



Chapter 5

Changes on the Western Frontier

The culture of the Plains Indians declines as white settlers transform the Great Plains. Meanwhile, farmers form the Populist movement to address their economic concerns.



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Changes on the Western Frontier

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Cultures Clash on the Prairie

The cattle industry booms in the late 1800s, as the culture of the Plains Indians declines.



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Cultures Clash on the Prairie

The Culture of the Plains Indians

Life on the Plains

- **Great Plains**—grasslands in west-central portion of the U.S.
- East: hunting, farming villages; west: nomadic hunting, gathering

The Horse and the Buffalo

- Horses, guns lead most Plains tribes to nomadic life by mid-1700s
- Trespassing others' hunting lands causes war; count coup for status
- Buffalo provides many basic needs:
 - worship without formal ministers
 - meat used for jerky, pemmican



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The Culture of the Plains Indians *{continued}*

Family Life

- Form family groups with ties to other bands that speak same language
- Men are hunters, warriors; women butcher meat, prepare hides
- Believe in powerful spirits that control natural world
 - men or women can become shamans
- Children learn through myths, stories, games, example
- Communal life; leaders rule by counsel



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Settlers Push Westward

Clash of Cultures

- Native Americans: land cannot be owned; settlers: want to own land
- Settlers think natives forfeited land because did not improve it
- Since consider land unsettled, migrants go west to claim it

The Lure of Silver and Gold

- 1858 discovery of gold in Colorado draws tens of thousands
- Mining camps, tiny frontier towns have filthy, ramshackle dwellings
- Fortune seekers of different cultures, races; mostly men



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The Government Restricts Native Americans

Railroads Influence Government Policy

- 1834, government designates Great Plains as one huge reservation
- 1850s, treaties define specific boundaries for each tribe

Massacre at Sand Creek

- Troops kill over 150 Cheyenne, Arapaho at Sand Creek winter camp



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The Government Restricts Native Americans *{continued}*

Death on the Bozeman Trail

- Bozeman Trail crosses Sioux hunting grounds
 - men or women can become shamans
- **Treaty of Fort Laramie**—U.S. closes trail; Sioux to reservation
- **Sitting Bull**, leader of Hunkpapa Sioux, does not sign treaty



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Bloody Battles Continue

Red River War

- 1868, Kiowa, Comanche engage in 6 years of raiding
- 1874–1875, U. S. Army crushes resistance on Plains in Red River War

Gold Rush

- 1874 **George A. Custer** reports much gold in Black Hills, rush begins

Custer's Last Stand

- 1876, Sitting Bull has vision of war at sun dance
- Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, Gall crush Custer's troops
- By late 1876, Sioux are defeated; some take refuge in Canada
 - people starving; Sitting Bull surrenders 1881



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The Government Supports Assimilation

The Dawes Act

- 1881, Helen Hunt Jackson exposes problems in *A Century of Dishonor*
- **Assimilation**—natives to give up way of life, join white culture
- 1887, **Dawes Act** to “Americanize” natives, break up reservations
 - gives land to individual Native Americans
 - sell remainder of land to settlers
 - money for farm implements for natives
- In the end, Natives Americans receive only 1/3 of land, no money



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The Government Supports Assimilation *{continued}*

The Destruction of the Buffalo

- Destruction of buffalo most significant blow to tribal life
- Tourists, fur traders shoot for sport, destroy buffalo population



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The Battle of Wounded Knee

Wounded Knee

- Ghost Dance—ritual to regain lost lands
 - spreads among Sioux on Dakota reservation
- Dec. 1890, Sitting Bull is killed when police try to arrest him
- Seventh Cavalry takes about 350 Sioux to Wounded Knee Creek
- **Battle of Wounded Knee**—cavalry kill 300 unarmed Native Americans
- Battle ends Indian wars, Sioux dream of regaining old life



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Cattle Become Big Business

Vaqueros and Cowboys

- American settlers learn to manage large herds from Mexican vaqueros
 - adopt way of life, clothing, vocabulary
- Texas **longhorns**—sturdy, short-tempered breeds brought by Spanish
- Cowboys not in demand until railroads reach Great Plains

Growing Demand for Beef

- After Civil War demand for meat increases in rapidly growing cities



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Cattle Become Big Business *{continued}*

The Cow Town

- Cattlemen establish shipping yards where trails and rail lines meet
- **Chisholm Trail** becomes major cattle route from San Antonio to Kansas



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A Day in the Life of a Cowboy

A Day's Work

- 1866–1885, up to 55,000 cowboys on plains
 - 25% African American, 12% Mexican
- Cowboy works 10–14 hours on ranch; 14 or more on trail
- Expert rider, roper; alert for dangers that may harm, upset cattle

Roundup

- During spring roundup, longhorns found, herded into corral
- Separate cattle marked with own ranch's brand; brand calves



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A Day in the Life of a Cowboy *{continued}*

The Long Drive

- Herding of animals or **long drive** lasts about 3 months
- Cowboy in saddle dawn to dusk; sleeps on ground; bathes in rivers

Legends of the West

- Celebrities like “Wild Bill” Hickok, Calamity Jane never handled cows



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The End of the Open Range

Changes in Ranching

- Overgrazing, bad weather from 1883 to 1887 destroy whole herds
- Ranchers keep smaller herds that yield more meat per animal
- Fence land with barbed wire; turn open range into separate ranches



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Settling on the Great Plains

Settlers on the Great Plains transform the land despite great hardships.



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Settling on the Great Plains

Settlers Move Westward to Farm

Railroads Open the West

- 1850–1871, huge land grants to railroads for laying track in West
- 1860s, Central Pacific goes east, Union Pacific west, meet in Utah
- By 1880s, 5 transcontinental railroads completed
- Railroads sell land to farmers, attract many European immigrants



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Columbus Crosses the Atlantic *{continued}*

Government Support for Settlement

- 1862 **Homestead Act** offers 160 acres free to any head of household
 - 1862–1900, up to 600,000 families settle
- **Exodusters**—Southern African-American settlers in Kansas
- Railroad, state agents, speculators profit; 10% of land to families
- Government strengthens act, passes new legislation for settlers

The Closing of the Frontier

- 1872, Yellowstone National Park created to protect some wilderness
- 1890s, no frontier left; some regret loss of unique American feature



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Settlers Meet the Challenges of the Plains

Dugouts and Soddies

- Few trees, so many settlers dig homes into sides of ravines or hills
- In plains, make **soddy** or sod home by stacking blocks of turf

Women's Work

- Homesteaders virtually alone, must be self-sufficient
- Women do men's work—plowing, harvesting, shearing sheep
- Do traditional work—carding wool, making soap, canning vegetables
- Work for communities—sponsor schools, churches



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Settlers Meet the Challenges of the Plains *{continued}*

Technical Support for Farmers

- Mass market for farm machines develops with migration to plains

Agricultural Education

- **Morrill Act** of 1862, 1890 finances agricultural colleges
- 1887 Hatch Act creates agricultural experiment stations

Farmers in Debt

- Railroads, investors create **bonanza farms**— huge, single-crop spreads
- 1885–1890 droughts bankrupt single-crop operations
- Rising cost of shipping grain pushes farmers into debt



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Farmers and the Populist Movement

Farmers unite to address their economic problems, giving rise to the Populist movement.



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Farmers and the Populist Movement

Farmers Unite to Address Common Problems

Economic Distress

- Farmers buy more land to grow more crops to pay off debts
- After Civil War, government takes greenbacks out of circulation
- Debtors have to pay loans in dollars worth more than those borrowed
- Prices of crops fall dramatically
- 1870s, debtors push government to put more money in circulation
- 1878 Bland-Allison Act—money supply increase not enough for farmers



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Farmers Unite to Address Common Problems *{continued}*

Problems with the Railroads

- Lack of competition lets railroads overcharge to transport grain
- Farms mortgaged to buy supplies; suppliers charge high interest

The Farmers' Alliances

- 1867, **Oliver Hudson Kelley** starts Patrons of Husbandry or **Grange**
- Purpose is educational, social; by 1870s, Grange fighting railroads
- **Farmers' Alliances**—groups of farmers and sympathizers
 - lectures on interest rates, government control of railroads, banks
 - gain over 4 million members



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The Rise and Fall of Populism

The Populist Party Platform

- **Populism**—movement of the people; Populist Party wants reforms
- Economic: increase money supply, graduated income tax, federal loans
- Political: Senate elected by popular vote; secret ballot; 8-hour day
- 1892, Populist candidates elected at different levels of government
 - Democratic Party eventually adopts platform



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The Rise and Fall of Populism *{continued}*

The Panic of 1893

- Railroads expand faster than markets; some go bankrupt
- Government's gold supply depleted, leads to rush on banks
 - businesses, banks collapse
 - panic becomes depression



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The Rise and Fall of Populism *{continued}*

Silver or Gold

- Political divisions also regional:
 - Republicans: Northeast business owners, bankers
 - Democrats: Southern, Western farmers, laborers
- **Bimetallism**—system using both silver and gold to back currency
- **Gold standard**—backing currency with gold only
- Paper money considered worthless if cannot be exchanged for metal
- Silverites: bimetallism would create more money, stimulate economy
- Gold bugs: gold only would create more stable, if expensive currency



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The Rise and Fall of Populism *{continued}*

Bryan and the “Cross of Gold”

- 1896, Republicans commit to gold, select **William McKinley**
- Democrats favor bimetallism, choose **William Jennings Bryan**
- Populists endorse Bryan, choose own VP to maintain party identity

The End of Populism

- McKinley gets East, industrial Midwest; Bryan South, farm Midwest
- McKinley elected president; Populism collapses; leaves legacy:
 - the powerless can organize, have political impact
 - agenda of reforms enacted in 20th century



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