

19



TRANSFORMING THE WEST 1865–1890



WHAT WAS the federal government's policy toward Indians in the late nineteenth century?

HOW DID Western railroads shape the West and affect the East?



WHAT BROUGHT the flood of migrants to the West in the late nineteenth century?

HOW WAS the environment transformed by Westward expansion?



1865
1890



Credits

- f. Chinese mining laborers, Idaho, 76-119.2/A, Idaho State Historical Society.

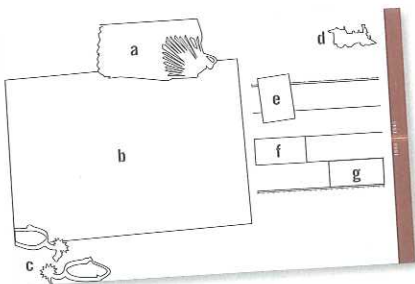


WHERE TO LEARN MORE

- ★ Golden Spike National Historic Site, near Promontory, Utah
www.nps.gov/gosp

IMAGE KEY

for pages 496–497



- a. A feather fan carried by Yuchi dancers. American Museum of Natural History
- b. Passengers and the train crew shooting buffalo on the line of the Kansas-Pacific Railroad: color line engraving, 1871.
- c. Confederate cavalry spurs from the American Civil War.
- d. An old fashioned steam locomotive engine with an attached coal car.
- e. Chief Wooly Head's Wife and Child.
- f. A Chinese mine worker steadies a water cannon in a shallow riverbed in Idaho with a fellow laborer standing nearby.
- g. Thirty-three horse team harvester, cutting, threshing and sacking wheat, c. 1902.

After a pleasant ride of about six miles we attained a very high elevation, and, passing through a gorge of the mountains, we entered a level, circular valley, about three miles in diameter, surrounded on every side by mountains. The track is on the eastern side of the plain, and at the point of junction extends in nearly a southwest and northeast direction. Two lengths of rails are left for today's work. . . . At a quarter to nine A.M. the whistle of the C.P. [Central Pacific Railroad] is heard, and soon arrives, bringing a number of passengers. . . . Two additional trains arrive from the East. At a quarter to eleven the Chinese workmen commenced leveling the bed of the road with picks and shovels, preparatory to placing the ties. . . . At a quarter past eleven the Governor's train arrived. The engine was gayly decorated with little flags and ribbons, the red, white, and blue. At 12 M. the rails were laid, and the iron spikes driven. The last tie that was laid is 8 feet long, 8 inches wide, and 6 inches thick. It is of California laurel, finely polished, and is ornamented with a silver escutcheon bearing the following inscription: "The last tie laid on the Pacific Railroad, May 10th, 1869." . . .

The point of contact is 1,085 4/5 miles from Omaha, leaving 690 miles for the C.P. portion of the work. The engine Jupiter, of the C.P., and engine 119, of the U.P.R.R. [Union Pacific Railroad] moved up within thirty feet of each other. . . . Three cheers were given for the Government of the United States, for the railroad, for the President, for the Star Spangled Banner, for the laborers, and for those who furnished the means respectively. The four spikes—two gold and two silver—were furnished by Montana, Idaho, California, and Nevada. They were about seven inches long, and a little larger than the iron spike. Dr. Harkness, of Sacramento, on presenting to Governor Stanford a spike of pure gold, delivered a short and appropriate speech. The Hon. F.A. Tuttle, of Nevada, presented Dr. Durant with a spike of silver, saying: 'To the iron of the East, and the gold of the West, Nevada adds her link of silver to span the continent and wed the oceans'. . . . The two locomotives then moved up until they touched each other, . . . and at one P.M., under an almost cloudless sky, and in the presence of about one thousand one hundred people, the completion of the greatest railroad on earth was announced.

Andrew J. Russell, "The Completion of the Pacific Railroad," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, June 5, 1869.

ANDREW J. RUSSELL'S short journey on the morning of May 10, 1869, from Ogden to Promontory Summit, Utah, enabled him to document what he called "the completion of the greatest work of the age, by which this vast continent is spanned, from ocean to ocean, by the iron path of travel and commerce." The transcontinental railroad symbolized the classic American journey, a people and a nation moving westward.

Its construction also set a precedent for western development. The two railroads that met in a desolate sagebrush basin were huge corporate enterprises, not individual



efforts, and corporations dominated Western growth as much as they did Eastern industrialization. The federal government also played a crucial role. Congress had authorized the Union Pacific and Central Pacific to build the railroad link, given them the right-of-way for their tracks, and provided huge land grants and financial subsidies.

The railroads' dependence on capital investment, engineering knowledge, technological innovations, and labor skills also typified Western development. Their labor forces both reflected and reinforced the region's racial and ethnic diversity. European immigrants, Mexicans, Paiute Indians, both male and female, and especially Chinese, recruited in California and Asia, chiseled the tunnels through the mountains, built the bridges over the gulches, and laid the ties and rails across the plains. But Russell kept the Chinese out of the famous photographs he took at Promontory, an indication of the racism that marred so many Western achievements.

Laying track as quickly as possible to collect the subsidies awarded by the mile, the railroad corporations adopted callous and reckless construction tactics, resulting in waste, deaths (perhaps as many as a thousand Chinese), and environmental destruction—consequences that would also characterize other forms of economic development in the West. And as with most other American undertakings in the West, the construction provoked conflict with the Cheyenne, Sioux, and other tribes.

The most important feature of the railroad, however, was that traffic moved in both directions. The railroads not only helped move soldiers and settlers into the West, but they also moved western products to the growing markets in the East. Thus the railroad both integrated the West into the rest of the nation and made it a crucial part of the larger economic revolution that transformed America after the Civil War.



This photograph, taken by A.J. Russell, records the celebration at the joining of the Central Pacific and Union Pacific railroads on May 10, 1869, at Promontory Summit, Utah. Railroads transformed the American West, linking the region to outside markets, spurring rapid settlement, and threatening Indian survival.

Union Pacific Historical Collection



17-3

Horace Greeley, *An Overland Journey* (1860)

SUBJUGATING NATIVE AMERICANS

The initial obstacle to exploiting the West was the people already living there, for despite Easterners' image of the West as an unsettled wilderness, Native Americans had long inhabited it and had developed a variety of economies and cultures. As white people pressed westward, they attempted to subjugate the Indians, displace them from their lands, and strip them of their culture. Conquest forced Indians onto desolate reservations, but efforts to destroy their beliefs and transform their way of life were less successful.

TRIBES AND CULTURES

Throughout the West, Indians had adapted to their environment. Each activity encouraged their sensitivity to the natural world, and each had social and political implications.

In the Northwest, abundant food from rich waters and dense forests gave rise to complex and stable Indian societies. During summer fishing runs, the Tillamooks, Chinooks, and other tribes caught salmon, which sustained them

WHAT WAS the federal government's policy toward Indians in the late nineteenth century?

WHERE TO LEARN MORE



National Museum of the American Indian, New York, New York
www.nmai.si.edu/index.asp



Chronology

1858	Gold is discovered in Colorado and Nevada.	1876	Indians devastate U.S. troops in the Battle of the Little Bighorn.
1860	Gold is discovered in Idaho.	1879	“Exodusters” migrate to Kansas.
1862	Homestead Act is passed. Gold is discovered in Montana.	1885	Chinese massacred at Rock Springs, Wyoming.
1864	Militia slaughters Cheyennes at Sand Creek, Colorado.	1887	Dawes Act is passed.
1867	Cattle drives make Abilene the first cow town.	1890	Government troops kill two hundred Sioux at Wounded Knee, South Dakota.
1868	Fort Laramie Treaty is signed.	1892	Mining violence breaks out at Coeur d’Alene, Idaho.
1869	First transcontinental railroad is completed.	1893	Western Federation of Miners is organized.
1874	Gold is discovered in the Black Hills. Turkey Red wheat is introduced to Kansas. Barbed wire is patented.		

throughout the year. During the mild winters, they developed artistic handicrafts, elaborate social institutions, and a satisfying religious life.

The Cahuillas of the southern California desert survived only through their ability to extract food and medicines from desert plants. In the dry and barren Great Basin of Utah and Nevada, Shoshones and Paiutes ate grasshoppers and other insects to supplement their diet of rabbits, mice, and other small animals. Such harsh environments restricted the size, strength, and organizational complexity of societies.

In the Southwest, the Pueblos dwelled in permanent towns of adobe buildings and practiced intensive agriculture. Because tribal welfare depended on maintaining complex irrigation systems, the Zunis, Hopis, and other Pueblos emphasized community solidarity rather than individual ambition. Town living encouraged social stability and the development of effective governments, elaborate religious ceremonies, and creative arts.

The most numerous Indian groups in the West lived on the Great Plains. The largest of these tribes included the Lakotas or Sioux, who roamed from western Minnesota through the Dakotas; the Cheyennes and Arapahos, who controlled much of the central plains between the Platte and Arkansas Rivers; and the Comanches, predominant on the southern plains.

Despite their diversity, all tribes emphasized community welfare over individual interest. Their economies were based on subsistence rather than profit. They tried to live in harmony with nature to ward off sickness, injury, death, or misfortune. And they were absorbed with the need to establish proper relations with supernatural forces that linked human beings with all other living things. These connections also shaped Indians’ attitude toward land, which they regarded—like air and water—as part of nature to be held and used communally.

Disdaining Native Americans and their religion, white people condemned them as “savages” to be converted or exterminated. Rejecting the concept of communal property, most white people demanded land for the exclusive use of ambitious individuals.

Perhaps no one expressed these cultural differences better than the great Sioux leader Sitting Bull. Referring to the forces of the spirit world, he declared:

It is through this mysterious power that we too have our being and we therefore yield to our neighbors, even our animal neighbors, the same

QUICK REVIEW

Indians in the West

- ◆ Desert tribes had to contend with a harsh environment.
- ◆ The cultures of many Southwest tribes emphasized communal solidarity.
- ◆ The most numerous Indian groups in the West lived on the Great Plains.



right as ourselves, to inhabit this land. Yet, hear me, people. We have now to deal with another race. . . . Possession is a disease with them. These people have made many rules that the rich may break but the poor may not. . . . They claim this mother of ours, the earth, for their own and fence their neighbors away; they deface her with their buildings. . . . That nation is like a spring freshet that overruns its banks and destroys all who are in its path. We cannot dwell side by side.

FEDERAL INDIAN POLICY

The government had in the 1830s adopted the policy of separating white people and Indians. Eastern tribes were moved west of Missouri and resettled on land then scorned as “the Great American Desert,” unsuitable for white habitation and development. This division collapsed in the 1840s when the United States acquired Texas, California, and Oregon. Mormons developed a trail through Indian country in 1847 and settled on Indian lands; gold and silver discoveries beginning in 1848 prompted miners to migrate across Indian lands. Rather than curbing white settler entry into Indian country, the government built forts along the overland trails and ordered the army to punish Indians who threatened travelers.

White migration devastated the Plains Indians. Livestock destroyed timber and pastures along streams in the semiarid region; trails eliminated buffalo from tribal hunting ranges. The Pawnees in particular suffered from the violation of their hunting grounds. One observer reported that “their trail could be followed by the dead bodies of those who starved to death.” The Plains Indians also suffered from the white migrants’ diseases for which Indians had no natural immunity. Cholera killed more than half of the Comanches and Kiowas, and most other tribes lost up to 40 percent of their population from the new diseases. Emigrants along the Platte River routes came across “villages of the dead.”

Recognizing that the Great American Desert could support agriculture, white settlers pressed on the eastern edge of the plains and demanded the removal of the Indians. Simultaneously, railroad companies developed plans to lay tracks across the plains. The federal government decided to relocate the tribes to separate and specific reserves. In exchange for accepting such restrictions, the government would provide the tribes with annual payments of livestock, clothing, and other materials. To implement this policy, the government negotiated treaties, extinguishing Indian rights to millions of acres, and ordered the army to keep Indians on their assigned reservations.

The commissioner of Indian affairs aptly described the Indians’ lot: “By alternate persuasion and force these tribes have been removed, step by step, from mountain to valley, and from river to plain, until they have been pushed halfway across the continent. They can go no further; on the ground they now occupy the crisis must be met, and their future determined.”

WARFARE AND DISPOSSESSION

From the 1850s to the 1880s, warfare engulfed the advancing frontier. Invading Americans bore ultimate responsibility for these wars. Even the men who led the white military assault conceded as much. General Philip Sheridan, for example, declared of the Indians: “We took away their country and their means of support, broke up their mode of living, their habits of life, introduced disease and decay among them, and it was for this and against this that they made war. Could anyone expect less?”

QUICK REVIEW

White Migration and the Plains Indians

- ◆ Livestock destroyed timber and pastures.
- ◆ Buffalo were eliminated from tribal hunting grounds.
- ◆ New diseases killed as much as 40 percent of some Indian groups.



One notorious example of white aggression occurred in 1864 at Sand Creek, Colorado. When gold was discovered on land only recently guaranteed to the Cheyennes and Arapahos, white settlers wanted to eliminate the Indian presence altogether. John Chivington, a Methodist minister, led a militia force to the Sand Creek camp of a band of Cheyennes under Black Kettle, an advocate of peace and accommodation. An American flag flew over the Indian camp. Under Chivington's orders to "kill and scalp all, big and little," the militia attacked Black Kettle's sleeping camp without warning. One white trader later described the helpless Indians: "They were scalped, their brains knocked out; the [white] men used their knives, ripped open women, clubbed little children, knocked them in the head with their guns, beat their brains out, mutilated their bodies in every sense of the word."

The **Sand Creek Massacre** appalled many Easterners. The Cheyennes, protested the commissioner of Indian affairs, were "butchered in cold blood by troops in the service of the United States." A congressional investigating committee denounced Chivington for "a foul and dastardly massacre which would have disgraced the veriest savage among those who were the victims of his cruelty." Westerners, however, justified the brutality as a means to secure their own opportunities. One Western newspaper demanded, "Kill all the Indians that can be killed. Complete extermination is our motto."

Other tribes were more formidable. None was more powerful than the Sioux, whose military skills had been honed in conflicts with other tribes. On the Bozeman Trail, in what the Lakotas called the Battle of One Hundred Slain, the Sioux wiped out an army detachment led by a captain who had boasted that he would destroy the Sioux nation. General William T. Sherman, who had marched through Georgia against Confederates, knew that the odds were different in the West. Fifty Plains Indians, he declared, could "checkmate" three thousand soldiers. General Philip Sheridan calculated that the army suffered proportionately greater losses fighting Indians than either the Union or the Confederacy had suffered in the Civil War.

Describing white actions as "uniformly unjust," a federal peace commission in 1868 negotiated the **Second Treaty of Fort Laramie**, in which the United States abandoned the Bozeman Trail and other routes and military posts on Sioux territory—one of the few times Indians forced the advancing whites to retreat. The United States also guaranteed the Sioux permanent ownership of the western half of South Dakota and the right to inhabit and hunt in the Powder River country in Wyoming and Montana, an area to be henceforth closed to all whites.

For several years, peace prevailed on the northern plains, but in 1872, the Northern Pacific Railroad began to build westward on a route that would violate Sioux territory. Rather than stopping the railroad, the government sent an army to protect the surveyors. Sherman regarded railroad expansion as the most important factor in defeating the Indians, for it would allow troops to travel as far in a day as they could march in weeks. Other technological developments, from the telegraph to rapid-fire weapons, also undercut the skills of the Indian warrior.

The white people's destruction of the buffalo also threatened Native Americans. From 1872 to 1874, white hunters killed 4 million buffalo. Railroad construction disrupted grazing areas, and hunters working for the railroads killed hordes of buffalo, both to feed construction crews and to prevent the animals from obstructing rail traffic. Hide hunters slaughtered even more of the beasts for their skins, leaving the bodies to rot. Reporters found vast areas covered with "decaying, putrid, stinking remains" of buffalo. Federal officials encouraged the buffalo's extermination because it would destroy the Indians' basis for survival.

The climactic provocation of the Sioux began in 1874 when Colonel George A. Custer led an invasion to survey the Black Hills for a military post and confirm



WHERE TO LEARN MORE



Fort Laramie National Historic Site,
near Guernsey, Wyoming
www.nps.gov/foia/

Sand Creek Massacre The near annihilation in 1864 of Black Kettle's Cheyenne band by Colorado troops under Colonel John Chivington's orders to "kill and scalp all, big and little."

Second Treaty of Fort Laramie The treaty acknowledging U.S. defeat in the Great Sioux War in 1868 and supposedly guaranteeing the Sioux perpetual land and hunting rights in South Dakota, Wyoming, and Montana.



the presence of gold. Thousands of white miners then illegally poured onto Sioux land. The army insisted that the Sioux leave their Powder River hunting grounds. When the Sioux refused, the army attacked. The Oglala Sioux under Crazy Horse checked one prong of this offensive at the Battle of the Rosebud in June 1876 and then joined a larger body of Sioux under Sitting Bull and their Cheyenne and Arapaho allies to overwhelm a second American column, under Custer, at the **Battle of the Little Bighorn**.

But the Indians had to divide their forces to find fresh grass for their horses and to hunt for their own food. “We have been running up and down in this country, but they follow us from one place to another,” lamented Sitting Bull about the Army’s pursuit. He led his followers to Canada, but the other bands capitulated in the winter of 1876–1877. The conquest of the northern plains came through attrition and the inability of the traditional Indian economy to support resistance to the technologically and numerically superior white forces.

The defeat of the Sioux nearly completed the Indian Wars. Smaller tribes, among them the Kiowas, Modocs, and Utes, had been overrun earlier. In the Northwest, the Nez Percé had outwitted and outfought the larger forces of the U.S. Army over a 1,500-mile retreat toward Canada. The exhausted Nez Percé surrendered after being promised a return to their own land, but the government refused to honor that pledge too and imprisoned the tribe in Oklahoma, where more than a third perished within a few years.

In the Southwest, the Navajos and the Comanches were subdued as the Sioux had been—by persistent pursuit that prevented them from obtaining food. The last to abandon resistance were the Apaches, under Geronimo. In 1886, he and thirty-six followers, facing five thousand U.S. troops, finally surrendered. Geronimo and other Apaches were sent to a military prison in Florida; the tribes were herded onto reservations. The Oglala chief Red Cloud concluded of the white invasion: “They made us many promises, more than I can remember, but they never kept but one. They promised to take our land, and they took it.”

LIFE ON THE RESERVATION: AMERICANIZATION

The next objective of government policy was to require Indians to adopt white peoples’ ways. This goal did not involve assimilation but merely “Americanization,” an expression of cultural conquest.

The government received aid from many Christian denominations, which had long proposed nonviolent methods of controlling Indians. Beginning in the 1860s, they gained influence in reaction to the military’s brutality. Religious groups helped staff the reservations as agents, missionaries, or civilian employees. Reformers wanted to change Indian religious and family life, train Indian children in Protestant beliefs, and force Indians to accept private ownership and market capitalism.

Confined on reservations and dependent on government rations, Indians were a captive audience for white reformers. White administrators sought to destroy traditional Indian government by prohibiting tribal councils from meeting and imprisoning tribal leaders.

Protestant religious groups persuaded the Bureau of Indian Affairs to frame a criminal code prohibiting and penalizing tribal religious practices. Established in 1884, the code remained in effect until 1933. It was first invoked to ban the Sun Dance, the chief expression of Plains Indian religion. To enforce the ban, the government withheld rations and disrupted the religious ceremonies that transmitted traditional values. In 1890, the army even used machine guns to suppress the Ghost Dance religion, killing at least two hundred Sioux men, women, and children at **Wounded Knee**, South Dakota.



WHERE TO LEARN MORE

Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. Crow Agency, Montana
www.nps.gov/libi/home.htm



17-7
 Tragedy at Wounded Knee
 (1890)

Battle of the Little Bighorn Battle in which Colonel George A. Custer and the Seventh Cavalry were defeated by the Sioux and Cheyennes under Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse in Montana in 1876.

Wounded Knee Massacre The U.S. Army’s brutal winter massacre in 1890 of at least two hundred Sioux men, women, and children as part of the government’s assault on the tribe’s Ghost Dance religion.



◆ AMERICAN VIEWS ◆

ZITKALA-SA'S VIEW OF AMERICANIZATION



Zitkala-Sa, or Red Bird, was an 8-year-old Sioux girl when she was taken from her South Dakota reservation in 1884 and placed in a Midwestern missionary school, where she encountered what she called the "iron routine" of the "civilizing machine." Here she recalls her first day at the school.

WHAT LESSONS were the missionaries trying to teach Zitkala-Sa? What lessons did Zitkala-Sa learn?

Soon we were being drawn rapidly away by the white man's horses. When I saw the lonely figure of my mother vanish in the distance, a sense of regret settled heavily upon me. . . . I no longer felt free to be myself, or to voice my own feelings. The tears trickled down my cheeks, and I buried my face in the folds of my blanket. Now the first step, parting me from my mother, was taken, and all my belated tears availed nothing. . . . Trembling with fear and distrust of the palefaces . . . I was as frightened and bewildered as the captured young of a wild creature. . . .

[At the missionary school,] the constant clash of harsh noises, with an undercurrent of many voices murmuring an unknown tongue, made a bedlam within which I was securely tied. And though my spirit tore itself in struggling for its lost freedom, all was useless. . . .

We were placed in a line of girls who were marching into the dining room. . . . A small bell was tapped, and each of the pupils drew a chair from under the table. Supposing this act meant they were to be seated, I pulled out mine and at once slipped into it from one side. But when I turned my head, I saw that I was the only one seated, and all the rest at our table remained standing. Just as I began to rise, looking shyly around to see how chairs were to be used, a second bell was sounded. All were seated at last, and I had to crawl back into my chair again. I heard a man's voice at one end of the hall, and I looked around to see him. But all others hung their heads over their plates. As I glanced at the long chain of tables, I caught the eyes of a pale-face woman upon me. Immediately I dropped my eyes, wondering why I was so keenly watched by the strange woman. The man ceased his mutterings, and then a third bell was tapped. Every one picked up his

knife and fork and began eating. I began crying instead, for by this time I was afraid to venture anything more.

But this eating by formula was not the hardest trial in that first day. Late in the morning, my friend Judewin gave me a terrible warning. Judewin knew a few words of English; and she had overheard the paleface woman talk about cutting our long, heavy hair. Our mothers had taught us that only unskilled warriors who were captured had their hair shingled by the enemy. Among our people, short hair was worn by mourners, and shingled hair by cowards!

. . . I remember being dragged out, though I resisted by kicking and scratching wildly. In spite of myself, I was carried downstairs and tied fast in a chair. I cried aloud, shaking my head all the while until I felt the cold blades of the scissors against my neck, and heard them gnaw off one of my thick braids. Then I lost my spirit. . . . My long hair was shingled like a coward's. In my anguish I moaned for my mother, but no one came to comfort me. Not a soul reasoned quietly with me, as my own mother used to do; for now I was only one of many little animals driven by a herder. . . .

I blamed the hard-working, well-meaning, ignorant [missionary] woman who was inculcating in our hearts her superstitious ideas. Though I was sullen in all my little troubles, as soon as I felt better I was . . . again actively testing the chains which tightly bound my individuality like a mummy for burial. . . .

Many specimens of civilized peoples visited the Indian school. The city folks with canes and eyeglasses, the countrymen with sunburnt cheeks and clumsy feet, forgot their relative social ranks in an ignorant curiosity. Both sorts of these Christian palefaces were alike astounded at seeing the children of savage warriors so docile and industrious. . . .

In this fashion many [whites] have passed idly through the Indian schools during the last decade, afterward to boast of their charity to the North American Indian. But few there are who have paused to question whether real life or long-lasting death lies beneath this semblance of civilization.

Source: Zitkala-Sa, "The School Days of an Indian Girl" (1900). Reprinted in *American Indian Stories* (Glorieta, NM: Rio Grande Press, 1976).



FROM THEN TO NOW

The Legacy of Indian Americanization

The assumptions, objectives, and failures of the Americanization policies of the nineteenth century continue to affect American Indians more than a century later. Although periodically modified (see Chapter 27), these policies long persisted, as did their consequences. In the 1970s official investigations reported that the continuing attempts of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to use education to force Indians into an Anglo-American mold “have been marked by near total failure, haunted by prejudice and ignorance.”

Similarly, the economic problems on reservations in the nineteenth century foreshadowed conditions a century later. Today Indians rank at the bottom of almost all measures of economic well-being. Lack of economic opportunity leaves isolated reservations with unemployment rates averaging 40 percent. Off the reservation, discrimination, limited skills, and inadequate capital further restrict Indians’ job prospects.

Indians also continue to suffer from poor health standards. They have the highest rates of infant mortality, pneumonia, hepatitis, tuberculosis, and suicide in the nation and a life expectancy twenty-five years less than the national average.

Indian culture, however, did not succumb to the pressure to Americanize. In the words of a Shoshone writer, “Indian history didn’t end in the 1800s. Indian cultures . . . evolve, grow, and continually try to renew themselves.”

In recent decades, Indian peoples have begun to reclaim their past and assert control over their future. Dramatic protests—most notably a confrontation in 1973 between Indian activists and the FBI at Wounded Knee, the site of the notorious 1890 massacre—have called attention to Indian grievances. But Indians have also moved effectively to regain control of the institutions that define their cultural identity. They have established com-

munity schools and tribal community colleges that provide a bilingual, bicultural education, seeking to preserve traditions while opening new opportunities. They have built tribal museums and visitor centers in order to shape the presentation of their histories and cultures. By the late 1990s there were more than 200 such institutions, from the Seneca-Iroquois Museum in upstate New York to the Makah Tribal Museum on the Olympic peninsula.

Indians have also secured legal recognition of their right to their cultural patrimony. The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 gives Indian communities the right to reclaim, or “repatriate,” material artifacts and skeletal remains from museums and historical societies. The Native American Religious Freedom Act of 1978 affirmed their right to practice their traditional religions and have access to sacred sites. Indian dance—once suppressed by white authorities—has revived, and the powwow has become a national Indian institution and symbol of Indian identity.

With the help of historians and lawyers, Indians are also winning enforcement of long-ignored treaty provisions guaranteeing them land ownership and water, hunting, and fishing rights. Court decisions have recognized the right of tribes to permit gambling on their reservations, and some tribes have built profitable casinos, attracting economic development that creates new job opportunities for their people and permits them to stay on their land.

Indians still confront hostility and condescension reminiscent of attitudes a century ago. A white museum official, for example—seeking to prevent the repatriation of Pawnee artifacts—claimed recently that Indians do not have a real religion. But Indians have proved resilient in preserving their cultural heritage and keeping it vibrant for future generations.

The government and religious groups also used education to eliminate Indian values and traditions. They isolated Indian children from tribal influences at off-reservation boarding schools. Troops often seized Indian children for these schools, where they were confined until after adolescence. The schoolchildren were forced to speak English, attend Christian services, and profess white American values. (American Views: “Zitkala-Sa’s View of Americanization.”)

Finally, government agents taught Indian men how to farm and distributed agricultural implements; Indian women were taught household tasks. These tactics reduced the status of Indian women, whose traditional responsibility for agriculture had guaranteed them respect and authority. Nor could men farm successfully on



Dawes Act An 1887 law terminating tribal ownership of land and allotting some parcels of land to individual Indians with the remainder opened for white settlement.

reservation lands, which white settlers had already rejected as unproductive. White people, however, believed that the real obstacle to economic prosperity for the Indians was their rejection of private property. As one Bureau of Indian Affairs official declared, Indians must be taught to be more “mercenary and ambitious to obtain riches.” Congress in 1887 passed the **Dawes Act**, which divided tribal lands among individual Indians. Western settlers and developers who had no interest in the Indians supported the law because it provided that reservation lands not allocated to individual Indians should be sold to white people. Under this “reform,” the amount of land held by Indians declined by more than half by 1900.

White acquisition and exploitation of Indian land seemed to be the only constant in the nation’s treatment of Native Americans. Assimilation itself failed because most Indians clung to their own values and rejected as selfish, dishonorable, and obsessively materialistic those favored by white people. But if it was not yet clear what place Native Americans would have in America, it was at least clear by 1900 that they would no longer stand in the way of Western development.

EXPLOITING THE MOUNTAINS: THE MINING BONANZA

HOW DID Western railroads shape the West and affect the East?

Migrants to the American West exploited the region’s natural resources in pursuit of wealth and success. Promoters, artists, and novelists developed images of the West as a land of adventure, opportunity, and freedom; pioneers as self-reliant individuals. All too often, however, reality differed from legend.

In the later nineteenth century, the West experienced several stages of economic development, but all of them transformed the environment, produced economic and social conflict, and integrated the region into the modern national economy. The first stage of development centered on mining, which attracted swarms of eager prospectors into the mountains and deserts in search of gold and silver. They founded vital communities, stimulated the railroad construction that brought further development, and contributed to the disorderly heritage of the frontier (see Map 19–1). But few gained the wealth they had expected.

RUSHES AND MINING CAMPS

The first important gold rush in the Rocky Mountains came in Colorado in 1859. More than 100,000 prospectors crowded into Denver and the nearby mining camps. Simultaneously, the discovery of the famous Comstock Lode in Nevada produced an eastward rush of miners from California. Some 17,000 claims were made around Virginia City, Nevada, the main mining camp. Strikes in the northern Rockies followed in the 1860s. Boise City and Lewiston in Idaho and Helena in Montana became major mining centers, and other camps prospered briefly before fading into ghost towns. Later, other minerals shaped frontier development: silver in Nevada, silver and lead in Colorado and Idaho, silver and in Arizona and Montana.

Mining camps were often isolated by both distance and terrain. They frequently consisted of only flimsy shanties, saloons, crude stores, dance halls, and brothels, all hastily built by entrepreneurs. Such towns reflected the speculative, exploitive, and transitory character of mining itself. And yet they did contribute to permanent settlement by encouraging agriculture, industry, and transportation in the surrounding areas.





MAP EXPLORATION

To explore an interactive version of this map, go to <http://www.prenhall.com/goldfield2/map19.1>



MAP 19-1

Economic Development of the West: Railroads, Mining, and Cattle, 1860–1900 The spread of the railroad network across the West promoted economic development by providing access to outside markets for its resources. The discovery of precious metals often attracted the railroads, but stockraisers had to open cattle trails to reach the railheads.

WHICH CITIES were most affected by the growth of railroads in the West?



QUICK REVIEW

Prostitution

- ◆ Largest source of paid employment for women in the West.
- ◆ Most women entered prostitution as a result of economic or familial hardship.
- ◆ Authorities showed little interest in welfare of prostitutes.

The camps had an unusual social and economic structure. The population was overwhelmingly male. In 1860, for example, about 2,300 men and only thirty women resided in the Nevada mining camps of Virginia City and Gold Hill. Women found far fewer economic opportunities than men did on the mining frontier. Several opened hotels. Those with less capital worked as seamstresses and cooks and took in washing. The few married women often earned more than their husbands by boarding other miners willing to pay for the trappings of family life.

But the largest source of paid employment for women was prostitution. Mary Josephine Welch, an entrepreneurial Irish immigrant, settled in Helena in 1867 and soon established the Red Light Saloon, the first of many saloons, dance halls, and brothels that she owned and operated. Most women who engaged in such activities, however, were far less successful, and they entered brothels because they already suffered from economic hardship or a broken family. But prostitution usually only worsened their distress. By the 1890s, as men gained control of the vice trade, violence, suicide, alcoholism, disease, drug addiction, and poverty overcame most prostitutes. Public authorities showed little concern for the abuse and even murder of prostitutes, although they used “sporting women” to raise revenue by fining or taxing them. Protestant women in Denver and other cities established “rescue homes” to protect or rehabilitate prostitutes and dance hall girls from male vice and violence.

The gender imbalance in mining camps also made saloons prevalent among local businesses. An 1879 business census of Leadville, Colorado, reported 10 dry goods stores, 4 banks, and 4 churches, but 120 saloons, 19 beer halls, and 118 gambling houses. Saloons were social centers in towns where most miners lived in crowded and dirty tents and rooming houses. As Mark Twain wrote in *Roughing It* (1872), his account of Virginia City, “The cheapest and easiest way to become an influential man and be looked up to by the community at large, was to stand behind a bar, wear a cluster-diamond pin, and sell whiskey.” One observer of the Montana camps reported that men, “unburdened by families, drink whenever they feel like it, whenever they have money to pay for it, and whenever there is nothing else to do. . . . Bad manners follow, profanity becomes a matter of course. . . . Excitability and nervousness brought on by rum help these tendencies along, and then to correct this state of things the pistol comes into play.” Disputes over mining claims could become violent, adding to the disorder. The California mining town of Bodie experienced twenty-nine killings between 1877 and 1883. But such killings occurred only within a small group of males who were known as the Badmen of Bodie. Daily life for most people was safe.

Indeed, personal and criminal violence, which remains popularly associated with the West, was less pervasive than collective violence. White men often drove Mexicans and Chinese from their claims or refused to let them work in higher paid occupations in the mining camps. The Chinese had originally migrated to the California gold fields and thereafter spread to the new mining areas of the Rockies and the Great Basin, where they worked in mining when possible, operated laundries and restaurants, and held menial jobs like hauling water and chopping wood. In 1870, more than a quarter of Idaho’s population and nearly 10 percent of Montana’s was Chinese. Where they were numerous, the Chinese built their own communities and maintained their customs.

But racism and fear of economic competition sparked hostility and violence against the Chinese almost everywhere. The worst anti-Chinese violence occurred in Rock Springs, Wyoming, in 1885 when white miners killed twenty-eight unresisting Chinese miners and drove away all seven hundred residents from the local



Chinatown. Although the members of the mob were well known, the grand jury, speaking for the white majority, found no cause for legal action: “Though we have examined a large number of witnesses, no one has been able to testify to a single criminal act committed by any known white person.” There was community sanction for violence against racial minorities.

LABOR AND CAPITAL

New technology had dramatic consequences for both miners and the mining industry. Initially, mining was an individual enterprise in which miners used simple tools, such as picks and shovels, wash pans, and rockers, to work shallow surface deposits known as placers. More expensive operations were needed to reach the precious metal buried in the earth.

Hydraulic mining, for example, required massive capital investment to build reservoirs, ditches, and troughs to power high-pressure water cannons that would pulverize hillsides and uncover the mineral deposits. Still more expensive and complex was quartz, or lode, mining, sometimes called hard rock mining. Time, money, and technology were required to sink a shaft into the earth. Timber was needed for underground chambers and tunnels. Pumps were installed to remove underground water, and hoists were constructed to lower men and lift out rock. Stamp mills and smelters were built to treat the ore.

Such complex, expensive, and permanent operations necessarily came under corporate control. Often financed with Eastern or British capital, new corporations integrated the mining industry into the larger economy. Hard rock mining produced more complex ores than could be treated in remote mining towns, but with the new railroad network, they were shipped to smelting plants as far away as Kansas City and St. Louis and then to refineries in Eastern cities. Western ores thus became part of national and international business. The mining industry’s increasing development of lower grade deposits led to greater capital investment and larger operations employing more workers and machinery.

But the new corporate mining had many disturbing effects. Hydraulic mining washed away hillsides, depositing debris in canyons and valleys to a depth of 100 feet or more, clogging rivers and causing floods, and burying thousands of acres of farmland. Such damage provoked an outcry and eventually led to government regulation.

Corporate mining also transformed prospectors into wage workers with restricted opportunities. Miners’ status declined as new machinery like power drills reduced the need for skilled laborers and prompted employers to hire cheaper workers from eastern and southern Europe. Moreover, mining corporations did little to protect miners’ health or safety. Miners died in cave-ins, explosions, and fires or from the great heat and poisonous gases in underground mines. Miners called the power hoists “man killers” because they frequently crushed and dismembered workers. In 1889, a Montana inspector of mines concluded that “death lurks even in the things which are designed as benefits.”

To protect their interests, miners organized unions. These functioned as benevolent societies, using members’ dues to pay benefits to injured miners or their survivors. Several unions established hospitals. Union halls offered an alternative to the saloons by serving as social and educational centers. The Miners’ Union Library in Virginia City was the largest library in Nevada. Unions also promoted miners’ interests on the job. They persuaded governments to adopt mine safety legislation and, beginning in the 1880s, to appoint mine inspectors. The chief role of these state officials was to answer the question posed by the Colorado mining inspector: “How far should an industry be permitted to advance its material welfare at the expense of human life?”

QUICK REVIEW

Technology and Mining

- ◆ Mining began as an individual enterprise.
- ◆ Deeper mining required expensive equipment.
- ◆ As mining became more complex and costly, it came under corporate control.



A Chinese mine worker steadies a water cannon in a shallow riverbed in Idaho with a fellow laborer standing nearby.

Chinese mining laborers, Idaho, 76-119.2/A, Idaho State Historical Society



But mining companies frequently controlled state power and used it to crush unions. Thus in 1892, in the Coeur d' Alene district of Idaho, mining companies locked out strikers and imported a private army, which battled miners in a bloody gunfight. Management next persuaded the governor and the president to send in the state militia and the U.S. Army. State officials then suppressed the strike and the union by confining all union members and their sympathizers in stockades. When mining companies in Utah, Colorado, and Montana pursued the same aggressive tactics, the local miners' unions in the West united for strength and self-protection. In 1893, they formed one of the nation's largest and most militant unions, the Western Federation of Miners.

As the law grew stronger and the owners adopted "legalized violence" as a repressive tool, miners turned to extralegal violence. In the Western mines, then, both management's tactics—blacklisting union members, locking out strikers, obtaining court injunctions against unions, and using soldiers against workers—and labor's response mirrored conditions in the industrial East. In sum, reflecting the industrialization of the national economy, Western mining had been transformed from a small-scale prospecting enterprise characterized by individual initiative and simple tools into a large-scale corporate business characterized by impersonal management, outside capital, advanced technology, and wage labor.

EXPLOITING THE GRASS: THE CATTLE KINGDOM

WHAT BROUGHT the flood of migrants to the West in the late nineteenth century?

The development of the range cattle industry reflected the needs of an emerging Eastern urban society, the economic possibilities of the grasslands of the Great Plains, the technology of the expanding railroad network, and the requirements of corporations and capital. It also brought "cow towns" and urban development to the West.

CATTLE DRIVES AND COW TOWNS

The cattle industry originated in southern Texas, where the Spanish had introduced cattle in the eighteenth century. Developed by Mexican ranchers, "Texas longhorns" proved well adapted to the plains grasslands.

Following the Civil War, industrial expansion in the East and Midwest enlarged the urban market for food and increased the potential value of Texas steers. The extension of the railroad network into the West, moreover, opened the possibility of tapping that market. The key was to establish a shipping point on the railroads west of the settled farming regions, a step first taken in 1867 by Joseph McCoy, an Illinois cattle shipper. McCoy selected Abilene, Kansas, in his words "a very small, dead place, consisting of about one dozen log huts, low, small, rude affairs." But Abilene was also the Western railhead of the Kansas Pacific Railroad and was ringed by lush grasslands for cattle. McCoy bought 250 acres for a stockyard and imported lumber for stock pens, loading facilities, stables, and a hotel for cowhands. Texans opened the **Chisholm Trail** through Indian Territory to drive their cattle northward to Abilene. Within three years, a million and a half cattle arrived in Abilene, divided into herds of several thousand, each directed by a dozen cowhands on a "long drive" taking two to three months. With the arrival of the cattle trade, other entrepreneurs created a bustling town. As both railroads and settlement advanced westward, a series of other cow towns—Ellsworth, Wichita, Dodge City, Cheyenne—attracted the long drives, cattle herds, and urban development.



WHERE TO LEARN MORE



National Cowboy Hall of Fame,
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
www.cowboyhalloffame.org/index2.html

Chisholm Trail The route followed by Texas cattle raisers driving their herds north to markets at Kansas railheads.



As with the mining camps, the cow towns' reputation for violence was exaggerated. They adopted gun control laws, prohibiting the carrying of handguns within city limits, and established police forces to maintain order. The towns taxed prostitutes and gamblers and charged high fees for liquor licenses. By collecting such "sin taxes," Wichita was able to forgo general business taxes, thereby increasing its appeal to prospective settlers.

Most cow towns, like Abilene, dwindled into small towns serving farm populations, but like mining camps, cow towns contributed to the growth of an urban frontier. Railroads often determined the location and growth of Western cities, providing access to markets for local products, transporting supplies and machinery for residents, and attracting capital for commercial and industrial development. The West, in fact, had become the most urban region in the nation by 1890, with two-thirds of its population living in communities of at least 2,500 people.

RISE AND FALL OF OPEN-RANGE RANCHING

Indian removal and the extension of the railroad network opened land for ranching in Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, Colorado, Montana, and the Dakotas. Cattle reaching Kansas were increasingly sold to stock these northern ranges rather than for shipment to the packing houses. Ranches soon spread across the Great Plains and into the Great Basin, the Southwest, and even eastern Oregon and Washington. Calves were cheap, and ranchers did not buy, but merely used, the grazing lands of the open range, which was public land. It sufficed to acquire title to the site for a ranch house and a water source because controlling access to water in semiarid lands gave effective control of the surrounding public domain "the same as though I owned it," as one rancher explained. Ranchers thus needed to invest only in horses, primitive corrals, and bunkhouses. Their labor costs were minimal: They paid cowboys in the spring to round up new calves for branding and in the fall to herd steers to market.

By the early 1880s, the high profits from this enterprise and an expanding market for beef attracted speculative capital and reshaped the industry. Eastern and European capital flooded the West, with British investors particularly prominent. British and American corporations acquired, expanded, and managed huge ranches.

Large companies soon dominated the industry, just as they had gained control of mining. Some large companies illegally began to enclose the open range, building fences to exclude newcomers and minimize labor costs by reducing the number of cowboys needed to control the cattle. One Wyoming newspaper complained that "some morning we will wake up to find that a corporation has run a wire fence about the boundary lines of Wyoming, and all within the same have been notified to move." And a Coloradan wondered, "Will the government protect us if we poor unite and cut down their fences and let our stock have some of Uncle Sam's feed as well as them?"

The industry eventually collapsed in an economic and ecological disaster. Overgrazing replaced nutritious grasses with sagebrush, Russian thistle, and other plants that livestock found unpalatable. Ten times as much land was required to support a steer by the 1880s. Droughts in the mid-1880s further withered vegetation and enfeebled the animals. Millions of cattle starved or froze to death in terrible blizzards in 1886 and 1887.

The surviving ranchers reduced their operations, restricted the size of their herds, and tried to ensure adequate winter feed by growing hay. To decrease their dependence on natural vegetation even further, they introduced drought-resistant sorghum and new grasses; to reduce their dependence on rainfall, they drilled wells and installed windmills to pump water.



17-4

Joseph G. McCoy, *Historic Sketches of the Cattle Trade of the West and Southwest* (1874)

QUICK REVIEW

Cattle Ranching

- ◆ Indian removal and the arrival of the railroad opened land for ranching.
- ◆ High profits in the industry attracted speculative capital and large companies.
- ◆ The industry collapsed in the 1880s due to overgrazing.



Employees of the Prairie Cattle Company at the ranch headquarters in Dry Cimarron, New Mexico, in 1888. This company, a British corporation, held 8,000 square miles of land.

The Denver Public Library, Western History Department

COWHANDS AND CAPITALISTS

Cowboys' work was hard, dirty, seasonal, tedious, sometimes dangerous, and poorly paid. Many early cowboys were white Southerners unwilling or unable to return home after the Civil War. Black cowhands made up perhaps 25 percent of the trail-herd outfits. Mexican cowboys developed most of the tools, techniques, and trappings that characterized the cattle industry: from boots, chaps, and the "western" saddle to roundups and roping. Black and Mexican cowboys were often relegated to the more lowly jobs, such as wrangler, a "dust-eater" who herded horses for others to use, but most were ordi-

nary hands on ranch or trail. Except in the few all-black outfits, they were rarely ranch or trail bosses. As the industry expanded northward, more cowboys came from rural Kansas, Nebraska, and neighboring states.

Initially, in the frontier-ranching phase dominated by the long drive, cowboys were seasonal employees who worked closely with owners. They frequently expected to become independent stock raisers themselves and typically enjoyed the right to "maverick" cattle, or put their own brand on unmarked cattle. These informal rights provided opportunities to acquire property and move up the social ladder.

With the appearance of large, corporate enterprises, the traditional rights of cowboys disappeared. Employers now prohibited cowhands from running a brand of their own. One cowboy complained that these restrictions deprived a cowhand of his one way "to get on in the world." To increase labor efficiency, some companies prohibited their cowboys from drinking, gambling, and carrying guns.

Cowboy strikes broke out where corporate ranching was most advanced. The first such strike occurred in Texas in 1883 when the Panhandle Stock Association, representing large operators, prohibited ranch hands from owning their own cattle and imposed a standard wage. More than three hundred cowboys struck seven large ranches for higher wages—\$50 rather than \$30 per month—and the right to brand mavericks for themselves and to run small herds on the public domain. Ranchers evicted the cowboys, hired scabs, and brought in the Texas Rangers for assistance. The strikers were forced to leave the region.

Other strikes also failed because corporate ranches and their stock associations had the power and cowhands faced long odds in their efforts to organize. They were isolated across vast spaces and had little leverage in the industry. Members of the Northern New Mexico Cowboys Union, formed in 1886, recognized their weakness. After asking employers for "what we are worth after many years' experience," they conceded, "We are dependent on you."

The transformation of the Western cattle industry and its integration into a national economy dominated by corporations thus made the cherished image of cowboy independence and rugged individualism more myth than reality. One visitor to America in the late 1880s commented: "Out in the fabled West, the life of the 'free' cowboy is as much that of a slave as is the life of his Eastern brother, the Massachusetts mill-hand. And the slave-owner is in both cases the same—the capitalist."



OVERVIEW

GOVERNMENT LAND POLICY

Legislation	Result
Railroad land grants (1850–1871)	Granted 181 million acres to railroads to encourage construction and development
Homestead Act (1862)	Gave 80 million acres to settlers to encourage settlement
Morrill Act (1862)	Granted 11 million acres to states to sell to fund public agricultural colleges
Other grants	Granted 129 million acres to states to sell for other educational and related purposes
Dawes Act (1887)	Allotted some reservation lands to individual Indians to promote private property and weaken tribal values among Indians and offered remaining reservation lands for sale to white settlers (by 1906, some 75 million acres had been acquired by white people)
Various laws	Permitted direct sales of 100 million acres by the Land Office

EXPLOITING THE EARTH: HOMESTEADERS AND AGRICULTURAL EXPANSION

Even more than ranching and mining, agricultural growth boosted the Western economy and bound it tightly to national and world markets. In this process, the government played a significant role, as did the railroads, science and technology, Eastern and foreign capital, and the dreams and hard work of millions of rural settlers. The development of farming produced remarkable economic growth, but it left the dreams of many unfulfilled.

SETTLING THE LAND

To stimulate agricultural settlement, Congress passed the most famous land law, the Homestead Act of 1862 (see the overview table “Government Land Policy”). The measure offered 160 acres of free land to anyone who would live on the plot and farm it for five years. The governor of Nebraska exclaimed, “What a blessing this wise and humane legislation will bring to many a poor but honest and industrious family.”

However, prospective settlers found less land open to public entry than they expected. Federal land laws did not apply in much of California and the Southwest, where Spain and Mexico had previously transferred land to private owners, or in all of Texas. Elsewhere, the government had given away millions of acres to railroads, or authorized selling millions more for educational and other purposes.

Settlers in Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, and the Dakotas in the late 1860s and early 1870s often found most of the best land unavailable for homesteading and much of the rest remote from transportation facilities and markets. Forty percent of the land in Kansas, for example, was closed to homesteading, which prompted the editor of the *Kansas Farmer* to complain that “the settlement of the state is retarded by land monopolists, corporate and individual.” Although 375,000 farms were claimed by 1890 through the Homestead Act—a success by any measure—most settlers had to purchase their land.

The Homestead Act also reflected traditional Eastern conceptions of the family farm, which were inappropriate in the West. Here larger-scale farming was

HOW WAS the environment transformed by Westward expansion?



WHERE TO LEARN MORE

★ American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Museum, Lincoln, Nebraska

necessary. And the law ignored the need for capital—for machinery, buildings, livestock, and fencing—that was required for successful farming on the Great Plains.

Other forces stimulated and promoted settlement. Newspaper editors trumpeted the prospects of their region. Land companies, eager to sell their speculative holdings, sent agents through the Midwest and Europe to encourage migration. Steamship companies, interested in selling transatlantic tickets, advertised the opportunities in the American West across Europe. The Scandinavian Immigration Society generated both publicity and settlers for Minnesota; the Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society established Jewish agricultural colonies in Kansas and North Dakota. The Mormons organized the Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company, which helped more than 100,000 European immigrants settle in Utah and Idaho. Their agricultural communities, relying on communal cooperation under church supervision, succeeded where individual efforts often failed in developing this region.

Most important, railroad advertising and promotional campaigns attracted people to the West. In 1882 alone, the Northern Pacific distributed more than 630,000 pieces of promotional literature in English, Swedish, Dutch, Danish, and Norwegian. “The glowing accounts of the golden west sent out by the R.R. companies,” one pioneer later recalled, had convinced her that “they were doing a noble work to let poor people know there was such a grand haven they could reach.” Only later did she realize that not only would the railroads profit from selling their huge land reserves to settlers, but also a successful agricultural economy would produce crops to be shipped East and a demand for manufactured goods to be shipped West on their lines. The railroads therefore advanced credit to prospective farmers, provided transportation assistance, and extended technical and agricultural advice.

Migrants poured into the West, occupying and farming more acres between 1870 and 1900 than Americans had in the previous 250 years. Farmers settled in every region. But most streamed into the Great Plains states, from the Dakotas to Texas. Much of Oklahoma was settled in virtually a single day in 1889 when the government opened up lands previously reserved for Indians. A reporter described the wild land rush that created Oklahoma City in hours and claimed 2 million acres of land by nightfall: “With a shout and a yell the swift riders shot out, then followed the light buggies or wagons and last the lumbering prairie schooners and freighters’ wagons, with here and there even a man on a bicycle and many too on foot—above all a great cloud of dust hovering.”

White migrants predominated in the mass migration, but African Americans initiated one of its most dramatic episodes, a millenarian folk movement they called the Exodus, which established several black communities in Kansas and Nebraska. Many settlers came from Europe, sometimes in a chain migration of entire villages, bringing with them not only their own attitudes toward the land but also special crops, skills, settlement patterns, and agricultural practices. By 1890, the foreign-born population of North Dakota exceeded 40 percent, and nonnatives made up much of the population in California and other Western states.

Migrants moved into the West in search of opportunity, which they sometimes seized at the expense of others already there. In the Southwest, Hispanics had long lived in village communities largely outside a commercial economy, farming small tracts of irrigated land and herding sheep on communal pastures. But as more Anglos, or white Americans, arrived, their political and economic influence undermined traditional Hispanic society. Congress restricted the original Hispanic land grants to only the villagers’ home lots and irrigated fields, throwing open most of their common lands to newcomers. The notorious Santa Fe Ring, a group of lawyers and land speculators, seized millions of acres through fraud and legal chicanery.

QUICK REVIEW

Westward Migration

- ◆ The Homestead Act, promoters, and the railroad prompted migration.
- ◆ Migrants poured into the West between 1870 and 1900.
- ◆ Most migrants were whites, but African-American communities were established in Kansas and Nebraska.



Spanish Americans resisted these losses, in court or through violence. *Las Gorras Blancas* (the White Caps) staged night raids to cut fences erected by Anglo ranchers and farmers and to attack the property of railroads, the symbol of the encroaching new order. “Our purpose,” they announced, “is to protect the rights of the people in general and especially those of the helpless classes.” Such resistance, however, had little success.

As their landholdings shrank, Hispanic villagers could not maintain their pastoral economy. Many became seasonal wage laborers in the Anglo-dominated economy, sometimes working as stoop labor in the commercial sugar beet fields that emerged in the 1890s, sometimes working on the railroads or in the mines. Women also participated in this new labor market. Previously crucial to the subsistence village economy, they now sought wage labor as cooks and domestic servants in railroad towns and mining camps. Hispanics retained some cultural autonomy, but they had little influence over the larger processes of settlement and development.

HOME ON THE RANGE

Farmers and their families encountered many difficulties, especially on the Great Plains, where they had to adapt to a radically new environment. The scarcity of trees on the plains meant that there was little wood for housing, fuel, and fencing. Until they had reaped several harvests and could afford to import lumber, pioneer families lived in dark and dirty sod houses. One Nebraska homesteader recalled that her first sight of a sod house “sickened me.”

For fuel, settlers often had to rely on buffalo or cattle “chips”—dried dung. One farmer reported in 1879 that “it was comical to see how gingerly our wives handled these chips at first. They commenced by picking them up between two sticks, or with a poker. Soon they used a rag, and then a corner of their apron. Finally, growing hardened, a wash after handling them was sufficient. And now? Now it is out of the bread, into the chips and back again—and not even a dust of the hands!”

The scarcity of water also complicated women’s domestic labor. They often transported water over long distances, pulling barrels on “water sleds” or carrying pails on neck yokes. Where possible, they also helped dig wells by hand.

Some women farmed the land themselves. Single women could claim land under the Homestead Act, and in some areas, women claimants made up 18 percent of the total and succeeded more frequently than men in gaining final title. At times, married women operated the family farm while their husbands worked elsewhere to earn money. In the 1870s, one Dakota woman recounted the demands women faced: “I had lived on a homestead long enough to learn some fundamental things: that while a woman had more independence here than in any other part of the world, she was expected to contribute as much as a man—that people who fought the frontier had to be prepared to meet any emergency; that the person who wasn’t willing to try anything once wasn’t equipped to be a settler.”

Women especially suffered from isolation and loneliness on the plains because they frequently had less contact with others than the farm men. One farm woman complained that “being cut off from everybody is almost too much for me.” Luna Kellie recalled that from her Nebraska farm “there were no houses in sight and it seemed like the end of the world.” To break the silence, to provide some music and color, many homesteading families kept canaries among their few belongings.

FARMING THE LAND

Pioneer settlers had to make daunting adjustments to develop the agricultural potential of their new land. Advances in science, technology, and industry made such adjustments possible. The changes would not only reshape the agricultural



Each of the four Chrisman sisters claimed a homestead and built a sodhouse near Goheen, Nebraska. Farming on the Great Plains was typically a family operation, with all members of the family having important tasks.

Corbis/Bettmann

economy but also bring their own great challenges to traditional rural values and expectations.

Fencing was an immediate problem on the treeless plains. Barbed wire, developed in the mid-1870s, solved the problem. By 1900, farmers were importing nearly 300 million pounds of barbed wire each year from Eastern and Midwestern factories.

The aridity of most of the West also posed difficulties. In California, Colorado, and a few other areas, settlers used streams fed by mountain snowpacks to irrigate land. Elsewhere, enterprising farmers developed variants of the “dry farming” practices that the Mormons had introduced in Utah, attempting to preserve and maximize the limited rainfall. Some farmers erected windmills to pump underground water.

The scarce rainfall also encouraged farmers to specialize in a single cash crop for market. Many plains farmers turned from corn to wheat, especially the drought-resistant Turkey Red variety of hard winter wheat that German Mennonites had introduced into Kansas from Russia. Related technological advancements included grain elevators that would store grain for shipment and load it into rail cars mechanically and mills that used corrugated, chilled-iron rollers rather than millstones to process the new varieties of wheat.

In semiarid regions, farmers required special plows to break the tough sod, new harrows to prepare the soil for cultivation, grain drills to plant the crop, and harvesting and threshing machines to bring it in. Thanks to more and better machines, agricultural efficiency and productivity shot up. By the 1890s, machinery permitted the farmer to produce eighteen times more wheat than hand methods had.

These developments reflected both the expansion of agriculture and its increasing dependence on the larger society. The rail network provided essential transportation for crops; the nation’s industrial sector produced necessary agricultural machinery. Banks and loan companies extended the credit and capital that allowed farmers to take advantage of mechanization and other new advances; and many other businesses graded, stored, processed, and sold their crops. In short, because of its market orientation, mechanization, and specialization, Western agriculture relied on other people or impersonal forces as it was incorporated into the national and international economy.

When conditions were favorable—good weather, good crops, and good prices—Western farmers prospered. Too often, however, they faced adversity. In the late 1880s, drought coincided with a slump in crop prices. Expanding production in Argentina, Canada, Australia, and Russia helped create a world surplus of grain that drove prices steadily downward. Prices for other farm commodities also declined.

Squeezed between high costs for credit, transportation, and manufactured goods and falling agricultural prices, Western farmers faced disaster. They responded by lashing back at their points of contact with the new system. They especially condemned the railroads. Luna Kellie complained, “The minute you crossed the Missouri River your fate both soul and body was in their hands. What you should eat and drink, what you should wear, everything was in their hands



and they robbed us of all we produced except enough to keep body and soul together and many many times not that.”

Farmers censured the grain elevators in the local buying centers that were often owned by Eastern corporations, including the railroads themselves. A Minnesota state investigation found systematic fraud by elevators, which collectively cost farmers a massive sum.

Farmers also denounced the many Eastern bankers and mortgage lenders who had provided the credit for them to acquire land, equipment, and machinery. With failing crops and falling prices, many Western farms were foreclosed.

Stunned and bitter, Western farmers concluded that their problems arose because they had been incorporated into the new system, an integrated economy directed by forces beyond their control. And it was a system that did not work well. “There is,” one of them charged, “something radically wrong in our industrial system. There is a screw loose.”

CONCLUSION

With determination, ingenuity, and hard work millions of people settled vast areas, made farms and ranches, built villages and cities, brought forth mineral wealth, and imposed their values on the land. These achievements were tempered by a shameful treatment of Indians and an often destructive exploitation of natural resources. But if most Westerners took pride in their accomplishments, and a few enjoyed wealth and power, many also grew discontented with the new conditions they encountered as the “Wild” West receded.

Railroad expansion, population movements, Eastern investment, corporate control, technological innovations, and government policies had incorporated the region fully into the larger society. Indians experienced this incorporation most thoroughly and most tragically, losing their lands, their traditions, and often their lives; the survivors were dependent on the decisions and actions of interlopers. Cowboys and miners also learned that the frontier merely marked the cutting edge of Eastern industrial society; neither could escape integration into the national economy by managerial decisions, transportation links, and market forces. Most settlers in the West were farmers, but they too learned that their distinctive environment did not insulate them from assimilation into larger productive, financial, and marketing structures.

SUMMARY

Subjugating Native Americans As white people pressed westward, the initial obstacle to exploiting the West was the people who already lived there. The native peoples used the land in their own way, had different concepts of progress and civilization, and had developed a variety of economies and cultures. From the 1850s to the 1880s, warfare engulfed the advancing frontier; railroad expansion, the destruction of the buffalo, and technological development undercut the ability of the Native Americans to resist. The conquest gradually forced Indians onto reservations, but efforts to “Americanize” the Indian way of life were less successful.

Exploiting the Mountains: The Mining Bonanza The first stage of the economic development of the West centered on mining as swarms of eager prospectors were attracted into the mountains and deserts in search of gold and silver.



The male-dominated saloon society of the mining camps generated violence and social conflicts. Mining was transformed from an individual effort into a corporate one; as minerals became more difficult to uncover, mining became technologically complex and expensive. Corporate mining permanently changed the landscape of the West through its environmental impact.

Exploiting the Grass: The Cattle Kingdom The development of the range cattle industry opened a second stage in the exploitation of the West. It reflected the needs of the Eastern urban society for food and the ability of the expanding rail network to deliver it. The cattle kingdom spread from Texas into the Great Plains; after the era of the long drives, cattle ranching became an increasingly corporate endeavor. While the romantic image of the cowboy is one of a rugged individualist freed of societal constraints, the actual work was hard, dirty, seasonal, dangerous, and poorly paid.

Exploiting the Earth: Homesteaders and Agricultural Expansion Even more than ranching and mining, agricultural growth boosted the West's economy and bound it to national and world markets. Government played a significant role in the expansion of farming, as did railroads, science and technology, Eastern capital, and hard work. The Homestead Act, along with land, railroad, and steamship companies, encouraged Western migration. Settlers encountered many difficulties: a radically new environment, the need for new farming techniques, weather conditions, loneliness, and isolation. These were combined with farmers being part of a global economic system; farmers reached the conclusion that something was terribly wrong with the system, and that bankers, grain elevator operators, and the railroads were to blame.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why was the completion of the first transcontinental railroad so celebrated?
 2. What factors most influenced the subjugation of American Indians?
 3. What were the major goals of federal Indian policy, and how did they change?
 4. How did technological developments affect Indians, miners, and farmers in the West?
 5. How did the federal government help transform the West?
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KEY TERMS

Battle of the Little Bighorn (p. 503)	Second Treaty of Fort Laramie (p. 502)
Chisholm Trail (p. 510)	Wounded Knee Massacre (p. 503)
Dawes Act (p. 505)	
Sand Creek Massacre (p. 502)	



WHERE TO LEARN MORE

- 🏛️ **Bodie State Historic Park, Bodie, California.** The largest authentic ghost town in the West, Bodie was an important mining center from the 1860s to the 1880s. About 170 buildings remain, including a museum with mining equipment and artifacts of everyday life. www.bodie.net/
- 🏛️ **Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Crow Agency, Montana.** The site of Custer's crushing defeat includes a monument to the Seventh Cavalry atop Last Stand Hill. A new authorized Indian Memorial will include sacred texts, artifacts, and pictographs of the Plains Indians. www.nps.gov/libi/home.htm
- 🏛️ **American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Museum, Lincoln, Nebraska.** This unique museum, consisting of a complex of restored homes, exhibitions, and archives, preserves the history and culture of Germans who emigrated to Russia and then to the American Great Plains, where they contributed importantly to the development of a multicultural society and an agricultural economy.
- 🏛️ **National Museum of the American Indian, New York, New York.** Part of the Smithsonian Institution, this museum has a collection of artifacts illustrative of more than ten thousand years of the Native American culture. www.nmai.si.edu/index.asp
- 🏛️ **National Cowboy Hall of Fame, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.** This large institution contains an outstanding collection of Western art, displays of cowboy and Indian artifacts, and both kitschy exhibitions of the mythic, Hollywood West and serious galleries depicting the often hard realities of the cattle industry. Its many public programs also successfully combine fun with learning. www.cowboyhalloffame.org/index2.html
- 🏛️ **Golden Spike National Historic Site, near Promontory, Utah.** The completion of the transcontinental railroad here in 1869 is reenacted from May to October, using reproductions of the original locomotives. Visitors can drive the route of the railroad, now a National Backway Byway through abandoned mining and railroad towns, from Promontory to Nevada. Virtual tour, history, and tourist links on: www.nps.gov/gosp
- 🏛️ **Fort Laramie, National Historic Site, near Guernsey, Wyoming.** A fur-trading post, stop on the Oregon Trail, site of treaty negotiations with the Plains Indians, and staging area for military campaigns, Fort Laramie is now a living history museum with many original buildings. For a virtual tour of the fort and information about visiting see: www.nps.gov/foia/

 For additional study resources for this chapter, go to:
www.prenhall.com/goldfield/chapter19

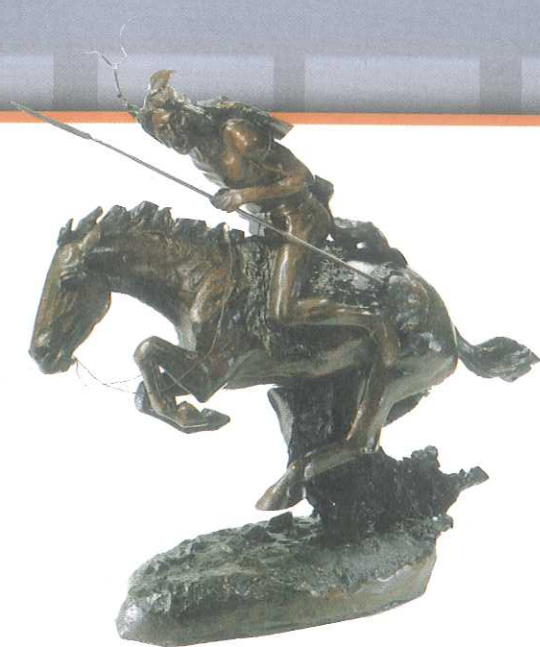
Mythologizing the “Wild West”

WHAT ELEMENTS do the Remington sculptures, the Curtis photograph, and the “dime novel” illustrations have in common? What, to judge from these images, made the West “wild”? How much do you think these images match up with reality?

One artist, Frederic Remington, deserves much of the credit for creating the West of our imagination. In Montana in 1881 an “old-timer” told him that “there is no more West.” Remington decided to “try to record some facts around me.” He recorded them first in a series of illustrations, then in paintings, and then in sculpture. Another who determined to “record some facts” was Edward S. Curtis who produced the twenty volume collection, *The North American Indian*, between 1906 and 1930. Curtis persuaded Native American peoples to reenact traditional practices, such as hunting or war parties. Often there was a twenty to fifty year gap between the reenactment and the practice itself. In contrast to Remington and Curtis who sought to (re)capture the truth about the West, “dime novels” sought simply to provide thrills. The “Wild West” is still part of our imaginative landscape.

Edward S. Curtis, “On the Warpath — Atsina,” from *The North American Indian*, v.04; Curtis notes: “These grim-visaged old warriors made a thrilling picture as they rode along, breaking out now and then into wild song of the chase or raid.” The image recreates a raiding party. Note the headdress on the party’s leader, fourth from left. The photograph was taken in 1908.





▲ **Frederick Remington, "The Cheyenne,"** a 1901 bronze statue, 20-1/2 x 23-1/4 x 8, now at the Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas. Remington loved to portray action; here a warrior is galloping on his pony into battle.

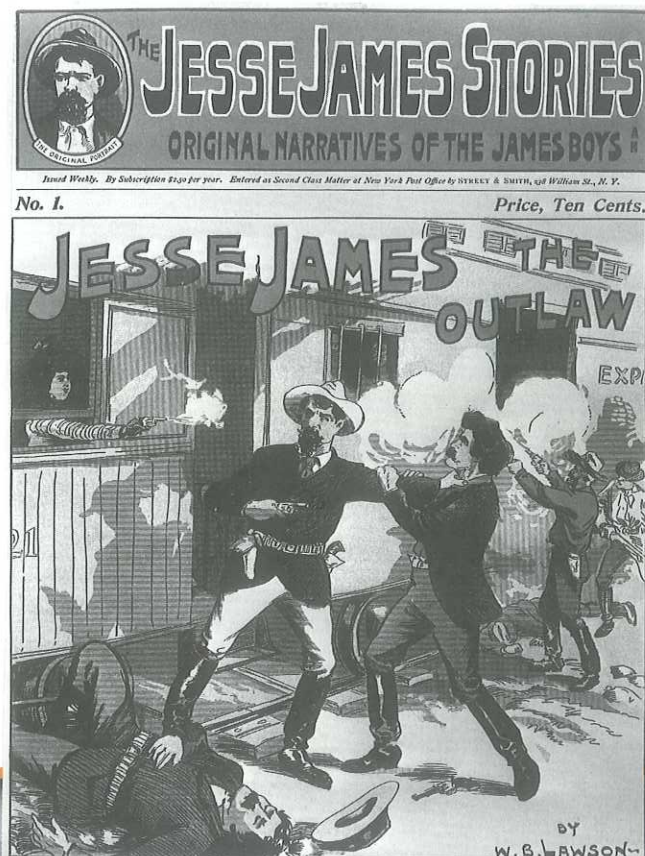
Frederick S. Remington, "The Cheyenne," 1901, cast 1904. Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas. (1997.140)

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award98/ienhtml/curthome.html>



▲ **Frederick Remington, "The Rattlesnake,"** (1905) Bronze, (Height 23 3/4 inches), now at Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas. Presented in honor of Boone Blakeley for service of Amon G. Carter and the Carter Family , 1941-1995. Acc. no.: 1995.3, Note how the rattlesnake has reverted from national symbol to natural menace as the cowboy's horse rears up and threatens to throw its rider.

Frederick S. Remington, "The Rattlesnake," 1905. Amon Carter Museum

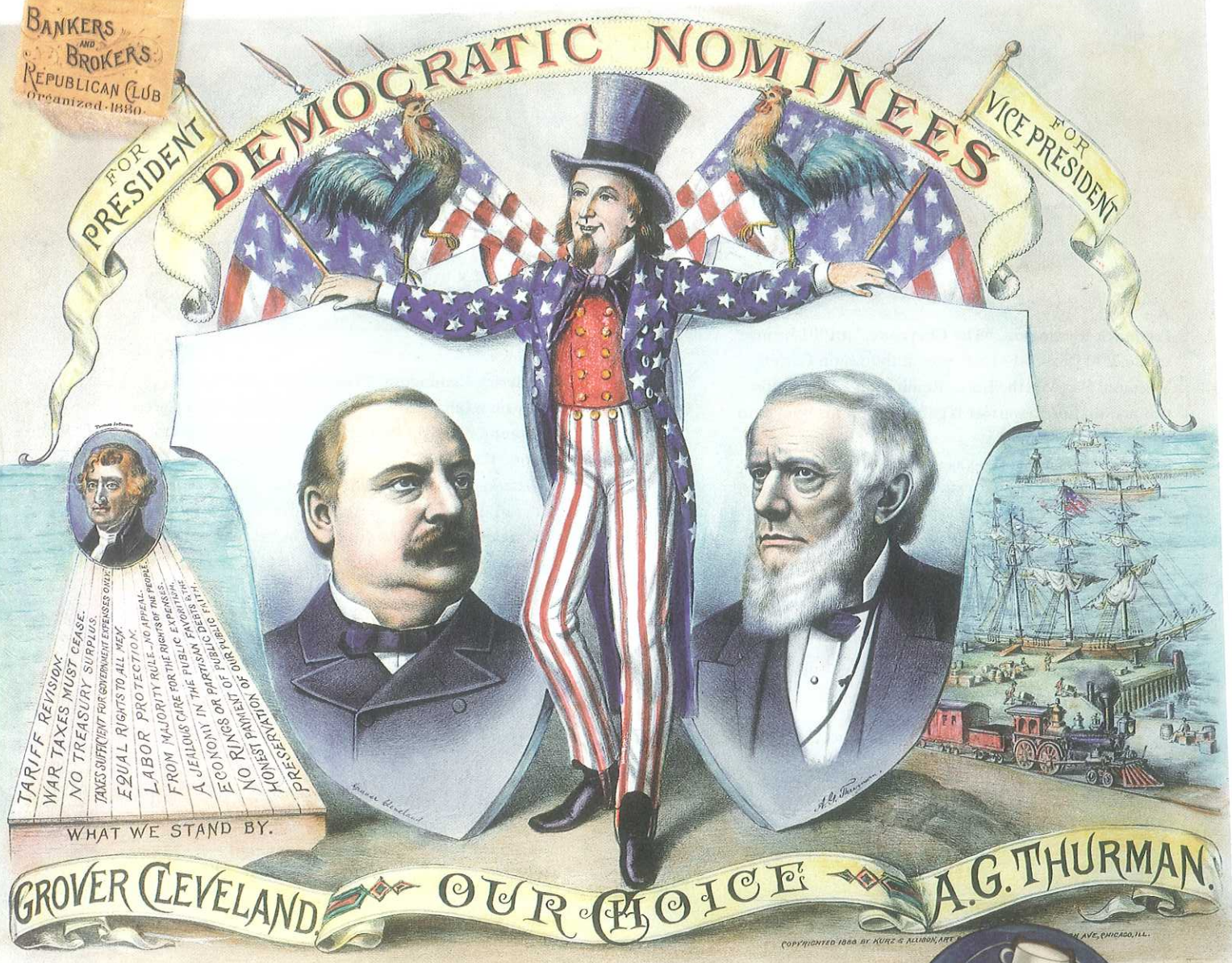


◀ **"Dime novels" purported to tell true tales of western adventure.** Jesse James was an historical figure, even if the stories in this "Log Cabin Library" edition bore no resemblance to his actual deeds. "The King of the Wild West" was a purely fictional creation.

From the Library of Congress's American Memory site
<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/tri015.html>



Dear Father, In the 5th, 8th, and 19th Wards . . .
 the negroes were driven away from the polls,
 beaten and wounded . . . No colored votes were
 polled in those precincts after twelve o'clock.



Presidential Campaign, 1888. Grover Cleveland and Allen G. Thurman as the Democratic party candidates for President and Vice President on a lithograph campaign poster by Kurtz & Allison, 1888.

