

Lesson 1

John B. S. Todd and Gabriel

Renville

In 1850, few white people lived in South Dakota. The grassy prairies went on for miles. They had never been plowed. Only Sioux (Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota) Indians and fur traders lived here. To others, it was the **frontier**.

John B. S. Todd and the Making of Dakota Territory

John B. S. Todd came to Dakota in 1855. He was a soldier with General William S. Harney. Todd liked what he saw here. He started a trading post. He sold supplies to soldiers at Fort Randall. Todd's company was named Frost, Todd and Company.

Todd saw that he could make more money if there were farms on the prairie. First, the Indians had to say it was okay for people to live in Dakota. Todd helped the

Yankton Nakotas negotiate a treaty (you learned about this in Unit 4). The treaty opened part of eastern South Dakota to American settlers. The land was between the Big Sioux River and the Missouri River. Todd's company bought some of the land. Then he sold it to farmers. He also started the town of Yankton. He sold town lots to people who wanted to start a business.

Todd wanted more people to buy land. More settlers would come if the land were part of the United States. First it had to be a territory. Todd got settlers to sign a paper. The paper asked the government to make Dakota Territory. Todd was the cousin of Mary Todd Lincoln. She was the wife of President Abraham Lincoln. This relationship may have been why the president was willing to talk to Congress. He asked them to make Dakota Territory. The year was 1861. Todd went to Washington, D.C., to talk for the settlers. He also helped to make Yankton the capital.

Later Todd went back to the army for awhile. He was a general during the Civil War. Afterwards he came back to Yankton. He was elected to the territorial legislature. Todd died at Yankton in 1872.

Gabriel Renville and Fort Sisseton

Life changed for the Indians. Once they had moved freely. They had followed the buffalo and the changing seasons. Now they had to stay on reservations. The Indians had to **adapt** to a new lifestyle. They needed strong leaders to help them.

Gabriel Renville was born on the shores of Big Stone Lake. It was about 1824. His father was a French and Sisseton Dakota fur trader. His mother was of Dakota and British **ancestry**. When he grew up, Gabriel Renville would work hard to keep his Dakota people together.

The Dakotas, or eastern Sioux, lived on reservations in Minnesota first. They were not happy there. Some of them left

the reservation (you read about this in Unit 4). Many settlers were killed. Renville and his band did not join the fighting. Instead, they helped white people get away from the raiding Dakotas. The raiders then burned the homes of Renville and his people. They were left with “no lands, no homes, no means of support.”

The United States government was thankful for what Renville and his people had done. The government made Renville an army **scout**. Other men in Renville’s band were also scouts. It was a way to support themselves.

Four years later, Renville became head of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe. He signed the treaty that set up Lake Traverse Indian Reservation. This was in northern Dakota Territory. Renville became chief of scouts at Fort Sisseton. He taught his people new skills. He taught them how to farm. He taught them to take care of

themselves in a white man's world. He led his people until his death in 1892.

Vocabulary

adapt (v.), to adjust or change to fit something new

ancestry (n.), the people from whom one comes; forefathers and foremothers

frontier (n.), the region just beyond or at the edge of a settled area

scout (n.), a person sent out from a larger group to gather information

Lesson 2

Laura Ingalls Wilder and Frederick Taft Evans

Settlers now streamed into Dakota Territory. The Homestead Act of 1862 drew thousands of them. This law was signed by President Lincoln. It promised free land to anyone who worked on it. A settler could claim a farm of 160 acres. He had to live on it and farm it for five years. Many **immigrants** from Europe and other states moved west. Many people who came had little money. The Homestead Act gave them a chance to own their own farms. One of the most famous of all settlers in Dakota Territory was a teenager named Laura.

Laura Ingalls Wilder and the Little Town on the Prairie

The story of Laura Ingalls Wilder and her family is about **homesteading**. It is also about building a town on the prairie. She told the story in nine books.

Laura Ingalls was born in Wisconsin in 1867. The Ingalls family followed the promise of free land to the West. The family homesteaded first in Kansas. This story is told in *Little House on the Prairie*. Then the family took a farm in Minnesota. *On the Banks of Plum Creek* tells this tale.

Then when Laura was twelve they moved to De Smet. *By the Shores of Silver Lake* tells the story of their move and of the building of De Smet. *The Long Winter* is an **account** of the hard winter of 1881 (learn more about this in Unit 6). *Little Town on the Prairie* talks about the early days of De Smet. When she was fifteen, Laura Ingalls began teaching school. She taught in one-room schools near De Smet. At the same time, Almanzo Wilder began **courting** her. She told this story in *These Happy Golden Years*.

Laura Ingalls and Almanzo Wilder married and homesteaded together. They had a baby girl. This story is told in *The*

First Four Years. They had many hardships. Crops failed. Their only son died. A fire burned down their home. **Diphtheria** left Almanzo partly paralyzed. In 1894, the Wilders left South Dakota. They moved to Missouri where they had better luck farming.

Later Laura's daughter asked her to write about her early life. Laura Ingalls Wilder's first book came out when she was sixty-five years old. It was called *Little House in the Big Woods*. It was about her life in Wisconsin. The other books came later. Wilder won awards for her books, and many, many people read them. She lived to be ninety years old.

Frederick Taft Evans and Hot Springs

Frederick Taft Evans was a rancher, **freighter**, and town builder. He liked the frontier and its rapid changes.

He was born in Parkman, Ohio, in 1835. Evans left home at eighteen. He

went out West. He worked as a woodchopper and bullwhacker. He bought a ranch in Nebraska in 1859. He also worked in a store and a bank in other places.

Then gold was discovered in the Black Hills in 1874. Evans joined others and began a freighting business. They hauled supplies west to Deadwood. They went on the official roads across the Great Sioux Reservation. Stagecoaches did too. The Evans Transportation Company carried millions of pounds of freight from Fort Pierre and Chamberlain. Evans hired more than one thousand men. He owned four hundred wagons, two hundred forty mules, and fifteen hundred oxen.

When the railroad reached Rapid City in 1886, Evans sold his business. Now, he helped build the southern Black Hills town of Hot Springs. It was a health spa. It had warm springs flowing in it. People thought they made them healthy. People came from all over to bathe in the springs.

Evans built the Evans Plunge. It was the largest enclosed swimming pool in the world. Evans also built the Evans Hotel and other buildings. All the buildings were built of native pink sandstone. Today, Hot Springs is still full of such beautiful buildings.

Evans was also a commissioner for Lawrence County, South Dakota, and mayor of Hot Springs. He always worked hard to make Hot Springs a good place to live. He died there in 1902.

Vocabulary

account (n.), a story of an event

courting (v.), trying to get another person to fall in love with you

diphtheria (n.), a disease that gives a person a high fever, weakness, and makes it hard to breathe

freighter (n.), a person who hauls goods for pay

homesteading (v.), claiming land by settling on it and farming it

immigrants (n.), people who migrate to a different country to settle

Lesson 3

Spotted Tail and Mary Collins

In 1877, the Great Sioux Reservation stretched for many miles. It went west from the Missouri River almost all the way to the Black Hills. But the Lakotas' nomadic way of life was over. No longer could they hunt buffalo. Instead, their food and clothing came from the United States government. It was payment for the land the Lakotas had given up. Government agents played a large role in the people's lives. Agents urged them to send their children to school. They told them to take up farming.

Spotted Tail and the Sicangu Lakotas

Spotted Tail was a Brulé (Sicangu) Lakota. As a strong voice for his people, he led them in their dealings with the United States. He was born in about 1823 near the White River. He earned honor among his people as a warrior. He fought other tribes

and United States soldiers. He spent time in prison in Kansas for killing soldiers.

There he saw the size of the United States Army. He saw that the Lakotas would have to stay friends with the white people. They would have to give up their old life or die. Spotted Tail was one of the leaders who signed the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868. His people settled on the reservation. He sent his children to boarding school so that they could learn English. He worked with his agent to get the best for his people.

When gold seekers came to the Black Hills, Spotted Tail visited the mines. He saw that the hills were of great value. He urged the Lakotas not to sell them. Even so, he kept his people at their **agency** during the fighting in Montana. Spotted Tail was one of the leaders who signed the agreement with the government. He gave up the Black Hills so that his people could eat. Spotted Tail settled with the Sicangus on what

would become the Rosebud Indian Reservation. He remained a powerful leader until his death in 1881.

Mary Collins and Sitting Bull

Christian missionaries now came to the reservation. President Ulysses S. Grant asked them to teach the Indians a new way of life. The missionaries taught about the Christian religion. They taught reading and writing. Some missionaries taught in both Lakota and English. They taught farming and home building. They were not always welcome. Missionaries had to win the trust of the people.

Mary C. Collins came to work among the Lakotas. She left thirty-five years later as a friend. She was born in Illinois in 1846. She taught school in Iowa for a few years. Then she came to work at the Oahe Mission on the Missouri River. Later Collins moved to the Standing Rock Indian Reservation. She lived among Sitting

Bull's band. Collins learned the Lakota language. She and Sitting Bull were friends. They valued each other's **opinions**.

These were desperate times for the Lakotas. New laws and treaties broke up the Great Sioux Reservation. First Congress **allotted** land to the Lakotas. Each adult got 160 acres. This was the same size of farm that settlers got as a homestead. Three-quarters of the adult men signed a paper agreeing to sell the rest of their lands. This is called the Sioux Agreement of 1889. Then Congress made six smaller reservations. All land not allotted to Lakotas was opened to settlers the next year. The Lakotas were not happy about this. The government was behind in payments of food and supplies. People were hungry. Missionaries like Mary Collins did what they could to help. Then a new religion spread among the people.

The Ghost Dance religion promised that the settlers would disappear; the buffalo

would come back to feed the people. Many Lakotas came together to dance so that this might come to pass. Fear spread among the settlers. The new religion looked like the start of a new war. The United States Army was afraid that Sitting Bull would be the leader. Mary Collins asked Sitting Bull to stop the dancing. She feared that many Indians would be killed. Her advice was too late. United States soldiers and Indian policemen came to arrest Sitting Bull. There was a fight, and Sitting Bull was killed. Some Lakotas fled south to the Badlands. The army stopped one group at Wounded Knee Creek. Over 150 Lakota men, women, and children were killed. About thirty soldiers died. For the Lakotas, it was the end of all hope for the old style of life.

Mary Collins stayed with the Lakotas. She tried to help them adapt to the reservation. She fought to get them more money for their lands. She moved back to Iowa when she retired. Even there, she

worked to make friends for the Indians. She died in 1920.

Vocabulary

agency (n.), a government office that gives rules on the reservation

allotted (v.), divided and given out as lots

opinions (n.), beliefs or thoughts

Lesson 4

Niels E. Hansen and Doane

Robinson

Land west of the Missouri River was now open for homesteading. **Agriculture** was not easy there. Grasshoppers sometimes ate crops as fast as they grew. Dry summers, cold winters, and high winds made farming hard. New plants and ways of farming needed to be found.

Niels E. Hansen and Cossack Alfalfa

Niels E. Hansen was a plant scientist. He adapted plants so they would grow in South Dakota. He was born in Denmark in 1866. He and his family were immigrants. He came to America when he was seven years old. He went to school at Iowa State College. Then he got a job at South Dakota State University in Brookings.

Beginning in 1897, Hansen went to Europe and Russia. He looked for “hardy” plants from “hardy” climates. He thought

these might do well in South Dakota. His most important find was Cossack alfalfa. This plant can survive harsh cold and dry weather. From the **steppes** of Siberia, Hansen brought back one teaspoonful of seed. Alfalfa soon became an important crop in western South Dakota. Hansen also brought smooth brome grass and crested wheat grass to the state.

In all, Hansen found three hundred plants that would grow here. They were fruits, flowers, trees, and **forage** crops. He won many awards for his work. He died in Brookings in 1952.

Doane Robinson and South Dakota

History

The 1890s were busy years. South Dakota became a state. Government was set up. Officials were elected. Laws were made. Railroads began to connect the state to the rest of the nation (read about this in Unit 6).

South Dakota now had a past and a future to think about.

Doane Robinson believed in South Dakota. He wanted to learn the history of its peoples. He wanted to save that history for people who would live here in the future. He was born in Wisconsin in 1856. His parents named him Jonah, but his baby sister called him “Donah.” This became Doane. He moved to Dakota Territory to practice law. But other things were more important to Robinson than law.

He wrote poetry and fiction. He gave talks about the history of South Dakota. He started a magazine. It was called the *Monthly South Dakotan*. It was about the history and culture of the state. Soon Robinson helped to start the South Dakota State Historical Society. He became a **historian** for the state. He collected items important to our history. He talked to Indians and non-Indians who lived here in

the early days. He put the things they told him into magazines and books. He started a state museum and library. There he kept safe the things he collected. Today, we can still see and study these things from our past. They are in the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre.

Robinson had many good ideas. Mount Rushmore in the Black Hills was one of his ideas. He worked for good roads and **tourism**. He died in 1945 in Pierre.

Vocabulary

agriculture (n.), the raising of crops or livestock; farming

forage (n.), food for animals like sheep or cattle

historian (n.), a person who studies the past

steppes (n.), treeless plains; grasslands

tourism (n.), traveling for fun