

Changes on the Western Frontier

The culture of the Plains Indians declines as white settlers transform the Great Plains. Meanwhile, farmers form the Populist movement to address their economic concerns.

Changes on the Western Frontier

SECTION 1 Cultures Clash on the Prairie

SECTION 2 Settling on the Great Plains

SECTION 3 Farmers and the Populist Movement

Section 1

Cultures Clash on the Prairie

The cattle industry booms in the late 1800s, as the culture of the Plains Indians declines.

SECTION

1 Cultures Clash on the Prairie

The Culture of the Plains Indians

Life on the Plains

- **Great Plains**—grasslands in west-central portion of the U.S.
- East: hunting, farming villages; west: nomadic hunting, gathering

The Horse and the Buffalo

- Horses, guns lead most Plains tribes to nomadic life by mid-1700s
- Trespassing others' hunting lands causes war; count coup for status
- Buffalo provides many basic needs:
 - hides used for teepees, clothes, blankets
 - meat used for jerky, pemmican

Continued . . .



SECTION

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continued **The Culture of the Plains Indians****Family Life**

- Form family groups with ties to other bands that speak same language
- Men are hunters, warriors; women butcher meat, prepare hides
- Believe in powerful spirits that control natural world
 - men or women can become shamans
- Children learn through myths, stories, games, example
- Communal life; leaders rule by counsel

SECTION

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Settlers Push Westward

Clash of Cultures

- Native Americans: land cannot be owned; settlers: want to own land
- Settlers think natives forfeited land because did not improve it
- Since consider land unsettled, migrants go west to claim it

The Lure of Silver and Gold

- 1858 discovery of gold in Colorado draws tens of thousands
- Mining camps, tiny frontier towns have filthy, ramshackle dwellings
- Fortune seekers of different cultures, races; mostly men



SECTION

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The Government Restricts Native Americans

Railroads Influence Government Policy

- 1834, government designates Great Plains as one huge reservation
- 1850s, treaties define specific boundaries for each tribe

Massacre at Sand Creek

- Troops kill over 150 Cheyenne, Arapaho at Sand Creek winter camp

Continued . . .



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continued **The Government Restricts Native Americans****Death on the Bozeman Trail**

- Bozeman Trail crosses Sioux hunting grounds
 - Red Cloud asks for end of settlements; Crazy Horse ambushes troops
- **Treaty of Fort Laramie**—U.S. closes trail; Sioux to reservation
- **Sitting Bull**, leader of Hunkpapa Sioux, does not sign treaty

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Bloody Battles Continue

Red River War

- 1868, Kiowa, Comanche engage in 6 years of raiding
- 1874–1875, U. S. Army crushes resistance on Plains in Red River War

Gold Rush

- 1874 **George A. Custer** reports much gold in Black Hills, rush begins

Custer's Last Stand

- 1876, Sitting Bull has vision of war at sun dance
- Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, Gall crush Custer's troops
- By late 1876, Sioux are defeated; some take refuge in Canada
 - people starving; Sitting Bull surrenders 1881



SECTION

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The Government Supports Assimilation

The Dawes Act

- 1881, Helen Hunt Jackson exposes problems in *A Century of Dishonor*
- **Assimilation**—natives to give up way of life, join white culture
- 1887, **Dawes Act** to “Americanize” natives, break up reservations
 - gives land to individual Native Americans
 - sell remainder of land to settlers
 - money for farm implements for natives
- In the end, Natives Americans receive only 1/3 of land, no money

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continued **The Government Supports Assimilation****The Destruction of the Buffalo**

- Destruction of buffalo most significant blow to tribal life
- Tourists, fur traders shoot for sport, destroy buffalo population

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The Battle of Wounded Knee

Wounded Knee

- Ghost Dance—ritual to regain lost lands
 - spreads among Sioux on Dakota reservation
- Dec. 1890, Sitting Bull is killed when police try to arrest him
- Seventh Cavalry takes about 350 Sioux to Wounded Knee Creek
- **Battle of Wounded Knee**—cavalry kill 300 unarmed Native Americans
- Battle ends Indian wars, Sioux dream of regaining old life



SECTION

1

Cattle Become Big Business

Vaqueros and Cowboys

- American settlers learn to manage large herds from Mexican vaqueros
 - adopt way of life, clothing, vocabulary
- Texas **longhorns**—sturdy, short-tempered breeds brought by Spanish
- Cowboys not in demand until railroads reach Great Plains

Growing Demand for Beef

- After Civil War demand for meat increases in rapidly growing cities

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continued **Cattle Become Big Business**

The Cow Town

- Cattlemen establish shipping yards where trails and rail lines meet
- **Chisholm Trail** becomes major cattle route from San Antonio to Kansas

SECTION

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A Day in the Life of a Cowboy

A Day's Work

- 1866–1885, up to 55,000 cowboys on plains
 - 25% African American, 12% Mexican
- Cowboy works 10–14 hours on ranch; 14 or more on trail
- Expert rider, roper; alert for dangers that may harm, upset cattle

Roundup

- During spring roundup, longhorns found, herded into corral
- Separate cattle marked with own ranch's brand; brand calves

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continued **A Day in the Life of a Cowboy**

The Long Drive

- Herding of animals or **long drive** lasts about 3 months
- Cowboy in saddle dawn to dusk; sleeps on ground; bathes in rivers

Legends of the West

- Celebrities like “Wild Bill” Hickok, Calamity Jane never handled cows

SECTION

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The End of the Open Range

Changes in Ranching

- Overgrazing, bad weather from 1883 to 1887 destroy whole herds
- Ranchers keep smaller herds that yield more meat per animal
- Fence land with barbed wire; turn open range into separate ranches



Section 2

Settling on the Great Plains

Settlers on the Great Plains transform the land despite great hardships.



NEXT

SECTION

2 Settling on the Great Plains

Settlers Move Westward to Farm

Railroads Open the West

- 1850–1871, huge land grants to railroads for laying track in West
- 1860s, Central Pacific goes east, Union Pacific west, meet in Utah
- By 1880s, 5 transcontinental railroads completed
- Railroads sell land to farmers, attract many European immigrants

Continued . . .



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2

continued Settlers Move Westward to Farm**Government Support for Settlement**

- 1862 **Homestead Act** offers 160 acres free to any head of household
 - 1862–1900, up to 600,000 families settle
- **Exodusters**—Southern African-American settlers in Kansas
- Railroad, state agents, speculators profit; 10% of land to families
- Government strengthens act, passes new legislation for settlers

The Closing of the Frontier

- 1872, Yellowstone National Park created to protect some wilderness
- 1890s, no frontier left; some regret loss of unique American feature



SECTION

2

Settlers Meet the Challenges of the Plains

Dugouts and Soddies

- Few trees, so many settlers dig homes into sides of ravines or hills
- In plains, make **soddy** or sod home by stacking blocks of turf

Women's Work

- Homesteaders virtually alone, must be self-sufficient
- Women do men's work—plowing, harvesting, shearing sheep
- Do traditional work—carding wool, making soap, canning vegetables
- Work for communities—sponsor schools, churches

Continued . . .



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2

continued Settlers Meet the Challenges of the Plains**Technical Support for Farmers**

- Mass market for farm machines develops with migration to plains

Agricultural Education

- **Morrill Act** of 1862, 1890 finances agricultural colleges
- 1887 Hatch Act creates agricultural experiment stations

Farmers in Debt

- Railroads, investors create **bonanza farms**—huge, single-crop spreads
- 1885–1890 droughts bankrupt single-crop operations
- Rising cost of shipping grain pushes farmers into debt



Section 3

Farmers and the Populist Movement

Farmers unite to address their economic problems, giving rise to the Populist movement.

SECTION

3 Farmers and the Populist Movement

Farmers Unite to Address Common Problems

Economic Distress

- Farmers buy more land to grow more crops to pay off debts
- After Civil War, government takes greenbacks out of circulation
- Debtors have to pay loans in dollars worth more than those borrowed
- Prices of crops fall dramatically
- 1870s, debtors push government to put more money in circulation
- 1878 Bland-Allison Act—money supply increase not enough for farmers

Continued . . .



SECTION

3

continued **Farmers Unite to Address Common Problems****Problems with the Railroads**

- Lack of competition lets railroads overcharge to transport grain
- Farms mortgaged to buy supplies; suppliers charge high interest

The Farmers' Alliances

- 1867, **Oliver Hudson Kelley** starts Patrons of Husbandry or **Grange**
- Purpose is educational, social; by 1870s, Grange fighting railroads
- **Farmers' Alliances**—groups of farmers and sympathizers
 - lectures on interest rates, government control of railroads, banks
 - gain over 4 million members

SECTION

3

The Rise and Fall of Populism

The Populist Party Platform

- **Populism**—movement of the people; Populist Party wants reforms
- Economic: increase money supply, graduated income tax, federal loans
- Political: Senate elected by popular vote; secret ballot; 8-hour day
- 1892, Populist candidates elected at different levels of government
 - Democratic Party eventually adopts platform

Continued . . .



SECTION

3

continued **The Rise and Fall of Populism**

The Panic of 1893

- Railroads expand faster than markets; some go bankrupt
- Government's gold supply depleted, leads to rush on banks
 - businesses, banks collapse
 - panic becomes depression

Continued . . .

SECTION

3

continued The Rise and Fall of Populism**Silver or Gold**

- Political divisions also regional:
 - Republicans: Northeast business owners, bankers
 - Democrats: Southern, Western farmers, laborers
- **Bimetallism**—system using both silver and gold to back currency
- **Gold standard**—backing currency with gold only
- Paper money considered worthless if cannot be exchanged for metal
- Silverites: bimetallism would create more money, stimulate economy
- Gold bugs: gold only would create more stable, if expensive currency

Continued . . .

NEXT

SECTION

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continued **The Rise and Fall of Populism****Bryan and the “Cross of Gold”**

- 1896, Republicans commit to gold, select **William McKinley**
- Democrats favor bimetallism, choose **William Jennings Bryan**
- Populists endorse Bryan, choose own VP to maintain party identity

The End of Populism

- McKinley gets East, industrial Midwest; Bryan South, farm Midwest
- McKinley elected president; Populism collapses; leaves legacy:
 - the powerless can organize, have political impact
 - agenda of reforms enacted in 20th century



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