

Our Public Land Heritage: From the GLO to the BLM

The challenge of managing public lands started as soon as America established its independence and began acquiring additional lands. Initially, these public lands were used to encourage homesteading and westward migration, and the General Land Office (GLO) was created to support this national goal. Over time, however, values and attitudes regarding public lands shifted. Many significant laws and events led to the establishment of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and laid the foundation for its mission to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of America's public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

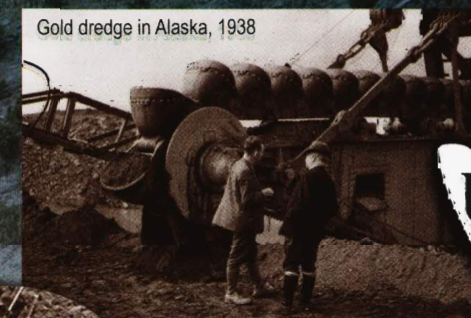
www.blm.gov/history



1861 • 1865
American Civil War



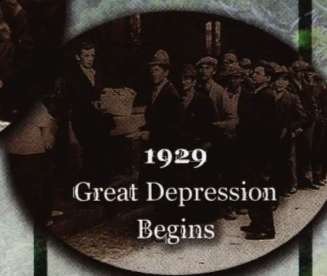
Placer mining in Colorado, 1893



Gold dredge in Alaska, 1938



1917 • 1918
World War I



1929
Great Depression Begins



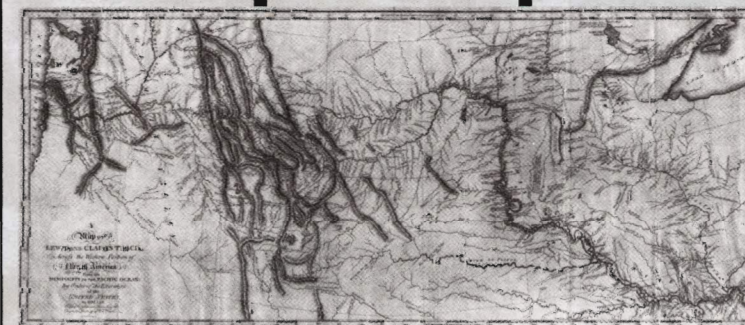
1783
Revolutionary War ends



Meriwether Lewis



William Clark



Lewis' and Clark's path across the western portion of North America, published 1814

1776
Declaration of Independence is signed.

1778
Second Continental Congress begins persuading states to cede land to create the public domain.

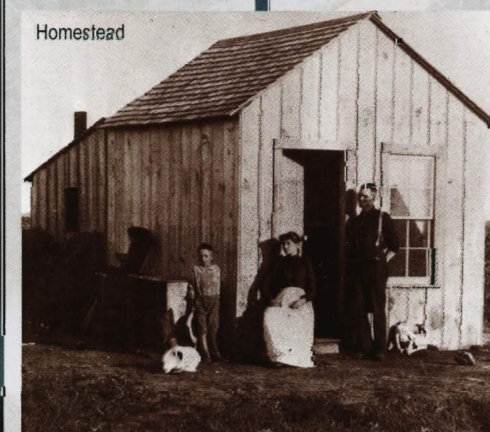
1785
Land Ordinance allows settlement of public domain lands and establishes the government's rectangular survey system.

1789
U.S. Constitution gives Congress the "Power to dispose of and make all needful Rules and Regulations respecting The Territory and other Property belonging to the United States."

1803
Ohio becomes the first state created from the public domain.

1812
General Land Office is established within the Treasury Department to oversee disposition of ceded and acquired lands.

1824
Office of Indian Affairs is established in the Department of War and is later transferred to the Department of the Interior



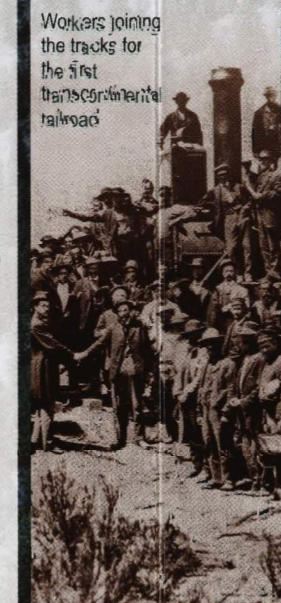
Homestead

1837
On its 25th anniversary, the General Land Office has 65 district land offices.

1843
"Great Migration" on the Oregon Trail begins.

1844
First geological surveys of public lands are initiated by the General Land Office in Michigan.

1849
Department of the Interior is established and the General Land Office is transferred to the new department.



Workers joining the tracks for the first transcontinental railroad

1850
First railroad land grants are made in Illinois, Alabama, and Mississippi.

1860
First Pony Express rider leaves St. Joseph, Missouri.

1862
Homestead Act entitles settlers to 160 acres of public land after they reside on and cultivate the land for 5 years.

Transcontinental Railroad Act gives railroad companies rights-of-way and alternate sections of public domain lands along both sides of their railroads.

1869
First transcontinental railroad is completed at Promontory Summit, Utah.

1872
General Mining Law identifies mineral lands as a distinct class of public lands subject to exploration, occupation, and purchase under stipulated conditions.

Establishment of Yellowstone National Park marks a shift from disposition to conservation and protection of federal lands.

1877
Desert Land Act authorizes the disposition of 640-acre tracts of public lands to homesteaders upon proof of reclamation of the lands by irrigation.

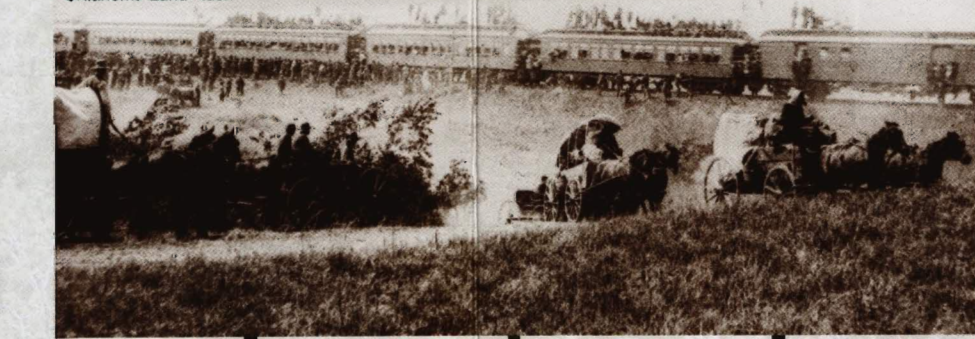
1878
Timber and Stone Act authorizes the negotiated sale of lands that are valuable for either logging or mining and otherwise unfit for cultivation.

1889
Oklahoma Land Rush begins the disposal of federal public domain lands in Oklahoma.



Travel across the desert in California

Oklahoma Land Rush



1894
Carey Act authorizes transfer of up to 1 million acres of public desert land to states for settling, irrigating, and cultivating purposes.

1897
Forest Management "Organic" Act transfers fire protection responsibilities for forest reserves from the Department of Army to the General Land Office.

1898
Congress extends homestead laws to Alaska.

1906
Antiquities Act preserves and protects prehistoric, historic, and scientifically significant sites on public lands and creates national monuments.



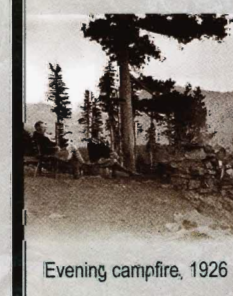
Theodore Roosevelt and John Muir, 1903

1911
Weeks Act permits the federal purchase of private land to protect the headwaters of rivers and watersheds and calls for cooperative fire protection efforts.

1916
Stock Raising Homestead Act authorizes homesteads of 640 acres and separates surface rights from subsurface (mineral) rights.

1920
Mineral Leasing Act authorizes federal leasing of public lands for private extraction of oil, gas, coal, phosphate, sodium, and other minerals.

1926
Recreation and Public Purposes Act allows conveyance or lease of public lands to state and local governments for outdoor recreation purposes.



Evening campfire, 1926

1934
Taylor Grazing Act authorizes grazing districts, grazing regulation, and public rangeland improvements in western states (excluding Alaska) and establishes the Division of Grazing (later renamed the U.S. Grazing Service) within the Department of the Interior.

1937
Oregon and California (O&C) Revested Lands Sustained Yield Management Act requires O&C Railroad lands to be managed for permanent forest production and provides for watershed protection, regulation of streamflow, and recreational facilities.

1939
Alaskan Fire Control Service is created within the General Land Office to prevent and suppress fires on Alaska public lands.

Jehn Trumbull's painting, Declaration of Independence

1770

1780

1790

1800

1810

1820

1830

1840

1850

1860

1870

1880

1890

1900

1910

1920

1930