Chapter 5 – Section 1

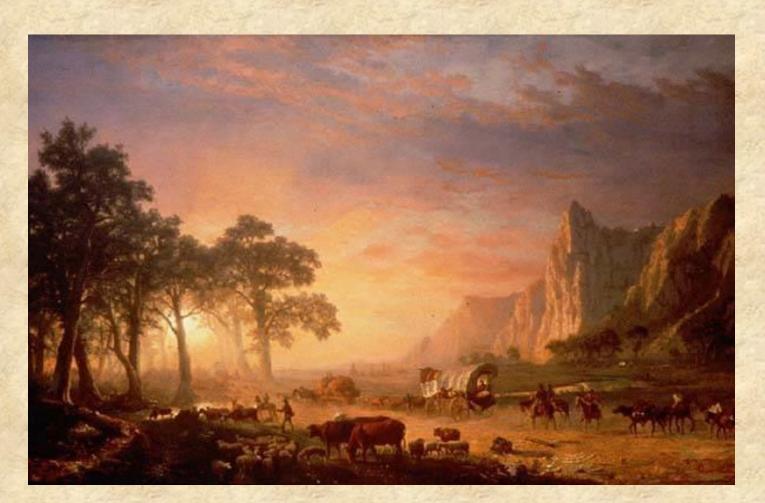
Moving West



American Progress, 1872 by John Gast

Why go West?

- Hoped for a new start in life
- A chance to own a farm and be own boss (out of factories)



Who owned the land?

 The Union Pacific and Central Pacific RR companies (received 10 sq. miles from the Federal govt. for every mile of track laid)



Homestead Act



- Gave 160 acres of land to anyone who met 5 conditions:
- 1. At least 21 or head of family
- 2. American citizen or immigrant who filed for citizenship
- 3. \$10 registration fee
- 4. Had to build a house and live on it at least 6 mo.'s/yr.
- 5. Had to actively farm land for 5 consecutive years before claiming ownership

Problems for Homesteaders

- Couldn't meet all the requirements
- Total cost to make a homestead liveable could easily reach \$1,000
- City settlers had no farming experience

Fraud – portable homes (too many claims to check

out)



Why so many gave up before their 5 years were over

- Prairie sod hard to plow
- Water was scarce
- Climate was blistering heat (in summer) and bitter cold (in winter)



Water

- Difficult to collect water if land claim wasn't near a water source
- Used buckets for rain



Prairie Fever

Disease from drinking contaminated water

(safer water underground, but too difficult and dangerous to dig a well w/out machinery that wasn't available until late 1800's)



Months away

- Men often spent months away from the homestead after the plowing and planting was done.
- Had to earn cash for survival.



Relied on each other

 Settlers cooperated building houses/barns, husking corn, and sewing quilts.



Women on the prairie

Made clothes, soap, candles, and preserved foods



Exodusters

- Group of African Americans from the South escaping (Exodus) violence after Civil War.
- (Most settlers were white, but 50,000 were black.)



3 Difficulties

- Difficult to earn enough to support a homestead
- Not used to growing corn and wheat on plains (Cotton)
- Faced racial hatred (Though it was better than the South)



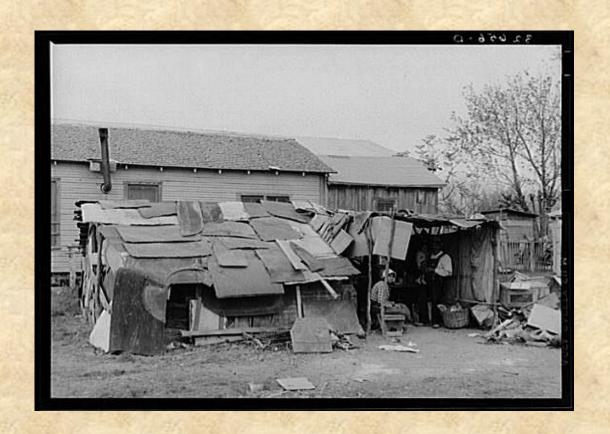
Difficult for Women

- Women spent long periods of solitude on the prairie
- Responsible for maintaining the homestead by themselves



Squatters

 People who moved onto land that doesn't belong to them (like some homeless people today)



Western Women

Were the first to campaign for the right to vote.
(1890 Wyoming is first state to let women vote)



Homework

 Write a 1 page diary entry describing life on the prairie. Use at least 5 facts from the section notes and <u>underline</u> and/or number them.