

## Third years

### Module: (ETC)

#### Mr. Selmi

### Continued Expansionism (4)

In 1845, the U.S government annexed the Republic of Texas (present-day U.S. state of Texas and parts of Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, Wyoming, and New Mexico). This expansion made many Americans dreaming of a transcontinental railroad that would unite the Atlantic with the Pacific coast.

#### The Transcontinental Railroad

In 1862, Congress passed Pacific Railroad Act which is based on a bill proposed in 1856 that had been a victim of the political skirmishes over slavery. The Central Pacific started work in Sacramento, California, in January 8, 1863, but progress was slow due to the resource and labour shortage caused by the Civil War. The Central Pacific faced a labour shortage in the west and relied heavily on Chinese immigrants, who represented over 80 percent of the Central Pacific's labourers. The project was completed on May 10, 1869 at Promontory Summit, Utah where, at a special ceremony, a golden spike was driven in to join the two sets of rails.

#### Homestead Act

The Homestead Act of 1862 was intended to make lands opening up in the west available to a wide variety of settlers. It provided inexpensive land to those willing to cultivate it, eventually encouraged several hundred thousand farmers to settle on the western lands. The homestead act gave each settler about 160 acres with some conditions; like the necessity to prove 5 years of residency by the homesteader. By the end of the century, more than 80 million acres had been granted to over 480,000 successful homesteaders. In total, about 10 percent of the U.S. was settled because of the Homestead Act, which was in effect until 1976 all states except for Alaska, which repealed the Homestead Act in 1986.

#### Tensions with Indians

Continued expansionism created increasing tensions with the Indian tribes living west Mississippi River. Many wars were fought between the U.S. Army and the Indians in order to force the Indian tribes to quit their territories and to live in reservations.

Among those wars:

#### Battle of Little Big Horn

At the Battle of the Little Bighorn on June 25, 1876, **General George Armstrong Custer** led 600 men into the Little Bighorn Valley, where they were overwhelmed by approximately 3,000 Sioux and Cheyenne warriors led by **Crazy Horse**. Custer and his men were all killed in the battle, known as Custer's Last Stand. Despite the decisive Indian victory, the U.S. government forced the Sioux to sell the Black Hills and leave the land.

#### Wounded Knee

In the late nineteenth century, Indian "Ghost Dancers" believed a specific dance ritual would reunite them with the dead and bring peace and prosperity. On December 29, 1890, the U.S. Army surrounded a group of Ghost Dancers at Wounded Knee Creek near the Pine Ridge reservation of South Dakota. During the ensuing Wounded Knee Massacre, fierce fighting broke out and 150 Indians were slaughtered. The battle was the last major conflict between the U.S. government and the Plains Indians.

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