

## Tribes of American Indians Living on the Great Plains



**4.13 Cheyenne survivors of the Washita attack, mostly women and children, held under guard at Camp Supply in Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma) in 1868.**

*(Courtesy Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University [WA Photos 27])*

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"The President in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land. But how can you buy or sell the sky? the land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?

If we sell you our land, remember that the air is precious to us, that the air shares its spirit with all the life that it supports. The wind that gave our grandfather his first breath also received his last sigh. The wind also gives our children the spirit of life. So if we sell our land, you must keep it apart and sacred, as a place where man can go to taste the wind that is sweetened by the meadow flowers.

*Excerpt from Chief Seattle's Letter to President Pierce (1854)*

## Buffalo and Other Wildlife



Russell, Andrew J. *Slaughterhouse, Promontory*. Promontory, UT. 1869. Stereographic collodion glass plate negative. Collection of Oakland Museum of California. (This image depicts the "slaughterhouse" at the Blue Creek camp in Promontory, Utah. Cattle, like these, would have been brought and slaughtered along the route to feed railroad workers.) <http://picturethis.museumca.org/pictures/slaughterhouse-promontory>

Massive hunting parties began to arrive in the West by train, with thousands of men packing .50 caliber rifles, and leaving a trail of buffalo carnage in their wake. Unlike the Native Americans or Buffalo Bill, who killed for food, clothing and shelter, the hunters from the East killed mostly for sport...railroads began to advertise excursions for "hunting by rail," where trains encountered massive herds alongside or crossing the tracks. Hundreds of men aboard the trains climbed to the roofs and took aim, or fired from their windows, leaving countless 1,500-pound animals where they died.<sup>3</sup>

*From "Where the Buffalo No Longer Roamed,"  
a Smithsonian.com article on the effects  
of the Transcontinental Railroad*

## Environmental Landscape



The half dozen transcontinental railroad companies advertise the beauties of their lines in gorgeous many-colored folders, each claiming its as the "scenic route." "The route of superior desolation"—the smoke, dust, and ashes route—would be a more truthful description. Every train rolls on through dismal smoke and barbarous melancholy ruins; and the companies might well cry in their advertisements: "Come! travel our way. Ours is the blackest. It is the only genuine Erebus route. The sky is black and the ground is black, and on either side there is a continuous border of black stumps and logs and blasted trees appealing to heaven for help as if still half alive, and their mute eloquence is most interestingly touching. The blackness is perfect. On account of the superior skill of our workmen, advantages of climate, and the kind of trees, the charring is generally deeper along our line, and the ashes are deeper, and the confusion and desolation displayed can never be rivaled. No other route on this continent so fully illustrates the abomination of desolation." Such a claim would be reasonable, as each seems the worst, whatever route you chance to take.

"The American Forests  
By John Muir, August 1897

## Industrial Accomplishment



Russell, Andrew J. *East and West Shaking Hands at Laying Last Rail.*  
Promontory, UT. 1869. Imperial collodion glass plate negative. Collection  
of Oakland Museum of California.  
<http://picturethis.museumca.org/pictures/east-and-west-shaking-hands-laying-last-rail>

The promise of the West was now truly available and settlers would come by the hundreds of thousands... Other transcontinental rail lines would be built, branch lines added. Within a relatively short time America's western frontier would vanish.

From Westward to Promontory

## Chinese Labors



This massive work could never have been completed without Chinese and Irish laborers, who comprised the bulk of the workforce. Chinese laborers were brought in by the Central Pacific Railroad in large numbers. Indeed, by the height of the construction effort in 1868, over 12,000 Chinese immigrants were employed, comprising about 80 percent of the Central Pacific's workforce. The Chinese were paid only \$27 a month (later rising to \$30 a month), significantly less than the \$35 a month that Irish laborers on the Central Pacific earned for doing the same work.

*Immigration, Railroads, and the West*  
Publications digitized for Immigration to the US

## Transportation of Goods



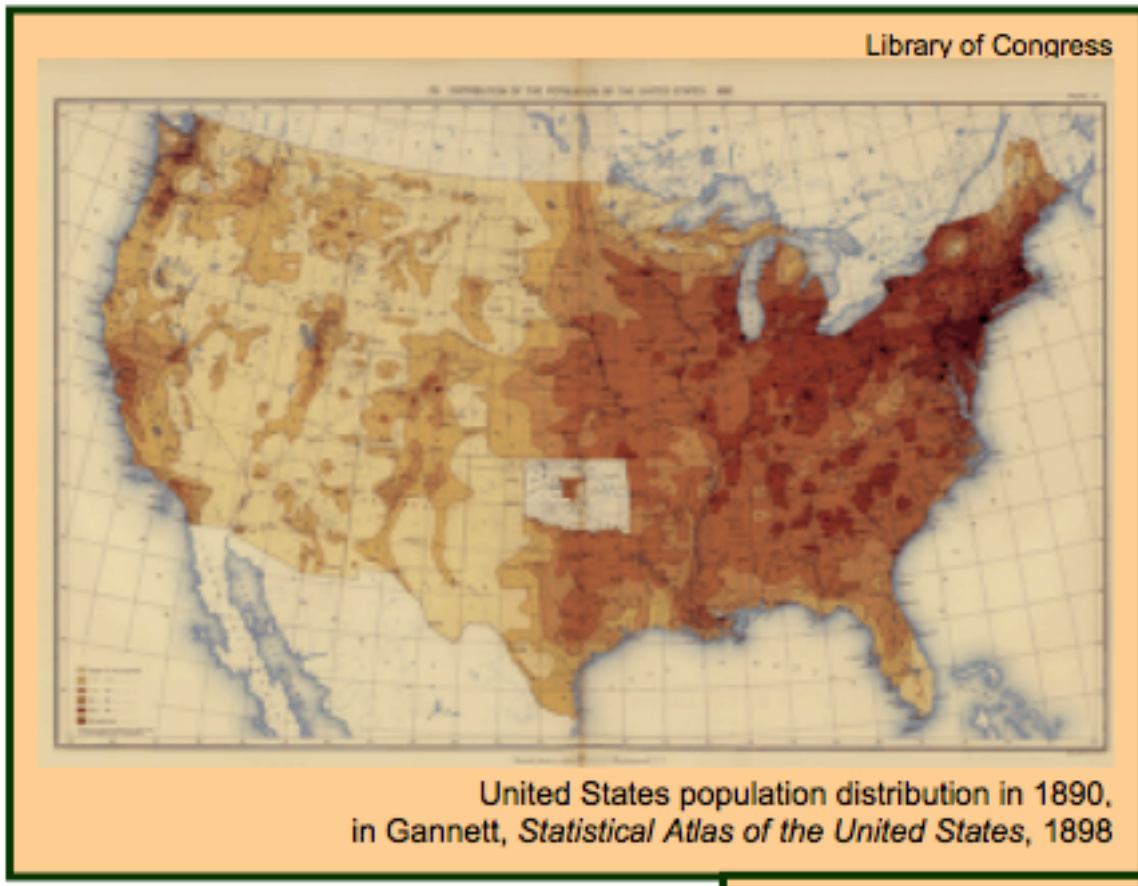
Russell, Andrew J. *Front Street, Sherman, Looking West*. Sherman, WY. 1869. Stereographic collodion glass plate negative. Collection of Oakland Museum of California.

<http://picturethis.museumca.org/pictures/front-street-sherman-looking-west>

The towns were often temporary and made up of tents and cheap board structures that easily could be dismantled and moved to the next location. The towns offered everything from dentistry to hardware supplies to saloons

*According to the Linda Hall Library,  
an independent research library:*

# The Frontier



“In a recent bulletin of the Superintendent of the Census for 1890 appear these significant words: "Up to and including 1880 the country had a frontier of settlement, but at present the unsettled area has been so broken into by isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to be a frontier line. In the discussion of its extent, its westward movement, etc., it can not, therefore, any longer have a place in the census reports." This brief official statement marks the closing of a great historic movement. Up to our own day American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development.”

*Frederick Jackson Turner*  
“*The Significance of the Frontier in American History*”  
1893