THE WEST
"GO WEST, YOUNG MAN, GO WEST AND GROW UP WITH THE COUNTRY."

HORACE GREELEY (1811-1872)
The West

- The Far West or “Great West” (land west of the Mississippi River) was once called the Great American Desert and unfit for civilization
- It actually will be a diverse land in terms of people and geography
Who Lived There? (Before Anglo-Americans)

- Native America/Indian Tribes
  - The most widespread group of Native Americans in the West were the Plains Indians

- Common Traits
  1. Close and Extended Family Networks
  2. Intimate Relationships with Nature
  3. Many tribes depended on Buffalo
  4. Sioux were the Most Powerful Tribe
Who Lived There? (Before Anglo-Americans)

- Native America/Indian Tribes
  - Weaknesses of the Plains Indians
    1. Vulnerable to Eastern Diseases
    2. Poor Economy and Technology
    3. Lacked Unity to Resist White Encroachment
Who Lived There? (Before Anglo-Americans)

- Hispanics

- Many Spanish-speaking people (Tens of Thousands) became part of the United States after the Mexican American War (1846-1848)

- In the long run, most Spanish-speaking people in the West lost their land and became part of an impoverished working class in the expanding capitalist economy
Who Lived There? (Before Anglo-Americans)

- Chinese
- 1848 Gold Rush brings many to America
- By 1880, over 200,000 Chinese constituted 1/10 of California’s population
- As mining declined, many Chinese worked on the Trans-Continental Railroad
- The Chinese were frequent victims of violence and prejudice as they often worked for lower wages
- In 1882, the federal government passed The Chinese Exclusion Act (no more immigration)
HERE COMES WHITEY!!! WHY?

- Discovery of Gold and Silver
- Homestead Act of 1862
  - Allowed for the purchase of 160 acres of cheap land, and other federal government assistance programs
- Completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869
The Changing Western Economy

- The new American settlers tied the West to the growing industrial economy of the East
- Mining, timbering, ranching, commercial farming, and other business pursuits relied on the East for markets and capital
- Racially stratified working class (Whites, non-whites)
MINING BOOM (1860-1890)

- Biggest strike = The Comstock Load of silver in Nevada
- Men greatly outnumbered women in mining towns
- Many prostitutes
- Mines were very dangerous, 1 in 30 miners were disabled, 1 in 80 were killed
- Mining towns suffered from lawlessness
- Many towns turned into ghost towns
Ranchers

• Railroads made possible the “long drive”, but eventually killed open range ranching as the trains brought in farmers who fenced the land in

• Chisholm Trail from Texas to Kansas – 1.5 Million cattle moved by Cowboys

• Western cattle to Eastern urban markets helped link the country together
The Farmer

- 1870s to early 1880s = **Boom** time for farmers. WHY?
  1. Cheap Land
  2. Cheap Transportation
  3. Fencing with **Barbed Wire** invented by **Joseph Glidden**
The Farmer

- **Boom** turns to **BUST** by the late 1880s. WHY?
  1. Scarce water supply; drought
  2. Falling prices due to overproduction (worldwide)
  3. High freight rates
  4. High interest rates
  5. High prices on domestic goods (protected by tariffs)
  6. Isolation
  7. Small farmers gave way to commercial farms
Romancing the West

- Painters such as Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Moran, and Frederic Remington romanticized the west in their art (Beauty)
Romancing the West

- Owen Wister’s *The Virginian* was a novel that romanticized the freedom of the West.
- Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show help to popularize and increase the mythology of the West.
Romancing the West

• Frederick Jackson Turner’s Frontier Thesis (1893) = Closing of the Frontier
  • Thesis = American Westward expansion had stimulated individualism, nationalism, and democracy
    (women gained the right to vote earliest in western territories/states)
  • Counter Thesis = Western “pioneers” depended on government subsidized railroads, federal troops, and government funded dams and canals for their existence
The Dispersal of the Tribes

- **E** – “Elimination”
- **R** – “Removal”
- **R** – “Reservation”
- **A** – “Assimilation”
- **C** – “Coexist”

- America’s history of relations with Native Americans is one of broken promises
The Dispersal of the Tribes

- In 1851, a new concentration policy was established to move tribes onto their own reservations, out of the way of the incoming white settlers (given the worst land)
- The Bureau of Indian Affairs, branch of the Department of the Interior, was in charge of administering the reservations and was often incompetent and corrupt.
The Dispersal of the Tribes

- Decimation of the Buffalo
  - 1865 = 15,000,000 ➔ 1875 = 1,000  WOW!!!
- Demand in the East for hides
- Railroad hired riflemen to kill buffalo as they were an obstruction
- Led to inevitable conflict with Indians
Indian Wars (1850s – 1880s)

- Many whites sought the **elimination** of the tribes. Army and **vigilante** massacres were common (Sand Creek, Washita River & “Indian Hunting”)
- Most famous Indian battle = Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull (Sioux) vs. George A. Custer (US Cavalry) at the **Battle of Little Big Horn** (1876)
Indian Wars (1850s – 1880s)

- **Chief Joseph** led the Nez Perce on an attempted escape to Canada, but was captured after a 1,321 mile trek
  - He said, “I will fight no more forever”
- **Apache Chief Geronimo** surrendered by 1886 and this marks the end of formal warfare between Indians and the US Army
Indian Wars (1850s – 1880s)

- After an Indian revival, known as the “Ghost Dance”, led many Indians to believe a messiah was coming, a final fatal massacre of Sioux occurred at Wounded Knee, South Dakota.
The Dawes Severalty Act (1887)

- Divided reservation lands into individual and family plots
- Native Americans given citizenship rights but could not sell property for 25 years
- Indians encouraged to adopt Christianity
- Children taken away and sent to boarding schools
- Government policy was now one of assimilation = “be like us”
- Native Americans had a hard time with the transition from collective to capitalist society

“Kill the Indian and save the man”