

## 4 On Buffaloes and Indians

The great herds of buffalo on the western plains were essential to the Plains Indians, providing them with food, shelter, and fuel. In the twenty years after the Civil War, though, with buffalo hides in fashion in white society, professional hunters and so-called sportsmen nearly extinguished the species in one of the great ecological disasters in history. It has been estimated that thirteen million animals were exterminated by 1883, when extinction threatened and buffalo became too scarce to be hunted profitably. Ironically, it was principally the herds of buffalo saved for "wild west" shows, such as that of Buffalo Bill Cody, that allowed the limited survival of the species.

In the first reading, W. Skelton Glenn describes commercial buffalo hunting. His 1910 memoirs, which most likely describe a hunt taking place in Texas sometime in 1876 or 1877, provide an account of the buffalo's rapid decline. The second selection, by E. N. Andrews, documents the hunt of buffalo for sport. As Andrews documents the brutality of the kill, he is wise and somewhat regretful about the encroachment of white civilization onto Native American lands. However, John Cook expresses little sentimental concern about the Native Americans. The fact that the decline of Native Americans was linked to the destruction of their food resources provided an incentive against the conservation of the buffalo herds. Influenced by the conservative Social Darwinism of the late nineteenth century, Cook saw the decline of the buffalo and the Native Americans as a process that not only was inevitable, but that would lead to the establishment of a more advanced civilization on the North American continent.

I have seen their bodies so thick after being skinned, that they would look like logs where a hurricane had passed through a forest [sic]. If they were lying on a hillside, the rays of the sun would make it look like a hundred glass windows. These buffalo would lie in this way until warm weather, drying up, and I have seen them piled fifty or sixty in a pile where the hunter had made a stand. As the skinner commenced on the edge, he would have to roll it out of the way to have

From Sprickland, Rex W., editor, "The Recollections of W. S. Glenn, Buffalo Hunter," *Panhandle-Plains Historical Review* 22 (1949), pp. 20-26. Courtesy of Panhandle-Plains Historical Society. It is a violation of the law to reproduce this selection by any means whatsoever without the written permission of the copyright holder.

room to skin the next, and when finished they would be rolled up as thick as saw logs around a mill. In this way a man could hide over a field and pick out the camps that were making the most money out of the hunt.

These hides, like all other commodities would rise and fall in price and we had to be governed by the prices [in the] East. This man, J. R. Loganstein, that run the hunt, has known them to be shipped to New York, then to Liverpool and back again in order to raise the price or corner the market....

We will now describe a camp outfit. They would range from six to a dozen men, there being one hunter who killed the buffalo and took out the tongues, also the tallow. As the tallow was of an oily nature, it was equal to butter; [it was used] for lubricating our guns and we loaded our own shells, each shell had to be lubricated and [it] was used also for greasing wagons and also for lights in camp. Often chunks as large as an ear of corn were thrown on the fire to make heat. The [i.e., the removal of the tallow] had to be done while the meat was fresh, the hunter throwing it into a tree to wind dry; if the skinner forgot it, it would often stay there all winter and still be good to eat in the spring and better to eat after hanging there in the wind a few days.

We will return to the wagon man. [There were] generally two men to the wagon and their business was to follow up the hunter, if they were not in sight after the hunter had made a killing, he would proceed in their direction until he had met them, and when they would see him, he would signal with his hat where the killing was. If they got to the buffalo when they were fresh, their duty was to take out all the humps, tongues and tallow from the best buffalo. The hunter would then hunt more if they did not have hides enough to make a load or finish their day's work.

A remarkable good hunter would kill seventy-five to a hundred in a day, an average hunter about fifty, and a common one twenty-five, some hardly enough to run a camp. It was just like in any other business. A good skinner would skin from sixty to seventy-five, an average man from thirty to forty, and a common one from fifteen to twenty-five. These skinners were also paid by the hide[,] about five cents less than the hunter was getting for killing, being furnished with a grind stone, knives and steel and a team and wagon. The men were furnished with some kind of a gun, not as valuable as Sharp's rifle, to kill cripples with, also kips and calves that were standing around. In several incidents [instances?] it has been known to happen while the skinner was busy, they would slip up and knock him over. Toward the latter part of the hunt, when all the big ones were killed, I have seen as many as five hundred up to a thousand in a bunch, nothing but calves and have ridden tight up to them, if the wind was right.

Market value reasons for kill.

American Experience, Nov 2, 30

JOHN R. COOK\*

That evening there was a general discussion in regard to the main subject in hunters' minds. Colorado had passed stringent laws that were practically prohibitory against buffalo-killing; the Legislature of Kansas did the same; the Indian Territory was patrolled by United States marshals. And all the venturesome hunters from eastern Colorado, western Kansas, the Platte, Solomon and Republican rivers country came to Texas to follow the chase for buffalo-hides.

The Texas Legislature, while we were here among the herds, to destroy them, was in session at Austin, with a bill drawn up for their protection. General Phil. Sheridan was then in command of the military department of the Southwest, with headquarters at San Antonio. When he heard of the nature of the Texas bill for the protection of the buffaloes, he went to Austin, and, appearing before the joint assembly of the House and Senate, so the story goes, told them that they were making a sentimental mistake by legislating in the interest of the buffalo. He told them that instead of stopping the hunters they ought to give them a hearty, unanimous vote of thanks, and appropriate a sufficient sum of money to strike and present to each one a medal of bronze, with a dead buffalo on one side and a discouraged Indian on the other.

He said: "These men have done in the last two years and will do more in the next year, to settle the vexed Indian question, than the entire regular army has done in the last thirty years. They are destroying the Indians' commissary; and it is a well-known fact that an army losing its base of supplies is placed at a great disadvantage. Send them powder and lead, if you will; but, for the sake of a lasting peace, let them kill, skin, and sell until the buffaloes are exterminated. Then your prairies can be covered with speckled cattle, and the festive cowboy, who follows the hunter as a second forerunner of an advanced civilization."

His words had the desired effect, and for the next three years the American bison traveled through a hail of lead.

The next morning our outfit pulled out south, and that day we caught up with and passed through many straggling bands of these solemn-looking but doomed animals. And thus we traveled by easy stages four days more.

Arriving on the breaks of the Salt fork of the Brazos river, we realized that we were in the midst of the vast sea of animals that caused us gladness and sorrow, joy, trouble and anxiety, but independence, for the succeeding three years. We drove down from the divide, and, finding a fresh spring of water, went into camp at this place. We decided to scout the country around for a suitable place for a permanent camp.

\*John R. Cook, *The Border and the Buffalo: An Untold Story of the Southwest Plains*. (Topeka, Kansas, *Care and Company*, 1907), pp. 112-115, 290-291.

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I had killed wild turkeys in southwest Missouri, also in southeastern Kansas, and had always looked upon them as a wary game bird. But here, turkey, turkey! Manifesting at all times and places a total indifference to our presence. At first we killed some of them, but after cooking and attempting to eat them we gave it up. Their meat was bitter and sickening, from eating china-berries (the fruit of *Sapindus marginatus*, or soapberry trees).

So we passed and repassed them; and they did the same, and paid no attention whatever to us.

Deer were simply too easy to find, for they were ever present. The same with antelope, bear, panther, mountain lion or cougar, raccoon, polecat, swift coyotes and wolves—they were all here.

And at times I asked myself: "What would you do, John R. Cook, if you had been a child of this wonderfully prolific game region, your ancestors, back through countless ages, according to traditional history, having roamed these vast solitudes as free as the air they breathed? What would you do if some outside interloper should come in and start a ruthless slaughter upon the very soil you had grown from childhood upon, and that you believed you alone had all the rights by occupancy that could possibly be given one? Yes, what would you do?"

But there are two sides to the question. It is simply a case of the survival of the fittest. Too late to stop and moralize now. And sentiment must have no part in our thoughts from this time on. We must have these 3361 hides that this region is to and did furnish us inside of three months, within a radius of eight miles from this main camp. So at it we went. And Hart, whom we will hereafter call Charlie, started out, and in two hours had killed sixty-three bison.

The summer of 1877 is on record as being the last of the Comanches in the role of raiders and scalpers; and we hunters were justly entitled to credit in winding up the Indian trouble in the great State of Texas, so far as the Kiowas and Comanches were concerned. Those Indians had been a standing menace to the settlement of 90,000 square miles of territory in Texas and New Mexico.

And to-day, 1907, it is a pleasing thought to the few surviving hunters of the old Southwest to know that the entire country of the then vast unsettled region is now dotted over with thousands of peaceful, prosperous homes.

Downgrading Indians, Hispanics, Mormons, immoral men, or fallen women, many white women made it clear that the disorientation of migration had not stolen their confident ability to sort and rank humanity from best to worst.

In the record of their words and actions, the women of Western history have made a clear statement that they do not deserve or need special handling by historians. There is no more point in downgrading them as vulnerable victims than in elevating them as saintly civilizers. The same woman could be both inspirational in her loyalty to her family's welfare and disheartening in her hatred of Indians. Those two attributes were not contradictory; they were two sides to the same coin. We cannot emphasize one side at the expense of the other, without fracturing a whole, living person into disconnected abstractions.

Our inability to categorize the murdered Narcissa Whitman, or the murdered Julia Bulette, teaches us a vital lesson about Western history. Prostitutes were not consistently and exclusively sinners, nor were wives and mothers consistently and exclusively saints. Male or female, white Westerners were both sinned against and sinning. One person's reward often meant another person's loss; white opportunity meant Indian dispossession. Real Westerners, contrary to the old divisions between good guys and bad guys, combined the roles of victim and villain.

Acknowledging the moral complexity of Western history does not require us to surrender the mythic power traditionally associated with the region's story. On the contrary, moral complexity provides the base for parables and tales of greater and deeper meaning. Myths resting on tragedy and on unforeseen consequences, the ancient Greeks certainly knew, have far more power than stories of simple triumphs and victories. In movies and novels, as well as in histories, the stories of men and women who both entered and created a moral wilderness have begun to replace the simple contests of savagery and civilization, cowboys and Indians, white hats and black hats. By questioning the Westerner's traditional stance as innocent victim, we do not debunk Western history but enrich it.

## Property Values

IF HOLLYWOOD wanted to capture the emotional center of Western history, its movies would be about real estate. John Wayne would have been neither a gunfighter nor a sheriff, but a surveyor, speculator, or claims lawyer. The showdowns would occur in the land office or the courtroom; weapons would be deeds and lawsuits, not six-guns. Movie-makers would have to find some cinematic way in which proliferating lines on a map could keep the audience rapt.

Western history is a story structured by the drawing of lines and the marking of borders. From macrocosm to microcosm, from imperial struggles for territory to the parceling out of townsite claims, Western American history was an effort first to draw lines dividing the West into manageable units of property and then to persuade people to treat those lines with respect.

White Americans saw the acquisition of property as a cultural imperative, manifestly the right way to go about things. There was one appropriate way to treat land—divide it, distribute it, register it. This relationship to physical matter seems to us so commonplace that we must struggle to avoid taking it for granted, to grasp instead the vastness of the continent and the enormous project of measuring, allocating, and record keeping involved in turning the open expanses of North America into



The key force of Western settlement: land rush at Hollister, Idaho. Courtesy Denver Public Library, Western History Department

transferable parcels of real estate. Like the settlers themselves, we steadfastly believe in the social fiction that lines on a map and signatures on a deed legitimately divide the earth. Of all the persistent qualities in American history, the values attached to property retain the most power.

As usual, Mark Twain had an infallible instinct for the irony hidden in a widespread social fiction. In *Roughing It*, he told the story of a hoax perpetrated by the locals in Nevada on an appointed U.S. attorney. A landslide, the practical jokers claimed, had thrown local property arrangements into disorder; Tom Morgan's cabin and ranch slid down a hill and landed on top of Dick Hyde's farm. Morgan then claimed ownership of both lay-

ers of the now consolidated property. With the U.S. attorney persuaded to defend Hyde's right to his buried farm, the case went to arbitration. Hyde had lost his ranch "by the visitation of God," the verdict came in, though Hyde retained the right to dig his ranch out from under the intruding thirty-five feet of Morgan's property. The duped U.S. attorney went appropriately wild.<sup>1</sup>

True to form, Twain selected the story that stretched an already absurd situation. One has to feel a certain sympathy for the U.S. attorney; people in the West had made many peculiar claims in this matter of property. A reliable line on credibility was not easy to draw. The recognition of legitimacy in property was

visibly a social fiction, supported by the majority's willing suspension of disbelief. The inability of Twain's lawyer to recognize fabrication was, if anything, a measure of his adaptation to the West.

If the actual workings of property could mystify the uninitiated, the ideal could not have been clearer. The founders of the American Republic had Europe to warn them of what happened to a society when population moved out of balance with the land supply. It was a common assumption that societies followed an inevitable sequence of development, from hunting and gathering to herding, agriculture, and, finally, manufacturing. To the planners of the American Republic, the third stage was the happiest. Independent and hardworking farmers provided the ideal citizenry, at once anchored and supported by their property. If America went past the third stage and into the fourth, the nation would face many of the same problems that plagued Europe—a small elite addicted to luxury, and a large population, perhaps a majority, of landless, dependent people whose very existence could ruin the prospects for a healthy republic.

America's hope thus lay in westward expansion—in the extended opportunities for the growing population to acquire property and for the nation to remain at the happy and virtuous stage of agriculture. In America, Thomas Jefferson said, "we have an immensity of land courting the industry of the husbandman. . . . Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever He had a chosen people, whose breasts He has made His peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue." Jeffersonian thinkers thus evoked "a vision of expansion across space—the American continent—as a necessary alternative to the development through time," Drew McCoy has explained, "that was generally thought to bring both political corruption and social decay." The success of the American experiment rested on the property-holding success of many individuals. "Power always follows property," John Adams said bluntly; property, widely distributed among the people, would hold the line against pernicious concentrations of power.<sup>2</sup>

When the various seaboard states ceded their western lands, the public domain provided the opportunity to put the ideal of

property into practice. The difficulty inherent in that project could be seen in the declining career of Elijah Hayward.

Appointed Andrew Jackson's land commissioner in 1830, Elijah Hayward got off to a good start. Hayward was, the historian Malcolm Rohrbough has written, "determined to create order and uniformity" in the General Land Office, a bureau under the secretary of the treasury charged with surveying, selling, and registering the public lands. Never a model of efficiency, the Land Office had fallen further and further behind in its duties. Charged with confirming land patents sent in from the district offices, the Washington office also had to oversee the record keeping of the many purchases on credit. It was also an information bureau, serving citizens interested in acquiring land. Its duties proliferated, but its staff did not. On behalf of their constituents, congressmen complained of the slowness with which the office worked; on their own behalf, congressmen made many of the requests for information that ate up the clerks' time; and for the sake of economy and retrenchment, congressmen refused to increase the office's appropriations.<sup>3</sup>

In 1832, Elijah Hayward had seventeen clerks to help him fight his way through the "forty thousand patents a year" he needed to issue "simply to meet the annual sales." Moreover, each of those land patents was to carry a presidential signature. Starting in December 1831 and continuing into June, "Andrew Jackson signed more than 10,000 patents. Yet when he paused for a rest, he was still 10,590 behind and losing ground." In 1833, Congress finally authorized an official patent signer; Jackson was relieved of his burdens, but Hayward continued to carry his. Understaffed and much criticized, Hayward struggled to supervise his often erratic field officers. The surveyor general in Florida was "always either ill or on leave to recover from periodic bouts of illness. Absent from his office for nine months from July 1831 to April 1832, he was so weakened on his return that he did nothing for the rest of the year." The director of operations in the active territories of Arkansas, Missouri, and Illinois "grew more and more pessimistic over the enormous backlog in his office. Eventually he refused to answer his mail. . . ."<sup>4</sup>

In a response that makes history seem predictable, Land

Commissioner Hayward took to drink. He "began to absent himself from the office for long periods, ostensibly because of illness." Andrew Jackson "ordered Hayward 'that he *must* desist entirely from taking *any spirits*, unless it was a table wine.'" The warning did not take. Hayward remained frequently incapacitated.<sup>5</sup>

Hayward resigned in 1835, and his successor had better luck. "Belatedly recognizing the volume of the land business and its complexity," Congress increased the staff of clerks from seven to eighty-eight. Moreover, reflecting national hard times, sales began to fall off. Nonetheless, at best the Land Office could stay narrowly ahead of its obligations, and every following land commissioner would have many moments when he would be tempted to raise a glass to the memory of Elijah Hayward.<sup>6</sup>

The temptation to drink aside, the business of land distribution entailed a whole range of complications not envisioned in the Jeffersonian ideal. Only in the imagination could virgin lands move smoothly into the hands of new owners, transforming wilderness to farmland, idle men to productive citizens. The "virgin lands" were not vacant, but occupied. Redistributing those lands to the benefit of white farmers required the removal of Indian territorial claims and of the Indians themselves—a process that was never simple. Indian residents were not the only complication; once the United States acquired land that had been in the possession of France or Spain, prior land claims under the laws of other empires added to the legal wilderness.

Then there was the problem of staffing the Land Office. There was no shortage of applicants for the positions of surveyors or agents, and that was the problem. Land Office employment promised a chance at inside information, prime positioning for investment in real estate. From the earliest years of the Land Office, its officials were widely involved in the buying and selling of land. In line with the Jeffersonian vision, the Land Office would have been staffed by high-minded officials; in fact, Malcolm Rohrbough has found, "the politicians who increasingly administered the public domain did not do so out of a feeling of service but to make a profit."<sup>7</sup>

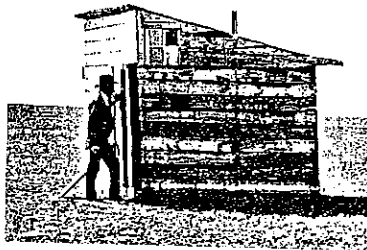
Even with more dedicated public servants to administer it,

land law bore little resemblance to the simple Jeffersonian ideal. From 1789 to 1834, Congress passed a total of 375 land laws—laws adjusting the size of lots for sale, shifting the price per acre, altering the requirement for cash payments or adding the option of credit, and granting rights of preemption in specific regions. A great burden fell on the Land Office simply to keep up with those laws, while congressional parsimony guaranteed understaffing and inefficiency. At one point, the Land Office commissioner did not have money to provide his field officers with copies of the federal land laws. Into the last half of the nineteenth century, variations in land law—the Homestead Act and its variations, the Timber Culture Act, the Desert Land Law—kept matters as complex as ever.<sup>8</sup>

Whatever laws Congress passed, land distribution could never keep up with settlement. Orderly surveys were to precede sales; once a district had been divided and platted, a competitive auction could be held. But surveying was often slow and inefficient, and impatient settlers pushed ahead of the surveys. Coping with these squatters caused headaches for federal officials. Using the U.S. Army to remove citizens by force was never an attractive political option, and presidential proclamations against intruders in the public lands or on Indian reserves were exercises in futility. Without reliable forces to back it up, federal authority suffered from an ongoing shortage of respect. "The settlers of the West," Malcolm Rohrbough has remarked, "took the view that the land was there to be taken, and that the rules and regulations of the government did not change their natural rights as citizens." Surely the most disheartening outcome for those who had shared Jefferson's hopes was the clear evidence that "all men were far from equal" in the competition for land. "The advantage," Rohrbough has said, "always accrued to the wealthy man of influence, regardless of what the law said."<sup>9</sup> Not even the Homestead Act, at last rewarding committed labor with free land, could reverse this pattern.

The Homestead Act, Paul Wallace Gates has shown, "did not end the auction system or cash sales." Moreover, "speculation and land monopolization continued after its adoption as widely perhaps as before, and within as well as without the law." The

# 15 Fencing the Homestead



With a portable shack, a homesteader could establish one claim and move on to another.

Imagine: you are settled on a farm in Kansas. You've worked hard, your crops are thriving, you're pleased with yourself. Then a cow-puncher decides to drive his herd to market and, though you're not right on the Chisholm Trail, you're near enough. The herd stampedes and longhorns trample your land. Wham, bang, squash! You have no crops. Nothing left of a year's work. And maybe no farm, because with-

out a crop to sell, you don't have money to buy more seed and supplies.

That kind of thing happened. It was just one of the things that discouraged farming in the Plains states. The early pioneers and the forty-niners (who went west during the gold rush) leapfrogged over the plains and mountains and settled in the Far West. They called the plains the "Great American Desert" and believed it was no good for farming. They were wrong. The region would become one of the best agricultural areas the world has ever known. But they were right about one thing. It wasn't an easy place to be a farmer. There were hardly any trees and not enough water. The soil was wonderfully rich—the pioneers found native grasses tall enough to hide a man on horseback—but the weather was either blisteringly hot



"Any woman who can stand her own company... and is willing to put in as much time at careful labor as she does over the wash-tub, will certainly succeed," wrote one homesteader.

**The Plains** states stretch from Texas to Canada and from Kansas and Iowa to the Rocky Mountains. The Plains states are Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming.

or frigidly cold, with tornadoes thrown in just to keep people on their toes. Besides that, there were invasions of grasshoppers that ate crops, droughts that dried them up, and a loneliness on the open plains that drove some people mad.

None of that seemed to matter. The dream of many Americans was to have a farm. Land in the East was spoken for. Even with problems, those vast plains looked inviting to people who wanted land of their own. Winds blew much of the time, which meant that windmills could be used to pump water from deep wells. That water made irrigation possible.

In 1862 (which was during the Civil War), Congress passed a bill called the Homestead Act. It said that for \$10 any citizen, or anyone who had filed papers to become a citizen, could have 160 acres of public land. That included women. As soon as the Civil War was over, a lot of people headed west to get land and become farmers. Some say a quarter of a million widows and single women were among those who became homesteaders.

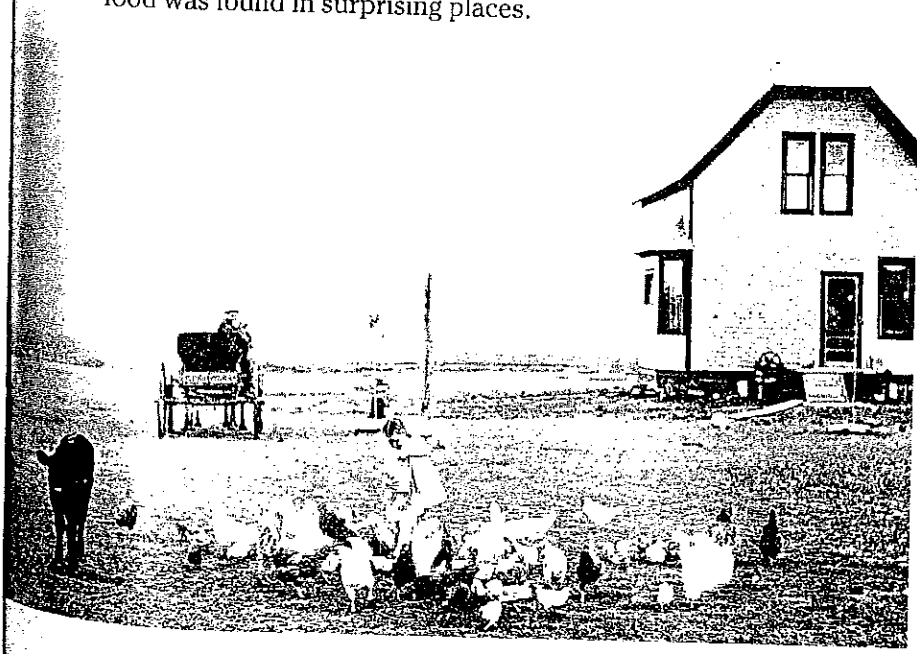
Many homesteaders were immigrants—right off the boat. Some western settlements became all German, or all Danish, or all Swedish, or all Norwegian. Many immigrants tried to hang on to their original culture. Food was one way to do it. Greek, Polish, German, or Italian food was found in surprising places.



The advertisements for land in Kansas and Nebraska never said what a cornfield looked like after a grasshopper plague had finished with it.

The Plains States are the heart of our nation, and that heart beats slow and sure year after year.... Nowhere can we find a closer correlation of landscape and character than in the Plains States. The people there are, for the most part, as plain and level and unadorned as the scenery.

—WILLIAM INGE, PLAYWRIGHT



Successful or not, a pioneer had to get used to being a long way from anywhere.



Hear the wind  
Blow through the buffalo-grass,  
Blow over wild-grape and brier.  
This was frontier, and this,  
And this, your house, was frontier.  
There were footprints upon the hill  
And men lie buried under,  
Tamers of earth and rivers.  
They died at the end of labor,  
Forgotten is the name.

—STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT,  
*WESTERN STAR*

The newcomers didn't have to worry about buffalo herds anymore—the buffalo were practically gone—but they did have that problem of cattle wandering about. They couldn't fence their land because there were no trees to make fenceposts; besides, wooden fences rotted, or got knocked over, or burned. Joseph Glidden solved their problem. He invented barbed wire. He experimented in his backyard with an old coffee mill and a big grindstone that turned. He used them to twist two wires together, and then he coiled sharp barbs around the wires. With barbed wire, farmers could fence in their property.  
*(continues on page 72)*

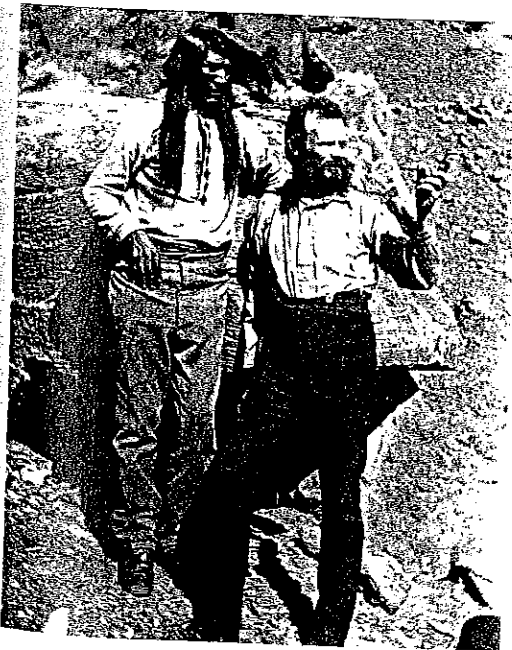
Recess for the children  
of Pine Creek School,  
Livingston, Montana,  
and their teacher, Miss  
Sherman, in 1888.



## Conscience, Conservationism, and Courage—All in One Man . . .



Above: The Grand Canyon, as painted by Thomas Moran. Below: John Wesley Powell with Tau-gu, Great Chief of the Southern Paiute, in the Colorado River Valley.



Picture a river eating its way through rock—for a million years. That's how the Grand Canyon was formed by the Colorado River. The canyon is a mile deep (1.6 km), 4 to 18 miles wide (6.4-29 km), and 217 miles long (349 km). No human-made structure anywhere in the world is anything like that. Plant life on the walls of the canyon varies from sub-tropical at the base to sub-arctic at the top. Located in Arizona, it is one of the world's most spectacular natural wonders.

Ancient pueblos dot the canyon's walls and once must have made astonishing homes. A few Europeans stumbled onto the awesome canyon, but no one had mapped it, or traced the Colorado River from its headwaters through the canyon, until a geologist named John Wesley Powell led an expedition in 1869. That was the year of the transcontinental railroad, but the men of the Powell expedition traveled in small boats that they often had to carry (portage) around hazardous rapids and falls. Powell had barely survived the battle of Shiloh in the Civil War. (He left an arm there.) This trip was equally dangerous. He wrote about his adventures and made Americans aware of the natural treasures in the West. Powell was among our first conservationists. He was anxious to preserve our natural wonders as national parks; others were more interested in promoting economic development. That conflict continues today.

## Pronghorns Abounding

**B**rewster Higley, a Pennsylvania doctor, packed his bags and headed west to become a homesteader in Kansas. He was so happy in his new home that he wrote a poem about it called "The Western Home." A neighbor set the poem to music and gave it a new name, "Home on the Range." Before long everyone was singing it. When Higley used the words *buffalo* and *antelope* everyone knew what he meant, but the proper names for those animals are *bison* and *pronghorns*.

*Oh, give me a home,  
Where the buffalo roam,  
Where the deer and the  
antelope play,  
Where seldom is heard  
A discouraging word,  
And the skies are not  
cloudy all day.*

*Home, home on the range,  
Where the deer and the  
antelope play,  
Where seldom is heard  
A discouraging word,  
And the skies are not  
cloudy all day.*

## Home on the Grange

**I**n 1867, Oliver Hudson Kelley founded a social and political organization for farmers called the National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry. It grew rapidly, especially in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Iowa. The Grange was a way for farmers to band together and protect their interests. Working people were joining unions; farmers joined the Grange.

**T**he grangers (that's what members were called) influenced lawmakers and established cooperative stores and mills. They made politicians pay attention to the farmers' concerns. Do you know what that word *husbandry* means? In medieval times a *husband* was the peasant who farmed his own land, the man of the family who provided for his household. He had to look after his crops and animals and use them economically, and from that we get one meaning of *husband*, which is "to be thrifty with one's resources." A meaning for *husbandry* that developed from this was simply "farming." From that came the meaning that the word usually has today: the application of scientific principles to farming, especially animal breeding.

And the word *grange*? It comes from England, where a *grange* was a farm or a farm building for storing grain, like a barn.

*The Grange wakes sleeping farmers up to railroads' unfair practices—they made farmers pay more to ship their goods than the middlemen in cities did.*



Early types of barbed wire. In 1874 Joseph

Now the cowboys had a problem. Those fences got in the way of their herds. Well, cowboys and farmers did some fighting, but before long the farmers and ranchers won. The cattle drives were over and most



## Plains Writing

July came on with that breathless, brilliant heat which makes the plains of Kansas and Nebraska the best corn country in the world. It seemed as if we could hear the corn growing in the night; under the stars one caught a



Willa Cather

faint crackling in the dewy, heavy-odoured cornfields where the feathered stalks stood so juicy and green. If all the great plain from the Missouri to the Rocky Mountains had been under glass, and the heat regulated by a thermometer, it could not have been better for the yellow tassels that were ripening and fertilizing the silk day by day. The cornfields were far apart in those times, with miles of wild grazing land between. It took a clear, meditative eye like my grandfather's to foresee that they would enlarge and multiply until they would be, not the Shimerdas' cornfields, or Mr. Bushy's, but the world's cornfields; that their yield would be one of the great economic facts, like the wheat crop of Russia, which underlie all the activities of men, in peace or war.

**W**hen spring came, after that hard win-

ter, one could not get enough of the nimble air. Every morning I wakened with a fresh consciousness that winter was over. There were none of the signs of spring for which I used to watch in Virginia, no budding woods or bloom-

ing gardens. There was only spring itself, the throb of it, the light restlessness, the vital essence of it everywhere; in the sky, in the swift clouds, in the pale sunshine, and in the warm, high wind rising suddenly, sinking suddenly, impulsive and playful like a big puppy that pawed you and then lay down to be petted. If I had been tossed down blindfold on that red prairie, I should have known that it was spring.

Everywhere now there was the smell of burning grass. Our neighbors burned off their pasture before the new grass made a start, so that the fresh growth would not be mixed with the dead stand of last year. Those light, swift fires, running about the country, seemed a part of the same kindling that was in the air.

—WILLA CATHER,  
MY ANTONIA, 1918

Gildden put out 10,000 pounds of barbed wire.

cowboys turned into ranch hands. By 1890, railroads seemed to be about everywhere, so the cattle drives weren't necessary anyway. Railroads meant farmers and ranchers could send their cattle and grains to faraway markets.

A new kind of agriculture developed on the Plains. The early American farms had been self-sufficient. The farmer took care of most of his own needs. Farm families raised cows, hogs, and chickens, grew wheat and vegetables, killed game, caught fish, built their own homes, and made their own furniture and clothes. They didn't have much use for money; they bartered for the few things they needed.

Self-sufficient farming wasn't suited to the Plains area or to the times. In the 19th century, agriculture became a big business. Many farmers became specialists who grew only one or two crops. It happened quickly. For thousands and thousands of years men and women had used the same methods of sowing and harvesting. Then a few inventions came along and changed everything.

**America: The Story of Us****Heartland**

- 1.) \_\_\_ In 1863, what does Lincoln give the go ahead to create?  
a.) a transcontinental railroad      b.) a powerful military  
c.) a powerful navy      d.) all of these!
- 2.) \_\_\_ Which is true of the transcontinental railroad project?  
a.) the Union Pacific and Central Pacific are both building the railroad.  
b.) their plan is to meet in Utah.  
c.) the cost will be around \$2 billion in today's money.  
d.) all of these are true! (And they must finish in 15 years!)
- 3.) \_\_\_ Where does the Central Pacific get their workers?  
a.) Japan      b.) China      c.) Ireland      d.) the American south
- 4.) \_\_\_ How many more times powerful is nitro glycerin than gunpowder?  
a.) five times      b.) ten times      c.) 12 times      d.) 13 times
- 5.) \_\_\_ How many Chinese die in explosions and rock slides?  
a.) 1000      b.) 1500      c.) 2500      d.) 5000
- 6.) \_\_\_ How many times do they strike each spike?  
a.) two      b.) three      c.) four      d.) five
- 7.) \_\_\_ How much did you have to have to claim land?  
a.) \$5      b.) \$10      c.) \$15      d.) \$25
- 8.) \_\_\_ How much of U.S. land will be given away by the Homestead Act?  
a.) 5%      b.) 7%      c.) 10%      d.) 40%
- 9.) \_\_\_ Tornadoes aren't the only problem the plain's settlers face- what else?  
a.) locusts      b.) prairie dogs      c.) native tribes      d.) blizzards
- 10.) \_\_\_ Between 1825-1925, \_\_\_ of the population of Norway comes to America.  
a.) 1/5      b.) ¼      c.) 1/3      d.) ½

- 11.) \_\_\_\_\_ Hunters harvest the buffalo for it's...
- a.) hide                      b.) hooves                      c.) tallow                      d.) all of these.
- 12.) \_\_\_\_\_ How old is Black Elk when the railroad arrives?
- a.) 2                              b.) six                              c.) ten                              d.) twelve
- 13.) \_\_\_\_\_ Who brought the horse to New World?
- a.) The English              b.) the French              c.) the Russians              d.) The Spanish
- 14.) \_\_\_\_\_ How many arrows can it take to kill a buffalo?
- a.) ten                              b.) twenty                              c.) thirty                              d.) forty
- 15.) \_\_\_\_\_ By 1889, how many wild buffalo are left in the United States?
- a.) 200                              b.) 150                              c.) 100                              d.) 85
- 16.) \_\_\_\_\_ What percentage of the south lives in rural poverty post Civil War?
- a.) 25%                              b.) 40%                              c.) 50%                              d.) 60%
- 17.) \_\_\_\_\_ What breed of cattle did they drive?
- a.) Texas Longhorn              b.) Holstein                      c.) Jersey                              d.) Bainsworth
- 18.) \_\_\_\_\_ One of \_\_\_\_\_ cowboys is black or Hispanic.
- a.) two                              b.) three                              c.) four                              d.) five
- 19.) \_\_\_\_\_ Where did cowboys drive the cattle to?
- a.) Utah                              b.) Nebraska                      c.) Kansas                              d.) Illinois
- 20.) \_\_\_\_\_ Joseph Glidden's invention of barbed wire cuts cost of fencing the open range by:
- a.) 50%                              b.) 60%                              c.) 70%                              d.) 80%
- 21.) \_\_\_\_\_ Custer charges a Sioux encampment of 7000 Natives with \_\_\_\_\_ soldiers.
- a.) 100                              b.) 700                              c.) 1000                              d.) 1500
- 22.) \_\_\_\_\_ The last battle against the Natives was fought at:
- a.) Wounded Knee              b.) Little Creek              c.) Red River                      d.) Fort Laramie