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CHAPTER

"Civilization's Inferno": The Rise and Reform of Industrial Cities

1880–1917

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Clarence Darrow, a successful lawyer from Ashtabula, Ohio, felt isolated and overwhelmed when he moved to Chicago in the 1880s. "There is no place so lonely to a young man as a great city," Darrow later wrote. "When I walked along the street I scanned every face I met to see if I could not perchance discover someone from Ohio." Instead, he saw a "sea of human units, each intent upon hurrying by." At one point, Darrow felt near despair. "If it had been possible I would have gone back to Ohio," he wrote, "but I didn't want to borrow the money, and I dreaded to confess defeat."

In the era of industrialization, more and more Americans had experiences like Darrow's. In 1860, the United States was rural: less than 20 percent of Americans lived in an urban area, defined by census takers as a place with more than 2,500 inhabitants. By 1910, more Americans lived in cities (42.1 million) than had lived in the entire nation on the eve of the Civil War (31.4 million). The country now had three of the world's ten largest cities (America Compared, p. 611). Though the Northeast remained by far the most urbanized region, the industrial Midwest was catching up. Seattle, San Francisco, and soon Los Angeles became hubs on the Pacific coast. Even the South boasted of thriving Atlanta and Birmingham. As journalist Frederic C. Howe declared in 1905, "Man has entered on an urban age."

The scale of industrial cities encouraged experiments that ranged from the amusement park to the art museum, the skyscraper to the subway. Yet the city's complexity also posed problems, some of them far worse than Clarence Darrow's loneliness. Brothels flourished, as did slums, pollution, disease, and corrupt political machines. Fast-talking hucksters enjoyed prime opportunities to fleece newcomers; homeless men slept in the shadows of the mansions of the superrich. One African American observer called the city "Civilization's Inferno." The locus of urgent problems, industrial cities became important sites of political innovation and reform.

IDENTIFY THE BIG IDEA

How did the rise of large cities shape American society and politics?



George Bellows, *New York* George Bellows, a member of the so-called Ash Can school of painters (Chapter 18), was fascinated by urban life. In this 1911 painting, he depicts Madison Square during a winter rush-hour, crowded with streetcars, horse-drawn wagons, and pedestrians. If you could enter the world of this painting, what might you hear, feel, and smell, as well as see? What does Bellows suggest about the excitement and challenges of life in the big city? Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

The New Metropolis

Mark Twain, arriving in New York in 1867, remarked, “You cannot accomplish anything in the way of business, you cannot even pay a friendly call without devoting a whole day to it. . . . [The] distances are too great.” But new technologies allowed engineers and planners to reorganize urban geographies. Specialized districts began to include not only areas for finance, manufacturing, wholesaling, and warehousing but also immigrant wards, shopping districts, and business-oriented downtowns. It was an exciting and bewildering world.

The Shape of the Industrial City

Before the Civil War, cities served the needs of commerce and finance, not industry. Early manufacturing sprang up mostly in the countryside, where mill owners could draw water power from streams, find plentiful fuel and raw materials, and recruit workers from farms and villages. The nation’s largest cities were seaports; urban merchants bought and sold goods for distribution into the interior or to global markets.

As industrialization developed, though, cities became sites for manufacturing as well as finance and trade. Steam engines played a central role in this change. With them, mill operators no longer had to depend on less reliable water power. Steam power also vastly increased the scale of industry. A factory employing thousands of workers could instantly create a small city

such as Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, which belonged body and soul to the Jones and Laughlin Steel Company. Older commercial cities also industrialized. Warehouse districts converted to small-scale manufacturing. Port cities that served as immigrant gateways

offered abundant cheap labor, an essential element in the industrial economy.

Mass Transit New technologies helped residents and visitors negotiate the industrial city. Steam-driven cable cars appeared in the 1870s. By 1887, engineer Frank Sprague designed an electric trolley system for Richmond, Virginia. Electricity from a central generating plant was fed to trolleys through overhead power lines, which each trolley touched with a pole mounted on its roof. Trolleys soon became the primary mode of transportation in most American cities. Congestion and frequent accidents, however, led to demands that

trolley lines be moved off streets. The “el” or elevated railroad, which began operation as early as 1871 in New York City, became a safer alternative. Other urban planners built down, not up. Boston opened a short underground line in 1897; by 1904, a subway running the length of Manhattan demonstrated the full potential of high-speed underground trains.

Even before the Civil War, the spread of railroads led to growth of outlying residential districts for the well-to-do. The high cost of transportation effectively segregated these wealthy districts. In the late nineteenth century, the trend accelerated. Businessmen and professionals built homes on large, beautifully landscaped lots in outlying towns such as Riverside, Illinois, and Tuxedo Park, New York. In such places, affluent wives and children enjoyed refuge from the pollution and perceived dangers of the city.

Los Angeles entrepreneur Henry Huntington, nephew of a wealthy Southern Pacific Railroad magnate, helped foster an emerging suburban ideal as he pitched the benefits of southern California sunshine. Huntington invested his family fortune in Los Angeles real estate and transportation. Along his trolley lines, he subdivided property into lots and built rows of bungalows, planting the tidy yards with lush trees and tropical fruits. Middle-class buyers flocked to purchase Huntington’s houses. One exclaimed, “I have apparently found a Paradise on Earth.” Anticipating twentieth-century Americans’ love for affordable single-family homes near large cities, Huntington had begun to invent southern California sprawl.

Skyscrapers By the 1880s, invention of steel girders, durable plate glass, and passenger elevators began to revolutionize urban building methods. Architects invented the skyscraper, a building supported by its steel skeleton. Its walls bore little weight, serving instead as curtains to enclose the structure. Although expensive to build, skyscrapers allowed downtown landowners to profit from small plots of land. By investing in a skyscraper, a landlord could collect rent for ten or even twenty floors of space. Large corporations commissioned these striking designs as symbols of business prowess.

The first skyscraper was William Le Baron Jenney’s ten-story Home Insurance Building (1885) in Chicago. Though unremarkable in appearance—it looked just like other downtown buildings—Jenney’s steel-girder construction inspired the creativity of American architects. A **Chicago school** sprang up, dedicated to the design of buildings whose form expressed, rather than masked, their structure and function. The presiding

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

How were America’s industrial cities different from the typical city before 1860?

Woolworth Building, New York City

Under construction in this photograph, taken between 1910 and 1913, the headquarters of the nationwide Woolworth’s five-and-dime chain became a dominant feature of the New York skyline. Manhattan soon had more skyscrapers than any other city in the world. Library of Congress.



genius of this school was architect Louis Sullivan, whose “vertical aesthetic” of set-back windows and strong columns gave skyscrapers a “proud and soaring” presence and offered plentiful natural light for workers inside. Chicago pioneered skyscraper construction, but New York, with its unrelenting demand for prime downtown space, took the lead by the late 1890s. The fifty-five-story Woolworth Building, completed in 1913, marked the beginning of Manhattan’s modern skyline.

The Electric City One of the most dramatic urban amenities was electric light. Gaslight, produced from coal gas, had been used for residential light since the early nineteenth century, but gas lamps were too dim to brighten streets and public spaces. In the 1870s, as generating technology became commercially viable, electricity proved far better. Electric arc lamps, installed in Wanamaker’s department store in Philadelphia in 1878, astonished viewers with their brilliant illumination. Electric streetlights soon replaced gaslights on city streets.

Before it had a significant effect on industry, electricity gave the city its modern tempo. It lifted elevators, illuminated department store windows, and above all, turned night into day. Electric streetlights made residents feel safer; as one magazine put it in 1912, “A light is as good as a policeman.” Nightlife became less risky and more appealing. One journalist described Broadway in 1894: “All the shop fronts are lighted, and

the entrances to the theaters blaze out on the sidewalk.” At the end of a long working day, city dwellers flocked to this free entertainment. Nothing, declared an observer, matched the “festive panorama” of Broadway “when the lights are on.”

Newcomers and Neighborhoods

Explosive population growth made cities a world of new arrivals, including many young women and men arriving from the countryside. Traditionally, rural daughters had provided essential labor for spinning and weaving cloth, but industrialization relocated those tasks from the household to the factory. Finding themselves without a useful household role, many farm daughters sought paid employment. In an age of declining rural prosperity, many sons also left the farm and—like immigrants arriving from other countries—set aside part of their pay to help the folks at home. Explaining why she moved to Chicago, an African American woman from Louisiana declared, “A child with any respect about herself or hisself wouldn’t like to see their mother and father work so hard and earn nothing. I feel it my duty to help.”

America’s cities also became homes for millions of overseas immigrants. Most numerous in Boston were the Irish; in Minneapolis, Swedes; in other northern cities, Germans. Arriving in a great metropolis, immigrants confronted many difficulties. One Polish man,



Lighting Up Minneapolis, 1883

Like other American cities, Minneapolis at night had been lit by dim gaslight until the advent of Charles F. Brush's electric arc lamps. This photograph marks the opening day, February 28, 1883, of Minneapolis's new era: the first lighting of a 257-foot tower topped by a ring of electric arc lamps. The electric poles on the right, connecting the tower to a power station, would soon proliferate into a blizzard of poles and overhead wires, as Minneapolis became an electric city. © Minnesota Historical Society/CORBIS.

who had lost the address of his American cousins, felt utterly alone after disembarking at New York's main immigration facility, Ellis Island, which opened in 1892. Then he heard a kindly voice in Polish, offering to help. "From sheer joy," he recalled, "tears welled up in my eyes to hear my native tongue." Such experiences suggest why immigrants stuck together, relying on relatives and friends to get oriented and find jobs. A high degree of ethnic clustering resulted, even within a single factory. At the Jones and Laughlin steelworks

in Pittsburgh, for example, the carpentry shop was German, the hammer shop Polish, and the blooming mill Serbian. "My people . . . stick together," observed a son of Ukrainian immigrants. But he added, "We who are born in this country . . . feel this country is our home."

Patterns of settlement varied by ethnic group. Many Italians, recruited by *padroni*, or labor bosses, found work in northeastern and Mid-Atlantic cities. Their urban concentration was especially marked after the

The World's Biggest Cities, 1800–2000

This table lists the ten largest cities in the world, by population in millions, at the start of the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries.

TABLE 19.1

| 1800 | | 1900 | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|--------------|
| City | Population | City | Population |
| Beijing, China | 1.10 million | London, United Kingdom | 6.48 million |
| London, United Kingdom | 0.86 | New York, United States | 4.24 |
| Guangzhou, China | 0.80 | Paris, France | 3.33 |
| Istanbul, Turkey | 0.57 | Berlin, Germany | 2.42 |
| Paris, France | 0.55 | Chicago, United States | 1.72 |
| Hangzhou, China | 0.50 | Vienna, Austria | 1.66 |
| Edo (later Tokyo), Japan | 0.49 | Tokyo, Japan | 1.50 |
| Naples (later part of Italy) | 0.43 | St. Petersburg, Russia | 1.44 |
| Suzhou, China | 0.39 | Philadelphia, United States | 1.42 |
| Osaka, Japan | 0.38 | Manchester, United Kingdom | 1.26 |
| 2000 | | | |
| City | Population | | |
| Tokyo, Japan | 34.45 million | | |
| Mexico City, Mexico | 18.02 | | |
| New York City/Newark, United States | 17.85 | | |
| São Paulo, Brazil | 17.10 | | |
| Mumbai (Bombay), India | 16.09 | | |
| Delhi, India | 15.73 | | |
| Shanghai, China | 13.22 | | |
| Calcutta, India | 13.06 | | |
| Buenos Aires, Argentina | 11.85 | | |
| Los Angeles, United States | 11.81 | | |

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. In each year, how many of the world's ten largest cities were located in the United States? In what regions of the world were the other cities located? What does this tell us about the United States's role in the world at each of these historical moments?
2. The figures from 1900 and 2000 show, to a large degree, the effects of industrialization. What does the table suggest about its impact?



The San Francisco Earthquake

California's San Andreas Fault had caused earthquakes for centuries—but when a major metropolis arose nearby, it created new potential for catastrophe. The devastating earthquake of April 18, 1906, occurred at 5:12 A.M., when many residents were sleeping. This photograph of Sacramento Street shows the resulting devastation and fires. The quake probably killed over 2,000 people, though the exact number will never be known. A massive 296-mile rupture along the fault, felt as far away as Los Angeles, Oregon, and central Nevada, the earthquake refuted contemporary geological theories. It prompted researchers to open new lines of inquiry aimed at predicting tremors—and constructing urban buildings that could withstand them.

Universal History Archive / UIG / The Bridgeman Art Library.

1880s, as more and more laborers arrived from southern Italy. The attraction of America was obvious to one young man, who had grown up in a poor southern Italian farm family. “I had never gotten any wages of any kind before,” he reported after settling with his uncle in New Jersey. “The work here was just as hard as that on the farm; but I didn’t mind it much because I would receive what seemed to me like a lot.” Amadeo Peter Giannini, who started off as a produce merchant in San Francisco, soon turned to banking. After the San Francisco earthquake in 1906, his Banca d’Italia was the first financial institution to reopen in the Bay area. Expanding steadily across the West, it eventually became Bank of America.

Like Giannini’s bank, institutions of many kinds sprang up to serve ethnic urban communities. Throughout America, Italian speakers avidly read the newspaper *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*; Jews, the Yiddish-language *Jewish Daily Forward*, also published in New York. Bohemians gathered in singing societies,

while New York Jews patronized a lively Yiddish theater. By 1903, Italians in Chicago had sixty-six **mutual aid societies**, most composed of people from a particular province or town. These societies collected dues from members and paid support in case of death or disability on the job. Mutual benefit societies also functioned as fraternal clubs. “We are strangers in a strange country,” explained one member of a Chinese *tong*, or mutual aid society, in Chicago. “We must have an organization (*tong*) to control our country fellows and develop our friendship.”

Sharply defined ethnic neighborhoods such as San Francisco’s Chinatown, Italian North Beach, and Jewish Hayes Valley grew up in every major city, driven by both discrimination and immigrants’ desire to stick together (Map 19.1). In addition to patterns of ethnic and racial segregation, residential districts in almost all industrial cities divided along lines of economic class. Around Los Angeles’s central plaza, Mexican neighborhoods diversified, incorporating Italians and Jews.

MAP 19.1**The Lower East Side, New York City, 1900**

As this map shows, the Jewish immigrants dominating Manhattan's Lower East Side preferred to live in neighborhoods populated by those from their home regions of Eastern Europe. Their sense of a common identity made for a remarkable flowering of educational, cultural, and social institutions on the Jewish East Side. Ethnic neighborhoods became a feature of almost every American city.



Later, as the plaza became a site for business and tourism, immigrants were pushed into working-class neighborhoods like Belvedere and Boyle Heights, which sprang up to the east. Though ethnically diverse, East Los Angeles was resolutely working class; middle-class white neighborhoods grew up predominantly in West Los Angeles.

African Americans also sought urban opportunities. In 1900, almost 90 percent of American blacks still lived in the South, but increasing numbers had moved to cities such as Baton Rouge, Jacksonville, Montgomery, and Charleston, all of whose populations were

more than 50 percent African American. Blacks also settled in northern cities, albeit not in the numbers that would arrive during the Great Migration of World War I. Though blacks constituted only 2 percent of New York City's population in 1910, they already numbered more than 90,000. These newcomers confronted conditions even worse than those for foreign-born immigrants. Relentlessly turned away from manufacturing jobs, most black men and

PLACE EVENTS IN CONTEXT

What opportunities did urban neighborhoods provide to immigrants and African Americans, and what problems did these newcomers face?



The Cherry Family, 1906

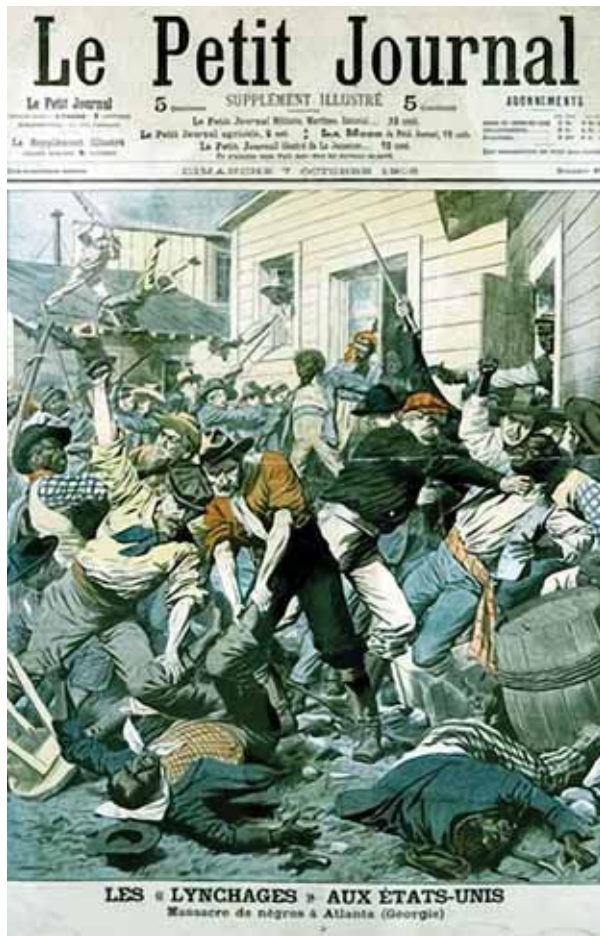
Wiley and Fannie Cherry migrated in 1893 from North Carolina to Chicago, settling in the small African American community that had established itself on the city's West Side. The Cherrys apparently prospered. By 1906, when this family portrait was taken, they had entered the black middle class. When migration intensified after 1900, longer-settled urban blacks like the Cherrys often became uncomfortable, and relations with needy rural newcomers were sometimes tense. Collection of Lorraine Heflin/Picture Research Consultants & Archives.

women took up work in the service sector, becoming porters, laundrywomen, and domestic servants.

Blacks faced another urban danger: the so-called **race riot**, an attack by white mobs triggered by street altercations or rumors of crime. One of the most virulent episodes occurred in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1906. The violence was fueled by a nasty political campaign that generated sensational false charges of “negro crime.” Roaming bands of white men attacked black Atlantans, invading middle-class black neighborhoods and in one case lynching two barbers after seizing them in their shop. The rioters killed at least twenty-four blacks and wounded more than a hundred. The disease of hatred was not limited to the South. Race riots broke out in New York City’s Tenderloin district (1900);

Evansville, Indiana (1903); and Springfield, Illinois (1908). By then, one journalist observed, “In every important Northern city, a distinct race-problem already exists which must, in a few years, assume serious proportions.”

Whether they arrived from the South or from Europe, Mexico, or Asia, working-class city residents needed cheap housing near their jobs (Map 19.2). They faced grim choices. As urban land values climbed, speculators tore down houses that were vacated by middle-class families moving away from the industrial core. In their place, they erected five- or six-story **tenements**, buildings that housed twenty or more families in cramped, airless apartments (Figure 19.1). Tenements fostered rampant disease and horrific infant mortality.



The Atlanta Race Riot—Seen from France

The cover of this Paris newsmagazine depicts the Atlanta race riot of 1906. While the artist had almost certainly never visited Atlanta, his dramatic illustration shows that, from this early date, racial violence could be a source of embarrassment to the United States in its relations with other countries.

Picture Research Consultants & Archives.

In New York’s Eleventh Ward, an average of 986 persons occupied each acre. One investigator in Philadelphia described twenty-six people living in nine rooms of a tenement. “The bathroom at the rear of the house was used as a kitchen,” she reported. “One privy compartment in the yard was the sole toilet accommodation for the five families living in the house.” African Americans often suffered most. A study of Albany, Syracuse, and Troy, New York, noted, “The colored people are relegated to the least healthful buildings.”

Denouncing these conditions, reformers called for model tenements financed by public-spirited citizens willing to accept a limited return on their investment. When private philanthropy failed to make a dent, cities turned to housing codes. The most advanced was New

York’s Tenement House Law of 1901, which required interior courts, indoor toilets, and fire safeguards for new structures. The law, however, had no effect on the 44,000 tenements that already existed in Manhattan and the Bronx. Reformers were thwarted by the economic facts of urban development. Industrial workers could not afford transportation and had to live near their jobs; commercial development pushed up land values. Only high-density, cheaply built housing earned landlords a significant profit.

City Cultures

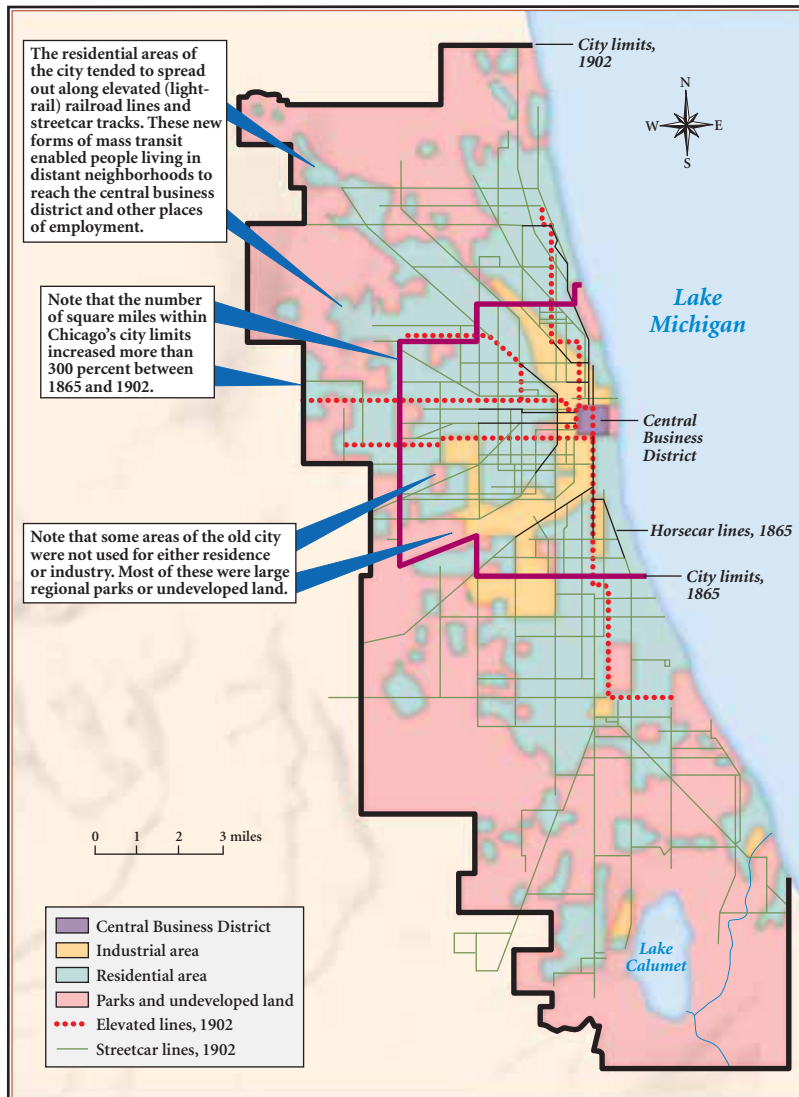
Despite their dangers and problems, industrial cities could be exciting places to live. In the nineteenth century, white middle-class Protestants had set the cultural standard; immigrants and the poor were expected to follow cues from their betters, seeking “uplift” and respectability. But in the cities, new mass-based entertainments emerged among the working classes, especially youth. These entertainments spread from the working class to the middle class—much to the distress of many middle-class parents. At the same time, cities became stimulating centers for intellectual life.

Urban Amusements One enticing attraction was **vaudeville theater**, which arose in the 1880s and 1890s. Vaudeville customers could walk in anytime and watch a continuous sequence of musical acts, skits, magic shows, and other entertainment. First popular among the working class, vaudeville quickly broadened its appeal to include middle-class audiences. By the early 1900s, vaudeville faced competition from early movie theaters, or nickelodeons, which offered short films for a nickel entry fee. With distaste, one reporter described a typical movie audience as “mothers of bawling infants” and “newsboys, bootblacks, and smudgy urchins.” By the 1910s, even working girls who refrained from less respectable amusements might indulge in a movie once or twice a week.

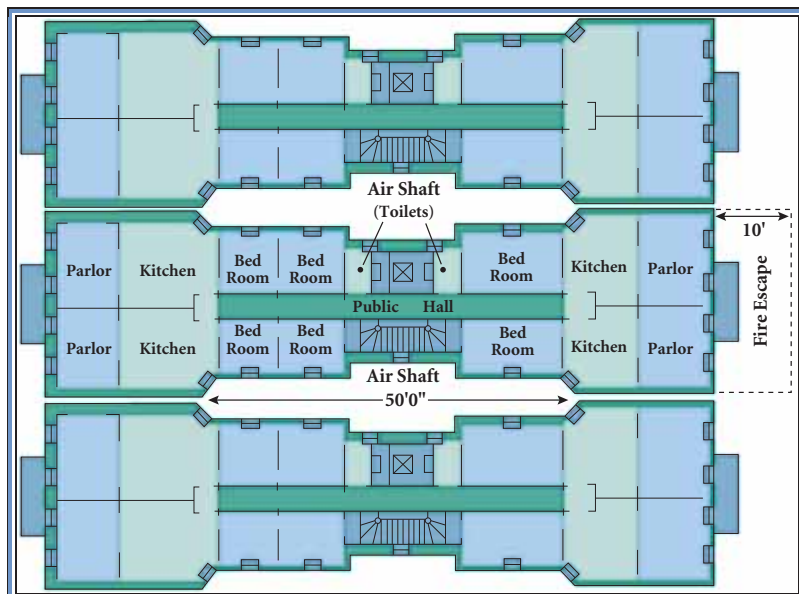
More spectacular were the great amusement parks that appeared around 1900, most famously at New York’s Coney Island. These parks had their origins in world’s fairs, whose paid entertainment areas had offered giant Ferris wheels and camel rides through “a street in Cairo.” Entrepreneurs found that such attractions were big business. Between 1895 and 1904, they installed them at several rival amusement parks near Coney Island’s popular beaches. The parks offered New Yorkers a

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

How did working-class and elite city residents differ in how they spent their money and leisure time?

**MAP 19.2****The Expansion of Chicago, 1865–1902**

In 1865, Chicagoans depended on horsecar lines to get around town. By 1900, the city limits had expanded enormously and so had the streetcar service, which was by then electrified. Elevated trains eased the congestion on downtown streets. Ongoing extension of the streetcar lines, some beyond the city limits, ensured that suburban development would continue as well.

**FIGURE 19.1****Floor Plan of a Dumbbell Tenement**

In a contest for a design that met an 1879 requirement for every room to have a window, the dumbbell tenement won. The interior indentation, which created an airshaft between adjoining buildings, gave the tenement its "dumbbell" shape. But what was touted as a model tenement demonstrated instead the futility of trying to reconcile maximum land usage with decent housing. Each floor contained four apartments of three or four rooms, the largest only 10 by 11 feet. The two toilets in the hall became filthy or broke down under daily use by forty or more people. The narrow airshaft provided almost no light for the interior rooms and served mainly as a dumping ground for garbage. So deplorable were these tenements that they became the stimulus for the next wave of New York housing reform.

Amusement Park, Long Beach, California

The origins of the roller coaster go back to a Switchback Railway installed at New York’s Coney Island in 1884, featuring gentle dips and curves. By 1900, when the Jack Rabbit Race was constructed at Long Beach, California, the goal was to create the biggest possible thrill. Angelenos journeyed by trolley to Long Beach to take a dip in the ocean as well as to ride the new roller coaster—and the airplane ride in the foreground. © Curt Teich Postcard Archives, Lake County Museum.



chance to come by ferry, escape the hot city, and enjoy roller coasters, lagoon plunges, and “hootchy-kootchy” dance shows. Among the amazed observers was Cuban revolutionary José Martí, working as a journalist in the United States. “What facilities for every pleasure!” Martí wrote. “What absolute absence of any outward sadness or poverty! . . . The theater, the photographers’ booth, the bathhouses!” He concluded that Coney Island epitomized America’s commercial society, driven not by “love or glory” but by “a desire for gain.” Similar parks grew up around the United States. By the summer of 1903, Philadelphia’s Willow Grove counted three million visitors annually; so did two amusement parks outside Los Angeles.

Ragtime and City Blues Music also became a booming urban entertainment. By the 1890s, Tin Pan Alley, the nickname for New York City’s song-publishing district, produced such national hit tunes as “A Bicycle Built for Two” and “My Wild Irish Rose.” The most famous sold more than a million copies of sheet music, as well as audio recordings for the newly invented phonograph. To find out what would sell, publishers had musicians play at New York’s working-class beer gardens and dance halls. One publishing agent, who visited “sixty joints a week” to test new songs, declared that “the best songs came from the gutter.”

African American musicians brought a syncopated beat that began, by the 1890s, to work its way into mainstream hits like “A Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight.” Black performers became stars in their own right with the rise of **ragtime**. This music, apparently named for its ragged rhythm, combined a steady beat in the bass (played with the left hand on the piano) with syncopated, off-beat rhythms in the treble (played

with the right). Ragtime became wildly popular among audiences of all classes and races who heard in its infectious rhythms something exciting—a decisive break with Victorian hymns and parlor songs.

For the master of the genre, composer Scott Joplin, ragtime was serious music. Joplin, the son of former slaves, grew up along the Texas-Arkansas border and took piano lessons as a boy from a German teacher. He and other traveling performers introduced ragtime to national audiences at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893. Seeking to elevate African American music and secure a broad national audience, Joplin warned pianists, “It is never right to play ‘Ragtime’ fast.” But his instructions were widely ignored. Young Americans embraced ragtime.

They also embraced each other, as ragtime ushered in an urban dance craze. By 1910, New York alone had more than five hundred dance halls. In Kansas City, shocked guardians of morality counted 16,500 dancers on the floor on a Saturday night; Chicago had 86,000. Some young Polish and Slovak women chose restaurant jobs rather than domestic service so they would have free time to visit dance halls “several nights a week.” New dances like the Bunny Hug and Grizzly Bear were overtly sexual: they called for close body contact and plenty of hip movement. In fact, many of these dances originated in brothels. Despite widespread denunciation, dance mania quickly spread from the urban working classes to rural and middle-class youth.

By the 1910s, black music was achieving a central place in American popular culture. African American trumpet player and bandleader W. C. Handy, born in Alabama, electrified national audiences by performing music drawn from the cotton fields of the Mississippi Delta. Made famous when it reached the big city, this

music became known as the **blues**. Blues music spoke of hard work and heartbreak, as in Handy's popular hit "St. Louis Blues" (1914):

Got de St. Louis Blues jes blue as I can be,
Dat man got a heart lak a rock cast in the sea,
Or else he wouldn't gone so far from me.

Blues spoke to the emotional lives of young urbanites who were far from home, experiencing dislocation, loneliness, and bitter disappointment along with the thrills of city life. Like Coney Island and other leisure activities, ragtime and blues helped forge new collective experiences in a world of strangers.

Ragtime and blues spread quickly and had a profound influence on twentieth-century American culture. By the time Handy published "St. Louis Blues," composer Irving Berlin, a Russian Jewish immigrant, was introducing altered ragtime pieces into musical theater—which eventually transferred to radio and film. Lyrics often featured sexual innuendo, as in the title of Berlin's hit song "If You Don't Want My Peaches (You'd Better Stop Shaking My Tree)." The popularity of such music marked the arrival of modern youth culture. Its enduring features included "crossover" music that originated in the black working class and a commercial music industry that brazenly appropriated African American musical styles.

Sex and the City In the city, many young people found parental oversight weaker than it had been before. Amusement parks and dance halls helped foster the new custom of dating, which like other cultural innovations emerged first among the working class. Gradually, it became acceptable for a young man to escort a young woman out on the town for commercial entertainments rather than spending time at home under a chaperone's watchful eye. Dating opened a new world of pleasure, sexual adventure, and danger. Young women headed to dance halls alone to meet men; the term *gold digger* came into use to describe a woman who wanted a man's money more than the man himself.

But young women, not men, proved most vulnerable in the system of dating. Having less money to spend because they earned half or less of men's wages, working-class girls relied on the "treat." Some tried to maintain strict standards of respectability, keenly aware that their prospects for marriage depended on a virtuous reputation. Others became so-called charity girls, eager for a good time. Such young women, one investigator reported, "offer themselves to strangers, not for money, but for presents, attention and pleasure." For some women, sexual favors were a matter of

practical necessity. "If I did not have a man," declared one waitress, "I could not get along on my wages." In the anonymous city, there was not always a clear line between working-class treats and casual prostitution.

Dating and casual sex were hallmarks of an urban world in which large numbers of residents were young and single. The 1900 census found that more than 20 percent of women in Detroit, Philadelphia, and Boston lived as boarders and lodgers, not in family units; the percentage topped 30 percent in St. Paul and Minneapolis. Single men also found social opportunities in the city. One historian has called the late nineteenth century the Age of the Bachelor, a time when being an unattached male lost its social stigma. With boardinghouses, restaurants, and abundant personal services, the city afforded bachelors all the comforts of home and, on top of that, an array of men's clubs, saloons, and sporting events.

Many industrial cities developed robust gay subcultures. New York's gay underground, for example, included an array of drinking and meeting places, as well as clubs and drag balls. Middle-class men, both straight and gay, frequented such venues for entertainment or to find companionship. One medical student remembered being taken to a ball at which he was startled to find five hundred gay and lesbian couples waltzing to "a good band." By the 1910s, the word *queer* had come into use as slang for *homosexual*. Though harassment was frequent and moral reformers like Anthony Comstock issued regular denunciations of sexual "degeneracy," arrests were few. Gay sex shows and saloons were lucrative for those who ran them (and for police, who took bribes to look the other way, just as they did for brothels). The exuberant gay urban subculture offered a dramatic challenge to Victorian ideals.

High Culture For elites, the rise of great cities offered an opportunity to build museums, libraries, and other cultural institutions that could flourish only in major metropolitan centers. Millionaires patronized the arts partly to advance themselves socially but also out of a sense of civic duty and national pride. As early as the 1870s, symphony orchestras emerged in Boston and New York. Composers and conductors soon joined Europe in new experiments. The Metropolitan Opera, founded in 1883 by wealthy businessmen, drew enthusiastic crowds to hear the innovative work of Richard Wagner. In 1907, the Met shocked audiences by presenting Richard Strauss's sexually scandalous opera *Salome*.

Art museums and natural history museums also became prominent new institutions in this era. The nation's first major art museum, the Corcoran Gallery

of Art, opened in Washington, D.C., in 1869, while New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art settled into its permanent home in 1880. In the same decades, public libraries grew from modest collections into major urban institutions. The greatest library benefactor was steel magnate Andrew Carnegie, who announced in 1881 that he would build a library in any town or city that was prepared to maintain it. By 1907, Carnegie had spent more than \$32.7 million to establish over a thousand libraries throughout the United States.

Urban Journalism Patrons of Carnegie’s libraries could read, in addition to books, an increasing array of mass-market newspapers. Joseph Pulitzer, owner of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and *New York World*, led the way in building his sales base with sensational investigations, human-interest stories, and targeted sections covering sports and high society. By the 1890s, Pulitzer faced a challenge from William Randolph Hearst (*Thinking Like a Historian*, p. 620). The arrival of Sunday color comics featuring the “Yellow Kid” gave such publications the name **yellow journalism**, a derogatory term for mass-market newspapers. Hearst’s and Pulitzer’s sensational coverage was often irresponsible. In the late 1890s, for example, their papers helped whip up frenzied pressure for the United States to declare war against Spain (Chapter 21). But Hearst and Pulitzer also exposed scandals and injustices. They believed their papers should challenge the powerful by speaking to and for ordinary Americans.

Along with Hearst’s and Pulitzer’s stunt reporters, other urban journalists also worked to promote reform. New magazines such as *McClure’s* introduced national audiences to reporters such as Ida Tarbell, who exposed the machinations of John D. Rockefeller, and David Graham Phillips, whose “Treason of the Senate,” published in *Cosmopolitan* in 1906, documented the deference of U.S. senators—especially Republicans—to wealthy corporate interests. Theodore Roosevelt dismissed such writers as **muckrakers** who focused too much on the negative side of American life. The term stuck, but muckrakers’ influence was profound. They inspired thousands of readers to get involved in reform movements and tackle the problems caused by industrialization.

Governing the Great City

One of the most famous muckrakers was Lincoln Steffens, whose book *The Shame of the Cities* (1904), first published serially in *McClure’s* magazine, denounced

the corruption afflicting America’s urban governments. Steffens used dramatic language to expose “swindling” politicians. He claimed, for example, that the mayor of Minneapolis had turned his city over to “outlaws.” In St. Louis, “bribery was a joke,” while Pittsburgh’s Democratic Party operated a private company that handled most of the city’s street-paving projects—at a hefty profit. Historians now believe that Steffens and other middle-class crusaders took a rather extreme view of urban politics; the reality was more complex. But charges of corruption could hardly be denied. As industrial cities grew with breathtaking speed, they posed a serious problem of governance.

Urban Machines

In the United States, cities relied largely on private developers to build streetcar lines and provide urgently needed water, gas, and electricity. This preference for business solutions gave birth to what one urban historian calls the “private city”—an urban environment shaped by individuals and profit-seeking businesses. Private enterprise, Americans believed, spurred great innovations—trolley cars, electric lighting, skyscrapers—and drove urban real estate development. Investment opportunities looked so tempting, in fact, that new cities sprang up almost overnight from the ruins of a catastrophic Chicago fire in 1871 and a major San Francisco earthquake in 1906. Real estate interests were often instrumental in encouraging streetcar lines to build outward from the central districts.

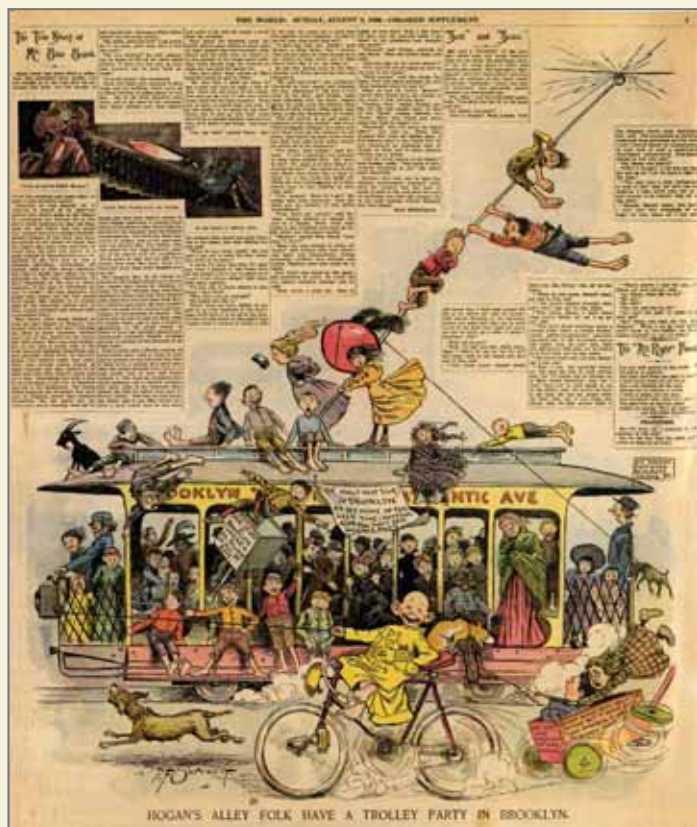
When contractors sought city business, or saloonkeepers needed licenses, they turned to **political machines**: local party bureaucracies that kept an unshakable grip on both elected and appointed public offices. A machine like New York’s infamous Tammany Society—known by the name of its meeting place, Tammany Hall—consisted of layers of political functionaries. At the bottom were precinct captains who knew every city neighborhood and block; above them were ward bosses and, at the top, powerful citywide leaders, who had usually started at the bottom and worked their way up. Machines dispensed jobs and patronage, arranged for urban services, and devoted their energies to staying in office, which they did, year after year, on the strength of their political clout and popularity among urban voters.

For constituents, political machines acted as a rough-and-ready social service agency, providing jobs for the jobless or a helping hand for a bereaved family. Tammany ward boss George Washington Plunkitt, for example, reported that he arranged housing for

THINKING LIKE A HISTORIAN

Making Mass Media: Newspaper Empires

1. R. F. Outcault's "The Yellow Kid" comic, *The World*, August 9, 1896. Pulitzer and Hearst introduced Sunday color comics, including "The Yellow Kid" (shown here on a bicycle). Working-class readers instantly recognized the "kid," slang that then referred to working-class immigrant children. The Kid, like other boys of his age, wore skirts; tenement toddlers' heads were shaved to discourage lice.



The World, Sunday, August 9, 1896.

2. Editorial, *Wheeling Register*, April 6, 1885. A West Virginia newspaper commented on a campaign by the *New York World* to complete the Statue of Liberty. Parts of the statue, donated by France, were languishing in New York City parks.

The *New York World* is a liberty-loving journal. It has taken the responsibility of being foster mother to that

much abused piece of bronze called the "BARTHOLDI statue." It begins to look as if the *World* may nurse it to a successful termination by raising funds enough through public contributions to complete the pedestal upon which it is to stand. Success to the enterprise.

3. "HOMELESS, HOPELESS! Nellie Bly in a Night Haunt of the City's Wretchedest of Women," *New York World*, February 9, 1896. Pulitzer and Hearst hired many "stunt reporters." The most famous was Elizabeth Jane Cochrane, who took her pen name, Nellie Bly, from a popular song. In 1892, sponsored by the *World*, Bly beat the record in Jules Verne's famous novel *Around the World in Eighty Days*, circumnavigating the world in seventy-two days. She filed many investigative pieces such as this one.

An old woman stood with her back against the side of a building. Over her head was a ragged shawl that had once been red. Around her knees hung a limp and shapeless calico skirt. The rain and sleet were falling steadily and lay thick and slushy upon the streets.

I shivered as I stopped to watch. . . . If the old woman felt the cold she gave no sign. She stood motionless, peeping around the corner. Her eyes were fixed upon the door of the Oak Street Station-House.

Just then three small boys, unmindful of the weather, came trudging down the street . . . industriously gathering every white spot that showed upon the pavement to add to the black snowballs they held in their wet red hands.

Turning the corner suddenly they came upon the old woman. For a second they paused and looked at her and she glared at them. It reminded me of the way dogs behave when they turn a corner and espy a cat. . . . The old woman started on a frantic hobble across the street, the boys after her. Their black snowballs landed squarely and soakingly against her bent back. . . . The old woman shouted things as she ran, things that do not sound well and are never by any chance reproduced in print, but they seemed to increase the delight of the fiendish boys. . . . She could hobble she made for the station-house and the boys pursued her, pelting her.

4. **Lewis Wickes Hine, newsboys selling at a Hartford, Connecticut saloon, 9:30 P.M., March 1909.** In addition to subscriptions and sales at newsstands, newspapers sold bundles of one hundred papers to boys and girls, who resold as many as they could. Photographer Lewis Hine's caption, included below, suggests one strategy for selling papers. Hine, working for the National Child Labor Committee, took many such images.

A common case of "team work." The smaller boy . . . goes into one of the saloons and sells his "last" papers. Then comes out and his brother gives him more. Joseph said, "Drunks are me best customers. . . . Dey buy me out so I kin go home." He sells every afternoon and night. Extra late Saturday. At it again at 6 A.M.



Library of Congress.

5. **Newsboys strike coverage, *New York Herald-Tribune*, July 25, 1899.** As sales plummeted after the War of 1898, Pulitzer and other newspaper titans raised the cost of a newspaper bundle, for children who resold them, from 50 to 60 cents. Newsboys struck. They failed to get the 50-cent price reinstated, but the World and other companies agreed to buy back unsold papers, which they had not done before. Kid Blink, the strike leader, was blind in one eye.

The newsboys' strike gathered new strength last night in a monster mass meeting held at New Irving Hall. . . . "Kid" Blink, who has been made Grand Master Workman of the union, led the procession. . . . The unbiased spectator last evening could not fail to be impressed with the resolute, manly fight the little fellows are making. . . .

SPEECH OF "KID" BLINK

. . . Dis is de time when we'se got to stick togedder like glue! But der's one ting I want ter say before I goes any further. I don't believe in getting' no feller's papers frum him and tearin' em up. I know I done it. (Cries of "You bet you did!") But I'm sorry fer it. No! der ain't nuttin in dat. We know wot we wants and we'll git it. . . . Dem 10 cents is as good ter us as to de millionaires — maybe better. . . . We'll strike and restrike till we get it. . . . We'll stick togedder like plaster, won't we, boys?

The boys answered that they would.

6. **Circulation statistics for the *New York World* from *N. W. Ayer and Son's American Newspaper Annual and Directory*, 1910.**

| Edition | Political affiliation | No. of Pages | Circulation |
|---------|-----------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Morning | Democratic | 16 | 361,412 |
| Evening | Independent | 12–16 | 410,259 |
| Sunday | Democratic | 56–72 | 459,663 |

Sources: (2) *Wheeling Register*, April 6, 1885; (3) *New York World*, February 9, 1896; (5) *New York Herald-Tribune*, July 25, 1899; (6) *N. W. Ayer and Son's American Newspaper Annual and Directory* (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer and Son, 1910), 623.

ANALYZING THE EVIDENCE

- Based on these sources, why do you think "yellow journalism" was popular and profitable? What audiences did it serve, and how?
- Consider the tone and point of view of sources 1, 3, and 5. What do they suggest about American attitudes toward the urban poor?
- What do these sources say about how Pulitzer and Hearst viewed their role as publishers? How might we compare their newspaper empires to other corporations of the industrial era (Chapter 17)?

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Write a brief essay in which you explain the ways in which the rise of mass-market newspapers might have contributed to and helped to publicize calls for progressive reform.

families after their apartments burned, “fix[ing] them up until they get things runnin’ again.” Plunkitt was an Irishman, and so were most Tammany Hall leaders. But by the 1890s, Plunkitt’s Fifteenth District was filling up with Italians and Russian Jews. On a given day (as recorded in his diary), he might attend an Italian funeral in the afternoon and a Jewish wedding in the evening. Wherever he went, he brought gifts, listened to his constituents’ troubles, and offered a helping hand.

The favors dispensed by men like Plunkitt came via a system of boss control that was, as Lincoln Steffens charged, corrupt. Though rural, state, and national politics were hardly immune to such problems, cities offered flagrant opportunities for bribes and kickbacks. The level of corruption, as Plunkitt observed, was greater in cities, “accordin’ to the opportunities.” When politicians made contracts for city services, some of the money ended up in their pockets. In the 1860s, William Marcy Tweed, known as Boss Tweed, had made Tammany Hall a byword for corruption, until he was brought down in 1871 by flagrant overpricing of contracts for a lavish city courthouse. Thereafter, machine corruption became more surreptitious. Plunkitt declared that he had no need for outright bribes. He favored what he called “honest graft”—the profits that came to savvy insiders who knew where and when to buy land. Plunkitt made most of his money building wharves on Manhattan’s waterfront.

Middle-class reformers condemned immigrants for supporting machines. But urban immigrants believed that few middle-class Americans cared about the plight of poor city folk like themselves. Machines were hardly perfect, but immigrants could rely on them for jobs, emergency aid, and the only public services they could hope to obtain. Astute commentators saw that bosses dominated city government because they provided what was needed, with no condescending moral judgments. As reformer Jane Addams put it, the ward boss was a “stalking survival of village kindness.” Voters knew he was corrupt, but on election day they might say, “Ah, well, he has a big Irish heart. He is good to the widow and the fatherless,” or, “he knows the poor.” Addams con-

cluded that middle-class reformers would only make headway if they set aside their prejudices, learned to “stand by and for and with the people,” and did a better job of it than the machine bosses did.



To see a longer excerpt of the Jane Addams essay, along with other primary sources from this period, see *Sources for America’s History*.

Machine-style governments achieved some notable successes. They arranged (at a profit) for companies to operate streetcars, bring clean water and gaslight, and remove garbage. Nowhere in the world were there more massive public projects—aqueducts, sewage systems, bridges, and spacious parks—than in the great cities of the United States. The nature of this achievement can be grasped by comparing Chicago, Illinois, with Berlin, the capital of Germany, in 1900. At that time, Chicago’s waterworks pumped 500 million gallons of water a day, providing 139 gallons per resident; Berliners made do with 18 gallons each. Flush toilets, a rarity in Berlin, could be found in 60 percent of Chicago homes. Chicago lit its streets with electricity, while Berlin still relied mostly on gaslight. Chicago had twice as many parks as the German capital, and it had just completed an ambitious sanitation project that reversed the course of the Chicago River, carrying sewage into Lake Michigan, away from city residents.

These achievements were remarkable, because American municipal governments labored under severe political constraints. Judges did grant cities some authority: in 1897, for example, New York’s state supreme court ruled that New York City was entirely within its rights to operate a municipally owned subway. Use of private land was also subject to whatever regulations a city might impose. But, starting with an 1868 ruling in Iowa, the American legal system largely classified the city as a “corporate entity” subject to state control. In contrast to state governments, cities had only a limited police power, which they could use, for example, to stop crime but not to pass more ambitious measures for public welfare. States, not cities, held most taxation power and received most public revenues. Machines and their private allies flourished, in part, because cities were starved for legitimate cash.

Thus money talked; powerful economic interests warped city government. Working-class residents—even those loyal to their local machines—knew that the newest electric lights and best trolley lines served affluent neighborhoods, where citizens had the most clout. Hilda Satt, a Polish immigrant who moved into a poor Chicago neighborhood in 1893, recalled garbage-strewn streets and filthy backyard privies. “The streets were paved with wooden blocks,” she later wrote, “and after a heavy rainfall the blocks would become loose and float about in the street.” She remembered that on one such occasion, local pranksters posted a sign

EXPLAIN CONSEQUENCES

Why, given that everyone agreed machines were corrupt, did urban voters support them?



City Garbage

"How to get rid of the garbage?" was a question that bedeviled every American city. The difficulties of keeping up are all too clear in this ground-level photograph by the great urban investigator Jacob Riis, looking down Tammany Street in New York City around 1890. Museum of the City of New York.

saying, "The Mayor and the Aldermen are Invited to Swim Here." As cities expanded, the limitations of political machines became increasingly clear.

The Limits of Machine Government

The scale of urban problems became dramatically evident in the depression of the 1890s, when unemployment reached a staggering 25 percent in some cities. Homelessness and hunger were rampant; newspapers nationwide reported on cases of starvation, desperation, and suicide. To make matters worse, most cities

had abolished the early-nineteenth-century system of outdoor relief, which provided public support for the indigent. Fearing the system promoted laziness among the poor, middle-class reformers had insisted on private, not public, charity. Even cities that continued to provide outdoor relief in the 1890s were overwhelmed by the magnitude of the crisis. Flooded with "tramps," police stations were forced to end the long-standing practice of allowing homeless individuals to sleep inside.

Faced with this crisis, many urban voters proved none too loyal to the machines when better alternatives arose. Cleveland, Ohio, for example, experienced

eighty-three labor strikes between 1893 and 1898. Workers' frustration centered on corrupt businesses with close ties to municipal officials. The city's Central Labor Union, dissatisfied with Democrats' failure to address its concerns, worked with middle-class allies to build a thriving local branch of the People's Party (Chapter 20). Their demands for stronger government measures, especially to curb corporate power, culminated in citywide protests in 1899 during a strike against the hated streetcar company. That year, more than eight thousand workers participated in the city's annual Labor Day parade. As they passed the mayor's reviewing stand, the bands fell silent and the unions furled their flags in a solemn protest against the mayor's failure to support their cause.

To recapture support from working-class Clevelanders, Democrats made a dramatic change in 1901, nominating Tom Johnson for mayor. Johnson, a reform-minded businessman, advocated municipal ownership of utilities and a tax system in which "monopoly and privilege" bore the main burdens. (Johnson once thanked Cleveland's city appraisers for raising taxes on his own mansion.) Johnson's comfortable victory transformed Democrats into Cleveland's leading reform party. While the new mayor did not fulfill the whole agenda of the Central Labor Union and its allies, he became an advocate of publicly owned utilities, and one of the nation's most famous and innovative reformers.

Like Johnson, other mayors began to oust machines and launch ambitious programs of reform. Some modeled their municipal governments on those of Glasgow, Scotland; Düsseldorf, Germany; and other European cities on the cutting edge of innovation. In Boston, Mayor Josiah Quincy built public baths, gyms, swimming pools, and playgrounds and provided free public concerts. Like other mayors, he battled streetcar companies to bring down fares. The scope of such projects varied. In 1912, San Francisco managed to open one small municipally owned streetcar line to compete with private companies. Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on the other hand, elected socialists who experimented with a sweeping array of measures, including publicly subsidized medical care and housing.

Republican Hazen Pingree, mayor of Detroit from 1890 to 1897, was a particularly noted reformer who worked for better streets and public transportation. During the depression, Pingree opened a network of vacant city-owned lots as community

vegetable gardens. Though some people ridiculed "Pingree's Potato Patches," the gardens helped feed thousands of Detroit's working people during the harsh depression years. By 1901, a coalition of reformers who campaigned against New York's Tammany Hall began to borrow ideas from Pingree and other mayors. In the wealthier wards of New York, they promised to reduce crime and save taxpayer dollars. In working-class neighborhoods, they vowed to provide affordable housing and municipal ownership of gas and electricity. They defeated Tammany's candidates, and though they did not fulfill all of their promises, they did provide more funding for overcrowded public schools.

Reformers also experimented with new ways of organizing municipal government itself. After a devastating hurricane in 1900 killed an estimated six thousand people in Galveston, Texas, and destroyed much of the city, rebuilders adopted a commission system that became a nationwide model for efficient government. Leaders of the **National Municipal League** advised cities to elect small councils and hire professional city managers who would direct operations like a corporate executive. The league had difficulty persuading politicians to adopt its business-oriented model; it won its greatest victories in young, small cities like Phoenix, Arizona, where the professional classes held political power. Other cities chose, instead, to enhance democratic participation. As part of the Oregon System, which called for direct voting on key political questions, Portland voters participated in 129 municipal referendum votes between 1905 and 1913.

Crucibles of Progressive Reform

The challenges posed by urban life presented rich opportunities for experimentation and reform. As happened in Cleveland with Tom Johnson's election as mayor, working-class radicals and middle-class reformers often mounted simultaneous challenges to political machines, and these combined pressures led to dramatic change. Many reformers pointed to the plight of the urban poor, especially children. Thus it is not surprising that **progressivism**, an overlapping set of movements to combat the ills of industrialization (Chapter 20), had important roots in the city. In the slums and tenements of the metropolis, reformers invented new forms of civic participation that shaped the course of national politics.

PLACE EVENTS IN CONTEXT

How did reformers try to address the limits of machine government? To what extent did they succeed?

Fighting Dirt and Vice

As early as the 1870s and 1880s, news reporters drew attention to corrupt city governments, the abuse of power by large corporations, and threats to public health. Researcher Helen Campbell reported on tenement conditions in such exposés as *Prisoners of Poverty* (1887). Making innovative use of the invention of flash photography, Danish-born journalist Jacob Riis included photographs of tenement interiors in his famous 1890 book, *How the Other Half Lives*. Riis had a profound influence on Theodore Roosevelt when the future president served as New York City's police commissioner. Roosevelt asked Riis to lead him on tours around the tenements, to help him better understand the problems of poverty, disease, and crime.

Cleaning Up Urban Environments One of the most urgent problems of the big city was disease. In the late nineteenth century, scientists in Europe came to understand the role of germs and bacteria. Though

researchers could not yet cure epidemic diseases, they could recommend effective measures for prevention. Following up on New York City's victory against cholera in 1866 — when government officials instituted an effective quarantine and prevented large numbers of deaths — city and state officials began to champion more public health projects. With a major clean-water initiative for its industrial cities in the late nineteenth century, Massachusetts demonstrated that it could largely eliminate typhoid fever. After a horrific yellow fever epidemic in 1878 that killed perhaps 12 percent of its population, Memphis, Tennessee, invested in state-of-the-art sewage and drainage. Though the new system did not eliminate yellow fever, it unexpectedly cut death rates from typhoid and cholera, as well as infant deaths from water-borne disease. Other cities followed suit. By 1913, a nationwide survey of 198 cities found that they were spending an average of \$1.28 per resident for sanitation and other health measures.

IDENTIFY CAUSES

What prompted the rise of urban environmental and antiprostitution campaigns?

A Hint to Boards of Health

In 1884, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* urged municipal and state boards of health to work harder to protect urban children. When this cartoon appeared, New Yorkers were reading shocking reports of milk dealers who diluted milk with borax and other chemicals. Note the range of health threats that the cartoonist identifies. Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center.



The public health movement became one of the era's most visible and influential reforms. In cities, the impact of pollution was obvious. Children played on piles of garbage, breathed toxic air, and consumed poisoned food, milk, and water. Infant mortality rates were shocking: in the early 1900s, a baby born to a Slavic woman in an American city had a 1 in 3 chance of dying in infancy. Outraged, reformers mobilized to demand safe water and better garbage collection. Hygiene reformers taught hand-washing and other techniques to fight the spread of tuberculosis.

Americans worked in other ways to make industrial cities healthier and more beautiful to live in. Many municipalities adopted smoke-abatement laws, though they had limited success with enforcement until the post–World War I adoption of natural gas, which burned cleaner than coal. Recreation also received attention. Even before the Civil War, urban planners had established sanctuaries like New York's Central

Park, where city people could stroll, rest, and contemplate natural landscapes. By the turn of the twentieth century, the **"City Beautiful" movement** arose to advocate more and better urban park spaces. Though most parks still featured flower gardens and tree-lined paths, they also made room for skating rinks, tennis courts, baseball fields, and swimming pools. Many included play areas with swing sets and seesaws, promoted by the National Playground Association as a way to keep urban children safe and healthy.

Closing Red Light Districts Distressed by the commercialization of sex, reformers also launched a campaign against urban prostitution. They warned, in dramatic language, of the threat of white slavery, alleging (in spite of considerable evidence to the contrary) that large numbers of young white women were being kidnapped and forced into prostitution. In *The City's Perils* (1910), author Leona Prall Groetzinger wrote



"FRIENDS" MEETING EMIGRANT GIRL AT THE DOCK
 "The girl was met at New York by two 'friends' who took her in charge. These 'friends' were two of the most brutal of all the white slave traders who are in the traffic."
 —U. S. Dist. Attorney Edwin W. Sims

Foreign girls are more helplessly at the mercy of white slave hunters than girls at home. Every year thousands of girls arriving in America from Italy, Sweden, Germany, etc., are never heard of again.

The Crusade Against "White Slavery"

With the growth of large cities, prostitution was a major cause of concern in the Progressive Era. Though the number of sex workers per capita in the United States was probably declining by 1900, the presence of red light districts was obvious; thousands of young women (as well as a smaller number of young men) were exploited in the sex trade. This image appeared in *The Great War on White Slavery*, published by the American Purity Foundation in 1911. It illustrates how immigrant women could be ensnared in the sex trade by alleged "friends" who offered them work. Reformers' denunciations of "white slavery" show an overt racial bias: while antiprostitution campaigners reported on the exploitation of Asian and African American women, the victimization of white women received the greatest emphasis and most effectively grabbed the attention of prosperous, middle-class Americans. From *The Great War on White Slavery*, by Clifford G. Roe, 1911. Courtesy Vassar College Special Collections.

that young women arrived from the countryside “burning with high hope and filled with great resolve, but the remorseless city takes them, grinds them, crushes them, and at last deposits them in unknown graves.”

Practical investigators found a more complex reality: women entered prostitution as a result of many factors, including low-wage jobs, economic desperation, abandonment, and often sexual and domestic abuse. Women who bore a child out of wedlock were often shunned by their families and forced into prostitution. Some working women and even housewives undertook casual prostitution to make ends meet. For decades, female reformers had tried to “rescue” such women and retrain them for more respectable employments, such as sewing. Results were, at best, mixed. Efforts to curb demand—that is, to focus on arresting and punishing men who employed prostitutes—proved unpopular with voters.

Nonetheless, with public concern mounting over “white slavery” and the payoffs machine bosses exacted from brothel keepers, many cities appointed vice commissions in the early twentieth century. A wave of brothel closings crested between 1909 and 1912, as police shut down red light districts in cities nationwide. Meanwhile, Congress passed the Mann Act (1910) to prohibit the transportation of prostitutes across state lines.

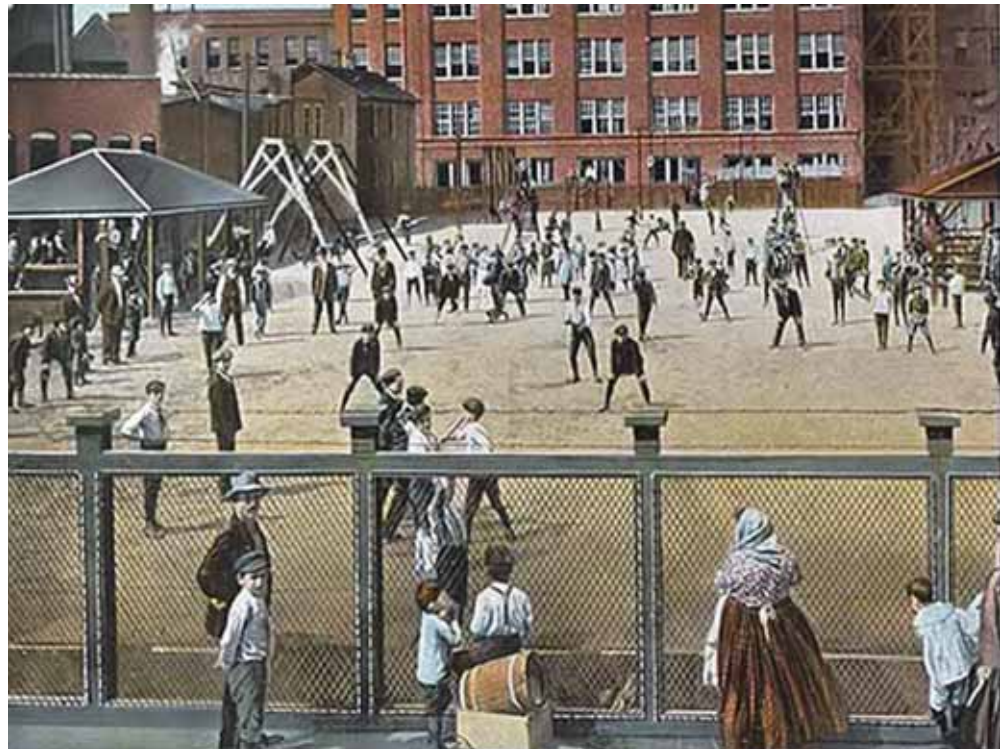
The crusade against prostitution accomplished its main goal, closing brothels, but in the long term it worsened the conditions under which many prostitutes worked. Though conditions in some brothels were horrific, sex workers who catered to wealthy clients made high wages and were relatively protected by madams, many of whom set strict rules for clients and provided medical care for their workers. In the wake of brothel closings, such women lost control of the prostitution business. Instead, almost all sex workers became “streetwalkers” or “call girls,” more vulnerable to violence and often earning lower wages than they had before the antiprostitution crusade began.

The Movement for Social Settlements

Some urban reformers focused their energies on building a creative new institution, the **social settlement**. These community welfare centers investigated the plight of the urban poor, raised funds to address urgent needs, and helped neighborhood residents advocate on their own behalf. At the movement’s peak in the early twentieth century, dozens of social settlements operated across the United States. The most famous, and one of the first, was **Hull House** on Chicago’s West Side, founded in 1889 by Jane Addams and her companion Ellen Gates Starr. Their dilapidated mansion, flanked

Hull House Playground, Chicago, 1906

When this postcard was made, the City of Chicago’s Small Parks Commission had just taken over management of the playground from settlement workers at Hull House, who had created it. In a pattern repeated in many cities, social settlements introduced new institutions and ideas—such as safe places for urban children to play—and inspired municipal authorities to assume responsibility and control. Picture Research Consultants & Archives.



**TRACE CHANGE
OVER TIME**

What were the origins of social settlements, and how did they develop over time?

by saloons in a neighborhood of Italian and Eastern European immigrants, served as a spark plug for community improvement and political reform.

The idea for Hull House came partly from Toynbee Hall, a

London settlement that Addams and Starr had visited while touring Europe. Social settlements also drew inspiration from U.S. urban missions of the 1870s and 1880s. Some of these, like the Hampton Institute, had aided former slaves during Reconstruction; others, like Grace Baptist in Philadelphia, arose in northern cities. To meet the needs of urban residents, missions offered employment counseling, medical clinics, day care centers, and sometimes athletic facilities in cooperation with the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA).

Jane Addams, a daughter of the middle class, first expected Hull House to offer art classes and other cultural programs for the poor. But Addams's views quickly changed as she got to know her new neighbors and struggled to keep Hull House open during the depression of the 1890s. Addams's views were also influenced by conversations with fellow Hull House resident Florence Kelley, who had studied in Europe and returned a committed socialist. Dr. Alice Hamilton, who opened a pediatric clinic at Hull House, wrote that Addams came to see her settlement as "a bridge between the classes. . . . She always held that this bridge was as much of a help to the well-to-do as to the poor." Settlements offered idealistic young people "a place where they could live as neighbors and give as much as they could of what they had."

Addams and her colleagues believed that working-class Americans already *knew* what they needed. What they lacked were resources to fulfill those needs, as well as a political voice. These, settlement workers tried to provide. Hull House was typical in offering a bathhouse, playground, kindergarten, and day care center. Some settlements opened libraries and gymnasiums; others operated penny savings banks and cooperative kitchens where tired mothers could purchase a meal at the end of the day. (Addams humbly closed the Hull House kitchen when she found that her bland New England cooking had little appeal for Italians; her coworker, Dr. Alice Hamilton, soon investigated the health benefits of garlic.) At the Henry Street Settlement in New York, Lillian Wald organized visiting nurses to improve health in tenement wards. Addams, meanwhile, encouraged local women to inspect the neighborhood and bring back a list of dangers to health and safety. Together, they prepared a complaint to city

council. The women, Addams wrote, had shown "civic enterprise and moral conviction" in carrying out the project themselves.

Social settlements took many forms. Some attached themselves to preexisting missions and African American colleges. Others were founded by energetic college graduates. Catholics ran St. Elizabeth Center in St. Louis; Jews, the Boston Hebrew Industrial School. Whatever their origins, social settlements were, in Addams's words, "an experimental effort to aid in the solution of the social and industrial problems which are engendered by the modern condition of life in a great city."

Settlements served as a springboard for many other projects. Settlement workers often fought city hall to get better schools and lobbied state legislatures for new workplace safety laws. At Hull House, Hamilton investigated lead poisoning and other health threats at local factories. Her colleague Julia Lathrop investigated the plight of teenagers caught in the criminal justice system. She drafted a proposal for separate juvenile courts and persuaded Chicago to adopt it. Pressuring the city to experiment with better rehabilitation strategies for juveniles convicted of crime, Lathrop created a model for juvenile court systems across the United States.

Another example of settlements' long-term impact was the work of Margaret Sanger, a nurse who moved to New York City in 1911 and volunteered with a Lower East Side settlement. Horrified by women's suffering from constant pregnancies—and remembering her devout Catholic mother, who had died young after bearing eleven children—Sanger launched a crusade for what she called birth control. Her newspaper column, "What Every Girl Should Know," soon garnered an indictment for violating obscenity laws. The publicity that resulted helped Sanger launch a national birth control movement.

Settlements were thus a crucial proving ground for many progressive experiments, as well as for the emerging profession of social work, which transformed the provision of public welfare. Social workers rejected the older model of private Christian charity, dispensed by well-meaning middle-class volunteers to those in need. Instead, social workers defined themselves as professional caseworkers who served as advocates of social justice. Like many reformers of the era, they allied themselves with the new social sciences, such as sociology and economics, and undertook statistical surveys and other systematic methods for gathering facts. Social work proved to be an excellent opportunity for educated women who sought professional careers. By 1920, women made up 62 percent of U.S. social workers.

Cities and National Politics

Despite reform efforts, the problems wrought by industrialization continued to cause suffering in urban workplaces and environments. In 1906, journalist Upton Sinclair exposed some of the most extreme forms of labor exploitation in his novel *The Jungle*, which described appalling conditions in Chicago meat-packing plants. What caught the nation's attention was not Sinclair's account of workers' plight, but his descriptions of rotten meat and filthy packing conditions. With constituents up in arms, Congress passed the **Pure Food and Drug Act** (1906) and created the federal Food and Drug Administration to oversee compliance with the new law.

The impact of *The Jungle* showed how urban reformers could affect national politics. Even more significant was the work of Josephine Shaw Lowell, a Civil War widow from a prominent family. After years of struggling to aid poverty-stricken individuals in New York City, Lowell concluded that charity was not enough. In 1890, she helped found the New York Consumers' League to improve wages and working conditions for female store clerks. The league encouraged shoppers to patronize only stores where wages and working conditions were known to be fair. By 1899, the organization had become the **National Consumers' League** (NCL). At its head stood the outspoken and skillful Florence Kelley, a Hull House worker and former chief factory inspector of Illinois. Kelley believed that only government oversight could protect exploited workers. Under her crusading leadership, the NCL became one of the most powerful progressive organizations advocating worker protection laws.

Many labor organizations also began in a single city and then grew to national stature. One famous example was the **Women's Trade Union League**, founded in New York in 1903. Financed by wealthy women who supported its work, the league trained working-class leaders like Rose Schneiderman, who organized unions among garment workers. Although often frustrated by the patronizing attitude of elite sponsors, trade-union women joined together in the broader struggle for women's rights. When New York State held referenda on women's suffrage in 1915 and 1917, strong support came from Jewish and Italian precincts where unionized garment workers lived. Working-class voters hoped, in turn, that enfranchised women would use their ballots to help industrial workers.

Residents of industrial cities, then, sought allies in state and national politics. The need for broader action was made clear in New York City by a shocking event



The Jungle

This poster advertises a 1914 silent film based on Sinclair's reform novel, which tells the story of Lithuanian immigrants struggling to get by amid the dangerous work, starvation wages, and abysmal living conditions of Chicago's meat-packing district. The film launched the film careers of actors George Nash and Gail Kane, who played the hero, Jurgis Rutkus, and his wife, Ona. Sinclair himself appeared at the start of the film, explaining how he conducted research for his story. Socialist clubs often screened the film, which ended—like the book—with a ringing call for workers to organize and create a “cooperative commonwealth” to take control of their conditions of life and work. Courtesy Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN.

on March 25, 1911. On that Saturday afternoon, just before quitting time, a fire broke out at the **Triangle Shirtwaist** Company. It quickly spread through the three floors the company occupied at the top of a ten-story building. Panicked workers discovered that, despite fire safety laws, employers had locked the emergency doors to prevent theft. Dozens of Triangle workers, mostly young immigrant women, were trapped in the flames. Many leaped to their deaths; the rest never reached the windows. The average age of the 146 people who died was just nineteen (American Voices, p. 630).

"These Dead Bodies Were the Answer": The Triangle Fire

William G. Shepherd, Reporter

William G. Shepherd's eyewitness account appeared in newspapers across the country. Working for the United Press, Shepherd phoned the story to his editor as he watched the unfolding tragedy.

I was walking through Washington Square when a puff of smoke issuing from a factory building caught my eye. I reached the building before the alarm was turned in. I saw every feature of the tragedy visible from outside the building. I learned a new sound — a more horrible sound than description can picture. It was the thud of a speeding, living body on a stone sidewalk. . . .

I looked up — saw that there were scores of girls at the windows. The flames from the floor below were beating in their faces. Somehow I knew that they, too, must come down, and something within me — something I didn't know was there — steeled me.

I even watched one girl falling. Waving her arms, trying to keep her body upright until the very instant she struck the sidewalk, she was trying to balance herself. Then came the thud — then a silent, unmoving pile of clothing and twisted, broken limbs. . . .

On the sidewalk lay heaps of broken bodies. A policeman later went about with tags, which he fastened with wire to the wrists of the dead girls, numbering each with a lead pencil, and I saw him fasten tag no. 54 to the wrist of a girl who wore an engagement ring. . . .

The floods of water from the firemen's hose that ran into the gutter were actually stained red with blood. I looked upon the heap of dead bodies and I remembered these girls were the shirtwaist makers. I remembered their great strike of last year in which these same girls had demanded more sanitary conditions and more safety precautions in the shops. These dead bodies were the answer.

Stephen S. Wise, Rabbi

A week after the fire, on April 2, 1911, a memorial meeting was held at the Metropolitan Opera House. One of the speakers, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, a prominent figure in New York reform circles, made the following remarks.

Entire books have been written about the catastrophic 1911 fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Company in New York City. The following excerpts are from documents by four contemporaries who in various ways played a part in the Triangle tragedy and its aftermath. Note the different audiences that these speakers and authors were addressing and the lessons that each one draws from this horrific event.

This was not an inevitable disaster which man could neither foresee nor control. We might have foreseen it, and some of us did; we might have controlled it, but we chose not to do so. . . . It is not a question of enforcement of law nor of inadequacy of law. We have the wrong kind of laws and the wrong kind of enforcement. Before insisting upon inspection and enforcement, let us lift up the industrial standards so as to make conditions worth inspecting, and, if inspected, certain to afford security to workers. . . . And when we go before the legislature of the state, and demand increased appropriations in order to ensure the possibility of a sufficient number of inspectors, we will not forever be put off with the answer: We have no money.

The lesson of the hour is that while property is good, life is better; that while possessions are valuable, life is priceless. The meaning of the hour is that the life of the lowliest worker in the nation is sacred and inviolable, and, if that sacred human right be violated, we shall stand adjudged and condemned before the tribunal of God and history.

Rose Schneiderman, Trade Unionist

Rose Schneiderman also spoke at the Metropolitan Opera House meeting. At age thirteen, she had gone to work in a garment factory like Triangle Shirtwaist's and, under the tutelage of the Women's Trade Union League, had become a labor organizer. The strike she mentions in her speech was popularly known as the Uprising of the 30,000, a nearly spontaneous walkout in 1909 that launched the union movement in the women's garment trades.

I would be a traitor to these poor burned bodies if I came here to talk good fellowship. We have tried you good people of the public and we have found you wanting. The old Inquisition had its rack and its thumbscrews and its instruments of torture with iron teeth. We know what these things are today; the iron teeth are our necessities, the thumbscrews are the high-powered and swift machinery close to which we must work, and the rack is here in the firetrap structures that will destroy us the minute they catch on fire.

This is not the first time girls have been burned alive in the city. . . . Every year thousands of us are maimed. The life of men and women is so cheap and property is so sacred. There are so many of us for one job it matters little if 146 of us are burned to death.

We have tried you citizens; we are trying you now, and you have a couple of dollars for the sorrowing mothers, brothers, and sisters by way of a charity gift. But every time the workers come out in the only way they know to protest against conditions which are unbearable the strong hand of the law is allowed to press down heavily upon us . . . [and] beats us back, when we rise, into the conditions that make life unbearable.

I can't talk fellowship to you who are gathered here. Too much blood has been spilled. I know from my experience it is up to the working people to save themselves. The only way they can save themselves is by a strong working-class movement.

Max D. Steuer, Lawyer

After finding physical evidence of the locked door that had blocked escape from the fire, New York's district attorney brought manslaughter charges against the Triangle proprietors, Max Blanck and Isaac Harris, who hired in their defense the best, highest-priced trial attorney in town, Max D. Steuer. In this talk, delivered some time later to a rapt audience of lawyers, Steuer described how he undermined the testimony of the key witness for the prosecution by suggesting that she had been coached to recite her answer. The trial judge instructed the jury that they could only convict Blanck and Harris if it was *certain* they had known the emergency exits were locked; as Steuer notes, the jury voted to acquit.

There are many times, many times when a witness has given evidence very hurtful to your cause and you say, "No questions," and dismiss him or her in the hope that the jury will dismiss the evidence too. [*Laughter.*] But can you do that when the jury is weeping, and the little girl witness is weeping too? [*Laughter.*] . . . There is one [rule] that commands what not to do. Do not attack the witness. Suavely, politely, genially, toy with the story.

In the instant case, about half an hour was consumed by the examiner [Steuer]. . . . Very little progress was made; but the tears had stopped. And then [the witness] was asked, "Now, Rose, in your own words, and in your

own way will you tell the jury everything you did, everything you said, and everything you saw from the moment you first saw flames."

The question was put in precisely the same words that the District Attorney had put it, and little Rose started her answer with exactly the same word that she had started it to the District Attorney . . . and the only change in her recital was that Rose left out one word. And then Rose was asked, "Didn't you leave out a word that you put in when you answered it before?" . . . So Rose started to repeat to herself the answer [*laughter*], and as she came to the missing word she said, "Oh, yes!" and supplied it; and thereupon the examiner went on to an entirely different subject. . . . [W]hen again he [asked her to repeat her story] . . . Rose started with the same word and finished with the same word, her recital being identical with her first reply to the same question.

The jurymen were not weeping. Rose had not hurt the case, and the defendants were acquitted; there was not a word of reflection at any time during that trial upon poor little Rose.

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QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. The hardest task of the historian is to conjure up the reality of the past—to say, "This is what it was really like." That's where eyewitness evidence like the reporter Shepherd's comes in. What is there in his account that you could only obtain from an eyewitness?
2. Both Rabbi Wise and Rose Schneiderman were incensed at the Triangle carnage, yet their speeches are quite different. In what ways? What conclusions do you draw about the different motivations and arguments that led to reform?
3. Max Steuer and Rose Schneiderman came from remarkably similar backgrounds. They were roughly the same age, grew up in poverty on the Lower East Side, and started out as child workers in the garment factories. The differences in their adult lives speak to the varieties of immigrant experience in America. Does anything in their statements help to account for their differing life paths? What might have happened if Rose Schneiderman, rather than "little Rose," had faced Max Steuer on the witness stand?

**EXPLAIN
CONSEQUENCES**

How did urban reform movements impact state and national politics?

Shocked by this horrific event, New Yorkers responded with an outpouring of anger and grief that crossed ethnic, class, and religious boundaries. Many remembered that, only a year earlier, shirtwaist workers had walked off the job to protest abysmal safety and working conditions—and that the owners of Triangle, among other employers, had broken the strike. Facing demands for action, New York State appointed a factory commission that developed a remarkable program of labor reform: fifty-six laws dealing with such issues as fire hazards, unsafe machines, and wages and working hours for women and children. The chairman and vice chairman of the commission were Robert F. Wagner and Alfred E. Smith, both Tammany Hall politicians then serving in the state legislature. They established the commission, participated fully in its work, and marshaled party regulars to pass the proposals into law—all with the approval of Tammany. The labor code that resulted was the most advanced in the United States.

Tammany's response to the Triangle fire showed that it was acknowledging its need for help. The social and economic problems of the industrial city had outgrown the power of party machines; only stronger state and national laws could bar industrial firetraps, alleviate sweatshop conditions, and improve slums. Politicians like Wagner and Smith saw that Tammany had to change or die. The fire had unforeseen further consequences. Frances Perkins, a Columbia University student who witnessed the horror of Triangle workers leaping from the windows to their deaths, decided she would devote her efforts to the cause of labor. Already active in women's reform organizations, Perkins went to Chicago, where she volunteered for several years at Hull House. In 1929, she became New York State's first commissioner of labor; four years later, during the New Deal (Chapter 23), Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed her as U.S. secretary of labor—the first woman to hold a cabinet post.

The political aftermath of the Triangle fire demonstrated how challenges posed by industrial cities pushed politics in new directions, transforming urban government and initiating broader movements for reform. The nation's political and cultural standards had long been set by native-born, Protestant, middle-class Americans. By 1900, the people who thronged to the great cities helped build America into a global industrial power—and in the process, created an electorate

that was far more ethnically, racially, and religiously diverse.

In the era of industrialization, some rural and native-born commentators warned that immigrants were “inferior breeds” who would “mongrelize” American culture. But urban political leaders defended cultural pluralism, expressing appreciation—even admiration—for immigrants, including Catholics and Jews, who sought a better life in the United States. At the same time, urban reformers worked to improve conditions of life for the diverse residents of American cities. Cities, then, and the innovative solutions proposed by urban leaders, held a central place in America's consciousness as the nation took on the task of progressive reform.

SUMMARY

After 1865, American cities grew at an unprecedented rate, and urban populations swelled with workers from rural areas and abroad. To move burgeoning populations around the city, cities pioneered innovative forms of mass transit. Skyscrapers came to mark urban skylines, and new electric lighting systems encouraged nightlife. Neighborhoods divided along class and ethnic lines, with the working class inhabiting crowded, shoddily built tenements. Immigrants developed new ethnic cultures in their neighborhoods, while racism followed African American migrants from the country to the city. At the same time, new forms of popular urban culture bridged class and ethnic lines, challenging traditional sexual norms and gender roles. Popular journalism rose to prominence and helped build rising sympathy for reform.

Industrial cities confronted a variety of new political challenges. Despite notable achievements, established machine governments could not address urban problems through traditional means. Forward-looking politicians took the initiative and implemented a range of political, labor, and social reforms. Urban reformers also launched campaigns to address public health, morals, and welfare. They did so through a variety of innovative institutions, most notably social settlements, which brought affluent Americans into working-class neighborhoods to learn, cooperate, and advocate on behalf of their neighbors. Such projects began to increase Americans' acceptance of urban diversity and their confidence in government's ability to solve the problems of industrialization.

C H A P T E R R E V I E W

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TERMS TO KNOW Identify and explain the significance of each term below.

Key Concepts and Events

Chicago school (p. 608)
 mutual aid society (p. 612)
 race riot (p. 614)
 tenement (p. 614)
 vaudeville (p. 615)
 ragtime (p. 617)
 blues (p. 618)
 yellow journalism (p. 619)
 muckrakers (p. 619)
 political machine (p. 619)
 National Municipal League
 (p. 624)

progressivism (p. 624)
 “City Beautiful” movement
 (p. 626)
 social settlement (p. 627)
 Hull House (p. 627)
 Pure Food and Drug Act (p. 629)
 National Consumers’ League
 (p. 629)
 Women’s Trade Union League
 (p. 629)
 Triangle Shirtwaist Fire (p. 629)

Key People

Scott Joplin (p. 617)
 Tom Johnson (p. 624)
 Jacob Riis (p. 625)
 Jane Addams (p. 627)
 Margaret Sanger (p. 628)
 Upton Sinclair (p. 629)
 Florence Kelley (p. 629)

REVIEW QUESTIONS Answer these questions to demonstrate your understanding of the chapter’s main ideas.

1. What were the major features of industrial cities that arose in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? What institutions and innovations helped make urban life distinctive?
2. What were the limitations and achievements of urban governments run by political machines?
3. Why did so many reform initiatives of the early twentieth century emerge in large cities? What were some of those initiatives, and what was their political impact?
4. **THEMATIC UNDERSTANDING** Using the thematic timeline on page 543, consider some of the ways in which mass migrations of people — both from other countries and from places within the United States — shaped industrial cities. How did this influence American society, culture, and national identity?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Recognize the larger developments and continuities within and across chapters by answering these questions.

1. ACROSS TIME AND PLACE In Chapter 17 we explored the activities of agrarian reformers and labor unions who protested the impact of industrialization on their lives. In Chapters 18 and 19 we considered the work of middle-class and urban reformers who sought to address some of the same conditions. Chronologically, their work overlapped: note, for example, that Jane Addams founded Hull House in 1889, just as the Farmers' Alliance was reaching a peak of activism and workers had organized the Knights of Labor and American Federation of Labor. Imagine a conversation among the following individuals: a rural man or woman active in the Farmers' Alliance; a skilled workman who joined the American Federation of Labor; an urban antiprostitution reformer; and a middle-class volunteer who worked in a settlement house. How would each have described the problems caused by industrializa-

tion? What remedies would each suggest? On what points would they have disagreed? Can you imagine any issues on which they might have worked together? What does this suggest about the opportunities and limits of alliance building, in the late 1800s and early 1900s, across class and geographic lines?

2. VISUAL EVIDENCE Imagine that you have just arrived in a big American city in the early 1900s. Look carefully at all the images in this chapter and group them under two categories: (1) problems and dangers you might have encountered as a new urban resident; (2) sights and opportunities that might have been appealing and exciting to you as a newcomer. On balance, do you think you would have wanted to stay, or turn around and head back home? Why? What factors might have shaped your decision?

MORE TO EXPLORE Start here to learn more about the events discussed in this chapter.

Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House* (1910). An inspiring must-read by a great American reformer.

George Chauncey, *Gay New York* (1994). A groundbreaking study of the rise of urban gay subcultures.

Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements* (1986). Explores urban working-class dating and the world of young working-class women.

Harold Platt, *The Electric City* (1991). A study of how electricity shaped the urban industrial society and economy.

Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood* (1982). A poignant account of Progressive Era antiprostitution campaigns and their tragic impact on sex workers.

David Von Drehle, *Triangle: The Fire That Changed America* (2003). The most recent account of the fire and its consequences.

TIMELINE Ask yourself why this chapter begins and ends with these dates and then identify the links among related events.

| | |
|------|---|
| 1866 | • New York City contains cholera epidemic |
| 1869 | • Corcoran Gallery of Art opens in Washington, D.C. |
| 1871 | • First elevated railroad begins operation in New York |
| 1878 | • Yellow fever epidemic in Memphis, Tennessee |
| 1883 | • Metropolitan Opera opens in New York |
| 1885 | • First skyscraper completed in Chicago |
| 1887 | • First electric trolley system built in Richmond, Virginia |
| 1889 | • Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr found Hull House in Chicago |
| 1890 | • Jacob Riis's <i>How the Other Half Lives</i> |
| 1892 | • New York's Ellis Island opens |
| 1893 | • Ragtime introduced to national audiences at Chicago World's Fair |
| 1897 | • First subway line opened in Boston |
| 1899 | • Central Labor Union protests in Cleveland • National Consumers' League founded |
| 1901 | • New York passes Tenement House Law • "City Beautiful" plan developed for Washington, D.C. |
| 1903 | • Women's Trade Union League founded |
| 1904 | • Subway running the length of Manhattan completed |
| 1906 | • Upton Sinclair's <i>The Jungle</i> published • Food and Drug Administration established • Atlanta race riot |
| 1910 | • Mann Act prohibits transportation of prostitutes across state lines |
| 1911 | • Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire in New York |
| 1913 | • Fifty-five-story Woolworth Building completed in New York |

KEY TURNING POINTS: On the timeline above, what tipping points can you identify when Americans began to propose political solutions for urban industrial problems? What issues did they emphasize?