

## Industrialization, Immigration, & Urbanization Overview Notes

What caused the growth of US industry? What were the effects of this growth?

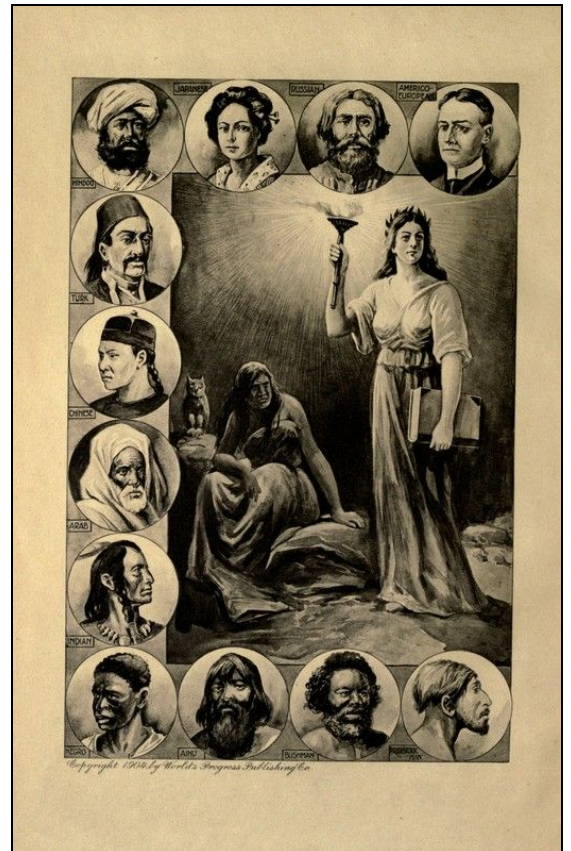
Towards the end of the 19th century, the United States experienced pronounced, fundamental technological & demographic shifts that would set the stage for much of the 20th century. These shifts would reinforce one another and lead the United States to becoming a fundamentally different nation than what it was prior to the Civil War.



There were two major movements of people in the years leading up to 1900: lots of people were moving west for farmland & people were moving into cities. More than one million land claims were filed in the 1890s under the Homestead Act which gave farmers 160 acres of land provided they reside on the property continuously for 5 years. The populations of Texas & Oklahoma increased by more than 2 million people between 1900-1910; yes, at one point in US history people wanted to move to Oklahoma. Farmers' products were in high demand during this time because people were also moving into cities at a breakneck rate. Between 1880 and 1920 the percentage of Americans who lived in cities rose from 20% to 68%. In the same timeframe the number of cities that had a population over 100,000 more than doubled from 12 to 26. So the United States, in a very short span of time, went

from being a predominantly rural to a predominantly urban nation. And it's no coincidence that at the same time people are moving into cities there are a host of new technical and structural changes happening that allow life in cities to be more livable.

It wasn't just food & technical inventions that allow more people to live in cities, there was another major cause: immigration. It's important to remember that immigration is not a new phenomenon in American history; throughout our nation's history people have been coming in and out of our country. At different times different groups have come and gone for different reasons. After the initial wave of English & Spanish migrants came to the Americas, a large group of Scandinavians, French and notably the Irish (after the potato famine of the 1840s) emigrated to the United States. Large numbers of Germans migrated to the United States after the failed revolutions of 1848 (the Lower East Side of Manhattan used to be called *kleindeutschland*, or Little Germany). The immigrants that we're concerned about are referred to as New Immigrants and often came from Southern & Eastern Europe. These New Immigrants were newer than the Old Immigrants from predominantly Northern & Western Europe & were more likely to be Jewish or Catholic and came mainly from Italy, Russia & the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Unlike earlier immigrant groups, they also had to contend with racial theory which attempted to group and rank all people into different racial groups. Anglo-Saxons were at the top of these "scientific" theories with all other groups below. Because of the sway that these theories had at the time, it was much more common for these immigrants to be discriminated against (it was also used as reason to imperialize other areas of the world & implement Jim Crow segregation laws throughout the country). For example, the Immigration Restriction League was founded in Boston in 1894 to lobby for national legislation to limit the number of immigrants that could enter the



United States. One group that was successfully lobbied against was the Chinese. Chinese men especially had been emigrating to the West Coast in large numbers since the 1850s to work in mines and on the railroads. They were targeted because they looked different, spoke a different language and had strange rituals like daily bathing. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 forbade further immigration of Chinese into the United States.

This large movement of people into the United States was part of a global trend that corresponded with industrialization. Between 1840 and the outbreak of World War I in 1914 about 40 million people emigrated to the United States. The United States was not the only nation to experience massive immigrant growth in the same time period. Brazil, Canada, the Caribbean and Argentina also experienced a large influx of people into their countries. But why were so many people moving? In a word: opportunity. As previously mentioned, the United States was experiencing a shift from animal to machine labor, a process called industrialization. These machines needed people to maintain & operate them. There was so much work available that companies sent recruiters to Europe to convince more laborers to move to the United States to work. Many of these jobs were found in factories which were located in cities. So now we can start to see how immigration, industrialization and the growth of cities interacted with and fed one another.

The cities that immigrants often moved to were not the best places to live. Immigrants often lived in cramped, unsanitary apartment buildings called tenements. Cities like New York had to pass laws that required tenements to have a basic amount of light and ventilation. What was interesting about these cities, however, was that laborers and owners lived in close proximity to one another. During this Gilded Age, the disparity in wealth was prominent & visible to both the wealthy & poor. It was virtually impossible to go to one of these metropolises and not notice that the majority of people were poor but a select few were incredibly wealthy. There were a couple of responses to this growing gap in wealth:



one, the wealthy, especially when public transportation was created in these cities, were able to move further away from downtown and build palatial homes in different neighborhoods of the city; second, politics became a method of enforcing change; finally, a social movement of upper-middle class reformers tried to enact change, the Progressive Movement. These different responses will be described in a future reading.