

◀ Workers lay railroad track in Nebraska, 1866.

WITNESS HISTORY

Working on the Railroad

Railroad construction boomed in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The railroads opened the West to a rush of settlers and played a key role in the rise of a number of southern cities. Hundreds of thousands of workers constructed about a quarter of a million miles of railroad tracks. Thousands more worked for the railroads after the tracks had been completed. As they toiled, many sang one of America's most popular folk tunes:

“I’ve been working on the railroad,
All the livelong day.
I’ve been working on the railroad,
Just to pass the time away.
Don’t you hear the whistle blowing?
Rise up so early in the morn.
Don’t you hear the captain shouting,
‘Dinah, blow your horn?’”

—from “I’ve Been Working on the Railroad,”
Unknown

▲ Golden spike that joined Central Pacific and Union railroads, Promontory, Utah, 1869

The South and West Transformed

Objectives

- Explain the development of the New South.
- Understand the impact on Native Americans as settlers moved to the West.
- Identify who moved to the West and their reasons for doing so.

Terms and People

sharecropping assimilate
Dawes Act open range

NoteTaking

Reading Skill: Summarize Prepare an outline to summarize the main events of the section.

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|---|
| <p>I. The South and West Transformed
 A. The New South
 1. Industries and Cities Grow
 a. Railroad construction
 b.</p> |
|---|

Why It Matters In the wake of the Civil War, southerners sought to rebuild their economy, knowing they could not simply revive the old system of plantation agriculture based on slave labor. The end of the war also unleashed a massive wave of migration to the West, which led to a boom in ranching, mining, and farming. This migration would cause the end to a way of life for most American Plains Indians. These developments transformed the way people in the South and the West lived. **Section Focus Question:** What were the most important developments in the South and the West?

The New South

After Reconstruction came to an end, some of the South's leading citizens hoped to create a new economy. Henry Grady, the editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, touted what he called a “New South.” Unlike the Old South, the New South would have a mixed economy. Rather than shipping its raw products, namely cotton, to northern textile mills, it would develop its own manufacturing firms.

Industries and Cities Grow To an extent, Grady's vision took hold. Textile mills cropped up in the Carolina hill country, and the


timber industry expanded in the Gulf States. Making use of nearby iron deposits, Birmingham, Alabama, developed into a steel-producing center. In the years following Reconstruction, railway construction boomed. Taking note of these developments, Wilbur Fisk Tillet of Vanderbilt University concluded that few if any parts of the country had made “such a marvelous advance” in such a short period of time.

Yet, such optimistic assessments glossed over persistent problems that beset the region. While the southern economy grew, it did not grow as rapidly as the economies of the North and the Midwest. Shortages of capital compelled southern industrialists to borrow from northern financiers, to the benefit of New York bankers. High illiteracy rates, persistent discrimination against African Americans, and a distrust of foreign immigrants weighed down the South.

Southern Farmers Face Difficult Times Hard times especially hit southern farmers. Overly dependent on a single product—cotton—southern farmers, white and black, suffered from declining prices for their crops. Also, beginning in 1890, farmers faced a new pest called the boll weevil. This beetle could completely destroy an entire planting, leaving farmers with little choice but to move north for jobs.

The **sharecropping** system also contributed to the hardships that southern farmers faced. Under this system, landowners dictated the crop and provided the sharecropper with a place to live, as well as seeds and tools, in exchange for a share of the harvested crop. Landowners and merchants often cheated sharecroppers at harvest time and discouraged them from diversifying their crops. Often, sharecroppers had to forfeit their entire crop just to pay off their previous debt and then had to take on further debt to survive.

African Americans Suffer Setbacks Although some African Americans managed to buy land and gain a higher education, overall the post-Reconstruction



The Sharecropping System

In theory, sharecropping provided an opportunity for poor, landless freedmen and white southerners to save money to purchase their own land. However, as the chart at right illustrates, sharecropping proved to be an endless cycle of debt and poverty that southern farmers could rarely escape. As agriculture was key to the southern economy, the sharecropping system remained a major source of labor until mechanized farming reduced the need for human laborers by the 1940s.

Why was the sharecropping system considered an endless cycle for southern farmers?

- ◀ Cotton was the primary crop of sharecroppers.

Sharecropping Cycle of Poverty

- 1 Landowner provides land, seed, and tools to sharecropper in exchange for a large share of the harvested crop.
- 2 Sharecropper purchases supplies from landowner's store on credit, often at high interest rates.
- 3 Sharecropper plants and harvests the crop.
- 4 Landowner sells the crop and takes the predetermined share. The sharecropper's portion of the crop is worth less than the amount owed to the landowner.
- 5 Sharecropper must promise the landowner a larger share of the next year's crop and becomes trapped in a cycle of debt.

era was a bleak one. Undeterred by northern military forces, which the federal government withdrew from the South after the election of 1876, the white southern majority slowly stripped African Americans of the political and civil rights they had gained following the Civil War. Groups like the Ku Klux Klan terrorized African Americans who sought to exercise their new political rights.

✓ **Checkpoint** What were the advances and setbacks in the development of the New South?

Cultures Clash in the West

For centuries, European settlers and their descendants had pressed westward, pushing Native Americans off their lands. Although Native Americans were lumped together in the minds of most Americans as “Indians,” they embraced many different belief systems, languages, and ways of life. In the 1830s, Congress enacted the Indian Removal Act and forced tribes in the Southeast to move beyond the Mississippi River to Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma.

Plains Indians Under Pressure After the Civil War and a brief period of Indian wars, the federal government compelled Plains Indians to move to reservations, or public land specifically reserved for them. “All who cling to their old hunting-grounds,” declared one federal army commander, “will be killed off.” The Indians fell into a cycle of poverty and despair. Even when they sought to revive their traditional customs and religious practices, they encountered resistance and persecution.

Approximately 250,000 Plains Indians lived west of the Mississippi River at the end of the Civil War. Their livelihoods were based on hunting buffalo and other wild game. Even before large numbers of farmers and ranchers migrated west, hunters had already started to undermine their culture by decimating the great buffalo herds that roamed the Plains. Killing the animals for their hides and for sport, hunters nearly drove them into extinction and with them, the Native Americans’ traditional way of life.

Native Americans Resist Although some Native Americans moved to the reservations without a fight, others decided to defend land they believed was rightfully theirs. In the middle of the Civil War, following a conflict between the Dakota tribe and settlers in Minnesota, the U.S. military captured 300 Dakota warriors and sentenced them to death. Ultimately, the army executed 39 of them, the largest public hanging in American history.

In a reversal of fortune, the Sioux crushed American troops commanded by General George Custer at the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876. Not a single American soldier survived the famous fight. Custer’s Last Stand, as the battle became known, however, proved to be the exception, not the rule.

HISTORY MAKERS

Chief Joseph (1840?–1904)

For almost three months, starting in June 1877, Chief Joseph led about 700 of his people on a 1,000-mile retreat toward Canada. Despite being outnumbered by at least ten to one, the Nez Percés won several battles and outmaneuvered the army through the month of September. When troops surrounded the Nez Percés, however, Chief Joseph surrendered with this famous speech:

“I am tired of fighting. Our chiefs are killed. . . . The little children are freezing to death. . . . 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, “I Will Fight No More Forever,” 1877

Chief Joseph’s retreat is considered one of the great military actions in American history, despite the fact that he and his people were eventually taken to a reservation.



TRACK THE ISSUE



How should the federal government deal with Indian nations?

From its earliest days, the federal government has grappled with the issue of relations with Native Americans. Since Indians in the West were forced to move onto reservations, government policy has shifted several times. Use the timeline below to explore this enduring issue.

- 1787 U.S. Constitution**
Federal government given power to regulate trade with Native Americans
- 1824 Bureau of Indian Affairs**
Agency created to handle relations with Native Americans
- 1887 Dawes Act**
Government divides reservations into individual land holdings.
- 1934 Indian Reorganization Act**
Tribal governments gain more control over their own affairs.
- 1975 Indian Self-Determination and Educational Assistance Act**
Indians win control over reservation schools and government services.



Comanche girls, 1892



Native Americans in traditional garb press for Indian rights in Washington, D.C.

DEBATE THE ISSUE

Native American Land Claims Today, several Native American nations have made claims to their original lands, arguing that old treaties were illegal. Opponents say that to recognize these claims after so many years would lead to injustice of a different kind to the people now living on those lands.

“For over 200 years, we have endured hardship and indignities from the unjust taking of our ancestral land. We have been confined to a small reservation. We have suffered the painful loss of our traditional way of life. . . . There will be no actions to evict our neighbors from their homes as we know all too well the pain and suffering displacement causes.”

—Tadodaho (Sidney Hill) of the Onondaga Nation, March 10, 2005

“Employing a unique body of laws, today’s courts have decided to hear cases based on alleged violations of federal law that occurred over 200 years ago. Even more incredible than the ability and willingness of our judicial system to resurrect these ancient claims, is its [tendency] to apply modern legal interpretations to ancient events and blatantly disregard the historical record.”

—Scott Peterman, May 25, 2002



TRANSFER Activities

1. **Compare** How do Tadodaho and Peterman differ on the subject of land claims?
2. **Analyze** How do you think Tadodaho would view the Dawes Act?
3. **Transfer** Use the following Web site to see a video, try a WebQuest, and write in your journal. www.pearsonschool.com/ushist

The story of the Nez Percé tribe better depicted the fate of Native Americans. The leaders of the peaceful Nez Percé tribe did not want to desert their ancestral homelands in the Northwest. When General Oliver Otis Howard threatened to force them onto the reservation, however, they realized they could not match the firepower of the United States Army. Therefore, the chief of the Nez Percés, Chief Joseph, reluctantly agreed to lead his people toward a reservation in Idaho. Soon after, however, about 20 young warriors, unhappy about losing their homeland, attacked nearby white settlements. The army immediately began a pursuit of the Nez Percés. With little choice left, Chief Joseph led a fighting retreat toward Canada that is remembered to this day for its skill and audacity. Within 40 miles of the Canadian border, American troops surrounded the Nez Percés. Finally, Chief Joseph surrendered.

The Government Promotes Assimilation Only after the federal government crushed most of the resistance and placed the remaining Indians on reservations did expressions of regret about the nation's Native American policy appear. In 1881, Helen Hunt Jackson wrote *A Century of Dishonor*. As the title of her book suggests, Jackson contended that the United States had pursued a dishonorable policy toward Native Americans since its founding.

Partly in response to her work, which became a bestseller, the United States enacted the **Dawes Act** in 1887. This act sought to destroy the Native American way of life by urging Native Americans to **assimilate**, or to be absorbed into the main culture of American society. The act gave the federal government the authority to divide the reservations into 160-acre privately owned plots of land and to give Native Americans the opportunity to become citizens. However, the act utterly failed to achieve its goal. Indians lost more than 50 percent of their land over the next 50 years, largely to unscrupulous investors, and fell further into poverty.

Yet another tragic chapter in the history of Native Americans took place in 1890. In the northern plains, many Indians looked to their traditions as a way to regain their spirit. Following the advice of some of their shamans, or religious leaders, they took part in the Ghost Dance, an ancient religious ritual. Fearing that the Ghost Dances would lead to an armed insurrection, federal officials banned them. Ultimately, this led to the massacre at Wounded Knee, in which the federal cavalry killed 250 Native Americans, mostly women and children. Black Elk, a Sioux Chief, later wrote about the massacre in *Black Elk Speaks*, one of the most widely read books written by a Native American.

 **Checkpoint** What impact did U.S. policies have on Native Americans?

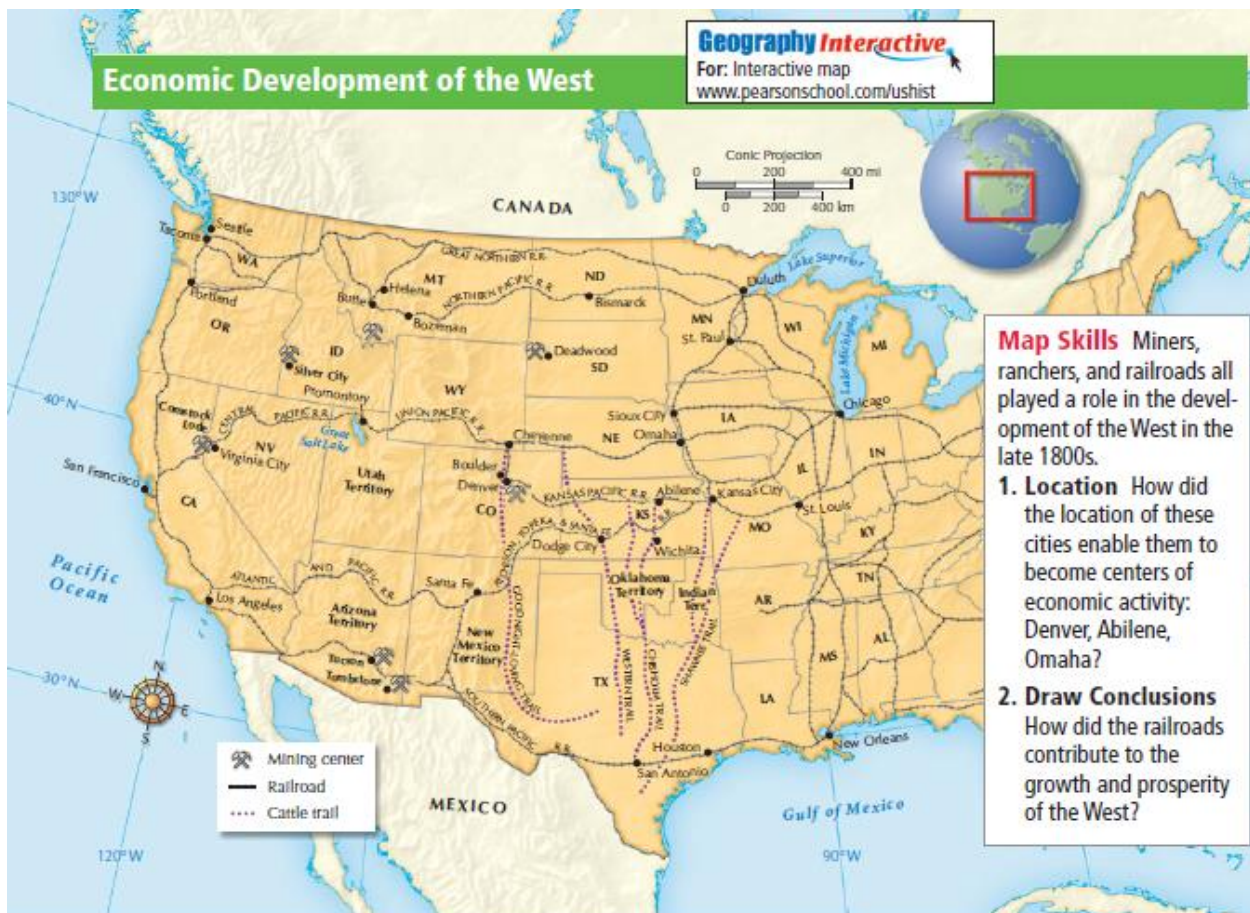
The Transformation of the West

Millions of American citizens poured into the West in the latter half of the nineteenth century. They came searching for gold and silver, to establish farms and ranches, and to work in the cities that sprang up along the railroad lines that stretched as far west as San Francisco. This mass migration would eventually transform the West into a mainstay of the American economy.

Miners and Railroaders The discovery of gold and silver—first in California and later in Nevada, Colorado, Montana, Idaho, and the Black Hills of South Dakota—attracted hordes of prospectors in the middle **decades** of the 1800s. These prospectors gathered in mining towns, many of which quickly became ghost towns when the gold and silver ran out.

Vocabulary Builder

decade—(DEHK ayd) *n.* ten-year period



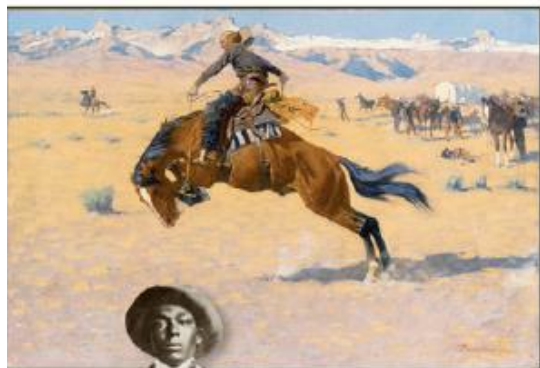
Map Skills Miners, ranchers, and railroads all played a role in the development of the West in the late 1800s.

- 1. Location** How did the location of these cities enable them to become centers of economic activity: Denver, Abilene, Omaha?
- 2. Draw Conclusions** How did the railroads contribute to the growth and prosperity of the West?

While gold and silver provided the first impetus for the migration westward, the transcontinental railroad opened the West to long-term economic development. The construction of the railroads was a massive undertaking. To encourage private corporations to lay the tracks, the federal government granted them nearly 200 million acres of land. In May 1869, the first transcontinental railroad was completed when Leland Stanford drove the final golden spike into the ground at Promontory, Utah.

By the turn of the century, railroads had transformed a country of isolated communities into an interconnected nation of towns and cities. Without the railroads, farmers and ranchers would have found it difficult to get their products to market. In turn, they could not have acquired the farm machinery and home amenities that they wanted. Over time, however, tensions increased between the owners of the railroads, who charged high rates for carrying freight, and the farmers who had no other way to ship their crops to the East.

Ranchers and Farmers Americans from the East who migrated west encountered a strange land. The Great Plains had few trees, very little rainfall, and the land from Missouri to the Rocky Mountains stretched on that way for miles. To heat their homes—initially constructed of sod—they had to burn dried buffalo chips, or dung. They relied on barbed wire for fencing. Moreover, spread out over vast expanses of land, they often lived in social isolation. Ida Lindgren’s letter to her mother reflected these difficulties:



Era of the Cowboy

Cold Morning on the Range by Frederic Remington (top); American cowboy, c. 1885 (bottom)

Primary Source

“Beloved Mama,

It has been a long time since I have written, hasn't it? . . . [W]hen one never has anything fun to write about, it is not fun to write. . . We have not had rain since the beginning of June, and then with this heat and often strong winds as well, you can imagine how everything has dried out. . . Then one fine day there came millions, trillions of grasshoppers in great clouds, hiding the sun, and coming down onto the fields, eating up everything that was still there.”

—Ida Lindgren, Letters, August 25, 1874, Manhattan, Kansas

In spite of these obstacles, millions of Americans moved west. They came to realize the American dream of owning their own land and working for themselves or, in the case of miners and the first cowboys, to make a fortune. At the

end of the Civil War, approximately 5 million head of cattle roamed freely in Texas under a herding system created by Mexican ranchers. The demand for meat back east led to the great cattle drives and the era of the cowboy.

On these cattle drives, entrepreneurs herded cattle from Texas to towns in Missouri and Kansas for shipment to the Midwest and the East. Immortalized in fiction and the movies, the long drives ended in Abilene, Dodge City, Tombstone, and other cities that had railroad depots. Beginning in the late 1870s, cowboys and cattlemen realized it made more sense to raise steers on the northern plains. There, the herds could feed on the **open range**—a vast area of grassland owned by the federal government—and then cowboys could ship their steer from nearby railroads without the difficulty of the long drive.

The era of open-range ranching came to an abrupt end with a series of terrible winters. Many of the animals could not get to sheltered areas because of fencing, which resulted in the death of millions of cattle. To avoid such terrible occurrences in the future, ranchers built fences around their land and raised enough feed for their herds.

✓ **Checkpoint** Who moved west in the latter half of the nineteenth century and why?

SECTION

3 Assessment

Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-test with vocabulary practice
www.pearsonschool.com/ushist

Comprehension

- 1. Terms and People** For each term below, write a sentence explaining its significance to the South or the West.
 - sharecropping
 - Dawes Act
 - open range

2. NoteTaking Reading Skill:

Summarize Use your completed outline to answer the Section Focus Question: What were the most important developments in the South and the West?

Writing About History

- 3. Quick Write: Prepare an Outline** Make an outline for an oral presentation on the development of the New South. This will help you structure the information in a logical way. Identify main ideas with Roman numerals and supporting details with capital letters.

Critical Thinking

- 4. Synthesize Information** What factors led to the rise of the New South, and what resulted?
- 5. Make Generalizations** How did the United States change as settlers moved westward?
- 6. Make Comparisons** What were the similarities and differences between the economic development of the South and that of the West?