

Chapter 26 (14th)

The Great West and the Agricultural Revolution

1. The Clash of Cultures on the Plains
 1. The West, after Civil War, still largely untamed. It was inhabited by Indians, buffalo, coyotes, Mexicans, and Mormons.
 2. The American Indians found themselves caught in between their own traditions and the westward-pushing white man.
 1. Indians fought one another as with the Comanche over the Apache, the Chippewa over the Cheyenne, and the Sioux over the Crow, Kiowa, and Pawnee. By this time, the Sioux had become expert horsemen and effectively hunted buffalo on the Spanish beasts.
 2. Whites' diseases were still striking at Native Americans. And, whites struck at the massive buffalo herds.
 3. Relations between Indians and the federal government were strained at best.
 1. Treaties were made at **Fort Laramie** (1851) and **Fort Laramie** (1853). The agreements started the system of reservations where Indians were to live on certain lands unmolested by whites.
 2. Whites didn't understand Indian society and that a "chief" didn't always exactly sign an agreement for an entire group or area. There were *many* chiefs representing many areas or even *no* area.
 3. Indians expected help from the federal government in return for their lands. The help (food, blankets, and supplies) often never got there or were swindled by corrupt officials.
 4. After the Civil War, the U.S. Army's new mission was to clear out the West of Indians for white settlers to move in.
 1. The so-called "**Indian Wars**" took place roughly from 1864-1890 (from the Sand Creek Massacre to the Battle of Wounded Knee). It was really less of a war than a long series of skirmishes, battles, and massacres.
 2. At first, Indians had the advantage because their arrows could be fired more rapidly than a muzzle-loading rifle. The invention of Colt .45 revolver (six-shooter by **Samuel Colt**) & Winchester repeating rifle changed this.
 3. Notably, one-fifth of the U.S. Army out West was black, the "**Buffalo Soldiers**" as the Indians called them.
2. Receding Native Population
 1. Violence out West began just before the Civil War ended.
 1. Col. J.M. Chivington's troops circled then killed 400 Indians who thought they'd been given immunity. This was the infamous **Sand Creek Massacre** (1864).
 2. Two years later, the Indians struck revenge in the **Fetterman Massacre**. The Sioux sought to stop the Bozeman Trail to Montana's gold and killed Capt. William J. Fetterman and his 81 soldiers.
 3. These two tic-for-tac massacres set the stage for terrible Indian-white relations and started the Indian wars.
 2. Just after Fetterman, the **Treaty of Fort Laramie** (1868) was made between the federal government and the Sioux. The gov. gave up on Bozeman Trail & huge Sioux reservation was established. The treaty although promising was short-lived.
 1. Six years later, in 1874, gold was discovered in the Black Hills of South Dakota (on the Sioux reservation) when **Col. William Armstrong Custer** led a "geological" expedition into the Black Hills.
 3. The **Battle of Little Bighorn** (1876) (AKA "Custer's Last Stand") followed.
 1. Led by **Crazy Horse** and **Sitting Bull**, some Sioux stubbornly refused to go to the reservation.
 2. Custer led about 400 cavalry against Crazy Horse who was labeled as a "hostile" Indian. Custer faced some 10,000 Indians, about 2,500 warriors. All 200+ or so of Custer's detachment were killed, including Custer himself, "Chief Yellow Hair."
 3. The Little Bighorn battle brought the U.S. military out for revenge and sealed the Indian-white relationship as little better than warfare.
 4. The **Nez Perce** tribe, led by **Chief Joseph**, revolted when the government tried to force them onto a reservation. They bugged out over some 1,700 miles, across the Rocky Mountains, and fled for Canada.
 1. They were caught and defeated at the **Battle of Bear Paw Mountain** only 40 miles from the Canada border. Chief Joseph "buried his hatchet" and gave his famous speech saying, "From where the sun now stands I will fight no more forever."
 2. The Nez Perce were sent to a Kansas reservation where 40% died from disease.
 5. The Apache of the Southwest were troublesome to the Army. Led by **Geronimo**, the military chased him and the Apache into Mexico where he proved to be a very wily adversary.
 1. The apache & Geronimo were eventually caught, imprisoned in Florida and then Oklahoma.
 6. Indians were subdued by (1) railroads, (2) diseases, (3) lack of buffalo, (4) war, & (5) the loss of land to white settlement.
3. Bellowing Herds of Bison
 1. There was an estimated 15 million buffalo by end of the Civil War. Buffalo herds diminished largely due to the railroads.
 1. The railroads literally split the Great Plains into sections. This decreased the buffalo's ability to roam around. Even more detrimental, railroads brought more and more whites who put more and more pressure on them.
 2. Buffalo were killed (a) for hides, (b) for sport, and (c) to kill off the Indian way of life.
 3. By 1885, an estimated only 1,000 survived, mostly located in Yellowstone National Park. The vast majority died off or "went the way of the buffalo."
4. The End of the Trail
 1. By the 1880's, the people were beginning to recognize the plight of the American Indian. **Helen Hunt Jackson's** book *A Century of Dishonor* helped outline the injustice done to Indians by the U.S. government. Her novel *Ramona* had the same effect in fiction form.

1. Native Americans faced a stark decision: join modern times, stick with traditional ways, or try to mix both.
2. Many whites wanted to try to help the Indians "walk the white man's road."
3. Others felt the tough policies of containing Indians on reservations and punishing "hostiles" was the way to go.
2. Missionaries were eager for Indians to convert to Christianity. They helped convince the gov. to outlaw the "Sun Dance."
 1. Later, "Ghost Dance" fad swept through the Sioux nation and prompted the **Battle of Wounded Knee** (1890).
 2. Wounded Knee was not a battle but a massacre. 200+ Indians were killed, essentially killed for dancing. This battle marked the end of the Indian Wars. By this time, all Indians were either on reservations or dead.
 3. 1890 was also the year that the federal government said there was "no discernible frontier"; that is to say that by 1890, the West was won, or lost, depending on the viewpoint.
3. In 1887 the **Dawes Severalty Act** was passed. Its overall goal was to erase tribes and set the Indians on the road to "becoming white." It was a very insulting law...
 1. Although Indians were truly "*Native Americans*" and the whites were the immigrants, the law said that Indians could become U.S. citizens after 25 years if they behaved as the gov. preferred (like "good white settlers").
 2. Looking back, this policy seems absurd since a European stepping off the boat in 1887 would receive citizenship in just a few short years, not 25.
 3. The **Carlisle Indian School** which opened in 1879 exemplifies the ambitions of the Dawes Act. Carlisle's goal was to train Indian children in whites' ways. The children were completely immersed in white culture and grew up that way. Carlisle's results were successful in their goal by following "kill the Indian, save the child" policies.
 1. A notable graduate of the Carlisle School was **Jim Thorpe**, likely one of the best all-around athletes in American history. He played professional football, professional baseball, professional basketball, and won Olympic gold medals in the decathlon and pentathlon.
 4. The Dawes Act held the goal of killing the Indian way of life, and largely succeeded. In 1900, Indians held only 50% of the land they'd held just 20 years prior.
 1. The forced-assimilation policies of the Dawes Act would rule until the Indian Reorganization Act (1934) was passed. By then, things had changed too much.
5. Mining: From Dishpan to Ore Breaker
 1. At Pike's Peak Colorado, gold was discovered in 1858 and "fifty-niners" flooded to the hills to dig. Most prospectors didn't find much or any gold, but many stayed to mine silver or farm.
 2. The **Comstock Lode** of silver was discovered in Nevada shortly after Pike's Peak. The lode was extremely productive: \$340 million dollars worth was unearthed. In 1864, Nevada became a state almost overnight.
 3. There was a routine to the growth of mining towns...
 1. First, gold/silver was found as in Virginia City, Nevada. When word got out, they grew like wild—too fast for their own good. These boomtowns were nicknamed "Helldorados" because of their lawlessness.
 2. Saloons and bordellos quickly came to town, and a general store for supplies.
 3. Later, if the town remained, a post office, school, sheriff, and an opera house for entertainment might arrive.
 4. For many towns, when the minerals ran out, the townsfolk simply left and the town became a ghost town.
 4. Notably women in these western towns gained a certain independence they lacked back East. Women found jobs in traditional female roles (like cooks or store clerks) as well as prostitutes. Still, they were making money for themselves.
 1. The independence and equality of western women is best seen in many states granting women the right to vote—Wyoming (1866), Utah (1870), Colorado (1893) and Idaho (1896).
 5. Mining life was captured and mixed into American folklore by stories by **Bret Harte** and **Mark Twain**.
6. Beef Bonanzas and the Long Drive
 1. As cities back East boomed in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the demand for food and meat increased sharply. The problem then became—how to get the western cattle to the eastern cities? The solution was the railroads.
 1. Beef became big business. Stockyard towns like Kansas City and Chicago gave birth to "beef barons" such as the **Swift** and the **Armour** families.
 2. Much of the cattle was in south Texas, where the railroads hadn't reached yet. The problem then became—how to get the Texas longhorns to the railroad. The solution was the "**long drive**", a cattle drive from Texas to the Kansas railroads.
 1. Cowboys would round up a herd then drive them northward across plains and rivers.
 2. Their destination—the stockyard towns like Dodge City or Abilene in Kansas, Ogallala, NE, & Cheyenne, WY.
 3. These towns became famous for the Wild West activities—hard liquor, wild women, gambling, shootouts, and their famous lawmen like **Wyatt Earp** and **Wild Bill Hickock**.
 3. The days of the cowboy driving cattle across the prairie on the long drive were short-lived. Several factors ended the days of the open range...
 1. Sheep herders came in and nibbled the grass off too short for cattle to feed.
 2. Several years of drought dried up the grass and hard freezes took their toll.
 3. Mostly, when railroads came to Texas, there was no need to drive cattle. The invention of barbed wire (and wire promoter **Samuel Glidden**) fenced in the land and the cattle business changed from roaming the open range to staying on a ranch.
 1. Ranching had become big business and big power, evidenced by the Wyoming Stock'-Growers Association who controlled the state.
 4. Despite being around only 20 years or so, the image of the American cowboy riding free across open land was deeply emblazoned on the American psyche.
 7. The Farmers' Frontier

1. The **Homestead Act** (1862) offered 160 acres of free land. Settlers only had to pay a small fee and improve the land, meaning build a small cabin on it. Alternately, the land could be purchased flat-out for \$1.25 per acre.
 1. Either way, the Homestead Act was a great deal. Some 500,000 settlers took up the offer and headed west.
 2. Settlers often had a rude awakening—due to its sparse nature, 160 acres of *western* land seemed much less than 160 acres back *east*.
 1. Settlers often were forced to give up due to drought, extreme cold or heat, or simply because 160 acres wasn't enough to sustain a family.
 3. Fraudsters accompanied the Homestead Act. Speculators grabbed up 10 times as much land as real farmers in hopes of turning a profit one day. Some hucksters built a twelve by fourteen cabin on the land, twelve by fourteen *inches*.
 2. Ever since the railroads came through, people realized that the American west, though dry, was actually fertile. The trick was to get water to the soil.
 1. Wheat prices soared due to worldwide crop failure & American settlers pushed farther westward, even west of the **100th meridian**. This line also the 20-inch rainfall line, the amount generally necessary to grow crops.
 2. Geologist **John Wesley Powell**, who'd shot the rapids of Colorado River, had warned that the land was too dry.
 1. Farmers developed "dry farming" to deal with the sparse rain. With this technique, farmers would plow the dew into the top few inches of soil. The system worked but it created a dusty layer of powder atop the soil. In the 1930's the Great Dust Bowl would result.
 2. A more drought resistant strain of wheat was imported from Russia and corn was replaced by easier-to-grow crops.
 3. The federal government irrigation projects would eventually dam up the Missouri and Columbia Rivers. Irrigation would suck the Colorado River so that it would peter out and never make it to the sea.
8. The Far West Comes of Age
1. The West boomed in population during the 1870's to 1890's and new states were ready to join the U.S. Several were admitted in one block vote: North and South Dakota, Montana, Washington, Idaho, and Wyoming.
 2. The Mormons finally banned polygamy (marrying multiple wives) in 1890 and Utah was then admitted as a state in 1896.
 3. The Oklahoma territory was opened to settlers in a "land rush" in 1889. Many jumped the starting gun and snuck out to the land "sooner" than the others—earning the nickname of the "Sooner state." Most land rusher participants went home empty-handed but Oklahoma became a state by the end of 1889.
9. The Fading Frontier
1. The census bureau announced in 1890 there was no longer a discernible frontier in America.
 2. The loss of frontier and land made people worry that it'd be gobbled up for good. **Yellowstone** was obtained by the federal government as the first national park in 1872. Yosemite and Sequoia parks followed in 1890.
 3. Frederick Jackson Turner wrote of the "**Turner Thesis**" saying that the frontier had played an important role in American history and in people's psychology.
 1. Turner wrote, "*American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West.*"
 4. Americans could always just up-and-leave, go westward, and start over (called the "**safety-valve theory**").
 1. City-dwellers typically did *not* move out West since they had no farming skills or money for equipment. The western cities (Chicago, Denver, San Francisco) *did* grow as workers sought jobs there. But, even the *possibility* of frontier land may have kept wages up since employers wouldn't want to lose valuable employees.
 2. Immigrant farmers were the ones to typically take up the western land to farm.
 5. The west saw several cultures bang heads: Native Americans, whites, Hispanics, Asian, and the immense role of government holding much of the land.
 6. The Great West was captured in word and on canvas by writers like Bret Harte, Mark Twain, Helen Hunt Jackson, Francis Parkman and painters George Catlin, Fredric Remington, and Albert Bierstadt.
10. The Farm Becomes a Factory
1. Farming changed too. Farmers used to grow and make whatever they needed. They now switched to growing "cash crops"—crops to be sold, not eaten or used. Other items would be purchased.
 1. If a desired item wasn't at the local general store, farmers could buy anything via mail order catalog. **Montgomery Ward** sent its first catalog out in 1872.
 2. Inventions turned farms into food-factories.
 1. Steam driven tractors could plow much more land than by mule or oxen.
 2. The "combine", a mix of reaper and thresher, harvested much more wheat.
 3. The drawback of these machines was that farmers got themselves into loads of debt. Many went bankrupt. The end result was that the small farmers faded and huge mega-farms emerged.
 3. California agriculture was amazing. They were extremely large and extremely productive.
 1. Migrant Mexican and Chinese workers were paid very little; profits were hefty.
 2. The refrigerator car was invented in the 1880's and California fruits and vegetables began moving eastward.
11. Deflation Dooms the Debtor
1. The economy bounced back, worldwide, in the 1880's. Markets went up, farmers produced more crops, and food prices dropped. In this situation, the farmer was the one to suffer.
 1. Grain farmers were at the whim of world crop prices. A bumper crop, in say Argentina, meant American wheat farmers faced ruin.
 2. The two major concerns of the farmer were (1) low crop prices and (2) deflated currency.
 1. Crop prices generally dropped due to the increased production that machinery could generate.

2. Deflated currency meant that it was more difficult to pay off debts.
 1. Farmers faced two problems here: (1) low crop prices meant they'd need to grow more crops to pay the debt (which meant lower crop prices again), and (2) there was literally less money in circulation making it tougher to get their hands on money. Less money in circulation was called "**contraction.**"
 3. The farmers operated at a loss each year, which mounted their debt, and sent them into a spiral toward foreclosure. Interest rates ran between 8 and 40%.
 4. After "losing the farm," farmers typically became "tenant farmers" where they lived on and worked, but did not own, the land. This situation was similar to the sharecroppers in the South after the Civil War.
12. Unhappy Farmers
1. If debt wasn't enough, farmers also faced drought, heat, prairie fires, floods, locust swarms that would eat everything but the mortgage, and the boll weevil decimated Southern cotton.
 2. The government added insult-to-injury by taxing farmers to death. Their lands were assessed too high meaning their taxes were too high.
 1. The farmers' assets (land) were in the open; by comparison, Easterners could hide their assets (stocks and bonds) in safe-deposit boxes.
 3. Perhaps the farmers' biggest enemy was the railroads.
 1. Farmers relied on the railroads to get the crops to the market. Farmers were at the railroads' mercy.
 2. Middlemen got a hefty cut by buying from the farmer, storing the grain, then selling to the railroad shipper.
 3. Railroad rates were high. Any disgruntled & complaining farmer saw his crops left at the railroad station to rot.
 4. In 1890, 1/2 of Americans were still farmers (although the number had been dropping since colonial days).
 1. Though big in numbers, they had a major weakness in that they were not organized. Whereas factory workers *were* organizing in labor unions, farmers did not.
 2. Two reasons cut at any farm organization: (1) farmers were/are by nature individualists and independent-minded; they rely on themselves, not on the "hide-behind-safety-in-numbers" theory of labor unions, and (2) from a practical sense, farmers were simply too spread out geographically to organize.
13. The Farmers Take Their Stand
1. The Greenback movement (push for paper money) had shown how farmers were disgruntled back in 1868.
 2. In 1869, **the Grange** (officially the National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry) was started by Oliver H. Kelley. The Grange was a national farmers' organization aimed at advancing farmers' agenda.
 1. Initial goal was social in nature—to have "get-togethers" for isolated farmers. By 1875 it had 800,000 members.
 2. The Grange then added helping the farmers' lot in life to their goals. Especially, the Grange wanted to get the trusts off of farmers' backs.
 1. They set "co-ops" (cooperatively owned stores) so farmers wouldn't have to sell to one grain elevator.
 2. They tried, and failed, to produce their own farm machinery.
 3. They got into politics, had some success in the Midwest, and sought to regulate railroads. These were called "Granger Laws."
 4. They faced a major setback in the Supreme Court's **Wasbash case** which said the states could not regulate interstate trade (meaning the railroads).
 3. Overall, the Grange had mixed results...
 1. Good side: 1878, they elected 14 members of Congress. They also stirred a sleeping lion in the American farmer.
 2. Bad side: 1880, the Greenback Party nominated Granger **James B. Weaver** for president but got 3% of the vote.
14. Prelude to Populism
1. In the 1870's an organization very similar to the Grangers emerged—the **Farmers' Alliance**. Their goals were the same also: to socialize and to push the farmers' agenda.
 1. The Alliance swelled to over 1,000,000 by 1890, but could've been even bigger. It excluded tenant farmers, share-croppers, farm workers, and blacks.
 2. A separate Colored Farmers' National Alliance was started for black farmers. It gained 250,000 members.
 2. Out of the Farmers' Alliance a new party was spawned—the People's Party, also known as the Populist Party. They agreed on the following:
 1. To fight the "money trust" on Wall Street.
 2. To nationalize railroads, telephone, and the telegraph.
 3. To start graduated income tax (meaning steps or levels, where the tax rate is higher the more a person earns).
 4. To start a "sub-treasury" to provide loans to farmers.
 5. To call for the unlimited coinage of silver.
 3. Of these goals, the coinage of silver rose to the top of the list. It sparked the most fire amongst farmers & their leaders.
 1. William Hope Harvey wrote a pamphlet called *Coin's Financial School*. It laid out the arguments for silver and was illustrated with such scenes as a gold beast beheading a silver maiden.
 2. Ignatius Donnelly was elected to Congress from Minnesota three times on the silver stance.
 3. **Mary Elizabeth Lease** said farmers should raise "less corn and more hell." And she did just that, earning her the nicknames of "Mary Yellin" or the "Kansas Pythoness."
 4. In 1892, the Populists won several seats in Congress. Their candidate, **James B. Weaver**, earned over 1,000,000 votes.
 1. They were hindered by racial tensions in the South. Their challenge was to join the North and join up with city workers to make a political party with a rural/urban one-two punch.
15. Coxe's Army and the Pullman Strike
1. The Panic of 1893 fueled the passion of the Populists. Many disgruntled unemployed fled to D.C. calling for change.

1. Most famous of these people was "General" Jacob Coxey. "**Coxey's Army**" (AKA the "Commonweal Army") marched on Washington with scores of followers and many newspaper reporters. They called for:
 1. Relieving unemployment by a government public works program.
 2. An issuance of \$500 million in paper money. Both of these would create inflation and therefore make debts easier to pay off.
 2. The march fizzled out when they were arrested for walking on the grass.
 2. The **Pullman Strike** in Chicago, led by **Eugene Debs**, was more dramatic.
 1. Debs helped organize the workers of the Pullman Palace Car Company.
 2. The company was hit hard by the depression and cut wages by about 1/3.
 3. Workers went on strike, sometimes violently.
 4. U.S. **Attorney General Richard Olney called in federal troops to break up the strike**. His rationale: the strike was interfering with the transit of U.S. mail.
 5. Debs went to prison for 6 months and turned into the leading Socialist in America.
16. Golden McKinley and Silver Bryan
1. The presidential **election of 1896** was an important one. It essentially asked, then answered, the question, "Will the U.S. base its money on gold, silver, or both?" It also saw disgruntled and restless workers going up against the conservative and worried business class.
 2. The Republicans nominated **William McKinley**.
 1. McKinley was "safe" in that he was pro-tariff, had a respectable Civil War record, a respectable Congressional record, and had a friendly mannerism.
 2. McKinley's right-hand-man was **Mark Hanna**, a businessman through-and-through. Hanna held very pro-business ideas and wanted to get McKinley elected so government could help business.
 3. Hanna organized the entire campaign. They were a bit indirect about the gold/silver issue, but they leaned gold.
 3. The Democrats nominated **William Jennings Bryan**.
 1. The Democrats were a bit lost without a leader until the young (36) Bryan came forward. He was a super speaker, called the "boy orator of the Platte" (a river in his home state of Nebraska).
 2. Bryan "wowed" the convention crowd with his **Cross of Gold Speech** saying, "You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold." Bryan was formerly nominated by the Democrats.
 3. This speech made the gold/silver issue the top issue in the election.
 1. The Democrats then stole the Populist Party's main push—they called for the value and coinage of silver at a ratio of 16:1, gold-to-silver.
 2. Fearing a McKinley win, Populists largely favored joining the Democrats in what could be called a "Demo-Pop" Party.
17. Class Conflict: Plowholders Versus Bondholders
1. In 1896 election was heated. William Jennings Bryan went on a blitz of campaign speeches. He once gave 36 in one day.
 2. The idea of silver money rose to near religion status. Silver was going to save the poor.
 1. Both sides threw around wild economic accusations and played on people's economic fears.
 3. McKinley's campaign amassed \$16 million (the most up to that time), whereas Bryan's only drummed up \$1 million.
 4. McKinley, and Mark Hanna, played on people's fears in the week before the election.
 1. They hinted if Bryan were elected, people need not report to work the next morning as their job would be gone.
 2. They initiated rumors that workers were considering paying in 50 cent pieces rather than dollars.
 5. McKinley won the election 1896 easily, 271 to 176 electoral votes. Bryan carried the South and West, McKinley carried the Northeast, Midwest, and far West.
 6. The election was important in that (a) gold was decided upon as America's economic basis, (b) it was a victory for business, conservatives, and middle class values (as opposed to the working class), and (c) it started 16 years of Republican presidents (and 8 of the next 36 years).
18. Republican Standpattism Enthroned
1. William McKinley, as president, was safe in decisions. He didn't ruffle feathers and tried to stay close to public opinion.
 2. With the gold/silver issue decided, the tariff became the lead issue.
 1. It was decided that the Wilson-Gorman Tariff wasn't bringing in enough money.
 2. So, Congress worked through the **Dingley Tariff Bill**. It eventually raised tariff rates to 46.5%, higher, but not as high as some had wanted.
 3. The gold issue was settled.
 1. Congress passed the **Gold Standard Act** (1900) saying people could trade in paper money for gold. Just knowing and trusting that meant there was no need to do that. This brought economic calm and stability.
 2. Also, there was a gold rush in Alaska, the "Klondike gold rush." Lots of new gold, also from worldwide sources, brought the inflation that the silverites had long wanted.
 4. The economy rebounded as well in 1897, McKinley's first year in office. This was due to...
 1. The 1893 recession had run its course and it was time for growth.
 2. McKinley likely brought a sense of calm both in his pro-business policies and by simply having the gold/silver question answered. The economy, and especially Wall Street, *never* likes uncertainty.