

# Settlers effect on the plains indians history essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The new railroads in the West occasioned by the Civil War opened up the area to economic development and new settlers. American settlers from the East entered via the Mississippi to ranch farm and mine. Native American settlers also poured from Deep South after being convinced that prosperity was only found in the West. Chinese workers constructing the railroads worsened diversity of the population in this region. The Great Plains underwent transformation because of settlers from the east. Farmers cultivated wheat and other crops on their lands and wiped out herds of American bison. The industry of cattle blossomed as the railroads provided a means of transport to market the cattle (Josephy 32).

The lives of African-Americans residing in the west were drastically affected by the increase in white settlement and disappearing of bison. Civil conflicts led to occasional victories by the American Indians despite great US military force and the large number of white settlers. By mid 1980s, over 50% of American Indians had been pushed into reservation areas that least appealed to the white settlers. Because of the civil war, there was a huge traffic of people entering the West Mississippi. These people originated from Midwest and East as well as Asia and Europe. Millions of people had been lured by the promise of riches from gold mines, cheap lands and the imagination of a better living style.

The new railroads offered a new means of transportation for the settlers while some of them sailed in order to arrive to the west coast. They settled on the Great Basin, Great Plains, and South West, enduring disillusionment, danger, and hardship. By 20th Century, the white settlers had acquired new homesteads, industries, and communities. Some of them became greatly

successful although most of the settlers did not succeed in achieving the wealth they desired (Trigger and Wilcomb 22).

Since the arrival of the white settlers, there was a misunderstanding between them and the Indians. For example, non-Indians did not recognize the religious practices of the native tribes, which include worshipping of animal and plant spirits. In addition, the Plain Indians believed in a complicated system of Kinship based on extended families: the settlers could not comprehend this. Such cultural differences made the white settlers view native people as barriers to civilization (Smith and Allen 47). As the Americans organized new states and territories in the West, it gave a clear indication that Native Americans were prohibited from roaming over the land occupied by non-natives. The US policy aimed at establishing small pieces of land for different tribes and motivated them to practice agriculture. While some tribes peacefully settled on the reservations, most of them were resistant and did not give up their way of life and their lands (Philip 18).

Losing the bison on the Great Plains was a huge threat to the survival of Indians than the battle with the US army. The American Indians relied on the bison as a source of fuel, shelter, clothing, and food. Although the destruction of the bison was not under the federal policy, the practice was approved by army commanders as a way of destroying key aspects of the Indian life. Besides, hunters were hired along the railroads killing wildlife animals whilst providing food to the workers of the transcontinental lines. After the completion of the railroads, the settlers used chartered cars to shoot the bison. As of 1975, they had killed millions of bison, which provided material for hides in the East. After a decade, the bison species became

<https://assignbuster.com/settlers-effect-on-the-plains-indians-history-essay/>

extinct. This situation was worsened because they had abandoned their nomadic lifestyle. As a result, the Indians had no option but to accept living on the reservations (McNickle 52).

The system of reserving Indians on small pieces of land did not succeed. Most of the families were reserved on marginal lands that made it impossible for them to develop farming practices that could sustain them. The government could not fulfill its promise of supplying them with food and other needs. This made the government abandon its hard held policy of viewing the tribes as sovereign states. The purpose of the new land was to promote farming among the native tribes through breaking the reservations (American Journey 547). The policy allowed the land to be distributed per each household. After the distribution, citizenship and title of ownership was given to each owner. However, this was not done to all the members of the native tribes. The reserved land that had not been allocated to the native Americans were sold to interested people. Although this was a humanitarian reform, the US policy did not recognize the communal lifestyle of Native Americans: this led to the loss of millions of acres of land belonging to the Indians (Smith and Allen 39).

The Plains Indian tribes were desperate and had an urge to restore their past; they were attracted to the Ghost Dance: a religious group. This movement had promised them that it would protect them from the white settlers, and the bullets of the American soldiers. It had also promised to bring the herds of Bison back. Efforts of reviving cultural practices of the Native Americans raised concerns among the US army and the settlers. This is because they were worried that it would increase the Indian resistance.

<https://assignbuster.com/settlers-effect-on-the-plains-indians-history-essay/>

When the US army failed to ban the Ghost Dance Movement, they adopted methods that are more aggressive. As of 1980, the US military had killed over 300 children, women, and men. This led a confrontation that marked of Plains Indian resistance (Trigger and Wilcomb 30).

In the beginning of 19th Century, the American government decided that it would use treaties to solve the conflict between non-Indian settlers and the Plains Indian tribes. These treaties were meant to restrict the Native American tribes from moving to certain regions. Later, the federal government established a permanent frontier where displaced eastern tribes could live. In 1854, the US government reserved a vast region for the settlers (McNickle 72).

Plains Indians were reserved and pressurized to embrace change. They deployed new resistant strategies but did not succeed. The Great Plains underwent transformation because of settlers from the east. Farmers cultivated wheat and other crops on their lands and wiped out herds of American bison. The cattle industry blossomed because the railroads provided a means of transport to market the cattle. However, they have demonstrated their skills in adapting to change and hardship while using the most available opportunity. They have worked for wages, traded, hunted, protested, lobbied, prayed, danced, made war, ranched and farmed. Using their adaptive approaches, the Plains Indians have maintained themselves as unique population despite the challenges (Smith and Allen 20).

## **Work Cited**

Josephy, Alvin. America in 1492: The World of the Indian People before the Arrival of Columbus. New York: Alfred A. Knopf 2002. History Reference Center.

McNickle, D'Arcy. Native American Tribalism: Indian Survivals and Renewals. London: Oxford University Press, 2003 JSTOR.

Philip, Kenneth. John Collier's Crusade for Indian Reform, 1920-1954. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007 Print.

Smith, Paul, and Allen Robert. Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee. 2006 New York Times Historical Database.

Trigger, Bruce and Wilcomb Washburn, eds. The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006 Print.

The American Journey. Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2011. Print.