



Developing the West

Lindsey Webster, Madi Goll, Victoria Somerville

Introduction

There were many components that contributed to the development of the west. Of those things the development of barbed wire, the building of railroads, and the introduction of the McCormick reaper played big roles.

Introduction of barbed wire

Barbed wire was invented in 1873 by Joseph Glidden. The widespread use of barbed wire brought an end to open range grazing. It made the settlement of small farms possible. The wire kept cattle from grazing on new farmland because the cattle were not able to break the wire. It was cheap so even small farms were able to use it. The invention of barbed wire was the west's modern technology to make it possible for individual farms to settle.

Building of the Railroads

In 1862, Leland Stanford and his partners won the right to build a line eastward from San Francisco. Their railroad was the central Pacific which was to meet with the Union Pacific, which would be built from the west. They met on May 10, 1869. Because of railroads new towns sprang up rapidly in the west. The creation of railroads greatly increased westward expansion. The rapid population growth brought political changes and the creation of many new states. The railroad established the nations infrastructure for the future. The railroads could transport cattle from the west, so farmers did not feel the need to move west. Farmers that previously lived in the west made a lot of business because they are now able to transport goods faster along the railroad.

Introduction of the McCormick reaper

In 1847, Cyrus McCormick began the mass manufacture of his reaper in a Chicago factory. The invention of two successful reaping machines - independently by Obed Hussey in Ohio, who obtained the first patent in 1834. The first reapers cut the standing grain and, with a revolving reel, swept it onto a platform from which it was raked off into piles by a man walking alongside. It could harvest more grain than five men using the earlier cradles. Cyrus McCormick moved to Chicago, built a reaper factory, and founded what eventually became the International Harvester Company. In 1872 he produced a reaper which automatically bound the bundles with wire. In 1880, he came out with a binder which, using a magical knotting device (invented by John F. Appleby a Wisconsin pastor) bound the handles with twine. The reaper was eventually replaced by the self-propelled combine, operated by one man, which cuts, gathers, threshes, and sacks the grain mechanically. The reaper was the first step in a transition from hand labor to the mechanized farming of today. It brought about an industrial revolution, as well as a vast change in agriculture.

Conclusion

The invention of these things helped develop the west's land and settlement with barbed wire. The technology with the invention of the McCormick reaper and transportation with the building of the railroads.