

Emergence of Modern America

Growth of the West



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Growth of the West

Settlers had been gradually moving west into territories obtained during the era of Manifest Destiny. With the rise of the steam locomotive in the early 1860's, Congress and President Lincoln gave approval for federal funding to build a railroad that would span across the continent. This transcontinental railroad would unite the industrialized East with the natural resources found out West.



Transcontinental Railroad



The Transcontinental Railroad
Railroad that crossed the
continent and connected the
economies of the east and west.

With the Pacific Railway Act in 1862, Congress gave funding to two companies to build the Transcontinental Railroad. The Union Pacific would link to existing railroad lines and build west from Nebraska. The Central Pacific would start in Sacramento, California and build east. The government paid the railroad companies in federal land which would then be divided up and sold off to settlers and businessmen.

Transcontinental Railroad

The Union Pacific started in Nebraska and built tracks westward across the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains. In 1866, the Union Pacific hired former Civil War General Grenville Dodge to take charge of railroad construction. He had built railroads before the Civil War and his military experience helped him lead men. He commanded a force of over 10,000 men, most of whom were Irish immigrants. Other immigrants, former Civil War soldiers, and freed slaves joined them.



The Transcontinental Railroad

Union Pacific:

Built west from Nebraska.
Hired former soldiers, freed slaves,
and Irish immigrants.



Transcontinental Railroad

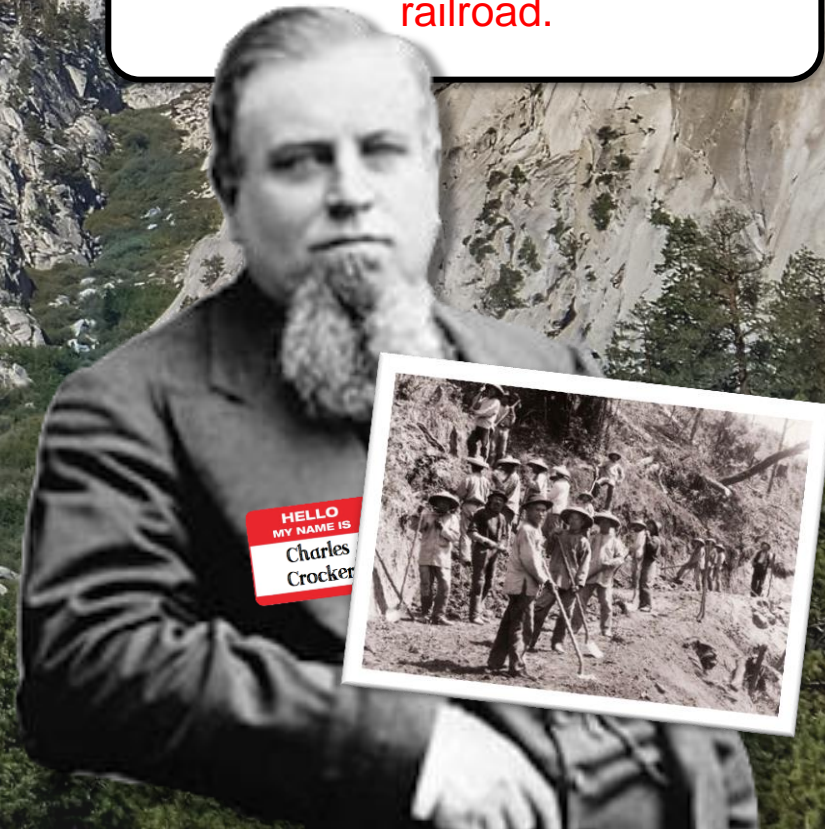
The Central Pacific faced the task of building track over and through the Sierra Nevada Mountains. When many of the workers fled to look for silver in Nevada, the head of construction, Charles Crocker, hired 50 Chinese workers. These immigrants proved to be hard workers and Crocker sent recruiters to China to bring back more workers. The Central Pacific employed more than 12,000 Chinese who cleared trees, shoveled dirt, blasted tunnels and laid thousands of miles of track.



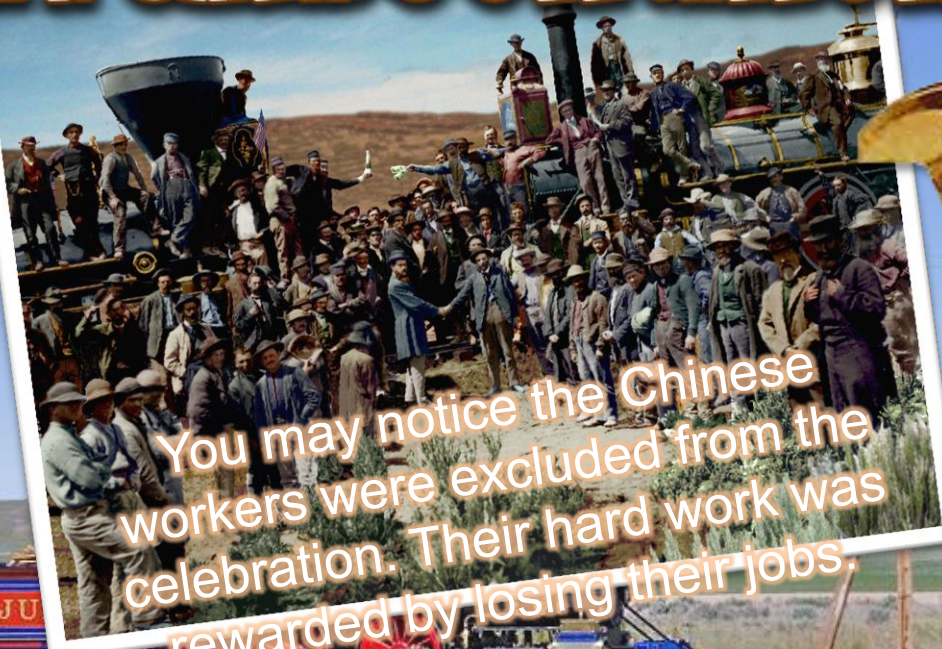
The Transcontinental Railroad

Central Pacific:

Built east from California.
More than 12,000 Chinese laborers recruited to build the railroad.



Transcontinental Railroad



You may notice the Chinese workers were excluded from the celebration. Their hard work was rewarded by losing their jobs.



The Transcontinental Railroad

Promontory, Utah:



Where the Union Pacific and Central Pacific lines connected.

On May 10, 1869, the Union Pacific and Central Pacific came together in Utah Territory at a point called Promontory Summit. A golden spike was driven in to complete the nearly 2,000 miles of track for the transcontinental railroad. Ultimately, the railroad would expand to add more lines across the continent. New settlers would flood into the west and establish towns and cities.



Transcontinental Railroad



The Transcontinental Railroad

Time Zones:



Regulated telling time by dividing the U.S. into time zones.

Timeline



1869
Transcontinental Railroad was completed.



Railroads also changed American in a surprising way- they altered time. Before railroads, each community set time based on the position of the sun. But railroads needed to be able to schedule the departure and arrival of trains. To solve this, the railroad companies set up Standard Time and divided the United States into four time zones.

Homesteaders



Homesteaders

Homestead Act
passed in 1862.

Offered Farmers
160 acres of land
in the West.

Settlers must
clear the land
and farm for 5
years.



The same year Congress approved the transcontinental railroad, they also passed the Homestead Act.

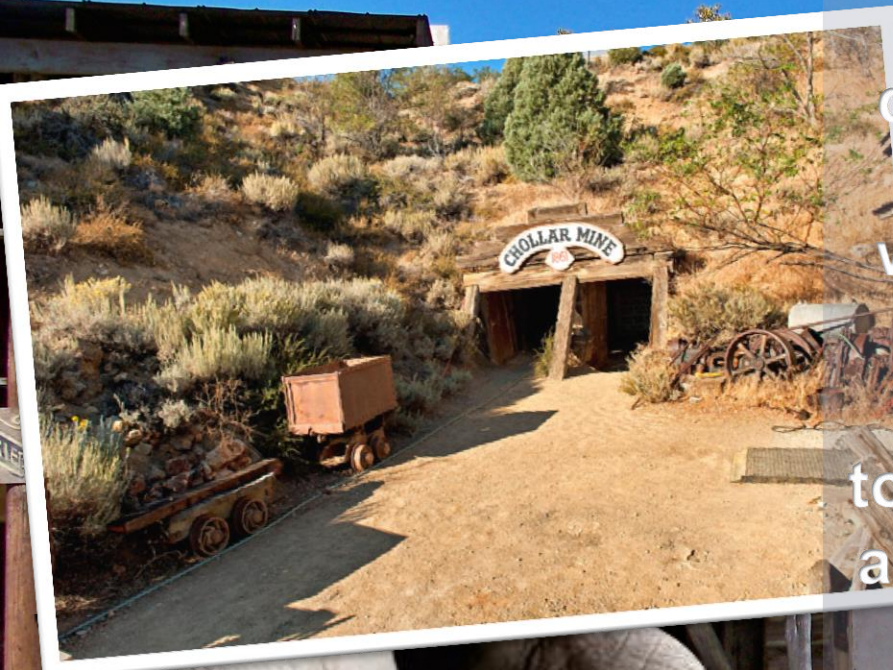
This new law offered farming families 160 acres of federal land in the West. All they had to do was establish a working homestead by clearing the land, building a home, and farming the land for five years.

The Homestead Act drew settlers west and attracted foreign immigrants with the promise of land ownership. By 1910, the number of farms in the U.S. had tripled to more than 6 million.



Miners & Ranchers

Some new settlers to the west dreamed of striking it rich. In the 1870's another rush took place when gold and silver were found in many states and territories throughout the West. Boom towns sprung up almost overnight and most turned into ghost towns when the easy to find gold and silver was gone. The boom towns had no government or law enforcement. Robbery and murder were common and miners had their own methods of vigilante justice to control crime.



Miners & Ranchers

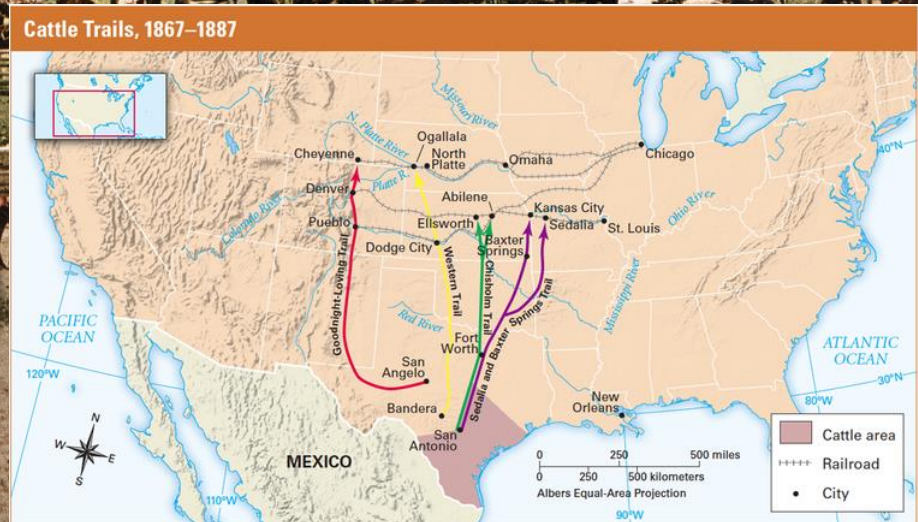
Another group of settlers was made up of cowboys and ranchers. Millions of longhorn cattle roamed the Texas plains. Cities out east provided a profitable market for beef. Cow Towns appeared along railroad lines where cowboys would herd cattle to ship east.



Miners and Ranchers found Gold & Silver throughout the west.

Boom towns brought new businesses West.

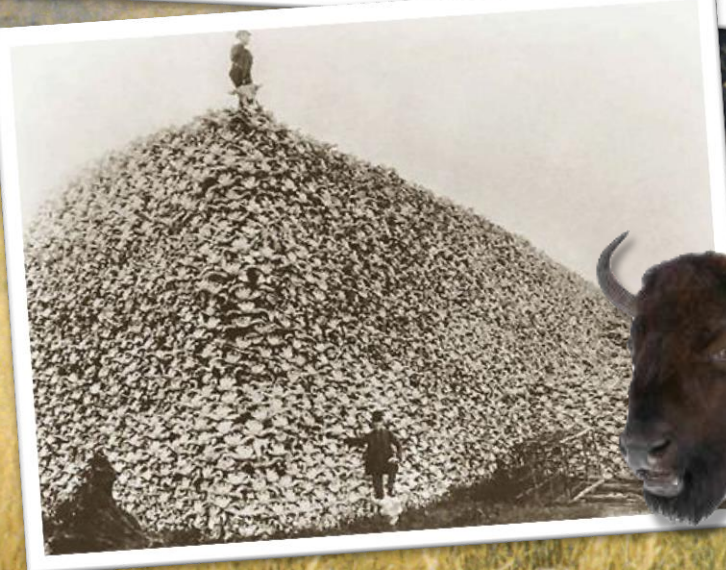
Ranchers brought cattle to "cow towns" to be shipped east
African-American cowboy Nat Love



Extirpation of Buffalo




As railroads moved into the west, buffalo hunters followed. Hunters killed huge numbers of the North American Bison for their hides and bones. The Plains Indians depended on the bison for food and were horrified by the slaughter. By 1880 the buffalo had all but vanished and the Plains Indians were left with little choice but to go live on reservations. Their land was in high demand for cattle ranching, mining, and homesteading.



War on the Plains

American Indian Lands Today



Originally, the Indian Removal Act of 1830 gave much of the land west of the Mississippi River to the American Indians. As the railroad brought settlers, homesteaders, ranchers, and miners west, the Plains Indians watched their land and resources get snatched up once again. Plains Indians hated the idea of living on reservations and many tribes resisted. The U.S. Army was sent to force the Indians onto the reservations and a number of battles took place between American Indians and the U.S. Military.

The Federal Government promised annuity payments to Indians on reservations. Often the promised food and money failed to arrive. Federal agents in charge of distributing the payments sometimes were dishonest and sold the food and supplies to white settlers.

War on the Plains



George Custer

Led the U.S. Army at the
Battle of Little Bighorn



The most famous battle between Plains Indians and the U.S. Military took place in present day Montana near the Little Bighorn River. Soldiers found gold in the Black Hills of Dakota Territory. Within months 15,000 settlers had rushed to try and strike it rich and swarmed onto the native people's land. Instead of restricting the miners, the government wanted to force the Indians out. In June of 1876, George Custer spotted an Indian camp of Dakota and Cheyenne and decided to attack immediately. The battle was a disaster for the U.S. soldiers. The Dakota and Cheyenne were led by Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. They surrounded Custer's men and killed all 211 soldiers. This battle became nicknamed "Custer's Last Stand."



War on the Plains



American
Indians

Hunters killed
herds of buffalo-
The Plains
Indians' main
food source.

Wars took place
as Indian tribes
resisted being
forced onto
reservations.

The Battle of Little Bighorn was the last major victory for the Plains Indians. The government responded by increasing military presence in the West. In 1877, Crazy Horse surrendered and Sitting Bull and his followers fled to Canada. In 1881, the starving band returned and surrendered to the U.S. Army and were escorted onto reservations. The Federal Government ignored all previous treaties and Congress took the Black Hills and 40 million acres.

In 1887, Congress passed the Dawes Act. This new law divided up reservations to give individual Indians their own land to farm. It also created boarding schools for American Indian children. The purpose was to encourage natives to adopt white culture.



Optional Online Video Resources

- Modern Marvels: Transcontinental Railroad
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oi40dooQwYg>
- Biography: The Real Wild West- Crazy Horse
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kye44IFzJ1k>
- Biography: The Real Wild West- George Custer
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ek1gFNS-M>
- Smithsonian: Love on the Range (Portraying Nat Love)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3N8V5_idt0