



Handout - Times of U.S. Legislation and Other Events Related to Native Americans, 1830-1890

Indian Removal Act (1830) - The Act, signed by President Andrew Johnson, forced the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole nations from their ancestral lands in the Southeast and displaced them to land west of the Mississippi River. The legislation led to the Trail of Tears, where nations such as the Cherokee were forced by the U.S. Army to march over 5,043 miles in the cold. An estimated 15,000 people died on the journey.

Cherokee Nation v. Georgia (1831) - The state of Georgia subjected the Cherokee Nation to a series of laws that violated preexisting land treaties agreed upon by the Cherokee nation and the U.S. Government, in which the Cherokee were recognized as an independent nation. After several failed negotiations, the Cherokee Nation sued the state of Georgia. The case ended up in the Supreme Court, where it was dismissed with the argument that the Supreme Court did not have the jurisdiction to rule over the case because the Cherokee Nation was a “dependent nation” in relation to the United States, and not a foreign State.

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) - The Mexican American War ended with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo which granted the United States land that is part of present day California, Arizona, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, Wyoming, and Nevada.

The Gold Rush (1849) - Gold found in California sparked the “Gold Rush.” Many people, especially white colonizers, headed west in hopes of striking it rich. The influx of people in the West led to environmental destruction and tension with Indigenous people. By the end of the Gold Rush in 1860, disease and violence caused the Indigenous population in California to drop to 30,000 from about 300,000.

Indian Appropriations Act (1851) - A series of acts were passed by the U.S. government to legally control the movement and segregate Native Americans. The first was passed in 1851, which allocated funds to move Indigenous Nations westward. The second Indian Appropriations Act ended the tradition wherein the United States recognized Indigenous populations as independent nations. This formally ended the process of treaty-making between the U.S. government and Indigenous nations.

Gadsden Purchase (1853) - The United States purchased 29,000 square miles from Mexico that covers present day Southern Arizona and New Mexico. The U.S. purchased the land with the hopes of expanding a railroad line to the Pacific.

Homestead Act (1862) - Signed by Abraham Lincoln on May 20, 1862, the Homestead Act encouraged US citizens to head West by offering cheap land: 160 acres in exchange for a filing fee. Residents had to then maintain six months of residency or purchase the land for \$1.25 per acre.



Pacific Railway Acts (1862) - Signed into effect by Abraham Lincoln, the series of acts provided land grants and loans necessary to complete the first transcontinental railroad. Construction on the railroad began in 1863 and was completed in 1869. The building of the railroad disrupted the lives of Native Americans whose land the railroads crossed over. Land was stolen from Native American nations, treaties were broken, and violence ensued between Native Americans and railroad workers. Another effect the construction of the railroad caused on Native American communities was the decline in bison. Bison was a vital resource for Indigenous populations as it provided food and materials for warmth. The transcontinental railroad, along with white hunters, eradicated the American Bison, ultimately leaving Native Americans starving and displaced.

The U.S. - Dakota War (1862) - After the U.S. Government broke a series of treaties with the Dakota in Minnesota, the tribe went to war against white settlers. After six weeks of fighting, the war ended in December 26, when President Abraham Lincoln approved the execution of 38 Dakota people. It remains the largest mass execution in U.S. history.

The Treaty of Fort Laramie (1868) - A series of treaties signed between the U.S. government and the Sioux and Arapaho nations that granted them land west of the Missouri River, establishing the Great Sioux reservation in exchange for a cease on raids and attacks towards white settlers who were infiltrating the land of the nations. The signing of the treaties also granted the Sioux the Black Hills, which remain sacred to them. Once gold was discovered in the hills in 1874, the US government broke the treaty, forced the Sioux to relocate, sparking more conflict.

Great Sioux War (1876-1877) - As a result of the broken Treaty of Fort Laramie, the Great Sioux War, also known as the Black Hills War, occurred between the U.S. Government and the Lakota, Sioux, and Cheyenne.

The Dawes Act (1887) - Also known as the General Allotment Act, the Dawes Act divided up Native American territory to give to Anglo settlers and to force Native Americans to assimilate.

Wounded Knee (1890) - On the Pine Ridge reservation, U.S. Troops massacred over 200 Sioux men, women, and children. At the time of the massacre, the Sioux already surrendered to the army.