Chapter 26 - The Great West And The Agricultural Revolution (1865-1896)

1. The Clash Of Cultures On The Plains
2. Native Americans numbered about 360,000 in 1860, to their misfortune they stood in the path of the advancing white settlers. They already had been fighting between tribes.
3. White settlers unwittingly spread disease to the Natives and put pressure on the already dwindling buffalo population.
4. Federal government tried to pacify The Plain Indians by signing treaties with the "chiefs" of various "tribes"
* The treaties marked the beginnings of the reservation system.
* They established boundaries for the territory of each tribe.
* But the white treaty makers misunderstood both Indian government and society - many Native-Americans didn't follow the main chiefs and couldn't understand the concept of living in one defined territory.
1. In the 1860's the government herded the Indians on to even smaller confines, the Indians surrendered their ancestral lands only when they received solemn promises that they would be left alone and provided with food, clothing and other supplies.
* Sadly they were lied to and given defective provisions; moth-eaten blankets and spoiled beef.
1. Receding Native Population
2. Indian wars in the west were often savage clashes. Innocent natives were shot on sight by aggressive whites, women and children filled in cold blood.
3. In 1866 a Sioux war party ambushed and killed 81 soldiers and civilians under captain Fetterman.
4. The battle of Little Bighorn - Gold was found on Sioux territory and they attacked the greedy gold-seekers and wiped out 250 soldiers sent to suppress the Indians.
5. Fierce Apache tribes of Arizona and New Mexico were the most difficult to subdue
6. "Taming" of the Indians was engineering by many factors. The government's willingness to back its land claims with force. The railroad could bring out unlimited numbers of white people to settle and fight and the Indians were ravenged by new diseases. Over hunting of the buffalo doomed the Plains Indian way of life.
7. Bellowing Herds Of Bison
8. Tens of millions of buffalo existed when the whites first arrived. These animals were the staff of life for the Native Americans.
9. The buffalo were in danger of extinction by 1805.
10. The End Of The Trail
11. By the 1880's the national conceive began to stir uneasily over the plight of the Indians debates seesawed.
12. There were the humanitarians who wanted to treat the Indians kindly and make them assimilate. The hard-liners insisted on containment and punishment, neither side showed respect for their culture.
13. The Dawes Severalty Act of 1887 dissolved many tribes, took away their land ownership and gave them different land.
14. Schools were formed to instill while values to Indian children.
15. By 1900 the Indians had lost 50% of their lands
16. The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 tried to restore the tribes.
17. Mining From Dishpan To Ore Breaker
18. When gold was first found avid miners went to make their fortunes, many didn't strike it rich.
19. Smaller "Lucky Strikes" drew gold and silver seekers to western states like Montana and Idaho. Towns sprouted from the sand and when diggings petered out the towns became ghost towns.
20. Once there was no more loose surface gold, the big businesses took over the mining industry to smash the gold-bearing quartz.
21. Beef Bonanzas And The Long Drive
22. Cow-meat business sprang into existence as a main pillar of the economy.
23. Texas cowboys - black, white, and Mexican - drove herds of 1,000-10,000 slowly from the plains to the railroad terminals. As long as lush grass was available the long drive was profitable.
24. Intruders like the homesteader and the sheep herder built too many barbed wire fences and many cows died.
25. Over expansion and overgrazing also took its toll, cowboys became part of folklore.
26. The Farmer's Frontier
27. The Homestead Act of 1862 - allowed a settler to acquire as much as 160 acres of land by living on it for five years. Improving it and paying about $30. Before land was sold for revenue, now it was given away to fill empty spaces.
28. The Act turned out to be a huge hoax, the land proved to be quite inadequate on the rain-scarce Great Plains.
29. Prairie soil was astonishingly fruitful when the sod was broken with heavy plows. Lacking trees for lumber for lumber settlers built sod houses and burned corncobs.
30. Lured by wheat farming settlers pushed further west past the 100th meridian where rain was rare.
31. Dry farming - shallow cultivation that over time created a finely pulverized surface soil.
32. Other adaptations: tough strains of wheat, resistant to cold and drought imported from Russia. Corn was abandoned in favor or Sorghum and barbed wire was perfected.
33. Irrigation Projects caused The Great American Desert to bloom.
34. The Far West Comes Of Age
35. The Great West experienced a migration surge and consequently new states joined the Union.
36. The Fading Frontier
37. By 1890 all the unsettled areas were now broken into by American settlement.
38. As the 19th century ended the American people were disturbed to find that their fabled tree land was going or gone. Its passing ended a romantic phase in the nation's development.
39. The Western colonization was an important chapter of American history.
40. The Farm Becomes A Factory
41. Farms and farmers are changing, before they were self-reliant but then concentrated on cash crops and used the money to buy necessities at the stores.
42. Farms were mechanized, they had to buy expensive machinery to plant and harvest crops.
43. The farm was attaining the status of an outdoor grain factory.
44. Deflation Dooms The Debtor
45. Once farmers became chained to a one-crop economy they were engaged in a fiercely competitive business and were not the masers of their destinies. The price of their products was determined by the world market and how much was in production elsewhere.
46. low prices and deflated currency were the chief worries
47. Despite their toils they operated year after year at a loss, their farm machinery increased their output of grain and prices lowered and pushed them further into debt.
48. Harsh interest rates, 8-40%, were charged on mortgages.
49. Unhappy Farmers
50. Even mother nature ceased smiling as she conspired against agriculture. Mile-wide clouds of grasshoppers periodically revenged prone farms. Good Earth was going sour, floods added to erosion causing the loss of topsoil. Expensive fertilizers were needed. A series of drought started in 1887.
51. Farmers had to pay high taxes to the government, but sold their products in the unprotected world market while having to buy high priced goods in home market.
52. Other companies and industries like the railroads increased their rates but the farmers couldn't protest.
53. Farmers made up one-half of the population in 1890 but were disorganized. They were independent and individualistic. Never did they successfully organize until Roosevelt.
54. The Farmers Take Their stand
55. Farmers unsuccessfully sought relief from low prices and high indebtedness by demanding a paper currency inflation.
56. The National Grange of the Patriots of Husbandry - The Grange - organized in 1867. Lead by Oliver H. Kelly who wanted to enhance the lives of isolated farmers through socialization activities.
* By 1875 it claimed 800,000 members, they raised goals for self-improvement.
* Many went into politics but many "Granger-laws" were badly drawn and were later reversed. Influence shortly faded away.
1. The Green-backers labor party combined the inflationary appeal and a program for improving the lot of labor.
2. Prelude To Populism
3. Farmer's alliance founded in 1870's. Farmers came together to socialize and break the grip railroads and manufacturers had on them.
4. They weakened themselves by not including tenant or black farmers. But the radical division made it hard for black and white farmers to work together.
5. A new political party emerged in the 1890's - The People's Party or the Populists. They called for nationalizing the railroads, telephone, and telegraph; instituting income tax and creating a "sub treasury' to provide farmers with loans. Also wanted free and unlimited coinage of silver.
6. The Capital Populists were leading an earnest companion to relieve the farmers' many miseries.
7. Coxey's Army And The Pullman Strike
8. The panic of 1893 strengthened the Populists' arguments. Ragged armies of the unemployed began marching to protest their plight.
9. The most famous marcher was "General" Jacob Coxey. He took a march to Washington nut was arrested before reaching their destination.
10. The Pullman Strike of 1894, the car company was hit hard by the depression and cut wages about 1/3. The American federation of labor declined to support the strikes.
11. U.S. attorney General Richard Olney urged the dispatch of federal troops under the legal grounds that the strikers were interfering with mail. President Cleveland supported Olney.
12. The troops crushed the Pullman Strike.
13. Golden McKinley And Silver Bryan
14. The leading candidate for the Republican nomination of 1896 was William McKinley of Ohio.
15. Cleveland had become the most unpopular man in the country.
16. The Next democratic candidate was William Bryan of Nebraska.
17. Class Conflict: Plow-holders Versus Bondholders
18. Free silver became a big issue; Bryan was hailed to take "silverites" out of debt.
19. Bryan created panic among the "gold bugs" - eastern conservatives.
20. Employers threatened to pay their employees in 50 cents pieces instead of dollars if Bryan won.
21. On Election Day McKinley triumphed.
22. The free-silver election of 1896 was perhaps the most significant political turning point since Lincoln's victories.
23. Republican Stand Enthroned
24. McKinley took the inaugural oath in 1897. Cautious conservative nature caused him to shy away from reform.
25. Prosperity began to return with a rush in 1897.
26. The Gold Standard Act of 1900 provided that paper currency be redeemed freely in gold, moderate inflation arose at the discovery of new gold.