Western Expansion

- The federal government actively promoted economic development and the movement west.

- 1830-40s: Settlers to fertile Oregon territory
- 1847: Mormons had traveled west seeking religious refuge in Utah
- 1848: CA Gold Rush brought thousands of settlers to Bay area

Western Settlement

- Homestead Act (1862): Offered public land (160 acres) to any person who lived on it & improved it for 5 years.
  - Intended to encourage settlement of western land
  - Difficulties & Limitations:
    1) quality of land
    2) high cost of supplies
    3) mother nature
    4) fraud
    5) fluctuating crop prices

- Pacific Railroad Act (1862): Authorized the building of transcontinental railroad along a northern route.
  - Federal government provides money and land (subsidies) to the RR companies to construct.
  - Transcontinental Railroad completed in 1869
ECONOMY OF THE WEST

- **Boom and bust cycle** of the economy

Mining Industry
- Examples: 1) 1858 gold in Pike’s Peak, Colorado 2) 1859 Comstock Lode in Nevada (Nevada enters Union)
- Conditions: Extremely dangerous, nearly half population foreign born
- Impact: 1) Environmental destruction (hydraulic mining) 2) Loss of Native land

Cattle Industry
- Mexican cowboys (vaqueros) had been running the cattle business in Texas
- Vast open grasslands
- Railroads open up new markets
- Bust: bad winter, prices drop, overgrazing, farmers put up barbed wire

Myth vs. Reality of the West

- **Romanticized view** of the American west in literature, paintings, and dime novels.
  - Land of cowboys roaming the unexplored frontier
  - Sometimes ignored the complexities of Native American life, reality of western life.
- Melting Pot nature of the American West
  - **Chinese immigration**
  - CA Gold Rush
  - Work for the railroads
  - African American & Mexican cowboys
  - Utah enters union in 1896 (after they drop polygamy)
- Women’s suffrage was more common in the west
  - Wyoming is first to grant women the right to vote

Life in the Trans-Mississippi West

- Life for the plains Indians had dramatically changed
  - Heavily reliant on hunting bison
  - European introduction of horse, firearms, alcohol, & disease
- Increasing pressure on Native life
- Severe decline in the population of bison.
  - Undermine Native American resistance
  - Demand for buffalo hides
  - Impact of railroad expansion
- The biggest impact of western expansion will take place upon the lives of Native Americans in the trans-Mississippi west.
CONFLICT: INDIAN WARS

- Violence occurs as homesteaders, miners, and ranchers move west onto Native land.
- **Sand Creek Massacre** (1864): Colorado Militia attack and kill over 100 Native people
- **Battle of Little Big Horn** (1876): The Sioux tribe (Inspired by Sitting Bull) kill Custer and his men in the 7th Cavalry (Custer's Last Stand)
- **Chief Joseph** attempted to lead members of the Nez Percé tribe into Canada
  – Surrendered in 1877

Wounded Knee

- **Ghost Dance** movement begins amongst the Sioux in Dakota territory
  - Cultural / Religious Revival
  - Thought would get rid of the white settlers & return prosperity to the tribe
  - Federal government wants this to stop
- **Battle of Wounded Knee** (1890) U.S. army go into the Dakotas and killed over 200.
- The “battle” was really a massacre
- Marks the end of the major Native American frontier wars

Attempts at Assimilation

- Helen Hunt Jackson “A Century of Dishonor” (1881) documented mistreatment by the federal government of Native people
- Boarding schools such as Carlisle Indian School were intended to assimilate Native people
- Dawes Severalty Act (1887) End tribal ownership of land
  - Reservations split into 160 acre private farms
  - Natives had the potential to receive citizenship if they lived on land for 25 years and “adopted the habits of civilized life.”
  - Remaining reservation land sold to white settlers (oftentimes the best land)
DESTRUCTION OF NATIVE LIFE

• Tremendous population and territorial decline
  – Disease
  – Numerous wars in the late 19th century
  – Decline of bison population
  – Failed treaty agreements and forced removal to reservations

“Closing” of the Frontier

• Oklahoma Territory was opened up to settlement in 1889
  – Great land rush takes place
• Frederick Jackson Turner writes “The Significance of the Frontier In American History” (1893)
  – Argues frontier ended in 1890
  – Emphasizes the importance of the frontier on American identity
  – Safety valve theory: could head west when the times were tough
  – Ignores contributions of people already there, women, fact people by 1890s moving to urban areas
• Connection: Overseas expansion in 1890s

FARMERS ORGANIZE

• Farming was becoming more commercialized and specialized.
• Problems for farmers: 1) Falling prices 2) unfair railroad business practices 3) high cost of machinery 4) tight money supply 5) high tariffs
• The Grange Movement: organized social and educational activities. Later demanded collective reforms.
• Want: government regulation and ownership of business
  – Lobbied state legislatures for reforms
• Munn v. Illinois (1877) upheld law: states could regulate railroads
• Wabash Case (1886) states cannot regulate interstate commerce
  – Leads to passage of Interstate Commerce Act (1887)
• Farmers Alliance: Founded in Texas (1870s)- excluded blacks, ignored tenant farmers
• Significant 3rd Party: Populist Party
  – Platform: Government ownership of railroads
  – Free & unlimited coinage of silver (increase $$ supply)
  – Graduated income tax (rich pay more)
  – Direct election of Senator, use of initiatives and referendums
Growing frustration over the laissez faire capitalist system

- Farmers are organizing: Grange, Alliance, Populist
- Industrial Problems:
  - Homestead Strike (1892): Workers at Carnegie's steel plant are defeated
  - Panic of 1893: as a result of overspeculation the stock market crashes.
  - Grover Cleveland continues laissez faire approach
  - Coxey's Army (1894): unemployed march to D.C. demanding the fed government hire jobless for public works jobs
  - Pullman Strike (1894): President Cleveland uses the army and court injunction to defeat the strike.
  - Election of 1896: William McKinley (R) vs. William Jennings Bryan (D): Cross of Gold Speech, Populist fade, Republican McKinley wins

Closing out the 19th Century

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