
Unit 5: From Reconstruction to the Progressive Era Outline

5:1 The Trans-Mississippi West:

Indians of the Trans-Mississippi West

- 1) Native American tribes varied greatly in culture. Most Plains Indians were nomadic hunters dependent on the Buffalo. European diseases were devastating. There was constant warfare between Indians and whites from 1607 until the defeat of Geronimo in 1886.
- 2) In 1887 Helen Hunt Jackson wrote *A Century of Dishonor* which led to the Dawes Severalty Act. This act gradually gave Indians citizenship and reduced Indian land from 138 million acres to 48 million acres.

Western Frontiers

- 1) It was difficult to get capital to move west. The resources of the frontier fueled U.S. expansion. Two groups moved west: those who used nature and those who subdued nature. West of 98th meridian rainfall is generally less than 10 inches a year; timber was not available to settlers and a new way of life had to be created.
- 2) Trappers were the first group to exploit the frontier. Trapping was big business. Rendezvous was a method by which trappers got their furs to market. Trapping frontier ended in 1830s.
- 3) The mining frontier lasted about 40 years (1848-1896). Mining provided the capital necessary for US industrial expansion and helped open up the West.
- 4) The cattle frontier lasted from 1867-1890s. The long drive moved cattle to Kansas railroads and caused conflict between Texas cattlemen and Kansas farmers. The winters of 1885-87, the invention of barbed wire, and the movement of farmers to the frontier killed the cattle frontier.
- 5) The lack of national police caused violence to be greater on the American frontier than on the Canadian or Australian frontier. The vigilante dealt with law and order.

The Development of the Transcontinental Railroad

- 1) Government aid through land grants and loans enabled private corporations to build railroads in the U.S.
- 2) The Chinese were the primary labor force for the Central Pacific and Irish immigrants the primary labor force for the Union Pacific.
- 3) The first transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869.

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5:1 Student Notes Continued:

5:2 The Populist Movement:

US Agriculture in the Last Half of the 19th Century

- 1) Agriculture declined because technology allowed increased production and world wide competition to reduce prices. Mortgaged and tenant farms increased. In the South, the lien system (farmer mortgaged future cash crop for goods) was the rule. Staple crop farmers (cotton, grain) hurt the most.
- 2) Farmers blamed the railroads, national banks, corporations, and the tariff for their problems. They thought there was a world-wide conspiracy against them.

The Populist Movement

- 1) The Sherman Silver Purchase Act (1890) required the treasury to purchase 4 .5 million ounces of silver each month to inflate currency. The Sherman Act failed to stop deflation.
- 2) Populist (People's) Party formed in 1892. Advocated:
 - a) A "Subtreasury system" where the national government would store crops and lend farmers money;
 - b) Abolition of national banks;
 - c) Free coinage of silver;
 - d) Graduated income tax;
 - e) Reduction of tariff rates;
 - f) Direct election of Senators;
 - g) Government regulation of the railroads and telegraph companies.
- 3) The Populists tried to build a class alliance between South and West, blacks and whites, farmer and labor. They failed.
- 4) The Panic of 1893 caused President Grover Cleveland (D) to have the Sherman Silver Purchase Act repealed and it enabled the Republicans to gain control of the national government until 1930.

