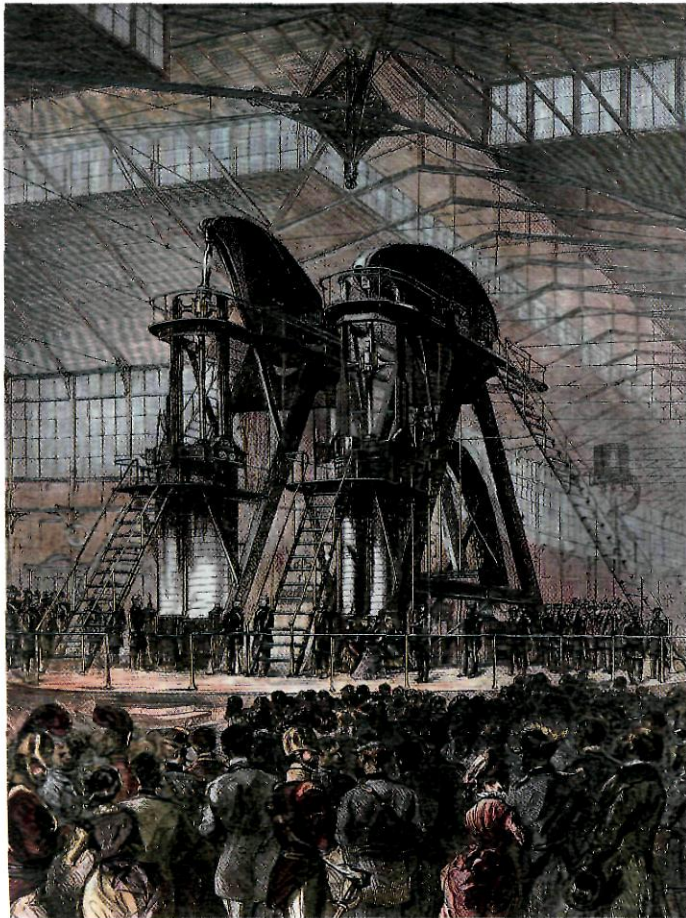


INVENTORS AND INDUSTRIES

In 1876 President Ulysses S. Grant traveled to Philadelphia to open a special exhibition. The exhibition was called the Centennial Exposition. It had been organized to celebrate the United States' hundredth birthday as an independent nation by showing some of its achievements.

The main attraction of the Centennial Exposition was the Machinery Hall. This was a big wooden building that covered more than twelve acres. Inside it visitors could see such recent American inventions as the typewriter and the telephone as well as machines for countless other uses—for sewing, grinding, screwing, printing, drilling, pumping, hammering.



President Grant and Emperor Dom Pedro II of Brazil start the Corliss Centennial Engine in Machinery Hall.

In the six months that the Exposition was open almost ten million people wandered through the hall. They gazed in wonder at its hundreds of machines. Even the normally patronizing British newspaper *The Times* was impressed. "The American invents as the Greek sculpted and as the Italian painted," it reported. "It is genius."

At the time of the Centennial Exposition, the United States was still mainly a farming country. But in the years that followed, American industries grew quickly. The production of coal and iron grew especially fast. These were the most important industrial raw materials in the nineteenth century.

Americans discovered vast new deposits of both in the 1880s and 1890s. In a range of low hills at the western end of Lake Superior, for example, some brothers named Merritt found the great Mesabi iron deposits. The Merritts made their discovery in 1887 and the Mesabi soon became one of the largest producers of iron ore in the world. The ore lay close to the surface of the ground in horizontal bands up to 500 feet thick. It was cheap, easy to mine, and remarkably free of chemical impurities. Before long Mesabi ore was being processed into high quality steel at only one tenth of the previous cost.

By 1900 ten times more coal was being produced in the United States than in 1860. The output of iron was twenty times higher. These increases were both a cause and a result of a rapid growth of American manufacturing industries in these years.

Railroads were very important in this growth of manufacturing. Vast amounts of coal and iron were used to make steel for their rails, locomotives, freight wagons and passenger cars. But this was not all. The railroads linked together buyers and sellers all over the country. Without them big new centers of industry like Pittsburgh and Chicago could not have developed. It was the railroads that carried cattle to Chicago from the Great Plains to keep its huge slaughter houses and meat processing plants busy. It was the railroads, too, that took reapers, windmills and barbed wire from Chicago's farm equipment factories to homesteaders on the prairies.

Thomas Edison

Americans have always been proud of their ability to find practical solutions to practical problems. During the nineteenth century they developed thousands of products to make life easier, safer or more enjoyable for people. Barbed wire is one example, the sewing machine is another.

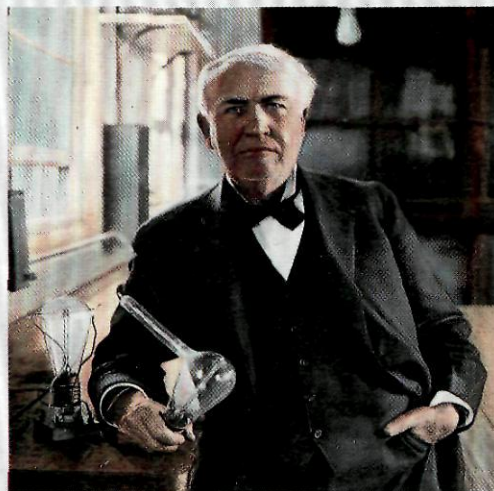
Up to the middle of the nineteenth century the inventors of such products often had little scientific knowledge. Their inventions were based on practical "know-how." So long as the inventions worked, everyone was satisfied.

Many later developments, however, called for an understanding of basic scientific principles in, for example, electricity, magnetism and chemistry. One man above all others showed an ability to use such knowledge to solve everyday problems. His name was Thomas Alva Edison.

Edison was born in 1847 and died in 1931. He made more than a thousand original inventions. Edison's laboratory contained every material and chemical that was then known. Wearing a long, white chemist's coat, his fingers stained by chemicals and his hair dirty with oil and dust, he would work for days without eating or sleeping when he was close to solving a problem.

Some of Edison's sayings became almost as well known as his inventions. "There is no substitute for hard work" was one of them. Sometimes he took this principle too far. On the day he got married, for example, he forgot his bride and spent the night working in his laboratory.

Edison had his greatest success in making practical use of electricity. In 1878 he formed the Edison Electric Light Company. He had a clear commercial aim—to capture from gas the huge market for lighting homes, streets and places of work.



Thomas Edison in his laboratory.

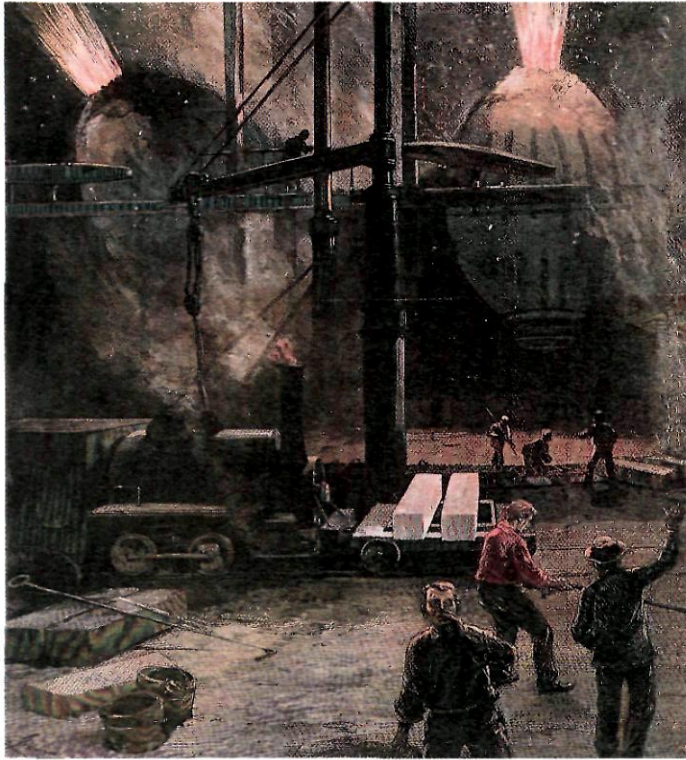
To do this, one thing Edison had to develop was a long-lasting, glowing electric light bulb. The problem was to find a suitable material for the filament of the bulb. What was needed was a filament that would glow brightly when the current of electricity passed through it, but without burning out. Edison tried platinum, paper, leather, wood, cotton. Some glowed for minutes, some for hours, but none for long enough to satisfy him. Then he found the answer—bamboo! When he gave a public demonstration of his light bulb the value of shares in the Edison Electric Light Company rose from \$100 to \$3,000 each.

Edison then built complete electrical generating systems to provide his bulbs with power. He developed dynamos to produce the electricity, underground cables to carry it to where it was needed, fuse boxes to make it safe to use.

The Age of Electricity had begun. Soon electricity would not only light streets, but heat houses, power machines, drive railroad engines. It would become what it has remained ever since—the world's chief source of energy.

By 1890 the industries of the United States were earning the country more than its farmlands. In the twenty years that followed, industrial output went on growing, faster and faster. By 1913 more than one third of the whole world's industrial production was pouring from the mines and factories of the United States.

The growth of American industry was organized and controlled by businessmen who found the money to pay for it. Many of these men began their lives in poverty. By a mixture of hard work and ability, and by ignoring the rights of others, they made themselves wealthy and powerful. Their admirers



Steel being forged at Carnegie's Pennsylvania Iron and Steel Works.

called such men “captains of industry.” Their critics called them “robber barons”—or worse!

Andrew Carnegie was one of the best known of these men. Carnegie was born in Scotland in 1835, but immigrated to America at the age of thirteen. He began his life there working for one dollar twenty cents a week in a Pittsburgh cotton mill. From there he moved to a job in a telegraph office, then to one on the Pennsylvania Railroad. By the time he was thirty he already had an income of over forty thousand dollars a year from far-sighted investments.

Carnegie concentrated his investments in the iron and steel business. By the 1860s he controlled companies making bridges, rails, and locomotives for the railroads. In the 1870s he built the biggest steel mill in America on the Monongahela River in Pennsylvania. He also bought coal and iron ore mines, a fleet of steamships to carry ore across the Great Lakes from Mesabi to a port he owned on Lake Erie, and a railroad to connect the port to his steel works in Pennsylvania.

Nothing like Carnegie's wealth and industrial power had ever before been seen in America. By 1900, as

owner of half the shares in the giant Carnegie Steel Corporation, his annual income was estimated to be over twenty-three million dollars—this was about twenty thousand times more than the income of the average American of the day.

The great wealth of men like Carnegie came partly from their success in swallowing up rival firms or driving them out of business. Businessmen like Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller, the “king” of the growing oil industry, realized that they could greatly increase their profits by doing this. They could reduce the costs of running their companies, and with no competitors to challenge their position they could raise the prices of their products to whatever level they wished.

Eli Whitney and the American system

Eli Whitney, the man who invented the cotton gin, never made much money from it. Too many people copied his original machine without paying him anything.

In about 1800 Whitney began to make guns. Until this time these had always been made by skilled gunmakers. Each gun was individually made, entirely by one man and a part from one gun would not necessarily fit another. Whitney changed this. At a factory he opened in Newhaven, Connecticut, he began to use machines to make guns. His machines made individual parts for guns in separate operations and in large numbers. Most important of all, they made parts that were exactly alike, so that any part would fit any gun. This made it possible for guns to be put together in stages, with different workers each carrying out one particular task.

Whitney's way of working meant that guns could now be made by men without enough skill to make a complete gun. He had worked out the main ideas of a way of manufacturing that would later become known as the “American system.” Later still this American system became known as “mass production.” Mass production was a very important discovery. Without it the standard of living of today's United States, and that of the entire industrialized world, would not be possible.

Henry Ford and mass production

Henry Ford is famous for making automobiles. But what makes him important is *how* he made them.

Ford began to make automobiles in the 1890s. One day in 1903 he was talking to a friend about the best way to do this. "The real way is to make one like another, as much alike as pins or matches," he said. The friend said that he did not believe that this was possible. "The principle is just the same," Ford replied. "All you need is more space."

Ford tried out his idea with an automobile called the Model T. Like Whitney's guns, every Model T was put together or "assembled" from exactly the same parts. The cars were even painted the same color. "A customer can have an automobile painted any color that he wants," Ford is supposed to have said, "so long as it is black."

This use of identical parts in manufacturing is called "standardization." Ford added to it the idea of a moving assembly line. The idea of the assembly line is to save time. It does this by positioning workers in a factory in one place and taking work to them.

The giant industrial organizations that such men created were known as "corporations." As they grew bigger and more powerful still, they often became "trusts." By the early twentieth century trusts controlled large parts of American industry. One trust controlled the steel industry, another the oil industry, another the meat-packing industry, and there were many more. The biggest trusts were richer than most nations. By their wealth and power—and especially their power to decide wages and prices—they controlled the lives of millions of people.

Many Americans were alarmed by the power of the trusts. The United States was a land that was supposed to offer equal opportunities to everyone. Yet now it seemed that the country was coming under the control of a handful of rich and powerful men who were able to do more or less anything they wished. Some bribed politicians to pass laws which

Ford first used an assembly line to make magnetos for his Model Ts. By the old method one man on his own did this job from start to finish. Ford divided the work into twenty-one separate actions. A different man carried out each one as the magneto moved past him on a moving belt called a "conveyor." The change reduced the time taken to put together a magneto from twenty minutes to five.

In 1913 Ford started to use assembly-line methods to make the complete Model T. As the cars moved along on a conveyor, dozens of workmen each carried out a single operation—tightening certain nuts or fixing certain parts. By the time a car reached the end of the line it was complete. It was filled up with gasoline and driven off ready for the road. Making a car in this new way took 1 hour and 33 minutes. Making one previously had taken 12 hours and 28 minutes.

By combining standardization and the assembly line Ford showed manufacturers of all kinds how to produce goods cheaply and in large quantities. Because of this he is seen as the father of twentieth-century mass production.

Others hired private armies to crush any attempt by their workers to obtain better conditions. Their attitude to the rights of other people was summed up in a famous remark of the railroad "king" William H. Vanderbilt. Vanderbilt was asked whether he thought that railroads should be run in the public interest. "The public be damned!" he replied.

The contemptuous way in which leaders of industry like Vanderbilt rejected criticism made people angry. It strengthened the feeling that something ought to be done to limit such men's growing power over the nation's life. Many people came to see this matter as the most important problem facing the United States in the early years of the twentieth century. Unless something was done about it, they feared, the United States would become a nation whose life was controlled by a handful of rich businessmen.

THE GOLDEN DOOR



The unveiling of the Statue of Liberty.

On a small island in New York harbor stands a giant statue of a robed woman. She looks out to sea, her right arm holding a torch high in the air. She is the Statue of Liberty, one of the best-known landmarks in the world. The Statue of Liberty was presented to the United States in 1886. It was given by the people of France to mark the hundredth anniversary of the War of Independence.

For millions of immigrants the Statue of Liberty has been their first sight of America. Carved on its base are words that for more than a hundred years now have offered them hope:

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore
Send these, the homeless tempest-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.

The story of the American people is a story of immigrants. More than 75 percent of all the people in history who have ever left their homelands to live in another country have moved to the United States. In the course of its history it has taken in more people from other lands than any other country in the world. Since the founding of Jamestown in 1607 more than fifty million people from other lands have made new homes there.

Between 1840 and 1860 more immigrants than ever before arrived. Most came from Europe. Poor crops, hunger and political unrest caused an estimated five million Europeans a year to leave the lands of their birth at this time. More of them went to the United States than to any other country.

Among these immigrants were many Irish people. The Irish depended for food upon their crops of potatoes. For five years after 1845 these became diseased and rotted in the fields. About 750,000 Irish people starved to death. Many of the survivors left Ireland and went to the United States. In 1847 alone more than 118,000 of them immigrated there. By 1860 one in every four of the people living in the city of New York had been born in Ireland. Today more than thirteen million Americans have Irish ancestors.

During the Civil War in the 1860s the federal government encouraged more emigration from Europe. It did this by offering land to immigrants who would serve as soldiers in the Union armies. By 1865 about one in five of the soldiers in the armies of the North was a wartime immigrant. Many had come from Germany. Today about one in three of all Americans have German ancestors.

Ireland is in the west of Europe. Germany is in the north. Until about 1880 most immigrants to the United States came from these regions. Then a big change took place. More emigrants from lands in the south and east of Europe began to arrive—Italians, Poles, Greeks, Russians, Hungarians, Czechs. By 1896 more than half of all the immigrants entering the United States were from eastern or southern Europe.



Immigrants sailing to America.

Many Jewish people came to the United States at this time. In the 1880s Jews were being killed all over eastern Europe in bloody massacres called “pogroms.” Many thousands escaped by leaving for the United States. Leon Stein was the son of one of them. Many years later he explained why his father, despite the hardship that he suffered in America, had wanted to live there:

“... the exploitation of labor was fearful and my father was having a terrible time. He was just getting by, making a living working twelve to fourteen hours a day. And he was suffering like a coal miner suffers, because in the sweat-shops [clothing factories], at that time, instead of coal dust what you got was lint ... Lint got down the throat and into the lungs and caused the same coughing, the same diseases, the same sickness as dust. And in the end it killed you. And in the end it probably was what killed him ...

But he still wanted to live in America. He never became rich, he never became successful—and he never became bitter ... Remember, he had come from a place where, if you were Jewish, you didn’t count as a human being and you had no rights at all. In America they gave my father the vote, they allowed him a place to live, and they let his children

grow up as Americans. Because of that he could never feel bitter ...”

Between 1880 and 1925 about two million Jews entered the United States. Today there are about 5.7 million Jewish Americans and they make up about 2.2 percent of the total population of the United States. In certain states along the Atlantic coast the percentage of Jews is higher. In the state of New York, for example, one person in ten is Jewish.

So many immigrants wanted to enter the United States in the late 1800s that the government found it difficult to keep check on them. To control the situation it opened a special place of entry in New York harbor. This place was called Ellis Island. All intending immigrants were examined there before they were allowed to enter the United States.

Ellis Island was opened in 1892. During its busiest times it dealt with almost 2,000 immigrants a day. Between its opening and 1954, when it closed its

Leaving home

Leon Stein’s mother was born in a small village in Lithuania. At the age of eighty-six she still remembered vividly the day in 1908 that she left her village and set off for America as an immigrant:

“I remember it clearly. The whole village turned out to wave us goodbye and we were all sitting in the cart with our little bundles on our laps and our shawls around our shoulders. I was excited a little bit, but mostly rather miserable and frightened. As the cart got to the end of the village street I could see the group of villagers who were waving us goodbye was getting smaller and smaller, but I kept my eyes fixed on my mother in the front of that little group. I didn’t take my eyes off her ... Then, just before the cart turned the corner and I lost sight of them, I saw my mother faint and fall to the ground crying and weeping, and I saw the rest of the group bend over her to pick her up, and I tried to get out of the cart and run back to her and stay with her. But the others with me in the cart stopped me and held onto me. And the cart turned the corner. And I was weeping and struggling and they were holding me. And I never saw my mother again.”



Immigrant children being examined by a health officer at Ellis Island.

doors, more than twenty million people waited anxiously in its halls and corridors. Immigration officers asked these people questions to find out if they were criminals or mentally abnormal. Doctors examined them for disease. A letter chalked on their clothing—H for heart disease or E for eye disease—could end their hopes of a new life in America.

But most passed the examinations. Almost half of all present-day Americans have ancestors who entered the United States by way of Ellis Island. Listen to Leon Stein again. One day in the 1970s he stood in Ellis Island's echoing, empty Great Hall and spoke quietly of the way that it made him feel:

"My parents came through this place at the turn of the century. How can I stand here and not be moved? I feel it is haunted. I think if you become really quiet you can actually hear all the crying, all the feeling, all the impatience, all the misunderstanding that went on in this hall. Being born again is not an easy thing and the people who came through here were being born again. This was their gateway to hope, to a new life."

The immigrants found work in busy cities like New York, Chicago and Pittsburgh—stitching garments, feeding furnaces, laboring on factory assembly lines, hacking out coal. They worked hard because they wanted to make a success of their new life. Yet for

most immigrants this new life was a hard one. They were outsiders in a strange land. Often they could not even speak its language. Only the hardest and lowest paid jobs were open to them. Like Leon Stein's father, they had to work for long hours in dangerous conditions and to live in overcrowded slums that were breeding places of disease and misery.

Yet bad as conditions were, they often seemed preferable to those the immigrants had left behind in Europe. In the United States they were free from religious and political persecution. They were often better dressed and better fed than they had ever been before. They marveled at such wonders as free schools for their children, at the lamps glowing along the city streets at nights, and at the fact that soap was cheap enough to be used by everyone! So the immigrants continued to pour in. By 1910 it was estimated that 14.5 percent of the people then living in the United States had been born in other countries.

This flood of immigrants worried many Americans. They accused immigrants of taking jobs away from American-born workers, of lowering standards of health and education, and of threatening the country's traditions and way of life by bringing in "un-American" political ideas like anarchism and communism.



The Cliff Dwellers—a painting that shows the slum conditions in which many immigrants lived.

Melting pot or salad bowl?

In 1908 Israel Zangwill wrote a play, *The Melting Pot*. The hero, a refugee from persecution in Czarist Russia, escapes to the United States. In the final scene he speaks with enthusiasm about the mixture of peoples in his new homeland:

“America is God’s Crucible, the great Melting Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and reforming! . . . Here you stand in your fifty groups with your fifty languages and histories, and your fifty blood hatreds and rivalries, but you won’t be like that for long, brothers, for these are the fires of God you’ve come to—these are the fires of God. . . . German and Frenchman, Irishman and Englishman, Jews and Russians—into the Crucible with you all! God is making the American . . . He will be the fusion of all races, the coming superman.”

Zangwill’s play was a great success. This was perhaps because many in the audiences who came to see it found its message reassuring. At a time when poor and uneducated immigrants from Europe were flooding into the United States in millions, it was comforting for Americans to be told that their country could turn the newcomers into Americans like themselves.

In fact this never really happened, at least not completely. The United States turned out to be more of a salad bowl than a melting pot. Groups from similar national and ethnic backgrounds often stayed together, keeping alive their old identities and many of their old customs. They lived in “Chinatowns” or “Little Italys,” areas populated almost entirely by Americans of similar ethnic origins. Such districts can still be found in many large American cities.

Americans from different immigrant backgrounds do mix together in time. It has been estimated, for example, that about 80 percent of the great-grandchildren of early-twentieth-century European immigrants marry outside their own ethnic groups. Yet such third generation Americans often cling with pride to important elements of their ethnic heritage. So do many Americans whose immigrant origins are even further in the past.

Such accusations were not new. In the 1860s, Chinese workers had been brought to California to build the railroads. The fact that Chinese laborers were willing to work for less pay caused American workers to dislike them. They felt threatened by these people with a different language and a different racial appearance. Chinese communities in the West were attacked and their buildings were burned down. Henry Sienkiewicz, a visitor from Poland, described a scene he witnessed in 1876:

“I was in San Francisco the night a massacre of the Chinese was expected. By the light streaming from burning buildings along the coast marched huge, menacing crowds of workers, carrying banners bearing such inscriptions as the following: ‘Self preservation is the first law of nature.’ . . . Order was at last restored, but only after the railroads, which had provoked the disturbances by reducing the wages of white men, agreed not to reduce wages and to dismiss their Chinese employees.”

In 1882 the strength of anti-Chinese feeling caused Congress to ban most Chinese immigration. Japanese and other Asian immigrants were refused entry as well and by 1924 no Asian immigrants were permitted into the United States. The ban lasted until after the Second World War.

In the 1920s Congress passed laws to limit all kinds of immigration. The one which had most effect was the Reed–Johnson Immigration Act of 1924. This law was an answer to the fears and the prejudices of Americans who were descendants of earlier north European immigrants. It said that in the future no more than 150,000 immigrants a year would be let into the United States. Each country which sent immigrants was given a “quota” which was based on the number of its people already living in the United States. The more it had there already, the more new immigrants it would be allowed to send.

The 1924 system was designed mainly to reduce immigration from southern and eastern Europe. Once it began, 87 percent of the immigration permits went to immigrants from Britain, Ireland, Germany and Scandinavia—the countries from which the ancestors of most 1920s Americans had come.

The 1924 Immigration Act marked the end of one of the most important population movements in the history of the world.

REFORMERS AND PROGRESSIVES



An immigrant family in New York in the early 1900s.

By 1900 the United States was the richest and most productive industrial country in the world. It produced 31.9 percent of the world's coal, 34.1 percent of its iron and 36.7 percent of its steel. About twenty million of its seventy-four million people earned a living from jobs in industry.

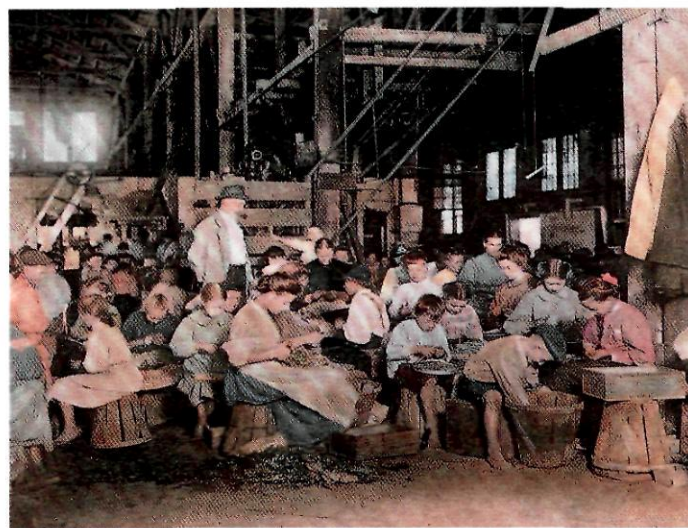
Men, women and children labored for long hours in factories, mines and workshops. Many lived in cities, for growing industrial centers like Pittsburgh and Chicago needed more and more workers. The workers' homes were dirty and overcrowded slums. Years later the son of immigrants from an Italian village remembered his mother's unhappiness. He described how she would sit for hours at the window of the family's room in a crowded New York tenement, or apartment building, "staring up at the little patch of sky above the tenements."

Wages were often low. In 1900 the average industrial worker was paid nine dollars for working fifty-nine hours a week. Many worked longer and earned less. In cotton spinning mills the usual working week was sixty-two hours for wages of ten cents an hour. Often the work was unhealthy or dangerous. In one plant belonging to the United States Steel Corporation forty-six men were killed in 1906—by

burns, explosions, electric shocks, suffocation, falling objects or by being crushed. If workers were killed or injured like this, neither they nor their families received compensation. When the owner of a coal mine was challenged about the dangers and hardships that his workers faced, his reply was short and cruel: "They don't suffer," he said. "Why, they can't even speak English."

Workers tried to form trade, or labor, unions to improve the conditions of their lives. These attempts often failed. One reason for this was the competition for jobs between American-born and immigrant workers. Another was the violent opposition unions faced from employers. Employers would dismiss union members and put their names on a "blacklist." If a worker's name appeared on one of these lists, other employers would refuse to give him a job.

Employers were determined to allow neither their workers nor anyone else to interfere in the way they ran their businesses. Sometimes they persuaded politicians to send soldiers to break up strikes. At other times they hired their own private armies to control their workers. This happened when workers at Andrew Carnegie's Homestead Steel Mill in Pennsylvania went on strike in 1892. The mill's manager hired 300 "detectives" to stop the strike. In



Women and children working in a vegetable cannery.

Samuel Gompers and the A.F.L.

In the early 1900s the leading American labor organization was the American Federation of Labor (A.F.L.). The A.F.L. was formed in 1886 by Samuel Gompers, a leader of the Cigarmakers' Union.

Cigarmaking was a skilled job. Gompers believed that unions of skilled workers were the only ones with a real chance of success. If unskilled workers went on strike they could easily be replaced. Skilled workers could not. This meant that employers would be more likely to listen to them.

The A.F.L. grew steadily as it brought more and more of these skilled workers together—carpenters, printers, iron molders, glassmakers. By 1904 it had 1.75 million members and was the United States' biggest labor organization.

At this time many workers in Europe were joining revolutionary labor movements. These European

movements called for the overthrow of capitalism—that is, the private ownership of factories, mines and other means of production—and its replacement by a new socialist economic system.

Most American workers rejected such revolutionary ideas. They were not interested in destroying the existing economic system; they simply wanted to make it work more effectively for their benefit. What they wanted was a bigger share of the wealth they helped to produce. Gompers called this “bread and butter unionism.” He believed that unions should concern themselves with the day-to-day welfare of their members, not with politics. Revolutions would not win a better life for working people, he said. But practical demands for higher wages, shorter working hours and safer working conditions would.

clashes between the detectives and the strikers, twenty people were killed.

Employers and the government were not the only enemies labor unions faced. The general public was usually against them. Americans had always seen their country as a land where individuals should be free to improve their lives by their own efforts. Many owned farms, shops or small manufacturing firms. Millions more dreamed of the day when they too would own a farm or a business of their own. Perhaps they might even become rich, as Carnegie had done! People such as these were unlikely to favor organizations which aimed to limit businessmen's freedom of action and opportunities.

But Americans were not complacent about conditions in their country. In the early years of the twentieth century a stream of books and magazine articles drew people's attention to a large number of national problems. Some dealt with conditions of life in the slums of the great cities, some with bribery and corruption in government, others with the dishonesty of wealthy businessmen. The books and articles often brought out startling and shocking facts. This caused some people to describe their authors with contempt as “muckrakers.”

One of the best-known muckrakers was Upton Sinclair. In 1906 he attacked the meat-packing industry in his novel *The Jungle*. This gave a horrifying description of life among immigrant workers in the slaughter houses of Chicago. *The Jungle* revealed to many middle-class Americans a side of their nation's life that they hardly knew existed. They were shocked to learn what went into their breakfast sausages. They were even more shocked when government investigators said that what Sinclair had written was correct. Here is part of the investigators' report on conditions in a Chicago meat-packing factory:

“We saw meat shoveled from filthy wooden floors, piled on tables rarely washed, pushed from room to room in rotten boxcars, in all of which processes it was . . . gathering dirt, splinters, floor filth and the expectoration [spit] of tuberculous and other diseased workers.”

Reports like this shocked and frightened the American people. Meat sales dropped by half. The meat companies begged the government to inspect their premises in order to convince people that their products were fit to eat. Congress quickly passed a new federal meat inspection law.



The Strike by Robert Koehler.

People began to demand that the nation's leaders should deal with other scandals exposed by the muckrakers. This pressure brought about an important change in American economic and political life. Before 1900 most Americans had believed in "laissez faire" – the idea that governments should interfere with business, and with people's lives in general, as little as possible. After 1900 many Americans became "Progressives." A Progressive was someone who believed that, where necessary, the government should take action to deal with the problems of society.

The Progressive movement found a leader in the Republican Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt became President in 1901. One of his main beliefs was that it was the duty of the President to use the power of the federal government to improve conditions of life for the people – to see that the ordinary man and woman got what he called "a square deal."

Roosevelt was particularly concerned about the power of the trusts. His idea was to give the United States the best of both worlds. He wanted to allow businessmen enough freedom of action to make their firms efficient and prosperous, but at the same time to prevent them from taking unfair advantage of

other people. A humorist of the time made fun of this two-sided attitude by describing it in these words:

"The trusts are hideous monsters built up by the enlightened enterprise of the men that have done so much to advance progress in our beloved country. On the one hand I would stamp them under foot, on the other hand, not so fast."

A good example of the "square deal" in action came in 1902. Anthracite coal miners went on strike to obtain better wages and working conditions. Their employers refused even to discuss the workers' demands. Then the President stepped in. He told the mine owners that they were being unreasonable. He said that unless they agreed to negotiate with their workers, the federal government would take control of the coal mines. The threat was enough. The owners changed their attitude and the strike was settled.

Another example of the "square deal" came a few years later. Roosevelt forced the big railroad companies to charge all their customers fair rates, instead of allowing large customers like the oil and meat-packing trusts to pay less than farmers and small businessmen. He also supported laws which

compelled manufacturers of foods and medicines to make sure that their products were pure and harmless before selling them.

Theodore Roosevelt retired as President in 1909. In 1912 he tried to regain the position, but he was defeated in the presidential election by Woodrow Wilson, the candidate of the Democratic Party.

Although Roosevelt and Wilson belonged to different political parties, some of their ideas were very similar. Wilson, too, supported the Progressive movement. He had promised that when he became President he would fight “not for the man who has made good [achieved success] but for the man who is going to make good—the man who is knocking and fighting at the closed door of opportunity.” As Governor of the state of New Jersey he had fought successfully to make sure that the state was run for the benefit of its people. He had reduced bribery and corruption there, and he had introduced reforms such as laws to give workers compensation for injuries at work.

In March 1913, Wilson stood before the Capitol building in Washington, the home of the United States Congress. There he took the oath as President. Then he made a brief speech about the state of the country: “We have built up a great system of government,” he told the crowd which had gathered to watch the ceremony. “But evil has come with the good . . . We have squandered [wasted] a great part of what we might have used. We have been proud of our industrial achievements, but we have not hitherto stopped thoughtfully enough to count the human cost . . .”

One of these “human costs,” Wilson believed, had been the near destruction for many ordinary Americans of a fair chance to get on in life. Workers, farmers, owners of small businesses—people such as these had seen their opportunities steadily shrinking in recent years owing to the continuing growth of the power of “big business” over the nation’s economic life. Despite Theodore Roosevelt’s attempts to bring the trusts under control, they were even more powerful in 1913 than they had been in 1900. Real equality of opportunity seemed in danger of disappearing in the United States. Wilson believed that only action by the federal government could halt this process. As President, he was determined to see that such action was taken.

Wilson called his policies “The New Freedom.” They were put into effect by a series of laws passed between 1913 and 1917. One of Wilson’s first steps was to reduce customs duties in order to encourage trade between the United States and other countries. Then he reformed the banking system and introduced a system of federal taxes on high incomes. Other laws reduced the powers of the trusts, gave more rights to labor unions and made it easier for farmers to borrow money from the federal government to develop their land. Many individual states also passed Progressive laws. They forbade factories to employ children, introduced secret voting, improved safety at work, and protected their natural resources.

But not all Wilson’s plans of reform were accepted. For example, the Senate refused to pass a law giving the federal authorities more control over the buying and selling of business shares. Another law, stopping child labor in factories everywhere, was declared to be unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

The Progressive movement changed and improved *American life in many ways. But many people still distrusted too much government “interference” in the nation’s life.*

Theodore Roosevelt and conservation

Perhaps Theodore Roosevelt’s most important service to his country was to persuade Congress to pass a number of conservation laws. These were laws to save the country’s natural resources from being used up carelessly and greedily.

The United States desperately needed such laws in the early 1900s. Roosevelt pointed out that unless action were taken to slow down the destruction of the country’s forests, mineral resources and soil fertility, Americans would soon discover that much of the natural wealth of the United States had been destroyed for ever.

Congress listened to Roosevelt’s advice. It passed conservation laws under which millions of acres of land were protected and their forest and mineral wealth preserved for the use of future generations.

AN AMERICAN EMPIRE



*The Maine
exploding in Havana
harbor in February,
1898.*

On January 25, 1898, one of the most modern ships in the United States' navy steamed into the harbor of Havana, Cuba. The ship was a cruiser called the *Maine*. A war was being fought in Cuba at this time and the *Maine* had been sent to Havana as a demonstration of American power. Three weeks later, on the night of February 15, a huge explosion shook the city. The *Maine* was blown to pieces and 260 of its crew were killed.

To this day, the cause of the explosion that destroyed the *Maine* remains a mystery. Some believe that it was set off by an accidental spark in the ship's magazine, or ammunition store. At the time, however, many Americans believed that the explosion had been caused by an enemy mine.

The man who made this claim most loudly was a newspaper owner named William Randolph Hearst. "THE WARSHIP MAINE WAS SPLIT IN TWO BY AN ENEMY'S INFERNAL [hellish] MACHINE," read the headline in one of his newspapers on February 17. The story which followed made it clear that to Hearst the "enemy" in the headline was Spain. Most Americans agreed with him. This was not because they had any proof. It was because they wanted to believe it. Let us see why.

In 1867 the United States had bought Alaska from Russia. Apart from this it had brought no additional land under its rule since gaining control of California and the Southwest in the Mexican War of 1846 to 1848. In the 1890s, however, a new spirit started to enter American foreign policy. These were years when Britain, France and Germany were busy claiming colonies, foreign lands which they could rule and exploit. Some Americans believed that the United States should do the same. Colonies overseas meant trade, wealth, power and prestige. "A policy of isolation did well enough [was all right] when we were an embryo nation, but today things are different," said Senator Orville Platt in 1893. "We are the most advanced and powerful nation on earth and our future demands an abandonment of the policy of isolation. It is to the ocean our children must look, as they once looked to the boundless west."

Many Americans agreed with Platt. Politicians, businessmen, newspapers and missionaries joined together to claim that "the Anglo-Saxon race" — by which they meant Americans as well as North Europeans — had a right and a duty to bring western civilization to the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin


Monroe's Doctrine

In the early nineteenth century most of Central and South America, or Latin America, was ruled by Spain. In the 1820s these Spanish colonies rebelled.

The Spanish government asked the great powers of Europe to help it to defeat the rebels. When Americans heard this they were alarmed. They did not want the armies and navies of powerful European nations in their part of the world. The rebel Spanish colonies were the United States' nearest neighbors. Americans felt that it was important to their country's safety to make sure that no foreign enemies gained influence in them.

In 1823 President Monroe warned European nations not to interfere in Latin American affairs. "The American continents are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by European powers," Monroe told Congress. "We should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere [half of the world] as dangerous to our peace and safety."

Monroe's statement came to be called the "Monroe Doctrine." It became one of the most important ideas in American foreign policy.

 America. How? By making them accept "Anglo-Saxon" rule or guidance.

From 1895 onwards feelings of this kind were focused more and more upon Cuba, which lay only ninety miles from the American coast. Many Americans had invested money in sugar and tobacco plantations there. But at this time Cuba was a Spanish colony.

In 1895 the people of Cuba rose in rebellion against their Spanish rulers. The rebels raided and burned villages, sugar plantations and railroad depots. To cut off the rebels' supplies, Spanish soldiers moved thousands of Cuban civilians into prison camps. The camps became badly overcrowded. As many as 200,000 people died in them of disease and hunger.

Hearst and another American newspaper owner named Joseph Pulitzer published sensational accounts

of the struggle in Cuba. Day after day millions of Americans read how, according to Hearst and Pulitzer, Cubans were being badly treated by the Spaniards. By 1898 many Americans felt that the United States should do something to help the Cubans. It was to show its sympathy for the rebels that the American government sent the *Maine* to Havana.

When the *Maine* blew up, people began calling for war with Spain. "Remember the *Maine*" became a battle cry. In April President McKinley demanded that Spain should withdraw from Cuba, and a few days later Spain and the United States went to war.

The Spanish-American War was fought in two parts of the world. One was Cuba; the other was the Philippines.

The Philippines was another big Spanish colony near the coast of Southeast Asia. It was said that President McKinley had to search a globe to find out exactly where it was. But he saw that the islands would be useful for the United States to control. From bases in the Philippines American soldiers and sailors would be able to protect the growing number of American traders in China.

- And Roosevelt's Corollary

The original Monroe Doctrine told Europeans not to interfere in Latin America. In 1904 President Theodore Roosevelt made an addition, or "corollary" to it. He said that the United States would intervene there whenever it thought necessary. Roosevelt believed that by doing this the United States would be able to ensure the internal stability of its Latin American neighbors and so remove any excuse for Europeans to interfere in their affairs.

In the next twenty years American governments often acted upon Roosevelt's Corollary. American soldiers landed in countries like Nicaragua, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and took over their governments for years at a time. Often the Americans made big improvements—paying off debts, draining swamps, building roads. But this did not stop Latin Americans from resenting their interference.



*Spanish General Toral
surrendering to U.S. General
Shafter, July 13, 1898.*

The first battle of the Spanish–American War was fought in the Philippines. American warships sank a Spanish fleet that was anchored there. A few weeks later American soldiers occupied Manila, the chief city in the Philippines, and Spanish resistance came to an end.

American soldiers also landed in Cuba. In less than two weeks of fighting, the Spanish were again defeated. Other American soldiers occupied Puerto Rico, another Spanish-owned island close to Cuba. In July the Spanish government saw it was beaten. It asked the Americans for peace.

When peace was signed, Spain gave most of its overseas empire to the United States—Cuba, the Philippines, Puerto Rico and a small Pacific island called Guam. At the same time the United States also annexed Hawaii. Hawaii was a group of islands in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Before this it had been independent, but Americans owned profitable sugar and pineapple plantations there.

In less than a year the United States had become a colonial power, with millions of non-Americans under its rule. Some Americans were worried by this. After all, they, too, had once been a colonial people. In rebelling against British rule they had claimed that colonial peoples should be free to rule themselves. So what about the Cubans? And what about the Filipinos? Filipinos who had fought for independence from Spain were soon fighting against American occupation troops. How could Americans fight against such people without being unfaithful to the most important traditions and values of their own country?

Most Americans answered this question by claiming that they were preparing underdeveloped nations for civilization and democracy. “I’m proud of my country,” said a Methodist minister in New England, “patiently teaching people to govern themselves and to enjoy the blessings of a Christian civilization. Surely this Spanish war has not been a grab for empire, but an heroic effort to free the oppressed and to teach millions of ignorant, debased human beings how to live.”

There was some truth in the clergyman’s claim. The Americans built schools and hospitals, constructed roads, provided pure water supplies and put an end to killer diseases like malaria and yellow fever in the lands they now ruled. They continued to rule most of them until the middle years of the century. The Philippines became an independent country in 1946. In 1953 Puerto Rico became self-governing, but continued to be closely tied to the United States. In 1959 Hawaii was admitted as the fiftieth state of the Union.

Cuba was treated differently. When Congress declared war on Spain in 1898 it said that it was only doing so to help the Cuban people to win independence. When the war ended, Cuba was soon declared an independent country.

But for years Cuba’s independence was just a pretense. Before the Americans took away their soldiers in 1902 they made the Cuban government give them land at Guantanamo Bay on the Cuban coast. A big American naval base was built there. The Cubans also had to accept a condition called the Platt Amendment. This said that the United States

could send troops to take control of Cuba any time it believed that American interests were in danger—in other words, whenever it wanted.

It did so many times. In 1906, for example, President Theodore Roosevelt set up an American military government in Cuba to stop a revolution. This ran the country's affairs until 1909. In 1912, 1917 and 1921 American marines were again sent to stop revolutions in Cuba. For many years the country continued to be little more than a protectorate of the United States.

Dollar Diplomacy

In economic and business affairs the United States has long been strongly internationalist. American foreign policy has often tried to provide businessmen with fresh opportunities. In the early years of the twentieth century, for example, the industrial nations of Europe were dividing the trade of China between them. To ensure that Americans also profited from this rich new market the United States' government worked to ensure freedom of trade in China by persuading other nations to accept a policy called the "Open Door."

The close relationship between American foreign policy and American business interests has shown itself in other ways. Political leaders have sometimes encouraged American businesses to invest abroad as a way of strengthening the political position of the United States. This happened in the early 1900s, when President Taft favored a policy known as "Dollar Diplomacy." This encouraged Americans to invest in areas that were strategically important to the United States, such as Latin America.

American firms which have established themselves in other countries have often received a mixed welcome. Their critics accuse them of using their economic power to influence foreign governments to follow policies that serve the political and economic interests of the United States rather than those of the country in which they are working. But foreign leaders often welcome American investment. They see such investment as a way of obtaining new jobs and new technology, and so of improving their countries' living standards.

"I took Panama"

In the early 1900s the American government wanted to build a canal across the Isthmus of Panama. The isthmus is the neck of land that joins North and South America and separates the Caribbean Sea from the Pacific Ocean. Building a canal across it would mean that American ships could travel quickly between the east and west coasts of the United States instead of having to make a long sea journey around South America.

The main problem was that the United States did not own the isthmus; a Latin American country called Colombia did. In 1903, when the Colombian government was slow to give the Americans permission to build the canal, President Theodore Roosevelt sent warships to Panama. The warships helped a small group of Panamanian businessmen to rebel against the Colombian government.

The rebels declared that Panama was now an independent state. A few days later they gave the Americans control over a ten-and-a-half-mile-wide strip of land called the Canal Zone across their new country. The way was clear for the Americans to build their canal. They began digging in 1904 and the first ships steamed through the completed canal in 1914.

Most Latin Americans thought that the Panama rebellion had been organized by Roosevelt. They thought so even more when he openly boasted: "I took Panama."



The building of the Panama Canal.