THE AMERICAN FRONTIER
IN THE LATE 19th CENTURY:

IS IT PART OF JEFFERSON'S
EMPIRE OF LIBERTY?

OR SOMETHING ELSE?

IN THE PERIOD THAT
YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT

WHAT COUNTS AS THE UNITED STATES
HAS TO BE DOMESTICATED.

OKAY, SO THERE'S THIS BIG,
OLD HUNK OF THE COUNTRY

THAT STILL IS NOT YET A PART
OF THIS INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY

THAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT

THE WHOLE PROCESS OF CLAIMING
AND BOUNding AND PEOPling

THIS LARGE TERRAIN

THAT'S ALREADY
OBVIOUSLY INHABITED

IS SOMETHING THAT
CREATES MODERN AMERICA.

WHAT HAPPENS OUT THERE
ON THE GROUND

SHAPES THE AMERICAN CHARACTER
IN FUNDAMENTAL WAYS.

IT REFLECTS LARGER
AMERICAN PROCESSES.

MORE THAN COWBOYS AND CATTLE,
MORE THAN HOMESTEADING

THE GOLD RUSH AND THE TRAGEDY
OF NATIVE AMERICANS.

"THE WEST"
TODAY ON A BIOGRAPHY OF AMERICA

THE UNITED STATES
CONSTITUTION TELLS US

THAT OUR GOVERNMENT IS
SUPPOSED TO ESTABLISH JUSTICE

AND TO PROMOTE
THE GENERAL WELFARE, BUT HOW?

AT THE END OF THE CIVIL WAR

AS INDUSTRIALISM RESHAPED
THE AMERICAN LANDSCAPE

AND AS THE GAP BETWEEN RICH
AND POOR GREW WIDER AND WIDER

THERE WASN'T ANY SUCH THING

AS A WELFARE STATE SPENDING
MONEY TO ESTABLISH JUSTICE.

WHAT WE HAD IN THOSE DAYS
INSTEAD WAS A FRONTIER STATE.

TO FOSTER SOCIAL JUSTICE
AND PROSPERITY AND DEMOCRACY

THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
DIDN'T SPEND MONEY.
Instead it handed out what it had the most of—land. It spent land. Land had been the cornerstone of power in what Thomas Jefferson called "the empire for liberty." And all across the expanding American empire, land made and broke people's fortunes and it haunted their dreams.

Between 1860 and 1900, the combination of money and machines and government power transformed more land, more quickly than ever before. Somehow, much of that land the government sold and gave away ended up in the hands of a wealthy few.

In 1845, as he sat on the shores of Walden Pond contemplating his country's future and his own labors and desires, Henry David Thoreau had written that eastward he went only by force but westward he went free. Thousands of Americans and immigrants shared Thoreau's dream of finding freedom someplace west of where they were. But others had more grandiose plans.

A young politician named William Gilpin told a mass meeting in Independence, Missouri, in 1849 that "the East should no longer hold the West in bondage." It wasn't a very poetic image especially coming from a man who had been educated in England. Gilpin knew his audience loved bluster. But they didn't expect poetry.

To stir up excitement about the transcontinental railroad, the federal government even bankrolled a huge survey.
That identified seven potential routes. The North and the South, of course, squabbled about where to put the railroad, until the South seceded. At that point, Congress, which was composed entirely of Northerners, chose a route that linked the West to the East. The Pacific Railway Act of 1862 was the biggest federal subsidy to industry. Congress chartered two corporations—the Central Pacific, which was to build eastward from California, and the Union Pacific, starting out in Omaha, Nebraska, and heading west. Each corporation got a 400-foot right of way along the route. Congress said it would try to get rid of any Indian land titles that might get inconveniently in the way. And the government also set up long-term, low-interest loans to the companies. The Central Pacific and Union Pacific ultimately got 20 square miles of alternating sections of land for every mile of track they laid. And in time, a country that had once rolled and risen according to natural processes and boundaries began to take on the look of a checkerboard.
AND THAT'S A VIEW FAMILIAR TO ANYBODY TODAY WHO'S EVER FLOWN IN AN AIRPLANE. THE PROFIT POTENTIAL WAS HUGE, BUT, THEN AGAIN, SO WERE THE RISKS. THESE WERE THE BIGGEST ENGINEERING PROJECTS THE COUNTRY HAD EVER UNDERTAKEN. BIG BUCKS MEANT BIG CHANCES FOR CORRUPTION AND THE CORRUPTION EXTENDED PRETTY FAR UP. BUSINESSMEN LIKE THE CENTRAL PACIFIC'S COLLIS HUNTINGTON SAID HE WASN'T NECESSARILY HAPPY HAVING TO BRIEZE POLITICIANS. BUT THEN HUNTINGTON SAID: CRONIES OF PRESIDENT GRANT INCLUDING THE VICE-PRESIDENT, ALONG WITH RAILROAD INSIDERS HELD STOCK IN A COMPANY CALLED THE CREDIT MOBILIER. IT WAS A PRIVATELY HELD CONSTRUCTION COMPANY WITH A FANCY NAME AND A SNEAKY AGENDA. BY CHARGING ENORMOUS RATES FOR THE WORK IT DID FOR THE UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD THE CREDIT MOBILIER BLED THE CAPITAL OUT OF THE PUBLICLY TRADED UNION PACIFIC AND IT MADE A FORTUNE FOR ITS OWN INVESTORS. BUT WITH ALL THIS WHEELING AND DEALING, STILL, SOMEBODY HAD TO GRADE THE ROADBEDS AND LAY THE TRACKS AND THIS WAS HORRIBLY HARD WORK, ESPECIALLY IN THE SIERRA NEVADA WHERE CHIPPING THROUGH GRANITE MEANT THAT A BAD DAY'S WORK MIGHT YIELD NO MORE THAN THREE INCHES OF PROGRESS. AND IT WAS DANGEROUS, TOO. ACROSS THE GREAT PLAINS AND ON UP ONTO THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE INDIANS SOMETIMES ATTACKED CONSTRUCTION PARTIES. THEY TORE UP THE RAILS AND BURNED THE TELEGRAPH POLES. THAT WENT ALONGSIDE THE TRACKS. THAT THEY CALLED
"THE IRON SNAKE."

129 01:06:54:15 01:06:55:24 WELL, WHO BETTER
130 01:06:55:26 01:06:58:13 FOR SUCH BACKBREAKING, TERRIFYING RAILROAD WORK
131 01:06:58:15 01:07:00:26 THAN AFRICAN AMERICANS AND IMMIGRANTS?
132 01:07:00:28 01:07:04:08 THE UNION PACIFIC HIRED MOSTLY IRISH AND BLACK WORKERS
133 01:07:04:10 01:07:08:02 WHO WERE EAGER FOR THE JOBS, DESPITE THE HORRIBLY LOW WAGES.
134 01:07:08:04 01:07:10:00 LABOR WAS SCARCE IN CALIFORNIA AND THE MEN WHO RAN THE CENTRAL PACIFIC
135 01:07:10:02 01:07:12:13 DIDN'T REALLY KNOW WHAT THEY'D DO UNTIL SOMEBODY REMEMBERED
136 01:07:12:15 01:07:14:15 THAT CHINESE LABORERS HAD BUILT THE GREAT WALL.
137 01:07:14:17 01:07:16:03 TEST PROJECTS USING CREWS OF 50 CHINESE WORKERS WERE SUCH DAZZLING SUCCESSES
138 01:07:16:05 01:07:19:02 THAT THE CENTRAL PACIFIC RECRUITED SOME 10,000 CHINESE MEN.
139 01:07:19:04 01:07:22:00 THEY CAME TO THE UNITED STATES, HOPING TO WORK AND SAVE ENOUGH TO RETURN TO CHINA WITH A PILE OF MONEY
140 01:07:22:02 01:07:23:25 BUT ALL TOO OFTEN POVERTY OR DEATH GOT IN THE WAY OF GOING HOME.
141 01:07:23:27 01:07:25:21 THE RAILROADS BROUGHT RECONSTRUCTION AMERICA
142 01:07:25:23 01:07:27:04 WITH ALL OF ITS RACE AND CLASS AND GENDER TENSIONS
143 01:07:27:06 01:07:29:20 TO NEW PLACES IN NEW WAYS.
144 01:07:29:22 01:07:32:25 "HELL ON WHEELS" RAILROAD TOWNS LIKE O'GALLALA, NEBRASKA, AND LARAMIE, WYOMING WERE NOTORIOUS FOR VICE AND VIOLENCE.
145 01:07:32:27 01:07:34:04 THEY USED TO SAY THAT WHISKEY RAN IN THE STREETS WERE PUNISHED BY LYNCH MOBS
146 01:07:34:06 01:07:39:07 BUT ALL TOO OFTEN AND CRIMES LIKE GARROTING WERE NOT WAIT FOR THE ACCUSED TO BE BROUGHT TO TRIAL.
147 01:07:39:09 01:07:42:01 AND YET, EVEN THOUGH THE BOOMTOWNS BUBBLED AND BURST
148 01:07:42:03 01:07:45:10 HAD ONCE TAKEN SIX WEEKS AT BEST.
That same trip could now be made in a matter of days. More transcontinental routes and trunk lines connected places that had once seemed in the words of New Mexico Territorial Governor, "remote beyond compare."

Sleepy provincial towns, like Los Angeles, California, became railroad boomtowns. The conquest of the continent, which had been such a laborious enterprise from the time of Columbus on, sped up to a degree that no one could have imagined.

The raw riches of the West, thousands of tons of ores from the mines and cattle by the millions, could now flow east to be processed and consumed. And at the same time the railroad brought all kinds of people and ideas into the West. People who had often violently disagreed with each other, laborers, soldiers and wildcat miners came and went.

But the West was also to attract people with middle-class aspirations, people who hoped to settle the country and to make it grow. And it was their hopes that reflected the plans of the nation.

Newly arrived Americans on the frontier clamored for a solution, any solution.
TO WHAT THEY LIKED TO CALL "THE INDIAN PROBLEM."

SOMETIMES THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT LED THE WAY

MAKING TREATIES OR SENDING TROOPS.

BUT WESTERNERS ALSO TOOK MATTERS INTO THEIR OWN HANDS

AND THE RESULTS COULD BE HORRIFYING.

IN 1864, TWO AMBITIOUS COLORADO POLITICIANS

TERRITORIAL GOVERNOR JOHN EVANS, AND COLONEL JOHN SHIVINGTON

A FORMER METHODIST MINISTER WHO COMMANDED THE COLORADO MILITIA

DECIDED THEY COULD MAKE POLITICAL HAY

OUT OF AN INDIAN WAR.

ONE OF SHIVINGTON'S OFFICERS ORDERED HIS MEN TO BURN VILLAGES

AND KILL CHEYENNE, WHEREVER AND WHENEVER FOUND.

WHEN MILITIA MEN KILLED A CHEYENNE CHIEF

WHEN MILITIA MEN KILLED A CHEYENNE CHIEF, BLACK KETTLE

WHO WAS RIDING IN, TO TALK PEACE

THE INDIANS FINALLY BEGAN TO ORGANIZE FOR WAR.

BUT ONE CHEYENNE CHIEF, BLACK KETTLE

STILL HOPED FOR PEACE.

HE AGREED TO TAKE HIS BAND, ESCORTED BY FEDERAL TROOPS

TO CAMP AT A PLACE CALLED SAND CREEK

AND THERE, ON THE MORNING OF NOVEMBER 29, 1864

SHIVINGTON AND 700 MEN, MANY OF THEM DRUNK

RODE INTO THE INDIANS' CAMP, AND BEGAN KILLING.

MOST OF THE CHEYENNE MEN WERE OFF HUNTING

SO SHIVINGTON'S MEN SLAUGHTERED MAINLY WOMEN AND CHILDREN

MUTILATING AND LOOTING THE CORPSES.

THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS DECLARED THAT THE CAMPAIGN WAS "ONE OF THE MOST BRILLIANT FEATS OF ARMS IN INDIAN WARFARE."

"ONE OF THE MOST BRILLIANT FEATS OF ARMS IN INDIAN WARFARE."

HE SAID SHIVINGTON HAD WHIPPED INDIANS IN THE COUNTRY.
AS THE YEARS PASSED, NATIVE AMERICANS Fought to keep a shred of what they'd had against increasingly heavy odds. The west rang with the names of bloody places—Washata Creek and Little Big Horn.

The surrender of Geronimo in 1886 marked the last organized Indian resistance. The arrest and murder of Sitting Bull followed by the Seventh Cavalry's massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890 ended a final heart-breaking epilogue to the Indian Wars.

By the time of the Wounded Knee tragedy, the government had turned to another approach to the so-called "Indian problem". Reformers like the writer Helen Hunt Jackson, self-styled friends of the Indian, insisted that the best course of action was to civilize and Christianize the Indians, and get them speaking English and farming and living in nuclear families.

And so, in 1887, Congress passed the Dawes Act. Each Indian reservation was to be broken up into private parcels and each tribe member would receive a personal allotment of land. The maximum allotment of 160 acres going to male heads.
OF HOUSEHOLDS.

257 01:12:59:25 01:13:03:10  THE GOVERNMENT WAS SUPPOSED TO HOLD THE LAND IN TRUST
258 01:13:03:12 01:13:04:18  FOR 25 YEARS.
259 01:13:04:20 01:13:06:29  BUT THROUGH FRAUD AND FEDERAL NEGLECT
263 01:13:16:19 01:13:20:15  WHITES MOVED IN TO SNAP UP CHEAP SO-CALLED "SURPLUS" LAND.
264 01:13:20:17 01:13:23:00  160 ACRES, A QUARTER OF A SQUARE MILE
265 01:13:23:02 01:13:26:29  WAS NOT ENOUGH TO FEED A FAMILY IN THE BEST CIRCUMSTANCES
266 01:13:27:01 01:13:28:19  MOST PLACES IN THE WEST AND THERE WAS NO GUARANTEE THAT THE LAND WOULD HAVE
268 01:13:32:07 01:13:33:17  WATER OR GOOD SOIL.
269 01:13:33:19 01:13:37:01  SO EVEN INDIANS WHO WANTED TO BECOME YEOMAN FARMERS
270 01:13:37:03 01:13:39:14  WERE PRETTY MUCH DOOMED TO FAILURE.
274 01:13:50:05 01:13:52:00  WAS WHITE SETTLEMENT.
275 01:13:52:02 01:13:53:11  AND IT WAS NOT ALWAYS EASY
278 01:13:58:15 01:14:01:04  AND GO TO CHURCH AND BUILD SCHOOLS.
279 01:14:01:06 01:14:03:13  INSTEAD, THE WEST SEEMED TO OVERFLOW
280 01:14:03:15 01:14:05:26  WITH ROOTLESS, LAWLESS AMERICAN MEN.
282 01:14:08:13 01:14:10:16  AND OUT IN THE CANYONS AND UP IN THE MOUNTAINS
283 01:14:10:18 01:14:13:07  THEY WERE SHOOTING AT THE INDIANS, SHOOTING AT EACH OTHER
284 01:14:13:09 01:14:14:17  JUMPING EACH OTHER'S CLAIMS
285 01:14:14:19 01:14:17:08  ROBBING STAGE COACHES AND BANKS AND TRAINS
286 01:14:17:10 01:14:20:29  AND THEY WERE CREATING AS MANY PROBLEMS AS THEY'D SOLVED.
287 01:14:21:01 01:14:22:26  IN 1869, WYOMING TERRITORY
OF THE RAILROAD BOOM.

AND GOLD HAD BEEN DISCOVERED
ON THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE.

THE TERRITORY WAS FULL
OF HOMESICK SOLDIERS

AND HARD-LIVING LABORERS
AND FOOTLOOSE FORTUNE SEEKERS.

CHEYENNE, ARAPAHO
AND SHOSHONI INDIANS

WERE CONSTANTLY SKIRMISHING

WITH TRANSIENT BANDS
OF IMMIGRANT MEN.

AS IF THESE LOCAL TENSIONS
WEREN'T ENOUGH

THIS WAS ALSO, OF COURSE,
THE MIDDLE OF RECONSTRUCTION.

DEMOCRATS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL
WERE BATTLING REPUBLICANS'
ATTEMPTS TO ASSURE
BLACK CITIZENS COULD
EXERCISE THEIR RIGHTS
INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO VOTE.

IN SOUTH PASS CITY
A MINING CAMP HIGH UP
ON THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE

WILLIAM BRIGHT, A DEMOCRAT
WAS ELECTED TO
THIS TERRITORIAL LEGISLATURE.

AND BRIGHT HAD AN IDEA
HE HOPED WOULD BRING IN
MORE ORDERLY,
RESPECTABLE WHITE SETTLERS
LIKE HIMSELF
AND HIS YOUNG WIFE, JULIA.

BRIGHT DECIDED HE'D INTRODUCE
A BILL TO GIVE WOMEN THE VOTE.

HE ARGUED THAT
GIVING WHITE WOMEN LIKE JULIA
THE RIGHT TO VOTE WOULDN'T ONLY
PROMOTE SETTLEMENT

IT WOULD ALSO BRING AN UPLIFTING
ELEMENT TO WYOMING POLITICS.

AND COINCIDENTALLY, IT MIGHT
ALSO OFFSET BLACK MEN'S VOTES.

EVIDENTLY,
HE CONVINCED HIS COLLEAGUES
BECAUSE THEY PASSED
BRIGHT'S WOMEN SUFFRAGE BILL
AND IT WAS THE FIRST TO PASS
ANYWHERE IN THE UNITED STATES

AND ITS TERRITORIES.

UNFORTUNATELY
FOR THE DEMOCRATS, HOWEVER

WHITE WOMEN VOTERS
PROVED UNRELIABLE ALLIES.

THEY TENDED TO VOTE
TO CLOSE SALOONS ON SUNDAYS.

01:15:53:00 THEY LIKED TO VOTE REPUBLICAN.
01:15:56:27 AND SOME WERE EVEN SEEN DRIVING BLACK VOTERS TO THE POLLS.
01:15:59:12 BUT THERE ARE OTHER IRONIES AS WELL.
01:16:02:28 BY 1871, WILLIAM AND JULIA BRIGHT HAD LEFT WYOMING
01:16:05:22 ALONG WITH NEARLY ALL THE OTHER FAMILIES
01:16:08:25 WHO'D SEEN THE GOLD BOOM BUST AT SOUTH PASS.
01:16:12:08 EVIDENTLY, THE VERY PEOPLE WHO SUPPOSEDLY EMBODIED SETTLEMENT
01:16:15:08 HAD A TENDENCY TO BE ROOTLESS AND RESTLESS.
01:16:17:17 AND AFTER ONLY TWO YEARS' EXPERIMENT
01:16:19:24 THE DEMOCRATIC-CONTROLLED LEGISLATURE
01:16:21:23 VOTED TO REPEAL WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.
01:16:23:29 FORTUNATELY FOR THE WOMEN OF WYOMING
01:16:26:00 AND PERHAPS THE WOMEN OF AMERICA
01:16:28:23 THE REPUBLICAN GOVERNOR VETOED THE BILL--
01:16:30:09 BUT THE IRONY REMAINED.
01:16:33:01 WHEN WYOMING CAME INTO THE UNION IN 1890
01:16:36:06 AS THE FIRST STATE TO ENFRANCHISE WOMEN
01:16:38:04 AS THE "EQUALITY STATE"
01:16:41:23 IT DID SO NOT BECAUSE THE FRONTIER PROMOTED LIBERTY
01:16:46:29 BUT BECAUSE OF THE COMPLICATED POLITICS OF THE AMERICAN EMPIRE.
01:16:50:11 BUT STILL, THAT DREAM OF FREEDOM PERSISTED
01:16:52:19 AND IT DEPENDED ON GETTING LAND.
01:16:55:14 IN 1862, CONGRESS HAD PASSED THE LAW THAT EMBODIED
01:16:59:00 MORE THAN ANY OTHER PIECE OF LEGISLATION IN AMERICAN HISTORY
01:17:01:19 THE JEFFERSONIAN VISION OF AMERICA--
01:17:03:04 THE HOMESTEAD ACT.
01:17:06:23 FOR A SMALL REGISTRATION FEE, ANY HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD
01:17:09:28 COULD GET A 160 ACRES OF THE PUBLIC DOMAIN.
01:17:13:13 IF HE, OR FOR THAT MATTER SHE, MANAGED TO LIVE ON THAT LAND
01:17:15:19 FOR FIVE YEARS AND MAKE BASIC IMPROVEMENTS
01:17:18:16 THE LAND WOULD BE FREE.
LIKE THE INDIAN FAMILIES WHO TRIED FARMING UNDER THE DAWES ACT
MANY HOMESTEADERS FAILED AND THERE WERE GOOD REASONS FOR THE FAILURE.
MOST OF THE WEST WAS TOO DRY FOR SMALL FARMS TO MAKE IT.
NOW, JUST BUYING A PLOW AND DIGGING A WELL
AND PUTTING UP A FENCE AND PURCHASING SEED--
THAT COULD COST JUST AS MUCH AS A $1,000.
MOREOVER, MACHINES LIKE THE McCORMICK REAPER WERE REVOLUTIONIZING FARMING MAKING IT NOT ONLY POSSIBLE BUT VIRTUALLY MANDATORY FOR FARMERS TO PLOW AND PLANT AND HARVEST MORE ACRES.
IN THE 1870s, HOPE AND DEBT EXPANDED.
THE FARMERS PLANTED MORE, RANCHERS BROUGHT IN MORE STOCK BUT THE FARMING AND RANCHING BONANZAS COULDN'T LAST.
DROUGHT YEARS BECAME MORE AND MORE COMMON.
GRASSHOPPER PLAGUES AND BLIZZARDS RAGED.
CROPS WITHERED IN THE FIELD; CATTLE DIED OF THIRST.
THE FURIOUS WINTERS OF 1886 AND 1887 PRODUCED STORIES OF DISASTERS ACROSS COW COUNTRY.
OF RANCHERS GOING OUT TO CHECK THEIR HERDS AND FINDING THEIR CATTLE BY THE HUNDREDS.
PILED UP AGAINST BARBED-WIRE FENCES THEIR RIBS STANDING OUT, FROZEN TO DEATH.
THE WESTERN WRITER J. FRANK DOBIE, PUT IT THIS WAY:
THE FARMERS HAD IT JUST AS BAD;
THE SUMMERS AFTER THOSE WINTERS DROUGHTS AND LOCUSTS TOOK WHAT THE ICE STORMS HAD LEFT BEHIND.
FOREIGN COMPETITION DROVE WHEAT PRICES DOWN AND DOWN.
BANKRUPT FARMERS LOADED UP THEIR HOUSEHOLD GOODS AND THEY GAVE UP.
"IN GOD WE TRUSTED," READ THE SIGN ON A WAGON HEADED EAST.

"BUT IN KANSAS WE BUSTED."

AS THE CENTURY NEARED AN END, THE EMPIRE FOR LIBERTY WAS IN TROUBLE.

THE WORLD WAS HEADED FOR A SYSTEM OF INDEPENDENT, SPECIALIZED PRODUCERS.

AND JUST AS MEAT-PACKING HAD BECOME THE DOMAIN OF LARGE CORPORATIONS, SO WOULD THE GROWING AND PROCESSING OF THOSE AMBER WAVES OF GRAIN.

AND WHAT ABOUT THOSE FARM FAMILIES CHASING JEFFERSON'S DREAM?

WELL, THEY FOUND THEMSELVES DEPENDENT NOT ONLY ON WEATHER THAT COULD TURN THEIR HOPES TO DUST IN A MATTER OF WEEKS BUT ALSO ON THE BANKS THAT EXTENDED LOANS FOR THE MACHINES AND THE SEEDS.

AND THEY WERE DEPENDENT ON THE RAILROADS THAT SHIPPED THE GOODS.

THOREAU HAD NOT BEEN HAPPY AS HE STOOD WATCHING THE CONSTRUCTION OF A RAIL LINE THAT WOULD, HE WAS AFRAID, DESTROY THE REFUGE HE SOUGHT AT WALDEN.

"WE DO NOT RIDE ON THE RAILROAD," THOREAU WROTE.

"IT RIDES UPON US."

FARMERS WERE SQUEEZED BY THE GOVERNMENT'S TIGHT MONEY POLICIES.

AND THE RAILROADS, WITH THE COMPLICITY OF STATE LEGISLATURES WHO WERE VERY EASILY BOUGHT, CHARGED HIGH RATES TO CARRY THEIR CROPS TO THE MARKET--

WITH DOLLARS THAT WERE WORTH MORE THAN THE ONES ONLY MONTHS BEFORE.

THAT THEY BORROWED ONLY MONTHS BEFORE.

AND THE RAILROADS, WITH THE COMPLICITY OF STATE LEGISLATURES WHO WERE VERY EASILY BOUGHT.

CHARGED HIGH RATES TO CARRY THEIR CROPS TO THE MARKET--
AS HIGH AS THE TRAFFIC WOULD BEAR.

THESE PROBLEMS FINALLY PUSHED FARMERS TO ORGANIZE.

AS EARLY AS 1867, THE PATRONS OF HUSBANDRY OR GRANGE, HAD PROTESTED AGAINST THE BANKS AND THE RAILROADS

AND HAD URGED FARMERS TO COOPERATE--

TO BUY LESS AND PRODUCE MORE.

BY THE LATE 1880s, FARMER'S ALLIANCES--

FIRST ORGANIZED IN THE SOUTHERN COTTON BELT

BUT SOON THEY WERE APPEARING ACROSS THE PRAIRIES AND PLAINS--

BEGAN TO ATTRACT THOUSANDS OF MEMBERS.

THEY DEMANDED STATE OWNERSHIP OF THE RAILROADS;

A GRADUATED INCOME TAX;

AND MORE MONEY IN CIRCULATION

IN THE FORM OF THE FREE AND UNLIMITED COINAGE OF SILVER

OR "FREE SILVER."

ALLIANCE MEN ALSO RAN FOR POLITICAL OFFICE AND SURPRISINGLY OFTEN, THEY WON.

ALLIANCE WOMEN, LIKE KANSAS'S MARY LEASE

A TALL WOMAN WITH A DEEP, ALMOST HYPNOTIC VOICE

KNEW FIRST-HAND THE DREARINESS AND INSECURITY OF FARM LIFE.

LEASE BECAME FAMOUS FOR URGING FARMERS

TO "RAISE LESS CORN AND MORE HELL."

BY 1892, THE ALLIANCES WERE READY TO TAKE THEIR MESSAGE NATIONWIDE.

THEY MET IN ST. LOUIS

WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE KNIGHTS OF LABOR AND OTHERS

TO FOUND THE PEOPLE'S PARTY

SOON TO BE KNOWN AS THE POPULIST PARTY.

THEIR PLATFORM CALLED FOR PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF RAILROADS

BANKS AND TELEGRAPH LINES

FOR A PROHIBITION ON LARGE LAND-HOLDING COMPANIES
A PROGRAM THAT SET THE AGENDA FOR 20th CENTURY POLITICAL REFORM.

But in 1896, with Bryan as the Democratic candidate, the contest between the Republicans and the Democrats was to be a battle between city and country.

The Populists knew which side they were on—

It was the losing side.

Masur: The West existed as much in people's imaginations as in their experiences and depictions of the frontier served a critical role in helping to shape a vision of American national destiny.

One of the most important images was "Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way" by Emanuel Leutze.

Leutze in this scene depicts a train of immigrants who have finally reached the promised land that point at the Sierra Nevada where they are looking across and they can see the Pacific slope ahead of them.

In the image an eagle unfurls the title banner. At the bottom he included medallion portraits of William Clark and Daniel Boone.

There's almost no allusion to the Indians here but it was the Indians and "Indian troubles," so to speak, that this train of immigrants had survived in coming across.

Indeed, the only Indians anywhere in this picture are buried here at the very top, along the sides of the banner that is being unfurled as if it is knocking them out of the picture itself.

This was an oil study that Leutze did.
BEFORE EXECUTING THE MURAL FOR THE UNITED STATES CAPITOL.

AND IN EXECUTING THE MURAL HE MADE A SIGNIFICANT COMPOSITIONAL CHANGE:

HERE IN THE TRAIN OF IMMIGRANTS HE INCLUDED THE FIGURE OF A BLACK MAN

A BLACK MAN LEADING AN IRISH IMMIGRANT WOMAN AND CHILD.

THE THREESOME APPEAR ALMOST AS A HOLY FAMILY

AND REVISIT THE THEME OF "MADONNA AND CHILD."

FOR LEUTZE, THE STORY OF THE EXPANSION INTO THE WEST WAS TO BE AN INCLUSIVE STORY

A STORY THAT INCORPORATED ALL ELEMENTS OF AMERICAN SOCIETY INTO THE POSSIBILITIES OF REACHING THIS PROMISED LAND

ON THE WESTERN SHORE.