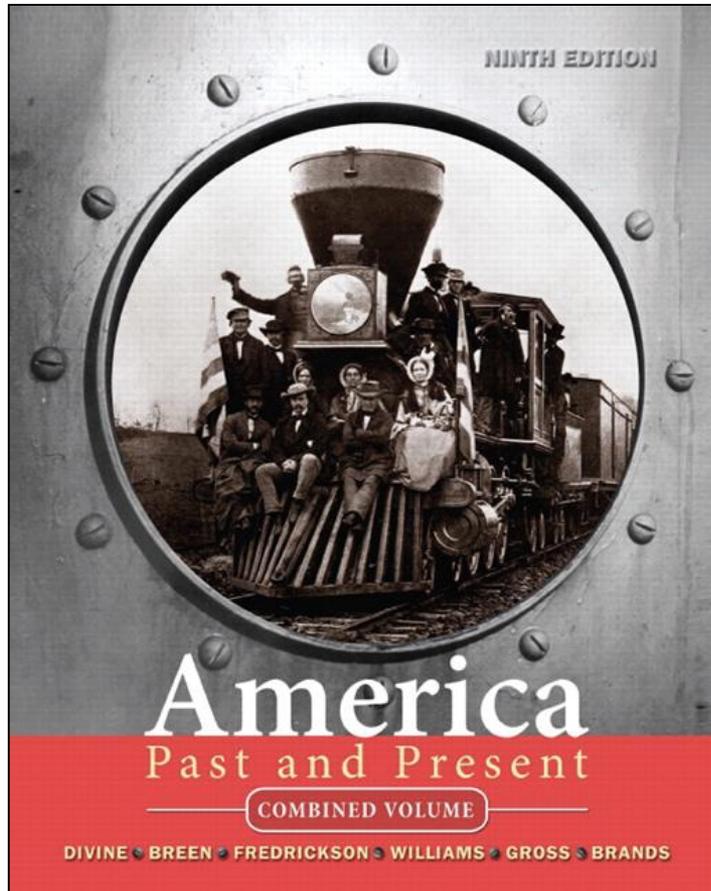


America: Past and Present

Ninth Edition



Chapter 17

The West: Exploiting An Empire

Beyond the Frontier

- 1840: Settlement to Missouri timber country
- Eastern Plains have rich soil, good rainfall
- High Plains, Rockies semi-arid
- Most pre-Civil War settlers head directly for Pacific Coast

Physiographic Map of the U.S.



Crushing the Native Americans

- 1867: 250,000 Indians in western U.S.
 - Displaced Eastern Indians
 - Native Plains Indians
- By the 1880s:
 - Most Indians on reservations
 - California Indians decimated by disease
- By the 1890s, Indian cultures crumble

Life of the Plains Indians: Political Organization

- Plains Indians nomadic, hunt buffalo
 - Skilled horsemen
 - Tribes develop warrior class
 - Wars limited to skirmishes, “counting coups”
- Tribal bands governed by chief and council
- Loose organization confounds federal policy

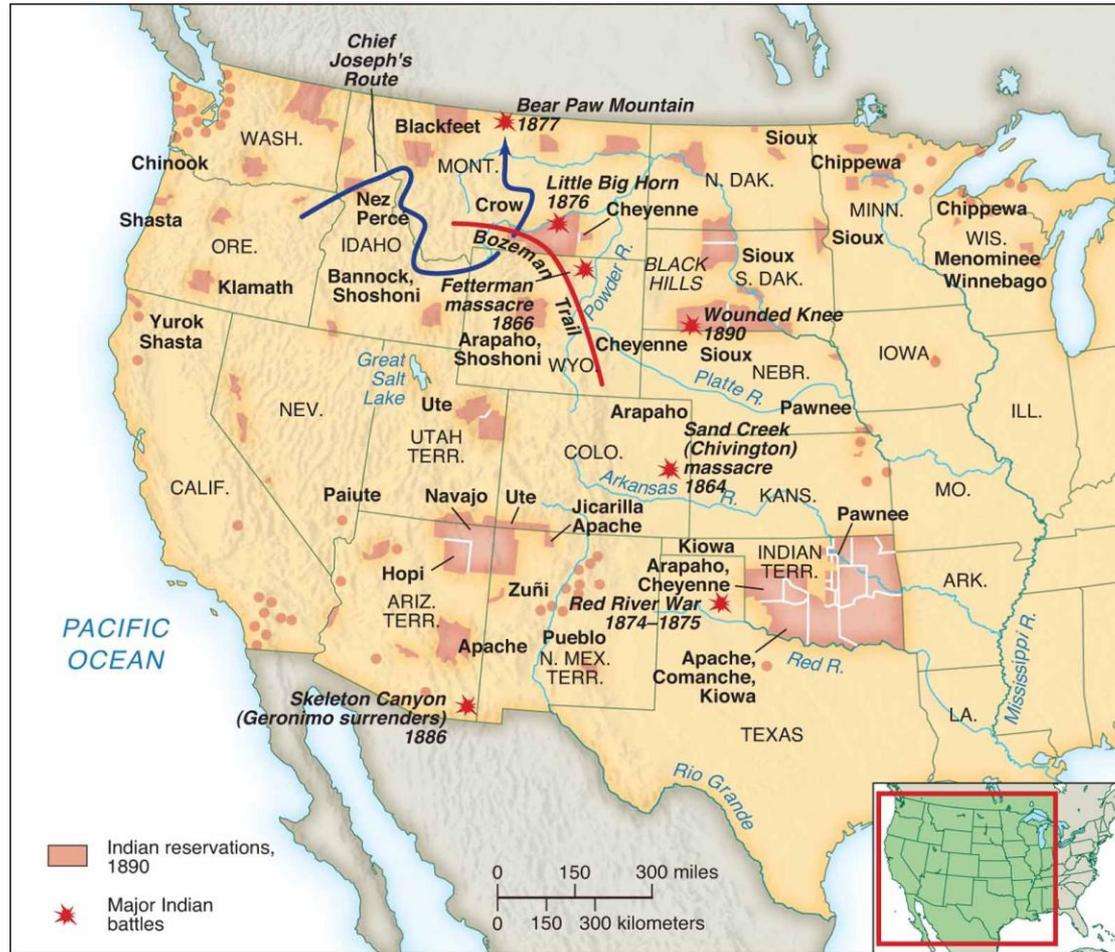
Life of the Plains Indians: Social Organization

- Sexual division of labor
 - Men hunt, trade, supervise ceremonial activities, clear ground for planting
 - Women responsible for child rearing, art, camp work, gardening, food preparation
- Equal gender status common
 - Kinship often matrilineal
 - Women often manage family property

“As Long as Waters Run”: Searching for an Indian Policy

- Trans-Mississippi West neglected
- Indian Intercourse Act of 1834 excludes any white from Indian country without a license
- Land regarded as Indian preserve

Native Americans in the West: Major Battles and Reservations



“As Long as Waters Run”: Searching for an Indian Policy

- After 1850, more whites in Indian country
- John Chivington and the Sand Creek massacre
- Sioux War of 1865–1867 and Fetterman Massacre

“As Long as Waters Run”: Searching for an Indian Policy

- Debate over Indian policy
 - Humanitarians want to “civilize” Indians
 - Others want firm control and swift reprisal
- Humanitarians win with “small reservation” policy

Final Battles on the Plains

- Small reservation policy fails
 - Young warriors refuse restraint
 - White settlers encroach on Indian lands
- Final series of wars suppress Indians
 - 1876, Little Big Horn: Sioux defeat Custer
 - Most battles result in Indian defeat, massacre
 - 1890, Wounded Knee: Massacre to suppress “Ghost Dances”

The End of Tribal Life

- 1887: Dawes Severalty Act
 - Destroys communal ownership of Indian land
 - Gives small farms to each head of a family
 - Indians who leave tribes become U.S. citizens
- Near-extirmination of buffalo deals devastating blow to Plains Indians

Settlement of the West

- Unprecedented settlement 1870–1900
- Most move west in periods of prosperity
- Rising population drives demand for Western goods

Men and Women on the Overland Trail

- California Gold Rush begins Great Migration
- Settlers start from St. Louis, Missouri, in April to get through Rockies before snow
- Pacific trek takes at least 6 months

Land for the Taking: Federal Incentives

- 1860–1900: Federal land grants
 - 48 million acres granted under Homestead Act
 - 100 million acres sold to private individuals, corporations
 - 128 million acres granted to railroad companies

Land for the Taking: Federal Incentives

- Congress offers incentives to development
 - Timber Culture Act of 1873
 - Desert Land Act of 1877
 - Timber and Stone Act of 1878

Land for the Taking: Speculators and Railroads

- Most land acquired by wealthy investors
- Speculators send agents to stake out best land for high prices
 - River bottoms
 - Irrigable areas
 - Control of water
- Railroads settle grants with immigrants

Land for the Taking: Water and Development

- Water scarcity limits Western growth
 - Much of the West receives less than 20 inches of rainfall annually
 - People speculate in water as in gold
- 1902: Newlands Act sets aside federal money for irrigation projects

Territorial Government

- Western territorial officials appointed
- Territorial patronage systems persist
- Some Westerners make livings as Congressmen
- Territorial experience produces unique Western political culture

The Spanish-Speaking Southwest

- Spanish-speakers of the Southwest contribute to culture, institutions
 - Irrigation
 - Stock management
 - Weaving
 - Natural resource management
- Spanish-Mexican Californians lose lands after 1860s

The Bonanza West

- Quest to “get rich quick” produces:
 - Uneven growth
 - Boom-and-bust economic cycles
 - Wasted resources
 - “Instant cities” like San Francisco
- Institutions based on bonanza mentality

The Mining Bonanza

- Mining first attraction to the west
- Mining frontier moves from west to east
 - Individual prospectors remove surface gold
 - Big corporations move in with the heavy, expensive mining equipment
- 1874–1876: Black Hills rush overruns Sioux hunting grounds

Mining Regions of the West



Mining Bonanza: Camp Life

- Camps sprout with each first strike
- Camps governed by simple democracy
- Men outnumber women two to one
- Most men, some women work claims
- Most women earn wages as cooks, housekeepers, and seamstresses

Mining Bonanza: Ethnic Hostility

- 25–50% of camp citizens were foreign-born
- French, Latin Americans, Chinese hated
- 1850: California Foreign Miner's Tax drives foreigners out
- 1882: Federal Chinese Exclusion Act suspends Chinese immigration for 10 years

Mining Bonanza: Effects of the Mining Boom

- Contributed millions to economy
- Helped finance Civil War, industrialization
- Relative value of silver and gold change
- Early statehood for Nevada, Idaho, Montana
- Invaded Indian reservations
- Scarred, polluted environment
- Ghost towns

Gold from the Roots Up: The Cattle Bonanza

- The Far West ideal for cattle grazing
- Cattle drives take herds to rail heads
- Trains take herds to Chicago for processing
- Profits enormous for large ranchers
- Cowboys work long hours for little pay
- Cowboys self-governing

Cattle Trails



Gold from the Roots Up: The Cattle Bonanza

- By 1880, wheat farmers begin fencing range
- Mechanization modernizes ranching
- 1886: Harsh winter kills thousands of cattle
- Ranchers reduce herds, switch to sheep

Sodbusters on the Plains: The Farming Bonanza

- 1870–1890 farm population triples on plains
- African American “Exoduster” farmers migrate from the South to escape racism
- Water, building materials scarce
- Sod houses are common first dwelling

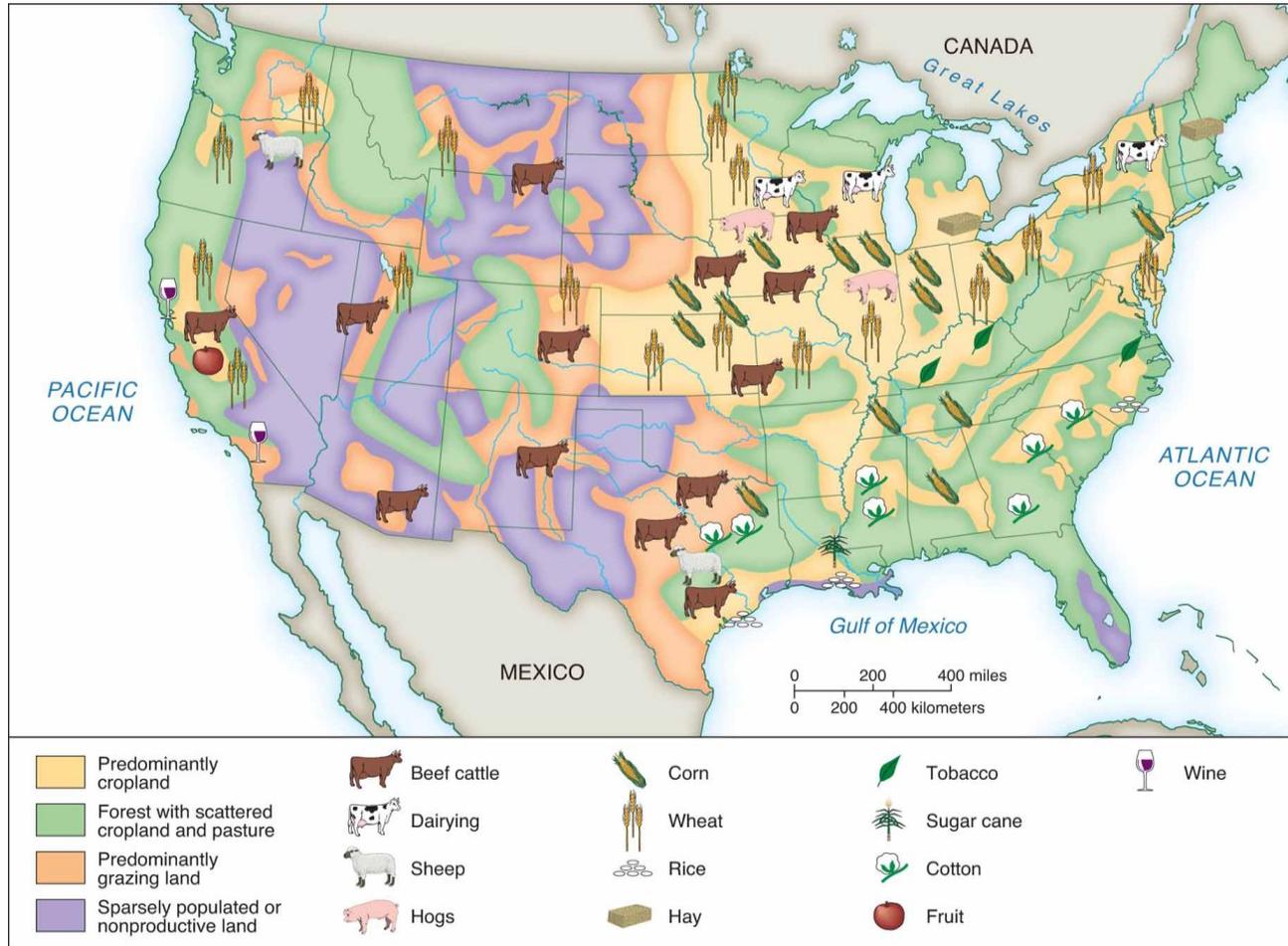
New Farming Methods

- Barbed wire allows fencing without wood
- Dry farming: Deeper tilling, use of mulch
- New strains of wheat resistant to frost
- 1885–1890: Drought ruins bonanza farms
- Small-scale, diversified farming adopted

Discontent on the Farm

- Farmers' grievances:
 - Declining crop prices
 - Rising rail rates
 - Heavy mortgages
- The Grange becomes a political lobby
- Trans-Mississippi farmers become more commercial, scientific, productive

Agricultural Land Use in the 1880s



The Final Fling

- 1889: Oklahoma opened to white settlement
- Changing views of Far West
 - “Frontier thesis” treated West as cradle of individualism, innovation
 - New Western History sees West as arena of conflicting interests, erosion of environment

The Meaning of the West

- Historians differ in their interpretation of the American frontier experience
 - Frederick Jackson Turner
 - “New Western historians”
- The West was the first American empire and played a profound role in shaping American customs and character