

Unit 10: *The New West*

Lecture 10.1 • *The Cattle Kingdom*

As the Plains Indians were forced onto the reservations by the army, a new way of life took over on the Great Plains.

Cattle Ranching

- To meet the growing American demand for beef, Texans began to drive longhorns north to Kansas, where they were shipped by rail to the huge stockyards in the Midwest (i.e. Chicago).
- Except for when they were rounded up for market, the cattle ran free, finding their own food, and reproducing on their own. This kind of ranching is called “**Open Range**”.
- With the growth of cattle ranching came the birth of the cowboy.
- By the 1870s, cattle ranching spread all the way from Texas to Montana. Some very famous frontier towns grew up along the cattle trails ... Abilene, Dodge City, and Denver are all examples.
- As competition for the range’s grass & water resources became more fierce, the cattle rancher began to fence off their land. Fencing off the land effectively ended the Open Range era.
- To make matters worse, during the 1880s, 90% of the nation’s cattle were killed by drought, blizzards, and starvation due to overgrazing.
- By 1890, the great cattle drives were over, and America’s “Cattle Kingdom” was on the decline. By 1900, cattle ranching would pass into the hands of big companies and corporations.



What university has the longhorn as their mascot?

Lecture 10.2 • *Homesteaders & Sodbuster*

- In 1863, Congress passed the **Homestead Act**, which gave people 160 acres of western land if they agreed to farm it for at least five years.
- 500,000 people took advantage of the offer and streamed west. They were called “Homesteaders” and “Sodbusters.”
- In 1879, thousands of newly freed blacks followed suit, and headed west. They were called “**Exodusters**”.
- Many of Colorado’s eastern plains towns (Burlington, Limon, Greeley, etc.) started out as homesteader “colonies.” Most Colorado farmsteads grew apples, peaches, sugar beets, potatoes, alfalfa, and melons.
- Homesteading and sodbusting was full of hardship:
 1. The work was hard, and the plains were isolated and lonely.
 2. Wood was scarce, so homes were built out of sod.
 3. Grasshopper swarms could destroy whole crops in just a few minutes.
 4. Water was even more scarce than wood, so many began using windmills to bring water up from underground, and complex laws were written to guarantee people their water rights.
- Homesteading life was particularly rough for women. They had to make their own clothing, prepare all their own food, educate the children, tend the sick, and see to all the housekeeping.



What is “sod”?

Exoduster:
portmanteau of “Exodus” and
“sodbuster”

Lecture 10.3 • *A Changing Colorado*

In the last quarter of the 1800s, new interests and industries appeared in Colorado.

Transportation

- Like on the plains, railroads were important to the growth of mountain communities, but in the mountains, it was “**narrow gauge**” (3 ft.) railroads that led the way, not the standard (4.5 ft.) railroads.

Health Resorts

- From all across the country, people sick with illnesses like tuberculosis and asthma came to the Colorado Springs area to try and recuperate.
- The mild and dry climate, and the mineral hot springs of the state attracted more people to Colorado than all the gold and silver mining booms combined!

Industry

- The area around Pueblo developed as the state’s main industrial center.
- It was called the “*Pittsburgh of the West*” & “*Steel City*” (because of all the iron and steel it produced), and “*Bullion City of the World*” (because of the smelters that produced **bullion**).

Coal

- The new industries were fueled by coal, which was first found in Colorado in 1859 near Trinidad and Walsenburg.
- As opposed to gold and silver mining, coal mining ... (a) didn’t occur in a “rush”, (b) was controlled by big companies, and (c) was very dangerous.



What’s this?

bullion:
bars, ingots, or plates of precious metal