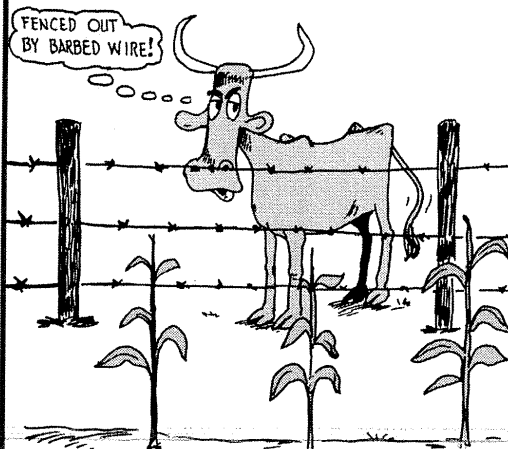
Between 1870 and 1890 rapid settlement of the Great Plains did occur. Why?

According to Webb, settlement came with the invention of plainscraft tools and weapons. What do you think?

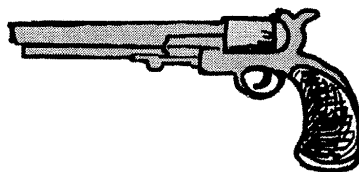


THREE INVENTIONS THAT TAMED THE GREAT PLAINS

BARBED WIRE—Invented in 1864 by Joseph Glidden, “bob war” as it was often called, allowed farmers to build fences, despite the lack of wood from trees.



COLT REVOLVER—Invented by Samuel Colt in 1835, the repeater pistol could fire several shots without reloading. This proved an advantage in fighting Indians, who could shoot many arrows by the time it took to reload a rifle.



WINDMILL—In 1854 Daniel Halladay invented the self-regulating windmill. It turned its face to the wind and adjusted to its force. This added power to the pumping of water from deep wells, crucial on the Plains where annual rain was less than 20 inches.



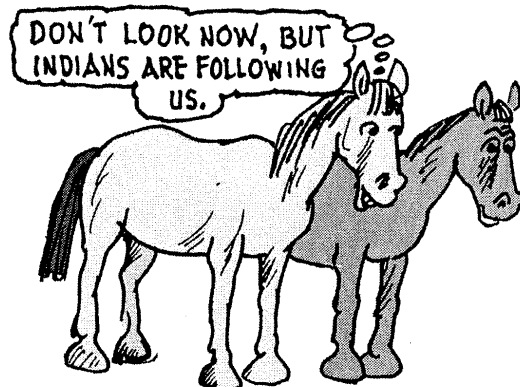
1-4 ★ INDIAN BARRIER TO THE GREAT PLAINS

Only a few Indian tribes lived on the Great Plains before Spaniards brought horses to North America. But then...

In 1540 Spanish Conquistador Francisco Vasquez de Coronado and his followers explored the American Southwest, paving the way for Spanish settlers who arrived with cattle and horses. For 140 years Spaniards who settled in the Southwest kept their horses from the Pueblo Indians among whom they settled.



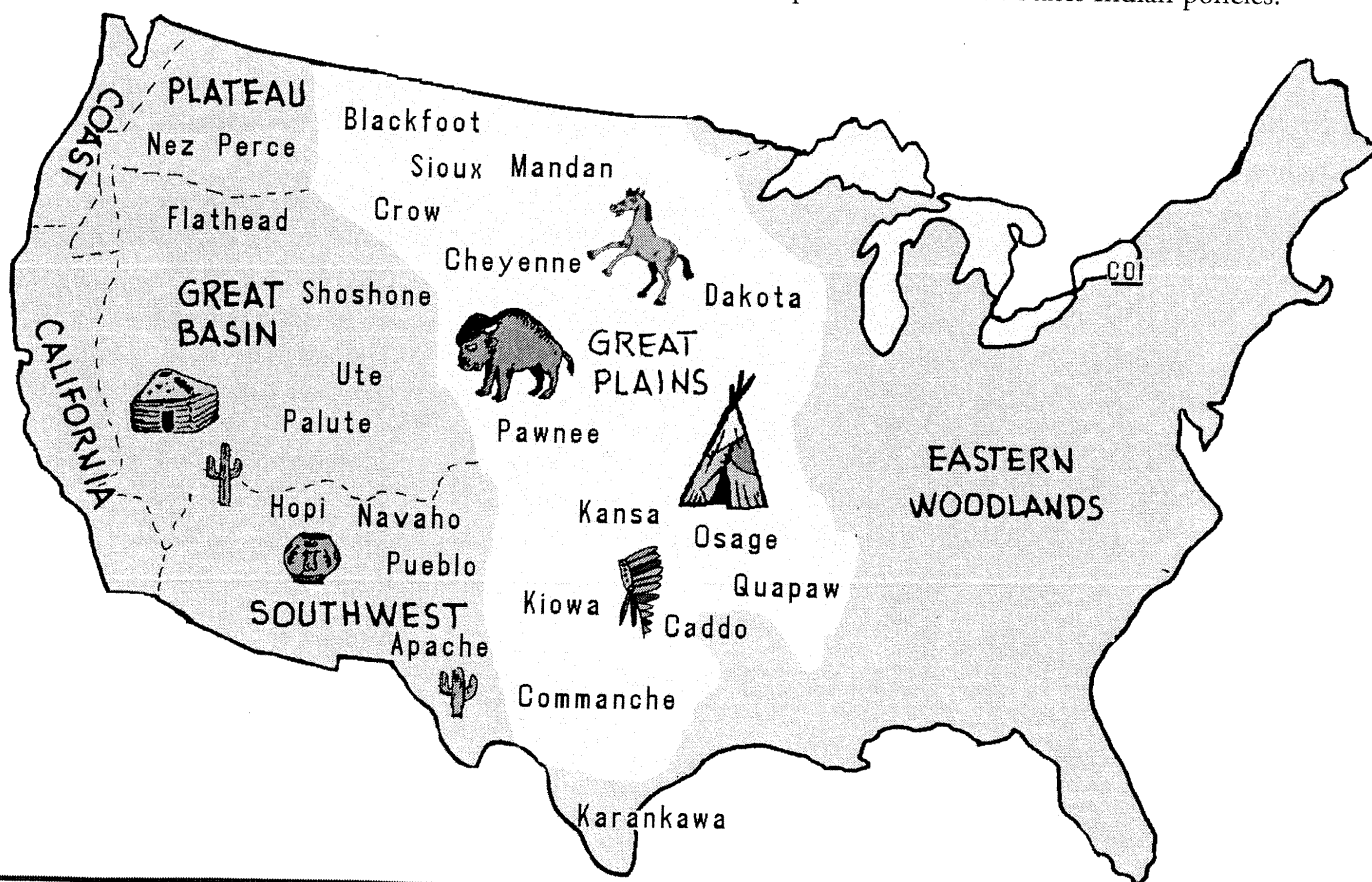
In 1680 the Pueblo Indians revolted against the Spaniards, shaking their power for twelve years and allowing Spanish horses to spread from the Southwest to the North and East—and on to the Great Plains.



By 1780 Great Plains Indians were using horses to hunt buffalo and thus could live on the "Great American Desert."

Horses enabled the Indians to adopt a new way of life in which their existence did not depend on growing meager crops on the Plains' semiarid grasslands. Before acquiring horses they faced starvation hunting buffalo on foot. Now, on horseback, they could chase huge herds of buffalo for hundreds of miles and have an abundance of food.

Indian population on the Great Plains tripled between 1680 and 1780. By the mid 1800s 225,000 Indians roamed the Plains. These Indians were a barrier to white settlement until the invention of new technology (including the Colt revolver and transcontinental railroads) and expansionist United States Indian policies.

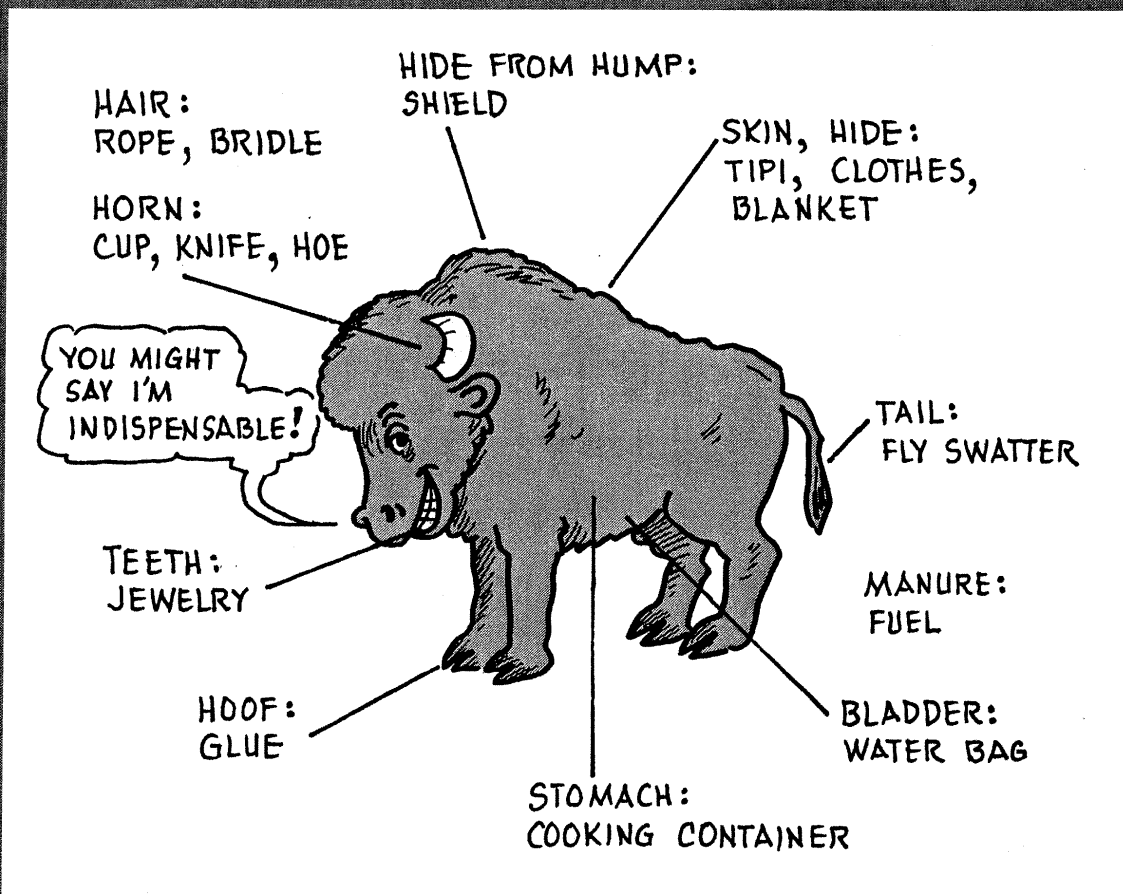


1-5 ★ LIFE WITH THE BUFFALO

From 1780 to 1880, Great Plains Indians lived a unique, colorful, nomadic existence following the buffalo. They were called “wild Indians” by white frontiersmen.

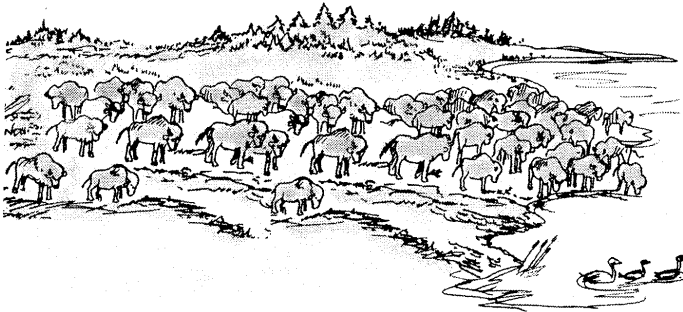


Life for the Plains Indians revolved around the buffalo, for it provided every part of their livelihood: food, clothing, shelter, and fuel. Hunting buffalo herds became the central fact of their lives, and the buffalo became sacred to them.



In 1865 an estimated 15,000,000 buffalo roamed the Great Plains.

Herds were so numerous that in 1868 a Kansas & Pacific train waited eight hours while a buffalo herd crossed the track.



By 1885 only about 1,000 buffalo remained.

In 1937 only 34 remained.

WHAT HAPPENED?

Railroad companies building the first transcontinental railroad, between 1863 and 1869, paid railroad crews to kill buffalo for food—and for robes which were fashionable in the East.

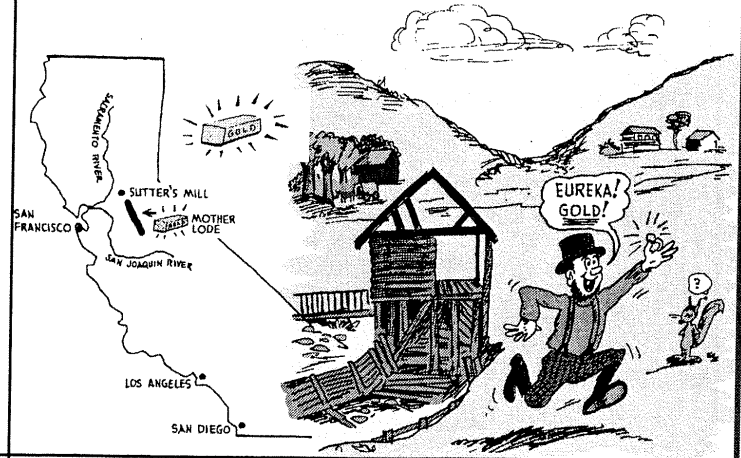
William F. Cody killed 4,280 buffalo in 18 months while working for the Kansas Pacific Railroad, earning the name "Buffalo Bill." According to his autobiography, *The Life of Hon. William F. Cody, Known as Buffalo Bill*, all that he killed were used to feed the railroad crews.

HMM, THIS WILL BE MY 4,000TH BUFFALO IN 18 MONTHS — BUT WHO'S COUNTING?



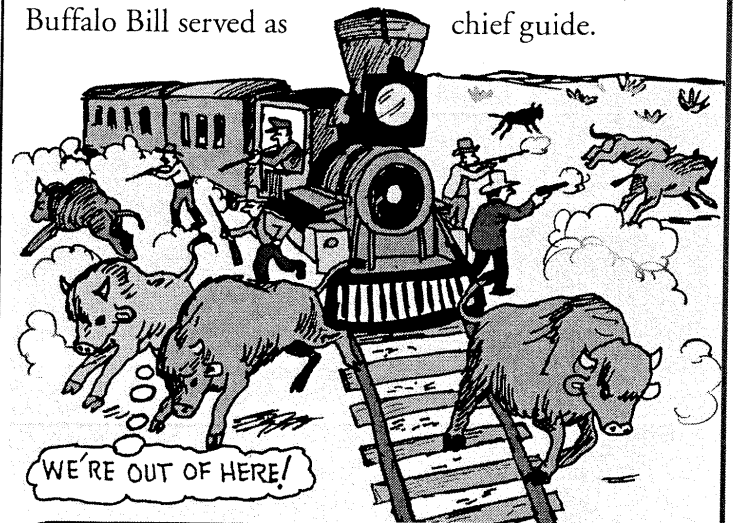
In 1849 gold was discovered in California.

To make travel across the Great Plains safer for whites rushing to find California gold, the United States adopted a policy of destroying the nomadic life of Plains Indians. How? By encouraging the killing of buffalo herds—the Indians' livelihood.



Railroad advertisements for buffalo safaris drew sportsmen from the eastern United States and from Europe. Dudes, most of them, they would lean out of train windows or take a few steps outside the rail cars and shoot buffalo.

Even the royals came. General William T. Sherman himself planned through the War Department a grandiose buffalo hunt for Grand Duke Alexis of Russia, son of Czar Alexander II. General George A. Custer was co-host for the 1872 Nebraska hunt, and Buffalo Bill served as chief guide.



Fortunately, the buffalo population has been rescued from extinction by preservationists. By the early twenty-first century the number of buffalo had increased to about 300,000.

United States Indian policies reflected and aided white settlers' desire for Indian lands.

Progressively, the United States Indian policies included:

1. REMOVAL
2. CONTAINMENT
3. RESERVATIONS

1. REMOVAL



In 1830 the Indian Removal Act forced the removal of southeastern Indian tribes to Indian Territory, present-day Oklahoma.

Part of the "Great American Desert," this unwanted land could be given to the Indians and never missed. In 1856 the *North American Review* described the Plains area as "a country destined to remain forever an uninhabited waste."

In a twist of fate, oil would someday be found on this "waste land" called Oklahoma.

2. CONTAINMENT

Easterners, increasingly attracted to the West, pressed the United States government to confine Plains Indians to limited hunting grounds.

In 1851 the United States Indian Bureau sent agent Thomas Fitzpatrick to summon a Great Council of the Tribes at Fort Laramie in Wyoming Territory.

More than 10,000 Indians, representing most of the Plains tribes, came to Fort Laramie. Major tribes agreed to hunting ground boundaries, from which federal authorities would exclude whites. Gifts and promises of annual payments persuaded the Indians.

- ◆ The Sioux were to stay north of the Platte River.
- ◆ The Cheyenne and Arapaho were to stay in the Colorado foothills.

Failure of Containment

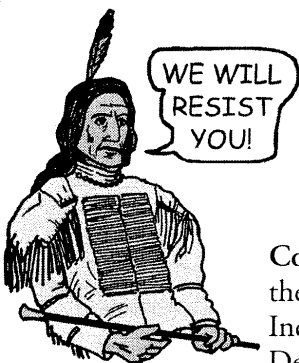
THEORY: The United States maintained that each tribe was a sovereign nation, to be treated as an equal in all treaties.

REALITY: The United States broke most of its treaties with Indians. Moreover, the Indian chiefs had limited power, and young braves often refused to accept the treaties to which the chiefs had agreed.

Broken promises by the United States soon followed the 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty as federal agents pressured tribes for further concessions. The 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act and the 1855-1859 discoveries of gold and silver in Nevada and Colorado encouraged Americans to move westward. By 1860 Plains Indians had lost all but 1.5 million of 19 million acres of hunting grounds given them in treaties.

The Sioux War, 1866-67

The Sioux Indians protested construction of the Bozeman trail that the United States was building through their hunting grounds in Montana. The trail was for the benefit of American gold miners.



CHIEF RED CLOUD

Sioux warriors, led by Chief Red Cloud, ambushed Captain W.J. Fetterman's federal troops, killing 82 United States soldiers.

Consequently, authority over the Indians passed from the Indian Bureau of the Interior Department to the War Department, and policies toughened.

3. RESERVATIONS

In 1867 the Congressional Peace Commission was appointed to end the Sioux War and begin a restrictive Reservation Policy. Plains Indians would be settled on two reservations: Dakota Territory and Indian Territory (Oklahoma).

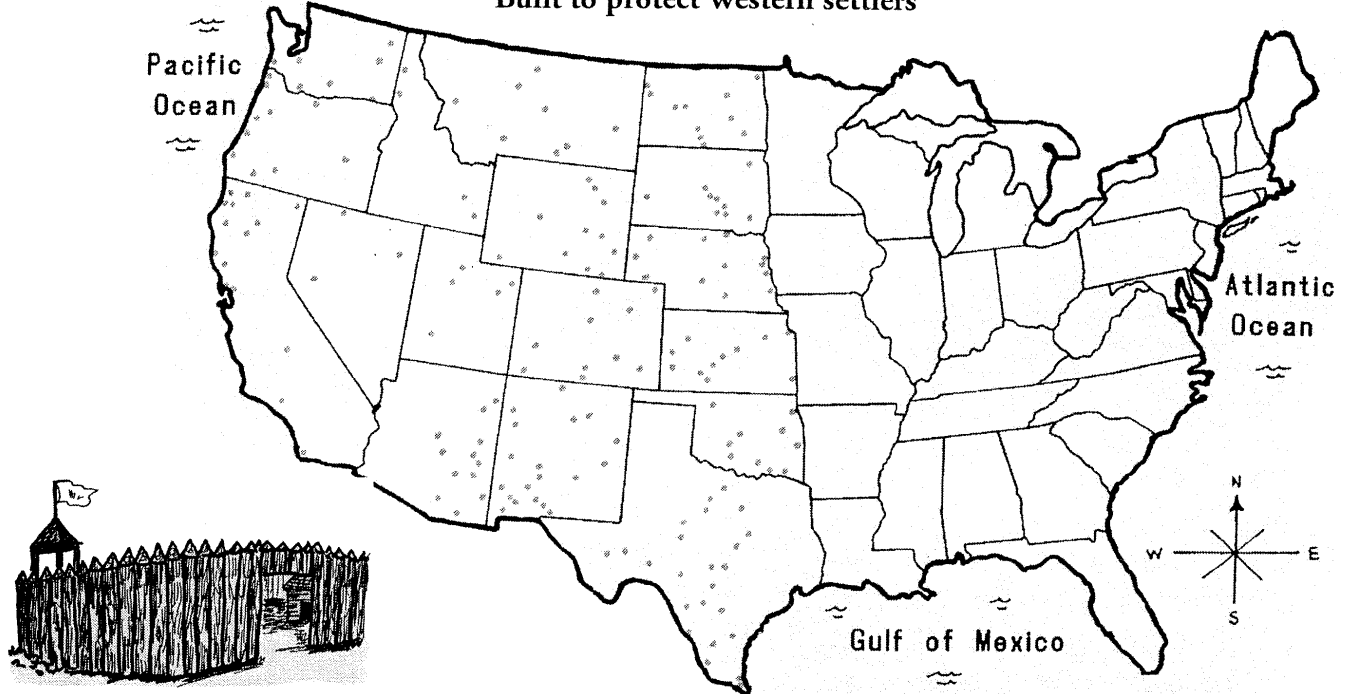
Here they were to: "abandon old habits and become farmers" and "learn to walk the white man's road."

Most tribes agreed, but some refused. With their whole way of life at stake, fierce warfare raged across the Plains.

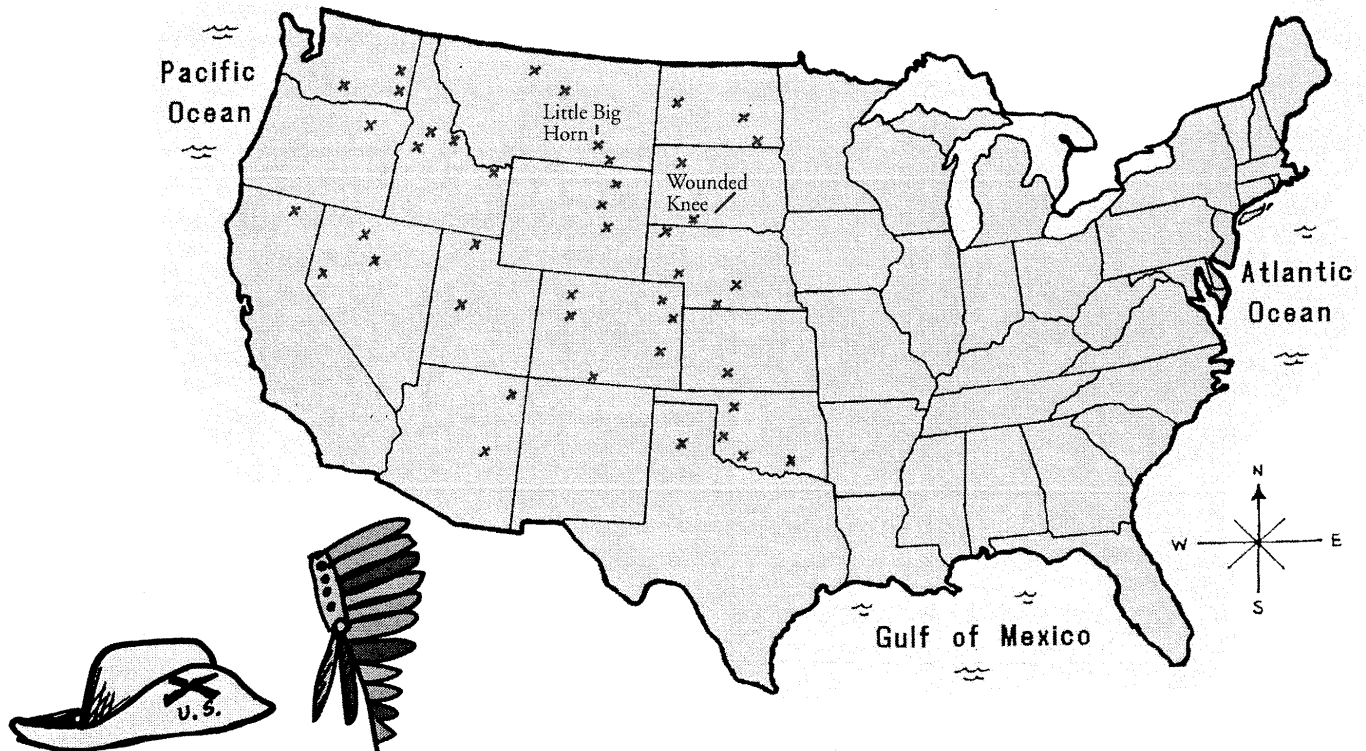


FAILURE OF THE CONTAINMENT AND RESERVATION POLICIES RESULTED IN WARFARE BETWEEN INDIANS AND WHITES—FROM THE 1860s TO THE 1876 BATTLE OF LITTLE BIG HORN AND ENDING IN 1890 WITH A MASSACRE OF SIOUX INDIANS BY FEDERAL TROOPS AT WOUNDED KNEE.

FEDERAL FORTS,
Built to protect Western settlers



MAJOR INDIAN BATTLES, 1860s-1890



THE BATTLE OF LITTLE BIGHORN, JUNE 25, 1876, WAS THE LAST MAJOR BATTLE OF THE INDIAN WARS. SOME 2,500 SIOUX AND CHEYENNE WARRIORS, DIRECTED BY CHIEF SITTING BULL AND LED BY CHIEF CRAZY HORSE, KILLED LT. COLONEL GEORGE C. CUSTER AND ALL OF HIS 264 TROOPS FROM THE UNITED STATES SEVENTH CAVALRY.

It all started with gold.

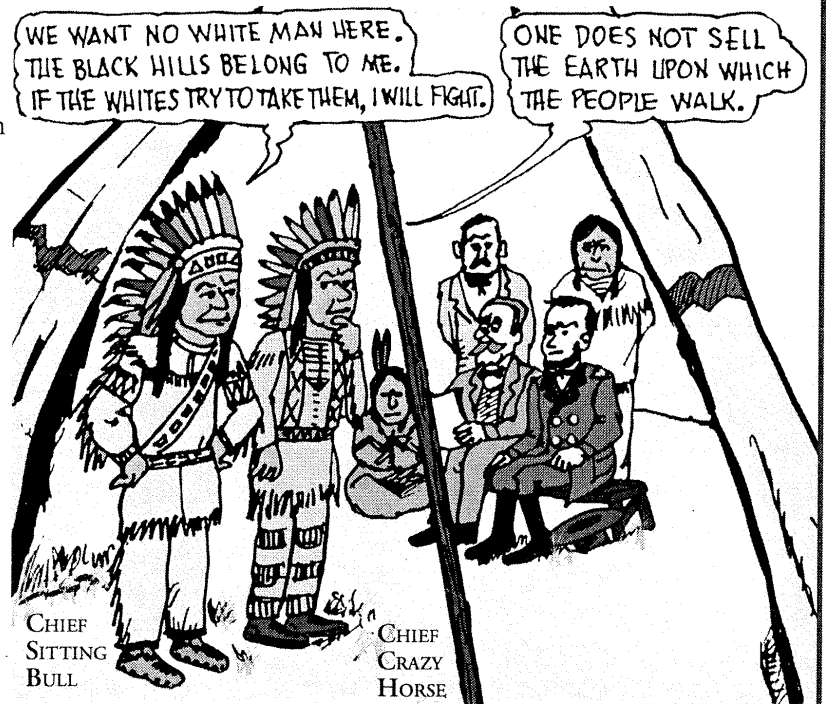


In 1874 gold was discovered on the Sioux Indian reservation in the Black Hills of present-day South Dakota and Wyoming. The United States had given this land to the Sioux as a permanent home in the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie.

Federal troops tried unsuccessfully for a year to prevent hundreds of miners from invading the Black Hills, land sacred to the Sioux because it was their ancestral burial ground.

The United States sent General Philip Sheridan and other agents to buy the land back from the Sioux, but Chief Sitting Bull and Chief Crazy Horse refused.

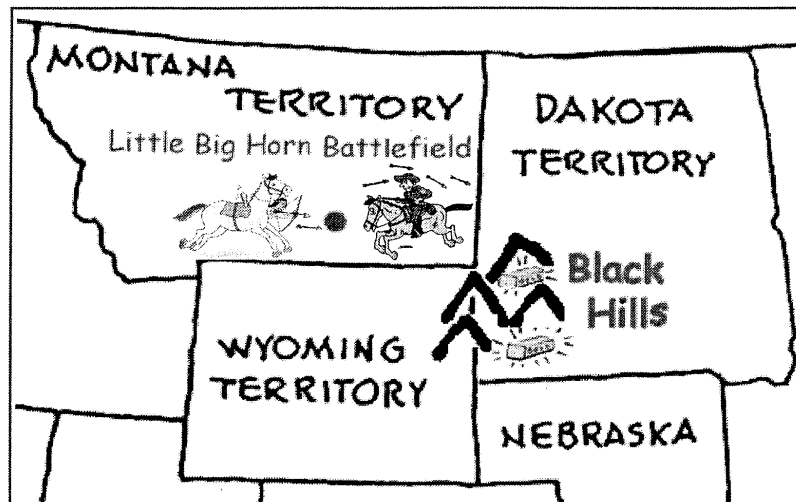
The Sioux went on the warpath to stop the gold rush. They concentrated their forces, which included Cheyenne warriors, near the Little Big Horn River in Montana Territory.



CUSTER'S LAST STAND



LT. COLONEL
GEORGE A. CUSTER



CHIEF
SITTING BULL

On June 25, 1876, Lt. Colonel George A. Custer disobeyed orders to wait for reinforcements and ordered an attack against a large camp of Sioux and Cheyenne warriors near the Little Big Horn River in Montana. He faced formidable opponents in Chief Sitting Bull, the strategist, and Chief Crazy Horse, the war leader. The Sioux and Cheyenne easily surrounded Custer, killing him and all 264 soldiers he commanded.

This was a watershed event in American history. Suffering their worst defeat in the Indian wars, federal troops set out with a vengeance to capture Sitting Bull and Crazy horse and force the Plains Indians to live on reservations. They were successful in this mission—Crazy Horse surrendered in 1877, Sitting Bull in 1881—and in opening up the Plains for unimpeded white settlement.

African-American soldiers were among the federal troops fighting Indians who resisted going to the reservations.

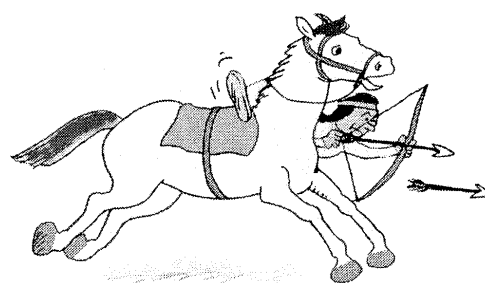
BUFFALO SOLDIERS

the Indians called them, a name the soldiers grew proud of because of the honored place buffalo had in Indian life.

(Later, in the 1898 Spanish-American War, Buffalo Soldiers would charge up Kettle Hill along with Theodore Roosevelt.)



Indians resisting reservation life fought fiercely. General Philip Sheridan said, "Often a mere 50 Indians could checkmate 3,000 soldiers." They could hang by the heel to one side of a horse and shoot arrows under its neck. They could do intricate cavalry maneuvers controlled by secret signals.



Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce Indians in Oregon and Idaho was a courageous resister. In 1877 he led his tribe 1,000 miles toward Canada before being captured.

He lamented:

"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."



CHIEF JOSEPH

The Apaches of Arizona were the last to resist capture. Cochise went to the reservation in 1872, but Geronimo continued to lead a war faction.

Geronimo was captured in 1886 and taken to the Oklahoma reservation, where he grew watermelons and taught a Sunday School class in the Dutch Reformed Church.

In 1904 Geronimo sold pictures of himself at the St. Louis World's Fair, and in 1905 he rode in President Theodore Roosevelt's inaugural parade.

Geronimo died at age 80 in 1909.



GERONIMO

1890: The Battle of Wounded Knee ended warfare with the Indians in a tragic way.

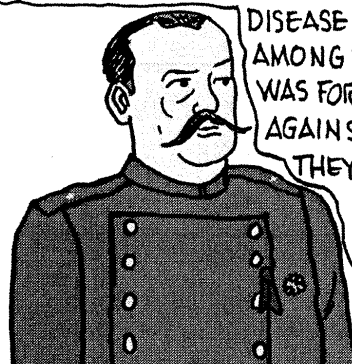
In 1884 the Interior Department had issued a criminal code forbidding Indian religious practices.

Disregarding the code, Plains Indians turned to an emotional religion as they faced an end to their way of life. It emphasized the coming of a messiah, as well as ghost dances, visions, and trances.

United States agents on the Sioux reservation feared that the emotionalism might lead to an insurrection. The federal troops they summoned killed 200 Dakota men, women, and children at a creek called Wounded Knee in present-day South Dakota.

General Philip Sheridan, in command of frontier troops after the Civil War, expressed his opinion about reasons for the Indian wars:

WE TOOK AWAY THEIR COUNTRY, THEIR MEANS OF SUPPORT.... INTRODUCED DISEASE AND DECAY AMONG THEM, AND IT WAS FOR THIS AND AGAINST THIS THAT THEY MADE WAR. COULD YOU EXPECT LESS?



THE DAWES SEVERALTY ACT AND CITIZENSHIP

In 1887 Congress passed the Dawes Severalty Act in an attempt to help Indians assimilate, that is to abandon collective, tribal society and become individual property owners—like white people.

The Dawes Severalty Act offered 160 acres of free land for heads of families and 80 acres for a single adult. The land could not be sold for 25 years.

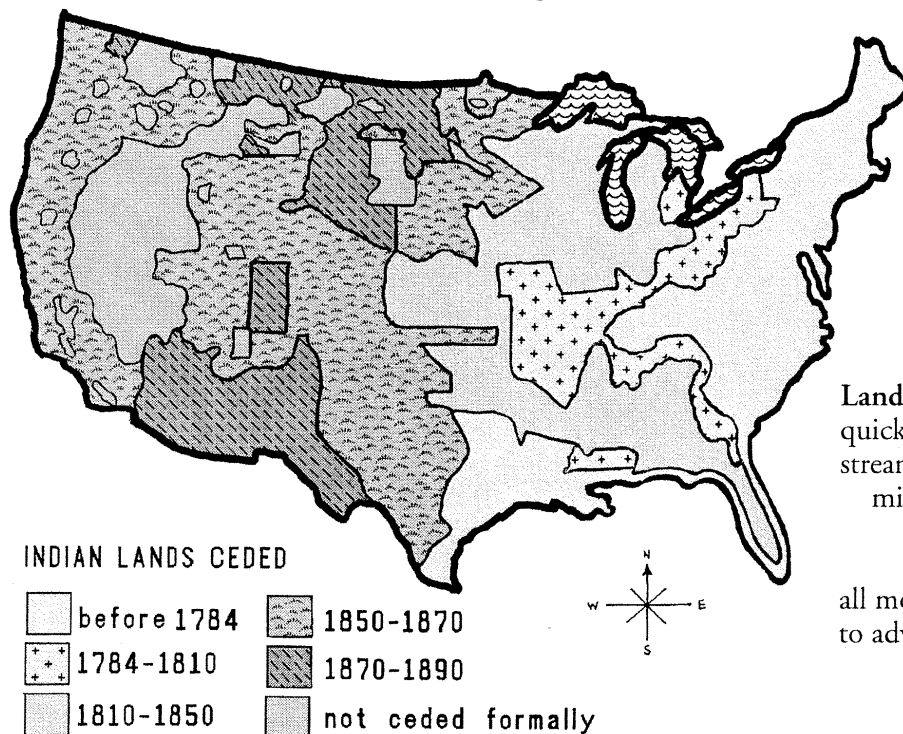
Limited citizenship accompanied the land, and in 1924 Congress granted full citizenship to all Indians.

How successful was the Dawes Act? By 1934, out of 138 million acres given to Indians under the Dawes Act, 86 million acres were in white hands. Therefore, in 1937 the government reversed itself and once again encouraged tribal ownership.



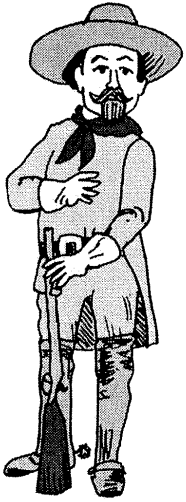
INDIAN LAND CESSIONS

United States history is marked by steady territorial expansion westward. Expansion came at a high cost to American Indians, for they were dispossessed of their lands through purchase, treaties, and force. The map below shows the areas of land ceded by the Indians through 1890.



Land ceded by the Indians quickly filled with a steady stream of miners, cowboys, and farmers—all moving westward to advance their fortunes.

I WAS THERE!



WILLIAM F. CODY
"BUFFALO BILL"

1846-1917

MEET WILLIAM F. CODY, better known as "Buffalo Bill," who was born in Iowa in 1846 and lived an adventurous life taming the Wild West, as he called it. Buffalo Bill was a rugged frontiersman of the Great Plains, beginning with adolescence:

- ◆ Age 12: He worked as a wagontrain bullwhacker on a trip to Wyoming.
- ◆ Age 13: He prospected in the Colorado gold rush.
- ◆ Age 15: He delivered mail as a Pony Express rider.



As an adult, Buffalo Bill:

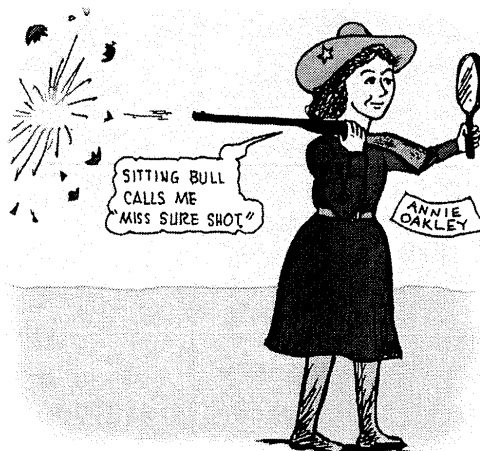
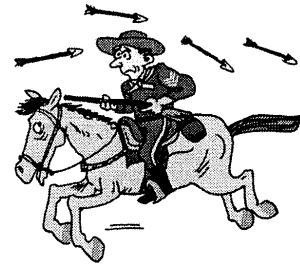
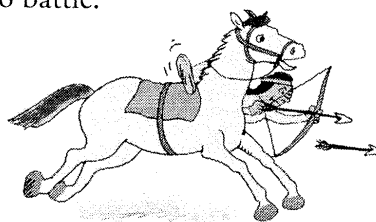
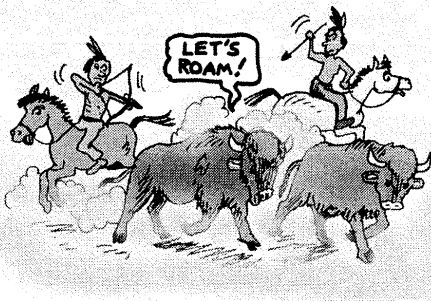
- ◆ fought in the Civil War with the Union's Seventh Kansas Cavalry
- ◆ married in 1863 and had four children, naming a son for Kit Carson
- ◆ hired on as a buffalo hunter to feed the Kansas Pacific Railroad construction crew, earning the name Buffalo Bill by killing 4,280 buffalo in 18 months
- ◆ served from 1868 to 1872 as a civilian scout for the Fifth Cavalry and fought in 16 Indian battles
- ◆ won the Congressional Medal of Honor in 1872 for his scouting service, although the award was revoked in 1916 because he had not been a regular member of the army at the time (In 1989 the award was restored posthumously.)
- ◆ became famous in the East as the hero of Ned Buntline's Western "dime novels"
- ◆ won acclaim portraying himself in Ned Buntline's play "The Scouts of the Plains," based on Buffalo Bill's own adventures.

HISTORY AS SHOW BUSINESS: BUFFALO BILL'S WILD WEST EXHIBITION

Buffalo Bill wanted to preserve the West's frontier history, and he did so with great success.

He created a living history exhibition of the Wild West, a traveling show so popular it played for three decades (1883-1913) before thousands of Americans and Europeans, including U.S. presidents and British monarchs.

Designed to educate and entertain, the outdoor extravaganza dramatized every aspect of frontier life: buffalo hunts with Sioux Indians and a buffalo herd, stagecoach attacks by Indians, and even Custer's Last Stand enacted by Sioux Indians who had fought in the 1876 battle.



Two of the show's most popular stars were **CHIEF SITTING BULL**, who toured briefly in 1885, and sharpshooter **ANNIE OAKLEY**.