

Plains indians



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The destruction of the Plains Indians' cultures connected with the technological developments and government actions in the United States. During the period of struggle between Indians and Whites in the late 19th century, Indian leaders often traveled east to plead their case before the federal government, with few results. The building of the transcontinental railroads and all their branches was an inevitable part of the Industrial Revolution that drove America following the Civil War.

The Indians were repressed due to the railroad, which cut through their territory in the West, the declining population of the buffalo, wars, and the loss of their land to White settlement. The federal government tried to quiet the Indians' protests by signing treaties with the chiefs of the tribes.

However, the treaties failed because those who signed didn't necessarily represent groups of people in Indian culture, and in most cases, the Indians didn't recognize the authority chiefs outside of their own tribes. In the 1860s, the U. S. government made new efforts to relocate Indians into even smaller reservations than before.

Indians were often promised that they wouldn't be bothered further if they would just move out of their ancestral lands, and often, Indian agents were corrupt and sold off cheap food and products to their own fellow Indians. White men often ignored the treaties, though, and frequently scammed the Indians. In frustration, many Native American tribes attempted to fight back. After the Civil War, the U. S. Army's new mission became to move the Indians out of the West so the White settlers could move in. A couple of Indians and Whites battled between 1860s to 1890s in a series known as the Indian Wars.

Many times though, the Indians were better equipped than the federal troops sent to stop their revolts because arrows could be fired more rapidly than their rifles. However, the invention of the Colt .45 revolver and Winchester repeating rifle put the Indians at a disadvantage. During this period, there was much violence among the Indians and Whites. Generals Sherman, Sheridan, and Custer all battled Indians in battles such as Little Big Horn. The building of the railroads is connected with the settlement of the West and the steady destruction of Indian cultures.

The main food source for Plains Indians were the bison. In the early days, millions of bison populated the American prairie, and by the end of the Civil War, there were still 15 million buffalo. Many people killed buffalo for their meat and their skin but many people killed the bison for sport and just left the rest of the carcass to rot. However, it was the expansion of the railroad that really started the bison massacre. Railroads enhanced the value of the land enormously, but made farmers dependent on railroads. The need for open land led them to kill off the bison for railroad land.

Railroad construction led to further settlement of the West, which in turn complicated conditions for the Indian tribes. The Plains Indians were driven out of their territory and into too small reservations. With the expansion of the railroad, down came their number one food source, the bison. Inventions such as the Winchester, led to the disadvantage of Indians during battles when protecting their land. The wars, overall, also affected the Indians. The government actions, building of the railroad and other inventions, contributed to the steady decline in the Plains Indians' population.