

[MUSIC PLAYING]

INSTRUCTOR: Government ambitions were big in the 1860s and 1870s not only in the conflict between North and South, but also out in the West. When the confederate states withdrew from congress, they gave the remaining states a unique chance to reshape the economy. Republicans promptly built the first transcontinental railroad, passed the homestead act, funded a network of universities in every state, and they also raised tariffs on imported goods to protect American manufacturing.

Those policies had a big effect. They enabled the United States to exploit the vast resources of the West, and they played a decisive role in the nation's rising industrial power. Describing the conquest of the West, Historian Frederick Jackson Turner saw in 1893 a peaceful orderly process of economic development.

But it didn't turn out that way. Mining and logging brought booms and then busts. Farmers who filed homestead claims or purchased land from the railroads found out that the [? planes ?] could be a hostile environment. [? Aridity ?] and drought forced thousands to give up their quest to farm or ranch.

Meanwhile the United States removed native peoples from their remaining Western lands. A process made easier by the encroachment of white ranchers and farmers and the hunting of bison to near extinction. A victory by Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho forces at the Little Big Horn was short lived. Afterward, like most native peoples, they were forced on to reservations.

Many history textbooks end the story there, but I think that's a mistake. As one author has said, Americans tend to remove Indians from our national history with a sharp rhetorical tool known as an *alms*, that is, after their defeat, *alms*, they vanish from the story. That's what most white Americans believed at the time, but they were wrong.

Even in the difficult reservation era, native peoples found new ways to survive and resist. So as you read the rest of this textbook, look for evidence of American Indians in later chapters. Their story continues in the 20th century and today. Amid the oppressive conditions of white run boarding schools, younger generations of Indians built cross tribal networks to advocate on their peoples behalf. And in this way also, government policies in the west brought contradictory and unexpected results.

