

## The American West 1835-1895

In the beginning - settlers lived only on the east coast. Plains tribes lived on the Plains undisturbed

### Way of life, structure of society and beliefs of the Plains tribes

Survival on the Great Plains was difficult - hot summers, very cold winters, little water, fires from lightning strikes and strong winds. Reliant on buffalo for everything - as a result had great horse riding and archery skills, nomadic lifestyle - tipis and travois. Harsh winters most tribes moved into lodges.

Tribes such as the Sioux were made up of **bands** which could vary from 20 to several hundred members. The whole tribe would meet up every summer.

Chiefs - were the tribe leaders. Always men. Might be more than one eg a spiritual chief, a war chief. Might be chosen for their wisdom, spiritual powers, leadership skills or because they were good hunters or warriors.

Councils band chiefs and elders met when the whole tribe got together to make decisions such as war or peace on another tribe. The tribe's spiritual chief was consulted on important decisions.

Warrior brotherhoods consisted of young men who had proved their bravery and skill in fighting other tribes. Trained young men in fighting skills and about the tribe's beliefs and values. Leaders joined the guard unit, organised buffalo hunts, chose where the tribe should camp.

Women could not be chiefs. Polygamy as there were more women than men (hunting and war) so could produce more children. Feeding and clothed family, looked after possessions, processed buffalo into usable objects. Set role different from men but of equal importance to the tribe's survival.

Buffalo used for tipis, blankets, fuel .....

Horses needed for hunting buffalo, to travel across the Plains to find buffalo and for fighting. Men measured their wealth in horses.

Beliefs about nature everything has a spirit. Humans are part of nature and should work with it. Performed the Sun Dance to enter the spirit world. Spirits could charge up magic items to help them in hunting or fighting.

Beliefs about land - seen as sacred. The Lakota Sioux believed their people had been created in a special cave in the Black Hills by the Great Spirit. Some plains tribes did farm and fish, but the land could not be bought or sold and no one person owned it. Farming and mining were disrespectful to the land.

Attitudes to war - survival was difficult so raids on other tribes for food, horses, weapons and people (women to marry and children to enlarge the tribe). Couldn't afford to lose warriors in fights so only fought if they thought they could win or escape easily, counting coup - a warrior would show bravery by trying to hit an enemy without being injured or killed.

## Migration and Early settlement

Migration was at first across the Plains to the west coast. Disturbed the buffalo on their journeys.

### Reasons for migration

Economic crisis in the east - 25% unemployment in the east, people moved to make a new life

Good farmland on the west coast

The Oregon Trail made the journey easier - Government paid for the mapping of the trail to encourage more people to migrate.

Gold rush in California 1849 - by 1855 population was 300 000.

Manifest Destiny - the belief that the settlers had the right to settle all the land in the USA

Converting Plains tribes to Christianity

### The process and problems of migration

The Oregon Trail - only way to get across the mountains with wagons. 1836 first used, 1846 5000 had migrated west using it. Maps showed where the water was and the best places to cross rivers safely. 3000 km long

Migrants had to complete the journey before winter - were likely to get stuck in the snowy mountains and starve to death. Start the journey in April so there was enough grass to feed horses. Most travelled in 'wagon trains' with people who had a variety of skills to help each other - eg a carpenter to fix wagons. Problems on the trail - 20 000 died from drowning, accidents or cholera.

The Donner Party 1846 tried a new short cut (550km shorter) that had been described as a fine road with plenty of water and grass and water... but had never been used. The route was not marked and hard to follow, mountainous, they had to find safe places to cross rivers, and there were stretches with no grass or water. In November snow storms trapped the migrants - livestock died and half the party - only survived by eating each other

The Mormon Migration and Salt Lake City 1846-7 - left the east to escape persecution for their beliefs such as polygamy. Their leader Brigham Young believed God had called the Mormons to migrate to the Salt Lake Valley - no settlers lived there. Difficult journey as they left in cold February to escape persecution. Stayed at Omaha for the winter. Travelled the Donner Party shortcut BUT an advance party marked out the way, found water sources and safe river crossings and planted crops along the way. Migrants were organised into smaller groups with lots of different skills and with a leader for organisation. Put their wagons in a circle at night to protect them from attack and to keep the animals in. Rested their livestock regularly so they could complete the journey.

**Survival in Salt Lake** - the lake was salty and the land not good enough for growing crops. The Mormons were successful because:

- They believed Young was God's prophet and obeyed him completely
- Everyone worked for the good of the community rather than themselves - the Church owned all the land
- Built irrigation systems from the freshwater streams so crops could be grown.
- Organisation - each settlement produced different useful products eg crops or timber and brought them to the city to trade.
- Each settlement had a mixture of skills such as blacksmiths and carpenters and a church leader in overall charge.

### **Government Policy towards the Indians/Conflict and tension**

**1834 Permanent Indian Frontier** all Indians had to live to the west of the frontier, believing that Indians and settlers could not live together until the Indians were more 'civilised' and followed the settler way of life eg farming. Whites were not allowed to settle on Indian land or sell them alcohol or guns. The frontier was guarded by army forts.

**BUT** the situation changed in the 1840s because

1. The huge numbers of settlers crossing the Plains in the 1840s created tension between them.
2. The USA won war against Mexico and gained huge new territory and established the state of Oregon. Indian lands were now in the middle.
3. The Government wanted settlers to move into the new areas and to be safe on their journey.

**1851 The Indians Appropriations Act** government money was given to pay for moving Plains Indians into reservations. Hunting land was allocated to the reservations so the tribes could continue to hunt. By reducing the amount of land the Indians had for hunting, the government hoped they would take up farming. Went against their nomadic lifestyle - buffalo, tipis and travois.

**1851 Fort Laramie Treaty** - organised a Council of Plains tribes to agree a treaty which would end conflict and tension. The government wanted safe access for settlers across the Plains and to get the tribes to agree to live in certain areas allocated for each tribe. After a week of negotiations:

**The Plains tribes agreed** to allow migrants to travel through their lands in safety (which undermined the Permanent Indian Frontier), allow railway surveyors onto their land, allow roads and army posts to be built and to pay compensation if the terms were broken (eg a settler attacked)

**The US government agreed** to protect Plains tribes from white settlers and to pay the Indians \$50 000 a year to keep the treaty - this was paid in food and

products - meant they had to do as the government wanted which reduced their independence. Territories were set out for the Plains Indians which led to the creation of reservations.

**BUT** neither side stuck to the terms.....migrants didn't stick to the allocated Oregon Trail and strayed onto areas that they shouldn't - the government didn't stop them.

### **The development of settlement on the Plains (outlawed by the above!)**

1861-5 - during the Civil War the north could ignore the south's attitude to the west. The north wanted new states in the west to be free of slavery and small family farms owned by individuals. They passed

**1. 1862 Homestead Act** - promoted settlement in the west by taking up unclaimed land and making a new life there. A homestead meant a family home and enough land to support a family - 160 acres for \$10. Anyone over 21 could file a claim (there were limits to the numbers of claims by one person to prevent businessmen making huge profit.) They then lived on and farmed the land and after 5 years could 'prove up' for \$30 to own their homestead.

**Significance** The Act encouraged immigration from Europe.

80 million acres became homesteaded - 16%- so a lot of land remained unsettled.

60% of claims were never 'proved up' because it was so hard to farm the Plains. The Act wanted lots of individual families to get the land but rich landowners used the Act to get land more cheaply by getting their employees to file claims and pass on the rights to them

**2. The Pacific Railroad Act 1862** Railways in 1862 did not go far west BUT railways were essential to help migration to the West, promoted the development of towns and connected the industrial north with farming in the west to help trade. The Act split the job into two companies, Union Pacific from the east and Central Pacific from the west. The Act ignored any rights Plains Indians had to land along the route (45 million acres) and huge loans to build it.

The railways then sold some of their land from the government to fund the building and had immigration officers to encourage people from abroad to settle on the Plains. 200 million acres were settled - more than the Homestead Act because they had more land to sell, used better marketing and many people wanted to live near a railroad.

### **Impact of the railroads**

**On settlers and farming** - easier and cheaper travel west, more immigration from Europe, towns grew where railways stopped, farmers could sell crops in the east and settlers could buy from the industrial cities (machinery, clothes)

**On cattle farming** - helped the growth - Texas cattlemen could transport and sell cattle in the cities in the east

**On Plains tribes** - declining buffalo numbers as tracks and land grants reduced grassland and trains brought buffalo hunters to the Plains. Conflict as Indians attacked railroad surveyors

**On the USA** - connected west and east - 'Manifest Destiny' had been achieved.

### **Farming the Plains - and problems**

Farming went well on the west coast - Oregon and California, producing so much wheat that they were exporting it to Europe.

1850s - settlement began on the Plains encouraged by the government - behind the Permanent Indian Frontier BUT the land had never been farmed before.

#### **Problems**

**Water** - Low rainfall and very few rivers and streams -> too dry for crops or livestock, no rivers for transport, water could be 300 feet down - wells were expensive to dig and hard work

**Few trees** -> no timber for building houses or fences to keep in livestock, no wood for cooking or heating. They had to use buffalo dung as fuel. Houses were built of sods of earth - they were warm and fireproof but were always , dirty, insect infested and turned to mud in the heavy rain.

**Climate extremes** - hot summers, cold winters, hailstorms, thunderstorms -> crops shrivelled in the heat, hailstorms and fires (from lightning) destroyed crops.

**Ploughing** normal ploughs broke because of the tangled grass roots. Digging had to be done by hand.

**Grasshoppers** could destroy crops, grass and even wool on sheep's backs. Their droppings polluted water sources.

### **Homesteaders solving the problems of farming the Plains part 1**

**Water** - (Halladay's) windmills pumped water out of the ground BUT not very powerful

**Timber** - barbed wire fenced off crops to protect from animals and livestock

**Ploughing** - a steel plough (sulky plow) was used, strong enough to tackle roots

**Timber Culture Act 1873** - homesteaders could claim another 160 acres if they grew trees on 40 acres of it. Trees were essential as windbreaks for the crops, timber for building houses, fences and furniture and for fuel. In some places though there was not enough water for the trees to grow. In others claims were made then sold on for profit.

**New crops** - brought from Russia - 'Turkey Red' wheat grew well on Plains farms.

## **Part 2 Solving problems for homesteaders - new technology and farming methods 1876 -1895**

**Dry farming** - prepared the soil so it trapped rainwater under the surface, worked well in growing wheat.

**Wind Pumps** - many homesteaders gave up their claims as they couldn't access enough water for their crops. There was plenty of water underground but it was too deep and difficult to get to the surface. By the 1880s metal windpumps were the solution - only needed oiling once a year, larger blades increased the pumping power - used by cattle ranchers and farmers.

**Barbed wire** introduced in 1874 - solved the problem of lack of timber. Cheap and effective way to fence off claims, protect crops from roaming livestock and keep cattle in. Coating to stop rust.

**Mechanisation** steel ploughs went deeper to help dry farming, seed drills planted seeds deep into the soil to reach the water.

### **Cattle farming**

**From the 1830s** Texan cowboys drove cattle to the northern cities. BUT they transported a cattle disease called 'Texas fever'

**1855** Missouri farmers blocked the drives and a quarantine law was passed to stop infected cows entering.

**1861-65** During the Civil War the longhorns had not been managed and their numbers had grown to 5 million. They were not worth much in Texas but there was great demand for them in the north - \$50 in Chicago. BUT they needed to transport them there....

**1867** the railroad reached **Abilene**. **Joseph McCoy** seized an opportunity - there was already the Chisholm trail (a trade route) and grass along the journey to feed the cattle. They could then be loaded onto trains and sent north.

To make his venture successful, McCoy bought land to build stockyards to keep the cattle, a depot where railway cars could be loaded, constructed a hotel for travelling cowboys, got the Chisholm trail marked out through Indian territory so it could be easily followed and marketed the idea to Texas cattlemen. Huge success - Abilene became the first cow town and McCoy very rich!

**1866 The Goodnight-Loving Trail** was established. Indians were starving in their reservation near Fort Sumner. G and L drove 2000 cattle to the reservation and sold them for 4X their value in Texas.

Continued to sell cattle directly to the new populations of the west, including doing a deal with John Iliff who was selling beef to government workers and reservations in Colorado and Wyoming.

**John Iliff and ranching on the Plains** - recognised that there was a great demand for meat in Denver (a gold mining area). He decided to fatten the cows

on the grass on the Plains and sell them to the gold miners without the expense and difficulty of the long drives. 1866 bought a ranch near Denver for 26 000 cattle and became the Denver's first millionaire by selling beef to the mining towns, to the workers on the railroad and to the government for reservations. Iliff was the first of the cattle barons - owning huge ranches on the Plains (almost free land, free food and cheap rail transport). The barons often controlled local politics because of their huge wealth and power in the area.

### **Cowboys and changes in the cattle industry**

**1870s and 1880s** - the Plains became overstocked - too many cattle, not enough grass. Led to a fall in demand and prices, soil erosion.

**Winter 1887 The 'Great Die Up'** winter 1886-7 was very harsh - 15% of cattle died, many cattlemen went bankrupt. Price of beef went down as the remaining cattle were in such poor condition and so many were for sale. This led to the end of ranching on the open range - smaller ranches could save their cattle in the smaller areas. Smaller herds were easier to guard, supply enough water to and more easily found in the snow. Fewer cattle meant price of beef rose again.

After 1887 ranchers started to produce higher quality meat - eg Herefords - as they were more valuable/breeding needed to be controlled they were fenced in.

**Cowboys on a cattle drive** - could take up to 6 months, hard work as the half wild longhorns could suddenly stampede and then get lost, injured or killed.

Running could also make the cows lose weight and so reduce their value.

Also had to deal with crossing rivers, sleeping in the open, dealing with snakes and wild animals, guarding the cattle from theft and attacks by Plains tribes.

Cowboys worked in outfits of 12 - led by a trail boss, with a chuck wagon full of food and water and a cook. The wrangler cared for the horses.

At the end of the journey eg Abilene they would drive the cattle into a stockyard for sale and then loaded onto rail cars. Then they got paid..... and often spent their money on fancy clothes, women, gambling and drinking..... which could lead to fighting.

**Cowboys on a ranch** very little work in the winter, the round up began in the spring. Cattle and calves born in the Spring were branded to show which ranch they belonged to. Work on the ranch was very hard - only suitable for men in their 20s, living in a bunkhouse and often strict rules - eg no gambling.

**Cowboys on the Plains** had to cope with snow in the winter- would have to ride out to break ice in the water, make paths in the snow to help them out of snowdrifts.

### **Rivalry between ranchers and homesteaders - cattle vs farming**

Ranchers used public land to graze cattle - needed about 2000 acres - fine until homesteaders' 160 acre claims spread to ranching areas.

Ranchers tried to stop this happening by

- filing claims for good land with waterholes or springs which would make the land around it useful so it wouldn't be claimed
- ranchers' employees and family would file claims and give it to the ranchers
- taking homesteaders to court over claims - knowing they couldn't afford to fight
- sometimes threatened homesteaders, damaged their crops and accused them of cattle rustling.

Ranchers also complained homesteaders' barbed wire harmed their animals, homesteaders complained that cattle trampled and ate their crops.....ranchers said animals had a legal right to roam on public land and it was the homesteaders' fault for not fencing their land properly..... tensions often led to conflict ... see the range wars later

### **Problems of lawlessness in the newly settled west**

West often described as lawless - were laws in America but no one in the west to enforce/make sure they were obeyed.

Communities needed law enforcement to protect their property, buy and sell fairly and to live their lives peacefully.

**Why there were problems** - huge number of migrants in the Californian gold rush - 300 000 led to criminal activity

- Gold prospectors were allocated an area of land to look for gold and keep any they found. BUT claim jumping was common - if a claim looked promising others tried to steal it.
- The huge mining camps attracted people trying to make money out of the prospectors - eg 'salting a claim' - scattering a few flakes of gold on a worthless claim and conning a new migrant into buying it. Road agents - gangs of criminals who waited in isolated spots along roads to rob travellers
- Prostitutes and people selling alcohol in the camps - combination often led to fights and use of guns made it dangerous for everyone
- Many disappointed prospectors went to San Francisco for work and didn't find any .... many turned to crime. Gangs took over different areas of the city - law officers were ineffective because of the scale of the problem and corruption. Reached the point that gang members would walk into saloons, kill people, take their money and leave.



### Attempted solutions

**Federal law enforcement** - when a territory grew to 60 000 the federal government appointed a governor, 3 judges to hear cases and a US Marshal who could appoint deputies to help him and order a posse of men to chase down lawbreakers

**Sheriffs** were appointed in areas of 5 000. Similar powers to the Marshal, no legal training and often chosen for their ability to calm people down and break up fights.

**Problems** territories were huge, horseback travel meant news was slow to reach the sheriff. The officials were badly paid - no incentive to do job properly so many were corrupt. Some areas set up their own systems. Mining camps often set up their own rules as they didn't have access to the legal system. Vigilance Committees developed in San Francisco as many believed the legal system was corrupt. Organised 200 vigilantes to capture criminals, put them on trial and punish them. This idea spread to some Mining camps - often the accused did not get a fair trial and might be lynched.

**Billy the Kid 1878** a private war erupted between a cattle baron John Chisum and cattle rustlers. Billy fought for Chisum and promised to avenge the death of a friend killed in the war. Killings and counter killings continued and ended in a five day gun battle in Lincoln. Billy went on the run and tales of his gun fighting exploits in killing 21 men appeared in newspapers. Local ranchers appealed to the President to end the violence. A new governor, Garrett was appointed. He captured Billy who was then sentenced to death at his trial. Billy then killed 2 men on his jail escape, was hunted down and shot. Significance - shows the justice system was too weak.

**Wyatt Earp and the OK Corral** 1874 Wyatt was involved in a fight and arrested - he was then involved in law enforcement, helping a Marshal to keep order. Then became a Marshal and moved to Tombstone, Arizona. There was tension between cattle ranchers (Clantons and McLaury's) and rich mine owners. Rich mine owners made him deputy sheriff to bring order to the town. Clashes between the Earps and the C and M as they tried to recover stolen cattle. Cowboys carried on rustling cattle and robbing stagecoach (Earps were also accused of being involved in robberies).

1881 gunfight at the OK Corral the Earps killed three members of the C and M family - the Earps said they were only trying to disarm them but C and M opened fire. Two Earps were killed in revenge in 1882, Wyatt shot the two men he said were responsible for killing them. Opinion turned against the Wyatts as their violent law keeping was just causing more conflict and Wyatt had become a murderer. He was forced to flee Tombstone.

**Lawlessness decreased** - people wanted their families and property to be secure so voted for laws to ban guns in towns. Towns became safer - as long as they stayed out of saloons and gambling halls. Towns now connected by rail and telegraph.

**Rivalry between homesteaders and ranchers AND small ranchers and big ranchers- the Johnson County War 1892**

Ella Watson and Jim Averill had a 670 homestead in the middle of an open range pasture used by Albert Bothwell. Bothwell wanted them gone and when they bought a small herd of cattle he accused them of stealing them from him. He seized them, hanged them and took the land and cattle.

1892 - homesteaders and small ranchers decided to round up the new calves in the spring before the rich ranchers had a chance too. The WGSA (rich ranchers) planned an invasion of Johnson County to kill 70 men 'for the good of the country'. Wyoming's governor knew about it. They raised £100 000 , hired 22 gunmen and transported them on a train supplied by the railway company. Once there they got distracted ..... attacked a ranch where two men on their list were hiding.

The local sheriff found out and raised a force to find the gunmen. The gunmen hid in the ranch surrounded by 300 townspeople until the US army rescued them. The charges were dropped as the WGSA payed the best lawyers, trial took place elsewhere as Johnson County was unlikely to have sympathy with the large ranchers, the prosecutors ran out of money as the trial went on so long.

Overall tensions between homesteaders and ranchers decreased as after the winter of 1886-7 most cattlemen moved to small ranches with fenced off land.

**More settlers on the Plains**

1. **The Exoduster Movement 1879** slaves in southern states were freed in 1865 but still often treated badly. Many had already moved west and got land using the Homestead Act. 1879 a rumour spread that the Government had given the state of Kansas for former slaves to live in - 40 000 - an exodus to the dry, dusty west.
2. **The Oklahoma Land Rush 1893** The Government decided to open up the middle section of Indian territory for 160 acre claims - the fastest got it! 8 million acres in 1893.

**Conflict between the Indians and settlers**

**The impact of railroads** 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty said tribes were to allow surveyors and construction workers onto their land - unaware of the impact - huge land grants, fences and railways disrupted and blocked buffalo hunting. Railroads brought thousands of homesteaders.

**Cattle industry** cattle and buffalo eat grass - as cattle numbers increased on the Plains, buffalo numbers declined. Cattle trails also disrupted buffalo hunts. **Gold Prospecting** prospectors had murdered Indians/moved tribes to get them away from possible gold claims. Influx from all over the world brought new diseases that devastated Indian populations. New towns grew up, completely alien to the Indian way of life. 1862 gold was discovered in the Lakota Sioux's hunting ground - thousands passed through along the Bozeman trail.

**US Government policy towards the Plains Indians** As more white Americans settled on the Plains the government continued to move Plains tribes onto reservations - in return they promised the Indians they would not lose any more land, be protected from whites and they would receive a yearly payment in money, food, livestock, farming equipment. The government felt reservations would benefit the Indians as they could learn farming and Christianity BUT land given was often too poor for farming and the Bureau of Indian Affairs agents who managed the reservations were often corrupt.

**Plains tribes** often moved onto reservations as their Council felt there was no other way to survive because of dwindling food supplies. But once it became clear that the government rarely kept promises that the tribes would be well cared for and they would be able to continue to hunt, other tribes resisted going onto them or not staying on them - the US Army decided to use force.

### **The Indian Wars 1862-68 - incidents showing worsening relations**

**1862 Little Crow** - a chief of a band of Dakota Sioux in Minnesota - numbers of settlers increasing, animals to hunt decreasing. 1851 The Dakota Sioux had agreed to go onto 2 reservations in exchange for money - Little Crow thought this would provide security for his people while they adapted to their new way of life. BUT the government did not pay the money as they said the tribe owed £200 000 debt to traders, the reservations could not produce enough food to feed the Indians over winter. Trouble flared as Indian warriors raided to capture resources or steal from the Agency storehouse.

**1858** - the Dakota Sioux had to sign away half the reservation to pay of the debts, by **1862** they were desperate - crops had failed, people tried to survive by eating grass, the Agency refused to give any supplies to the Indians even though the storehouses were full. Little Crow and other chiefs took provisions from the warehouses and attacked army forts and settlers' towns. Around 600 soldiers and settlers were killed.

**Consequences** 400 Sioux were captured, 38 were sentenced to death. The rest of the tribe were moved to isolated dry lands - many starved to death in the first winter. Bounties were offered for scalps of any found hiding. A hunter chopped off Little Crow's head.

**1864 – The Sand Creek Massacre** – gold had been discovered in Arapaho and Cheyenne territory in Colorado. Settlers wanted the tribes to move out. They agreed but young warriors in the brotherhoods known as the Dog soldiers didn't. They continued to attack the settlers. Black Kettle (a Cheyenne chief) and government and army officials tried to reach an agreement. Black Kettle set up camp and Colonel Chivington ordered by the governor massacred 130 men, women and children. They scalped them and took other body parts for display in saloons.

BK escaped. The Dog soldiers felt they had been right all along, the massacre showed the settlers could not be trusted and must be fought, attacks resumed. The US army was busy fighting the Civil War, made an agreement to move the tribes to a large reservation and generous payments would be given to survivors of the massacre.

At the end of the war the government backed out of the deal – no compensation, had to stay away from white property and were given a reservation half the size promised.

**1866-68 Red Cloud's War** – when gold was discovered in Montana prospectors were taken a short cut from the Oregon Trail called the Bozeman Trail which went across Lakota Sioux hunting grounds. Angry Indians attacked them. The trail broke the terms of the 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty. **1866** the government invited chiefs to discuss a new treaty. They wanted the tribe to allow people to travel the trail safely in return for gifts and a promise that their hunting lands would not be disturbed. Red Cloud was furious to discover materials had already been brought to build forts along the Bozeman Trail – the government had already made its decision before the meeting. He believed they had no choice but to fight or starve. For the next two years they attacked soldiers and workers building the forts. Other Lakota Sioux leaders Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull also joined in and Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes joined in too.

**1866 – Fetterman's trap** men were attacked as they set out to cut wood at one of the new forts. 80 cavalymen were sent to protect them led by Captain Fetterman. The Lakota Sioux used a tactic of sending out a couple of scouts who deliberately got spotted by the cavalry, then galloped off leading the cavalry into an ambush – they were all killed.

The Lakota Sioux also captured Fort Phil Kearny on the Bozeman Trail – no one could use the trail or leave the fort. The government decided the only way forward was to convince the Plains tribes to give up their land and move to reservations further west.

**1868 – The Second Fort Laramie Treaty** – as Red Cloud had been so successful the government agreed to close the Bozeman Trail (they had already found another route) and Red Cloud agreed to take his people to a reservation in Dakota which was to be for the exclusive use of the Sioux nation.

**President Grant's Peace Policy 1868** aimed to calm tensions by improving the management of the reservations. Corrupt agents were replaced with religious men - especially Quakers who had a reputation for fairness, justice and peacefulness. An American Indian, Ely Parker became Commissioner of Indian Affairs. \$2 million was given to ensure those already living in reservations were properly cared for. Reservations were set up for tribes that were still roaming free and those who refused to go were to be treated as hostile and attacked by the army. Parker said no more treaties should be negotiated with the tribes as they didn't know what was best for them 'helpless and ignorant wards'. This led to **1871 Indian Appropriation Act** tribes would no longer be recognised as an independent nation, the US would not make treaties with them.

**1876 - the Battle of Little Bighorn** a turning point as the US Army was defeated. **Shock transformed policy - assimilate or die.**

1874 the Pacific railroad was approaching the Sioux hunting grounds in Dakota. Commander Custer led a group of soldiers to protect the workers from Plains Indians. He also used his mission to prospect for gold in the Black Hills, a sacred area for the Lakota Sioux. When he found gold, thousands followed him, staking a claim to land clearly breaking the 1868 FL Treaty.

The Government offered to buy the Black Hills, the Sioux refused. The government said the Plains tribes had broken the FL Treaty as they were attacking prospectors. Furious, thousands of Sioux and Cheyenne warriors left their reservations to join Sioux leaders Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. The government ordered them to return within 60 days, after which any Sioux not on the reservation would be attacked - impossible because of heavy snow and many did not want to obey.

7000 Sioux set up a lodge camp outside the reservation areas. Sitting Bull said 'The Whites want a war and we will give it to them.' The US army planned to attack the Sioux to force them back into the reservations. Custer's scouts found a camp of 2000 warriors in the valley of the Little Bighorn river..... he only had 600 men. He took 200 in to attack and all were killed.

### **Consequences of the battle**

Indians were mainly now seen as a real threat rather than weak savages - threatened Manifest Destiny and White Settlers - would have to assimilate or die. Indians must be kept on reservations, previous treaties ignored and there should be military control of the Plains - the tribes should have no weapons.

**1890 - The Wounded Knee Massacre** - Indians on the reservations were in despair - the government cut rations and a drought meant crop failures. Wovoka claimed to have a vision telling him that if the Indians rejected white ways of life and performed a dance - the Ghost Dance - the Great Spirit would bring all

the dead Indians back to life, a flood would carry away the whites and the Plains would belong to the Indians again. The dance spread and Sitting Bull was killed in an attempt to arrest him as the army thought (wrongly) that he was leading the rebellion. His followers fled, and the army caught up with them and took them to Wounded Knee Creek where they started to perform the dance. A shot was fired in the confusion - soon 250 men, women and children were killed.

**Reactions** - many were relieved that the Ghost Dance was over and praised the soldiers for their actions - and went on to **destroy the Plains Indians way of life**.....

### **Extermination of the buffalo**

Settlers rushed to kill them as buffalo hide could be used to make leather for the machine belts in the US factories as well as using bones for fertiliser and pigment - so they were valuable. Railroads brought hunters to the Plains, many hunters killed more than they could skin causing great offence to the tribes who believed the spirit world was angered and caused the buffalo to disappear. The buffalo became extinct.

**Destruction of the way of life of the Plains Indians** Plains tribes would starve if they did not assimilate and learn to farm. A nomadic existence was no longer allowed and Indians could not feed, clothe and shelter themselves. Many in the reservations relied on government handouts for food, government often cut rations to punish resistance which further weakened Indians who then died of diseases like flu and measles as well as starvation. Alcoholism and depression spread. Power of the chiefs were abolished. Indian children were sent to schools off reservation to be brought up as Christians and to have no respect for their way of life.

**1887 - The Dawes Act** - a Homestead Act for Indians - each family would have 160 acre plot of reservation land. They could then apply to be US citizens. Any leftover reservation land could be bought by whites.

The Act aimed to make Indians be individuals farming for themselves rather than being part of a tribe

**Significance** - a lot of reservation land was lost to whites. Many Indians struggled to farm on the Plains. Most sold their lands to whites and ended up landless. Many passed their land to their children in smaller plots - even harder to farm.

**1890 - the Indian frontier was officially closed** - the west had been settled by whites.