

Aim: To what extent was the "last west" a land of opportunity for many Americans during the late 19th century?

Document 1 . Poster appearing in Lexington, Kentucky, 1877

All Colored People

THAT WANT TO

GO TO KANSAS,

On September 5th, 1877,

Can do so for \$5.00

IMMIGRATION

WHEREAS, We, the colored people of Lexington, Ky., knowing that there is an abundance of choice lands now belonging to the Government, have assembled ourselves together for the purpose of locating on said lands. Therefore,

Be it RESOLVED, That we do now organize ourselves into a Colony, as follows:— Any person wishing to become a member of this Colony can do so by paying the sum of one dollar (\$1.00), and this money is to be paid by the first of September, 1877, in installments of twenty-five cents at a time, or otherwise as may be desired.

RESOLVED, That this Colony has agreed to consolidate itself with the Nicodemus Towns, Solomon Valley, Graham County, Kansas, and can only do so by entering the vacant lands now in their midst, which costs \$5.00.

RESOLVED, That this Colony shall consist of seven officers—President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and three Trustees. President—M. M. Bell; Vice-President—Isaac Talbott; Secretary—W. J. Niles; Treasurer—Daniel Clarke; Trustees—Jerry Lee, William Jones, and Abner Webster

RESOLVED, That this Colony shall have from one to two hundred militia, more or less, as the case may require, to keep peace and order, and any member failing to pay in his dues, as aforesaid, or failing to comply with the above rules in any particular, will not be recognized or protected by the Colony.

Document 2: Diary of Hettie Lee Anderson, Diary

March 16, 1889

This year dawned in gloom upon the discouraged homesteaders, many of whom were making desperate efforts to get out of the country which was not an easy thing to do for the impoverished settlers. Many were so deeply in debt and unable to sell their homesteads even after they had obtained full title to the land. I find a gloomy entry in the old diary which follows.

We have not made a living on this place a single year, though Newt has nearly killed himself working it. We have had to sell one thing after another to keep from actual starvation. Last spring one of my beloved cows had to go to buy provisions. The year before, our good wagon was sold for the same purpose - and so it goes. We have sat down to more meals than one, of simple coarse shortbread and molasses. We have been for weeks and weeks without one cent of money and unable to get credit for a dollar's worth at the store. If only the good Lord will help us out of this, we will surely try and never get into another such scrape.

Document 3: Excerpt from *Diary of John Grannis, a Montana Miner*, by Gary Forney

The early work for John Grannis and his partners was difficult made worse by his divorce from his wife.

As autumn 1863 approached, Grannis' mining work was frequently interrupted by hunting for his livestock that habitually wandered away: "October 28, Traversed the Madison Valley nearly all Day in search of my ox But Did not find him; November 1, Went down town and looked for old Brin did not find him; November 2, Hunted old Brin all Day; November 13, My Cattle had Run off this morning—found them in the Evening."

Grannis began the year of 1864 in a reflective, melancholy mood: "Friday, January 1, I arose Before Day & Read the 19th chapter of Matthew. I commence this year alone in the world without a wife."

Nevertheless, Grannis was soon in a routine common of most miners: "January 12, Cloudy & windy But nothing bad. Worked to Day 6 hours; January 13, Worked. Got the Large Rock out of the Drift. Cloudy But not cold."

This routine was dramatically broken on January 14 when, "obeying a notice of the vigilance committee," he went to Virginia City, having been appointed to serve as a guard for five men captured and subsequently hanged in what since has been called the Hangman's Building.

"Was released from Duty," Grannis wrote, "as soon as they were Dead & I came home after Dark...Saw five men hung and not a very good Day for hanging neither."

The remainder of 1864 entries record an endless routine of truncated weather observations and notes on Grannis' daily work, such as: "Worked at the Shaft," or "Worked at the Sluce," "at the windlass and sluced" or simply, "Worked all Day."

Steadily, however, his determined efforts began to pay benefits. On those days when his health, weather conditions and the condition of equipment permitted work, Grannis steadily recorded daily gold recovery of more than \$100 per day and \$1,000 per week; a present-day value of over \$95,000.

The Buffalo Go

A Kiowa Legend

Everything the Kiowas had come from the buffalo. Their tipi's were made of buffalo hides; so were their clothes and moccasins. They ate buffalo meat. Their containers were made of hide, bladders, or stomachs. The buffalo were the life of the Kiowas.

Most of all, the buffalo was part of the Kiowa religion. A white buffalo calf must be sacrificed in the sun dance. The priests used parts of the buffalo to make their prayers when they healed people or when they sang to the powers above.

So when the white men wanted to build railroads, or when they wanted to farm and raise cattle, the buffalo still protected the Kiowas. They tore up the railroad tracks and the gardens. They chased the cattle off the ranges. The buffalo loved their people as much as the Kiowas loved them.

There was war between the buffalo and the white men. The white men built forts in the Kiowa country, and the woolly-headed buffalo soldiers (the Tenth Cavalry, made up of Negro troops) shot the buffalo as fast as they could, but the buffalo still kept coming on, coming on, even into the post cemetery at Fort Sill. Soldiers were not enough to hold them back.

Then the white men hired hunters to do nothing but kill the buffalo. Up and down the plains those men ranged, shooting sometimes as many as a hundred buffalo a day. Behind them came the skinners with their wagons. They piled the hides and bones into the wagons until they were full, and then took their loads to the new railroad stations that were being built, to be shipped east to the market. Sometimes there would be a pile of bones as high as a man, stretching a mile along the railroad track.

The buffalo saw that their day was over. They could protect their people no longer. Sadly, the last remnant of the great herd gathered in council, and decided what they would do.

The Kiowas were camped on the north side of Mount Scott, those of them who were still free to camp. One young woman got up very early in the morning. The dawn mist was still rising from Medicine Creek, and as she looked across the water, peering through the haze, she saw the last buffalo herd appear like a spirit dream.

Straight to Mount Scott the leader of the herd walked. Behind him came the cows and their calves, and the few young males who had survived. As the woman watched, the face of the mountain opened.

Inside Mount Scott the world was green and fresh, as it had been when she was a small girl. The rivers ran clear, not red. The wild plains were in blossom, chasing the red buds up the inside slopes.

Into this world of beauty the buffalo walked, never to be seen again.

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