

African Americans

Examine the photograph and testimony below. Then read the introduction to Section 12.5 and the subsection "African Americans See the Plains as the 'Promised Land.'"



Testimony of Benjamin Singleton

Given in Washington, D.C., on April 17, 1880, before the Senate committee investigating the "Negro Exodus from the Southern States."

Question: What is your colony called?

Answer: Singleton colony is the name of it, sir.

Question: Well, tell us about it.

Answer: I have been fetching out people; I believe I fetched out 7,432 people.

Question: You have brought out 7,432 people from the South to Kansas?

Answer: Yes, sir; brought and sent.

Question: Have they any property now?

Answer: Yes; I have carried some people in there that when they got there they didn't have 50 cents left, and now they have got in my colony—Singleton colony—a house, nice cabins, their milch cows, and pigs, and sheep, perhaps a span of horses, and trees before their yards, and some 3 or 4 or 10 acres broken up, and all of them has got little houses that I carried there. They didn't go under no relief assistance; they went on their own resources; and when they went in there first the country was not overrun with them; you see they could get good wages; the country was not overstocked with people; they went to work, and I never helped them as soon as I put them on the land.

Railroad Owners

Examine the photograph and newspaper article below. Then read the introduction to Section 12.3. Also read the subsections “The First Transcontinental Railroad Creates Huge Challenges” and “Railroads Become Lifelines in the West.”



At 2:27 P.M., Promontory Point, 2,400 miles west of Washington, said to the people congregated in the various telegraph offices: “Almost ready. Hats off; prayer is being offered.”

A silence for the prayer ensued. At 2:40 the bell tapped again, and the office at the Point said: “We have got done praying. The spike is about to be presented.”

Chicago replied: “We understand; all are ready in the East.”

Promontory Point: “All ready now; the spike will be driven. The signal will be three dots for the commencement of the blows.”

For a moment the instrument was silent; then the hammer of the magnet tapped the bell. “One, two, three,” the signal; another pause of a few seconds, and the lightning came flashing eastward, vibrating over 2,400 miles between the junction of the two roads and Washington, and the blows of the hammer upon the spike were measured instantly in telegraphic accents on the bell here.

At 2:47 P.M., Promontory Point gave the signal, “Done,” and the Continent was spanned with iron.

—*New York Times*, May 10, 1869

Populists

Examine the photograph and quotation below. Then read all of Section 12.6, “Farmers Rise Up in Protest.”



*What you farmers need to do is raise less corn
and more hell.*

—Populist Mary Elizabeth Lease, to Kansas farmers in 1890

Miners

Examine the photograph and letter below. Then read the introduction to Section 12.2 and the subsection “Miners: In Search of the Big Strike.”



Omega, California, Dec. 10, 1859

It is with sad feelings that I sit down to pen you a few lines . . . I hope these lines will find you and the children well and enough to eat, for I have seen a number of times that I could not get enough but at present we have plenty . . . Lo and I have six claims here and 2 on the River. If I make enough to pay my way home next fall, you will see one fellow taking a bee line for his Wife and Children. For a man has got to be very lucky or else he does not make much in this country. It is just like a lottery, if a man happens to be lucky . . . he makes something, if not, he makes nothing but grub and water . . . I am so lonesome I am sometimes almost sick, but I have got to stay here until next fall . . . My love to you all . . . back next fall. Your loving Wm. G. Henderson

—Excerpts from a letter by Dr. William Henderson
to his wife, Weltha

(Dr. Henderson never made it back home to his family. He died in Omega, California, on February 10, 1861.)

Railroad Workers

Examine the photograph and song lyrics below. Then read the introduction to Section 12.3 and the subsection "Working on the Railroad: Jobs and Hardships for Immigrants."



Drill Ye Tarriers Drill

Every morning about seven o'clock
There were twenty tarriers drilling at the rock
The boss comes along and he says, "Keep still
And bear down heavy on the cast iron drill."

Chorus

And drill, ye tarriers, drill
Drill, ye tarriers, drill
For it's work all day for the sugar in you tay [tea]
Down beyond the railway
And drill, ye tarriers, drill
And blast and fire!

The boss was a fine man down to the ground
And he married a lady six feet 'round
She baked good bread and she baked it well
But she baked it harder than the hobs of Hell.

The foreman's name was John McCann
By God, he was a blamed mean man
Last week a premature blast went off
And a mile in the air went big Jim Goff.
And drill, ye tarriers, drill.

And when next payday came around
Jim Goff a dollar short was found
When he asked, "What for?" came this reply:
"You were docked for the time you were up
in the sky."
And drill, ye tarriers, drill.

American Indians

Examine the photograph and speech below. Then read all of Section 12.4, "Indian Wars Shatter Tribal Cultures."



I am tired of fighting.
Our chiefs are killed.
Too-hul-hul-sit is dead.
Looking Glass is dead.
He who led the young men in battle is dead.
It is the young men now who say "yes" or "no."
My little daughter has run away upon the prairie.
I do not know where to find her—perhaps I shall find her too among the dead.
It is cold and we have no fire; no blankets.
Our little children are crying for food but we have none to give.
Hear me, my chiefs!
I am tired; my heart is sick and sad.
From where the sun now stands,
Joseph will fight no more forever.

—Chief Joseph, surrender speech, 1877

Ranchers and Cowboys

Examine the photograph and quotation below. Then read the introduction to Section 12.2 and the subsection "Ranchers and Cowboys Find a Home on the Range."



We had a new experience when we got to the Kansas state line. We ran into a bunch of settlers. The cowboys always called them "nesters." Now, they didn't like for these trail herds to cross their lands at all, and there they were gathered in groups, armed with shotguns and clubs, to force us to narrow the trail down as much as possible and keep the cattle moving. They were afraid they would lose some of their grass . . . It was in June of that year that they almost came to war with the cattlemen coming up the trail . . . but word came through from Washington, granting the Texas cattlemen the right to drive their cattle through the Indian Territory, and to the Kansas market.

—H. P. Cook, working cowboy, 1871

Settlers

Examine the photograph, and listen to the song below. Then read the introduction to Section 12.5 and the subsection "Opportunities and Challenges on the Great Plains."



Little Old Sod Shanty on the Claim

I am looking rather seedy now
While holding down my claim
And my vittles are not always
Served the best
And the mice play shyly round me
As I nestle down to rest
In my little old sod shanty in the west

Chorus

Oh the hinges are of leather
And the windows have no glass
While the board roof
Lets the howling blizzards in
And I hear the hungry coyote
As he slinks up through the grass
Round the little old sod shanty
On my claim

Yet I rather like the novelty
Of living in this way
Though my bill of fare
Is always rather tame
But I'm happy as can be
For I'm single and I'm free
In the little old sod shanty on my claim

My clothes are plastered
O'er with dough, I'm looking like a fright
And everything is scattered
Round the room
But I wouldn't give the freedom
That I have out in the west
For the table of the Eastern man's
Old home

Still I wish that some kind-hearted girl
Would pity on me take
And relieve me from the mess
That I am in
Oh, the angel, how I'd bless her
If this her home she'd make
In the little old sod shanty on my claim