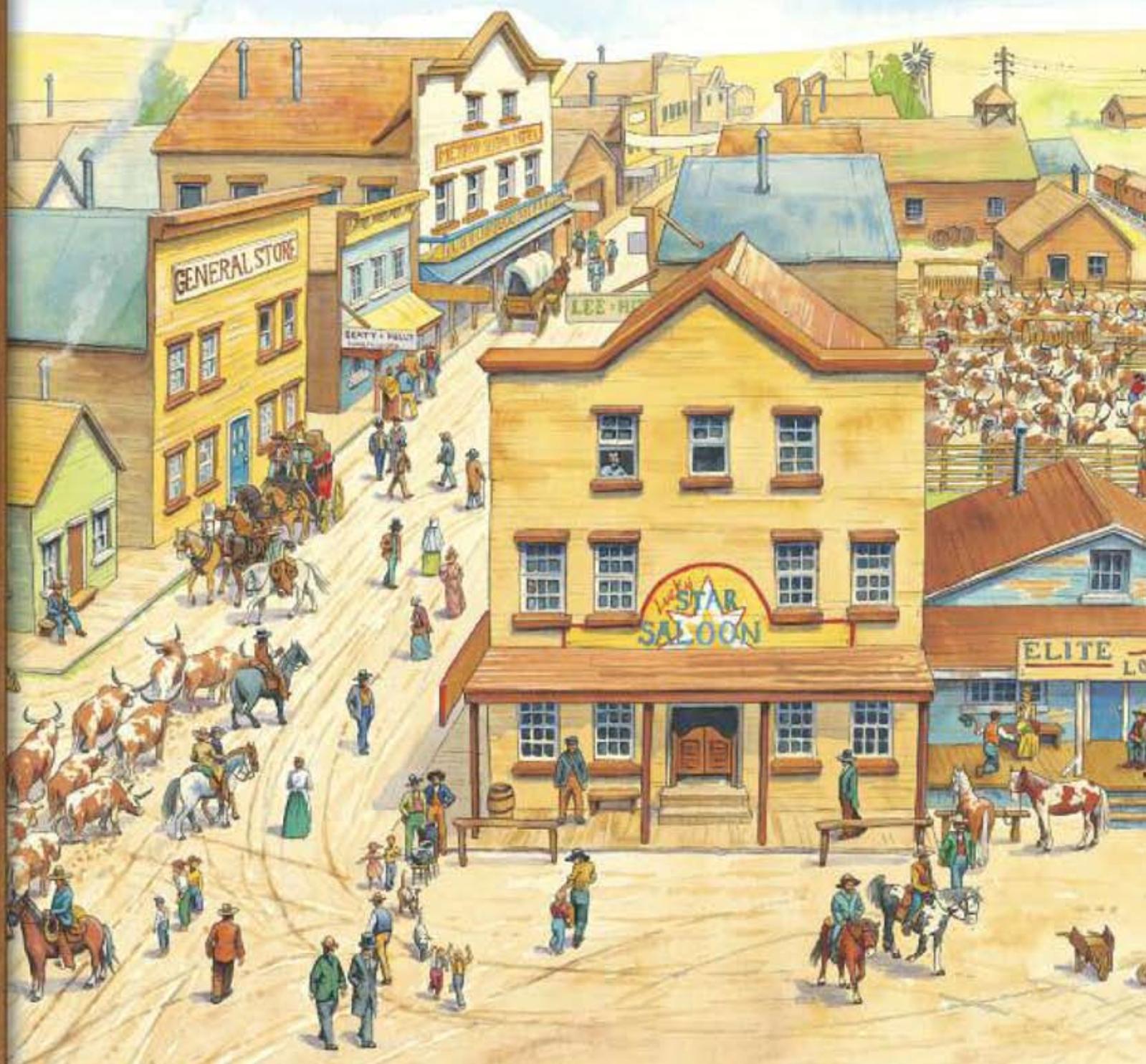
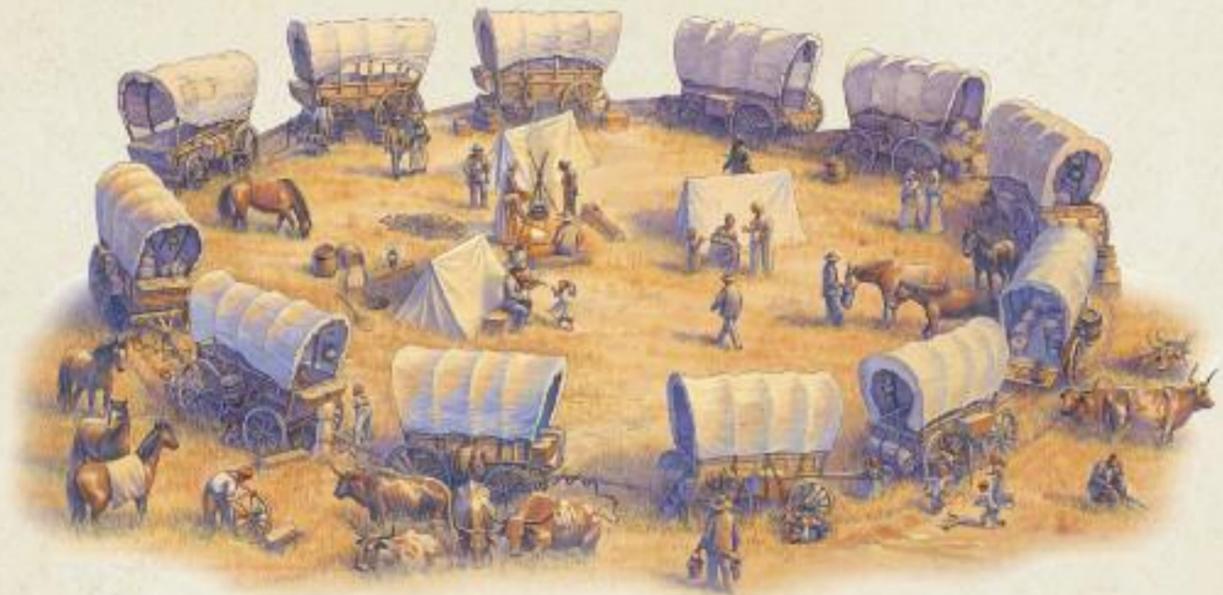


The story of the **WILD WEST**



The story of the
WILD WEST



illustrated by
Mark Stacey

 Orpheus

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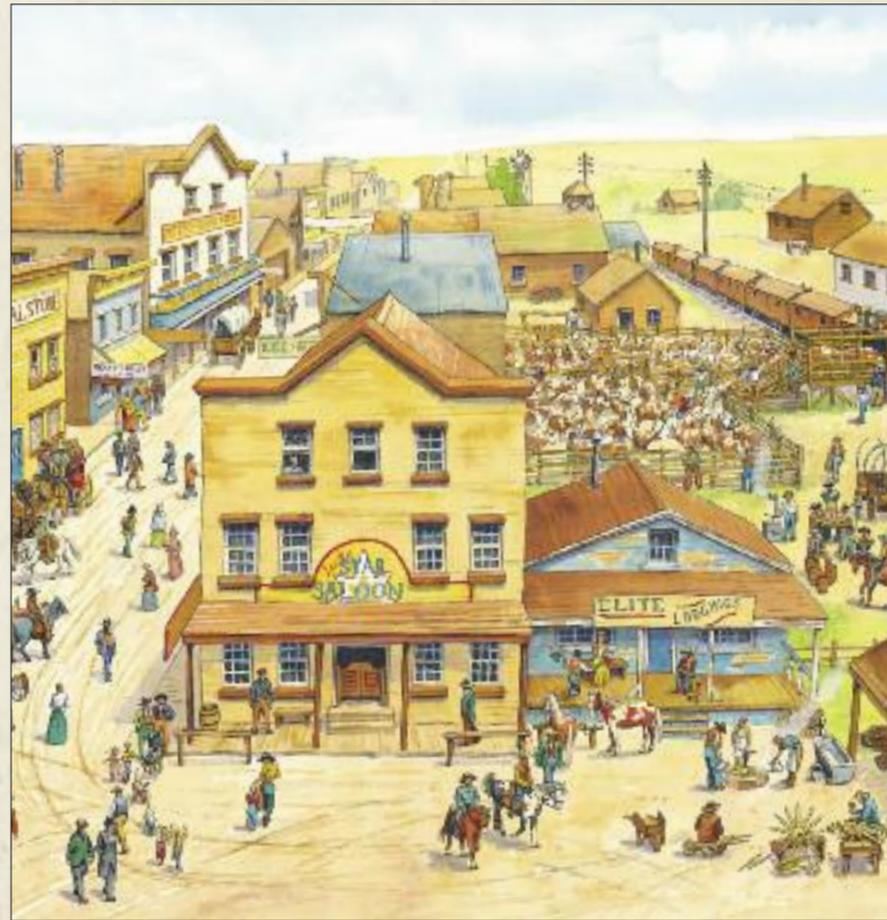
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The American West



Between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains lies the Great Plains of North America. Hundreds of years ago it was a vast area of grassland with herds of grazing buffalo. People had lived on the Plains for thousands of years, travelling around in tribes hunting the buffalo, which provided them with food, clothing and shelter. The arrival of European settlers to farm this land, and the building of the railways across the continent spelt disaster for the Native American Indians.

It is the year 600 AD. American Indians have been living on the Great Plains for thousands of years. They travel about on foot, hunting the herds of buffalo that roam the Plains. Buffalo provide the Indians with most of their food. Their skins, fur and bones are useful for making clothes, tipis (tents), weapons and tools.

As soon the lookouts spot the buffalo, the hunters begin to stalk them.

Carefully herding the animals along valleys, they drive them towards a wooden enclosure, called a corral, that they have already built. As the buffalo approach the corral, the hunters run towards them, shouting, waving skins and prodding them with flint-tipped spears to make the buffalo run into the corral. The hunters need great skill to herd the huge animals without being trampled, or gored by their sharp horns.



About 1200 years have passed. The lives of the Plains Indians have changed dramatically since the arrival of European settlers. The Spaniards brought horses, which quickly became prized possessions among the Indians.

Horses allow them to hunt buffalo with greater success. A man on horseback can gallop alongside a running buffalo, wielding his spear or bow and arrow with deadly accuracy. Hunting on horseback also makes herding buffalo into corrals easier for the hunters.

The Indians trade, steal and breed horses. This has led to fighting between tribes. Instead of co-operating to find food, parties of Indians now raid one another's camps. Some tribes have become famous for their particularly swift, fierce and ruthless attacks.

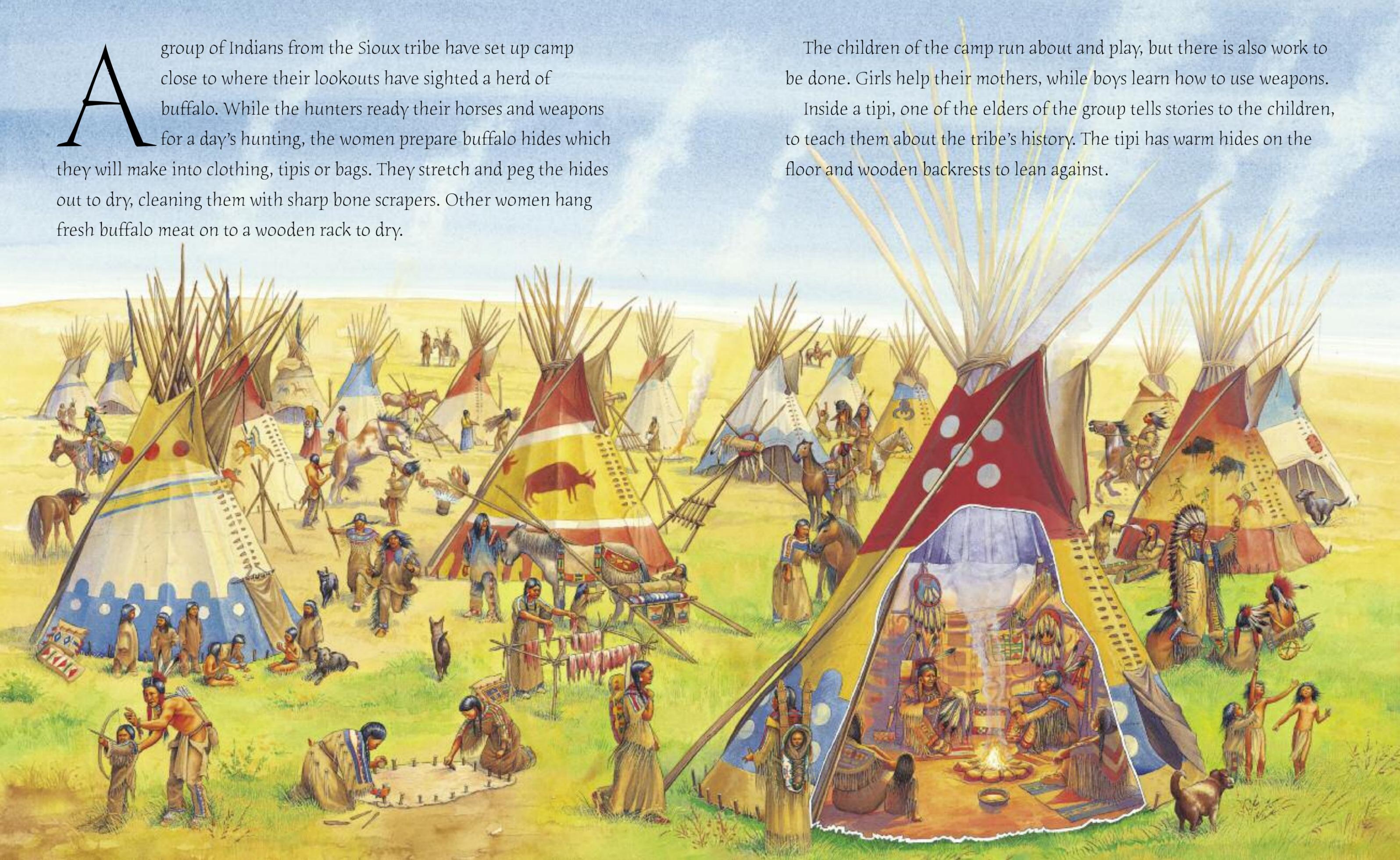
A raiding party sweeps into the camp of a neighbouring tribe on horseback, taking everyone by surprise. They drive away horses and steal stored meat and grain. As well as spears and bows and arrows, the raiders now have guns.



A group of Indians from the Sioux tribe have set up camp close to where their lookouts have sighted a herd of buffalo. While the hunters ready their horses and weapons for a day's hunting, the women prepare buffalo hides which they will make into clothing, tipis or bags. They stretch and peg the hides out to dry, cleaning them with sharp bone scrapers. Other women hang fresh buffalo meat on to a wooden rack to dry.

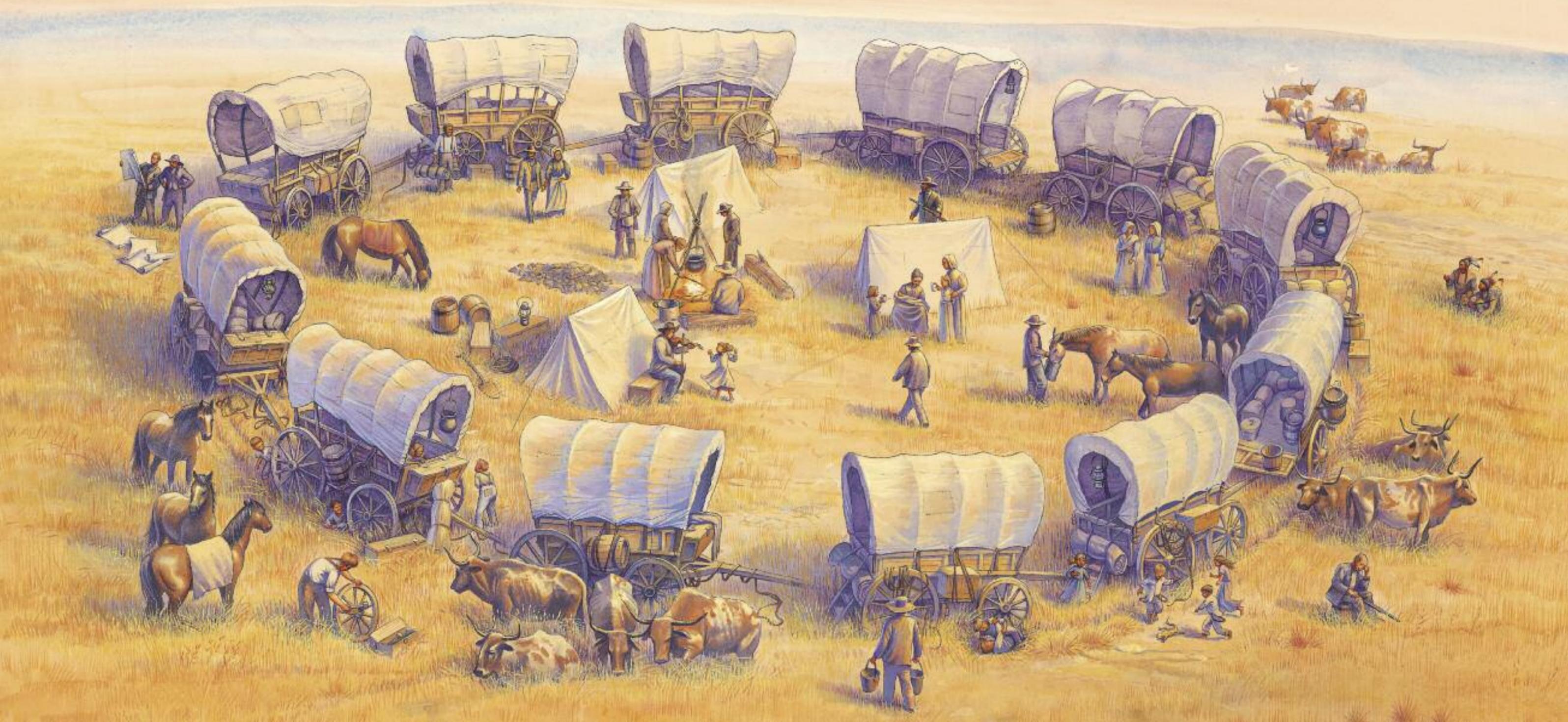
The children of the camp run about and play, but there is also work to be done. Girls help their mothers, while boys learn how to use weapons.

Inside a tipi, one of the elders of the group tells stories to the children, to teach them about the tribe's history. The tipi has warm hides on the floor and wooden backrests to lean against.



Forty years later, in the 1840s, a group of white settlers from far away in the east are travelling across the Plains in search of fertile farming land in the west. The settlers travel in wagons drawn by mules, horses or oxen.

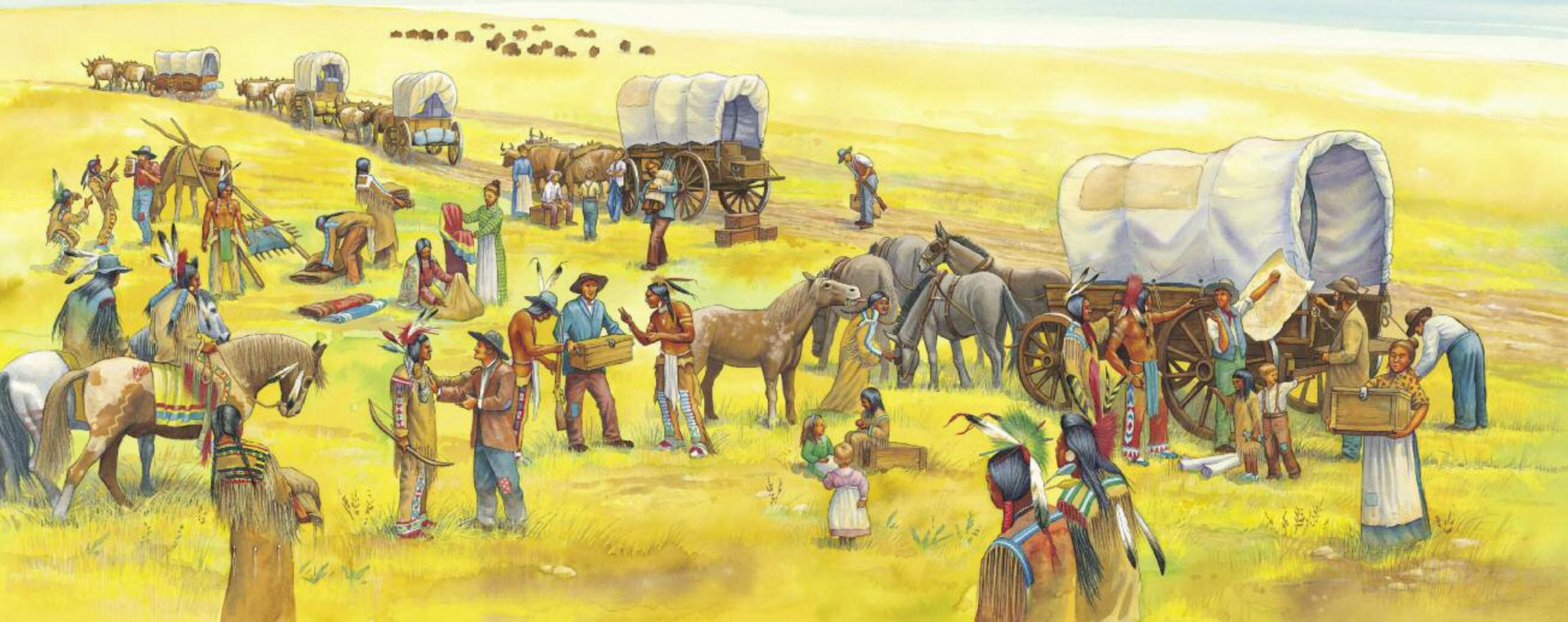
As evening falls, they draw their wagons into a circle to keep out wild animals. The men repair the wagons and feed the animals while women prepare the evening meal over a fire of buffalo dung or “buffalo chips”. They rely on the food stores they carry, as food is scarce on the Plains.



Soon, the number of people travelling westwards towards Oregon and California has grown from a trickle to a steady stream. They have been inspired by reports from previous travellers, who tell of rich farmland and a pleasant climate. On their journey west, this group, however, has met other travellers who have given up and turned back. They warn the families to expect hardships such as hunger, thirst, heat and cold. Deadly diseases such as cholera are common, and have killed many people.

The group hope they will have more luck. One of their fears, however, is attack by fierce Indian tribes. But the Indians they meet are friendly and keen to trade goods, although some demand money for passing through their lands. The Indians are used to white settlers. They have traded with fur trappers and adventurers—known as “mountain men”—for many years.

As the wagon train pauses to rest, the Indians trade buffalo hides and dried buffalo meat for blankets, guns and luxuries such as beads and mirrors. They also help the travellers to plan the next part of their route.



Twenty years later, and settlers are now setting up home on the Great Plains. They have travelled not only from the east but also from abroad. This family has come from Eastern Europe. They have just finished building their farm, known in these parts as a homestead. With little wood to be found on the Plains, their house is built from sods, slabs of turf cut from the ground.

The heavy ground is baked hard by the sun and difficult to cut, so the family must wait until it has been softened by rain. Special heavy ploughs are needed to prepare the ground for sowing crops.

The women look after the family and cook the meals. They collect dried buffalo or cow dung to fuel the fires and antlers for grinding ground down into fertiliser for the crops.

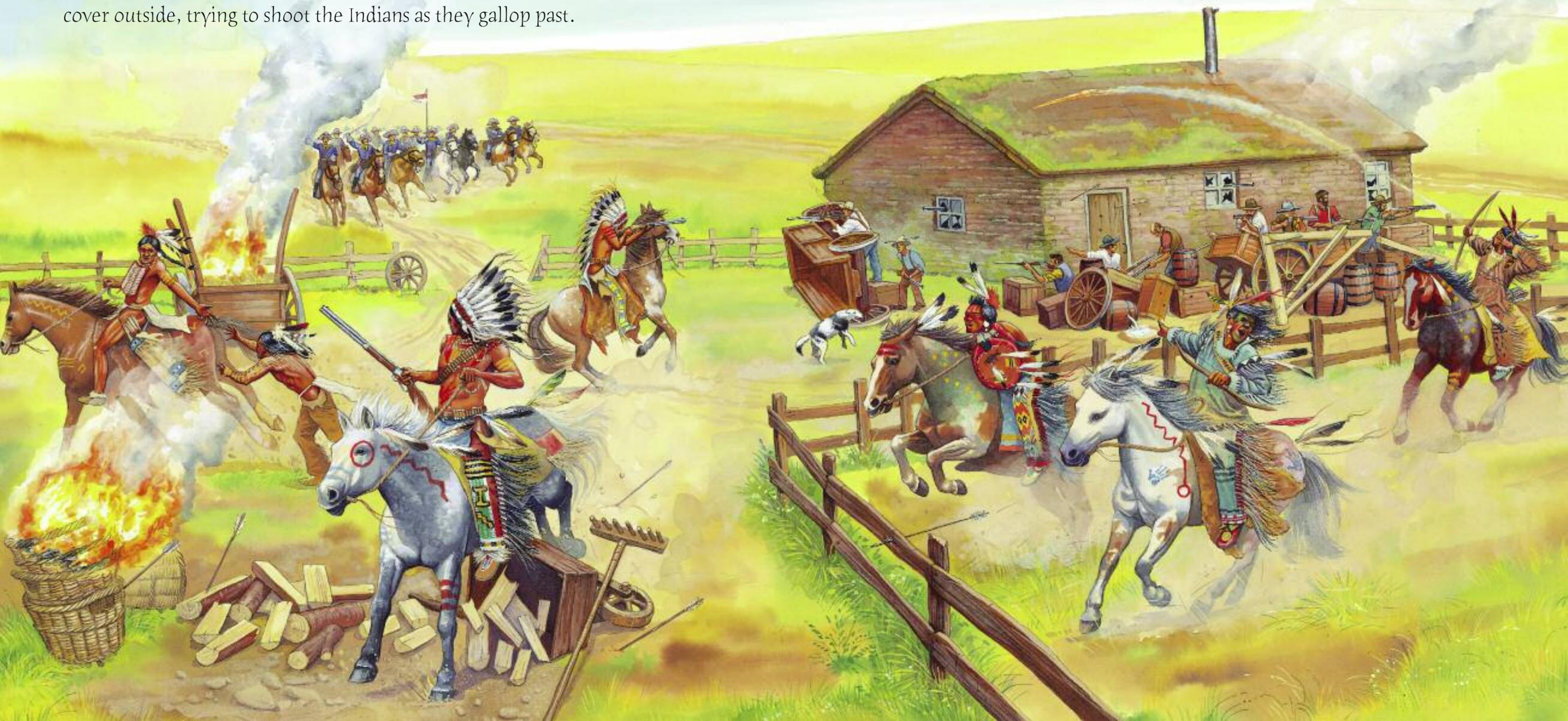


The homestead soon comes under attack from a group of Indians. They are angry that their homelands are being taken over by white settlers. They fear for the safety of their people and future of their way of life, and have decided to fight back.

Some of the men of the homestead are inside the house with the women and children, shooting through the windows. Other men take cover outside, trying to shoot the Indians as they gallop past.

The Indians drive away cattle and start fires around the house. They are armed with guns as well as bows and arrows.

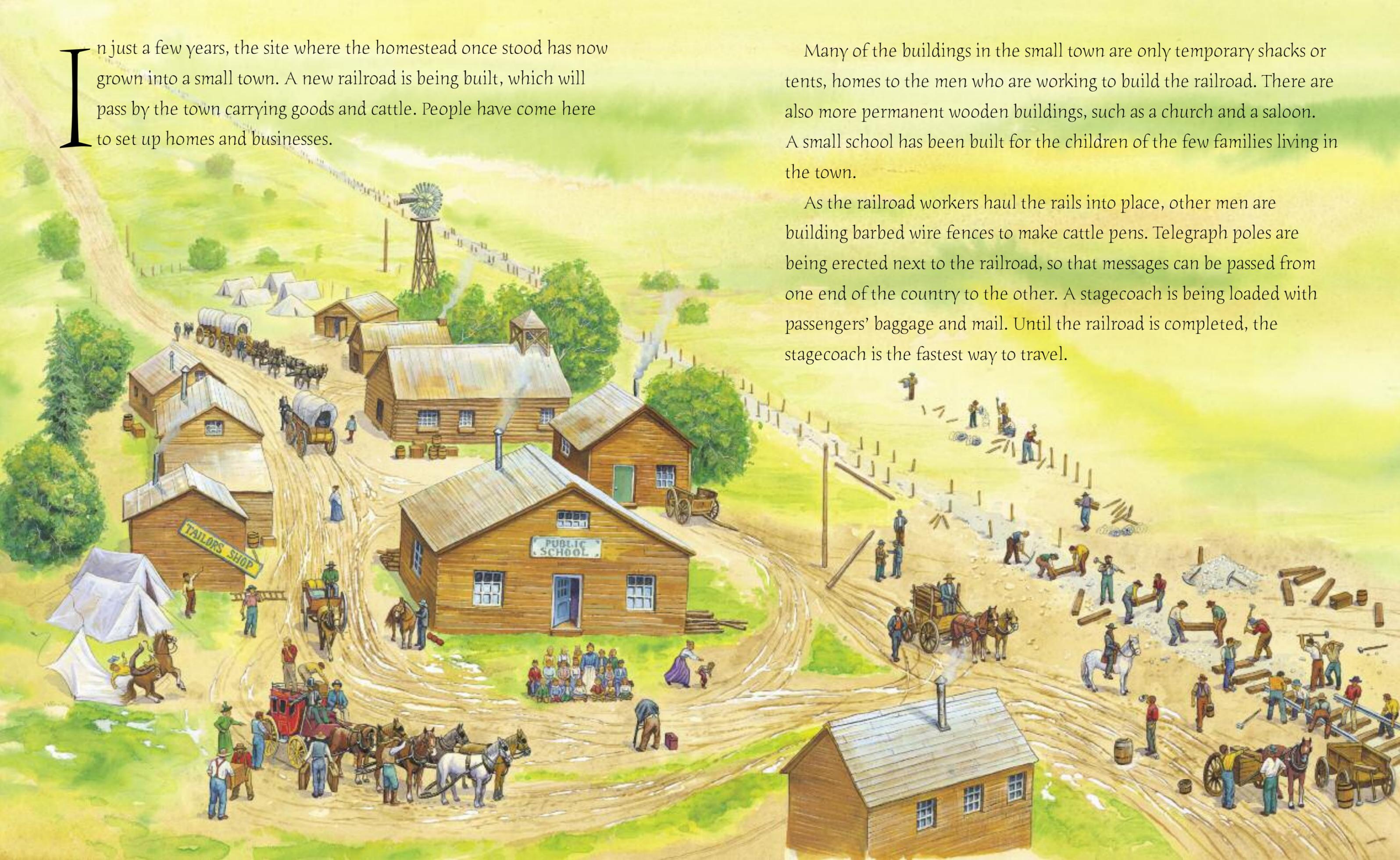
Suddenly a warning shout goes up from one of the Indians, and a cheer from the homesteaders. A group of armed US cavalry soldiers from a nearby fort are arriving to rescue the homesteaders. The Indians take a few last shots and gallop away at top speed.



In just a few years, the site where the homestead once stood has now grown into a small town. A new railroad is being built, which will pass by the town carrying goods and cattle. People have come here to set up homes and businesses.

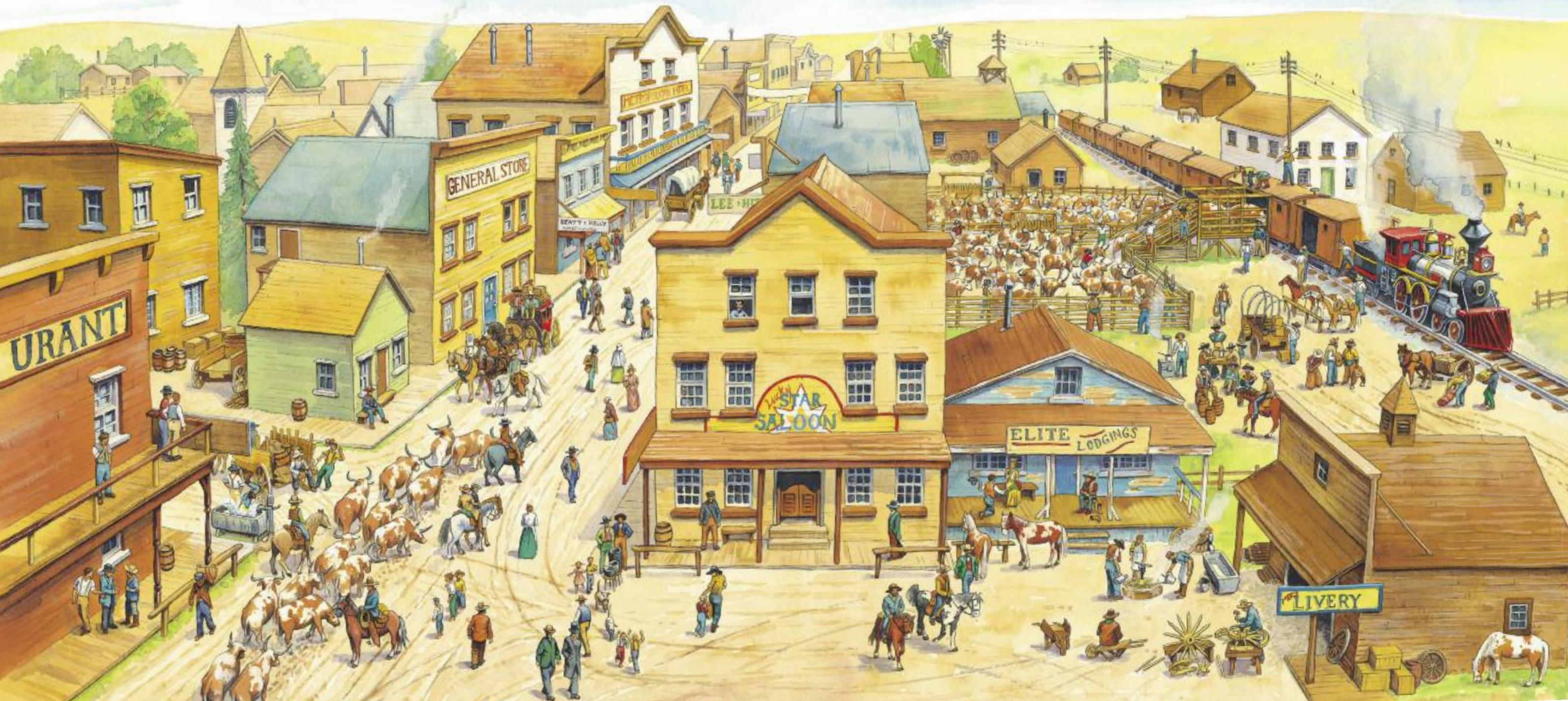
Many of the buildings in the small town are only temporary shacks or tents, homes to the men who are working to build the railroad. There are also more permanent wooden buildings, such as a church and a saloon. A small school has been built for the children of the few families living in the town.

As the railroad workers haul the rails into place, other men are building barbed wire fences to make cattle pens. Telegraph poles are being erected next to the railroad, so that messages can be passed from one end of the country to the other. A stagecoach is being loaded with passengers' baggage and mail. Until the railroad is completed, the stagecoach is the fastest way to travel.



The town has grown rapidly since the railroad was finished in the 1870s. Wood was brought in by rail to build more houses, as well as shops and hotels. All the walkways outside the buildings on the main streets, and hitching rails erected in front of them for people to tie up their horses, are also made of wood.

Cowboys drive cattle from ranches in the south across the Plains to the town. They herd the cattle into pens and then load them on to trains headed for markets in the east. After the cattle are loaded, the cowboys can enjoy life in town. There are plenty of saloons, bars and dance halls for them to relax in, after weeks or even months on the cattle trails.



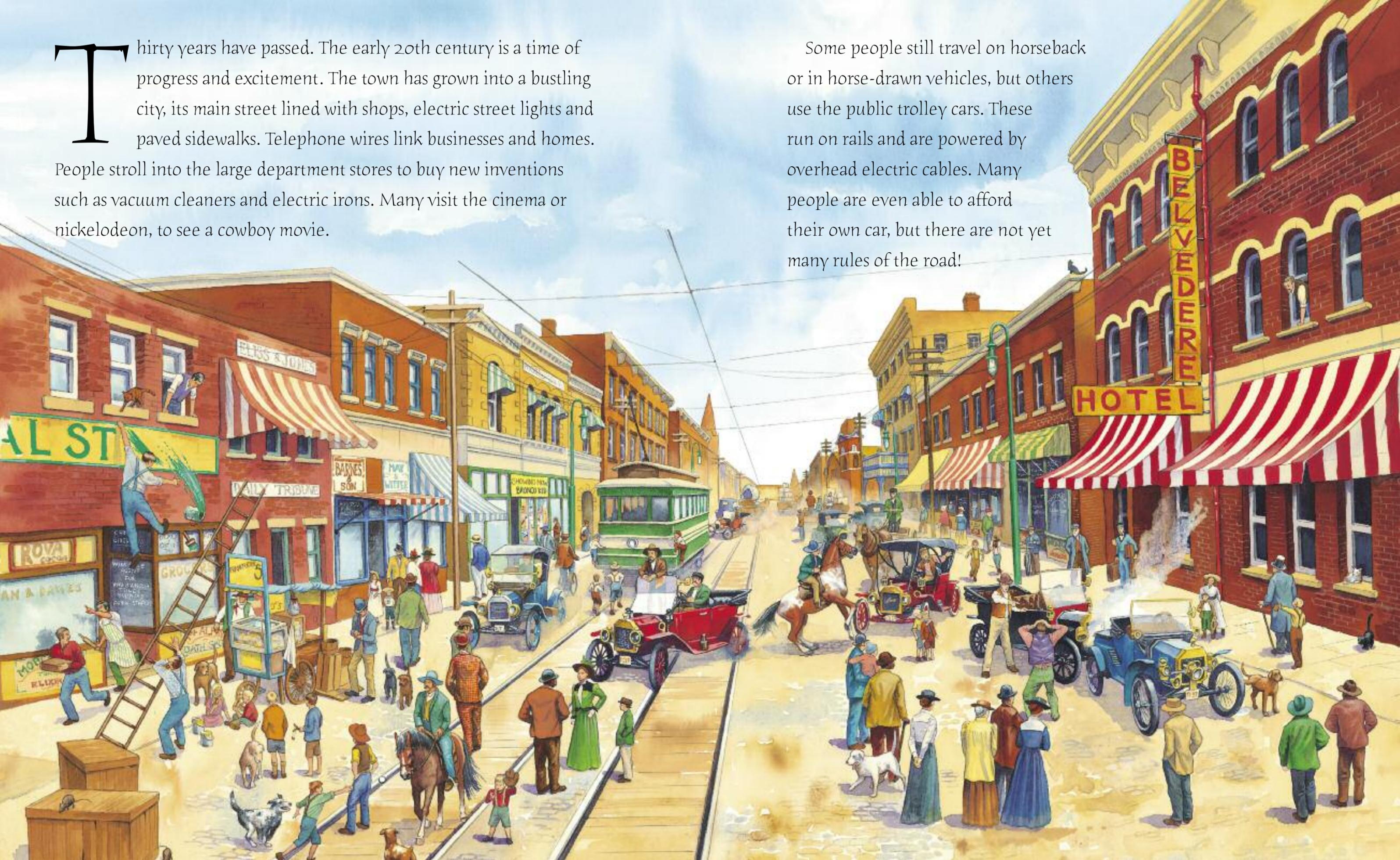
The town soon becomes quite rowdy. Outlaws come into town to steal horses, and to rob people. The cowboys that throng the town also cause a lot of trouble. They spend most of the money they have earned from the cattle drive on drink and gambling, which often causes arguments and fighting.

In the saloon, a drunken fight has started because someone has cheated in a card game. In the street outside, passers-by run for cover as a gunfight breaks out. People shoot at each other from the rooftops or from behind upturned carts. The town marshal hurries out of the jail to break up the fight before too many people get hurt.



Thirty years have passed. The early 20th century is a time of progress and excitement. The town has grown into a bustling city, its main street lined with shops, electric street lights and paved sidewalks. Telephone wires link businesses and homes. People stroll into the large department stores to buy new inventions such as vacuum cleaners and electric irons. Many visit the cinema or nickelodeon, to see a cowboy movie.

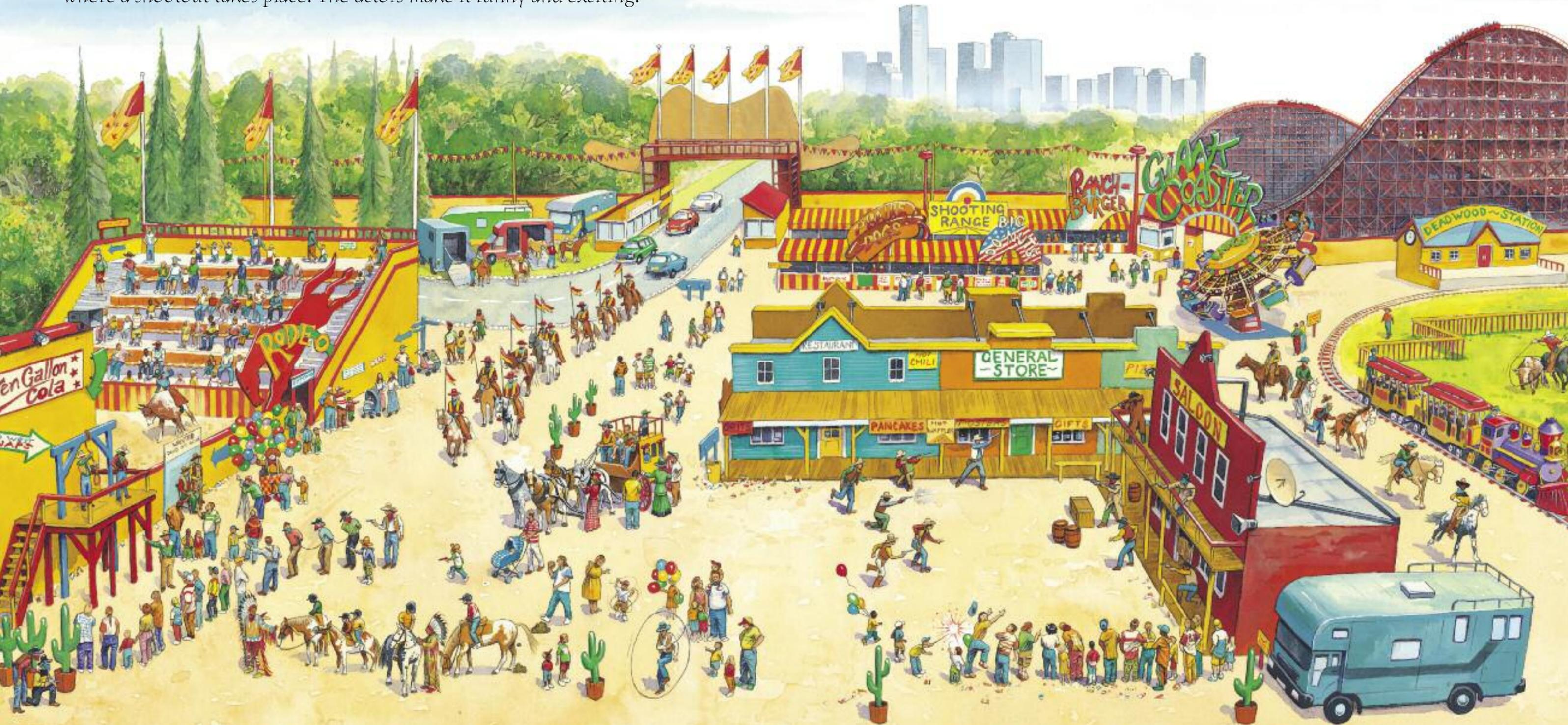
Some people still travel on horseback or in horse-drawn vehicles, but others use the public trolley cars. These run on rails and are powered by overhead electric cables. Many people are even able to afford their own car, but there are not yet many rules of the road!



One hundred years on, we have reached the present day. On the outskirts of the city, with its towering skyscrapers, a Wild West theme park has been built. It has thrilling rollercoaster rides and other attractions. People dressed as cowboys ride up and down the streets. A crowd gathers to watch a show where a shootout takes place. The actors make it funny and exciting.

A rodeo show demonstrates real-life cowboy skills such as lassoing and bull riding. Children can go for rides on a pony, in a stagecoach or even on a miniature railway. There is even a saloon bar with music and dancers.

Visitors come to experience a little of the Wild West. But how closely does all this come to what life was really like on the American Plains?



GOLD RUSH

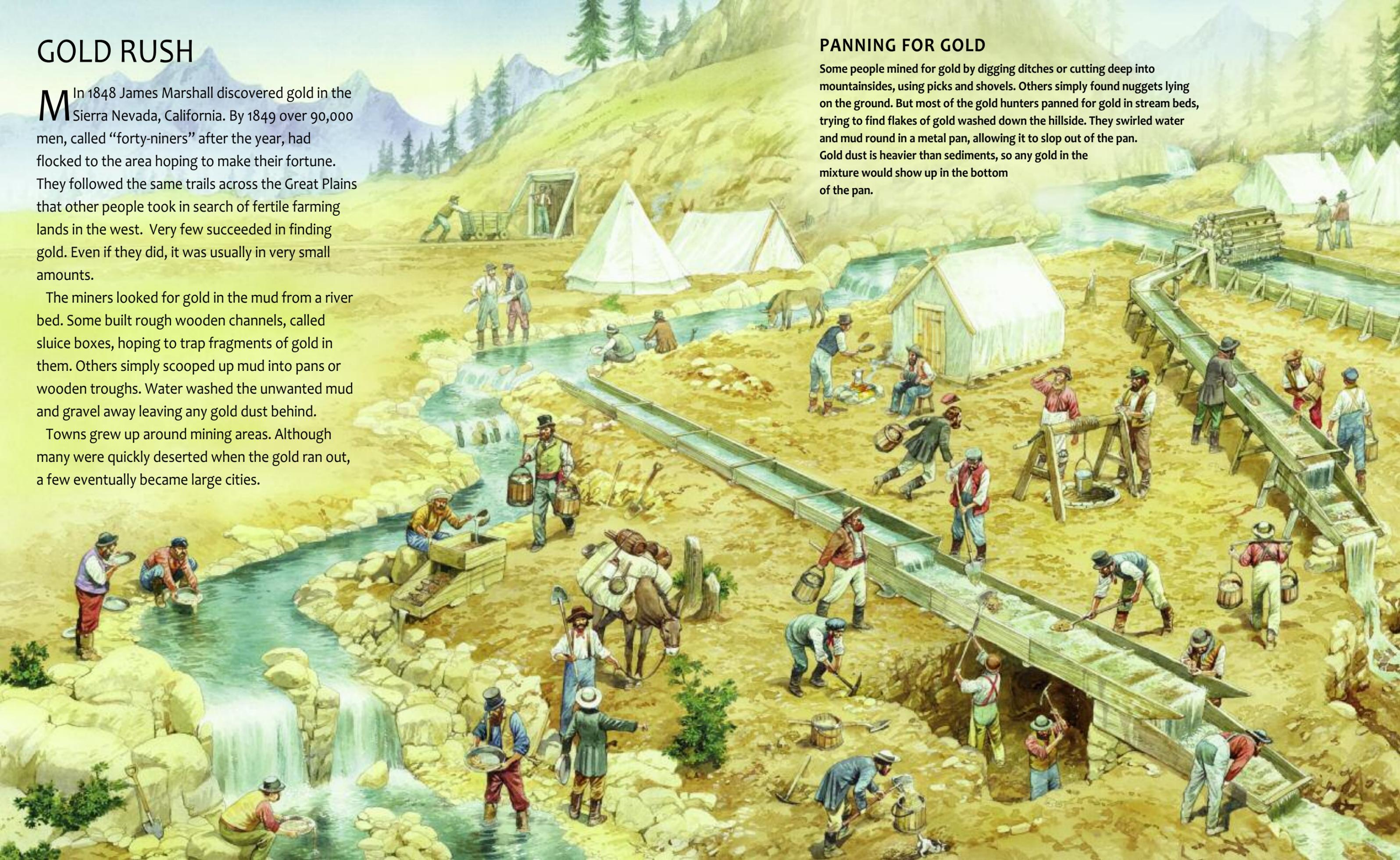
MIn 1848 James Marshall discovered gold in the Sierra Nevada, California. By 1849 over 90,000 men, called “forty-niners” after the year, had flocked to the area hoping to make their fortune. They followed the same trails across the Great Plains that other people took in search of fertile farming lands in the west. Very few succeeded in finding gold. Even if they did, it was usually in very small amounts.

The miners looked for gold in the mud from a river bed. Some built rough wooden channels, called sluice boxes, hoping to trap fragments of gold in them. Others simply scooped up mud into pans or wooden troughs. Water washed the unwanted mud and gravel away leaving any gold dust behind.

Towns grew up around mining areas. Although many were quickly deserted when the gold ran out, a few eventually became large cities.

PANNING FOR GOLD

Some people mined for gold by digging ditches or cutting deep into mountainsides, using picks and shovels. Others simply found nuggets lying on the ground. But most of the gold hunters panned for gold in stream beds, trying to find flakes of gold washed down the hillside. They swirled water and mud round in a metal pan, allowing it to slop out of the pan. Gold dust is heavier than sediments, so any gold in the mixture would show up in the bottom of the pan.



GLOSSARY

Cattle trail The route taken by cowboys driving herds of cattle. There were several main trails, including the trail north from Texas to towns on the railroad.

Cavalry A group of soldiers that fought on horseback.

Corral A pen for cattle, or for buffalo herded together for slaughter. A defensive circle of wagons made by white settlers was also called a corral.

Cowboys Men who rounded up and drove cattle along trails.

Deputy Second-in-command to a marshal or sheriff.



An American Indian hunts a buffalo

Great Plains A vast tract of land in North America lying between the Mississippi River to the east and the Rocky Mountains to the west.

Homestead A farm established by settlers on the Great Plains. Encouraged by the offer of cheap land from the US Government, "homesteaders" first moved on to the Plains in the 1860s.

Marshal A US marshal was appointed by the US Government. He was responsible for dealing with serious crimes, like robbing a train. A town marshal dealt with minor matters such as fights and brawls.

Nickelodeon An early cinema or picture-house. The entrance charge was five cents, or one nickel.



After 1876, all American Indians were forced by the US government to live in reservations. By 1890 their warriors had been defeated.

Outlaw Someone who led a life of crime, often robbing banks and trains.

Posse A group of men called out by a town marshal or sheriff to hunt an outlaw.

Ranch A large farm on the Great Plains.

Reservations Areas where Indian tribes were forced to live by the US Government.



In the late 1800s, "Buffalo Bill" Cody (left) toured America and Europe with a show called Buffalo Bill's Wild West. It included shooting displays, stagecoach hold-ups, rodeo riding and battles with Indians.

Rodeo A round-up of cattle, or an exhibition of cowboy skills.

Sheriff A law officer appointed by a county. He was like a local policeman.

Stagecoach A carriage, usually pulled by

RANCHERS AND COWBOYS



The first ranchers settled on the Texas prairies. They used cowboys to herd their cattle north

across the Great Plains to the railroads, to be transported to markets in the east. Some cowboys were white labourers from the east. Others were black former slaves or Indians. Later ranchers set up home on the Great Plains, closer to the railroads. Early ranches were unfenced and cattle could wander for miles. The invention of barbed wire fencing meant that ranchers could keep their own cattle on their land and wild cattle out.



six horses, that carried passengers and mail across the West. It made regular stops, known as "stages", on the way.

Tipi (sometimes spelt tepee) A large cone-shaped tent made of buffalo hides hung on poles. Most Plains Indians lived in villages made up of tipis.

INDIANS

When Europeans arrived in North America in the 16th century, they found the land already occupied. Native Americans, or Indians, had lived there for generations, with their own cultures and ways of life. Among the Indians of the Great Plains were the Sioux people. Their chiefs (right) wore impressive, eagle-feather headdresses as a sign of their great bravery.



Outlaws hold up a train.



