Introduction
In this article I will outline the history of immigration, from the first populations of Native Americans, through European colonization and subsequent penetration of European, Asian, and more recent Latin American immigrant groups, and the effect on both the demography and rural development in the US West, from the distant past to the present. Each immigrant wave has had varying effects upon US population and landscape, and upon how rural areas developed and diffused from urban areas and small towns, into remote areas, from east to west through the late nineteenth century, a continuous, complex phenomenon, which can be difficult to articulate. The middle of the 20th century showed the opposite demographic trend, as large numbers of people moved from rural areas and small towns to cities, until the 1970s, when a rural reversal of population began to repopulate certain areas deemed desirable because of abundant natural resources with recreational and other amenities, including the Mountain and Pacific West.

History of Immigration in the United States and the US West
After working with two Native American Tribes, I am wary of documenting historical and anthropological movements that do not agree with tribal origin stories, some of which would contradict the historical record, in order not to offend native peoples. On the other hand, recent historical findings about the first immigrants to North America, do concur with some tribal origin stories: “like North America’s Native People, anthropologists and archeologists also have creation stories which explain how America’s native peoples came to be . . . it’s not a better story, just a different one” (Smith, 2007). Smith outlines the commonly accepted theory that Native peoples in North America came across a land bridge that formed between Siberia and Alaska during the last Ice Age, approximately 12,000 years ago. These groups were large game hunters, who entered the new continent when an ice free corridor opened in British Columbia; the migrating groups reached the Great Plains around 11,400 years ago, and then dispersed throughout the US and Mexico. Recently, however, this theory seems to be too simple, according to new findings. The crossing may have occurred on an ice-free corridor through the Pacific Coast of the Americas, as the oldest findings of inhabitation are in South America.

Additional theories support boat crossings from Europe, similar to the Viking boat routes of approximately 1,000 years ago, as there seem to be similarities in technologies and tools between the Solutrean people who resided in France and the Clovis people who were denizens of North America. Initial arrival of people in the Americas range from 12,500 to as much as 30,000 years ago (Smith, 2007). As the groups dispersed and settled, at first they mostly exhibited nomadic, hunter-gatherer, egalitarian socio-political systems, focused on subsistence, which later evolved, in some cultures, to sedentary settlements with very complicated, often extremely stratified class and economic systems. Later groups began to affect the landscape and society in different ways, by using fire, developing trade routes, and producing pottery. By 3,000-5,000 years ago, some peoples became full-time agriculturists and built cities of over 10,000 people, or built complex housing and apartments and roads connecting their settlements (Smith, 2007).
The “discovery” of America by Italian Christopher Columbus, under the auspices of Spain's King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella in 1492, began the process of European immigration to North America. This gradual influx would irrevocably change the lives of the first immigrants to the continent, which Columbus called “Indians.” The period of colonization, which England, France, and Spain engaged in from the 16th through the 18th century, eventually propelled two independent revolutions that led to the countries of the United States of America in 1776, and Mexico in 1821. Even before the first large wave of European immigration in 1820 to the US, Native Americans were in conflict with the early colonists and later citizens of both countries, and more established US residents complained about the poverty and pauperism of new immigrants, whose perceptions and realities concerning immigrants still remain in both rural and urban areas today. Initially, some European groups, such as William Penn’s colony of Pennsylvania, strove to treat Native peoples fairly, as well as some political figures in the early US government such as Secretary of War Henry Knox in 1789, who stated, “The Indians, being the prior occupants, possess the right of the soil. It cannot be taken from them unless by their free consent, or by the right of conquest in a just war. To dispossess them on any other principle would be a gross violation of the fundamental laws of nature, and of that distributive justice which is the glory of a great nation.” Others, such as the commissioner to Iroquois representatives negotiating the Treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1784, were not as generous—he stated the following, “You are mistaken in supposing you are a free nation . . . You are a subdued people, you have been overcome in war in which you entered into with us.” (Schmoop, 2012).

The first wave of immigrants arrived from Europe, due to more available ocean transport, and US employer recruitment, as well as hopes for a better life, and from 1820 to 1860, several million immigrants arrived, mostly from northeastern Europe. The 1862 Homestead Act, where new and more established residents could occupy vacant land for farming, dispersed even more people, and increased the migration toward the western US. The next wave of European immigrants hailed primarily from Southern Europe, and manifested differences of language, religions, and culture; therefore, assimilation into the existing society was more complicated. Though immigrants eventually became economically successful, social perceptions were that they were not. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 halted Chinese labor immigration. Also, governmental Acts limiting those who were poor and illiterate, and eventual passage of the Immigration and Nationality Acts of 1921 and 1924, set immigration quotas which were biased toward northwestern Europe. Therefore, 1930-1965 was a time of limited immigration, except for during WWII and with exceptions such as the Mexican Bracero program, where farmers recruited farmworkers from Mexico. Congress amended the Immigration and Nationalization Acts to eliminate country quotas in 1965, but the amendments also placed limits on numbers of people who could emigrate from Mexico (Gabbaccia, 2013). After this time, more immigrants from Latin America and Asia entered the US, who were poorer and also exhibited diversity in cultural, language, and appearance. Concerns about US worker replacement in agriculture and meat packing arose, as well as with other employment, as agricultural workers shifted to more permanent positions, and affected the economies of both urban and rural areas (Jensen, 2006).

Although the highest number immigrants, as well as illegal immigrants, to the US, now come from Mexico, and many US citizens have ancestors who lived in areas that originally belonged to Mexico—in the current states of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and California, which were acquired by the US through purchase or war in the 19th century. The Mexican Revolution (1916-1921) was an agrarian revolution that led to land reform and freedom from the oppressive rule of hacendia owners who forced peasants to work in plantations or on ranches as peons (Wikipedia, 2013). In the US, the Green Corn Rebellion highlighted the concerns of the Mexican Revolution—1,500 white, black, and Native American tenant farmers organized a working class rebellion against capitalist agriculture and the US government, which ultimately failed, but showed solidarity among disparate races who were oppressed, and originally immigrants or migrants to Oklahoma (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2009). Later protests by Mexican and Mexican-American migrant farmworkers in the 1960s to the present have been more successful in raising wages, values for piecework, or better living conditions through organized boycotts of the companies they work for or secondary boycotts of grocers who sell their products, although they faced strong opposition from their employers. These protesters organized groups such as the United Farmworkers and Families United for Justice (Kárání, 2013).

**Historical and Current Demographic Trends of the US West**

After the European westward expansion of the 17th-19th centuries, and the often violent appropriation of tribal territories by the US government, who relocated Native Americans either in other territories (such as Oklahoma) or on reservations, by the end of 19th century, the US population was relatively dispersed between cities, towns, and rural areas that were adjacent to cities and towns, or very remote. A 2004 report from Montana Fish, Wildlife
and Parks claimed that migration from east to west was “indeed the driving force. From the mid-18th century until the mid-19th century, the migration was more like a bleeding of population from the densely populated eastern core cities into adjacent territory to the west. After 1850, larger numbers of people moved in successive waves, starting with miners and homesteaders, followed by thousands of European immigrants and the native born citizens they were displacing” (p.1). Toward the end of that century, however, a reversal occurred, as agriculture became more mechanized and less labor intensive, and over several decades, rural residents flocked to the cities for better work opportunities and more amenities. This trend continued until 1970 (Johnson, 2006). President Teddy Roosevelt was extremely concerned about this rural depopulation and formed the Country Life Commission in 1909. The Commission noted several rural ‘deficiencies’ of unstable crop prices, lack of farm credit access, land ownership amalgamation, environmental degradation, lack of transportation and communication infrastructure, limited healthcare access, and a paucity of educational facilities. Despite modernization and post-modernization, these deficits still exist today (De Alessi, 2012). Surveys from this Commission indicated that “bad roads, parasitic middlemen, and a discriminatory transportation system” (Koch 2012, p.3) as problems by rural residents noted. The establishment of the national parcel post (1912), as well as the Federal Aid Road Act (1916) aimed to ameliorate some rural ills.

Conservation was another goal of the Teddy Roosevelt’s Administration, because population growth as well as immigrants streaming into new areas had caused a depletion of mineral, range, and timber resources, in addition to mismanaged waterways—federal control of some land resources for conservation resulted in “the creation of national forest reserves, regulation of grazing and logging on public lands, and reclamation of arid lands through large scale irrigation projects” (Koch, 2012, p.3). Farmers were seen as the ‘salt of the earth,’ and it was they who held the rural social and democratic fabric together. Through education, provided by the federal government in the form of the agricultural extension service and research experiment stations of each states’ land grant agricultural college, extension agents encouraged farmers to adopt a scientific viewpoint and new technologies, in order to become more productive to support the food needs of burgeoning future US populations. These institutions helped to educate rural populations, but did not stem the tide of migration to the cities (Koch, 2012).

Yet, since 1970, the urban migration has reversed yet again, as more people head for certain types of rural areas, and for various reasons. The Mountain West and the Pacific Northwest are two areas where reverse migration has occurred, and an increase in immigration to these areas has concurrently happened. Through the 1980s, an increase in farm employment reduced poverty, but by the 1990s “a 100 person increase in farm employment was associated with an 85 person increase in poverty” (Jensen, 2007, p.16). This suggests an interrelation between farm employment, immigration, and poverty. Seasonal farmworkers, who have low wages, cannot contribute as much to the economic growth of their communities (Taylor et al., 2006). However, Mexican immigrants who have left the Southwest for other areas of the country reduced their poverty rate. Many more established immigrants have followed the increased migration of the elderly and young adult populations that relocated in tourism-based economies of the Mountain West and West Coast, as well as other gentrified areas of the US. The flux of the aging baby boom generation and rich young adults into areas where natural resource amenities promote tourism and retirement opportunities, has generated employment in recreation services such as the arts, entertainment, lodging, and food services, as well as construction, which drew immigrants to work. Other specialized agricultural crops and food processing job opportunities in Oregon and Washington, such as vegetable, grass, and flower seeds, garlic, mint, sugar beets, apples, green peas, and potatoes, also attracted immigrant workers. The immigrant populations in these areas have greatly increased. Many new immigrants are Mexican Hispanics, and these relatively younger populations with a higher rate of natural increase can invigorate rural communities, although they can also overload community services such as education (Jensen, 2007). Communities that have been insular in the past also have to adapt to a multicultural environment, and schools also must adapt to a bilingual culture.

While rural areas in the US West are still comprised of mostly Caucasian populations, Asians, African Americans, Native Americans in some areas, and especially Hispanics from established, migrant, or immigrant populations—show a higher rate of migration and immigration than whites, with the exception of older Caucasians. Therefore, the US West is now more diverse than ever, and in numerous rural counties, but not all, this is driving richer economic and social growth in areas that were stagnant or losing population.