Joseph Warren Matthews experienced the industrial Far West late in life. Seeking wages, the fifty-one-year-old Californian took a temporary job at Claus Spreckels’s Watsonville sugar refinery in 1893 but soon left for the better pay offered on a nearby ranch. Matthews worked the next two years laying pipe for the Hollister Water Company. “This is my birthday,” Matthews scribbled in his diary on June 6, 1896. “I am 54 years old. I worked all day filling in [the] ditch.” He earned $18.70 from “the Water Co.” that month. Eventually laid off, Matthews sought employment during the following three years wherever it could be found: mining quicksilver in California; wage labor in the Alaskan goldfields; road work for a Pacific Northwest lumber company; smelting ore for the San Jose Copper Company; and finally, an irrigation job in the San Joaquin Valley for Miller & Lux, the massive land, cattle, and water company. Now fifty-seven years old, Matthews drew less than a dollar per day “plus found” working on one of the firm’s night irrigation crews. He left Miller & Lux’s employ after thirty-eight days and died six months later from a work-related accident.\footnote{The author wishes to acknowledge the helpful comments offered by Steve Aron, Bill Deverell, Clark Davis, Doug Smith, Miriam Feldblum, Martin Ridge, Dick Walker, and the anonymous referees of the Pacific Historical Review. 1. Joseph Warren Matthews Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California Press, 2000 Center St., Ste. 303, Berkeley, CA 94720-1223.}
Matthews was no migrant bindle stiff. He had lived in California for forty years before embarking on his itinerant work life, and he owned a small farm south of San Francisco Bay for much of that time. He was a church elder and strong temperance advocate, preaching the virtue of sobriety to friend and foe alike. Bad harvests, declining agricultural markets, and mounting debts during the 1890s financial panic forced Matthews to seek wages away from home while his wife Rebecca tended their heavily mortgaged farm. On the road, Matthews joined an itinerant labor force gathered from around the world, mostly desperate “hard travelers” who sought opportunity in the chaos of western industrial life. Blasting rock in the New Idria quicksilver mines or irrigating at night for Miller & Lux may seem at odds with Matthews’s status as a western farmer and community leader. Nevertheless, his jobbing across California and the Pacific Coast mirrored a common strategy used by many struggling small farmers to navigate the insecurity and turbulence of this burgeoning capitalist society. Matthews had entered the heart of the industrial Far West.

The work life of western laborers, however, provides only one window into the region’s industrial society. The Far West that emerged after the 1849 California Gold Rush featured an instant market economy, dynamic urban cores, and large corporate enterprises. In short, the West had a “machine in the


I use the term “Far West” to refer to essentially the same region that Earl Pomeroy designated the “Pacific Slope,” a term I will use interchangeably with “Far West.” For my purposes, the region’s coherence has less to do with political boundaries and more to do with patterns of trade, investment, social intercourse, and natural resource flows. Thus, the Far West’s dimensions constantly changed over time. As this essay will illustrate, California (and San Francisco in particular) remained the region’s nerve center prior to 1900; or, as Pomeroy wrote, its “catalyst, banker,
garden” that moved across the region with shocking speed. This transformation raises important questions about both the region and the nation’s industrial development. Was the Far West a “plundered province” in which primitive business operations merely answered eastern industry’s demands for raw materials? Did these firms develop from their own economic and natural environment, and could they compete with the East’s vertically integrated corporate machines? Finally, should the study of western industrialism ultimately direct our attention to national patterns or to the particularities of place? Western regionalists are drawn in the latter direction, given their attempts to distinguish the region as a unique social and ecological landscape. Borderlands and comparative historians, on the other hand, seek out the broader global relationships imbedded in capitalist transformation. This essay attempts to merge these two perspectives and asks: How should we understand the region’s rapid incorporation within the context of the larger industrializing nation?

Such a study and recognition of the Far West’s complex


character moves us beyond the confines of western regionalism and initiates a broader discussion about the modernizing nation. The typical narrative of U.S. industrialism emphasizes eastern factories and European immigrant laborers, manufacturing and Wall Street financiers, vertical chains of production guided by the "visible hand" of salaried managers. This narrative is rooted in a particular model of industrial expansion that accounts well for the emergence of manufacturing and transportation but fails to register the diversity of modern enterprise and its multifold consequences. As a result, the usual story of U.S. industrialization offers vital lessons about that well-trod beltway from Lowell, Massachusetts, to Detroit, but remarkably little about Butte copper mines, corporate land reclamation, or industry's environmental context.

The need for this broader picture derives partially from the glaring absence of western industrialism in American history textbooks and general syntheses, as well as more specialized studies. Alfred Chandler's *The Visible Hand*, although published almost a quarter-century ago, still maintains a powerful hold

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over the field of business and industrial history. In his model, the "modern business enterprise" emerged from the integration of mass-production manufacturing and marketing, gave rise to a new class of middle managers, and "grew and spread with surprising swiftness." Yet Chandler's representative firms "spread" only so far. Despite his attempt to chart the rise of this "most powerful institution...in the entire American economy," the westernmost portion of that economy and its industrial activity received no attention. American industry was therefore defined by its northeastern manifestations. The concept of regional "paths" to industrialism appeared more prominently in Walter Licht's recent synthesis, Industrializing America (1995). The late nineteenth century witnessed the creation of "a wide belt of industry that covered New England, the Middle Atlantic states, and the Midwest," Licht writes, as well as "new marketing centers in the West, and mineral discoveries in the mountain states." If Licht now had the opportunity to address the contours of far western industrialism, he quickly dismissed that opportunity because western developments "occurred as extensions of the industrial core of the country that stretched from Lynn, Massachusetts, to Philadelphia and west to Chicago." The West is clearly peripheral to the real story of American industrialization, and, according to Licht, major developments in the Pacific Coast states "would not occur until the twentieth century and would pale in comparison to the industrial heartland fashioned a century earlier."

In these and many other histories of American industrialization, close attention to regional variation is trumped by a preoccupation with big manufacturers ("by whatever route they took to size," Chandler writes) as the most important form of modern capitalist enterprise. Studies that depart from this focus on the manufacturing "giants," such as Philip Scranton's provocative book Endless Novelty (1997), suggest that significant

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11. Licht, Industrializing America, 117.
business innovations did transpire throughout the “infrequently visited sections of the American industrial terrain.”\textsuperscript{15} Scranton’s “tour” of the nation’s industrial terrain, however, still stops short of the American West. A similar inattention to western corporate geography is apparent in the leading journal of U.S. industrial enterprise, *Business History*—which has offered no article during the past decade on late nineteenth-century western business and industry.\textsuperscript{14}

Western historians have an opportunity to expand this narrow perspective by explicating regional paths as part of national trends.\textsuperscript{15} Fortunately, a number of western studies already point in this direction. Earl Pomeroy’s provocative synthesis *The Pacific Slope* (1966) rejected the image of the Far West as a place dominated by small-scale frontier enterprises prior to its rapid transformation during World War II. Instead, Pomeroy described a late nineteenth-century Far West commanded by major industries, rising metropolises, and politically savvy entrepreneurs. Pomeroy’s Pacific Slope, however, often leaned too heavily in an eastward direction: Bernard DeVoto’s “plundered province” thesis echoed throughout his study and turned the Far West into a semi-dependent offspring of eastern capital.\textsuperscript{16} By shortchanging

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} Between 1990 and 1999 *Business History* published three articles on twentieth-century firms or industries located in California, and one on a Montana-based department store. None of these studies attempted to treat regional characteristics in a broad, conceptual manner.
\end{itemize}
the autonomous ambitions of western capitalists. Pomeroy underestimated the dynamism and innovation that characterized the region’s investment patterns and business structures. William Robbins’s *Colony and Empire: The Capitalist Transformation of the American West* (1994) cast western industry in a stronger mold. Building on recent studies by historians and economic geographers, Robbins explored the West’s dual identity as resource-provider and capitalist powerhouse. This dialectic, Robbins suggested, gave the region a central position in the modern world’s “constantly changing network of capitalist relations.”17 Despite the different conclusions reached by Pomeroy and Robbins, they both detailed extensive industrial activity in the Far West prior to its widely acknowledged twentieth-century transformation.18 They also grappled with a rich vein of literature on western industries left untouched by historians who limit their purview to the nation’s industrial heartland.

A remarkably diverse literature is available to historians ready to produce this much-needed reassessment of the industrial Far West. Carey McWilliams, Rodman Paul, and Vernon Jensen pioneered the study of three leading business sectors: agriculture, mining, and timber. Paying close heed to the industries’ shifting locations, technologies, and labor forces, they revealed the rapid consumption of the western terrain by extractive enterprise. The continuing scholarly output on these three industries joins a proliferation of studies on other western business activities: irrigation and land reclamation, oil, fisheries, manufacturing, and the railroads. Individual firms, of course, often directed industrial growth in different sectors. Eschewing the tired and triumphalist approach to business history, recent


works on the Southern Pacific Railroad, Anaconda Copper, the Kern County Land Company, and Great Western Power offer a range of cross-disciplinary analyses. Add to these approaches the latest developments in western labor history, community studies, and Borderlands and environmental history, and the opportunity to reconceive the Far West as an industrial nexus raises intriguing possibilities.

This essay will utilize the large-scale firms at the center of far western industrialization to explore regional characteristics within a national context. These corporations shared several fundamental traits. First, built with private capital, western firms utilized public officials and the larger political state to secure vast holdings of land and natural resources. Second, investment capital and industrial entrepreneurship were remarkably dynamic; many companies created vertical production chains and spun off subsidiaries in different business sectors. Third, these corporations operated out of metropolitan cores and incorporated peripheral hinterlands into urban markets and business networks. San Francisco (and California as a whole) propelled


this regional system. Finally, industrial enterprise in the Far West thrived by engineering natural landscapes and mobilizing large labor forces. Rather than two separate phenomena, changing nature and exploiting labor reinforced one another throughout the region.21 These characteristics were certainly not exceptional to western industry; indeed, they illustrate some of the common processes through which industry emerged across the nation. At the same time, they represent the particular emphases and shared foundations of far western firms, allowing us to conceptualize an industrializing America that incorporates regional patterns, a greater diversity of enterprises, and the natural environment.

The corporate land rush: Claiming Western resources

The 1849 rush to California’s goldfields captured worldwide attention. During the five years following James Marshall’s discovery at Sutter’s Mill, miners extracted over $400 million in gold from the Sierra placers. By 1875, $1 billion in gold and $300 million in silver had been sifted and blasted by mining corporations from the Far West’s landscape.22 This wealth created enormous capital for regional and national investment, while the inflow of merchants and laborers turned the Far West into a microcosm of the world’s business community. The simultaneous rush on Pacific Slope lands, however, received less attention than the rush on western minerals. Settlers of modest means grabbed small plots by hook and crook, while capitalized investors utilized land laws and public networks to carve out vast expanses of the region’s terrain. Rather than regulating access to the public domain, federal land policy represented an institutional acquiescence quickly exploited by Gold Rush profiteers


to accumulate western acres *en masse*, including the prime estates of debt-ridden *rancheros*. Industrial enterprise across the Far West secured its footing on this basis, quite literally from the ground up.

The extractive character of most Pacific Slope industries made extensive landownership a crucial and powerful corporate asset. For instance, California and Pacific Northwest timber companies clear-cut large stretches of old-growth redwood, ponderosa pine, and Douglas-fir based on private rights to millions of acres. Highly capitalized mining corporations extracted the Far West’s deposits of gold and silver through contiguous mineral claims and quickly reinvested their profits in other land-based operations. The Southern Pacific and Northern Pacific railroads, financed by government gifts of public lands, remained the region’s largest landowning corporations throughout the nineteenth century. By striking private deals with western industrialists, these railroads passed their bounty into the hands of other rising business enterprises. Land, therefore, provided the means for capitalized industries to expand across the Far West.


Few firms better exemplify this process than the land, cattle, water, and meatpacking enterprise Miller & Lux. Henry Miller and Charles Lux arrived in Gold Rush San Francisco in 1850 and soon formed a meat wholesaling partnership. Cultivating strong ties with San Francisco’s leading bankers, the two partners began integrating the business backwards by purchasing herds of cattle, acquiring extensive rangeland, and developing irrigation systems to grow fodder. At the center of the business lay the lucrative meat markets that fed San Francisco’s burgeoning population. From there, Miller & Lux’s business fanned out into the Santa Clara and San Joaquin valleys, northern Nevada, and eastern Oregon. Through the artful use of public land laws and government agents, the firm soon owned over 1.25 million acres, though Miller suspected his company’s strategically located riparian water rights allowed it to “control ten times the land we actually own.” With meat sales totaling over $2 million dollars annually and a 1,200-person labor force to rival most eastern factories, Miller & Lux ranked among the nation’s top 200 “industrial enterprises” at the turn of the century.

The staggering scale of Miller & Lux’s landholdings represents only a magnification of the pattern for ranching and industrial agriculture in the Far West. By 1870 the thirteen largest landowners in the San Joaquin Valley (most of whom lived in San Francisco) owned on average 238,464 acres each.


Friedlander's huge spread of San Joaquin land produced wheat that his chartered ships carried directly to Great Britain. William Chapman mixed extensive agriculture, cattle raising, and canal development in the valley with the nation's largest "land scrip" business in San Francisco. Hugh Glenn developed the largest wheat operation on the Sacramento River before blazing a trail to eastern Oregon's unclaimed expanse—a trail soon crowded with other California land monopolists.  

Agricultural, ranching, and railroad companies provide obvious case studies of extensive landownership serving the needs of corporate enterprise. Early lumber firms reveal similar consolidations: the California Redwood Company, the Pacific Lumber Company, the Oregon Lumber Company, and the Baker City Lumber Company amassed enormous holdings of timberland between 1850 and 1900. A whole new phase in this industry's land consolidation commenced when the Weyerhaeuser Company relocated from the Great Lakes region to the Pacific Northwest in 1900 and purchased 900,000 acres from the Northern Pacific Railroad. Other Pacific Slope land-based industries operated at smaller scales of acquisitiveness. Oil, irrigation, and mining enterprises sought riches through strategic claims of land, minerals, and water. In these business sectors, a claim's utility and performance—rather than its size—drove industrial success.

How should these firms with their massive land acquisitions influence our view of industrial America? The rush to the land by industrial enterprises reflected a strategic awareness of the region's untapped wealth and the means through which to tap


31. On the lumber industry, see Nancy Langston, Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares: The Paradox of Old Growth in the Inland West (Seattle, 1995); William G. Robbins, Lumberjacks and Legislators: Political Economy of the United States Lumber Industry, 1890–1941 (College Station, Texas, 1982); Cox, Mills and Markets.

it. In the region’s highly competitive marketplace, the supposedly “open” space of the Far West produced a “sooner” mentality toward landownership that put Oklahoma’s notorious line-jumpers to shame. A careful reading of Land Office records and government land laws, however, suggests that far western industrialists also developed highly rational land acquisition strategies. This business behavior, which utilized state institutions to further private enterprise, paralleled rather than borrowed from eastern industrial tactics. As Thomas McCraw has argued for eastern enterprise, the roots of western corporate development also “lay deep within the political state.”

The Far West’s business leaders consistently relied upon private-public reciprocity and professional expertise to build their firms on the public domain. George Hearst, who left the Comstock Lode with enough silver to become truly rich in the Black Hills and Butte, repeatedly enlisted U.S. Geological Survey mineral experts to study his mines. Government geologists were only too happy to oblige, since Hearst had supported their survey during his tenure on the California State Committee of Mines and Mining Interests. Generous land grants to western railroads (24 million acres to the Southern Pacific, 7.3 million acres to the Central Pacific, 40 million acres to the Northern Pacific, 19.1 million acres to the Union Pacific) represented extreme cases of political lobbying and corporate welfare. Such grants directly aided private railroads and indirectly supported other western industrialists who received insider information on railroad land sales. Foreign capitalists also learned the ropes. When alien exclusion land laws in the 1870s threatened the interests of British mining investors, they sought help from California Senator Aaron A. Sargent. Sargent responded to the British lobby with an 1875 bill protecting their mineral claims.

34. Peterson, The Bonanza Kings, 103.
35. Frederick Cleveland and Fred Wilbur Powell, Railroad Promotion and Capitalization in the United States (New York, 1909), 251.
36. The British lobby was headed by Foreign Minister Sir Edward Thornton. Clark C. Spence, British Investment and the American Mining Frontier, 1860–1901 (Ithaca, N.Y., 1958), 191–205. Sargent was only one of many western senators assisting land barons and industrialists in this manner. Other prominent senatorial plunderers include California’s Leland Stanford, Nevada’s William Stewart and
Indeed, Sargent proved one of the most industrious allies of far western enterprise. In 1877 he pushed through the Desert Lands Act at the behest of James Haggin’s Kern County Land Company, allowing Haggin to consolidate over 100,000 acres of Kern County real estate by employing hundreds of “dummy” entrymen, many of whom were public servants at the San Francisco mint.37

Such land grabs have provided some of the richest (and often misleading) anecdotes in U.S. history. To claim vast stretches of alleged swampland under the Swamp and Overflowed Lands Act, Henry Miller (of Miller & Lux) supposedly sat in a rowboat perched atop a horse-drawn wagon that was pulled across entire townships of California grassland, allowing cohorts to testify that Miller had crossed the terrain in a boat.38 Miller’s dubious captaincy offers a great story, but it unfortunately distorts the very modern and corporate methods by which the firm raided the public domain. Miller & Lux did claim over 200,000 acres of “swampland” between 1860 and 1890. Yet this cumulative land grab resulted from the firm’s careful coordination of information by an entire cadre of agents: public surveyors, land scrip dealers, lobbyists in Sacramento and Washington, and eventually, county tax assessors.39 For a modernizing enterprise like Miller & Lux, the boat proved unnecessary.

The colorful land acquisition story should not obscure the early formation and trajectory of industrial expansion in the Far West. Through extensive landownership or smaller strategic claims, these enterprises consolidated their control over the re-

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38. Miller and his mythic boat were apparently omnipresent in the Far West. The same story was reported in California, Oregon, and Nevada during the late nineteenth century.

region's resources. While landownership and resource extraction functioned to varying degrees in eastern and southern industrial development, the drive to consolidate land and resources as a long-term business strategy played out most dramatically in the Far West. It was here in a region where extractive enterprises demanded unparalleled assets in land that property acquisitions held the greatest importance for the nation's industrial development. The dominance of extractive industries in the Far West, however, has led many western and U.S. historians to view the region as merely an "economic colony" or a business "frontier" of the industrial East.40 While eastern capitalists certainly reached west of the Mississippi for resources and investment opportunities, the Far West had no lack of venture capitalists and industrialists ready to exploit all market niches.

**The dynamism of Far Western enterprise**

The West as "plundered province" or "colony" thesis—argued most forcefully by Bernard DeVoto in 1934 but inspired over fifty years before—has always relied upon a particular characterization of the region and its business enterprises.41 The West was imagined as an untouched warehouse of natural resources prior to American rule, with delivery clerks quietly awaiting their opportunity to "unlock" the "treasure vaults."42 The new American managers of this vast natural wealth were junior partners in plunder, ready to "pour [the region's] resources into the expanding productive system."43 The western-based firms that existed, furthermore, survived in a state of arrested development. Large, cumbersome, and purely extractive in purpose, they did not pursue the organizational trends that reshaped American industry during the postbellum decades. In the fam-


43. Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America*, 23.
ily snapshot of American business, western firms remained the ugly cousins to the captains of industry.

Recent literature on the region’s business structures and strategies challenges this image.44 Many far western firms were among the most dynamic capitalist enterprises in the nation, a dynamism not deriving from eastern trends but instead springing from their own social and ecological surroundings. Pacific Coast industrialists recognized both the scope of business opportunities and the scale of regional, national, and international markets. Certainly, the far western terrain had its share of home-spun snake oil salesmen and debt-ridden speculators. But a different sort of business enterprise had a more lasting impact on the region’s economy and society: highly rationalized, vertically integrated firms directed by imperious and innovative leaders.

The Central Pacific Railroad’s phenomenal growth, so legendary that it seems almost preordained, should caution us against reading the firm’s ultimate success backward into history. When east met west on May 10, 1869, the future of California’s railroad venture looked promising. The Big Four (Leland Stanford, Collis Huntington, Charles Crocker, and Mark Hopkins) controlled both the main artery of commerce into the Far West and millions of acres of land along that artery. Rails and land provided a sound foundation for constructing a western empire, but the Central Pacific’s subsequent actions transformed it into a truly dynamic enterprise. First and foremost, Stuart Daggett explained, was the creation of a “comprehensive system” of ownership and management “held together by leases and stock control.”45 By the fall of 1870, the Central Pacific had gained control of most smaller lines in the Far West—the Western Pacific, the California & Oregon, the San Joaquin Valley, the San Francisco & San Jose, and the San Francisco, Oakland, & Alameda railroad companies. The Big Four next created a giant parent company, the Southern Pacific, to manage all subsidiary operations and build up new transportation hubs like El Paso for the Southwest.46

44. See Malone, The Battle for Butte; Robbins, Colony and Empire; Anderson and Hill, eds., The Political Economy of the American West; Schwantes, Hard Traveling; Peterson, The Bonanza Kings.

45. Stuart Daggett, Chapters in the History of the Southern Pacific (New York, 1922), 140, 142.

46. Niles M. Hansen, Border Economy: Regional Development in the Southwest
on a grand scale resulted. As in eastern industrial firms, five departments organized the different lines, distinct departments oversaw various corporate functions, and hundreds of mid- and upper-level managers carried out daily operations. The owners concentrated their energies on marketing the region’s most valuable products: agricultural land, townsites, political offices, and the California Dream itself. Far from a *fait accompli* in 1869, William Deverell argues, the Southern Pacific’s highly organized decision making and “corporate expansion at a fearsome rate” led to its dominant role in the region.47

Other large-scale enterprises in the Far West also organized their corporate structures for long-term growth and competitive advantage. Miller & Lux developed different departments for land management, cattle production, political lobbying, engineering, accounting, marketing, and so on. The firm thereby addressed particular business concerns through different channels. The two partners handled major deals (such as negotiating preferential shipping routes and freight rebates from the Southern Pacific), the slaughterhouse superintendent determined the flow of cattle into the abattoir, and the firm’s land and engineering departments carried out reclamation projects to ensure irrigated rangeland in times of drought.48 Foreign companies also found the Far West a particularly friendly environment for corporate innovation. The British grain shipping firm of Balfour, Guthrie & Company opened its San Francisco office in 1869 to take advantage of California’s booming markets and wheat production. The 1870s depression prompted the firm’s conservative managers to respond creatively by branching into mining, insurance, oil development, real estate, and other businesses in San Francisco, Tacoma, Portland, Seattle, and Los Angeles. By 1900 Balfour, Guthrie’s organizational capacities facilitated dozens of thriving subsidiaries.49


In the mining industry, corporate expansion through spin-off subsidiaries developed as a common strategy against business risks. Following the early lead of California bankers and businessmen William Sharon and William Ralston, the San Francisco-based silver kings John Mackay, Jim Fair, James Flood, and William O’Brien (also known as the Irish Big Four) operated a handful of banks and mining companies in the Comstock region, supplying their mines with water through the subsidiary Virginia and Gold Hill Water Company. In Montana, Samuel T. Hauser controlled numerous mining companies during the 1880s (including the Helena Mining and Reduction Co., the Livingston Coke and Coal Co., and the Gregory Consolidated Mining Co.) before consolidating them all into the Helena and Livingston Smelting and Reduction Company. The Anaconda Copper Mining Company managed a staggering array of smaller firms in mining, water, coal, and lumber, while the Anaconda itself represented just one of many operations controlled by its owners. In the end, charting the interests of the Far West’s mining industrialists is a dizzying exercise.

Corporate spin-offs and consolidations, however, reveal something significant: These firms were not behind the organizational curve but actually primary agents of managerial and industrial innovation. Diversification, as the above examples suggest, offered a means for western companies to control different layers of the production process in a highly competitive market. Vertical integration moved these firms beyond resource extraction in one industry to multiple extractive sectors, followed by the processing and marketing of products. Diversification also allowed firms to experiment in developing markets or transcend geographic boundaries and develop subsidiaries across vast distances. Beneath the Far West’s seemingly haphazard, hit-and-run business activity lay an innovative and coordinated form of corporate capitalism—a form entirely missed by historians who limit their perspective to the “industrial belt which stretched from the eastern seaports to the Great Lakes.”

The dynamism of U.S. business enterprise relied in part on

cutting-edge technology and expertise, and the Far West excelled in this sphere of industrial experimentation. California companies developed explosives and mineral-processing methods (like the Washoe mercury process) for use throughout the region, and such technology soon "fanned out across the globe."54 The region attracted many of the world's leading railroad, irrigation, and petroleum engineers, who utilized the Far West as an experimental station for the latest technological innovations. Mining expert John Hays Hammond, railroad engineer William Hood, and petroleum geologist Edwin T. Dumble all worked in western ventures before taking their expertise abroad.55 California State Engineers William Hammond Hall and James Schuyler developed the nineteenth century's most detailed land and irrigation surveys that agriculture, oil, and power companies exploited for decades to come.56 A crucial asset to the region's major industries, the migration of technical expertise also shows how western corporations successfully harnessed the constant flow of information and technology for their specific needs.

Business enterprise in the Gilded Age had no scarcity of failed schemes, and the Far West did not differ in this regard.57 At the other end of the spectrum, however, many firms grew in size and power by tapping technical expertise, adapting multi-layered corporate structures, and creating modern managerial systems. Eastern industry did not monopolize these innovations; indeed, the Far West's leading enterprises moved to the forefront of organizational trends. They integrated vertically, to control both production and marketing, and expanded horizontally across space, to capitalize on the hinterland's vast terrain. Moreover, they devised innovative techniques (in mining, timber,

56. William Hammond Hall, Report of the State Engineer to the Legislature of the State of California, Session of 1880 (Sacramento, Calif., 1880).
agriculture, and oil production) to modernize traditional extractive practices. Investors from around the globe amassed large returns on the region’s industrial growth, and many investors undeniably viewed the place as merely a resource colony. But the Far West developed its own network of power brokers, and, for most of the late nineteenth century, they operated out of San Francisco.

Creating an urban system

Exhibiting no lack of ambition, Gold Rush San Francisco ignored the prospect of a colonial childhood and strove immediately to build an economic empire. The city’s adopted name signified this aspiration. It was known under Spanish and Mexican rule as the port of Yerba Buena (though the mission and presidio were called San Francisco), but Yankee merchants appropriated the name of San Francisco Bay in 1848 to attract the world’s ship captains to their side of the bay. The ploy worked exceedingly well. San Francisco quickly grew while the town sites across the bay languished.58 The city immediately became the conduit through which international migrants rushed to the gold country. Capital arrived with these global immigrants, complementing the unprecedented flow of wealth from the mineral-rich Sierra. Both sources of capital fueled San Francisco’s investments in its widening hinterland, and city leaders used this window of opportunity to establish extensive networks. By 1870 the “Pacific Coast Metropolis” had secured its regional position at the nexus of a “sprawling financial web.”59 To the extent that

58. This and many subsequent developments of San Francisco lend support to Allan Pred’s “asymmetric” model of urban expansion. Pred argues that a city’s extraregional relationships are often more significant than its connection to the surrounding hinterland. As the following discussion suggests, San Francisco was tied to a global economy from its inception (and even prior to American rule, when Californios exchanged hides and tallow with international traders). At the same time, central place theory (and William Cronon’s recent revision of it) still holds a great deal of analytical power when applied to the case of San Francisco and its periphery, particularly in respect to specific firms that grew outward from the city center. See Allan Pred, *City-Systems in Advanced Economies* (London, 1977); Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*.

we conceptualize industrial America around the growth of powerful cities (not just manufacturing centers), San Francisco merits considerable attention.

San Francisco's regional power stemmed in large measure from the city's centralization of finance capital, legal offices, and corporate boardrooms. The early San Francisco "bank crowd" included entrepreneurs from around the country: John Parrott of Missouri, William Tecumseh Sherman and William Ralston of Ohio, Darius Ogden Mills of New York, and the St. Louis banking house of Page & Bacon. Gold Rush lawyers and partnerships—Henry Huntley Haight, Aaron A. Sargent, Tobin & Tobin, and Halleck, Peachy & Billings—set up shop and quickly turned real property into a highly liquid commodity. Merchants and transplanted capitalists from all walks of life drew upon these financial and legal talents to expand their operations, engross the public domain, and turn city-based ventures into vast regional enterprises.60 In each arena, the rising business elites were rarely the pure, rugged individualists they imagined themselves. Like their eastern brethren, San Francisco capitalists forged alliances in the city's dynamic marketplace and coordinated their activities through powerful networks.

For much of the late nineteenth century, the headquarters of almost every leading western enterprise was situated within a few city blocks of San Francisco's California Street. This business district, like those of Boston, New York, and Chicago in previous years, organized trade relations with its emerging hinterland communities. But perhaps more than anywhere else in the nation, urban-based enterprises on the Pacific Coast quickly moved beyond commercial trade and began building their factories in the fields. Claus Spreckels's sugar empire is a case in point. Between the Civil War and the depression of the 1890s, Spreckels built one of the nation's largest sugar corporations through his consolidation of the San Francisco-based California

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Sugar Refinery Company, the Oceanic Steamship Company, and the Spreckelsville sugar plantation in Hawaii. Through this process, Spreckels successfully integrated transportation, factory production, marketing, and a large labor force to realize economies of scale and scope. However, Spreckels’s ownership of hinterland resources—over 40,000 acres of sugarcane fields in Hawaii and a larger sugar beet plantation in California’s Salinas Valley—provided his means of controlling sugar production.61 From its corporate headquarters in San Francisco, Spreckels’s sugar enterprise bridged the nineteenth-century hinterland of rural California with the emerging Pacific Rim business frontier.62

Industrial development in the Far West often made the binary division between “urban” and “rural” places unstable at best. The mining industry’s growth illustrates this point and challenges Walter Licht’s claim that industrial production “does not transpire in the countryside.”63 As surface mining gave way to hydraulic and quartz mining (with the need for greater capital, technology, and skilled labor), a succession of industrialized mining towns appeared in San Francisco’s periphery.64 The first of these urban clusters outside of California itself, Nevada’s Comstock Lode, offered a highly profitable proving ground for San Francisco’s industrial planners. Following the silver and gold strike at Washoe in 1859, the Comstock boomed as capital and laborers traveled east from San Francisco to Nevada while high-grade ore was sent the opposite direction. The growth of the Comstock—financed in large part by San Francisco capitalists D. O. Mills, William Ralston, George Hearst, Lloyd Tevis, and the partnership of Mackey, Fair, Flood & O’Brien—sent values on the San Francisco Mining Exchange through the roof, causing it briefly to surpass the New York Stock Exchange as the largest stock market in the world.65 Between 1859 and

63. Licht, Industrializing America, xiv.
65. Joseph L. King, The History of the San Francisco Stock and Exchange Board
1882, the region's sixty principal mines generated an estimated $292,726,310 in precious metals.66

As the Comstock thrived, an urban network of towns emerged surrounding Virginia City—the city Mark Twain called "half colony and half suburb" to San Francisco.67 But how should we define the Comstock region: as urban, rural, colony, or suburb? Like many eastern industrial sites, the Comstock held many different location characteristics as its capital output ebbed and flowed. Yet, as Eugene Moehring contends, it remained one "subsystem" in a larger whole during its boom years, "a peripheral extension of the California urban system created by the earlier Gold Rush" and supporting San Francisco's market expansion.68 When San Franciscans saw diminishing returns on their investments, they took their profits to the next promising site in the urban system. In the wake of San Francisco's industrial machine sat a "junkyard of dreams," a rusting and depleted Comstock region that looked like so many other post-boom settlements.69 Unlike the permanence of eastern manufacturers, industrial production in the Pacific states had a far more dynamic and transitory nature.

As industrial expansion reshaped both urban and rural places, it also supported U.S. expansion and conquest. Stephen Aron and others have argued that U.S. expansion played out through overlapping patterns of "conquest, colonization, and capitalist consolidation" across a "Greater West" from Appalachia to the Pacific.70 Far western industry played a major role in this process during the late nineteenth century. In the Comstock, for instance, violent attacks against Nevada's Paiute Indians during the 1860 Pyramid Lake War transpired at the height of San Fran-

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cisco's capital investments in the region. Here and elsewhere across the West—George Hearst's subsequent move into South Dakota's Black Hills serves as an obvious example—industrial interests functioned as co-conspirators in the charge against native peoples. What Richard Brown has termed the "western war of incorporation" ultimately included a range of violent participants, from Indians and labor leaders to company henchmen and the U.S. cavalry. But it was corporate enterprise that repeatedly sought out and received government aid for its campaigns.

The decline of San Francisco's regional power at the turn of the century derived in part from increased competition by eastern investors and corporations. Land reformer Henry George had forecast this development as early as 1868, and the following decades witnessed greater pressures by national conglomerates on regional business systems. But an equally important factor for San Francisco's waning power was the city's very success at industrial expansion. San Francisco capitalists invested heavily in other West Coast cities between 1860 and 1890: Darius Ogden Mills in Portland, Leland Stanford, Henry E. Huntington, and E. J. "Lucky" Baldwin in Los Angeles, and dozens of San Franciscans in the bayside communities of San Jose and Oakland. For the short term, investments in these peripheral cities strengthened San Francisco's position as the regional financier. The window of opportunity San Franciscans had once enjoyed began to close, however, when they faced the simultaneous challenge of national corporations from the East and urban upstarts on the city's periphery.

**Engineering an industrial landscape**

On a most basic level, industrial capitalism transformed the relationships between people, work, and their communities. When a master craftsman in New York City assumed the new post of factory foreman or when a domestic worker sought em-

73. George, "What the Railroad Will Bring Us."
ployment in a textile plant, the result included significant shifts in personal identity and community memberships. Industrial work, a growing body of literature tells us, reshuffled the social bonds and tensions in nineteenth-century America.\(^75\) Yet the major studies of U.S. industrial workers find little of interest in the American West, beyond occasional references to the Western Federation of Miners.\(^76\) Even the premier journal in the field, *Labor History*, gives scant attention to far western workers and industry, and almost no mention of the period before World War I.\(^77\) As a result, the perspectives of laborers like Joseph Warren Matthews are left unaccounted. Matthews—whose story opened this article—attempted to retain title to his small farm in California by earning wages from a series of corporate enterprises across the Far West. This new work life altered his social status and personal identity, to say nothing of his wife’s added responsibilities on their farm. Matthews, however, rarely wrote about such issues. Instead, his diary and letters are filled with observations of his new natural surroundings and the work tasks that enmeshed him in the landscape.

Matthews’s experiences reveal one of the primary characteristics of the industrial Far West: The extraction and processing of nature’s wealth demanded large labor forces constantly engaged with the physical surroundings. This was not an endgame of “conquering” nature but a daily interface linking

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77. A brief survey of *Labor History* between 1990 and 1999 reveals one article dealing with the late nineteenth-century West and approximately one article per volume on the twentieth-century West. Most of these essays focus on either Los Angeles or Seattle and the Pacific Northwest.
workers with natural landscapes. For instance, in 1899 Matthews described the process of breaking and irrigating a new 800-acre alfalfa field on a corporate ranch:

There is an immense crowd of men and horses and mules working at this job...about 60 or 70 men and from 200 to 250 animals working at it. First the land has to be surveyed off so as to tell where to excavate the ditches and throw up the levies... These ditches and levies are then excavated and thrown up by ditching machines each drawn by ten mules then the high places are plowed and scraped off so as to level up the land inside of each check. Then followed the Stockton gang plows and each check is plowed separately to keep from tearing the levies down then comes the seed sower which sow a light seeding of barley which is harrowed in then follows the seed sower which sows the alfalfa seed on the same land to be followed by other harrows for covering it. Then follows the box hole diggers who dig holes in the canals for putting in lumber gates for damming up the water for flooding the land then comes the carpenters box and bridge builders then the boxes have to be filled around with dirt and puddled in with water. Then the land must be flooded to bring up the seed.

Then, Matthews failed to add, came his work. After preparing the land for irrigation, laborers like Matthews spent their days and nights moving the water across a series of irrigation checks and keeping the canal walls in proper shape. Each stage of the process involved shaping the landscape. Multiply this 800-acre field by the many millions of irrigated acres in the Far West, and one can appreciate industrialized agriculture’s demand for wage labor.

Wage laborers—both landless bindle stiffs and wage-seeking farmers like Matthews—filled the payrolls of all Pacific Slope


companies, populating not just industrial cities but also the rural hinterlands organized by capitalist enterprises. Lured by reports of high wages in the Far West, this complex laboring population often received less pay than expected and ample opportunity to keep moving on.81 “It wasn’t getting here that mattered,” concluded one of John Steinbeck’s pioneer characters, “it was movement and westering.”82 The region’s boom-and-bust economy and the seasonal nature of many extractive industries certainly contributed to phenomenally high transience rates; but the oversupply of skilled labor also allowed employers to hire and fire at will and thereby construct an army of unemployed migrants.83 Matthews may have been privileged in this regard. His working route across California, Alaska, and Washington took place over a decade rather than a year, and it included numerous long-term positions. Matthews was also fortunate in his ability to return home when he desired. “I don’t expect to stay here [in my present job],” Matthews wrote his wife one spring morning from the San Joaquin Valley, “[I] am getting real homesick and don’t think I can stand to stay away much longer.”84

The region’s workforce exhibited as much racial and ethnic diversity as any in the world. Late nineteenth-century migrants from around the globe mixed and competed with the earlier migrants from Asia, Europe, Mexico, the eastern states, and resident borderland populations. Matthews appeared to accept this social diversity as simply one part of industrial wage labor. His road work crew in rural Washington was composed largely of Scandinavian immigrants; in the Watsonville sugar plant he worked side by side with Mexican Americans; and in Alaska he joined an international cast of workers thrown to-

84. Joseph Warren Matthews to Rebecca Matthews, April 2, 1897, Matthews Collection.
gather by gold rush conditions. As in eastern industrial sites, far western work crews often became ethnic enclaves where group membership offered a chance at steady employment. But the region’s industrial employers also saw social diversity as a factor to administer and control. For instance, Matthews’s fellow irrigators (while employed by Miller & Lux) were almost exclusively Italian immigrants; the ranch cooks were Chinese; and the vaqueros were Mexican. Miller & Lux’s long-term employees (foremen, superintendents, and managers) were either native-born whites or northern European immigrants.85 Some of these ethnic and racial boundaries were permeable—hence, Matthews’s placement on a work crew comprised of Italians—but in the vast majority of cases these boundaries were crossed only by the privileged Anglo workers.86

If the social composition and work assignments of western laborers varied across industrial sectors, the overarching task of engineering the natural landscape remained remarkably consistent. Reducing this process to the simple “exploitation” of natural resources fails to credit far western enterprise with much ingenuity; indeed, it fails to recognize industry’s goal of creating an orderly and efficient landscape. The Northwest timber industry, for example, harvested trees with the greatest speed allowed by technology. But those same companies and work crews also constructed roads and rails to transport the harvest, built dams on rivers to hold logs, cut fire breaks, and constructed mills to finish the product.87 Each component of work sought to replace complex natural systems with efficient systems of production, and each stage placed laborers in the midst of this transformation.

Engineering the land often required an industry to cross extractive sectors and alter the land in multiple ways. As mining evolved from early sluices to hydraulic and hard-rock technologies, companies increasingly turned rivers from their beds and clear-cut surrounding hillsides of timber to provide supports for

85. For Miller & Lux, ethnic segmentation rationalized such factors as wage differentials, duration of employment, and job assignments. See Igler, “Industrial Cowboys,” chapter 5.

86. For data on the firm’s labor segmentation practices among irrigation workers, see the Dos Palos “Time Books,” 1899–1901, carton 737, Miller & Lux Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

87. Langston, Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares, 80-85.
mine shafts. Commenting in 1876 on the need for lumber in Nevada’s mining districts, journalist Dan De Quille noted: “The Comstock lode may truthfully be said to be the tomb of the forests of the Sierras. Millions on millions of feet of lumber are annually buried in the mines, nevermore to be resurrected.”

When timber played out on Lake Tahoe’s east side, De Quille observed, mining companies sent their agents back across the summit to harvest timber on the lake’s west side. The firms built elaborate networks of railroads, ferries, sawmills, and flumes to transport the lumber for the mining district’s underground skeleton. Thus, reorganizing the landscape’s natural systems held an array of environmental and social consequences—some easily recognizable, others not apparent for decades.

Environmental changes directly affecting human communities received the most immediate attention. Deforestation led to wildlife declines and unsightly vistas, but clear-cut logging also polluted the rivers used by local agriculturalists. The resulting complaints by downstream irrigators were made primarily on utilitarian grounds; they demanded protection of their precious water supply, particularly in drought years. Hydraulic mining in the Sierra (and elsewhere) created similar tensions by flooding rivers with sludge and tailings. As a result, Sacramento Valley agriculturalists in the 1860s and 1870s faced the impossible task of holding their streams in one location while the riverbeds filled with mining debris. The 1884 Woodruff v. North Bloomfield ruling severely curtailed such pollution by hydraulic mining companies, marking the ascendancy of agribusiness over mining interests in one locale. But Woodruff did not lead to a reassessment of watershed destruction or other problems caused by the industry, such as the dumping of poisonous quicksilver into a water supply, massive riparian erosion, and toxic air pollution in cities like Butte and Leadville. Toxic emissions raised periodic complaints by workers and their families, but the standard industry response left little room for argument: “The

thicker the fumes the greater our financial vitality, and Butteites feel best when the fumes are thickest.93 Whether in Homestead, Pennsylvania, or Butte, Montana, risks like respiratory disease came with the job description.

If some environmental problems gained attention for their immediate social costs, the more gradual shifts in ecological communities usually escaped notice. The San Joaquin land upon which Joseph Warren Matthews worked his night irrigation shift had teemed with wildlife and free-flowing rivers until the 1840s. European grasses had gradually been replacing native vegetation prior to this time, but grassland changes accelerated when market hunters cleared the ranges for domesticated cattle and sheep. Both the ranching industry and large-scale agriculturalists channelized the valley's waterscape in order to regulate its hydrological processes. The result was mixed: Agribusiness flourished on the landscape due to engineering technology and armies of migrant laborers, but extremely high levels of salinity soon caked much of the topsoil, a situation resolved by workers like Matthews flushing the salt downstream or into wastewater dumps. Decades later those wastewater dumps (containing a toxic brew of salinity and selenium) would teem with deformed wildlife.94

Environmental impact, however, was always a two-way street for Pacific Slope extractive industries. Far western firms razed the region's forests, excavated its mountainsides, rerouted its rivers, and reclaimed its wetlands, but natural forces still conditioned industry through factors beyond human control. Resource depletion forced many mining and timber enterprises to be as migrant as their workers. Natural cycles and chaotic events—from flood and drought to forest fires and tectonic shifts—presented constant risks to businesses built on the land. The conditions that nature prescribed to industry were rarely understood or followed, yet those limits nonetheless repre-

93. The Butte Miner, n.d.; quoted in Smith, Mining America, 75.
presented an additional concern to the usual risks experienced by eastern manufacturing enterprises. In the end, the natural environment shaped the industrial process as much as land-based firms shaped their natural surroundings.

The prevailing emphasis on the eastern "factory system" as the "symbol" of the industrializing nation suggests the triumph of modern enterprise and the separation of production from the natural environment.95 The factory walls surrounding industrial workers symbolized this bifurcated world: Inside the modern factory industry held sway, while outside the walls remained traditional forms of production and natural resources.96 This narrative explains a great deal about the transition to industrial capitalism. But if industrialism obscured the connections between production and the natural environment for many Americans, it clarified that connection for laborers employed by land-based corporate enterprises. Making the desert "blossom as a rose" for industrial agriculture or razing the hills of Seattle to shape a new city placed workers in direct contact with the environment, and these endeavors were part and parcel of western large-scale enterprise. Industrialization took place in an environmental context. By ignoring this dynamic (despite recent studies by environmental historians), we miss a powerful force of ecological change as well as the human agents of that change.97

Conclusion

The Southern Pacific Railroad, Anaconda Copper, the Pacific Lumber Company, the California Sugar Refinery Company, and Miller & Lux—such far western enterprises offer crucial insights to the nation's divergent industrial paths, and yet they rarely appear in general syntheses or more specialized accounts of the nation's transformation. Even the most comprehensive works like Alfred Chandler's The Visible Hand consign important western enterprises to the appendices and endnotes.98 Eastern

95. Nelson, Managers and Workers, ix.
97. Steinberg, Nature Incorporated, 10–17; Smith, Mining America, 5–24; Brechin, Imperial San Francisco, 13–70.
98. A large number of western firms actually do appear in Chandler's tables and appendices, which makes their lack of treatment in the text all the more disappointing. See Chandler, The Visible Hand, 503–513.
firms ultimately define the processes of business modernization and economic consolidation that reshaped the nation during the late nineteenth century. From Andrew Carnegie's steel conglomerate to the Chicago meatpacking companies, the growth of modern industry symbolized the nation in the midst of dynamic change. While companies merged, integrated production, and built marketing systems to feed consumer demands, small proprietors faced increased competition and workers searched for security in new organizational forms. Despite the restricted geography and contested meanings of this narrative, it still signifies a crucial transition in American political, economic, and social history. By recognizing that far western firms operated at the heart of this activity, we can understand industrialism as a historical process that enveloped an entire nation and contained important regional contingencies.

How should we proceed toward a more inclusive reading of late nineteenth-century industrial America? What will that new image offer? One place to begin is by appreciating the diversity of the nation's industrial landscapes. Studies of eastern industry largely emphasize the built environment. Eastern manufacturers centralized production and the laboring population in one-industry towns, manufacturing cities, and industrial suburbs—all urban clusters centered on the traditional factory system. The massive and imposing factory symbolized both industry's modern character and its dominant landscape. The Pacific Slope's land-based enterprise, on the other hand, often dispersed production and workers across vast rural areas. The work locations frequently changed as industries exhausted resources, but the rural landscape nonetheless remained a primary environment for laborers and their work. The Far West therefore highlights the fact that industrialization knit urban and rural landscapes together in multiple ways. This broader industrial geography is germane not just to this region but can be investigated across the nation.

Reconceptualizing industrialism also requires paying closer attention to various environmental transformations. Indeed, by listening to the people employed by the Far West's largest enterprises, we discover that changes to the natural landscape held great meaning for laborers as they struggled to understand the industrial forces reshaping their lives. José Messa, for example, worked for a series of corporate enterprises in California dur-
ing the late nineteenth century. He witnessed the mining boom, the spread of ranching and irrigation companies, the oil industry's sudden emergence, and the phenomenal growth of agribusiness after 1900. But when asked to consider the most important transformation during his lifetime, Messa remembered above all the vast wetlands that once covered the San Joaquin Valley where he grew up, and replied, "the disappearance of the water." Messa understood the impact that industry had on the land, and he knew that seemingly simple environmental changes could signify far larger social and economic trends. His memory, although specific to just one western locale, reveals that the personal experience of industrial workers involved a range of factors beyond the shop floor—and often included the reorganization of ecological communities. The Far West provides a compelling site to explore the dynamic between industrial and environmental change and a model for investigating industrialism's broadest impacts elsewhere.

Greater attention to incipient causes and resulting paths should also figure more prominently in a new understanding of industrial America. The Far West's industrial economy sprang initially from the phenomenal Sierra gold strikes and the vast terrain seized during the Mexican-American War. The subsequent rush on land and resources constituted a pivotal phase in U.S. expansion and the growth of extractive industry. The region's capitalist enterprises thereafter developed clear emphases: innovative and multilayered approaches to resource extraction and processing, vast land acquisition to consolidate assets and overcome environmental risks, and large itinerant labor forces to engineer the physical landscape. Geopolitical lines posed few insurmountable barriers. As Samuel Truett and others have shown, western firms quickly expanded across the U.S.-Mexico borderlands in pursuit of resources and markets. The


point is not that these developmental and geographic characteristics were exceptional to western industry. Rather, they textured a national process with regional and transnational significance, revealing how different factors gave multifaceted shape to the central institution of the industrial revolution—the corporation.

Conceptualizing the Far West as a distinctly industrial region serves many ends. It encourages western historians to view the region’s cultural conflicts and social-ecological tensions within a framework of dynamic capitalist relations. It allows us to appreciate the interplay between western society’s transience and simultaneous desire for permanence. Joseph Warren Matthews, in this regard, was not simply a stable western farmer forced into the labor market to hold title to his land. Rather, he personified the experience of many rural Americans who struggled for security in a new economic environment. Emphasizing industrial change in the Far West also forces us to confront the growing conflicts between regional economies and national integration at the century’s turn. Miller & Lux, for instance, encountered just this problem in the 1890s when the Chicago Beef Trust appeared on the Pacific Coast and battled San Francisco meatpackers for market share. Finally, situating far western industrialism within a national context challenges all U.S. historians to write more inclusively about the growth of modern enterprise, its social and ecological repercussions, and its complex variations.

The image of a highly industrialized and corporate Far West outlined here is offered to make a point: Our studies of western incorporation will influence the larger picture of U.S. industrialization insofar as they establish regional patterns in national and international contexts. “Place” matters a great deal—it can reveal important distinctions about business origins, landscape change, and social responses to incorporation. But a retreat to western (or eastern) exceptionalism will fail to appreciate industry’s powerful manifestations throughout the entire country. A broader perspective on the nation’s dynamic transformation is overdue. One place to start is with the relationship of industrial change to region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.