
26

The Great West and the Agricultural Revolution, 1865-1896

PART I: Reviewing the Chapter

A. Checklist of Learning Objectives

After mastering this chapter, you should be able to

1. describe the nature of the cultural conflicts and battles that accompanied the white American migration into the Great Plains and the Far West.
2. explain the development of federal policy towards Native Americans in the late nineteenth century.
3. analyze the brief flowering and decline of the cattle and mining frontiers.
4. explain the impact of the closing of the frontier, and the long-term significance of the frontier for American history.
5. describe the revolutionary changes in farming on the Great Plains.
6. describe the economic forces that drove farmers into debt, and describe how the Grange, the Farmers' Alliances, and the Populist Party organized to protest their oppression.

B. Glossary

To build your social science vocabulary, familiarize yourself with the following terms.

1. **nomadic (nomad)** A way of life characterized by frequent movement from place to place for economic sustenance. "... the Sioux transformed themselves from foot-traveling, crop-growing villagers to wide-ranging nomadic traders. ..." (p. 591)
2. **immunity** Freedom or exemption from some imposition. "... [the] militia massacred ... four hundred Indians who apparently thought they had been promised immunity." (p. 593)
3. **reservation** Public lands designated for use by Indians. "The vanquished Indians were finally ghettoized on reservations. ..." (p. 595)
4. **ward** Someone considered incompetent to manage his or her own affairs and therefore placed under the legal guardianship of another person or group. "... there [they had] to eke out a sullen existence as wards of the government." (p. 595)
5. **probationary** Concerning a period of testing or trial, after which a decision is made based on performance. "The probationary period was later extended. ..." (p. 597)
6. **folklore** The common traditions and stories of a people. "These bowlegged Knights of the Saddle ... became part of American folklore." (p. 602)
7. **irrigation** Watering land artificially, through canals, pipes, or other means. "... irrigation projects ... caused the 'Great American Desert' to bloom. ..." (p. 604)
8. **meridian** In geography, any of the imaginary lines of longitude running north and south on the globe. "... settlers ... rashly pushed ... beyond the 100th meridian. ..." (p. 604)

9. **contiguous** Joined together by common borders, "Only Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Arizona remained to be lifted into statehood from contiguous territory on the mainland of North America." (p. 606)
10. **safety valve** Anything, such as the American frontier, that allegedly serves as a necessary outlet for built-up pressure, energy, and so on. "But the 'safety-valve' theory does have some validity." (p. 607)
11. **loan shark** A person who lends money at an exorbitant or illegal rate of interest. "The [farmers] . . . cried out in despair against the loan sharks. . . ." (p. 610)
12. **serfdom** The feudal condition of being permanently bound to land owned by someone else. ". . . the farmers were about to sink into a status suggesting Old World serfdom." (p. 610)
13. **mumbo jumbo** Mysterious and unintelligible words or behavior. "Kelley, a Mason, even found farmers receptive to his mumbo jumbo of passwords and secret rituals. . . ." (p. 611)
14. **prophet** A person believed to speak with divine power or special gifts, sometimes including predicting the future (hence any specially talented or eloquent advocate of a cause). "Numerous fiery prophets leapt forward to trumpet the Populist cause." (p. 613)
15. **citadel** A fortress occupying a commanding height. ". . . join hands with urban workers, and mount a successful attack on the northeastern citadels of power." (p. 614)

PART II: Checking Your Progress

A. True-False

Where the statement is true, mark T. Where it is false, mark F, and correct it in the space immediately below.

- ___ 1. Cultural conflicts and population loss to disease weakened the Plains Indians' ability to resist white encroachment onto their lands.
- ___ 2. The Plains Indians were rather quickly and easily defeated by the U.S. Army.
- ___ 3. A crucial factor in defeating the Indians was the destruction of the buffalo, a vital source of food and other supplies.
- ___ 4. Humanitarian reformers respected the Indians' traditional culture and tried to preserve their tribal way of life.
- ___ 5. Individual gold and silver miners proved unable to compete with large mining corporations and trained engineers.
- ___ 6. During the peak years of the Long Drive, the cattlemen's prosperity depended on driving large beef herds great distances to railroad terminal points.
- ___ 7. More families acquired land under the Homestead Act than from the states and private owners.
- ___ 8. Although very few city dwellers ever migrated west to take up farming, the frontier "safety valve" did have some positive effects on eastern workers.
- ___ 9. The farmers who settled the Great Plains were usually single-crop producers dependent on unstable distant markets for their livelihoods.

- ___ 10. The greatest problem facing the farmers was inflation in the prices of machinery and supplies they had to buy.
- ___ 11. A fundamental problem of the Farmers' Alliance was their inability to overcome the racial division between white and black farmers in the South.
- ___ 12. The economic crisis of the 1890s strengthened the Populists' belief that farmers and industrial workers should form an alliance against economic and political oppression.
- ___ 13. Republican political manager Mark Hanna struggled to raise enough funds to combat William Jennings Bryan's pro-silver campaign.
- ___ 14. Bryan's populist campaign failed partly because he was unable to persuade enough urban workers to join his essentially rural-based cause.
- ___ 15. McKinley's victory in 1896 ushered in an era marked by Republican domination, weakened party organization, and the fading of the money issue in American politics.

B. Multiple Choice

Select the best answer and write the proper letter in the space provided.

- ___ 1. Western Indians offered strong resistance to white expansion through their effective use of
 - a. artillery and infantry tactics.
 - b. their alliance with remaining Mexican resisters in the West.
 - c. nighttime and winter campaigning.
 - d. repeating rifles and horses.
- ___ 2. Intertribal warfare among Plains Indians increased in the late nineteenth century because of
 - a. the attempt of the Chippewas to gain dominance over all other groups.
 - b. the confining of several different groups within a single reservation.
 - c. growing competition for the rapidly dwindling hunting grounds.
 - d. the rise of the "Ghost Dance" among some Indian groups.
- ___ 3. The federal government's attempt to confine Indians to certain areas through formal treaties was largely ineffective because
 - a. the nomadic Plains Indians largely rejected the idea of formal authority and defined territory.
 - b. Congress refused to ratify treaties signed with the Indians.
 - c. the treaties made no effective provisions for enforcement.
 - d. the largest tribe, the Sioux, refused to sign any treaties with the whites.
- ___ 4. The warfare that led up to the Battle of the Little Big Horn was set off by
 - a. white intrusion into the previously reserved Indian territory of Oklahoma.
 - b. Indian attacks on the transcontinental railroad construction crews.
 - c. white intrusions after the discovery of gold in the sacred Black Hills.
 - d. a conflict over the interpretation of the second Treaty of Fort Laramie.

5. Indian resistance was finally subdued because
- most of the effective Indian leadership was bought off.
 - the coming of the railroad led to the destruction of the buffalo and the Indians' way of life.
 - most Indians lost the will to resist.
 - the army developed effective techniques of guerrilla warfare.
6. The federal government attempted to force Indians away from their traditional values and customs by
- instructing them in white farming methods.
 - creating a network of children's boarding schools and white "field matrons."
 - establishing scholarships for Indian students at white colleges.
 - developing programs of bilingual education in reservation schools.
7. Both the mining and cattle frontiers saw
- an increase of ethnic and class conflict.
 - a loss of economic viability after an initial boom.
 - a turn from large-scale investment to the individual entrepreneur.
 - a movement from individual operations to large-scale corporate businesses.
8. The problem of developing agriculture in the arid West was solved most successfully through
- concentrating agriculture in the more fertile mountain valleys.
 - the use of small-scale family farms rather than large "bonanza" farms.
 - the use of irrigation from dammed western rivers.
 - the turn to desert crops like olives and dates.
9. The "safety valve" theory of the frontier holds that
- Americans were able to divert the most violent elements of the population to the West.
 - the conflict between farmers and ranchers was relieved by the Homestead Act.
 - unemployed city dwellers could move west and thus relieve labor conflict in the East.
 - political movements such as the Populists provided relief for the most serious grievances of western farmers.
10. Which one of these factors did *not* make the trans-Mississippi West a unique part of the America frontier experience?
- the large numbers of Indians, Hispanics, and Asian-Americans in the region
 - the problem of applying new technologies in a hostile wilderness
 - the scale and severity of environmental challenges in an arid environment
 - the large role of the federal government in economic and social development
11. By the 1880s, most western farmers faced hard times because
- free land was no longer available under the Homestead Act.
 - they were unable to increase grain production to keep up with demand.
 - they were being strangled by excessive federal regulation of agriculture.
 - they were forced to sell their grain at low prices in a depressed world market.

- _____ 12. Which of the following was *not* among the political goals advocated by the Populist Party in the 1890s?
- nationalizing the railroad, telegraph, and telephone
 - creation of a national system of unemployment insurance and old-age pensions
 - a graduated income tax
 - free and unlimited coinage of silver money
- _____ 13. The U.S. government's response to the Pullman strike aroused great anger from organized labor because
- it seemed to represent "government by injunction" designed to destroy labor unions.
 - it broke apart the growing alliance between urban workers and farmers.
 - it undermined efforts to organize federal workers like those in the postal service.
 - it turned their most effective leader, Eugene V. Debs, into a cautious conservative.
- _____ 14. William Jennings Bryan gained the Democratic nomination in 1896 because he strongly advocated
- unlimited coinage of silver in order to inflate currency.
 - higher tariffs in order to protect the American farmer.
 - government ownership of the railroads and the telegraph system.
 - a coalition between white and black farmers in the South and Midwest.
- _____ 15. McKinley defeated Bryan primarily because he was able to win the support of
- white southern farmers.
 - eastern wage earners and city dwellers.
 - urban and rural blacks.
 - former Populists and Greenback Laborites.

C. Identification

Supply the correct identification for each numbered description.

- _____ 1. Major northern Plains Indian nation that fought and eventually lost a bitter war against the U.S. Army, 1876–1877
- _____ 2. Southwestern Indian tribe led by Geronimo that carried out some of the last fighting against white conquest
- _____ 3. Generally poor areas where vanquished Indians were eventually confined under federal control
- _____ 4. Indian religious movement, originating out of the sacred Sun Dance that the federal government attempted to stamp out in 1890
- _____ 5. Federal law that attempted to dissolve tribal landholding and establish Indians as individual farmers
- _____ 6. Huge silver and gold deposit that brought wealth and statehood to Nevada
- _____ 7. General term for the herding of cattle from the grassy plains to the railroad terminals of Kansas, Nebraska, and Wyoming
- _____ 8. Federal law that offered generous land opportunities to poorer farmers but also provided the unscrupulous with opportunities for hoaxes and fraud

- _____ 9. Improved type of fencing that enabled farmers to enclose land on the treeless plains
- _____ 10. Former "Indian Territory" where "sooners" tried to get the jump on "boomers" when it was opened for settlement in 1889
- _____ 11. Third political party that emerged in the 1890s to express rural grievances and mount major attacks on the Democrats and Republicans
- _____ 12. Popular pamphlet written by William Hope Harvey that portrayed pro-silver arguments triumphing over the traditional views of bankers and economics professors.
- _____ 13. Bitter labor conflict in Chicago that brought federal intervention and the jailing of union leader Eugene V. Debs
- _____ 14. Spectacular convention speech by a young pro-silver advocate that brought him the Democratic presidential nomination in 1896
- _____ 15. Popular term for those who favored the "status quo" in metal money and opposed the pro-silver Bryanites in 1896

D. Matching People, Places, and Events

Match the person, place, or event in the left column with the proper description in the right column by inserting the correct letter on the blank line.

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|-------------------------------|--|
| _____ 1. Sand Creek, Colorado | A. Ohio industrialist and organizer of McKinley's victory over Bryan in the election of 1896 |
| _____ 2. Little Big Horn | B. Leader of the Nez Percé tribe who conducted a brilliant but unsuccessful military campaign in 1877 |
| _____ 3. Sitting Bull | C. Author of the popular pro-silver pamphlet "Coin's Financial School" |
| _____ 4. Chief Joseph | D. Former Civil War general and Granger who ran as the Greenback Labor party candidate for president in 1880 |
| _____ 5. Geronimo | E. Leader of the Sioux during wars of 1876-1877 |
| _____ 6. Helen Hunt Jackson | F. Explorer and geologist who warned that traditional agriculture could not succeed west of the 100 th meridian |
| _____ 7. John Wesley Powell | G. Leader of the Apaches of Arizona in their warfare with the whites |
| _____ 8. William Hope Harvey | H. Site of Indian massacre by militia forces in 1864 |
| _____ 9. Eugene V. Debs | I. Massachusetts writer whose books aroused sympathy for the plight of the Native Americans |
| _____ 10. James B. Weaver | J. Site of major U.S. Army defeat in the Sioux War of 1876-1877 |
| _____ 11. Mary E. Lease | K. Railway union leader who converted to socialism while serving jail time during the Pullman strike |
| _____ 12. Mark Hanna | L. Eloquent Kansas Populist who urged farmers to "raise less corn and more hell" |

E. Putting Things in Order

Put the following events in correct order by numbering them from 1 to 5.

- ___ A sharp economic depression leads to a major railroad strike and the intervention of federal troops in Chicago.
- ___ The violation of agreements with the Dakota Sioux leads to a major Indian war and a military disaster for the U.S. cavalry.
- ___ A federal law grants 160 acres of land to farmers at token prices, thus encouraging the rapid settlement of the Great West.
- ___ The U.S. Census Bureau declares that there is no longer a clear line of frontier settlement, ending a formative chapter of American history.
- ___ Despite a fervent campaign by their charismatic young champion, pro-silver Democrats lose a pivotal election to "Gold Bug" Republicans.

F. Matching Cause and Effect

Match the historical cause in the left column with the proper effect in the right column by writing the correct letter on the blank line.

Cause	Effect
___ 1. The encroachment of white settlement and the violation of treaties with Indians	A. Caused widespread protests and strikes like the one against the Pullman Company in Chicago
___ 2. Railroad building, disease, and the destruction of the buffalo	B. Threatened the two-party domination of American politics by the Republicans and Democrats
___ 3. Reformers' attempts to make Native Americans conform to white ways	C. Created new psychological and economic problems for a nation accustomed to a boundlessly open West
___ 4. The coming of big-business mining and stock-raising to the West	D. Ended the romantic, colorful era of the miners' and the cattlemen's frontier
___ 5. "Dry farming," barbed wire, and irrigation	E. Decimated Indian populations and hastened their defeat at the hands of advancing whites
___ 6. The passing of the frontier of 1890	F. Effectively ended the free-silver agitation and the domination of the money question in American politics
___ 7. The growing economic specialization of western farmers	G. Made settlers vulnerable to vast industrial and market forces beyond their control
___ 8. The rise of the Populist Party in the early 1890s	H. Made it possible to farm the dry, treeless areas of the Great Plains and the West
___ 9. The economic depression that began in 1893	I. Further undermined Native Americans' traditional tribal culture and morale
___ 10. The return of prosperity after 1897 and new gold discoveries in Alaska, South Africa, and elsewhere	J. Led to nearly constant warfare with Plains Indians from 1868 to about 1890

G. Developing Historical Skills

Comparing Election Maps

Comparing maps of two consecutive elections enables you to see what political changes have occurred in a relatively brief historical period. The election map on p. 628 shows the vote by county; the one on p. 637 shows the vote by state. Keep that difference in mind as you answer the following questions.

1. Six western states had significant votes for the Populist Weaver in 1892. Who carried them in 1896?
2. List six states where Democrat Cleveland had strong support in 1892 that turned around and voted Republican in 1896. In which region were most such states located?
3. List five states that stayed solidly Republican in both 1892 and 1896, and five states that stayed solidly Democratic. In which regions were each of these groups of "solid" states located?
4. In 1892, nine midwestern and western states had substantial concentrations of Populist voters. In the election of 1896, how many of those nine states went Democratic, and how many went Republican?

H. Map Mastery

Map Discrimination

Using the maps and charts in Chapter 26, answer the following questions.

1. In the election of 1892, which three western states had no counties that backed the Populist party?
2. Which four southern states had the most Populist support in the election of 1892 (that is, at least three counties that went Populist)?
3. In the election of 1896, how many electoral votes did McKinley win from states west of the Mississippi River?
4. How many electoral votes did McKinley win in the southern states of the old Confederacy?

Map Challenge

Using the maps of *American Agriculture in 1900* (p. 609) and *Presidential Election of 1896* (p. 620), discuss why the relationship between the Populist and pro-silver movements and the patterns of American agriculture. Include in your analysis some analysis of those Midwestern agricultural states that did may have been influenced by Populism but did not vote for Bryan in 1896.

PART III: Applying What You Have Learned

1. How did whites finally overcome resistance of the Plains Indians, and what happened to the Indians after their resistance ceased?
2. What social, ethnic, environmental, and economic factors made the trans-Mississippi West a unique region among the successive American frontiers?
3. What were the actual effects of the frontier on American society at different stages of its development? What was valuable in Frederick Jackson Turner's "frontier thesis," despite its being discredited by subsequent historians?
4. How did the forces of economic class conflict and race figure into the farmer and labor revolt of the 1880s and 1890s? Was there ever any chance that a bi-racial coalition of farmers could have succeeded not only in economic change but in overcoming the South's racial divisions? Were race relations actually worse after the Populist revolt failed?
5. Were the Populist and pro-silver movements of the 1880s and 1890s essentially backward-looking protests by a passing rural America, or were they, despite their immediate political failure, genuine prophetic voices raising central critical questions about democracy and economic justice in the new corporate industrial America?
6. What were the major issues in the crucial campaign of 1896? Why did McKinley win, and what were the long-term effects of his victory?
7. Some historians have seen Bryan as the political heir of Jefferson and Jackson, and McKinley as the political heir of Hamilton and the Whigs. Are such connections valid? Why or why not? (See Chapters 10, 12, and 13.)