

# GCSE History - American West Revision Notes

In the 1840s the Great Plains were sparsely inhabited by the Plains Indians. The Indians depended upon huge herds of buffalo that roamed the grasslands. To the few non-Indians who travelled across them, the Great Plains was seen as a useless desert.

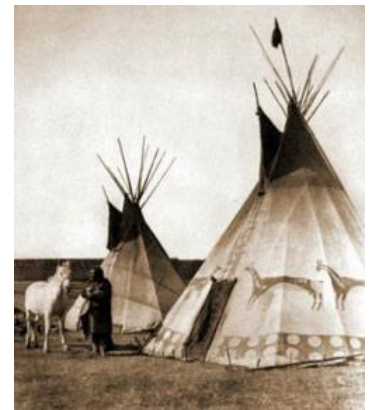
By 1895 the Great Plains were populated by thousands of homesteaders and ranchers. The once-empty grasslands were dotted with towns and cities and crossed by railroads. Those Plains Indians who still survived were confined to reservations and the buffalo had all been slaughtered.

## TOPIC 1 – THE PLAINS INDIANS

Native Americans used to be more commonly known as American Indians or the Plains Indians. This is because when Columbus thought he'd reached India when he first got to America in 1492. He soon realised he hadn't, but called the people Indians anyway. The Plains Indians weren't a single group with a single culture – there were many different tribes.

### Each family lived in a home called a tipi

The tipi was the home of each Indian family. It was made from buffalo skins sewn together and supported by a circular frame of wooden poles. It was the responsibility of the women. They made it, owned it, put it up and moved it. It could be taken down and packed for transport in ten minutes. This made it an ideal home for people who were frequently on the move.



In the summer the tipi bottom could be rolled up to let air in. In winter it could be banked with earth to keep the tipi warm. The conical shape of the tipi made it strong enough to resist the strong winds on the Great Plains.

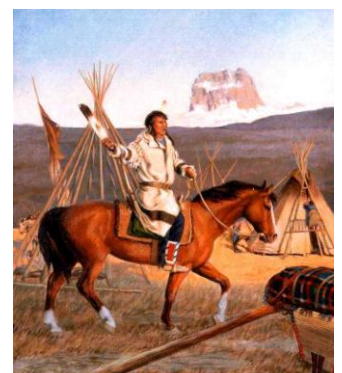
### They relied on the buffalo

- Plains Indians were nomadic hunter gatherers – they followed the buffalo around the Plains. They provided the necessities of life:
  - meat
  - skins for wool, clothing, shoes, tipis
  - sinews for thread, ropes, bowstrings
  - bones for implements
  - dung for fuel



### The horse increased the tribes' power and efficiency

- The lives of the Native Americans were transformed by the horse.
- It became much easier to hunt, and to transport stored food and other belongings across the Great Plains.



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## Religion – Spirits

- Believed in Wakan Tanka, the Great Spirit. He created the world and everything that lives.
- They believed all things had spirits and that spirits could influence their lives.

## Religion – Land

- The Plains Indians came from the land and would return to the land when they died.
- They believed the land could not be owned or bought by an individual, or even by a nation.
- High places were sacred, as they were closer to the spirit world.
- The Black Hills was particularly sacred to them, as this was the place where their nation began.

## Religion – Circles

- Sioux Indians believed in the circle of nature.
- Circles surrounded them: circular moon, circular sun and circular horizon.
- Indians lived through circle of life: birth, childhood, adulthood, old age, second childhood and death.
- Villages and the tipi were circular in honour of this.

## Religion – Dances and Ceremonies

- Dances were used when the whole tribe needed to contact the spirits.
- The Buffalo Dance was used to call the spirit world to call the buffalo to them.
- The most famous ceremony was the Sun Dance. This was used to get guidance from the Spirit World.

## Religion – Visions

- Visions were a way of contacting the spirit world; names were given as a result of visions.
- Women could easily contact the spirit world – this gave them status. Puberty and menstruation began the start of this process, and young girls received training on how to contact the spirit world.
- Visions influenced decision making, such as war.

## Religion – Medicine Men

- A 'medicine man' was an Indian man who people believed could cure illness by using the spirits.
- All spirit power was considered 'medicine'.
- People believed that they became ill if they possessed an evil spirit.
- Medicine men would try to drive out evil spirits; they sometimes used practical remedies such as herbs.

## Family life

- **Men** – responsible for hunting, looking after the horses and protecting the band. They were judged by their skills as hunters, warriors and horsemen.
- **Women** – responsible for the tipi, for preparing food and fetching water, and for making clothing and other items. They were judged by their skill at crafts and as home-makers. Women were highly valued as the bearers of children.

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- **Children** – highly valued as they were the future of the band. They learned useful skills from their parents and other relatives. Boys were taught to hunt whilst girls were taught to maintain a home.
- **Old people** – important as they were able to give advice. They were involved in helping to bring up the children. However, when they became too old and weak to keep up they might have to be left behind. The survival of the band was of greater importance than any individual.

## Political organisation of the Plains Indians

- In order to survive on the Great Plains the members of an Indian band had to co-operate and work closely together. They had to be well organised.
- Throughout the year the band would have to move across the Great Plains. From time to time bands would meet up to camp and hunt together.
- Once a year, and sometimes more often, the bands would meet together as a nation. Indian society was organised in a way that reflected the need for co-operation.

## Generosity was expected by chiefs in the tribe

- Plains Indians were highly individualistic and cherished fine possessions – but didn't accumulate more than they could use.
- Generosity to those in need was expected of those who could provide it, and it added to their prestige and power. Chiefs who weren't generous lost their influence.

## Most men were warriors

- Tribal warfare was part of the culture of many Native Americans. Low intensity warfare and raiding for animals and captives was a part of life and the usual way for men to gain prestige.
- "Counting coup" meant riding up to an enemy and merely touching him with a special stick, then getting away.
- Native Americans did not think of themselves as part of a Native American nation but as members of a particular tribe. Rival tribes therefore could be strangers and enemies to each other as much as to the white settlers.



## TOPIC 2 – THE EARLY PIONEERS

### Mountain Men

- Explorers and trappers (known as 'mountain men') had some knowledge of the routes that would later become the Oregon and California trails in the 1840s. In particular, the South Pass – the only possible route through the Rockies – was first discovered by the mountain men.
- Mountain men came from a variety of backgrounds, but all adopted Native American survival skills.

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## The Great American Desert

- Between the East and the fertile land in Oregon and California were The Great Plains.
- The extremes of climate, sparse rainfall and hard ground meant they were at first thought sustainable for agriculture. They were called the Great American Desert.

## Why did people go west?

Many factors influenced people to risk the journey across America.

Factors Pushing Them Out of the East	Factors Pulling Them to the West
Poverty	A new start
Disease	Tall tales and newspaper reports
Religious or social persecution	Fertile cheap land
Taxation	Government encouragement
Eastern overpopulation	Gold and silver

## The tough journey west across the Great Plains

- The Oregon and California Trails stretched about 2000 miles and took about 5 months by loaded wagon. Rivers, mountains and deserts had to be crossed. Lack of discipline and experience caused dangerous delays – it was vital to beat the winter deadline.
- The Donner Party, heading for California, tried a short cut and were trapped in deep snow in the Sierra Nevada in 1846. Of 87 emigrants, less than 50 survived till next spring – by eating those who had died!
- Crossing the continent wasn't cheap – those who could outfit a wagon must have had money. Many were farmers who had sold their farms at a profit. Young men without funds could hire themselves out as helpers on the wagon trains.

## Manifest Destiny

- Many white Americans believed that they were destined to occupy and govern all of North America.
- They saw it as their God-given right. They thought it was their “manifest destiny” to do so.
- The white settlers saw their religion and culture as superior to those of the Native Americans – they saw themselves as civilising the continent.

## **The California Gold Rush**

### Gold was found in California in 1848

- Gold was found by James Marshall, working at a sawmill in California in January 1848 – just nine days before California changed hands from Mexico to the USA.
- News leaked out and people went crazy!
- Soon there were tens of thousands of fortune-seekers coming to California – they were known as the “49ers”. During 1848-1852 the non-Native American population rose from 14 000 to 225 000. Many lived in makeshift camps, some of which grew into mining towns like Angels Camp and Placerville.
- Some came to run service industries: store keepers, saloon owners and prostitutes.

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## Not everyone made a fortune

- The first gold was found by panning the stream beds. Most people only came equipped for this method, but the streams were soon exhausted and expensive underground mining took over.
- Prices for everything were huge, including transport home. Many '49ers had little choice – they could work for mining companies in foul conditions, or starve.

## Problems of law and order in mining towns

- Criminals were attracted to the Gold Rush. There were plenty of con men, violent thieves and claim-jumpers (who stole other people's claims to successful mines).
- People stole other people's land and mining stake.
- Men were often armed with guns and other weapons; this meant that disagreements between people were often ended in shootings!
- No US government law officers to protect the miners, people made their own arrangements
- Heavy drinking was common.

## TOPIC 3 – THE MORMONS

### **Who were the Mormons and what were their beliefs?**

- Another group of people to cross the Plains were the Mormons.
- The faith was started by Joseph Smith, who claimed to have seen a vision of an angel.
- He claimed the angel told him to find some engraved gold plates hidden on a hillside. Smith found these plates and translated them; the translations were published in the Book of Mormon in 1830.
- The Book of Mormon told how Jesus had visited America after the Resurrection, and also how the lost tribes of Israel had come to America, from which the Indians were descended.

### The religious beliefs of the Mormons

- They practised polygamy – where a Mormon man could marry more than one wife.
- Thought they were God's chosen people and were therefore superior to the non-Mormons.
- They believed in racial equality – they treated black people and Indians as equals.
- They were against drinking and gambling.
- They believed that they had to make God's kingdom on earth.

### The Mormons were often persecuted for their religion

- The non-Mormons thought polygamy was immoral and were worried it'd lead to more Mormons.
- Their efforts to convert people raised fears of expansion and annoyed gentiles.
- Some Mormons (the Danites) attacked and robbed gentiles.
- Claims to be the chosen ones of God made the Mormons seem arrogant.
- People were afraid of the large and growing numbers of the Mormons, they feared them taking over.

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## Why did the Mormons have to keep moving in the east?

### Kirtland, Ohio

- The Mormons were hardworking and successful. They founded a bank in Kirtland. Many non-Mormons invested in the bank for religious reasons.
- In a financial crisis the bank went bankrupt and everyone lost the money they had invested. The Mormons were blamed and driven out of Kirtland. Joseph Smith was tarred and feathered by locals.

### Missouri

- The Mormons were mixing with blacks and encouraging them to join the church on an equal basis.
- The gentiles were jealous of their hard work and thought they were superior. They feared they would be swamped by growing numbers of the Mormons and they would take over the government.
- The government issued an extermination order.

### Nauvoo, Illinois

- The Mormons rebuilt the town of Commerce and called it Nauvoo, the town grew rapidly.
- They gained a charter, which enabled them to run Nauvoo as an independent state.
- Joseph Smith said he had a revelation from God and he introduced polygamy in 1844. Non-Mormons thought polygamy was wrong and feared Mormon overpopulation.
- Some Mormons thought polygamy was wrong too, and they criticised Smith in a Mormon newspaper.
- He replied by destroying the printing presses of the newspaper, making him look like a dictator.
- Smith also announced his intention to stand for president of the United States.
- Joseph Smith was thrown into jail and killed when an angry mob attacked him.

### Remembering the movements of the Mormons

Kirtland	Kind
Missouri	Monsters
Nauvoo	Never
Salt Lake City	Scare Lively Children



## Why did the Mormons succeed in the west?

### Brigham Young and deciding to go west

- After the death of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young (new Mormon leader) had to decide what to do next.
- Knew they could live in the east and thought that they needed somewhere isolated to live.
- Brigham Young knew about the Oregon Trail and that the most isolated area in the west was by the Great Salt Lake. This part of the Rockies also still belonged to Mexico, so if the Mormons moved there they would be outside the control of the US government.
- In 1845 Brigham Young decided that the Mormons would leave Nauvoo and go west across the Plains.

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## The Mormon journey west across the Great Plains

- Brigham Young was a brilliant organiser. He was practical and more down-to-earth than Smith. He was also a determined man and very considerate too.
- Preparations went on all winter. This included the building of wagons, collecting of equipment and gathering food supplies.
- Pioneer bands left first to set up camps along the way. They planted crops and marked out the routes for the rest of the Mormons to follow.
- The rest of the Mormons had to begin their journey before they were properly prepared because mobs began looting their homes.
- Each group of was split into 10 wagon groups, each with a leader to keep them in line.
- Everybody stopped, ate and slept at the same time. Bugles were sounded so people knew what to do.
- They built Winter Quarters where the Mormons would spend the winter.

## Problems faced when the Mormons arrived at the Great Salt Lake

- The Mormons had to develop **irrigation schemes**, using snow water from the mountains.
- There was a **lack of building materials**, so the Mormons had to make houses from mud bricks.
- There were **not enough people** for community to be self-sufficient – so Young called Mormons from all over the world to come to the Salt Lake. As a result, many Mormons migrated to Salt Lake City.
- There was no private ownership of land. The Church assigned farm land according to people's needs.

## Reaching a political settlement with the US government

- In 1848 Salt Lake Valley was handed over by Mexico and became Utah, a territory of the USA. It had no access to the sea and no independence, but Brigham Young became governor.
- The Mormons ignored US laws. The Danites suppressed opposition and attacked US officials.
- In 1857 the US appointed a non-Mormon governor, who arrived with 2500 US troops. Later that year 140 non-Mormon settlers were massacred at Mountain Meadows. The Mormons blamed the Indians, but others suspected the Mormons. The modern Mormon Church believes that local Mormons carried out the attack without Brigham Young's knowledge.
- Utah wasn't allowed to become a state while it still practised polygamy. Young died in 1866 and the Mormons finally abandoned the practise in 1890. Utah was made a state in 1896.

## Who contributed more to the success of the Mormons: Joseph Smith or Brigham Young?

Joseph Smith	Brigham Young
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Founded the Mormon Church</li> <li>• Charismatic personality attracted new Mormons</li> <li>• Organised the movements in the East</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Made decision and organised the journey west</li> <li>• Organised the community at the Great Salt Lake</li> <li>• Encouraged converts from Europe</li> </ul>
<p><b>Although...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Polygamy made the Mormons unpopular</li> <li>• Running for US president increased gentile fear</li> <li>• Acted like a dictator when he destroyed the printing presses of a Mormon newspaper</li> </ul>	<p><b>Although...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acted like a dictator, his word was law in the Great Salt Lake</li> </ul>

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## TOPIC 4 – THE HOMESTEADERS

### **Why did so many people want to become homesteaders and settle on the Plains?**

Homestead Act 1862 – families were given 160 acres of land for free, providing that they lived on it and farmed it for five years

Timber Culture Act 1873 – settlers were given a further 160 acres of free land if they agreed to plant 40 acres of their land with trees

Desert Land Act 1877 – settlers who wanted more land could buy 640 acres of land cheaply in areas where lack of rainfall was a problem

End of the US Civil War – thousands of demobilised soldiers and their families wanted to rebuild their lives. Freed black slaves were also looking for a new life. Many ex-slaves and ex-soldiers became homesteaders, cowboys and railroad builders.

Building of the Railroads – it was easy for homesteaders to get onto the Plains and land could be bought cheaply from railroad companies which were selling land either side of the railroad.

### **Did all the homesteaders go west for the same reasons?**

#### Pull Factors

- The offer of free land
- The chance of a new start
- Advertising by the railroad companies
- Letters home from those who had already gone west, and who were successfully farming, encouraged people to move onto the Plains themselves

#### Push Factors

- Many were looking to escape poverty and unemployment
- Looking for good farming land
- Some moved to the Plains to escape religious persecution
- Ex-soldiers from the US Civil War saw lack of opportunity when they returned home

#### Enabling factors

- Later homesteaders could travel by railroad
- The Indians were cleared from these lands, defeated by the US army and confined to reservations or pushed further west



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## How did homesteaders survive on the Plains?

	Problem	Solution
<b>Water Shortages</b>	Water was scarce. It was difficult to grow crops without water and homesteaders couldn't keep themselves clean.	Windmills were used to pump water from underground. Methods of dry farming were also used.
<b>Weather Extremes</b>	There was draught in the summer and cold in the winter. Fierce winds blew. This could destroy crops.	Dry farming techniques were used to overcome problems of draught.
<b>Fuel</b>	There was no wood to burn as fuel for heating and cooking.	Buffalo dung and cow dung were used as fuels.
<b>Dirt and Disease</b>	It was easy for disease to develop and illness was common among homesteaders.	Women used natural medical remedies to treat disease.
<b>Building Materials</b>	There was a lack of wood and only a few could afford wood to build their homes.	Blocks of earth were cut and used as building bricks to build 'sod' houses.
<b>Natural Hazards</b>	Prairie fires started in the summer. There were plagues of grasshoppers that could destroy crops.	No solution! They had to endure!

## What was life like for female homesteaders?

### Jobs women did:

- Making and washing clothes
- Preparing food for their family
- Making household items, such as soap and candles

### Problems and hazards women faced:

- No social life, because of the long distances between farmhouses
- Mental health problems, due to the lack of a social life and the heavy workload
- Coming into contact with hostile Indians

## Which factors determined whether a homesteader would be successful?

Exact location of their land – some parts of the Plains were more fertile than others.

Adaptability – The Great Plains required them to adapt their farming techniques. Homesteaders who failed to adapt did not succeed.

Weather – severe droughts of the 1870s and 1880s forced thousands of homesteaders into bankruptcy.

Hard work and determination – those who survived were helped by a number of inventions and developments in homesteading.

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## TOPIC 5 – THE CATTLE INDUSTRY AND RANCHERS

### How did the cattle industry develop?

#### Background Information

- Cattle had been first introduced to America by European invaders
- By 1850s Southern Texas was the major centre of cattle ranching
- Texas Longhorn was the traditional breed of cattle that were very hardy
- In the 1850s beef became a popular food
- Cattle were driven by cowboys to the markets where they were sold
- As they did so they came into conflict with Homesteaders

Beef's popularity – in the 1850's beef became a popular and demand for it increased in the eastern USA.

The effect of the American Civil War – Texan cattle ranchers returned from fighting in the Civil War to find that their herds had grown dramatically.

New markets – The US Army in the West, the Indians on reservations, miners and railroad builders provided a good market for cattle.

Railroads – their development meant that beef could quickly get to these new markets. New 'cow towns' like Abilene and Dodge City in Kansas were built along the railway line where cattle could be hoarded onto trains. Also the builders of the railroads bought beef for food.

Charles Goodnight and Oliver Loving – they were the first to drive cattle out of Texas to the North. Their route became known as the Goodnight-Loving trail.

Joseph McCoy – created the cow town of Abilene in Kansas in 1867. He bought land, built stock pens and advertised the town as a shipping point.

### Problems for Cattlemen

- They had to drive their cattle to markets in the east – this was long and tough for the cowboys
- Cattle drives brought cattlemen into conflict with homesteaders who were beginning to settle
- As Homesteaders settled they blocked the routes of cattle drives
- Texas Longhorns carried Texas fever which killed other cattle – homesteaders were afraid of this

### What was the Open Range?

Rather than driving cattle across the Plains, why not settle cattle and set up ranches on the Plains? If the homesteaders were moving there, why shouldn't cattlemen? This became known as the Open Range

- Unfenced land that was used to graze cattle
- Cattle roamed freely over this land
- Cattle was branded to show which ranch it belonged to
- Land was not owned – no rancher could afford to own all the land he required to graze their cattle

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## Why was the Open Range successful?

- The Plains Indians were defeated and confined to the reservations
- The buffalo that had previously grazed on the Plains were gone, slaughtered by the hunters
- It was discovered that if Texas longhorns were held on the northern plains during the winter then the cold would kill the disease-carrying ticks
- The railroads that were crossing the Plains were able to take cattle to market

## Why did the Open Range come to an end?

- The terrible winters of 1886 and 1887 caused the deaths of thousands of cattle
- As more ranches on the Plains, overcrowding of cattle resulted. This caused grass stocks for the cattle on the Plains to decrease
- As people ranched cattle on the open range the cost of cattle increased which led to decreased profit. As the price of beef fell due to overstocking, cattle ranchers on the Plains struggled to make profits.
- Large ranching corporations squeezed out smaller cattle ranchers

## What was life like for cowboys?

- Drove cattle from Texas to cow towns
- Treated sick cattle
- Repaired fences when ranching took over from the long drive
- Protected the cattle from rustlers
- Loaded cattle into cattle trucks

## The Johnson County War of 1892

### Background

Johnson County in Wyoming had been settled by cattle barons in the 1870s, these were men who ran large ranches. They became very powerful in the state and joined together in the Wyoming Stock Growers Association. Among its members was the governor of Wyoming and important individuals in the state. Its purpose was to protect the interests of its powerful members. By the 1880s three threats had developed.

### The three causes

1. Beef prices were falling. The harsh winter of 1886-7 had damaged income from ranching cattle.
2. Homesteaders and small ranchers were settling in Wyoming and this led to disputes over land ownership. These people were settling on land which the cattle barons claimed was their land.
3. Cattle rustling was becoming a problem. The cattle barons lost cattle to rustlers and blamed the homesteaders and small ranchers. It was hard to get juries of local men to convict men accused of rustling. So they took law into their own hands.

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## The first killings

- Took place in 1889. Jim Averill, who ran a small store and saloon, and his partner, a prostitute called Ella Watson, were living on land claimed by a cattle baron. They were lynched outside their cabin.
- No one was prosecuted for this crime, although the cattle barons were known to be responsible. The cattle barons claimed that the two were rustlers.
- Ella was said to accept cattle as payment for her services and she was accused of rustling.

## A stage further

- In 1892 the cattle barons planned a full-scale invasion of Johnson County
- The acting governor of Wyoming knew all about it and even supplied guns. A death list of names was drawn up and gunfighters were recruited.
- They were brought to Wyoming on a special train provided by the Union Pacific Railroad Company.
- The gunfighters and cattlemen made up an invasion force of roughly 50 men. The plan was to capture the town of Buffalo, kill the sheriff and then kill the rest of the men on the list.

## Plans into action

- The invaders began by cutting the telegraph wires to cut off Johnson County from the outside world.
- But then the plan went wrong. There they were stopped by the heroic resistance of Nate Champion. After the death of his friend, he held off the invaders all day until they finally burnt him out of his cabin.
- While this was going on the invaders were spotted by some passing riders. By the time Nate Champion was dead the alarm had been raised in Buffalo.
- The next day, as the invaders approached Buffalo, they heard that local people were armed and ready. They then retreated. They were besieged by nearly 300 men, until the US Cavalry arrived to save them.
- The invaders were taken into protective custody. The war ended with two dead, Nate Champion and his friend, and several wounded.
- The large-scale cattle ranches were never convicted for their actions. However, they never had the same power in Wyoming again. The homesteaders were able to continue their lives in peace.

## **TOPIC 6 – LAW AND ORDER IN THE WEST**

### **Factors Encouraging Lawlessness**

#### Geographical

- The West was vast and initially sparsely populated
- Transport was very slow

#### Political

- Shortage of reliable law officers in new mining and cow towns
- Politicians would not pay to employ new or better officers

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## Social

- Conflicts between different ethnic groups – e.g. Chinese, blacks, freed slaves, Europeans
- Civil War soldiers found it difficult to readjust to normal life
- Conflict between southern and northern ex-Civil War soldiers

## Economic

- Lots of people trying to make money
- Conflict between competing groups: e.g. cattle Barons and small ranchers (Johnson County War)

## Values and attitudes

- Your responsibility to sort your own problems out
- Lots of people carried guns so arguments could turn into shootings
- If you shot a man in self defence you did not break the law

## **The Vigilantes**

- People who took the law into their own hands
- They drove suspected criminals out of town or lynched them
- In the early days, it took time for law and order to get established in new towns. Sheriffs were often badly paid and took bribes, criminals could pay sheriffs them off
- They helped some when there was no alternative but sometimes added to the problem by accusing and punishing the wrong people

## **TOPIC 7 – THE INDIAN WARS**

### **Little Crow's War 1861-62**

#### Events

- In 1861 the reservation system was introduced by the US government
- As a result of a bad harvest in their reservation and non payment of annual government cash payment, 12,000 Santee Sioux were unable to buy food and violence grew
- Indian Agency attacked by Sioux Indians
- Killing of 700 white settlers by undisciplined bands

#### Consequences

- In October 1862, 2000 Santee Sioux were captured and surrendered
- 303 Sioux sentenced to death, but due to weak evidence President Abraham Lincoln reduced all sentences but 38. These were hanged in December
- The remainder of Santee Sioux were transferred to a new reservation

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## Red Cloud's War 1865-68

### Events

- In 1862 gold was discovered in the Rocky Mountains
- The Bozeman Trail passed through Sioux lands
- The government failed to stop miners from breaking the peace treaty and they crossed Sioux lands
- Sioux Indians attacked travellers along the trail
- The government initially opened peace talks with Sioux leader, Red Cloud, to resolve issue
- At the same time, the government also ordered the US army to build a chain of forts along the Bozeman Trail to protect travellers
- Red Cloud found out about the fort building, broke off talks in disgust and attacked the army
- Sioux laid siege to the forts, and, although unable to capture them, it prevented free movement of US army and lack of access to Bozeman Trail

### Consequences

- In 1868 the government realised that the Sioux could not be defeated militarily
- An alternative route to the gold-mining areas was opened
- The government agreed to withdraw from the forts
- Under the terms of Fort Laramie Treaty the Great Sioux Reservation was created
- No non-Indian settlers were allowed to enter this land and so Red Cloud agreed to the treaty

## The Great Sioux War 1876-77

### Events

- In 1874 an expedition led by General Custer to the Black Hills to protect railway surveyors and find out if gold was present in the area broke Fort Laramie Treaty
- Custer reported that the area was rich in gold and caused a vast influx of miners which the US army was helpless to prevent from invading the territory
- The Sioux refused the government offer to buy the Black Hills as they were sacred to them as they were the place where their nation began
- In December 1875 all Sioux were ordered to return to their reservation – this was impossible to achieve
- 7000 Indians from various tribes were in the Powder River country
- In February 1876 the army were instructed to treat all Indians outside the reservation as hostile
- General Sheridan ordered a three-pronged campaign
- As a result, the army suffered famous defeat to Indians at the Battle of the Little Bighorn in June 1876

### Consequences

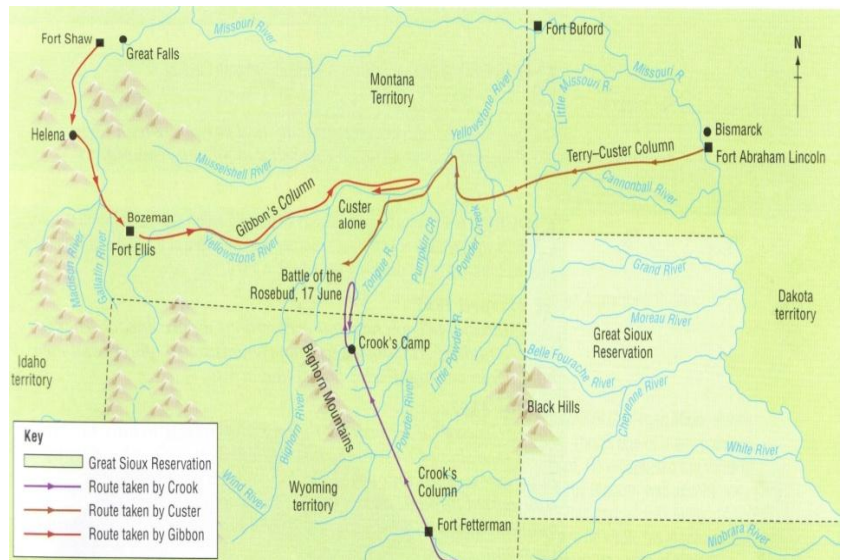
- News of the defeat at the Little Bighorn reached the rest of American on 4<sup>th</sup> July 1876, the hundredth anniversary of the declaration of independence

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- The public reaction to the defeat was of great shock and no effort was spared in support the army campaign that followed
- The little bands of Indians that split up after Little Bighorn were followed and attacked during the autumn and winter of 1876-77
- Outnumbered and short of ammunition, food and supplies, one by one the small bands of Indians gave in and returned to their reservations
- On 5<sup>th</sup> May 1877, Crazy Horse (one of the Sioux leaders) rode into the reservation and surrendered. The day before Sitting Bull (another Sioux chief) and his followers escaped over the border to Canada
- The armed resistance of the Sioux was over

## The Battle of the Little Bighorn

- General Sheridan thought up a three-pronged attack on the Sioux Indians who were camping in the valley of the Little Bighorn.
- The three columns had no way of communicating with each other.
- They had not found out how many Indians there were.
- Custer had refused offer of a Gatlin gun and reinforcements.
- Custer was ordered to wait for Terry but gave an ambiguous answer.



## Can General Custer be blamed for the defeat of the US army at the Battle of the Little Bighorn?

Custer's Actions	Other Reasons for Defeat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Custer refused the offer of a Gatlin gun and refused to accept reinforcements</li> <li>• Custer gave an ambiguous answer when asked to wait for Terry</li> <li>• He pushed his men too hard, became too tired</li> <li>• Divided his command</li> <li>• Deliberately disobeyed orders when he rode across the Wolf Mountains and arrived a day earlier than planned</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The three columns had no way of communicating with each other</li> <li>• The US army had not found out how many Indians there were</li> <li>• Crook's column had been attacked by Indians and had to retreat back to their fort</li> <li>• The Indians were in bigger numbers</li> <li>• The Sioux had better weapons</li> <li>• Indians stood and fought due to Crazy Horse, the inspirational leader of the Sioux Indians</li> </ul>

# GCSE History - American West Revision Notes

## TOPIC 8 – THE END OF THE PLAINS INDIANS

### **The Destruction of the Buffalo**

Between 1840 and 1885 the buffalo were hunted to almost extinction; their numbers fell from an estimated 13 million in 1840 to around 200 in 1885.

Settlement on the edge of the Great Plains, the construction of the railroads across the Great Plains, the destruction of the buffalo's natural habitat and the introduction of new diseases all contributed.

#### Hunting for sport

- To begin with, buffalo were hunted for food and sport.
- Hunting increased when the railroads reached the Great Plains.
- Special excursion trains were run so that people could go out and shoot buffalo for sport.
- Buffalo hunters were employed to keep the workers on the supplied with fresh meat.

#### Hunting for hides

- In 1871, an eastern tannery discovered a process to produce high quality leather from buffalo hides. This caused the price of buffalo hides to increase.
- Railroads had reached the Great Plains. Trains could transport the hides east to the tanning industry.
- Hunters were armed with powerful rifles with a long range.
- Hunters killed using a method called a stand which was an extremely efficient way of hunting.
- By 1875 the southern herd had been destroyed. By 1883 the northern herd was destroyed.

#### Hunting for bones

- It was not until after the hide was removed were the bones of buffalo picked.
- Homesteaders and crews of professional 'bone pickers' collected skeletons and took them by wagon to railroad sidings. From there they were sent east to the factories.
- In the east, the bones were ground into fertiliser, or made into buttons, combs and knife handles. Hooves were made into glue.

### **The Reservations**

#### Government Policy

- From 1825 onwards a system of Indian reservations was developed on the Great Plains.
- The Indians were supervised by government-appointed Indian agents.
- Reservations were intended to keep Indians apart from the homesteaders and ranchers.
- On the reservations the Indians were expected to live as farmers. At first, they were allowed to leave the reservations to hunt for buffalo. However, after conflicts in the 1860s and 1870s they lost this right.



# GCSE History - American West Revision Notes

## Reservation Conditions

- By the 1870s the Indians were virtually prisoners on their reservations and conditions were bad.
- The reservations were usually on land settlers didn't want, such as poor farm land. This made it difficult for the Indians to feed themselves, and they became dependent on government hand-outs of food.
- The Indians were sometimes badly treated by dishonest Indian agents – housing monies were stolen, food rations were inadequate and medical treatment was not available.

## The Destruction of Indian Culture

**Territorial** – through a series of laws the government reduced the size of the Sioux reservation and split up the Sioux Indians into smaller groups.

**Political** – in 1885 the government took control of all legal matters; Indians lost any power to punish members of their bands. Communal reservation lands were broken into individual plots by the 1887 Dawes General Allotment Act. This meant Indians did not need to go to their chiefs and became self-sufficient.

**Economic** – the ban of Sioux leaving the reservations to hunt buffalo destroyed their economy.

**Religious** – feasts, dances and ceremonies were banned. The power of medicine men was undermined. There was little need for young men to seek visions to give them power in war and in the buffalo hunt.

**Educational** – children were taken from their parents and sent to boarding school. The Sioux were unable to prevent their children being taken, or their rations would be stopped until they gave in. The children lived under military conditions and were taught to have no respect for their traditional way of life.