

Chapter 4 Notes Opening the West

Section 1: The Mining Booms

Gold, Silver and Boomtowns

Miners found gold in the West, leading to the creation of new states.

- After the California Gold Rush ended in the mid-1850s, newspapers claimed prospectors were making large **sums** of money mining in the Colorado Rockies.
- Most gold was deep between rock layers, requiring machinery to **extract** the particles.
- One of the world's richest deposits of silver-bearing ore, called the **Comstock Lode**, was discovered in Nevada in 1859.
- Gold finds created boomtowns—towns inhabited by lively, lawless, violent men and **vigilantes**.
- Western mining areas increased in population and by 1890 formed seven new states.

Railroads Connect East and West

Railroads transported gold and silver to market and brought supplies to the miners.

- The need for railroads expanded rapidly between 1865 and 1890.
- Government **subsidies** and land grants supported the expansion.
 - Much of the land needed came from Native Americans.
- Land grants were offered to two railroad companies willing to build a **transcontinental** rail system, which was completed on May 10, 1869.
 - Union Pacific Company
 - Central Pacific Company
- The tracks met at Promontory Summit in the Utah territory, where California governor **Leland Stanford** drove in a last golden spike.
- Effects of the transcontinental railroad included:
 - Increased demand for steel, coal, and construction supplies
 - New towns along rail lines
 - Ranchers and farmers moved west
 - Country divided into four **time zones**
 - More efficiency in travel and product distribution
 - A more united America

Section 2: Ranchers and Farmers

Cattle on the Plains

Ranchers herded their cattle to railroad towns and shipped them to new markets in the North and East.

- Longhorns, a tough breed of cattle, roamed free in the Texas territory.
- Demand for beef was high in the North and East.
- The **Long Drive** required ranchers to drive cattle east 1,000 miles or more to towns **located** near railroads for transportation to other cities.

Life on the Great Plains

Cowhands and ranchers lived difficult lives on the Plains.

- Storms, stampedes, rustlers, and riding in a saddle every day for months made cattle driving hard work.
- Cowhands included:
 - Veterans of the Civil War
 - African Americans in search of a better life
 - Hispanic ranch hands known as **vaqueros**
- Ranching eventually replaced cattle drives.

Farmers Settle the Plains

Free land and new farming methods brought many settlers to the Great Plains.

- Several **factors** brought settlers to the Plains:
 - Railroads made the journey easier and cheaper.
 - The **Homestead Act** brought farmers to the Plains to **homestead**.
 - Above-average annual rainfall made the land better suited to farming.
- Homesteaders settled on the Plains to own land and be independent:
 - Scandinavians searching for economic opportunities
 - African Americans who called themselves “Exodusters”
- To overcome the challenging climate, **sodbusters** tried new methods and tools for farming:
 - **Dry farming**
 - Windmills
 - Barbed wire fencing
- Many farmers went into debt or lost ownership of their farms.

- The Oklahoma Territory, designated as “Indian Territory” in the 1830s, was the last region of the Plains to be settled.

Section 3: Native American Struggles

Following the Buffalo

Native Americans of the Great Plains depended on buffalo to survive, but railroads threatened this lifestyle.

- Government officials wanted to **ensure** the safety of whites moving into Native American territory, the Great Plains.
- For centuries, some Native Americans lived as farmers and hunters while others lived a **nomadic** life, following herds of buffalo.
- American hunters slaughtered the buffalo to feed railroad crews and to prevent herds from blocking the trains.

Conflict

Conflict between Native Americans and whites grew as Native Americans were forced onto reservations.

- The Indian Peace Commission recommended moving Native Americans to a few large **reservations** in Oklahoma and the Dakota Territory.
- Native Americans became angered with the poor land and the government’s failure to deliver on promises, which led to **widespread** uprisings.
- At Little Bighorn, Colonel George Custer and his army were defeated by Sioux and Cheyenne warriors led by **Sitting Bull** and **Crazy Horse**.
- Apache raids throughout Arizona were led by **Geronimo**.
- The **Dawes Act** of 1887 called for the breakup of reservations and gave each Native American a plot of reservation land, encouraging them to be farmers and then American citizens.
- A battle at **Wounded Knee** was the last armed conflict between the U.S. government and Native Americans.

Section 4: Farmers in Protest

The Farmers Organize

The National Grange and the Farmers’ Alliances tried to help farmers.

- Farming expanded in the West and South after the Civil War, but fell on hard times as the supply of crops outgrew the demand.
- Farmers blamed their troubles on three groups:
 - Railroad companies
 - Eastern manufacturers
 - Bankers

- Farmers rallied together and **created** the **National Grange**, which offered:
 - Education
 - Social gatherings
 - Support through state laws
 - Cash-only **cooperatives**
- The Farmers' Alliances, which sprang up in the West and the South, tried to offer farmers support and some federal protection.

A Party of the People

The Populist Party supported the views of farmers and the common people.

- The Farmers' Alliances formed a national political party—the Populist Party—whose goals were rooted in **populism**.
- The Populist Party believed:
 - That government should own railroads and telegraph lines
 - That the current gold-based **currency** should be replaced with silver coins
 - That there should be political (single term for president) and labor (reduced hours) reforms
 - In a national income tax
- **William Jennings Bryan**, supported by the Populist Party in the presidential election of 1896, lost to Republican **William McKinley**.

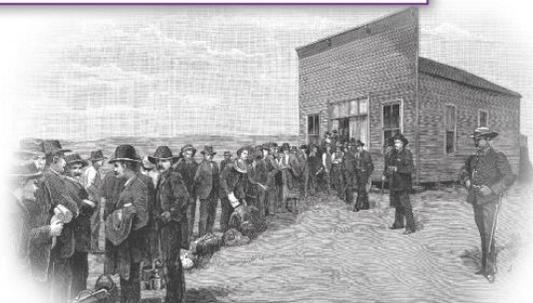


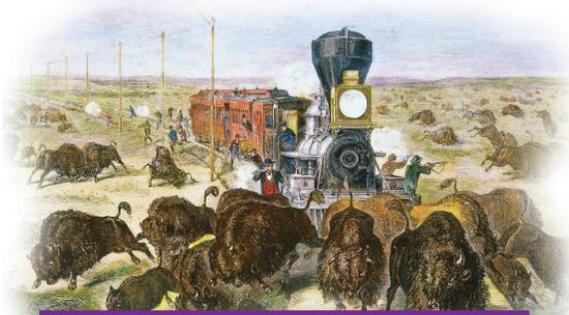
Ranchers

- Railroads open up profitable new markets for beef in the North and East.
- Cowhands herd cattle from Texas on long drives.
- Ranching spreads from Texas to the northern Plains.
- The "Cattle Kingdom" ends when a surplus of cattle causes prices to fall.

Miners

- Pikes Peak in Colorado and the Comstock Lode in Nevada bring many miners west.
- Boomtowns spring up near mining sites and are abandoned when mining ended.
- Population growth leads to statehood for Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, Washington, Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho.





Native Americans

- Plains Indians are forced off their lands with the promise of receiving new land.
- White settlers move into land promised to Native Americans.
- The slaughter of the buffalo removes a major part of the Native American way of life.
- The Dawes Act aims to break up reservations and end tribal identification among Native Americans.

Farmers

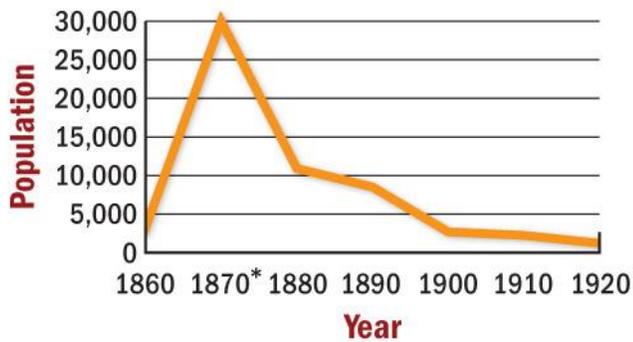
- The Homestead Act attracts thousands of settlers with the promise of free land on the Great Plains.
- New technology helps pioneers overcome the harsh realities of farming on the Plains.
- Organizations such as the Grange and Farmers' Alliances help farmers financially and politically.



By the Numbers Life of a Mining Boomtown

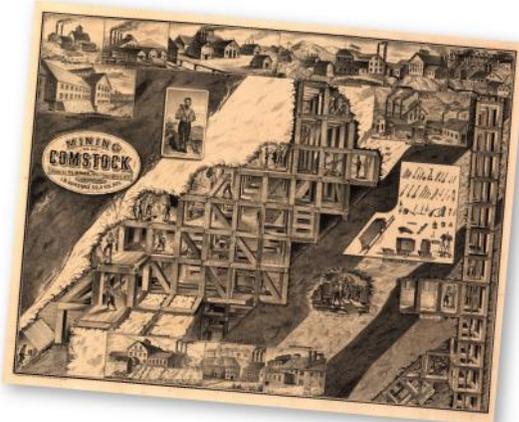
A Boomtown's Population Virginia City, Nevada, became one of the largest cities in the West after gold was discovered in the region. Once all of the gold was extracted from the ground, however, Virginia City's population declined.

Population of Virginia City, Nevada



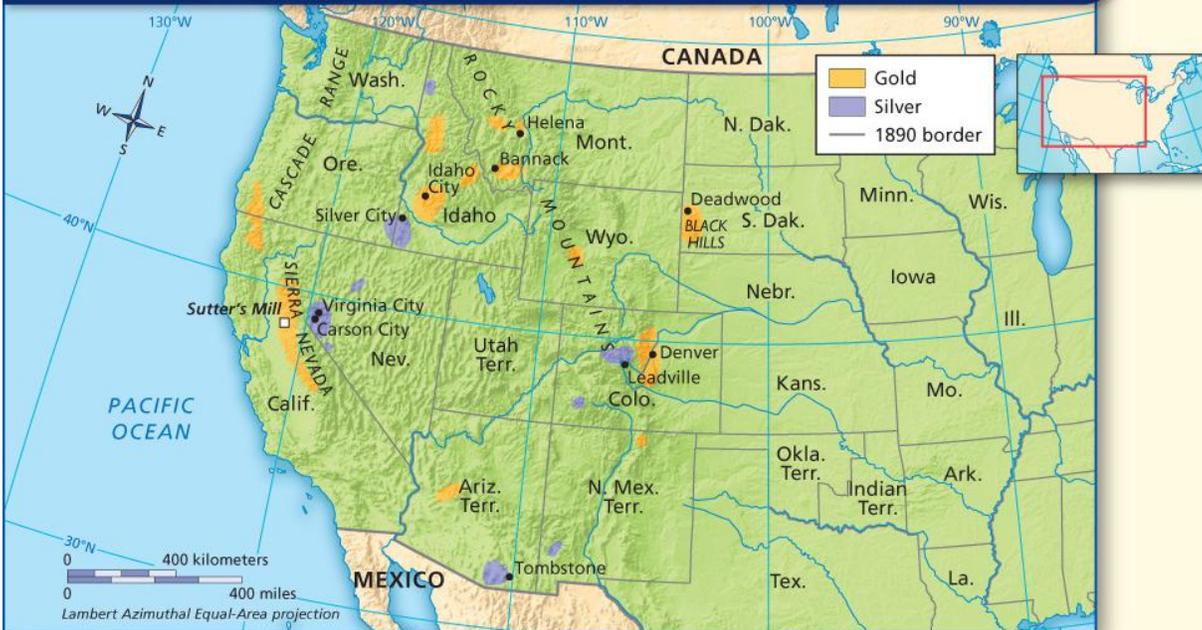
*Estimate according to various Nevada historical sources

Source: Nevada State Library and Archives, 2007.



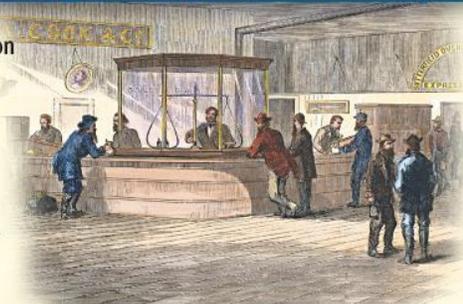
Mining and the West, 1848-1890

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC



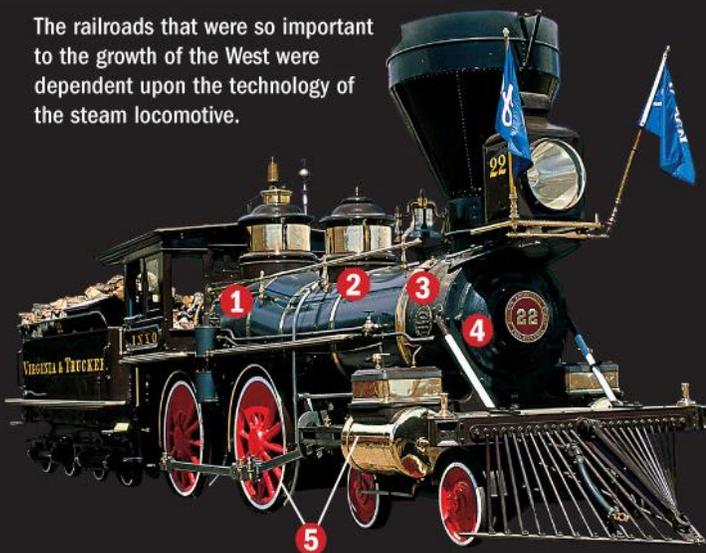
Gold, Silver, and Growth The expansion of mining led to growth in population and the addition of new states.

In the mining boomtowns, real estate, rent, and prices soared. Here, miners exchange gold dust for bank notes. ▶



The Steam Locomotive

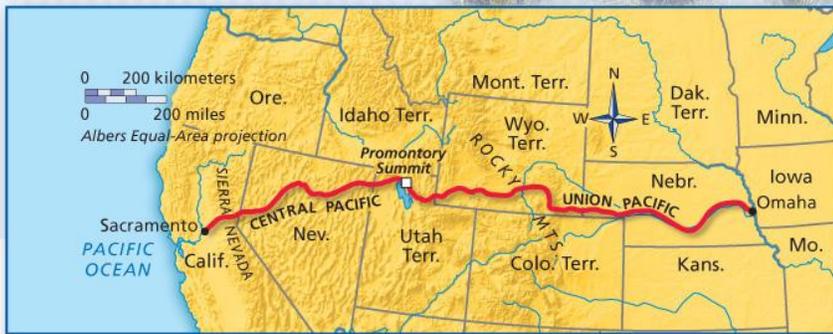
The railroads that were so important to the growth of the West were dependent upon the technology of the steam locomotive.



- 1 The **firebox** burns coal, wood, or sometimes oil.
- 2 Water in the **boiler**, heated by gases from the firebox, creates steam.
- 3 The **smoke box** draws hot gases from the firebox and keeps an even fire burning.
- 4 In the **steam header tank**, the heated steam expands and creates great pressure.
- 5 Hot steam is piped to the **pistons**. The pistons power the **drive rods**, which in turn push the **drive wheels**.

Primary Source The Transcontinental Railroad

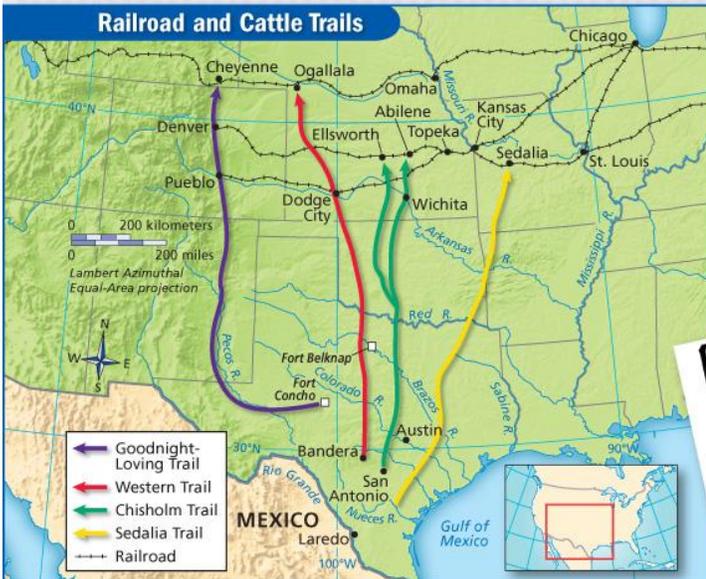
Improving Travel When it was completed in May 1869, America's first transcontinental railroad spanned more than 1,700 miles (2,736 km). A rail trip coast to coast took a week. Before the railroad, the same trip would have taken months.



▲ The "golden spike" ceremony signified the completion of the railroad line.

Primary Source Cowhands and Cattle Drives

Railroad and Cattle Trails



Growth of the Cattle Kingdom After the Civil War there was a high demand for meat in Northern cities. With longhorns worth 20 times more in the North, Texas cowhands began rounding up cattle and driving them north to the railroad cities.

Cattlemen were encouraged to use the railroad to transport their cattle to market. ▼

CATTLE MEN READ THIS!
Great Inducements to those who wish to
Ship Cattle on the U. P. Railroad!!

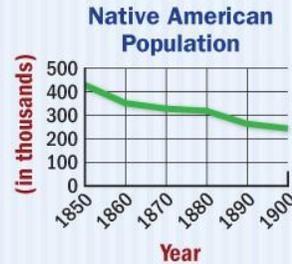
Having entered into special arrangements with the U. P. R. R. Company, by which I can ship Cattle East at greatly reduced rates, and having selected a point between Carter and Church Buttes Stations some ten miles East of the former place, near the junction of the Big and Little Brazos, and leaving

Primary Source Conflicts With Native Americans

Cultures Under Pressure Westward migration of white settlers in the mid-1800s caused conflicts with Native Americans on the Great Plains. White settlers fought with many groups, including the Sioux, Cheyenne, Apache, and Navajo. After the Civil War, the U.S. government implemented a reservation policy. Some Native Americans agreed to move to reservations; others resisted.



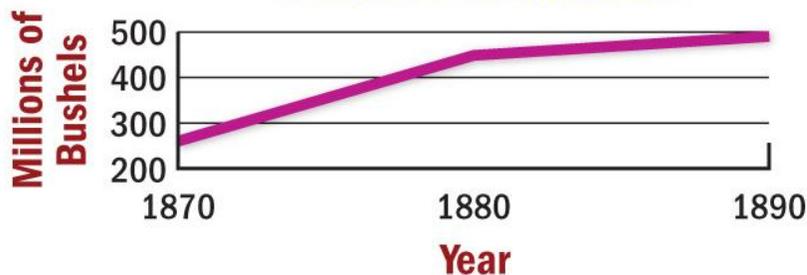
By the Numbers



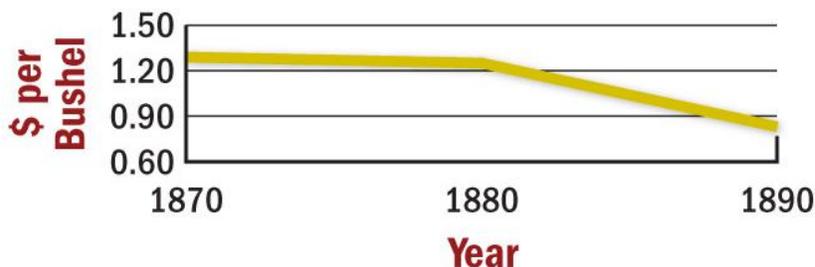
By the Numbers Farmers Face Hard Times

A Drop in Crop Prices As farming grew, so did the amount of crops grown, such as wheat. The price of wheat dropped because there was too much wheat available to sell.

Wheat Production



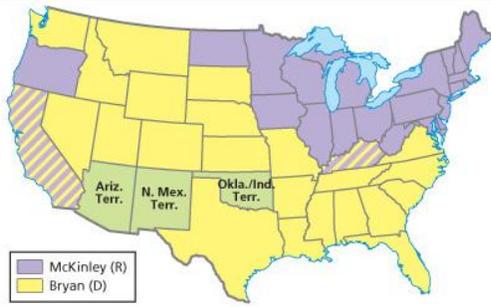
Wheat Prices



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Historical Statistics of the United States.

The Election of 1896

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Campaigns in Contrast In 1896 the Democratic presidential nominee was William Jennings Bryan, who ran on a free-silver platform. The Republicans nominated William McKinley, a pro-business candidate who favored the gold standard and a high tariff.



◀ Democrat William Jennings Bryan campaigned that free silver would help farmers and the working class.

▲ Republican William McKinley said that the gold standard would ensure prosperity for all.