The West after the Civil War

- Irish, German, Scandinavian, Chinese, and Hispanic represented the age of the late 19th century immigration.

- The West was considered the area of great open spaces. Urban tradition began in San Francisco, Salt Lake City, San Antonio, and Denver.

- There was no typical "Westerner" because diversity was the nature of the western experience.

- Most residents of the frontier fell into five categories: farmers, miners, railroad workers, cowboys, and Native Americans.

- The economy was largely based on agriculture and extraction.

- Some businesses did exist including Wells Fargo and Levi Strauss, but commercialism was limited and in the infancy stages of development.

- The "Westerners" adopted the concepts of Social Darwinism and "Every man for themselves" practice. Thousands of southern Blacks migrated to Kansas called "exodusters" named after the Israelites. The Blacks in Kansas met racism, disenfranchisement, and a new faction of the KKK.

- Chinese discrimination was limited during the early 1850's when about 5,000 came to California annually.

- Until 1868, under the Burlingame Treaty, Chinese were encouraged to migrate to the West Coast as labor for railroad construction. Immigration grew to 20,000 per year.

- By 1877, railroad construction declined and enormous nativism directed against Chinese was evident on the west coast. Riots in San Francisco in 1877 and open slander and racism was common.

- The Californian constitution denied suffrage to any native born in China.

- By 1882 annual migration from China rose to 40,000 and strict immigration limits were set for Chinese indefinitely (Chinese Exclusion Act 1882).
SETTLING THE WEST: 1865-1890

I. Frederick Jackson Turner - Significance of the Frontier in American History (1893):
"Up to our own day American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development."

A. Argued closing of the frontier had ended an era in American history.
B. Used census report of 1890 to explain that settlement of the frontier had provided an explanatory framework for American development.
C. His work also illustrates the psychological power of the frontier in that, with its passing, Americans began to realize that revitalizing opportunities were also vanishing.

II. "Great West" or the "Great American Desert"
A. From the Great Plains in the east to the California desert in the west.
B. Flood of whites to area after Civil War -- 1865, no white people in area (except Mormons in Utah & scattered Spanish-Mexican settlements in Southwest).
C. By 1890, entire area carved into states except for four territories.
   1. one of the most rapid settlements of such a vast area in all history.
   2. Expansion spurred by the Homestead Act of 1862 (see below)
D. Native Americans stood in the way of expansion on two fronts: westward from the trans-Mississippi East and eastward from the Pacific Coast; epic clash inevitable.
E. African-Americans
   1. 18% of California population by 1890
   2. Over 500,000 lived west of Mississippi; many came west as slaves
   3. After 1877, about 200,000 blacks moved West, many homesteading in Kansas or Oklahoma.
   4. As many as 1 in 4 cowboys were black

III. Impact of the Transcontinental Railroad on the Frontier
A. Established three western frontiers
   1. Mining
   2. Cattle
   3. Farming (largely made possible by homesteading or land purchases from railroads)
B. Towns sprang up along railroad routes
   1. Railroads given alternating square miles of territory 3 miles wide on each side of the track.
   2. Railroads sold much land to settlers

IV. Mining in the West (first of three frontiers)
A. Mineral-rich areas of the West were the first to be settled extensively.
   1. First - prospectors and commercial miners; then - ranchers and farmers followed.
   2. Copper, lead, tin, quartz, & zinc more profitable than gold or silver in the long term.
B. Pike’s Peak, Colorado
   1. Gold discovered in 1858 and thousands of "Pike’s Peakers" rushed West.
   2. Though only a few of the 100,000 "59-ers" profited, thousands stayed in region to mine silver, or farm grain.
C. Comstock Lode discovered in Nevada in 1859 (gold and silver)
D. Copper mining -- Colorado, Montana, Wyoming -- Increased demand for copper due to increased use of telegraph, electric, and telephone wires.
E. Boom towns to ghost towns occurred when mines petered out and towns abandoned.
F. Corporations gradually came to dominate mining (need large capitalization)
G. Significance of mining
   1. Attracted population and wealth to the Wild West
   2. Helped finance the Civil War
   3. Facilitated building of the railroads
   4. Intensified conflict between whites and Indians
   5. Introduced the silver issue into American politics

V. Cattle raising (second of three frontiers)
   A. Transcontinental railroad facilitated transportation of meat from long-horned cattle to cities.
      1. Cattle now driven to stockyards (e.g. Kansas City & Chicago)
      2. Beef tycoons like the Swifts and Armours emerged
      3. Refrigerator cars allowed transportation of fresh meat from stockyards to East.
   B. "Long Drive"
      1. Mexican ranchers had developed ranching techniques later used by Texans, then by Great Plains cattlemen and cowboys -- Spanish words: rodeo, bronco, lasso
      2. Texas cowboys included former Confederate soldiers, northern whites, blacks, and Mexicans.
      3. Cowboys drove herds through the plains until they reached a railroad terminal – Abilene, Dodge City, Ogallala, and Cheyenne.
   C. Challenges to the "long drive"
      1. Homesteaders brought out by trans-continental railroad built barbed-wire (invented by Joseph Glidden) fences that were too numerous to be cut down by the Cowboys.
      2. Terrible winters / scorching summers killed thousands of steer.
      3. Overgrazing and overexpansion also took their toll.
      4. Ranchers built heartier stock and fenced them into controlled lands where they could feed and water them to keep them healthy.