

Was Life in the Late 1800s  
better for Americans in the  
West and South?

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### What is not Being Covered Today

- Mining - the search for rare minerals in the west
- Cattle Herding - development of ranching and destruction of prairie grasslands
- Fencing in the West - effect on cattle ranching
- Barbed Wire - role in closing the west
- Exploitation of Natural Resources - clear cutting national forests
- Development of conservation organizations - Sierra Club, protected parks

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### MODERNIZING AGRICULTURE

- Between 1865 and 1900, the nation's farms more than doubled in number
  - Modern machinery and increased transportation
  - Small family farms still dominated
  - Farmers steadily slipping in the workforce, 37 percent by 1900
- American agriculture in demand as the European population drastically increased

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## THE CHARACTER OF AMERICAN AGRICULTURE

- Technological innovation played a major role in facilitating American agricultural expansion
  - Machinery was expensive - farmers went into debt
  - Increased harvests allowed for surplus both nationally and internationally
  - Lower prices encourage overproduction causing more lowering of prices - downward cycle
  - Deflation also increased the real value of debt

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## FARMERS ON THE GREAT PLAINS, 1865-1890s

- Railroads helped encourage agricultural settlement on the Plains
- First boom period 1879 to 1890s: tens of thousands, mainly from Illinois, Iowa and Missouri, moved onto the Great Plains
- Violent changes in the weather and temperature along with the scarcity of wood and water made success on the plains difficult
- Settlers lived in sod houses rather than log cabins

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## FARMERS ON THE GREAT PLAINS, 1865-1890S

- Industrial innovations helped settlers overcome some of the natural obstacles
- Costs of machinery, vagaries of crops and markets, the threat of pests and natural disasters, and the shortage of cash all made life on the Plains difficult
- First boom ended abruptly in the late 1880s and early 1890s as falling agricultural prices cut profits and a devastating drought followed
- Agricultural efforts had long-term ecological impact on plains eventually contributing to the Dust Bowl of the 1930s

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## CORNUCOPIA ON THE PACIFIC

- With the completion of a national railroad system, farming became California's greatest asset
- Agricultural productivity in the southern half of the central valley depended on massive irrigation projects whose costs were passed on to settlers
- As railroads lowered rates and introduced refrigeration, fruit came to dominate California agriculture

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## FARM PROTEST

- During the post-Civil War period, many farmers, black and white, began to realize that only through collective action could they improve rural life
- Midwestern and those near city market adjusted to changing economic conditions
- Southern and western farmers, however, faced more problems

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## THE GRANGE IN THE 1860s AND 1870s

- The earliest organization was in 1867 when Oliver Kelley founded the Order of the Patrons of Husbandry. By 1875, it had more than 800,000 members and was now called the National Grange
- Goal to reform the ways in which agricultural business was done
- Between 1869 and 1874, businessmen and farmers successfully pressed Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota to pass "Granger Laws" establishing maximum rates that railroads and grain elevators could charge
- Other states set up railroad commissions to regulate railroad rates, or outlawed railroad practices that seemed unjust
- In 1877, the Supreme Court upheld these laws in *Munn v. Illinois* - said it was okay for state to regulate grain elevator rates
- Reversed Munn in 1886 ruling in *Wabash v. Illinois* thereby increasing pressure on Congress to act

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## THE INTERSTATE COMMERCE ACT OF 1887

- Required railroad rates be reasonable and just, that rate schedules be made public and that unfair practices like rebates be discontinued
  - Established the Interstate Commerce Commission which had the power to investigate and prosecute lawbreakers.
  - Authority was limited to interstate commerce
- ICC initially had little success prosecuting the railroads for infractions

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## THE SOUTHERN FARMERS' ALLIANCE IN THE 1880s & 1890s

- The Grange declined in the late 1870s but farm protest did not
- The Southern Farmers Alliance became one of the most important reform organizations of the 1880s
  - Sent lecturers across the South and into the Plains
  - Supported cooperatives, legislative efforts, changes in the money supply and measures to improve the quality of rural life

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## THE OCALA PLATFORM, 1890

- In December 1890, the National Alliance (farmers) gathered in Ocala, Florida, to develop a platform
  - Direct elections of Senators - Why?
  - Supported lowering the tariff - Why?
  - Envisioned new banking system controlled by the federal government. - Why?
  - Called for the government to take an active economic role by increasing the amount of money in circulation - Why?
  - Called for subtreasuries in agricultural regions - Why?
  - Graduated income tax - Why?
  - Regulation of transportation and communication networks - Why?

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## THE WEST

- In 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner informed listeners at the Chicago World's Fair that the frontier had closed
- Known today as Turners Thesis

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## THE FRONTIER THESIS IN NATIONAL AND GLOBAL CONTEXT

- According to Turner, the struggle to tame the wilderness had changed settlers from Europeans into Americans and created rugged individualism that "promoted democracy"

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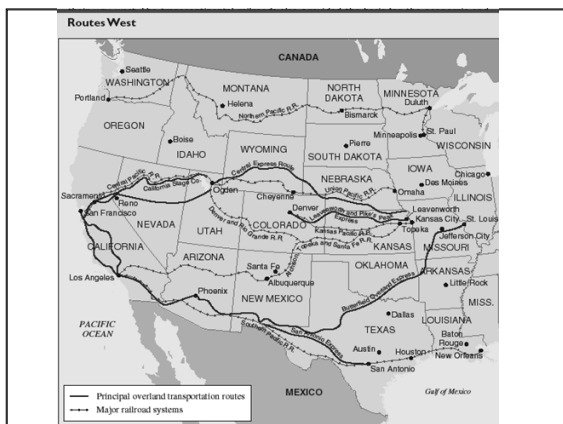
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## RESOLVING THE NATIVE AMERICAN QUESTION

- As farmers settled the west, they clashed with Native Americans
- In California, disease and violence killed 90 percent of the Native American population in the 30 years following the gold rush
- Most tribes resisted attempts to curb their way of life and transform their culture

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## BACKGROUND TO THE PLAINS WARS

- Lives of the Plains Indians revolved around the buffalo
  - Increased emigration disrupted tribal pursuits and animal migration patterns
  - Early efforts of the federal government to persuade Plains tribes to stay away from settlers had little luck
- During the Civil War, eastern tribes that had relocated to Oklahoma divided their support but after the war all were branded traitors

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## THE WHITE PERSPECTIVE

- 1864: Colorado militia massacred a band of friendly Cheyenne at Sand Creek causing Cheyenne, Arapaho and Sioux to retaliate
- The congressional commission authorized to make peace viewed the west as belonging to whites while Indians should give way before progress
- When Indians could not be convinced to return to the reservations, the military attacked, launching winter campaigns.
- Two major questions:
  - 1) how to prevent Indians from blocking white migration?
  - 2) what to do with them in the long run?

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## THE TRIBAL VIEW

- Broken promises fueled Indian resistance to attacks on their ancient way of life
- Native American bravery and skill might result in single victories, like that against Custer at Little Big Horn
  - Wholesale destruction of the buffalo (13 million by 1883) contributed to white victory

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## Changes in American Attitudes

- In 1871, Congress abandoned the practice of treating the tribes as sovereign nations
- The government urged tribes to replace tribal justice with a court system and extended federal jurisdiction to the reservations
- Tribes were warned not to gather for religious ceremonies

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## THE 1887 DAWES ACT

- Sought to undermine the tribe by dividing Indian land to individual families through the Dawes Act
  - “Surplus” land would be sold to white settlers
  - Within 20 years of the Dawes Act, Native Americans had lost 60 percent of their lands
  - Profits from the land sales were held in trust by the government for use in “civilizing” the Indians

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## THE GHOST DANCE: A Native American Renewal Ritual

- By the 1890s, religious prophet Wovoka promised followers if they did the Ghost Dance, whites would disappear and the buffalo and their ancestors would return
  - Bands of Sioux fled the reservation, pursued by the military who surrounded and massacred one group at Wounded Knee Creek in December 1890
- Effectively ended all Native American Resistance
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cI0Jfdkq4z8>

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## THE NADIR OF BLACK LIFE

- In 1890, many Congressional bills from Reconstruction that had aimed to support and assist the newly freed slaves were cast aside by a new generation of politicians
  - Supreme Court made a number of rulings detrimental to African Americans
  - Northern leaders made no efforts to protect blacks and northerners increasingly promulgated negative stereotype.
- Encouraged by these actions, southerners sought to make blacks permanently into second class citizens
  - Amended southern constitutions to disenfranchise blacks, which they accomplished by 1910
  - In the 1890s, state and local laws legalized informal segregation through "Jim Crow" laws that were upheld by the

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## THE NADIR OF BLACK LIFE

- Political and social discrimination made it more possible to keep blacks permanently confined to agricultural and unskilled labor
- Blacks did not accept their declining position passively
- Incidents of lynching and other forms of violence against blacks increased

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## DIVERGING BLACK RESPONSES

- Ida B. Wells launched an anti-lynching campaign in 1892
- T. Thomas Fortune organized the Afro-American League (a precursor to the NAACP)
- Other blacks continued to support the idea of migration, either to other parts of the Americas or back to Africa
- Booker T. Washington, who proposed in his 1895 Atlanta Compromise that blacks abandon efforts to obtain civil, social or voting rights and settle for economic opportunity
- In 1903, W.E.B. DuBois, the first black to be awarded a Ph.D. from Harvard, attacked Washington's position stating that political rights should precede, not follow, economic well-being

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