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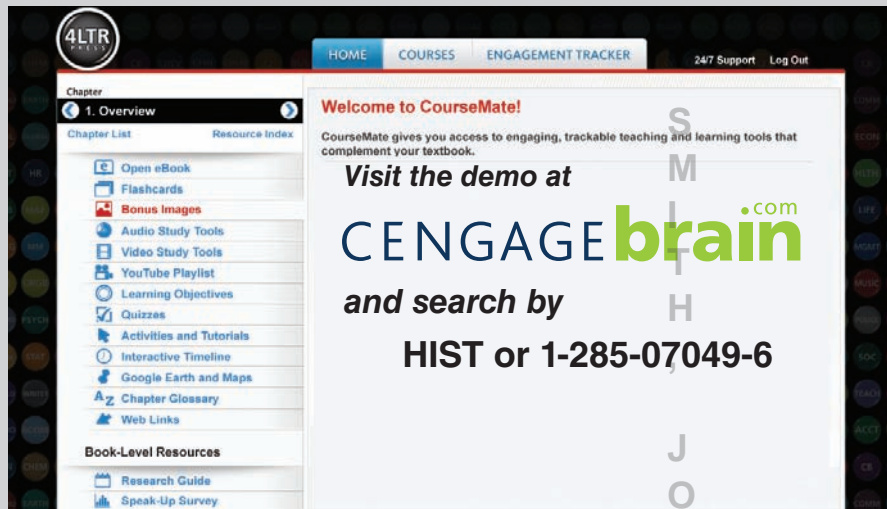
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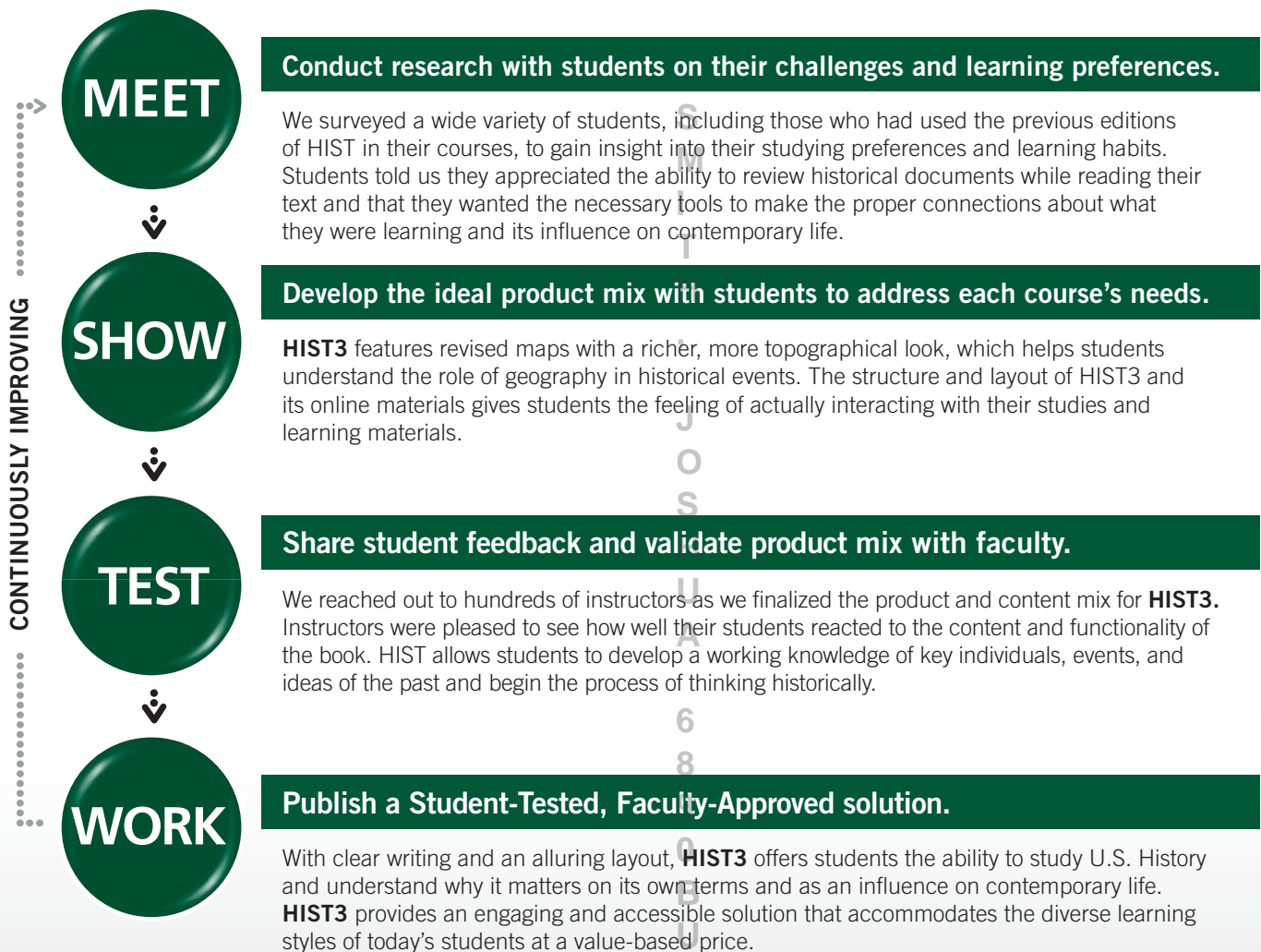
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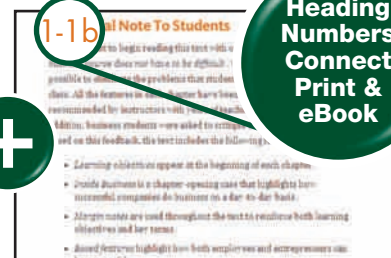
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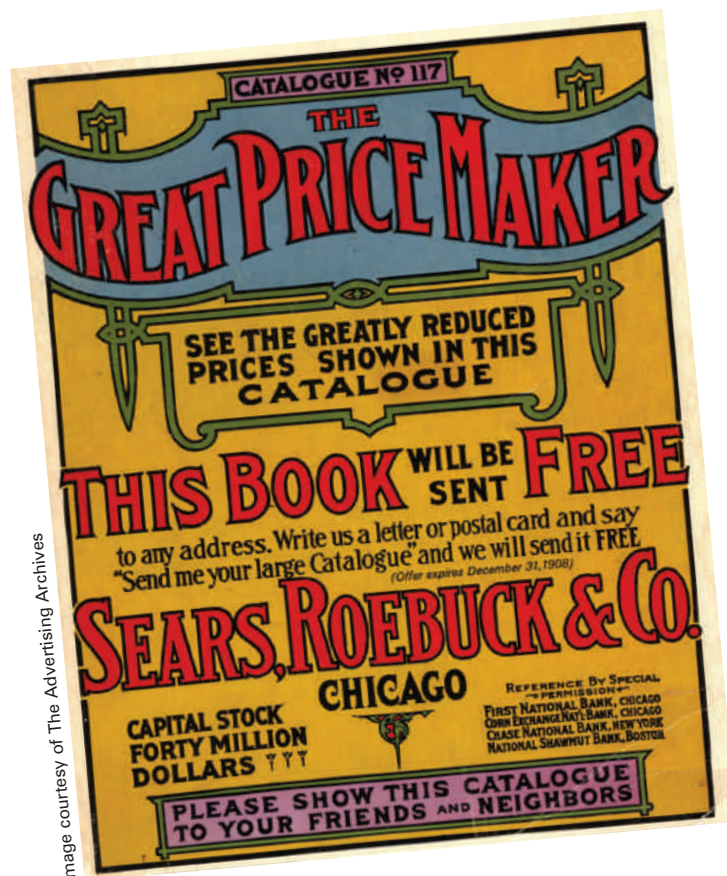
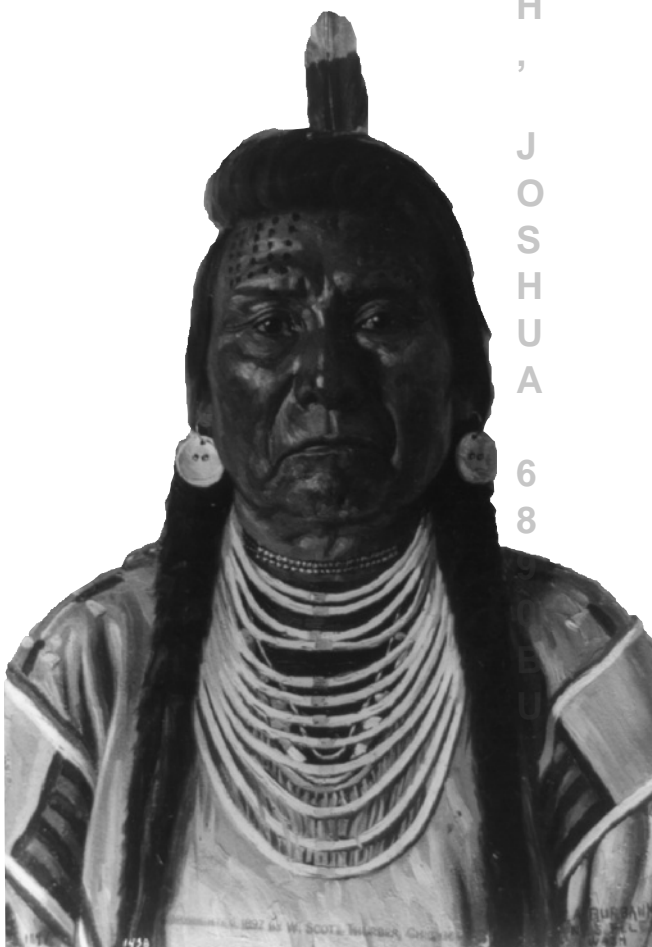


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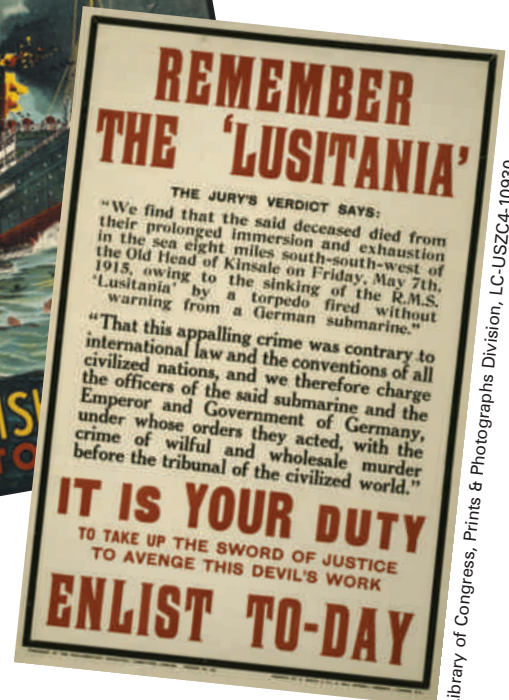
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About the Author

Kevin M. Schultz is associate professor of American history at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He has special interests in religion, ethnoracial history, and American intellectual and cultural life, and has written significantly on these subjects. His *Tri-Faith America: How Postwar Catholics and Jews Helped America Realize Its Protestant Promise* was published in 2011 by Oxford University Press. His essays on a variety of topics have appeared in *The Journal of American History*, *American Quarterly*, *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *Labor History* and several other venues, popular and academic alike. An award-winning teacher, he received his B.A. from Vanderbilt University and his PhD from UC Berkeley.

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CHAPTER 16

Reconstruction, 1865–1877



Learning Outcomes

After reading this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 16-1** Describe the changed world of ex-slaves after the Civil War.
- 16-2** Outline the different phases of Reconstruction, beginning with Lincoln's plan and moving through presidential Reconstruction to Congressional Reconstruction.
- 16-3** Explain how Reconstruction evolved at the individual states' level.
- 16-4** Evaluate and understand the relative success of Reconstruction.

“Nearly 23 percent of the South’s fighting-age men had died in the war.”

Confederate soldiers returned home to a devastated South in 1865. While northern trains and cities began to hum with activity, the South’s farms and factories, its railroads and bridges—its entire infrastructure—had been destroyed by war. Nearly 23 percent of the South’s fighting-age men had died in the war. Thousands more bore the physical scars of battle. The physical rebuilding of the region began quickly and progressed rapidly, but reconstructing southern society was a much more difficult process, especially considering (1) the political questions about how to integrate rebel states back into the nation and (2) the social questions about how to integrate 4 million newly freed slaves.

The North was also vastly changed, albeit in another way. Northern politicians seized the opportunity to pass many of the laws that southerners in Congress had long resisted. During and shortly after the war, Congress passed laws supporting internal improvements, outlawing slavery, and expanding the developments of the Market Revolution. Indeed, some historians argue that the Civil War was crucial in turning the Market Revolution into the Industrial Revolution. Regardless of the term you use, the North after the Civil War was beginning to resemble what we think of today as a modern industrial society.

But, first, to the era of **Reconstruction**, the federal government’s attempts to resolve the issues resulting from the end of the Civil War, which lasted from 1865 to 1877.

What do **you** think?

Reconstruction had some significant achievements but was ultimately a failure.

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly Agree

6

7

Reconstruction

The federal government’s attempts to resolve the issues resulting from the end of the Civil War

16-1 Freedmen, Freedwomen

After the Civil War, black Americans encountered a new world of opportunities. After years of enslavement, or at least the perpetual threat of enslavement if they had been already freed, African Americans confronted a new question: what does it mean to be free? After the passage in 1865 of the Thirteenth Amendment outlawing slavery throughout the land forever, black Americans had to wonder: what does one do after the bonds of slavery have been broken?

The first thing many freed people did was move. They often left the plantations upon which they had labored as slaves, or they sought to reunite with long-lost family members, who had perhaps been sold to another owner. The freedom of movement was the key.

This new mobility meant that black family life began to stabilize throughout the South. Men and women now had more control over their lives and their familial

<< The process of reconstructing the nation after four years of civil war was long and exhausting, so long in fact that it may have even allowed the South to lose the war but win the peace.

Ku Klux Klan

A quasi-military force formed immediately after the Civil War by former Confederate soldiers in order to resist racial integration and preserve white supremacy

Freedmen's Bureau

Government agency designed to create a new social order by government mandate; this bureau provided freedmen with education, food, medical care, and access to the justice system

roles. Reflecting the priorities of nineteenth-century American society, ex-slaves often removed women from the fields so that they could occupy a “women’s sphere of domesticity.” Most black women still had to work for financial reasons, but they often began working as indoor domestics rather than as field hands.

Meanwhile, freed families often desperately sought to purchase land in order to continue the planting life they knew best, sometimes

by simply purchasing a piece of the land on which they had labored before the Civil War. In their new communities, African Americans also expressed their religious independence by expanding the huge independent network of black churches that had been established since the Revolution. During the Reconstruction era, the number of black churches multiplied.

The newly freed people also sought the education that had been denied them during slavery. Schools for African Americans opened all over the South, for parents and for children. Learning to read meant learning to understand contracts, engage in political battles, and monitor wages, new experiences for those who had only recently been deemed chattel.

Politically, African Americans sought to vote. They marched in demand of it. They paraded to advocate for bills endorsing it. They lionized black Revolutionary heroes to establish their credentials as vote-casting Americans. And they held mock elections to show their capacity and desire to participate in the American political process. Life for the newly freed was tumultuous but exciting, filled with possibilities. It was a whole new world they encountered, full of promise and hope.

16-1a The Freedmen's Bureau

While ex-slaves explored a life based on the free-labor vision, members of the defeated Confederacy sought to maintain as much of the old order as possible. To this end, they worked to prevent ex-slaves from acquiring economic autonomy or political rights. Although they had lost the war, ex-Confederates feared a complete turnover from the lives they had led before it. Indeed, one of the first organizations created after the war in the South was the **Ku Klux Klan**, founded in 1865 by six white Confederate soldiers concerned about the racial implications of black freedom. The Klan and other similar organizations, such as the Southern Cross and the Knights of White Camellia, served as quasi-military forces serving the interests of those who desired the restoration of white supremacy. Nathan Bedford Forrest, a Confederate general, was the Klan’s first national leader.

To help mitigate this resistance, in 1865, Congress established the **Freedmen's Bureau**, a

{ What it means to be free . . . }

After the Civil War, African Americans in the South demonstrated their freedom in numerous ways, large and small. Many bought dogs, some purchased firearms, and several held mass meetings without white supervision, all actions that were often denied them under slavery. Many quickly moved after the war, almost always traveling in search of lost relatives who had been sold to other plantations during the era of slavery, when slave families were secondary to profits. Many newly freed persons simply sought to be far away from the plantations on which they had been enslaved. Ex-slaves who traveled around the country demonstrated their freedom to make their own choices.

>> Freedom was an expansive concept and meant everything from owning dogs to getting married to voting.



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>> **"The Secretary of War may direct such issues of provisions, clothing, and fuel, as he may deem needful for the immediate and temporary shelter and supply of destitute and suffering refugees and freedmen and their wives and children, under such rules and regulations as he may direct."**—Freedmen's Bureau Bill, 1865

government agency designed to create a new social order by government mandate. Under the management of northerner O. O. Howard (after whom Howard University is named), Congress designed the Freedmen's Bureau to build and manage new schools, provide food and medical care to needy southern black and white people, and ensure equal access to the judicial system for southerners both black and white. It had some success with this Herculean task: the Freedmen's Bureau built 3,000 schools and expanded medical care throughout much of the South, paying particular attention to the freed slaves and the areas where they had settled.

Its task of redesigning economic relations would prove more challenging. Although Lincoln's Republicans in Congress succeeded in putting into the bureau's charter a provision that plantations be divided into 40-acre plots and sold to former slaves, that plan was upended by politicians intending to enforce their own plans for reconstructing the South. Because politics were vitally important in determining how Reconstruction would unfold, it is to politics we must turn.

16-2 Political Plans for Reconstruction

Even before the war was over, President Lincoln had pondered what it would take to bring the South back into the nation. Unfortunately for him, many in Congress were more interested in punishment than in reconciliation.

16-2a Lincoln's Plan for Reconstruction and His Assassination

In 1863, Lincoln issued his **Ten-Percent Plan**, which offered amnesty to any southerner who proclaimed loyalty to the Union and support of the emancipation of slaves. When 10 percent of a state's voters in the election of 1860 had taken the oath to the United States, they could develop a new state government, which would be required to abolish slavery. Then that state could reenter the Union with full privileges, including the crucial apportionment to the House of Representatives and Senate. Although requiring just 10 percent of a population to declare loyalty seems extremely lenient toward the opposition (besides the fact that it left out any role for the ex-slaves), Lincoln was attempting to drain support from the Confederacy and shorten the war by making appeasement look easy.

Congress Bristles

Republicans in Congress, more interested in punishing the South than Lincoln was, bristled at Lincoln's leniency. In opposition to Lincoln's plan, they passed the **Wade-Davis Bill**, which would have allowed a southern state back into the Union only after 50 percent of the population had taken the loyalty oath. Furthermore, to earn the right to vote or to serve in a constitutional convention, southerners would have to take a second oath, called the **iron-clad oath**, that testified that they had never voluntarily aided or abetted the rebellion. The iron-clad oath was designed to ensure that only staunch Unionists in the South could hold political power. Lincoln vetoed the bill, but the battle about Reconstruction continued.

Lincoln's Assassination

As this battle wore on between Congress and the president, the hostilities of the American Civil War finally ended. Although the South had lost the war,

Ten-Percent Plan

Plan issued by Lincoln in 1863 that offered amnesty to any southerner who proclaimed loyalty to the Union and support of the emancipation of slaves; once 10 percent of a state's voters in the election of 1860 signed the oath, it could create a new state government and reenter the Union

Wade-Davis Bill

Bill that would have allowed a southern state back into the Union only after 50 percent of the population had taken the loyalty oath

iron-clad oath

Oath to be taken by southerners to testify that they had never voluntarily aided or abetted the rebellion



Read Lincoln's proclamation on vetoing the Wade-Davis Bill.

testified that they had never voluntarily aided or abetted the rebellion. The iron-clad oath was designed to ensure that only staunch Unionists



>> In an act of retribution, actor John Wilkes Booth shot Lincoln in the head just three days after the Civil War had ended.



View a Library of Congress picture gallery about Lincoln's assassination.

a few disgruntled southerners would attempt to get revenge. Three days after Appomattox, John Wilkes Booth, a local actor and Confederate sympathizer, shot and killed Lincoln during a play at Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C. Eleven days later, a Union soldier shot and killed Booth as he tried to escape from a burning barn. In the coming political showdown, Lincoln's deep empathy and political acumen would be missed, as the battle to reconstruct the nation now took place between defiant congressional Republicans and the insecure man who had stumbled into the presidency—Andrew Johnson.

16-2b Andrew Johnson and Presidential Reconstruction

Upon Lincoln's assassination, Andrew Johnson became president. Johnson was a native southerner, born in North Carolina and then residing in Tennessee. He was also functionally illiterate. Throughout the war, however, Johnson proved a loyal Unionist, and he served as Tennessee's military governor after the state was taken over by the Union Army. Despite Johnson's being a Democrat, in 1864, Lincoln selected Johnson as his running mate because Lincoln hoped to quiet dissent by running



with a non-northerner and a non-Republican. While it may have helped him win the election, Lincoln's plan would ultimately backfire.

Presidential Reconstruction, 1865–1867

Johnson was a lonely man who had a tough time handling criticism. Since his youth, he had looked up to the South's planter aristocracy and constantly sought its approval. Reflecting these insecurities, within a month of assuming the presidency, Johnson unveiled his plan for Reconstruction: (1) scrapping the "40-acres-and-a-mule" plan suggested in the charter of the Freedmen's Bureau and (2) creating a tough loyalty oath that many southerners could take in order to receive a pardon for their participation in the rebellion. However, Johnson added a curious but vital caveat that Confederate leaders and wealthy planters—who were not allowed to take the standard oath—could appeal directly to Johnson for a pardon. Anyone who received amnesty through either of these measures regained his citizenship rights and retained all of his property, except for his slaves. Under Johnson's plan, a governor appointed by the president would then control each rebel state until the loyalty oath was administered to the citizens. At that point, southerners could create new state constitutions and elect their own governors, state legislatures, and federal representatives. Johnson showed no concern for the future of black people in America.

Southern states made the most of the leeway Johnson afforded them. Even Robert E. Lee applied to be pardoned (although his pardon was never granted during his lifetime). A line of southern planters literally appeared at the White

House to ask Johnson's personal forgiveness; doing so allowed the southern elite to return to its former privileged status. In the end, Johnson granted amnesty to more than 13,000 Confederates, many of whom had been combative leaders in the Confederacy. Once Johnson had granted these pardons, he ensured that there would be no social revolution in the South. With pardons in hand,

>> An insecure man who had stumbled into the presidency, Andrew Johnson found it difficult to reunite the nation.



Read Johnson's Proclamation of Amnesty for the Confederate States.

they would not lose their land or their social control of the South.

Black Codes

Most of the new southern state governments returned Confederate leaders to political power. These leaders then created **black codes** modeled on the slave codes that existed before the Civil War. Although the codes legalized black marriages and allowed African Americans to hold and sell property, freed slaves were prohibited from serving on juries or testifying against white people in court. Intermarriage between black and white Americans was also strictly forbidden. Some states even had special rules that limited the economic freedoms of their black populations. Mississippi, for example, barred African Americans from purchasing or renting farmland. Most states created laws that allowed police officials to round up black vagrants and hire them out as laborers to white landowners.

In the end, these new laws hardened the separation of black Americans from white Americans, ending the intermingling and interaction that had been more common during slavery. With the rise of post-Civil War black codes, black and white southerners began a long process of physical separation that was not present before the war and that would last for at least a century. These black codes would also begin the process whereby black southerners after the Civil War were left with, in the words of one historian, nothing but freedom.



Read the Mississippi legislature's black codes.

16-2c Congressional Reconstruction

Johnson did nothing to prevent the South from reimposing these conditions on the black population. In Johnson's eyes, reconstruction of the Union would be finished as soon as southern states returned to the Union without slavery. Conservative members of Congress agreed. A group that would come to be called the **Radical Republicans** disagreed.

The Radical Republicans

The Republican Party had never been squarely behind Lincoln's plan for Reconstruction, and in fact the Radical Republicans, known as the wing of the

party most hostile to slavery, had opposed Lincoln's plans fiercely. Radicals in Congress, including Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania, Charles Sumner of Massachusetts (of "Bleeding Sumner" fame), and Benjamin Wade of Ohio, had pushed for emancipation long before Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, and they considered Lincoln's lenient Reconstruction program outrageous. As they looked toward the end of the war, Radicals hoped to use the Confederacy's defeat as an opportunity to overhaul southern society. At the very least, they hoped to strip the southern planter class of its power and ensure that freed slaves would acquire basic rights.

black codes

Post-Civil War laws specifically written to govern the behavior of African Americans; modeled on the slave codes that existed before the Civil War

Radical Republicans

Wing of the Republican Party most hostile to slavery

Civil Rights Act

Bill that granted all citizens mandatory rights, regardless of racial considerations; designed to counteract the South's new black codes

Congress overrode Johnson's veto on the Civil Rights Act, making it the first law ever passed over presidential veto.

The Radicals versus Johnson

As we have seen, Johnson, considering himself somewhat of a moderate, took office intending to wrap up the process of Reconstruction quickly. Granting amnesty to former Confederate leaders and other wealthy southerners demonstrated as much. Radicals in Congress, however, continued to devise measures for protecting the interests of the

newly freed black population. With no southerners yet in Congress, the Radical Republicans wielded considerable power.

Their first moves were (1) to expand the role of the Freedmen's Bureau, creating a stronger organization with greater enforcement powers and a bigger budget, and (2) to pass the important **Civil Rights Act**, which was designed to counteract the South's new black codes. The Civil Rights Act granted all citizens mandatory rights, regardless of racial considerations. Johnson vetoed both bills, but Congress overrode the veto on the Civil Rights Act, making it the first law ever passed over presidential veto. Their willingness to override a presidential veto suggests the importance that Radical Republicans placed on a meaningful reconstruction effort. It was the first of many vetoes the Radical Republicans would override.



Read a Harper's Weekly editorial about the Civil Rights Bill.

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Congressional Reconstruction

Phase of Reconstruction during which Radical Republicans wielded more power than the president, allowing for the passage of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments and the Military Reconstruction Act

Fourteenth Amendment

Amendment to the U.S. Constitution passed in 1868 that extended the guarantees of the Constitution and Bill of Rights to all persons born in the United States, including African Americans and former slaves; it promised that all citizens would receive the "due process of law" before having any of their constitutional rights breached

Military Reconstruction Act

Act that divided the former rebel states, with the exception of Tennessee, into five military districts; a military commander took control of the state governments and federal soldiers enforced the law and kept order

The Fourteenth Amendment

Congress's success in circumventing Johnson's veto began a new phase of Reconstruction known as **Congressional Reconstruction** in which Congress wielded more power than the president. Congress introduced a constitutional amendment in 1866 that (1) barred Confederate leaders from ever holding public office in the United States, (2) gave Congress the right to reduce the representation of any state that did not give black people the right to vote, and (3) declared that any person born or naturalized in the United States was, by that very act, an American citizen deserving of "equal protection of the law." This, in essence, granted full citizenship to all black people; states were prohibited from restricting the rights and privileges of any citizen.

To the frustration of Radicals like Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner, the amendment, which

became the **Fourteenth Amendment** to the U.S. Constitution, did not also protect the voting rights of African Americans. Nevertheless, Congress passed the amendment and it went to the states for ratification. Tennessee approved it and, in 1866, was invited by Congress to reenter the Union. Every other state of the former Confederacy rejected the amendment, suggesting that the Radicals' hopes for restructuring the South would not be realized easily.

Congressional Reconstruction, 1867–1877

Despite the strenuous labors of Andrew Johnson, the midterm elections of 1866 gave the Radical Republicans a two-thirds majority in both houses of Congress, and they began to push their program of Reconstruction more vig-

orously. The election was vicious, as Johnson and his supporters went around the country on what was called the "swing around the circle" to castigate and even threaten the execution of several Radical Republicans. Despite Andrew Johnson's claim that Reconstruction was over, the Radical-led Congress easily passed (again over Johnson's veto) the **Military Reconstruction Act** in March 1867. This act divided the former rebel states, with the exception of Tennessee, into five military districts. In each district, a military commander took control of the state governments, and federal soldiers enforced the law and kept order. See Map 16.1 on the right.

Congress also made requirements for readmission to the Union more stringent. Each state was instructed to register voters and hold elections for a state constitutional convention. In enrolling voters, southern officials were required to include black people and exclude any white people who had held leadership positions in the Confederacy, although this provision proved easy to ignore. Once the conventions were organized, the delegates then needed to (1) create constitutions that protected black voting rights and (2) agree to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment. Only then would Congress ratify the new state constitutions and accept southern state representatives back into the national Congress. Holding a fair state election and agreeing to the Fourteenth Amendment became the litmus tests for reentry to the nation. Without doing so and thereby becoming full-fledged members of the Union again, the southern states would remain without congressional apportionment and under military control.

The Second Reconstruction Act

At first, these provisions proved to be both too harsh and too lenient. The Military Reconstruction Act so outraged southerners that they refused to enroll the voters needed to put Reconstruction into motion. But southerners also preferred military rule to civilian control by those hostile to the South. In response to these various objections (and to the South's sub-

sequent foot-dragging), Congress passed the Second Reconstruction Act, authorizing the Union military commanders to register southern voters and assemble the constitutional conventions (since the southerners were not eager to do this themselves). The southern states continued to stall, so, in the summer of 1867, Congress passed two more acts designed to force southerners to proceed with

There was nothing worse than being part of a nation and having no say in how that nation was governed.



Map 16.1. Reconstruction in the South

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Reconstruction. President Johnson vetoed all these measures, but his vetoes were all overridden by Radical Republicans in Congress. He was helpless to stop Congress's actions.

Eventually, the southern states had no choice but to follow the Military Reconstruction Act's instructions. There was nothing worse than being part of a nation and having no say in how it was governed. Southerners wanted congressional representation back, and, in order to get it, they had to acquiesce to Congress's demands. In June 1868, Congress readmitted representatives and senators from six states: North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Alabama, Arkansas, and Louisiana.



Read the Second Reconstruction Act.

By 1870, the remaining four southern states—Virginia, Mississippi, Georgia, and Texas—had also agreed to the required provisions and they too received permission to send congressmen to Washington. As more and more Confederate states came back into the Union, the Fourteenth Amendment became the law of the land in 1868.

Frustrations

Although the Radical Republicans in Congress had considerable successes, in many important ways

they did not produce the social revolution they had envisioned: (1) they did not redistribute land to freed slaves; (2) they did not provide black people with guaranteed access to education; (3) they did not forbid racial segregation; and (4) they did not call for absolute racial equality for black and white people. The process of reconciliation meant that both sides had to give at least a little, and President Johnson's leniency at the outset of Reconstruction had caused Radicals the most consternation.

16-2d Johnson's Impeachment

Still stung by Johnson's initial act of granting pardons to the southern aristocracy, Radicals were equally stymied by his constant string of vetoes. Frustrated by all this, Congress took steps to limit the president's authority.

The Tenure of Office Act

In 1867 Congress passed the Tenure of Office Act, which required the president to obtain the consent of the Senate before removing certain government officials from office. In essence, the law declared that Johnson could not fire anyone who had earned congressional approvals, especially Republicans

Fifteenth Amendment

Amendment that extended voting rights to all male citizens regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude

who had been appointed by Lincoln. Johnson of course vetoed the act, but Congress once again overrode his veto.

The Impeachment

A showdown over the new law occurred in August 1867, when Johnson wanted to remove from office Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton. Stanton sympathized with the Radicals and had fallen out of favor with Johnson, so Johnson ordered his dismissal. The Senate, however, refused to authorize the firing. Undeterred, Johnson ordered Stanton to resign. When Republicans in the House of Representatives learned that Johnson had defied the Senate's Tenure of Office Act, they drafted a resolution to impeach Johnson. This could be the chance they had sought to eliminate a major obstacle to Congressional Reconstruction. The House made eleven charges against Johnson, stemming mostly from his refusal to heed the Tenure of Office Act, and a majority of the representatives voted in favor of putting him on trial. This made Andrew Johnson the first president in the nation's history to be impeached.

Radical Republicans in the House of Representatives (especially Thaddeus Stevens) powered the vote for impeachment, but the Constitution dictates that impeachment trials must take place in the Senate and must be judged by the chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Moderate Republicans and Democrats in the Senate refused to join the House Radicals in condemning Johnson, and, by one vote, the Senate lacked the two-thirds



Find out more about the impeachment of Andrew Johnson.

majority needed to convict the president and remove him from office.

16-2e The Fifteenth Amendment

In 1868, the Republicans nominated the war hero Ulysses S. Grant for president, hoping that Grant's tremendous popularity in the North would help them control the White House and propel their Reconstruction plans through the federal government. The Democrats nominated Horatio Seymour, the governor of New York. To the shock of the Republicans, the race between Grant and Seymour was relatively close. Although Grant obtained a majority in the Electoral College, he won the popular vote by only 300,000 ballots. Since an estimated 450,000 black people had voted for Grant, it was clear that a narrow majority of white Americans had cast their ballots for Seymour.

Recognizing the importance of their newest support base—and aware that their time in power might be limited—Republicans in Congress moved quickly to create a constitutional amendment guaranteeing the suffrage rights of black males.



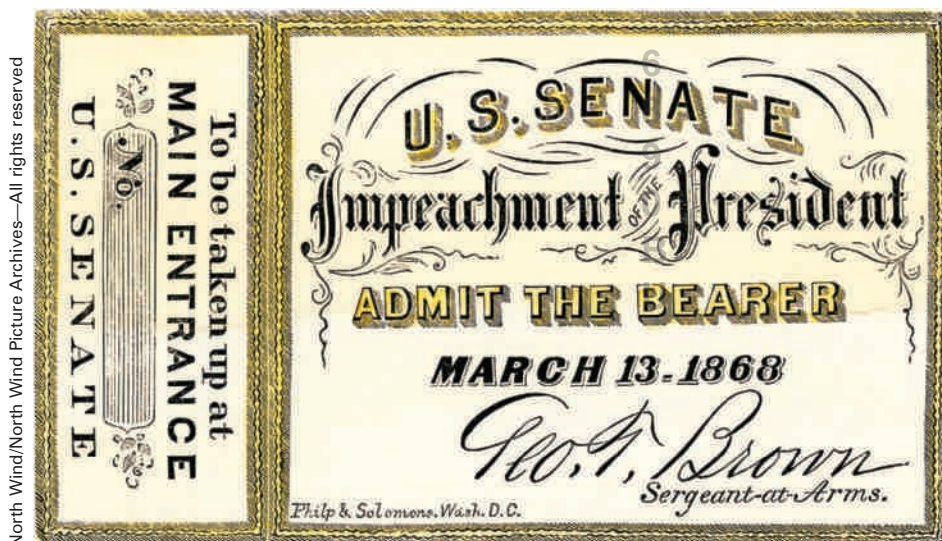
Read the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

It became the **Fifteenth Amendment**, which was ratified and adopted in 1870. The Fifteenth Amendment prohibited any state from denying citizens the right to vote on the grounds of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

16-2f Women's Rights

The Fourteenth Amendment introduced the word *male* into the Constitution for the first time, and the Fifteenth Amendment ratified the notion that voting rights were solely intended for men. Many women, who had often supported the fight for black civil rights, fought back. Historically, advocates for the rights of women have often first fought for the rights of racial minorities, especially

>> After numerous battles between Congress and President Johnson over the meaning of Reconstruction, a group of Radical Republicans in Congress sought to impeach the president for violating the Tenure of Office Act. Johnson was the first president ever to face an impeachment trial, and he held onto his job by only one vote in the Senate. Tickets were sold at the trial.



North Wind/North Wind Picture Archives—All rights reserved

black people. This was the case in the 1830s and 1840s, and again in the 1860s and 1870s. Viewing the overhauling of the U.S. Constitution as a moment ripe for extending various freedoms to women, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Olympia Brown, two veterans of the struggle to expand women's rights, pushed for a constitutional guarantee of women's suffrage. Using new journals such as *The Agitator*, activist women also pushed for a reform of marriage laws, changes in inheritance laws, and, as always, the vote.

But they were frustrated at almost every turn. Even Republicans declared that Reconstruction was designed solely for black men. Women were torn about whether or not to support the Reconstruction amendments, even if they excluded provisions for women's rights. These bitter differences led to divisions within the women's suffrage movement that would last until the 1890s.

16-3 Grassroots Reconstruction

With all the political jockeying within the federal government, Reconstruction at the state level was even more rancorous. Freed slaves exercised more muscle at the state level, ensuring that Republicans dominated all of the new state governments in the South. Newly freed slaves steadfastly cast their ballots for the party that had given them their freedom. To support this voter bloc, Republican politicians—from the North and the South—sought dramatic Reconstruction efforts. But at every turn they encountered strong opposition. Before long, it became evident that the process of reconstructing the South would be a process of two steps forward, one step back. And the most substantive change that could have happened—land and economic redistribution to the ex-slaves—remained perpetually frustrated.

16-3a Black Officeholders

Even with the admission of black voters, the proportion of government positions held by black Americans was still smaller than their proportion in the population. They were rarely elected to high positions, and until 1990 no black person was ever elected



Analyze an image of the South Carolina legislature.

or nominated to serve as governor. South Carolina was the only state

where a black judge served in the state supreme court, and, because the state was 60 percent African American, only in South Carolina did African Americans form a plurality of the legislature. Nevertheless, more than 2,000 black citizens gained political office in the Reconstruction South. Some were policemen, some were sheriffs, some were tax assessors. Their roles were important because they ensured that fairness would be enforced and that the rule of law would be upheld.

carpetbagger

Northern-born white who moved south after the Confederacy's defeat

16-3b Carpetbaggers and Scalawags

Yet white men held most of the offices in the new state governments, and many were Republicans supportive of protecting black rights. Some of these new officials were northern-born white men who moved south after the Confederacy's defeat. Southerners called these men **carpetbaggers** because they supposedly journeyed to the South with nothing more than what they could carry in a ratty old carpetbag. The carpetbag was meant to symbolize corruption and lowliness, as supposedly poor and pretentious northerners headed south seeking to capitalize on the region's fall from grace. Not all the so-called carpetbaggers were corrupt, of course. Many of them came to the South with a desire to improve the lot of America's black people.



>> During Reconstruction, Hiram Revels of Mississippi (on the left) became the nation's first African American senator, while several other southern states voted African Americans to the House.

The Granger Collection, New York / The Granger Collection

scalawag

Southern-born white Republican; many had been nonslaveholding poor farmers

sharecropping

System in which a family farmed a plot of land owned by someone else and shared the crop yield with the owner

Southern-born, white Republicans were given the name **scalawag**, originally a term used by cattle drivers to describe livestock that was too filthy for consumption, even by dogs. Although southern Democrats insisted that only the “dirtiest” citizens became scalawags, in reality, many elite men joined

the Republican Party, including Confederate generals Pierre Beauregard and James Longstreet. Most of the scalawags, however, had been nonslaveholding poor white farmers who worked and lived in the hill country. Many of these scalawags believed that participating in the Republicans’ plan was the fastest way to return their region to peaceful and prosperous conditions.

Southern Republican Successes

Although they faced considerable opposition from the old antebellum elite, southern Republicans managed to (1) construct the South’s first public school system, (2) develop a system of antidiscrimination measures, (3) strengthen the rights and privileges of agricultural workers, and (4) begin efforts at internal improvements in the various states. Under the leadership of southern Republicans, for example, every state in the South financed a system of railroads and attempted to lure northern industries to the South. They met with mixed results, but they showed a newfound commitment to greater equality and to bringing the gains of the Market Revolution southward.

16-3c Sharecropping

Despite the new opportunities put forward by southern Republicans, freed slaves had to struggle hard to enjoy their new liberty. There was no serious land reform and the Market and Industrial Revolutions were slow to move southward, so most black southerners had no choice but to accept work as agricultural wage laborers for white landholders, many of whom had been slaveholders before the war.

The Battle of Labor

Many of these landowners attempted to recreate as much of the slave system as they could, closely overseeing their workers, forcing them to work in gangs, and even trying to use the whip to maintain discipline. The freedmen, however, refused to be reduced to slavery again. They insisted on working shorter hours, and they often refused to work in gangs. To limit the amount of surveillance, freedmen often built their own log cabins far away from the houses of their employers. Unless they were willing to go beyond the rule of law, most landowners could do nothing to stop them.

The Sharecropping System

The power struggle between southern whites and the freedmen led former slaveholders to establish and develop the **sharecropping** system. As sharecroppers, families farmed a plot of land owned by someone else and shared the crop yield with the owner of the property. Typically, the farmer and the owner split the yield in half, but the owner often claimed an even larger share if he supplied the seeds or tools necessary for cultivating the crop or if he provided housing and food. Although black farmers had earned the right to work in a familial setting, as opposed to the gang labor system of the slave era, landowners had managed to curtail black freedom by preventing many of them from owning property.

Despite sharecropping’s prominent place in southern black history, there were more white sharecroppers in the South than black. It was a sign of the South’s poverty after the war. The sharecropping system offered little hope for economic or social advancement. Sharecroppers could rarely earn enough money to buy land, and they were constantly in debt to their landlords. The landlord was

>> Many Southerners saw carpetbaggers as corrupt and lowly, although many came South with the intention of improving the life of America’s black people.



Newscom

always paid first when crops were sold at market, so if crop prices were lower than expected, sharecroppers were left with little or no income. Although sharecropping was not slavery, it was still a harsh and limited form of economic existence that permeated the South after the Civil War. By 1900, 50 percent of southern whites and 75 percent of southern blacks lived in sharecropping families.

Convict Leasing

Southern landowners and politicians also began the practice of convict leasing during these years, whereby the state leased out prisoners to private companies or landowners looking for workers after the demise of slavery. Convicts usually were not paid for their labor and were often treated harshly. But the system was good for the state, which earned income from the practice, and the lessees, who exploited the labor of the prisoners. Convicts were used in railroad, mining, and logging operations, as well as on farms. And, although convicts of all colors were exploited by the system, African Americans were particularly targeted. During the three decades after the Civil War, the number of men in prison increased in nearly every state of the South, and the percentage of those prisoners who were black ballooned. Many were convicted on questionable charges, and more than one dirty judge was exposed for fraudulently convicting an innocent black man who would be destined to work as the leased property of the state. Some historians see convict leasing as just an extension of slavery, with only a different name.

16-4 The Collapse of Reconstruction

Despite the obvious setbacks, the reconstruction of the South did have some significant achievements, including two new constitutional amendments, the passage of the nation's first civil rights law, and the abolition of slavery. These positive achievements could have continued to accumulate, but they did not, for two reasons: (1) growing northern disinterest in the plight of America's southern black population and (2) southern resistance to Reconstruction.

16-4a In the North

On the whole, the eight years of Grant's presidency (1869–1877) were not marked by great strides for African American civil rights. Instead, Grant's term became infamous for economic chicanery and

corruption. The president's personal secretary was caught embezzling federal whiskey revenues in the so-called "Whiskey Ring," while Grant's own family was implicated in a plot to corner the gold market. Charges of corruption even led to a split in the Republican Party, further draining support for Reconstruction efforts. As more upstanding political leaders became preoccupied with efforts to clean up the government and institute civil service reform, securing equal rights for black people in the South ceased to be the most pressing issue. Other things seemed to matter more. And, as Reconstruction moved into the background, northerners' racism—always just under the surface—became more visible.

Despite charges of corruption, Grant was reelected to the presidency in 1872, and during his second term, only one major piece of Reconstruction legislation was passed. Even that had key limitations. The **Civil Rights Act of 1875** forbade racial discrimination in all public facilities, transportation lines, places of amusement, and juries. Segregation in public schools, however, was not prohibited. Moreover, there was no effort whatsoever to legislate against racial discrimination by individuals or corporations, so discrimination in the workplace remained legal.

In addition to these flaws, the Civil Rights Act proved ineffective anyway. The federal government did not enforce the law vigorously, so the southern

Civil Rights Act of 1875

Act that forbade racial discrimination in all public facilities, transportation lines, places of amusement, and juries; it proved largely ineffective



The Granger Collection, New York / The Granger Collection

>> An African American sharecropper, 1899.

Civil Rights Cases

Cases in which, in 1883, the Supreme Court declared all of the provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1875 unconstitutional, except for the prohibition of discrimination on juries

Panic of 1873

Financial crisis provoked when overspeculation, high postwar inflation, and disruptions from Europe emptied the financial reserves in America's banks; many banks simply closed their doors; this emergency focused northern attention on the economy rather than on civil rights

states ignored it. And in 1883, in what would come to be called the **Civil Rights Cases**, the Supreme Court delivered a final blow to this last act of Reconstruction by declaring all of its provisions unconstitutional, except for the prohibition of discrimination on juries. In 1890, Henry Cabot Lodge, a Republican from Massachusetts, led the House of Representatives in passing a Federal Elections Bill that would have revived protection of voting rights for African Americans, but a Senate filibuster prevented the piece of legislation from becoming law. It would be

nearly seven decades before another civil rights bill made its way through Congress.

The failure of the Civil Rights Act of 1875 reflected a larger northern disinterest in Reconstruction. For many northerners, support for black rights had been an outgrowth of their animosity toward the South. In 1865, such feelings burned hotly, and northerners were willing to support federal efforts to guarantee the liberties of former slaves.



Analyze a
Harper's Weekly
cartoon on the
Civil Rights Act of 1875.

As the bitterness of war faded, northerners were tired of the antagonism between North and South, so their interest in civil rights faded, too.

Instead, northerners became consumed with economic matters, especially after the United States entered a deep recession in 1873. The **Panic of 1873** erupted when numerous factors, including overspeculation, high postwar inflation, and disruptions from Europe, emptied the financial reserves in America's banks. Rather than honor their loans, many banks simply closed their doors, which led to a panic on Wall Street. Although Grant acted quickly to end the immediate panic, many businesses were forced to shut down. The Panic lasted four years and left 3 million Americans unemployed. In the years after 1873, Americans became concerned more with jump-starting the economy than with forging new laws to protect the needs and interests of black citizens.

The Republicans, meanwhile, took the blame for the nation's economic troubles, so, in the congressional elections of 1874, they lost seventy-seven



Analyze a
Harper's Weekly
cartoon on the
Panic of 1873.

seats, thus losing control of the House. The party that had spearheaded civil rights legislation in America was

no longer in a position to control federal policy. Instead, the Democrats were back.

16-4b In the South

The decline of northern support for Reconstruction emboldened southern Democrats, who worked to reclaim political control of their region. In order to create white solidarity against Republican rule in the South, the Democrats shamelessly asserted white superiority.

Racism proved to be a powerful incentive for the Democratic Party, especially to attract poor southerners worried about their economic fortunes. Keeping black people as an underclass in southern society was important to poor white people's sense of self-worth (and economic well-being), and Democrats promised to protect the racial hierarchy as it had been before the Civil War. Democrats earned the backing of the vast majority of white southerners—mostly by championing continued white supremacy.

Intimidation of Black and Republican Voters

To control black votes, white Democrats often used economic intimidation. Throughout the nineteenth century, voting was not done by secret ballot, so it was easy to know how every individual cast his ballot. Democratic landowners fired tenant farmers who voted Republican and publicized their names in local newspapers to prevent other landowners from hiring them too. The threat of starvation and poverty thus kept many black citizens from voting for the Republican Party.

More than economic intimidation, however, southern Democrats used violence to control southern politics. A number of paramilitary groups, including the Ku Klux Klan, provided the ground troops. They harassed black and white Republicans, disrupted Republican Party meetings, and physically blocked black southerners from casting ballots in elections. They even assassinated Republican Party leaders and organizers. Their goal was to erode the base of Republican support in the South and to ensure election victories for the Democratic Party. Prior to the presidential election of 1868, 2,000 people were killed or injured in Louisiana alone. In Texas, the federal military commander said murders were so common he could not keep track of them.

Terror in the Heart of Freedom

In addition to these more purely political forms of repression, southern white males also used rape and sexual violence against African American women as a form of political terror. Because black women now had the right to accuse white men of sexual crimes, historians have been able to determine that white men often staged elaborate attacks meant to reenact the antebellum racial hierarchy, when southern white men were firmly in control. African Americans of course fought back, but as the Democrats grew increasingly powerful in the region, the claims of southern black women often went unheard. Most damningly, these crimes indicated how limited black freedom had become in the decade after the Civil War. Not only were African Americans losing their political and social rights, they were also losing the right to basic safeties, the right to organize their life as they saw fit, and the right to live comfortably in a democratic nation.

Grant's Response

Although not known for its civil rights activism, the Grant administration did respond to the upsurge in southern violence by pushing two important measures through Congress: (1) the Force Act of 1870 and (2) the Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871. The new laws declared that interfering with the right to vote was a felony; they also authorized the federal government to use the army and suspend the writ of habeas corpus in order to end Klan violence. Grant proceeded to suspend the writ in nine South Carolina counties and to arrest hundreds of suspected Klan members. These efforts crushed the Klan in 1871 (although it would resurge in the 1910s and 1920s).

The Mississippi Plan

Southern Democrats, however, did not relent. In 1875, Democrats in Mississippi initiated a policy called the **Mississippi Plan**, which called for using as much violence as necessary to put the state back under Democratic control. Democratic clubs began to function much as the Klan had, terrorizing Republican Party leaders and the black and white citizens who supported them. This time, the Grant administration refused to step in to stop the violence. Most northerners no longer seemed willing to support federal intervention into southern strife.

In 1876, the Mississippi Plan formally succeeded. By keeping tens of thousands of Republicans from casting ballots, the Democrats took charge of the state government. In the vocabulary of the

time, Mississippi had been “redeemed” from Republican rule. In fact, it had been tortured into submission; official reports proclaiming as much were generally ignored.

“Redeemers” Win the Presidential Election of 1876

The presidential election of 1876 put the final nail in Reconstruction’s coffin.

Through violence and intimidation, the Democrats had already succeeded in winning control of all the southern states except Louisiana, Florida, and South Carolina. They intended to use the Mississippi Plan to “redeem” those three states and win the presidency as well. Perversely using the Christian language of redemption, the leaders of these efforts were widely called **Redeemers**.

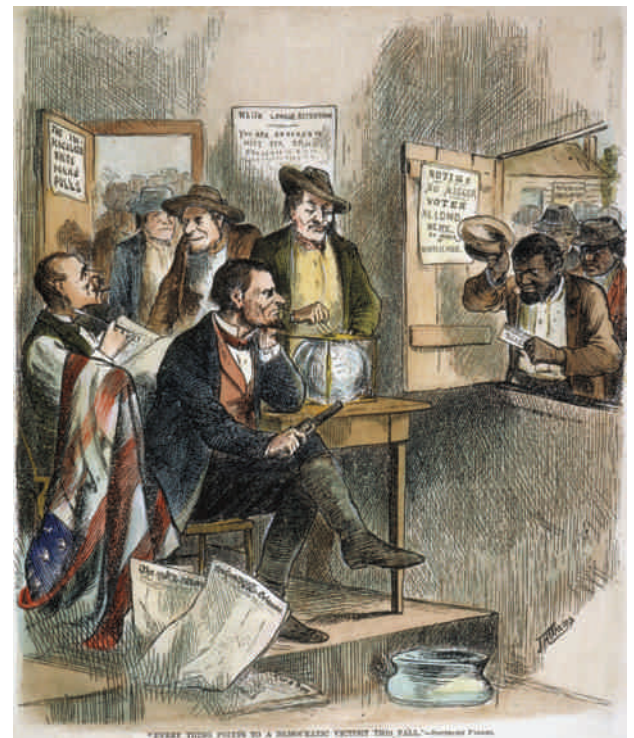
The presidential campaign pitted Ohio Republican Rutherford B. Hayes against New York Democrat Samuel Tilden, who had a reputation

Mississippi Plan

1875 Democratic plan that called for using as much violence as necessary to put Mississippi back under Democratic control

Redeemers

A collection of southern Democrats and their supporters who used violence, intimidation, and the law to win political and social control away from those promoting greater racial equality in the region



The Granger Collection, New York / The Granger Collection

>> The White League and other similar organizations were founded to use violence and intimidation to keep African American voters from the polls throughout the South.

Compromise of 1877

Compromise in which Republicans promised not to dispute the Democratic gubernatorial victories in the South and to withdraw federal troops from the region, if southern Democrats accepted Hayes's presidential victory and respected the rights of black citizens

as a reformer and a fighter against political corruption. The election was a mess. Violence prevented as many as 250,000 southerners from voting for the Republican ticket, and, as southern Democrats had hoped, Democratic governors triumphed in Louisiana, Florida, and South Carolina.

The Democrats in those states also reported that the majority of voters favored Tilden for the presidency. Republicans were suspicious, however, and did a canvass of their own. They claimed that the Democrats had used violence to fix the results. Louisiana, Florida, and South Carolina, the Republicans argued, should have gone to Hayes. These disputed states carried enough Electoral College votes to swing the entire election one way or the other.

The Compromise of 1877

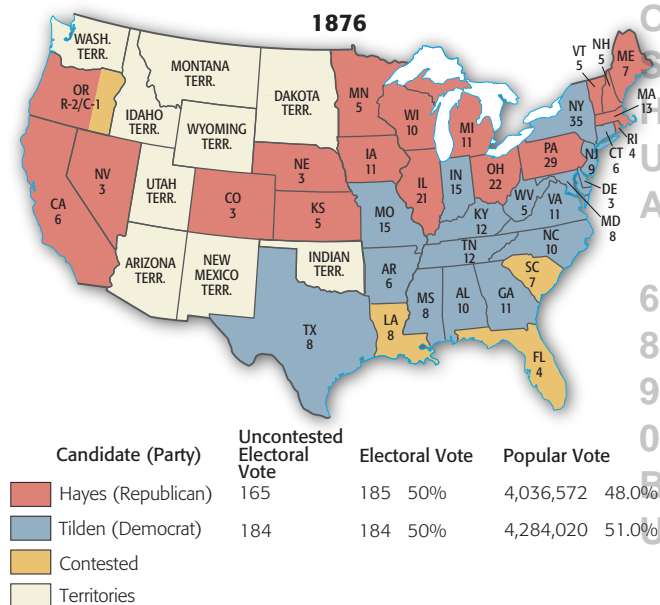
After receiving two versions of the final tallies, Congress needed help

Reconstruction was America's unfinished revolution, and a great chance to correct the colossal wrong that was slavery.

deciding what to do. It created a 15-member electoral commission, with 5 members from the Senate, 5 from the House, and 5 from the Supreme Court. The commission was composed of 8 Republicans and 7 Democrats, and, by a purely partisan vote of 8 to 7, the commission gave the disputed states of Louisiana, Florida, and South Carolina to Hayes, the Republican. The Democratic Party leaders were furious, but, in order to prevent further violence, Republican leaders proposed a compromise that became known as the **Compromise of 1877** (see Map 16.2).

In the compromise, Republicans promised (1) not to dispute the Democratic gubernatorial victories in the South and (2) to withdraw federal troops from the region. The white redeemers would thus be in control throughout the entire South. In return, the Republicans asked the Democrats to (1) accept Hayes's presidential victory and (2) respect the rights of its black citizens. The Democrats accepted these terms, and, with that, Hayes withdrew the federal military from the South. Of course, without a federal military to protect black Americans, Reconstruction was over, and the South was left under the control

of the Redeemers who used violence, intimidation, and the law to create the society they envisioned. Freed blacks progressively lost whatever political and social gains they had achieved during the previous twelve years. This failure ensured that racial oppression would continue. In the words of one historian, Reconstruction was America's unfinished revolution, and a great chance to correct the colossal wrong that was slavery vanished. For more on why Reconstruction ended in 1877, see "The reasons why ..." box on Reconstruction on the next page.



Map 16.2. The Disputed Election of 1876

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Looking Ahead...

Why did Reconstruction fail? So boldly stated, the question is perhaps unfair. There were major accomplishments. Slavery was abolished. Federal laws were established that provided support for further political gains for America's black population. There have been only six black senators ever elected to the U.S. Senate, but two of them were elected during Reconstruction (Hiram Rhodes Revels and Blanche K. Bruce, both from Mississippi). About a fifth of the 112 black Americans ever to serve in the

The reasons why . . .

There were three prominent reasons why Reconstruction ended in 1877, before equality could be ensured for southern African Americans.

Northern indifference. After the Panic of 1873, many northerners focused intently on economic matters. The passions inflamed by the Civil War had begun to fade by the early 1870s, and the economic turmoil provoked by the Panic led northerners to focus on their personal fortunes. Plus, with the Industrial Revolution ramping up in the North (see Chapter 17), northerners were even less likely to take big risks on behalf of black civil rights in the South.

Southern recalcitrance. With northern indifference becoming increasingly evident during the second presidential term of Ulysses S. Grant, white southerners increased the level of violence—political, physical, and sexual—they used against African Americans

and Republicans more generally. The Democratic Party in the South promised white superiority, and throughout the 1870s it was beginning to deliver.

National political ambivalence. By 1876, northern politicians had more at stake in reviving the sagging economy than in fighting for the rights of African American southerners. When it became clear that the results of the presidential election of 1876 were going to be disputed, northern Republicans willingly negotiated with southern Democrats, securing the Republicans the presidency at the cost of pulling federal troops out of the South. Without northern oversight, southern whites were free to reclaim their social and political power, and that is exactly what they did.

U.S. House of Representatives were elected during Reconstruction.

But there was a dramatic decline of black political participation in the South (where a large majority of black people lived) beginning in 1876 and lasting until after the Second World War. There was an even more dramatic increase in physical segregation between America's black and white populations during and after Reconstruction. The causes are many. President Johnson's unwillingness to participate in a wholesale social revolution meant that land would not be redistributed in the South, signifying that, for the most part, the wealthy would remain wealthy and the poor would remain poor. The development of sharecropping as an institution further paralyzed black advancements, especially after the emergence of black codes limited black Americans' abilities to protest economic injustices. Finally, the violence used by the southern Redeemers served as an emblem of the wrongs felt by white southerners, and, when northerners became more focused on the rollicking economy of the Industrial Revolution, there was no one left to monitor the henhouse. Plainly enough, most white southerners strongly opposed racial change, and after 1876, they were left in power to do as they wished.

On what had northern attentions become focused? It is to the development and ramifications of the great Industrial Revolution that we now must turn.

What else was happening . . .

1865	William Bullock invents printing press that can feed paper on a continuous roll and print both sides of the paper at once.
1867	Bullock dies of gangrene after getting caught in his own invention.
1867	Benjamin Disraeli helps pass the 1867 Reform Bill in Britain, which extends the franchise to all male householders, including, for the first time, members of the working class.
1869	Opening of the Suez Canal in Egypt connecting the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea, allowing water travel between Asia and Europe without having to navigate around Africa.
1870	First New York City subway line opens.
1871	Euphemia Allen, age sixteen, composes simple piano tune "Chopsticks."
1873	Mark Twain patents the scrapbook.



Visit the CourseMate website at www.cengagebrain.com for additional study tools and review materials for this chapter.

CHAPTER 17

The Industrial Revolution

Learning Outcomes

After reading this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 17-1** Describe and discuss the development of the Industrial Revolution in America after the Civil War, concentrating on the major industries and their leaders.
- 17-2** Describe how America's regional and local markets merged into one truly national market and how this influenced the consumer demand for products and services, as well as some of the costs associated with the transition.
- 17-3** Discuss the functioning of national, state, and local politics during the late 1800s.
- 17-4** Describe the formation of the early labor unions in the United States, including their goals, activities, and situations at the end of the nineteenth century.



Culver Pictures/The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY

“The world that had consisted of small farms, artisans’ workshops, and small factories transformed into a full-scale industrial society.”

As the process of ensuring political, economic, and social rights of African Americans waned during the 1870s, most Americans turned their attention to another transformation brought on by the Civil War: the Industrial Revolution. During the half-century between 1865 and 1915, the United

States evolved from a relative economic backwater to become the most powerful economy in the world. Industrialization played a key role in the nation’s advances, and both the Civil War and a core group of innovative, aggressive, farsighted, and opportunistic entrepreneurs were the main stimulants of growth. They embodied the optimism and inventiveness of the late nineteenth century, although they often pushed too far and engaged in practices we now see as unethical and corrupt, leaving wide gaps between the rich and the poor, between black and white, and between immigrant and native.

Like the Market Revolution of the first half of the century (which focused primarily on improvements in communications and transportation to broaden the reach of American agricultural goods), the Industrial Revolution of the second half transformed the nation’s economy, its social life, and its politics. During the nineteenth century, the nation’s main energy sources shifted from human and animal power to mechanical power. Builders transitioned from using materials one might find on the ground, such as stones and logs, to using manufactured materials, such as lumber, bricks, and steel. Smaller craft shops lost business to large specialized factories. Industrial cities grew dramatically as well, as mechanized public transportation allowed wealthier people to move away from noisy city centers. And railroads made travel increasingly easy—even, by 1869, allowing people and goods to cross the continent speedily and safely. During the late nineteenth century, the world that had consisted of small farms, artisans’ workshops, and small- or medium-sized factories at the beginning of the century transformed into a full-scale industrial society of large factories, polyglot urban hubs, and a wide range of people working and managing the newly developed industries.

Unsurprisingly, the politics of the era were poorly equipped to handle all these challenges. In a society uncertain about the moral role of politics (especially after the bloody Civil War) and eager not to miss out on the economic possibilities of the new age, politics during the last third of the nineteenth century were characterized by high voter participation, extreme partisanship, and massive corruption.

By the early 1900s, three waves of reformers had emerged to demand that the government intervene to curtail the most oppressive practices of big business: (1) the labor movement, (2) the Populists, and (3) the Progressives. The first of these reformers—the labor movement—was the most radical. It emerged concurrently with the Industrial Age and focused on the working classes. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, workers sought to establish a politics of class by means of an increasingly vocal movement of laborers and

What do **you** think?

No invention had more lasting impact than the incandescent light bulb.

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly Agree

6

7

◀◀ Schoolchildren play on the hills above the Carnegie steel mills, symbols of the effects of the Industrial Revolution on Americans big and small, rich and poor, northern, southern, and western.

Industrial Revolution

Transformation in the way goods were made and sold, as American businessmen between 1865 and 1915 used continuing technological breakthroughs and creative financing to bring greater efficiency to their businesses

their families. During its first years, this labor movement was raucous and provocative, questioning America's commitment to capitalism and democracy. Socialists flourished in this environment, as did communists and anarchists. Each challenge to American democratic capi-

talism stirred fear among the American upper and middle classes, but that, of course, was the point.

This chapter describes and explains the advent of the Industrial Revolution, focusing on the key industries and business developments, as well as the inability or unwillingness of politicians to manage these challenges. It concludes with an examination of the first grassroots demands for reform in the shape of the American labor movement.

17-1 The Industrial Revolution

The process of industrialization began well before the Civil War, and indeed, industrialization, along with improved communications and transportation, sparked the Market Revolution during the first half of the nineteenth century. But after the Civil War, American material output increased dramatically, and big businesses extended their reach deeper into American life. Together, these events revolutionized the way Americans lived, no matter which region they called home.

The **Industrial Revolution** can be defined as a transformation in the way goods were made and sold, as American businessmen between 1865 and 1915 used continuing technological breakthroughs and creative financing to bring greater efficiency to their businesses, which dramatically expanded their markets and their ability to produce goods. The effects of this transformation were felt outside the business world, resulting in two key social transitions: (1) more and more Americans left farming to work in factories or retail, which spurred the rapid growth of cities; and (2) the American economy became dominated less by family businesses and more and more by large-scale corporate firms. Thus, many historians cite the late nineteenth century as the birth of a modern industrialized America. One historian has pinpointed these years as the time when Americans physically and intellectually left behind the small, localized "island communities" that dotted the United States before the Civil War and confronted the large, polyglot nature of the American nation.

Why an Industrial Revolution in America? The Industrial Revolution had been launched in England in the 1750s, made its way over to the European continent by the early 1800s, and crossed the Atlantic well before the 1840s. But three reasons figure in its dramatic growth from 1865 to 1915 (see "The reasons why ..." on American industrialization on page 293).

17-1a The Basic Industries

The central industries of the Industrial Revolution were railroads, steel, and petroleum. Each had leaders who took control of their industry's development. These "captains of industry" were also sometimes called "robber barons," depending on the perspective of the observer. Through these industries, Americans created a corporate society.

Railroads

The expansion of the railroads was perhaps the one predictable development of the post-Civil War years. With the support of the federal government, between 1860 and 1915 total railroad development leapt from approximately 30,000 miles of track to more than 250,000 miles (see Map 17.1 on page 294). By the eve of World War I in 1914, the national railroad network was basically complete, such that some historians say that all tracks built after 1890 were simply unnecessary. Railroads spanned the nation, making the movement of goods and products easy, cheap, and reliable.

Several ruthless and ingenious businessmen helped make all the growth possible. Leland Stanford, for example, was one of the "Big Four" captains of the railroad industry. With his partners, Collis

>> Laying track, tying together America, and "opening" the west.



Track-layers gang-building the Union Pacific Railroad through American wilderness, 1860s, (b/w photo), American Photographer, (19th century)/Private Collection, Peter Newark American Pictures/The Bridgeman Art Library

{ The reasons why . . . }

There were at least three reasons why American industrialization expanded when it did:

The Civil War. Production needs during the Civil War stimulated industrial development, particularly in the North. For example, the Union Army's high demand for food fueled the expansion of western farms. Clothing and shoe manufacturers were encouraged to produce more goods faster. And the government offered huge wartime contracts for uniforms, shoes, weapons, food, and other commodities, sparking breakthroughs in their manufacture.

Government support. Besides purchasing goods for its troops, Congress took advantage of the absence of southerners in the House and the Senate to pass a series of national internal improvement projects. The most majestic of these was the first transcontinental railroad. In July 1862, Congress offered enormous financial incentives to the Union Pacific Railroad and the Central Pacific Railroad companies to complete the expansive task. This transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869, and, over the next twenty years, legendary business moguls erected other transcontinental lines, often with financial incentives from the federal government. The federal government also supported scientific training and research, developed the first national currency and tax system, and made possible the construction of the first land grant universities (such as Michigan State University and Rutgers)—all evidence of the government's willingness to midwife the Industrial Revolution. In the end, government support of the building infrastructure allowed goods and information to travel more quickly and efficiently to wider markets.

Technological breakthroughs. An abundance of scientific developments also contributed to the expansion of big business, and again, the Civil War was the transitional moment. For example, the need to move meat from one place to another in order to feed Union soldiers prompted the



Vintage Images/Getty Images

>> Factory work was often cramped.

creation of refrigerated railroad cars. By 1878, inventors had perfected the cars, which permitted long-distance transfer of numerous perishable goods. This, of course, allowed for the development of new towns in the West—so long as they were close to the railroad lines.



Panoramic Images/Getty Images

Huntington, Charles Crocker, and Mark Hopkins, Stanford developed the railroad system in California and made the entire West easily accessible. All four men were New Yorkers who had headed to California during the gold rush. All four were Republicans and supporters of Lincoln during the war. Knowing the war would promote the expansion of railroads, the four invested money and energy in creating a transcontinental network of tracks. Once these railroads were completed, the Big Four controlled much of the access to the West—control that brought great wealth and power.

Steel

The steel industry made the massive expansion of railroads possible. As early as the Middle Ages,

In 1901 Carnegie sold his company for more than \$400 million—the equivalent of \$9.8 billion today.

steel had been used to make weapons. But because the process of making steel—by burning impurities out of iron ore—was laborious and expensive, artisans produced only small quantities. In the mid-1850s, English inventor Sir Henry Bessemer invented a way to convert large quantities of iron ore into steel by using extremely hot air. Mass production of steel did not take off, however, until Andrew Carnegie

became interested in the industry. On a trip to England in 1872, Carnegie saw the Bessemer process at work in a steel plant, and, amazed at its efficiency, he decided to open a steel plant in the United States. Rather than artisans, he could use cheap, unskilled laborers, who were willing to learn to operate the hot, dangerous machines for low wages. By 1900, he had built the largest steel company in the world



Map 17.1. Railroad Expansion, 1870–1920

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vertical integration

The system by which a business controls all aspects of its industry, from raw materials to finished product, and is able to avoid working or sharing profits with any other companies

and produced more than 25 percent of the steel used in the United States. Carnegie's steel was used in many national landmarks, including the Brooklyn Bridge.

Carnegie's greatest contribution in the world of business was his use of **vertical integration**, which meant placing all aspects of steel production under his control, from the moment iron ore was extracted from mines to the time finished steel was shipped to customers. Carnegie realized that, by integrating all the

processes of making and distributing steel, he could avoid working with other companies and thus increase his profits. His method worked: in 1901



Find out more about the steel business.

Carnegie sold his company, U.S. Steel, for more than \$400 million—the equivalent of \$9.8 billion today.

Petroleum

In the mid-nineteenth century, petroleum was increasingly used both as a machine lubricant and as a source of illumination. The breakthrough here came in 1855, when Professor Benjamin Silliman of Yale University discovered that kerosene, a formerly "useless" byproduct of crude oil (unrefined petroleum), was a powerful illuminant. Entrepreneurs then rushed to find greater supplies of crude oil. The Pennsylvania Rock Oil Company hired Edwin Drake, a speculator and promoter, to drill for oil in northwestern Pennsylvania. After two years of searching, on August 28, 1859, Drake successfully drilled for oil in Titusville, Pennsylvania. His find ushered in an American oil boom.

The next challenge was to figure out the best means of extracting crude oil, transporting it to refineries, packaging it, conveying it to cities and towns across the nation, and marketing the finished products. John D. Rockefeller essentially filled all of these niches. He consolidated refining operations in Cleveland, and then, by paying close attention to cost-cutting details, he ruthlessly drove down the costs of producing usable commodities. Much of Rockefeller's success can be attributed to his pioneering efforts at **horizontal integration**. In essence, he took over other oil companies or worked in combination with them to control competition, lower the cost of petroleum, and, of course, maximize profits. He practiced vertical integration as well, much like Andrew Carnegie in the steel industry. But he focused more intently on limiting competition



Read Henry Demarest Lloyd's "The Lords of Industry."

with other businesses in the same industry. His legal advisors created a unique entity called "the trust," which acted as a board of directors for all the oil refiners. Rockefeller intended to provide cheap petroleum and to make himself wealthy. He succeeded at both.

17-1b Technology

In addition to the dynamic developments of business leaders, numerous technological, financial, and legal innovations powered the Industrial Revolution. Indeed, this was the era of many of America's most

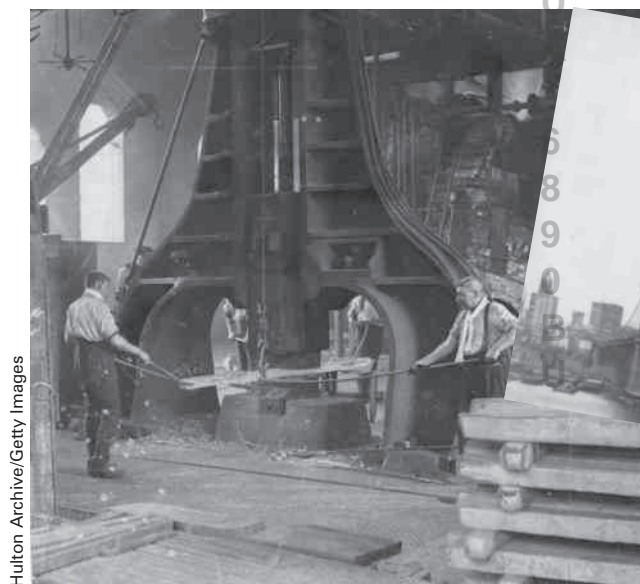
far-reaching inventions and innovations.

Perhaps no invention had more lasting impact than the incandescent light bulb, created by Thomas Edison in 1879. After years of experimentation, Edison harnessed the power of electricity and transmitted bright light for extended periods of time. The subsequent development of huge electrical power stations made this new form of energy cheap enough to allow middle-class homeowners to purchase it and businesses to operate after dark. Development of the first electric grids spread electricity throughout cities. In addition to light bulbs, Edison also perfected the motion picture camera, the phonograph, the microphone, and more. He set up the first industrial research laboratory in the world, developed solely to invent new things. It worked. In the United States alone, Edison held 1,093 patents. He possessed more abroad.

Separately, Alexander Graham Bell's invention in 1876 of the telephone, which also used electrical power, vastly sped up the flow of communications over long distances and enabled businesses to exchange information more efficiently. In architecture, the Bessemer process of steel production allowed architects to design the first skyscrapers, reaching hundreds of feet into the air. And the mechanized elevator, invented by Elisha Otis in 1853, made all these skyscrapers useable. Before the elevator, few people would rent rooms above the sixth

horizontal integration

The system by which a business takes over its competitors in order to limit competition, lower costs, and maximize profits



Hulton Archive/Getty Images

>> Bessemer converter in use at a Pittsburgh steel plant.



Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-79048

>> The Brooklyn Bridge. "Hard! I guess it's hard. I lost forty pounds the first three months I came into this business. It sweats the life out of a man."—Steelworker at a Carnegie plant, circa 1893

floor. At the same time, the typewriter was invented in the 1860s and marketed by Eliphalet Remington and Sons beginning in 1873. The typewriter created a number of office jobs that opened up to women during these years. In the otherwise patriarchal business world of the nineteenth century, it helped make women earners in an industrializing economy.

Invention bred still more invention. In the seven decades before 1860, the U.S. Patent Office issued 36,000 patent licenses. During the three decades after 1860, that number of patents grew to 144,000.

17-1c Innovative Financing, Law, and Business Practices

Despite all these incredible inventions, perhaps no innovation was more transformative than one that emerged from a new breed of financiers. Such giants as Jay Gould and J. Pierpont Morgan specialized in forming groups of rich men (called syndicates) in order to provide huge amounts of capital to fund promising companies and start up new industries. Morgan and a handful of associates gathered investors from around the globe to underwrite and fund various investment opportunities. The advent of pooled funds allowed Morgan to broker the formation of one of the world's first billion-dollar corporations, the Northern Securities Company. In addition to everything else, the latter half of the nineteenth century was also the era of the giant corporation.

Beginning in the mid-1800s, federal and state governments made changes in corporate law that supported these financial schemes and encouraged growth. They provided corporations with the power to acquire and merge with other businesses, thus allowing corporations to accumulate the capital required to finance big businesses. They also provided a significant layer of protection between families' fortunes and the courts. Rather than relying on any single individual's fortune to raise money, corporate officers were allowed to sell their stock on the open market. In that way, the investors who bought shares of the stock would become "part owners" of the company. In the event that a corporation was sued successfully, investors holding stock limited their liability to just the number of shares they owned. During the Industrial Revolution, the number of corporations increased dramatically, creating a sizeable number of organizations with large amounts of money that were able and willing to buy up successful smaller companies and develop a national (and even international) market.



Hulton Archive/Getty Images

>> In the nineteenth century, petroleum was used as both a machine lubricant and as a powerful illuminant.

During this era, entrepreneurs also experimented with innovative business practices that allowed them to expand rapidly. For one, they streamlined operations. As businesses became larger, managers could not personally supervise all facets of their operations. So entrepreneurs established a hierarchy of managers and supervisors to coordinate schedules, keep track of shipments, and analyze the costs of each facet of the business. This development had two results: (1) it allowed corporations to control shops across a broad stretch of the nation, often centralizing control in one of the growing cities of the Midwest, such as Chicago; and (2) it created a class of managers that would figure prominently in the rapidly expanding middle class.



The Granger Collection, New York/The Granger Collection

>> After thousands of hours in the laboratory, Edison discovered that a carbon filament in an oxygen-free bulb lasted more than forty hours.

tisements began to replace the single-column notices of earlier years. Celebrities were featured wearing watches or hats. The number of advertising agencies expanded rapidly. Billboards and placards sprouted up everywhere.

17-2b National Brands

Along similar lines, the first advertising agencies began rudimentary marketing surveys to identify potential consumers' preferences and then applied the

results to the marketing of individual products. For example, buying biscuits in the late nineteenth century was often problematic because they were stored in open containers; usually they became stale before

17-2 The National Market: Creating Consumer Demand

By the late nineteenth century, with railroads spanning the nation and the process of replaceable parts making more and more goods available to a consuming public, the entire American nation became a marketplace. As wise businessmen capitalized on this development, they helped create the modern consumer culture. They also spread the growing pains of industrialization far beyond its central hubs.

17-2a Advertising

One significant development in the formation of a modern consumer culture was a revolution in advertising. Before the Industrial Revolution, businessmen notified people about the availability of goods simply by printing announcements in local newspapers or in leaflets handed out to customers. Because their companies served mostly a local market, such advertising techniques were effective. As the consumer economy evolved after the Civil War, however, businesses began to market goods more aggressively and across numerous regions. In newspapers, multiple-column, even full-page adver-



Bettmann/CORBIS

>> Nabisco's first ads featured a little boy in a rain slicker carrying a box of the specially packaged biscuits unharmed through the rain.

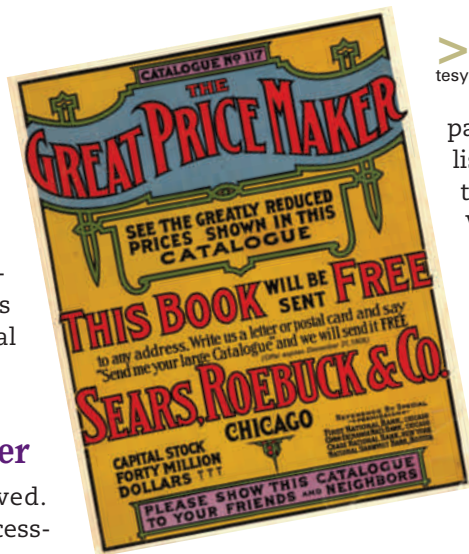
they were bought. The National Biscuit Company (Nabisco) test-marketed a rather ordinary biscuit that had one difference from typical biscuits—a new, sealed package. Soon, consumers across the country demanded the product. The combination of technological and transportation innovations allowed the creation of truly national brands.

17-2c Stores and Mail Order

Chain stores quickly followed. Essentially, chains began when successful storeowners decided to reach more customers by opening branches in separate locations. Large chain stores had the advantage of being able to negotiate lower wholesale prices because they could purchase items in bulk; often they passed on a portion of their savings to consumers in the form of lower prices. One of the largest grocery chains was the Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company, known as A&P. Frank W. Woolworth devised another type of chain based on the idea of selling lots of inexpensive goods at cheap, fixed prices. His Woolworth outlets were originally called “five and tens,” meaning that almost all of the goods were priced at either a nickel or a dime. The growth of his stores was phenomenal. In 1859, Woolworth founded his first store; by 1915 he and his partners controlled around six hundred outlets.

The emergence of advertising and national chain stores helped create a consumer culture in the nation's cities. The wide availability of consumer goods prompted some entrepreneurs to open department stores, which quickly became the greatest symbol of the emerging desire for consumption. In ornate window displays, such as New York's Macy's (founded 1858) and Philadelphia's Wanamaker's (1877), a large selection of items dazzled passersby. The stores also provided employment to thousands of urban Americans, especially women.

Chain retail stores appealed to city and town dwellers, but to reach rural customers, farsighted entrepreneurs used catalogues. In 1872, Aaron Montgomery Ward set up a mail order business. Beginning with a single-



>> **Sears Roebuck catalogue.** Image courtesy of The Advertising Archives

page list of items, he expanded his lists until his catalogue was heavier than many magazines. Richard W. Sears and Alvah C. Roebuck were comparative latecomers to the mail order business, but they offered Ward stiff competition. By the late 1890s, the Sears catalogue numbered more than five hundred pages. Next to the family Bible, it was one of the few “books” considered indispensable by farm families.

17-2d Harmful Business Practices

All this innovation and marketing came with significant costs; most significantly they signaled the advent of corporate life in America, a time when businessmen engaged in several harmful business practices to ensure they controlled the market. For most of them, whatever it took to drive out competitors, they did. Thus, while several of the innovations of men like Stanford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller benefited the American population, often these men took things too far.



Read a contemporary piece chronicling Rockefeller's business tactics.

Monopolization

As brilliant an entrepreneur as he was, Rockefeller was involved in many of the harmful practices. In the late 1800s, for instance, Rockefeller essentially controlled the drilling, refining, and transporting of most of the nation's petroleum. But that was not enough. He was determined to control the product's wholesale distribution and retail marketing as well. So he established regional outlets that ruthlessly undersold well-established companies for as long as it took to drive them out of business. Rich as he was, Rockefeller could absorb short-term losses

much longer than his competitors. Once he had driven his rivals out of business, he was free to charge whatever he wished for his product (although he had to keep prices relatively low to keep international competition at bay). In 1879, his Standard

“Mr. Rockefeller awakened a general bitterness.”

—Ida Tarbell, *The History of the Standard Oil Company*, 1904

Oil Company controlled 90 percent of all petroleum in the country.

Rockefeller also had his way with railroads. His petroleum shipments comprised the majority of the business of several rail lines. By threatening to take his business to other competitors, he forced several railroad officials to offer him rebates on every barrel he shipped. In this way, Rockefeller paid lower railroad rates than his competitors. Rockefeller also interfered with railroad lines that carried his competitors' products. He convinced officials that they were hurting his business whenever they shipped a competitor's products and that they should pay him a refund for each such barrel they shipped. Such business practices tested the limits of how much freedom politicians would allow businessmen to have.

Price Gouging

Railroads also engaged in price gouging. For example, in urban areas where demand was high, usually several railroads operated their lines. These railroads often had to provide competitive rates, and during the occasional price wars between their competitors, railroads sometimes cut prices below their own costs. To make up for these losses, railroads gouged customers in other places—usually small towns that were served by just one line. Railroad officials also increased rates for local service, provoking differences between “long haul” and “short haul” charges. For instance, farmers in the eastern Dakotas complained that it cost more to ship a bushel of wheat 400 miles to Minneapolis than it cost to send that same product to Europe, more than ten times as far. Once again, these practices would eventually motivate the government to act—but not for many decades.

Environmental Damage

A third harmful business practice concerns what the Industrial Revolution did to the environment. Drilling for petroleum damaged the soil. The development of mechanized hydraulic mining in the Industrial Age caused much more damage to the land than any of the mining done by miners in previous centuries. Burning coal for all those railroads and machines gave off damaging gases. And railroad tracks cut through lands that were largely untouched by sustained human development. Most Americans did not express deep concerns for these types of problems, but a few did. The top preservationist of the period was John Muir, the founder of the American environmental organization the Sierra Club and an influential advocate of preserving the mountain lands between California and Montana.



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>> In 1892, John Muir began the Sierra Club in an effort to protest the environmental damage of the Industrial Age.

In 1872, the federal government created the first national park, Yellowstone National Park, which comprises parts of Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho. Other parks proliferated shortly thereafter, but the growth of federally preserved lands hardly outpaced the expansion of industry into previously lightly touched terrain.

17-2e Working Conditions

The land was not the only thing transformed by the rise of big business. Workers also faced new challenges. Suddenly at the mercy of powerful machines that required them to perform the same simple task again and again, they worked ten to twelve hours a day, six days a week. They repeated the same boring task, hour after hour, until the whistle finally blew at the end of the shift. Between 1880 and 1900 an average of 35,000 workers died each year on the assembly line. The work was grueling.

Women and children were not spared. As mechanization continued to decrease the need for skilled labor, and as employers kept searching for workers who would accept low pay, women and children entered factories in increasing numbers. By the turn of the century, 20 percent of the industrial work force was female. The textile industry in particular relied almost completely upon women and children. Many states passed child labor laws by the end of the 1800s, but employers routinely ignored these laws, and the number of child factory workers remained high.

Many employers also callously ignored the basic needs of their workers, most notoriously illustrated by the



View an online exhibit on the Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire.

Triangle Shirtwaist Company

New York City garment factory; scene of a horrific fire in 1911

sweatshop

Crowded factory in an urban setting, often one where workers are exploited

1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, in the New York City garment district, near Washington Square Park. Foremen at the Triangle Shirtwaist Company had bolted the fire escape door shut to prevent female workers from taking breaks. When a fire broke out in the front of their **sweatshop**—

located several stories above the street—hundreds of employees were trapped in the back of the shop. They faced two choices: sure death from the fire or probable death by leaping from the window to the pavement below. Bystanders had lifelong nightmares from the sight of falling bodies thudding to the ground. The final death toll was 146 workers, most of them poor women.

strength of business leaders and corporations and the widening economic disparities in the cities—demanded a new kind of politics. Instead, the politics of the late nineteenth century reflected the Industrial Revolution's devotion to business, not to the needs of the urban poor or the working classes. Indeed, politically, the devotion to the needs of business had two vital consequences: (1) it permitted a dramatic decline in attention to the treatment of African Americans, which had dominated the politics of the Reconstruction era; and (2) it sullied the image of politicians, who sometimes were guilty of blatant corruption as they prioritized the interests of business over those of other groups in the population. Federal, state, and local politicians gave massive land grants to their friends, offered government contracts only to their supporters, and accepted bribes for doing all sorts of “public works.”

17-3 The Politics of the Industrial Age

The dramatic changes that came about as a result of industrialization—including the growing

17-3a Justifications of the Industrial Order

Three intellectual justifications emerged to defend the actions of the leaders of the Industrial Revolution. Often they overlapped. Any reformer would have to



Hulton Archive/Getty Images

>> Victims of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire lay exposed, open invitations to debate the costs of the Industrial Age.

overcome, or at least acknowledge, each of them before attempting to reform American politics.

Mainline Protestant Morality

First, many of the leading industrialists of the late nineteenth century were sons of ministers, and they relied on a hard-line defense of Protestant individualism, arguing that economic problems stemmed from a particular individual's actions (or inactions) and that these problems were therefore not social in nature. There was a good bit of nativism in this argument too, especially considering that the vast majority of immigrants were Catholics and Jews from southern and eastern Europe (immigration will be discussed more fully in the next chapter). Furthermore, the industrialists firmly believed that their actions were improving the lot of humankind, which, despite some obvious contradictions, they were in fact doing. It was easy to argue that power grids, electric light, better transportation, and improved communications had increased the convenience and comfort of modern living.

Social Darwinism

The second justification was **Social Darwinism**. Railroad tycoons like Charles Francis Adams, Jr., believed that they were justified in their overbearing behavior because they had shown themselves to be the most successful competitors in an open market. Of course, because they had benefited from the federal government's actions to promote industrial growth through tariffs, subsidies, and cheap land sales, the successful capitalists' wealth was not as independently earned as they believed.

English philosopher Herbert Spencer promoted this Darwinistic perspective. After reading Charles Darwin's theories on biological evolution, Spencer coined the phrase "survival of the fittest" and applied Darwin's concepts to the contemporary economic environment. Although very few Americans took Darwin's theory as far as Spencer

did, businessmen occasionally borrowed those ideas that fit their needs.

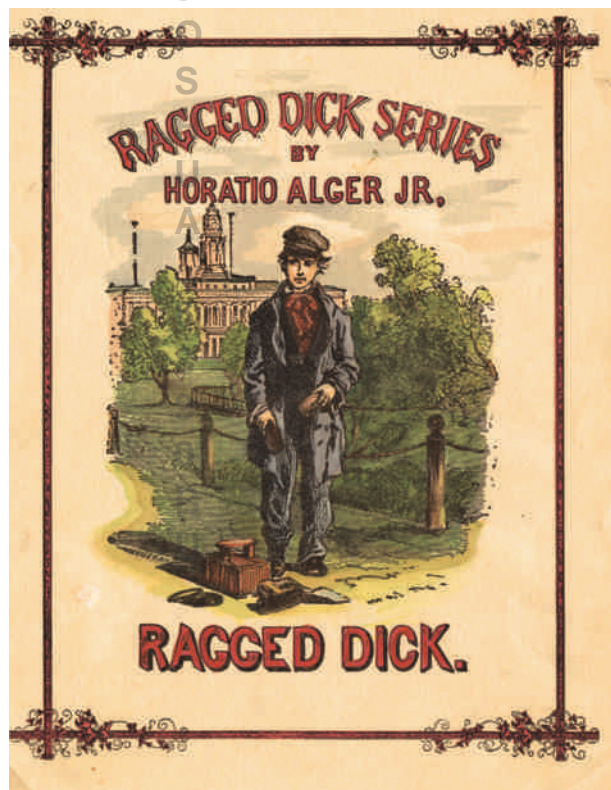
Social Darwinism also had a racist tinge, providing intellectual justification for laws and social practices that kept African Americans, Indians, certain categories of immigrants, and women second-class citizens who were often denied the vote and a basic right to property ownership. This notion of a racial or cultural hierarchy of peoples was widely espoused in late-nineteenth-century America; even the African American intellectual W. E. B. Du Bois relied on it when he argued that the vast majority of African Americans were ill equipped to be full citizens and instead should rely on a "talented tenth" to lead the way.

The Myth of Success

Successful businessmen also perpetuated the belief that if you worked hard enough, you could become wealthy. This notion was popularized by many writers, none more ardently than Horatio Alger. An admired and prolific writer (he produced 135 pieces of fiction), Alger wrote virtually all of his stories with the same plot: a good person works hard and, with a little luck, inevitably succeeds. His protagonist, a young man with working-class roots, moves from a farm or small town to the city. Once there, leading a morally upright life, wholly committed to hard work, and, above all, showing loyalty to his employer, the hero literally rises "from rags to riches." Alger's formula was sometimes called "pluck and luck," because

Social Darwinism

The theory that "survival of the fittest" extended to the business realm: tycoons believed they were justified in their overbearing behavior because they had shown themselves to be the most successful competitors in an open market



>> "He was above doing anything mean or dishonorable. He would not steal, or cheat, or impose upon younger boys, but was frank and straight-forward, manly and self-reliant."—Horatio Alger, description of the hero from *Ragged Dick*
Bettmann/CORBIS

Crédit Mobilier Company

A construction company set up by the directors of the Union Pacific in 1867 in order to build part of their transcontinental railroad—in essence, they were their own subcontractors and awarded themselves generous contracts

Tweed Ring

Friends and cronies of New York's corrupt "Boss" William M. Tweed

Tammany Hall

A political organization known as a "machine," whose members regarded politics as an opportunity to get rich while providing favors to the urban underclass

"Where is the rich man who is oppressing anybody? If there was one, the newspapers would ring with it."

—William Graham Sumner, in defense of Social Darwinism

the hero always benefits from some fortuitous event (such as rescuing the boss's beautiful daughter from the path of a runaway fire truck).

17-3b Political Corruption

Supported by these intellectual justifications, many businessmen brought their

pro-business agenda to politicians. Business interests quickly became the strongest lobby in the nation, and their requests usually came with reimbursements. In order to obtain land grants, protective tariffs, tax relief, and other "favors," many businessmen exchanged cash or stock options with the era's politicians. The exchange of these favors occurred on both national and local levels. These "exchanges" often erupted in public scandal.

The Crédit Mobilier Scandal

The most damaging of these scandals was the Crédit Mobilier Scandal. In order to ensure an abundance of subsidies and land grants for their railroad, representatives from the Union Pacific offered federal lawmakers stock in the Crédit Mobilier Company. The problem was that this construction company had been set up by the directors of the Union Pacific in 1867 in order to build part of

>> "Who Stole the People's Money?" 'Twas him." One of cartoonist Thomas Nast's famous cartoons on the corruption of the Tweed Ring. Boss Tweed himself is pictured, far left foreground, with the full beard.

interference from the government, officials at Crédit Mobilier awarded congressmen stock in the company. The corruption was so blatant that company proxies handed out shares on the floor of the House of Representatives. Recipients included the Speaker of the House, the minority leader, and Schuyler Colfax, vice president of the United States from 1868 to 1872. When the scandal became public, it led to a congressional investigation and sullied the image of many of the era's leading politicians.

The Tweed Ring

Urban politics were equally corrupt, and none more so than New York's under "Boss" William M. Tweed. His **Tweed Ring** of friends controlled **Tammany Hall**, a Democratic political organization known as a "machine" whose members regarded politics as an opportunity to get rich while providing favors to the urban underclass. Through his connections at Tammany, "Boss" Tweed was appointed to supervise



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the dramatic rebuilding of New York City's infrastructure during the formative years of the Industrial Revolution. Tweed profited from this rebuilding because he or his associates owned or had access to many of the subcontractors who did the labor. He also typically overcharged contractors and took tidy sums off the top for himself. Tweed was eventually exposed as a fraud in 1871 and was subsequently jailed and fined. After a dramatic escape, he was returned to jail, where he died in 1878. But Tammany Hall continued to exert influence on local politics until the early 1900s.



Learn more about Tammany Hall and "Boss" Tweed.

The Appeal of Tammany

Despite its rampant corruption, Tammany appealed to recent Irish, Italian, and Jewish immigrants, who would provide Tammany politicians with their votes in exchange for preference in getting city jobs, free drinks on Election Day, and assorted social services. One way local "bosses" established loyalty was to watch over neighborhoods and take care of short-term emergencies. George Washington Plunkitt, for example, a colorful Tammany boss who came to power a generation after the fall of Tweed, told journalist William Riordan that if a family was made homeless by a fire, he went straight to the scene, found the family a temporary place to live, gave them money for immediate necessities, and ensured that they got back on their feet. What better way was there, he asked, to ensure voters' gratitude and loyalty? And what did it matter if, once empowered by the votes of those he "served," he took a little off the top?

Historians recognize that the machine system had its advantages, both in

"There's an honest graft, and I'm an example of how it works. I might sum up the whole thing by sayin': 'I seen my opportunities and I took 'em.'"

—George Washington Plunkitt, from Plunkitt of Tammany Hall, 1905

easing the transition to America for European newcomers and in dealing with short-term crises. But the system's reliance on above-the-law patronage also bred inefficiency, corruption, and cynicism, as unqualified people filled important government positions and as bribes raised prices for consumers.

17-3c Political Divisions

Despite the corruption, or perhaps because of it, politics were vibrant at the national level, political parties dominated, and few major political programs were implemented (the battles were too fierce). Judging from presidential elections, the nation was almost evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans. But if the nation was evenly divided, the states were not, with Republicans controlling most of the northern states and Democrats controlling the South. Democrats also did well with urban immigrants. Rarely did the party of the president also control Congress, and between 1876 and 1896, a series of one-term presidents occupied the White House. More than 80 percent of eligible voters turned out for elections, mostly because of the dynamism of the parties and their numerous supporting



Miramax/courtesy Everett Collection

>> Martin Scorsese's 2002 film *Gangs of New York* was set in the city presided over by Boss Tweed.

mugwumps

The machine's mischievous nickname for Republicans who supported Democrat Grover Cleveland in the 1884 election only because Republican candidate James Blaine was considered a product of machine politics

machines. Nevertheless, for the most part the nation's leaders were incapable of managing, or unwilling to manage, the many problems associated with the Industrial Revolution.

Moreover, after the trauma of the Civil War, the American people often

shied away from such deeply emotional issues as social welfare or concern for minorities. In a brutal reminder of the way politics could inspire passion, in 1881, President James A. Garfield was assassinated by a fellow Republican who disagreed with the president over the issue of civil service reform. Spurred to act by the assassination, Congress passed the Pendleton Act in 1883, which for the first time created a class of federal jobs that was not entirely controlled by political patronage. (Garfield's assassin had been fired from his post, not for incompetence, but based on the faction of the Republican Party he had supported during the election of 1880.) The act revealed divisions within the Republican Party, which was split between idealist reformers on the one hand and those supportive of machine politics and the spoils system on the other. Machine politicians mischievously labeled their Republican opponents **mugwumps**, meaning Republicans who supported Democratic candidate Grover Cleveland in the 1884 election only because the Republican candidate, James Blaine, was viewed as a product of machine politics.

17-4 The Rise of Labor

For the first three decades after the Civil War, then, businessmen generally had their way in the political arena. They could count on friendly legislators to provide subsidies for promising new industries, and more mature industries might receive tariff protection against foreign competition. When workers went on strike, the government often intervened on the side of management by ordering troops to protect strikebreakers. There were few safety regulations mandated by government, and workers' rights were limited. Job security was nonexistent. Workers who became sick or injured risked being fired, and new inventions in machinery continually made certain jobs obsolete. And pay was minimal. Although the average wage for industrial work rose between 1870 and 1900, that wage in 1900 was still only 20 cents an hour, or less than five dollars today, hardly enough to pay for adequate food, clothing, and shel-

ter. Nevertheless, workers still went on strike and fought for better working conditions, and one of the most important developments of these years was the rise of organized labor.

17-4a The Railroad Strike of 1877

Tensions caused by these conditions inevitably reached the boiling point, and the first labor conflict to come to national attention occurred in 1877, when railroad workers in West Virginia went on strike and froze most of the country's train traffic. The railroad industry had expanded enormously following the Civil War, and wage cuts during the Panic of 1873 created widespread resentment among workers. When the B&O Railroad announced a second wage cut in the calendar year, workers in Martinsville, West Virginia, went on strike. Almost immediately, the strike extended to Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Illinois. The easy transport brought by railroads moved more than goods; it helped circulate ideas around too.

Word of the strike reached President Rutherford B. Hayes while he was dining in a train car with the president of the B&O Railroad, who argued that the strikers posed a serious threat to public safety. Hayes agreed and authorized the use of the National Guard to put an end to the strikes. Violence soon erupted in towns and cities across the country, and battles broke out in Baltimore, Chicago, San Francisco, and Pittsburgh. In St. Louis, striking railroad workers were joined by all other industrial workers in the city, shutting down all manufacturing establishments for four days. The city's industry was at a standstill.

Eventually, the National Guard defeated the strikers, railroad workers took pay cuts, and strike leaders were jailed. But more than one hundred people were killed nationwide, and there was astronomical property damage. Though the strike's carnage evaporated public sympathy for the workers, the conflict brought the issue of labor activism into the national consciousness.

17-4b The Struggle over Union Expansion

As worker discontent grew, emerging unions of organized workers struggled to exert influence. But they faced an uphill battle. Business owners opposed them, had ample resources to do so, and could take advantage of ethnic, religious, and racial divisions among the workers themselves.

Opposition of Business Owners

On a practical level, employers considered unions bad for business. To stay competitive, business owners were constantly seeking to keep costs down. Labor was one such cost, and a company whose profits were dropping might cut jobs and wages. Most owners also saw their union-busting tactics as a defense of the American way of life. For them, union organizing ran counter to the American virtues of independence and self-reliance, and they often justified the pitfalls of the capitalist system by citing the theory of Social Darwinism or the fact that their industries were propelling the United States toward building the largest economy in the world.

Business Resources

Regardless of motive, American business owners had several resources at their disposal to fight against unions. They fired workers who joined unions and denied jobs to union organizers. Many workers had to sign a **yellow dog contract**, in which they promised, upon pain of termination, not to join a union. Employers also used the **blacklist**, a compilation of known union activists in a particular area. Employers shared these lists and refused to hire anyone whose name appeared on them. Also, by hiring a mixture of native-born Americans and immigrants of different backgrounds, employers tried to exploit ethnic divisions to forestall any feelings of worker unity, and they did so with considerable success.

Business owners were often just as successful in breaking strikes as they were in hindering union organization. To keep their factories and mines running, they hired **strikebreakers**, often unemployed immigrant workers from other areas who were hungry for jobs and had no stake in the union struggle.

Divisions Among Workers

In addition to stiff opposition from business owners, union organizers also faced obstacles within the labor pool itself. Workers did not share the same levels of skill and pay, or the same occupations. More highly skilled workers enjoyed higher wages and better job security; for them, unions did not have much appeal. Immigrant workers also posed a problem to unity. They were isolated from one another by language and sometimes religion, and native-born Americans, who saw immigrants as a threat to their own jobs, often resented them. Many immigrants were in America only temporarily, to earn quick money to send back home; they had families to support and did not stand to benefit from a typical strike's long months of idleness. For these reasons, many labor

unionists despised immigrants, seeing them as not committed to the cause.

Labor Solidarity

Despite the fractured nature of the American work force, union leaders fought to create a sense of common purpose among its members. Arguing that it was the working class, not owners and managers, who produced America's wealth, union organizers tried to instill a sense of pride and camaraderie among union members. Some unions, especially those in urban areas with a large immigrant population, sought to overcome the inherent barriers between ethnic groups. The **International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU)** of New York City, for example, often conducted its union meetings in five different languages simultaneously.

yellow dog contract

Contract stipulating that an employee would not join a union

blacklist

A compilation of known union activists in a particular area; employers refused to hire anyone whose name appeared on one

strikebreakers

Workers who agreed to work while union workers were on strike

International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU)

Major New York City union that often conducted its union meetings in five different languages simultaneously

Contract Labor Law

Passed in 1885, this prohibited employers from forcing immigrants to work to pay off the costs of their passage to America

Roles of Government and the Middle Class

To achieve their goals, union leaders needed more than solidarity among workers; they also needed support from government leaders and the politically influential middle class. Such support was hard to find. In the last two decades of the 1800s, some middle-class reformers did address labor issues, and the government did take some actions to improve worker conditions. For instance, many middle-class Americans participated in charitable reform efforts that sought to improve workers' living conditions. As a result of these efforts, Congress in 1868 mandated an eight-hour workday for federal construction projects, and in 1885 it passed the **Contract Labor Law**, which prohibited employers from forcing immigrants to work to pay off the costs of their passage to America. But these laws were exceptions. For the most part, the middle class and the government remained supportive of industry leaders.

17-4c The Knights of Labor

At the national level, the Knights of Labor was America's first effective union, one that sought to

unite all of America's "toilers" into a single organization that, through the power of its vast membership, could deliver workers from their plight. The Knights of Labor accepted farm hands and factory workers; it welcomed women, African Americans, and immigrants. (The union excluded lawyers, bankers, doctors, and liquor dealers, all of whom, from the union's perspective, were not toilers but white-collar workers.)

Founded in 1869 by a Philadelphia tailor named Uriah Stephens, the Knights of Labor rose to prominence in 1879, when Terence Powderly assumed leadership. Powderly opened the union's doors to almost all workers, and it became, for a brief time, the largest union in the country. In 1884 and 1885, the Knights of Labor entered the national spotlight when its members staged successful strikes against railroad companies in the Southwest. After the railroad strikes, membership in the Knights of Labor exploded; the union had approximately 100,000 members in 1884, and by 1886 its membership rolls had swelled to more than 750,000 workers.



Read the original Knights of Labor platform.

The Fall of the Knights

As quickly as it had grown, the influence of the Knights of Labor faded away. Ultimately, the Knights simply could not coordinate the activities of its members, who came from a variety of regions, industries, and ethnic backgrounds. Also, although the union owed much of its growth to the success of strikes, Powderly resisted using strikes because he believed, correctly, that they would jeopardize the union's public standing.

>> Woodcut of dynamite exploding among police ranks during the Haymarket Square riot, Chicago, 1886.



>> The Knights of Labor, led by Terence Powderly (center), sought to unite all the nation's "toilers," as indicated by the variety of laborers represented in each of the four corners of the image. The Granger Collection, New York/The Granger Collection

The Haymarket Riot

Powderly's distrust of strikes proved to be well founded. Regardless of other problems plaguing the Knights of Labor, in the end it was a single event that caused the demise of the union. In spring 1886, workers demanding an eight-hour workday went on strike against the McCormick Harvester Company of Chicago. On May 3, four picketers were killed during a clash with the police. The next day a rally was held in Chicago's Haymarket

Square to protest the police's actions. When police tried to break up this second gathering, someone threw dynamite at them. The explosion killed seven policemen and wounded dozens of others. Those police who were not injured then fired their guns into the crowd; four more people were killed, and more than a hundred others were trampled and shot at as they fled. The "Haymarket Affair," as it was called in the press, was believed to be the work of



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anarchists (who believed governments were unnecessary and should be abolished), and the incident created a state of hysteria among middle-class citizens, who mistakenly feared that all laborites were anarchists. Eventually, eight reputed anarchists were arrested for conspiring to kill the policemen, and although none of the men could be tied to the actual bomb, they were convicted, and seven received the death sentence.

After the Haymarket bombing, anti-union editorials appeared in newspapers across the country, and the Knights of Labor were a frequent target. One



Read Terence Powderly's *Thirty Years of Labor*.

of the convicted men was a union member, and, although Powderly condemned the bombing, his organization became synonymous with anarchist activity. It could not survive the mischaracterization, and by the early 1890s the union was gone, and, for a short time at least, its vision of a coalition of all workers disappeared with it.

17-4d Growth and Frustrations

Despite all the setbacks, in the late 1880s and throughout the 1890s, workers continued to organize, although usually on a smaller scale than the Knights of Labor. Particularly after 1893, when the country experienced a severe economic depression, union activity intensified. But the labor movement was no match for big business. In two important struggles, the Homestead strike of 1892 (which began when the Homestead Steel Factories outside Pittsburgh cut wages and tried to break the local union) and the Pullman strike of 1894 (which began when the railroad developer George Pullman cut wages on his workers by 25 percent, after firing a full third during the previous weeks), business owners successfully called upon the full weight of the U.S. government to crush labor activism. In both cases, industrial leaders destroyed the strikes and the unions supporting them by calling on the state or national guard. It was clear who had the upper hand.

17-4e The Rise of the AFL

At the time of these highly publicized strikes, another union, the **American Federation of Labor (AFL)**, became the leading labor organization in America. Founded in 1881, the AFL gained momentum throughout the 1880s by pursuing a different strategy than the Knights of Labor—one that made it more attractive to middle-class Americans. The AFL was a loose federation of roughly one hundred **craft unions** rather than a single national union.

It was also avowedly anti-socialist and anti-anarchist. Its leader, Samuel Gompers, coordinated the craft unions' actions without making any central decisions for them, and by arbitrating disputes, he ensured they stuck by each other. However, Gompers did not believe in organizing unskilled laborers, who were easily replaced by strikebreakers.

The AFL's successes helped offset failures like the Homestead and Pullman strikes. Its most important early achievement took place in 1890, when Gompers's own cigar makers' union established the eight-hour workday. Up until then, the typical workday had been ten hours or longer. In a pattern typical for the AFL, other AFL unions also demanded the shortened workday, and before long, printers, granite cutters, and coal miners were also working fewer hours per day. By the 1890s, the AFL had replaced the Knights of Labor as the most important labor lobby in the nation.

17-4f Labor and Politics

Despite the AFL's victories, by the turn of the century government favoritism toward big business had convinced many labor leaders of the need for political solutions. But the labor movement was far from united in how to do this. The AFL's Samuel Gompers argued that entering the political arena was too costly and that labor's best strategy was to focus on winning individual concessions from owners.

Other laborites chose to enter the political arena by creating new parties. In 1901, socialists formed the **American Socialist Party**, led by Eugene V. Debs. The party fielded candidates in both national and local elections, with some success. It sought to help workers by replacing the nation's capitalist system, but through involvement in the democratic process.

More radical forms of political protest also emerged, among them those employed by the **International Workers of the World (IWW)**. Founded

American Federation of Labor (AFL)

The leading labor organization in America, founded in 1881 by Samuel Gompers and composed of craft unions rather than a single national union

craft union

Union of skilled laborers, the type of union assembled under the American Federation of Labor

American Socialist Party

Political party formed in 1901 and led by Eugene V. Debs that advocated replacing the nation's capitalist system

International Workers of the World (IWW)

A collection of militant mining unions founded in 1905 in Colorado and Idaho; sought to use labor activism to overthrow the capitalist system



Read Samuel Gompers's congressional testimony regarding AFL unions.

anarcho-syndicalism

A radical form of political protest that advocates the use of labor activism to overthrow the capitalist system



Read Eugene Debs's "How I Became a Socialist."

in 1905, the IWW grew out of a collection of militant mining unions in Colorado and Idaho, where workers scorned the AFL's exclusiveness. Under the leadership of "Big Bill" Haywood, the "Wobblies," as IWW members were called, pursued **anarcho-syndicalism**, which sought to use labor activism to overthrow the capitalist system.

The Mainstream

Most labor leaders, however, followed the AFL's example and avoided challenging the country's political establishment. Nonetheless, union leaders did begin to see that influencing government officials through the political process could be beneficial to their cause. For example, when President Theodore Roosevelt arbitrated a coal miners' strike in 1902, he forced mine owners to make concessions to the union. During the years following 1902, laborites became active participants in the nation's politics—a role they would continue to play throughout the twentieth century.

What else was happening . . .

1876–1882	The right arm and torch of the Statue of Liberty cross the Atlantic three times.
1884	N. Thompson, founder of Coney Island Luna Park, introduces the roller coaster, calling it Switchback.
1886	Statue of Liberty is dedicated. The statue, a gift from France intended to commemorate the two nations' founding ideal of liberty, will come to symbolize American freedom to millions of immigrants.
1895	Independent Labour Party founded in England.
1896	The first comic strip character—the "Yellow Kid"—appears in the <i>New York Journal</i> .
1899	Felix Hoffmann patents aspirin.

"My first step was thus taken in organized labor and a new influence fired my ambition and changed the whole current of my career. I was filled with enthusiasm and my blood fairly leaped in my veins. Day and night I worked for the brotherhood."

—Eugene V. Debs, "How I Became a Socialist," 1902

Looking Ahead . . .

Between 1865 and the early 1900s, the American economy was transformed from one run by family shops and small factories to one generally controlled by large corporations. As these corporations consolidated their business practices, they helped

improve access to food, material wealth, and new technologies. They also helped expand large urban centers, especially in the North, and pushed their innovations into the West and the South, creating what looked like the first national consumer culture to many Americans, where Nabisco crackers could be found in most American grocery stores and where the Sears catalogue could be found in all regions of the country.

Many of the inventions of the late nineteenth century did not seem particularly transformative to contemporaries. The *New York Times* reporter covering the 1882 story of Edison's first large-scale light bulb test, in New York City, passively described the test as "in every way satisfactory." He did not recognize the electric light bulb as something all that different from the gas bulbs that had illuminated the city before. But what the reporter missed was that the bulb required a grid of electrical power that could be extended for miles. He missed the fact that electric automation would lead to widespread electrification and spark hundreds of other inventions.

One group that understood the transformative nature of the Industrial Revolution was the working class. They sought to counter the growing size and power of their new corporate bosses by coming together in unions, although beyond the perceived need for solidarity there was little in common between the variety of organizations that emerged in the late nineteenth century. And no matter their particular outlook, unions were often frustrated in their endeavors to improve the lives of the working class, if not by the power of the corporations, then by the actions of the state and federal governments. They did achieve some success, including the eight-hour workday and the forty-hour workweek, but

these were hard fought and it was difficult to see if more was coming.

The inventions of the Industrial Age and the expansion of corporate America affected the entire nation, although they affected each region somewhat differently. In the North, the Industrial Revolution would help transform society by inspiring the arrival of millions of immigrants and creating an urban society, along with reactionary politics, as working-class laborers sought to make the government more responsive to their needs in the budding labor movement. The South would struggle to overcome

the disruptions of the Civil War and try to forge what it called a “New South.” And the West would utilize the developments of the Industrial Age to establish itself as a vital and increasingly well-developed part of the nation. It is to these transformations that we now must turn.



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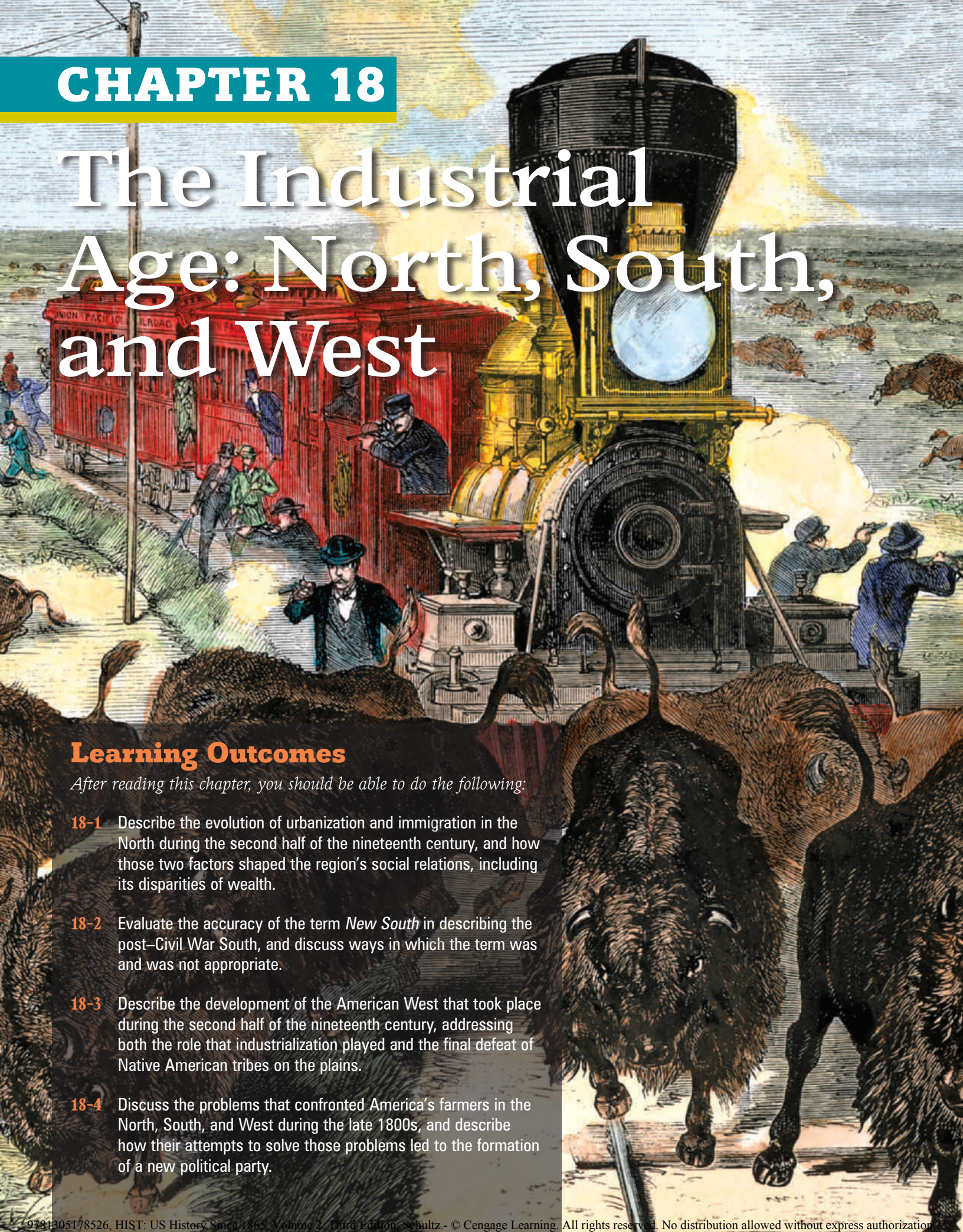
CHAPTER 18

The Industrial Age: North, South, and West

Learning Outcomes

After reading this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 18-1** Describe the evolution of urbanization and immigration in the North during the second half of the nineteenth century, and how those two factors shaped the region's social relations, including its disparities of wealth.
- 18-2** Evaluate the accuracy of the term *New South* in describing the post-Civil War South, and discuss ways in which the term was and was not appropriate.
- 18-3** Describe the development of the American West that took place during the second half of the nineteenth century, addressing both the role that industrialization played and the final defeat of Native American tribes on the plains.
- 18-4** Discuss the problems that confronted America's farmers in the North, South, and West during the late 1800s, and describe how their attempts to solve those problems led to the formation of a new political party.



“Urban life had been part of the northern landscape since the colonial era. This was not the case in the newly developing South and West.”

The Industrial Revolution affected all aspects of American life, and it provoked more changes than just those in the factories. How one experienced the Industrial Revolution depended on where one lived. In the North, the small factories that had emerged in the early nineteenth century took

on gigantic proportions. There were also many, many more of them. Jobs in these factories turned northern cities into magnets for people far and wide and created a rambunctious urban life that we still associate with modern living. The jobs created by the industrial growth also made the North a draw for European immigrants searching for economic opportunities and freedom from persecution. Unlike previous waves of immigration, though, the immigrants that came during the last quarter of the nineteenth century mostly came from southern and eastern Europe, speaking foreign tongues, coming from different political backgrounds, and often practicing different religions. These turn-of-the-twentieth-century immigrants made America an even more polyglot nation and prompted questions about the meaning of America more generally. These two impulses—urbanization and immigration—shaped the Industrial Age in the American North.

While the North grew tremendously during the years after the Civil War, it had a foundation on which to grow. Factories were familiar sights in the North starting in the late eighteenth century, and urban life had been part of the landscape since the colonial era. This was not the case in the newly developing South and West.

In the South of the 1870s and 1880s, a collection of regional civic boosters attempted to harness the power of the Industrial Revolution to reshape the image of that region. In the antebellum era, the South was powered by a few crops (especially “King Cotton”) and controlled politically and economically by a handful of wealthy families. And of course it was slaves who had done much of the South’s laboring. Post-Reconstruction civic boosters in the South, however, made the argument that, after the Civil War, a “New South” had emerged, one based on economic opportunity, rich natural resources, and increased racial equality. While these hopes were sometimes met (some cities did in fact blossom), the promise of the New South was all too often frustrated. This frustrated promise was manifested in perhaps the deepest legacy of the New South: the system of racial segregation known as Jim Crow. Indeed, if the Industrial Age in the North was shaped by urbanization and immigration, in the South it was shaped by slower economic development and hardened racial segregation.

But even the South had more of an industrial foundation upon which to grow than the West. No region of the country was transformed more rapidly by the changes of the Industrial Age than the land west of the Mississippi River. During the final third

What do **you** think?

The Industrial Revolution transformed the West more than the North or the South.

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly Agree

6

7



The railroad was vital in opening the western frontier for American settlement. This image shows trains taking hunters to the western plains to shoot bison (note the discarded carcasses). By 1891, the bison population had dropped from 13 million to just 865.

tenements

Crowded slum houses in urban areas, which housed mostly immigrants

of the nineteenth century, vast stretches of arable land were rapidly populated by millions of Americans who built great cities, decimated Indian populations, and cre-

ated industries controlled by industrial magnates. The cowboy, the most memorable image of the late-nineteenth-century West, was often working at the behest of a millionaire industrialist who was sending cattle to a slaughterhouse in one of the West's new great cities. The corporate life of the late nineteenth century knew no boundaries.

But farming would remain central to both the South and the West, and the corporate-friendly politics whose unresponsiveness had sparked the labor movement provoked a rural movement for reform in the South and the West. Collectively called the Populist movement, it was often just as radical in its challenges to industrial capitalism as the labor movement, and it too would encounter more frustration than success. But these rural reformers put forward a platform that would succeed long after the Populists had exited the political stage.

This chapter will examine the social and cultural manifestations of the Industrial Revolution in the North, South, and West, before turning to the second homegrown response to the seemingly unfettered advance of corporate capitalism, the Populist Movement.

18-1 The North

Most of the massive industries of the Industrial Age emerged in the North. There, because there was work, cities ballooned into metropolises. And as the cities of the North grew, economic disparities between the wealthy and the poor became more pronounced; the corporations of the Industrial Age generated enormous fortunes for a handful of people, leaving most industrial laborers in poverty.

18-1a Urbanization

By 1900, more than a third of America's people lived in cities, and city populations were growing twice as fast as the population as a whole. Between 1870 and 1920, the number of Americans living in cities increased fivefold, from 10 million to 54 million. The population of New York City went from 800,000 in 1860 to 2 million in 1900. The population of Boston increased from 180,000 in 1860 to 600,000 in 1900. And Chicago grew from 109,000 in 1860 to 1.7 million in 1900. The cities were booming.



North Wind/North Picture Archives—All rights reserved

>> Rival gangs of firefighting clubs sometimes fought each other while buildings blazed.

Tenement Life

Most of the people living in these growing cities were workers working in the new factories of the Industrial Age. For them, manufacturers sometimes provided company housing close to the factories so that the entire work force could walk to work. For most others, independent builders sought quick profits and got away with throwing up inferior houses because few cities at the time had building codes. Developers also carved up previously built single-family homes into multiple-unit dwellings called **tenements**, which often had thin walls and frequently lacked windows as well. These kinds of close quarters led to communal childcare networks, and they also pushed people out into the streets, creating a raucous, lively, and sometimes dangerous street scene. The housing stock of the era was quickly overwhelmed by all the urban growth, leading to creative, often unsafe solutions.

One effect of such rapid building was a dearth of parks in the new cities. More pertinently, adequate plumbing was virtually nonexistent, and few pre-1900 workers' houses had an indoor water supply; most shared pumps and wells in back alleys. City governments began to build sewers after 1860, but these sewers were primitive; most ended at the nearest river or lake, where raw sewage was



>> "One of the sights which this coal side of our civilization has to show is the presence of herds of little children of all ages, from six years upward, at work in the coal breakers, toiling in dirt, and air thick with carbon dust, from dawn to dark, of every day in the week except Sunday. These coal breakers are the only schools they know. A letter from the coal regions in the Philadelphia 'Press' declares that 'there are no schools in the world where more evil is learned or more innocence destroyed than in the breakers. It is shocking to watch the vile practices indulged in by these children, to hear the frightful oaths they use, to see their total disregard for religion and humanity.'"—Henry Demarest Lloyd, "The Lords of Industry," 1884

simply dumped into the water. Typhoid epidemics swept through city populations at a time when the connection between sewage and disease transmission was not widely understood. In 1900, the city of Chicago reversed the direction of the city's main river, diverting it to the Mississippi River in order to send the city's waste products away from Lake Michigan, its primary water source. Of course, dumping the city's waste into the Mississippi River had unsanitary effects as well, just not for Chicago. The cities were growing tremendously, but the expansion was haphazard, and those at the bottom of the pay scale were often deprived of basic necessities.

Wealthy Neighborhoods

While successful industrialists neglected the safety of their factories and workers' housing, they devoted enormous resources to the building of cultural institutions and the development of wealthy neighborhoods. Many had amassed huge for-



tunes during the rapid industrial growth. By 1890, for instance, the wealthiest 1 percent of the American population owned as much property as the remaining 99 percent. And in the cities of the North, the leading industrialists ostentatiously displayed their fortunes. Fifth Avenue in New York, for example, was lined with mansions and townhouses, and on New Year's Day, hostesses drew back the curtains of their mansions to reveal views of opulent interiors. The working classes would line the streets in awe and anger. The Newport home of William Vanderbilt, the grandson of Cornelius Vanderbilt, now called "Marble House," cost more than \$11 million—a staggering \$169.5 million today. "Diamond" Jim Brady, a wealthy New York City financier, was notorious for sitting two inches from his dinner table and continuing to eat until his expanding stomach touched the table. New York socialite Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish threw a party to honor her dog, which arrived wearing a diamond collar worth

\$15,000 (today, nearly \$350,000). The wealthy of this era were extremely wealthy.

This gross materialism did not go unnoticed. Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner published a novel called *The Gilded Age* (providing the era with its most notable label) that satirically described the greed, materialism, and political corruption that accompanied the growth of industry and cities. To gild something, of course, is to provide a thin coat of gold over a much cheaper metal, suggesting the harsh and debased economics that was hiding behind the wealth and supposed refinement. Economics professor Thorstein

Veblen, in his book *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), called the behavior of the wealthy class "conspicuous

 View pictures of Marble House and other Newport mansions.

 Read Andrew Carnegie's essay "Wealth."

>> New York socialite Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish threw a party to honor her dog, which arrived wearing a diamond collar worth \$15,000 (today, nearly \$350,000). iStockphoto.com/Sarah Kennedy

Coney Island

Public amusement park opened in New York in 1895; it featured roller coasters, water slides, and fun houses

consumption.” He argued that, ultimately, the selfishness of the rich harmed economic growth. Edith Wharton’s novels, particularly *The House of Mirth* (1905),

mocked the emptiness of the life led by the wealthy and the stifling social conventions that ruled their lives. Andrew Carnegie, one of the most conscientious of the captains of industry, described the problem of the Gilded Age as that of reconciling the wealthy and the poor in order to maintain a prosperous nation. In the burgeoning cities of the North, the two seemed to be living worlds apart.

Suburbs

Often the middle classes would try to flee the polarities of the city, and in the late nineteenth century, suburbs began their initial growth. Street railways made it possible to live 4 or 5 miles from work (or farther), yet still get there fairly quickly each morning. Streetcar companies often built their lines beyond the edge of town in the confident expectation that housing developments would soon follow. They

were often right; their lines formed the backbone of new suburban communities inhabited by the middle class. Slowly, city populations became increasingly stratified, with upper- and middle-class people living outside the noisy industrial districts, venturing as far away as bona fide suburbs, while the working classes and those enduring discrimination because of their race, religion, or country of origin lived in less desirable areas close to the industrial hubs.

Entertainments

Cities had long been spaces of public entertainment, and in the nineteenth century they teemed with vaudeville houses, dance halls, and saloons. These spaces were often deemed immoral or improper by the upper classes. In the 1890s, entrepreneurs in the growing leisure industry found a more wholesome way to lure the city’s masses: large, magnificent amusement parks. In 1895, New York’s **Coney Island** opened, featuring roller coasters, water slides, and fun houses. Unlike other public amusements like vaudeville and saloons, amusement parks attracted both men and women because they were considered more respectable. For instance, Coney Island helped



AP/Library of Congress

>> Crowds at a baseball game in New York. Their presence at a daytime baseball game suggests the leisure time allotted to the Industrial Age’s new middle class.



>> Vendors on Mulberry Street, the heart of New York's Little Italy, around 1900.

spur dating among working-class young men and women.

Attending professional baseball games was another way to relax, and baseball became a source of urban pride during these years. It began in 1876, with the formation of the **National League** by the Cincinnati Red Stockings (America's first professional team) and seven others. The league's success depended on reliable, intercity rail transport to carry the teams to each other's fields, as well as the telegraph lines along which rapid news of scores and results could be carried. The National League's success prompted the creation of the rival **American League** in 1901, and the two leagues competed in the first **World Series** in 1903, all due to the transportation and communications revolutions of the late nineteenth century, as well as the creation of a middle class with enough disposable income to enjoy an afternoon at the ballpark.

18-1b Immigration

Along with urbanization and the growing disparities of wealth, another important development in the industrializing North was immigration. Between 1880 and 1920, approximately 25 million people came to the United States. Unlike earlier arrivals, these new immigrants did not migrate from the British Isles or northern Europe; instead, they came predominantly from eastern, central, and southern Europe. They were Poles, Greeks, Italians, Bulgarians, Ukrainians, Czechs, Serbs, and Croats; they were Orthodox Jews, Eastern Orthodox Catholics, and Roman Catholics. This new immigration was the result of at least four factors (see "The reasons why . . ." box below).

The Immigrant Experience

Most of these new immigrants, who were often called **greenhorns** because of their awkward, uncultivated ways, faced a hard life in America. After successfully passing through well-known gateways like New York's **Ellis Island**, these immigrants struggled against tremendous adversity. America itself provided a tight labor market, and many immigrants came with limited knowledge of English, limited education, and limited work skills.

National League

The first professional baseball league, begun in 1876 with eight teams

American League

The second professional baseball league, begun in 1901

World Series

Baseball competition between the National League and the American League, played for the first time in 1903

greenhorns

European newcomers to America

Ellis Island

Immigrant gateway to New York City from 1892 to 1954



Explore the past of Ellis Island.



Take a virtual tour of a Lower East Side tenement.

{ The reasons why . . . }

There were at least four reasons for the rise in immigration during these years:

European population growth. Europe had experienced tremendous population growth during the nineteenth century, creating gaps between the number of workers and the number of jobs.

Urban crowding in Europe. The Industrial Revolution in Europe drew people away from agricultural industries to cities, where the crush of newcomers made employment even harder to find.

Antisemitism. A rise in antisemitism, especially within the Russian Empire, forced many Jews to flee.

Economic opportunities. America served as a magnet because it promised economic opportunity and personal freedoms. Many who came planned only to acquire enough wealth to make a better life for themselves back in Europe. For example, between 1910 and 1914, more than 400,000 Italian immigrants left the United States. These immigrants were usually men who came to America alone, planning to return home and rejoin their families.

Most stayed close to where they had landed, settling in such urban areas as New York City, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Boston. They found themselves on the bottom rung of the industrial hierarchy, working low-paying factory jobs.

Nevertheless, they kept coming, and by the end of the 1800s, immigrants made up a majority of the populations of most major American cities. By 1890, for example, New York's population was 80 percent immigrant. Chicago's population was a remarkable 87 percent immigrant. Most immigrants lived in crowded tenements, and unsurprisingly, poverty and overcrowding precipitated murder and other violent crimes. Some immigrant girls, driven by poverty and desperation, turned to prostitution.

Ethnicity, Assimilation, and the American Dream

Despite the struggle, immigrants also had their share of triumphs. Some even prospered, and many eventually gained a material stake in their new country by owning property. However, there was a fundamental tension at the core of the immigrant success story. Immigrants often sought to maintain a sense of connection to their native countries, but their status in America was inextricably tied to assimilation into American culture. New York and other major cities contained an amazing patchwork of different ethnic communities. These communities developed a variety of resources for comforting lonely and homesick immigrants, including foreign-language newspapers and fraternal and religious organizations. These were the years when America's cities evolved into complex mosaics of ethnic neighborhoods.

18-2 The "New South"

Even before the Civil War, the South lagged behind the North in urbanization and industrialization, mainly because of its dependence on slavery and the domination of plantation owners in the state governments during the antebellum period. But after the war, southerners such as Henry Grady, the owner and editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, argued that the South should improve its cities and provide for the growth of industry. It should partake in

"The New South is enamored of her new work. Her soul is stirred with the breath of a new life. The light of a grander day is falling fair on her face."

—Henry Grady, "The New South," 1886

the Industrial Revolution and encourage economic relations with the North, including accepting northern loans. Grady's stirring speech "The New South" argued that the postwar South was a different world from the antebellum South, especially because it was not built on the subjugation of an entire race

or the domination of a single industry like cotton. A spirit of enterprise characterized southern life in the late 1870s and 1880s, he argued.

Southern iron, steel, textile, and tobacco industries all emerged during the thirty-five years following the Civil War, as did numerous cities. Still, despite Grady's celebration of cooperation between black and white southerners in the New South, black people

rarely benefited from any of these changes. Worse still, the era bore witness to the rise of the segregated society that would last until the 1960s and beyond. Thus, there were two components of the New South: (1) the halting and haphazard creation of an industrialized South, and (2) the quick and summary creation of a racial caste system. If many southerners shared the optimism, energy, and inventiveness that characterized the Industrial Revolution in the North, it nonetheless manifested itself far differently.



Read Grady's "New South" speech.

18-2a Southern Industries

Southern industry grew up around railroads, iron manufacture, textile production, and tobacco. However, the South never developed a strong industrial base, at least not one comparable to what was taking place in the North.

Railroads

Railroads led the South's industrial expansion, attracting capital from wealthy northern investors. The railroads also provided much-needed connections between the cities and towns of the South. Before the Civil War and up until about 1880, southern railroad development was very slow. But between 1880 and 1890—just one ten-year period—southern rails grew from 16,605 miles to 39,108 miles, an increase of more than 100 percent. Southern state governments poured resources into supporting rail companies, and northern rail com-

panies began to expand into southern states, seeing an opportunity for profit and growth in the developing southern economy. By 1890, southern railroads had become a model for railroad development worldwide.

Iron Production

The expansion of the railroads also helped foster the urbanization of southern cities and the growth of the iron industry. Many New South advocates hoped that iron production would become the central means for the South to compete with the North in industry. Because the demand for iron was high, especially in construction trades and in laying railroad lines, the iron industry seemed an ideal place to invest money and resources. As a result, it grew; the southern iron industry expanded seventeenfold in the 1800s.

Cotton and Textiles

The easy transportation provided by railroads also allowed for the expansion of the southern textile industry. The industry grew fast in the South because of the abundance of cheap labor and the wide availability of cotton. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, a mill-building craze swept the South. In 1870, about 10,000 people were employed in textile manufacturing. By 1900, nearly 100,000 people worked in the industry. The work was harsh, reflecting the typical labor conditions of the Industrial Age. It was not uncommon for a mill worker to work a fourteen-hour day.

Tobacco

Tobacco was another growth industry in the New South. In the 1880s, James Buchanan Duke took advantage of the invention of the automatic cigarette-rolling machine to overwhelm the tobacco-producing competition. The new machine, invented in 1881 by James Bonsack, could roll 200 cigarettes per minute, the same as what a skilled worker could produce in an hour. Using this competitive advantage, and aggressively advertising his cigarettes across the nation, Duke bought up more than two hundred of his competitors, ultimately forming the American Tobacco Company, one of the largest companies in the country and one of the original twelve companies included in the Dow Jones Industrial Average. It alone was known as “the Tobacco Trust.”



Hulton Archive/Getty Images

>> Workers from the blast furnace at Ensley, six miles from Birmingham, Alabama, where iron ore was converted into about 200 tons of pig iron per day in each of the three functioning furnaces. Note the racial distinction between worker and manager in the New South.

Industrial Failures

Despite the growth of the southern iron, textile, and tobacco industries, hopes of a new industrial South proved fleeting. The growth of the steel industry in Pennsylvania eventually surpassed southern iron production. Furthermore, although textile growth was impressive, the industry employed only a small percentage of southerners, and wages were as much as 30 percent lower than they were in the North, limiting the development of an expansive marketplace (because there were fewer dollars in circulation). Finally, although men like Grady had touted the contributions of African Americans, most black southerners were still barred from industrial employment. Poor white people were far more likely to be employed in railroads, iron, or textiles than African Americans, and these poor whites often resisted efforts at integration in their workplaces. Despite the industrial developments of the late 1800s, agriculture still led the southern economy.

18-2b Southern Urbanization

For supporters of the New South, Birmingham, Alabama, became the symbol of southern urbanization. The city was ideally suited for growth because the Louisville and Nashville Railroad connected Birmingham with coal-mining towns all over Alabama, making it easy to ship the raw iron ore to the city's production facility. Birmingham became the

"Second Mississippi Plan"

Plan that established legal barriers (the poll tax, literacy tests, and property qualifications) to prevent African Americans from voting in Mississippi; served as a legislative model for other states

Jim Crow laws

State and local laws, usually passed in southern states, that mandated racial segregation in public facilities, including schools, restaurants, and rail cars

Louisiana Separate Car Act

1890 law mandating that black people and white people ride in separate train cars; challenged by Homer Plessy

center of the South's iron production in the late nineteenth century. Visitors from all over the world marveled at Birmingham's growth and its promise for future expansion. Many investors, including industrialist Andrew Carnegie, fueled this growth by pouring money into Birmingham's iron production. Birmingham was the crown jewel of southern urbanization.

Atlanta, Nashville, and Memphis all followed suit, taking precedence over water-centered, "Old South" cities like New Orleans and Charleston. But beyond them, similar cities were slow to grow in the South. There was simply not enough industry

to merit continued urban expansion, in part because of southerners' unwillingness to increase wages for the South's black population, which would have expanded markets, encouraged growth, and made southern industry more competitive. Immigrants, who could choose where to settle, chose the cities of the North over those of the South because of the depressed wages throughout the South.

18-2c Segregation in the New South

Worse than low wages, though, was the southern drive to repeal political and social rights for black people. After the North retreated from military rule of the South in 1877, race relations became increasingly rigid and violent, especially in areas where black and white Americans competed for economic opportunities. Southern white Democrats continued to deprive African Americans of their civil and political rights by passing laws that disenfranchised African Americans and separated blacks from whites. These efforts were coupled with an even more violent effort to block black citizens from participating in southern public life. Both efforts would prove only too successful. While the South did not have a monopoly on racism, it was where 95 percent of African Americans lived in 1865.

Racial Disenfranchisement

Since the decline of Reconstruction, southern states had sought to disenfranchise African American voters. Formal disenfranchisement began in Mississippi in 1890. This "Second Mississippi Plan," as it became known, established legal barriers to prevent African Americans from voting. The plan served as a model for other states, and politicians across the South amended their state constitutions to deny blacks voting rights (South Carolina did so in 1895, Louisiana in 1898, and North Carolina in 1900). They did this through a series of questionable laws, such as the poll tax, which required voters to pay a fee to vote; literacy tests, which required voters to prove various levels of literacy; and property qualifications, which disqualified most black people, who were often too poor to own property. Eventually black citizens in every southern state effectively lost the right to vote. For example, in Louisiana, 95.6 percent of the state's black population was registered to vote in 1896, and more than half of them voted. In 1904, after the passage of these shady laws, only 1,342 of the state's black people were still registered—more than a 90 percent decline in just eight years.

Jim Crow Segregation

Disenfranchisement occurred simultaneously with the development of other laws between 1890 and 1913 that segregated African Americans from white Americans in every public place in the South. These laws, known as **Jim Crow laws**, prevented African Americans from attending the same schools as white people or sitting in the same areas of restaurants. Citing these Jim Crow laws, one historian has called the 1890s the nadir of American race relations.

Plessy v. Ferguson

Black people, of course, challenged these laws, but they were mostly frustrated in their efforts. The most important case emerged in Louisiana, when Homer Plessy, who claimed to be one-eighth black, challenged segregation on trains by sitting in a white car and announcing he was black. Plessy intentionally violated the 1890 **Louisiana Separate Car Act** in order to support a local protest movement against the law. After his arrest, Plessy hoped that the courts would rule that the law violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

The nation's highest court had evaluated racial segregation and let it stand.

The case eventually went to the Supreme Court, which, in 1896, issued one of its landmark decisions. In *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Court declared that segregation laws were constitutional, claiming that, as long as the accommodations were “separate but equal,” it was legal to have separate facilities for black and white America. The nation’s highest court had evaluated racial segregation and let it stand.

Lynching

Violence was another form of political and social intimidation, and it was especially effective in areas where black and white Americans competed for similar jobs. Much of this violence came in the form of lynching, whereby a mob would gather to murder (usually by hanging, then burning) someone whom they believed to have violated a law or social custom. In the 1880s and 1890s, nearly 2,000 black men were lynched in the South. For more on why southerners



Read the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision.

created the system known as Jim Crow, see “The reasons why . . .” box below.

African American Responses

Although every African American had thoughts about the rise of racial segregation in the South, there were two major responses from the African American community. The first called for black Americans to accommodate their situation and not fight for political and civil rights, focusing instead on economic success. Booker T. Washington exemplified this accommodationist response. In

Plessy v. Ferguson

1896 Supreme Court case that declared that segregation laws were constitutional, claiming that, as long as the accommodations were “separate but equal,” it was legal to have separate facilities for black and white Americans

hierarchy of races

A theory based on the idea that some racial groups are superior to others; in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many Americans used purported scientific evidence and social science data to argue that white people from British descent sat atop the hierarchy, while racial minorities and new immigrants were less sophisticated and less capable of self-rule

The reasons why . . .

There were at least four reasons why southerners created the racially segregated system known as Jim Crow during the decades after the Civil War:

History of slavery. The South, of course, was where the vast majority of American slaves lived before the Civil War, and the major underlying cause of the war was the perpetuation of slavery. Despite losing the war, many southerners sought to restore the South to what they idealized as its antebellum grandeur. This imperfect vision included, and indeed was predicated upon, creating a racist system as close to slavery as possible. The segregated social vision was, however, historically inaccurate, because slavery relied on relatively close proximal relations between black and white people, whereas segregation introduced social and spatial differences that were entirely new.

Science. The South did not have a monopoly on racism, though, and in most states throughout the nation black people could not vote and were denied many other basic rights. Indeed, the best science at the time openly advocated that the white race was superior and ranked the other races in descending order, with African Americans almost always at the bottom. Measurements of skulls and a variety of aptitude tests seemed to confirm the thesis. Using this **hierarchy of races**, white Americans in the North rebuked southern and eastern European immigrants (who were often not deemed “white”). White Americans in the West confidently lorded over Indians and Chinese. And white Americans in the South found justification for creating a social system that not only denied basic rights to African Americans but also segregated them from the rest of society. A

large part of the fear, it must be noted, was that these evolutionary “lesser” beings might try to improve their genetic stock by having sexual relations with white women, and interracial sex became a bogeyman behind much of the South’s justification for segregation.

Economics. In 1865, about 95 percent of African Americans lived in the South. When the Industrial Age came south, the availability of black workers often kept wages low. This created tremendous animosity from much of the South’s white working class. They argued that if black workers could be denied access to certain jobs, wages for white workers would go up. Indeed, the towns that had the highest number of lynchings in this period were those that had witnessed industrial growth and that had a competitive number of African American and white workers.

Politics. The Democratic Party shamelessly took advantage of all these factors, using its political power in the South to create the legal system of segregation known as Jim Crow. While claiming to be honoring southern history and using science as its justification, the Democratic Party secured votes by calling for racial solidarity within the white working class. When the Populist Party threatened to create an interracial working-class party, the Democrats fought back by calling for racial solidarity and by disenfranchising the “unfit” African American voters. By the 1890s, the legal system of segregation that would last until the 1960s was largely in place.

Atlanta Compromise

Speech delivered by Booker T. Washington in 1895 encouraging black economic development and assuaging white fears of racial intermingling; black and white people, he said, should remain as separate as the fingers on a hand, but they should work together to reach common economic ground

Niagara Movement

An attempt at political organization among black activists in the early 1900s. W. E. B. Du Bois drafted a "Statement of Principles," which declared that African Americans should fight for their rights rather than accept abuse and separation

Atlanta in 1895, he delivered a speech that became known as the **Atlanta Compromise**, encouraging black economic development and assuaging white fears of racial intermingling. Black and white people, Washington said, should remain as separate as the fingers on a hand, but they should work together to reach common economic ground. Economic progress, he believed, could take place without racial integration. Washington believed that self-help within the African American community would stop the violence and allow for the progress of the race. He had enormous influence in the late nineteenth century, and his beliefs won

wide support among white and black people into the twentieth century.

The other response from black America exemplified a refusal to compromise. For example, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, a writer and editor, led a crusade against lynching during the late nineteenth century after three of her friends were murdered in Memphis, Tennessee. In 1892, Wells-Barnett authored one of the



Read the "Atlanta Exposition Address."

most powerful anti-lynching pamphlets in the country, *Southern Horrors*. She became internationally famous for her protests.

W. E. B. Du Bois similarly criticized Washington's Atlanta speech. In the **Niagara Movement** (an attempt at political organization among black activists in the early 1900s), Du Bois drafted a "Statement of Principles" declaring that African Americans should fight for their rights rather



Read W. E. B. Du Bois's thoughts on Booker T. Washington.

than accept abuse and separation. Du Bois later played an important role in organizing the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Formed in 1909, the NAACP led a decades-long assault on lynching and Jim Crow laws, continuously (and, for more than half a century, unsuccessfully) pressuring the government to end segregation and outlaw lynching. Du Bois and Washington



Read the Niagara Movement's "Statement of Principles."

openly debated black people's options, with Du Bois offering a stinging critique of Washington in Du Bois's famous book *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). Both responses, it must be noted, failed to prevent the creation of the Jim Crow South.

18-2d Society and Culture in the Postwar South

The white South's brutal restrictions on the region's African American population gained greater popular acceptance in the late nineteenth century through a cultural revival that centered on the "myth of the lost cause." This myth tried to diminish the importance of slavery as a cause of the Civil War by lionizing the rebels of the Confederacy as avid defenders of "states' rights." Not only were many southerners attempting to reinstitute antebellum social practices, but many were also aiming to glorify the cause and culture of institutionalized slavery.

The Myth of the Lost Cause

The myth of the lost cause provided cultural justification for the return of white political power.



Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

>> The great anti-lynching reformer Ida B. Wells-Barnett, pictured here with her family in 1909, was brought into the crusade after three of her friends were lynched in Memphis.



The Granger Collection, New York

>> Lynchings were often communal events, similar to a neighborhood picnic. This 1908 image of five black men lynched in Texas was turned into a mass-produced postcard.

Associated with the defeat of the Confederacy, the myth was first presented in Edward Pollard's book *The Lost Cause* (1866). The war, as portrayed by Pollard, was a valiant effort fought against overwhelming odds to protect southern independence. Slavery, he argued, was not a cause of the Civil War; rather, it was northern aggression that disrupted the peaceful relationship between white masters and black slaves. Many organizations were established in the late-nineteenth-century South to defend this myth. These included the Southern Historical Society, founded in 1869 by a former Confederate general to promote a "proper" interpretation of the Civil War; the United Confederate Veterans Association, founded to establish a "Confederate Memorial Day"; and the United Daughters of the Confederacy, founded in 1895 to celebrate the southern war effort. Many northerners, racists themselves, were all too eager to accept this demotion of the importance of slavery as a cause of the war, and throughout the North historians reconceptualized the history of Reconstruction as a horror, characterized not by the violence of the Ku Klux Klan, but by corrupt black domination.

African American Cultural Life

As white southerners variously confronted the impact of the Civil War and the meaning of the region's race relations, African Americans found ways to support their struggle for freedom and independence. For example, in Texas, black Americans

celebrated their own holidays to keep the issues surrounding slavery and the Civil War alive. The celebration of **Juneteenth**, marking the date that slaves were formally freed in Texas (June 19, 1865), was the most popular of these holidays, and it spread to black communities across the South. It is still celebrated in many southern communities today. But two other institutions reveal the central concerns of southern black people in the late nineteenth century: (1) education and (2) the church.

Juneteenth

A celebration marking the date that slaves were formally freed in Texas: June 19, 1865

Tuskegee Institute

College established for African Americans in Tuskegee, Alabama, by Booker T. Washington in 1881

Black Literacy and Educational Institutions

One of the most important goals of African Americans after the Civil War was expanding educational opportunity. Forbidden from learning to read or write by pre-Civil War slave codes, African Americans made literacy and education a central priority after the war. As a result, black literacy rates grew dramatically in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Schools popped up, and African Americans founded institutions of higher learning, such as Fisk University in Nashville (founded in 1866), Howard University in Washington, D.C. (1867), and Atlanta University in Georgia (1865).

The most prominent institution was Booker T. Washington's **Tuskegee Institute** in Tuskegee, Alabama (1881). Washington pioneered higher learning for African Americans and devoted his life to the growth of black education at all levels. However, he was often chastised for his belief that it would be better for black Americans to learn practical skills



Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-78481

>> Forbidden from learning to read or write by pre-Civil War slave codes, African Americans made literacy and education a central priority after the war.

Homestead Act

Federal act, passed in 1862, that awarded 160 acres to settlers who occupied the land for five years

that would prepare them for industrial machine work than to seek other kinds of education, such as the arts and sciences, that might be perceived as challenging the

white hierarchy. In this, as in so many other areas, Washington and Du Bois would spar over the relevancy of different kinds of education. Regardless, educational opportunities for African Americans in the South expanded, if in a segregated manner.

Religious Life

The second central institution of black life in the South of the late 1800s was the church. After the war, the role of the black church quickly expanded in African American communities. The largest denominations were the Baptist Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Churches became the central arenas of black social life after the Civil War because they were supposedly apolitical and therefore unthreatening to the South's white population. Churches did, however, host political meetings and develop social welfare institutions in an era before large-scale public welfare programs existed.

18-3 The Industrializing West

If the Industrial Age brought to the North urbanization and immigration, and if the South entered the age still burdened by the oppressions of history, including a commitment to racial inequality and the myth of the lost cause, the West confronted the new era in its own way. The main concerns of those in the West during the late nineteenth century were getting soil to produce crops and keeping Indians and immigrants at bay. The federal government aggressively assisted in all these efforts. But working the land is of course difficult, and many farmers struggled to make a living off their newly acquired property. As they fought to make ends meet, another harbinger of the Industrial Age interceded. Large corporations were often lurking in the background, seeking to buy out failed farming endeavors in order to create what were then called bonanza farms and what we would today call agribusinesses. The West of the late nineteenth century inspired the lore of the "Wild West," with its tales of cowboys and Indians. And indeed, some components of the development of the West were in fact wild. But for the most part, those most interested in the development of the West were corporations,



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>> African American church in Washington, D.C., 1870s.

usually with bases in the industrial capitals of the North. Like the South, which often depended on northern wealth to industrialize, the West too is sometimes referred to as a mere colony to the rest of the United States. Nevertheless, the Industrial Age did transform the West in ways that few could have predicted.

18-3a Expansive Farming

American settlers in the West had always been farmers, and before the Civil War most Americans in the region were still involved in agriculture. They might have been grain elevator operators, agricultural commodities brokers, or farmers, but in general, most Americans in the West lived off the land. Chicago and St. Louis were booming towns, but most of their wealth was attributable to processing and distributing natural goods like lumber, corn, cattle, and wheat.

The Homestead Act

This commitment to the land only accelerated during the Civil War, when northern congressmen took advantage of the absence of southerners in Congress and encouraged the expansion of a free-labor West by passing the **Homestead Act** in 1862. The Homestead Act awarded 160 acres to settlers who occupied the land for five years, and between 1862 and 1890 it led to the creation of almost 400,000 farms, on which some 2 million people eventually lived. African Americans seeking land, northerners seeking to avoid the industrialization of their cities, and new immigrants all came west.

Industrial Farming

Despite the promises of the Homestead Act, the first homesteaders faced particularly severe trials.



>> Despite the benevolent promises of the Homestead Act, the first homesteaders faced particularly severe trials. Sodbusters faced the ravages of locust swarms, tornadoes, hailstorms, and extreme temperatures. Pioneer family pose outside their sod house, Kansas, c. 1860 (b/w photo), American Photographer (19th century) / Private Collection, Peter Newark American Pictures / The Bridgeman Art Library

On the northern Great Plains, rainfall dwindled to as few as eight inches a year, and pioneers, or **sodbusters** as they were known, faced the ravages of locust swarms, tornadoes, hailstorms, and extreme temperatures. By the 1870s, however, life for Great Plains farmers had improved, mainly because of the Industrial Revolution. Between 1870 and 1910, urbanization and immigration led eastern urban populations to increase by 400 percent, stimulating demand for western wheat and other crops. In response to this new demand, the eastern plains from Minnesota and the Dakotas and south to Texas became the nation's wheat belt. Corn and hog production also spread throughout much of the West. In addition, the nation's growing rail network offered more, better, and cheaper connections to the markets of the East. Indeed, moving the western commodities to the East was one of the principal reasons for railroad expansion throughout the nineteenth century.

Bonanza Farms

As technologies improved and markets grew, more and more speculators began growing wheat, and corporations similarly got interested. Often buying land from frustrated sodbusters, these large industrial interests quickly built huge **bonanza farms** covering thousands of acres. Across the Great Plains, these “factories in the fields” operated with an econ-

omy of scale heretofore unknown to American agriculture. In the 1880s, a single bonanza farm in North Dakota's Red River Valley covered 13,000 acres and employed a thousand workers. By embracing the newest technologies, recruiting cheap laborers from Chicago and other midwestern cities, and securing lands from railroad companies, bonanza farmers increased farm yields dramatically, making food more plentiful in the cities to the east. But they also put greater economic pressures on the small farms.

sodbusters

American pioneers who settled the northern Great Plains

bonanza farms

Giant farms on the Great Plains, covering thousands of acres and employing hundreds of workers

18-3b Industry in the West

Besides farming, three major industries shaped the post-Civil War western economy: (1) railroads, (2) cattle, and (3) mining.

The Railroads

During the Civil War, northern congressmen passed many internal improvement bills, including several that assisted the development of railroads in the West. Their efforts were just the beginning: during the 1800s, Congress awarded various railroad companies more than 223 million acres to encourage the construction of lines connecting East and West. The arrival of a railroad depot spurred the creation of towns. If an established town lay far from the newly built railroad lines, that town usually dwindled into nonexistence. As a boy, Thomas Edison and his family were forced to leave Milan, Ohio, after the railroads bypassed the town.

The Cattle Industry

Cattle was one of the industries that railroads developed the most (see Map 18.1 on page 325). Beginning in the 1860s, cowboys began to lead mass cattle drives from Texas, where most cattle were, to various cities along the railroad lines, especially Abilene, Kansas. Abilene was the nation's first “cow town,” or town developed in order to facilitate the movement of cattle from Texas and Oklahoma to other parts of the country. From places like Abilene, the cattle would then be moved via rail to Chicago's slaughterhouses and meatpacking plants, where the animals would be slaughtered and the meat packaged and sent in refrigerated rail cars to eastern markets. The



>> Abilene, Kansas, where cows waited for railroads to take them to the slaughterhouses of Chicago.

most recognizable image of the era was the cowboy, but cowboys were often actually employees of large corporations working to supply the world's demand for beef, and in fact they largely disappeared by the 1880s. Barbed wire, first patented in 1874 and spread through the West by the late 1880s, closed the open ranges on which the cowboys' long drives depended. Between 1865 and 1885, the work of being a cowboy attracted some 40,000 young men from a variety of ethnic and class backgrounds. Many were white, but about 30 percent of the West's cowboys were either Mexican or African American; hundreds were Indian.

The Mining Industry

The third pillar of western industry was mining (see Map 18.1), mainly for gold, silver, copper, and coal. Mining had fostered much of the original settlement in the West, when the first California gold rush of 1849 established the rollicking, boom-and-bust cycle that defined the region's economy. Yet the nature of mining changed dramatically after the Civil War, when most of the gold and silver deposits within reach of individual prospectors had been exhausted. Large investors, often backed by corporations with access to new technology, displaced the roughshod world of the forty-niners. Unlike earlier rushes, the silver strike at Colorado's Leadville (1877) and the gold strike at Cripple Creek (1891) offered few opportunities for individual prospectors because big companies controlled access to the mines. As in the North and the South, large corporations controlled most of the wealth in the industrializing West.

18-3c Western Cities

Farming, mining, and cattle were the lifeblood of the West, and that blood flowed through towns and cities. Western cities connected the natural resources of the West to urban centers in the East. Huge cities emerged rapidly in the West, humming with all the industries necessary to convert raw material into packaged goods ready for shipping. No city grew faster than the Midwestern city of Chicago. With its busy train station and its avid business promoters, Chicago became the capital of western commerce. It developed meatpacking plants to turn cattle into cash and a stock market where speculators could bet on that year's yield. By 1900, 1.7 million people lived in Chicago. And Chicago was not alone. By 1890, a greater

>> This photo from Cheyenne, Wyoming, shows the diverse nature of American cowboys, as well as the rough-and-tumble life they led.



percentage of westerners lived in cities than in any other region in the nation. Cities like Dodge City, Kansas, transitioned from a fur-trading post to a cattle town to a stockyard city.

18-3d Outsiders in the Industrializing West

The two groups that did not mesh with the way of life developing in the West were the American Indians and the Chinese, and both were persecuted as outsiders.

Subjugating the Plains Indians

As always, westward migration entailed conflict with Indians. Like immigrants in the northern cities and African Americans in the South, American Indians suffered from the white Americans' racism, paternalism, and belief that the United States had a "manifest destiny" to control all the land between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans (for more on manifest destiny, see Chapter 13). Although conflict was constant, violence between white Americans and Indians accelerated during the Civil War, as Union troops streamed into the West to put down various

 **Map 18.1.** Use of the Western Lands in the Late Nineteenth Century
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local Confederate revolts. During those travails, it was often difficult to tell where the Civil War ended and the escalating war against the Indians began.

These small “Indian Wars,” as the U.S. Army called them, became commonplace throughout the second half of the 1800s. One conflict that epitomizes the violence is the Sand Creek Massacre of 1864. During the early 1860s, the Arapahoe and Cheyenne Indians clashed



Compare editorials from the *Rocky Mountain News* with congressional testimony that followed.

with white settlers who had been drawn to Colorado by the 1859 Pike’s Peak gold rush. As white settlers began to demand the extermination of the Indians, a handful of chiefs sought peace. During one round of negotiation, a Cheyenne delegation near Denver was told it enjoyed army protection until negotiations were complete. The next morning, November 29, 1864, Colorado militiamen attacked the sleeping Indians. By the day’s end, more than two hundred Cheyenne lay dead. As news of the massacre spread throughout the Great Plains, anger turned to outrage among Indians, and battles between Indian tribes and white settlers escalated.

The increasing violence between Indians and settlers inspired General William T. Sherman, of Civil War fame, to call for the extermination of all the Sioux. But, despite continuing conflict, U.S. government leaders in Washington, especially President Grant, still declared a desire for peace. In 1869, Grant initiated a so-called Peace Policy that consisted of empowering church leaders to distribute payments and food to the Indians. This “conquest through kindness” aimed to turn the Plains Indians, who had been offered open reservations to continue their traditional lifestyles, to the American ideals of private

“Their village consisted of one hundred and thirty Cheyenne and Arapahoe lodges. These, with their contents, were totally destroyed.”

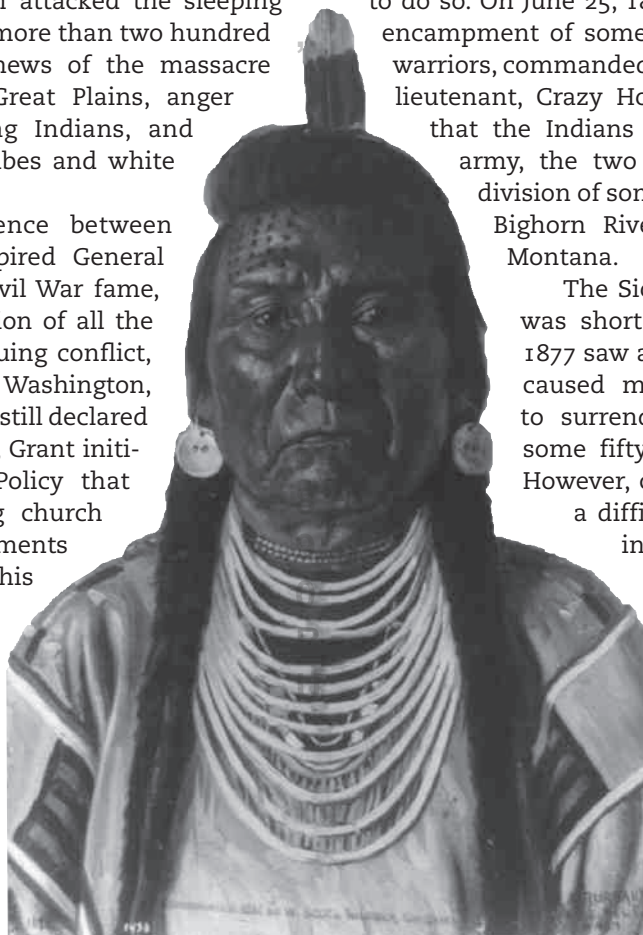
—Rocky Mountain News, 1864

property, settled farming, and Christianity. Notwithstanding this paternalistic hope, Grant warned tribes that any Native Americans unprepared to make peace on his terms would be subject to continued military action.

In essence, he told them to accept his terms or face eventual destruction.

Unfortunately, many Americans did not follow Grant’s Peace Policy, choosing instead to continue to invade lands guaranteed to Indians. One such example is the 1874 military expedition, under General George Armstrong Custer’s command, into the Black Hills of present-day South Dakota. When Custer reported to eastern newspapers that there was “gold among the roots of the grass,” American prospectors streamed into land not only considered sacred by the Sioux but also promised to them in an 1868 treaty. When the Sioux attacked some prospectors, Custer vowed to protect them. He was unable to do so. On June 25, 1876, his force came upon an encampment of some 2,500 Sioux and Cheyenne warriors, commanded by Chief Sitting Bull and his lieutenant, Crazy Horse. Despite Custer’s belief that the Indians would cower to the white army, the two tribes annihilated Custer’s division of some 200 troops along the Little Bighorn River, in today’s southeastern Montana.

The Sioux victory at Little Bighorn was short-lived. The winter of 1876–1877 saw a massive counterattack that caused most of the Indian alliance to surrender. Chief Sitting Bull and some fifty Sioux escaped to Canada. However, cut off from bison, they had a difficult time finding food, and, in 1881, they too surrendered to U.S. forces. Other Indian efforts at resistance also failed. For example, in 1877, Chief Joseph and the Nez Percé tribe refused to be moved from their lands in Idaho to a reservation in Washington. Rather than fight, Joseph led a brilliant retreat to Canada with about 250 of his warriors and 450



>> **Chief Joseph.** Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-1438

noncombatants. The army followed Chief Joseph's party through 1,700 miles of mountains before catching up to them and demanding their surrender.

The Dawes Act

By the 1870s, many reformers and U.S. policymakers decided that placing American Indians on large reservations might not be the best way to bring order to white-Indian relations. For one thing, reservations obstructed the routes of certain planned railroads. Furthermore, reformers such as Helen Hunt Jackson criticized the U.S. policy on humanitarian grounds. Jackson wrote *A Century of Dishonor* (1881), which examined the numerous treaties the United States broke with Indian tribes.

Arguments from these reformers led to the passage of the **Dawes General Allotment Act**, which became federal law in 1887. As with Grant's "Peace Plan," the act demonstrated an attempt to alter the tribal nature of Indians. It declared that lands held by tribes were to be divided among families and individuals. To prevent speculators from getting title to the lands, the act did not allow Indians to sell them; instead, the government held the land in trust



Read the Dawes Act.

for twenty-five years. At the end of the twenty-five years, individual Indians were to receive title to the land and become U.S. citizens. This was yet another attempt to wage peace by conversion. In the prevailing American view, Indians were capable of citizenship, but they were not quite there yet, so they needed to be treated as wards of the state until they learned the ways of American citizens.

As it turned out, the Dawes Act did not help Indians establish farms because the arid land of the northern Plains was unsuited to agriculture. In addition, despite the alleged safeguards, tribal lands were often lost by fraud or coercion, so that, by 1934, white Americans owned two-thirds of lands originally reserved for Indians. Most pointedly, the Dawes Act struck at Indians' greatest strength—their communal ethos—by dividing many of the reservations into individual plots of land.

Dire Circumstances

In the midst of these efforts, conditions in the tribes became desperate. In particular, the loss of the

bison proved devastating to the way of life that had sustained Indians since they first occupied the Great Plains. In 1865, the number of bison in the United States was some 13 million; by 1891, that number had dwindled to just 865. Railroads and commercial hunters were responsible for most of this decimation. Without bison to hunt, the Plains Indians had little means of subsistence. Confined to reservations, they obtained only a meager living from farming the barren lands provided by relocation treaties. The poor-quality food supplies from the U.S. government sometimes did not come at all because of the widespread corruption in the government's Bureau of Indian Affairs. Starvation and epidemics pervaded the tribes, making it even more difficult for them to defend themselves against further encroachment.

Last Attempts at Resistance

With little hope left, some Indians attempted to participate in a revitalization movement similar to the one preached by Neolin before the Revolutionary War. The central ritual for the Plains Indians became the "**Ghost Dance**," a dance lasting five days that, if done properly and at the right time, would supposedly raise the Indians above the ground while the land below them was replaced with new land, effectively sandwiching the white men between the two layers of sod, removing them forever.

Dawes General Allotment Act

Federal law, passed in 1887, declaring that lands held by tribes were to be divided among families, and the Indians were not allowed to sell their lands because the government held these lands in trust for twenty-five years, after which individual Indians were to receive title to the land and become U.S. citizens

"Ghost Dance"

The central ritual for the Plains Indians, this was a dance lasting five days that would supposedly raise the Indians above the ground while the land below them was replaced with new land, effectively sandwiching the white men between the two layers of sod, removing them forever

*I do not come to
fight the white
men. If you leave
me alone I will
harm no one. I
have been driven
from my home
by the white men
and am going
to the buffalo
country to find
another.*

—Chief Joseph, according to his biographer

Wounded Knee Massacre

1890 conflict in which the U.S. Army fired on the Sioux, triggering a battle that left 39 U.S. soldiers and 146 Sioux dead

intervene agreed to the U.S. Army's command to encamp near the army at Wounded Knee Creek. On December 29, 1890, an accidental rifle discharge led soldiers from the U.S. Army to fire on the

Sioux. After what became known as the **Wounded Knee Massacre**, 39 U.S. soldiers lay dead, while the Sioux suffered 146 deaths, including 44 women and 18 children.

Wounded Knee was the tragic and grisly end of the federal government's century-long war against the Indians. The next forty years witnessed continuing efforts to break up tribal sovereignty—most notably in Indian territories, where the government forced the liquidation of tribal governments. By 1900, the Indian population had reached its lowest point in American history, bottoming out at just 250,000. The “Wild West” of cowboy-and-Indian lore was gone.

The Chinese Exclusion Act

In addition to subjugating the Plains Indians, white Americans in the West also targeted another population—the Chinese. In the 1850s, Chinese immigrants began traveling to the American West in search of gold and other lucrative minerals. Most never discovered those riches, but ample work for the railroads provided another impetus for migration, and by 1880, more than 200,000 Chinese immigrants had settled in the United States, mostly in California.

Accounts of their lives suggest that most white Americans initially saw them as hardworking people, but as the number of Chinese immigrants increased, many white Americans challenged their right to be in the United States. In the early 1850s, the California legislature passed a tax on “foreign miners,” which led most of the Chinese immigrants to search for work outside of mining. Many found jobs in the railroad industry, which was booming after the Civil War. Indeed, Chinese laborers made up 90 percent of the laborers who worked on the western half of the first transcontinental railroad. Once the American system of railroad tracks was mostly completed, many Chinese immigrants moved to cities, such as San Francisco, and developed an expansive “Chinatown.” Most of the urban Chinese worked as laborers and servants, but some rose to prominence and positions of leadership within their communities. These leaders often joined together to handle community disputes, place workers in jobs, and dispense social services.



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© Thomas Peter/Alamy

>> San Francisco's Chinese quarter of the 1870s evolved into today's sprawling Chinatown.

In the workplace, however, Chinese laborers gained a reputation for working for lower wages than their white counterparts. This situation led to interethnic hostilities, especially among workers. Denis Kearney, an Irish immigrant who created the Workingman's Party of California in 1878, made the issue of Chinese immigration a political one. By the late 1870s, anti-Chinese sentiment extended along the entire Pacific Coast.

In 1882, Congress responded to Californians' demands that something be done to restrict Chinese immigration. At the behest of California's senators, Congress passed the **Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882**, which banned the immigration of Chinese laborers for ten years and prohibited the Chinese who were already in the United States from becoming citizens. The bill was renewed in 1892 and made permanent in 1902. It was the first repudiation of the United States's long history of open immigration. While the bill was most certainly racist, it is worth noting that, until 1917, there were few restrictions on wealthy Chinese immigrants, and in 1898 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the children of Chinese immigrants who were born in the United States were still American citizens.

18-4 The Populists

In the topsy-turvy agricultural worlds of the South and the West, the corporations of the Industrial Age were rapidly turning into transformative players, dominating key industries like railroads and tobacco, and even challenging the sustainability of the self-sufficient farmer. Farmers both western and southern felt squeezed by a system that seemed stacked against them. Vulnerable to falling crop prices, often saddled with debt, and unable to meet the forces of corporate capitalism on a level playing field, during the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s many farmers formed organizations to attempt to protect their rural interests. There were many kinds of farm advocacy groups developed during these years, varying in objective, degree of racial liberalism, and political techniques. But in the 1890s, farmers joined together in the **Populist Party**, which championed the cause of farmers over what it saw as the entrenched powers of banking and credit. Collectively, these agricultural advocates have come to be called the Populists.

18-4a Problems Confronting Farmers

By the late nineteenth century, the business of farming had become a risky endeavor. In addition to the age-old threats of bad weather and poor crops, many farmers were now deeply in debt from loans needed to purchase the large-scale machinery required to increase yields. Thus, while the technological advances of the Industrial Revolution had made farming physically easier, they had also put farmers more in debt. Meanwhile, the great distances between western farms and the markets of the East increased

shipping costs, a problem exacerbated by grain elevator owners and railroad companies, who often exploited their monopolies. Similarly, the increase in the amount of goods shipped to market from the expansive and bountiful Great Plains meant that prices plummeted. Farmers who had taken advantage of the Homestead Act were being stretched thin. Sharecroppers in the South owed increasing amounts of money to their landowners. By the late nineteenth century, most farmers were in debt.

Deflation

Even worse, they all confronted the basic problem of falling crop prices. While overproduction played a part in pushing down prices, another, more insidious force was at work: deflation. Between 1873 and 1875, the federal government tried to erase its Civil War debt by putting the nation on a **gold standard**, taking out of circulation most paper money ("greenbacks") and silver coins, thus leaving gold as the primary form of currency. But when gold became scarce, the result was deflation, whereby prices fell because there was not enough money circulating in the system. This situation had a ruinous effect on farmers. As deflation pushed down the prices of all goods, including crops, farmers made smaller profits; meanwhile, their debts stayed the same as before. Only now, they had less money with which to pay it off.

18-4b Farmers Unite

Several movements arose in response to farmers' problems of debt and deflation. Two of the most powerful included (1) the Grange Movement and (2) the Farmers' Alliance.

Emergence of the Grange Movement

The first movement to protest the farmer's plight emerged shortly after the Civil War. Founded in Washington, D.C., in 1867, the Grange (formally known as the National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry) began life as a local fraternal organization. But by the early 1870s, as deflation plagued farmers, the Grange became a national movement that expressed farmer discontent. In seeking political

Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882

Act that banned the immigration of Chinese laborers for ten years and prohibited the Chinese who were already in the United States from becoming citizens

Populist Party

A political party of the 1890s that championed the "farm" cause of land and crops over the powers of banking and credit

gold standard

An economic plan using gold as the primary form of currency while taking paper money and silver coins out of circulation

Munn v. Illinois (1877)

A Supreme Court case that declared states could regulate businesses within their borders if those businesses operated in the public interest

Subtreasury Plan

An economic plan advocated by the Farmers' Alliance, in which crops would be stored in government-owned warehouses and used as collateral for low-cost government loans to struggling farmers

remonetize

To turn a certain commodity (for instance, silver) back into an acceptable currency

solutions to the farmers' problems, it did achieve some limited success. Grangers demanded the regulation of railroad rates, for instance, and succeeded in having rate legislation passed in several states, including Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin. They also succeeded in having the Supreme Court declare, in the case of *Munn v. Illinois* (1877), that states could regulate businesses within their borders if those businesses operated in the public interest. But internal divisions ultimately doomed the Grange, and in the late 1870s its influence waned.

the South and Midwest and then spread to other farming regions. These alliances acted as cooperatives, meaning that they organized farmers into a unified front to gain bargaining power. Like labor unions, alliances hoped to find strength in numbers, and sometimes they did just that.

The Turn to Politics

But the alliances failed to be effective in the long term because bankers and commercial interests often simply refused to do business with them. The Farmers' Alliance then sought a political remedy. In 1890, Dr. Charles W. Macune, the national movement's leader, lobbied members of the U.S. Congress to support his **Subtreasury Plan**. Under this plan, crops would be stored in government-owned warehouses and used as collateral for low-cost government loans to struggling farmers.

In 1890, when legislation to enact the plan was defeated in Congress, desperation among American farmers reached a fever pitch. With deflation running rampant and crop prices continuing to fall, farmers suspected a conspiracy: Eastern bankers and corporations, with the tacit blessing of the government, were deliberately keeping gold out of circulation to lead the farmers to bankruptcy, which would then force the sale of large tracts of agricultural land. The farmers knew they needed to create a stronger, more powerful movement in order to be heard.

Rise of the Farmers' Alliance

In the late 1880s, another national movement known as the Farmers' Alliance emerged. The Farmers' Alliance was a network of smaller local alliances that first sprang up in the early 1880s in pockets of



>> An idealized view of the National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry, with each circle representing an aspect of Western life.

18-4c Populism

The farmers thus entered the national political arena in 1892 with a broad and far-reaching movement known as Populism. In 1892, a convention of farmers in Omaha, Nebraska, formed the People's Party (its members were called Populists) to advocate farmers' concerns in local, state, and federal politics. On the one hand, the Populists sought to address such day-to-day issues as high storage and shipping rates. In this vein, Populists also sought to reverse deflation so that crop prices would rise, which would enable them to pay down their debts. In particular, they wanted the government to **remonetize** silver or, in other words, turn silver into an acceptable currency. This would end the economy's reliance on gold, which had made currency hard to find and expensive, and put more currency in the marketplace, boosting prices. On the other hand, they also put forward dramatic and at times radical proposals about ensuring a fairer distribution of wealth, including nationalizing certain industries and creating broad government regulations. Frustrated with what they saw as political inaction, they also advocated increased political

transparency, such as the direct election of senators (who had often been chosen by the state legislatures).



Read the Populists' 1892 election platform.

Like those in the labor movement, the Populists advocated not only improvements in their daily lives but also

a dramatic reconsideration of the way the United States was encountering the Industrial Age.

A National Movement

Building from the national network of the Farmers' Alliance, the Populist Movement quickly spread across the country. With their promise of relief for farmers and their far-reaching vision, the Populists overcame existing political and regional loyalties (white southerners were usually Democrats and preoccupied with race, whereas Midwestern farmers, owing their land to Lincoln's Homestead Act, were nearly all Republicans). Tom Watson, a Populist leader from Georgia, argued that white and black sharecroppers alike were in danger of economic ruin, and he spoke to mixed-race audiences that were temporarily united by the Populist message. Some Populists even advocated bringing in industrial workers to fashion a working-class political

party. A revolt against the extravagances of the Industrial Age seemed to be brewing.

The Populists rapidly gained ground in the political arena. In 1892, James Weaver, the Populists' presidential candidate, won several western states, and the hard times that followed a financial panic in 1893 sparked widespread interest in the Populist demands for economic justice. Several Populist candidates won congressional elections in 1894. That same year, Populist supporter Jacob Coxey led an army of roughly four hundred workers on a march from Ohio to Washington to demand government jobs for the unemployed. The year 1894 also saw the publication of *Coin's Financial School*, a national bestseller that made a dramatic appeal for the unlimited government purchase of silver, a plan commonly called "free silver." Populists' demands were on the rise.

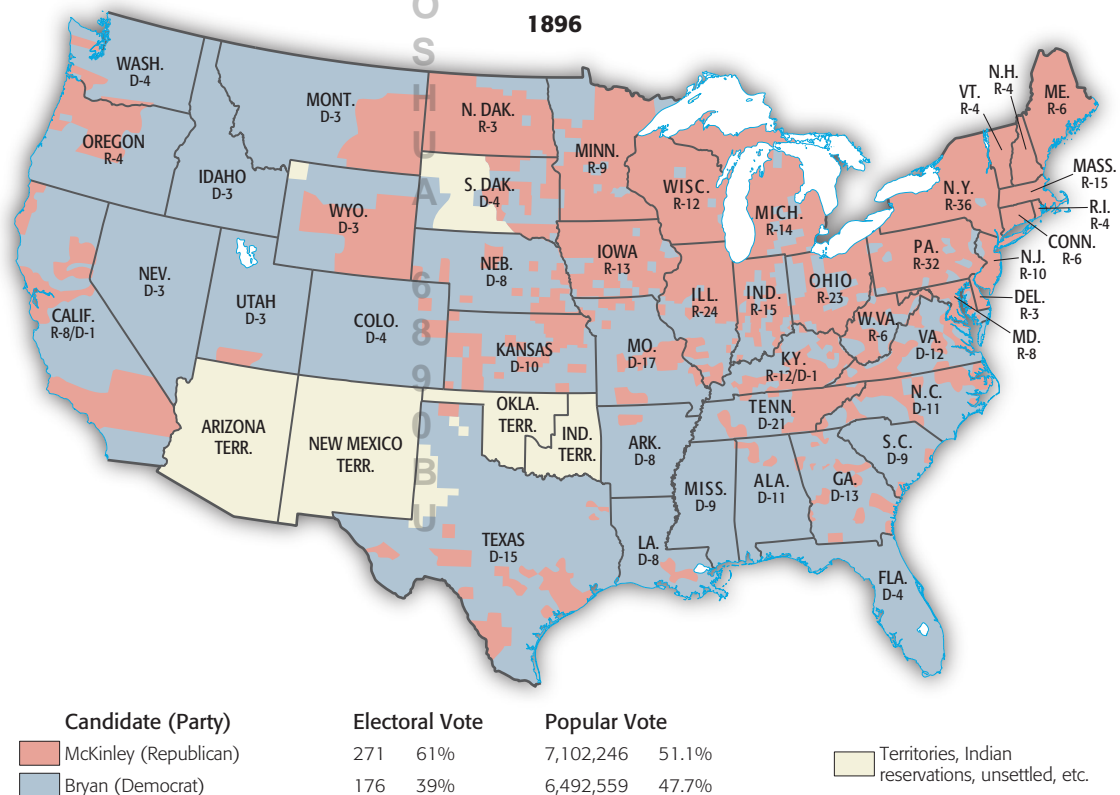
The Presidential Election of 1896

The mainstream popularity of currency reform, however, proved to be a double-edged sword for the Populists. In the 1896 presidential election (Map 18.2), Democratic nominee William Jennings Bryan was a charismatic thirty-six-year-old Nebraskan whose embrace of the free-silver position left the



Map 18.2. The Election of 1896

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Populists in a quandary. As a member of one of the two traditional political parties, Bryan stood the best chance of winning the election, but beyond currency reform, he was not interested in Populist issues such as grain storage and debt relief. Yet a separate Populist candidate would likely split the vote for Bryan, thus handing victory to Republican nominee William McKinley, who favored the gold standard; McKinley's election was the worst possible outcome for the Populists. Faced with this prospect, the Populist Party nominated Bryan for president and Tom Watson for vice president.

The election was one of the most impassioned in American history and ended badly for the Democrats and the Populists. Bryan, whose free-silver "Cross of Gold" speech ("you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold") is one of the most vivid political speeches in American history, never appealed to the largest voting bloc in the Northeast: urban immigrant workers. These workers actually benefited from deflation's low prices because they did not have large debts, and many felt alienated by Bryan's evangelical Protestantism. Thus by supporting Bryan, the Populists had helped prevent a union of laboring people across the nation. In the end, Bryan carried most of the South and West, but Republican votes in the urban Northeast led to his stunning defeat. McKinley gained the presidency, beginning a fourteen-year Republican reign in office and ending the political stalemate that had marked the previous two decades.

The Vanishing of the Populists

After 1896, the Populists' mass movement declined. In the South, southern Democrats beat them back with calls for white solidarity, and indeed, the Democrats' fear of the racial collaboration evidenced by the Populist Movement led to a rapid increase in the speed of African American disenfranchisement. More importantly to the demise of the Populists, though, was the fact that the long deflationary trend for farmers that had been ongoing since the end of the Civil War finally broke in 1897, allowing many farmers to begin to prosper. When Bryan ran for president again in 1900, he lost even more emphatically than he had in 1896. Nevertheless, despite their political decline, many of the less radical goals of the Populists were achieved in the twentieth century, including the direct election of senators, low-interest government loans for farmers, federal regulation of railroad rates, and regulation of the money supply.

 Was the original Wizard of Oz a Populist parable? Find out!

Looking Ahead . . .

The Industrial Revolution affected each region of the United States differently. The North became one of the most industrialized regions in the world, confronting the challenges of immigration, urbanization, and the labor movement. Many southerners, meanwhile, attempted to transform their region into a smaller, more humane industrialized hub, but instead fell back into the racial disparities that had long been part of the region's identity. Americans in the West took more and more of that region away from American Indians, as homesteaders and corporate farmers tapped into the soil in order to provide much of the raw materials for the Industrial Age.

All Americans confronted numerous challenges in adapting to the new era. The land did not always prosper. Racism and fear of outsiders provoked reactionary political responses. And northern businessmen lost interest in the regions they exploited once they felt they had tapped their economic potential. Often frustrated by how state and federal governments were not addressing their economic needs, farmers from the West and South combined under the name of the Populists to challenge America's industrial order. Meanwhile, workers came together to fashion the modern labor movement in an effort to protest the most egregious disparities of the new Industrial Age. The Populists and the workers did not achieve most of their goals, but the issues they brought forward—and the radical politics they threatened to usher in—would be central to the third, most successful wave of reformers responding to the Industrial Revolution. It is to those reformers, the Progressives, that we now turn.

What else was happening . . .

1876	A horse named Comanche is the only survivor from the losing side in the Battle of Little Bighorn.
1885	The first modern hamburger is made in Seymour, Wisconsin.
1890	Pharmacist Caleb Bradham produces "Brad's Drink" as a digestive aid and energy booster; in 1898 it would be renamed Pepsi-Cola.
1893	The melody for "Happy Birthday to You" is copyrighted.



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