

## U.S. INDIAN POLICY

- 1820-1850 Push Eastern tribes west of the Mississippi where they must live alongside the Plains tribes.
- Bureau of Indian Affairs established as part of the Department of the Interior
- 1850-1867 Make treaties with tribes to allow white settlers to pass safely through Indian lands, or make treaties in which tribes give up land and move further west. Build forts and keep troops in the West to protect settlers moving through Indian lands and to enforce treaties.
- 1851 Fort Laramie treaty with the Plains Indians.  
1864 Sand Creek Massacre
- 1867-1868 Bring the period of treaty making to an end; treat Indians as wards of the government; create smaller reservations, and force tribes to settle on them.
- 1870-1887 Abolish practice of treating Indians as separate "nations." Indians became wards of the government. Indians to adopt "American" culture.
- 1874 Gold discovered in the Black Hills: Sioux territory opened to settlement  
1876 Little Big Horn  
1877 Nez Perce  
1881 A Century of Dishonor published  
1886 Geronimo surrenders to federal troops
- 1887-1934 Divide reservation land into individual plots; try to break up tribes; eventually allow Indians to become citizens (Dawes Act)
- 1890 Wounded Knee



The period from 1860 to the end of the 1880's was one of intermittent and bitter Indian warfare, of savagery and cruelty, of broken treaties, of lost hopes, and of final surrender by one and then another of the Indian tribes.

The first important Indian war in this period took place during 1862 when most regular Union troops had left the plains to fight in the Civil War. The Sioux of Minnesota, herded onto small reservation along the Minnesota River and cheated by corrupt traders and government officials, sought revenge. The uprising was not planned, but was precipitated by a few young Sioux braves who killed five settlers near New Ulm, Minnesota. Settlers and Indians alike were alarmed. Some Sioux fled west. Others, under Chief Little Crow, knowing that settlers would seek revenge for the murders, took to the warpath. They killed hundreds of adults and children and burned whole villages. Eventually the army subdued them. Taken to St. Paul, for trial, many Indians received pardons, but over 300 were hanged.

In 1864 the Cheyenne and Arapaho, banished from their hunting grounds to the barren lands of southwestern Colorado, attacked coach trails along the South Platte River and threw the whole area into panic. Revenge came, swift and cruel. With nearly 1,000 men Colonel J.M. Chivington attacked, scalped, and massacred about 450 Indians, including children, who had already surrendered.

A decade later, prospectors discovered gold in the Black Hills of South Dakota. This was in the heart of land reserved for the Dakota Sioux, but gold hunters, hurrying to stake claims, ignored Indian rights. Led by their chiefs Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse, the Sioux, together with other discontented tribes farther west, resisted. Troops sent to stop the fighting met stiff opposition. In 1875 Colonel George A. Custer, with his command of over 200 cavalrymen was annihilated at the Battle of Little Big Horn in Montana. Vengeance was swift. The cavalry crushed the Sioux and captured Crazy Horse. Sitting Bull escaped to Canada.

In 1877 the discovery of gold in Idaho led to a similar uprising of the peaceful Nez Perce Indians. Fighting bravely, they retreated toward Canada, but at length had to surrender. Exiled to Oklahoma, their chief, Joseph, spoke for many of his fellow Indians. "I am tired of fighting," he said. "My heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands I will fight no more forever."

Some Indians still fought on. Apaches, under Geronimo, their principal leader, did not surrender until 1886. In 1890 some Dakota Sioux "ghost dancers" frightened Indian agents into calling for troops. Afraid that the troops might act hastily, many Indians fled from their reservation only to be butchered at the Battle of Wounded Knee in December, 1890.

**GOVERNMENT AID TO THE INDIANS.** The sorry plight of the Indians appealed to the humanitarian instincts of people in the East. President Rutherford B. Hays, in his message to Congress in 1877, pointed out that most Indian wars had their origin in broken promises and acts of injustice. In 1881 Helen Hunt Jackson's book A Century of Dishonor, called the nation's attention to the need for more humane Indian policy. Interested people formed private organizations to campaign for the adoption of such a policy. After the defeat of the Apaches, under Geronimo in Arizona in 1886, this campaign began to bear fruit.

In 1887 Congress passed a controversial measure called the Dawes Severalty Act. Through this act the U.S. began a systematic effort to encourage Indians to adopt a new way of life. The act dealt with the Indians as individual rather than as a member of a tribe and it encouraged individual rather than tribal ownership of land. It provided a 160 acre allotment to each head of a family and eighty acres to each single adult. Clear title to the land was withheld for a twenty-five year period, during which time no one could either sell or mortgage it. In 1901 the government admitted the Indians of the Five Civilized tribes -- Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Seminole, and Creek -- to full citizenship. It was 1924 before Congress granted full citizenship to all Indians.



During the half century following the passage of the Dawes Act, the Indians actually lost land as their holdings decreased from 138,000,000 to 48,000,000 acres. Much of the land they retained was the most arid and poorest in the nation. A few Indians later made fortunes from oil, but few Indians had oil on their lands, and most were barely able to eke out an existence. In 1934 the Wheeler-Howard Act ended the land allotment system of the the Dawes Act and again provided for tribal ownership of Indian land.

Today over half a million Indians live on over 100 reservations administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, a branch of the Department of the Interior. This government agency encourages self-government within the tribes and helps those who leave the reservations to find jobs and accommodations in other cities. Most Indians have resisted modern civilization, and the Indian problem still remains. These proud people are living descendants of once undisputed rulers of America.

1. The Indian Wars discussed in this reading refer to what period of time?
2. Which states were associated with the following tribes:
  - Sioux
  - Cheyenne
  - Nez Perce
  - Apaches
3. For the following Indians, give their tribe and the Battle associated with each:
  - Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse
  - Geronimo
4. What was the Dawes Severalty Act? How was it changed by the Wheeler -Howard Act?
5. Name the "5 civilized tribes". When were they granted citizenship?
6. When were the other Indians granted citizenship?
7. What is the famous quote from Chief Joseph?