

CHAPTER SIXTEEN THE CONQUEST OF THE FAR WEST

Objectives

A thorough study of Chapter Sixteen should enable the student to understand:

1. The cultural characteristics of the varied populations of the region.
2. The pattern of settlement of the last American frontier, and the significance of the frontier in American history.
3. The impact of the discovery of gold and silver in the West both on the region and on the nation as a whole.
4. The development of the cattle industry in the American Southwest after 1860.
5. The methods used by the federal government to reduce the threat of the Plains Indians, and the Indians' ultimate fate.
6. The reasons for the transition from subsistence farming to commercial farming, and the effect of the change on the West.

Main Themes

1. The varied and vibrant ethnic and racial cultures that characterized the American West and how Anglo-European whites enforced their dominant role by the latter part of the nineteenth century.
2. The transformation of the Far West from a sparsely populated region of Indians and various early settlers of European and Asian background into a part of the nation's capitalistic economy.
3. The closing of the frontier as Indian resistance was eliminated, miners and cowboys spearheaded settlements, and government-subsidized railroads opened the area for intensive development.
4. The development of mining, ranching, and commercial farming as the three major industries of the West.
5. The problems faced by farmers as the agricultural sector entered a relative decline.

Glossary

1. **territory:** A geographical and governmental subdivision under the jurisdiction of the United States but not included within any state. Beginning with the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, the federal government divided the West into territories to facilitate control until the area was prepared for statehood. Territories were allowed some self-government by territorial legislatures, but the president appointed the territorial governor. Because of the peculiar circumstances surrounding their entry into the union, Texas and California never went through the territorial stage.
2. **frontier:** In the American sense, an unexplored, unsettled, or recently settled geographic region. The term also refers to any endeavor in which development possibilities seem unbounded—for instance, the urban frontier, frontiers of science. In the European sense, the frontier is the area near the border with another nation.
3. **placer mining:** The process of removing gold from the sand and gravel of stream beds. Gold, eroded from mountain lodes, washes into swift-flowing streams and is suspended in the water until the streams slow in certain places and the gold settles to the bottom. Placer mining is the

easiest and cheapest method of gold mining because only a simple pan or wooden sluice box is required to separate the gold from the sand and gravel.

4. **quartz mining:** The process of removing gold or silver from lodes in ore-bearing rock and earth. It is an expensive process involving digging, blasting, crushing, and smelting.
5. **barrios:** Urban neighborhoods occupied, principally, by lower-class Mexican Americans. Spanish language dominates in the *barrio*, and businesses, churches, and other social institutions catering to Mexican Americans are concentrated in these neighborhoods. *Barrios* were often, but not always, located on the fringe of the city.

Pertinent Questions

THE SOCIETIES OF THE FAR WEST (442-450)

1. Describe the caste system that developed in the American Southwest under Spanish and Mexican rule. What role did the Pueblo Indians and other tribes play in this system?
2. Describe the culture of the Plains tribes, with particular emphasis on gender roles and the importance of the American bison (buffalo). What three tribes dominated the northern plains by the mid-nineteenth century?
3. Explain the advantages and disadvantages that the Plains Indians had in their conflicts with white settlers. Why did the whites eventually prevail?
4. How did Anglo-American dominance affect the nature of Hispanic culture in New Mexico from the 1840s to 1900?
5. What factors led to the decline of Mexican-American economic and social dominance in California and Texas? What was the socioeconomic status of most Mexican Americans by the end of the nineteenth century?
6. Up to 1869, in what two fields did the greatest number of Chinese immigrants work? How did employment tendencies, residence patterns, and social relationships change in the Chinese community later in the nineteenth century?
7. Why was Anglo-European hostility toward the Chinese so high in California? What actions resulted from this hostility? How did the Chinese Americans respond?
8. What factors led to the massive increase in Anglo-European settlement of the Far West after the Civil War?
9. Describe the vision of the Homestead Act and how it was flawed. What changes were made to remedy weaknesses in the act?
10. Describe the process of evolution from territory to state. What areas still lacked statehood by the turn of the century? Why?

THE CHANGING WESTERN ECONOMY (450-455)

11. What was the composition of the western labor force? How was it shaped by racial prejudice and gender imbalance?
12. Describe the typical pattern of development and decline in the western mining industry. What was life like for the men and women who lived and worked in the mining regions?
13. Describe the origins, purposes, and practices of the "long drive" and "open range" periods of the "cattle kingdom." What ended this colorful but brief boom?
14. Why did women tend to gain the right to vote in the western states and territories before they did in the East?

THE ROMANCE OF THE WEST (455-461)

15. To what two factors does the text attribute much of the romantic image of the Far West? Explain.

16. How accurate was Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis about the American frontier?
17. **THE DISPERSAL OF THE TRIBES (461-467)**
Describe the evolution of traditional national Indian policy up to the 1880s. What did the policies accomplish? How were the policies and their implementation flawed?
18. What happened to the great buffalo (bison) herds, and how did it affect Indian life?
19. Describe how the influx of white settlers into the West led to violence and warfare. What were the major encounters? Why did the whites ultimately prevail?
20. What was the basic objective of the Dawes Act, and how did it try to accomplish this goal?
21. **THE RISE AND DECLINE OF THE WESTERN FARMER (467-469)**
Describe the building of the transcontinental railroads and subsidiary lines. Why can it be said that the western railroads were essentially public projects, despite their private ownership?
22. How did the railroads stimulate settlement of the Great Plains?
23. What unfamiliar problems did farmers encounter on the Great Plains? What methods and devices helped solve these problems?
24. How were market forces changing the nature of American agriculture? What was the result?
25. What were the three main grievances of the late-nineteenth century farmer? To what extent did psychological factors compound these problems?
26. **PATTERNS OF POPULAR CULTURE: THE WILD WEST SHOW (456-457)**
What role did Buffalo Bill and the Wild West Show phenomenon play in shaping and preserving an image of the American West that is at odds with that presented by most modern historians?
27. **WHERE HISTORIANS DISAGREE: THE "FRONTIER" AND THE WEST (458-459)**
Why do the "new western historians" argue that Anglo-European Americans did not so much settle the West as conquer it? Is this a fair characterization of the course of events?

Identification

Identify each of the following, and explain why it is important within the context of the chapter.

1. Great American Desert
2. Indian Territory
3. "territorial rings"
4. *californios*
5. "coolies"
6. "tongs"
7. Washoe district/Comstock Lode
8. vigilantes
9. "range wars"
10. Albert Bierstadt
11. Mark Twain
12. Frederic Remington
13. Theodore Roosevelt
14. Bureau of Indian Affairs
15. Sand Creek massacre

16. Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull
17. George A. Custer
18. Battle of the Little Bighorn
19. Nez Percé
20. Geronimo
21. Wounded Knee
22. barbed wire
23. Annie Oakley

Document 1

At the Medicine Lodge Council of 1867 representatives of the Kiowa, Comanche, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Plains Apache tribes met with a United States delegation including the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, a U.S. senator, and various generals and other officials. Over 7,000 Indians were gathered along Medicine Lodge Creek in southern Kansas just outside Indian Territory. Several chiefs spoke eloquently of their anguish at having to give up territory. The excerpt below comes from the statement of Kiowa Chief Satanta. Consider the following questions: Did all the land south of the Arkansas River really belong to the southern Plains tribes? Was there a realistic way for Satanta's vision to have been granted by federal policy?

All the land south of the Arkansas [River] belongs to the Kiowas and Comanches, and I do not want to give away any of it. I love the land and the buffalo and I will not part with any. . . . I have heard that you intend to settle us on a reservation near the [Wichita] mountains [in southwestern Oklahoma]. I do not want to settle there. I love to roam over the wide prairie, and when I do it, I feel free and happy, but when we settle down we grow pale and die. . . . A long time ago this land belonged to our fathers, but when I go up to the river, I see a camp of soldiers, and they are cutting my wood down, or killing my buffalo. I do not like that, and when I see it, my heart feels like bursting with sorrow.

Document 2

The *Atlanta Constitution* was one of the leading Bourbon voices of the postwar South, especially during the editorship of Henry Grady (1879–1889). The following editorial, written before Grady's period, celebrates the completion of the first transcontinental railroad. Consider the following questions: How does the editorial reveal the psychological importance of the transcontinental railroad to the American sense of nationhood? How does it show that the railroad would lead to the end of the frontier? What does the writer reveal about Southern jealousy of Northern industrial accomplishment and Southern resolve to advance economically? (see Chapter Fifteen)?

This mammoth enterprise is completed at last. It has no equal in modern history for magnitude, importance, and the energy of its execution. Bold in conception and stupendous in realization, it stands a monument among the monster achievements of the age. It links the oceans with its iron bonds. It brings the continents into close social and commercial communion. It nullifies the area of immense distances and overleaps the impediments of boundless wilderness. It pierces savage realms with the probe of civilization. It hitches progress on to the barren dominion of the uncultured Indian. It connects the buffalo with the water-fall. With the speed of lightning it transmits the refinements of high polish and the improvements of progressive art and science broad-cast over a country that must have remained otherwise a free range of wild forest. It redeems from disuse millions of acres of virgin land, and is the "opening up" [of] a stream of commerce and development that will beneficially inundate one of the magnificent portions of the world.

It is useless to dispute the wonderful spirit of energy and skill that has put this herculean enterprise through. The difficulties have been almost invincible, and the nerve to overcome them has been grand.

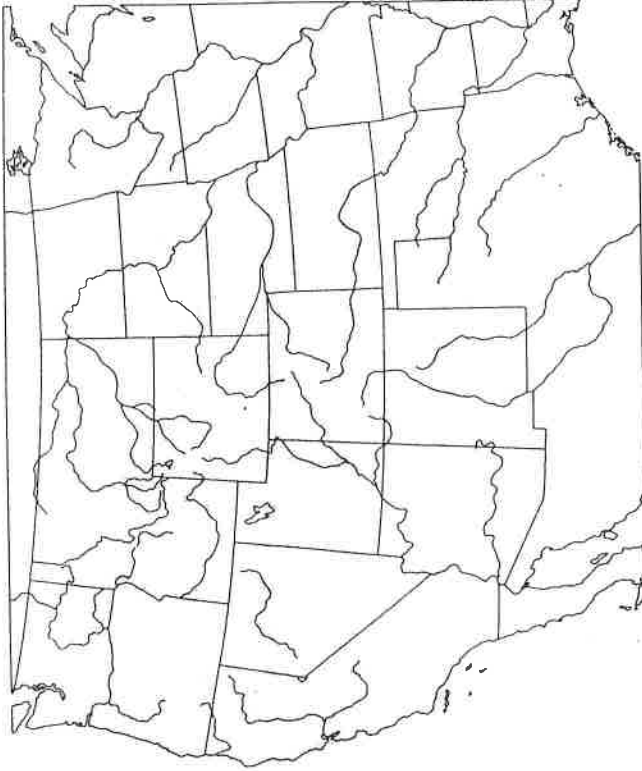
But this success has some grave drawbacks concerned with it. . . . It might have been built elsewhere with less money and served the purposes of its construction better. . . . The Southern Pacific route is destined to be the successful road between the two oceans. It is shorter than the one now built, runs through a milder climate, has less obstacles of mountain and river, and can be used all the year round. . . . We regard the Southern Pacific as one of the necessities of Southern effort. It will do more to build up our Southern States than any other one business movement. When we get to be the channel for the stupendous tide of commerce and trade that will surge over the land from the Pacific coast, we will spring into potent importance, and we will absorb and assimilate unreckonable wealth and population. Let us grasp for the huge prize. Let us no longer sit confessed slugs in contrast with Northern energy. Let us not sit supinely and see our Northern neighbor pick fruits that belong to us legitimately.

Atlanta Constitution, 12 May 1869, p. 1.

Map Exercise

Fill in or identify the following on the blank map provided. Use the maps in the text and appendix as your source.

1. Indicate the area of the Great Plains by means of diagonal lines.
2. Draw lines indicating the general flow of the "long drives."
3. Indicate the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevada-Cascade Range by drawing inverted Y's along their positions.
4. Place boxes with dates to indicate the general areas of the gold and silver rushes of 1849, 1858 to 1859, and 1874. Tell what state each strike was in.
5. Draw a line along the approximate route of the first transcontinental railroad. Place a star at the point where the two lines joined.
6. Locate Denver and San Francisco.
7. Identify the following: Indian Territory (Oklahoma); the Dakotas; New Mexico; and California.



Interpretive Questions

Based on what you have filled in, answer the following. On some of the questions you will need to consult the narrative in your text for information or explanation.

1. How was the pre-Civil War settlement along the Pacific coast isolated from the rest of the nation?
2. Why did the post-Civil War gold and silver rushes involve considerable west-to-east as well as east-to-west migration?
3. What two major cities of the twentieth century obtained significant early boosts from the mining rushes?
4. What were the long-term results from the days of the long cattle drives?
5. Why were the Plains Indians so resentful of the reservations they were provided?
6. What areas of the nation were best served by the first transcontinental railroad? Why was the South resentful?
7. What special challenges did agriculture of the Great Plains present to farmers?

Summary

Far from being empty and unknown, significant parts of what would become the western United States were populated by Indians and Mexicans long before the post-Civil War boom in Anglo-European settlement. Even after the waves of white occupation and in the face of significant prejudice from those whites, large numbers of Mexicans and Asian Americans continued to live in the West and shape the region's culture.

White settlement developed in initial boom-and-bust patterns in the three industries that would do much to shape the region in the long run: mining, ranching, and commercial agriculture. Asians, Mexicans, and African Americans provided much of the labor force for these industries.

In the late nineteenth century, the South and West were underdeveloped regions with an almost colonial relationship to the industrial, heavily populated Northeast and Midwest. Except for a few pockets in the Far West, by 1860 the frontier line of agricultural settlement stopped at the eastern edge of the Great Plains. Hostile Plains Indians and an unfamiliar environment combined to discourage advance. By the end of the century, the Indian barrier to white settlement had been removed, cattle ranchers and miners had spearheaded development, and railroads had brought farmers, who, despite nagging difficulties, had made significant adaptations to the Great Plains.

Review Questions

These questions are to be answered with essays. This will allow you to explore relationships between individuals, events, and attitudes of the period under review.

1. Explain how the mining, cattle, and farming frontiers followed something of a boom-and-bust pattern. Evaluate the long-term impact of these frontier activities.
2. What was the role of women in the far western mining and railroad towns and on the ranches and farms? How did the role change with time?
3. How did the white racial, ethnic, and cultural prejudice against Indians, Mexicans, and Asians shape the development of the West? What were the similarities and differences in the experiences of these three groups?

Chapter Self Test

After you have read the chapter in the text and done the exercises in the Study Guide, take the following self test to see if you understand the material you have covered. Answers appear at the end of the Study Guide.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

Circle the letter of the response that best answers the question or completes the statement.

1. Because the area was arid to semiarid and thought to be unfit for Anglo-European civilization, many nineteenth-century Americans called the Far West the:
 - a. Trans Mississippi Wasteland.
 - b. Intermountain Barrens.
 - c. Prairie Wilderness.
 - d. Great American Desert.

2. Indian Territory, to which several eastern Indian tribes including the Cherokees and Creeks were removed, is now the state of:
 - a. South Dakota.
 - b. Kansas.
 - c. Oklahoma.
 - d. Wyoming.
3. Which of the following best represents the "caste system" that prevailed in the American Southwest before the arrival of Anglo-European settlement? (highest status first)
 - a. Pueblos, Spanish/Mexicans, Apaches/Navajos
 - b. Apaches/Navajos, Pueblos, Spanish/Mexicans
 - c. Spanish/Mexicans, Pueblos, Apaches/Navajos
 - d. Spanish/Mexicans, Apaches/Navajos, Pueblos
4. What northern Plains Indian nation was the strongest?
 - a. Comanche
 - b. Sioux
 - c. Pawnee
 - d. Blackfeet
5. The groups of local businessmen and politicians who had Washington connections and who dominated the government of New Mexico and other territories were often called:
 - a. "range bosses."
 - b. "territorial rings."
 - c. "ranch kings."
 - d. "capiol cowboys."
6. What happened to the *californios* who dominated California prior to the gold rush of 1849?
 - a. Most died due to epidemic diseases brought in by the miners.
 - b. The ones who could speak English adapted well and continued to dominate real estate ownership.
 - c. Most emigrated back to Mexico or Arizona.
 - d. Many lost status and land and were excluded from the prosperity of the statehood period.
7. Which of the following was *not* a reason for Anglo-American resentment of Chinese immigrants?
 - a. They tended to congregate together and maintain Chinese culture.
 - b. Some secret societies ("ongs") engaged in crime.
 - c. Many of the early female Chinese immigrants had been sold into prostitution.
 - d. The Chinese were perceived as lazy slackers who would not work hard.
8. Which of the following was *not* a flaw in the Homestead Act?
 - a. One hundred sixty acres was not enough land in the West.
 - b. The law did not provide capital for machines and the like.
 - c. The land was too costly for most settlers.

15. Who were the *two* principal Indian chiefs who led the forces that massed in the northern plains in 1875–1876 following the Black Hills gold rush? (Mark *two* letters.)
- Black Kettle
 - Sitting Bull
 - Crazy Horse
 - Geronimo
 - Red Eagle
16. The purpose of the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887 was to:
- weaken tribes, allot land to individual Indians, and promote assimilation.
 - geographically disperse the reservations so it would be more difficult for Indian warrior forces to unite.
 - increase tribal loyalty and reduce violence by allowing chiefs and tribal councils to act autonomously on the reservations.
 - restore economic viability to the nomadic way of Plains Indian life by revitalizing the bison herds.
17. Construction of the early transcontinental railroad lines was financed mainly by:
- European investors excited about the developing American West.
 - Wall Street investors with close ties to cattle and mining interests.
 - small investors such as farmers and local merchants who wanted to attract rail lines to their communities.
 - government subsidies in the form of favorable loans and land grants.
18. What fencing material revolutionized agriculture on the prairie and plains?
- split rails
 - chain link
 - pickets
 - barbed wire
19. By the end of the century, agriculture on the Great Plains was increasingly:
- subsistence in nature.
 - commercially oriented.
 - truck farming.
 - being displaced by industry.
20. Which of the following are listed in the text as farmers' three principle grievances? (Mark *three* letters.)
- High interest charges
 - Persistent production shortfalls
 - Inequitable freight rates
 - Inadequate currency
 - Poor-quality farm machinery produced by American factories

9. Which type of mining came first as new fields opened?
- placer (pan)
 - quartz (lode)
 - strip (open pit)
 - hydrolic (water pressure)
10. Which of the following states/territories did *not* experience significant mining development from the 1850s to 1880s?
- Nevada
 - Colorado
 - Kansas
 - South Dakota
 - Montana
11. The "long drive" in the open-range cattle industry referred to the process of:
- rounding up the cattle from great distances all over the range for branding in the spring.
 - moving the cattle south to Texas in the winter and north to Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana in the spring to take advantage of the best pasture.
 - using cattle as oxen to pull covered wagons for settlers seeking homesteads in the West.
 - herding cattle from the ranges in Texas and other remote areas to the nearest accessible railroad loading point so that the cattle could be shipped to slaughterhouses in the East.
12. What *two* groups constituted most of the cowboys in the open range era? (Mark *two* letters.)
- southern Whites
 - Native Americans
 - African Americans
 - Hispanics
 - Chinese
13. The historian who influenced many with his paper on "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" was:
- Oliver Wendell Holmes.
 - C. W. McCune.
 - Albert Bierstadt.
 - Frederick Jackson Turner.
 - Charles A. Beard.
14. The federal government agency vested with management of Indian relations and the reservations was the:
- Indian Lands Commission.
 - Native American Administration.
 - Office of Assimilation and Concentration.
 - Bureau of Indian Affairs.

TRUE-FALSE QUESTIONS

Read each statement carefully. Mark true statements "T" and false statements "F."

1. As late as 1900, the Far West remained essentially outside America's capitalist economy.
2. Except in warfare, American Indian tribal culture made little distinction between the genders in family and work roles.
3. Although most historians have previously presented the buffalo (bison) as critical to Plains Indian culture prior to the 1880s, recent anthropological work has revealed that this is a myth and that the buffalo was actually relatively unimportant for these tribes.
4. Prior to the arrival of significant numbers of English-speaking settlers, an elite group of large landowning Hispanics dominated life in New Mexico.
5. A *barrio* was a Mexican American who cooperated with Anglo settlers and often supervised poor farm workers.
6. "Coolies" were Chinese indentured servants whose status was close to slavery.
7. In the late nineteenth century, most white Californians favored increased Chinese immigration because there was a labor shortage and the Chinese would work cheaply.
8. The Timber Culture Act, Desert Land Act, and Timber and Stone Act provided avenues for westerners to acquire larger tracts of land than were allowed under the Homestead Act.
9. By 1900 all of the present states except Alaska, Hawaii, and Utah had been admitted to the Union.
10. The working class in the American West was racially diversified and stratified.
11. Vigilantes were groups of citizens in mining towns organized to enforce justice in the absence of official legal authority.
12. Prostitution was common in the mining "boom towns."
13. When the "long-drive" era began, there was an excess of cattle in Texas, so cowboys drove huge herds to rail centers in Louisiana, especially New Orleans, for shipment to the East.
14. Since the majority of western cowboys were veterans of the Confederate army, African Americans were seldom allowed to work on ranches or the long drives.
15. The so-called "Range Wars" were fought between the big railroad companies and their workers over harsh working conditions and low wages.
16. The text regards Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis of the West as an empty, uncivilized frontier awaiting settlement and which was essentially settled by 1890, as the best explanation for the region's transformation.
17. Although the Bureau of Indian Affairs was chronically under funded and understaffed, the reform-minded whites who ran it established a solid reputation for honesty, efficiency, and sincere concern for the well-being of the Native Americans they served.
18. On the West Coast, in California in particular, whites sometimes hunted down Indians and killed them without provocation.
19. Although small, the Nez Percé tribe was composed of particularly effective warriors who engaged in raids throughout the southern plains until Chief Joseph was finally captured in 1877.
20. The first transcontinental railroad was completed shortly before the beginning of the Civil War, but due to the war the railroad didn't carry much traffic until the end of the 1860s.

TERMS, CONCEPTS, NAMES

"Great American Desert"	Bureau of Indian Affairs	Hannin Garland
Plains Indians	Sand Creek massacre	Helen Hunt Jackson
"Territorial rings"	Crazy Horse	Buffalo Bill
<i>Californios</i>	Sitting Bull	Denis Kearney
<i>Barrios</i>	George A. Ouster	Chinese Exclusion Act
"Coolies"	Battle of the Little Big Horn	Homestead Act
"Tongs"	Chief Joseph	Sodbusters
Chisholm Trail	Mangas Colorados	Cornstock Load
"Texas fever"	Gerónimo	Black Hills
"Range wars"	"Ghost Dance"	Boontowns
"Rocky Mountain School"	Wounded Knee	Vigilantes
Frederick Jackson Turner	Dawes Severalty Act	"Long drives"
"Concentration"	Assimilation	"Cattle kingdom"