

# Lesson 24: Tensions in the West

*How did settlers change the West and affect American Indians?*

# Lesson 24 – Section 1: The Nez Perce

- For centuries, the Nez Perce freely roamed the lush mountains and valleys where Oregon, Washington, and Idaho come together today.



# Lesson 24 – Section 1: The Nez Perce

- For decades, the Nez Perce were among the friendliest of all western Indians toward Americans and had attempted to live peacefully with white people.
  - In 1805, they saved Lewis and Clark and their expedition from starvation.



# Lesson 24 – Section 1: The Nez Perce

- Americans' hunger for land and riches finally broke that friendship. In the 1860s, miners swarmed over Nez Perce land looking for gold.
- In 1877, representatives of the U.S. government presented Chief Joseph with a terrible choice. You can give up your land peacefully and move to Lapwai, they told him, or army troops will come and force you to relocate there.
- Fearing a war he could not win, Chief Joseph agreed to move.



# Lesson 24 – Section 1: The Nez Perce

- One night, a group of angry young warriors seeking revenge slipped out of camp and murdered several whites.
- When the soldiers arrived, the American Indians still hoped to avoid war and came forward to talk, carrying the white flag of peace. The troops opened fire anyway. Minutes later, 34 soldiers lay dead.



# Lesson 24 – Section 1: The Nez Perce

- **In desperation, the Nez Perce headed for the one place where they might still live free—Canada.**
- For the next three months, Chief Joseph led the U.S. Army on a chase of more than 1,500 miles through rugged mountain country. Although greatly outnumbered, his warriors won several battles.



# Lesson 24 – Section 1: The Nez Perce

- The chase ended less than 40 miles from the Canadian border and Chief Joseph was forced to surrender.
- After their surrender in 1877, Chief Joseph and his followers were sent to a barren reservation in Oklahoma





# Lesson 24 – Section 2: New Interest in the West

- By the start of the Civil War, the West was populated mostly by American Indians and huge herds of bison.
- Then, in 1862, Congress passed two laws that stirred new interest in the West—the Homestead Act and the Pacific Railway Act.





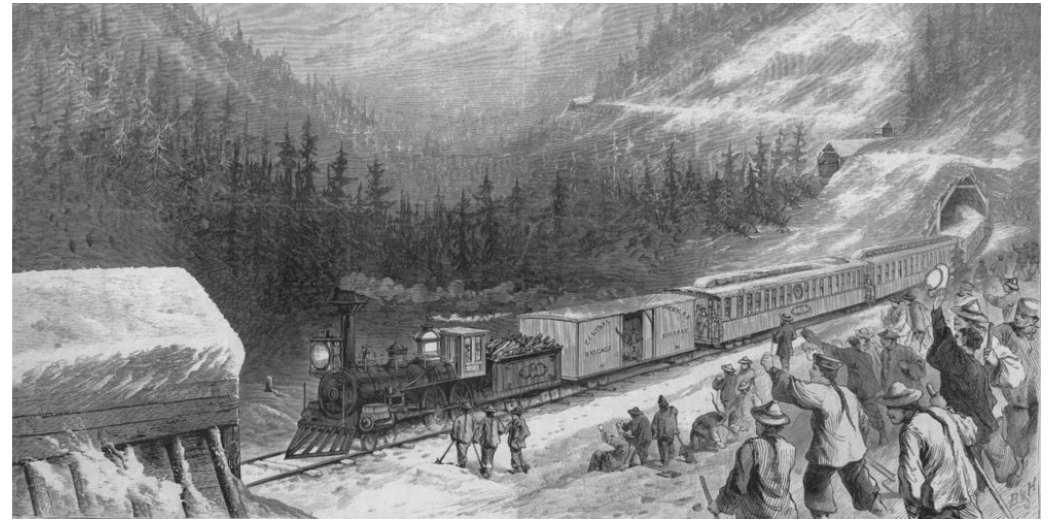
# Lesson 24 – Section 2: New Interest in the West

- The Homestead Act offered farmers 160 acres of public land in the West for free. All the farmer, or homesteader, had to do was clear the land and farm it for five years, after which the homesteader received ownership of the land.
- Between 1860 and 1910, the number of farms in the United States tripled from 2 million to more than 6 million.



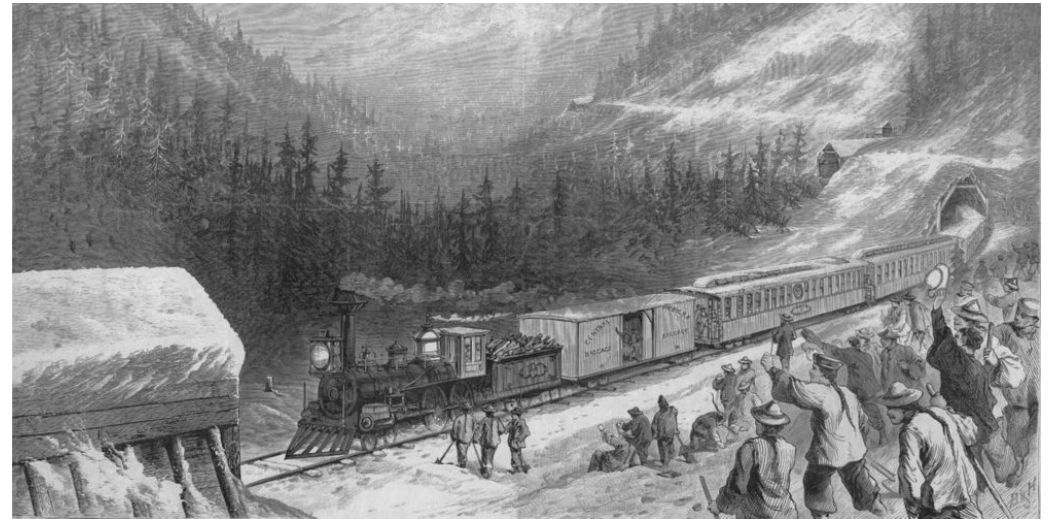
# Lesson 24 – Section 2: New Interest in the West

- The Pacific Railway Act called for the building of a transcontinental railroad to link the Atlantic and Pacific coasts.
- This huge construction project was given to two railroad companies: the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific.



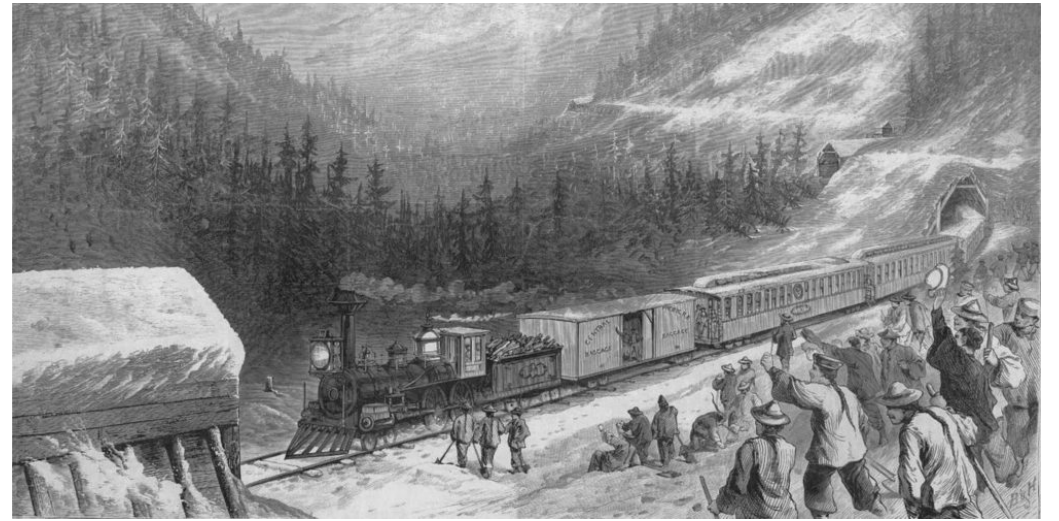
# Lesson 24 – Section 2: New Interest in the West

- To help the railroad companies pay for the project, Congress gave them **subsidies** in the form of sections of free land for every mile of track they laid.
- The railroads could sell this land to settlers later. The government also loaned the two companies more than \$60 million.



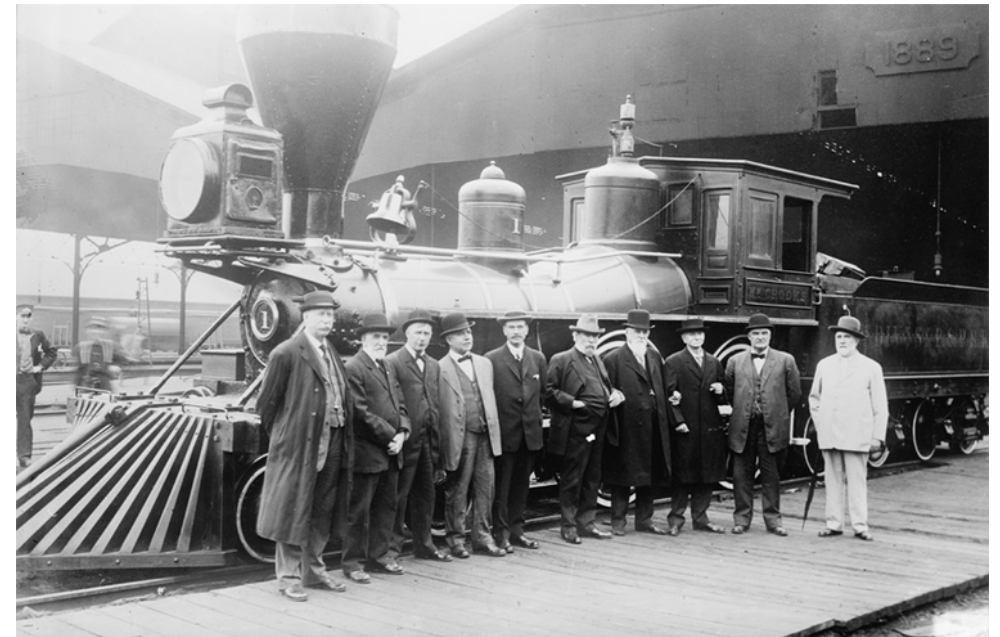
# Lesson 24 – Section 2: New Interest in the West

- Railroads opened the West to a flood of new settlers, including newcomers like farmers and ranchers, prospectors and preachers, and more than a few crooks.
- But most were ordinary people who dreamed of the West as a place where a lot of hard work and a little luck could make their dreams come true.



# Lesson 24 – Section 3: Railroad Builders

- The Union Pacific would start in Nebraska and build tracks westward across the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains,
- The Central Pacific would start in California and lay tracks eastward across the mountains of the Sierra Nevada and then across the Great Basin.



# Lesson 24 – Section 3: Railroad Builders

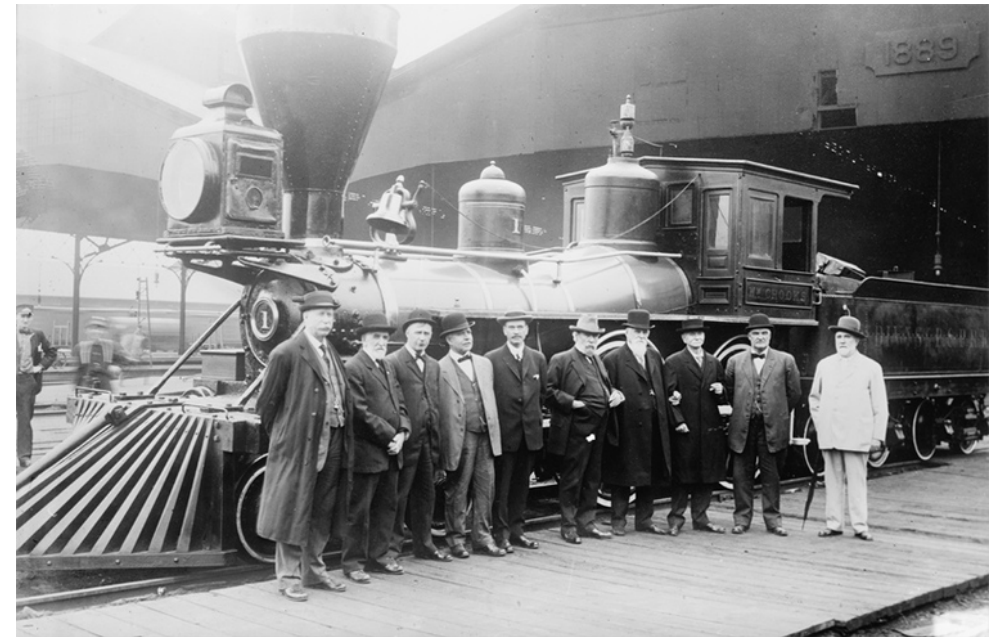
- The Union Pacific Railroad got off to a slow start. Then, in 1866, a former Civil War general named Grenville Dodge took charge of construction.
- He commanded a force of 10,000 workers, made up of mostly Irish immigrants who were fleeing the slums of eastern cities.





# Lesson 24 – Section 3: Railroad Builders

- They were joined by other immigrants, ex-soldiers, Mexicans, and freed slaves.
- All were young men who not only needed jobs, but also hoped to start new lives in the open spaces of the West.
- By 1867, Dodge's crews were laying as much as seven miles of track a day across the plains.



# Lesson 24 – Section 3: Railroad Builders

- For the Plains Indians, not only was the railroad an invasion of their homeland, its construction destroyed their main source of food as millions of bison were slaughtered to feed railroad workers.
- Some Indian warriors attacked the work crews and derailed supply trains by prying up sections of track.



# Lesson 24 – Section 3: Railroad Builders

- In California, the Central Pacific Railroad faced different problems. Soon after the company began laying track, many of the workers dashed off to newly discovered silver mines in Nevada or to safer jobs elsewhere, bringing construction to a stop.





# Lesson 24 – Section 3: Railroad Builders

- In desperation, Charles Crocker, the head of construction, hired 50 Chinese workers.
- Although many doubted that the Chinese were big enough to do heavy construction, they often completed as much work in a day as any other crew, if not more.



# Lesson 24 – Section 3: Railroad Builders

- About 12,000 Chinese laborers worked for the Central Pacific clearing trees, shoveling dirt, blasting tunnels, and laying tracks.
- An estimated 1,000 Chinese workers lost their lives in explosions, snow slides, and other accidents.
- Despite these losses, the workers managed to lay up to ten miles of track in a day.



# Lesson 24 – Section 3: Railroad Builders

- On May 10, 1869, the two lines came together at Promontory Summit in Utah Territory, where a golden spike was driven in to complete the 1,800 miles of track.
- The Chinese workers, who had contributed so much to building the railroad, were not acknowledged at the celebration. Their reward for their years of hard work was to lose their jobs.

