



# CHAPTER 6

## Cities, Immigrants, and Farmers

**SS.912.A.3.1** Analyze the economic challenges to American farmers and farmers' responses to these challenges in the mid to late 1800s.

**SS.912.A.3.6** Analyze changes that occurred as the United States shifted from an agrarian to an industrial society.

**SS.912.A.3.7** Compare the experience of European immigrants in the east to that of Asian immigrants in the west (the Chinese Exclusion Act, Gentlemen's Agreement with Japan).

**SS.912.A.3.11** Analyze the impact of political machines in United States cities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

**SS.912.G.4.2** Use geographic terms and tools to analyze the push/pull factors contributing to human migration within and among places.

**SS.912.G.4.3** Use geographic terms and tools to analyze the effects of migration both on the place of origin and destination, including border areas.

### Names and Terms You Should Know

Urbanization

Immigrant

Political machine

Assembly Hall

Opium

Immigrants

Immigrants

Island

Island

Ghetto

Americanization

Chinese Exclusion Act

Gentlemen's Agreement

Nativism

Sherman Silver Purchase Act

Grange Movement

Granger Laws

*Munn v. Illinois*

*Wabash v. Illinois*

Interstate Commerce Act

Populist Party

Omaha Platform

William Jennings Bryan

"Cross of Gold" Speech



# Florida "Keys" to Learning

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1. The rise of industry led to urbanization: the movement of people from the countryside to cities. The growth of cities posed new problems: (1) traffic congestion; (2) overcrowding and slums; (3) inadequate garbage collection and sewage treatment; and (4) vast differences in wealth, sharpening social antagonisms.

2. The problems of cities led to the rise of political machines like Tammany Hall in New York. The machine, usually led by a "Boss" like Boss Tweed, provided services to immigrants and the poor. The machine then encouraged immigrants and the poor to vote for its candidates. Officials elected by the machine made huge fortunes by charging excessive amounts on public contracts or receiving "kickbacks."

3. The "Old Immigrants" had come from Great Britain, Ireland and Germany before 1880. The "New Immigrants" came from Southern and Eastern Europe (Poland, Russia, Italy, Greece) after 1880. Most were Catholic, Jewish, or Greek Orthodox. Many spoke no English and were desperately poor.

4. Steamship companies made coming to America more affordable. Poorer immigrants travelled "steerage" class. Europeans in steerage class were processed at Ellis Island, where they could be sent back if they did not pass a medical examination. After 1910, Asians were processed on Angel Island in San Francisco Bay, where they often faced long delays—sometimes for several months. Most immigrants went to live in ethnic neighborhoods in cities, known as "ghettos," where they lived with others speaking the same language and practicing the same traditions. Usually the children of the immigrants were the first to be "Americanized."

5. Asian immigrants faced special challenges. Chinese men began arriving after the California Gold Rush, and later to work on the railroads. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 prohibited almost all immigration from China.

Japanese Americans began arriving at the end of the century; their immigration was cut off by the Gentlemen's Agreement (1907) between Japan and the United States.

6. Nativists believed that white, Protestant, native-born Americans were superior to others, and that immigrants with other cultural traits were undesirable.

7. In the late 19th century, most Americans were still farmers. They began experiencing difficulties when food prices fell even though their costs remained high. Farmers organized into social and political groups to meet these challenges. The Grange Movement was a national association of farmers' social clubs, which served social and educational purposes.

8. Grangers entered state legislatures and passed laws to regulate grain elevators and railroads. The Supreme Court upheld state regulation of a grain elevator in *Munn v. Illinois* (1877). It overruled a state law regulating railroad rates in *Wabash v. Illinois* (1886) on the grounds that only Congress could regulate interstate commerce. Congress passed the Interstate Commerce Act in 1887, the first federal law to regulate business practices.

8. The Populist Party was formed in the early 1890s to represent the interests of farmers and workers. The "Omaha Platform" of 1892 included many far-reaching proposals that were later adopted, direct election of U.S. senators, a secret ballot, a progressive income tax, a national currency, and a national bank.

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In this chapter, you will learn about some of the changes that occurred as America shifted from an agrarian to an industrial society.

## Cities

One of the most important effects of America's Second Industrial Revolution was the explosive growth of cities. In 1865, most Americans lived in the countryside. By 1920, half of all Americans lived in cities. New York, Chicago and Philadelphia had over a million residents. This movement of people from the countryside into the city is known as urbanization.

### The Reasons for Urbanization

Why did so many people move into cities in these years? Both "push" and "pull" factors contributed to urbanization:

- ▶ Railroads and improved roads made it easier for people to move to cities. Cities grew with special rapidity at railroad "hubs" like Chicago

and Atlanta, where goods had to be loaded and unloaded to change their routes or forms of transportation.

- ▶ Many people were attracted by the cultural opportunities and variety of city life. They sought the convenience and pleasures of music halls, museums, libraries and universities.
- ▶ The rise of factories and the needs of growing urban populations created more jobs. At the same time, farm machinery meant not as many laborers were needed to grow food on farms. This caused people to move to cities in search of work.

## The Historian's Apprentice

- ▶ Use the Internet to research a large city close to where you live. When did it first become a city? What factors caused its population to grow?



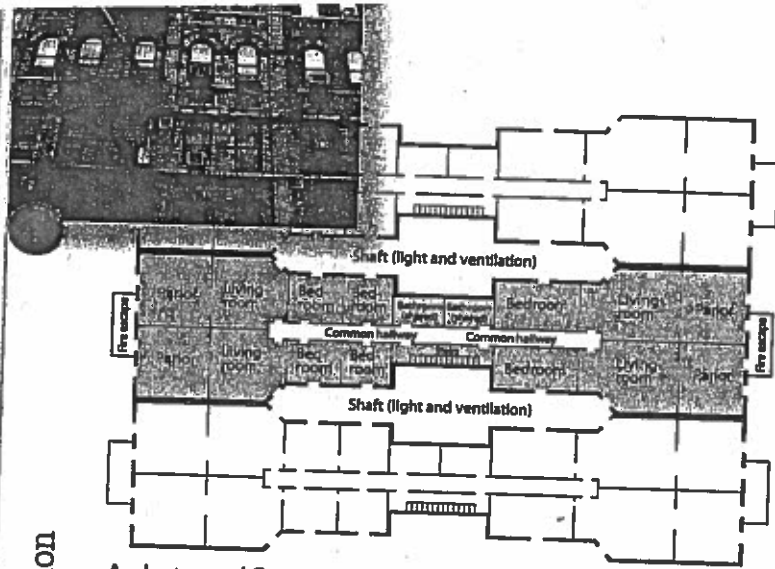
City	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910
New York*	1,338,391	1,772,962	2,321,644	3,437,202	4,766,883
Philadelphia	674,022	847,170	1,046,964	1,293,697	1,549,008
St. Louis	310,864	350,518	451,770	575,238	687,029
Chicago	298,977	503,185	1,099,850	1,698,575	2,185,283
Baltimore	267,354	332,313	434,439	508,957	558,485
Boston	250,526	362,839	448,477	560,892	670,585
Cincinnati	216,239	255,139	296,908	325,902	363,591
San Francisco	149,473	233,959	298,997	342,782	416,912

\* Includes Brooklyn

### Cities Face New Problems

American cities grew so rapidly that municipal authorities often could not deal adequately with all the needs. Many cities lacked sufficient hospitals,

police forces, public schools, fire departments, and street-cleaning and garbage-collection services for the large influx of people.



A photo and floorplan of a tenement row.

### Overcrowding and slums

As workers poured into the inner city in search of jobs, the middle classes moved out of the industrial districts for better housing. Middle-class homes in city centers were converted into tenements—low-cost rental housing barely meeting minimal living requirements. Whole families were crowded into single-room apartments, often without heat or lighting. Many families shared a single toilet.

### Lack of Sanitation and Pollution

In the 1870s, most cities lacked sewer systems. Raw sewage sometimes flowed into sources of drinking water. People died from epidemics of cholera or typhoid, spread from contaminated water. The lack of ventilation in tenement housing also contributed to the spread of disease. Garbage-collection and street-cleaning services were generally inadequate. Factories and railroads polluted the air, water, and ground with smoke, ashes, and chemicals. These problems were only gradually eliminated as cities built sewer systems and took other steps to improve public health.

### Traffic Congestion

Until the turn of the century, horse-drawn cars crowded the streets of larger cities, making movement difficult when people traveled to and from work. Most cities had developed hap-



hazardly and their streets were often not wide enough for the increased traffic. This problem was gradually reduced by the introduction of the cable car, the electric trolley, and the electric subway for urban transport.

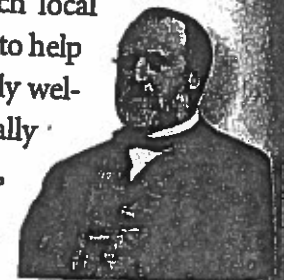
### Vast Differences in Wealth

In American cities, the very rich often lived just around the corner from the very poor. Rich city-dwellers spent lavish amounts of money on parties, clothes, and other luxury items just to display their wealth. They also built walls and hired guards to protect themselves. The very proximity of the rich and poor increased the tensions of city-life and made it all the more difficult for the poor to endure their squalid conditions.

### Political Corruption

Many American cities were run by “political machines.” A political machine is an organization, usually controlled by a strong leader or “boss,” that gets citizens to vote for its candidates on election day. People worked for the “machine” in exchange for political favors and other rewards.

In the 19th century, political bosses provided jobs and services to immigrants and other poor residents in return for their votes. The political machine then used its control of city government to make profits by overcharging on city contracts. It might overcharge on construction or for other services. The most famous political machine was Tammany Hall in New York City. Founded in 1789, Tammany Hall named and elected mayors and other government officials of New York City from the 1850s to the 1930s. Tammany Hall assigned its own “ward boss” to each local district of the city (known as a *ward*), to help gather votes. Tammany Hall especially welcomed Irish immigrants, who generally supported its candidates. Boss Tweed, the most corrupt politician of his day, amassed a personal fortune from city contracts and “kickbacks.”

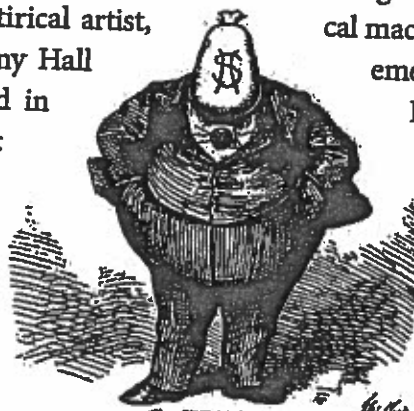


William Marcy “Boss” Tweed

Another Tammany Hall member, George Washington Plunkitt, was a New York State legislator. He made a fortune by buying up property he knew the government was about to purchase, and then selling it

at exorbitant prices. Plunkitt distinguished between "dishonest graft," which was only for personal gain, and "honest graft" for the benefit of one's party and state as well as oneself.

Tammany Hall became the object of reformers' attacks. Washington Gladden, a Protestant pastor and editor of a religious newspaper, condemned Boss Tweed. Thomas Nast, the satirical artist, attacked Boss Tweed and Tammany Hall in his political cartoons, published in *Harper's Weekly* and *The New York Times*. Tweed complained that his voters could not read but they were moved by Nast's drawings. The inability of Tweed's political machine to prevent a city riot in 1871 turned New York's elite against him, and Tweed was



The "BRAINS"  
That achieved victory at the Rochester Democratic Convention

arrested later in the year. After a series of trials and an escape to Spain, Tweed was returned to the United States and finally died in jail in 1878.

For all their shortcomings, the bosses and their machines did provide important social services to those in need at a time when government's role in resolving social problems was strictly limited. Political machines lent money, provided jobs, and gave emergency assistance for food, coal, or rent.

Boss Tweed, for example, provided jobs to Irish laborers and helped them to complete their applications for becoming American citizens. Tweed and his followers also encouraged the uptown expansion of New York City and the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge, and arranged a generous grant of land to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

## The Historian's Apprentice

Use the Internet to research the impact of political machines. Select one American city in the late 19th century and investigate its "political machine." Present your findings in the form of a short oral report or PowerPoint presentation to your class.

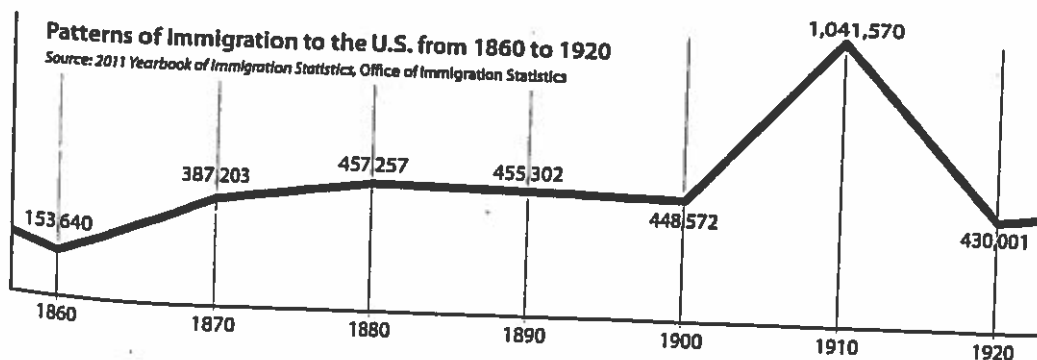
## Immigrants

The industrialization of America and the rapid growth of cities were greatly spurred by a flood of immigrants to American shores.

### Shifting Patterns of Immigration

The United States is unique in that most of its citizens are descended from immigrants. Historically,

the migration of people to the United States has resulted from a combination of "push" and "pull" factors: conditions in immigrants' home countries propelled them to leave, while conditions in the United States attracted them to come here.



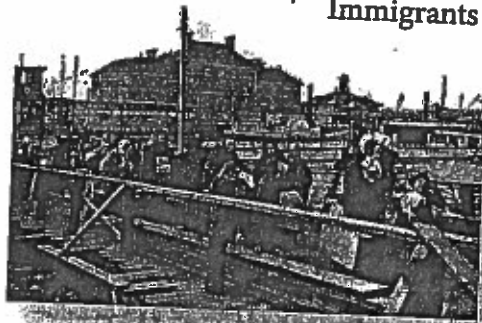


Depiction of mother and children during the Irish potato famine

The "Old Immigrants" generally came to escape religious and political persecution or to find new economic opportunities. Most spoke English. Often they came to escape great hardships. For example, the Irish potato famine led to a mass exodus from Ireland to America in the 1840s.

### The "New Immigrants," 1880-1924

Existing patterns of immigration changed in the 1880s. Conditions in Western Europe improved, while lower transportation costs brought migration to America within the grasp of other Europeans. The "New Immigrants" came chiefly from Southern and Eastern Europe, especially Austria-Hungary, Italy, Russia, and Greece. Italians, Poles, Jews, and Greeks came in large numbers. The "New Immigrants" were generally Catholic, Jewish or Orthodox Christian rather than Protestant. They spoke little or no English and had different appearances and habits from Northern Europeans. Many were extremely poor



Most "New Immigrants," however, simply came to escape grinding poverty. In their own countries, land and wealth were controlled by small elites and most people were desperately poor. Because of cheaper steamship travel, many could now afford the voyage to the United States. There were no legal restrictions on European immigration to America at that time. Letters from relatives and accounts in newspapers spread optimistic reports of the benefits of American life. Advertisements from steamship companies selling tickets, railroads selling land grants, and industrialists recruiting labor also attracted newcomers.

Immigrants were drawn by the promise of greater freedom, higher standards of living, and economic opportunity. By 1900, more than 13% of those living in the United States were foreign-born.

## The Historian's Apprentice

Make a Venn diagram comparing the characteristics of the "Old" and "New" Immigrants.

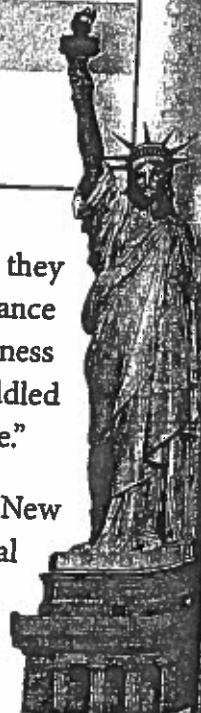
### Establishing a New Life

#### The Voyage Across

Usually the "New Immigrants" traveled by train to a port in Europe and then crossed the Atlantic in the cheapest class (known as "steerage"), sleeping in spaces without windows below the water level. Many carried their belongings in a single bag.

Most landed in New York Harbor, where they passed the Statue of Liberty, a gift from France that came to symbolize America's willingness to accept the "tired" and "poor . . . huddled masses" of other lands, "yearning to be free."

After 1892, most immigrants arriving in New York City landed at Ellis Island for medical





Thousands of immigrants arrived at Ellis Island every week

examinations and to be processed for admission to the United States. They could be sent back to Europe for poor health, especially signs of tuberculosis (TB), or for other reasons, such as a criminal history, but most were admitted to the United States. Many immigrants were given new names by officials who could not pronounce their old ones. Once admitted, a large number of the immigrants remained in New York City; others took trains to join relatives and friends in towns and cities across America.

### Challenges in the New Land

The vast majority of the “New Immigrants” settled in the cities of the Northeast and Midwest, where they took unskilled jobs. A few, especially those coming from Scandinavia and Germany, went to farms on the Great Plains. They all faced many challenges:

- ▶ They were unfamiliar with American customs and ways—from foods and kitchen implements to voting in elections.
- ▶ They could only find employment at unskilled jobs for long hours with low pay.

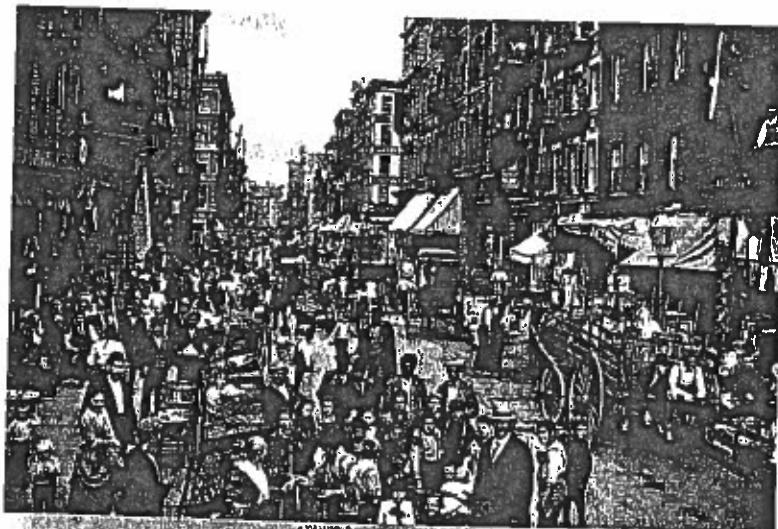
To cope with these problems, immigrants usually settled down in urban neighborhoods with other immigrants of the same nationality, known to historians as “ghettos.” Different parts of the Lower East Side of New York City, for example, were Jewish or German (*Kleindeutschland*), while Chinatown and Little Italy sprang up on opposite sides of Canal Street. In these ethnic neighborhoods, immigrants could converse with one another in their native language. Here they found churches and synagogues they could attend, and they helped one another to find housing and work. Often they had friends and

relatives from the “Old Country” in the same neighborhood. They had groceries with ethnic foods, clothing stores with their traditional garments, and their own banks and insurance companies. There might even be one or more community newspapers printed in their native language. The immigrants felt comfortable surrounded by those who spoke the same language, followed the same customs, and shared the same experiences. But the fact that they lived in these ethnic ghettos also meant that they were cut off from the American mainstream.

### The Process of “Americanization”

Only gradually did the immigrants become “Americanized”—*assimilated into mainstream American society by learning its values and behaviors*. Often it was the children of the immigrants, and not the immigrants themselves, who were the first to become “Americanized.”

While some adult immigrants attended night school to learn English, most were too busy working or caring for their families to spend time learning a new language. It was left to the children of the immigrants to attend public schools, learn English, and become familiar with American customs. Immigrant children were eventually “assimilated”—or made similar to other Americans. The process of assimilation was frequently accompanied by conflict between generations. The immigrants and their



Mulberry Street in New York City was home to Italian immigrants

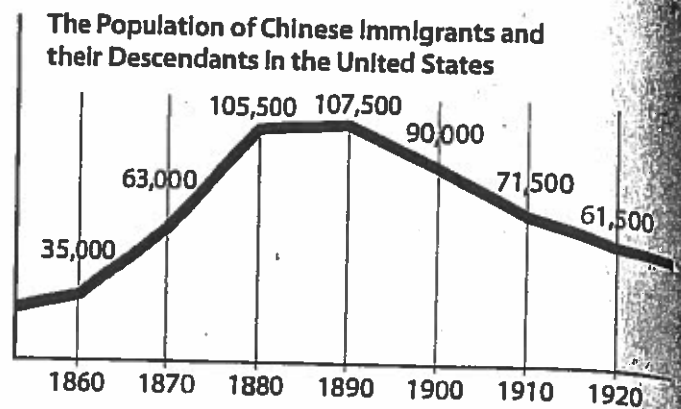
children had to choose which new customs to accept and which older traditions to preserve. Often different generations did not agree on the proper mix. Immigrant children, for example, might be embarrassed by the clothes or speech of their elders. Their parents might insist on arranged marriages, while the children insisted on finding their own marriage partners, according to the American custom.

## Immigrants from Asia

### Chinese Americans.

Apart from three Chinese sailors who arrived by ship in 1785, and three Chinese residents listed in the Census of 1830, there is little evidence of Chinese immigration to the United States before the discovery of gold in California in 1848. "Pushed" by warfare and economic hard times in China, and "pulled" by the lure of gold, Chinese immigrants began arriving in "Gold Mountain"—California—shortly thereafter. At first, most worked panning for gold. Just as the gold was running out, Chinese workers were recruited as laborers for the construction of the transcontinental railroad. Men in China left their villages, borrowed money from a broker for the journey, and repaid the broker's loan with earnings in America. Most left their wives and families behind. Railroad workers earned wages in America ten times higher than they could in China. They worked tirelessly, lived in meager dwellings, and sent most of their pay back to their families in China. Charles Crocker, one of the railroad owners, noted that "wherever we put them, we found them good, and they worked themselves into our favor to such an extent that if we found we were in a hurry for a job, it was better to put Chinese on at once."

In 1868, the United States signed the Treaty of Burlingame, permitting the "free migration" of Chinese immigrants to America. After the railroad was completed, many Chinese immigrants moved to San Francisco, where they lived in "Chinatown" and

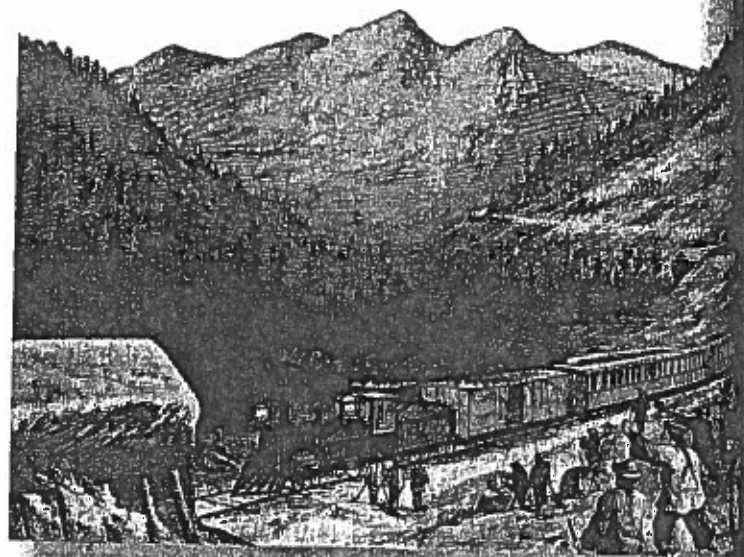


worked as tailors, cigar-makers and at other jobs; others worked as field hands, dug wine cellars in vineyards, or labored at other tasks. Because of discrimination, many left their jobs and started their own small businesses—especially Chinese laundries.



Chinese gold miners in California

Like the "New Immigrants" from Europe, the Chinese looked and dressed differently and spoke an alien language. They often lived in "Chinatowns" in a society of men where prostitution, gambling and other vices flourished. It was feared that a "Chinese invasion" would threaten the "racial purity" of traditional America. Prejudice against Chinese immigrants found expression in politics, the laws, and the courts. In the 1850s, George Hall, a white man, was



Chinese workers on the Central Pacific, part of the transcontinental railroad



convicted in California of murdering a Chinese resident based on the testimony of three Chinese witnesses. The California Supreme Court ruled that Chinese individuals could not testify in court and that the evidence of the three witnesses was inadmissible. The conviction was reversed and Hall, the murderer, was set free. Decisions like *People v. Hall* gave license to others to abuse the Chinese.

The U.S. Naturalization Act of 1870 permitted "whites and persons of African descent" to become U.S. citizens, but denied Asians this same right: only by being born in the United States could a person with Asian parents qualify as an American citizen. The Page Act of 1875 further prohibited the immigration of "undesirables" from Asia (such as convicted criminals or prostitutes).

In the Presidential election of 1876, both candidates promised to introduce laws ending Chinese immigration to the United States. In 1882, Congress then passed the Chinese Exclusion Act. This law placed a ban on the immigration of Chinese skilled and unskilled laborers to the United States for a period of ten years. Afterwards, the act was periodically

renewed. All Chinese already living in the United States had to obtain a special certificate before leaving for a visit to China, or they would not be permitted to re-enter the United States. Six years later, the law was amended so that any Chinese who left could never return. As a result of the Chinese Exclusion Act,

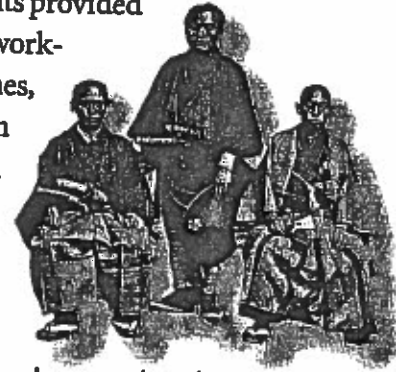
many Chinese residents in America were permanently separated from their families in China.

After 1910, the limited Chinese immigration that remained was processed at Angel Island, a facility in San Francisco similar to Ellis Island. However, Chinese immigrants generally received worse treatment than those arriving from Europe. They might be kept on Angel Island in prison-like conditions

for days, weeks or even months before being permitted to enter the United States.

### Japanese Americans

Japanese immigration to the United States began shortly after the Meiji Restoration (1868) caused major unrest and social change in Japan. "Pushed" by changes in Japan and "pulled" by the lure of greater economic opportunities in America, the first wave of Japanese settlers was sponsored by the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Farm Company. They arrived in California in 1869. The 1870 Census showed 55 Japanese living in the United States; there were still only 148 in 1880, and just 2,038 by 1890. Similar to the Chinese, the first Japanese immigrants provided a source of cheap labor, working on farms and in mines, and building railroads in the northwest. Almost all of the earliest Japanese immigrants were men. Like the Chinese, they were unable to become naturalized citizens.



Japanese Immigrants—1860s

Because of racist prejudices, American leaders finally negotiated a "Gentlemen's Agreement" with the Japanese government in 1907. The Japanese government agreed to prevent the further immigration of workers from Japan to the United States. An exception was made for the wives and children of those Japanese already in America. Japanese men living in the United States could therefore return to Japan, get married, and come back to America with their wives. Those who could not afford the trip across the Pacific sometimes arranged marriages by exchanging photographs. Their weddings took place according to Japanese custom, even though the bride and groom were in different places and had never even seen one another. In this way, some Japanese women, known as "picture brides," became the wives of men in the United States and were able to immigrate to join their husbands.

## The Historian's Apprentice

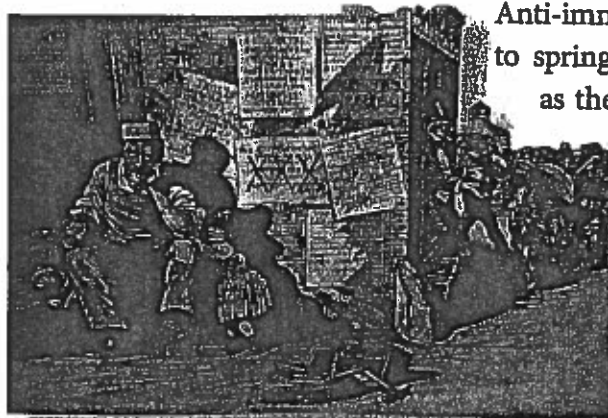
- ▶ Compare the experiences of the “New Immigrants” from Southern and Eastern Europe with those of Chinese and Japanese immigrants coming from Asia. Consider why they came, how they came here, what they did, and how they were treated. Present your results in the form of a table or chart. Use the Internet or your school library to obtain additional information.
- ▶ Look on the Internet or in your school or public library for pictures showing how immigrants from Europe and Asia lived in their home countries and in the United States between 1870 and 1920. Make a slide show to share with your classmates. What conclusions can you draw from these pictures about the immigrant experience?

### The Rise of Nativism

Before World War I, there were no limits on European immigration to the United States. The Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor symbolized the spirit of welcome. Americans felt that their country was so large that it could easily absorb newcomers. Because America was populated mainly by immigrants and their descendants, many Americans felt a strong sense of empathy towards new arrivals at its shores. Employers welcomed immigration as a source of cheap labor.

The huge flood of immigration at the end of the 19th century, however, led to a rise in **nativism**—the belief that native-born Americans were superior to others, and that immigrants and their diverse cultural influences were undesirable. Nativists believed that the only “true” Americans were native-born, white, English-speaking and Protestant—characteristics that a majority of American citizens shared at that time. Nativists looked at other races, religions, and nationalities as inferior. They viewed the “New

Immigrants” as dirty and unhealthy, and feared that they would lower American standards of living, spread disease, and bring down the wages of other workers. Nativists further blamed the immigrants for selling their votes to political “bosses,” undermining American democracy and spreading corruption. The “New Immigrants,” they concluded, could never be assimilated into mainstream American life.



1880s cartoon showing a skilled American worker being displaced by newly arriving immigrants

Anti-immigration societies began to spring up across America, such as the “Immigration Restriction League.” In California, prejudice against Asians led to riots even before the Chinese Exclusion Act. The Ku Klux Klan also re-emerged as a racist and nativist organization that favored “white supremacy.” Klan members disliked Afri-

can Americans, Catholics, Jews and immigrants. Nativism would eventually lead to the passage of federal laws severely restricting immigration. You will learn more about these laws later in this book.

# Farmers

As late as 1900, four out of ten Americans still lived on farms. These farmers, like other Americans, were greatly affected by the Second Industrial Revolution. Most of them were no longer self-sufficient: they were market-oriented and grew crops or raised livestock for sale in America's burgeoning towns and cities. They sold their wheat, cotton, corn, beef or milk to others for cash and then used the money that they earned to buy other foods and goods. This made American farmers extremely vulnerable to changes in market prices for crops and livestock.

In the late 19th century, farmers experienced increasing difficulties as food prices dropped lower and lower. By 1890, the average price of wheat was less than one-third what it had been in 1870. Farmers blamed the railroads and bankers for their troubles. Because so many Americans were still farmers, their discontent had important social and political effects.

## The Problems of Farmers, 1870–1920

Most farmers found their incomes were steadily falling, even as their expenses remained high. Why were crop and livestock prices dropping?

### Agricultural Overproduction

The main reason for the drop in crop prices was overproduction. The opening of the Great Plains had greatly increased the number of acres under cultivation. At the same time, improvements in machinery and farming techniques had increased the amount grown on each acre. The result of all this was that American

farmers were producing more crops than ever before. With so many crops, food prices naturally fell. City-dwellers benefitted from greater farm production and cheaper food. But many farmers were driven out of business.

### International Competition

Railroad and steamship transportation created a new international market for food crops. Wheat-growers faced new competition from Canada, Argentina, Russia and Australia. Less of the American crop could be sold abroad. At home, even when American farmers had bad years because of poor weather, imported foreign grain kept prices low.

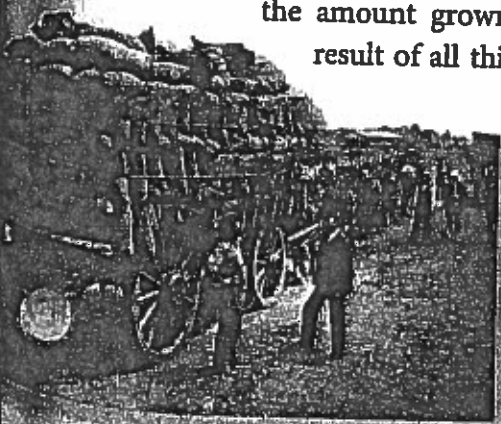
### The Scarcity of Money

Another reason for the drop in food prices was the scarcity of money. Because of fluctuations in gold and silver prices, the government stopped minting silver dollars. Yet, as the population of the United States and the value of its goods and services grew, there was no longer enough money in circulation. This caused some prices to drop.

Meanwhile, even as their own prices dropped, American farmers continued to face high production costs and other difficulties, making it ever harder for them to make ends meet.

### The Profits of "Middlemen"

Farmers usually did not sell their crops directly to urban consumers but to "middlemen" who connected them with urban markets. These middlemen were brokers or grain elevator owners, who bought crops at harvest time when prices were low. The farmer, who needed cash, had no choice but to sell to the broker or grain elevator operator at a low price. The middlemen made profits by selling later to urban markets when prices were higher. In some cases, farmers paid grain elevator owners to store their grain. Often the elevator owner charged exorbitant rates. Farmers resented middlemen for taking a share of what they thought should be their own profit.



A farmer and grain dealer negotiating price of wheat

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### High Shipping Costs

Farmers who shipped crops to grain elevators or urban markets had to pay for shipping by the railroads. Rates were often extremely high. Railroad companies generally charged less to carry freight over a longer than a shorter distance. This was because there were usually competing railroad lines for “long hauls” between major cities. Railroad companies tried to make up for what they lost in the cutthroat competition for long hauls by raising their rates for “short hauls”—shipments from small communities served by only one railroad. Railroad companies knew that whatever rate they charged, local farmers would have to pay it to reach their markets. In effect, a single railroad usually enjoyed a monopoly on local shipping.

### The High Cost of Manufactured Products

While farmers were paid low prices for their crops, they paid high prices for manufactured or processed goods like kerosene, fertilizer, farm machinery, clothing and furniture. A high protective tariff kept out many cheaper foreign goods. In some cases, monopoly practices in American industry also kept the prices of manufactured products artificially high. Trusts kept up the prices of fertilizer, barbed wire, and harvesters.

### Farm Debt and the Cost of Money

Farmers often borrowed money to buy land, make improvements, or purchase farm machinery. If the harvest was poor, farmers also took out loans simply to survive. They used their own farms as security for these loans. Banks and other lenders saw farmers as poor credit risks and charged them

high rates of interest. If a family could not meet its payments, the bank might foreclose and seize the family farm.

Because most farmers were in debt, they favored a policy of “cheap money,”—that is, *inflated* currency. If prices rose, the real value of a farmer’s payments to a bank to pay off his debt would be less.

**Inflation** occurs when prices rise—for example, when the price of a quart of milk increases from \$2.00 to \$3.00. The quart of milk is the same, but the money has changed its value. Because of inflation, the same amount of money (\$2.00) has actually become worth less. To remember inflation, think of blowing up a balloon. Pumping air into the balloon causes it to increase in size—or *inflate*. Inflation occurs when prices increase, just like the size of a balloon when pumped with air.

Unfortunately, just the opposite of what the farmers wanted was happening: because of the scarcity of money (and other factors), food prices were continuing to drop. This **deflation** made farmers’ loan payments increasingly hard to pay.

Many farmers believed that if the government would just print more paper money or flood the economy with silver coins and paper money backed by silver as well as gold, prices would rise again. This would then make it possible for them to raise their own prices and to repay their debts.



For example, a farmer might buy tools and seed for \$10.00. He borrows the money from the bank. Suppose the farmer needs to sell 100 bushels of wheat to earn \$10.00 to repay the loan. If prices go down, he will need to sell more wheat to earn the same \$10.00 to pay off the loan. If prices go up, it will become easier for him to pay the loan because he can sell less wheat to make \$10.00.

With recent mining discoveries of silver, it was hoped that the government could in fact make more silver coins and silver-backed paper money. In 1890, Congress passed the Sherman Silver Purchase Act. This law required the federal government to purchase a large amount of silver each month. Supporters predicted this would lead to an increase in the amount of money in circulation. However, the law was repealed in 1893 when the country entered into a depression.

### Natural Disasters

In addition to these other problems, farmers were constantly subject to the forces of nature. A single bad year could wipe out the savings of many good years, increase the amount that a farmer borrowed, or even force a farmer to sell his land. In the 1880s, Southern cotton-growers suffered from the spread of boll weevils (*a type of beetle that eats cotton buds*), while wheat farmers on the Great Plains lost crops to grasshoppers and droughts (*lack of rainfall*).

### Rural Isolation

The problems of farm life were made worse by the psychological effects of isolation. A farming family worked long hours on the land, miles from neighbors and without the conveniences we have today, such as cars, telephones, radios, or televisions. Social life centered on market days and church services in the nearest small town. The problems of rural isolation and loneliness were especially acute on the vast Great Plains.

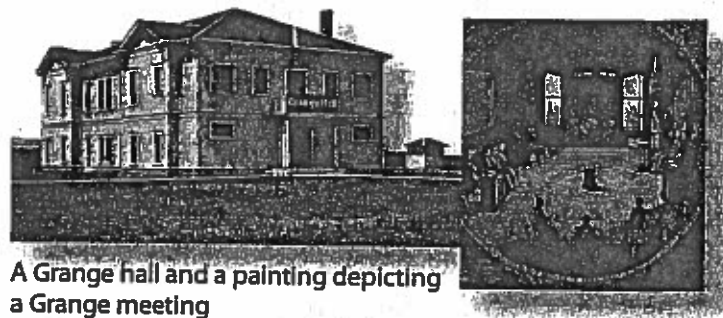
### Farmers Organize to Overcome Their Problems

In the last quarter of the 19th century, farmers united to overcome the challenges confronting them in an industrial society.

### The Grange Movement

In 1867, Oliver Hudson Kelley organized the "Grange Movement." (The name *grange* comes from the old French word for "barn.")

The Grange was a national association of farmers' social clubs. Kelley hoped to break the rural isolation of



A Grange hall and a painting depicting a Grange meeting

farmers and to spread information about new farming techniques. He wished to modernize farming by providing farmers with the same opportunities for education and social interaction that existed in cities. The Grangers organized picnics, lectures, and other social activities. Within ten years, the Grange had more than 1.5 million members.

Grangers tried to replace middlemen by forming their own "farmers' cooperatives." These cooperatives bought machinery, fertilizers, and manufactured goods in bulk at a discount. They also sold their crops directly to markets in towns and cities. But because of their lack of experience and expertise, most of these cooperatives eventually failed.

### Granger Laws

Once farmers had organized into Granger clubs, they quickly turned to politics. They especially blamed the railroad companies for their problems. In several states in the Midwest, Grangers elected candidates to their state legislature. These states passed new laws regulating railroad and grain storage rates.

The railroad companies protested bitterly against the "Granger laws," arguing that these new regulations took away the value of their property illegally, without "due process."

In *Munn v. Illinois* (1877), the U.S. Supreme Court upheld one of the "Granger laws" as constitutional. Illinois had passed a law regulating grain elevators. A grain elevator owner challenged the law as a violation of his private property. The Supreme Court ruled that a state government could regulate a private utility if that utility was serving the public interest.

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Nine years later, the Supreme Court limited this ruling. In *Wabash, St. Louis and Pacific Railroad v. Illinois* (1886), the Supreme Court held that state governments could not regulate railroads running through more than one state, since the Constitu-

tion had given the power to regulate interstate commerce exclusively to Congress. Since most railroads ran through several states, the *Wabash* decision invalidated many of the “Granger laws.”

## The Historian's Apprentice

*“[A] statute of a state, intended to regulate or to tax or to impose any other restriction upon the transmission of persons or property or telegraphic messages from one state to another, is not within that class of legislation which the states may enact in the absence of legislation by Congress, and that such statutes are void even as to that part of such transmission which may be within the state.”*

—U.S. Supreme Court, *Wabash, St. Louis, and Pacific Railroad v. Illinois* (1886)

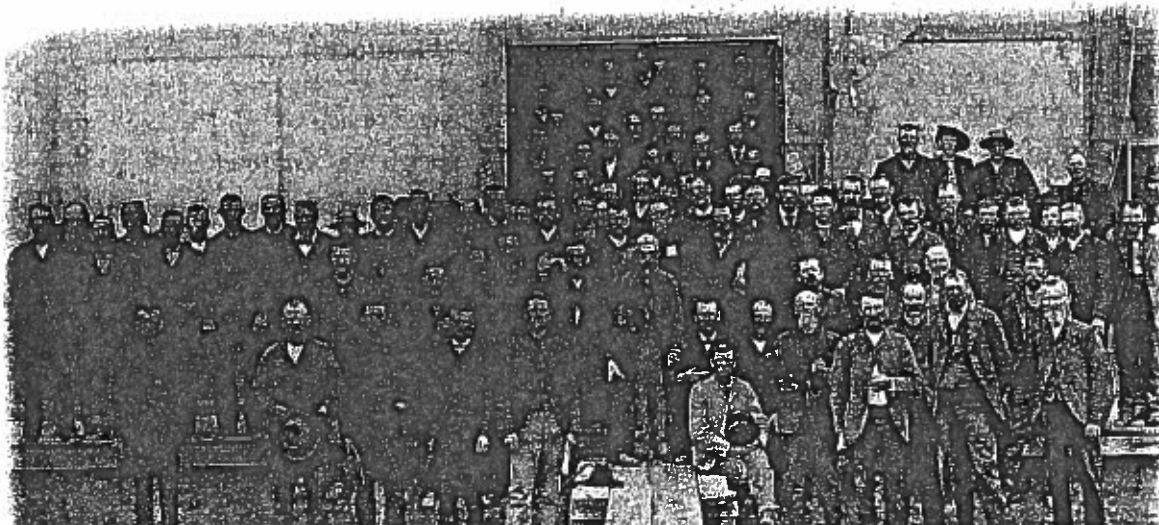
- ▶ Write a paragraph explaining, in your own words, why the U.S. Supreme Court ruled differently in the *Munn* and *Wabash* decisions.

### The Interstate Commerce Act (1887)

In reaction to the *Wabash* decision, Congress passed the Interstate Commerce Act only one year later. The act marked the first step towards federal regulation of unfair business practices. It prohibited giving different rates to different customers for hauling freight the same distance. It also banned price-fixing agreements (“pooling”) or charging more for “short hauls” than for “long hauls” along the same route. Railroad companies were required to publish their rates, which were to be “fair and reasonable.” An Interstate Commerce Commission was created to investigate complaints against railroads and to enforce the act. It was the first federal regulatory agency created to watch over an industry

### The Populist Party, 1892–1896

Even after passage of the Interstate Commerce Act, farmers continued to have difficulties. Farmers—mainly Grange members—formed regional political associations, known as “Farmers Alliances,” in the Northwest and the South. The Farmers Alliances generally focused on local politics. In the early 1890s, the leaders of the Farmers Alliances formed a new national political party—the “People’s Party”—better known as the Populist Party. The Populists were convinced that rich industrialists and bankers had a stranglehold on government, and that the Democratic and Republican Parties had both “sold out” to the banking interest. They further believed that bankers were using their control of government



to restrict the money supply so that their own gold would become even more valuable. To fight this conspiracy, the Populists wanted to unite all laboring men—both farmers and industrial workers.

### The Populist Platform of 1892

The Populists held a national convention at Omaha, Nebraska, in 1892. They nominated a candidate to the Presidency and drew up a party platform with many innovative proposals. The “Omaha Platform” contained many ideas that were later enacted into law.

In the election of 1892, the Populists elected five Senators and received more than a million votes for their Presidential candidate. Their main strong-

holds were areas where prices had dramatically dropped: cotton prices in the South, wheat prices in the Northwest, and silver in the Mountain states.

### The Election of 1896

The Depression of 1893 began only a few months after the election. Populists blamed the depression on the scarcity of money, which at that time was backed by gold. Without enough money, prices kept spiraling downwards. Free coinage of silver, the Populists reasoned, would increase the money available through bimetallism. This would raise farm prices and make farm loans easier to repay. Populist leaders focused their attention on this issue to attract “free silver” Republicans and Democrats to their party.

#### Key Provisions of the “Omaha Platform”

- ▶ Free and unlimited coinage of silver at a ratio of 16:1 (1 ounce of gold should be equal in value to 16 ounces of silver).
- ▶ The direct election of Senators, instead of their selection by state legislatures.
- ▶ Government ownership of railroads, telegraphs and telephones.
- ▶ The use of the secret ballot in elections.
- ▶ Introduction of a graduated (or progressive) income tax—taxing the wealthy at higher rates than others—to reduce the government’s dependence on tariffs for revenue.
- ▶ Postal saving banks, so that people would not need to rely on private banks to protect their savings.
- ▶ Use of the “initiative” and “referendum” to make politicians more responsive to the people.
- ▶ Restrictions on immigration.
- ▶ An eight-hour workday for industrial workers.
- ▶ Limit the Presidency to one term in office.
- ▶ Use government warehouses to store farm goods until food prices were higher.



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## The Historian's Apprentice

Which of these Populist proposals later passed into law and are still with us today?

*There are two ideas of government. There are those who believe that if you will only legislate to make the well-to-do prosperous, their prosperity will leak through on those below. The Democratic idea, however, has been that if you legislate to make the masses prosperous, their prosperity will find its way up through every class which rests upon them. You came to us and tell us that the great cities are in favor of the gold standard; we reply that the great cities rest upon our broad and fertile prairies. Burn down your cities and leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic; but destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in the country. Having behind us the producing masses of this nation and the world, supported by the commercial interests, the laboring interests, and the toilers everywhere, we will answer their demand for a gold standard by saying to them: 'You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns; you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.'*

—William Jennings Bryan, Speech at the Democratic National Convention

**The Democratic Convention.** The incumbent President, Grover Cleveland, was a Democrat. Many farmers and workers saw his policies, however, as increasingly conservative. As President, Cleveland had halted the government purchase of silver, had used federal troops to put down the Pullman Strike, and had failed to lower tariffs significantly. As a result, Democrats became divided. At the Democratic Convention of 1896, “free silver”

Democrats—those who thought the government should allow unlimited coinage of silver—defeated Cleveland’s supporters after a bitter struggle. William Jennings Bryan, a 36-year-old Congressman, won his party’s nomination after delivering his brilliant “Cross of Gold” speech, exalting the farmer and denouncing banking interests for attempting to “crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.”



William Jennings Bryan

The Democratic nomination of Bryan on a “free silver” platform placed Populist leaders in an awkward position. They decided to nominate Bryan too, rather than to divide the “free silver” vote. This brought Populists under the control of the Democratic Party and ended their independence as a separate party.

**The Election: McKinley versus Bryan.** Republicans nominated William McKinley, who favored the gold standard, a high protective tariff, and the non-interference of government in business. Behind McKinley stood the organizing ability of wealthy Ohio businessman Marcus Hanna. Hanna solicited money from large business owners and raised ten times as much campaign money as Bryan’s supporters. Carnegie, Rockefeller and J.P. Morgan were all frightened of Bryan and contributed to McKinley’s campaign. In the Northeast, many people blamed President Cleveland for the depression and looked upon the Democratic candidate, Bryan, as a lunatic. Hanna’s propaganda convinced workers that Bryan’s election would bring about a general economic collapse and cost them their jobs. Most newspapers also supported McKinley. In the West, people viewed the silver issue with religious devotion. Bryan campaigned throughout the country, giving more than 600 speeches. The election itself turned out to be very close. Bryan swept the South, the Great Plains, and the Rocky Mountain states, winning 6.5 million votes. But McKinley won the Northeast, the Midwest, and the Pacific states of California and Oregon—giving him 7 million votes and a majority of the electoral votes. Bryan ran for the Presidency again in 1900 and 1908, but lost each time. Although the Populists disbanded, many of their ideas were later adopted. You will learn about these changes in the next chapter.



## Cities

**Urbanization**—the movement of population from the countryside to cities

### Problems of Cities

- ▶ Overcrowding and slums—cheap tenement housing often lacked air ventilation or proper sanitation
- ▶ Traffic congestion—horse-drawn cars, trains, narrow streets
- ▶ Lack of garbage collection services and proper sewage—led to water contamination and diseases like cholera
- ▶ Vast differences in wealth—sharpened social antagonisms

**Political Machines—corruption—Example: Boss Tweed and Tammany Hall**

- ▶ The “Boss” and members of the machine provided various social services to the immigrants and the poor.
- ▶ The “political machine” encouraged immigrants and the poor to vote for its candidates.
- ▶ Officials elected by the “political machine” then charged excessive amounts on public contracts or received “kickbacks,” making huge fortunes.

## Immigration

**Before 1880:** “Old Immigrants” came from Great Britain, Ireland and Germany. Most people spoke English.

**1880–1924:** “New Immigrants”

- ▶ The “New Immigrants” came from Southern and Eastern Europe: Poland, Russia, Italy, Greece.
- ▶ Most were Catholic, Jewish, or Greek Orthodox. Many spoke no English. Most were desperately poor.
- ▶ They had different traditions than most “mainstream” Americans and faced prejudice and discrimination.

### Asian Immigrants

- ▶ Chinese men began arriving during the California Gold Rush and helped to build the transcontinental railroad in California. Afterwards, they faced prejudice and discrimination.
- ▶ The *Naturalization Law of 1870* prevented Asian immigrants from becoming naturalized citizens.
- ▶ The **Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)** banned almost all immigrants from China, and was the first restriction ever placed on immigration to the United States (other than against criminals or unhealthy persons).
- ▶ Japanese Americans began arriving at the end of the century; their immigration was cut off by the **Gentlemen’s Agreement (1907)** between Japan and the United States.

## The Immigrant Experience

**The Voyage:** Steamship companies made it more affordable to come to America.

**Admission:** After 1892, poorer Europeans in “steerage” class were processed at **Ellis Island**. They could be sent back if they did not pass a medical examination. After 1910, Asians generally were processed on **Angel Island** in San Francisco, where they faced even longer delays—sometimes for several months.

**Ethnic “Ghettos”:** Most immigrants went to live in ethnic neighborhoods in cities, known to historians as “ghettos.” There they lived with others who spoke the same language and practiced the same traditions.

**“Americanization”:** Usually the children of the immigrants were the first to be “Americanized”—or assimilated into “mainstream” society by learning the values and behaviors of American culture. By attending public schools, immigrant children learned English and American ways. This often led to conflict between generations.

**Nativism:** Nativists generally believed that white, Protestant native-born Americans were superior to others, and that immigrants and their diverse cultural influences were undesirable. Nativist feelings led to the **Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882**, and later restrictions on immigration in the 1920s.

## Farmers' Problems

In the late 19th century, a large number of Americans were still farmers, growing crops or raising livestock for sale. They began experiencing problems when food prices fell, even though their costs remained high.

### Why Food Prices Fell

- ▶ Agricultural overproduction
- ▶ International competition
- ▶ Scarcity of money kept food prices low

### Other Problems Faced by Farmers

- ▶ Profits of middlemen
- ▶ High shipping costs—unfair railroad rates
- ▶ High costs of manufactured products—protective tariffs and trusts
- ▶ Farmer indebtedness
- ▶ Natural disasters
- ▶ Rural isolation

## Farmers Organize

Farmers organized into social and political groups to meet these challenges.

**Grange Movement:** National association of farmers' social clubs—served social and educational purposes

**Farmers' Cooperatives:** Attempts by Grangers to set up their own businesses for buying and selling bulk

**Populist Party:** Grangers formed "Farmers' Alliances," which formed the Populist Party in the early 1890s—a new national political party to represent the common interests of farmers and workers.

## Granger Laws

- ▶ Grangers entered state legislatures and passed laws to regulate grain elevators and railroads.
- ▶ The Supreme Court upheld state regulation of a grain elevator in *Munn v. Illinois* (1877)
- ▶ The Supreme Court overruled a state law regulating railroad rates in *Wabash v. Illinois* (1886) on the grounds that only Congress could regulate interstate commerce.

### Interstate Commerce Act (1887)

- ▶ Passed by Congress after the *Wabash* decision.
- ▶ The first federal law to regulate business practices.
- ▶ Railroads could not give different rates for hauling the same freight the same distance.
- ▶ Railroads could not charge more for short hauls than long hauls.
- ▶ Congress set up a new agency, the *Interstate Commerce Commission*, to oversee enforcement of the act.

## The Populist Party

- ▶ **Populist Platform of 1892 ("Omaha Platform")**
  - Included many far-reaching proposals that were later adopted: direct election of U.S. Senators, secret ballot, progressive income tax, initiative and referendum procedures, eight-hour work day, restrictions on immigration.
  - Other ideas were never adopted: government ownership of railroads and utilities, postal savings banks, unlimited silver coinage.
- ▶ **William Jennings Bryan's "Cross of Gold" Speech**—Bryan chosen as Democratic Party nominee in 1896. Populist party follows suit rather than divide the "free silver" vote.
- ▶ 1896 Presidential election campaign: Populists and Democrats focused on "bimetallism"—basing money on silver as well as gold to raise prices and make it easier for farmers to repay their debts.
- ▶ Bryan lost to McKinley in a close election: Populists won support in the South, Great Plains and the Rocky Mountain states.

### Problems of Farmers

- ▶ Falling crop prices
- ▶ High costs for transport and storage
- ▶ Farmer debt

• Loss of farm jobs

Farmers

Urbanization

Cities

- New jobs
- Attraction of city life

### Problems of Cities

- ▶ Overcrowding and slums
- ▶ Traffic congestion
- ▶ Lack of public services
- ▶ Pollution and disease

### Farmers Organize

- ▶ Grange movement
- ▶ Granger laws
- ▶ Populists

# Changing America

### Political "machines"

- ▶ Provide services to immigrants in exchange for their votes
- ▶ Profit from control of city governments

Americanization—the role of schools

Nativism—dislike of foreigners

Immigration

Bosses

- ▶ Boss Tweed
- ▶ Tammany Hall

### European Immigrants

#### "Old" (before 1880)

- ▶ From Western Europe
- ▶ Most were English-speaking Protestants

#### "New" (1880–1924)

- ▶ From Southern and Eastern Europe
- ▶ Spoke non-English languages
- ▶ Most were Catholic or Jewish
- ▶ Most were extremely poor
- ▶ Most moved to ethnic "ghettos" in cities
- ▶ Took low-paying jobs

### Asian Immigrants

- ▶ From China and Japan
- ▶ Spoke non-English languages
- ▶ Faced discrimination in California and the West
- ▶ Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)
- ▶ Gentlemen's Agreement (1907)

## What Do You Know?

