

Old West Information

1. The **American Old West**, or the **Wild West**, comprises the history, geography, people, folklore, and culture in the Western United States.
2. Most often referring to the latter half of the 19th century, between the California Gold Rush of 1849 and the end of the century.
3. Louisiana Purchase – a large territory west of the Mississippi River acquired in 1804 that would allow for future expansion west.
4. Transcontinental Railroad - built between 1863 and 1869 this railroad joined the eastern and western halves of the United States allowing for the transfer of people, natural resources, and finished goods.
5. Important Groups:
 - Miners – a rush of people went west with hopes of striking it rich.
 - Ranchers – turned the cattle industry into big business in the west.
 - Cowhands - a diverse group of men, and few women, that helped create the myth of the cowboy.
 - Buffalo Soldiers – African-American soldiers in the west.
 - Chinese Railroad Workers – built the transcontinental railroad and many settled in present day California.
 - Women – were able to gain more responsibility and rights in the west.
 - Native Americans – Beginning in the 1850's, white settlers, with the help of the U.S. government, began to take the land of the Plains tribes, destroying their way of life and bringing about bloody conflict.