

## **Chapter 26- The Great West and the Agricultural Revolution**

### **1865-1896**

#### **A. The Clash of Cultures on the Plains**

- 1.** Native Americans numbered about 360,000 in 1860 scattered throughout trans-Missouri West
  - 1.** The Indians stood in the path of the advancing white pioneers (threatened bison population)
  - 2.** The Cheyenne and Sioux on horses transformed themselves into nomadic traders and hunters
  - 3.** White intruders spread cholera, typhoid, and smallpox among the native peoples of the plains
- 2.** The federal government tried to pacify the Plains Indians (competition for hunting grounds)
- 3.** Treaties signed at Fort Laramie and Fort Atkinson marked the reservation system in the West
  - 1.** They established boundaries for the territory for each of the tribes (“colonies of the north”)
  - 2.** Native Americans actually lived in scattered bands recognizing no authority outside
  - 3.** The federal government intensified this policy and herded the Indians into still smaller confines
  - 4.** Indians surrendered their land only when they received promises that they would be left alone
- 4.** In the 1860s fierce warfare between the Indians and U.S. Army raged in the West

#### **B. Receding Native Population**

- 1.** The Indian wars in the West were often savage clashes (cruelty begot cruelty)
  - 1.** Colonel Chivington’s militia massacred Indians at Sand Creek, Colorado in 1864
  - 2.** In 1866 a Sioux war party attempted to block construction of the Bozeman Trail
  - 3.** They ambushed Fetterman’s command and the Indians left not a single survivor
- 2.** In the Treaty of Fort Laramie (1868) the government abandoned the Bozeman Trail and the “Great Sioux reservation” was guaranteed to the Sioux tribes
- 3.** Custer found gold in South Dakota but the Plains Indians massacred his militia

4. Chief Joseph finally surrendered after leading his band of Nez Perce Indians for 1,700 miles
5. Fierce Apache tribes of AZ and NM were the most difficult to subdue
  1. Led by Geronimo, they were pursued into Mexico by federal troops (finally captured)
6. The relentless fire-and-sword policy of the whites shattered the spirit of the Indians
7. The Native Americans were ghettoized on reservations—they were then largely ignored
8. The taming of the Indians was by the railroad, white people's diseases, and no more buffalo

#### C. Bellowing Herds of Bison

1. The buffalo were the staff of life for Native Americans—for food, tools, clothing, etc
2. With the building of the railroad, the massacre of the herds began in deadly earnest
3. Creatures were slain for hides, choice cuts, or even for sheer amusement
4. By 1885, only about a thousand buffalo were alive in the West

#### D. The End of the Trail

1. By the 1880s the national conscience began to stir uneasily over the plight of the Indians
  1. MA writer Helen Hunt Jackson inspired sympathy for Indians (*A Century of Dishonor, Ramona*)
  2. Humanitarians wanted to treat the Indians kindly and persuade them to take up white man's life
2. Hard-liners insisted on the current policy of forced containment and brutal punishment
3. Neither side showed much respect for the Native American culture (Sun dance, Ghost Dance)
4. The movement to reform Indian policy was the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887
  1. The act dissolved many tribes as legal entities, wiped out tribal ownership of land and set up individual Indian family heads—full citizenship was granted to all Indians in 1924
  2. In the 1890s the government expanded its network of Indian boarding schools and sent "field matrons" to the reservations to teach Native American women sewing and virtues
  3. The Dawes Act struck directly at tribal organization; was the cornerstone of Indian policy
  4. Under these federal policies, the Indian population started to mount slowly

#### **E. Mining: From Dishpan to Ore Breaker**

- 1.** Conquest of the Indians and coming of the railroad were god-sends for the mining frontier
  - 1.** The golden gravel of California continued to yield “pay dirt” and Colorado had its discovery
  - 2.** People poured into Nevada in 1859 after Comstock Lode had been uncovered—gold and silver
- 2.** Boomtowns sprouted from the desert sands like magic and disappeared quickly
- 3.** Once the loose surface gold was gobbled up, ore-breaking machinery was imported
  - 1.** The operation could be undertaken only by corporations (pooled wealth of stockholders)
  - 2.** The age of big business came to the mining industry—attracted population and wealth
- 4.** Women and men found opportunity and won a kind of equality on the frontier that earned them the vote in Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and “Idaho before the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- 5.** The outpouring of silver and gold enabled the Treasury to hold up the credit

#### **F. Beef Bonanzas and the Long Drive**

- 1.** With transcontinental railroads, cattle could not be shipped to stockyards, under “beef barons”
  - 1.** Texas cowboys drove herds slowly over the plains until they reached markets (Long Drive)
- 2.** Overexpansion and overgrazing turned cowboy into plowboys
  - 1.** Breeders learned to fence their ranches, produce fewer animals, and organize

#### **G. The Farmer’s Frontier**

- 1.** The Homestead Act of 1862 allowed a settler to acquire as much as 160 acres of land by living on it for five years, improving it, and paying a nominal fee of about \$30
  - 1.** Many more families purchased their land from the railroads, land companies, or states
  - 2.** The Homestead Act was quite the hoax—much of the 160 acres was in rain-scarce Great Plains
  - 3.** The railways played a major role in developing the agricultural West (marketing of crops)

4. Prairies were mostly treeless and the tough sod had been packed in (assumed to be sterile)

1. But once the soil was broken up, the earth proved astonishingly fruitful
2. The 100<sup>th</sup> meridian running through the Dakotas to Texas separated two climatologically regions; a well-watered area to the east and a semiarid area to the west of the line
3. In the wake of droughts, the new technique of “dry farming” took root on the plains
  1. The method consisted of frequent shallow cultivation supposedly adapted to the arid West
  2. Tough strains of wheat, resistant to cold and drought, were imported from Russia
4. Federally financed irrigation projects caused the Great American Desert to bloom

#### H. The Far West Comes of Age

1. The Great West experienced a fantastic growth in population from the 1870s to the 1890s
2. New Western states joined the Union; CO, ND, SD, MT, WA, ID, WY, UT (Republican votes)
3. The federal government made available the fertile plains of Oklahoma Territory
  1. Oklahoma boasted 60,000 inhabitants in one year and became the Sooner State in 1907

#### I. The Fading Frontier

1. In 1890, the census announced that a frontier line was no longer discernible in America
  1. Jackson Turner's *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (1893)
  2. The government set aside land for national parks: Yellowstone (1872) and Yosemite (1890)
  3. Americans had been notorious for their mobility; land was often the most profitable crop
  4. Much has been said about the frontier as a “safety valve” (possibility of westward expansion)
    1. Western cities were the real safety valves (people found ways to seek their fortunes)
2. In the trans-Mississippi West, the Native Americans made their last desperate struggle against colonization and there most Native Americans live today—Pacific to Asia

#### J. The Farm Becomes a Factory

1. American farmers had previously raised their own lives and but high prices persuaded farmers to concentrate on growing single “cash” crops and use profits to buy supplies in the store
  1. Farmers were intimately tied to banking, railroading, and manufacturing (twine binder, combine)
  2. Agricultural modernization drove many farmers off the land swelling ranks of industrial workers
  3. The farm was attaining the status of a factory—an outdoor grain factory
2. Agriculture was a big business from its earliest days in California’s productive Central Valley
  1. California fruit and vegetable sold at a handsome profit in the rich urban markets of the East with the advent of the railroad refrigerator car in the 1880s

#### **K. Deflation Dooms the Debtor**

1. For farmers, as long as prices stayed high, all went well, but prices skidded in the 1880s
  1. Bankruptcy fell on lie blight and grain prices depended on the world market of grain
  2. Low prices and a deflated currency were the chief worries of the farmers—North, South, West
    1. The deflationary pinch on the debtor flowed partly from the static money supply
  3. Ruinous rates of interest were charged on mortgages (eastern loan companies)
2. Farm tenancy rather than farm ownership was spreading fast throughout the nation

#### **L. Unhappy Farmers**

1. Insects ravaged the crops, floods added to the waste of erosion, and expensive fertilizers needed
2. Their land was overassessed, and they paid painful local taxes (high protective tariffs)
3. Farmers were at mercy of the harvester trust, all of which could control output and raise prices
4. The railroad octopus had grain growers in its grip—high freight rates
5. Farmers still made up nearly one-half of the population in 1890—not organized at all
  1. They did manage to organize a monumental political uprising

#### **M. The Farmers Take Their Stand**

1. Prices sagged in 1868, and a host of farmers unsuccessfully sought relief by demanding inflation
2. The National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry (Grange, 1867) led by Oliver H. Kelley
3. Kelley wanted to enhance lives of isolated farmers through social, education, fraternal activities
4. Kelley found that farmers were receptive to passwords, rituals, and hierarchy
5. Grangers raised their goals from self-improvement to improvement of farmer's collective plight
6. Grangers also went into politics (regulate railroads through state legislation)
7. Granger Laws—public control of private business for general welfare (bitterly attacked)
8. Following the *Wabash* decision of 1886, the Grangers' influence faded
9. Farmer's grievances found a vent in the Greenback Labor Party (1878, also elected Weaver)

#### N. Prelude to Populism

1. Manifestation of rural discontent came through the Farmers' Alliance founded in TX, 1870s
2. The farmers wanted to break the grip of the railroads and manufacturers through cooperative
3. The Alliance weakened by ignoring the plight of landless tenant farmers, sharecroppers
4. In the 1880s a Colored Farmers' National Alliance emerged to attract black farmers
5. Out of the Farmers' Alliances a new political party—the People's Party AKA Populists
6. They called for nationalizing of railroads, instituting an increasing income tax, creating a new federal "subtreaty" for the farmers, and free and unlimited coinage of silver (inflation)
7. William Hope Harvey's *Coin's Financial School* (silver)
8. The queen of the Populists was Mary E. Lease known as the "Kansas Pythoness"
9. In 1892, the Populists jolted the traditional parties by polling more than 1 million votes

#### O. Coxey's Army and the Pullman Strike

1. The panic and depression of 1893 strengthened the Populists' argument that farmers and laborers alike were being victimized by an oppressive economic and political system
2. Ragged armies of the unemployed began marching to protest their plight

3. Jacob Coxey set out for Washington in 1894 to demand government relieve unemployment
4. General Coxey and his lieutenants were arrested for walking on the grass
5. The Pullman strike of 1894 in Chicago was headed by Eugene Debs (American Railway Union)
6. Workers finally struck the Pullman Palace Car Company (lower wages, same rent)
7. The American Federation of Labor declined to support the Pullman strikers ("respectability")
8. U.S. Attorney General Richard Olney called for dispatch of federal troops and his legal grounds were that the strikers were interfering with the transit of the U.S. mail
9. Federal troops crushed the Pullman strike and Debs was sentenced to prison for 6 months
10. This was the first time that such a legal weapon had been used by Washington to break a strike

**P. Golden McKinley and Silver Bryan**

1. Monetary policy loomed as the issue on which the election of 1896 would turn
2. William McKinley of Ohio (R) supported by Marcus Hanna (believed gov't should aid business)
3. Republicans had the money of Hannah and leaned toward hard-money policies (support tariff)
4. Cleveland was the most unpopular man in the country (more like a Republican)
5. William Jennings Bryan's Cross of Gold speech got him nominated for the Democrats
6. The platform demand inflation through unlimited coinage of silver
7. Democratic "Gold Bugs" unable to swallow Bryan bolted their party over the silver issue
8. With the ratio of 16 oz Ag to 1 oz Au, most Populists decided to vote for the Bryan

**Q. Class Conflict: Plowholders Versus Bondholders**

1. William Jennings Bryan swept through 27 states and made nearly 600 speeches (even East)
2. Free silver became almost as much a religious as a financial issue (silver cure people in debt)
3. Bryan created panic among eastern conservatives with his threat of converting holdings lower
4. Hanna shook trusts and plutocrats and piled up enormous campaign money (\$16 million)

5. Fear was Hanna's strongest ally, as it was Bryan's worst enemy
6. McKinley triumphed decisively taking the populous East and the Presidency
7. The results demonstrated Bryan's lack of appeal to unmortgaged farmer and eastern laborer
8. The outcome was a resounding victory for big business, the big cities, middle-class values, and financial conservatism—last effort to win White House with mostly agrarian votes
9. Future of presidential politics lay in the cities with their growing populations
10. The smashing Republican victory of 1896 heralded a Republican grip on the White House for sixteen consecutive years—long reign accompanied by diminishing voter participation, the weakening of party organizations, and fading away of issues like money and civil service reform
11. Concern for industrial regulation and the welfare of labor (political era—fourth party system)

#### R. Republican Stand-pattism Enthroned

1. McKinley's cautious, conservative nature caused him to shy away from banner of reform
2. The tariff issue forced itself to the fore—the Wilson-Gorman law did not raise enough revenue
3. Dingley Tariff Bill of 1897 proposed new higher rates and finally with additions was at 46.5%
4. Prosperity began to return with a rush in 1897; the Gold Standard Act of 1900 provided that the paper currency be redeemed freely in gold (over last-ditch silverite opposition)
5. Discoveries of new gold deposits brought huge quantities of gold onto world markets, as did the perfection of the cheap cyanide process for extracting gold from low-grade ore
6. Moderate inflation took care of the currency needs