The West: Settlers
Unit 1: The Gilded Age (1870-1920)
Cowboys

• Growing demand from cities > boom in cattle industry, ranchers used cowboys to get cattle to RRs
  – long drive, Chisholm Trail
  – refrigerator cars
• Cowboy life romanticized, in reality was very tough
  – Buffalo Bill and Calamity Jane
• Barbed wire helped farmers but led to range wars, closed frontier
  – conservation movement
  – Turner thesis: bad for Americans?
Miners

- Gold rushes in CA, Colorado, Black Hills
- Comstock Lode silver rush in Nevada
- Prospectors: veterans, immigrants, African Ams
- Boom towns were dangerous, ruled by vigilante justice
- Most disappointed, few struck it rich
Farmers

• Homestead Act: land to 600,000 families
  – Land rushes, Sooners
  – Soddys, drought, locusts

• New Technology
  – McCormick and Deere
  – Morrill Act: colleges, research

• Debt and Bankruptcy
  – Large bonanza farms failed
  – Small farmers ended up in debt due to overproduction, expensive equipment, RR charges
Minorities

• African Americans
  – Exodusters
  – Buffalo soldiers: all-black Army regiment used during Indian Wars

• Mexican immigrants
  – Vaqueros
  – Debt peonage

• Chinese immigrants
  – Gold rush
  – Many used to build transcontinental RR
  – After it was finished, increasing nativism resulted in the Chinese Exclusion Act
Promontory Point, Utah

170 million acres, and a significant portion of the Homestead Act land
Railroads

• Workers
  – Conditions were dangerous and poor, most were unemployed veterans and immigrants
  – Pullman towns house/control

• Corruption
  – Land grant misuse: Crédit Mobilier
  – Price fixing and discrimination

• Regulation
  – Granger laws at state level: *Munn v. Illinois*
  – Interstate Commerce Act create the ICC for federal regulation, but was weak
Panic of 1893

- Railroad bubble bursts due to speculation and shaky financing > bank failures and a run on the gold supply
  - Coxley’s march on Washington
  - Pullman strike
- Led to consolidation of railroads and the Free Silver movement
  - greenbacks > deflation after Civil War
  - new mines flooded market with silver
People’s Party

• Omaha Platform based on issues of farmer and industrial workers ("common man")
  – direct election of senators, graduated income tax, 8-hr workday, bimetallism
    • “Silverites” supported bimetallism, the government backing money with silver in addition to gold in order to increase the money supply and stimulate the economy
    • “Goldbugs” wanted to keep the current gold standard, which was more stable and benefited bankers and businesses

• Fusion with the Democratic Party
  – William Jennings Bryan’s “Cross of Gold” speech earned him the nomination of both parties
  – Lost to Republican William McKinley