16. The West

1. The West: Settlement of the Last Frontier
   1. **Great American Desert-** pioneers’ nickname for land b/w Mississippi River and Pacific Coast
   2. before had been populated by buffalo herds which supported the native population
   3. but by 1900, the buffalo had been wiped out, the land fenced in by homesteads, crisscrossed by steel rails and modernized by new towns
   4. Hispanic New Mexico
      1. Mexicans were integrated into America during Manifest Destiny
      2. many Spanish-speaking communities had an established social structure of landowners, peasants and Indian laborers (listed from superior to inferior)
      3. after the Mexican War, US tried to establish territorial government that excluded the established Mexican ruling class
      4. they feared that the government would take their land and threaten their societies, so they rebelled
      5. New Mexico government dominated through territorial rings, which were circles of local business men and ambitious politicians with access to federal money who worked together to make the territorial government mutually profitable
      6. Native American tribes defeated by US army, allowed Hispanics and whites to expand
      7. Hispanic societies survived b/c they were far from English-speaking society
      8. new wave of Mexican immigrants was immediately subordinate
   5. Hispanic California and Texas
      1. missionaries converted Indians to Christianity, also enslaved them
      2. religious hierarchy replaced with secular aristocracy
      3. **californios** (Hispanic people in California) were excluded by Anglo population from the gold rush and plundered of their land
      4. rancheros unable to survive because of reckless expansion, growing debt and a severe drought in the 1860s
      5. farmers unable to raise livestock because communal grazing lands fell under the control of Anglo ranchers
      6. Texan landowners lost their land too
      7. **Cortina** staged inconsequential rebellions
   6. modernized by miners, cattlemen and cowboys, and farmers
   7. **The Mining Frontier (1860s to 1890s)**
      1. **1848 California Gold Rush** was the beginning of a quest for gold and silver in the West
      2. other major discoveries were the **Comstock Lode, Anaconda, and Black Hills**
      3. initially, individual prospectors looked for traces of gold in mountain streams using **placer mining** (shovels and washing pans)
      4. but eventually turned into **deep-shaft mining**
      5. towns flared up suddenly then died within a few years once the gold/silver ran out
      6. however, towns that *served* the mines, like **San Francisco, Sacramento** and **Denver** became important commercial centers
      7. filled with speculative optimism, because although few ever struck it rich, those who did were usually from modest/poor backgrounds
      8. many outlaws, which forced communities to adopt vigilante justice
      9. men outnumbered women
      10. half of the mining population was foreign-born
          1. initially, Chinese welcomed b/c hard working and accepted little pay
          2. however, they became competition
          3. resentment became legislated discrimination (“foreign miners” tax)
          4. Chinese effectively driven out of mining business into the railroad business and cities, which were benevolent societies
          5. in contrast, **tongs** were secret societies, violent criminal organizations involved in the opium trade and prostitution
          6. Chinese worked as common laborers, servants and unskilled factory hands; women worked as prostitutes
          7. anti-Chinese sentiment in the Democratic Party and the Workingmen’s party grew alongside **anti-coolie clubs** (boycott Chinese goods!)
          8. were culturally denounced as savages
          9. **Chinese Exclusion Act** passed, which banned Chinese immigration into the US and barred Chinese already in the country from becoming naturalized citizens
          10. Chinese protests had no effect
      11. mining economically created a crisis over the value of gold and silver backed currency
      12. scarred the lands of the Native Americans
      13. after the boom, people remained as wage laborers in corporate mines with horrible conditions: above 100 degrees Fahrenheit temperatures, poor ventilation, lethal dusts, explosions, cave-ins
   8. **The Cattle Frontier**
      1. **vaqueros** were the original American cowboys, but on a smaller scale
      2. cattle business techniques (branding, roundups, roping) as well the cattle breeds themselves were originally from Mexico
      3. during the Civil War, 5 million heads of cattle roamed freely over the grasslands, making the cattle business easy to enter after the war
      4. most cowboys blacks and Mexicans, receiving only a $1 a day for their dangerous work
      5. railroads both built and destroyed the cattle frontier, providing markets but also populating the open range, turning it into farmland
      6. many towns sprung up to handle the long-range drives
      7. women owned ranches, and won suffrage in the West first; Wyoming first state to give women suffrage, but also did so to gain more power in Congress
      8. factors leading to the end of the cattle frontier
         1. 1880s-- overgrazing destroyed the grass
         2. 1885-1886-- drought killed 90% of cattle
         3. sheep competed for grass
         4. homesteaders fenced off the open range
      9. changed eating habits from pork to beef
   9. The Farming Frontier
      1. **Homestead Act of 1862** encouraged farming on Great Plains by offering 160 acres of public land free to any family if they stayed for five years
         1. however, 2,500,000 families had to purchase their own land because railroad companies and speculators took the best land
         2. because of the horrible lifestyle, only 400,000 homesteaders stayed long enough to keep the land
         3. supplemented by **Timber Culture Act, Desert Land Act** and **the Timber and Stone Act**, which provided additional land with other stipulations
         4. many attempted to farm the land-- called **sodbusters**
      2. problems: extremes of hot and cold weather, grasshopper plagues, lonesome life, scarce water, no wood for fences, falling prices for crops, expensive new machinery, 160 acres not enough for grazing
      3. solutions: barbed wire, mail-order windmills to drill deep wells for water, moisture techniques like dry farming (cover land with dust) and deep-plowing, Russian wheat which was better with extreme weather, dams and irrigation
      4. despite solutions, 2/3 of farms fell into unsurmountable debt, causing reverse migration back to the cities
   10. **American Cowboy Myth**
       1. frontier was originally romanticized by **Mark Twain** in his novels about the Mississippi Valley, the earlier frontier
       2. Americans considered the West the final frontier
       3. pretty landscape helped with the myth building :b
       4. **Wild West shows** staged cattle drives and Indian attacks for entertainment
          1. **Buffalo Bill**- organizer of first Wild West show
          2. **Annie Oakley**- shot cards and road horses
          3. Natives also toured, showing off their martial skills and exotic costumes
       5. ***The Virginian*** romanticized the cowboy’s freedom from traditional social constraints and his affinity with nature and his viol n v ence
       6. artist **Frederick Remington** portrayed the cowboy as a natural aristocrat
       7. **Theodore Roosevelt** published ***The Winning of the West***, which romanticized the spread of white civilization into the frontier
       8. **Turner’s frontier thesis**
          1. by 1889, most of the west had achieved statehood and Oklahoma Territory had been snatched away from natives and opened for settlement
          2. Turner asserted that the frontier broke down class distinctions and fostered social and political democracy
          3. forced Americans to be independent, individual, inventive and practical-minded
          4. the closure of the frontier might cause class division and social conflict
          5. closure of the frontier meant more movement to urban areas and the decline of rural farming
       9. originally, West believed to be a virtual Garden of Eden, where a person could begin life anew and where the ideals of democracy could be restored
       10. but now, setting of utopia shrank from New World to the West to nothing
   11. The Removal of Native Americans
       1. many different cultural and tribal groups
       2. Pueblos of the Southwest were farmers and lived within the caste system; Spanish on top, then Pueblos, then **genizaros** (Indians without tribes)
       3. Plains people developed nomadic way of life dependent on hunting buffalo
       4. buffalo decimated because of high demand for buffalo hides, desire to reduce railroad traffic, and disappearance of the open plain
       5. originally, US treated tribes as independent nations and negotiated border lines with them, like the Missouri River
       6. 1830s- **Andrew Jackson** moved eastern natives to the West b/c he (falsely) believed that America would stick to the east coast
       7. 1851- federal government assigned each tribe a reservation (“**concentration**” policy)
       8. divided the tribes from one another and made them easier to control, forced tribes into scattered locations and allowed government to take the best lands for white settlement
       9. but the Plains tribes ignored them and continued to follow the migrating buffalo
       10. the **Indian Peace Commission** wanted to move all the Plains Indians into two large reservations, but had little success negotiating b/c their agents were inexperienced and dishonest
       11. Indian Wars
           1. despite being aggressive warriors, natives failed b/c they did not unite together, were outmanned and were outgunned
           2. 1864- slaughter of Cheyenne people at **Sand Creek**, Colorado
           3. 1866- **Sioux War**- Sioux warriors wiped out an army column
           4. then government promised natives protection on smaller reservations, but gold miners refused to stay off natives’ lands if gold was found on them
           5. 1870s- Red River War, second Sioux War by **Sitting Bull** and **Crazy Horse**
           6. 1876- natives won in the **Battle of Little Bighorn**
           7. 1877- **Chief Joseph** attempted to lead his people into Canada  
              “Hear me, my chiefs. I am tired. My heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever.”
           8. white vigilantes also hunted Indians, scalping them
           9. eventually forced to comply with government b/c of defeat and the elimination of the buffalo, the backbone of their lifestyle
       12. Assimilationists
           1. ***A Century of Dishonor (1881)*** created sympathy for Native Americans, but only motivated people to assimilate the natives
           2. assimilation- formal education, training and conversion to Christianity in attempt to civilize them
           3. took Indian children away from families and sent them to white boarding schools
           4. **Dawes Severalty Act (1887)**
              1. divided tribal lands into plots of 160 acres or less, then granted citizenship if people stayed on the lands for 25 years and “adopted the habits of civilized life”
              2. effect: broke up tribal organizations and forced them to assimilate
              3. the land was sold to white settlers by corrupt government, speculators or natives themselves
       13. **Ghost Dance movement**- last ditch religious effort to resist US domination, until 200 massacred by US Army in 1890; ended the Indian wars
       14. Aftermath: US policy in the 20th century
           1. 1925- granted citizenship to all natives
           2. 1930s- part of Roosevelt’s New Deal, **Indian Reorganization Act** which promoted the re-establishment of tribal organization and culture
2. Changing Economy
   1. Labor in the West
      1. labor shortage in West led to higher wages for workers, but working conditions sucked and job security was nonexistent
      2. huge geographic mobility but limited social mobility
      3. non-whites always occupied the lower tiers of employment, because they were “genetically or culturally” suited to manual labor-- white supremacy
   2. The Rise of Agriculture
      1. railroad companies spurred settlement by setting rates low, selling land cheaply and providing credit liberally
      2. climate change in the 1870s, with higher rainfall, promoted settlement
   3. Changes in Agriculture
      1. farm numbers increased while percentage of farmers decreased
      2. farming became more commercialized and specialized
      3. concentrated on cash crops like corn or wheat; no longer self-sufficient, instead relied on food from stores in town and manufactured goods from mail-order catalogs
      4. dependent on large and expensive machines, which smaller farms couldn’t afford, and thus they were no longer able to compete
      5. farms ran like factories
      6. modern communication created new markets around the world
      7. falling prices (1880s)
         1. increased production along with global competition drove prices down
         2. farmers with mortgages with high interest rates were forced to grow two or three times as much in order to pay off debts
         3. but overproduction only lowered prices
         4. more debt, foreclosures, forced independent farmers to become tenants and sharecroppers
      8. rising costs
         1. industrial corporations able to keep prices high on manufactured goods by forming monopolies
         2. middlemen like wholesalers and retailers took their cut before selling to farmers
         3. railroads, warehouses and elevators charged high/discriminatory rates for the shipment and storage of grain
         4. big interest on loans
         5. heavy taxes on property but not stock/bond income
      9. economic difficulties caused social and cultural resentment
         1. unable to access education for their children, medical facilities or recreational/cultural activities
         2. children left the farms for the city
         3. no longer did farmers think of themselves as the backbone of America
   4. Fighting Back against Changes in Agriculture
      1. didn’t initially band together because of their independence and individualism
      2. **National Grange Movement (1868)**
         1. organized by **Oliver H. Kelley** as a social and educational organization for farmers
         2. strong in the Old Northwest (now called the Midwest)
         3. established **cooperatives**- businesses owned and run by the farmers to save the costs charged by middlemen
         4. lobbied their *states* to pass laws regulating the railroad and elevator rates
         5. made it illegal for railroads to fix prices and to give rebates to privileged customers
         6. **Munn v Illinois**, Supreme Court upheld the right of a state to regulate the businesses of a public nature, like railroads
      3. **Interstate Commerce Act (1886)**
         1. however, states could only regulate local rides (**Wabash v. Illinois 1886)**
         2. so railroad companies adapted to Granger laws by raising their interstate rates
         3. act required railroad rates to be “reasonable and just”
         4. set up the **Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC)** which investigated and prosecuted pools, rebates and other discriminatory practices
         5. however, the ICC helped the railroads more than the farmers, because it lost most of its cases, helped stabilize rates and prevent destructive competition
      4. by 1890, 1 million farmers (poor white and blacks too) had joined farmers’ alliances, which provided education and organized economic/political action-- had potential for independent political party
      5. **Ocala platform**
         1. farmers’ alliances --> National Alliance
         2. wanted: direct election of US senators, lower tariff rates, graduated income tax, new banking system regulated by federal government, more money in circulation, which would create inflation and raise crop prices, federal storage of farmers’ crops, and federal loans so they wouldn’t have to depend on middlemen and creditors
         3. didn’t form political party, but supported candidates in 1890 who supported their alliance goals
         4. their ideas were later used in the **Populist movement**