

Name _____

Date _____

North Dakota

North Dakota is located in the northern Great Plains area of the central United States. North Dakota shares its northern border with the country of Canada. North Dakota is surrounded by three other states: Montana to the west; South Dakota to the south; and Minnesota to the east. The Red River forms the boundary between North Dakota and Minnesota.

Early History

Archaeologists inform us that the land of present-day North Dakota was once home to woolly mammoths, but these prehistoric creatures became extinct about 8,000 years ago. Ancient people lived in North Dakota at that time but very little is known about them. However, archaeologists have more information about the Woodland people who lived on the land between 500 BCE and 1000 CE. Woodland people learned to cultivate crops and lived in small villages. They also utilized the local Knife River flint for crafting sharp tools and spear points.

Woodland people who lived in the vicinity of the Red River were influenced by the mound-building Adena culture of western Ohio while the Native Americans living near the Missouri River were influenced by the great Mississippian culture that was centered around the Mississippi River. Mississippian people were also mound-builders, and archaeologists have found burial mounds in North Dakota.

However, life was quite different for Native Americans depending upon where in the North Dakota area they lived. The people who lived near the major rivers maintained permanent settlements and engaged in farming while those who lived in the Great Plains lived a nomadic life following the buffalo herds. Hunting buffalo became easier after horses were introduced into North America by the Spanish in the 1500s. Horses reached the nomadic Native Americans by the 1700s.

Another Native American group, called the Sioux or Dakota people, came to the area around 1600 but eventually was displaced by the arrival of the Ojibwa people in the late 1600s and early 1700s. The Ojibwa people were moving westward because their homeland near the Great Lakes was being taken over by European settlers. The Dakotas were moving from the woodlands of eastern North Dakota to the Great Plains of the west.

Name _____

Date _____

Because North Dakota was so far from both Canadian settlements and the British colonies on the Atlantic coast, the Native Americans in the North Dakota area had little contact with Europeans until the end of the 1700s. Traders and trappers came to North Dakota in search of furs. Even though French, British and Spanish traders came to the area, no colonial power tried to control the area. However the southern half of North Dakota was included in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 whereby the U.S. purchased land from France. At the conclusion of the War of 1812 between the U.S. and Great Britain, the treaty known as the Convention of 1818 set the northern boundary of North Dakota, where it remains today.

Towards Statehood

North Dakota remained largely unsettled until the mid-1800s because of its remoteness and the difficult terrain. A new local invention called the Red River cart, allowed people to transport goods to and from North Dakota. The Red River cart was a relatively simple two-wheel ox-drawn cart made from wood. Simple though it was, the over-sized wheels featured large rims suitable for traversing rough ground. The combination of Red River carts and steamboats on the Missouri and Red Rivers allowed trade and settlement in North Dakota.

Also in the 1850s, the federal government signed treaties with Native American groups to purchase land. Native Americans were then to be given reservation land and supplies; however, federal agents and traders often failed to deliver the promised payments and supplies. Meanwhile, Congress created the Dakota Territory in 1861. Due to the federal government's failure to keep promises, the Dakota people fought with U.S. Army soldiers in 1863 and 1864; the army then built a series of forts to protect settlers.

Next in the progression across the prairies of North Dakota was the railroad. The Northern Pacific Railroad originated in Minnesota, reaching the Missouri River by 1873. Fargo was a new town created by and for the railroad. Unfortunately Fargo was established on land belonging by federal treaty to the Lakota branch of the Dakota people. Then gold was discovered in the Black Hills, an area sacred to the Lakota people that the federal government said was theirs by treaty. In an attempt to resolve the problem of land claims, the federal government ordered that all Lakota people live on reservations and sent troops to enforce the order.

Name _____

Date _____

General George Custer and his troops encountered Lakota leader Crazy Horse and his warriors on the Little Big Horn River, today called the Little Bighorn River, in the Battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876. The location of the actual battle is in present-day Montana but at the time the area was part of the Dakota Territory. Custer and all his men were killed, prompting a swift retaliation by the federal government. All Native Americans in the Dakota Territory were confined to living on reservations. The conflicts between the federal government and the Native Americans in the Dakota Territory ended with the Wounded Knee Massacre where U.S. troops killed 300 Native Americans.

Meanwhile settlers continued to relocate to the Dakota Territory. As the population increased, citizens petitioned the federal government for statehood. President Benjamin Harrison signed a bill in 1889 which formed the states of North and South Dakota from portions of the Dakota Territory.

Name _____

Date _____

Circle True or False after analyzing each of the following statements.

1. True False The Missouri River forms the boundary between North Dakota and its neighbor to the south, Missouri.
2. True False Woodland people learned to cultivate crops and utilized Knife River flint for crafting sharp tools and spear points.
3. True False Mississippian and Adena people were mound-builders and archaeologists have found burial mounds in North Dakota.
4. True False Descendants of the horses that were originally introduced to North America by Spanish explorers eventually reached the Native Americans living in the Dakotas and these people used horses in hunting buffalo.
5. True False The Sioux, Dakota and Ojibwa people are related because they are all descendants of the Adena culture.
6. True False Part of North Dakota became U.S. land through the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and the northern border of the state was set at the end of the War of 1812 by the Convention of 1818.
7. True False The Red River cart was a relatively simple two-wheel horse-drawn cart made from wood that featured large wheels suitable for the rough terrain.
8. True False Fargo was created as a railroad town when the Northern Pacific Railroad was built from Minnesota to the Dakota Territory.
9. True False In the Battle of Little Big Horn General Custer and his U.S. army troops defeated the Dakota warriors who were lead by a great warrior, Crazy Horse.
10. True False North Dakota and South Dakota became states at the same time.

Name _____

Date _____

Answers

1. False
2. True
3. True
4. True
5. False
6. True
7. False
8. True
9. False
10. True