Conquest and Survival: The Trans-Mississippi West

1860–1900
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Decades after the event, cowboy Evan G. Barnard vividly recalled the preparations made by settlers when Oklahoma territorial officials announced the opening of No Man’s Land to the biggest “land rush” in American history. “Thousands of people gathered along the border. . . . As the day for the race drew near, the settlers practiced running their horses and driving carts.” Finally, the morning of April 22, 1889, arrived. “At ten o’clock people lined up . . . ready for the great race of their lives.” Like many others, Barnard displayed his guns prominently on his hips, determined to discourage competitors from claiming the 160 acres of prime land that he intended to grab for himself.

Evan Barnard’s story was one strand in the larger tale of the destruction and creation of communities in the trans-Mississippi West. In the 1830s, the federal government designated what was to become the state of Oklahoma as Indian Territory, reserved for the Five Civilized Tribes (Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Creeks, and Seminoles) who had been forcibly removed from their eastern lands. All five tribes had reestablished themselves as sovereign republics in Indian Territory. The Cherokees and Chocktaws became prosperous cotton growers. The Creeks managed large herds of hogs and cattle, and the Chickasaws grazed not only cattle but also sheep and goats on their open fields. The Five Tribes also ran sawmills, gristmills, and cotton gins. Indian merchants were soon dealing with other tribespeople as well as licensed white traders and even contracting with the federal government.

The Civil War, however, took a heavy toll on their success. Some tribes, slaveholders themselves, sided with the Confederacy; others with the Union. When the war ended, more than 10,000 people—nearly one-fifth of the population of Indian Territory—had died. To make matters worse, new treaties required the Five Civilized Tribes to cede the entire western half of the territory, including the former northern Indian territory of Nebraska and Kansas, for the resettlement of tribes from other regions.

Western Oklahoma thereby became home to thousands of newly displaced peoples, including the Pawnees, Peorias, Ottawas, Wyandots, and Miamis. Many small tribes readily took to farming and rebuilt their communities. But the nomadic, buffalo-hunting Kiowas, Cheyennes, Comanches, and Arapahoes did not settle so peacefully. They continued to traverse the plains until the U.S. Army finally forced them onto reservations. Eventually, more than 80,000 tribespeople were living on twenty-one separate reservations in western Oklahoma, all governed by agents appointed by the federal government.

The opening of the unassigned far western district of Oklahoma known as No Man’s Land to non-Indian homesteading, however, signaled the impending end of Indian sovereignty. Many non-Indians saw this almost 2-million-acre strip as a Promised Land, perfect for dividing into thousands of small farms. African Americans, many of whom were former slaves of Indian planters, appealed to the federal government for the right to stake claims there. Another group of would-be homesteaders, known as “Boomers,” quickly tired of petitioning and invaded the district in 1880, only to be booted out by the Tenth Cavalry. Meanwhile, the railroads, seeing the potential for lucrative commerce, put constant pressure on the federal government to open No Man’s Land for settlement. In 1889, the U.S. Congress finally gave in.

Cowboy Barnard was just one of thousands to pour into No Man’s Land on April 22, 1889. Many homesteaders simply crossed the border from Kansas. Southerners, dispossessed by warfare and economic ruin in their own region, were also well represented. Market-minded settlers claimed the land nearest the
railroads, and by nightfall of April 22, they had set up tent cities along the tracks. In a little over two months, after 6,000 homestead claims had been filed, the first sod houses appeared, sheltering growing communities of non-Indian farmers, ranchers, and other entrepreneurs. Some Indian leaders petitioned the federal government for the right to resettle on new land distant from white settlers, but nothing came from their efforts.

Dramatic as it was, the land rush of 1889 was only one in a series of events that soon dispossessed Oklahoma’s Indians of their remaining lands. First, the federal government broke up the estates held collectively by various tribes in western Oklahoma, assigning to individuals the standard 160-acre allotment and allowing non-Indian homesteaders to claim the rest. Then, in 1898, Congress passed the Curtis Act, which formally ended Indian communal land ownership and thereby legally dissolved Indian Territory. Members of the former Indian nations were directed to dismantle their governments, abandon their estates, and join the ranks of other homesteaders. The flood of whites into Oklahoma left the Indians outnumbered ten to one in lands once wholly theirs (see Map 18-1).

When Oklahoma was granted statehood in 1907, a commentator in the Daily Oklahoman said, “The uniting of Indian Territory with Oklahoma Territory in statehood removes the last particle of that vast domain, which in the early part of the last century was set aside by Congress as an eternal home for the red man.” Later generations of Oklahomans often celebrated the origin of their state as Indian territory. Even the name of their state—Oklahoma—means “the land of the red man.” At the formal ceremony marking statehood, just before the newly elected governor took the oath of office, a mock wedding ceremony conveyed the new relationship: a tough and virile cowboy, representing white people, took as his submissive wife a demure Indian maiden.

By 1907, nearly one-quarter of the entire population of the United States lived west of the Mississippi River. Hundreds of new communities, supported primarily by cattle ranching, agriculture, mining, or other industries, had not only grown with the emerging national economy but helped to shape it in the process. The newcomers had also brought poverty, warfare, and death, destroying ways of life that had formed centuries earlier; and they drastically transformed the physical landscape. Through their activities and the support of Easterners, the United States realized an ambition that John L. O’Sullivan had described in 1845 as the nation’s “manifest destiny to overspread the continent” and remake it in a new image. But in this onward march of empire, the native American world was swept away.

### KEY TOPICS

- The impact of western expansion on Indian societies
- The West as an “internal empire” and the development of new technologies and new industries
- The creation of new communities and the displacement of old communities
- The West as myth and legend

### INDIAN PEOPLES UNDER SIEGE

The Indians living west of the Mississippi River keenly felt the pressure of the gradual incorporation of the West into the American nation. California became a state in 1850, Oregon in 1859. Congress consolidated the national domain in the next decades by granting territorial status to Utah, New Mexico, Washington, Dakota, Colorado, Nevada, Arizona, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. The purchase of Alaska in 1867 added an area twice the size of Texas and extended the nation beyond its contiguous borders so that it reached almost to Russia and the
North Pole. The federal government made itself the custodian of all these thinly settled regions, with appointed white governors supervising the transition from territorial status to statehood.

A series of events brought large numbers of white settlers into these new states and territories: the discovery of gold in California in 1848, the opening of western lands to homesteaders in 1862, and the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. With competition for the land and its resources escalating into violent skirmishes and small wars, federal officials became determined to end tribal rule and bring Indians into the American mainstream.

**On the Eve of Conquest**

Before the European colonists reached the New World, various Indian tribes had occupied western lands for more than 20,000 years. Hundreds of tribes, totaling perhaps a million members, had adapted to such extreme climates as the desert aridity of present-day Utah and Nevada, the bitter cold of the northern Great Plains, and the seasonally heavy rain of the Pacific Northwest. Many cultivated maize (corn), foraged for wild plants, fished, or hunted game. Several tribes built cities with several thousand inhabitants and traded across thousands of miles of western territory.

Invasion by the English, Spanish, and other Europeans brought disease, religious conversion, and new patterns of commerce. But geographic isolation still gave many tribes a margin of survival unknown in the East. At the close of the Civil War, approximately 360,000 Indian people still lived in the trans-Mississippi West, the majority of them in the Great Plains (see Map 18-2).

The surviving tribes adapted to changing conditions. The Plains Indians learned to ride the horses and shoot the guns introduced by Spanish and British traders. The Pawnees migrated farther westward to evade encroaching non-Indian settlers, while the Sioux and the Comanches fought neighboring tribes to gain control of large stretches of the Great Plains. The Southwestern Hopis and Zunis, conquered earlier by the Spanish, continued to trade extensively with the Mexicans who lived near them. Some tribes took dramatic steps toward accommodation with white ways. Even before they were uprooted and moved across the Mississippi River, the Cherokees had learned English, converted to Christianity, established a constitutional republic, and become a nation of farmers.

Legally, the federal government had long regarded Indian tribes as autonomous nations residing within American boundaries and had negotiated numerous treaties with them over land rights and commerce. But pressured by land-hungry whites, several states had violated these federal treaties so often that the U.S. Congress passed the Indian Removal Act of 1830 (see Chapter 10), which provided funds to relocate all Eastern tribes by force if necessary. The Cherokees challenged this legislation, and the Supreme Court ruled in their favor in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831). Ignoring the Court’s decision, President Andrew Jackson, known as a hardened Indian fighter, forced many tribes to cede their land and remove to Indian Territory. There, it was believed, they might live undisturbed by whites and gradually adjust to “civilized” ways. But soon, the onslaught of white settlers, railroad entrepreneurs, and prospectors rushing for gold pressured tribes to cede millions of their acres to the United States. In 1854, to open the Kansas and Nebraska
As early as the 1840s, highly placed officials had outlined a plan to subdue the intensifying rivalry over natural resources and land. Under the terms of their proposal, individual tribes would agree to live within clearly defined zones—reservations—and, in exchange, the Bureau of Indian Affairs would provide guidance, while U.S. military
forces ensured protection. This reservation policy also reflected the vision of many “Friends of the Indian,” educators and Protestant missionaries who aspired to “civilize the savages.” By the end of the 1850s, eight western reservations had been established where Indian peoples were induced to speak English, take up farming, and convert to Christianity.

Several tribes did sign treaties, although often under duress. High-handed officials, such as governor Isaac Stevens of Washington Territory, made no attempt at legitimate negotiations, choosing instead to intimidate or deceive the tribal chiefs. After their leaders were coerced into signing away 45,000 square miles of tribal land, state officials moved the Indians onto three reservations. The Suquamish leader Seattle admitted defeat but warned the governor: “Your time of decay may be distant, but it will surely come.”

The federal government repeatedly reduced the size of land allotments, forcing tribes to compete with each other for increasingly scarce resources and making subsistence farming on the reservation virtually impossible. The Medicine Lodge Treaty of 1867 assigned reservations in existing Indian Territory to Comanches, Plains (Kiowa) Apaches, Kiowas, Cheyennes, and Arapahoes, bringing these tribes together with Sioux, Shoshones, and Bannocks. All told, more than 100,000 people found themselves competing intensely for survival. Over the next decade, a group of Quakers appointed by President Ulysses S. Grant attempted to mediate differences among the tribes and to supply the starving peoples with food and seed. At the same time, white prospectors and miners continued to flood the Dakota Territory. “They crowded in,” Iron Teeth, a Cheyenne woman, recalled bitterly, “so we had to move out.” Moreover, corrupt officials of the Bureau of Indian Affairs routinely diverted funds for their own use and reduced food supplies, a policy promoting malnutrition, demoralization, and desperation.

The nomadic tribes that hunted and gathered over large territories saw their freedom sharply curtailed. The Lakotas, or western Sioux, a loose confederation of bands scattered across the northern Great Plains, were one of the largest and most adaptive of all Indian nations. Seizing buffalo-hunting territory from their rivals, the Pawnees and the Crows, the Sioux had learned to follow the herds on horseback. Buffalo meat and hides fed and clothed the Sioux and satisfied many of their other needs as well. Images of buffalo appeared in their religious symbols and ceremonial dress.

The mass slaughter of the buffalo brought this crisis to a peak. In earlier eras, vast herds of buffalo had literally darkened the western horizon. As gunpowder and the railroad moved west, the number of buffalo fell rapidly. Non-Indian traders avidly sought fur for coats, hide for leather, bones for fertilizer, and heads for trophies. New rifles, like the .50 caliber Sharps, could kill at 600 feet; one sharpshooter bragged of killing 3,000 buffalo. Army commanders encouraged the slaughter, accurately predicting that starvation would break tribal resistance to the reservation system. With their food sources practically destroyed, diseases such as smallpox and cholera (brought by fur traders) sweeping through their villages, and their way of life undermined, many Great Plains tribes, including many Sioux, concluded that they could only fight or die.
The Indian Wars

In 1864, large-scale war erupted. Having decided to terminate all treaties with tribes in eastern Colorado, territorial governor John Evans encouraged a group of white civilians, the Colorado Volunteers, to stage raids through Cheyenne campgrounds. Seeking protection, Chief Black Kettle brought a band of 800 Cheyennes to a U.S. fort and received orders to set up camp at Sand Creek. Feeling secure in this arrangement, Black Kettle sent out most of his young warriors to hunt. Several weeks later, on November 29, 1864, the Colorado Volunteers and soldiers attacked. While Black Kettle held up a U.S. flag and a white truce banner, a disorderly group of 700 men, many of them drunk, slaughtered 105 Cheyenne women and children and 28 men. They mutilated the corpses and took scalps back to Denver to exhibit as trophies. Iron Teeth, who survived, remembered seeing a woman “crawling along on the ground, shot, scalped, crazy, but not yet dead.” Months after the Sand Creek Massacre, bands of Cheyennes, Sioux, and Arapahoes were still retaliating, burning civilian outposts and sometimes killing whole families.

The Sioux played the most dramatic roles in the Indian Wars. In 1851, believing the U.S. government would recognize their own rights of conquest over other Indian tribes, the Sioux relinquished large tracts of land as a demonstration of good faith. But within a decade, a mass invasion of miners and the construction of military forts along the Bozeman Trail in Wyoming, the Sioux’s principal buffalo range, threw the tribe’s future into doubt. During the Great Sioux War of 1865–67, the Oglala Sioux warrior Red Cloud fought the U.S. Army to a stalemate and forced the government to abandon its forts, which the Sioux then burned to the ground. The Treaty of Fort Laramie, signed in 1868, restored only a temporary peace to the region.

The Treaty of Fort Laramie granted the Sioux the right to occupy the Black Hills, or Paha Sapa, their sacred land, “as long as the grass shall grow,” but the discovery of gold soon undermined this guarantee. White prospectors hurriedly invaded the territory. Directed to quash rumors of fabulous deposits of the precious metal, Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer organized a surveying expedition to the Black Hills during the summer of 1874, but, contrary to plan, the Civil War hero described rich veins of ore that could be cheaply extracted. The U.S. Congress then pushed to purchase the territory for Americans.

To protect their land, thousands of Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho warriors moved into war camps during the summer of 1876 and prepared for battle.

After several months of skirmishes between the U.S. Army and Indian warriors, Lieutenant Colonel Custer decided to rush ahead to a site in Montana that was known to white soldiers as Little Bighorn and to Lakotas as Greasy Grass. This foolhardy move offered the allied Cheyenne and Sioux warriors a perfect opportunity to cut off Custer’s logistical and military support. On June 25, 1876, Custer and his troops were wiped out by one of the largest Indian contingents ever assembled, an estimated 2,000 to 4,000 warriors.

“Custer’s Last Stand” gave Indian-haters the emotional ammunition to whip up public excitement. After Custer’s defeat, Sitting Bull reportedly said, “Now they will never let us rest.”
For open access by farmers, ranchers, resources and markets became free. Removed to reservations, the natural Custer went to Little Big Horn to stake out large-scale war, the "Indian Wars," eruptedasm all the tribes would agree to live within reservations, and, in exchange, the Bureau of Indian Affairs would provide guidance and the U.S. military would provide protection. By the end of the 1850s, eight western reservations had been established. Several tribes agreed to sign treaties with the U.S. government agreeing to give up land and live on reservations, often under duress. On the reservations, Indian tribes found themselves competing intensely for survival. Those tribes that did not agree to move to reservations saw their freedom sharply curtailed, with increased competition from non-Indian traders for buffalos. As this competition became fiercer, a large-scale war, the "Indian Wars," erupted in Colorado in 1864, resulting in the killing of 105 Cheyenne women and children and 28 men at the Sand Creek Massacre. After months of skirmishes between the U.S. government and Indian warriors, Custer went to Little Big Horn to stake out a military holding. In 1876, his troops were wiped out by the Indians. Following this battle, the U.S. government tracked down the Indian contingents and forced them to surrender. The last Indian group to surrender was Geronimo and 30 tribe members, who finally gave up in September 1886. As the Indians were removed to reservations, the natural resources and markets became free for open access by farmers, ranchers, and investors. U.S. Army tracked down the disbanded Indian contingents one by one and forced them to surrender. In February, 1877, Sioux leadership in the Indian Wars ended.

Among the last to hold out against the reservation system were the Apaches in the Southwest. Most Apache bands had abided by the Medicine Lodge Treaty of 1867, but in 1874, some of the Apache bands, unable to tolerate the harsh conditions on the reservation, returned to their old ways of seizing territory and stealing cattle.

Pursued by the U.S. Army, the Apaches earned a reputation as intrepid warriors. Brilliant strategists like Geronimo and skilled horse-riding braves became legendary for lightning-swift raids against the white outposts in the rugged Arizona terrain. In 1874-75, the Kiowas and the Comanches, both powerful tribes, joined the Apaches in one of the bloodiest conflicts of the era, the Red River War. The U.S. Army ultimately prevailed, although less by military might than by denying Indians access to food. Small-scale warfare sputtered on until September 1886, when Geronimo, his band reduced to only thirty people, finally surrendered, thereby ending the Indian Wars.

**The Nez Percé**

The Nez Percé (meaning “pierced nose”) had been given their name by French-speaking fur trappers, who thought they had seen members of the tribe wearing decorative shells in their septums. For generations, the Nez Percé had regarded themselves as good friends to white traders and settlers. Living in the plateau where Idaho, Washington, and Oregon now meet, they had saved the Lewis and Clark expedition from starvation in 1803. The Nez Percé had occasionally assisted American armies against hostile tribes, and many of them were converts to Christianity.

But the discovery of gold on Nez Percé territory in 1860 changed their relations with whites for the worse. In 1863, pressed by prospectors and mining companies, government officials demanded that the Nez Percé cede 6 million acres, nine-tenths of their land, at less than ten cents per acre. Some of the Nez Percé leaders agreed to the terms of the treaty, which had been fraudulently signed on behalf of the entire tribe, but others refused. At first, federal officials listened to Nez Percé complaints against the treaty and decided to allow them to remain on their land. But, in response to pressure from settlers and politicians, they almost immediately reversed their decision, ordering the Nez Percé, including Chief Joseph and his followers, to sell their land and to move onto a reservation.

Intending to comply, Chief Joseph’s band set out from the Wallowa Valley with their livestock and all the possessions they could carry. Along the way, some young members of another Indian band traveling with them rode away from camp to avenge the death of one of their own by killing several white settlers. Hoping to explain the situation, a Nez Percé truce team approached U.S. troops. The troops opened fire, and the Indian riders fired back, killing one-third of the soldiers. Brilliantly outmaneuvering vengeful U.S. troops sent to intercept them, the 750 Nez Percé—including women, children, and the elderly—retreated for some 1,400 miles into Montana and Wyoming through mountains and prairies, and across the Bitterroot Range. Over the three- and-a-half months of their journey, Nez Percé braves fought 2,000 regular U.S. troops and eighteen Indian auxiliary detachments in eighteen separate engagements and two major battles. U.S. troops finally trapped the Nez Percé in the Bear Paw Mountains of northern Montana, just 30 miles from the Canadian border. Suffering from hunger and cold, they surrendered.

Promised they would be returned to Oregon, the Nez Percé were sent instead to disease-ridden bottomland near Fort Leavenworth in Kansas, and then to Oklahoma. Arguing for the right of his people to return to their Oregon reservation,
Joseph spoke eloquently through an interpreter, to Congress in 1879. “Treat all men alike. Give them all the same law. Give them all an even chance to live and grow. All men were made by the same Great Spirit Chief,” Joseph pleaded. The last remnant of Joseph’s band were deported under guard to a non-Nez Percé reservation in Washington, where Chief Joseph died in 1904 “of a broken heart,” and where his descendants continue to live in exile to this day.

The Internal Empire

Since the time of Christopher Columbus, the Americas had inspired in Europeans visions of a land of incredible wealth, free for the taking. In the nineteenth century, the North American continent, stretching across sparsely populated territories toward the Pacific Ocean, revived this fantasy, especially as early reports conjured dreams of mountains of gold and silver. Determined to make their fortunes, be it from copper in Arizona, wheat in Montana, or oranges in California, numerous adventurers traveled west. As a group, they carried out the largest migration and greatest commercial expansion in American history.

But the settlers themselves also became the subjects of a huge “internal empire” whose financial, political, and industrial centers of power remained in the East. A vast system of international markets also shaped the development of mines, farms, and new communities, even as Americans romantically imagined the West to be the last frontier of individual freedom and wide open spaces. Only a small number of settlers actually struck it rich in the great extractive industries—mining, lumbering, ranching, and farming—that ruled the western economy. Meanwhile, older populations—Indian peoples, Hispanic peoples, and more recently settled communities like the Mormons—struggled to create places for themselves in this new expansionist order.

Mining Towns

The discovery of gold in California in 1848 roused fortune seekers from across the United States, Europe, and as far away as Chile and China; just ten years later, approximately 55,000 Chinese men were working in western mines. Meanwhile, prospecting parties searching for the mother lode overran the territories, setting a pattern for intermittent rushes for gold, silver, and copper that extended from the Colorado mountains to the Arizona deserts, from California to Oregon and Washington, and from Alaska to the Black Hills of South Dakota. Mining camps and boomtowns soon dotted what had once been thinly settled regions and speeded the urban development of the West. The population of California alone jumped from 14,000 in 1848 to 223,856 just four years later. Mining soon brought the West into a vast global market for capital, commodities, and labor (see Map 18-3).

The mining industry quickly grew from its treasure-hunt origins into a grand corporate enterprise. The Comstock Lode of silver, discovered by Henry Comstock along the Carson River in Nevada in 1859, sent about 10,000 miners across the Sierra Nevada from California, but few individuals came out wealthy. Comstock himself eventually sold his claims for a mere $11,000 and two mules. Those reaping the huge profits were the entrepreneurs who could afford to invest in the heavy—and expensive—equipment necessary to drill more than 3,000 feet deep and to hire engineers with the technical knowledge to manage the operations.

The most successful mineowners bought out the smaller claims and built an entire industry around their stakes. They found investors to finance their expansion

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.
To explore this map further, go to www.myhistorylab.com

By the end of the nineteenth century, the vast region of the West was crosscut by hundreds of lines of transportation and communication. The trade in precious metals and in cattle helped build a population almost constantly on the move, following the rushes for gold or the herds of cattle.

Encyclopedia of American Social History.

HOW DID the growth of railroads and mining impact the environment and the lives of native peoples?

and used the borrowed capital to purchase the latest in extractive technology, such as new explosives, compressed-air or diamond-headed rotary drills, and wire cable. They gained access to timber to fortify their underground structures and water to feed the hydraulic pumps that washed down mountains. They built smelters to refine the crude ore into ingots and often financed railroads to transport
the product to distant markets. By the end of the century, the Anaconda Copper Mining Company, which had mining interests throughout the West, had expanded into hydroelectricity to become one of the most powerful corporations in the nation.

The mining corporations laid the basis for a new economy as well as an interim government and established many of the region’s first white settlements. Before the advent of railroads, ore had to be brought out of, and supplies brought into, mining areas by boats, wagons, and mules traveling hundreds of miles over rough terrain. The railroad made transportation of supplies and products easier and faster. The shipping trade meanwhile grew into an important industry of its own, employing thousands of merchants, peddlers, and sailors. Gold Hill and nearby Virginia City, Nevada, began as a cluster of small mining camps and by the early 1860s became a thriving urban community of nearly 6,000 people. A decade later, the population had quadrupled, but it subsequently fell sharply as the mines gave out. Occasionally, ore veins lasted long enough—as in Butte, Montana, center of the copper-mining district—to create permanent cities.

The many boomtowns, known as “Helldorados,” flourished, if only temporarily, as ethnically diverse communities. Men outnumbered women by as much as ten to one, and very few lived with families or stayed very long. They often bunked with male kin and worked alongside friends or acquaintances from their hometowns or with fellow immigrants. The Chinese men, the sojourners who hoped to find riches in the “Gold Mountain” of America before returning home, clustered together and created their own institutions such as social clubs, temples, and fraternal societies known as tongs. Some miners lived unusually well, feasting on oysters trucked in at great expense. Amateur sporting events, public lectures, and large numbers of magazines and books filled many of their leisure hours. But the town center was usually the saloon, where, as one observer complained, men “without the restraint of law, indifferent to public opinion, and unburdened by families, drink whenever they feel like it, whenever they have the money to pay for it, and whenever there is nothing else to do.”

The western labor movement began in these camps, partly as a response to dangerous working conditions. In the hardrock mines of the 1870s, one of every thirty workers was disabled, one of eighty killed. Balladeers back in Ireland sang of Butte as the town “where the streets were paved with Irish bones,” and departing emigrants promised their mothers that they would never go underground in Montana. Miners began to organize in the 1860s, demanding good pay for dangerous and life-shortening work. In 1892, miners in the Coeur d’Alene region of Idaho, in the aftermath of a bitter and violent strike, formed the western Federation of Miners, which became, by the end of the century, one of the strongest unions in the nation.

When mineowners’ private armies “arrested” strikers or fought their unions with rifle fire, miners burned down the campsites, seized trains loaded with ore, and sabotaged company property. The miners’ unions also helped to secure legislation mandating a maximum eight-hour day for certain jobs and workmen’s compensation for injuries. Such laws were enacted in Idaho, Arizona, and New Mexico by the 1910s, long before similar laws in most Eastern states.

The unions fought hard, but they did so exclusively for the benefit of white workers. The native-born and the Irish and Cornish immigrants (from Cornwall, England) far outnumbered other groups before the turn of the century, when Italians, Slavs, and Greeks began to replace them. Labor unions eventually admitted these new immigrants, but refused Chinese, Mexican, Indian, and African American workers.

Map 18-3
Westward migration of white settlers—and subsequent displacement of Indian tribes from that land—was fueled by a number of factors: the discovery of gold in California, the opening of western lands to homesteaders in 1862, and the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. The discovery of gold and silver in many regions of the West produced intense pressure on tribes to cede millions of their acres to the United States. And as railroads and new weaponry infiltrated western lands, the buffalo population rapidly diminished. Army commanders encouraged the slaughter of buffalo, predicting that by eliminating the Indians’ food supply, their resistance to the reservation system would be broken. With their food sources practically destroyed and their way of life undermined, many native Indians felt that they could only fight or die. Eventually, the large-scale Indian Wars erupted. Federal officials became determined to end tribal rule and bring Indians into mainstream America.

In this excerpt, Lee Chew, a Chinese immigrant, reminiscences of his time in the railroad industry and the treatment he received by the white miners.

We were three years with the railroad, and then went to the mines, where we made plenty of money in gold dust, but had a hard time, for many of the miners were wild men who carried revolvers and after drinking would come into our place to shoot and steals shirts, for which we had to pay... Americans are not all bad... Still, they have their faults, and their treatment of us is outrageous...
When prices and ore production fell sharply, not even unions could stop the owners from shutting down the mines and leaving ghost towns in their wake. Often they also left behind an environmental disaster. Hydraulic mining, which used water cannons to blast hillside and expose gold deposits, drove tons of rock and earth into the rivers and canyons. By the late 1860s, southern California’s rivers were clogged, producing floods that wiped out towns and farms. In 1893, Congress finally passed the **Caminetti Act**, giving the state the power to regulate the mines. (The act also created the Sacramento River Commission, which began to replace free-flowing rivers with canals and dams.) Underground mining continued unregulated, using up whole forests for timbers and filling the air with dangerous, sulfurous smoke.

**Mormon Settlements**

While western expansion fostered the growth of new commercial cities such as the numerous if unstable mining towns, it simultaneously placed new restrictions on established communities. The Mormons (members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints) had fled western New York in the 1830s for Illinois and Missouri, only to face greater persecution in the Midwest. When their founder, Joseph Smith, was murdered after announcing that an angel had told him that it is “the will of Heaven that a man have more than one wife,” the community sought refuge in the West. Led by their new prophet, Brigham Young, the Mormons migrated in 1846–47 to the Great Salt Lake Basin to form an independent theocratic state called Deseret and to affirm the sanctity of plural marriage, or polygamy.

By 1870, more than 87,000 Mormons lived in Utah Territory, creating relatively stable communities that were unique in the West for their religious and ethnic homogeneity. Contrary to federal law, church officials forbade the selling of land. Mormons instead held property in common. They created sizable settlements complemented
by satellite villages joined to communal farmlands and a common pasture. Relying on agricultural techniques learned from local Indian tribes, the Mormons built dams for irrigation and harvested a variety of crops from desert soil. Eventually, nearly 500 Mormon communities spread from Oregon to Idaho to northern Mexico (see Map 18-4).

However, as territorial rule tightened, the Mormons saw their unique way of life once again threatened. The newspapers and the courts repeatedly assailed the Mormons for the supposed sexual excesses of their system of plural marriage, condemning them as heathens and savages. Preceded by prohibitory federal laws enacted in 1862 and 1874, the Supreme Court finally ruled against polygamy in the 1879 case of United States v. Reynolds, which granted the freedom of belief but not the freedom of practice. In 1882, Congress passed the Edmunds Act, which effectively disfranchised those who believed in or practiced polygamy and threatened them with fines and imprisonment. Equally devastating was the Edmunds-Tucker Act, passed five years later, which destroyed the temporal power of the Mormon Church by confiscating all assets over $50,000 and establishing a federal commission to oversee all elections in the territory. By the early 1890s, Mormon leaders officially renounced the practice of plural marriage.

Although Brigham Young wed twenty-seven women and fathered fifty-six children, no more than 15 to 20 percent of Mormon families practiced polygamy and even then, two wives was the norm. Still, the “celestial” law of plural marriage had been central to the Mormons’ messianic mission. Forced to give up the right to the practice, they gave up many other aspects of their distinctive communal life, including the common ownership of land. By the time Utah became a state in 1896, Mormon communities resembled in some ways the society that the original settlers had sought to escape. Nevertheless, they combined their religious cohesion with leadership in the expanding regional economy to become a major political force in the West.

**Mexican Borderland Communities**

The Mexican-American War ended in 1848 with the United States taking fully half of all Mexican territory—the future states of Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah, most of New Mexico, and parts of Wyoming, and Colorado. The Gadsden Purchase of 1853 rounded off this prize, giving the United States a strip of land, rich in copper deposits, that stretched from El Paso west to the Colorado River—in short, all the land north of the Rio Grande River. Reflecting upon the new continental empire in North America, a British writer summed up the significance of the recent acquisitions. The United States had become, he wrote, “a power of the first class, a nation which it is very dangerous to offend and almost impossible to attack.”

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo allowed the Hispanic people north of the Rio Grande to choose between immigrating to Mexico or staying in what was now the United States. But the new Mexican-American border, one of the longest ungarded boundaries in the world, could not successfully sever communities that had been connected for centuries. What gradually emerged, was an economically and socially interdependent zone, the Anglo-Hispanic borderlands linking the United States and Mexico.

Although under the treaty all Hispanics were formally guaranteed citizenship and the “free enjoyment of their liberty and property,” local “Anglos” (as the Mexicans called

**MAP 18-4**

*Mormon Cultural Diffusion, ca. 1883* Mormon settlements permeated many sparsely populated sections of Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico. Built with church backing and the strong commitment of community members, they survived and even prospered in adverse climates.

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**Edmunds Act** 1882 act that effectively disfranchised those who believed in or practiced polygamy and threatened them with fines and imprisonment.
white Americans) often violated these provisions and, through fraud or coercion, took control of the land. The Sante Fe Ring, a group of lawyers, politicians, and land speculators, stole millions of acres from the public domain and grabbed over 80 percent of the Mexicano landholdings in New Mexico alone. More often, Anglos used new federal laws to their own benefit.

For a time, Arizona and New Mexico seemed to hold out hope for a mutually beneficial interaction between Mexicanos and Anglos. A prosperous class of Hispanic landowners, with long-standing ties to Anglos through marriage, had established itself in cities like Albuquerque and Tucson, old Spanish towns that had been founded in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Estevan Ochoa, merchant, philanthropist, and the only Mexican to serve as mayor of Tucson following the Gadsden Purchase, managed to build one of the largest business empires in the West. In Las Cruces, New Mexico, an exceptional family such as the wealthy Amadors could shop by mail from Bloomingdales, travel to the World’s Fair in Chicago, and send their children to English-language Catholic schools. Even the small and struggling Mexicano middle class could afford such modern conveniences as kitchen stoves and sewing machines. These Mexican elites, well integrated into the emerging national economy, continued to wield political power as ranchers, landlords, and real estate developers until the end of the century. They secured passage of bills for education in their regions and often served as superintendents of local schools. Several prominent merchants became territorial delegates to Congress.

But the majority of Mexicans who had lived in the mountains and deserts of the Southwest for well over two centuries were less prepared for these changes. Most had worked outside the commercial economy, farming and herding sheep for their own subsistence. Before 1848, they had few contacts with the outside world. With the Anglos came land closures as well as commercial expansion, prompted by railroad, mining, and timber industries. Many poor families found themselves crowded onto plots too small for subsistence farming. Many turned to seasonal labor on the new Anglo-owned commercial farms, where they became the first of many generations of poorly paid migratory workers. Other Mexicanos adapted by taking jobs on the railroad or in the mines. Meanwhile, their wives and daughters moved to the new towns and cities in such numbers that by the end of the century, Mexicanos had become a predominantly urban population, dependent on wages for survival.

Women were quickly drawn into the expanding network of market and wage relations. They tried to make ends meet by selling produce from their backyard gardens; more often they worked as seamstresses or laundresses. Formerly at the center of a communal society, Mexicanas found themselves with fewer options in the cash economy. What wages they could now earn fell below even the low sums paid to their husbands, and women lost status within both the family and community.

Occasionally, Mexicanos organized to reverse these trends or at least to limit the damage done to their communities. In the border town of Brownsville, Texas, in 1859, Juan Nepomuceno Cortina, known as the Red Robber of the Rio Grande, and sixty of his followers pillaged white-owned stores and killed four Anglos who had

**Edmunds-Tucker Act** 1887 act which destroyed the temporal power of the Mormon Church by confiscating all assets over $50,000 and establishing a federal commission to oversee all elections in the Utah territory.
gone unpunished for murdering several Mexicans. “Cortina’s War” marked the first of several sporadic rebellions. As late as the 1880s, Las Gorras Blancas, a band of agrarian rebels in New Mexico, were destroying railroad ties and farm machinery and posting demands for justice on fences of the new Anglo farms and ranches. In 1890, Las Gorras turned from social banditry to political organization, forming *El Partido del Pueblo Unido* (The People’s Party). Organized along similar lines, *El Alianzo Hispano-Americano* (The Hispanic-American Alliance) was formed “to protect and fight for the rights of Spanish Americans” through political action. *Mutualistes* (mutual aid societies) provided sickness and death benefits to Mexican families.

Despite many pressures, Mexicanos preserved much of their cultural heritage. Many persisted in older ways simply because they had few choices. In addition, the influx of new immigrants from Mexico helped to reinforce traditional cultural norms. Beginning in the late 1870s, the modernizing policies of Porfirio Díaz, the president of Mexico from 1876 to 1911, brought deteriorating living conditions to the masses of poor people, and prompted a migration northward that accelerated through the first decades of the twentieth century. These newcomers revitalized old customs and rituals associated with family and religion. The Roman Catholic Church retained its influence in the community, and most Mexicans continued to turn to the church to baptize infants, to celebrate the feast days of their patron saints, to marry, and to bury the dead. Special saints like the Virgin of Guadalupe and distinctive holy days like the Day of the Dead survived, along with fiestas celebrating the change of seasons. Many communities continued to commemorate Mexican national holidays, such as *Cinco de Mayo* (the Fifth of May), marking the Mexican victory over French invaders in the battle of Puebla in 1862. Spanish language and Spanish place names continued to distinguish the Southwest.

**The Open Range**

The slaughter of the buffalo made way for the cattle industry, one of the most profitable businesses in the West. Texas longhorns, introduced by the Spanish, numbered over 5 million at the close of the Civil War and represented a potentially plentiful supply of beef for Eastern consumers. In the spring of 1866, entrepreneurs such as Joseph G. McCoy began to build a spectacular cattle market in the eastern part of Kansas, where the Kansas Pacific Railroad provided crucial transportation links to slaughtering and packing houses and commercial distributors in Kansas City, St. Louis, and Chicago.

In 1867, only 35,000 head of cattle reached McCoy’s new stockyards in Abilene, but 1868 proved the first of many banner years. Drovers pushed herd after herd north from Texas through Oklahoma on the trail marked out by part-Cherokee trader Jesse Chisholm. Great profits were made on Texas steers bought for $7–9 a head and sold in Kansas for upward of $30. In 1880, nearly 2 million cattle were slaughtered in Chicago alone. For two decades, cattle represented the West’s bonanza industry.

**The Long Drives**

The great cattle drives depended on the cowboy, a seasonal or migrant worker. After the Civil War, cowboys—one for every 300–500 head of cattle on the trail—rounded up herds of Texas cattle and drove them as much as 1,500 miles north to grazing ranches or to the stockyards where they were readied for shipping by rail to Eastern markets. The boss supplied the horses, the cowboy his own bedroll, saddle, and spurs. The workday lasted from sunup to sundown, with short night shifts for guarding the cattle. Scurvy, a widespread ailment, could be traced to the basic chuckwagon menu...
of sowbelly, beans, and coffee, a diet bereft of fruits and vegetables. The cowboy worked without protection from rain or hail, and severe dust storms could cause temporary blindness. As late as 1920, veterans of the range complained that no company would sell life insurance to a cowboy.

In return for his labor, the cowboy received at the best of times about $30 per month. Wages were usually paid in one lump sum at the end of a drive, a policy that encouraged cowboys to spend their money quickly and recklessly in the booming cattle towns of Dodge City, Kansas, or Cheyenne, Wyoming. In the 1880s, when wages began to fall along with the price of beef, cowboys fought back by stealing cattle or by forming unions. In 1883, many Texas cowboys struck for higher wages; nearly all Wyoming cowboys struck in 1886. Aided by the legendary camaraderie fostered in the otherwise desolate conditions of the long drive, cowboys, along with miners, were among the first western workers to organize against employers.

Like other parts of the West, the cattle range was ethnically diverse. Between one-fifth and one-third of all workers were Indian, Mexican, or African American. Indian cowboys worked mainly on the northern plains and in Indian Territory; the vaqueros, who had previously worked on the Mexican cattle haciendas, or huge estates, predominated in South Texas and California. African American cowboys worked primarily in Texas, where the range cattle industry was founded.

Like the vaqueros, African American cowboys were highly skilled managers of cattle. Some were sons of former slaves who had been captured from the African territory of Gambia, where cattle raising was an age-old art. Unlike Mexicans, they earned wages comparable to those paid to Anglos and, especially during the early years, worked in integrated drover parties. By the 1880s, as the center of the cattle industry shifted to the more settled regions around the northern ranches, African Americans were forced out, and they turned to other kinds of work.

Very few women participated in the long drives. Sally Redus, wife of an early Texas cattleman, once accompanied her husband on the trip from Texas to Kansas. Carrying her baby on her lap, she most likely rode the enormous distance “sidesaddle,” with both legs on one side of the horse. Most women stayed back at the ranch. Occasionally, a husband and wife worked as partners, sharing even the labor of wrangling cattle, and following her husband’s death, a woman might take over altogether. Elizabeth Collins, for example, turned her husband’s large ranch into an extraordinarily prosperous business, earning for herself the title “Cattle Queen of Montana.” The majority of wives attended to domestic chores, caring for children and maintaining the household. Their daughters, however, often tagged along after their fathers and learned to love outdoor work. They were soon riding astride, “clothespin style,” roping calves, branding cattle or cutting their ears to mark them, and castrating bulls. But not until 1901 did a woman dare to enter an official rodeo contest.

**The Sporting Life**

In cattle towns as well as mining camps, saloons, gambling establishments, and dance halls were regular features on the horizon. The hurdy-gurdy, a form of hand organ, supplied raucous music for cowboys eager to spend their money and blow off steam after the long drive. Here they found dancing partners, often called hurdy-girls or hurdies. If they wanted to do more than dance, the cowboy and his partner could retreat to one of the small rooms for rent, which were often located at the rear of the building.

During the first cattle drive to Abilene in 1867, only a few women worked as prostitutes; but by the following spring, McCoy’s assistant recalled, “they came in swarms, & as the weather was warm 4 or 5 girls could huddle together in a tent very comfortably.” Although some women worked in trailside “hoghouses,” the best-paid
prostitutes congregated in the brothel districts. Most cattle towns boasted at least one bawdy house. Dodge City had two: one with white prostitutes for white patrons; another with black prostitutes for both white and black men. Although prostitution was illegal in most towns, the laws were rarely enforced until the end of the century, when reformers led campaigns to shut down the red-light districts. Until then, prostitution supplied these women with the largest source of employment outside the home.

Perhaps 50,000 women engaged in prostitution west of the Mississippi during the second half of the nineteenth century. Like the cowboys who bought their services, most prostitutes were unmarried and in their teens or twenties. Often fed up with underpaid jobs in dressmaking or domestic service, they found few alternatives to prostitution in the cattle towns, where the cost of food and lodging was notoriously high. Still, earnings in prostitution were slim, except during the cattle-shipping season when young men outnumbered women by as much as three to one. In the best of times, a fully employed Wichita prostitute might earn $30 per week, nearly two-thirds of which would go for room and board. Injury or even death from violent clients, addiction to narcotics such as cocaine or morphine, and venereal disease were workaday dangers.

Community and Conflict

The combination of prostitution, gambling, and drinking discouraged the formation of stable communities. According to a Kansas proverb, “There’s no Sunday west of Junction City and no god west of Salina.” Personal violence was notoriously commonplace on the streets and in the barrooms of cattle towns and mining camps populated mainly by young, single men. Many western towns such as Wichita outlawed the carrying of handguns, but enforcement usually lagged. Local specialty shops and mail-order catalogues continued to sell weapons with little regulation. But contrary to popular belief, gunfights were relatively rare. Local police officers, such as Wyatt Earp and James “Wild Bill” Hickok, worked mainly to keep order among drunken cowboys.

After the Civil War, violent crime, assault, and robbery rose sharply throughout the United States. In the West, the most prevalent crimes were horse theft and cattle rustling, which peaked during the height of the open range period and then fell back by the 1890s. Death by legal hanging or illegal lynching—at “necktie parties” in which the victims were “jerked to Jesus”—was the usual sentence. In the last half of the century, vigilantes acting outside the law mobilized more than 200 times, claiming altogether more than 500 victims.

The “range wars” of the 1870s produced violent conflicts. By this time, both farmers and sheep herders were encroaching on the fields where cattle had once grazed freely. Sheep chew grass down to its roots, making it practically impossible to raise cattle on land they have grazed. Farmers meanwhile set about building fences to protect their domestic livestock and property. Great cattle barons fought back against farmers by ordering cowboys to cut the new barbed-wire fences. Rivalry among
the owners of livestock was even more vicious, particularly in the Southwest and Pacific Northwest. In those areas, Mexicano shepherds and Anglo cattlemen often fought each other for land. In Lincoln County, New Mexico, the feuds grew so intense in 1878 that one faction hired gunman Billy the Kid to protect its interests. President Rutherford B. Hayes finally sent troops to halt the bloodshed. As one historian has written, violence was “not a mere sideshow” but “an intrinsic part of western society.”

The cattle barons helped to bring about their own demise, but they did not go down quietly. Ranchers eager for greater profits, and often backed by foreign capital, overstocked their herds, and eventually the cattle began to deplete the limited supply of grass. Finally, during 1885–87, a combination of summer drought and winter blizzards killed 90 percent of the cattle in the northern Plains. By the time of the “big die-up,” returns on investments were already declining, and many ranchers fell into bankruptcy. The era of the long drive that inspired so much western lore proved to be a relatively short-lived phenomenon.

Farming Communities on the Plains

The vision of a huge fertile garden extending from the Appalachians to the Pacific Ocean had inspired Americans since the early days of the republic. But the first explorers who actually traveled through the Great Plains quashed this dream. “The Great Desert” was the name they gave to the region stretching west from Kansas and Nebraska, north to Montana and the Dakotas, and south again to Oklahoma and Texas. Few trees fended off the blazing sun of summer or promised a supply of lumber for homes and fences. The occasional river or stream flowed with “muddy gruel” rather than pure, sweet water. Economically, the entire region appeared as hopelessly barren as it was vast. It took massive improvements in both transportation and farm technology—as well as unrelenting advertising and promotional campaigns—to open the Great Plains to wide-scale agriculture.

The Homestead Act

The Homestead Act of 1862 offered the first incentive to prospective white farmers. This act granted a quarter section (160 acres) of the public domain free to any settler who lived on the land for at least five years and improved it; or a settler could buy the land for $1.25 per acre after only six months’ residence. Restricting its provisions to unmarried women, the Homestead Act encouraged adventurous and hard-working women to file between 5 and 15 percent of the claims, which allowed approximately 400,000 households to build farms for themselves.

Homesteaders achieved their greatest success in the central and upper Midwest, where the soil was rich and weather relatively moderate. But those settlers lured to the Great Plains by descriptions of land “carpeted with soft grass—a sylvan paradise” found themselves locked in a fierce struggle with the harsh climate and arid soil. Nearly half of all homesteaders failed to improve the land and therefore lost their claims.

The dream of a homestead nevertheless died hard. Five years after the passage of the Homestead Act, New York Tribune editor Horace Greeley still advised his readers to strike off “into the broad, free West” and “make yourself a farm from Uncle Sam’s generous domain, you will crowd nobody, starve nobody, and . . . neither you nor your children need evermore beg for Something to Do.” He was wrong. Although the Homestead Act did spark the largest migration in American history, only 10 percent of all farmers got their start under its terms.

Most settlers acquired their land outright. State governments and land companies usually held the most valuable land near transportation and markets, and the
majority of farmers were willing to pay a hefty price for those benefits. The big-time land speculators did even better, plucking choice locations at bargain prices and selling high. And the railroads, which received land grants from the federal government, did best, selling off the holdings near their routes at top dollar.

**Populating the Plains**

The rapid settlement of the West could not have taken place without the railroad. Although the Homestead Act offered prospective farmers free land, it was the railroad that promoted settlement, brought people to their new homes, and carried crops and cattle to Eastern markets. The railroads therefore wielded tremendous economic and political power throughout the West. Their agents—reputed to know every cow in the district—made major decisions regarding territorial welfare. In designing routes and locating depots, railroad companies put whole communities “on the map,” or left them behind.

Along with providing transportation links between the East and the West and potential markets as distant as China, the western railroads directly encouraged settlement. Unlike the railroads built before the Civil War, which followed the path of villages and towns, the western lines preceded settlement. Bringing people west became their top priority, and the railroad companies conducted aggressive promotional and marketing campaigns. Agents enticed Easterners and Europeans alike with long-term loans and free transportation by rail to distant points in the West. For example, the Santa Fe Railroad sent agent C. B. Schmidt to Germany, where he managed to entice nearly 60,000 Germans to settle along the rail line. The railroads also sponsored land companies to sell parcels of their own huge allotments from the federal government. The National Land Company, founded in Chicago in 1869, alone organized sixteen colonies of mainly European immigrants in parts of Kansas and Colorado.

More than 2 million Europeans, many recruited by professional promoters, settled the Great Plains between 1870 and 1900. Some districts in Minnesota seemed to be virtual colonies of Sweden; others housed the largest number of Finns in the New World. Nebraska, whose population as early as 1870 was 25 percent foreign-born, concentrated Germans, Swedes, Danes, and Czechs. But Germans outnumbered all other immigrants by far. A smaller portion of European immigrants reached Kansas, still fewer the territories to the south where Indian and Hispanic peoples and African Americans remained the major ethnic populations.

Many immigrants found life on the Great Plains difficult but endurable. “Living in Nebraska,” the locals joked, “is a lot like being hanged; the initial shock is a bit abrupt, but once you hang there for awhile you sort of get used to it.” The German-speaking Russians who settled the Dakotas discovered soil similar to that of their homeland but weather that was even more severe. Having earlier fled religious persecution in Germany for Russia, they brought with them heavy coats and the technique of using sun-dried bricks to build houses in areas where lumber was scarce. These immigrants often provided examples for other settlers less familiar with such harsh terrain.

Having traveled the huge distance with kin or members of their Old World villages, immigrants
In this excerpt, Lydia Allen Rudd writes in her diary of westward travel from the Missouri River.

_We had a very heavy fog this morning which cleared up about noon. Our men are not any of them very well this morning. We passed another grave to day which was made this morning. The board stated that he died of cholera. He was from Indiana. We met several that had taken the back track for the states homesick I presume let them go._

In this excerpt, Mrs. Orsemus Boyd describes her arrival at Camp Halleck, Nevada, where she joined her husband a few months after they married in October, 1867.

_I found that my new home was formed of two wall tents pitched together so the inner one could be used as sleeping and the outer one as a sitting room. A calico curtain divided them, and a carpet made of barley sacks covered the floor . . . The wall tents were only eight feet square, and when windowless and doorless except for the one entrance, as were those, they seemed from the inside much like prison._

tended to form tight-knit communities on the Great Plains. Many married only within their own group. For example, only 3 percent of Norwegian men married women of a different ethnic background. Like many Mexicanos in the Southwest, several immigrant groups retained their languages into the twentieth century, usually by sponsoring parochial school systems and publishing their own newspapers. A few groups closed their communities to outsiders. The Poles who migrated to central Nebraska in the 1880s, for example, formed an exclusive settlement; and the German Hutterites, who disavowed private property, lived in exclusion as much as possible, in the Bon Homme colony of South Dakota, established in 1874.

Among the native-born settlers of the Great Plains, the largest number had migrated from states bordering the Mississippi River. Settling as individual families rather than as whole communities, they faced an exceptionally solitary life on the Great Plains. To stave off isolation, homesteaders sometimes built their homes on the adjoining corners of their homestead plots. Still, the prospect of doing better, which brought most homesteaders to the Great Plains in the first place, caused many families to keep seeking greener pastures. Mobility was so high that between one-third and one-half of all households pulled up stakes within a decade.

Communities eventually flourished in prosperous towns like Grand Island, Nebraska; Coffeyville, Kansas; and Fargo, North Dakota, that served the larger agricultural region. Built alongside the railroad, they grew into commercial centers, home to banking, medical, legal, and retail services. Town life fostered a special intimacy; even in the county graveyard, it was said, a town resident remained among neighbors. But closeness did not necessarily promote social equality or even friendship. A social hierarchy based on education (for the handful of doctors and lawyers) and, more important, investment property (held mainly by railroad agents and bankers) governed relationships between individuals and families. Reinforced by family ties and religious and ethnic differences, this hierarchy often persisted across generations.

**Work, Dawn to Dusk**

By the 1870s, the Great Plains, once the home of buffalo and Indian hunters, was becoming a vast farming region populated mainly by immigrants from Europe and white Americans from east of the Mississippi. In place of the first one-room shanties, sod houses, and log cabins stood substantial frame farmhouses, along with a variety of other buildings like barns, smokehouses, and stables. But the built environment took nothing away from the predominating vista—the expansive fields of grain. “You have no idea, Beulah,” wrote a Dakota farmer to his wife, “of what [the wheat farms] are like until you see them. For mile after mile there is not a sign of a tree or stone and just as level as the floor of your house. . . . Wheat never looked better and it is nothing but wheat, wheat, wheat.”

Most farm families survived, and prospered if they could, through hard work, often from dawn to dusk. Men’s activities in the fields tended to be seasonal, with heavy work during planting and harvest; at other times, their labor centered on construction or repair of buildings and on taking care of livestock. Women’s activities were usually far more routine, week in and week out: cooking and canning of seasonal fruit and vegetables, washing, ironing, churning cream for butter, and keeping chickens for their eggs. Women tended to the young children, and they might occasionally take in boarders, usually young men working temporarily in railroad construction. Many women complained about the ceaseless drudgery, especially when they watched their husbands invest in farm equipment rather than in domestic appliances. Others relished the challenge.
Milking the cows, hauling water, and running errands to neighboring farms could be done by the children, once they had reached the age of nine or so. The “one-room school,” where all grades learned together, taught the basics of literacy and arithmetic that a future farmer or commercial employee would require. Older sons and daughters might move to the nearest town to earn money to contribute to the family coffers.

The harsh climate and unyielding soil nevertheless forced all but the most reclusive families to seek out friends and neighbors. Many hands were needed to clear the land for cultivation or for roadbeds, to raise houses and barns, or to bring in a harvest before a threatening storm. Neighbors might agree to work together haying, harvesting, and threshing grain. A well-to-do farmer might “rent” his threshing machine in exchange for a small cash fee and, for instance, three days’ labor. His wife might barter her garden produce for her neighbor’s bread and milk or for help during childbirth or disability. Women often combined work and leisure in quilting bees and sewing circles, where they made friends while sharing scraps of material and technical information. Whole communities turned out for special events, such as the seasonal husking bees and apple bees, which were organized mainly by women.

Much of this informal barter, however, resulted from lack of cash rather than from a lasting desire to cooperate. When annual harvests were bountiful, even the farm woman’s practice of bartering goods with neighbors and local merchants—butter and eggs in return for yard goods or seed—diminished sharply, replaced by cash transactions. Still, wheat production proved unsteady in the last half of the nineteenth century, and few farm families could remain reliant wholly on themselves.

For many farmers, the soil simply would not yield a livelihood, and they often owed more money than they took in. Start-up costs, including the purchase of land and equipment, put many farmers deep in debt to local creditors. Some lost their land altogether. By the turn of the century, more than one-third of all farmers in the United States were tenants on someone else’s land.

The Garden of Eden was not to be found on the prairies or on the plains, no matter how hard the average farm family worked. Again and again, foreclosures wiped out the small landowner through dips in commodity prices, bad decisions, natural disasters, or illness. In one especially bad year, 1881, a group of farmers in western Iowa chose to burn off, rather than harvest, their wheat because the yield promised to be so small. The swift growth of rural population soon ended. Although writers and orators alike continued to celebrate the family farm as the source of virtue and economic well-being, the hard reality of big money and political power told a far different story.

**THE WORLD’S BREADBASKET**

During the second half of the nineteenth century commercial farms employed the most intensive and extensive methods of agricultural production in the world. Hard-working farmers brought huge numbers of acres under cultivation, while new technologies allowed them to achieve unprecedented levels of efficiency in the planting and harvesting of crops. As a result, farming became increasingly tied to international trade, and modern capitalism soon ruled western agriculture, as it did the mining and cattle industries.

**NEW PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGIES**

Only after the trees had been cleared and grasslands cut free of roots could the soil be prepared for planting. But as farmers on the Great Plains knew so well, the sod

**HOW DID** agribusiness differ from more traditional forms of farming?
west of the Mississippi did not yield readily to cultivation and often broke the cast-iron plows typically used by Eastern farmers. Farther west, some farmers resorted to drills to plant seeds for crops such as wheat and oats. Even in the best locations, where loamy, fertile ground had built up over centuries into eight or more inches of decayed vegetation, the preliminary breaking, or “busting,” of the sod required hard labor. One man would guide a team of five or six oxen pulling a plow through the soil, while another regulated the depth of the cut, or furrow. But, as a North Dakota settler wrote to his wife back in Michigan, after the first crop, the soil became as “soft as can be, any team [of men and animals] can work it.”

Agricultural productivity depended as much on new technology as on the farmers’ hard labor. In 1837, John Deere had designed his famous “singing plow” that easily turned prairie grasses under and turned up even highly compacted soils. Around the same time, Cyrus McCormick’s reaper began to be used for cutting grain; by the 1850s, his factories were turning out reapers in mass quantities. The harvester, invented in the 1870s, drew the cut stalks upward to a platform where two men could bind them into sheaves; by the 1880s, an automatic knotter tied them together. Drastically reducing the number of people traditionally required for this work, the harvester increased the pace many times over. The introduction of mechanized corn planters and mowing or raking machines for hay all but completed the technological arsenal (see Table 18.1).

In the 1890s, the U.S. commissioner of labor measured the impact of technology on farm productivity. Before the introduction of the wire binder in 1875, he reported, a farmer could not plant more than 8 acres of wheat if he were to harvest it successfully without help; by 1890, the same farmer could rely on his new machine to handle 135 acres with relative ease and without risk of spoilage. The improvements in the last half of the century allowed an average farmer to produce up to ten times more than was possible with the old implements.

Scientific study of soil, grain, and climatic conditions was another factor in the record output. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, federal and state governments added inducements to the growing body of expertise, scientific information, and hands-on advice. Through the Morrill Act of 1862, “land-grant” colleges acquired space for campuses in return for promising to institute agricultural programs. The Department of Agriculture, which attained cabinet-level status in 1889, and the Weather Bureau (transferred from the War Department in 1891) also made considerable contributions to farmers’ knowledge. The federal Hatch Act of 1887, which created a series of state experimental stations, provided for basic agricultural research, especially in the areas of soil minerals and plant growth. Many states added their own agricultural stations, usually connected with state colleges and universities.

Nature nevertheless often reigned over technological innovation and seemed in places to take revenge against these early
successes. West of the 98th meridian—a north–south line extending through western Oklahoma, central Kansas and Nebraska, and eastern Dakota—perennial dryness due to an annual rainfall of less than 20 inches constantly threatened to turn soil into dust and to break plows on the hardened ground. Summer heat burned out crops and ignited grass fires. Mountains of winter snows turned rivers into spring torrents that flooded fields; heavy fall rains washed crops away. Even good weather invited worms and flying insects to infest the crops. During the 1870s, grasshoppers in clouds a mile long ate everything organic, including tree bark and clothes.

**Producing for the Global Market**

Farming changed in important ways during the last third of the nineteenth century. Although the family remained the primary source of labor, farmers tended to put more emphasis on production for exchange rather than for home use. They continued to plant vegetable gardens and often kept fowl or livestock for the family’s consumption, but farmers raised crops mainly for a market that stretched across the world.

Wheat farmers in particular prospered. With the world population increasing at a rapid rate, the international demand for wheat was enormous, and American farmers made huge profits from the sale of this crop. Wheat production ultimately served as a barometer of the agricultural economy in the West. Farmers in all corners of the region, from Nebraska to California, expanded or contracted their holdings and planned their crops according to the price of wheat.

The new machines and expanding market did not necessarily guarantee success. Land, draft animals, and equipment remained very expensive, and start-up costs could keep a family in debt for decades. A year of good returns often preceded a year of financial disaster. Weather conditions, international markets, and railroad and steamship shipping prices all proved equally unpredictable and heartless.

The new technology and scientific expertise favored the large, well-capitalized farmer over the small one. Such is the story of the large-scale wheat operations in the great Red River Valley of North Dakota. Here, a shrewd worker such as Oliver Dalrymple could take advantage of a spectacular bonanza. When Dalrymple started out in 1875, he managed a farm owned by two officials of the Northern Pacific Railroad. He cleared their land, planted wheat, and yielded a sizable harvest the first year. He did much better the second year and began to invest in his own farm. A decade later, his operations included 32,000 acres in wheat and 2,000 in oats. Dalrymple now had the financial resources to use the latest technology to harvest these crops and to employ up to 1,000 seasonal laborers at a time. The majority of farmers with fewer resources expanded at more modest rates. Between 1880 and 1900, average farm size in the seven leading grain-growing states increased from 64.4 acres to more than 100 acres.

**California Agribusiness**

The trend toward bonanza farming reached an apex in California, where farming as a business surpassed farming as a way of life. Bankers, railroad magnates, and other Anglos made rich by the Gold Rush took possession of the best farming land in the state. They introduced the latest technologies, built dams and canals, and invested huge amounts of capital, setting the pattern for the state’s prosperous agribusiness. Farms of nearly 500 acres dominated the California landscape in 1870; by the turn of the century, two-thirds of the state’s arable land was in 1,000-acre farms. As land reformer and social commentator Henry George noted, California was “not a country of farms but a country of plantations and estates.”
This scale of production made California the national leader in wheat production by the mid-1880s. But it also succeeded dramatically with fruit and vegetables. Large- and medium-sized growers, shrewdly combined in cooperative marketing associations during the 1870s and 1880s, used the new refrigerator cars to ship their produce in large quantities to the East and on to Europe. By 1890, cherries, apricots, and oranges, packed with mountains of ice, made their way into homes across the United States.

California growers learned quickly that they could satisfy consumer appetites and even create new ones. Orange producers packed their products individually in tissue paper, a technique designed to convince Eastern consumers that they were about to eat a luxury fruit. By the turn of the century, advertisers for the California Citrus Growers' Association described oranges as a necessity for good health, inventing the trademark “Sunkist” to be stamped on each orange. Meanwhile California's grape growing grew into a big business. Long considered inferior to French wines, California wines found a ready market at lower prices. Other grape growers made their fortunes in raisins. One company trademarked its raisins as “Sun Maid” and packaged them for schoolchildren in the famous “nickel” box.

By 1900, California had become the model for American agribusiness, not the home of self-sufficient homesteaders but the showcase of heavily capitalized farm factories that employed a huge tenant and migrant workforce, including many Chinese. After the mines gave out and work on the transcontinental railroad ended, thousands of Chinese helped to bring new lands under cultivation. Renting their land, Chinese tenant farmers specialized in labor-intensive crops such as vegetables and fruits, and peddled their crops door-to-door or sold them in roadside stands. Others worked in packing and preserving in all the major agricultural regions of the state. However, the Chinese, like the majority of field hands, rarely rose to the ranks of agricultural entrepreneurs. By the turn of the century, amid intense legislative battles over land and irrigation rights, it was clear that the rich and powerful dominated California agribusiness.

**The Toll on the Land**

Viewing the land as a resource to command, the new inhabitants often looked past the existing flora and fauna toward a landscape remade strictly for commercial purposes. The changes they produced in some areas were nearly as cataclysmic as those that occurred during the Ice Age.

Banishing many existing species, farmers “improved” the land by introducing exotic plants and animals—that is, biological colonies indigenous to other regions and continents. Farmers also unintentionally introduced new varieties of weeds, insect pests, and rats. Surviving portions of older grasslands and meadows eventually could be found only alongside railroad tracks, in graveyards, or inside national parks.

Numerous species disappeared altogether or suffered drastic reduction. The grizzly bear, for example, an animal exclusive to the West, could once be found in large numbers from the Great Plains to California and throughout much of Alaska; by the early decades of the twentieth century, one nature writer estimated that only...
800 survived, mostly in Yellowstone National Park. At the same time, the number of wolves declined from perhaps as many as 2 million to just 200,000. By the mid-1880s, no more than 5,000 buffalo survived in the entire United States, and little remained of the once vast herds but great heaps of bones sold for $7.50 per ton.

The slaughter of the buffalo had a dramatic impact, not only on the fate of the species, but also on the grasslands of the Great Plains. Overall, the biological diversity of the region had been drastically reduced. Having killed off the giant herds, ranchers and farmers quickly shifted to cattle and sheep production. Unlike the roaming buffalo, these livestock did not range widely and soon devoured the native grasses down to their roots. With the ground cover destroyed, the soil eroded and became barren. By the end of the century, huge dust storms swept across the plains.

In 1873, the U.S. Congress passed the **Timber Culture Act**, which allotted homesteaders an additional 160 acres of land in return for planting and cultivating forty acres of trees. Because residence was not required, and because tree planting could not be assessed for at least thirteen years, speculators filed for several claims at once, then turned around and sold the land without having planted a single tree. Although some forests were restored, neither the weather nor the soil improved.

Large-scale commercial agriculture also took a heavy toll on inland waters. Before white settlement, rainfall had drained naturally into lakes and underground aquifers, and watering spots were abundant throughout the Great Plains. Farmers mechanically rerouted and dammed water to irrigate their crops, causing many bodies of water to disappear and the water table to drop significantly. In the 1870s, successful ranchers in California pressed for ever greater supplies of water and contracted Chinese work gangs to build the largest irrigation canal in the West. In 1887, the state of California formed irrigation districts, securing bond issues for the construction of canals, and other western states followed. But by the 1890s, irrigation had seemed to reach its limit without federal support. The Newlands or **National Reclamation Act** of 1902 added 1 million acres of irrigated land, and state irrigation districts added more than 10 million acres. Expensive to taxpayers, and ultimately benefiting corporate farmers rather than small landowners, these projects further diverted water and totally transformed the landscape.

Although western state politicians and federal officials debated water rights for decades, they rarely considered the impact of water policies on the environment. Lake Tulare in California’s Central Valley, for example, had occupied up to 760 square miles. After farmers began to irrigate their land by tapping the rivers that fed Tulare, the lake shrank dramatically, covering a mere 36 square miles by the early twentieth century. Finally the lake, which had supported rich aquatic and avian life for thousands of years, disappeared entirely. The land left behind, now wholly dependent on irrigation, grew so alkaline in spots that it could no longer be used for agricultural purposes.

The need to maintain the water supply indirectly led to the creation of national forests and the Forest Service. Western farmers supported the **General Land Revision Act of 1891**, which gave the president the power to establish forest reserves to protect watersheds against the threats posed by lumbering, overgrazing, and forest fires. In the years that followed, President Benjamin Harrison established fifteen forest reserves exceeding 16 million acres, and President Grover Cleveland added more than 21 million acres. But only in 1897 did the secretary of the interior finally gain the authority to regulate the use of these reserves.

The **Forest Management Act** of 1897 and the National Reclamation Act of 1902 set the federal government on the path of large-scale regulatory activities. The Forest Service was established in 1905, and in 1907, forest reserves were transferred from the Department of the Interior to the Department of Agriculture. The federal

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**Timber Culture Act** 1873 act which allotted homesteaders an additional 160 acres of land in return for planting and cultivating 40 acres of trees.

**National Reclamation Act** 1902 act which added 1 million acres of irrigated land to the United States.

**General Land Revision Act of 1891** Act which gave the president the power to establish forest reserves to protect watersheds against the threats posed by lumbering, overgrazing, and forest fires.

**Forest Management Act** 1897 act which, along with the National Reclamation Act, set the federal government on the path of large-scale regulatory activities.
WHAT PLACE did the West hold in the national imagination?

AP* Guideline 16.3

Quick Review

National Parks
- 1864: Congress passed the Yosemite Act placing area under management of state of California.
- 1872: Yellowstone named first national park.
- Five new national parks named between 1890 and 1910.

THE WESTERN LANDSCAPE

Throughout the nineteenth century, many Americans viewed western expansion as the nation’s “manifest destiny,” and just as many marveled at the region’s natural and cultural wonders. The public east of the Mississippi craved stories about the West and visual images of its sweeping vistas. Artists and photographers built their reputations on what they saw and imagined. Scholars, from geologists and botanists to historians and anthropologists, toured the trans-Mississippi West in pursuit of new data. The region and its peoples came to represent what was both unique and magnificent about the American landscape (see Map 18-5).

NATURE’S MAJESTY

By the end of the century, scores of writers had described spectacular, breathtaking natural sites like the Grand Tetons and High Sierras, vast meadows of waving grasses and beautiful flowers, expansive canyons and rushing white rivers, and exquisite deserts covered with sagebrush or dotted with flowering cactus, stark yet enticing.

Moved by such evidence, the federal government began to set aside huge tracts of land as nature reserves. In 1864, Congress passed the Yosemite Act, which placed government would now play an even larger role in economic development of the West, dealing mainly with corporate farmers and ranchers eager for improvements.

MAP 18-5

The Establishment of National Parks and Forests The setting aside of land for national parks saved large districts of the West from early commercial development and industrial degradation, setting a precedent for the later establishment of additional parks in economically marginal, but scenic, territory. The West, home to the vast majority of park space, became a principal site of tourism by the end of the nineteenth century.
the spectacular cliffs and giant sequoias under the management of the state of California. Meanwhile, explorers returned to the East awestruck by the varied terrain of the Rocky Mountains, the largest mountain chain in North America, and described huge sky-high lakes, boiling mud, and spectacular waterfalls. In 1872, Congress named Yellowstone the first national park, Yosemite and Sequoia in California, Crater Lake in Oregon, Mount Rainier in Washington, and Glacier in Montana all became national parks between 1890 and 1910.

Landscape painters, particularly the group that became known as the Rocky Mountain School, also piqued the public’s interest in western scenery. In the 1860s, German-born Albert Bierstadt, equipped with a camera, traveled the Oregon Trail. Using his photographs as inspiration, Bierstadt painted mountains so wondrous that they seemed nearly surreal, projecting a divine aura behind the majesty of nature. His “earthscape”—huge canvases with exacting details of animals and plants—thrilled viewers and sold for tens of thousands of dollars.

**The Legendary Wild West**

By the end of the century, many Americans, rich and poor alike, imagined the West as a land of promise and opportunity and, above all, of excitement and adventure. Future president Theodore Roosevelt helped to promote this view. Soon after his election to the New York State Assembly in 1882, Roosevelt was horrified to see himself lampooned in the newspapers as a dandy and a weakling. A year later, after buying a ranch in South Dakota, he began to reconstruct his public image. He wrote three books recounting his adventures in the West, claiming that they had instilled in him not only personal bravery and “hardihood,” but self-reliance. The West, Roosevelt insisted, meant “vigorous manhood.”

The first “westerns,” the “dime novels” that sold in the 1860s in editions of 50,000 or more, reflected these myths. Competing against stories about pirates, wars, crime, and sea adventures, westerns outsold the others. Edward Zane Carroll Judson’s *Buffalo Bill, the King of the Border Men*, first published in 1869, spawned hundreds of other novels, thousands of stories, and an entire magazine devoted to Buffalo Bill. Real-life African American cowboy Nat Love lived on in the imaginations of many generations as Edward L. Wheeler’s dime novel hero “Deadwood Dick,” who rode the range as a white cowboy in black clothes in over thirty stories. His girlfriend “Calamity Jane”—“the most reckless buchario in ther Hills”—also took on mythic qualities.

Railroad promoters and herd owners actively promoted these romantic and heroic images. Cowman Joseph McCoy staged Wild West shows in St. Louis and Chicago, where Texas cowboys entertained prospective buyers by roping calves and breaking horses. Many cowboys played up this imaginary role, dressing and talking to match the stories told about them. The first professional photographers often made their living touring the West, setting up studios where cowboys and prostitutes posed in elaborate costumes.

The former Pony Express rider, army scout, and famed buffalo hunter William F. Cody hit upon the idea of an extravaganza that would bring the legendary West to...
“Buffalo Bill” Cody made sharpshooter Annie Oakley a star performer. Entrancing crowds with her stunning accuracy with pistol or rifle, Oakley shot dimes in midair and cigarettes from her husband’s mouth. Cody also hired Sioux Indians and hundreds of cowboys to perform in mock stagecoach robberies and battles. With far less fanfare, many veteran cowboys enlisted themselves on “dude ranches” for tourists or performed as rope twirlers or yodeling singers in theaters across the United States.

The “American Primitive”

New technologies of graphic reproduction encouraged painters and photographers to provide new images of the West, authentic as well as fabricated. A young German American artist, Charles Schreyvogel, saw Buffalo Bill’s tent show in Buffalo and decided to make the West his life’s work. His canvases depicted Indian warriors and U.S. cavalry fighting furiously but without blood and gore. Charles Russell, a genuine cowboy, painted the life he knew, but also indulged in imaginary scenarios, producing paintings of buffalo hunts and first encounters between Indian peoples and white explorers.

Frederic Remington, the most famous of all the western artists, left Yale Art School to visit Montana in 1881, became a Kansas sheepherder and tavern owner, and then returned to painting. Inspired by newspaper stories of the army’s campaign against the Apaches, he made himself into a war correspondent and captured vivid scenes of battle in his sketches. Painstakingly accurate in physical details, especially of horses, his paintings celebrated the “winning of the West” from the Indian peoples. By the turn of the century, Remington was the chief magazine illustrator of western history.

Remington joined hundreds of other painters and engravers in reproducing the most popular historic event: Custer’s Last Stand. Totally fictionalized by white artists to show a heroic General Custer personally holding off advancing Indian warriors, these renditions dramatized the romance and tragedy of conquest. Indian artists recorded Custer’s defeat in far less noble fashion.

Photographers often produced highly nuanced portraits of Indian peoples. Dozens of early photographers from the Bureau of American Ethnology captured the gaze of noble tribespeople or showed them hard at work digging clams or grinding corn. President Theodore Roosevelt praised Edward Sheriff Curtis for vividly conveying tribal virtue. Generations later, in the 1960s and 1970s, Curtis’s photographs again captured the imagination of western enthusiasts, who were unaware or unconcerned that this sympathetic artist had often posed his subjects or retouched his photos to blur out any artifacts of white society.

Painters and photographers led the way for scholarly research on the various Indian societies. The early ethnographer and pioneer of fieldwork in anthropology Lewis Henry Morgan, devoted his life to the study of Indian family or kinship patterns, mostly of Eastern tribes such as the Iroquois, who adopted him into their Hawk Clan. In 1851, he published *League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee, or Iroquois*, considered the
first scientific account of an Indian tribe. A decade later, Morgan ventured into Cheyenne country to examine the naming patterns of this tribe. In his major work, *Ancient Society*, published in 1877, he posited a universal process of social evolution leading from savagery to barbarism to civilization.

One of the most influential interpreters of the cultures of living tribespeople was the pioneering ethnographer Alice Cunningham Fletcher. In 1879, Fletcher met Susette (Bright Eyes) La Flesche of the Omaha tribe, who was on a speaking tour to gain support for her people, primarily to prevent their removal from tribal lands. Fletcher, then forty-two years old, accompanied La Flesche to Nebraska, telling the Omahas that she had come “to learn, if you will let me, something about your tribal organization, social customs, tribal rites, traditions and songs. Also to see if I can help you in any way.” After transcribing hundreds of songs, Fletcher became well known as an expert on Omaha music. She also promoted assimilation through the allotment of individual claims to 160-acre homesteads, eked out of tribal lands, and helped to draft the model legislation that was enacted by Congress as the **Omaha Act of 1882**. In 1885, Fletcher produced for the U.S. Senate a report titled *Indian Education and Civilization*, one of the first general statements on the status of Indian peoples. As a founder of the American Anthropological Society and president of the American Folklore Society, she encouraged further study of Indian societies.

While white settlers and the federal government continued to threaten the survival of tribal life, Indian lore became a major pursuit of scholars and amateurs alike. Adults and children delighted in turning up arrowheads. Fraternal organizations such as the Elks and Eagles borrowed tribal terminology. The Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, the nation’s premier youth organizations, used tribal lore to instill strength of character. And the U.S. Treasury stamped images of tribal chiefs and buffalo on the nation’s most frequently used coins.

**OVERVIEW**

**Major Indian Treaties and Legislation of the Late Nineteenth Century**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Treaty or Act</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>Nez Percé Treaty</td>
<td>Signed illegally on behalf of the entire tribe, in which the Nez Percé abandoned 6 million acres of land in return for a small reservation in northeastern Oregon. Led to Nez Percé wars, which ended in 1877 with the surrender of Chief Joseph.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>Medicine Lodge Treaty</td>
<td>Assigned reservations in existing Indian Territory to Comanches, Plains (Kiowa), Apaches, Kiowas, Cheyennes, and Arapahoes, bringing these tribes together with Sioux, Shoshones, Bannocks, and Navajos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td>Treaty of Fort Laramie</td>
<td>Successfully ended Red Cloud’s war by evacuating federal troops from Sioux Territory along the Bozeman Trail; additionally granted Sioux ownership of the western half of South Dakota and rights to use Powder River country in Wyoming and Montana.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td></td>
<td>Congress declares end to treaty system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>Dawes Severalty Act</td>
<td>Divided communal tribal land, granting the right to petition for citizenship to those Indians who accepted the individual land allotment of 160 acres. Successfully undermined sovereignty.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 18
CONQUEST AND SURVIVAL: THE TRANS-MISSISSIPPI WEST, 1860–1900

THE TRANSFORMATION OF INDIAN SOCIETIES

In 1871, the U.S. government formally ended the treaty system, eclipsing without completely abolishing the sovereignty of Indian nations. Still, the tribes persisted. Using a mixture of survival strategies from farming and trade to the leasing of reservation lands, they both adapted to changing conditions and maintained old traditions.

Reform Policy and Politics

By 1880, many Indian tribes had been forcibly resettled on reservations, but very few had adapted to white ways. For decades, reformers, mainly from the Protestant churches, had lobbied Congress for a program of salvation through assimilation, and they looked to the Board of Indian Commissioners, created in 1869, to carry out this mission. The board often succeeded in mediating conflicts among the various tribes crowded onto reservations, but made far less headway in converting them to Christianity or transforming them into prosperous farming communities. The majority of Indian peoples lived in poverty and misery, deprived of their traditional means of survival and more often than not, subjected to fraud by corrupt government officials and private suppliers. Reformers who observed these conditions firsthand nevertheless remained unshaken in their belief that tribespeople must be raised out of the darkness of ignorance into the light of civilization. Some conceded, however, that the reservation system might not be the best means to this end.

Unlike most Americans, who saw the conquest of the West as a means to national glory, some reformers were genuinely outraged by the government’s continuous violation of treaty obligations and the military enforcement of the reservation policy. One of the most influential was Helen Hunt Jackson, a noted poet and author of children’s stories. In 1879, Jackson had attended a lecture in Hartford, Connecticut, by a chief of the Ponca tribe whose destitute people had been forced from their Dakota homeland. Heartstruck, Jackson lobbied former abolitionists such as Wendell Phillips to work for Indians’ rights and herself began to write against government policy. Her book-length exposé, A Century of Dishonor, published in 1881, detailed the plight of Indian peoples.

Jackson threw herself into the Indian Rights Association, an offshoot of the Women’s National Indian Association (WNIA), which had been formed in 1874 to rally public support for a program of assimilation. The two organizations helped to place Protestant missionaries in the West to work to eradicate tribal customs as well as to convert Indian peoples to Christianity. According to the reformers’ plans, men would now farm as well as hunt, while women would leave the fields to take care of home and children. Likewise, all communal practices would be abandoned in favor of individually owned homesteads, where families could develop in the “American” manner and even celebrate proper holidays such as the Fourth of July. Children, hair trimmed short, would be placed in boarding schools where, removed from their parents’ influence, they would shed traditional values and cultural practices. By 1882, the WNIA had gathered 100,000 signatures on petitions urging Congress to phase out the reservation system, to establish universal education for Indian children, and to award title to 160 acres to any Indian individual willing to work the land.

The Dawes Severalty Act, passed by Congress in 1887, incorporated many of these measures and established federal Indian policy for decades to come. The act allowed the president to distribute land, not to tribes, but to individuals legally “severed” from their tribes. The commissioner of Indian affairs rendered the popular interpretation that “tribal relations should be broken up, socialism destroyed and the
family and autonomy of the individual substituted. The allotment of land in sever-
alty, the establishment of local courts and police, the development of a personal
sense of independence and the universal adoption of the English language are means
to this end.”

Those individuals who accepted the land allotment of 160 acres and agreed to
allow the government to sell unallotted tribal lands (with some funds set aside for edu-
cation) could petition to become citizens of the United States. A little over a decade
after its enactment, many reformers believed that the Dawes Act had resolved the basis
of the “Indian problem.” Hollow Horn Bear, a Sioux chief, offered a different opin-
ion, judging the Dawes Act to be “only another trick of the whites.”

The Dawes Act successfully undermined tribal sovereignty but offered little
compensation. Indian religions and sacred ceremonies were banned, the telling of
legends and myths forbidden, and shamans and medicine men imprisoned or exiled
for continuing their traditional practices. “Indian schools” forbade Indian languages,
clothing styles, and even hair fashions in order to “kill the Indian . . . and save the
man,” as one schoolmaster put it.

These and other measures did little to integrate Indians into white society.
Treated as savages, Indian children fled most white schools. Nor did adults receive
much encouragement to become property holders. Government agencies allotted
them inferior farmland, inadequate tools, and little training for agricultural self-
sufficiency. Seeing scant advantage in assimilating, only a minority of adults dropped
their tribal religion for Christianity or their communal ways for the accumulation
of private property. Within the next forty years, the Indian peoples lost 60 percent of the
reservation land remaining in 1887 and 66 percent of the land allotted to them as
homesteaders. The tenets of the Dawes Act were not reversed until 1934. In that year,
Congress passed the Indian Reorganization Act, which affirmed the integrity of Indian
cultural institutions and returned some land to tribal ownership (see Chapter 24).

The Ghost Dance
After the passage of the Dawes Severalty Act, one more cycle of rebellion remained
for the Sioux. In 1888, the Paiute prophet Wovoka, ill with scarlet fever, had a vision
during a total eclipse of the sun. In his vision, the Creator told him that if the Indian
peoples learned to love each other, they would be granted a special place in the after-
life. The Creator also gave him the Ghost Dance, which the prophet performed for
others and soon spread throughout the tribe. The Sioux came to believe that when
the day of judgment came, all Indian peoples who had ever lived would return to their
lost world and white peoples would vanish from the earth. The chant sounded:

The whole world is coming.
A nation is coming, a nation is coming.
The Eagle has brought the message to the tribe.
The father says so, the father says so.
Over the whole earth they are coming.
The buffalo are coming, the buffalo are coming.
The Crow has brought the message to the tribe,
The Father says so, the Father says so.

Many white settlers and federal officials feared the Ghost Dancers, even though
belief in a sudden divine judgment was common among Christians and Jews. Before
the Civil War, Protestant groups such as the Millerites, who had renounced per-
sonal property and prepared themselves for the millennium, were tolerated by
other Americans. But after decades of Indian warfare, white Americans took the
Ghost Dance as a warning of tribal retribution rather than a religious ceremony. As thousands of Sioux danced to exhaustion, local whites intolerantly demanded the practice be stopped. The U.S. Seventh Cavalry, led in part by survivors of the Battle of Little Bighorn, rushed to the Pine Ridge Reservation, and a group of the Sioux led by Big Foot, now fearing mass murder, moved into hiding in the Bad Lands of South Dakota. After a skirmish, the great leader Sitting Bull and his young son lay dead.

The Seventh Cavalry pursued the Sioux Ghost Dancers and 300 undernourished Sioux, freezing and without horses, to Wounded Knee Creek on the Pine Ridge Reservation. There, on December 29, 1890, while the peace-seeking Big Foot, who had personally raised a white flag of surrender, lay dying of pneumonia, they were surrounded by soldiers armed with automatic guns. The U.S. troops expected the Sioux to surrender their few remaining weapons, but an accidental gunshot from one deaf brave who misunderstood the command caused panic on both sides.

Within minutes, 200 Sioux had been cut down and dozens of soldiers wounded, mostly by their own cross fire. For two hours soldiers continued to shoot at anything that moved—mostly women and children straggling away. Many of the injured froze to death in the snow; others were transported in open wagons and finally laid out on beds of hay under Christmas decorations at the Pine Ridge Episcopal church. The massacre, which took place almost exactly 400 years after Columbus “discovered” the New World for Christian civilization, seemed to mark the final conquest of the continent’s indigenous peoples.

Black Elk later recalled, “I can see that something else died there in the bloody mud, and was buried in the blizzard. A people’s dream died there. It was a beautiful dream... The nation’s hoop is broken and scattered. There is no center any longer, and the sacred tree is dead.”

**ENDURANCE AND REJUVENATION**

The most tenacious tribes were those occupying land rejected by white settlers or those distant from their new communities. Still, not even an insular, peaceful agricultural existence on semiarid, treeless terrain necessarily provided protection. Nor did a total willingness to peacefully accept white offers prevent attack.

The Pimas of Arizona, for instance, had a well-developed agricultural system adapted to a scarce supply of water, and they rarely warred with other tribes. After the arrival of white settlers, they integrated Christian symbolism into their religion, learned to speak English, and even fought with the U.S. cavalry against the Apaches. Still, the Pimas saw their lands stolen, their precious waterways diverted, and their families impoverished.

The similarly peaceful Yana tribes of California, hunters and gatherers rather than farmers, were even less fortunate. Suffering enslavement, prostitution, and multiple new diseases from white settlers, they faced near extinction within a generation. One Yana tribe, the Yahi, chose simply to disappear. For more than a decade, they lived in caves and avoided all contact with white settlers.

Many tribes found it difficult to survive in the proximity of white settlers. The Flatheads, for example, seemed to Indian commissioners in the Bitterroot region of Montana to be destined for quick assimilation. They had refused to join the Ghost Dance and had agreed to sell their rich tribal land and move to a new reservation. But while waiting to be moved, the disposessed Flatheads nearly starved. When they
finally reached the new reservation in October 1891, the remaining 250 Flatheads put on their finest war paint and whooped and galloped their horses, firing guns in the air in celebration. But disappointment and tragedy lay ahead. The federal government drastically reduced the size of the reservation, using a large part of it to provide a national reserve for buffalo. Only handfuls of Flatheads, mostly elderly, continued to live together in pockets of rural poverty.

A majority of tribes, especially smaller ones, sooner or later reached numbers too low to maintain their collective existence. Intermarriage, although widely condemned by the white community, drew many young people outside their Indian communities. Some tribal leaders also deliberately chose a path toward assimilation. The Quapaws, for example, formally disbanded in the aftermath of the Dawes Severalty Act. The minority that managed to prosper in white society as tradespeople or farmers abandoned their language, religious customs, and traditional ways of life. Later generations petitioned the federal government and regained tribal status, established ceremonial grounds and cultural centers (or bingo halls), and built up one of the most durable powwows in the state. Even so, much of the tribal lore that had underpinned distinct identity had simply vanished.

For those tribes who remained on reservations, the aggressively assimilationist policies of the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA) challenged their traditional ways. The southern Ute, for example, at one time hunted, fished, and gathered throughout a huge region spanning the Rocky Mountains and the Great Basin. In 1848, they began to sign a series of treaties in accord with the reservation policy of the U.S. government. Twenty years later their territory had been reduced to approximately one-quarter of Colorado Territory, and in 1873, they had further relinquished about one-quarter of this land. After the passage of the Dawes Act, the U.S. government, pressured by white settlers, gave the tribe two choices: they could break up their communal land holdings and accept the 160 acres granted to the male heads of families, or they could maintain their tribal status and move to a reservation in Utah. The Utes divided over the issue, but a considerable number chose to live on reservations under the administration of the OIA.

Under the terms of the Dawes Act, southern Ute men and women endured continuous challenges to their egalitarian practices. The OIA assumed, for example, that Ute men would represent the tribe in all official matters, a policy that forced Ute women to petition the U.S. government to recognize their rights and concerns. Similarly, Ute women struggled to hold on to their roles as producers within the subsistence family economy against the efforts of the OIA agents to train them for homemaking alone. In the 1880s, the OIA established a matrons program to teach Ute women to create a “civilizing” home, which included new lessons about sanitation, home furnishings, and health care. But even fifty years later, some Ute preferred to live at least part of the year in a teepee in a multigenerational family, rather than in a private residence designed for a single married couple and their children.

A small minority of tribes, grown skillful in adapting to dramatically changing circumstances, managed to persist and even grow. Never numbering more than a few thousand people, during the late eighteenth century the Cheyennes had found themselves caught geographically between aggressive tribes in the Great Lakes region and had migrated into the Missouri area, where they split into small village-sized communities. By the mid-nineteenth century, they had become expert horse traders on the Great Plains, well prepared to meet the massive influx of white settlers by shifting their location frequently. They avoided the worst of the pestilence that spread from the diseases white people carried, and likewise survived
The Legendary Cowboy: Nat Love, Deadwood Dick

Nat Love was born a slave in 1854 and spent his childhood on a plantation in Tennessee. In 1907 he published a short autobiography, *The Life and Adventures of Nat Love, Better Known in the Cattle Country as “Deadwood Dick,”* recounting his “unusually adventurous” life during the decades after emancipation. He worked as a cowboy, a ranch hand, an Indian fighter, and a rodeo performer. His most famous episode occurred in the boomtown of Deadwood, South Dakota, where in 1876 he won a cowboy tournament. It began with a roping contest, in which Love roped, saddled, and mounted a mustang in just nine minutes, winning the almost unbelievably large prize of $200. In the second part of this competition, a shooting contest, Love once again came out on top, hitting the bull’s-eye in ten out of twelve shots. He boasted that the miners and gamblers who had gathered for the tournament were so awed that they called him “Deadwood Dick,” a name he proudly claimed until his death in 1921.

That name became familiar to the many readers of Edward Wheeler’s *Deadwood Dick* dime novels, and at least five of Love’s contemporaries claimed to be that character. Wheeler published the first installment in this popular series in 1877 as *Deadwood Dick, the Prince of the Road,* or, *The Black Rider of the Black Hills.* It is said that Love’s autobiography reads like a dime novel, packed with adventures that no historian has yet been able to authenticate.

The photograph illustrating Love’s popular autobiography captures the standard image of the cowboy of the legendary Wild West—the chaps, firearm, and ammunition in the cartridge belt circling his waist, the tack on the floor (saddle, harness, rope), and the assertive body language. But in Love’s case, the cowboy is a black man.

**HOW DOES** Nat Love fit into the legendary Wild West? How readily would you expect nineteenth-century readers of the *Deadwood Dick* dime novels to accept the hero’s identity as a black man?

How does Nat Love’s identity as an African American line up with the image of the heroic cowboy in modern American popular culture?
widespread intermarriage with the Sioux in the 1860s and 1870s. Instructed to settle, many Cheyenne took up elements of the Christian religion and became farmers, also without losing their tribal identity. Punished by revenge-hungry soldiers after the battle of Little Bighorn, their lands repeatedly taken away, they still held on. The Cheyennes were survivors.

The Navajos experienced an extraordinary renewal, largely because they built a life in territory considered worthless by whites. Having migrated to the Southwest from the northwestern part of the continent perhaps 700 years ago, the Diné (“the People”), as they called themselves, had already survived earlier invasions by the Spanish. In 1863, they had been conquered again through the cooperation of hostile tribes led by the famous Colonel Kit Carson. Their crops burned, their fruit trees destroyed, 8,000 Navajo were forced in the 300-mile “Long Walk” to the desolate Bosque Redondo reservation, where they nearly starved. Four years later, the Indian Bureau allowed the severely reduced tribe to return to a fraction of its former lands.

By 1880, the Navajos’ population had returned to nearly what it had been before their conquest by white Americans. Quickly depleting the deer and antelope on their hemmed-in reservation, they had to rely on sheep alone as a food reserve during years of bad crops. With their wool rugs and blankets much in demand in the East, the Navajos increasingly turned to crafts, eventually including silver jewelry as well as weaving, to survive. Although living on the economic margin, they persevered to become the largest Indian nation in the United States.

The nearby Hopis, like the Navajos, survived by stubbornly clinging to lands unwanted by white settlers, and by adapting to drastically changing conditions. A famous tribe of “desert people,” the Hopis had lived for centuries in their cliff cities.

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### CHRONOLOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1848</td>
<td>Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo</td>
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<td>1849–60s</td>
<td>California Gold Rush</td>
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<td>1853</td>
<td>Gadsden Purchase</td>
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<td>1858</td>
<td>Comstock Lode discovered</td>
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<td>1859</td>
<td>Cortina’s War in South Texas</td>
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<td>1862</td>
<td>Homestead Act makes free land available</td>
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<td>1865–67</td>
<td>Morrill Act authorizes “land-grant” colleges</td>
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<tr>
<td>1866</td>
<td>Great Sioux War</td>
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<td>1866–87</td>
<td>Texas cattle drives begin</td>
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<td>1869</td>
<td>Medicine Lodge Treaty established reservation system</td>
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<td>1869</td>
<td>Alaska purchased</td>
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<td>1872</td>
<td>Yellowstone National Park created</td>
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<td>1873</td>
<td>Timber Culture Act</td>
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<td>1874–75</td>
<td>Sioux battles in Black Hills of Dakotas</td>
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<td>1876</td>
<td>Custer’s Last Stand</td>
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<td>1877</td>
<td>Defeat of the Nez Percé</td>
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<td>1881</td>
<td>Helen Hunt Jackson, <em>A Century of Dishonor</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Edmunds Act outlaws polygamy</td>
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<tr>
<td>1885–87</td>
<td>Droughts and severe winters cause the collapse of the cattle boom</td>
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<td>1887</td>
<td>Dawes Severalty Act</td>
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<td>1890</td>
<td>Sioux Ghost Dance movement</td>
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<td>1890</td>
<td>Massacre of Lakota Sioux at Wounded Knee</td>
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<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Census Bureau announces the end of the frontier line</td>
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<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>Forest Management Act gives the federal government authority over forest reserves</td>
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Their highly developed theological beliefs, peaceful social system, sand paintings, and kachina dolls interested many educated and influential whites. The resulting publicity helped them gather the public supporters and financial resources needed to fend off further threats to their reservations.

Fortunate northwestern tribes remained relatively isolated from white settlers until the early twentieth century, although they had begun trading with white visitors centuries earlier. Northwestern peoples relied largely on salmon and other resources of the region’s rivers and bays. In potlatch ceremonies, leaders redistributed tribal wealth and maintained their personal status and the status of their tribe by giving lavish gifts to invited guests. Northwest peoples also made intricate wood carvings, including commemorative “totem” poles, that recorded their history and identified their regional status. Northwestern peoples maintained their cultural integrity in part through connections with kin in Canada, as did Southern tribes with kin in Mexico. In Canada and Mexico, native populations suffered less pressure from new populations and retained more tribal authority than in the United States.

Indian nations approached their nadir as the nineteenth century came to a close. The descendants of the great pre-Columbian civilizations had been conquered by foreigners, their population reduced to fewer than 250,000. Under the pressure of assimilation, the remaining tribespeople became known to non-Indians as “the vanishing Americans.” It would take several generations before Indian sovereignty experienced a resurgence.

### Conclusion

The transformation of the trans-Mississippi West pointed up the larger meaning of expansion. Almost overnight, mines opened, cities grew, and farms and cattle ranches spread out across the vast countryside. New communities formed rapidly and often displaced old ones. In 1890, the director of the U.S. Census announced that the nation’s “unsettled area has been so broken into by isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to be a frontier line.”

The development of the West met the nation’s demands for mineral resources for its expanding industries and agricultural products for the people of the growing cities. Envisioning the West as a cornucopia whose boundless treasures would offer themselves to the willing pioneer, most of the new residents failed to calculate the odds against their making a prosperous livelihood as miners, farmers, or petty merchants. Nor could they appreciate the long-term consequences of the violence they brought with them from the battlefields of the Civil War to the far reaches of the West.

Americans had brought in commercial capitalism and their political and legal systems, as well as many of their social and cultural institutions. Ironically though, even after statehood, white settlers would still be only distant representatives of an empire whose financial, political, and industrial centers remained in the Northeast. In return for raw produce or ore drawn out of soil or rock, they received washtubs, clothes, and whiskey; model legal statutes; and doctors, lawyers, and teachers. But they were often frustrated by their continued isolation, and they were enraged at the federal regulations that governed them, and at the Eastern investors and lawyers who seemed poised on all sides to rob them of the fruits of their labor. Embittered westerners, along with southerners, would form the core of a nationwide discontent that would soon threaten to uproot the American political system.
AP* DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION

Directions: This exercise requires you to construct a valid essay that directly addresses the central issues of the following question. You will have to use facts from the documents provided and from the chapter to prove the position you take in your thesis statement.

Successive waves of settlement brought radical alteration to the lives of those who had occupied the trans-Mississippi West at an earlier time. Evaluate how later emigrants forced changes in the lifestyles of two of the following groups in the West:

(a) Native Americans (Indians)
(b) Mexican Americans
(c) Mormons
(d) Cowboys

DOCUMENT A
Read the essay “American Communities: The Oklahoma Land Rush” on pages 606–607 and examine the map on page 608. Oklahoma had been promised to the Five Civilized Tribes in the 1830s.

• What happened to those promises?
• What happened to later promises?

DOCUMENT B
Examine the map on page 614 of the mining rushes, the railroads, the cattle trails.

• What was happening in the trans-Mississippi West between 1860 and 1900?
• What successive changes occurred?
• How did this affect the four groups mentioned above?

DOCUMENT C
Examine the Mormon sphere of influence (ca. 1883) as shown on the map on page 617.

• Why did the Mormon community settle in the Far West?
• What was happening to the Mormon community by 1883?
• What additional changes occurred by 1896?

DOCUMENT D
Look at the painting of the market plaza in San Antonio (ca. 1878–1879) on page 618.

• What was happening to Mexican Americans in Texas at this time?

Go online to the Handbook of Texas at http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/SS/fse8.html and research the life of Juan Nepomuceno Seguin.

• Who was this Texas patriot, veteran of the Battle of San Jacinto? Why was he treated in such a manner?
• What does that say about the treatment of all Mexican Americans on the frontier of the United States, 1860–1900?

Suggested Answer:
Successful essays should note:
• Promises made and broken to the Five Civilized Tribes and the settlement of Oklahoma (p. 606–607, Map 18-1, and Document A)
• The westward expansion and mass migration of settlers because of the mining rushes, railroads, and cattle trails (Map 18-3 and Document B)
• The encroachment of land rights by the new settlers and how they affected the Indians, Mexican Americans, Mormons, and cowboys (Map 18-3 and Document B)
• The history of Mormon settlement in the Far West (Map 18-4 and Document C)
• The changes to the Mormon community and their settlement between 1833 and 1896 (Map 18-4 and Document C)
• How the exclusion from better-paying jobs and the forced removal from the land affected Mexican Americans, especially women (Image p. 618 and Document D)
• The significance of Texas patriot Juan Nepomuceno Seguin, his involvement and treatment in the Battle of San Jacinto (Document D)
• The general treatment of Mexican Americans on the frontier of the United States, 1860–1900 (Document D)
• The popular opinions about cowboys in the West and the accuracy of this depiction (Image p. 621 and Document E)
• The daily life of a cowboy (Document E)
• How westward expansion of the railroad, arrival of farmers, invention of barbed wire, and the end of the open range changed the lifestyle of the cowboy (Document E)
• How the arrival of farm families and towns, along with crop fields, barbed wired, and domesticated farm animals, would impact Native Americans, Mexican Americans, Mormons, and cowboys in the West (Document F)
DOCUMENT E
Look at the 1870s woodcut “Curly Wolves Howled on Saturday Night” on page 621.
- What kind of image of the cowboy did this graphic create?
- Was that image accurate?
- How did the cowboy live his daily life?
- How did the railroads, barbed wire, the arrival of farmers, and the end of the open range change the lifestyle of the cowboy?

DOCUMENT F

This is the sod home of John and Marget Bakken near Milton, North Dakota, about 1895.
- When farm homes like this began to appear on the western frontier along with barbed wire, crop fields, domesticated farm animals, families, and towns, what would be the impact upon the four groups mentioned in the question?
- How would their lives change?

AP PREP TEST
Select the response that best answers each question or best completes each sentence.

1. As the United States expanded to the West in the last half of the nineteenth century:
   a. the nation took care to protect indigenous cultures as much as possible.
   b. the region became more heterogeneous as all the ethnic groups assimilated.
   c. the world, society, and culture of Native American Indians was destroyed.
   d. very few white Americans migrated to the region and it remained Indian Territory.
   e. the integration of Native American Indians into American culture skyrocketed.

Answer Key
1-C  4-C  7-B  10-C  13-D
2-E  5-A  8-D  11-D  14-B
3-A  6-E  9-E  12-A
2. Early in the history of the United States:
   a. most of the Great Plains tribes had been destroyed and few Indians still lived west of the Mississippi River.
   b. most eastern tribes accepted the new inhabitants of the Americas and assimilated into American culture and government.
   c. the government had established laws to protect all Indian claims to territory east of the Mississippi River.
   d. European diseases and alcohol had completely destroyed Indian society everywhere in the new nation.
   e. many eastern tribes had been relocated into areas of the West thought to be beyond white encroachment.

3. The Indian Wars:
   a. began with the Sand Creek Massacre and lasted until the capture of Geronimo.
   b. were concentrated in the Indian Territory and lasted for just a couple of years.
   c. involved only a few campaigns against the Sioux tribes in the Dakota Territory.
   d. resulted in the total military defeat of every Indian tribe in the United States.
   e. began with the assault on white civilians under the protection of Col. Custer.

4. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints:
   a. moved to the Utah Territory where they were completely beyond the control of the national government.
   b. originally settled in Utah but eventually the church leadership moved the center of the faith to California.
   c. did not retain all of their practices in the West, but they still became a powerful political force in the region.
   d. were for the most part urban artisan settlers and the vast majority of them lived in Salt Lake City.
   e. moved to California where they retained all their practices in West and became a powerful unified coalition in the region.

5. The Cattle Kingdom of the American West:
   a. depended on the presence of unfenced range that provided free feed and open trails for cattle producers.
   b. originated in the southern state of Texas and cattle producers insisted on hiring only white Americans.
   c. was truly a male enterprise and women played no role at all in operating ranches or cattle companies.
   d. grew rapidly only after refrigerated railcars made it possible to ship beef throughout the United States.
   e. relied upon the manual labor of newly arrived immigrants and freed slaves, who they could pay less.

6. Crucial to opening the Great Plains to large-scale agriculture was:
   a. government subsidies to farmers who increased their production.
   b. the first real effective use of horse-drawn plows and combines.
   c. prestige and security that farming and land ownership provided.
   d. the creation of a federal highway system that facilitated marketing.
   e. significant improvements in transportation and in farm technology.

7. A significant change in American agriculture that occurred after 1870 was:
   a. the rapid growth in subsistence farming as a result of the depressions of the 1870s and the 1890s.
   b. the shift away from producing primarily for local trade and toward growing for an international market.
   c. the dominance of small family farms as most agricultural operations began under the Homestead Act.
   d. a decline in overall agricultural production and an increasing need to import food into the United States.
   e. the decline in the overall demand for agricultural products as a result of a decreasing American population.
8. The development of the American West:
a. had little significant permanent ecological influence on the region.
b. led to the widespread reforestation of all of the Great Plains.
c. depleted the soil but did not put any stress on the area’s water resources.
d. often produced devastating results for the area’s natural resources.
e. had little impact on the native animals and species of the region.

9. Late in the 1800s and early in the 1900s:
a. state governments became the primary agencies in the development of the West.
b. the federal government decreased its role in the economic development of the West.
c. the rugged individualism of the West eliminated the government’s role in economic growth.
d. national policies regarding the West remained the same as they had early in the 1800s.
e. the federal government increased its role in the economic development of the West.

10. The future president of the United States who symbolized the legendary American West was:
a. Grover Cleveland.
b. William McKinley.
c. Theodore Roosevelt.
d. Woodrow Wilson.
e. William Taft.

11. As the nineteenth century came to an end:
a. most Americans did not care one way or another about the fate of the Native Americans and their culture.
b. Native-American culture had been totally destroyed by government policies that led to western expansion.
c. all of the Native Americans in the United States were on reservations and their culture no longer faced any threats.
d. government policy threatened Indian culture, but artists and scholars were fascinated by native groups.
e. most Americans sought compensation and preservation of the Native American cultural identity.

12. The book *A Century of Dishonor* by Helen Hunt Jackson:
a. sharply criticized the U.S. government for failing to honor its treaties with the Indian tribes.
b. detailed the atrocities Indians had committed against white settlers from the beginning of the nation.
c. focused on the harsh actions state militias had taken against Indians in order to protect white settlers.
d. compared the way white Americans had treated slaves to how they had treated Native Americans.
e. meticulously described the tribal practices and shame brought to Americans by co-existing with Native Americans.

13. The event that epitomized the fate of Native Americans occurred in 1890 at:
a. Adobe Walls.
b. Little Big Horn.
c. Palo Duro Canyon.
d. Wounded Knee.
e. Fort Laramie
14. By the late 1800s:
   a. people in the western United States were so patriotic that they never expressed any dissatisfaction.
   b. many westerners had become deeply discontented with federal policies and eastern capitalists.
   c. westerners increasingly resented the influence that the former Confederate states had in the government.
   d. western farmers appreciated the role that financiers played in protecting the interests of all Americans.
   e. many westerners had become increasingly impatient with local policies and a lack of concern or address by the federal government.