White Settlers

White Settlers from the East migrated West in large numbers after the Civil War.

Many were farmers who had lost their property or had their property destroyed during the war. Also, Western farmland was much cheaper.

Pacific Railway Acts – government gave the railroad companies 175 million acres of public land to build a railroad linking the East and West Coast

This made travel much easier and faster than it had ever been before.

Homestead Act – This act gave settlers 160 acres of land for a small fee. Gave land to those who were at least 21 years old or the heads of families. Allowed people to own and farm land who had never been able to afford it before.

This brings large numbers of people to the West

Morrill Land-Grant Act – the government gave millions of acres to the states so that they could found colleges that had a focus on agriculture and farm mechanics. This provided more people with an opportunity for a farming education.

Immigrants

Immigrants from Europe and all over the world migrated to the American West during the late 1800s.

They were drawn to the cheap available farmland of the West

They also frequently took jobs in ranching, farming, railroad construction and mining. Chinese immigrants were crucial in the building of the transcontinental railroad.

Some also faced ethic and religious discrimination in their old country. The way of life out West made ethnic and religious freedom much easier

Immigrants could also benefit from the Homestead Act – the act was applicable to both US citizens and those who hoped to become US citizens

African Americans

During Reconstruction, many African Americans migrated West.

They were drawn to the many available jobs and cheap farmland.

Many were former slaves fleeing the South after the Civil War. However, many slaves also faced discrimination in the North as well. Northerners did not appreciate freed blacks coming to take their jobs

Many were also fleeing the conditions they faced as a part of Reconstruction. Many Southerners refused to accept the end of the slavery. They kept freed blacks in bondage through the sharecropping system, and many blacks were not able to take advantage of their new constitutional rights

Most African Americans remained in the South, however, as they were still caught up in the sharecropping system.

Native Americans

Large numbers of Native Americans lived on the Great Plains out West

They lived as nomads, meaning that they did not set up permanent settlements. They moved to follow their source of food – the buffalo.

Railroads and availability of cheap farmland brought many white settlers onto their land. Whites and Native Americans had different ideas about land ownership that led to conflict

Whites felt that they were going to use the land and make it more productive. The Native Americans believed that no one person should own land.

White settlers hunted the buffalo of the Great Plains to extinction. This eliminated the Indians’ source of food.

Native Americans were eventually forced onto small spaces of land called Reservations. The government decided that the Indians could live on these reservations.

However, the Indians had been nomadic people with unlimited space. They did not like the reservation system, and this led to the Indian Wars

Mormons

The Mormons were a religious group and followers of Mormon leader Brigham Young.

They migrated out west to Salt Lake City in Utah between 1846 and 1848.

Like many other Western migrants, the Mormons saw the West as a place where they could find freedom. The Mormons wanted religious freedom.

The Mormons had many controversial religious ideas. The most controversial was their belief in *polygamy*. Polygamy is the idea that a man can have more than one wife.

The Mormons hoped that in the West they would be able to practice all of their beliefs, including polygamy, in freedom.

However, the US government decided that the Mormons are allowed to *believe in the idea* of polygamy but they are not allowed to *practice* polygamy.

There is still a very large Mormon population in Salt Lake City, Utah.