

Carlisle Indian School

Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, was the top Indian boarding school in the United States in the late 1800s. It was founded by Captain Richard Henry Pratt under the authority of the US federal government and was the first federally funded Indian boarding school not located on an Indian reservation. It was created due to the belief that Native Americans were the equals of European-Americans, and Native American children exposed to European-American culture would learn skills to advance in American society. Pratt is known for saying that his goal was to “kill the Indian to save the man” when it came to the goals of his school. Throughout its use (until the early 1900s), the school taught thousands of Native Americans and some believed it was an excellent source of education. In reality, it was just an alternative to exterminating Native Americans (assimilation vs extermination) and it was good-hearted but misguided. Carlisle Indian Industrial School is important because it was a model school for other Native American learning establishments and taught values important to European-Americans during this time.

Dawes Severalty Act

The Dawes Severalty Act was sponsored by Henry Dawes in the late 1800s. This act was passed in order to integrate Native Americans into white society. Under this act, land changed from tribal to mostly individual and the President had the power to break up tribal lands into individual plots of land. Some native groups were not affected by this law until Grover Cleveland changed things. This act is important because it broke almost all treaties with Native Americans and tried to disassemble tribes in order to civilize them. Tribes struggled to survive and many lost important aspects of their cultures due to this law. It showed a change in Native American policy as well and gave whites more land (just like with the Indian Removal Act).

Homestead Act of 1862

The Homestead Act of 1862 was passed in the Union, after the Civil War had begun. This law was passed by the Republicans in Congress in the mid-1800s. Under this act, homesteads were given 160 acres of land as long as they promised to improve the land within five years. The Homestead Act of 1862 is important because it was an act passed only by Republicans (since there were few Democrats left in the Union) and showed their political power. The act itself encouraged westward expansion because of all of the cheap land. Europeans immigrated to America and set up communities while Native Americans were driven from their lands. This act also helped the railroad industry.

Pacific Railroad Act of 1862

The Pacific Railroad Act was passed by Abraham Lincoln in the mid-1800s. This act authorized extensive land grants in the western United States and the issuance of government bonds to the Union Pacific Railroad and Central Pacific Railroad companies, the first big businesses of America. This was done so that the First Transcontinental Railroad would be completed. This also was an instance where the railroads were subsidized by the government (which technically they weren't supposed to do if they followed laissez-faire policies). The Pacific Railroad Act is important because it led to the creation of the Transcontinental Railroad and it also led to the Crédit Mobilier of America scandal. This law also created jobs for railroad workers, but it put into question the idea of laissez-faire (government stays out of business). This act helped big business owners like Thomas Durant and also helped homesteaders begin to move westward.

Wabash v. Illinois

The case of Wabash v. Illinois took place in the late 1800s. In this case, the Supreme Court ruled that one of the Granger laws was unconstitutional. These laws had been created in order to help farmers living out West. Granger laws helped farmers stick together and form stronger communities. One Granger law that tried to regulate commerce by helping smaller farmers was found to be unconstitutional. This power was only reserved for Congress. This decision put limits on how a state could regulate commerce. This case is important because the government tried and failed to regulate big businesses. The Interstate Commerce Act was issued, creating the Interstate Commerce Commission. This also was a precedent to future cases where the government would favor big businesses.

Frederick Jackson Turner's "Frontier Thesis"

Frederic Jackson Turner was an American historian during the late 1800s. Turner believed that humanity would continue to progress as long as new land was available for people to move to. The frontier would provide people with a place for the homeless and their social problems would be solved. According to him, American democracy was formed in the American Frontier. His frontier thesis is important because it influenced people's opinions on the Frontier and influenced its teaching in schools. It overly romanticized the West and made people in the East think about life in the West. There was an effort to preserve this land, called the Conservation Movement.

Jay Gould

Jay Gould was a financier who controlled the Erie Canal. He was responsible for creating a financial panic in the late 1800s after he tried to control the gold market. When gold prices began to fall, Gould saved himself while investors were left in ruin. He also sold fake stocks in order to try to put railroads out of business. Jay Gould is important because he made President Grant look bad and proved that the administration was corrupt.