

# Analyzing the Indian Problem in American Manifest Destiny and the Story of Buffalo Bill Cody in the 1800s.

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DOI:<https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.803031>

Received: 14 February 2024; Accepted: 22 February 2024; Published: 02 April 2024

## ABSTRACT

This study is about the Indian Problem in the History of American expansionism. The 13 colonies and their dream of Manifest Destiny. The study shows how the Indians taught immigrants how to survive in America, but in return, the Americans saw them as savages who needed to be eliminated. To understand all this, I carried out a comprehensive study, on books, Google Scholar, newspapers, Movies, and others. what I found was that Apart from William Penns, who paid the Indians for the Land the King gave him, the new settlers with the dream of Manifest Destiny were ruthless to the Indians and they never respected the agreements they made with them. That was why Buffalo Bill said that every Indian outbreak you see, originated from a broken promise.

**Keywords:** Manifest Destiny, Expansionism, Buffalo Bill, Indians, America, Conflict. Treaties, Tensions.

## INTRODUCTION

The US has a long history of expansionism or the practice of invading foreign lands to expand its territories for political, social, and economic factors or ideologies. The 1800s were full of American expansionist sentiments and many subscribed to the concept of “Manifest Destiny”, they believed that providence preordained the United States to occupy as much land on the continent as possible (Marvin, Perry 2015). The westward expansion began in the early 1800 when Thomas Jefferson negotiated with France to buy the French colony of Louisiana which was 828,000 square miles of land west of the Mississippi River. Some of the factors that influenced expansionism are as follows. (a) economic competition among industrial nations (b) political and military competition, including the creation of a strong naval force (c) the belief in the racial and cultural superiority of people of Anglo-Saxon descent.

The main goal of expansionism was to extend the boundaries of the United States from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. in doing so, they infringed on the rights and properties of native Americans whose responses were not friendly. Apart from William Penns who signed a treaty with the neighboring Indians and paid for the territory the King gave him in North America, all others were harsh and rude to the Indians. The purpose of this study is to examine how the American ideology of “Manifest Destiny” created tension between the European settlers and the Native Americans. The United States expanded to the Pacific Ocean and acquired more than two million square miles of contiguous territory through land purchases and war (Arthur Spirling 2012).

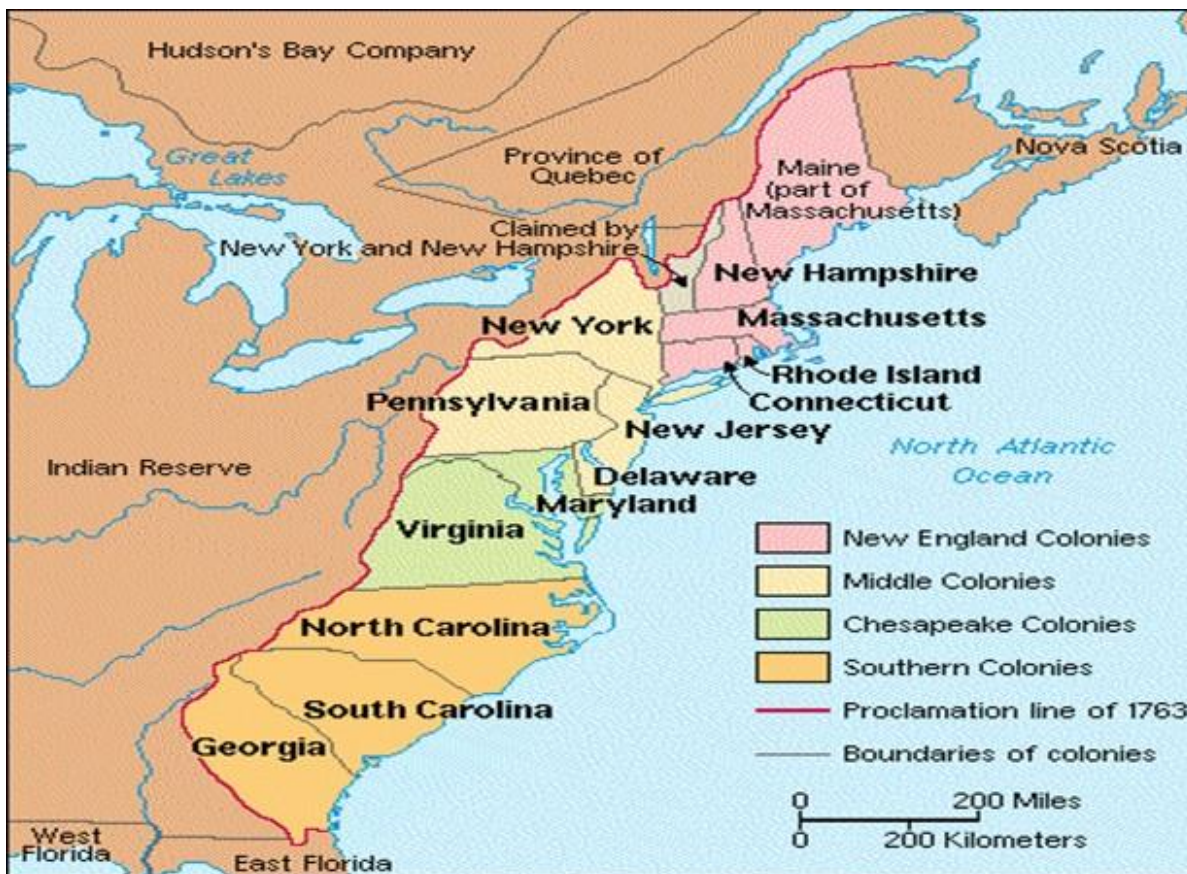
This study will bring to light the ruthless nature of the new settlers based on the issue of territorial hunger and desire. Also, it will expose the impressions they had about the native Americans and finally, the study will show how Buffalo Bill Cody (William Frederick Cody) tried to get fair treatment and correct the

negative impression the new settlers had about the Native Americans. In an account given by Marvin Perry about expansionism, he made open the ruthless nature of European settlers as he explained how they raided Indian camps, killing women and children (Marvin Perry 1989).

## TERRITORIAL EXPANSION (MANIFEST DESTINY)

Territorial expansion in American history refers to the creation of new borders by the 13 colonies after the proclamation of independence from Britain. In 1783, the territory of the United States stretched to the Mississippi River. To the west was the vast Louisiana Territory a possession of Spain (Robert Lee 2017). Robert Lee’s accounting for Conquest: The Price of the Louisiana Purchase of Indian Country he made mention of the 13 colonies before expansion and their Traditional grouping. They included New England (New Hampshire; Massachusetts; Rhode Island; and Connecticut); Middle (New York; New Jersey; Pennsylvania; and Delaware) Southern (Maryland; Virginia; North Carolina; South Carolina and Georgia) (Simon A. Sieronov 2020). The map of Figure 1, will show the original settlement of all the 13 colonies before and after they gained independence from Great Britain.

Figure 1: The map of the 13 Colonies



Source: History.com, retrieved 12/12/2022.

Taking a look at the original settlements of the European immigrants, the study will then drive us to why they had to extend their territories, how it was done, and what was the response of the native Americans. At this point, we will have to examine how the two groups interacted during their early meeting.

Between 1607 and 1733 English first settlement in North America went through a lot of hardship the colonies almost failed. The Virginia colony and others had ambitions for greater wealth since it was known that the Spanish colonies were rich. The news of the Spanish discovery of minerals inspired migrants. So,

the early settlers dreamed of discovering gold or silver or finding a waterway to the Pacific. These Europeans did not prepare themselves to become farmers or expect to do farming and so, they died of starvation or diseases during the first winter (Beverly, Lamire 2021). This study then brings us to how the early Europeans came in contact with the native Americans and how they were rescued.

According to Marvin Perry, the Indians of the Powhatan confederacy gave the settlers food during the first years, he also explained how the Indian farmers also taught the Europeans how to grow corn, yams, and Tobacco which eventually changed the destiny of the colony. Some Native Americans were mostly mobile tribes, ranging over a large region in pursuit of bison. others were also raiders, stealing horses and various goods from other tribes while other tribes were settled agriculturists raising crops in fertile river valleys and also spending some time hunting (Marvin, Perry 2015). As time passed, the colonies grew in size and more immigrants came from Europe leading to conflicts. As the English settlements grew, the Indians were forced to leave their farms and villages and move farther inland.

Figure 2 United States Territorial Expansion, 1783-1898



Source: History.com, 12/12/2022.

The United States' territorial expansion started from the Louisiana territory in 1803 as shown in the map of Figure 2. In an agreement made with France on April 30, 1803, known as the Louisiana Purchase Treaty of 1803, the United States purchased 828,000 square miles of land west of the Mississippi River for \$15 million (Louisiana 1803). Approximately 4 cents for an acre. This purchase, doubled the size of the United States expanding westward. Also, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October 1810, United States President James Madison declared that the United States should claim west Florida between the Mississippi and Perdido Rivers with his opinion that it was part of the Louisiana Purchase. On February 22, 1819, an agreement was concluded with Spain that claimed both East and West Florida (Andrew, Francis McMichael 2008).

Eugene Barker detailed the annexation of Texas on December 29, 1845. Here, the United States annexed Texas and it was admitted into the Union as the 28<sup>th</sup> States. According to Barker, this annexation happened



after Texas declared its independence from the Republic of Mexico on March 2, 1836, expanding the territory further west (Eugene, Barker 1946). More so, the United States added some new territories after signing an agreement with the United Kingdom. the Oregon Treaty, of 1846 in Washington, D.C. In this agreement, the British gained the land North of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel including Vancouver Island and the United States took possession of the southern territories therefore increasing the size and shape of the United States. Another successful purchase was made by the United States from the Republic of Mexico on June 8, 1854. This purchase is known as the Gadsden Purchase which is a 29,670-square-mile region of present-day southern Arizona and southern New Mexico (Louis, Bernard. Schmidt 1961).

This study then brings us to how the United States administration had to deal with the native Americans in the newly purchased territories. The American Indian groups were many, they included, Cherokee, Iroquois, Navajo, Sioux, Apache, Ute People, Paiute, Iowa people, Omaha people, Odawa, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Pawnee people, Arikara, Nez Perce, Colorado River Indian Tribes, Sauk People, Cheyenne, Shawnee Tribe, Shoshone, Meskwaki, Seneca-Cayuga Nation, Wyandotte Nation, Fort Sill Apache Tribe, and more minor tribes. Some of these tribes practiced agriculture while others depended on hunting.

Through This study, researchers will be aware of some reasons why the native Americans resisted the United States administration and how some of the tribes were relocated but others resisted and attacked the new settlers, raided their homes and destroyed their properties. in the (William Wellman. 1944) (Movie 1944), Wellman laid enfaces on how the native Americans valued the buffalo and their ancestral land and so one of the reasons why Indians resented the white man was the fact that the new settlers were hunting indiscriminately and the Buffalo was so critical to the survival of the Native American. The bison not only provided American Indians with food, shelter, and tools but also a model of how they lived this made the American Indians to be in disagreement with the new settlers. The absence of a consensus between the different groups of people gave way to violence and misconceptions about Indians

Alan, Taylor. In ‘‘Wasty Ways’’ *Stories of American Settlement*, Taylor explained how the new settlers indiscriminately eliminated the forest and wildlife. Because of the increase in the demand for land for the cultivation of Tobacco. It should be understood that Native Americans taught the New Settlers how to cultivate tobacco and as a result of the success and the progress in Tobacco production, more plantations were opened, more lands were needed, more immigrants came in and the Indians had land disputes to settle with newcomers. The new settlers had great ambition to become rich either by opening plantations or by discovering gold and silver mines so they needed to have access to much land (Alan, Taylor 1998).

The United States continued to perpetrate massacres against many Native American people, as portrayed in the movie by William Wellman, since they needed their ancestral lands so, they subjected them to one-sided treaties through discriminatory government policies. the outcome was that they diminished in size and strength and they were never recognized as US citizens throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century but they were classified as savages who needed to be exterminated. This will lead us to a question, why were Indians not violent with the French just as they were with the Americans? The answer is simple. The Americans came up with the idea of cultural superiority of the Anglo-Saxons and treated the Indians as savages while the French had a fair-trading relationship with them.

The principle of Manifest Destiny gave birth to class distinction, superior cultures, and superior humans. This can be seen as the birthplace of discrimination, segregation, nepotism, racism, and Slavery. For example, it is unimaginable how the Japanese will annex Korea but refuse Korean citizenship or how the British will come to Africa and refuse Africans from owning their ancestral lands. the American immigrants alongside Spain and France made agreements without the consent of the native American people.

According to Marvin Perry 1989, p. 424 William Penn, a devout Quaker was among those who treated the Indians with respect and dignity. After being persecuted for becoming a protestant, King Charles II granted

him a huge tract of land in North America for the services his father gave to the English throne. (Marvin, Perry 2015) He was the sole owner of Pennsylvania and he excised greater honor and nobility in 1682 by signing a treaty with the Neighboring Indians and paying them for the land the king gave to him. The second thing he did for the Indians was that he barred the whites from selling alcohol to them and finally he prevented white traders from cheating the Indians during trade agreements.

## THE EXPERIENCE OF BUFFALO BILL CODY

This study then introduces a man of great nobility, a man of timber, and Caliber, a Manly Man, nobody else but William Frederick Cody (Buffalo Bill Cody). born on February 26, 1846, in Scott County, Iowa Unites States, a brave, resolute, Strong, and Honorable man. He was able to build a relationship with native Americans and he understood them more than anyone else did. Figure 3 is a picture of Buffalo Bill Cody with a Traditional ruler of the Native American tribe (Cheyenne).

The Cheyenne people are one of the indigenous groups of Indians who lived in the Great Plains. The people spoke an Algonquian language. The lived-in camps were friendly to the white man and they were mostly farmers, hunters, and gathers but they were vulnerable to diseases. They became victims of American territorial expansion and for that reason, they were constantly relocated. They are among the groups that were poorly treated by the American leading to retaliations and unprecedented assaults, enmities, raids, and massacres

Figure 3: Buffalo Bill Cody and a Native American Traditional Ruler.



In the History of America's Wild West, Buffalo Bill Cody as he was commonly known, was a buffalo hunter, U.S. Army scout, and an Indian fighter. He was referred to as the best man in the field with the best shoots and he is also known to be the man who gave the Wild West its name (Kevin, Meethan 2010). He became famous in buffalo hunting in 1867 while hunting for the Kansas Pacific Railroad work crews and because of expatriates in shooting, he was employed in 1868 by the US Army civilian scout and guide of the fifth cavalry and his role was to provide the military with necessary information about the enemy.

He had great respect for his opponents and wanted some fair treatment for the Indians. In his words, he pointed accusing fingers at the United States government for not keeping to the agreements they had with

the Indians thereby leading to conflicts. “ Every Indian outbreak that I have ever known has resulted from broken promises and broken treaties by the government” (William, Wellman 1944) (Buffalo Bill Cody 1944) and in that case, we are going to examine some of the broken treaties made by the United States and the Native Americans. Some of them are the Treaty of Fort Pitt 1778, the Treaty of Canandaigua/Pickering Treaty/ Calico Treaty 1794, the Treaty of Greeneville 1795, the Treaty of Fort Wayne 1809, the Treaty of New Echota 1835, Fort Laramie Treaty 1868 (Arthur, Spirling 2012).

These treaties were mutual agreements signed by the Indians and the Americans, the Lenape agreement was to permit the Continental Army to cross their land, guide them to British locations, and “join the troops of the United States” in return, the Americans promised to build a fort in Lenape territory for protection and promised trade goods but it crumbled within a short period

In the Calico Treaty, of 1794, President Washington sent an envoy to establish “peace and friendship”, land rights, and transport development most of the treaties provided only short-term resolution because US expansion was rapid so it quickly nullified the treaties. Also, in the treaty of Wayne 1809, William Henry Harrison who was the governor of Indiana made an agreement with the native Americans and bought 2.5 million acres of land in what is now Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio but in 1811 he led an attack on the native Americans killing women and children, the United States had a huge appetite for land and so, no agreement with the Indians stood its grounds (Francis, X. Clines).

Looking at a handful of agreements that were nullified, it is possible to say the United States disrespected their opponents either because they considered them culturally inferior, or they were working based on the principle of “Manifest Destiny.” He educated the world about the Wild West through his shows he was an old west legend before starting the show business and with that, he traveled to different countries in Europe. The first thing his shows did was to portray the lives of Indians and Americans in the Wild West. Life was hard, harsh, and competitive characterized by railway constructions, cowboy’s cattle were rustled and the sheriff was usually a slacker with scant interest in enforcing what little law existed. The most common causes of death in the Wild West were by shooting, drowning, wagon wheels, or by an animal. Figure 4 is an illustration of cowboys and railroad construction

Figure 4: Life in the Wild West





Figure 5 Corporal punishment in the Wild West



Buffalo Bill's show brought to light life in the jungle and many people understand how life was in the Wild West.

This was a period of American expansionism and people from different races, groups, religions, and cultural backgrounds mingled together in search of either freedom of worship or to make a fortune. what makes this study more interesting is the fact that a new generation of historians will understand the true history of America and the Indian problem because up to date, so many Americans are still having the idea that Indians were savages. For example, most movies portray cowboys as heroes while Indians as bad people meanwhile they are not.

The Indians were just trying to earn a living and dying to protect their ancestral lands as portrayed in a movie Directed by William A. Wellman titled Buffalo Bill (1944) starring Joel McCrea and Maureen O'Hara with Linda Darnell, Thomas Mitchell (as Ned Buntline), Edgar Buchanan and Anthony Quinn in supporting roles. The opening scene starts in 1877, with Buffalo Bill Cody (Joel McCrea) hunting buffaloes and rescuing a wagon of dignitaries from attacking Cheyennes people They included McGraw (Edgar Buchanan) a Union army commander, Senator Frederici (Moroni Olson) and his nubile daughter Louisa (Maureen O'Hara) (movie)

Here, we get to understand the interpretation Americans had for Indians from what Senator Frederici told Bill Cody "We need more men like you to exterminate these savages" (William, Wellman Buffalo Bill 1944). But Bill Cody after examining the arrows used by the Cheyenne Indians, made him to understand that they are not as dangerous as the Senator thought.

The movie portrays Bill Cody as someone who admires and respects the Indians. His friendship with Chief Yellow Hand (Anthony Quinn) was of mutual respect and trust, he tried to negotiate mutual coexistence between the Indians but public opinion was against the Indians, as shown in the movie, and military leaders, politicians, and businessmen were prepared to take their lands and destroy their hunting grounds for their benefits. Figure 6 shows pictures of the Cheyenne soldiers.

The belief that America is trying to become the World police has a long origin. The issue is that when they

do wrong, who follows them up? Because their actions are justified and there are always no objections that is the reason why the Arab world is against them. The Americans in all instances failed to agree with the native Americans. All the agreements they had with them were not respected and they painted them as savages, and low lives and disrespected them on many occasions. Fighting back was always considered a rebellion. They could not protect their lands by fighting, they only had to respect orders and move to new destinations each time the Americans desired more lands.

The History of American Manifest Destiny started hundreds of years ago and it has become a culture for the American. They will always derive a means to go against the initial agreement. For example in the 1940s and 50s, they had an agreement with Russia to limit NATO expansion but in the year 2020 and so, they opened doors to countries closer to Russia to join the organization.

Figure 6: Cheyenne Indian Soldiers



Source: History.com, retrieved 12/20/2022.

Based on the information we gathered from the shows and the movies portraying the characters of the Indians, we realized that the Indians were truly Honest, loyal, trustworthy, self-confident, dependable, and generous. They would easily assimilate the white man among them and accept him, unlike the white man who will only think of killing them. As understood from the movie, Cody had friends among the Indians like Chief Yellow Hand and his son, who were loyal and respected the friendship which explains why he was able to be the mediator between the Indians and the Americans.

Even though he enjoyed a good friendship of trust and loyalty, he was seen fighting against the Indians and



this came as a result of counter-pressure from politicians and businessmen who needed more territories as soon as possible. The Indians were outnumbered, thanks to the use of modern weapons like machine guns, and well-trained soldiers as compared to the Indians who used arrows and made a lot of noise while attacking. Very few Indians had guns there making them vulnerable before the American fighters. The result was the destruction of Indian camps, massacre of women and children, and seizure of their ancestral lands.

## CONCLUSION

The study of American history is that with a lot of controversies because of ideological differences when it comes to the interpretation and understanding of certain issues. American History is characterized by migration, treaties, conflicts, and wealth. What differs is how each adventurer archived his goals. Throughout this study (Manifest Destiny) we found out that the Indians received the early settlers, and trained them how to grow tobacco. Also, the good nature of William Penns, he paid the Indians for the land that was assigned to him by the King of England. And finally, how the new settlers became ruthless to the native Americans in a quest to achieve their dream of Manifest Destiny.

By so doing, they massacred women and children, and destroyed camps thereby provoking the Indians who responded by kidnappings and attacking white settlements without regret in the words of Buffalo Bill Cody, said ‘Every Indian outbreak that I have ever known has resulted from broken promises and broken treaties by the government’ (Buffalo Bill Cody 1944) ( W. William 1944) The study shows how American’s hunger for space and wealth and power made them to chase the Indians out of their ancestral lands either through peaceful negotiation or by violent but What matters next is how the next generation of scholars will interpret these incidents.

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