**Module 1: Slideset ⅘: The West Part 1 and 2**

**Myths of the American West**

* Two laws were passed in 1862 that contributed to the settlement of the west. One being the Pacific Railway Act that funded the transcontinental railroad and the second of the Homestead act that divided lands in 160 acre plots that people could get for free or for a small fee.

**Transcontinental railroad**

* First proposal was to link the Mississippi River to the pacific ocean in 1845 by Asa Whitney.
* Two companies were formed, Union Pacific that would push west across the plains and the other central pacific that would head east from Sacramento.
* Union Pacific: Led by Thomas Durant. Selected routed based on how cheap they were to construct but didnt give emphasis on the long term economic potential of the area served. He vetoed the engineers who wanted to use the attractive south pass route in wyoming. Construction began in 1866, 1863 in Sacrament but in Omaha after the civil war ended. Chief engineer was Grenville Dodge, a retired US army officer.
* Big Four and Central Pacific: Big four was a group of american merchants: Stanford(president), Hopkins(fund raising and purchasing), Huntington(vice-president) and Crocker(treasurer). Founded Central pacific in 1861. Stanford represented money in the west and Huntington in the east. Construction began in Sac in 1863.
* May 1869 the two lines met at Promontory Point, Utah.

**Scandals and Shenanigans**

* The transcontinental railroad also had many controversies and scandals. To get the rights, the companies spent heavily on bribes to ensure favorable resolution from political parties. People created companies to handle money from investors and the government. If parts of the railroad needed t o be rebuilt they would be happy about it because it meant they got more bonuses from the government.

**Settling the West**

**Indian Troubles**

* Indians inhabited most of the western lands but three main forces conspired against them. First was the destruction of the bisons herds since they depended on them for food, clothing, etc. Second was the occupation of the lands by the homesteading farmers. Third was the hostility brought by the whites who feared and despised them. Even lands that were ceded to the indians were overtaken by the whites esp if there was news of silver or gold in those areas.
* Many indians were killed off by european diseases such as small pox.
* The first decree was the treaty of fort laramie where they agreed to give indians land in return for westward expansion but it only caused for more conflicts to arise. White officials goaled to have a peaceful coexistence with the treaties but the migrants had no respect for the treaties and did not have any federal govt to enforce them.
* Instead they tried to make indians sign new treaties and if they wouldnt all sign, they accepted the signatures of the minority and declared the treaty to be in force. US would up alternating between destroying the native american people or making treaties with them.
* Whites exaggerated the menace of the indians an example being The San Creek Massacre of Nov 1864. John Chivington convinced that indians were potential threats. The indians had signs of stars and stripes to show peace in the safe haven they were given. The US militias went in anyways and killed two hundred people and displayed their scalps and were honored for it.
* In return in 1866, The Fetterman massacre too place where the indians led american soldiers to an ambush outside of Fort Phil Kearny. Killed 81 us soldiers and mutilated their bodies similar to Sand Creek.
* The US thought the only way was to destroy their main resource, the buffalo but the indians had already by killing them off and selling them to buffalo robe companies.
* Battle of Little Big Horn: Battle between the US and the Cheyenne and the Sioux. (Slides 35-39)
* The Dawes Severalty Act 1887 was designed to turn indians into american style farmers. It broke up tribal lands and only those that accepted the division got US citizenship. If accepted they got 160 - 320 acres of farmland to the head of the Native american family. Similar to the homestead act but this land was being returned to them instead of given to them.

**Mining and Mining Towns**

* First key element was farming in the western economy. The number of farms tripled between 1860 and 1900 with the abundance of wheat, corn and cattle.
* Second key element of the western economy. First boom was in california in 1849, next in 1859 was gold was discovered in colorado and silver in nv.
* Rush towns would be empty and then rushed with population when the strike was found. Once the minerals are exhausted they would wait and filter back to denver until the next strike.
* Denver was able to survive the Civil War and a great fire of 1863 due to it geography. It sits on the edge of the Great Plains and where the Rocky Mountains begin.
* 3 factors contributed to the volatility of the mining industry: first was comparative lack of geological knowledge. Second was the violence of labor relations which led to strikes, dynamiting of mine works and assassinations of leaders. And third was changing govt policy toward the monetization of gold and silver.

**Ranchers and Cowboys**

* Third major industry was ranching. As Texas entered the union in 1845 with tons of cattle that were originally used for skins and tallow, but as Americans began to eat more beef, cattle began to get sold to larger slaughterhouses in big cities.
* Key man in the operation was Joseph McCoy from Illinois. In 1867, McCoy approached several texas cattle bosses and said he would buy their cattle and arrange it with the railroad to ship the mto kansas city or chicago to a slaughterhouse. He did this in Abilene that was far enough that it did not conflict with others in Kansas or Missouri.
* By 1867 the routine for cattle trail business had developed. It was important for the trail boss to keep the cattle strong and healthy since they were measured for size.
* Many had made it a business including immigrants from Germany and France and even Theodore Roosevelt. But as the number of ranches grew, the amount of grass needed to feed dwindled causing a lot the these ranches to fail.