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Wired to the World
June 15, 2006

[Note: These are rough notes taken by the project manager during the summer institute. Some of the people's names included may be mis-spelled. Please check for accuracy.]

Follow up: Southerners are only Americans who have lost a war and have been occupied. Most of the feelings southerners still harbor extends from Reconstruction. The men who fought and died and saw their friends die, have dug their heels in—they did not want to acquiesce to the north and their political agenda. The civil war was the first war in which the government took on the responsibility of identifying the dead. This illustrates the expanding responsibilities of the federal government. 1866 Mississippi: 1/3 of the state budget was used to purchase prosthetic limbs.

Thick Questions: Expansion of the 1840's, question generated during expansion, and not flushed out until the Civil War and its aftermath.

How do you hold a nation together that was that big?

Technological innovation is used to connect the richest real estate in the world and the political center of the country.

The Telegraph: The First Internet and the Making of the West

When does The West become conceptually The West in the way it is thought of today? Book titles explode after 1860s.

All regions in the U.S. are diverse, but none are like the West. The West is full of enormous diversity, but it is still conceptually seen as one region. West contains the lowest and the highest, the hottest and the coldest, the wettest and the driest, but yet we still call it the same thing.

Parts come together to function as one thing—that is why we call something what we call it.

The West as we think of it could not have come into existence without the telegraph. The two grow up together.

May 1844: First successful demonstration of the telegraph.

Telegraph: Samuel F. B. Morse (began as a painter). Morse was best known as a portraiture artist. By the 1830s, Morse began getting bored painting. On the steamship back to the U.S., he sat in on a conversation in which people were talking about the ** electromagnetism. Morse returned to his cabin and wrote in his journal that if you could make electricity visible by turning it into a system of signs, you could transfer intelligence “at light speed.”

Alfred Vale worked with Morse. The genius of their system was that it was enormously simple. By breaking the circuit, you make a mark. The two worked with Joseph Henry at the

Smithsonian to develop a way to maintain electricity over a great distance. They had to develop boosters and insulation.

Genius was to make the electrical impulse itself the message. Morse and Vale wrote the code.

Acceleration of Movement: Things vs. Information

The single biggest thing about the telegraph was that it separated the person from the message. Before, a message could only move as fast as people could move. The Railroad greatly increased (it was 10-15) times faster in the movement of people and freight over the freight wagon. The telegraph over Pony Express was an amazing 44,000,000 times faster.

How the West Was Being Made

Only with the breakthrough of the telegraph could the West emerge the way it did.

A technological revolution

West was a place where people were inventing

The rise of the corporation

The West was made by the rise of big business. Western Union

A partnership of corporations and government

Informal and formal cooperation

Transcontinental railroads are also the epitome of this type of growth and are often the main narrative. But, something else came before them: The telegraph! Now, look at this narrative:

The great breakthrough in development of the West was the transcontinental telegraph, which was authorized by Congress in 1861. The government provided for the support of the transcontinental telegraph. The government also promised land and financial support. However, the government is promised use. To do this, two corporations were created. The government contracted with Western Union and another corporation out of California. Western Union built east to west out of Omaha, NE and the other in California out of Sacramento, CA. Began building in July of 1861. Set up dummy corporations to build the line. The line was finished in October of 1861. They finished 9 months ahead of schedule. A corrupt bargain: they hired themselves to do the work, so they overpaid themselves. Western Union floated bonds and they turned 144,000 into 6 million by the end of the decade. For the customer, it cost almost \$200 to send 8 words.

How the West Worked

The West couldn't be coordinated without being able to connect the West into one region through communication.

- Discovery and inventory of resources
- Putting them to new uses
- Linking them to an international economy

- Connecting the West to the World
- How could these things have happened without the telegraph?

W. A. Peril at 18 years old: Hired to drive a herd of 1500 longhorns in 1868 from TX to Abilene. The drover takes a train to Abilene to get things ready for when the cattle arrive. The drover has to go find out what the best price is for cattle. He finds that out by checking the telegraph. So, he sends the cattle to Montana. They spend the winter in Wyoming. He finds out the prices are better in San Francisco. He sends the cattle towards San Francisco. In Idaho, he finds out the prices are better in Oregon, so he sends half to Oregon and the rest to San Francisco.

Uses the oldest and newest technology and cobbles them together to do his job.

How We Think About the West

We could not think of the West as a single region/place without being able to “think” about the region simultaneously.

We are used to knowing that we can communicate throughout the region instantaneously. Space and time don’t mean what they did before. Until that happens, you cannot think of the West in the way that we do without instant communication.

Gold discovered in January of 1848. First strong rumor of gold discovered doesn’t reach the east coast until August. The first confirmation of gold wasn’t until December.

Now, fast forward to 1877. A telegrapher in Camp Grant Arizona wanted to marry his fiancé in Los Angeles. She couldn’t come marry him because there was no preacher in Arizona, and he couldn’t leave because he was the only telegrapher. The ceremony was conducted over the telegraph. **The West as Married to the World**

The West as Conquest

The telegraph gave country this idea of power, ego, and hubris. Telegraph sent the completion of the transcontinental railroad into the Pacific Ocean. (The Sistine Chapel and the completion of the transcontinental railroad) The images give the sense that Americans were “touched by God.” The West gave the country the sense that Americans were a “chosen people.”

Jedidiah Morse was Samuel Morse’s father. He was a minister and one of the first geographers. He is the first to advocate Manifest Destiny, but says it will take near 100 years. Ironically, his son speeds it up.

“What Hath God Wrought?” was the first message sent (From the Book of Numbers 23: 23-24). This comment was normally taken as an expression of amazement. But, it is from the story of the Israelites coming into the “promised land.” The tribes there go to God to ask for help, but they are basically told, “These are God’s people” and there is nothing we can do about it. That is what the telegraph meant to the Indians.