Farming the Plains

What helped ease farmers' hardships as they settled the West?

Migrants hoped to find a better life in the West, but often experienced loneliness, isolation, the lack of essential products and services they previously knew, and even shortages of lumber needed to build homes. But the arrival of the railroad, the extension of the postal service into the West, and the advent of the mail-order business ended some of their problems by bringing consumer goods and people to the region. New technology and mechanization also made farming easier, and the creation of social clubs, churches, and other organizations helped ease social isolation.

The South After Reconstruction

In what ways was the South's economic development different from that of the West in the late nineteenth century?

In the South, the number of farms doubled between 1860 and 1880, yet more farmers rented rather than owned their land—the opposite of what occurred in the West. Southerners in the post–Civil War era relied increasingly on sharecropping or tenant farming, where land was rented and farmers borrowed money for supp using future crops as collateral. Ultimately, this sim pushed poor farmers further into debt, especially w merchants inflated prices and interest. Where the W benefited from technological advances in farm equipm the South's reliance on staple crops of tobacco and cot required human labor. While some southern indust development (cigarette and textile factories, for exam was poised to compete with the North and West, the So would remain a largely agricultural and rural region ba on staple crops until well into the twentieth century.

Suggestions for Further Reading

William Cronon, *Nature's* Metropolis: *Chicago and the Great We* (1991)

Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves a the Hidden History of American Conservation* (2001)

Karl Jacoby, *Shadows at Dawn: A Borderlands Massacre and the Violence of History* (2009)

Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (1987)

Eugene P. Moehring, *Urbanism and Empire in the Far West, 1840–1890* (2004)

Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1846–1890* (1984)

Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A New History of the American West* (1991)

Donald Worster, *A Passion for Nature: The Life of John Muir* (2008)

16

Building Factories, Building Cities

1877–1920

As immigrants sailed into New York Harbor in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, they saw Coney Island, a peninsula jutting out from Brooklyn. Its easy access from New York City by carriage road and ferry lines plus its beaches, parks, and attractions made Coney Island the world's largest entertainment resort. A 300-foot tower, with an elevator, was moved there after the 1876 Philadelphia World's Fair. Electric lamps lit the beaches for nighttime swimming. Racetracks and theaters attracted thousands of tourists. By 1904, the resort boasted three amusement parks—Steeplechase, Luna, and Dreamland. Rides, such as the world's first roller coaster, dazzled visitors. Before it burned down in 1896, there was even a hotel shaped like an elephant.

Coney Island blended the ingredients of modern America: new technology, materials, and products emerging from industrialization; and people and cultures emerging from urban growth. The industrialization that made Coney Island possible was a complex process featuring production of goods by machine. After two decades of industrialization, by the late 1800s, the United States was the world's most productive industrial nation and the largest producer of raw materials and food (see Map 16.1). Four themes characterized American industrialization. First, manufacturers harnessed technology to serve production in new ways. Second, to increase production, factory owners divided work into repetitive tasks organized by the clock, turning workers who once saw themselves as producers into employees. Third, a new consumer society emerged as goods such as canned foods and machine-made clothing became common. Fourth, seeking growth and profits, corporation owners amassed power through new forms of corporate organization.

At the same time, urbanization—the process whereby cities and their areas expand more rapidly than surrounding environments—accelerated after the Civil War and by 1920, the census showed that, for the first time, a majority of Americans (51.4 percent) lived in cities. Urbanites propelled industrialization by furnishing

Chapter Outline

its workforces and benefited from its consumer goods, service and entertainment, such as Coney Island. Migrants and imm grants to cities sought to free themselves from uncertainties of th past. But poverty and discrimination haunted many urban dwel ers, combining the era's opportunities with persistent inequalit How people built cities and adjusted to the industrial environmen shaped modern American society.

As you read this chapter, keep the following questions in mind:

- **How did mechanization affect the lives of average workers and the makeup of the labor force?**
- **What were the most important factors contributing to the urban growth of the period 1877–1920?**
- **How did immigrants adjust to and reshape their adopted homeland?**

Technology and the Triumph of Industrialism

How did technological innovations transform American industry?

Ingenuity drove the new industrialization. Between 1860 and 1930, the U.S. Patent Office granted 1.5 million patents for new inventions; it granted only 36,000 between 1790 and 1860. Inventions in electricity, internal combustion, and industrial chemistry often sprang from a marriage between technology and business organization.

Thomas Edison Inventor and founder of the first industrial research laboratory.

Birth of the Electrical Industry

Thomas Edison, who became America's most celebrated inventor, opened an "invention factory" in Menlo Park, New Jersey, in 1876. There, his application of electricity to light, sound, and images, plus his system of delivering electric power, laid the foundation for how Americans live today. His most notable invention was the incandescent light bulb. Additionally, his Edison Electric Light Company (founded in 1878) devised a system of power generation that provided electricity conveniently to manifold customers. Edison marketed his ideas with demonstrations of how electric lighting could transform night into day, brightening homes, offices, and places like Coney Island.

Other entrepreneurs further adapted electricity. Granville T. Woods, an Ohio engineer sometimes called "the black Edison," patented thirty-five devices vital to electronics and communications. Financiers Henry Villard and J. P. Morgan bought patents and merged equipment-manufacturing companies into the General Electric Company, including research laboratories.

Henry Ford: Founder of the Ford Motor Company and pioneer of modern assembly lines used in mass production.

Henry Ford and the Automobile Industry

Meanwhile, leading visionary manufacturer **Henry Ford** adapted the internal combustion engine—initially developed in Germany—to propel a vehicle.

Chronology

Knights of Labor founded	1893–97 Economic depression causes high unemployment and business failures
Economy declines	1895 *U.S. v. E. C. Knight Co.* limits Congress's power to regulate manufacturing
National League of Professional Baseball Clubs founded	1896 *Holden v. Hardy* upholds law regulating miners' working hours
Widespread railroad strikes protest wage cuts	1900–10 Immigration reaches peak
Edison Electric Light Company founded	1905 *Lochner v. New York* overturns law limiting bakery workers' working hours and limits labor protection law
"New" immigrants from eastern and southern Europe begin to arrive in large numbers	Intercollegiate Athletic Association, forerunner of National Intercollegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), is formed, restructuring rules of football
Standard Oil Trust founded	
Pulitzer buys *New York World*, creating major publication for yellow journalism	1908 *Muller v. Oregon* upholds law limiting women to ten-hour workday
Haymarket riot in Chicago protests police brutality against labor demonstrations	First Ford Model T built
American Federation of Labor (AFL) founded	1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire in New York City leaves 146 workers dead
Sherman Anti-Trust Act outlaws "combinations in restraint of trade"	1913 Ford begins moving assembly-line production
Homestead (Pennsylvania) steelworkers strike against Carnegie Steel Company	1920 Majority (51.4 percent) of Americans live in cities

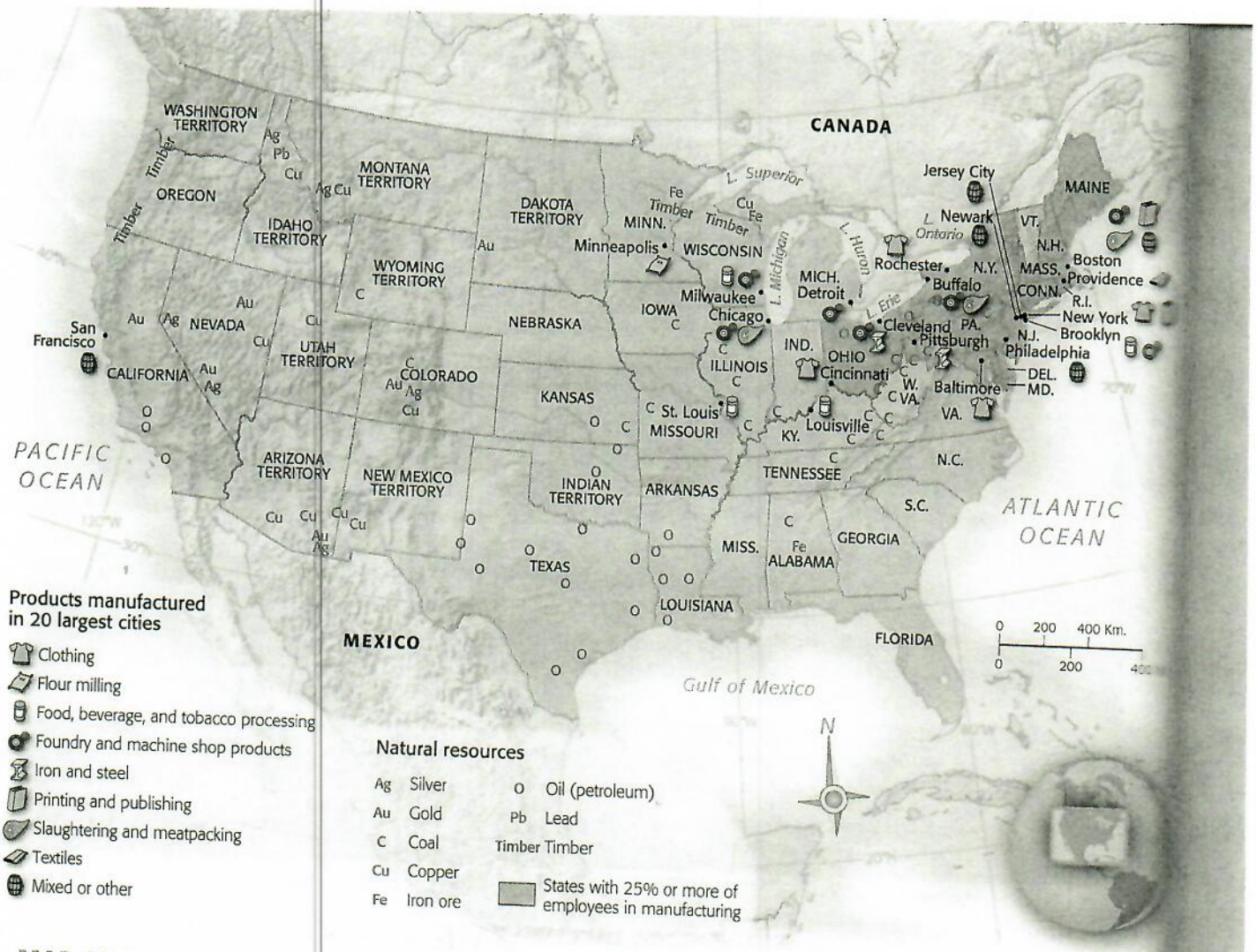
Through his organizational genius, Ford spawned a massive industry, predicting in 1909, "I am going to democratize the automobile. When I'm through, everybody will be able to afford one." Ford mass-produced identical cars on assembly lines that divided the manufacturing process into single tasks repeatedly performed by workers using specialized machines. By 1914, the Ford Motor Company outside of Detroit was producing 248,000 cars per year, and auto manufacturing spawned new industries in steel, oil, rubber, and glass. To enable his employees to afford a car, reduce labor turnover, and deter unionization, Ford began a Five-Dollar-Day pay plan that combined wages and profit sharing.

Link to Henry Ford Discusses Manufacturing and Marketing

In America, Scottish immigrant **Andrew Carnegie** recognized the benefits of the British Bessemer process for producing steel, and in the 1870s he built steel-making plants near Pittsburgh that eventually furnished materials for rails, bridges, barbed wire, and household appliances. In 1892, Carnegie formed the Carnegie Steel Company and by 1900 controlled 60 percent of the country's steel business. In 1901, he sold his holdings to a group led by J. P. Morgan, who formed the huge U.S. Steel Corporation.

Andrew Carnegie Scottish immigrant who built an enormous steel company and became a renowned philanthropist.

Industrial chemistry was pioneered by French immigrant E. I. du Pont, who manufactured gunpowder in Delaware in the early 1890s. In 1902, three du Pont



MAP 16.1
Industrial Production, 1919

By the early twentieth century, each state could boast at least one kind of industrial production. Although the value of goods produced was still highest in the Northeast, states such as Minnesota and California had impressive dollar values of outputs.

Source: Data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*, Vol. IX, Manufacturing (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1921)

cousins expanded the company into fertilizer, dyes, and other chemical products. In 1911, du Pont research labs adapted cellulose to produce such consumer goods as photographic film, textile fibers, and plastics.

Technology and Southern Industry

In the South, new industries developed around natural resources. The tobacco crop inspired North Carolinian James B. Duke to create a machine for making cigarettes. He began mass production in 1885 and attracted customers with advertising. By 1900, his American Tobacco Company was a global business. Also, electric-powered cotton looms and a cheap labor force enabled the southern textile industry to surpass water-powered New England mills. Many textile companies built villages around their mills and controlled housing, stores, schools, and churches. Northern capitalists invested in southern iron and steel, especially in

Birmingham, Alabama. And between 1890 and 1900, northern lumber syndicates moved into pine forests of the Gulf States, boosting wood production and prompting the relocation of furniture and paper production from North to South.

Technology and Everyday Life

Machines altered everyday life. Telephones and typewriters made face-to-face communications less important and facilitated correspondence. Electric sewing machines facilitated mass-produced clothing. Refrigeration enabled preservation and shipment of fresh meat, produce, and dairy products; canning preserved foods such as tomatoes, fish, and milk that otherwise would have spoiled easily. Dietary reformers William K. Kellogg and Charles W. Post mass-produced new breakfast foods such as cornflakes, and the discovery of vitamins heightened interest in food's health. Low-income families still consumed cheap dishes, but with increased availability of processed foods, American workers never suffered the severe malnutrition of other developing nations.

New technology even affected personal hygiene. Flush toilets, invented in England, reached American shores in the 1880s. Middle-class Americans began installing modern toilets in their urban houses, making bathrooms places of utmost privacy. Together, developments in communications, clothing, food, and plumbing contributed to a democratization of convenience via mass production.

Big Business and Its Critics

What led corporations to increasingly consolidate in the late nineteenth century?

Technological innovation required large capital investments. To expand, businesses borrowed from banks and sought higher profits to repay loans and reward stockholders. This spiraling process strangled small firms and caused uncertainty at the hint that a large debtor was about to fail. Economic downturns occurred regularly—in 1871, 1884, and 1893—as overproduction, underconsumption, and unregulated banking strained the system.

Corporations proved the best instruments for industrial expansion. These were companies that raised capital by selling shares to stockholders who shared profits without personal risk because laws limited their liability for company debts to the amount of their investments. Firms such as General Electric and the American Tobacco Corporation won judicial safeguards in 1888 when the Supreme Court declared that corporations, like individuals, are protected by laws preventing government from depriving them of property rights without due process of law. During the 1880s, corporations in the same industry made agreements, called *pools*, to share markets and profits.

Trusts and Holding Companies

Trusts came to dominate a few industries. These were large corporations formed to enable one company to control an industry by luring or forcing stockholders of smaller companies to yield their stock "in trust" to the larger company's board of trustees. This enabled companies such as **John D. Rockefeller**'s Standard Oil to achieve domination by combining with, or *vertically integrating*, other oil refineries. In 1898, New Jersey adopted laws allowing companies to own stock in other states, facilitating creation of holding companies, which

John D. Rockefeller
Creator of Standard Oil and master of the use of pools and trusts to monopolize an industry.

horizontal integration Business strategy in which a holding company would seek to control all aspects of the industry in which it functioned, fusing related businesses together under one management.

merged several companies' assets (buildings, equipment, inventory, and cash) under single management. Using this **horizontal integration**, holding companies could dominate all aspects of an industry, including raw materials, manufacture, and distribution. For example, Gustavus Swift's Chicago meat-processing operation controlled livestock, slaughterhouses, refrigerator cars, and marketing.

Trusts and holding companies ensured orderly profits. Between 1889 and 1903, three hundred combinations formed, including American Sugar Refining Company and U.S. Rubber Company. A new species of businessman, the financier, aided the process by creating a holding company through stock sales and bank loans, then persuading firms to sell to him. This often put small companies out of business and made huge fortunes for shrewd bankers such as J. P. Morgan.

Corporate growth turned stock and bond exchanges into hubs of activity. In 1869, only 145 industrial corporations traded on the New York Stock Exchange; by 1914, 511 did. Foreign investors poured huge sums into American companies.

Social Darwinism

Social Darwinism Extended Charles Darwin's theory of "survival of the fittest" to the free-market system, arguing that competition would weed out weaker firms and allow stronger, fitter firms to thrive.

Business leaders justified their actions by invoking **Social Darwinism**. This philosophy loosely grafted Charles Darwin's theory of survival of the fittest onto laissez-faire, the doctrine that government should not interfere in private economic matters. Social Darwinists reasoned that in a free-market economy, wealth would naturally flow to those most capable of creating it.

Denouncing efforts to legislate maximum working hours or factory conditions as interference, corporate leaders nonetheless lobbied for public subsidies and tax relief to encourage business growth.

Dissenting Voices

Critics, however, charged that new forms of big business were unnatural because they stifled opportunity and fostered greed. Farmers, workers, and intellectuals feared that corporations were creating monopolies—domination of an economic activity by one powerful company—that crushed small businesses, fixed prices, and corrupted politicians.

By the mid-1880s, some intellectuals challenged Social Darwinism and laissez-faire. For example, sociologist Lester Ward, in his book *Dynamic Sociology* (1883), argued that a system that guaranteed survival only to the fittest was wasteful and brutal. Instead, cooperative activity fostered by government intervention was fairer.

Visionaries such as Henry George and Edward Bellamy questioned why the United States had so many poor people while a few became wealthy. George, a printer alarmed by the poverty of working people like himself, believed that inequality stemmed from the ability of property owners to profit from rising land values and the rents they charged. To prevent profiteering, George proposed replacing all taxes with a "single tax" on the rise in property values caused by increased market demand. George's scheme influenced subsequent reformers.

Novelist Edward Bellamy proposed that government own the means of production. In *Looking Backward* (1888), Bellamy depicted Boston in the year 2000 as a peaceful community where everyone had a job and a "principle of fraternal

Library of Congress

A cartoon protesting John D. Rockefeller's power over the oil and railroad industries shows him wearing a golden crown and regal robe, and standing on an oil storage tank labeled "Standard Oil." The huge crown is topped with a dollar sign and made of oil tanks and railroad cars from four railroad companies owned by Rockefeller: Lehigh Valley Railroad, St. Paul Railroad, Jersey Central Railroad, and Reading Rail Road.

cooperation" replaced vicious competition. Bellamy's vision, called "Nationalism," sparked formation of Nationalist clubs nationwide and kindled efforts for political reform and government ownership of railroads and utilities.

Antitrust Legislation

Several states took steps to prohibit monopolies and regulate business. By 1900, twenty-seven states banned pools and fifteen outlawed trusts. Most were agricultural states in the South and West that were responding to anti-monopolistic pressure from farmers (see Chapter 17). But states lacked the staff and judicial support to effectively attack big business, and corporations evaded restrictions.

In 1890 Congress passed the Sherman Anti-Trust Act that made illegal "every contract, combination in the form of trust or otherwise, or conspiracy in the restraint of trade." Those convicted of violating the law faced fines and jail terms, and victims could sue for triple damages. However, the law, under influence from pro-business eastern senators, did not clearly define "restraint of trade" and left interpretation of its provisions to the pro-business courts. When in 1895 the federal government prosecuted the Sugar Trust for owning 98 percent of the nation's sugar-refining capacity, eight of nine Supreme Court justices ruled in *U.S. v. E.C. Knight Co.* that control of sugar manufacturing did not necessarily mean control of trade. Between 1890 and 1900, the federal government prosecuted only eighteen cases under the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, mostly against railroads. Ironically, the act equipped the government to break up labor unions, which, when they went on strike, were deemed in restraint of trade.

Mechanization and the Changing Status of Labor

How did mechanization and new systems of management change the nature and status of work?

As mechanized assembly lines made large-scale production more economical, owners invested in machines and hired fewer workers. Profitability relied on efficiency in production. Where previously workers controlled the methods of production, by the 1890s, engineers and managers with expert knowledge used standardization to reduce the need for human skills.

Frederick W. Taylor

The most influential advocate of efficiency was Frederick W. Taylor. As engineer for a Pennsylvania steel company in the 1880s, Taylor concluded that companies could best reduce costs and increase profits by applying studies of "how quickly the various kinds of work … ought to be done." This meant producing more for lower cost per unit, usually by eliminating unnecessary workers. He later outlined this system in his book, *Principles of Scientific Management* (1911). In 1898 Taylor took his stopwatch to Bethlehem Steel Company to apply his system. After observing workers shoveling iron ore, he designed fifteen kinds of shovels and prescribed proper motions for each, thereby reducing a crew of 600 men to 140. Soon other companies began implementing Taylor's theories. Taylor had little respect for ordinary laborers, calling steelworkers "stupid."

Workers Become Employees

Workers increasingly feared that they were becoming another interchangeable part in an industrial machine. No longer producers, who like farmers and craftsmen were paid according to the quality of what they produced, industrial workers instead were becoming wage earners who worked when someone hired and paid them. In mass production, tasks were regulated by the clock and carefully supervised. As a Massachusetts factory hand testified in 1879, "during working hours the men are not allowed to speak to each other, though working close together, on pain of discharge." Industrial accidents occurred often, killing hundreds of thousands each year. For those with mangled limbs and chronic illnesses, there was no disability insurance to replace lost income, and families suffered.

Workers attempted to retain autonomy. Artisans such as glassworkers and printers fought to preserve traditional customs, such as appointing a fellow worker to read a newspaper aloud while they labored. Immigrant factory workers tried to persuade foremen to hire their relatives and friends. After hours, workers enjoyed drinking and holiday celebrations, ignoring employers' efforts to control their social lives.

Women and Children in the Workforce

Employers cut labor costs by hiring women and children and paying them low wages. Between 1880 and 1900, numbers of employed women soared from 2.6 million to 8.6 million (see Figure 16.1). Inventions such as the typewriter and cash register simplified clerical tasks, and employers replaced males with females. Consequently, the proportion of women in domestic service (maids, cooks, laundresses), the most common and lowest paid form of female employment, declined. By 1920, women filled nearly half of all clerical jobs; in 1880 only 4 percent were women. Women were attracted to sales and secretarial positions because of their respectability and pleasant surroundings. Still, unskilled or uneducated women usually held menial positions in textile mills and food-processing plants that typically paid just $1.56 a week for seventy hours of work. (Unskilled men received $7 to $10.)

Mechanization in textile and shoe production created light tasks such as running errands, which children could handle cheaply. In 1890, more than 18 percent of children ages ten to fifteen were employed. In the South, textile mill owners

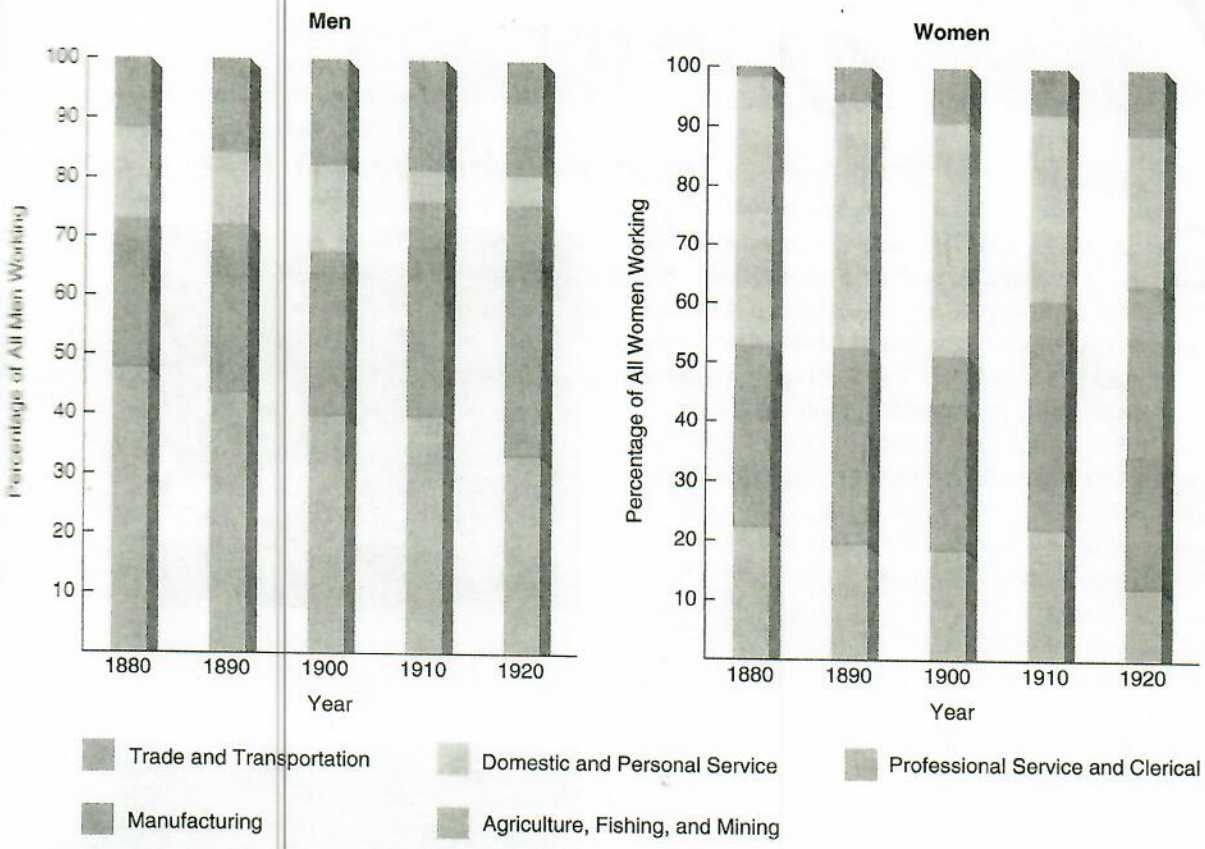


FIGURE 16.1
Distribution of Occupational Categories Among Employed Men and Women, 1880–1920
The changing lengths of the bar segments of each part of this graph represent trends in male and female employment. Over the forty years covered by this graph, the agriculture, fishing, and mining segment for men and the domestic service segment for women declined the most, whereas notable increases occurred in manufacturing for men and professional services (especially store clerks and teachers) for women.
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of the United States, 1880, 1890, 1900, 1910, 1920* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office)

induced sharecroppers, desperate for extra income, to bind their children over to factories at miserably low wages. Several states, especially in the Northeast, passed laws limiting ages and hours of child laborers. But statutes regulated only firms operating within state borders, not those engaged in interstate commerce. Enforcing age requirements proved difficult because many parents, needing income, lied about their children's ages. Children also worked in street trades—peddling, shining shoes, and scavenging for discarded wood, coal, and furniture.

Freedom of Contract

To justify their treatment of workers, employers asserted the concept of "freedom of contract"—that since workers freely entered into a contract with bosses, workers could seek another job if they disliked the wages and hours. Actually, employers used supply and demand to set wages as low as laborers would accept. When some states tried to improve working conditions through legislation, business interests enlisted

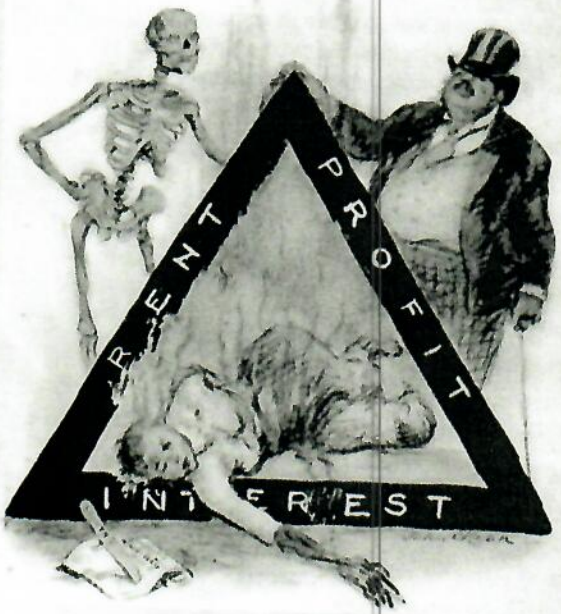
Visualizing THE PAST

Impact of the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Fire

On March 25, 1911, the worst factory fire in U.S. history occurred at the Triangle Shirtwaist Company, which occupied the top three floors of a building in New York City. Fed by piles of fabric, the fire spread quickly, killing 146 of the 500 young women, mostly Jewish immigrants, employed in the factory. Many of the victims were burned to death because they were locked inside workrooms by their employer; others plunged from windows. These images show three ways the public received news of the tragedy: through friends and relatives who came to identify and claim the bodies of victims, through a critical cartoon, and through the front page of a newspaper. Which of these images seems most powerful and likely to inspire reform? How do mass tragedies get communicated to the public today? What limitations in communications existed in 1911?

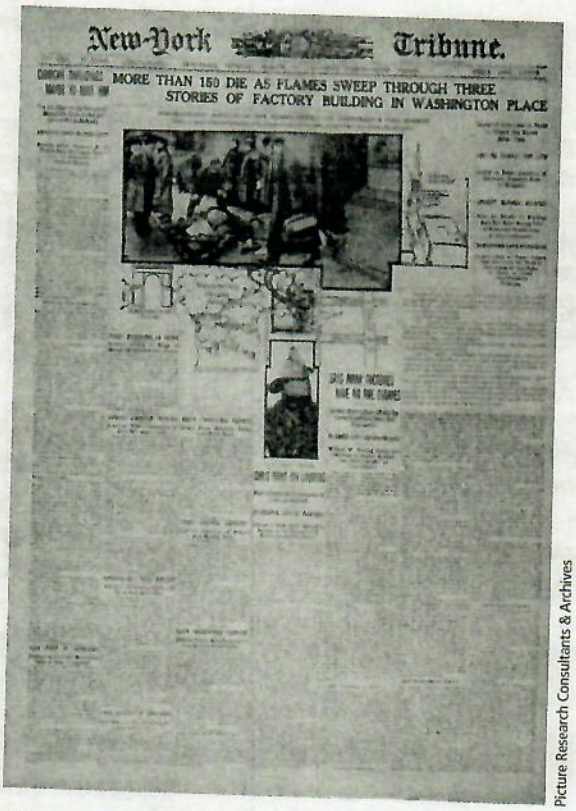
Bettmann/Corbis

Many of the victims of the Triangle Shirtwaist fire of 1911 were lined up in coffins, and their bodies were identified by relatives arriving at a makeshift morgue.



The Granger Collection, NYC

John French Sloan, an artist with radical leanings, drew this cartoon in the wake of the Triangle fire. Eager to assert that profit-minded capitalists were responsible for unnecessary deaths, Sloan used stark images to convey his message.



New-York Tribune.

MORE THAN 150 DIE AS FLAMES SWEEP THROUGH THREE STORIES OF FACTORY BUILDING IN WASHINGTON PLACE

Picture Research Consultants & Archives

Using a large-print headline and grisly photograph, the New York Tribune, *one of New York City's and the nation's oldest and most respected newspapers, filled much of its front page with news of the event.*

courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court, to oppose such measures. *Holden v. Hardy* (1898) upheld a law restricting miners' working hours because overly long workdays increased potential injuries. But the court voided a law limiting bakery workers to a sixty-hour week and ten-hour day (*Lochner v. New York,* 1905), reasoning that baking was not dangerous enough to prevent workers from selling their labor freely.

In *Muller v. Oregon* (1908), the Supreme Court made an exception for women. It concluded that a law regulating hours of female laundry workers was constitutional because women's well-being as childbearers was "an object of public interest." The case represented a victory for reformers seeking to safeguard women from exploitation. But because of the *Muller* decision, labor laws barred women from jobs such as printing and transportation, further confining women to low-paying, dead-end occupations.

Some workers tried to adjust to mechanization; others challenged the system by ignoring management's rules or quitting. Still others, disgruntled over low wages and anxious to restore independence, joined unions and went out on strikes.

Bettmann/Corbis

1911
ed by

Railroad Strikes of 1877

In 1877, a crisis in the railroad industry caused by four years of wage cuts, layoffs, and increased workloads climaxed with a series of strikes from Pennsylvania and West Virginia to Texas and California. State militia, organized and commanded by employers, broke up picket lines and fired upon strikers, and railroads hired strikebreakers. Pittsburgh saw the worst

TABLE 16.1 American Living Standards, 1890–1910

	1890	1910
Income and Earnings		
Annual income		
Clerical worker	$848	$1,156
Public schoolteacher	256	492
Industrial worker	486	630
Farm laborer	233	336
Hourly wage		
Soft-coal miner	0.18[a]	0.21
Ironworker	0.17[a]	0.23
Shoe worker	0.14[a]	0.19
Paper worker	0.12[a]	0.17
Labor Statistics		
Number of people in labor force	28.5 million	41.7 million[b]
Average workweek in manufacturing	60 hours	51 hours

Picture Research Consultants & Archives

violence; in July 1877, troopers attacked demonstrators, killing ten and wounding many more. A month later, President Rutherford B. Hayes sent in federal soldiers—the first significant use of the army to quell labor unrest.

Knights of Labor

About the same time, the Knights of Labor tried to organize a broad base of laborers. Aided by Terrence Powderly, a machinist and mayor of Scranton, Pennsylvania, who was elected grand master in 1879, the Knights built a membership of 730,000 by 1886. Unlike most craft unions, Knights welcomed unskilled and semiskilled workers, including women, African Americans, and immigrants (but not Chinese). The organization tried to bypass conflict between labor and management by establishing a cooperative society in which workers, not capitalists, owned factories, mines, and railroads. This ideal was unattainable because employers could outcompete laborers who might attempt to establish businesses. Powderly and other Knights leaders discouraged strikes, claiming they diverted attention from the long-term goal of a cooperative society and that workers lost more by striking. Some Knights, however, chose militant action. In 1886, they struck against southwestern railroads. When owner **Jay Gould** refused to negotiate, the strike spread. Ultimately, the Knights gave in. Thereafter Knights' membership dwindled, although its cooperative vision inspired the 1890s Populist movement (see Chapter 17).

Jay Gould Captain of industry and owner of the Union Pacific Railroad.

On May 1, 1886, in Chicago, one hundred thousand workers amassed for a huge demonstration, demanding an eight-hour workday. Two days later, fearing that anarchists were fomenting antigovernment violence, Chicago police mobilized and broke up a battle between unionists and strikebreakers, killing two and wounding others. On May 4, demonstrators protested police brutality at Haymarket Square near downtown Chicago. As police approached, a bomb exploded, killing seven and injuring sixty-seven. Authorities made arrests, and a court convicted eight anarchists of the bombing, despite questionable evidence. Four were executed, and one committed suicide in prison. Three received pardons in 1893 from Illinois governor John P. Altgeld.

The presence of foreign-born anarchists and socialists at Haymarket made civic leaders fearful that labor turmoil threatened social order. Consequently, governments strengthened police forces and employer associations circulated blacklists of union activists whom they would not employ.

American Federation of Labor

The **American Federation of Labor (AFL)** emerged from the 1886 upheavals as the major workers' organization. Led by **Samuel Gompers**, former head of the Cigar Makers Union, the AFL pressed for higher wages, shorter hours, and the right to bargain collectively. The AFL accepted capitalism and worked to improve conditions within it.

American Federation of Labor (AFL) Skilled craft unions united under leadership of Samuel Gompers.

Samuel Gompers AFL leader who focused on practical goals like improved wages, hours, and working conditions.

Link to Samuel Gompers, Congressional Testimony Regarding AFL Unions (1914)

The union avoided party politics, instead supporting labor's friends regardless of party. AFL membership grew to 1 million in 1901 and 2.5 million in 1917, when it consisted of 111 national unions.

Organized by craft rather than by workplace, the AFL rebuffed unskilled laborers and excluded women. Male unionists insisted that women would depress wages

and should stay at home because, as one put it, "She is competing with the man who is her father or husband or is to become her husband." Most unions also excluded immigrants and African Americans, fearing job competition. Long-held prejudices were reinforced when blacks and immigrants, eager for work, served as strikebreakers.

Homestead and Pullman Strikes

The AFL and labor movement suffered setbacks in the early 1890s when violence again stirred public fears. In July 1892, the AFL-affiliated Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steelworkers struck Homestead Steel in Pennsylvania over pay cuts. Henry Frick, president of Carnegie Steel Company (Homestead's owner), responded to the **Homestead Strike** by hiring three hundred guards from the Pinkerton Detective Agency to protect the factory, but strikers attacked the guards. State troopers intervened and, after five months, the strikers gave up.

Homestead Strike Worker walkout after wage cuts at a Carnegie Steel plant in 1892; officials responded to the strike by shutting down the plant.

In 1894, employees at the Pullman Palace Car Company, maker of railroad passenger cars, walked out over exploitive policies at the company town near Chicago. The owner, George Pullman, controlled nearly everything in the town of twelve thousand: land, buildings, school, bank, and rents. When he cut wages without reducing rents, the American Railway Union, led by **Eugene V. Debs**, went on strike. Pullman closed the factory and the union refused to handle Pullman cars attached to any train. The railroad owners' association enlisted aid from the federal government and Debs was arrested for defying a court injunction against the strike. President Grover Cleveland ordered federal troops to Chicago. The union ended the strike and Debs received a six-month prison sentence.

Eugene V. Debs Indiana labor leader who organized workers in the Pullman Strike of 1893; would be the Socialist Party of America's presidential candidate five times between 1900 and 1920.

Labor Violence in the West

In the West, in 1894, fighting erupted in Cripple Creek, Colorado, when mine owners increased work hours without increasing pay. The governor called in state militia after two weeks, and owners agreed to restore the eight-hour workday. In Idaho, federal troops intervened three times in mining strikes. In 1905, former Idaho governor Frank Steuenberg was assassinated; speculation arose that the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) was exacting revenge for when Steuenberg imposed martial law during a strike in 1899. Authorities arrested WFM activist William "Big Bill" Haywood and tried him for murder in 1907. He was acquitted after his famous defense attorney, Clarence Darrow, proved that mine owners had paid a key witness.

In 1905, radical laborers formed the **Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)**. Like the Knights, the IWW (nicknamed the "Wobblies") tried to unite unskilled workers. Embracing violent tactics and socialism's rhetoric of class conflict, the "Wobblies" believed workers should seize and run the nation's industries. Their leaders—Haywood, coalfield organizer Mary "Mother" Jones, fiery orator Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Italian radical Carlo Tresca, and songwriter Joe Hill—headed lumber, textile, and steel strikes. The union garnered publicity but collapsed during the First World War when federal prosecutors sent many of its leaders to prison and local police harassed IWW activities.

Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) Radical labor organization that sought to unionize all workers; nicknamed Wobblies, the IWW embraced socialism and led mass strikes of mine workers in Nevada and Minnesota and timber workers in Louisiana, Texas, and the Northwest.

Women Unionists

Despite exclusion from unions, some women organized and fought employers as strenuously as men. In 1909, male and female members of the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union staged a strike known as "Uprising of the 20,000" in New York City. Women also were prominent in the 1912 "Bread and Roses" strike against textile owners in Lawrence, Massachusetts, and their Telephone Operators' Department of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers sponsored a strike over wages that paralyzed the New England Bell telephone system in 1919. Without aid from male electrical workers, the telephone operators won higher wages and the right to bargain collectively.

The Women's Trade Union League (WTUL), founded in 1903, played a key role in representing laboring women. The WTUL sought legislation for shorter hours and better working conditions, supported strikes such as the "Uprising of the 20,000," sponsored educational activities, and campaigned for woman suffrage. Initially, sympathetic middle-class women held most WTUL offices, but after 1910 control shifted to working-class leaders, notably Agnes Nestor, a glove maker, and Rose Schneiderman, a capmaker. By inspiring working women to press for rights and training leaders, WTUL provided a vital link between labor and the women's movement into the 1920s.

The Nonunionized Workforce

The high-profile activities of organized labor obscure the fact that the vast majority of American wage workers in these years did not belong to unions. By 1920 union membership totalled 5 million—just 13 percent of all workers. For many, getting and keeping a job took priority over higher pay and shorter hours. Few companies employed workers year round; most hired during peak seasons and laid off employees during slack times. Moreover, union organizers excluded women, blacks, and immigrants.

The millions of men, women, and children who were not unionized tried to cope with industrial pressures. They joined societies such as the Polish Roman Catholic Union, African American Colored Brotherhood, and Jewish B'nai Brith, which for small fees provided life insurance, sickness benefits, and burial costs. Wages generally rose between 1877 and 1914, boosting purchasing power and consumerism; hourly pay averaged around 20 cents for skilled work and 10 cents for unskilled. But living costs rose faster, with the greatest effect felt in cities.

Growth of the Modern American City

What fueled urban growth in the late nineteenth century?

Initially trade centers, cities became arenas for industrial development in the late nineteenth century. As hubs for labor, transportation, communications, and consumption, cities supplied everything factories needed. Most cities housed various manufacturing enterprises, but product specialization was common. Mass-produced clothing concentrated in New York City, the shoe industry in Philadelphia, food processing in Minneapolis, meat processing in Chicago, fish canning in Seattle, steelmaking in Pittsburgh and Birmingham, and oil refining in Houston and Los Angeles. Such activities increased cities' attraction for people and capital.

Mechanization of Mass Transportation

As cities grew, settlement sprawled beyond original boundaries. Cities separated into distinct districts: working- and middle-class neighborhoods, commercial strips, downtown, and suburbs. Two forces created this new arrangement: first, mass transportation propelled people and enterprises outward. Second, economic change drew human and material resources inward.

By the 1870s, horse-drawn vehicles shared city streets with faster motor-driven conveyances. Commuter railroads and cable cars appeared, followed by electric-powered streetcars. In cities such as New York and Chicago, companies raised track onto trestles, enabling "elevated" trains to move above jammed streets. In Boston and New York, underground subways avoided traffic congestion.

Mass transit launched urban dwellers into outlying neighborhoods and created a commuting public. Working-class families, who needed every cent, found streetcars expensive. But the growing middle class who could afford the fare—usually five cents a ride—could escape to tree-lined neighborhoods on the outskirts and commute to the inner city for work, shopping, and entertainment. When consumers moved outward, shops, banks, and taverns followed. Meanwhile, the urban core became a work zone.

Population Growth

Between 1870 and 1920, the number of Americans living in cities increased from 10 million to 54 million, and the number of places with more than 100,000 people

Picture Research Consultants & Archives

Electric trolley cars and other forms of mass transit enabled middle-class people such as these women and men to reside on the urban outskirts and ride into the city center for work, shopping, and entertainment.

swelled from fifteen to sixty-four. Urban growth derived mainly from two sources. One was annexation of nearby territory. For example, New York City (Manhattan) merged with Brooklyn, Staten Island, and part of Queens in 1898, doubling from 1.5 million to 3 million people. Communities agreed to be annexed because they would gain access to cities' schools, water, and fire protection. More importantly, in-migration from the countryside and abroad contributed to urban population growth.

As debt and crop prices worsened, rural dwellers fled to cities such as Chicago and San Francisco, Indianapolis and Nashville. Young people were attracted by the independence of city life. Discrimination pushed many rural African Americans toward cities. By 1900, thirty-two cities, mostly in the South but in the North also, had more than ten thousand black residents. Because few factories would employ African Americans, most found service sector jobs—cleaning, cooking, and driving—usually at low wages.

"new immigrants" Wave of immigrants after 1880 coming from mainly southern and eastern Europe.

New Foreign Immigrants

More newcomers were foreign immigrants. Pushed by population pressures, land redistribution, religious persecution, and industrialization, they formed a global movement of people leaving Europe and Asia for Canada, Australia, Brazil, Argentina, and the United States. Before 1880, most immigrants came from northern and western Europe—England, Ireland, and Germany. But after 1880, many also came from eastern and southern Europe, Canada, Mexico, and Japan (see Map 16.2). Between 1900 and 1910, two-thirds of immigrants came from Italy, Austria-Hungary, and Russia. By 1910 arrivals from Mexico outnumbered those from Ireland. (See website for nationalities of immigrants.) Some wanted to make enough money to return home; most remained and helped to reshape American culture.

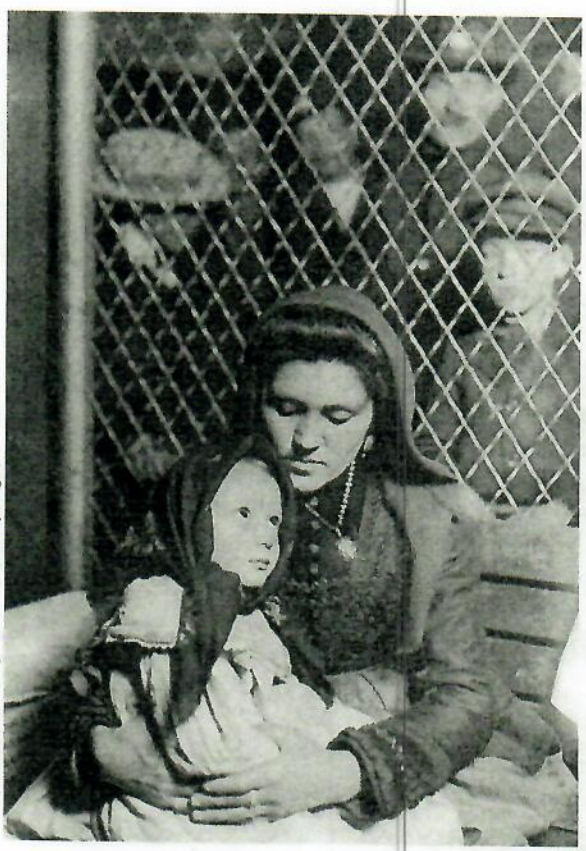


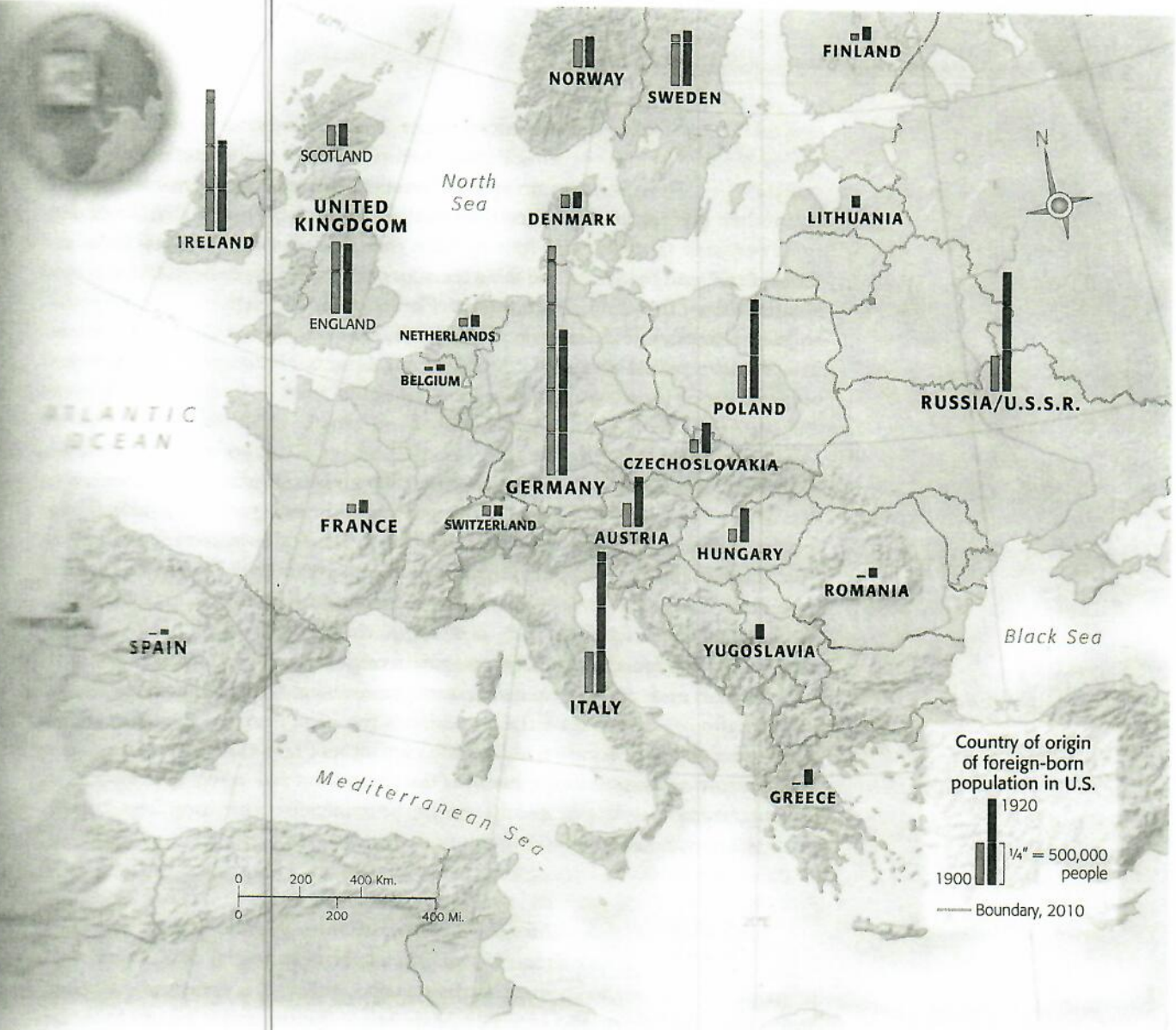
Photo by Lewis W. Hine/George Eastman House/Getty Images)

Male immigrants and an immigration official are looking through a wire fence at an Italian immigrant woman and her daughter who have recently arrived at the immigrant inspection station at Ellis Island, outside of New York City. The main port of entry for European immigrants after 1892, Ellis Island stands in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty.

Many long-settled Americans feared these **"new immigrants,"** whose customs, Catholic and Jewish faiths, languages, and poverty made them seem particularly alien. Yet old and new immigrants relied on similar family-centered cultures to survive. New arrivals received aid from relatives who already immigrated, and family members pooled resources to help newcomers adapt.

Geographical and Social Mobility

Once in America, newcomers seldom stayed put. Via migration, people tried to escape poor housing and employment for better opportunities. Advances through work were available mostly to white males. Thousands of businesses were needed to serve burgeoning urban populations, and growing corporations hired new clerical personnel. Women also migrated within and between cities, but they usually went with husbands or fathers. Assigned to low-paying



MAP 16.2
Sources of European-Born Population, 1900 and 1920

In just a few decades, the proportion of European immigrants to the United States who came from northern and western Europe increased (Ireland and Germany) or remained relatively stable (England and Scandinavia), while the proportion from eastern and southern Europe increased dramatically. Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau, "Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850–1990," February 1999, http://www.census.gov/population (accessed February 12, 2000).

occupations by prejudice, African Americans, American Indians, Mexican Americans, and Asian Americans made fewer gains.

Few individuals became rich by relocating, but many achieved moderate success. In fast-growing cities such as Atlanta and Los Angeles, approximately one in five white manual workers rose to white-collar or owner positions within ten years. Some men chose a steady job over the risk of starting a business. Many, particularly unskilled workers, could not maintain Old World occupations and had to accept low-paying jobs. Gaps between rich and poor widened, but urban economies created enough opportunities for those in between.

Cultural Retention

American cities were collections of subcommunities. Rather than completely assimilate, migrants and immigrants interacted with their environment to retain their identity while altering their outlook and urban society. Old World customs persisted in districts of Italians from the same province, Japanese from the same island, and Jews from the same Russian *shtetl.* Newcomers recreated aid organizations from their homelands, such as Chinese loan associations called *whey* that helped members start businesses. Southern Italians transferred the *padrone* system, whereby for a payoff a boss found jobs for immigrants. Newcomers practiced their religions and married within their group.

Urban Borderlands

In large cities, such as Chicago and Philadelphia, immigrants initially clustered in inner neighborhoods where jobs and cheap housing were available. These districts often were multi-ethnic "urban borderlands," where diverse people coexisted. Even in districts identified with a specific group, such as "Little Italy," rapid mobility undermined homogeneity as newcomers arrived and older inhabitants left. Businesses and institutions, such as bakeries, churches, and club headquarters—operated by and for one ethnic group—gave a neighborhood its identity.

For first- and second-generation immigrants, neighborhoods acted as havens until they were ready to leave the borderlands for other districts. European immigrants encountered prejudice, such as the exclusion of Jews from certain neighborhoods, professions, and clubs, but this discrimination was rarely systematic. For African Americans, Asians, and Mexicans, however, discrimination kept borderlands homogeneous.

Racial Segregation and Violence

By the late nineteenth century, racial bias forced African Americans into highly segregated ghettos. Within their neighborhoods, blacks nurtured institutions to cope with city life such as churches, newspapers, and clubs, and especially branches of Baptist and African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Protestantism. Religious associations dominated urban African American communities and fostered cooperation across class lines.

Often, the only way African Americans could relieve crowding in ghettos was to expand into surrounding, previously white neighborhoods, which resulted in attacks by white residents who feared blacks would reduce property values. Competition between blacks and whites for housing, jobs, and political influence sparked racial violence, in North and South. An influx of black strikebreakers into East St. Louis, Illinois, in 1917 heightened racial tensions, triggering a riot in which nine whites and thirty-nine blacks were killed and three hundred buildings were destroyed.

Though Chinese and Japanese immigrants usually preferred their own neighborhoods and business institutions in San Francisco, Seattle, Los Angeles, and New York, Anglos also tried to keep them separate. Using the slogan "The Chinese must go," Irish immigrant Denis Kearney and his followers intimidated employers into refusing to hire Chinese and drove hundreds of Asians from San Francisco. In 1880, the city banned Chinese laundries, which were social centers for immigrants

neighborhoods. In 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act Chinese immigration, and in 1892 the Geary Act extended previous and required Chinese Americans to carry certificates of residence. similarly, were prevented by law from becoming citizens.

Mexican Barrios

In southwestern cities such as Los Angeles, Tucson, Albuquerque, and San Antonio, Mexicans were the original inhabitants, Anglos the newcomers. But as increased, they pushed Mexicans into isolated districts called *barrios*, from multi-ethnic borderlands housing European immigrants. Such hindered the opportunities for African Americans, Asians, and Mexicans their lives.

everywhere, immigrant culture mingled with existing realities. many foreigners identified themselves by their village or regional birthplace, native-born Americans categorized them by nationality. People from County and County Limerick were merged into "Irish." Those from Calabria and Campania became "Italians." Moreover, the diversity of American cities prompted to modify habits. They learned the English language, used locally grown for traditional meals, fashioned mass-produced clothing into Old World and went to American doctors while still practicing folk medicine.

Religious Diversity

The influx of multiple immigrants transformed the United States into a religiously diverse nation. Newcomers from Italy, Polish lands, and Slovakia joined and Germans to increase Catholic populations in many cities, and New York came to house one of the largest Jewish populations in the world. By 1920, Buddhism was well established among Japanese immigrants on the West Coast and in Hawai'i. Catholics and Jews tried to adjust their faiths to new environments by adopting English in services and altering traditional rituals. Still, Catholic immigrant parishes pressured bishops into appointing priests of the same ethnicity as parishioners, and Orthodox Jews retained Old World customs such as separating men and women in services. But when Catholics and Jews married co-religionists of different nationalities—an Italian marrying a Pole, for example—religious identity remained strong while ethnic identities blended.

The nation's broad diversity prevented domination by a single racial or ethnic majority and nurtured rich cultural variety: American folk literature, Italian and Mexican cuisine, Yiddish theater, African American music and dance, and much more. Newcomers changed their environment as much as it changed them.

Housing

Population growth outpaced housing supplies. With high rents and few options, those with low incomes shared space so that two or three families—and boarders—occupied single-family homes and apartments. The result was unprecedented crowding. In 1890, New York City's immigrant-packed Lower East Side averaged 702 people per acre. Cramped tenements and row houses in New York, Philadelphia, and New Orleans lacked light and fresh air. States such as New York

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Mexican Barrios

In southwestern cities such as Los Angeles, Tucson, Albuquerque, and San Antonio, Mexicans were the original inhabitants, Anglos the newcomers. But as Anglo arrivals increased, they pushed Mexicans into isolated districts called *barrios*, often away from multi-ethnic borderlands housing European immigrants. Such racial bias hindered the opportunities for African Americans, Asians, and Mexicans to remake their lives.

Virtually everywhere, immigrant culture mingled with existing realities. Although many foreigners identified themselves by their village or regional birthplace, native-born Americans categorized them by nationality. People from County Cork and County Limerick were merged into "Irish." Those from Calabria and Campobasso became "Italians." Moreover, the diversity of American cities prompted foreigners to modify habits. They learned the English language, used locally grown foods for traditional meals, fashioned mass-produced clothing into Old World styles, and went to American doctors while still practicing folk medicine.

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passed regulations to establish ventilation and safety codes for new tenement buildings, but did not remedy existing buildings.

Improved furnaces, electric lighting, and indoor plumbing created more comfort for middle-class households and, later, for most others. Private enterprise made these technological advances possible, while major government-sponsored improvements were in street paving, modernized firefighting equipment, and electric street lighting.

Poverty and Crime

Poverty, however, continued to burden many urbanites. Employment, especially for unskilled workers, fluctuated with business cycles, triggering hardship for low-income families. Since colonial days, Americans believed that anyone could escape poverty through hard work and clean living; poverty, then, was due to moral weakness. Only those incapable of supporting themselves—orphans, people with disabilities, and widows—deserved relief. New York journalist Jacob Riis and other reformers concluded that people's environment contributed to poverty and therefore society bore responsibility to improve conditions. Riis's articles, combined into a book, *How the Other Half Lives* (1890), alerted readers to the deplorable conditions of slum housing. Some reformers advocated housing, education, and job initiatives to help the poor help themselves. Others, however, tolerated poor relief, but clung to the notion expressed by one charity worker that it "should be surrounded by circumstances that shall … repel everyone … from accepting it."

Crime and violence increased in American cities while falling in other industrializing nations. America's murder rate, for example, rose from 25 per million people in 1881 to 107 per million in 1898. Though police forces were increasingly professionalized, various urban groups disagreed about how best to enforce laws. Nativists were quick to blame immigrants for urban crime, and ethnic and racial minorities were more likely to be arrested. But lawbreakers included the native-born as well as foreigners.

Water Purity and Waste Disposal

Finding sources of pure water and ways to eliminate waste also challenged city dwellers. Old methods of sinking wells for water and dumping human and industrial waste in rivers no longer sufficed. By the 1880s, doctors increasingly embraced the theory that microorganisms caused disease, prompting concerns over where germs might breed. States gradually passed laws prohibiting disposal of raw sewage into rivers, and a few cities began to filter water and chemically treat sewage.

Trash, however, was a growing problem. Experts in 1900 estimated that every New Yorker annually generated 160 pounds of garbage (food), 1,200 pounds of ashes (from stoves and furnaces), and 105 pounds of rubbish. Factories created tons of solid waste (scrap metal, wood), and each of the 3.5 million horses in American cities daily dumped 20 pounds of manure and a gallon of urine on the streets. Women's groups convinced some cities to hire engineers to address the dilemma. One, George Waring, Jr., designed sewage disposal and street-cleaning systems for Memphis and New York. Cities became cleaner, but the trash problem continues to the present.

Political Machines

From the apparent confusion surrounding urban management arose **political machines**, organizations seeking to obtain and retain power. Machine politicians used fraud and bribery, but they also provided relief and service to their voters.

political machines Organizations that emerged in urban, often working-class and immigrant neighborhoods. They solicited votes for particular candidates and promised jobs and other services to supporters; putting their candidates in office gave them power over local government.

Big cities were typically run by political machines, with the most notable in New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago. Run by "**bosses**," these organizations built power bases among immigrant working classes. Bosses understood people's problems from firsthand experience. Bosses made politics their full-time profession. They attended weddings and wakes, sponsored picnics, and held open houses in saloons where neighborhood folk could speak to them. In return for jobs, food, clothing, and intervention when someone got arrested, people gave machine politicians the votes that kept them in power.

bosses Headed political machines; often of similar background to constituents, these popular local figures exchanged votes for money, support, and other favors.

To finance their activities, bosses used political influence to control the awarding of public contracts. Recipients repaid the machine with a portion of their profits or salaries. Critics called this graft; bosses called it gratitude. Though waste and corruption were often involved, machine-led governments constructed much of the new urban infrastructure—public buildings, sewer systems, schools, and streetcar lines—and expanded services such as firefighting, police, and public health.

Bribes and kickbacks made machine projects costly. Bosses financed expansion with municipal bonds, and public debts soared. Also, payoffs from gambling and illegal liquor traffic were important sources of machine revenues. But bosses likely were no guiltier of greed and discrimination than businessmen who exploited workers, spoiled the environment, and manipulated government.

Civic and Social Reform

Middle- and upper-class civic reformers tried to replace machine politics with a government run efficiently, like a business. Structurally, they wanted tighter budget control, city manager and commission forms of government, and nonpartisan elections. A few reform mayors, such as Hazen Pingree of Detroit and Tom Johnson of Cleveland, went beyond governmental change to provide jobs and better housing for poor people. But civic reformers rarely held office for long.

Another group addressed social problems. Mostly middle class, this group pressed for building codes ensuring safer tenements, improved schools to prepare immigrants for citizenship, and medical care for the poor. Often led by women such as **Jane Addams** and **Florence Kelley**, social reformers also promoted safer food, public playgrounds, and school nurses. Environmental reformers, such as those in the City Beautiful movement, urged construction of civic centers, parks, and boulevards that would make cities economically efficient and attractive. Many plans, however, were only dreams. Neither government nor private businesses could finance large-scale projects, and planners disagreed over whether beautification would solve urban problems.

Jane Addams Social worker, pioneer of the settlement house movement, and founder of Chicago's Hull House, which provided education, training, and social activities for immigrants and the poor.

Florence Kelley Settlement house worker who became the chief factory inspector for Illinois in 1893.

Urban reformers often failed to understand cities' diverse populations and people's varying visions of reform. To civic reformers, appointing government workers based on civil service exams rather than party loyalty meant progress, but to working-class men, civil service signified reduced job opportunities. Moral reformers believed

that restricting alcoholic beverages would prevent husbands from squandering wages, but immigrants saw it as interference. Planners' visions of new boulevards and buildings often displaced the poor. Well-meaning humanitarians criticized how immigrant mothers shopped, cooked, and raised children without regard for their financial difficulties. Thus urban reform merged idealism with insensitivity.

Family Life and Individual Life

How did urbanization affect family life and structure?

Family cushioned urban dwellers from the world's uncertainties. But increasingly, new institutions—schools, political organizations, unions—competed with the family to provide education and security.

Until recently, when the number of single people living alone has risen markedly, most American households (75 percent or more) have consisted of nuclear families—a married couple with or without children. Because immigrants tended to be young, the population generally was young. In 1880, the median age was under twenty-one; by 1920, it was still only twenty-five. (Median age at present is thirty-seven.) Moreover, in 1900, death rates among people aged forty-five to sixty-four were double what they are today, and only 4 percent of the population was sixty-five and older versus 13 percent today. Thus in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth, fewer children than today had living grandparents, and three-generation households of children, parents, and grandparents were rare. Falling birth rates reduced family sizes. In 1880, there were 40 live births per 1,000 people; by 1900, births had dropped to 32; and by 1920, to 28. In part, this decline occurred because the United States was becoming an urban nation, and birth rates are historically lower in cities. Second, as nutrition and medical care improved, infant mortality fell and families did not have to bear many children to ensure that some would survive. Third, parents increasingly recognized that having three or four children instead of six meant improved quality of life for each child. Birth control technology—diaphragms and condoms—had existed for centuries, but in this era new materials made devices more convenient and dependable.

Family as a Resource

Many young adults who left home to work in cities became boarders in homes and lodging houses. Boarding was a transitional stage before setting up their own household. It also allowed families with spare space to obtain extra income.

At a time when welfare agencies were rare, people turned to their family when in need. Relatives often resided nearby and helped with child care, meals, advice, and consolation. As one family member recalled, "After two days my brother took me to the shop he was working in and his boss saw me and he gave me the job." But kinship obligations were not always welcome. Immigrant parents pressured daughters to stay home to help with housework, stifling opportunities for education and independence. Immigrant parents and American-born children often clashed over the abandonment of Old World ways or the amount of wages employed children should contribute.

The Unmarried

Although marriage rates were high, large numbers of city dwellers were unmarried. In 1890 almost 42 percent

Increase in Leisure Time

By the late 1800s, machines and assembly lines cut average workweeks from sixty-six hours in 1860 to sixty in 1890 and forty-seven in 1920, giving workers shorter workdays and freer weekends. White-collar employees worked eight to ten hours a day and often only half a day, if that, on weekends. Many Americans had time for recreation, and entrepreneurs profited from their new leisure time.

Amusement became a commercial activity. Production of games and toys expanded. By the 1890s, middle-class families were buying mass-produced pianos and sheet music that made singing a popular home entertainment. Organized sports, formerly a fashionable indulgence of elites, became a favorite pastime of all classes.

Baseball

Baseball was the most popular sport. Derived from older bat, ball, and base-circling games, baseball was formalized in 1845 by the Knickerbocker Club of New York City. By 1860 at least fifty baseball clubs existed, and youths played informal games on city lots and fields nationwide. The National League of Professional Baseball Clubs, founded in 1876, gave the sport a business structure, though as early as 1867, a "color line" excluded black players from major professional teams. In 1903 the National League and competing American League (formed in 1901) began a World Series between their championship teams. The Boston Americans (later, Red Sox) defeated the Pittsburgh Pirates.

Croquet and Cycling

Croquet and cycling were popular pastimes for men and women. Played on lawns, croquet encouraged socializing. Cycling was as popular as baseball, especially after 1885, when the cumbersome velocipede, with its huge front wheel and tall seat, gave way to safety bicycles with pneumatic tires and identical wheels. By 1900, Americans owned 10 million bicycles. Also, bicycles helped free women from constraints of Victorian fashion since safe riding required women to wear divided skirts and simple undergarments.

Football

American football, as an intercollegiate competition, attracted players and spectators wealthy enough to have access to higher education. By the late nineteenth century, however, the game appealed to a wider audience. While the Princeton-Yale game drew fifty thousand spectators, informal games were played throughout the country.

College football's violence and "tramp athletes"—nonstudents hired to help teams win—sparked a national scandal, climaxing in 1905 when eighteen players died from game-related injuries. President Theodore Roosevelt, an advocate of athletics, convened a White House conference to discuss the brutality. The gathering founded the Intercollegiate Athletic Association (renamed the National Collegiate Athletic Association, or NCAA, in 1910) to police college sports. In 1906, the association made the game less violent and tightened player eligibility.

Japanese Baseball

Baseball, the "national pastime," was one new leisure-time pursuit that Americans took into different parts of the world. The Shanghai Base Ball Club was founded by Americans in China in 1863, but was denounced by the Imperial Court as spiritually corrupting. However, when Horace Wilson, an American teacher, taught baseball rules to his Japanese students around 1870, the game received an enthusiastic reception as a reinforcement of traditional values and became part of Japanese culture.

During the 1870s, Japanese high schools and colleges sponsored organized baseball, and in 1883 Hiroshi Hiraoka, a railroad engineer educated in Boston, founded the first official local team, the Shimbashi Athletic Club Athletics.

Before baseball, the Japanese had no team sports or recreational athletics. Once they learned about baseball, they found that the idea of a team sport fit their culture well. But for them, baseball was serious business, involving often brutal training. Practices at Ichiko, one of Japan's great high school baseball teams in the late nineteenth century, were dubbed "Bloody Urine" because many players passed blood after a day's drilling. There was a spiritual quality, too, linked to Buddhist values. According to one Japanese coach, "Student baseball must be the baseball of self-discipline, or trying to attain the truth, just as in Zen Buddhism." This prompted the Japanese to consider baseball a new method for pursuing the spirit of Bushido, the way of the samurai.

When Americans played baseball in Japan, the Japanese admired their talent but found them lacking discipline and respect. Americans insulted the Japanese by refusing to remove their hats and bow when they stepped up to bat. An international dispute occurred in Tokyo in1891 when an American professor, late for a game, climbed over a sacred fence, for which fans attacked him. The American embassy lodged a complaint. Americans assumed their game would encourage Japanese to become like westerners, but the Japanese transformed baseball into a Japanese expression of team spirit, discipline, and nationalism that was uniquely Japanese.

Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Japan

Replete with bats, gloves, and uniforms, this Japanese baseball team of 1890 very much resembles its American counterpart of that era. The Japanese adopted baseball soon after Americans became involved in their country but also added their cultural qualities to the game.

As more women enrolled in college, they participated in sports such as rowing, track, swimming, archery, and baseball. Invented in 1891 as a winter sport for men, basketball—soon women's most popular sport—received women's rules (which limited dribbling and running, and encouraged passing) from Senda Berenson of Smith College.

Show Business

American show business, increasingly created by and for ordinary people, matured in these years. Theatrical performances offered audiences escape into adventure, melodrama, and comedy. Musical comedies entertained with songs, humor, and dance. **George M. Cohan**, a singer and dancer born into an Irish family, drew on patriotism and traditional values in songs such as "The Yankee Doodle Boy" and "You're a Grand Old Flag."

George M. Cohan Singer, dancer, and songwriter who drew on patriotic and traditional values in songs.

minstrel shows Early stage shows in which white men wore blackface makeup and played to the prejudices of white audiences by offering demeaning and caricatured portrayals of African Americans in songs, dances, and skits.

Probably the most popular mass entertainment by 1900, vaudeville offered something for everyone. Shows featured jugglers, magicians, acrobats, comedians, singers, dancers, and animal acts. Shrewd entrepreneurs made vaudeville big business. Famous producer Florenz Ziegfeld packaged stylish shows—the Ziegfeld Follies—and created the Ziegfeld Girl, whose graceful dancing and alluring costumes suggested a haunting sexuality.

Picture Research Consultants & Archives

Eva Tanguay was one of the most popular vaudeville performers of her era. A buxom singer who billed herself as "the girl who made vaudeville famous," Tanguay dressed in elaborate costumes and sang suggestive songs, many of which were written just for her and epitomized her carefree style.

Opportunities for Women and Minorities

Show business provided new opportunities for female, African American, and immigrant performers, but encouraged stereotyping and exploitation. Comic opera diva Lillian Russell, vaudeville comedienne-singer Fanny Brice, and burlesque queen Eva Tanguay attracted loyal fans and handsome fees. In contrast to the demure Victorian female, they conveyed pluck and creativity. Tanguay was both shocking and confident when she sang, "It's All Been Done Before But Not the Way I Do It." But lesser female performers were often exploited by male promoters and theater owners, who wanted to profit by titillating the public with scantily clad women.

Before the 1890s, **minstrel shows** were the chief commercial entertainment employing African Americans. Vaudeville provided new opportunities but reinforced demeaning stereotypes. Pandering to prejudices of white audiences, composers and white singers degraded blacks in songs such as "You May Be a Hawaiian on Old Broadway, But You're Just Another Nigger to Me." Bert Williams, an educated black comedian and dancer, achieved success by wearing blackface makeup and playing stereotypical roles of a smiling fool and dandy, but the humiliation tormented him.

Immigrants occupied the core of American popular entertainment. Performers reinforced ethnic stereotypes,

but such distortions were more sympathetic than those involving blacks. A typical scene featuring Italians, for example, highlighted a character's uncertain grasp of English, which caused him to confuse *pallbearer* with *polar bear*. Such scenes allowed audiences to laugh with, rather than at, foibles of the human condition.

Movies

Shortly after 1900, live entertainment yielded to motion pictures. Perfected by Thomas Edison in the 1880s, movies began as slot-machine peep shows in arcades and billiard parlors. Eventually, images were projected onto a screen for large audiences. Producers, many of them from Jewish backgrounds, discovered that a film could tell an exciting story. Using themes of patriotism and working-class life, early filmmakers helped shift American culture away from straitlaced Victorian values to a more cosmopolitan outlook. Movies also presented social messages; *Birth of a Nation* (1915), directed by D. W. Griffith, was a stunning epic about the Civil War and Reconstruction that fanned racial prejudice by depicting African Americans as threats to white moral values. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), formed in 1909, led protests against it. But the film's pioneering techniques—close-ups, fade-outs, and battle scenes—heightened its appeal.

Yellow Journalism

News also became a consumer product. Joseph Pulitzer, a Hungarian immigrant who bought the *New York World* in 1883, pioneered a new branch of journalism by filling *World* pages with stories of disasters, crimes, and scandals under screaming headlines in bold type. Pulitzer also popularized comics, and the yellow ink they were printed in brought about the term "yellow journalism" as a synonym for sensationalism. Soon other publishers, such as William Randolph Hearst, adopted Pulitzer's techniques. Pulitzer, Hearst, and their rivals boosted circulations by creating sports and women's sections. Also, magazines such as *Saturday Evening Post* and *Ladies Home Journal* became popular with human-interest stories, photographs, and eye-catching ads.

In 1891, there was less than 1 telephone for every 100 people in the United States; by 1901, the number doubled; and by 1921, it swelled to 12.6. In 1900, Americans used 4 billion postage stamps; in 1922, they bought 14.3 billion. More than ever, people in different parts of the country knew about and discussed the same news event. America was becoming a mass society where the same products, technology, and information dominated everyday life.

To some extent, new amusements allowed ethnic and social groups to share common experiences. Yet different groups used amusement parks such as at Coney Island, ball fields, vaudeville shows, movies, and feature sections of newspapers and magazines to suit their own needs. To the dismay of natives who hoped that public recreation and holidays would assimilate newcomers, immigrants converted picnics and Fourth of July celebrations into ethnic events and occasions for boisterous festivity. Young working-class men and women resisted parents' and moralizers' warnings and frequented dance halls, where they explored forms of courtship and sexual behavior. Thus, leisure—like work and politics—was shaped by the pluralistic forces that thrived in the new urban-industrial society.

Technology of Recorded Sound

Today's iPods and digital recorders derive from technology, chemistry, and human resourcefulness that came together in the late nineteenth century. In 1877, Thomas Edison devised a way to preserve and reproduce his voice by storing it on indentations made in tinfoil. Edison intended his "speaking machine" to help businesses store dictation. But in 1878, his rivalry with telephone inventor Alexander Graham Bell, who was working on a similar device, drew Edison to invent a phonograph for recorded music. By the 1890s, audiences paid to hear recorded sounds from these machines.

By 1901, companies such as the Columbia Phonograph Company produced machines that played music recorded on cylinders molded from a durable wax compound. Over the next ten years, inventors improved the phonograph so sound played from a stylus (needle) vibrating in the grooves of a shellac disc. Records' playing time increased from two minutes to four.

Phonograph records replaced sheet music as the most popular medium, but soon radio emerged and boosted record sales. Radio's popularity was only possible via another electronic technology: the microphone, a vast improvement over megaphones. As phonograph prices declined and sound quality advanced, more records became available.

The 1938 invention of the idler wheel, which enabled a phonograph turntable to spin a disc at speeds necessary for the stylus to pick up sound accurately, brought an important advance. Shortly thereafter, inventions in sound recording, such as the magnetic tape recorder, allowed for more manipulation of sound in the recording studio. In 1963 Philips, a Dutch electronics firm, introduced the compact audiocassette. Two decades later, Philips joined with the Japanese corporation Sony to adapt digital laser discs, invented by an American for video storage, to store music. The compact disc (CD) was born, and from there it was a short step for Apple Computers, Inc., to create the iPod, storing CD-quality music on an internal hard drive. Today, downloaded music has replaced records, tapes, and discs as a multibillion-dollar industry.

Summary

Industrialization, propelled by technology, and urbanization, enriched by waves of immigrants, dramatically altered the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Industrial growth transformed the nation into a manufacturing, financial, and exporting power. Immigrant families outnumbered the native-born in many cities, and fueled the industrial economy as workers and consumers. And the era's new technologies made cities safer and life more comfortable.

But massive corporations transformed skilled producers into wage earners. Laborers fought to retain control of their work and organized unions. Finding adequate housing, jobs, and a safe environment posed challenges for newcomers. In cities, politics and reform took on new meanings, and family life reflected both change and continuity.

Wealth and power were unevenly distributed, however. Corporations consolidated to control resources. Though numerous, workers lacked influence, believing businesses profited at their expense. And the urban society that materialized when native inventiveness met the traditions of European, African, and Asian cultures seldom functioned smoothly, yet helped cities thrive. When the desire to retain one's culture met the need to fit in, it resulted in compound identifications: Irish American, Italian American, Polish American, and the like. By 1920, the foundation of the country's urban–industrial structure had been laid.

Chapter Review

Technology and the Triumph of Industrialism

How did technological innovations transform American industry?

New inventions and technological advances made production of goods and services faster and cheaper, which in turn fueled the rise of mass production and consumption. Big factories replaced small workshops as large-scale production became increasingly economical. Thomas Edison's system for inexpensively distributing electricity facilitated the emergence of countless other inventions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Henry Ford built on a European invention for engines to create the assembly-line process that would mass-produce thousands of identical—ultimately affordable—cars in the early twentieth century. The du Pont family similarly revolutionized the chemical industry; electric looms advanced textile production and relocated it from North to South; while North Carolinian James B. Duke mass-produced cigarettes and remade the tobacco industry.

Big Business and Its Critics

What led corporations to increasingly consolidate in the late nineteenth century?

Big companies saw consolidation as a way to guarantee profits and control downward economic cycles. They believed the more they pooled resources to set prices and influence profits by determining how much to supply the market, the more they could manage a downturn. Until the 1880s, however, laws made it illegal for companies to own stock in another firm. Instead, businessmen such as John D. Rockefeller turned to trusts, luring stockholders of smaller companies to yield control of their stock "in trust" to the larger company's board of trustees. Once states allowed companies within their borders to own stock in corporations in other states, holding companies emerged, where one firm would own a partial or complete interest in another and merge their assets and resources. Holding companies also found it easier to dominate their markets by controlling all aspects of an industry, from raw materials to manufacturing to distribution. Business leaders also embraced a new theory—Social Darwinism—a survival of the fittest for the laissez-faire economy that justified their actions. But critics questioned the concentration of wealth in a few hands and the growing poverty in a rich nation. Some wanted a more cooperative society and greater government involvement; others advocated government ownership of railroads and utilities. In the end, Congress passed antitrust legislation, though its potential was limited by vague language and pro-business courts.

Mechanization and the Changing Status of Labor

How did mechanization and new systems of management change the nature and status of work?

Innovation created new jobs, but laborsaving machines and assembly lines also meant that fewer workers could produce more in less time. This, along, with new ideas about efficiency (Frederick Taylor's "scientific management") replaced workers' skills with tasks regulated by supervisors and the clock. Instead of doing many different tasks, workers now did only one task repeatedly. As such, they were transformed from craftsmen and skilled producers into wage laborers. In the process, they lost control over their workdays and were regulated by the production mandates of bosses. The devaluing of skill and the urge to maximize profits led manufacturers to further cut labor costs by hiring women and children, whom they could pay much less. The advent of typewriters and other office machines opened clerical and white-collar jobs to educated women, though at a fraction of what men had earned. But in manufacturing, long days and often-hazardous working conditions led to an increasing number of accidents. Workers formed labor unions and participated in (sometimes violent) strikes, in the hope of regaining control over their work lives, with mixed results.

Growth of the Modern American City

What fueled urban growth in the late nineteenth century?

Cities grew two ways: first, by annexing areas that bordered them, as New York City did when it merged with Brooklyn, Staten Island, and parts of Queens, doubling its population to 3 million. Cities also expanded via in-migration from rural areas and, more importantly,

immigration from abroad. New groups of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe joined earlier immigrants from northern and western European in seeking new opportunities in the United States between 1880 and 1920. Population pressures, land redistribution, industrialization, and religious persecution pushed many immigrants to leave Europe, Asia, Canada, and Latin America for the United States. Within the United States, low crop prices and heavy debts pushed some white farmers from the country in search of jobs in the city; in other cases, young men sought to escape economic hardship for the excitement of cities while young women left unhappy homes for greater independence. Similarly, African Americans headed to cities for better jobs and to escape crop liens and racial violence. As a result, cities became places of great cultural diversity.

Family Life and Individual Life

How did urbanization affect family life and structure?

In some ways, family life remained the same: it was still a central aspect of people's lives and provided resources and a safe haven from the harsh world beyond it. But in many ways the traditional family was transformed: institutions such as schools, unions, and political groups competed with the family in providing education and security, for example. With a rising population of young single immigrants and migrants, more people remained single—and for longer periods of time—than in the past, which meant more single people living alone or as boarders in other people's homes. Family size was reduced, too, with far fewer children born. This was due partly to lower infant mortality rates thanks to better nutrition and medical care, but also because birth rates tend to be lower in cities and because new and better materials for condoms and diaphragms made birth control devices more convenient and reliable. The notion of life stages emerged with lower birth rates and longer life expectancy, segmenting one's life into childhood, adolescence, and so on. With compulsory education, peer groups became more influential than families in shaping young people's behavior. Families continued to rely on each other as resources, especially immigrant families adjusting to life in America, but generations often clashed over Old World versus New World identities.

New Leisure and Mass Culture

What fueled the rise of commercial leisure?

Mechanization and new, more efficient means of production, along with labor activism, led to shorter workweeks and hours—which, in turn, gave workers more time to use as they saw fit. New mass entertainment rose to fill this need, including baseball and football leagues, bicycling, and other outdoor activities, as well as theater, vaudeville, and, later, film. Vaudeville was an early form of popular live entertainment, appealing to broad audiences with magic shows, comedians, singers and dancers, and providing work opportunities for blacks, immigrants and women (even while reinforcing negative stereotypes.) But by 1900, live entertainment was quickly replaced by the advent of movies, which began as slot machine peep shows in the 1880s, but evolved by the early twentieth century into a medium for story-telling. By focusing on a variety of themes, the medium of film helped shift American culture away from the straitlaced nature of Victorian society toward more cosmopolitan outlook.

Suggestions for Further Reading

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Howard P. Chudacoff and Judith E. Smith, *The Evolution of American Urban Society*, 7th ed. (2010)

John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (1988)

Steven J. Diner, *A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era* (1998)

Nancy Foner and George M. Frederickson, eds., *Not Just Black and White: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States* (2004)

Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (1985)

Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (1998)

John F. Kasson, *Civilizing the Machine: Technology and Republican Values in America, 1776–1900* (1976)

Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (2003)

T. J. Jackson Lears and Richard W. Fox, eds., *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880–1980* (1983)

Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890–1935* (1991)

Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (1986)

of adult men and 37 percent of women were single, almost twice as high as in 1960 (though lower than today). About half lived with parents, but others inhabited rented rooms. Mostly young, they developed a subculture that included dance halls, saloons, cafes, and the YMCA and YWCA.

Some unmarried people were part of homosexual populations that gathered in large cities such as New York, San Francisco, and Boston. Though difficult to estimate numerically, gay men patronized their own clubs, restaurants, coffeehouses, and theaters. A number of same-sex couples, especially women, formed lasting relationships, sometimes called "Boston marriages." People in this subculture were categorized more by how they acted—men acting like women, women acting like men—than by their sexual partners. The term "homosexual" was not used. Men who dressed and acted like women were called "fairies." Gay women remained hidden, and a visible lesbian subculture was rare until the 1920s.

Stages of Life

Before the late nineteenth century, stages of life were less distinct than today. Childhood was regarded as a period during which youngsters prepared for adulthood by gradually assuming responsibilities, such as caring for younger siblings. Subdivisions of youth—toddlers, schoolchildren, teenagers—were not recognized. Because married couples had more children over a longer time span, parenthood occupied most of adult life. Older people worked until they were physically incapable.

By the late nineteenth century, however, decreasing birth rates shortened the period of parenting, so more middle-aged couples experienced an "empty nest" when children grew up and left home. Longer life expectancy and a tendency by employers to force aged workers to retire separated the old from the young. As states passed compulsory school attendance laws in the 1870s and 1880s, childhood and adolescence became distinct stages, and peers rather than family influenced youngsters' behavior.

By 1900, new agencies assumed tasks formerly performed by families. Schools made education a community responsibility. Employment agencies, political machines, and labor unions became responsible for job recruitment and security. Yet kinship remained a dependable institution. Holiday celebrations—Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter—were times for family reunions. Birthdays, too, became increasingly festive, serving as milestones for measuring age-related life stages. In 1914, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day, capping a six-year campaign by schoolteacher Anna Jarvis, who believed children were neglecting their mothers. Ethnic, religious, and racial groups adapted celebrations to their cultures, preparing special foods and ceremonies.

New Leisure and Mass Culture

What fueled the rise of commercial leisure?

On December 2, 1889, as laborers paraded through Worcester, Massachusetts, seeking shorter working hours, carpenters hoisted a banner proclaiming, "Eight Hours for Work, Eight Hours for Rest, Eight Hours for What We Will." That last phrase claimed a new aspect of life: leisure.

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Gilded Age Politics

1877–1900

William Graham Sumner said of people who were lazy, immoral, or criminal that "it would have been better for society and would have involved no pain to them, if they had never been born." Born in New Jersey, Sumner was raised in Hartford, Connecticut, the son of a railroad employee and wife who had emigrated from England. In spite of his family's modest means, Sumner graduated from Yale College (later Yale University) in 1863. After studying in Germany and England, he was ordained an Episcopal priest in 1869. But society and economics were his real passions. So in 1872 he left the church and accepted a professorship in political and social science at Yale, where he remained until retiring in 1909.

Professor Sumner was a champion of laissez-faire, the ideology that government involvement in private affairs should be kept to a minimum. He was among those credited with adapting Charles Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest to society and economics (see page 529). In an 1887 essay, Sumner expressed his laissez-faire views by asserting that the American people had "reached the point where individualism is possible," concluding that "whenever we try to get paternalized [meaning controlled by government] we only succeed in getting policed."

Sumner is an icon of the nation's rampant economic expansion. The traumatic Civil War and its aftermath plus the extraordinary rise of large corporations between 1877 and 1900 influenced politics and government and shaped everyday life. The era was characterized by greed, special interest, and political exclusion. The obsession with riches seemed so widespread that, when Mark Twain and his novelist friend Charles Dudley Warner satirized America as a nation of money-grubbers in their novel *The Gilded Age* (1874), the name stuck and is still used by historians to characterize the late nineteenth century.

At first glance, the Gilded Age may appear as the era in which laissez-faire triumphed. Corporations seemed to expand unfettered and government spending, especially on social programs,

Chapter Outline

was kept to a minimum. The U.S. Congress was preoccupied with matters designed to aid business, and in several influential decisions, the Supreme Court limited the ability of government to control corporations.

Such a view, however, would miss the era's developments that expanded government power at federal, state, and local levels far more than people at the time realized. Though certain groups resisted government authority, others actively sought it. In spite of partisan and regional rivalries, Congress achieved legislative landmarks in railroad regulation, tariff and currency reform, the civil service, and other important issues. And in spite of Sumner's fear, state and local governments expanded their police power—the authority to protect the health, safety, and morals of citizens. Nevertheless, exclusion still prevented the majority of Americans—including women, southern blacks, Indians, uneducated whites, and unnaturalized immigrants—from voting and from the tools of democracy.

Until the 1890s, a stable party system and sectional balance maintained political equilibrium. Then, in the 1890s, rural discontent rumbled through the West and South, and a deep economic depression exposed the industrial system's flaws. The 1896 presidential campaign stirred Americans, as a new party system arose, old parties split, and sectional unity dissolved. The nation emerged from the turbulent 1890s with new economic and political configurations.

As you read this chapter, keep the following questions in mind:

- **What were the functions of government in the Gilded Age, and how did they change?**
- **How did policies of exclusion and discrimination make their mark on the political culture of the age?**
- **How did the economic climate give rise to the Populist movement?**

The Nature of Party Politics

How did factional disputes complicate party politics in the Gilded Age?

Public interest in elections reached an all-time high between 1870 and 1896. Around 80 percent of eligible voters (white and black males in the North and West, mostly white males in the South) consistently voted—a rate 20 to 30 percent higher than today's. Featuring parades, picnics, and speeches, politics served as recreation, with voting as its final step.

Chronology

1873	Congress ends coinage of silver dollars
1873–78	Economic hard times hit
1877	Georgia passes poll tax, disfranchising most African Americans
1878	Bland-Allison Act requires U.S. Treasury to buy between $2 million and $4 million in silver each month
1881	Garfield assassinated; Arthur assumes presidency
1883	Pendleton Civil Service Act introduces merit system
	Supreme Court strikes down 1883 Civil Rights Act
1886	*Wabash* case declares that only Congress can limit interstate commerce rates
1887	Farmers' Alliances form
	Interstate Commerce Commission begins regulating rates and practices of interstate shipping
1890	McKinley Tariff raises tariff rates
	Sherman Silver Purchase Act commits the U.S. Treasury to buying 4.5 million ounces of silver each month
	"Mississippi Plan" uses poll taxes and literacy tests to prevent African Americans from voting
	National American Woman Suffrage Association formed
1890s	Jim Crow laws, discriminating against African Americans in legal treatment and public accommodations, passed by southern states
1892	Populist convention in Omaha draws up reform platform
1893	Sherman Silver Purchase Act repealed
1893–97	Major economic depression hits United States
1894	Wilson-Gorman Tariff passes
	Coxey's Army marches on Washington, D.C.
1896	*Plessy v. Ferguson* establishes separate but equal doctrine
1898	Louisiana implements "grandfather clause" restricting voting by African Americans
1899	*Cumming v. County Board of Education* applies separate but equal doctrine to schools

Cultural-Political Alignments

In the Gilded Age, party loyalty was fierce. With some exceptions, people who opposed government interference in personal liberty identified with the Democratic Party; those who believed government could be an agent of reform identified with the Republicans. There was also a geographic dimension to these divisions. Northern Republicans capitalized on bitter memories of the Civil War by "waving the bloody shirt" at Democrats. Northern Democrats focused more on urban and economic issues, but southern Democratic candidates waved a different bloody shirt, calling Republicans traitors to white supremacy and states' rights.

Political allegiances were so evenly divided that no party gained dominance for long. Between 1877 and 1897, Republicans held the presidency for three terms, Democrats for two. Rarely did one party control the presidency and Congress simultaneously. From 1876 through 1892, presidential elections were close. The outcome often hinged on populous northern states—Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Both parties tried to gain advantages by nominating presidential candidates from these states (and by committing vote fraud).

Party Factions

Internal quarrels split the Republican and Democratic parties. Among Republicans, New York's Senator Roscoe Conkling led one faction, known as "Stalwarts," and worked the spoils system to win government jobs for supporters. The Stalwarts' rivals were the "Half Breeds," led by Maine congressman James G. Blaine, who also blatantly pursued influence. On the sidelines stood more idealistic Republicans, or **"Mugwumps"** (supposedly an Indian term meaning "mug on one side of the fence, wump on the other"). Mugwumps, such as Missouri Republican senator Carl Schurz, believed that only righteous, educated men should govern. Republican allies of big business supported gold as the standard for currency, whereas those from western mining regions favored silver. Democrats subdivided into white supremacist southerners; working-class advocates; immigrant-stock supporters of urban political machines; business-oriented advocates of low tariffs and the gold standard; and debtor-oriented advocates of free silver.

Mugwumps Term used for idealistic Republican reformers.

In each state, one party usually dominated, and often the state "boss" was a senator who doled out jobs and parlayed his clout into national influence. (Until ratification of the Seventeenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1913, state legislatures elected U.S. senators.) These men exercised their power brazenly.

The Activism of Government

In what ways did the government become more activist—and expand its authority—in the late nineteenth century?

Still, government played a greater role in people's lives than previously. Along with laws, governments increasingly employed the constitutional provision of "police power," meaning the authority, within limits, to regulate and enforce order to ensure the health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the population.

Uses of Police Power

From the earliest days of the Republic, state and local governments intervened in people's lives to protect safety. By the Gilded Age, these laws and regulations greatly expanded. Laws banned mistreatment of animals and children; laws provided for the purity of foods and medicines; laws established minimum requirements for professionals such as doctors and teachers; and laws ensured the legitimacy of banks and insurance companies. Other laws required the licensing of, and sometimes prohibition of, liquor sales, prizefighting, and obscene literature; laws regulated rates and operations of streetcars and railroads; laws limited the working hours of women and children; and laws mandated racial segregation. Despite objections, state legislatures and city councils passed these laws with broad consent of the people they governed. Moreover, courts generally upheld them.

Due Process

Protesters who challenged police power asserted that governments were interfering with a person's or company's right to use of private property. This right was in the clause of the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution that stated that no person could "be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation." The

restriction originally applied to actions by the federal government, but the Fourteenth Amendment (1868) extended it to state governments.

Railroad rates demonstrate how business interests tried to use due process as a protection against state and federal government regulation. In battling the competition for customers, railroads launched rate wars and angered shippers with inconsistent freight charges. On noncompetitive routes, railroads often boosted charges to compensate for unprofitably low rates on competitive routes. Railroads also played favorites, reducing rates to large shippers and offering free passes to preferred customers and politicians.

Railroad Regulation

Such favoritism stirred farmers, small merchants, and reform politicians to demand rate regulation. By 1880, fourteen states established commissions to limit freight and storage charges of state-chartered lines. Railroads fought back, arguing that the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution guaranteed them freedom to acquire and use property without government restraint. But in 1877, in *Munn v. Illinois,* the Supreme Court upheld state regulation, declaring that grain warehouses owned by railroads acted in the public interest and therefore must submit to regulation for "the common good."

Only the federal government could regulate interstate lines, as affirmed by the Supreme Court in the *Wabash* case of 1886. Reformers thereupon demanded federal action. Congress passed the **Interstate Commerce Act** in 1887, which prohibited rebates and rate discrimination and created the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC), the nation's first regulatory agency, to investigate railroad rate-making and issue cease and desist orders against illegal practices. The legislation's weak enforcement provisions, however, left railroads room for evasion, and federal judges diminished state and ICC powers. In the *Maximum Freight Rate* case (1897), the Supreme Court evoked due process, ruling that regulation interfered with a railroad's right to a "fair return" from its property. Though weakened by a standoff between police power and due process, the principle of regulation remained in force.

Interstate Commerce Act An 1887 law that established the Interstate Commerce Commission, the nation's first regulatory agency, to investigate railroad rate-making and discriminatory rate practices.

Veterans' Pensions

Issues of pensions, patronage abuses, tariffs, and currency also provoked debates and partisanship. From the end of the Civil War into the 1880s, Congress debated soldiers' pensions. The **Grand Army of the Republic**, an organization of Union army veterans, allied with the Republican Party and cajoled the government into providing pensions for former northern soldiers and their widows. Although the North spent $2 billion to fight the Civil War, veterans' pensions cost $8 billion, one of the largest welfare commitments the federal government has ever made. By 1900 soldiers' pensions accounted for roughly 40 percent of the federal budget. Confederate veterans, however, were excluded, though some southern states funded small pensions and built old-age homes for ex-soldiers.

Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) A social and political lobbying organization of northern Civil War veterans that convinced Congress to provide $8 billion in pensions for former Union soldiers and widows.

Civil Service Reform

Few politicians dared oppose pensions, but some attempted to dismantle the spoils system—the practice of awarding government jobs, or spoils—to political

supporters regardless of their qualifications. During the Civil War, the federal government expanded considerably, and the spoils system flourished. As the postal service, diplomatic corps, and other government agencies grew, the number of federal jobs tripled, from 53,000 to 166,000. (There are about 1.9 million today.) Elected officials scrambled to control these to benefit their party. In return for short hours and high pay, appointees to federal positions pledged votes and part of their earnings to patrons.

Shocked by such corruption, especially after the Grant administration scandals, some reformers advocated appointments based on merit—civil service. Support for change accelerated in 1881 when a distraught job seeker assassinated President James Garfield. The **Pendleton Civil Service Act**, passed by Congress in 1882, created the Civil Service Commission to oversee competitive examinations for roughly 10 percent of federal jobs, but the president could expand the list. Because the Constitution barred Congress from interfering in state affairs, civil service at state and local levels developed more haphazardly.

Pendleton Civil Service Act
Attempt to end the spoils system; created the Civil Service Commission to oversee competitive exams for government jobs.

Tariff Policy

From 1789 onward, Congress created tariffs, which levied duties (taxes) on imported goods, to protect American products from foreign competition. But tariffs quickly became a tool special interests used to enhance profits. By the 1880s these interests succeeded in obtaining tariffs on more than four thousand items. A few economists and farmers argued for free trade, but most politicians insisted that tariffs were necessary to support industry and preserve jobs.

The Republican Party made protective tariffs its core agenda. Democrats complained that tariffs made prices artificially high by reducing less expensive imports, hurting farmers whose crops were not protected and consumers wanting to buy manufactured goods.

During the Gilded Age, revenues from tariffs and other levies created a federal budget surplus. Most Republicans liked that government was earning more than it spent and hoped to keep the surplus as a reserve or use it for projects that would aid commerce. Democrats acknowledged a need for protection of some manufactured goods and raw materials, but they favored lower tariff duties to encourage foreign trade and reduce the Treasury surplus.

Manufacturers and their congressional allies controlled tariff policy. The McKinley Tariff of 1890 boosted already-high rates by 4 percent. When House Democrats passed a bill to trim tariffs in 1894, Senate Republicans, aided by southern Democrats, added six hundred amendments restoring most cuts (the Wilson-Gorman Tariff). In 1897, the Dingley Tariff raised rates further. Attacks on duties, though unsuccessful, made tariffs a symbol of privileged business in the public mind.

Monetary Policy

When increased industrial and agricultural production caused prices to fall after the Civil War, debtors (have-nots) and creditors (haves) had opposing reactions. Farmers suffered because crop prices dropped and because demand for a limited supply of circulating money raised interest rates on loans, making it costly to borrow funds to pay mortgages and debts. They favored coinage of silver to

increase the amount of currency in circulation, which in turn would reduce interest rates. Small businessmen, also in need of loans, agreed. Large businessmen and bankers favored a stable money supply backed only by gold, fearing currency fluctuations that would threaten investors' confidence in the U.S. economy. The money debate also reflected sectional cleavages: western silver-mining areas and agricultural regions of the South and West against the industrial Northeast.

Before the 1870s, the federal government bought gold and silver to back its paper money (dollars), setting a ratio that made a gold dollar worth sixteen times more than a silver dollar. Discovery and mining of gold in the West, however, increased gold supplies and lowered market prices relative to silver. Consequently, silver dollars disappeared from circulation as owners hoarded them. In 1873, Congress officially halted silver coinage. The United States unofficially adopted the gold standard.

Within a few years, new mines in the West began flooding the market with silver, and its price dropped. Gold now became relatively less plentiful, worth *more* than sixteen times that of silver, and it became worthwhile for people to spend rather than hoard silver dollars. Silver producers wanted the government to resume buying silver at the old sixteen-to-one ratio. Debtors, hurt by the economic hard times of 1873–1878, saw silver as a means of expanding the currency supply, so they pressed for resumption of silver coinage at the old sixteen-to-one ratio.

With parties split into silver and gold factions, Congress tried to compromise. The Bland-Allison Act (1878) authorized the Treasury to buy $2 million to $4 million worth of silver monthly, and the **Sherman Silver Purchase Act** (1890) increased the government's silver purchase by specifying weight (4.5 million ounces) rather than dollars. Neither measure satisfied various interest groups. Creditors wanted the government to stop buying silver, whereas for debtors, the legislation failed to expand the money supply satisfactorily. The issue would intensify during the 1896 presidential election (see pages 512–514).

Sherman Silver Purchase Act Law that instructed the treasury to buy, at current market prices, 4.5 million ounces of silver monthly.

Legislative Accomplishments

Congress addressed thorny issues under difficult conditions. Congressmen earned small salaries yet had to maintain two residences: in their home district and in Washington. Most congressmen had no private offices, worked long hours, wrote their own speeches, and paid for staff themselves. Yet, though corruption and greed tainted several, most politicians were principled and dedicated. They managed to pass significant legislation that increased the power of the federal government.

Presidential Initiative

What actions did American presidents between 1877 and 1900 take to restore authority to their office?

Operating under the cloud of Andrew Johnson's impeachment, Grant's scandals, and doubts about the legitimacy of the 1876 election (see Chapter 14), American presidents between 1877 and 1900 moved to restore authority to their office. Proper and honest, Presidents Rutherford Hayes (1877–1881), James Garfield (1881), Chester Arthur (1881–1885), Grover Cleveland (1885–1889 and 1893–1897), Benjamin Harrison (1889–1893), and William McKinley (1897–1901) tried to act as legislative and administrative leaders. Each president cautiously initiated legislation and used vetoes to guide national policy.

Hayes, Garfield, and Arthur

Rutherford B. Hayes had been a Union general and Ohio congressman and governor before his disputed election to the presidency, which prompted opponents to label him "Rutherfraud." Hayes served as conciliator, emphasizing national harmony over sectional rivalry and opposing racial violence. He tried to overhaul the spoils system by appointing civil service reformer Carl Schurz to his cabinet and by battling New York's patronage king, Senator Conkling.

When Hayes declined to run for reelection in 1880, Republicans nominated another Ohio congressman and Civil War hero, James A. Garfield, who won by 40,000 votes out of 9 million cast. By winning the pivotal states of New York and Indiana, Garfield carried the electoral college by 214 to 155. Garfield hoped to reduce the tariff and develop economic relations with Latin America, and he rebuffed Conkling's patronage demands. But in July 1881, Charles Guiteau shot him in a Washington railroad station. Garfield lingered for seventy-nine days before dying on September 19.

Garfield's successor was Vice President Chester A. Arthur, the New York Stalwart whom Hayes had fired. Arthur became a temperate executive. He signed the Pendleton Civil Service Act, urged Congress to modify outdated tariff rates, and supported federal railroad regulation. He wielded the veto aggressively, killing bills that excessively benefited railroads and corporations. Arthur wanted to run for president in 1884 but Republicans nominated James G. Blaine instead.

Democrats picked New York's governor, Grover Cleveland, a bachelor who admitted during the campaign that he had fathered an out-of-wedlock son. Cleveland beat Blaine by only 29,000 popular votes; his tiny margin of 1,149 votes in New York secured that state's 36 electoral votes, enough for a 219-to-182 victory in the electoral college. Cleveland may have won New York thanks to remarks of a Protestant minister, who equated Democrats with "rum, Romanism, and rebellion." Democrats publicized the slur among New York's large Irish-Catholic population, urging voters to support Cleveland.

Cleveland and Harrison

Cleveland, the first Democratic president since James Buchanan (1857–1861), expanded civil service, vetoed private pension bills, and urged Congress to cut tariff duties. When advisers worried about his chances for reelection, the president retorted, "What is the use of being elected or reelected, unless you stand for something?" Senate protectionists killed tariff reform, and when Democrats renominated Cleveland in 1888, businessmen convinced him to moderate his attacks on tariffs.

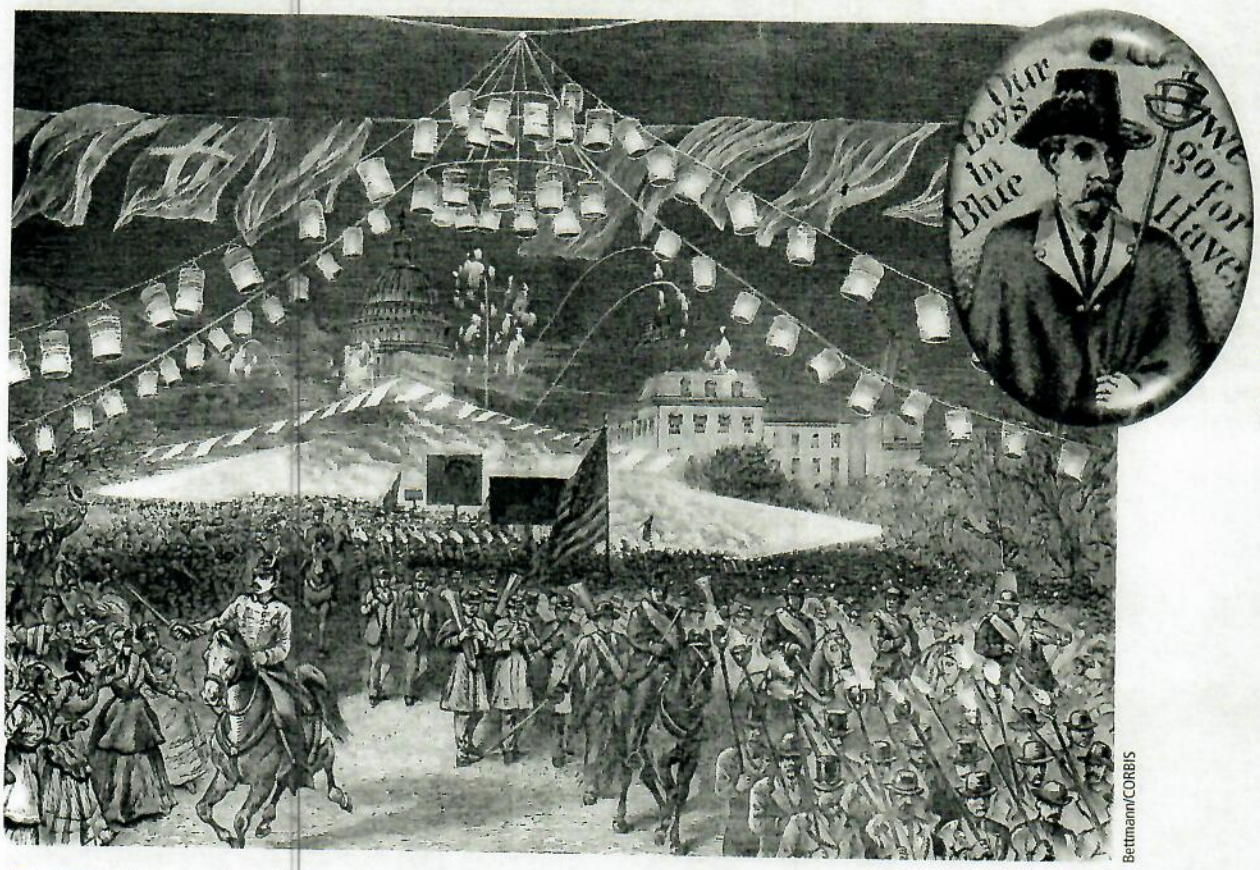
Republicans in 1888 nominated Benjamin Harrison, former Indiana senator and grandson of President William Henry Harrison (1841). Bribery and multiple voting helped him win Indiana by 2,300 votes and New York by 14,000. (Democrats also indulged in frauds, but Republicans proved more successful at them.) Although Cleveland outpolled Harrison by 90,000 popular votes, Harrison carried the electoral college by 233 to 168.

The first president since 1875 whose party had majorities in both congressional houses. Harrison influenced legislation by threats of vetoes, informal dinners,

Visualizing THE PAST

The Spectacle of Gilded Age Politics

During the Gilded Age, political events, especially presidential elections, provided opportunity for elaborate spectacle, and politicians occupied the limelight as major celebrities. A presidential campaign functioned as a public festival at a time when mass entertainments such as movies and sports did not exist to offer people outlets for their emotions by attending parades, cheering, watching fireworks, and listening to marching bands. These two images, one an artist's rendering and the other a means for displaying one's preference for a particular candidate, present evidence of how people of the era might have expressed themselves politically. What similarities to modern-day campaign events and symbols do the images represent? In what ways are they different? Did politics and campaigning in the Gilded Age play a different role in the nation's culture than they do at present?



Collection of Janice L. and David J. Frent/ Corbis

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The presidential campaign of Rutherford B. Hayes excited strong emotions. The inset image is that of a campaign brooch reminding voters of Hayes's Civil War record, and the drawing illustrates the gala of Hayes's inauguration in 1876.

and consultations with politicians. Partly in response, the Congress of 1889–1891 passed 517 bills, 200 more than the average passed by Congresses between 1877 and 1889. Harrison showed support for civil service by appointing reformer Theodore Roosevelt as civil service commissioner. But pressured by special interests, Harrison signed the Dependents' Pension Act, which provided pensions for Union veterans and widows and children, doubling the number of welfare recipients from 490,000 to 966,000.

The Pension Act and other appropriations pushed the 1890 federal budget past $1 billion for the first time. Democrats blamed the "Billion-Dollar Congress" on spendthrift Republicans. In 1890, voters reacted by unseating seventy-eight Republican congressmen. Capitalizing on voter unrest, Democrats nominated Grover Cleveland to run against Harrison in 1892. With large business contributions, Cleveland beat Harrison by 370,000 popular votes (3 percent of the total), easily winning the electoral vote.

In office again, Cleveland addressed currency, tariffs, and labor unrest, but his actions reflected political weakness. Cleveland promised sweeping tariff reform, but Senate protectionists undercut his efforts. And he bowed to requests from railroads, sending federal troops to put down the Pullman strike of 1894. In spite of Cleveland's efforts, major events—particularly economic downturn and agrarian ferment—pushed the country in another direction.

Discrimination and Disfranchisement

What legal means were used to discriminate against newly enfranchised African Americans in the decades following the Civil War?

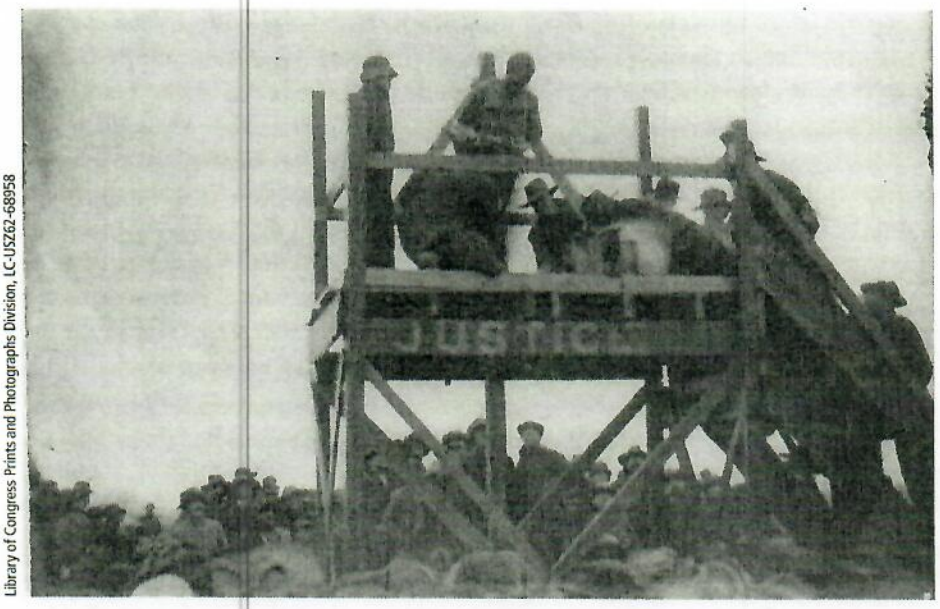
Despite speeches about freedom and opportunity during the Gilded Age, policies of discrimination haunted more than half the nation's people. Racial issues long shaped politics in the South, home to the majority of African Americans. Southern white farmers and workers feared that newly enfranchised African American men would challenge their political and social superiority (real and imagined). Wealthy landowners and merchants fanned these fears, keeping blacks and whites from uniting to protest their own economic subjugation. Even some white feminists, such as Susan B. Anthony, opposed voting and other rights for blacks on grounds that white women deserved such rights before black men did.

In the North, custom more than law limited the opportunities of black people. Discrimination in housing, employment, and access to facilities such as parks, hotels, and department stores kept African Americans separate. Whether via low wages or lower crop returns, African Americans felt the sting of their imposed inferiority.

Violence Against African Americans

In 1880, 90 percent of southern blacks farmed or worked in personal and domestic service—just as they had as slaves. Between 1889 and 1909, more than seventeen hundred African Americans were lynched in the South. About a quarter of **lynching** victims were accused of assault—rarely proved—on a white woman. Most, however, had simply said or done something that made insecure whites feel disrespected, or they had succeeded in business or taken a job that made whites feel inferior.

lynching Vigilante hanging of those accused of crimes; used primarily against blacks.



Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-68958

Lynching could mean other than simple hanging. In 1893, a mob estimated at 10,000 gathered in Paris, Texas, to watch the torture and killing of a black man believed to have assaulted and murdered a four-year-old white girl. This photo was taken just as Henry Smith, the alleged assailant, was tortured fifty times by red-hot iron brands, then doused with kerosene and set on fire. After the gruesome event, the vengeful crowd burned down the scaffold.

Blacks did not suffer silently. Their most notable activist was **Ida B. Wells**, a Memphis schoolteacher, who was forcibly removed from a railroad car in 1884 when she refused to surrender her seat to a white man. In 1889, Wells became partner of a Memphis newspaper, the *Free Speech and Headlight*, in which she published attacks against white injustice, particularly the case of three black grocers lynched in 1892 after defending themselves against whites. She subsequently toured Europe, drumming up opposition to lynching and discrimination. Unable to return to hostile Memphis, she moved to Chicago and became a powerful advocate for racial justice.

Ida B. Wells African American journalist and activist who mounted a national anti-lynching campaign.

Disfranchisement

Southern white leaders instituted official measures of political discrimination. Despite threats and intimidation after Reconstruction, blacks still formed the backbone of the southern Republican Party and won numerous elective positions. In North Carolina, eleven African Americans served in the state senate and forty-three in the house between 1877 and 1890. This was unacceptable to racist whites, and beginning with Florida and Tennessee in 1889 (and eventually every southern state), governments levied taxes of $1 to $2 on all voters—prohibitive to most blacks, who were poor and in debt. Other schemes disfranchised or deprived the voting rights of blacks who could not read.

Furthering disfranchisement, the Supreme Court determined in *U.S. v. Reese* (1876) that Congress had no control over local and state elections other than upholding the Fifteenth Amendment, which prohibits states from denying the vote "on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." State legislators also found ways to exclude black voters. An 1890 state constitutional convention established the "Mississippi Plan," requiring voters to pay a poll tax eight months before each election, present the tax receipt at election time, and prove they could read and interpret the state constitution. Registration officials applied stiffer standards to blacks than to whites, even declaring black college graduates

ineligible due to illiteracy. In 1898 Louisiana enacted the first "grandfather clause," which established literacy and property qualifications for voting but exempted sons and grandsons of those eligible to vote before 1867—a year in which no blacks could vote in Louisiana.

Such restrictions proved effective. In South Carolina, 70 percent of eligible blacks voted in the 1880 election; by 1896, the rate dropped to 11 percent. By the 1900s, African Americans effectively lost political rights in the South. More importantly, because voting is a right of citizenship, disfranchisement stripped African American men of their standing as U.S. citizens. Disfranchisement also affected poor whites, few of whom could meet poll tax, property, and literacy requirements. Consequently, the total number of eligible voters in Mississippi shrank from 257,000 in 1876 to 77,000 in 1892.

Legal Segregation

Existing customs of racial separation also expanded. During the 1870s, the Supreme Court opened the door to laws strengthening racial discrimination by ruling that the Fourteenth Amendment protected citizens' rights only against infringement by state governments, not by individuals, private businesses, or local governments. These rulings climaxed in 1883 when, in the *Civil Rights* cases, the Court struck down the 1875 Civil Rights Act, which prohibited segregation in facilities such as streetcars, theaters, and parks. Thus railroads, such as the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad, could legally maintain discriminatory policies.

Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court ruling validating legal segregation; legalized separate facilities for blacks and whites as long as they were equal.

The Supreme Court also upheld legal segregation on a "separate but equal" basis in ***Plessy v. Ferguson*** (1896). This case began in 1892 when a New Orleans organization of African Americans chose Homer Plessy, a dark-skinned creole who was only one-eighth black (but considered black by Louisiana law), to sit in a whites-only railroad car. Plessy was arrested, and the appeal of his conviction reached the U.S. Supreme Court in 1896. The Court affirmed that a state law providing for separate facilities for the two races was reasonable because it preserved "public peace and good order." To the Court, a law separating the races did not necessarily "destroy the legal equality of the races." Although the ruling did not specify the phrase "separate but equal," it legalized separate facilities for black and white people as long as they were equal. In 1899, the Court legitimated school segregation in *Cumming v. County Board of Education*, until it was overturned by *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954.

Link to "'Jim Crow' Street-Car Law Set to Catch Negroes," 1904

Segregation laws—known as Jim Crow laws—multiplied throughout the South, reminding African Americans of their inferior status. State and local statutes passed in the 1890s restricted blacks to the rear of streetcars, to separate public drinking fountains and toilets, and to separate sections of hospitals and cemeteries.

African American Activism

African American women and men challenged injustice. Some boycotted discriminatory businesses; others promoted "Negro enterprise." In 1898, Atlanta University professor John Hope urged blacks to become their own employers and support Negro Business Men's Leagues. Some blacks used higher education to elevate their status. In all-black teachers' colleges, men and women sought to expand opportunities for themselves and their race.

While disfranchisement pushed African American men from public life, African American women used domestic roles as mothers, educators, and moral guardians to uplift the race and seek improvements. Along with seeking the vote, they successfully lobbied southern governments for cleaner city streets, expanded charity services, and vocational education. While black women and white women sometimes united to achieve their goals, white women often sympathized with white men in supporting racial exclusion.

Woman Suffrage

Some women challenged male power structures by seeking the right to vote. An intensely religious woman, Frances Willard believed that (Christian) faith would empower women to uplift society. She urged women who joined the Woman's Christian Temperance Union to sign a pledge to abstain from alcohol to protect families from the evils of drink. But Willard also believed that the WCTU could best do the Lord's work if women could vote. Thus, at its 1884 convention, the WCTU passed a resolution deploring the "disenfranchisement of 12 million people who are citizens."

The more direct suffrage crusade was conducted by two organizations, the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) and the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA). The NWSA, led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, advocated women's rights in courts and workplaces as well as at the ballot box. The AWSA, led by former abolitionist Lucy Stone, focused narrowly on suffrage. The two groups merged in 1890 to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association with Stanton as president.

Anthony's argument for a constitutional amendment giving women the vote received little congressional support, with senators claiming suffrage would interfere with women's family obligations. Moreover, the women's suffrage campaign was tainted by racial intolerance. Many movement leaders espoused white superiority and accommodated racial prejudices to retain support from the AWSA's and NWSA's predominantly white, middle-class membership. Blacks who joined the WCTU had a separate Department of Colored Temperance. Also, leaders such as Anthony and Stanton felt resentment that the Fifteenth Amendment had enfranchised black men but not women. Many believed that "educated" white women should vote and that "illiterate" blacks should not.

Picture Research Consultants & Archives

Frances Willard became the second and best-known president of the national Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), founded in 1874. Beyond promoting abstinence from drinking alcohol, Willard and the WCTU also were involved in other reforms, including women's suffrage. In 1893, Willard took her crusade worldwide and became the first president of the International Council of Women. Here Willard's status is symbolized by her seat amid major American and British suffrage leaders, all officers of the World's WCTU.

Women did win partial victories. Between 1870 and 1910, eleven states (mostly in the West) legalized limited woman suffrage. By 1890, nineteen states allowed women to vote on school issues, and three granted suffrage on tax and bond issues. The right to vote in national elections awaited a later generation, but leaders such as Ida B. Wells, Susan B. Anthony, and Lucy Stone proved that women could be politically active even without the vote.

Agrarian Unrest and Populism

How did farmers' discontent crystallize in various movements in the late nineteenth century?

Economic inequity also sparked a mass movement. Despite rapid industrialization and urbanization in the Gilded Age, the United States remained an agrarian society with 64 percent of the population living in rural areas in 1890. The expression of farmers' discontent with economic hardship—a mixture of strident rhetoric, nostalgic dreams, and hardheaded egalitarianism—began in Grange organizations in the early 1870s. It accelerated when Farmers' Alliances formed in Texas in the late 1870s and spread across the South and Great Plains in the 1880s. The movement flourished where debt, bad weather, and insects demoralized struggling farmers and inspired visions of a cooperative, democratic society.

Hardship in the Midwest and West

In the Midwest, as growers cultivated more land, as mechanization boosted productivity, and as foreign competition increased, supplies of agricultural products exceeded national and worldwide demand. Prices for staple crops dropped steadily. A bushel of wheat that sold for $1.45 in 1866 brought only 80 cents in the mid-1880s and 49 cents by the mid-1890s. Meanwhile, transportation and storage fees remained high. To buy necessities and pay bills, farmers had to produce more. But the more they produced, the lower crop prices dropped (see Figure 17.1).

In Colorado, absentee capitalists seized control of transportation and water, and concentration of technology by large mining companies pushed out small firms. Charges of monopolistic behavior by railroads echoed among farmers, miners, and ranchers in Wyoming and Montana. In California, Washington, and Oregon, wheat and fruit growers found opportunities blocked by railroads' control of transportation and storage rates.

Grange Movement

With aid from Oliver H. Kelley, a U.S. Bureau of Agriculture employee, farmers organized in almost every state during the 1860s and 1870s, founding the Patrons of Husbandry—or the Grange—dedicated to improving economic and social conditions. By 1875 the Grange had twenty thousand branches and a million members. Strongest in the Midwest and South, Granges sponsored meetings and educational events to relieve the loneliness of rural life. Family oriented, Granges welcomed women's participation.

Greenback Labor Party
Advocated expanding the money supply through the government printing of money not backed by gold.

As membership flourished, Granges turned to economic and political action. Many members joined the **Greenback Labor Party**, formed in 1876 to advocate expanding the money supply by keeping "greenbacks"—paper money created by the

Farmers' Alliances

By 1890, two networks of Farmers' Alliances—one in the Great Plains, one in the South—constituted a new mass movement. The first Alliances arose in Texas, where hard-pressed farmers rallied against crop liens, merchants, railroads, and money power. Using traveling lecturers to recruit members, Alliance leaders expanded the movement into other southern states, boasting two million members by 1889. A separate Colored Farmers' National Alliance claimed one million black members. In the late 1880s, the Plains movement organized two million members in Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas. Women participated actively in Alliance activities.

To bypass corporate power and control markets, Alliances, like the Grange, proposed that farmers form cooperatives, uniting to sell crops and livestock and buy supplies. By pooling resources, Alliances reasoned, farmers could exert more economic pressure and share the benefits of their hard work rather than competing against each other.

To relieve cash and credit shortages, Alliances proposed a government aid system called a subtreasury. Under the plan, the federal government would construct warehouses where farmers could store nonperishable crops while awaiting higher market prices; the government would then loan farmers treasury notes amounting to 80 percent of the market price of stored crops. Farmers could use these notes to pay debts and make purchases. Once the crops were sold, farmers would repay the loans plus small interest and storage fees, thereby avoiding the exploitative crop lien system.

The subtreasury plan's second part would provide low-interest government loans to farmers to buy land. These loans, along with the treasury notes loaned to farmers who temporarily stored crops in government warehouses, would inject cash into the economy and encourage the kind of inflation that advocates hoped would raise crop prices without raising other prices.

Private Collection/Picture Research Consultants & Archives

Exhibited at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, this cabin was the site of the first Farmers' Alliance meeting in Lampasas County, Texas. Using recruiters, rallies, and meetings replete with slogans like "We Are All Mortgaged But Our Votes," the organization voiced the grievances of rural America and laid the groundwork for formation of the Populist Party in the 1890s.

Problems in Achieving Alliance Unity

Had Farmers' Alliances been able to unite politically, they could have wielded formidable power; but racial voting restrictions weakened Alliance voter strength, and racism blocked acceptance of blacks by white Alliances. Some southern leaders, such as Georgia's Senator Tom Watson, tried to unite distressed black and white farmers, but poor whites held fast to prejudices. Many considered African Americans inferior and took comfort that there always would be people worse off than they were. Regional differences also prevented unity. Northern Alliances favored protective tariffs to keep out foreign grain, whereas white southerners wanted low tariffs to curb costs of imports. However, both favored railroad regulation, equitable taxation, currency reform, an end to alleged election frauds, and prohibition of landownership by foreign investors.

Rise of Populism

By 1890, farmers had elected several sympathetic officeholders, especially in the South, where Alliance allies won four governorships, eight state legislatures, forty-four seats in the House of Representatives, and three in the Senate. In the Midwest, Alliance candidates running on third-party tickets, such as the Greenback Party, won some victories in Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas. Leaders crisscrossed the country to recruit support for a new party. In summer 1890, the Kansas Alliance held a "convention of the people" and nominated candidates who swept the state's fall elections. Formation of this People's Party, or **Populist Party**, gave a title to Alliance political activism. (Populism is the political doctrine that asserts the rights and powers of common people versus privileged elites.) By 1892, southern Alliance members joined northern counterparts in summoning a People's Party convention in Omaha, Nebraska, on July 4 to draft a platform and nominate a presidential candidate.

Populist Party "People's Party" that raised an agrarian-based, third-party challenge to the Republicans and Democrats and advocated for the rights of the common man.

Charging that inequality (between white classes) threatened to splinter society, the new party's platform declared, "The fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few," and that "wealth belongs to him that creates it." It addressed three central sources of rural unrest: transportation, land, and money. Frustrated with weak regulation, Populists demanded government ownership of railroad and telegraph lines. The monetary plank called on the government to make more money available for farm loans and to restore unlimited coinage of silver. Other planks advocated a graduated income tax, direct election of U.S. senators, and a shorter workday. As its presidential candidate, the party nominated James B. Weaver of Iowa, a former Union general and supporter of an expanded money supply.

Populist Spokespeople

The Populist campaign featured dynamic personalities and rousing rhetoric. The Kansas plains rumbled with speeches by Mary Lease, who could allegedly "set a crowd hooting and harrahing at her will," and by "Sockless Jerry" Simpson, an unschooled but canny rural reformer who got his nickname after he ridiculed silk-stockinged wealthy people, causing a reporter to muse that Simpson probably never wore stockings. Minnesota's Ignatius Donnelly, pseudoscientist and writer of apocalyptic novels, became chief visionary of the northern plains, penning the

Russian Populism

Before American Populism, a different form of populism emerged in another largely rural country: Russia. Whereas American Populism came from the Alliance farm organizations, Russian populism was created by intellectuals seeking to educate peasants to agitate for social and economic freedom.

Russian society began to modernize in the mid-nineteenth century. Town governments were given control of local taxation, and education became more widespread. Perhaps most importantly, in 1861 Czar Alexander II signed an Edict of Emancipation, freeing Russian serfs (slaves attached to specific lands) and granting them compensation to buy land. Reforms progressed slowly, however, prompting some young, educated Russians called nihilists to press for radical reforms, including socialism. The reformers became known as *narodniki*, or populists, from *narod*, the Russian term for "peasant."

Narodniki envisioned a society of self-governing village communes, somewhat like the cooperatives proposed by American Farmers' Alliances. One leader, Peter Lavrov, believed intellectuals must get closer to the people and help them improve their lives. Russian populists believed only an uprising against the czar could realize their goals. When Alexander instituted repressive policies against the *narodniki* in the late 1870s, many turned to terrorism, culminating in Alexander II's assassination in 1881.

Russian peasants remained tied to tradition and could not abandon loyalty to the czar. Arrests and imprisonments after Alexander's assassination discouraged populists' efforts, and the movement declined. Nevertheless, populist ideas became the cornerstone of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and of subsequent Soviet social and political ideology.

Bettmann/CORBIS

Russian peasants, like American tenant farmers and owners of small landholdings, suffered from poverty and pressures of the expanded market economy. The plight of struggling Russian farm families stirred up empathy from young populist intellectuals, who adopted radical solutions that did not capture as much political fervor among farmers as American Populism did.

Omaha platform's thunderous language. The campaign also attracted opportunists, such as the one-eyed, sharp-tongued South Carolina senator "Pitchfork Ben" Tillman, who exploited agrarian resentments for their own political ends.

In the 1892 presidential election, Populist candidate James Weaver garnered 8 percent of the popular vote, majorities in four states, and twenty-two electoral votes. Not since 1856 had a third party done so well in its first national effort. Nevertheless, Populists were only successful in the West. The vote-rich Northeast ignored Weaver, and Alabama was the only southern state that gave Populists as much as one-third of its votes.

Still, Populism gave southern and western rural dwellers faith in a future of cooperation and democracy, as they looked toward the 1896 presidential election. Amid hardship and desperation, millions came to believe that a cooperative democracy in which government would ensure equal opportunity could overcome corporate power.

The Depression and Protests of the 1890s

Why did socialism fail to take hold in the United States amid the labor activism of the late nineteenth century?

In 1893, shortly before Grover Cleveland's second presidency began, the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad, once a thriving and profitable line, went bankrupt. Like other railroads, it had borrowed heavily to lay track and build stations and bridges. Overexpansion cut into profits, and the company was unable to pay its debts.

The same problem beset manufacturers. Output at McCormick farm machinery factories was nine times greater in 1893 than in 1879, but revenues had only tripled. The company bought more equipment and squeezed more work from fewer laborers, but it only increased debt and unemployment. Jobless workers could not pay their bills. Banks suffered when their customers defaulted. The failure of the National Cordage Company in May 1893 sparked a chain reaction of business and bank closings. By year's end, five hundred banks and sixteen hundred businesses had failed. Between 1893 and 1897, the nation suffered a staggering economic depression.

Nearly 20 percent of the labor force was jobless during the depression. Falling demand caused prices to drop between 1892 and 1895, but layoffs and wage cuts more than offset declining living costs. Many people could not afford basic necessities. The New York police estimated that twenty thousand homeless and jobless people roamed city streets.

Continuing Currency Problems

As the depression deepened, so did the currency dilemma. The Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890 committed the government to using treasury notes (silver certificates) to buy 4.5 million ounces of silver monthly. Recipients could redeem these certificates for gold, at the ratio of one ounce of gold for every sixteen ounces of silver. But a western mining boom increased silver supplies, causing its value to fall and prompting holders of silver certificates and greenback currency to exchange their notes for more valuable gold.

Consequently, the nation's gold reserves dwindled, falling below $100 million in early 1893.

Psychologically, if investors believed the country's gold reserves were disappearing, they would lose confidence in America's economic stability and refrain from investing. British capitalists, for example, owned $4 billion in American stocks and bonds and were likely to stop investing if dollars depreciated. The lower the gold reserve dropped, the more people rushed to redeem their money. Panic spread, causing more bankruptcies and unemployment.

To protect the gold reserve, President Cleveland called a special session of Congress to repeal the Sherman Silver Purchase Act. Repeal passed in late 1893, but the run on gold continued. In early 1895, reserves fell to $41 million, and, desperate, Cleveland accepted an offer of 3.5 million ounces of gold for $65 million worth of federal bonds from a banking syndicate led by financier J. P. Morgan. When the bankers resold the bonds, they made a $2 million profit. Cleveland claimed that he had saved the reserves, but discontented farmers, workers, silver miners, and some of Cleveland's Democratic allies saw only humiliation in the president's deal with big businessmen.

The deal between Cleveland and Morgan did not end the depression. After improving slightly in 1895, the economy plunged again. Farm income, declining since 1887, slid further; factories closed; banks restricted withdrawals. The tight money supply depressed housing construction, drying up jobs. Cities encouraged citizens to cultivate "potato patches" on vacant land to alleviate food shortages. Urban police stations filled up nightly with homeless people.

Consequences of Depression

In the late 1890s, gold discoveries in Alaska, good harvests, and industrial revival brought relief. But the downturn hastened the crumbling of the old economic system and emergence of a new one. The American economy expanded beyond sectional bases; when western farmers fell into debt, their depressed condition weakened railroads, farm-implement manufacturers, and banks in other regions. Moreover, the corporate consolidation that characterized the new business system tempted many companies to expand too rapidly. When the bubble burst in 1893, their reckless debts pulled other industries down with them.

A new global marketplace was emerging, forcing American farmers to contend with discriminatory transportation rates and falling crop prices at home, along with Canadian and Russian wheat growers, Argentine cattle ranchers, Indian and Egyptian cotton manufacturers, and Australian wool producers. Consequently, one country's economy affected that of other countries. With the glutted domestic market, American businessmen sought new markets abroad (see Chapter 19).

Depression-Era Protests

The depression exposed fundamental tensions in the industrial system. Technological and organizational changes had been widening the gap between employees and employers for half a century. Labor protest began with the railroad strikes of 1877. Their vehemence and support from working-class people raised fears that the United States would experience

a popular uprising like the one in France in 1871, which briefly overturned the government and introduced communist principles. The 1886 Haymarket riot, prolonged 1892 strike at the Carnegie Homestead Steel plant, and labor violence among miners in the West heightened anxieties (see Chapter 16). In 1894, there were over thirteen hundred strikes and countless riots. Contrary to accusations of business leaders, few protesters were immigrant anarchists or communists. Rather, they were Americans who believed that in a democracy their voices should be heard.

Socialists

Small numbers of socialists participated in these confrontations. Some socialists believed that workers should control factories and businesses; others supported government ownership. All, however, opposed capitalism. Their ideas derived from Karl Marx (1818–1883), the German philosopher and father of communism, who contended that whoever controls the means of production determines how well people live. Marx wrote that industrial capitalism profits by paying workers less than the value of their labor and that mechanization and mass production alienate workers from their labor. According to Marx, only by abolishing the return on capital—profits—could labor receive its true value, possible only if workers owned the means of production. Marx predicted that workers worldwide would revolt and seize factories, farms, banks, and transportation lines. This revolution would establish a socialist order of justice and equality. Marx's vision appealed to some workers (even nonsocialists) because it promised independence and to some intellectuals because it promised to end class conflict and crass materialism.

In America, much of the movement was influenced by immigrants—first Germans, later Russian Jews, Italians, Hungarians, and Poles. It splintered into small groups, such as the Socialist Labor Party, which failed to attract the mass of laborers because it often focused on doctrine rather than workers' everyday needs. Nor could they rebut clergy and business leaders who celebrated opportunity, self-improvement, social mobility, and consumerism. Workers hoped that they or their children would benefit through education and acquisition of property or by becoming their own boss; they thus sought individual advancement rather than the betterment of all.

Eugene V. Debs

In 1894, a new and inspiring socialist leader emerged. The Indiana-born Eugene V. Debs headed the newly formed American Railway Union, which had carried out that year's strike against the Pullman Company. Jailed for defying the injunction against the strike, Debs read Karl Marx's works in prison. Once released, he became the leading spokesman for American socialism, combining visionary Marxism with Jeffersonian and Populist antimonopolism. Debs captivated audiences with attacks on the free-enterprise system. "Many of you think you are competing," he would lecture. "Against whom? Against Rockefeller? About as I would if I had a wheelbarrow and competed with the Santa Fe [railroad] from here to Kansas City." By 1900, the group—soon to be called the Socialist Party of America—was uniting around Debs.

Coxey's Army

In 1894, however, businessman Jacob Coxey from Massillon, Ohio, captured public attention. Coxey had believed that, to aid debtors, the government should issue $500 million of "legal tender" paper money and make low-interest loans to local governments, which would use the funds to pay unemployed men to build roads and other public works. He planned to publicize his scheme by leading a march from Massillon to Washington, D.C., gathering unemployed workers en route. "Coxey's Army" of about 200 left in March 1894. Hiking across Ohio into Pennsylvania, the marchers received food and housing in depressed industrial towns and rural villages and attracted additional recruits. A dozen similar processions from places such as Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles also trekked eastward. Sore feet prompted some marchers to commandeer trains, but most marches were law-abiding.

Coxey's band of five hundred entered Washington, D.C., on April 30. The next day, the group, armed with "war clubs of peace," advanced to the Capitol. When Coxey and a few others vaulted a wall surrounding the grounds, mounted police routed the demonstrators. Police dragged Coxey away. As arrests and clubbings continued, Coxey's dream of a demonstration of four hundred thousand jobless workers dissolved. Like the strikes, the first people's march on Washington yielded to police muscle.

Unlike socialists, who wished to replace the capitalist system, Coxey's troops merely wanted more jobs and better living standards. Today, in an age of union contracts, regulation of business, and government-sponsored unemployment relief, their goals do not appear radical. The brutal reactions of officials, however, reveal how threatening dissenters like Coxey and Debs seemed to the existing social order.

Silver Crusade and the Election of 1896

How did Bryan's focus on free silver undermine his presidential campaign and the Populist Party?

Social protest and economic depression made the 1896 presidential election seem pivotal. Debates over money and power were climaxing as Democrats and Republicans battled to control Congress and the presidency. The key question, however, was whether voters would abandon old party loyalties for the Populist Party.

Free Silver

The Populist crusade against "money power" settled on the issue of silver, which many believed would solve the nation's complex ills. To them, coinage of silver symbolized an end to special privileges for the rich and return of government to the people by lifting struggling families out of debt, increasing the cash in circulation, and reducing interest rates.

As the 1896 election approached, Populists had to decide whether to join with sympathetic factions of the major parties, thus risking a loss of identity, or remain an independent third party. Except in mining areas of Rocky Mountain states where free coinage of silver had strong support, Republicans were unlikely allies because their support for the gold standard and big business represented what Populists opposed.

Alliance with northern and western Democrats was more plausible since the party there retained vestiges of antimonopoly ideology and sympathy for a looser currency system, despite the influence of "gold Democrats," such as President Cleveland and Senator David Hill of New York. Linking with southern Democrats seemed less viable since candidates' failure to carry out their promises left southern farmers feeling betrayed. Whichever option they chose, Populists ensured that the 1896 election would be the most issue oriented since 1860.

Link to Populist Party Platform, 1896

Nomination of McKinley

Both major parties were divided. For a year, Ohio industrialist Marcus A. Hanna maneuvered to win the Republican nomination for Ohio's governor, William McKinley, and corralled enough delegates to succeed. The Republicans' only distress occurred when they adopted a platform supporting the gold standard, rejecting a prosilver stance proposed by Colorado senator Henry M. Teller. Teller, a party founder forty years earlier, left the convention in tears, taking a small group of silver Republicans with him.

During the Democratic convention, prosilver delegates wearing silver badges and waving silver banners paraded through the Chicago Amphitheatre. A *New York World* reporter remarked, "all the silverites need is a Moses." They found one in **William Jennings Bryan**.

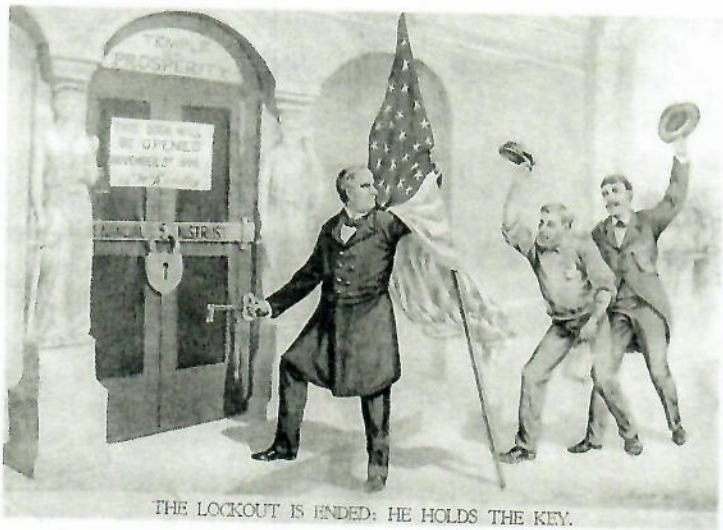
William Jennings Bryan
Orator, anti-imperialist, champion of farm interests, and three-time Democratic presidential candidate.

William Jennings Bryan

Bryan arrived at the Democratic convention as a member of a contested Nebraska delegation. A former congressman whose support for coinage of silver annoyed President Cleveland, Bryan found the depression's impact on midwestern farmers distressing. Shortly after the convention seated Bryan, he joined the resolutions committee and helped write a platform calling for unlimited coinage of silver. Bryan's now-famous closing words ignited the delegates.

> Having behind us the producing masses of this nation and the world, supported by the commercial interests, the laboring interests, and the toilers everywhere, we will answer [the wealthy classes'] demand for a gold standard by saying to them: You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.

After that speech, it took five ballots to win Bryan the nomination, but the magnetic "Boy Orator" proved irresistible. In accepting the silverite goals of southerners and westerners and repudiating Cleveland's policies, the Democratic Party became more attractive to discontented farmers. But it alienated a minority gold wing, who withdrew and nominated their own candidate.



Collection of Janice L. and David J. Frent/Corbis

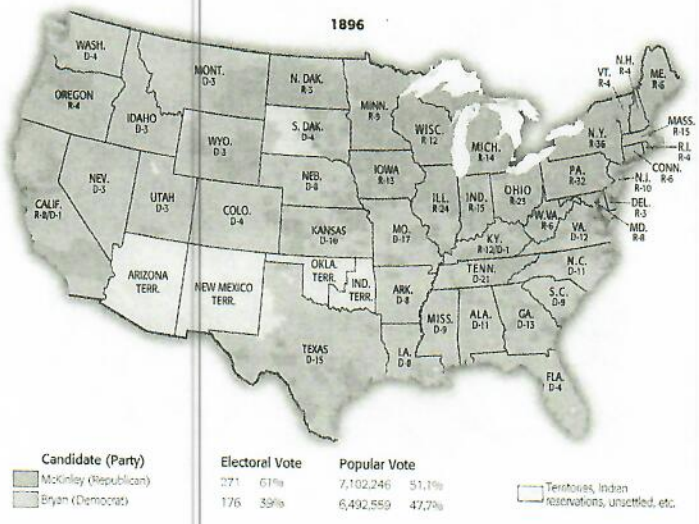
During the 1896 presidential campaign, Republicans depicted their candidate, William McKinley, as holding the key to prosperity for both the working man and the white-collar laborer, shown here raising their hats to the candidate. Republicans successfully made this economic theme—rather than the silver crusade of McKinley's unsuccessful opponent, William Jennings Bryan—the difference in the election's outcome.

Bryan's nomination presented the Populist Party convention with a dilemma. Should Populists join Democrats or nominate their own candidate? Some reasoned that supporting a separate candidate would split the anti-McKinley vote and guarantee a Republican victory. The convention compromised, first naming Tom Watson as its vice presidential nominee to preserve party identity (Democrats had nominated Maine shipping magnate Arthur Sewall) and then nominating Bryan for president.

The campaign, as Kansas journalist William Allen White observed, "took the form of religious frenzy." Bryan preached that "every great economic question is in reality a great moral question." Republicans countered Bryan's attacks on privilege by predicting chaos if he won. Hanna invited thousands of people to McKinley's home in Canton, Ohio, where the candidate plied them with homilies on moderation and prosperity, promising something for everyone. In an appeal to working-class voters, Republicans stressed the new jobs that a protective tariff would create.

Election Results

The election results revealed that the political standoff had ended. McKinley, symbol of urban and corporate ascendancy, beat Bryan by 600,000 popular votes and won in the electoral college by 271 to 176 (see Map 17.1). Bryan worked hard to rally the nation, but obsession with silver prevented Populists from building the urban-rural coalition that would have solidified their appeal. Urban workers, who might have benefited from Populist goals, feared that silver coinage would shrink the value of their wages. Labor leaders, such as the AFL's Samuel Gompers, would not commit fully because they viewed farmers as businessmen, not workers. And socialists denounced Populists as "retrograde" because they, unlike socialists, believed in free enterprise. Thus the Populist crusade collapsed. Although Populists and fusion candidates won a few state and congressional elections, the Bryan-Watson ticket of the Populist Party polled only 222,600 votes nationwide.



MAP 17.1
Presidential Election, 1896

William Jennings Bryan had strong voter support in the South and West, but the numerically superior industrial states, plus California, created majorities for William McKinley. Source: Copyright © Cengage Learning 2015

The McKinley Presidency

As president, McKinley reinforced his support of business by signing the Gold Standard Act (1900), requiring that all paper money be backed by gold. A seasoned politician, McKinley guided passage of record-high tariff rates as congressman in 1890. He accordingly supported the Dingley Tariff of 1897, which raised duties even higher. A believer in opening new markets abroad to sustain profits at home, McKinley encouraged imperialistic ventures in Latin America and the Pacific. Better times and victory in the Spanish-American War helped him beat Bryan again in 1900.

Interpreting a Fairy Tale

The Wizard of Oz, released in 1939 and one of the all-time most popular movies, began as a work of juvenile literature penned by journalist L. Frank Baum in 1900. Originally titled *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, the story used memorable characters to create an adventurous quest.

Adults have long searched the story for hidden meanings. In 1964, scholar Henry M. Littlefield asserted that Baum intended to write a Populist parable illustrating the conditions of overburdened farmers and laborers. Dorothy, he theorized, symbolized the well-intentioned common person; the Scarecrow, the struggling farmer; the Tin Man, the industrial worker. Hoping for a better life, these friends, along with the Cowardly Lion (William Jennings Bryan), followed a yellow brick road (the gold standard) that led nowhere. The Emerald City was presided over by a wizard, who tried to be all things to all people, but Dorothy revealed him as a fraud. Dorothy was able to leave this muddled society and return to her simple Kansas farm family of Aunt Em and Uncle Henry by using her magical silver slippers (representing coinage of silver, though the movie made them red).

Subsequent theorists identified additional symbols, such as Oz being the abbreviation for ounces (oz.), the chief measurement of gold. The Wicked Witch of the East—who, Baum wrote, kept the little people (Munchkins) "in bondage,"—could represent industrial capitalism. But in 1983 historian William R. Leach asserted that Baum's tale actually was a celebration of urban consumer culture. Its language exalted the opulence of Emerald City, which to Leach resembled the "White City" of the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, and Dorothy's joviality symbolized the optimism of industrialization. Baum's career supported this new interpretation. Before writing, he designed display windows and was involved in theater—activities that gave him an appreciation of modern urban life.

The real legacy of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* has been its ability to provoke differing interpretations. Baum's fairy tale, the first truly American work of this sort, has bequeathed many fascinating images about the diversity and contradictions of American culture.

Summary

Though buffeted by special interests, Gilded Age politicians prepared the nation for the twentieth century. Laws encouraging economic growth with some principles of regulation, measures expanding government agencies while reducing crass patronage, and federal intervention in trade and currency issues evolved during the 1870s and 1880s, to the distress of Social Darwinists such as William Graham Sumner. Principles of police power clashed with those of due process, but many new laws set the stage for expanded government activism.

Nevertheless, the United States remained a nation of inconsistencies. Those who supported disfranchisement of African Americans and continued discrimination against women and racial minorities still dominated politics. People in power could not tolerate radical views like socialism or Populism, but many of these ideas continued to find supporters in the new century.

The 1896 election realigned national politics. The Republican Party, founded in the 1850s amid a crusade against slavery, became the majority party by emphasizing government aid to business, drawing the urban middle class, and playing down moralism. The Democratic Party miscalculated on the silver issue but held its support in the South

and in urban political machines. At the national level, however, loyalties lacked their former potency. Suspicion of party politics increased, and voter participation declined. Populists tried to energize a third-party movement, but their success was fleeting.

Still, many Populist goals eventually were incorporated by the major parties, including regulation of railroads, banks, and utilities; shorter workdays; a variant of the subtreasury plan; a graduated income tax; and direct election of senators. These reforms succeeded because various groups united behind them. Immigration, urbanization, and industrialization had transformed the United States into a pluralistic nation in which interest groups had to compromise. As the Gilded Age ended, business was still ascendant, and large segments of the population remained excluded from political and economic opportunity. But the winds of dissent and reform had begun to blow more strongly.

Chapter Review

The Nature of Party Politics

How did factional disputes complicate party politics in the Gilded Age?

Most Democrats, who included immigrants and Catholics, sought to restrict government power, while most Republicans were native-born Protestants who believed government should play a bigger role in reforming society. Both parties were ultimately divided by factional rifts that kept them from simultaneously controlling the presidency and Congress or holding power in either for very long. Republican factions included Stalwarts and Half Breeds, who each sought to wield influence and award jobs to supporters, and Mugwumps, who thought only the most upstanding men should be allowed in government. Democrats split into white-supremacist southerners, immigrant and working-class advocates of urban political machines, businessmen who sought lower tariffs and the gold standard, and those who embraced free silver. Such divisions within parties made unity difficult.

The Activism of Government

In what ways did the government become more activist—and expand its authority—in the late nineteenth century?

The government increasingly saw its role as ensuring public safety and setting standards for acceptable behavior throughout society. Laws more specifically banned certain behaviors—the mistreatment of children, for example—and regulated public safety, health, and morality, such as by setting maximum work hours for women and children and prohibiting liquor sales and obscene literature. Efforts to regulate businesses, however, met with challenges under the due process provision of the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution, which, for example, railroads evoked to block efforts to regulate rates. The Supreme Court reaffirmed the federal government's authority to regulate interstate commerce, institutionalized when Congress passed the Interstate Commerce Act in 1887, complete with its own—and the nation's first—regulatory enforcement agency. The federal government also created the largest welfare commitment to that time via its pension program to Civil War veterans and their families, and broadened its powers over tariffs.

Presidential Initiative

What actions did American presidents between 1877 and 1900 take to restore authority to their office?

After Andrew Johnson's impeachment and the scandals plaguing both the Grant administration and the 1876 election, the presidency was tarnished. Presidents Rutherford Hayes (1877–1881), James Garfield (1881), Chester Arthur (1881–1885), Grover Cleveland (1885–1889 and 1893–1897), Benjamin Harrison (1889–1893), and William McKinley (1897–1901) sought to bring integrity back to federal government through various legislative initiatives. They all supported civil service (and its expansion) as a means to end the corruption of the spoils system. With varying success, they addressed currency, tariffs, railroad regulation, and labor unrest.

Discrimination and Disfranchisement

What legal means were used to discriminate against newly enfranchised African Americans in the decades following the Civil War?

To keep blacks from voting, southern leaders instituted measures such as poll taxes, which most blacks could not afford, and literacy tests. These measures were upheld in the Supreme Court, which noted that the Fifteenth Amendment could only prohibit states from denying the vote based on "race, color, or previous condition of servitude," but could not control the local election process. Similarly, Jim Crow, or segregation laws, confined African Americans to separate areas in public places such as streetcars, hospitals, and parks, thereby deliberately reminding them of their inferior status. These laws were upheld by the Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which permitted statesto legally segregate on a "separate but equal" basis. Violence against African Americans—particularly lynching—provided a reminder of the extremes of white racism and hostility.

Agrarian Unrest and Populism

How did farmers' discontent crystallize in various movements in the late nineteenth century?

As farm prices dropped, farmers found it increasingly difficult to earn a living from their land. Those conditions were made worse by the fact that as smallholders, most could not compete with large firms, which could negotiate lower costs for transportation and supplies by virtue of their size. In response, farmers founded local organizations called Granges in the 1860s and 1870s, partly as social clubs and partly to enable them to join forces in cooperatives where they could get the same competitive advantage as larger firms. Granges declined in the late 1870s, replaced a decade later by Farmers' Alliances, which rallied against crop liens, merchants, railroads, and money power. Along with cooperatives, Alliances sought a government aid system called a subtreasury that they hoped would provide low-interest loans to farmers seeking to buy land and assist farmers in warehousing crops until market prices increased. By 1890, farmers allied politically, helping to form the Populist Party and elect candidates representing their interests.

The Depression and Protests of the 1890s

Why did socialism fail to take hold in the United States amid the labor activism of the late nineteenth century?

The depression and thousands of strikes beginning with the 1877 railroad strike revealed general worker dissatisfaction that certainly created the conditions ripe for socialism to flourish, particularly once its charismatic leader Eugene V. Debs came to the fore in the 1890s. But American socialists could not agree on how best to implement Marxist strategies for worker control of the means of production and the end of capitalism's inequities. Socialism was also thwarted by that distinctly American celebration of social mobility and individual achievement. While workers found some aspects of socialism attractive, their ultimate aim was individual advancement, which they were unwilling to sacrifice for the greater good of all workers.

The Silver Crusade and the Election of 1896

How did Bryan's focus on free silver undermine his presidential campaign and the Populist Party?

Populists embraced the issue of silver because they believed it would end special privileges for the rich by lifting mainstream Americans from debt, increasing the money in circulation, and lowering interest rates. Populists fused these ideas to the Democratic Party by joining forces with them behind William Jennings Bryan for president in 1896. Bryan was singularly focused on silver, but this cost him votes from urban workers, who feared silver coinage would cut their wages. Labor leaders equated farmers with businessmen, and as such, could not join forces with Populists on this issue. Bryan received only 222,600 votes nationwide, and while Populists continued to influence elections, the party itself collapsed.

Suggestions for Further Reading

Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (1992)

Jean Baker, *Sisters: The Lives of America's Suffragists* (2005)

Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896–1920* (1996)

Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South, from Slavery to the Great Migration* (2003)

Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (1995)

Jean V. Matthews, *The Rise of the New Woman: The Women's Movement in America, 1875–1930* (2003)

Nick Salvatore, *Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist* (1992)