

## CHAPTER 16

# THE CONQUEST OF THE FAR WEST



**TOURISTS IN YOSEMITE** By the end of the nineteenth century, the great “wild west” had become a popular tourist attraction for men and women from all over the United States, and beyond. Yosemite Falls, the site of this picture, is one of the most celebrated sights in Yosemite National Park, established in 1900. (*Library of Congress*)

**T**HROUGH MUCH OF THE FIRST HALF of the nineteenth century, relatively few English-speaking Americans considered moving into the vast lands west of the Mississippi River. For some the obstacle was distance; for others it was lack of money; for many more it was the image of much of the Far West, popularized by some early travelers, as the “Great American Desert,” unfit for civilization.

By the mid-1840s, however, enough migrants from the eastern regions of the nation had settled in the West to begin to challenge that image. Some were farmers, who had found fertile land in areas once considered too arid for agriculture. Others were ranchers, who had discovered great open grasslands on which they could raise large herds of cattle or sheep for the market. Many were miners, including some of the hundreds of thousands of people who had flocked to California during the 1848–1849 gold rush. By the end of the Civil War, the West had already become legendary in the eastern states. No longer the Great American Desert, it was now the “frontier”: an empty land awaiting settlement and civilization; a place of wealth, adventure, opportunity, and untrammelled individualism; a place of fresh beginnings and bold undertakings.

In fact, the real West of the mid-nineteenth century bore little resemblance to either of these images. It was a diverse land, with many different regions, many different climates, many different stores of natural resources. And it was extensively populated, with a number of well-developed societies and cultures. The English-speaking migrants of the late nineteenth century did not find an empty, desolate land. They found Indians, Mexicans, French and British Canadians, Asians, and others, some of whose families had been living in the West for generations. The Anglo-American settlers helped create new civilizations in this vast and complicated land, but they did not do so by themselves. Although they tried, with considerable success, to conquer and disperse many of the peoples already living in the region, they were never able to make the West theirs alone. They interacted in countless ways with the existing population. Almost everything the Anglo-Americans did and built reflected the influence of these other cultures.

Most of all, however, English-speaking Americans transformed the West by connecting it with, and making it part of, the growing capitalist economy of the East. And despite their self-image as rugged individualists, they relied heavily on assistance from the federal government—land grants, subsidies, and military protection—as they developed the region.

Myth and Reality

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

- 1847 ▶ Taos Indians rebel in New Mexico, killing American governor and precipitating military rule
- 1848–1849 ▶ California gold rush begins
- 1851 ▶ “Concentration” policy devised for western tribes
- 1852 ▶ California legislature passes “foreign miners” tax to exclude Chinese from gold mining
- 1858 ▶ Comstock Lode silver deposits discovered in Nevada
- 1859 ▶ Colorado gold rush launches western mining bonanza
  - ▶ Mexicans in Texas raid Brownsville jail
- 1861 ▶ Kansas admitted to Union
- 1862 ▶ Homestead Act passed
- 1864 ▶ Nevada admitted to Union
  - ▶ U.S. troops massacre Arapaho and Cheyenne at Sand Creek
- 1865–1867 ▶ Sioux Wars
- 1866 ▶ “Long drives” launch western cattle bonanza
  - ▶ Chinese workers strike against Union Pacific
- 1867 ▶ Nebraska admitted to Union
  - ▶ Indian Peace Commission establishes “Indian Territory” (later Oklahoma)
- 1868 ▶ Black Kettle and his Cheyenne warriors captured and killed by U.S. forces
- 1869 ▶ Union Pacific, first transcontinental railroad, completed
- 1872 ▶ Cochise, chief of Chiricahua Apaches, agrees to treaty with U.S.
- 1873 ▶ Barbed wire invented
  - ▶ Timber Culture Act passed
- 1874 ▶ Gold rush begins in Black Hills, Dakota Territory
- 1875 ▶ Sioux uprising begins
  - ▶ Southern buffalo herd nearly extinguished
- 1876 ▶ Battle of Little Bighorn
  - ▶ Colorado admitted to Union
- 1877 ▶ Desert Land Act passed
  - ▶ Nez Percé Indians resist relocation
- 1878 ▶ California Workingmen’s Party founded and attacks Chinese immigration
  - ▶ Timber and Stone Act passed
- 1881 ▶ Anaconda copper mine begins operations in Montana
- 1882 ▶ Congress passes Chinese Exclusion Act
- 1884 ▶ Helen Hunt Jackson publishes *Ramona*
- 1885 ▶ Mark Twain publishes *Huckleberry Finn*
- 1885–1887 ▶ Harsh winters help destroy open-range cattle raising
  - ▶ Geronimo surrenders, ending Apache resistance
- 1887 ▶ Dawes Act passed
  - ▶ Prolonged drought in Great Plains begins
- 1889 ▶ North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, and Washington admitted to Union
  - ▶ Oklahoma (formerly Indian Territory) opened to white settlement
- 1890 ▶ Indian “Ghost Dance” revival
  - ▶ Battle of Wounded Knee
  - ▶ Wyoming and Idaho admitted to Union
- 1891 ▶ Hamlin Garland publishes *Jason Edwards*
- 1892 ▶ Congress renews Chinese Exclusion Act
- 1893 ▶ Frederick Jackson Turner proposes “frontier thesis”
- 1896 ▶ Utah admitted to Union
- 1902 ▶ Congress makes Chinese Exclusion Act permanent
  - ▶ Owen Wister publishes *The Virginian*
- 1906 ▶ Congress passes Burke Act to speed assimilation of tribes

## THE SOCIETIES OF THE FAR WEST

The Far West (or what many nineteenth-century Americans called the “Great West”)—the region beyond the Mississippi River into which millions of Anglo-Americans moved in the years after the Civil War—was in fact many lands. It contained some of the most arid territory in the United States, and some of the wettest and lushest. It contained the flattest plains and the highest mountains. It contained vast treeless prairies and deserts and great forests. And it contained many peoples.

### The Western Tribes

The largest and most important western population group before the great Anglo-American migration was the Indian tribes. Some were members of eastern tribes—Cherokee, Creek, and others—who had been forcibly resettled west of the Mississippi to “Indian Territory” (later Oklahoma) and elsewhere before the Civil War. But most were members of tribes that had always lived in the West.

The western tribes had developed several forms of civilization. More than 300,000 Indians (among them the Serrano, Chumash, Pomo, Maidu, Yurok, and Chinook) had lived on the Pacific coast before the arrival of Spanish settlers. Disease and dislocation decimated the tribes, but in the mid-nineteenth century 150,000 remained—some living within the Hispanic society the Spanish and Mexican settlers had created, many still living within their own tribal communities. The Pueblos of the Southwest had long lived largely as farmers and had established permanent settlements there even before the Spanish arrived in the seventeenth century. The Pueblos grew corn; they built towns and cities of adobe houses; they practiced elaborate forms of irrigation; and they participated in trade and commerce. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, their intimate relationship with the Spanish (later Mexicans) produced, in effect, an alliance against the Apaches, Navajos, and Comanches of the region.

The complex interaction between the Pueblos and the Spanish, and between both of them and other tribes, produced an elaborate caste system in the Southwest. At the top were the Spanish or Mexicans, who owned the largest estates and controlled the trading centers at Santa Fe and elsewhere. The Pueblos, subordinate but still largely free, were below them. Apaches, Navajos, and others—some captured in war and enslaved for a fixed time, others men and women who had voluntarily left their own tribes—were at the bottom. They were known as *genizaros*, Indians without tribes, and they had become in many ways part of Spanish society. This caste system reflected the preoccupation of the Spanish Empire in America with racial ancestry; almost every group in the Southwest—not just Spanish and Indians, but several categories of mulattoes and mestizos (people of mixed race) had a clear place in an elaborate social hierarchy.

The most widespread Indian presence in the West was the Plains Indians, a diverse group of tribes and language groups. Some formed alliances with one another; others were in constant conflict. Some lived more or less sedentary lives as farmers; others were highly nomadic hunters. Despite their differences, however, the tribes shared some traits. Their cultures were based on close and extended family networks and on an intimate relationship with nature. Tribes (which sometimes numbered several thousand) were generally subdivided into “bands” of up to 500 men and women. Each band had its own governing council, but the community had a decision-making process in which most members participated. Within each band, tasks were divided by gender. Women’s roles were largely domestic and artistic: raising children, cooking, gathering roots and berries, preparing hides, and creating many of the impressive artworks of tribal culture. They also tended fields and gardens in those places where bands remained settled long enough to raise crops. Men worked as hunters and traders and supervised the religious and military life of the band. Most of the Plains Indians practiced a religion centered on a belief in the spiritual power of the natural world—of plants and animals and the rhythms of the days and the seasons.

Many of the Plains tribes—including some of the most powerful tribes in the Sioux Nation—subsisted largely through hunting buffalo. Riding small but powerful horses, descendants of Spanish stock, the tribes moved through the grasslands following the herds. Permanent settlements were rare. When a band halted, it constructed tepees as temporary dwellings; when it departed, it left the landscape almost completely undisturbed, a reflection of the deep reverence for nature that was central to Indian culture and religion.

The buffalo, or bison, provided the economic basis for the Plains Indians’ way of life. Its flesh was their principal source of food, and its skin supplied materials for clothing, shoes, tepees, blankets, robes, and utensils. “Buffalo chips”—dried manure—provided fuel; buffalo bones became knives and arrow tips; buffalo tendons formed the strings of bows.

The Plains Indians were proud and aggressive warriors, schooled in warfare from their frequent (and usually brief) skirmishes with rival tribes. The male members of each tribe were, in effect, a warrior class. They competed with one another to develop reputations for fierceness and bravery both as hunters and as soldiers. By the early nineteenth century, the Sioux had become the most powerful tribe in the Missouri River valley and had begun expanding west and south until they dominated much of the plains.

The Plains warriors proved to be the most formidable foes white settlers encountered. But they also suffered from several serious weaknesses that in the end made it impossible for them to prevail. One weakness was the

Plains Indians

Economic Importance  
of the Buffalo

Caste System





**BUFFALO CHASE** The painter George Catlin captured this scene of Plains Indians in the 1830s hunting among the great herds of buffalo, which provided the food and materials on which many tribes relied. (*Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC/Art Resource, NY*)

inability of the various tribes (and often even of the bands within tribes) to unite against white aggression. Not only were they seldom able to draw together a coalition large enough to counter white power; they were also frequently distracted from their battles with whites by conflicts among the tribes themselves. At times, tribal warriors faced white forces who were being assisted by guides and even fighters from other, usually rival, tribes.

Even so, some tribes were able to overcome their divisions and unite effectively for a time. By the mid-nineteenth century, for example, the Sioux, Arapaho, and Cheyenne had forged a powerful alliance that dominated the northern plains. But there remained other important ecological and economic weaknesses of the western tribes in their contest with white society. Indians were tragically vulnerable to eastern infectious diseases. Smallpox epidemics, for example, decimated the Pawnees in Nebraska in the 1840s and many of the California tribes in the early 1850s. And the tribes were, of course, at a considerable disadvantage in any long-term battle with an economically and industrially advanced people. They were, in the end, outmanned and outgunned.

## Hispanic New Mexico

For centuries, much of the Far West had been part of, first, the Spanish Empire and, later, the Mexican Republic. Although the lands the United States acquired in the 1840s did not include any of Mexico's most populous regions, considerable numbers of Mexicans did live in them and suddenly became residents of American territory. Most of them stayed.

Spanish-speaking communities were scattered throughout the Southwest, from Texas to California. All of them were transformed in varying degrees by the arrival of Anglo-American migrants and, equally important, by the expansion of the American capitalist economy into the region. For some, the changes created opportunities for greater wealth. But for most it meant an end to the communal societies and economies they had built over many generations.

In New Mexico, the centers of Spanish-speaking society were the farming and trading communities the Spanish had established in the seventeenth century (see p. 20). Descendants of the original Spanish settlers (and more recent migrants from Mexico) lived alongside the Pueblo Indians and some American traders and engaged primarily in cattle and sheep ranching. There was a small aristocracy of great landowners, whose estates radiated out from the major trading center at Santa Fe. And there was a large population of Spanish (later Mexican) peasants, who worked on the great estates, farmed small plots of their own, or otherwise scraped out a subsistence. There were also large groups of Indian laborers, some enslaved or indentured.

When the United States acquired title to New Mexico in the aftermath of the Mexican War, General Stephen Kearny—who had commanded the American troops in the region during the conflict—tried to establish a territorial government that excluded the established Mexican ruling class (the landed aristocrats from around Santa Fe and

Taos Indian Rebellion

the most influential priests). He drew most of the officials from among the approximately 1,000 Anglo-Americans in the region, ignoring the over 50,000 Hispanics. There were widespread fears among Hispanics and Indians alike that the new American rulers of the region would

confiscate their lands and otherwise threaten their societies. In 1847, Taos Indians rebelled; they killed the new governor and other Anglo-American officials before being subdued by United States Army forces. New Mexico remained under military rule for three years, until the United States finally organized a territorial government there in 1850.

By the 1870s, the government of New Mexico was dominated by one of the most notorious of the many “territorial rings” that sprang up in the West in the years before statehood. These were circles of local businesspeople and ambitious politicians with access to federal money who worked together to make the territorial government mutually profitable. In Santa Fe, the ring used its influence to gain control of over 2 million acres of land, much of which had long been in the possession of the original Mexican residents of the territory. The old Hispanic elite in New Mexico had lost much of its political and economic authority.

Even without its former power and despite the expansion of Anglo-American settlement, Hispanic society in New Mexico survived and grew. The U.S. Army finally did what the Hispanic residents had been unable to accomplish for 200 years: it broke the power of the Navajo, Apache, and other tribes that had so often harassed the residents of New Mexico and had prevented them from expanding their society and commerce. The defeat of the tribes led to substantial Hispanic migration into other areas of the Southwest and as far north as Colorado. Most of the expansion involved peasants and small tradespeople who were looking for land or new opportunities for commerce.

Hispanic societies survived in the Southwest in part because they were so far from the centers of English-speaking society that Anglo-American migrants (and the railroads that carried them) were slow to get there. But

Hispanic Resistance

speaking society that Anglo-American migrants (and the

Mexican Americans in the region also fought at times to preserve control of their societies. In the late 1880s, for example, Mexican peasants in an area of what is now Nevada successfully fended off the encroachment of English-speaking cattle ranchers.

But by then, such successes were already the exception. The Anglo-American presence in the Southwest grew rapidly once the railroads established lines into the region in the 1880s and early 1890s. With the railroads came extensive new ranching, farming, and mining. The expansion of economic activity in the region attracted a new wave of Mexican immigrants—perhaps as many as 100,000 by 1900—who moved across the border (which was unregulated until World War I) in search of work. But the new immigrants, unlike the earlier Hispanic residents of the Southwest, were coming to a society in which they were from the beginning subordinate to Anglo-Americans. The English-speaking proprietors of the new enterprises restricted most Mexicans to the lowest-paying and least stable jobs.

## Hispanic California and Texas

In California, Spanish settlement began in the eighteenth century with a string of Christian missions along the Pacific coast. The missionaries and the soldiers who accompanied them gathered most of the coastal Indians into their communities, some forcibly and some by persuasion. The Indians were targets of the evangelizing efforts of the missionaries, who baptized over 50,000 of them. But they were also a labor force for the flourishing and largely self-sufficient economies the missionaries created; the Spanish forced most of these laborers into a state of servitude little different from slavery. The missions had enormous herds of cattle, horses, sheep, and goats, most

**A CALIFORNIAN MAGNATE IN HIS HOME** General Don Andres Pico, a wealthy rancher in Mexican California, is shown here in his home—a former mission—in the San Fernando Valley in southern California. It portrays some of the characteristic features of Mexican life in California—a busy and crowded household filled with servants and relatives; an orchard in the distance; *vaqueros* (cowboys) lassoing cattle in the background. (Courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 19xx.039:33—ALB)



of them tended by Indian workers; they had brickmakers, blacksmiths, weavers, and farmers, most of them Indians as well. Few of the profits of the mission economy flowed to the workers.

In the 1830s, after the new Mexican government began reducing the power of the church, the mission society largely collapsed, despite strenuous resistance from the missionaries themselves. In its place emerged a secular Mexican aristocracy, which controlled a chain of large estates (some of them former missions) in the fertile lands west of the Sierra Nevada. For them, the arrival of Anglo-Americans before and after the Civil War was disastrous. So vast were the numbers of English-speaking immigrants that the *californios* (as the Hispanic residents of the state were known) had little power to resist the onslaught. In the central and northern parts of the state, where the Anglo population growth was greatest, the *californios* experienced a series of defeats. English-speaking prospectors organized to exclude them, sometimes violently, from the mines during the gold rush. Many *californios* also lost their lands—either through corrupt business deals or through outright seizure (sometimes with the help of the courts and often through simple occupation by squatters). Years of litigation by the displaced Hispanics had very little effect on the changing distribution of landownership.

In the southern areas of California, where there were at first fewer migrants than in other parts of the state, some Mexican landowners managed to hang on for a time. The booming Anglo communities in the north of the state created a large market for the cattle that southern *rancheros* were raising. But a combination of reckless expansion, growing indebtedness, and a severe drought in the 1860s devastated the Mexican ranching culture. By the 1880s, the Hispanic aristocracy in California had largely ceased to exist. Increasingly, Mexicans and Mexican Americans became part of the lower end of the state's working class, clustered in barrios in Los Angeles or elsewhere, or becoming migrant farmworkers. Even small landowners who managed to hang on to their farms found themselves unable to raise livestock, as the once communal grazing lands fell under the control of powerful Anglo ranchers. The absence of herding destroyed many family economies and, by forcing farmers into migrant work, displaced much of the peasantry.

A similar pattern of dispossession occurred in Texas, where many Mexican landowners lost their land after the territory joined the United States (see pp. 346–347). This occurred as a result of fraud, coercion, and the inability of even the most substantial Mexican ranchers to compete with the enormous emerging Anglo-American ranching kingdoms. In 1859, Mexican resentments erupted in an armed challenge to American power: a raid on a jail in Brownsville, led by the rancher Juan

Decline of Mission Society

Declining Status of Hispanics

Cortina, who freed all the Mexican prisoners inside. But such resistance had little long-term effect. Cortina continued to harass Anglo communities in Texas until 1875, but the Mexican government finally captured and imprisoned him. As in California, Mexicans in southern Texas (who constituted nearly three-quarters of the population there) became an increasingly impoverished working class relegated largely to unskilled farm or industrial labor.

On the whole, the great Anglo-American migration was less catastrophic for the Hispanic population of the West than it was for the Indian tribes. Indeed, for some Hispanics, it created new opportunities for wealth and station. For the most part, however, the late nineteenth century saw the destruction of Mexican Americans' authority in a region they had long considered their own; and it saw the movement of large numbers of Hispanics—both longtime residents of the West and more recent immigrants—into an impoverished working class serving the expanding capitalist economy of the United States.

## The Chinese Migration

At the same time that ambitious or impoverished Europeans were crossing the Atlantic in search of opportunities in the New World, many Chinese crossed the Pacific in hopes of better lives than they could expect in their own poverty-stricken land. Not all came to the United States. Many Chinese moved to Hawaii, Australia, South and Central America, South Africa, and even the Caribbean—some as “coolies” (indentured servants whose condition was close to slavery).

A few Chinese had come to California even before the gold rush (see pp. 356–357), but after 1848 the flow increased dramatically. By 1880, more than 200,000 Chinese had settled in the United States, mostly in California, where they constituted nearly a tenth of the population. Almost all came as free laborers. For a time, white Americans welcomed the Chinese as a conscientious, hard-working people. In 1852, the governor of California called them “one of the most worthy classes of our newly adopted citizens” and called for more Chinese immigration to swell the territory's inadequate labor force. Very quickly, however, white opinion turned hostile—in part because the Chinese were so industrious and successful that some white Americans began considering them rivals, even threats. The experience of Chinese immigrants in the West became, therefore, a struggle to advance economically in the face of racism and discrimination.

In the early 1850s, large numbers of Chinese immigrants worked in the gold mines, and for a time some of them enjoyed considerable success. But opportunities for Chinese to prosper in the mines were fleeting. In 1852, the California legislature began trying to exclude the Chinese from gold mining by enacting a “foreign miners” tax (which also helped exclude Mexicans).

Racism



A series of other laws in the 1850s were designed to discourage Chinese immigration into the territory. Gradually, the effect of the discriminatory laws, the hostility of white miners, and the declining profitability of the surface mines drove most Chinese out of prospecting. Those who remained in the mountains became primarily hired workers in the mines built by corporations with financing from the East. These newer mines—which extended much deeper into the mountains than individual prospectors or small, self-financed groups had been able to go—replaced the early, smaller operations.

As mining declined as a source of wealth and jobs for the Chinese, railroad employment grew. Beginning in 1865, over 12,000 Chinese found work building the transcontinental railroad. In fact, Chinese workers formed 90 percent of the labor force of the Central Pacific and were mainly responsible for construction of the western part of the new road. The company preferred them to white workers because they had no experience of labor organization. They worked hard, made few demands, and accepted relatively low wages. Many railroad workers were recruited in China by agents for the Central Pacific. Once employed, they were organized into work gangs under Chinese supervisors.

Work on the Central Pacific was arduous and often dangerous. As the railroad moved through the mountains, the company made few concessions to the difficult condi-

tions and provided their workers with little protection from the elements. Work continued through the winter, and many Chinese tunneled into snowbanks at night to create warm sleeping areas for themselves. The tunnels frequently collapsed, suffocating those inside; but the company allowed nothing to disrupt construction.

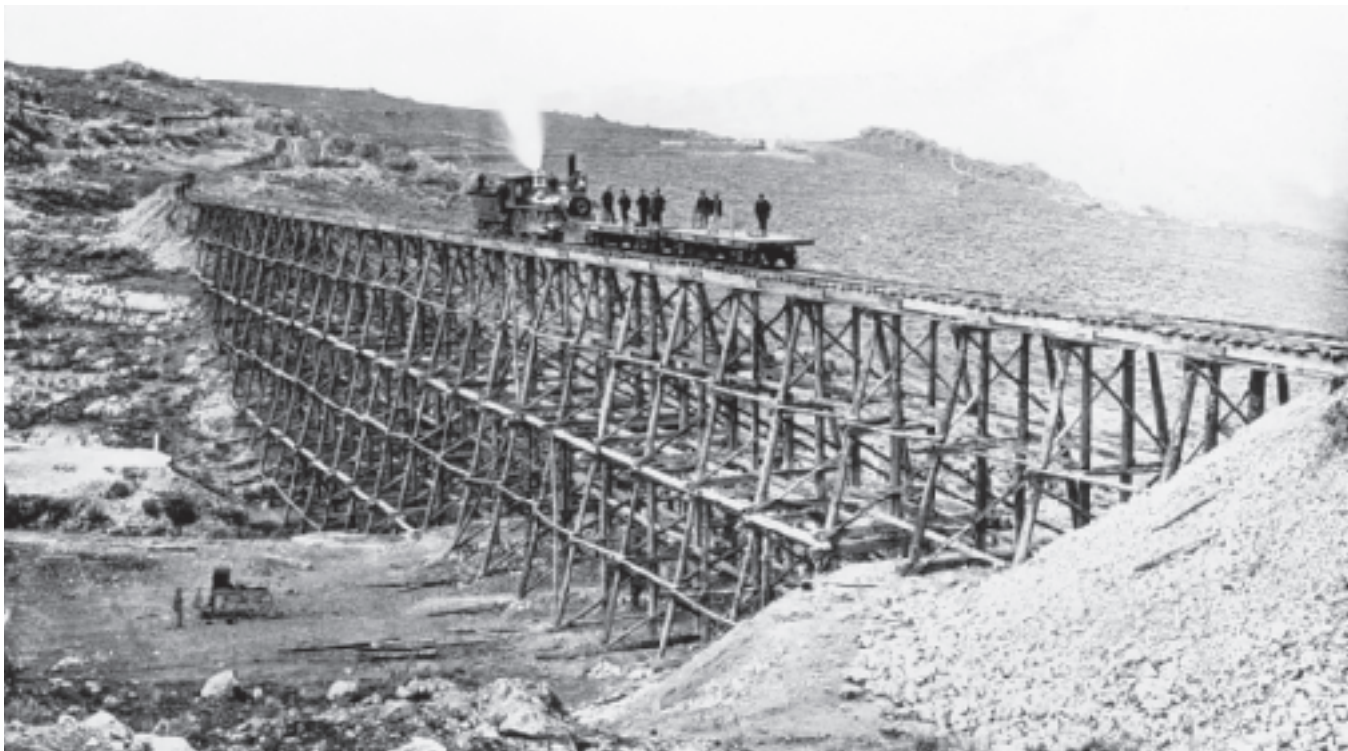
Chinese laborers, however, were not always as docile as their employers imagined them to be. In the spring of 1866, 5,000 Chinese railroad workers went on strike, demanding higher wages and a shorter workday. The company isolated them, surrounded them with strikebreakers, and starved them. The strike failed, and most of the workers returned to their jobs.

In 1869 the transcontinental railroad was completed. Thousands of Chinese were now out of work. Some hired themselves out on the vast new drainage and irrigation projects in the agricultural valleys of central California. Some became common agricultural laborers, picking fruit for low wages. Some became tenant farmers, often on marginal lands that white owners saw no profit in working themselves. Some managed to acquire land of their own and establish themselves as modestly successful truck farmers.

Increasingly, however, Chinese immigrants flocked to cities. By 1900, nearly half the Chinese population of California lived in urban areas. By far the largest single Chinese community was in San Francisco.

Building the  
Transcontinental  
Railroad

Establishment  
of “Chinatowns”



**THE TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD** This complicated trestle under construction by the Union Pacific was one of many large spans necessary for the completion of the transcontinental railroad. It gives some indication of the enormous engineering challenges the railroad builders had to overcome. (*Union Pacific Railroad Museum Collection*)



**A CHINESE FAMILY IN SAN FRANCISCO** Like many other Americans, Chinese families liked to pose for photograph portraits in the late nineteenth century. And like many other immigrants, they often sent them back to relatives in China. This portrait of Chun Duck Chin and his seven-year-old son, Chun Jan Yut, was taken in a studio in San Francisco in the 1870s. Both father and son appear to have dressed up for the occasion, in traditional Chinese garb, and the studio—which likely took many such portraits of Chinese families—provided a formal Chinese backdrop. The son is holding what appears to be a chicken, perhaps to impress relatives in China with the family’s prosperity. (*National Archives and Records Administration*)

Much of community life there, and in other “Chinatowns” throughout the West, revolved around powerful organizations—usually formed by people from the same clan or community in China—that functioned as something like benevolent societies and filled many of the roles that political machines often served in immigrant communities in eastern cities. They were often led by prominent merchants. (In San Francisco, the leading merchants—known as the “Six Companies”—often worked together to advance their interests in the city and state.) These organizations became, in effect, employment brokers, unions, arbitrators of disputes, defenders of the community against outside persecution, and dispensers of social services. They also organized the elaborate festivals and celebrations that were such a conspicuous and important part of life in Chinatowns.

Other Chinese organizations were secret societies, known as “tongs.” Some of the tongs were violent criminal organizations, involved in the opium trade and prostitution. Few people outside the Chinese communities were aware of their existence, except when rival tongs engaged in violent conflict (or “tong wars”), as occurred frequently in San Francisco in the 1880s.

Life was hard for most urban Chinese, in San Francisco and elsewhere. The Chinese usually occupied the lower rungs of the employment ladder, working as common laborers, servants, and unskilled factory hands. Some established their own small businesses, especially laundries. They moved into this business not because of experience—there were few commercial laundries in China—but because they were excluded from so many other areas of employment. Laundries could be started with very little capital, and required only limited command of English. By the 1890s, Chinese constituted over two-thirds of all the laundry workers in California, many of them in shops they themselves owned and ran.

The relatively small number of Chinese women fared even worse. During the earliest Chinese migrations to California, virtually all the women who made the journey did so because they had been sold into prostitution. As late as 1880, nearly half the Chinese women in California were prostitutes. Both Anglo and Chinese reformers tried to stamp out the prostitution in Chinatowns in the 1890s, but more effective than their efforts was the growing number of Chinese women in America. Once the sex ratio became more balanced, Chinese men were more likely to seek companionship in families.

## Anti-Chinese Sentiments

As Chinese communities grew larger and more conspicuous in western cities, anti-Chinese sentiment among white residents became increasingly strong. Anti-coolie clubs emerged in the 1860s and 1870s. They sought a ban on employing Chinese and organized boycotts of products made with Chinese labor. Some of these clubs attacked Chinese workers in the streets and were suspected of setting fire to factories in which Chinese worked. Such activities reflected the resentment of many white workers toward Chinese laborers for accepting low wages and thus undercutting union members.

Anti-Coolie Clubs

As the political value of attacking the Chinese grew in California, the Democratic Party took up the call. So did the Workingmen’s Party of California—created in 1878 by Denis Kearney, an Irish immigrant—which gained significant political power in the state in large part on the basis of its hostility to the Chinese. By the mid-1880s, anti-Chinese agitation and violence had spread up and down the Pacific coast and into other areas of the West.

But anti-Chinese sentiment did not rest on economic grounds alone. It rested on cultural and racial arguments





**AN ANTI-CHINESE RIOT** White citizens of Denver attacked the Chinese community of the city in 1880, beating many of its residents and vandalizing their homes and businesses. It was one of a number of anti-Chinese riots in the cities of the West. They were a result of a combination of racism and resentment by white workers of what they considered unfair competition from Chinese laborers who were willing to work for very low wages. (Bettmann/Corbis)

as well. For example, the reformer Henry George, a critic of capitalism and a champion of the rights of labor (see p. 484), described the Chinese as products of a civilization that had failed to progress, that remained mired in barbarism and savagery. They were, therefore, “unassimilable” and should be excluded.

In 1882, Congress responded to the political pressure and the growing violence by passing the Chinese Exclusion Act, which banned Chinese immigration into the United States for ten years and barred Chinese already in the country from becoming naturalized citizens. Support for the act came from representatives from all regions of the country. It reflected the growing fear of unemployment and labor unrest throughout the nation and the belief that excluding “an industrial army of Asiatic laborers” would protect “American” workers and help reduce class conflict. Congress renewed the law for another ten years in 1892 and made it permanent in 1902. It had a dramatic effect on the Chinese population, which declined by more than 40 percent in the forty years after its passage.

The Chinese in America did not accept the new laws quietly. They were shocked by the anti-Chinese rhetoric that lumped them together with African Americans and Indians.

#### Chinese Resistance

They were, they insisted, descendants of a great and enlightened civilization. How could they be compared to people who knew “nothing about the relations of society”? White Americans, they said, did not protest the great waves of immigration by Italians (“the most dangerous of men,” one Chinese American said) or Irish or Jews. “They are all let in, while Chinese, who are sober, are duly law abiding, clean, educated and industrious, are shut out.” The Six Companies in San Francisco organized strenuous letter-writing campaigns, petitioned the president, and even filed suit in federal court. Their efforts had little effect.

### Migration from the East

The great wave of new settlers in the West after the Civil War came on the heels of important earlier migrations. California and Oregon were both already states of the Union by 1860. There were large and growing Anglo- and African-American communities in Texas, which had entered the Union in 1845 and had been part of the Confederacy during the war. And from Texas and elsewhere, traders, farmers, and ranchers had begun to establish Anglo-American outposts in parts of New Mexico, Arizona, and other areas of the Southwest.

But the scale of the postwar migration dwarfed everything that had preceded it. In previous decades, the settlers had come in thousands. Now they came in millions, spreading throughout the vast western territories—into empty and inhabited lands alike. Most of the new settlers were from the established Anglo-American societies of the eastern United States, but substantial numbers—over 2 million between 1870 and 1900—were foreign-born immigrants from Europe: Scandinavians, Germans, Irish, Russians, Czechs, and others. Settlers were attracted by gold and silver deposits, by the shortgrass pastures for cattle and sheep, and ultimately by the sod of the plains and the meadowlands of the mountains, which they discovered were suitable for farming or ranching. The completion of the great transcontinental railroad line in 1869, and the construction of the many subsidiary lines that spread out from it, also encouraged settlement.

The land policies of the federal government also encouraged settlement. The Homestead Act of 1862 permitted settlers to buy plots of 160 acres for a small fee if they occupied the land they purchased for five years and improved it. The Homestead Act was intended as a progressive measure. It would give a free farm to any American who needed one. It would be a form of government relief to people who otherwise might have no prospects. And it would help create new markets and new outposts of commercial agriculture for the nation’s growing economy.

#### Homestead Act

But the Homestead Act rested on a number of misperceptions. The framers of the law had assumed that mere possession of land would be enough to sustain a farm family. They had not recognized the effects of the increasing mechanization of agriculture and the rising costs of running a farm. Moreover, they had made many of their calculations on the basis of eastern agricultural experiences that were inappropriate for the region west of the Mississippi. A unit of 160 acres was too small for the grazing and grain farming of much of the Great Plains. Although over 400,000 homesteaders stayed on Homestead Act claims long enough to gain title to their land, a much larger number abandoned the region before the end of the necessary five years, unable to cope with the bleak life on the windswept plains and the economic realities that were making it difficult for families without considerable resources to thrive.

Not for the last time, beleaguered westerners looked to the federal government for solutions to their problems. In response to their demands, Congress increased the homestead allotments. The Timber Culture Act (1873) permitted homesteaders to receive grants of 160 additional acres if they planted 40 acres of trees on them. The Desert Land Act (1877) provided that claimants could buy 640 acres at \$1.25 an acre provided they irrigated part of their holdings within three years. The Timber and Stone Act (1878), which presumably applied to nonarable land, authorized sales at \$2.50 an acre. These laws ultimately made it possi-

#### Government Assistance

ble for individuals to acquire as much as 1,280 acres of land at little cost. Some enterprising settlers got much more. Fraud ran rampant in the administration of the acts. Lumber, mining, and cattle companies, by employing “dummy” registrants and using other illegal devices, seized millions of acres of the public domain.

Political organization followed on the heels of settlement. After the admission of Kansas as a state in 1861, the remaining territories of Washington, New Mexico, Utah, and Nebraska were divided into smaller units that would presumably be easier to organize. By the close of the 1860s, territorial governments were in operation in the new provinces of Nevada, Colorado, Dakota, Arizona, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. Statehood rapidly followed. Nevada became a state in 1864, Nebraska in 1867, and Colorado in 1876. In 1889, North and South Dakota, Montana, and Washington won admission; Wyoming and Idaho entered the next year. Congress denied Utah statehood until its Mormon leaders convinced the government in 1896 that polygamy (the practice of men taking several wives) had been abandoned. At the turn of the century, only three territories remained outside the Union. Arizona and New Mexico were excluded because their scanty white populations remained minorities in the territories, because their politics were predominantly Democratic in a Republican era, and because they were unwilling to accept admission as a single state. Oklahoma (formerly Indian Territory) was opened to white settlement and granted territorial status in 1889–1890.

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**SODBUSTERS** As farmers moved onto the Great Plains in Nebraska and other states on the agrarian frontier, their first task was to cut through the sod that covered the land to get to soil in which they could plant crops. The sod itself was so thick and solid that some settlers (including the Summers family of West Custer County, Nebraska, pictured here in 1888) used it to build their houses. The removal of the sod made cultivation of the plains possible; it also removed the soil's protective covering and contributed to the great dust storms that plagued the region in times of drought. (*Nebraska State Historical Society*)

## THE CHANGING WESTERN ECONOMY

Among the many effects of the new wave of Anglo-American settlement in the Far West was a transformation of the region's economy. The new American settlers tied the West firmly to the growing industrial economy of the East (and of much of the rest of the world). Mining, timbering, ranching, commercial farming, and many other economic activities relied on the East for markets and for capital. Some of the most powerful economic institutions in the West were great eastern corporations that controlled mines, ranches, and farms.

### Labor in the West

As commercial activity increased, many farmers, ranchers, and miners found it necessary to recruit a paid labor force—not an easy task for those far away from major population centers and unable or unwilling to hire Indian workers. The labor shortage of the region led to higher wages for workers than were typical in most areas of the East. But working conditions were often arduous, and job security was almost nonexistent. Once a railroad was built, a crop harvested, a herd sent to market, a mine played out, hundreds and even thousands of workers could find themselves suddenly unemployed. Competition from Chinese immigrants, whom employers could usually hire for considerably lower wages than they had to pay whites, also forced some Anglo-Americans out of work. Communities of the jobless gathered in the region's few cities, in mining camps, and elsewhere; other unemployed people moved restlessly from place to place in search of work.

Those who owned no land were highly mobile, mostly male, and seldom married. Indeed, the West had the highest percentage of single adults (10 percent) of any region in the country—one reason why single women found working in dance halls and as prostitutes among the most readily available forms of employment.

Despite the enormous geographic mobility in western society, actual social mobility was limited. Many Americans thought of the West as a land of limitless opportunity, but, as in the rest of the country, advancement was easiest and most rapid for those who were economically advantaged to begin with. Studies of western communities suggest that social mobility in most of them was no greater than it was in the East. And the distribution of wealth in the region was little different from that in the older states as well.

Even more than in many parts of the East, the western working class was highly multiracial. English-speaking whites worked alongside African Americans and immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, as they did in the East. Even more, they worked with Chinese,

Filipinos, Mexicans, and Indians. But the work force was highly stratified along racial lines. In almost every area of the western economy, white workers (whatever their ethnicity) occupied the upper tiers of employment: management and skilled labor. The lower tiers—people who did unskilled and often arduous work in the mines, on the railroads, or in agriculture—consisted overwhelmingly of nonwhites.

Reinforcing this dual labor system was a set of racial assumptions developed and sustained largely by white employers. Chinese, Mexicans, and Filipinos, they argued, were genetically or culturally suited to manual labor. Because they were small, those who promoted these racist stereotypes argued, they could work better in deep mines than whites. Because they were accustomed to heat, they could withstand arduous work in the fields better than whites. Because they were unambitious and unconcerned about material comfort, they would accept low wages and live in conditions that white people would not tolerate. These racial myths served the interests of employers above all, but white workers tended to embrace them too. That was in part because the myths supported a system that reserved whatever mobility there was largely for whites. An Irish common laborer might hope in the course of a lifetime to move several rungs up the occupational ladder. A Chinese or Mexican worker in the same job had no realistic prospects of doing the same.

### The Arrival of the Miners

The first economic boom in the Far West came in mining, and the first part of the area to be extensively settled by migrants was the mineral-rich region of mountains and plateaus, where settlers hoped to make quick fortunes by finding precious metals. The life span of the mining boom was relatively brief. It began in earnest around 1860 (although there had, of course, been some earlier booms, most notably in California), and flourished until the 1890s. And then it abruptly declined.

News of a gold or silver strike in an area would start a stampede reminiscent of the California gold rush of 1849, followed by several stages of settlement. Individual prospectors would exploit the first shallow deposits of ore largely by hand, with pan and placer mining. After these surface deposits dwindled, corporations moved in to engage in lode or quartz mining, which dug deeper beneath the surface. Then, as those deposits dwindled, commercial mining either disappeared or continued on a restricted basis, and ranchers and farmers moved in and established a more permanent economy.

The first great mineral strikes (other than the California gold rush) occurred just before the Civil War. In 1858, gold was discovered in the Pike's Peak district of what would soon be the territory of Colorado; the following year, 50,000 prospectors stormed in from California, the

Limited Social Mobility

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Life Cycle of a Mining Boom

Racially Stratified Working Class

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Mississippi valley, and the East. Denver and other mining camps blossomed into “cities” overnight. Almost as rapidly as it had developed, the boom ended. After the mining frenzy died down, corporations, notably the Guggenheim interests, revived some of the profits of the gold boom, and the discovery of silver near Leadville supplied a new source of mineral wealth.

While the Colorado rush of 1859 was still in progress, news of another strike drew miners to Nevada. Gold had been found in the Washoe district, but the most valuable ore in the great Comstock Lode (first discovered in 1858 by Henry Comstock) and other veins was silver. The first prospectors to reach the Washoe fields came from California; and from the beginning, Californians dominated the settlement and development of Nevada. In a remote desert without railroad transportation, the territory produced no supplies of its own, and everything—from food and machinery to whiskey and prostitutes—had to be shipped from California to Virginia City, Carson City, and other roaring camp towns. When the first placer (or surface) deposits ran out, California and eastern capitalists bought the claims of the pioneer prospectors and began to use the more difficult process of quartz mining, which enabled them to retrieve silver from deeper veins. For a few years these outside owners reaped tremendous profits; from 1860 to 1880, the Nevada lodes yielded bullion worth \$306 million. After that, the mines quickly played out.

The next important mineral discoveries came in 1874, when gold was found in the Black Hills of southwestern Dakota Territory. Prospectors swarmed into the area, then (and for years to come) accessible only by stagecoach. Like the others, the boom flared for a time, until surface

resources faded and corporations took over from the miners. One enormous company, the Homestake, came to dominate the fields. Population declined, and the Dakotas, like other boom areas of the mineral empire, ultimately developed a largely agricultural economy.

Although the gold and silver discoveries generated the most popular excitement, in the long run other, less glamorous natural resources proved more important to the development of the West. The great Anaconda copper mine launched by William Clark in 1881 marked the beginning of an industry that would remain important to Montana for many decades. In other areas, mining operations had significant success with lead, tin, quartz, and zinc. Such efforts generally proved more profitable in the long run than the usually short-lived gold and silver extraction.

Life in the boomtowns had a hectic tempo and a gaudy flavor unknown in any other part of the Far West. A speculative spirit, a mood of heady optimism, gripped almost everyone and dominated every phase of community activity. And while relatively few of the prospectors and miners who flocked to the bonanzas ever “struck it rich,” there was at least some truth to the popular belief that mining provided opportunities for sudden wealth. The “bonanza kings”—the miners who did become enormously wealthy off a strike—were much more likely to have come from modest or impoverished backgrounds than the industrial tycoons of the East.

The conditions of mine life in the boom period—the presence of precious minerals, the vagueness of claim boundaries, the cargoes of gold being shipped out—attracted outlaws and “bad men,” operating as individuals

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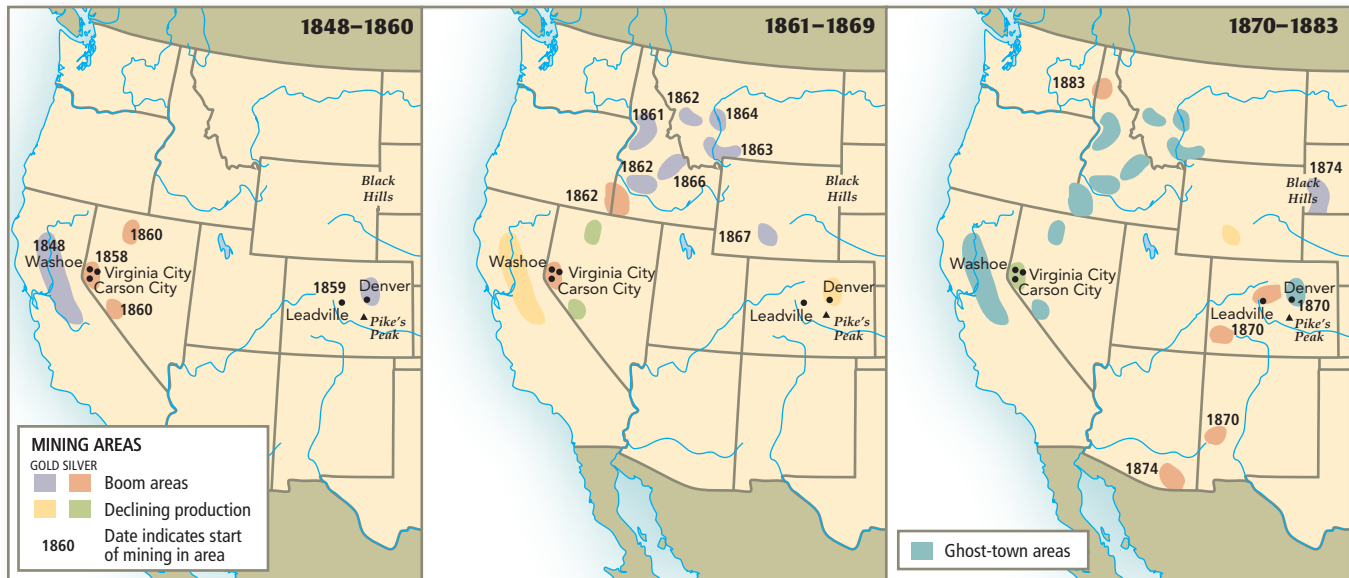
#### Boomtown Life

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**COLORADO BOOMTOWN** After a prospector discovered silver nearby in 1890, miners flocked to the town of Creede, Colorado. For a time in the early 1890s, 150 to 300 people arrived there daily. Although the town was located in a canyon so narrow that there was room for only one street, buildings sprouted rapidly to serve the growing community. As with other such boomtowns, however, Creede's prosperity was short-lived. In 1893 the price of silver collapsed, and by the end of the century, Creede was almost deserted. (From the Collections of The Henry Ford)



**MINING TOWNS, 1848–1883** These three maps illustrate the rapid movement from boom to bust in the western mining industry in the mid-nineteenth century. Note how quickly the “boom” areas of gold and silver mining turn into places of “declining production,” often in the space of less than a decade. Note, too, how mining for both metals moved from California and Nevada in the 1860s to areas farther east and north in the 1870s and beyond. The map also shows the areas in which “ghost towns”—mining communities abandoned by their residents once production ceased—proliferated. ♦ *What impact did mining have on the population of the West?*

For an interactive version of this map, go to [www.mhhe.com/brinkley13ch16maps](http://www.mhhe.com/brinkley13ch16maps)

or gangs. When the situation became intolerable in a community, those members interested in order began enforcing their own laws through vigilante committees, an unofficial system of social control used earlier in California. Vigilantes were unconstrained by the legal system, and they often imposed their notion of justice arbitrarily and without regard for any form of due process. Sometimes criminals themselves secured control of the committees. Some vigilantes continued to operate as private “law” enforcers after the creation of regular governments.

Men greatly outnumbered women in the mining towns, and younger men in particular had difficulty finding female companions of comparable age. Those women who did gravitate to the new communities often came with their husbands, and their activities were generally (although not always) confined to the same kinds of domestic tasks that eastern women performed. Single women, or women whose husbands were earning no money, did choose (or find it necessary) to work for wages at times, as cooks, laundresses, and tavern keepers. And in the sexually imbalanced mining communities, there was always a ready market for prostitutes.

The thousands of people who flocked to the mining towns in search of quick wealth and who failed to find it often remained as wage laborers in corporate mines after the boom period. Working conditions were almost uniformly terrible. The corporate mines were deep and extremely hot, with temperatures often exceeding 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Some workers died of heatstroke (or of

pneumonia, a result of experiencing sudden changes of temperature when emerging from the mines). Poor ventilation meant large accumulations of poisonous carbon dioxide, which caused dizziness, nausea, and headaches. Lethal dusts stayed in the stagnant air to be inhaled over and over by the miners, many of whom developed silicosis (a disabling disease of the lungs) as a result. There were frequent explosions, cave-ins, and fires, and there were many accidents with the heavy machinery the workers used to bore into the earth. In the 1870s, before technological advances eliminated some of the dangers, one worker in every thirty was disabled in the mines, and one in every eighty was killed. That rate fell later in the nineteenth century, but mining remained one of the most dangerous and arduous working environments in the United States.

## The Cattle Kingdom

A second important element of the changing economy of the Far West was cattle ranching. The open range—the vast grasslands of the public domain—provided a huge area on the Great Plains where cattle raisers could graze their herds free of charge and unrestricted by the boundaries of private farms. The railroads gave birth to the range-cattle industry by giving it access to markets. Eventually, the same railroads ended it by bringing farmers to the plains and thus destroying the open range.

The western cattle industry was Mexican and Texan by ancestry. Long before citizens of the United States invaded the

Mexican Origins



**THE CATTLE KINGDOM, C. 1866–1887** Cattle ranching and cattle drives are among the most romanticized features of the nineteenth-century West. But they were also hardheaded businesses, made possible by the growing eastern market for beef and the availability of reasonably inexpensive transportation to take cattle to urban markets. ♦ *Why was that necessary for the great cattle drives, and what eventually ended it?* The other is the dense network of trails and railroads that together made possible the commerce in cattle.

For an interactive version of this map, go to [www.mhhe.com/brinkley13ech16maps](http://www.mhhe.com/brinkley13ech16maps)

Southwest, Mexican ranchers had developed the techniques and equipment that the cattlemen and cowboys of the Great Plains later employed: branding (a device known in all frontier areas where stock was common), roundups, roping, and the gear of the herders—their lariats, saddles, leather chaps, and spurs. Americans in Texas adopted these methods and carried them to the northernmost ranges of the cattle kingdom. Texas also had the largest herds of cattle in the country; the animals were descended from imported Spanish stock—wiry, hardy longhorns—and allowed to run wild or semiwild. From Texas, too, came the horses that enabled the caretakers of the herds, the cowboys, to control them—small, mus-

cular broncos or mustangs well suited to the requirements of cattle country.

At the end of the Civil War, an estimated 5 million cattle roamed the Texas ranges. Eastern markets were offering fat prices for steers in any condition, and the challenge facing the cattle industry was getting the animals from the range to the railroad centers. Early in 1866, some Texas cattle ranchers began driving their combined herds, as much as 260,000 head, north to Sedalia, Missouri, on the Missouri Pacific Railroad. Traveling over rough country and beset by outlaws, Indians, and property-conscious farmers, the caravan suffered heavy losses, and only a fraction of the animals arrived in Sedalia. But the drive was an important experiment. It proved that cattle could be driven to distant markets and pastured along the trail, and that they would even gain weight during the journey. This earliest of the “long drives,” in other words, established the first, tentative link between the isolated cattle breeders of west Texas and the booming urban markets of the East. The drive laid the groundwork for the explosion of the industry—for the creation of the “cattle kingdom.”

With the precedent of the long drive established, the next step was to find an easier route through more accessible country. Market facilities grew up at Abilene, Kansas, on the Kansas Pacific Railroad, and for years the town reigned as the railhead of the cattle kingdom. Between 1867 and 1871, cattlemen drove nearly 1.5 million head up the Chisholm Trail to Abilene—a town that, when filled with rampaging cowboys at the end of a drive, rivaled the mining towns in rowdiness. But by the mid-1870s, agricultural development in western Kansas was eating away at the open range land at the same time that the supply of animals was increasing. Cattlemen therefore had to develop other trails and other market outlets. As the railroads began to reach farther west, Dodge City and Wichita in Kansas, Ogallala and Sidney in Nebraska, Cheyenne and Laramie in Wyoming, and Miles City and Glendive in Montana all began to rival Abilene as major centers of stock herding.

A long drive was a spectacular sight, and it is perhaps unsurprising that it became the most romanticized and mythologized aspect of life in the West. It began with the spring, or calf, roundup. The cattlemen of a district met with their cowboys at a specified place to round up stock from the open range; these herds contained the stock of many different owners, with only their brands to distinguish them from one another. As the cattle were driven in, the calves were branded with the marks of their mothers. Stray calves with no identifying symbols, “mavericks,” were divided on a pro-rata basis. Then the cows and calves were turned loose to pasture, while the yearling steers (year-old males) were readied for the drive to the north. The combined herds, usually numbering from 2,000 to 5,000 head, moved out. Cowboys representing each of the major ranchers accompanied them. Most of the cowboys in the early years were veterans of the Confederate army. The



**COWBOYS ON A “LONG DRIVE”** The “long drive” not only provided cattle for the eastern market, it also created communities of men who spent much of their lives on the trail, working for ranchers tending cattle. These cowboys were mostly young, unmarried men, mostly white but including many African Americans. Most of them later settled down, but many agreed with the former cowboy Charles Goodknight, who wrote years later, “All in all, my years on the trail were the happiest I ever lived. There were many hardships and dangers... but when all went well, there was no other life so pleasant. Most of the time we were solitary adventurers in a great land, ... and we were free and full of the zest of darers.” This photograph of cowboys riding herd dates from the 1880s. (*Library of Congress*)



next largest group consisted of African Americans—over half a million of them. They were more numerous than white northerners or Mexicans and other foreigners. They were usually assigned such jobs as wrangler (herdsman) or cook.

Every cattleman had to have a permanent base from which to operate, and so the ranch emerged. A ranch consisted of the employer’s dwelling, quarters for employees, and a tract of grazing land. In the early years of the cattle kingdom, most ranches were relatively small, since so much of the grazing occurred in the vast, open areas that cattlemen shared. But as farmers and sheep breeders began to compete for the open plains, ranches became larger and more clearly defined; cattlemen gradually had to learn to raise their stock on their own fenced land.

There was always an element of risk and speculation in the open-range cattle business. At any time, “Texas fever”—a disease transmitted to cattle by parasite-carrying ticks—might decimate a herd. Rustlers and Indians frequently seized large numbers of animals. But as settlement of the plains increased, new forms of competition joined these traditional risks. Sheep breeders from California and Oregon brought their flocks onto the range to compete for grass. Farmers (“nesters”) from the East threw fences around their claims, blocking trails and breaking up the open range. A series of “range wars”—between sheepmen and cattlemen, between ranchers and farmers—erupted out of the tensions between these competing groups, resulting in significant loss of life and extensive property damage.

Competition with  
Farmers

Accounts of the lofty profits to be made in the cattle business—it was said that an investment of \$5,000 would return \$45,000 in four years—tempted eastern, English, and Scottish capital to the plains. Increasingly, the structure of the cattle economy became corporate; in one year, twenty corporations with a combined capital of \$12 million were chartered in Wyoming. The inevitable result of this frenzied, speculative expansion was that the ranges, already severed and shrunk by the railroads and the farmers, became overstocked. There was not enough grass to support the crowding herds or sustain the long drives. Finally nature intervened with a destructive finishing blow. Two severe winters, in 1885–1886 and 1886–1887, with a searing summer between them, stung and scorched the plains. Hundreds of thousands of cattle died, streams and grass dried up, princely ranches and costly investments disappeared in a season.

The open-range industry never recovered; the long drive disappeared for good. Railroads displaced the trail as the route to market for livestock. But the established cattle ranches—with fenced-in grazing land and stocks of hay for winter feed—survived, grew, and prospered, eventually producing more beef than ever.

Although the cattle industry was overwhelmingly male in its early years, there were always a few women involved in ranching and driving. As ranching became more sedentary, the presence of women greatly increased. By 1890, more than 250,000 women owned ranches or farms in the western states (many of them as proxies for their husbands or fathers, but some in their own right). Indeed, the region provided women with many opportunities that

were closed to them in the East—including the opportunity to participate in politics. Wyoming was the first state in the Union to guarantee woman suffrage; and throughout the West, women established themselves as an important political presence (and occasionally as significant officeholders).

Women won the vote earlier in the West than they did in the rest of the nation for different reasons in different places. In Utah, the Mormons granted women suffrage in an effort to stave off criticism of their practice of polygamy. In some places, women won suffrage before statehood to swell the electorate to the number required by Congress. In others, women won the vote by persuading men that they would help bring a “moral” voice into the politics of the region and strengthen the sense of community in the West. Because women were, most men (and many women) believed, more “generous and virtuous” than men, they might bring these special qualities to the raw societies of the region. (Many of the same arguments were ultimately used to justify suffrage in the East as well.)

## THE ROMANCE OF THE WEST

The supposedly unsettled West had always occupied a special place in the Anglo-American imagination, beginning in the seventeenth century when the first white settlers along the Atlantic coast began to look to the interior for new opportunities and for refuge from the civilized world. The vast regions of this “last frontier” had a particularly strong romantic appeal to many whites.

### The Western Landscape

The allure of the West was obvious. The Great Plains, the Rocky Mountains, the basin and plateau region beyond the Rockies, the Sierra Nevada, and the Cascade Range—all constituted a landscape of brilliant diversity and spectacular grandeur, different from anything white Americans had encountered before. It was little wonder that newcomers looked on the West with reverence and wonder. Painters of the “Rocky Mountain School”—of whom the best known were Albert Bierstadt and Thomas Moran—celebrated the new West in grandiose canvases, some of which were taken on tours around eastern and midwestern states and attracted enormous crowds, eager for a vision of the Great West. Such paintings emphasized the ruggedness and dramatic variety of the region, and reflected the same awe toward the land that earlier regional painters had displayed toward the Hudson River valley and other areas.

The interest in paintings of the West helped inspire a growing wave of tourism. Increasingly in the 1880s and 1890s, as railroads extended farther into the region and as

the Indian wars subsided, resort hotels began to spring up near some of the most spectacular landscapes in the region; and easterners began to come for visits of several weeks or more, combining residence in a comfortable hotel with hikes and excursions into the “wilderness.”

### The Cowboy Culture

Even more appealing than the landscape was the rugged, free-spirited lifestyle that many Americans associated with the West—a lifestyle that supposedly stood in sharp contrast to the increasingly stable and ordered world of the East. Many nineteenth-century Americans came to romanticize, especially, the figure of the cowboy and transformed him remarkably quickly from the low-paid worker he actually was into a powerful and enduring figure of myth.

Admiring Americans seldom thought about the many dismal aspects of the cowboy’s life: the tedium, the loneliness, the physical discomforts, the low pay, the relatively few opportunities for advancement. Instead, in popular western novels such as Owen Wister’s *The Virginian* (1902), they romanticized his freedom from traditional social constraints, his affinity with nature, even his supposed propensity for violence. Wister’s character was a semi-educated man whose natural decency, courage, and compassion made him a powerful symbol of the supposed virtues of the frontier. But *The Virginian* was only the most famous example of a type of literature that soon swept throughout the United States: novels and stories about the West, and about the lives of cowboys in particular, that appeared in boys’ magazines, pulp novels, theater, and even serious literature. The enormous popularity of traveling Wild West shows spread the cult of the cowboy still further. (See “Patterns of Popular Culture,” pp. 454–455.)

The cowboy had become perhaps the most widely admired popular hero in America, and a powerful and enduring symbol of the important American ideal of the natural man (the same idea that had shaped James Fenimore Cooper’s Natty Bumppo earlier). That symbol has survived into the twenty-first century—in popular literature, in song, in film, and on television.

### The Idea of the Frontier

Yet it was not simply the particular character of the new West that made it so important to the nation’s imagination. It was also that many Americans considered it the last frontier. Since the earliest moments of European settlement in America, the image of uncharted territory to the west had always comforted and inspired those who dreamed of starting life anew. Now, with the last of that unsettled land being slowly absorbed into the nation’s civilization, that image exercised a stronger pull than ever.

Political Gains for Women

In Utah, the Mormons granted women suffrage in an effort to stave off criticism of their practice of polygamy.

Myth of the Cowboy

“Rocky Mountain School”

It was little wonder that newcomers looked on the West with reverence and wonder.

Romantic Image of the West

## THE WILD WEST SHOW

For many Americans, the “Old West” has always been a place of myth—a source of some of our culture’s most romantic and exciting stories. Historians have offered a picture of the West sharply at odds with its popular image, but the image survives despite them. One reason the romantic depiction of the Old West has persisted is the astonishing popularity of the “Wild West show” in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This colorful entertainment may have had little connection with the reality of western life, but it stamped on its audiences an image of the West as a place of adventure and romance that has lasted for generations. The Wild West show emerged out of a number of earlier entertainment traditions. The great showman P. T. Barnum had begun popularizing the “Wild West” as early as the 1840s when he staged a “Grand Buffalo Hunt” for spectators in New York, and such shows continued into the 1870s, one of them featuring the famous “Wild Bill” Hickok. At about the same time, western cowboys began staging versions of the modern rodeo when their cattle drives passed near substantial towns. But the first real Wild West show opened in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1883. Its organizer was William F. Cody, better known as “Buffalo Bill.”

Cody had ridden for the Pony Express, fought in the Civil War, and

been a supplier of buffalo meat to workers on the transcontinental railroad (hence his celebrated nickname). But his real fame was a result of his work as a scout for the U.S. Cavalry during the Indian wars of the 1870s and as a guide for hunting parties of notable easterners. One of them, a dime-novel writer who published under the name Ned Buntline, wrote a series of books portraying (and greatly

exaggerating) Buffalo Bill’s exploits. The novels turned Cody into a national celebrity.

The Wild West show Cody began in 1883 inspired dozens of imitators, and almost all of them used some version of its format. Cody’s shows included mock Indian attacks (by real Indians) on stagecoaches and wagon trains. There were portrayals of the Pony Express. There were shooting, riding,



**PROMOTING THE WEST** Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show was popular all over the United States and, indeed, through much of the world. He was so familiar a figure that many of his posters contained only his picture with the words “He is Coming.” This more conventional poster announces a visit of the show to Brooklyn. (Culver Pictures, Inc.)

Mark Twain, one of the great American writers of the nineteenth century, gave voice to this romantic vision of the frontier in a series of brilliant novels and memoirs. In some of his writings—notably *Roughing It* (1872)—he wrote of the Far West and of his own experience as a newspaper reporter in Nevada during the mining boom. His greatest works, however, dealt with life on an earlier frontier: the Mississippi Valley of his boyhood. In *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), he produced characters who repudiated the constraints of organized society and attempted to escape into a natural world. For Huck Finn, the vehicle of escape might be a small raft on the Mississippi, but the yearning for freedom reflected a larger vision of the West as the last refuge from the constraints of civilization.

The painter and sculptor Frederic Remington also captured the romance of the West and its image as an alternative to the settled civilization of the East. He portrayed the cowboy as a natural aristocrat, much like Wister’s Virginian, living in a natural world in which all the normal supporting structures of “civilization” were missing. The romantic quality of his work made Remington one of the most beloved and successful artists of the nineteenth century.

Theodore Roosevelt, who was, like both Wister and Remington, a man born and raised in the East, traveled to the Dakota Badlands in the mid-1880s to help himself recover from the sudden death of his young wife. He had long romanticized the West as a place of physical regeneration—a place where a man could gain strength through rugged activity (just as Roosevelt himself, a sickly,

Frederic Remington





**ANNIE OAKLEY** Annie Oakley had been a vaudeville and circus entertainer for years before joining Buffalo Bill's Wild West show in 1885. She was less than five feet tall and weighed less than a hundred pounds, but her exploits with pistols, rifles, and horses earned her a reputation as a woman of unusual strength and skill. (Bettmann/Corbis)

and roping exhibitions. And there was a grand finale—"A Grand Hunt on the Plains"—that included buffalo, elk, deer, mountain sheep, longhorn cattle, and wild horses. Later, Cody added a reenactment of Custer's last stand. And later still, he began to include stagings of such nonwestern heroics as Theodore Roosevelt's charge up Kettle Hill during the Spanish-American War.

But the effort to evoke the romance of the Old West always remained at the show's center.

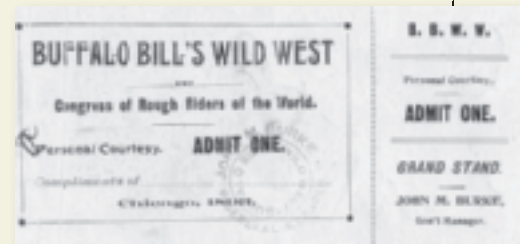
Buffalo Bill was always the star performer in his own productions. But the show had other celebrities, too. A woman who used the stage name Annie Oakley became wildly popular for her shooting acts, during which she would throw into the air small cards with her picture on them, shoot a hole through their middle, and toss them into the audience as souvenirs.

Native Americans were important parts of the Wild West shows, and hundreds of them participated—showing off their martial skills and exotic costumes and customs. The great Sioux leader Sitting Bull toured with the show for four months in 1885, during which he discussed Indian affairs with President Cleveland, who was a member of one of his audiences. The famous Chiricahua Apache warrior Geronimo, who had fought against the United States until 1886, spent a season touring with one of Buffalo Bill's competitors—having previously been paraded around the country as a prisoner by the U.S. Army. He later appeared in a re-creation of an Apache village at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis.

Buffalo Bill's show was an immediate success and quickly began traveling across the nation and throughout Europe. Over 41,000 people saw it on one day in Chicago in 1884. In 1886, it played for six months on Staten Island in New York, where General William T.

Sherman, Mark Twain, P. T. Barnum, Thomas A. Edison, and the widow of General Custer all saw and praised it. Members of the royal family attended the show in England, and it drew large crowds as well in France, Germany, and Italy.

The Wild West shows died out not long after World War I, but many of their features survived in circuses and rodeos, and later in films, radio and television shows, and theme parks. Their popularity was evidence of the nostalgia with which late-nineteenth-century Americans looked at their own imagined past, and their eagerness to remember a "Wild West" that had never really been what they liked to believe. Buffalo Bill and his imitators confirmed the popular image of the West as a place of romance and glamour and helped keep that image alive for later generations.



**FREE ADMISSION** The managers of Buffalo Bill's company were eager to attract visits from the famous and influential and gave out many complimentary tickets (like this one for a show in Chicago in 1893) to local dignitaries in an effort to entice them to appear. (Culver Pictures, Inc.)

asthmatic boy, had hardened himself through adherence to the idea of a strenuous life). His long sojourn into the Badlands in the 1880s cemented his love of the region, which continued to the end of his life. And like Wister and Remington, he made his own fascination with the West a part of the nation's popular culture. In the 1890s, he published a four-volume history, *The Winning of the West*, with a romanticized account of the spread of white civilization into the frontier. These and other books on the West enhanced his own reputation. They also contributed to the public's fascination with the "frontier."

## Frederick Jackson Turner

Perhaps the clearest and most influential statements of the romantic vision of the frontier came from the historian

Frederick Jackson Turner, of the University of Wisconsin. In 1893, the thirty-three-year-old Turner delivered a memorable paper to a meeting of the American Historical Association in Chicago titled "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in which he argued that the end of the "frontier" also marked the end of one of the most important democratizing forces in American life. (See "Where Historians Disagree," pp. 456–457.)

In fact, Turner's assessments were both inaccurate and premature. The West had never been a "frontier" in the sense he meant the term: an empty, uncivilized land awaiting settlement. White migrants into the region had joined (or displaced) already-established societies and cultures. At the same time, considerable unoccupied land remained in the West for many years to come. But Turner did express

Turner's Frontier Thesis

## THE “FRONTIER” AND THE WEST

The American West, and the process by which people of European descent settled there, has been central to the national imagination for at least two centuries. It has also, at times, been central to American historical scholarship.

Through most of the nineteenth century, the history of the West reflected the romantic and optimistic view of the region beloved by many Americans. The lands west of the Mississippi River were places of adventure and opportunity. The West was a region where life could start anew, where brave and enterprising people endured great hardships to begin building a new civilization. Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail* (1849), a classic of American literature, expressed many of these assumptions and in the process shaped the way in which later generations of Americans would view the West and its past. But the emergence of western history as an important field of scholarship can best be traced to the famous paper Frederick Jackson Turner delivered at a meeting of the American Historical Association in 1893. It was titled “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.” The “Turner thesis” or “frontier thesis,” as his argument quickly became known, shaped both popular and scholarly views of the West (and of much else) for two generations.

Turner stated his thesis simply. The settlement of the West by white people—“the existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward”—was the central story of American history. The process of westward expansion had transformed a desolate and savage land into a modern civilization. It had also continually renewed American ideas of democracy and individualism and had, therefore, shaped not just the West but the nation as a whole. “What the Mediterranean Sea was to the Greeks, breaking the bonds of custom, offering new experiences, calling out new institutions and activities, that, and more, the ever retreating frontier has

been to the United States.” The Turner thesis shaped the writing of American history for a generation, and it shaped the writing of western American history for even longer. In the first half of the twentieth century, virtually all the major figures in the field echoed and elaborated at least part of Turner's argument. Ray Allen Billington's *Westward Expansion* (1949) was for decades the standard textbook in the field; his skillful revision of the Turner thesis kept the idea of what he called the “westward course of empire” (the movement of Europeans into an unsettled land) at the center of scholarship. In *The Great Plains* (1931) and *The*

*Great Frontier* (1952), Walter Prescott Webb similarly emphasized the bravery and ingenuity of white settlers in Texas and the Southwest in overcoming obstacles (most notably, in Webb's part of the West, aridity) to create a great new civilization.

The Turner thesis was never without its critics. But serious efforts to displace it as the explanation of western American history did not begin in earnest until after World War II. In *Virgin Land* (1950), Henry Nash Smith examined many of the same heroic images of the West that Turner and his disciples had presented; but he treated those images less as



**READING THE WAR BULLETINS, SAN FRANCISCO** Residents of San Francisco's Chinatown gather on a sidewalk to await a Chinese-language newspaper's posting of the reports from Asia of the progress of the Sino-Japanese War. The conflict between China and Japan in 1894-1895 left China so weakened that it could no longer effectively resist incursions from Western nations. (*Library of Congress*)

descriptions of reality than as myths, which many Americans had used to sustain an image of themselves that the actual character of the modern world contradicted. Earl Pomeroy, in an influential 1955 essay and in many other works, challenged Turner's notion of the West as a place of individualism, innovation, and democratic renewal. "Conservatism, inheritance, and continuity bulked at least as large," he claimed. "The westerner has been fundamentally imitator rather than innovator. . . . He was often the most ardent of conformists." Howard Lamar, in *Dakota Territory, 1861-1889* (1956) and *The Far Southwest* (1966), emphasized the highly diverse experiences of different areas of the West and thus challenged the emphasis of the Turnerians on a distinctive western environment as the crucial determinant of western experience.

The generation of western historians who began to emerge in the late 1970s launched an even more emphatic attack on the Turner thesis and the idea of the "frontier." Echoing the interest of historians in other fields in issues of race, gender, ethnicity, and culture, "new" western historians such as Richard White, Patricia Nelson Limerick, William Cronon, Donald Worster, Peggy Pascoe, and many others challenged the Turnerians on a number of points.

Turner saw the nineteenth-century West as "free land" awaiting the expansion of Anglo-American settlement and American democracy. Pioneers settled the region by conquering the "obstacles" in the way of civilization—the "vast forests," the "mountainous ramparts," the "desolate, grass-clad prairies, barren oceans of rolling plains, arid deserts, and a fierce race of savages." The "new western historians" rejected the concept of a "frontier" and emphasized, instead, the elaborate and highly developed civilizations (Native American, Hispanic, mixed-blood, and others) that already existed in the region. White, English-speaking Americans, they argued, did not so much settle the West as conquer it. And that conquest was never complete. Anglo-Americans in the West continue to share the region not only with the Indians and Hispanics

who preceded them there, but also with African Americans, Asians, Latino Americans, and others who flowed into the West at the same time they did. Western history, these scholars have claimed, is a process of cultural "convergence," a constant competition and interaction—economic, political, cultural, and linguistic—among diverse peoples.

The Turnerian West was a place of heroism, triumph, and, above all, progress, dominated by the feats of brave white men. The West the new historians describe is a less triumphant (and less masculine) place in which bravery and success coexist with oppression, greed, and failure; in which decaying ghost towns, bleak Indian reservations, impoverished barrios, and ecologically devastated landscapes are as characteristic of western development as great ranches, rich farms, and prosperous cities; and in which women are as important as men in shaping the societies that emerged. This aspect of the "new western history" has attracted particular criticism from those attached to traditional accounts. The novelist Larry McMurtry, for example, has denounced the new scholarship as "Failure Studies." He has insisted

that in rejecting the romantic image westerners had of themselves, the revisionists omit an important part of the western experience.

To Turner and his disciples, the nineteenth-century West was a place where rugged individualism flourished and replenished American democracy. To the new scholars, western individualism is a self-serving myth. The region was inextricably tied to a national and international capitalist economy; indeed, the only thing that sustained Anglo-American settlement of the West was the demand in other places for its natural resources. Western "pioneers" were never self-sufficient. They depended on government-subsidized railroads for access to markets, federal troops for protection from Indians, and (later) government-funded dams and canals for irrigating their fields and sustaining their towns.

And while Turner defined the West as a process—a process of settlement that came to an end with the "closing of the frontier" in the late nineteenth century—the new historians see the West as a region. Its distinctive history does not end in 1890. It continues into our own time.



(Montana Historical Society, Helena)





**TWILIGHT ENCAMPMENT** The western photographer Walter McClintock took this dramatic photograph of a Blackfoot Indian camp in the 1890s. By the time this picture was taken, the Indian tribes were already dwindling, and artists, photographers, and ethnographers flocked to the West to record aspects of Indian civilization that they feared would soon disappear. (*Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University*)

a growing and generally accurate sense that much of the best farming and grazing land was now taken, that in the future it would be more difficult for individuals to acquire valuable land for little or nothing.

## The Loss of Utopia

In accepting the idea of the “passing of the frontier,” many Americans were acknowledging the end of one of their most cherished myths. As long as it had been possible for them to consider the West an empty, open land, it was possible to believe that there were constantly revitalizing opportunities in American life. Now there was a vague and ominous sense of opportunities foreclosed, of individuals losing their ability to control their own destinies. The psychological loss was all the greater because of what historian Henry Nash Smith would later call, in *Virgin Land* (1950), the “myth of the garden”: the once widely shared belief that the West had the potential to be a virtual Garden of Eden, where a person could begin life anew and where the ideals of democracy could be restored.

In late-nineteenth-century fiction, such as Helen Hunt Jackson’s *Ramona*, the setting for utopia, once the New World as a whole, had shrunk to the West of the United States. And now even that West seemed to be vanishing.

## THE DISPERSAL OF THE TRIBES

Having imagined the West as a “virgin land” awaiting civilization by white people, many Americans tried to force the region to match their image of it. That meant, above all,

ensuring that the Indian tribes would not remain obstacles to the spread of white society.

## White Tribal Policies

The traditional policy of the federal government was to regard the tribes simultaneously as independent nations and as wards of the president, and to negotiate treaties with them that were solemnly ratified by the Senate. This limited concept of Indian sovereignty had been responsible for the government’s attempt before 1860 to erect a permanent frontier between whites and Indians, to reserve the region west of the bend of the Missouri River as permanent Indian country. However, treaties or agreements with the tribes seldom survived the pressure of white settlers eager for access to Indian lands. The history of relations between the United States and the Native Americans was, therefore, one of nearly endless broken promises.

By the early 1850s, the idea of establishing one great enclave in which many tribes could live gave way, in the face of white demands for access to lands in Indian Territory, to a “Concentration” Policy new reservations policy, known as “concentration.” In 1851, each tribe was assigned its own defined reservation, confirmed by separate treaties—treaties often illegitimately negotiated with unauthorized “representatives” chosen by whites, people known sarcastically as “treaty chiefs.” The new arrangement had many benefits for whites and few for the Indians. It divided the tribes from one another and made them easier to control. It allowed the government to force tribes into scattered locations and to take over the most desirable lands for white settlement. But it did not survive as the basis of Indian policy for long.

In 1867, in the aftermath of a series of bloody conflicts, Congress established an Indian Peace Commission, composed of soldiers and civilians, to recommend a new and presumably permanent Indian policy. The commission recommended replacing the “concentration” policy with a plan to move all the Plains Indians into two large reservations—one in Indian Territory (Oklahoma), the other in the Dakotas. At a series of meetings with the tribes, government agents cajoled, bribed, and tricked representatives of the Arapaho, Cheyenne, Sioux, and other tribes into agreeing to treaties establishing the new reservations.

But this solution worked little better than previous ones. Part of the problem was the way in which the government administered the reservations it had established. White management of Indian matters was entrusted to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, a branch of the Department of the Interior responsible for distributing land, making payments, and supervising the shipment of supplies. Its record was appalling. The bureau’s agents in the West, products of political patronage, were often men of extraordinary incompetence and dishonesty. But even the most honest and diligent agents were generally ill prepared for their jobs, had no understanding of tribal ways, and had little chance of success.

Compounding the problem was what was, in effect, economic warfare by whites: the relentless slaughtering of the buffalo herds that supported the tribes’ way of life. Even in the 1850s, whites had been killing buffalo at a rapid rate to provide food and supplies for the large bands of migrants traveling to the gold rush in California. After the Civil War the white demand for buffalo hides became a national phenomenon—partly for economic reasons and partly as a fad. (Everyone east of the Missouri seemed to want a buffalo robe from the romantic West, and there was a strong demand for buffalo leather, which was used to make machine belts in eastern factories.) Gangs of professional hunters swarmed over the plains to shoot the huge animals. Railroad companies hired riflemen (such as Buffalo Bill Cody) and arranged shooting expeditions to kill large numbers of buffalo, hoping to thin the herds, which were obstructions to railroad traffic. Some Indian tribes (notably the Blackfeet) also began killing large numbers of buffalo to sell in the booming new market.

It was not just the hunting that threatened the buffalo. The ecological changes accompanying white settlement—the reduction, and in some areas virtual disappearance, of the open plains—also decimated

#### Poorly Administered Reservations

#### Decimation of the Buffalo



**CHIEF GARFIELD** Edward Curtis, one of the most accomplished photographers of tribal life in the early twentieth century, made this portrait of a Jicarilla Apache chief in 1904. By then, the Jicarilla were living in a reservation in northern New Mexico, and white officials had assigned all members of the tribe Spanish or English names. The man depicted here, the head chief, had chosen the name Garfield himself. (*Chief Garfield-Jicarilla, 1904. Edward Curtis. Reproduced by permission of Christopher Cardozo, Inc.*)

the buffalo population. The southern herd was virtually exterminated by 1875, and within a few years the smaller northern herd had met the same fate. In 1865, there had been at least 15 million buffalo; a decade later, fewer than a thousand of the great beasts survived. The army and the agents of the Bureau of Indian Affairs condoned and even encouraged the killing. By destroying the buffalo herds, whites were destroying the Indians’ source of food and supplies and their ability to resist the white advance. They were also contributing to a climate in which Indian warriors felt the need to fight to preserve their way of life.

### The Indian Wars

There was almost incessant fighting between whites and Indians from the 1850s to the 1880s, as Indians struggled



**HELD UP BY BUFFALO** Once among the most numerous creatures in North America, the buffalo almost became extinct as a result of indiscriminate slaughter by white settlers and travelers, who often fired at herds from moving trains simply for the sport of it. This scene was painted around 1880 by N. H. Trotter. (*Smithsonian Institution*)



against the growing threats to their civilizations. Indian warriors, usually traveling in raiding parties of thirty to forty men, attacked wagon trains, stagecoaches, and isolated ranches, often in retaliation for earlier attacks. As the United States Army became more deeply involved in the fighting, the tribes began to focus more of their attacks on white soldiers.

At times, this small-scale fighting escalated into something close to a war. During the Civil War, the eastern Sioux in Minnesota, cramped on an inadequate reservation and exploited by corrupt white agents, suddenly rebelled against the restrictions imposed on them by the government's policies. Led by Little Crow, they killed more than 700 whites before being subdued by a force of regulars and militiamen. Thirty-eight of the Indians were hanged, and the tribe was exiled to the Dakotas.

At the same time, fighting flared up in eastern Colorado, where the Arapaho and Cheyenne were coming into conflict with white miners settling in the region. Bands of Indians attacked stagecoach lines and settlements in an effort to regain lost territory. In response to these incidents, whites called up a large territorial militia, and the army issued dire threats of retribution. The governor urged all friendly Indians to congregate at army posts for protection before the army began its campaign. One Arapaho and Cheyenne band under Black Kettle, apparently in response to the invitation, camped near Fort Lyon on Sand Creek in November 1864. Some members of the party were warriors, but Black Kettle believed he was under official protection and exhibited no hostile intention. Nevertheless, Colonel J. M. Chivington, apparently encouraged by the

army commander of the district, led a volunteer militia force—largely consisting of unemployed miners, many of whom were apparently drunk—to the unsuspecting camp and massacred 133 people, 105 of them women and children. Black Kettle himself escaped the Sand Creek massacre. Four years later, in 1868, he and his Cheyennes, some of whom were now at war with the whites, were caught on the Washita River, near the Texas border, by Colonel George A. Custer. White troops killed the chief and slaughtered his people.

At the end of the Civil War, white troops stepped up their wars against the western Indians on several fronts. The most serious and sustained conflict was in Montana, where the army was attempting to build a road, the Bozeman Trail, to connect Fort Laramie, Wyoming, to the new mining centers. The western Sioux resented this intrusion into the heart of their buffalo range. Led by one of their great chiefs, Red Cloud, they so harried the soldiers and the construction party—among other things, burning the forts that were supposed to guard the route—that the road could not be used.

But it was not only the United States Army that threatened the tribes. It was also unofficial violence by white vigilantes who engaged in what became known as “Indian hunting.” In California, in particular, tracking down and killing Indians became for some whites a kind of sport. Some who did not engage in killing offered rewards (or bounties) to those who did; these bounty hunters brought back scalps and skulls as proof of their deeds. Sometimes the killing was in response to Indian raids on white communities. But often it was in service to a more basic and terrible purpose. Considerable numbers of whites were

Indian Resistance

Sand Creek Massacre

“Indian Hunting”



committed to the goal of literal “elimination” of the tribes, a goal that rested on the belief in the essential inhumanity of Indians and the impossibility of white society’s coexisting with them. In Oregon in 1853, for example, whites who had hanged a seven-year-old Indian boy explained themselves by saying simply “nits breed lice.” In California, civilians killed close to 5,000 Indians between 1850 and 1880—one of many factors (disease and poverty being the more important) that reduced the Indian population of the state from 150,000 before the Civil War to 30,000 in 1870.

The treaties negotiated in 1867 brought a temporary lull to many of the conflicts. But new forces soon shattered the peace again. In the early 1870s, more waves of white settlers, mostly miners, began to penetrate some of the lands in Dakota Territory supposedly guaranteed to the tribes in 1867.

Indian resistance flared anew, this time with even greater strength. In the northern plains, the Sioux rose up in 1875 and left their reservation. When white officials ordered them to return, bands of warriors gathered in Montana and united under two great leaders: Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull.

Three army columns set out to round them up and force them back onto the reservation. With the expedition, as colonel of the famous Little Bighorn Seventh Cavalry, was the colorful and controversial George A. Custer, golden-haired romantic and glory seeker. At the Battle of the Little Bighorn in southern Montana in 1876—perhaps the most famous of all conflicts between whites and Indians—the tribal warriors surprised Custer and 264 members of his regiment, surrounded them, and killed every man. Custer has been accused of rashness, but he seems to have encountered something that no white man would likely have predicted. The chiefs had gathered as many as 2,500 warriors, one of the largest Indian armies ever assembled at one time in the United States.

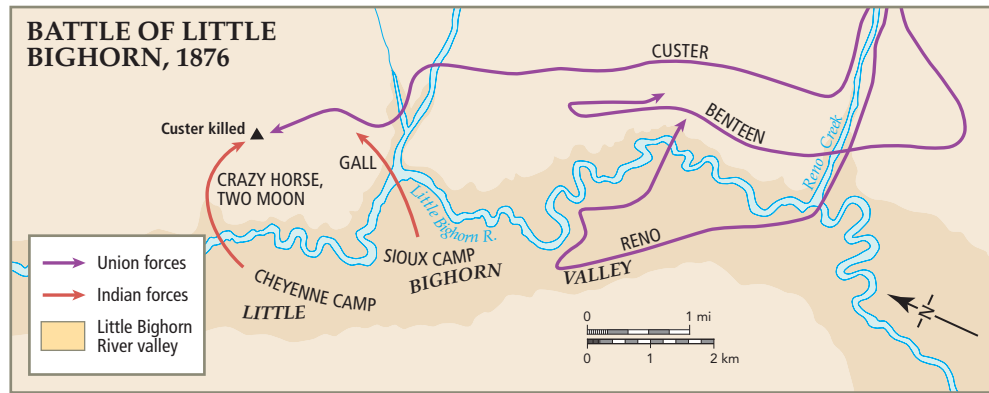
But the Indians did not have the political organization or the supplies to keep their troops united. Soon the warriors drifted off in bands to elude pursuit or search for food, and the army ran them down singly and returned them to Dakota. The power of the Sioux was soon broken. The proud leaders, Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull, accepted defeat and the monotony of life on reservations. Both were later killed by reservation police after being tricked or taunted into a last pathetic show of resistance.

One of the most dramatic episodes in Indian history occurred in Idaho in 1877. The Nez Percé were a small and relatively peaceful tribe, some of whose members had managed to live unmolested in Oregon into the 1870s without ever signing a treaty with the United States. But under pressure from white settlers, the government forced them to move into a reservation that another branch of the tribe had accepted by treaty in the 1850s. With no realistic prospect of resisting, the Indians began

the journey to the reservation; but on the way, several younger Indians, drunk and angry, killed four white settlers.

The leader of the band, Chief Joseph, persuaded his followers to flee from the expected retribution. American troops pursued and attacked them, only to be driven off in a battle at White Bird Canyon. After that, the Nez Percé scattered in several directions and became part of a remarkable chase. Joseph moved with 200 men and 350 women, children, and elders in an effort to reach Canada and take refuge with the Sioux there. Pursued by four columns of American soldiers smarting from their defeat at White Bird Canyon, the Indians covered 1,321 miles in seventy-five days, repelling or evading the army time and again. They were finally caught just short of the Canadian boundary. Some escaped and slipped across the border; but Joseph and most of his followers, weary and discouraged, finally gave up. “Hear me, my chiefs,” Joseph said after meeting with the American general Nelson Miles. “I am tired. My heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever.” He surrendered to Miles in exchange for a promise that his band could return to the Nez Percé reservation in Idaho. But the government refused to honor Miles’s promise, and the Nez Percé were shipped from one place to another for several years; in the process, many of them died of disease and malnutrition (although Joseph himself lived until 1908).

The last Indians to maintain organized resistance against the whites were the Chiricahua Apaches, who fought intermittently from the 1860s to the late 1880s. The two ablest chiefs of this fierce tribe were Mangas Colorados and Cochise. Mangas was murdered during the Civil War by white soldiers who tricked him into surrendering, and in 1872 Cochise agreed to peace in exchange for a reservation that included some of the tribe’s traditional land. But Cochise died in 1874, and his successor, Geronimo—unwilling to bow to white pressures to assimilate—fought on for more than a decade longer, establishing bases in the mountains of Arizona and Mexico and leading warriors in intermittent raids against white outposts. With each raid, however, the number of warring Apaches dwindled, as some warriors died and others drifted away to the reservation. By 1886, Geronimo’s plight was hopeless. His band consisted of only about thirty people, including women and children, while his white pursuers numbered perhaps ten thousand. Geronimo recognized the odds and surrendered, an event that marked the end of formal warfare between Indians and whites. The Apache wars were the most violent of all the Indian conflicts, perhaps because the tribes were now the most desperate. But it was the whites who committed the most flagrant and vicious atrocities. In 1871, for example, a mob of white miners invaded an Apache camp, slaughtered over a hundred Indians, and captured children, whom they sold as slaves to rival tribes. On other



**THE INDIAN FRONTIER** As conflict erupted between Indian and white cultures in the West, the government sought increasingly to concentrate tribes on reservations. Resistance to the reservation concept helped unite the Sioux and Cheyenne, traditionally enemies, in the Dakotas during the 1870s. Along the Little Bighorn River, the impetuous Custer underestimated the strength of his Indian opponents and attacked before the supporting troops of Reno and Benteen were in a position to aid him.

occasions, white troops murdered Indians who responded to invitations to peace conferences, once killing them with poisoned food.

Nor did the atrocities end with the conclusion of the Apache wars. Another tragic encounter occurred in 1890 as a result of a religious revival among the Sioux—a revival that itself symbolized the catastrophic effects of the white

assaults on Indian civilization. The Sioux were by now aware that their culture and their glories were irrevocably fading; some were also near starvation because corrupt government agents had reduced their food rations. As other tribes had done in trying times in the past, many of these Indians turned to a prophet who led them into a religious revival.



**THE BATTLE OF THE LITTLE BIGHORN: AN INDIAN VIEW** This 1898 watercolor by one of the Indian participants portrays the aftermath of the Battle of the Little Bighorn, June 25–26, 1876, in which an army unit under the command of General George Armstrong Custer was surrounded and wiped out by Sioux and Cheyenne warriors. This grisly painting shows Indians on horseback riding over the corpses of Custer and his men. Custer can be seen lying at left center, dressed in yellow buckskin with his hat beside him. The four standing men at center are Sitting Bull, Rain-in-the-Face, Crazy Horse, and Kicking Bear (the artist). At lower right, Indian women begin preparations for a ceremony to honor the returning warriors. (*Southwest Museum of the American Indian, Autry National Center; 1026.G.1*)

This time the prophet was Wovoka, a Paiute who inspired a spiritual awakening that began in Nevada and spread quickly to the plains. The new revival emphasized the coming of a messiah, but its most conspicuous feature was a mass, emotional “Ghost Dance,” which inspired ecstatic visions that many participants believed were genuinely mystical. Among these visions were images of a retreat of white people from the plains and a restoration of the great buffalo herds. White agents on the Sioux reservation watched the dances in bewilderment and fear; some believed they might be the preliminary to hostilities.

On December 29, 1890, the Seventh Cavalry (which had once been Custer’s regiment) tried to round up a group of about 350 cold and starving Sioux at Wounded Knee, South Dakota. Fighting broke out in which about 40 white soldiers and more than 300 of the Indians, including women and children, died. What precipitated the conflict is a matter of dispute. An Indian may well have fired the first shot, but the battle soon turned into a one-sided massacre, as the white soldiers turned their new machine guns on the Indians and mowed them down in the snow.

## The Dawes Act

Even before the Ghost Dance and the Wounded Knee tragedy, the federal government had moved to destroy forever the tribal structure that had always been the cornerstone of Indian culture. Reversing its policy of nearly fifty years of creating reservations in which the tribes would be isolated from white society, Congress abolished the practice by which tribes owned reservation lands communally. Some supporters of the new policy believed they were acting for the good of the Indians, whom they considered a “vanishing race” in need of rescue by white society. But the action was frankly designed to force Indians to become landowners and farmers, to abandon their collective society and culture and become part of white civilization.

The Dawes Severalty Act of 1887 (usually known simply as the Dawes Act) provided for the gradual elimination of tribal ownership of land and the allotment of tracts to individual owners: 160 acres to the head of a family, 80 acres to a single adult or orphan, 40 acres to each dependent child. Adult owners were given United States citizenship, but unlike other citizens, they could not gain

Assimilation



full title to their property for twenty-five years (supposedly to prevent them from selling the land to speculators). The act applied to most of the western tribes. The Pueblo, who continued to occupy lands long ago guaranteed them, were excluded from its provisions. In applying the Dawes Act, the Bureau of Indian Affairs relentlessly promoted the idea of assimilation that lay behind it. Not only did they try to move Indian families onto their own plots of land; they also took Indian children away from their families and sent them to boarding schools run by whites, where they believed the young people could be educated to abandon tribal ways. They also moved to stop Indian religious rituals and encouraged the spread of Christianity and the creation of Christian churches on the reservations.

Few Indians were prepared for this wrenching change from their traditional collective society to capitalist individualism. In any case, white administration of the program was so corrupt and inept that ultimately the government

simply abandoned it. Much of the reservation land, therefore, was never distributed to individual owners. Congress attempted to speed the transition with the Burke Act of 1906, but Indians continued to resist forced assimilation.

Neither then nor later did legislation provide a satisfactory solution to the problem of the Indians, largely because there was no entirely happy solution to be had. The interests of the Indians were not compatible with those of the expanding white civilization. Whites successfully settled the American West only at the expense of the region's indigenous peoples.

## THE RISE AND DECLINE OF THE WESTERN FARMER

The arrival of the miners, the empire building of the cattle ranchers, the dispersal of the Indian tribes—all served as a prelude to the decisive phase of white settlement of the



**WOUNDED KNEE** This grim photograph shows Big Foot, chief of the Lakota Sioux, lying dead in the snow near Wounded Knee in South Dakota. He was one of many victims of an 1890 massacre of over 300 members of the tribe, killed by U.S. Army soldiers after the Indians had surrendered their weapons. Whether the massacre was planned and deliberate, or whether it was a result of confusion and fear, remains in dispute. (Private Collection, Peter Newark American Pictures/The Bridgeman Art Library International)



**LE SABRE INDIAN SCHOOL, MONTANA** Government authorities and private philanthropists tried in many ways to encourage Indians to assimilate into mainstream white American society after the end of the Indian wars of the late nineteenth century. One of the most ambitious, and controversial, was a series of boarding schools for Indian children, where white teachers worked to teach them the ways of the English-speaking world. Most such schools were for boys, but some—such as this school in Montana, run by Catholic nuns—were created for girls. (*Montana Historical Society*)

Far West. Even before the Civil War, farmers had begun moving into the plains region, challenging the dominance of the ranchers and the Indians and occasionally coming into conflict with both. By the 1870s, what was once a trickle had become a deluge. Farmers poured into the plains and beyond, enclosed land that had once been hunting territory for Indians and grazing territory for cattle, and established a new agricultural region.

For a time in the late 1870s and early 1880s, the new western farmers flourished, enjoying the fruits of an agricultural economic boom comparable in many ways to the booms that eastern industry periodically enjoyed. Beginning in the mid-1880s, however, the boom turned to bust. American agriculture—not only in the new West but in the older Midwest and the South as well—was producing more than it ever had, too much for the market to absorb. For that and other reasons, prices for agricultural goods declined. Both economically and psychologically, the agricultural economy began a long, steady decline.

## Farming on the Plains

Many factors combined to produce this surge of western settlement, but the most important was the railroads. Before the Civil War, the Great Plains had been accessible only through a difficult journey by wagon. But beginning in the 1860s, a great new network of railroad lines developed, spearheaded by the transcontinental routes Congress had authorized and subsidized in 1862. They made huge new areas of settlement accessible.

The completion of the transcontinental line was a dramatic and monumental achievement. The two lines joined at Promontory Point in northern Utah in the spring of 1869.

But while this first transcontinental line captured the public imagination, the construction of subsidiary lines in the following years proved of greater importance to the West. State governments, imitating Washington, D.C., encouraged railroad development by offering direct financial aid, favorable loans, and more than 50 million

acres of land (on top of the 130 million acres the federal government had already provided). Although operated by private corporations, the railroads were essentially public projects.

It was not only by making access to the Great Plains easier that the railroads helped spur agricultural settlement there. The railroad companies themselves actively promoted settlement, both to provide themselves with customers for their services and to increase the value of their vast landholdings. In addition, the companies set rates so low for settlers that almost anyone could afford the trip west. And they sold much of their land at very low prices and provided liberal credit to prospective settlers.

Contributing further to the great surge of white agricultural expansion was a temporary change in the climate of the Great Plains. For several years in succession, beginning in the 1870s, rainfall in the plains states was well above average. White Americans now rejected the old idea that the region was the Great American Desert. Some even claimed that cultivation of the plains actually encouraged rainfall.

Even under the most favorable conditions, farming on the plains presented special problems. First was the problem of fencing. Farmers had to enclose their land, if for no other reason than to protect it from the herds of the open-range cattlemen. But traditional wood or stone fences were too expensive and were ineffective as barriers to cattle. In 1873, however, two Illinois farmers, Joseph H. Glidden and I. L. Ellwood, solved this problem by developing and marketing barbed wire, which became standard equipment on the plains and revolutionized fencing practices all over the country.

The second problem was water. Much of the land west of the Mississippi was considerably more arid than the lands to the east. Some of it was literally desert. As a result, the growth of the West depended heavily on irrigation—providing water from sources other than rainfall. Water was diverted from rivers and streams and into farmlands throughout the West—in California and in the Southwest more than anywhere else. In other areas, farmers drilled wells or found other methods of channeling water onto their lands. The search for water—and the resulting battles over control of water (between different landowners and even between different states)—became a central and enduring characteristic of western life.

In the plains states, the problems of water created an epic disaster. After 1887, a series of dry seasons began, and lands that had been fertile now returned to semidesert. Some farmers dealt with the problem by using deep wells pumped by steel windmills, by turning to what was called dry-land farming (a system of tillage designed to conserve

moisture in the soil by covering it with a dust blanket), or by planting drought-resistant crops. In many areas of the plains, however, only large-scale irrigation could save the endangered farms. But irrigation projects of the necessary magnitude required government assistance, and neither the state nor federal governments were prepared to fund the projects.

Most of the people who moved into the region had previously been farmers in the Midwest, the East, or Europe. In the booming years of the early 1880s, with land values rising, the new farmers had no problem obtaining extensive and easy credit and had every reason to believe they would soon be able to retire their debts. But the arid years of the late 1880s—during which crop prices were falling while production was becoming more expensive—changed that prospect. Tens of thousands of farmers could not pay their debts and were forced to abandon their farms. There was, in effect, a reverse migration: white settlers moved back east, sometimes turning once flourishing communities into desolate ghost towns. Those who remained continued to suffer from falling prices (for example, wheat, which had sold for \$1.60 a bushel at the end of the Civil War, dropped to 49 cents in the 1890s) and persistent indebtedness.

## Commercial Agriculture

American farming by the late nineteenth century no longer bore very much relation to the comforting image many Americans continued to cherish. The sturdy, independent farmer of popular myth was being replaced by the commercial farmer—attempting to do in the agricultural economy what industrialists were doing in the manufacturing economy.

Commercial farmers were not self-sufficient and made no effort to become so. They specialized in cash crops, which they sold in national or world markets. They did not make their own household supplies or grow their own food but bought them instead at town or village stores. This kind of farming, when it was successful, raised the farmers' living standards. But it also made them dependent on bankers and interest rates, railroads and freight rates, national and European markets, world supply and demand. And unlike the capitalists of the industrial order, they could not regulate their production or influence the prices of what they sold.

Between 1865 and 1900, agriculture became an international business. Farm output increased dramatically, not only in the United States but also in Brazil, Argentina, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Russia, and elsewhere. At the same time, modern forms of communication and transportation—the telephone, telegraph, steam navigation, railroads—were creating new markets

Key Role of the Railroad

promoted settlement, both to provide themselves with customers for their services and to

Hard Times for Farmers

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Barbed Wire

ing and marketing barbed wire, which became standard equipment on the plains and revolutionized fencing practices all over the country.

Drought

pumped by steel windmills, by turning to what was called dry-land farming (a system of tillage designed to conserve



around the world for agricultural goods. American commercial farmers, constantly opening new lands, produced much more than the domestic market could absorb; they relied on the world market to absorb their surplus, but in that market they faced major competition. Cotton farmers depended on export sales for 70 percent of their annual income, wheat farmers for 30 to 40 percent; but the volatility of the international market put them at great risk.

Beginning in the 1880s, worldwide overproduction led to a drop in prices for most agricultural goods and hence to great economic distress for many of the more than 6 million American farm families. By the 1890s, 27 percent of the farms in the country were mortgaged; by 1910, 33 percent. In 1880, 25 percent of all farms had been operated by tenants; by 1910, the proportion had grown to 37 percent. Commercial farming made some people fabulously wealthy. But the farm economy as a whole was suffering a significant decline relative to the rest of the nation.

### The Farmers' Grievances

American farmers were painfully aware that something was wrong. But few yet understood the implications of national and world overproduction. Instead, they concentrated their attention and anger on immediate, comprehensible—and no less real—problems: inequitable freight rates, high interest charges, and an inadequate currency.

The farmers' first and most burning grievance was against the railroads. In many cases, the railroads charged higher freight rates for farm goods than for other goods, and higher rates in the South and West than in the Northeast. Railroads also controlled elevator and warehouse facilities in buying centers and charged arbitrary storage rates.

Farmers also resented the institutions controlling credit—banks, loan companies, insurance corporations. Since sources of credit in the West and South were few, farmers had to take loans on whatever terms they could get, often at interest rates ranging from 10 to 25 percent.

Many farmers had to pay these loans back in years when prices were dropping and currency was becoming scarce. Increasing the volume of currency eventually became an important agrarian demand.

A third grievance concerned prices—both the prices farmers received for their products and the prices they paid for goods. Farmers sold their products in a competitive world market over which they had no control and of which they had no advanced knowledge. A farmer could plant a large crop at a moment when prices were high and find that by harvesttime the price had declined. Farmers' fortunes rose and fell in response to unpredict-

able forces. But many farmers became convinced (often with valid reason) that “middlemen”—speculators, bankers, regional and local agents—were combining to fix prices so as to benefit themselves at the growers' expense. Many farmers also came to believe (again, not entirely without reason) that manufacturers in the East were conspiring to keep the prices of farm goods low and the prices of industrial goods high. Although farmers sold their crops in a competitive world market, they bought manufactured goods in a domestic market protected by tariffs and dominated by trusts and corporations.

### The Agrarian Malaise

These economic difficulties produced a series of social and cultural resentments. Farm families in some parts of the country—particularly in the prairie and plains regions, where large farms were scattered over vast areas—were virtually cut off from the outside world and human companionship. During the winter months and spells of bad weather, the loneliness and boredom could become nearly unbearable. Many farmers lacked access to adequate education for their children, to proper medical facilities, to recreational or cultural activities, to virtually anything that might give them a sense of being members of a community. Older farmers felt the sting of watching their children leave the farm for the city. They felt the humiliation of being ridiculed as “hayseeds” by the new urban culture that was coming to dominate American life.

The result of this sense of isolation and obsolescence was a growing malaise among many farmers, a discontent that would help create a great national political movement in the 1890s. It found reflection, too, in the literature that emerged from rural America. Late-nineteenth-century writers often romanticized the rugged life of the cowboy and the western miner. For the farmer, however, the image was often different. Hamlin Garland, for example, reflected the growing disillusionment in a series of novels and short stories. In the past, Garland wrote in the introduction to his novel *Jason Edwards* (1891), the agrarian frontier had seemed to be “the Golden West, the land of wealth and freedom and happiness. All of the associations called up by the spoken word, the West, were fabulous, mythic, hopeful.” Now, however, the bright promise had faded. The trials of rural life were crushing the human spirit. “So this is the reality of the dream!” a character in *Jason Edwards* exclaims. “A shanty on a barren plain, hot and lone as a desert. My God!” Once, sturdy yeoman farmers had viewed themselves as the backbone of American life. Now they were becoming painfully aware that their position was declining in relation to the rising urban-industrial society to the east.

Consequences  
of Overproduction

6 million American farm families.

By the 1890s, 27 percent of the farms in the country were mortgaged;

Isolation

Farmers' Grievances

## CONCLUSION

To many Americans in the late nineteenth century, the West seemed a place utterly unlike the rest of the United States—an untamed “frontier” in which hardy pioneers were creating a new society, in which sturdy individuals still had a chance to be heroes. This image was a stark and deliberate contrast to the reality of the urbanizing, industrializing East, in which the role of the individual was being transformed by the rise of industrial life and its institutions.

The reality of the West in these years, however, was very different from the image. White Americans were moving into the vast regions west of the Mississippi at a remarkable rate in the years after the Civil War, and many of them, it is true, were settling in lands far from any civilization they had ever known. But the West was not an empty place in these years. It contained a large population of Indians, with whom the white settlers sometimes lived uneasily and sometimes battled, but almost always in the end pushed aside and (with help from the federal government) relocated onto lands whites did not want. There were significant numbers of Mexicans in some areas, small populations of Asians in others, and African Americans moving in from the

South in search of land and freedom. The West was not a barren frontier, but a place of many cultures.

The West was also closely and increasingly tied to the emerging capitalist-industrial economy of the East. The miners who flooded into California, Colorado, Nevada, the Dakotas, and elsewhere were responding to the demand in the East for gold and silver, but even more for such utilitarian minerals as iron ore, copper, lead, zinc, and quartz, which had industrial uses. Cattle and sheep ranchers produced meat, wool, and leather for eastern consumers and manufacturers. Farmers grew crops for sale in national and international commodities markets. The West certainly looked different from the East, and its people lived their lives in surroundings very different from those of eastern cities. But the growth of the West was very much a part of the growth of the rest of the nation. And the culture of the West, despite the romantic images of pioneering individuals embraced by easterners and westerners alike, was at its heart as much a culture of economic growth and capitalist ambition as was the culture of the rest of the nation.

## INTERACTIVE LEARNING

The *Primary Source Investigator* CD-ROM offers the following materials related to this chapter:

- A short documentary movie, **The Curtis Legacy**, about a well-known photographer who documented native peoples for years (D11).
- Interactive maps: **Indian Expulsion** (M9) and **Mining Towns** (M14).
- Documents, images, and maps related to the settlement of the American West following the Civil War, and the dispersal of the native peoples in the process.

Highlights include the text of the Dawes Act of 1887, the federal policy that broke up Indian tribal lands, images of Native Americans in the American West, and excerpts from Frederick Jackson Turner’s *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*.

### Online Learning Center ([www.mhhe.com/brinkley13e](http://www.mhhe.com/brinkley13e))

For quizzes, Internet resources, references to additional books and films, and more, consult this book’s Online Learning Center.

## FOR FURTHER REFERENCE

Frederick Jackson Turner’s *The Frontier in American History* (1920) is a classic argument on the centrality of the frontier experience to American democracy. His argument frames much of the later historical writing on the West, most of which rejects the “Turner thesis.” Patricia Nelson Limerick’s *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (1987) argues that the West was not a frontier but rather an inhabited place conquered by Anglo-Americans. Richard White, *“It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own”: A History of the American West* (1991) is an outstanding general history of the region that

revises many myths about the West. Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (1989) surveys the experiences of Asian Americans as immigrants to America’s western shore. Jean Pfaelzer, *Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans* (2007) illustrates anti-Chinese sentiment. John Mack Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* (1979) examines the social experience of westering migrants, and Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Authority in the American West, 1874–1939* (1990) describes the female communities of the West.

William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis and the Great West* (1991) describes the relationships among economies and environments in the West. Jon Gjerde, *The Minds of the West: Ethnocultural Evolution in the Rural Middle West, 1830-1914* (1997) examines the impact of ethnicity on the shaping of the agrarian West. Robert Wooster, *The Military and United States Indian Policy, 1865-1902* (1988) and Sally Denton, *American Massacre: The Tragedy at Mountain Meadows, September 1857* (2003) examine the military campaigns against the Indians in the nineteenth century. Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (1984) examines U.S. policies toward Native Americans in the years after the end of

the Indian Wars. John Mack Faragher, *Daniel Boone* (1992) is a study of one of the West's most fabled figures. Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization* (1985) and *Gunfighter Nation* (1992) are provocative cultural studies of the idea of the West. Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land* (1950) is a classic study of the West in American culture. Rebecca Solnit, *River of Shadows: Edward Muybridge and the Technological Wild West* (2003) considers the impact of photography on images of the West. *The West* (1996), a documentary film by Stephen Ives and Ken Burns, offers a broad history of the region, along with a companion book of the same title by Geoffrey C. Ward.