

New Spirits

Americans in the "Gilded Age," 1865–1905



REBECCA EDWARDS
Vassar College

SECOND EDITION

New York Oxford
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
2011

PART I



The Wedge

Three years after the Civil War, an itinerant journalist living in San Francisco ventured some predictions about the transcontinental rail line that would soon connect California to New York. In "What the Railroad Will Bring Us," Henry George developed the arguments he later presented in *Progress and Poverty*, a book that went through more than a hundred editions in the twenty years after its publication in 1879. *Progress and Poverty* shocked readers by challenging their belief in progress. The author observed that railroads, economic growth, and industrialization held out the hope of prosperity for everyone, but they delivered to only part of the population. George had watched rents escalate in San Francisco while more and more local people became wage workers in factory and service jobs. Unlike other observers, he saw that these were not temporary or marginal side effects but an integral part of the nation's economic transformation. "Widespread destitution is found in the midst of the greatest abundance," he observed. "Where population is densest, wealth greatest, and the machinery of production and exchange most highly developed—there we find the deepest poverty, the sharpest struggle for existence."

George hastened to note that economic growth *did* bring wealth to many Americans. The problem, he argued, was that the new forces "do not act upon the social fabric from underneath, as was for a long time hoped and believed, but strike it at a point intermediate between top and bottom. It is as though an immense wedge were being forced, not underneath society, but through society. Those who are above the point of separation are elevated, but those who are below are crushed down." George noted that these problems had arisen in monarchies and democracies, high-tariff and free-trade countries. He concluded that they were structural to capitalism, especially in its emerging corporate form. The new economy, George predicted, would destroy traditional agriculture, trades, and crafts and "make sharper the contrast between the House of Have and the House of Want."

The extent to which one accepts Henry George's critique depends on how one defines "Have" and "Want." Was the measure of "Have" the ability to put money in the bank? If so, then in George's lifetime the Wants far outnumbered the Haves. If the prospect of home ownership was the measure, then the numbers looked better,

putting perhaps half above the wedge. Was it freedom from hard physical labor? More Americans rose above the wedge. Was it the ability to be one's own boss? Many more fell below it. The enjoyment of more consumer products, including more variety on the table? More above. In a global economy, though, poverty among workers overseas might need to be counted in the totals. And it was even more daunting to try to measure the development of democracy, cultural achievement, and spiritual growth. Capitalism promised *material* progress. Even if it delivered that to every person on the globe, other measures remained in question.

Part I of *New Spirits* turns first to the material, exploring the transformations wrought in the nineteenth-century United States by revolutions in technology, finance, and economic policy. Controversy over the role of government, especially in helping distribute economic risks and rewards, had helped precipitate the Civil War, and it remained a critical issue of the postwar decades. This, along with the many legacies of the war itself, is the subject of Chapter 1. Chapter 2 explores the speed and reach of telegraphs, railroads, and steamships and the more general impact of the rise of fossil fuels. Chapter 3 examines the world of work as experienced by those below and above Henry George's "wedge." Chapter 4 considers some of the ways in which Americans used, debated, deplored, and celebrated the power of money. Was the United States, as many critics charged, becoming a money-obsessed society? What were the benefits and pitfalls of rapid material progress? Were traditional values being displaced, and if so, was that a cause for celebration or for mourning?

CHAPTER 1

An Uneasy Peace

What is freedom? Is it the bare privilege of not being chained? . . . If this is all, then freedom is a bitter mockery, a cruel delusion.

—CONGRESSMAN JAMES A. GARFIELD

On New Year's Day, 1863, on a Union-controlled island off the coast of South Carolina, Colonel Thomas W. Higginson bore witness to a great human triumph. For weeks he had been drilling the First South Carolina Volunteers (Colored) as they prepared to join the Union Army, but to recognize President Lincoln's final Proclamation of Emancipation, which went into effect on January 1, camp commanders declared a holiday. Former slaves gathered from miles around to hear a local preacher read the executive order that made them officially free. "The very moment the speaker had ceased," Higginson reported, "and just as I took and waved the flag. . . there suddenly arose close beside the platform a strong male voice (but rather cracked and elderly) into which two women's voices instantly blended." The assembly broke into an impassioned verse of "My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing!" "I never saw anything so electric," Higginson wrote. "It made all other words cheap; it seemed the choked voice of a race at last unloosed. . . Art could not have dreamed of a tribute to the day of jubilee that should be so affecting; history will not believe it." Against all odds, the aspirations of a people in bondage and of the U.S. government had converged. Higginson's soldiers would henceforth fight for a freedom President Lincoln had ruled to be rightfully theirs.

Ironically, the men and women gathered at Camp Saxton were among only a handful who were actually liberated by Lincoln's proclamation. Many thousands had already escaped and freed themselves in the chaos of war; millions still lived in parts of the Confederacy that U.S. forces had not conquered. Lincoln, in his capacity as commander in chief, had issued the proclamation as a military measure to punish seceded states, and for the time being it left slavery intact in Union border states such as Maryland and Kentucky. Not until 1865 did the Thirteenth Amendment officially abolish slavery nation-wide and Union troops enforce that measure with victory on the battlefield. Nonetheless, those who attended the celebration in South Carolina had good reason to hope that Lincoln's proclamation

marked the beginning of the end. When the United States fully ceased to practice slavery two years later, the trend toward New World abolition became unmistakable. Spain would sustain slavery in Cuba until 1886, while Brazil, the last holdout, abolished the institution two years later. In law, at least, four centuries of New World racial slavery had come to an end.

Immense as this transformation was, it was only one of several great revolutions, both national and global, carried forward by the American Civil War. A new United States, led by the victorious North and West, consolidated its boundaries from Atlantic to Pacific. The United States began to assert its power on the world stage while it continued to wrestle with domestic conflicts. Confederate general Robert E. Lee may have surrendered in April 1865, but in some ways the U.S. Civil War continued for decades afterward. So central was the war's legacy to American politics that the 1880 presidential campaign featured four ex-Union generals, running on the Republican, Democratic, Prohibition, and Greenback-Labor tickets. At each election, veterans in uniform marched in torchlight parades, and Republican candidates made pilgrimages to giant reunions organized by the powerful Union veterans' association, the Grand Army of the Republic. Even party symbols reflected the war: Cartoonist Thomas Nast began to draw the Democratic Party as a kicking donkey, symbol of the rebellious South; in 1876 he added the elephant, with its proverbially long memory, to represent Republicans' fixation on the Union.

While politics centered on war rhetoric and imagery, outright bloodshed continued sporadically throughout much of the 1870s. Parts of the South were accurately described as continuing war zones, with dozens of large-scale episodes of terror and many more local crimes carried out by loosely organized groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and Knights of the White Camellia. Freedmen's leaders were beaten, shot, or burned alive in their homes. There was little doubt of the motive when a woman in Henry County, Georgia—wife of a black Union veteran and Republican leader—was gang-raped at gunpoint by a group of Confederate veterans. The Republican governor of South Carolina testified in 1871 that an "actual state of war" existed in several counties. In 1880, at the end of his presidency, Rutherford B. Hayes observed, "I saw things done in the South which could only be accounted for on the theory that the war was not yet ended." Like his predecessor, Ulysses S. Grant, Hayes promised to "end the war and bring peace," which suggested how little peace had yet been accomplished.

THE SCARS OF WAR

When eighteen-year-old Isaac Moses Perski, a Russian Jew fleeing the czar's military draft, landed in New York in 1882, one of his first purchases was a picture book about the U.S. Civil War. Perski could see the war's legacy all around him in the city where he settled. Slavery was dead; African Americans in New York, as elsewhere, were building new institutions, founding churches and businesses, and creating nationwide networks of advocacy and mutual aid. The war had helped

Table 1.1 A Growing Urban Population

	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900
U.S. population	31,444,000	38,558,000	50,156,000	62,947,000	75,995,000
Urban population	6,217,000	9,902,000	14,130,000	22,106,000	30,160,000
Percent urban	19.8	25.7	28.2	35.1	39.7
Percent rural	80.2	74.3	71.8	64.9	60.3

While the majority of Americans still lived in rural areas (defined by the census as places with 2,500 or fewer inhabitants), the urban population increased spectacularly after the Civil War. By the turn of the century, thirty-eight American cities had passed the 100,000 mark of population, and more than 66 percent of northeasterners lived in urban areas. Note that during each decade, the U.S. population as a whole grew between 20 and 30 percent. Figures in the table above have been rounded to the nearest thousand.

Source: Robert G. Barrows, "Urbanizing America," in *The Gilded Age*, ed. Charles W. Calhoun (Wilmington, DE, 1996), 93, 95.

create New York's first millionaire class and fill the burgeoning tenement wards. In fact, the war had helped build New York itself. In all parts of the country, urbanization accelerated rapidly during the 1860s and 1870s. By the time Perski arrived, more than half of northeasterners lived in urban areas, and New York's population had recently surpassed one million. By 1900 it would double again.

While the former Confederacy remained in turmoil, Perski saw plenty of scars on the human landscape of the North. Thousands of veterans suffered lingering effects of wounds and wartime illnesses ranging from dysentery to syphilis. The Union alone counted more than 20,000 amputees. Contemporary testimony suggests that alcoholism rose sharply in both North and South after soldiers returned home. Confronted by an antiliquor reformer, one veteran scoffed that "we men of blood and iron, who have seen death in every shape and color without flinching, . . . we want something stronger than water, tea, or coffee." Many veterans dosed themselves with opiates, vast quantities of which had been administered in wartime hospitals. Morphine took the nickname "soldier's joy," while hypodermic drug use became known among pharmacists as "army disease."

Almost every aspect of American culture was reshaped by the Civil War. Veterans' writings brought a hard edge to journalism and literature in what one scholar calls "the chastening of American prose style." Colonel J. W. De Forest of Connecticut was still in the army when he published one of the first works of American realism, *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty* (1867). The author bluntly depicted battlefield carnage, and he refused to punish bad characters and reward good ones, as Victorian convention required. Ambrose Bierce, a Union veteran who suffered recurring nightmares and trauma from his war experiences, also built his fiction around scenes he had witnessed: dead men's faces being eaten by pigs and a soldier writhing in the dirt after a shell removed the top of his skull. One of Bierce's favorite sayings was "nothing matters." His fellow

Union veteran Robert Ingersoll, who in 1863 had declined to reenlist because he could “bear no more bloodshed and mutilation,” became the country’s most prominent *agnostic*, a word that entered general usage after the war. Immense crowds flocked to hear Ingersoll hail Union victory and question the existence of God.

The war deaths of more than 1.5 percent of the nation’s population—630,000 soldiers and perhaps 30,000 civilians—provoked major social upheavals. In the devastated war generation, thousands of young women gave up hope of marriage or remarriage. Thrown into desperation by the loss of a breadwinner, many war widows went looking for work, and their plight was so obvious that it helped establish women’s right to earn a living by their own labor. Thousands of women pursued careers as teachers and nurses, while others went into reform and foreign mission work. “The exigencies and inspirations of the great civil war,” wrote one missionary journal in 1879, “were the best of preparations. They evoked from the heart and brain of American women undertakings of national significance, and gave us, for the first time in our history, some adequate consciousness of our power.”

The women’s temperance campaign, one of the largest grassroots movements of the 1870s and 1880s, was partly a response to postwar conditions. The United States had seen considerable temperance activity before the war, but the plight of alcoholic veterans, as well as women’s new prominence as reformers, intensified the campaign. Joining a wave of spontaneous local protests in the decade after the war, some women entered saloons to pray and sing; others circulated petitions asking officials to withhold licenses from liquor dealers. The national Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) coalesced in 1873, claiming more than a million members by its peak in the late 1880s. Under the guidance of its charismatic leader, Frances Willard, after 1879 WCTU members founded kindergartens, soup kitchens, free lunch rooms, and libraries; advocated prison reform and public health measures; endorsed an eight-hour day for workers; and denounced domestic violence. Willard also advocated women’s suffrage, and when Republicans resisted the temperance agenda she persuaded the WCTU to back the Prohibition Party, taking women directly into partisan politics. In adopting this strategy, Willard drew on the legacy of antislavery. Her father had been a Wisconsin legislator whose Free-Soil Party had once, in the 1850s, “held the balance of power” on the question of slavery in the federal territories. For a decade Willard’s party strove to win the same kind of power.

The war experiences of one woman, Clara Barton, helped prompt the United States to accept new international standards for human rights. Early in the war, forty-year-old Barton volunteered as a nurse in the Army’s desperately understaffed field hospitals. She later remembered staunching wounds with corn husks when bandages ran out. At Fredericksburg, she recalled, she had to “wring the blood from the bottom of my clothing, before I could step, for the weight about my feet.” After the war Barton traveled to Europe, where she met founders of the Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations. By 1881 she and her allies in the United States had established the American Red Cross, and a year later she won a related victory: due to Barton’s almost single-handed lobbying, Congress ratified the 1864

Geneva Convention, agreeing to uphold international standards for treatment of wounded soldiers and prisoners of war. Through the Red Cross, Barton aided victims of natural and human-made disasters across the United States, including forest fires, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, and yellow fever epidemics in the South. By the 1890s the American Red Cross began work overseas, supplying relief during a Russian famine and aiding refugees after the massacre of Armenians in Turkey. Barton became an outspoken leader of the international peace movement.

The Union and Confederacy had trained three million men to fight, and not all of them went home to live peacefully. The weapons of war were widely in evidence in the late 1860s and 1870s. With government permission, discharged veterans from both sides of the conflict took their sidearms home with them, and at the same time cheap handguns proliferated as patents expired on the famous Colt and Smith & Wesson revolvers. Shop windows displayed pistols with names such as Czar and Dictator, and in the decade after the war guns replaced knives and poison as the weapon of choice for both murder and suicide. Sensationalist newspapers exaggerated the threat posed by violent crime, but the headlines were right about the depredations of the country’s most notorious ex-soldiers. Frank and Jesse James had been Confederate raiders in Missouri’s vicious guerilla war. Using the railroads for mobility and surprise, they robbed a West Virginia bank in 1866, a Kentucky bank two years later, and a Missouri train in 1876. Jesse James, who never officially surrendered to the Union, was finally shot dead in 1882, the same year Russian immigrant Isaac Perski landed in New York.

RECONSTRUCTING THE SOUTH

The South’s secession from the United States temporarily gave the North sweeping political control, just at the moment when the upstart Republican Party won national power. Republicans had a powerful vision of government activism, and in the decade after 1861 they implemented an ambitious array of new policies and programs. But at the same time, Unionists never formally acknowledged the Confederacy’s existence. Throughout the secession crisis and the war, their chief aim was to reincorporate the South completely into the nation. Thus, ironically, the South’s return to the Union undermined the program of the Republicans—who led the Union War effort. By the end of the long and grueling conflict, most Republicans hoped to transform the ex-Confederacy through Emancipation, free labor, economic development, and African-American citizenship. Democrats resisted that vision. Southern Democrats, in particular, fought to preserve as much as they could of the Old South’s political, economic, and social order.

This result was not inevitable. After the surrender of their army, many former Confederates were prepared in 1865 for drastic changes in their society. “What new relations between us & our negroes will be established we cannot tell,” wrote one Georgia planter in resignation, “but there is no doubt it will be a radical change. . . . We will be compelled to conform to the new conditions under which we are placed.” He predicted optimistically that freedmen “will now have a choice where to labour.

This will ensure good treatment & the best terms. The most humane, the most energetic & the most judicious managers have the best chances in the race for success. I expect to see a revolution in the ownership of landed estates."

Such sentiments suggest that much could have been accomplished if policies toward the defeated South had been wisely planned and administered. But Abraham Lincoln's assassination in 1865 brought Vice President Andrew Johnson to the White House. Johnson proved to be a disaster. "He is obstinate without being firm, self-opinionated without being capable of systematic thinking, combative and pugnacious without being courageous," observed one disgusted Republican who had tried to work with the new president. "He is always worse than you expect." Johnson, a Tennessee Unionist Democrat, had been placed on the 1864 ticket to shore up support for Lincoln's reelection among Democrats and independent voters. As president he seemed, at first, to advocate vigorous reformation in the South, but in practice he was weak. Though he swore publicly to hang leading rebels, Johnson privately extended pardons to many wealthy Confederates and restored their lands. Presented with evidence of widespread murders and mob violence carried out by southern whites against blacks, he showed no interest in protecting freedmen.

Ex-Confederates read these signals and concluded that they could act with impunity. Within months of their military defeat, various former Confederate states enacted "Black Codes" that set terms for the subordination of former slaves. Under the Codes, freedmen and women could be forcibly indentured for long periods, beaten, deprived of pay if they protested, and have their children taken away to serve and work for whites. When southerners topped this by electing high-ranking ex-Confederates to state and federal positions, Johnson was shocked, though his own vacillation had precipitated the defiance. By the summer of 1866, when Johnson undertook a speaking tour to defend his policies, he was openly heckled in Cincinnati and other midwestern cities. General U. S. Grant privately dubbed him a "national disgrace."

Strengthened by sweeping victories in the midterm elections of 1866, Congressional Republicans seized the helm. They passed a series of new laws aimed at transforming southern society and protecting freedmen's rights. When Johnson vetoed their proposals and tried to punish Radicals by purging his cabinet, Congress impeached the president in February 1868. The showdown and trial wasted enormous political energy that, under better circumstances, could have been directed toward Reconstruction policy itself. Republicans ultimately failed, by one vote, to remove Johnson from office. Nonetheless, the impeachment forced Johnson to back down. From 1868 onward, Congressional Republicans salvaged Reconstruction as best they could. With the Reconstruction Act of 1867 they divided the former Confederacy into five military districts and outlined new requirements for states' readmission to the Union.

Union war hero Ulysses S. Grant, elected to the presidency in 1868, lent his stature to this Radical Reconstruction, which lasted from roughly 1868 to 1874. Among the Radicals' most enduring achievements were three landmark amendments



Group of freedpeople near the canal, Richmond, Virginia, April 1865. This informal portrait was taken by John Reekie (studio of Alexander Gardner) just after the Confederate capital fell to U.S. forces. Most African Americans were living in hardship amid the Confederacy's collapse, but their freedom was now secure. Courtesy Library of Congress.

to the U.S. Constitution, the first two of which had been passed earlier by Congress, and all of which won ratification between 1868 and 1870. The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery. The Fourteenth Amendment established the primacy of federal over state citizenship, declaring that no state could "deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law." For the first time, after this amendment's ratification, the U.S. Constitution asserted the federal government's authority to protect all Americans' rights from infringement by a state. The Fifteenth Amendment granted voting rights to men of all races, sending hundreds of thousands of freedmen to the polls. Republicans supported these

amendments with enforcement apparatus, such as the creation of the cabinet-level Department of Justice in 1870. Faced with mounting violence by the Ku Klux Klan, whose members terrorized Republicans, Congress passed an 1871 law allowing the president to use both federal courts and the U.S. Army to put down conspiracies that deprived citizens of their rights. President Grant undertook vigorous enforcement, driving the Klan underground.

With the unprecedented expansion of U.S. citizenship, some Republicans even endorsed women's suffrage, which emerged during Reconstruction as a subject of serious national debate. In the campaigns to ratify the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments, suffragists pressed hard to include voting rights for women. Though the effort failed, a number of suffrage advocates tried to vote in the election of 1872, hoping to persuade judges that the language of the new Fourteenth Amendment included women as full citizens. In *Minor v. Happersett* (1875), the U.S. Supreme Court decisively rejected this interpretation. Women, they declared, could gain the ballot only when voters expressly chose to extend it to them. Voters in two territories had already done so: Wyoming in 1869 and Utah in 1870. Many Americans began to support such measures in the context of Reconstruction—not always because they took a positive view of the expanded franchise. “If we give



Atlanta University, graduating class of 1903, a portrait of achievement four decades after Emancipation. All the graduates in this picture were “Negro” according to prevailing racial definitions. Courtesy Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center.

Negroes, and Chinamen, and everything else a right to vote,” asked one disgruntled Californian, “why in the name of God don’t you give [women] equal rights?” On the other hand, suffragist Olympia Brown argued that black women “need the ballot more than anyone in the world.”

Meanwhile, Republican Reconstruction governments in the South undertook an array of activist measures. State legislatures sought to foster economic growth by building railroads and offering incentives to business. They established state-run asylums and orphanages, and they replaced gallows and whipping posts with penitentiaries. Most dramatically Republicans introduced public education, which had been virtually unknown for either blacks or whites before the war. Enrollments quadrupled in the space of a few years, and some schools—such as New Orleans’ public schools and Kentucky’s private Berea Literary Institute—were even racially integrated. Missouri’s new public schools system enrolled more than 280,000 students by 1870 and won nationwide praise. At the same time, Republican city governments installed new amenities like streetlights and sewage systems. Many southern states created boards of health to combat yellow fever, and some provided free smallpox vaccinations.

It is difficult to mark one precise moment when all these various initiatives came to a close. In many ways, the greatest moments of opportunity had already been lost during Andrew Johnson’s term. Republicans tried as late as 1890 to pass a new federal law to enforce fair elections in the South, and they almost succeeded. But in the shorter run, what most decisively ended Reconstruction was a severe economic depression that began in 1873, spreading hardship nationwide. Tax revenues dried up; state governments curtailed their ambitious new programs. As the Grant administration struggled to protect southern blacks, the northern public—and soon, federal courts—greeted these efforts with increasing hostility.

One turning point was a horrific episode in the village of Colfax, Louisiana. Louisiana’s Republican Party had splintered into factions; white supremacist Democrats, who refused to accept the state government’s legitimacy, operated with increasing boldness. One Republican was dragged from his bed and beheaded. Another opened a New Orleans newspaper and found his own obituary, printed by enemies as a warning. Faced with such threats, Republican leaders in Colfax Parish fled, abandoning local black farmers to a wage of vigilantism. Several dozen families trekked to town, dug trenches, and prepared to defend themselves. At dawn on Easter Sunday, armed Democrats gave the farmers thirty minutes to send their wives and children away. Then they attacked on horseback, supported by an artillery piece they had concealed across the river. When sixty men retreated inside the courthouse, the attackers set it ablaze and shot everyone who emerged. Then they marched forty prisoners into the woods and shot them dead. One elderly black man survived under the pile of bodies, to testify to what he had seen.

The Colfax Massacre provoked nationwide outrage, and federal investigators indicted ninety-eight men under a recent civil rights statute. But they could only secure three convictions. Then, in the case of *U.S. v. Cruikshank* (1876), the Supreme Court overturned even those three. The justices ruled that the Fourteenth Amendment

could only prevent a *state* from violating citizens' rights; the federal government had no power over individuals, even those who organized themselves into private armies to seize political power. *Cruikshank* and a series of related decisions gutted almost all the postwar laws that Congress had designed to protect civil rights.

Most white northerners were becoming equally disinclined to intervene. Only a minority supported freedmen's rights, and the shock of a sudden economic depression made other issues seem far more urgent. A year and a half after Colfax, when President Grant sent troops to halt a Democratic coup in Louisiana, northern editors widely denounced the move. At a public meeting in Boston, leading abolitionists were booed when they spoke in favor of Grant's action. Such men, wrote the *New York Times* dismissively, "represent ideas in regard to the South which the majority of the Republican Party have outgrown."

The 1874 funeral of U.S. senator Charles Sumner, a passionate advocate of justice for freedmen, marked the eclipse of Republicans' progressive wing. In the midterm election of 1874, voters repudiated the whole Reconstruction program and chose Democrats in overwhelming numbers. With Democrats firmly in control of the House of Representatives, the chance for further Reconstruction legislation was dead. Violence and voter intimidation returned in parts of the South during the presidential election of 1876—so much so that it proved difficult to decide the extremely close race between Republican Rutherford B. Hayes and Democrat Samuel Tilden. Had the election been fair and free across the South, Hayes would have won. Ultimately, a special commission voted along party lines to recognize Republican electoral votes from parts of the fiercely contested South. Hayes took office; in exchange for Democrats' agreement not to resist his election, he removed the last federal troops from the South.

The consequences of political reaction were dramatic, as shown by the aftermath of an 1876 strike in coastal South Carolina. During the harvest season, freedmen walked off the job on big rice plantations, protesting sharp wage reductions and some employers' custom of paying in "scrip" that could only be used at the planter's own store. The black community united behind the protest with mass meetings and parades; employers were forced to pay higher wages or let rice rot in the field. The strike worked, in part, because South Carolina's Reconstruction government declined to intervene. When a delegation of planters demanded that the governor send for federal troops, he refused. Republicans simply allowed the power struggle to play out between workers and employers. Privately, some were amused at the spectacle of elite South Carolinians, who had just instigated a war to defend "states' rights," pleading for federal troops to police their plantations.

Though rice plantations extended farther down the coast into Georgia, the Combahee strike stopped abruptly at the state border. The reason was that in Georgia, ex-Confederate Democrats had seized power and largely excluded blacks from voting. When Georgia rice workers threatened to join the strike, planters informed them that "a company of soldiers was ready at a moment's notice in Savannah, to cross the river, and sweep out of the plantation all disaffected negroes." "This was strictly true," reported one planter, "and had the desired effect."

The lesson was not lost on elite South Carolinians. While the Combahee strike was still in progress, Democrat Wade Hampton, a wealthy planter and ex-Confederate general, launched his candidacy for the South Carolina governorship. During his campaign, vigilantes assassinated several Republican politicians, murdered thirty black militiamen in Aiken County, and assaulted would-be voters. Election results were nonetheless so close that they remained in dispute until March 1877, when the deadlock between U.S. presidential candidates Hayes and Tilden was resolved. South Carolina Democrats agreed to accept Hayes as president in exchange for Hampton as governor. Hampton implemented the kinds of policies that secured Georgia rice-growers' power: restrictions on black voting rights, steep cuts in landowners' taxes, and repeal of fair-labor laws.

Politicians like Wade Hampton often claimed that they sought to reduce the size and scope of government. To some extent this was true: southern Democrats did slash property taxes and cut an array of Reconstruction programs and services. But in other ways, southern state governments exercised far greater powers than they had before the war. Despite their attacks on Republican corruption, most continued to broker deals with railroads and other business interests. "You are mistaken," one Democrat wrote to a northern colleague, "if you suppose that all the evils... result from the carpetbaggers and the negroes. The Democrats are leagued with them when anything is proposed that promises to pay."

The most notorious example was the convict lease system, a monstrous public/private hybrid that flourished across the South after 1880. Through it, legislatures authorized state courts to loan out thousands of convicts to private firms that paid a fee for their labor and promised to feed, clothe, and shelter them. Convicts were mostly African American, but they included poor whites and, in Texas, many Mexicans. The system grew to immense proportions: at its peak, Alabama received 73 percent of all state revenue from convict leasing. Set to work in mines and turpentine camps, leased convicts endured extraordinary brutality. In a typical Mississippi camp, they slaved from 4:30 A.M. until after sundown, "as long as it is light enough for a guard to see how to shoot." Before the 1890s, female convicts were often chained in bunks with male strangers. Beatings were routine; few inmates left without permanent scars, and overwork, scurvy, and typhoid killed as many as 5 percent of leased convicts each year, escalating to three times that level in disease-prone summers.

Convict leasing made a few insiders very rich. Among them was U.S. senator Joseph Brown, ex-Confederate governor of Georgia. Brown's Raccoon Mountain Coalmine employed convict laborers, courtesy of the state of Georgia, for \$15 per year. Brown, who netted \$98,000 annually from Raccoon Mountain alone, became a millionaire. His notorious mine inspired the black folk song "Joe Brown's Coal Mine": "Sez that's the train I leave here on, / Sez I'm bound to that sundown job."

Defenders of convict lease called it a small-government measure, one that saved taxpayer dollars by reducing the cost of prisons. But viewed from another angle, convict lease was an appropriation of government power for private ends on a scale few could have imagined in the days of slavery. Joe Brown's business in

some ways mirrored the northern railroad industry. It used government subsidies to promote enterprise while helping private interests amass spectacular fortunes. Though public debate centered on the question of how big government should be, the underlying question was often "Whose interests should it serve?"

RECONSTRUCTING THE NATION

Though historians sometimes describe the late nineteenth century as an era of *laissez-faire*, when government was weak, that notion would have baffled both Unionists and ex-Confederates. Advocates of smaller government responded to what they saw, at the time, as a central government that was exercising extraordinary and unprecedented powers. Republicans set out, before and during the Civil War, to develop new initiatives that would help ordinary Americans. In doing so, they took an attitude toward government more like that of today's Democrats than today's Republicans. (We will explore, in Part III, how and why the parties began to change places in the late 1890s.)

Republicans used government power to promote economic development and industrialization. First and foremost, that meant railroads, which provided fast, powerful networks for travel and trade. Transcontinental railroads seemed crucial to Republicans, who believed these railroads would bind the nation together with ties of commerce and communication, discouraging future sectional conflicts. Since railroad building was expensive, policy makers offered aid. Between 1861 and 1872, Congress subsidized transcontinental railroads with grants of a staggering 100 million public acres and \$64 million in tax incentives and direct aid. State and local governments vied to offer railroads their own subsidies. By the late 1890s, the United States boasted three transcontinental lines and a total of 183,601 miles of track, about 42 percent of the world's total. By then, the nation's roads were capitalized at \$35 billion and employed almost 800,000 men.

Republicans undertook an array of other pro-business initiatives, notably high protective tariffs. First implemented in 1790 as a revenue measure, tariffs required overseas manufacturers to pay a tax for the privilege of selling goods in the United States. In the antebellum decades, northern mill owners had argued for much steeper "protective" tariffs to shield U.S. industries from foreign competition. Representatives from rural areas, especially the South, had blocked them, since tariffs on manufactured goods did not raise farmers' crop prices but cost them when they went shopping. After the South left the Union, Congress instituted higher tariffs and kept them in place for most of the rest of the century. Tariff rates were crafted to serve both economic and political goals, protecting textiles, steel, and iron and also sugar and wool, which were linked to critical constituencies in swing states. What the tariff did not cover was cotton and wheat, the great export crops so critical to southern and western farmers.

Tariffs brought in the bulk of federal revenue during the postwar decades, earning more than \$2.1 billion in the 1880s alone. That income paid off the massive Union war debt with remarkable speed; two decades after the war, the U.S.

Treasury was accruing large surpluses. At the same time, American industries grew spectacularly behind the tariff barrier. Real gross domestic product rose an average of more than 4 percent a year for decades after the Civil War, and while many factors led to this high growth rate, tariffs played a key role. Such protected industries as sheep ranching and steel were among the fastest-growing parts of the economy. The western sugar beet industry was launched with the help of the sugar tariff. American-born cane planters in Hawai'i and Cuba, in fact, worked desperately for annexation so they could be classed as domestic producers and obtain the same advantage.

The United States emerged from the Civil War with far greater power to flex its economic and political muscle in places like Hawai'i and the Caribbean. During the war, leaders of both the Union and the Confederacy, like their forerunners in the early republic, fretted over the prospect of European intervention in the war. After Union victory the tables turned: British politicians listened anxiously as Congress debated whether to ask Britain to hand over Canada. Acknowledging that it owed reparations because Confederate raiders such as the CSS *Alabama* had been built in English shipyards, Britain submitted to international arbitration and paid the United States \$15.5 million.

William Seward, secretary of state from 1861 to 1869 under presidents Lincoln and Johnson, developed a sweeping vision of global economic power. While European strategists believed that political conquests led to increased trade, Seward argued the reverse: if America achieved "commercial ascendancy," then political dominance would follow in its wake. In pursuit of this goal, Seward initiated talks with China to ensure an open market for American products and to arrange for Chinese immigrants, a source of cheap labor, to enter the United States. Seward advocated purchase of overseas sites for naval ports and coaling stations to strengthen trade. Faced with opposition at home, he won only two acquisitions, tiny Midway (an uninhabited Pacific island) and Alaska, purchased from Russia in 1867. Seward, however, accurately predicted that the United States would eventually control Hawai'i, the Philippines, and an isthmian (Panama) canal that American engineers would construct.

The most ambitious Republican proposals included measures to address the impact of war itself. A pension system for Union veterans, far more extensive than the programs provided in previous American wars, supported disabled veterans and widows, orphans, and dependent mothers and sisters of the Union dead. Branches of the U.S. National Soldiers' Home sprang up to care for the most disabled men. Showcases of Union pride, they featured libraries, telegraph offices, and the latest in medical care. Outside its gates, each home attracted a string of saloons—painful reminders of the war's psychic toll—but the homes' landscaped grounds became popular picnic sites for tourists. At the home outside Dayton, Ohio, visitors could stroll through acres of gardens and admire two scenic lakes and an aviary.

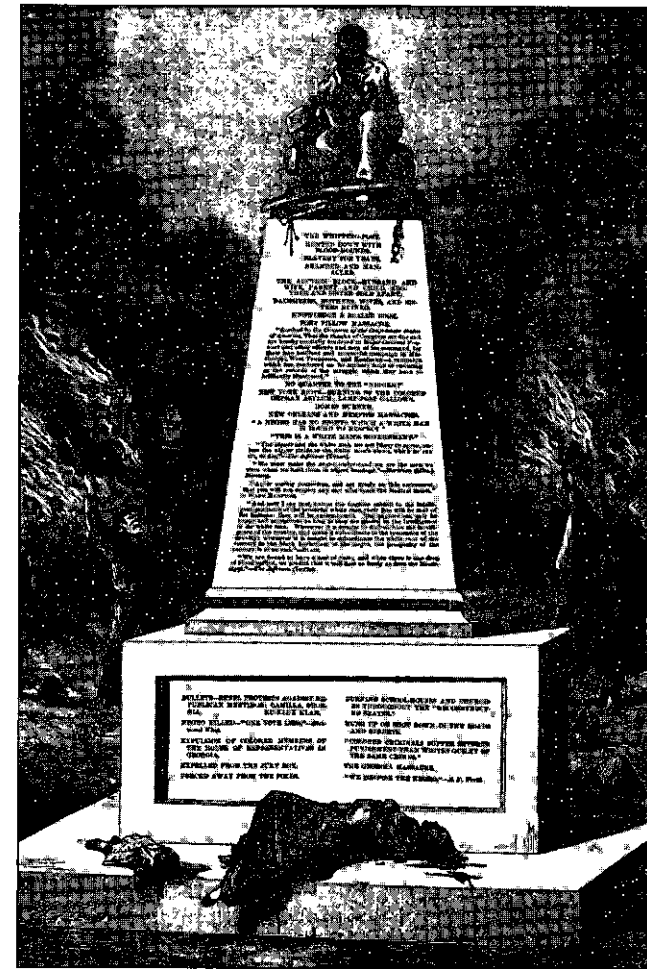
Public education was high on Republicans' agenda. In the immediate aftermath of war, the Freedmen's Bureau not only mediated legal disputes and provided

food and shelter to destitute freedpeople in the former Confederacy; it also set up more than 2,500 schools. Bureau officials also played a central role in setting up freedmen's colleges like Fisk and Howard, both named for Bureau leaders. Through the wartime Morrill Act, Congress transferred thousands of federal acres to states for public universities, placing special emphasis on increasing access for women and working-class men. The act created or expanded an array of leading institutions, ranging from the University of California to Cornell University. Republicans created a federal Department of Education in 1867; though demoted to the status of "office" a few years later, it remained a national site for educational research and policy ideas.

Meanwhile, the Department of Agriculture, created during the war, set up a nationwide network of experiment stations and extension services to hybridize plants and advise farmers on crop rotation, fertilizer use, and control of insects and disease. U.S. Marine Hospital laboratories made advances in bacteriology. The National Weather Service began keeping systematic records and delivering public forecasts. The U.S. Geological Survey, founded in 1879, sent expeditions to map the far corners of the continent and precipitated discoveries in geology and paleontology. Americans were even prouder of the U.S. Life-Saving Service (LSS), whose heroic deeds won attention in the popular press. The service had existed before the Civil War but like many other federal agencies had been grossly underfunded, relying mainly on volunteers. In the 1870s Congress expanded and professionalized the service, ushering in its heyday. Stationed along the coasts, LSS employees warned navigators away from dangerous shores and staged dramatic rescues by lifeboat and towline. Between 1871 and 1915, when the LSS merged with the Coast Guard, its surfmen saved more than 178,000 lives.

Other revolutionary changes took place in the growing cities. Though rapid growth overwhelmed urban planners, most cities tried to enforce architectural safety, and many completed ambitious sanitary engineering projects. City dwellers began to expect paved sidewalks, where they could wait under gas or electric streetlights for trolleys that would carry them to and from the business districts and residential suburbs. One of the great questions of the Progressive Era was whether or not cities should contract with private companies for such services or inaugurate municipal ownership. (Like Congressional Republicans who subsidized the railroad, they usually opted for the former.) Mayors and city councils established thousands of public parks. New York's Central Park was the largest and most famous, but by the turn of the century Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, and St. Louis each boasted more than 2,000 landscaped acres. An approving British visitor remarked that "no country in the world" had "such extensive and delightful public parks and pleasure-grounds."

As striking as such federal and municipal projects were, expansions of power by the states may have been even more significant. Almost all states recognized married women's right to claim their own wages, which had previously been the property of husbands. In many states, husbands and wives won broader access to divorce. Pressured by the WCTU and other temperance groups, many states



"Patience on a Monument," by cartoonist Thomas Nast, *Harper's Weekly*, 10 October 1868. In the early years of Reconstruction, Nast's cartoons offered powerful indictments of ex-Confederate violence. He appealed to northerners to sympathize with freedmen and support African-American voting rights. Courtesy Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center.

restricted the sale of liquor; several banned it outright. Some legislatures began to regulate key industries, appointing mine and factory inspectors and dairy boards. By 1883, four years before Congress created the Interstate Commerce Commission, fourteen states had established railroad commissions; fifteen had commissioners to oversee the insurance industry. Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota even regulated shipping rates. Many states (and municipalities, too) invested in public health projects. By the mid-1880s Massachusetts had capped the workday at ten hours for women and children, restricted unsafe food and drugs, and imposed

state oversight of banks, insurance companies, and utilities. In the 1870s and 1880s, federal courts allowed most of these regulations to stand.

Such far-reaching initiatives, along with the bloody struggles of Reconstruction, prompted a backlash against rising government power. The term “Liberal Republican” was first made famous in Horace Greeley’s presidential campaign against Republican U. S. Grant in 1872. Though Grant won overwhelmingly, liberal ideas were on the rise over the decade that followed. Influential proponents included editors such as E. L. Godkin of the *Nation* and George W. Curtis of *Harper’s Weekly*. They were not “liberal” in the sense that the word is used today in the United States. Rather, they championed the virtues of laissez-faire and market economics. They mistrusted government power, critiquing Reconstruction policies in the South, high protective tariffs, and the “spoils system” of political appointments.

Liberal Republicans responded in the 1870s to what they saw as increasing corruption, and to new two challenges. First, wage workers’ groups began to organize nationally in the late 1860s and called for laws limiting the workday to eight hours. Liberal Republicans argued that such laws would violate rights of contract and property (though they denied taking sides between labor and capital). Second, Liberal Republicans attacked southern Reconstruction governments as illegitimate, run by “trashy whites and ignorant negroes,” as Godkin put it. Liberals cheered when white supremacist Democrats drove out southern Republicans, and they urged northerners to abandon freedmen’s voting rights. Both North and South, they argued, should be governed by “the part of the community that embodies the intelligence and the capital.”

Increasingly, in the 1870s, Liberal thinkers sided with Democrats in rejecting the Republican economic initiatives of the Civil War and Reconstruction. The excesses of lobbyists and corrupt legislators—not to mention machine grafters like Tammany’s “Boss Tweed”—lent support to their arguments. Railroad building proved to be particularly subject to bribes and backroom deals, as dozens of railroad companies lobbied (and bribed) for government funds. The most notorious scandal of Reconstruction, the *Crédit Mobilier* affair, resulted from unsavory deals between legislators and railroad lobbyists. And it was not clear that the resulting transportation system served the public interest. Railroads outraged farmers with their complex rates, which discriminated against small shippers. Even worse, they built an array of competing and overextended lines, resulting in duplicate services, frequent bankruptcies, and fierce rivalries among the lines.

Controversy also ensued over who benefited from high protective tariffs. Republicans claimed tariffs helped workers, and high tariffs did in fact create new industries and protect jobs from moving overseas. But the argument that tariffs would keep American wages high proved false. By the 1880s economic reformers argued that most tariff benefits were going to major industrialists, who could mark up prices in the absence of foreign competition, hold wages low, and keep the profits. It gradually became clear that tariffs had helped create the giant corporations that were beginning to overshadow the economic landscape, while raising wages little, if at all.



“The Grand Old Party of Moral Ideas ‘Keeping Up Appearances.’ G.O.P. to W.R.: ‘Hurry up and get my dress on; we must cover up this awful skirt.’” The Democratic-leaning humor journal *Puck* suggests how the Republican Party’s fortunes have fallen. Her dress, bustle, and plume proclaim “political purity,” “high moral ideals,” and “war record.” But a tariff “protection corset” gives the lady her shape; her patched petticoat records such scandals as *Crédit Mobilier* and the Navy and Whiskey Rings. The party’s handmaid is Whitelaw Reid, editor of the staunchly Republican *New York Tribune*. *Puck*, 20 August 1884. Courtesy Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center.

Thus, as early as the mid-1880s, the stage was set for a protracted set of debates. Even high-tariff advocates, such as Pennsylvania congressman William “Pig Iron” Kelley, began to admit that Republican tariffs had not prevented industrial poverty in the United States. Kelley’s daughter Florence, studying economics in Germany in 1884, wrote home arguing that laws to cap the workday at eight hours would help workers more than tariffs did. Politicians in the United States (like their German counterparts) were slow to accept such advice, but William Kelley read his daughter’s letter into the *Congressional Record* and declared that he agreed.

Within a decade, Florence Kelley returned to the United States and launched a radical and creative career as an economic reformer.

FREEDMEN AND THE POSTWAR ECONOMY

One of the central challenges facing freedmen and freedwomen after Emancipation was shared by other Americans: how could one best get ahead in an economy that required mobility, flexibility, and very hard work? By any measure, freedmen's accomplishments in the decades after the war were impressive. In the Yazoo Delta of Mississippi, only a few years after slaves there had been tortured to death for conspiring to join the Union Army, freedmen were clearing forests, selling lumber, and saving money. Some learned to read and write, purchased land, and passed along prosperous farms to their sons and daughters. Freedman and Union veteran Isaiah Montgomery launched an even more ambitious project in the 1880s. When the railroad came through, he purchased 840 acres to create the town of Mound Bayou. Its African-American residents soon owned 30,000 acres surrounding the town, which supported a bank, railroad station, and cotton-oil mill. Mayor Montgomery proudly noted that in his town "a black man could run *for* sheriff instead of *from* the sheriff." Almost everyone could read and write, and the town later produced a number of distinguished civil rights advocates.

In rural areas compromises between the desires of landowners and freedmen led to the development of sharecropping, through which a landowner and a tenant family split the proceeds of the tenant's crop. Sharecropping was not exactly what anyone desired. Rather, it exposed divergent definitions of Emancipation. Former slaveholders wanted, of course, as much control over labor as possible. Most northern Republicans expected ex-slaves to become wage laborers on big plantations, so the South could continue to produce the export crops, especially cotton, that were so crucial to the nation's trade. But few former slaves saw gang labor on plantations as a full measure of freedom. They wanted autonomy and a life as different from slavery as possible. Many built cabins in the woods where they could hunt and fish, keep pigs or a cow, and grow crops for their own use. Yet because land ownership was elusive, most were eventually pushed into the cash economy, toiling for others (usually whites) at low wages. "A deep misunderstanding," historian Barbara Fields has observed, "caused the authors of Reconstruction to offer with a great flourish a gift that the freedmen did not want [that is, wage labor on plantations] and to interpret as perversity or racial incapacity the latter's refusal to accept the gift with gratitude."

Many tenant and sharecropping families were ambitious. A northern journalist reported from Alabama in 1880 that "I met a woman who lived a few miles from Talladega, and she showed me \$98, the receipts from her own little cotton patch, and, said she, 'I plowed, and I sowed, and I hoed every lick of it myself, and I picked it, and got it baled and sold it too.' This is no extraordinary case. I met everywhere in the neighborhood of Talladega women not only able but willing to do more than a man's work, if by it they could send their children to school." But for

rural blacks, economic success was achieved against enormous odds. They were barred by custom, if not law, from high-paying jobs, business loans, mortgages, and land purchases. In 1883 Mississippi counted 19 black-owned country stores, but this was out of a total of 2,248.

During the hard years between 1878 and 1881, as many as 50,000 southern African Americans moved west. About 68,000 went north in the 1870s, a figure that reached 185,000 by the 1890s and accelerated through the Great Migration of the 1910s. Before 1900, however, most journeys took place within the South. Mobility and dislocation, hallmarks of black life in America ever since African survivors of the Middle Passage had arrived in the British colonies, endured in new forms. Thousands of men and women undertook long journeys in search of work and to get back home to visit or care for kin. After Emancipation, Annie Burton, who began life as a slave on an Alabama plantation, moved into town with her mother and sisters to attend school. She cooked for families in Macon and Atlanta, Georgia, and then found a job in New England by responding to a magazine advertisement. She returned to the South frequently to care for ill relatives and to adopt her nephew after his mother died. At various times she operated restaurants in Massachusetts and Florida and a boardinghouse in Rhode Island.

A small, prosperous black elite emerged in the wake of the war: twenty-five black lawyers, real estate brokers, and other professionals began to serve their own communities. Even a single institution could make an enormous difference in the growth of the black middle class. The Freedmen's Hospital in Washington, D.C., for example, run by the Department of the Interior, was one of a tiny number of hospitals in the United States that trained African-American doctors; its interns went on to practice medicine all over the country. Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, the hospital's surgeon-in-chief, set up a nursing school and in 1893 performed the nation's first successful open-heart surgery.

Yet prosperous blacks felt, as keenly as the working class, the many impediments created by a race-conscious society. The prevailing code defined race both by color—brown, black, yellow, and white—and by nationality, and the consequences varied for groups designated by terms such as *Nordic* and *Hebrew*. The U.S. Immigration Commission, for example, designated southern Italians as an "Iberic" people. "Excitable, impulsive, highly imaginative, impracticable," they supposedly had trouble adapting "to highly organized society." But Italian immigrants were usually defined as white, permitted by both law and custom to live in white neighborhoods, attend white schools, and take jobs that blacks were denied. By contrast, prejudices of color and nationality worked in tandem against blacks: whether designated as Africans, Negroes, blacks, or "coloreds," they were assigned to the bottom tiers of the racial hierarchy.

Denied the right to locate in white neighborhoods, African Americans in southern cities often lived in cramped and filthy slums such as "the Bottoms" along polluted Cripple Creek in Knoxville, Tennessee, a neighborhood of "rickety shacks clustered on stilts." The vast majority of the post-Emancipation generation found themselves below the economic wedge described by Henry George, trapped in

low-wage jobs or tenant contracts. Booker T. Washington, born a slave in Virginia in 1856 and educated at the Hampton Institute, spoke for millions of such farmers and laborers when he called for "industrial education," training that would help working-class youth get decent skilled jobs. In the two decades after 1881, when he assumed leadership of Alabama's Tuskegee Institute, Washington was the nation's most prominent black leader. He preached hard work, thrift, and respectability. "My experience," he wrote in his autobiography, "is that there is something in human nature which always makes an individual recognize and reward merit, no matter under what color of skin merit is found."

The career of African-American writer Charles Chesnutt offered a counterpoint to Washington's optimism. Chesnutt, a grocer's son who grew up in North Carolina, got a good education and began teaching at an early age. He reported the comment of an Anglo clerk when one of his friends called Chesnutt a gentleman: "With me a nigger is a nigger, and nothing in the world can make him anything else but a nigger." Very light-skinned, Chesnutt wrestled with the dilemma of whether he should pass himself as Anglo. "I am as white as any of them," he wrote angrily in his diary at age seventeen, but Chesnutt chose to identify himself as black. "I will live down the prejudice, I will crush it out," he vowed. "I will show to the world that a man may spring from a race of slaves, and yet far excel many of the boasted ruling race." For a decade Chesnutt produced subtle, accomplished fiction, but he was forced to give up writing in 1905 and return to law clerking, since demand for his fiction was insufficient to support his family. In that same year Thomas Dixon's pathologically racist novel *The Clansman*—basis for the later film *Birth of a Nation*—became a nationwide best-seller. It revised the history of Reconstruction to depict freedmen and their northern allies menacing white womanhood, while the Ku Klux Klan rode to the rescue as noble avengers.

Chesnutt captured some of the complexities of African Americans' struggles after Emancipation in his story "The Doll," told through the eyes of Tom Taylor, a barber who has moved north. When a political convention meets in town, one of Taylor's customers turns out to be an ex-Confederate colonel who long ago murdered Taylor's father. For decades the barber has dreamed of revenge, but with his razor at the colonel's throat, he looks around at the employees who depend on him. "One was sending a son to college; another was buying a home. The unmarried one was in his spare hours studying a profession." If he murders the colonel, all will be thrown into poverty. Tom himself will lose his access to prominent white citizens whom he has often asked for help on behalf of those in need. Still anguishing over what to do, Tom looks up and sees the doll his little daughter has asked him to repair, hanging beside his mirror. He decisively swallows his rage. "His own father had died in defense of his daughter; he must live to protect his own." Tom thus pins his dreams on the next generation, but to do so he has to let his father's murderer walk free. In describing the barber's dilemma, Chesnutt captured something essential about how African Americans entered the post-Reconstruction world, carrying burdens of justice denied.

Looking back from the vantage point of the 1930s, W. E. B. DuBois criticized Americans' tendency to think of Emancipation and southern Reconstruction as events segregated from the rest of U.S. history. "The most magnificent drama in the last thousand years," he wrote, "is the transportation of ten million human beings out of the dark beauty of their mother continent into the new-found Eldorado of the West. They descended into Hell; and in the third century they arose from the dead. . . . It was an upheaval of humanity like the Reformation and the French Revolution." The struggles of freedmen and freedwomen, DuBois argued, were central to the history of America's labor movement, its economic modernization, and its politics, culture, and religious faith. To claim otherwise was to be "blind and led by the blind."

African Americans shared with other Americans a postwar world of restlessness, mobility, and risk. Freedom itself brought the impulse to move along and seek new opportunities, to seek lost relatives or leave behind terrible memories. At the same time the postwar economy transformed the landscape of the South and the nation, pushing and pulling even those with the strongest ties to their old communities and to the land. Folk and blues ballads soon found in the railroad a symbol of restlessness and disconnection. "When a woman gets the blues," went one famous line, "she goes to her room and hides; When a man gets the blues, he catches a freight train and rides." Being on the railroad brought blues of its own: "I'm a broken-hearted bachelor, travelin' through this wide world all alone, It's the railroad for my pillow, this jungle is my happy home." Other songs spoke of the difficulties of traveling poor:

*Mmmm—please help me win my fare,
Cause I'm a travelin' man, boys I can't stay here.*

*I said "Looka hyah engineer, can I ride your train?"
He said, "Look here you oughta know this train ain't mine an' you askin' me
in vain."*

As such songs testified, a tremendous economic upheaval in the postwar years set the conditions not only for the hopes and struggles of freedmen and freedwomen, but for those of all Americans.

FOR FURTHER READING

Thomas Higginson's memoirs can be found in *Army Life in a Black Regiment* (New York, 1984 [1869]), and Isaac Perski's story is in Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic* (New York, 1998). On veterans see the Surgeon General's Office, *Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion* (Washington, DC, 1888), Richard Severo and Lewis Milford, *The Wages of War* (New York, 1989), Eric T. Dean, Jr., *Shook Over Hell* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), and T. J. Stiles, *Jesse James* (New York, 2002). On veterans' services see Patrick J. Kelly, *Creating a National Home* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), and Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), though I take a somewhat more optimistic

view than Skocpol of the pension system's legacy. On guns and violence I rely on Donald B. Webster, Jr., *Suicide Specials* (Harrisburg, PA, 1958), and Eric H. Monkkonen, *Murder in New York City* (Berkeley, CA, 2001). Consider also the last chapter of Michael A. Bellesiles's provocative book, *Arming America* (New York, 2000).

On the war's cultural and religious impact see Edmund Wilson, *Patriotic Gore* (New York, 1962), and Susan Jacoby, *Freethinkers* (New York, 2004). For the impact on women see Jeannie Attie, *Patriotic Toil* (Ithaca, NY, 1998), Elizabeth B. Pryor, *Clara Barton* (Philadelphia, 1987), and for the WCTU, Ruth Bordin, *Woman and Temperance*, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick, NJ, 1990), and Barbara L. Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity* (Middletown, CT, 1980). On suffrage see Ellen Carol DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage* (Ithaca, NY, 1978), and in the West, Rebecca J. Mead, *How the Vote Was Won* (New York, 2004).

For Reconstruction in the South my main source is Eric Foner's *Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (New York, 1988). On the Combahee strike see Foner's *Nothing but Freedom* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1983), and on Colfax, Ted Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1984). Also helpful are Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex* (Cambridge, MA, 1990), Howard N. Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890* (New York, 1978), and the essays in *Divided Houses*, ed. Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (New York, 1992).

For politics and government at the national level, see Morton Keller's classic account *Affairs of State* (Cambridge, MA, 1977). On Reconstruction see Brooks D. Simpson, *The Reconstruction Presidents* (Topeka, KS, 1998), and Michael Perman, *Emancipation and Reconstruction* (Arlington Heights, IL, 1987). On Seward see Walter LaFeber, *The American Search for Opportunity* (New York, 1993), which is volume 4 of the Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations. On partisan politics see H. Wayne Morgan's readable *From Hayes to McKinley* (Syracuse, NY, 1969), Robert W. Cherny, *American Politics in the Gilded Age, 1868-1900* (Wheeling, IL, 1997), and Charles W. Calhoun, *Conceiving a New Republic: The Republican Party and the Southern Question, 1869-1900* (Topeka, KS, 2006). For a broad view of Whig and Republican state-building see John Gerring, *Party Ideologies in America, 1828-1996* (Cambridge, 1998). On federal activism in the economy there are two immensely helpful books by Richard E. Bense, *Yankee Leviathan* (New York, 1990), and *The Political Economy of American Industrialization, 1877-1900* (Cambridge, 2000). For an alternative perspective on protective tariffs see Alfred E. Eckes, Jr., *Opening America's Market* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1995), and Dana Frank, *Buy American* (Boston, 1999). On "Pig Iron" Kelley and his daughter see Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Florence Kelley and the Nation's Work* (New Haven, CT, 1995).

On new government powers see, in addition to Keller and Bense, William R. Brock, *Investigation and Responsibility* (Cambridge, MA, 1984), Ballard C. Campbell, *The Growth of American Government* (Bloomington, IN, 1995), and Walter I. Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State* (New York, 1974). Howard S. Miller discusses the USGS in "The Political Economy of Science," in *Nineteenth-Century American Science*, ed. George H. Daniels (Evanston, IL, 1972), 95-114, as does Thomas G. Manning in *Government in Science* (Lexington, KY, 1967). On the Freedmen's Bureau see Barry A. Crouch, *The Freedmen's Bureau and Black Texans* (Austin, TX, 1992), and *The Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction*, ed. Paul A. Cimbala and Randall M. Miller (New York, 1999). On city government see John C. Teaford, *The Unheralded Triumph: City Government in America, 1870-1900* (Baltimore, 1983), and Stanley K. Schultz, *Constructing Urban Cultures* (Philadelphia, 1989). As a starting point on urban machines see Terence J. McDonald's wonderful introduction to his edition of William L. Riordon's *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall* (Boston, 1994).

On northerners' fading support for Reconstruction see, in addition to Foner, David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion* (Cambridge, MA, 2001), Heather Cox Richardson, *The Death of Reconstruction* (Cambridge, MA, 2001), and Nancy Cohen, *The Reconstruction of American Liberalism, 1865-1914* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2002). Thomas A. Guglielmo offers a useful analysis of systems of racial categorization in *White on Arrival* (New York, 2003). On the South after Reconstruction see Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South* (New York, 1992), and Barbara Fields' brilliant essay, "Ideology and Race in American History," in *Region, Race, and Reconstruction*, ed. J. Morgan Kousser (New York, 1982). The quotation about the "deep misunderstanding" between Reconstruction policy makers and freedpeople is from Fields' essay, page 166.

On labor during Reconstruction see also Julie Saville, *The Work of Reconstruction* (New York, 1994). For Republican policies in one southern city see Lawrence L. Hartzell, "The Exploration of Freedom in Black Petersburg, Virginia, 1865-1902," in *The Edge of the South*, ed. Edward L. Ayers and John C. Willis (Charlottesville, VA, 1991), 134-156. There is a burgeoning literature on convict lease, including Alexander C. Lichtenstein, *Twice the Work of Free Labor* (London, 1996), Matthew J. Mancini, *One Dies, Get Another* (Columbia, SC, 1996), and Martha Myers, *Race, Labor, and Punishment in the New South* (Columbus, OH 1998). On Booker T. Washington's life and thought, Fitzhugh Brundage provides an excellent brief overview in his edition of Washington's autobiography, *Up from Slavery* (Boston, 2003).

On African-American experiences see also John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 8th ed. (New York, 2000), as well as Leon F. Litwack's two extraordinarily rich accounts, *Been in the Storm So Long* (New York, 1979) and *Trouble in Mind* (New York, 1998), and for a brief overview, Leslie H. Fishel, Jr., "The African-American Experience," in *The Gilded Age* ed. Charles W. Calhoun (Wilmington, DE, 1996). Also see Darlene Clark Hine et al., *The African-American Odyssey*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ, 2003), Hine's *A Shining Thread of Hope* (New York, 1998), Dorothy Sterling, *We Are Your Sisters* (New York, 1984), and Tera Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom* (Cambridge, MA, 1998). On the Yazoo Delta see John C. Willis, *Forgotten Time* (Charlottesville, VA, 2000). Willard B. Gatewood examines the black elite in *Aristocrats of Color* (Bloomington, IN, 1990); on its rise in Washington, D.C., especially, see Jacqueline M. Moore, *Leading the Race* (Charlottesville, VA, 1999). W. E. B. DuBois reflected on African-American history in *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York, 1935). On the blues see Paul Oliver, *Blues Fell This Morning*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1990), and Alan Lomax, *The Land Where the Blues Began* (New York, 1993).

CHAPTER 2

Reach

Corporation. n. An ingenious device for obtaining individual profit without individual responsibility.

—AMBROSE BIERCE, *THE DEVIL'S DICTIONARY*

In the fall of 1883, dozens of buffalo hunters bought supplies for the season and trekked out to the Dakotas and Montana to slaughter America's last great bison herd. To their astonishment, it had vanished. In the previous three years, hunters had already, without realizing it, exterminated so many bison that almost none were left. Construction of the transcontinental railroad, had divided the Plains buffalo into two great herds north and south of the tracks. The southern herd had been hunted to near-extinction in the late 1870s; now the northern was gone as well. Strips of tough, supple bison hide made excellent belts for eastern industrial machines, and the slow animals were easy targets for modern weapons. Hunter Orlando Brown killed 5,700 bison in the first two months of 1876 alone, firing his .50-caliber rifle so many times that he went deaf in one ear. Taking only hides, hunters such as Brown left skinned carcasses rotting across the Plains.

In one of the first pieces of legislation proposed to protect wildlife, Congress tried in 1874 to prohibit the killing of female bison by non-Indians, hoping this measure would allow the species to reproduce. But the Grant administration had an incentive for extermination: removal of Plains Indians, who depended on bison for tools, food, shelter, and clothing. In the 1867 Treaty of Medicine Lodge, for example, the government had pledged that Comanche, Kiowa, Southern Cheyenne, and Arapaho could hunt south of the Arkansas River "so long as the buffalo may range thereon in such numbers as to justify the chase." Few officials openly said so, but many agreed with an army officer who advised a visitor to "kill every buffalo you can. Every buffalo dead is an Indian gone." Grant pocket-vetoed the bison protection bill. In the next decade, six million bison vanished, with such horrific speed that native peoples believed the animals had hidden themselves underground.

During the same winters when the last remnants of the northern herd fell, shoppers in Chicago and New York City discovered fresh oranges at their grocery stores. Chinese farmworkers in California had boxed the fruit in a much-admired style called the China pack: "every wrapper smooth, not a wrinkle," as one citrus

grower described it, "and the tissue triangled to a point on top so that when the box was opened it was something to display." Fresh fruit in winter began as an expensive luxury, but boxcars soon arrived with larger cargoes, and Florida and California "sunshine fruit" became a national marvel. By 1891 California railroads were shipping out 302 million pounds of fruit a year.

The rotting bison carcasses in Montana and winter oranges in Chicago were twin manifestations of an economic revolution. In the name of progress, bison had to make way for railcars that could whisk products to customers across the continent. In the post-Civil War years, economic enterprise achieved new scale and reach, linking producers and consumers in a breathtaking set of transformations. Telegraphs, railroads, and steamships laid the foundations for this revolution. The process was a global one that disproportionately benefited the large and resource-rich United States. As the outlines of a modern global economy emerged, U.S. corporations exercised new and formidable power.

PALEOTECHNOLOGY

If any single factor brought this revolution, it was the development of fossil fuels. The energy of animals, humans, wood, and water came to be replaced by steam engines, petroleum, and then electricity. So essential was the shift that critic Lewis Mumford, looking back from the vantage point of the 1930s, characterized the mid- to late nineteenth century as the dawn of the "Paleotechnic Era." His phrase highlighted the use of coal and oil, two natural resources created in the distant geological past. (Mumford, an advocate of renewable energy, also hinted with the prefix "paleo-" that an economy based on fossil fuel was hopelessly retrograde.) By the 1850s steam engines were becoming more cost-effective than water in many applications. While as late as 1890 almost half of New England's manufacturing energy still came from water, steam engines could be taken to inland areas without prime sites along falling rivers and streams. Natural gas and artificial gas, extracted from coal, came into use by the 1850s for urban lighting. The development of kerosene from crude oil, which began in western Pennsylvania and Ohio just before the Civil War, soon offered a rival source of heat and light.

Paleotechnology wrought especially dramatic transformations in the Mid-Atlantic and Midwest. Before the Civil War, American manufacturing had been largely concentrated in New England's water-powered textile mills. Afterward an extensive industrial heartland arose. Rich coal deposits helped build the great steel mills of Pittsburgh, Buffalo, and Cleveland. Towns like Trenton, New Jersey, and Schenectady, New York, grew into busy manufacturing centers, while Ohio boasted major hubs such as Akron, Cincinnati, and Dayton. By 1900, industrial production in the United States exceeded the *combined* output of Britain, Germany, and France.

No place better exemplified the rise of paleotechnology than Chicago, which in the forty years after 1860 grew from a small city of 30,000 to a metropolis of two million. The city benefited from nearby deposits of bituminous coal, and while

early Chicagoans relied largely on wood for heat and whale oil for light, these soon gave way to coal, coal gas, and kerosene. By the 1880s bright, steady, coal-fired electricity became a major energy source for streetlamps and commercial lighting. In 1893 tourists gasped at the sight of thousands of electric bulbs outlining the elegant buildings of the Chicago World's Fair against the evening sky. Electric trolleys ferried fair visitors and rush-hour commuters around the Loop and out to the suburbs. A decade later, the city's electric company had 30,000 private customers, and Chicago's inhabitants were using, per capita, 4.3 tons of coal per year.

Steam power had its most dramatic impact on transportation. In the 1830s the fastest form of inland transport had been the canal boat, pulled by plodding mules. Canals froze in winter, their walls collapsed in heavy rains, and they suffered frequent blockages from fallen trees. Furthermore, canals had to run near rivers or other water sources and could not extend into the arid regions of the West. Dirt roads were worse: rocky, muddy, and cratered, they were often impassable after spring rains. Steam locomotives not only moved goods and people much faster than canals and wagon paths, but engineers could also lay railroad tracks over rugged terrain, even deserts, and span wide rivers with bridges. Nimble small-gauge tracks soon carried passengers and freight through spectacular passes in the Rockies. Locomotives could run day and night, through searing heat, high winds, thunderstorms, droughts, and blizzards. They carried immense loads for long distances with no biological need for rest.

Railroads, then, facilitated commerce over vast geographic spaces. By 1905 a journey from New York to San Francisco—which a half-century earlier had required either months of overland trekking or a sail around Cape Horn—now took eighty-two hours. In order to support complex operations over broad swaths of territory, railroad companies pioneered many of the structures and practices of corporate capitalism. They organized their workforce into departments overseen by professional managers. They made creative use of engineers and accountants, whose specialized skills evolved to meet the companies' needs. Railroads dominated the New York Stock Exchange for decades, attracting the bulk of European investment in the United States. Everywhere, Americans acknowledged "the roads" as catalysts of geographic expansion and economic growth. An Illinois woman remarked that without a railroad her town would have "neither telegraph, nor schoolhouse, nor anything."

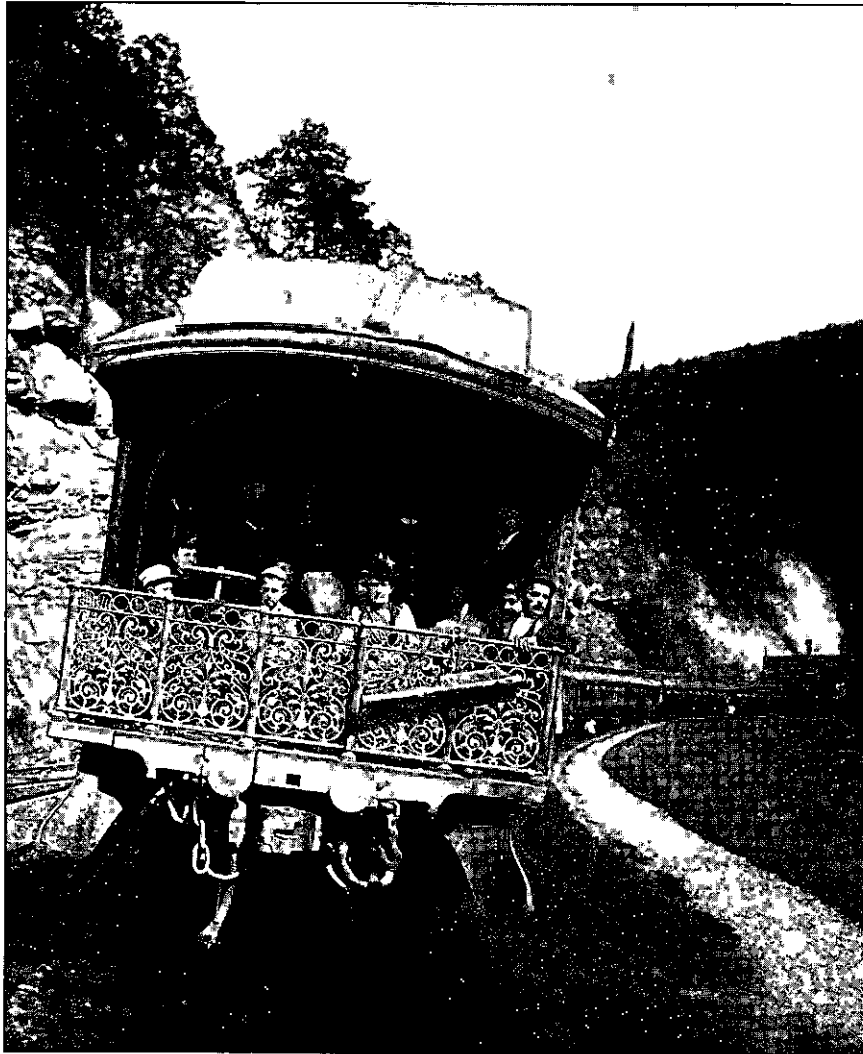
The power of fossil fuels depended to a large extent on political decisions. As we saw in Chapter 1, Union victory and Republican economic policies set the stage for industrialization. In an age of nationalism and empire-building, events in other nations worked toward similar ends. Canada attained dominion status within the British Empire in 1867, and in the same year France withdrew its claim over Mexico. Thus, America's two nearest neighbors gained an autonomy from Europe that brought them more tightly into the economic orbit of the United States. A year later advocates of modernization in Japan deposed the last shogun and set their country on the path toward industrial development. In 1870–1871 the crushing defeat of France by a combined army of German states reshaped Europe's



Guthrie Cotton Depot, Texas (undated). Workers pose atop immense bales of cotton, compressed in steam-powered cotton presses and loaded for shipment. While an array of raw materials and products traveled by rail and steamship, cotton remained the country's leading export in dollar value from the 1840s to the 1920s. Courtesy Library of Congress.

political landscape. Strong and unified, Germany would soon become the continent's leading empire, competing head-to-head with Britain around the globe. In all these countries a new generation of government leaders strove to harness paleotechnology and out-compete national rivals.

Meanwhile, observers around the world were shocked by the Paris Commune of 1871, in which French radicals protested government paralysis and the threatened return of monarchy. The Communards burned buildings and assassinated the archbishop of Paris; after the rebellion was suppressed the government ruthlessly executed 20,000 Parisians. The Commune raised a hysterical fear of "communism" that influenced for decades afterward political debate in every industrializing nation. It reinforced many Americans' conviction that, as Liberal Republicans argued, social order was a more urgent concern than social justice.



"Observation End of the *Pennsylvania Limited* on Horseshoe Curve" (detail), east slope of the Alleghenies, circa 1893. With the railroad revolution, people as well as goods moved from place to place more efficiently than ever before. William H. Rau, a photographer for the Pennsylvania Railroad, halted the train to take this publicity shot of elite passengers enjoying the view on the company's premier line. Courtesy American Premier Underwriters, Inc., and Library Company of Pennsylvania.

Government policies shaped the forms that paleotechnology took. The corporation itself, in the modern sense, was an invention of government. Over the course of the nineteenth century, state legislatures gradually gave up the task of chartering corporations only for special public purposes, and by the 1870s anyone could create a corporation for almost any purpose without a legislative act. At the

same time, Congress and the federal courts worked to create an unimpeded nationwide market in goods, services, and labor. North Carolina, in an 1879 Supreme Court ruling, was not allowed to require out-of-state insurance companies to deposit funds with the state as security for residents who bought policies. A Virginia law that charged licensing fees to out-of-state manufacturers was struck down the following year. In *Munn v. Illinois* (1877) the Supreme Court did allow states to regulate grain-elevator operators (and by implication railroads) because those businesses were "clothed in the public interest," but in doing so the Court implied that any businesses *not* so clothed were out of bounds for regulation. Thus, as telegraphs and railroads bound the continent together, government policies not only facilitated their construction but also set sweeping new conditions for the business and trade they carried on.

The impact of paleotechnology was as apparent in traditional sectors such as agriculture as it was in heavy industry. Steam-powered grain threshers, corn huskers, sugar mills, cotton presses, and dairy cream separators appeared, manufactured by companies including McCormick and Deere in steam-powered plants and brought to the hinterlands by rail. In the 1830s growing twenty bushels of wheat had taken more than sixty hours of human labor; by the late 1880s and 1890s, the same yield took less than four hours. A midwestern farmer no longer bagged his wheat in burlap sacks clearly identifiable as his own product and liable to rot as it waited for shipment by wagon or barge. Instead, he sent it by rail to a steam-powered grain elevator in Chicago or another hub. The process rearranged economic relationships at every point along the path from farmer to consumer. It benefited large-scale processors such as the Pillsbury Company of Minneapolis, which bought great quantities of wheat at discount and shipped out mass-market products. Small-town mills could not compete. By the 1880s affluent shoppers began to think of Pillsbury and Gold Medal as synonymous with flour. Quaker Oats, Campbell's Soup, Hershey's Chocolate, and Heinz Ketchup arrived through similar large-scale manufacturing and marketing strategies.

Few industries showed more clearly than meatpacking the stunning reach of paleotechnical capitalism. Railroads began shipping live cattle and hogs to feedlots for fattening, then to centralized slaughtering facilities. (Frequent suffocation and injuries in these mass shipments prompted a long battle by the Humane Society against cruelty to livestock.) The ranching firm of Miller and Lux, which created a 1.25-million-acre empire in California, Nevada, and Oregon, sent its cattle to San Francisco's Butchertown. By the 1870s Chicago's Union Stockyards killed and processed more than a million hogs a year for pork and side products. Visiting British author Rudyard Kipling found the process disturbing. He described how on the slaughterhouse floor the hogs' "full-voiced shriek became a sputter, and then a fall as of heavy tropical rain." Hogs and cattle died at a rate of five per minute. "The blood ran in muttering gutters," Kipling reported. "There was no place for hand or foot that was not coated with thicknesses of dried blood, and the stench of it in the nostrils bred fear." While eastern shoppers were at first reluctant to purchase meat that had not been locally slaughtered, companies such as Swift and Armour ruthlessly

undercut smaller competitors. In market after market they offered astonishingly cheap meat, pricing their products below cost if necessary until customers made the switch.

While paleotechnology standardized and mechanized the deaths of millions of animals, it also built up heavy industries, most prominently steel. The career of Andrew Carnegie suggested the complexities of this process. As a young immigrant from Scotland, Carnegie moved with his family to Pittsburgh, where he ingratiated himself with leaders of the Pennsylvania Railroad as an errand boy. Rising through the ranks, Carnegie worked his way into the steel industry by borrowing British technologies such as the Bessemer process as well as brokering deals for railroad rebates via his Pennsylvania connections. Carnegie shrewdly chose to enter the steel business just after policy makers erected a tariff barrier to block competing imports. Most of all, Carnegie watched the bottom line. He made innovative use of cost accounting to keep close track of expenses. He mercilessly slashed labor costs. On occasion, he tore down recently built factories and built them over, calculating that increased efficiency would make it worth his while. Carnegie maddened shareholders by refusing to pay dividends for years at a stretch, plowing profits back into the enterprise. He was fond of quoting his frugal Scottish mother: "Watch the pennies, and the pounds will take care of themselves."

John D. Rockefeller, whose Standard Oil Company dealt in fossil fuel itself, built an even bigger corporate empire. Like Swift and Armour, Rockefeller sold his products at below cost until he bankrupted competitors, a practice that became notorious as "predatory pricing." By 1880 Standard Oil controlled nine-tenths of the national market in refined oil, and its size allowed Rockefeller to demand deep rebates from railroads that shipped his oil. Former refiner George Rice told investigators that Standard Oil had driven him into bankruptcy through secret deals, predatory pricing, and collusion with the railroads. It was, Rice said, "a very sad, bitter, and ruinous experience for me." The scale of Rockefeller's empire can be measured by the companies that emerged from its court-ordered breakup after 1911: they included the roots of today's ExxonMobil, Amoco, Chevron, Sunoco, and Conoco.

As Rockefeller's maneuvers showed, powerful capitalists were not fans of marketplace competition; they gave only lip service to Liberal Republicans' ideal of *laissez-faire*. Instead, they strove to lessen and block rivalries by gobbling up competitors, and cooperating through secret financial deals. After experimenting for years with various unenforceable "gentlemen's agreements" and pools, corporations turned in the 1880s to the trust, a legal invention through which multiple firms deposited stock in an umbrella entity. The Standard Oil Trust led the way in 1882, followed within five years by trusts in linseed oil, sugar, whiskey, salt, and many other products. The resulting vast corporations began to dominate key sectors of the economy.

If in retrospect the transition appears orderly and inevitable, it was not. Though many Americans have seen photographs of the celebratory "golden spike"

being driven in 1869 at the site of the first transcontinental link in Utah, few know the instructive story of the second transcontinental line, the Northern Pacific, which eventually ran from Minneapolis to Seattle. Despite a federal grant of sixty million acres—over half of all the land Congress gave to railroads before 1871—the line proved very difficult to build. Banking legend Jay Cooke, who had become a national hero by helping manage the Union's finances during the Civil War, overextended himself selling risky bonds and illegally mortgaging government-granted property. The collapse of his firm in 1873 not only bankrupted the railroad but also helped trigger a severe depression. Cooke's successor, Henry Villard, completed the rail line a decade later, but the effort broke his health. He lost control of the Northern Pacific to rivals, who then competed ruinously with newer roads. Before Villard's death in 1900, the Northern Pacific had gone bankrupt a second time.

The replacement of Plains bison with millions of range cattle was an equally messy process. In the cattle bonanza of the early 1880s, giant ranching companies invested in ventures that stretched hundreds of miles. By 1884 they had turned loose twenty million cattle in the inland West. The cattle kings wanted large-scale, rationalized, efficient production, but they did not get it. Even the toughest cattle could not cope with the Great Plains' extremes of heat and cold, and a series of brutal winters on the Plains—so shocking that they introduced the term *blizzard* to Americans in its modern usage—starved and froze millions of cows and calves. As they migrated in search of food and warmth, the cattle bumped against barbed wire fences that marked property lines. Along fences where the bodies piled up, settlers later walked long distances on top of nothing but bones. Some cattlemen went bankrupt, while others were too revolted to stay in the business. "I wanted no more of it," a Montana rancher remembered later. "I never wanted to own again an animal that I could not feed or shelter."

Farming in the arid West proved equally problematic. In the immediate postwar years, the Great Plains had seemed well-watered. Not understanding the twenty-year cycle of rising and falling precipitation in Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas, settlers concluded that their arrival was causing rainfall to increase. Both western promoters and scientific experts enthusiastically proclaimed that "rain follows the plow." Some believed sod-breaking itself released moisture into the air, while one Harvard professor proposed that steel railroad tracks had a magnetic effect on cloud formation. In the late 1880s the rain cycle shifted, and the resulting drought left thousands of farmers stranded. Homesteaders were not the only ones caught out. Large bonanza farms, similar in structure to the great cattle companies, had set up operation in areas such as South Dakota's Red River Valley and planted thousands of acres of wheat. Drought and debt broke up most of these farms within a decade. Novelist O. E. Rolvaag, a Norwegian immigrant who worked for several years as a farmhand in the Dakotas, summed up his view of these disasters in his grim novel *Giants in the Earth*: "The Great Plain Drinks the Blood of Christian Men and Is Satisfied."

Despite catastrophic defeats, the incorporators forged ahead. Before railroad-builders had established themselves securely in the West, they were already

reaching southward into Mexico. Railroads, again, served as catalysts for other forms of development, and in the early 1870s they demanded the same kinds of concessions from Mexico's government that they sought from their own. Mexico's Liberal leaders were, in fact, busily breaking up communal and church landholdings and seeking to modernize the economy, but President Sebastian Lerdo de Tejada thought U.S. railroad magnates asked too much, especially since they insisted on grants of land rather than bonds or cash. After Lerdo won reelection in 1875, private U.S. interests secretly sent weapons and \$500,000 to the losing presidential candidate, Porfirio Díaz, who was so eager to promote development that his followers won the nickname "Railroaders." Díaz engineered a coup the following year.

Díaz's three decades of rule were some of the friendliest in Mexican history for U.S. corporate investment. The railroads that U.S. companies built and operated rarely served the interests of Mexican passengers or linked Mexican cities to one another. Rather, they were designed to ship raw materials from south to north and from the interior to the coasts. Each project solicited per-mile land concessions from Mexico—helpfully provided by the Díaz government—and each led investors to pursue further ventures south of the border. By 1896 American investors owned 80 percent of Mexico's railroad stocks and bonds. A decade later foreigners owned one-third of all the country's land, with Americans accounting for three-quarters of the total. Texas Oil had claimed four million acres for exploration and drilling. Phelps-Dodge oversaw a lucrative cross-border empire in copper mining, and the Guggenheim Company supervised mining and smelting operations in gold, iron, copper, and zinc. Around Monterrey U.S. companies vied with Italian and British competitors to exploit fabulous silver deposits. Other U.S. companies ran huge coffee, sugar, henequen, and rubber plantations.

These enterprises benefited from the policy, pursued by both Díaz and his predecessors, of dispossessing traditional Indian communities and breaking up landholdings for private sale. Many Mexicans uprooted by this process became wage laborers in corporate enterprises; for thousands, migration to northern Mexico and across the border in search of work became a way of life. Mexican workers faced relentless discrimination, as companies openly differentiated the "American wage" from the "Mexican wage" and reserved high-status jobs for U.S. nationals. At the Batopilas mine in the Sierra Madre, for example, an American supervisor earned \$18,000 a year, an assistant electrician \$1,500, and a Mexican miner about \$75. Farmers forced from their land, however, had few options other than working on ranches, sugar beet farms, or railroad gangs. Northern Mexico developed a distinctive economy in the shadow of the United States. The people of Sonora, known as "Mexican Yankees" to their countrymen farther south, began to play baseball and incorporate words such as *picher* and *catcher* (as well as the curse *sanabich*) into their vocabulary.

Mexico became a model for American business expansion and corporate investment, in many parts of the world. Copper and rubber from Mexico joined the stream of commerce along with Montana cattle, Wisconsin ice, Georgia cotton,

Cuban sugar, and Brazilian coffee. By the 1890s dozens of U.S. corporations fit the modern definition of *multinational*. The pioneer was Singer Sewing Machine, which had exported its popular machines a decade before the Civil War, sent agents abroad during the war years, and by 1868 operated a factory in Scotland. A decade later Singer had sales headquarters in six European capitals, South Africa, and New Zealand. Singer managers experimented early with global marketing and sales. They advertised their sewing machine as "The Great Civilizer" and boasted of serving the "Hindoo mother," the "dark-eyed Mexican Senorita," and the "flaxen-haired Russian peasant girl." The company's foreign agents negotiated the complexities of the caste system in India, and in China they hosted free sewing schools, hoping students would become future customers.

Seeking markets abroad, companies often found it profitable (partly because of tariff barriers) to manufacture in those countries rather than at home. By the mid-1880s producers of farm machinery, locomotives, elevators, typewriters, and pharmaceuticals had substantial sales in Europe and elsewhere. Four dozen U.S. corporations had factories in Canada. Bell Telephone had subsidiaries in Europe, Latin America, and Asia. Edison was exporting electric lights to countries as far away as Chile and Japan. Standard Oil, the behemoth of them all, was competing head-to-head in foreign markets with refiners of Russian and Middle Eastern oil. George Eastman of Eastman Kodak, which by the end of the decade sold cameras from Shanghai to St. Petersburg, remarked that foreign sales cushioned the ups and downs of the U.S. marketplace: they helped "distribute our eggs and pad the basket." For Eastman and other corporate titans, the pile of eggs grew very high.

REDEFINING SPACE AND TIME

Railroads and steamships carried not only fruit, meat, and sewing machines, but also people with dreams of prosperity. Carlos Córdoba's journey began after his father's death, when he became an apprentice in his uncle's blacksmith shop near the border between Sonora and Arizona. There he learned to use the latest American machine tools, and at age fifteen he crossed the border and found a maintenance job at a copper mine. For Michael Daunis, a Lithuanian farmer's son, the journey began with letters from a cousin in the United States who reported (falsely, it turned out) that he was getting rich. The cousin sent a transatlantic ticket, and Michael left, expecting to return in a few years and buy "the biggest farm in the village." Ellen O'Grady's travels also began with kin: two sisters working in New York City paid her passage from Ireland. For Chen Yixi of Langmei village in southeast China, the journey began with famine and a ravaging civil war that left his family destitute. The teenaged Yixi headed for the United States, where he ended up in Seattle for almost four decades.

Like 40 percent of U.S. immigrants during the late nineteenth century, two of these migrants eventually went home. Carlos Córdoba returned to his childhood village with a sewing machine and stove for his mother. Chen Yixi returned triumphantly to China as a wealthy entrepreneur. Michael Daunis and

Ellen O'Grady, like the other three-fifths of new arrivals, ended up living and dying in the United States. Their journeys show how quickly global transportation became a direct consumer product, available to people abroad as well as within the United States. Paleotechnology made it far cheaper and quicker to cross an ocean or continent. With the advent of steamships the cost of a transatlantic or transpacific trip fell to \$50 and sometimes half as much. At steamship offices in most major U.S. cities, workers could buy tickets to send back to family and friends. Labor recruiters also went abroad to offer contracts for work in the United States, with the cost of passage built in. Better communication provided incentives to go, since reliable mail and telegraph service allowed family and friends to keep in touch, wire money, and come home for visits.

The United States was by no means the sole destination for immigrants. Thousands of English and Welsh workers headed for Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and many manual laborers left southern Italy for other parts of Europe and Argentina, with only a third choosing North America. Chinese migrants moved to Southeast Asia in large numbers before turning to the United States and Australia. But the United States was a major beneficiary whose arrivals came from every point on the compass. As one historian observes, "The American working class formed out of four great diasporas—from Europe, Africa, Asia, and Mexico." With Chinese and Latinos arriving in substantial numbers after the Civil War, Americans became a truly global people.

Not all migrants came willingly. Around the world, paleotechnology pushed people off the land and out of traditional trades, forcing them toward the industrial core. Small-scale farming proved vulnerable to capital intensification and consolidation of landholdings by powerful elites. European tailors and blacksmiths

found their crafts undermined by cheaper factory-made goods, while eastern European Jews, who had long held a distinctive place as artisans and middlemen, found their livelihoods undermined by urbanization and new networks of shipping and trade. In Poland the arrival of Singer sewing machines drew rural women into clothing factories well before they traveled to the United States to take up similar work. Government policies played a powerful role in these changes. By raising import duties, for example, the McKinley tariff of 1890 virtually destroyed the tin industry of Wales. U.S. manufacturers quickly recruited unemployed Welsh tin workers to emigrate and work for them.

Even migrants with noneconomic motives, such as Russian Jews seeking refuge from religious persecution, depended on the infrastructures of steam power: while railroads displaced Jews from their prescribed economic niche, railroads also enabled Jews to flee remote inland locations and reach Germany's ports, gateways to America. A Russian Jewish lullaby promised material plenty as well as religious freedom to those who undertook the journey:

*Your daddy's in America, little son of mine,
But you are just a child now, so hush and go to sleep.
America is for everyone, they say it's the greatest piece of luck
For Jews, it's a garden of Eden, a rare and precious place.
People there eat challah in the middle of the week.*

As the song suggested, almost all immigrants came to America looking for economic opportunity. In doing so they changed their customs, languages, and sometimes even their names. At age twelve Spyridon Demopoulos was chosen by the elders of his Greek village to go to the United States; arriving in Maryland, he took the name Stephen Demas and worked his way up in the restaurant and laundry business, eventually bringing over three siblings. Min Chung of China became Billy Ford, a labor boss in the Nevada borax mines. He and his California-born wife, Loy Lee (Lily Sue), had seven children: Timothy, James, Rose, Bessie, Lillian, Alice, and George Washington.

On opposite sides of the globe, the factors that drove emigration in Ireland and southeast China were strikingly similar. Both were poverty-stricken agricultural regions swept up in Britain's expanding empire. Ireland had been a British colony for centuries, while China had recently been forced through gunboat diplomacy to trade with Britain on unfavorable terms. Both Ireland and South China suffered overcrowding on the land and massive crop failures. These catastrophes were exacerbated by British policies that dictated the export of grain from starving Ireland and the import of opium to China. Ireland's Great Famine left an estimated 1.1 to 1.5 million dead, and combined with the emigration of 2.1 million cut the island's population by a third. A decade later South China endured the extraordinary upheaval of the Taiping Rebellion, a civil war sparked by economic dislocation and exposure to Christian missionary ideas. The resulting struggle left twenty million people dead. Faced with such catastrophes, both the Irish and southern Chinese were drawn from their homelands into international manufacture and trade.

Table 2.1 Sources of Immigrants to the United States, 1866–1900

COUNTRY OR REGION OF ORIGIN	NUMBER OF ARRIVALS	PERCENTAGE OF U.S. IMMIGRANTS
Germany	3,230,720	24.7
Ireland	1,720,188	13.0
Scandinavia	1,380,676	10.4
Britain	1,986,745	15.0
Austria-Hungary	1,026,296	7.7
Italy	1,023,238	7.7
Canada	900,103	6.8
Russia	759,739	5.7
China	239,730	1.8

Chinese immigrants are almost certainly undercounted. Most Mexicans in the United States were native born, but census takers did not ask citizens to identify themselves by Hispanic origin until 1930. The number of Americans who identified themselves as having been born in Latin America rose from 38,315 in 1860 to 137,458 in 1900; this number doubled by 1910.

Sources: Roger Daniels, *The Immigrant Experience in the Gilded Age*, in *The Gilded Age*, ed. Charles W. Calhoun (Wilmington, DE, 1996), 65–67; U.S. Census Bureau.

Having traveled halfway around the globe in opposite directions, Irish and Chinese railroad gangs met face to face in America when the Central Pacific (employing Chinese) and Union Pacific (employing Irish) joined up in 1869.

Millions of people took on transnational identities, viewing themselves as, for example, Chinese and American or Italian and Argentine. They subscribed to newspapers from their home countries and switched back and forth from English to their own languages. Their gamble was double or nothing. If they were lucky they might end up fitting in comfortably on two continents, sharing new prosperity with kin at home and abroad. The unlucky suffered poverty, illness, death, or prolonged separation. In California prominent Chinese merchants' wives told a visitor they were terrified that they would "die among strangers." Suey Hin, a successful San Francisco madam, had a more ambiguous view. She liked the United States but told a visitor she had returned to Hong Kong three times and hoped to go back permanently. "I am too old to be an American," she said. "If I were younger, I would be one."

Immigrants most often took jobs on the bottom rungs of the economic ladder. A few specialized in work they had done at home, but most, like the Chinese who started laundries and restaurants, carved out niches based on whatever work was available and allowed. Sweatshop garment production, so prominent in New York City, was already familiar to many European immigrants, but Syrians chose itinerant peddling simply because it required little overhead. In a pattern typical of many cities, Jewish men in Poughkeepsie, New York, tended to become tailors, an Old World holdover, while Irishmen found work as teamsters, carpenters, and policemen, jobs few had held at home. To a large extent immigrants settled in the Northeast, Midwest, and West, not the South. (In 1890 the populations of seven ex-Confederate states remained more than 98 percent native born.) In comparison to immigrants, though, Southern blacks had a more difficult struggle to purchase homes, move up the employment ladder, and secure better prospects for the next generation. Even in northern industrial cities, overt discrimination excluded blacks from most occupations and relegated them to the lowest-paying jobs as waiters, butlers, cooks, and maids.

Immigrants were an enormous asset to the American economy, which exercised its strongest pull during boom years. In effect, the United States skimmed off able-bodied and talented breadwinners from other countries, kept them during their peak productivity, and sent them home when they could no longer work. If the United States served as something of a safety valve for desperate immigrants, the reverse was also true. During severe depressions, millions of foreign-born workers returned to their homelands, exporting their poverty and easing unemployment pressures in the United States. Investigating in the early twentieth century, Italian officials were distressed to find that steamships were not only taking prime Italian workers to America but were also bringing home thousands with injuries and illnesses, including tuberculosis. Since the United States offered no social safety net, the elderly also tended to return home when they could no longer earn a living. Touring Greece in the twentieth century, the author

Wallace Stegner found coffeehouses filled with "gnarled, durable old men" who greeted American visitors in fluent English. "They tell you that they have spent many years in America. They wonder if you know their cousin Joe Kosmos in Joliet, Illinois, or if by chance you come from Paterson, New Jersey, or Denver, Colorado, places they have lived and have friends."

The benefits of migration were obvious: opportunities for migrants, cheap labor for employers, and flexibility and adaptability for both groups. Many of the costs fell into categories that economists tend not to measure. Most notable, perhaps, were the tremendous stresses on family life. Thousands of fathers never saw their newborn infants, meeting them only when they were older children or never at all. Occasionally a migrant husband just vanished, leaving a spouse who never knew whether she had been widowed or abandoned. Long years of loneliness sometimes contributed to prostitution, adultery, and divorce, and lack of proximity to kin brought an array of other problems. In Texas, where young Louisa Rollfing lived with her husband August, distance from her beloved mother in Germany contributed to tragedy. When her first baby was born prematurely, she had difficulty nursing and could not find an older woman to give her advice. "I did not have any experience," she later wrote. "Maybe he could have been saved if I had Mother near me." Instead, the baby died. Conversely, many women in South China counted themselves lucky to have a husband's income from overseas while they enjoyed extended periods of freedom from patriarchal control. The restless search for work and opportunity both strengthened women's rights and weakened family ties.

While immigrants journeyed to and fro in cheap, unpleasant steerage berths, affluent Americans enjoyed journeys of unprecedented luxury and speed. The New York Central, advertising a trip of only twenty hours from New York to Chicago, billed itself as the "fastest train in the world." On its premier service in the 1890s, the Pennsylvania Railroad featured not only mahogany dining cars and sleepers but also a library, barber, stenographer, and stock reports three times a day. Even before the Civil War railroads had begun to build and promote resorts, tempting well-to-do Americans to participate in a ritual newly described as "vacationing." In postwar decades the practice grew exponentially. Wealthy Manhattanites could get to the spa at White Sulphur Springs, Virginia, for \$28, or to a great camp in the Adirondacks for \$50. Philadelphians could reach Cape May, New Jersey, nonstop in three hours. Many of the great names of American travel—from Lake Tahoe to Palm Beach, Florida—became fashionable destinations. By 1900 railroads offered direct service to national parks in the West, which they played a role in developing. Even rural and working-class Americans shared some of the fun. Few had the money or leisure for extended tours, but through "excursion trains" an occasional summer Sunday at the state fair or the beach became accessible to millions.

Steamships allowed elite and middle-class travelers to venture overseas as travel to Europe and the Holy Land became cheaper, faster, safer, and more comfortable. Some travelers came home with their prejudices confirmed. "I felt as



"From Sicily," 1905. Cheaper, faster transportation led to more fluid patterns of immigration as well as increased numbers of migrants. Many, such as these new arrivals, came as single men or left wives and children at home, hoping to work in America for a few years and either send for their families or return home with their savings. Lewis Wickes Hine took this photograph as part of a series at Ellis Island in New York. Hine, who went on to a celebrated career as a photojournalist, hoped to instill in native-born Americans the same admiration for immigrants they had for the Pilgrims. SOURCE: George Eastman House, Rochester, New York.

never before," declared one visitor to England, "the unspeakable superiority of America." But ease of travel and communication also stimulated cross-fertilization of ideas. Jane Addams got the inspiration for Hull House in London; antiynching advocate Ida B. Wells funded her work through lectures to sympathetic Britons. Almost every major American artist sojourned in Paris, bringing the American art world fully into Europe's orbit. Scholars in many fields studied on the Continent or in England. Pioneer mathematician J. Willard Gibbs took his advanced degrees in Germany, and though his papers appeared in Connecticut, almost no Americans had the training to comprehend them. Major social thinkers such as Florence Kelley and W. E. B. DuBois also undertook postgraduate study in Germany. In a very different field of learning, Americans in London around 1870 first encountered the practice and the phrase "living in drag."

For Boston intellectual Henry Adams, son of the U.S. ambassador to Britain during the Civil War, extended travels in Europe prompted perceptive comparisons with conditions in his homeland. Having visited the great museums and cathedrals of Europe, Adams stood and pondered the operations of an electric



Mexican-American ranch family, Mora Valley, New Mexico Territory, 1895. Note the leather boots on the baby's feet: this ranching family appears to have aspirations for their young son. Courtesy Photographic Archives, Palace of the Governors, Museum of New Mexico.

dynamo at the 1900 Paris Exposition. The influence of Christianity, Adams wrote, was being eclipsed by American enterprise, powerful but bereft of spirituality. "At the Louvre and at Chartres," Adams wrote, speaking of religious faith, "was the highest energy ever known to man, the creator of four-fifths of his noblest art, exercising vastly more attraction over the human mind than all the steam-engines and dynamos ever dreamed of; and yet this energy was unknown to the American mind." Americans, Adams wrote with foreboding, "felt a railway train as power." Walt Whitman expressed a more optimistic version of the same view in "To a Locomotive in Winter":

Type of the modern—emblem of motion and power—pulse of the continent . . .

By day thy warning ringing bell to sound its notes,

By night thy silent signal lamps to swing.

Fierce-throated beauty!

Roll through my chant with all thy lawless music, thy swinging lamps at night,

Thy madly-whistled laughter, echoing, rumbling like an earthquake, rousing all,

Law of thyself complete, thine own track firmly holding. . .

Thy trills of shrieks by rocks and hills return'd,

*Launch'd o'er the prairies wide, across the lakes,
To the free skies unpent and glad and strong.*

Whitman's enthusiasm was widely shared. For the first time in human history, an ordinary person could cross an ocean in two weeks with reasonable safety, and the continent of North America in half that time. In 1889 millions of Americans followed the progress of twenty-two-year-old stunt reporter Nellie Bly, who set out to beat the fictional record set in Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*. Bly traveled by rail and steamship from New York to London, Paris, and Italy; through the Suez Canal to Sri Lanka, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Yokohama; and across the Pacific. A special train dispatched by her sponsors at the *New York World* then whisked her from San Francisco to Manhattan for a record journey of seventy-two days, six hours, and eleven minutes. "Father Time Outdone!" trumpeted the *World*, proclaiming a "new age of lightning travel." The editors glossed over the inconvenient fact that Bly's achievement depended largely on British steamships, and ports. Instead, they hailed Bly as an American success story.

Bly's trip revealed as much about news as it did about transportation. The managers of the *World* funded her journey because she would write lively telegraph dispatches, fueling sales. Global communication had become, nearly instantaneous. Telegraph lines connected every continent; a reliable message could get from London to New York in only ten minutes and from Bombay in ninety. In 1871, in a stunt not unlike Bly's, the *New York Herald* had sent their reporter Henry Stanley to the Congo to "find" English explorer David Livingstone. (Livingstone was unaware that he was lost.) The significance of the trip had been again not so much the outcome but the search itself. Stanley's vivid dispatches made it to the coast to be telegraphed back for sensational headlines.

To a large extent the Civil War fostered Americans' insatiable demand for information, which papers like the *Herald* and *World* worked to sustain. "Each magazine and periodical," observed a reporter in 1893, "now runs a neck-and-neck race to capture the first and freshest news. . . . Priority in catching a current event is the overwhelming aim." Paper and printing costs fell steadily. Visitors to San Francisco could sample an array of ethnic newspapers, ranging from *União Portuguesa* to *Slavenska Čitaonica*. African-American "race papers" became a potent tool for discussion and organization, culminating by the turn of the century in papers of nationwide circulation and distinction such as the *Chicago Defender*. Meanwhile, mass-market papers boasted circulations in the hundreds of thousands. Like other corporations they sought profits on high volume and razor-thin margins, bolstering sales through celebrity coverage and aggressive advertising campaigns.

Information thus became a major industry in itself, just as critical as railroads to the expanding networks of administration and commerce. Western Union telegraph company, like Rockefeller's Standard Oil, succeeded in absorbing rival firms and establishing an effective nationwide monopoly. By 1900 it counted 22,900 offices in the United States and carried sixty-three million messages a year.

The telegraph helped transform financial markets, sending stock quotes and shipping news humming along the wires. Since before the Civil War most of America's major financiers, such as J. P. Morgan and J. and W. Seligman, had arrived with European connections, backed by substantial capital from Britain, Belgium, and other financial centers. In the postwar years rapid communication made it easier to sustain those connections and move money around the world.

Along with the telegraph, the postal service played a critical but underrecognized role in the transformation of news and commerce. Officials in the U.S. Railway Mail Service, created in 1869, found creative ways to deliver mail quickly using night trains and having workers sort in transit. While the expensive telegraph was used largely by businesses, almost all Americans benefited from cheap, reliable mail. "The post office is the visible form of the Federal Government to every community and to every citizen," declared the postmaster general in 1890. "Its hand is the only one that touches the local life, the social interests, and business concern of every neighborhood." Through Railway Mail, as well as subsidies to the railroads over which it traveled, the U.S. government gave a tremendous boost to economic growth. Banks, businesses, and customers mailed millions of checks, drafts, bills of exchange, and other instruments of credit, which by the 1880s made up more than 90 percent of all bank receipts. Cheap bulk mailing rates, introduced in the mid-1880s, stimulated the rise of mail-order catalogs and magazines.

By the 1880s one Michigan editor complained bitterly about the emerging global information age. There had been a severe forest fire nearby, he wrote, but nothing about it came over the wires; instead, the telegraph brought "a full account of the flood in Shanghai, a massacre in Calcutta, a sailor fight in Bombay, hard frosts in Siberia, a missionary banquet in Madagascar, [and] the price of kangaroo leather from Borneo." The editor, told readers he was canceling his telegraph service and would henceforth report only local news. Few followed his lead. Instead, further innovations quickened the pace. In 1899 the *New York Herald* followed the America's Cup race through a wireless radio broadcast, transmitted by inventor Enrico Marconi from steamships near the racing yachts. In 1903 Marconi opened the first commercial wireless service on Cape Cod, and the era of radio broadcasting was born.

Watching the hustle and bustle of information shipping, and shopping, many Americans experienced an accelerating rush in the pace of life. Newcomers shared the impression, especially when they disembarked in a metropolis such as New York. In his autobiographical novel *The Rise of David Levinsky*, Abraham Cahan described his character's disorientation after making the Atlantic voyage: "The active life of the great strange city made me feel like one abandoned in the midst of a jungle." Levinsky was struck by the "preoccupied faces and hurried step," "the scurry and hustle." One of the first English phrases he learned from his landlady was "hurry up." The noted pianist Ignace Paderewski, visiting from Poland in 1891, remembered in Chicago "an atmosphere of intense competition, of continuous effort, and of speed—speed, speed, even then."

Medical experts soon warned that the pace of information and travel was exerting great psychological pressure. They noted that it was much more stressful to receive stock market updates five times a day than it was to check them once a week. In *American Nervousness* (1881) Dr. George Beard warned of an epidemic of neurasthenia brought about by the need for punctuality. "We are under constant strain, mostly unconscious," Beard argued, "oftentimes in sleeping as well as in waking hours, to get somewhere or do something at some definite moment." He identified the five sources of neurasthenia as "steam power, the periodical press, the telegraph, the sciences, and the mental activity of women." Unfortunately, the exact symptoms of the malady remained unclear. Doctors suggested that neurasthenia might be implicated in almost every kind of complaint, including baldness, hay fever, headaches, insomnia, and sexual dysfunction. Authors such as Beard seemed proud of neurasthenia, a "distinguished" illness made "possible by a new and productive country." Others were not so sure. Writers such as Kate Chopin in *The Awakening* and Edith Wharton in *House of Mirth* used neurasthenic characters to critique American society and its money-centered values.

The illness Beard diagnosed was, he and many others assumed, a problem of the affluent classes. The drive for efficiency and speed was equally obvious, however, to railroad and telegraph workers and anyone whose job depended on those networks, including wholesalers and traveling salesmen. A Cincinnati paper worried that *commuters*—a new term in Americans' vocabulary—had to bend their lives to fit train schedules. Commuters enjoyed suburban life in more relaxing surroundings than the city could offer, but they lost much of that repose as they rushed to catch the 7:03. "The longer a man is a commuter," the editor worried, "the more he grows to be a living timetable."

Railroads altered the reckoning of time itself. Before the 1880s American cities and towns set their own local times. Savannah, Georgia, for example, operated a half-hour ahead of Atlanta time. This system wreaked havoc on railroad schedules and passengers—or, to put it another way, rapid intercity transit created confusion where before there had been little or none. At the behest of a zealous manager who advocated standard time, a group of major railroads announced in 1883 that they were dividing the nation into four zones—Eastern, Central, Mountain, and Pacific—and setting standard times for the operation of trains. Despite sporadic protests, usually from cities and towns that experienced a dramatic clock shift, most Americans accepted railroad time as a matter of convenience and progress. On Sunday, November 18, 1883, "the day of two noons," clock-keepers all over the country changed their clocks to reflect the new system. The *Washington Post* observed, with only slight exaggeration, that it was a revolution "scarcely second to the reformation of the calendar by Julius Caesar."

Even when the consequences of the new economy arrived at a precise moment—as they did at noon on that November Sunday—they often seemed unstoppable. The paleotechnical era, a creation of human invention and of myriad decisions by voters, policy makers, financiers, and businessmen, arrived like a mandate from nature itself. Andrew Carnegie perhaps expressed the attitude best

in his famous essay "Wealth." "The conditions of human life have not only been changed, but revolutionized," he declared. "Whether the change be for good or for ill, it is upon us, beyond our power to alter, and therefore, to be accepted and made the best of. It is a waste of time," he added impatiently, "to criticize the inevitable."

Educational reformer John Dewey, writing in 1899, took an optimistic view of progress for reasons rather different from Carnegie's. In the economic revolution that was occurring, Dewey wrote, "the face of the earth is making over, even as to its physical forms; political boundaries are wiped out and moved about; . . . population is hurriedly gathered into cities from the ends of the earth; habits of living are altered with startling abruptness and thoroughness; the search for the truths of nature is infinitely stimulated." He observed that information, like wheat, now moved fluidly and in larger quantities than ever before. "Knowledge is no longer an immobile solid; it has been liquefied. It is actively moving in all the currents of society." Even morality and religious faith were undergoing change, and so were the values and skills that parents should teach their children. Just as Carnegie thought it a waste of time to lament the loss of traditions—in the modern world, after all, who wanted to light their homes with whale oil?—Dewey thought it "useless to bemoan the departure of the good old days of children's modesty, reverence and implicit obedience." Instead, Dewey identified other virtues that could make the new order serve the cause of democracy. "We must recognize our compensations," he wrote, "—the increase in toleration, in breadth of social judgment, the larger acquaintance with human nature, . . . greater accuracy of adaptation to differing personalities." Through his work at a model school attached to the University of Chicago, Dewey invented forms of education that would combine discipline with independence, manual skill with intellectual exploration. He hoped to imbue each student with "the spirit of service and . . . the instruments of effective self-direction."

Like many thinkers of his day, Dewey combined enthusiasm for progress with an attempt to preserve the best of what he saw fading away. He appreciated the ways in which children had traditionally learned from their parents, contributing to the productive work of the household while they mastered a skill such as carpentry or candle making. Dewey's model school thus engaged both boys and girls in sewing, cooking, and shop work, hoping to instill responsibility and love of craft. In this, Dewey's school was not so different from Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute, which taught blacksmithing, tin making, sewing, and other industrial arts. They sought, in a world of coal-fired locomotives, Bessemer furnaces, and far-flung corporate enterprise, to sustain some of the virtues of local production and craftsmanship.

Dewey, Washington, and their counterparts recognized that they were preparing young Americans for revolutionary journeys—journeys from the farms to the big city, and from continent to continent, into a future world that would challenge the expectations of their grandparents' day. Dewey understood that the transformation of labor lay at the heart of the journeys his students would undertake.

But though he insisted that the corporate and industrial workplace depended, at root, on the old "household and neighborhood" systems of production, most of his students would enter employments of a very different type. The world of work was changing, both for the prosperous and for the struggling poor.

FOR FURTHER READING

On bison see Andrew C. Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison* (Cambridge, 2000), and Richard White, "Animals and Enterprise," in *The Oxford History of the American West*, ed. Clyde A. Milner II, et al. (New York, 1994), 237–74. On the citrus industry see Steven Stoll, *The Fruits of Natural Advantage* (Berkeley, CA, 1998), and Robert V. Hine and John Mack Faragher, *The American West* (New Haven, CT, 2000). Critical throughout this chapter is William Cronon's breathtaking exploration of Chicago's relationship to its western economic hinterlands, *Nature's Metropolis* (New York, 1991). For fossil fuel use see David Nye, *Consuming Power* (Cambridge, MA, 1998), and Harold Platt, *The Electric City* (Chicago, 1991). My analysis of Lewis Mumford's *Technics and Civilization* is indebted to Richard White, *The Organic Machine* (New York, 1995). For railroads I rely on another book by White, "It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own" (Norman, OK, 1991), and on Carlos A. Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln, NE, 1996), as well as John F. Stover, *American Railroads*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, 1997). For a history of Miller and Lux see David Iglar, *Industrial Cowboys* (Berkeley, CA, 2001). On agriculture see Fred A. Shannon, *The Farmer's Last Frontier* (New York, 1945).

On consolidation of the infrastructure see George L. Anderson, "Banks, Mails, and Rails, 1880–1915," in *The Frontier Challenge*, ed. John G. Clark (Lawrence, KS, 1971), as well as Morton Keller, *Affairs of State*, Richard Bense, *The Political Economy of American Industrialization*, and Edward L. Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, all cited in Chapter 1. On the information revolution see Richard R. John, "Recasting the Information Infrastructure for the Industrial Age," in *A Nation Transformed by Information*, ed. Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., and James W. Cortada (New York, 2000), 55–105; Wayne E. Fuller, "The Populists and the Post Office," *Agricultural History* 65 (1991): 1–16; Richard A. Schwarzlose, *The Nation's Newsbrokers* (Evanston, IL, 1989); Sally M. Miller, ed., *The Ethnic Press in the United States* (Westport, CT, 1987); Tom Standage, *The Victorian Internet* (New York, 1999); Susan J. Douglas, *Inventing American Broadcasting, 1899–1922* (Baltimore, 1987); and for a sweeping global perspective on technology, Daniel R. Headrick, *Tentacles of Progress* (New York, 1988). A helpful overview of industrialization and its impact in the United States is Walter Licht, *Industrializing America* (Baltimore, 1995).

The best biography of Carnegie is Joseph Frazier Wall, *Andrew Carnegie* (New York, 1970). For Rockefeller see Ron Chernow, *Titan* (New York, 1998). On the rise of corporate management the classic source is Alfred E. Chandler's *The Visible Hand* (Cambridge, MA, 1977). For an international perspective on these developments see E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875–1914* (New York, 1987). On U.S. investment in Mexico I have drawn largely on John Mason Hart's study *Empire and Revolution* (Berkeley, CA, 2002). See also Ramón Eduardo Ruíz, *The People of Sonora and Yankee Capitalists* (Tucson, 1988), Matt S. Meier and Feliciano Ribera, *Mexican Americans/American Mexicans* (New York, 1993), and Linda S. Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Cambridge, MA, 1999). The quote about the construction of the American working class out of "four great diasporas" comes from Gordon's book, p. 48. On the rise of multinational companies I have depended on

Emily S. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream* (New York, 1982), and especially on Mira Wilkins, *The Emergence of Multinational Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA, 1970). On the Singer Company see Robert Bruce Davies, *Peacefully Working to Conquer the World* (New York, 1976).

The best overviews of immigration are Roger Daniels, *Coming to America* (New York, 1990), Walter T. K. Nugent, *Crossings* (Bloomington, IN, 1992), Mark Wyman, *Round-Trip to America* (Ithaca, NY, 1993), and Bruce M. Stave, *From the Old Country* (Hanover, NH, 1999). On specific immigrant groups see Donna R. Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas* (Seattle, 2000), Hasia R. Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America* (Baltimore, 1983), and Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles* (New York, 1985), both on the Irish; on Asian immigrants, Madeline Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home* (Stanford, CA, 2000), Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore* (Boston, 1989), and Judy Yung, *Unbound Voices* (Berkeley, CA, 1999); on Jews, Hasia R. Diner, *A New Promised Land* (New York, 2003). Stegner's memoir of visiting Greece is in his introduction to Zeese Papanikolas, *Buried Unsung* (Salt Lake City, 1982). On Poughkeepsie see Clyde Griffen and Sally Griffen, *Natives and Newcomers* (Cambridge, MA, 1978).

Cindy S. Aron looks at tourism and vacations in *Working at Play* (New York, 1999); see also Earl Pomeroy, *In Search of the Golden West* (New York, 1957). On trans-Atlantic intellectual and political connections see Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings* (Cambridge, MA, 1998). For neuresthenia I rely on Tom Lutz, *American Nervousness, 1903* (Ithaca, NY, 1991), and for railroad time on Ian R. Bartky, *Selling the True Time* (Stanford, CA, 2000). I am also grateful to David Greenstein for his research paper "From Sunshine to Smokestacks: Practicality and the Adoption of Railroad Standard Time," *History* 367, Vassar College, May 2003.

(Wheeling, IL, 1995). For the baseball Players' League I have relied in addition on Michael Dimmitt Magidson, "'The Greatest Move in the History of the National Game': The Players' League of 1890," senior history thesis, Vassar College, 2000.

For white-collar workers see Barton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism* (New York, 1976), Stuart M. Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class* (Cambridge, MA, 1989), and on the culture of salesmanship Walter A. Friedman's *Birth of a Salesman* (Cambridge, MA, 2004). For women's work in key industries see Thomas C. Jepsen, *My Sisters Telegraphic* (Athens, OH, 2000), Lisa M. Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscraper* (Philadelphia, 1990), Venus Green, *Race on the Line* (Durham, NC, 2001), and Stephen H. Norwood, *Labor's Flaming Youth* (Urbana, IL, 1990).

For civil service and government work see Ari S. Hoogenboom, "Spoilsmen and Reformers," in *The Gilded Age*, ed. H. Wayne Morgan (Syracuse, NY, 1963), 69–90, and Cindy S. Aron, *Ladies and Gentlemen of the Civil Service* (New York, 1987). Nancy A. Hewitt covers women's work in Tampa in *Southern Discomfort* (Urbana, IL, 2001), and Angel Kwolek-Folland analyzes the corporate office in *Engendering Business* (Baltimore, 1994). A discussion of "vertical vision" appears in David Shi, *Facing Facts* (New York, 1994), a book helpful to me here and elsewhere in its coverage of the rise of realism and modernism in the arts.

CHAPTER 4

Money

As I know them, there are few millionaires, very few indeed,
who are clear of the sin of having made beggars.

—ANDREW CARNEGIE, "WEALTH"

For the Lakota Sioux, the Black Hills are the world's sacred center, the heart of lands their great-grandfathers fought for and won. As early as the 1840s some Lakota knew that the hills' streams glittered with a mineral that newcomers eagerly sought. They kept the secret for decades, but in the 1870s rumors spread nationwide about "gold in the hills." Prospectors invaded Dakota Territory, encouraged by boosters and driven by desperation in the midst of a severe economic depression. The army, upholding a U.S. treaty with the Lakota, forcibly removed as many prospectors as it could, but more and more arrived. Some came in the middle of winter, hoping blizzards and subzero temperatures would hamper the army's efforts to police Indian lands. One persistent gold seeker was ejected five times in seven months.

While temporarily protecting treaty rights, the Grant administration pressured the Lakota to sell the Black Hills, arguing that it could not stop the hordes for long. Indian leaders refused. Chief Sitting Bull contemptuously proposed getting a scale and digging up soil to "sell it by the pound"—which, he knew, was exactly what prospectors were doing. When negotiations broke off in 1875, federal officials instructed the army to stop defending Sioux lands. Prospectors surged in to stake claims and build the mining camps of Deadwood and Lead. The Lakota angrily withdrew northward; on isolated claims dead miners were found with arrows through their hearts. Sitting Bull and other chiefs declined to relocate to a proposed reservation, pointing out that less than a decade earlier the United States had promised they could live forever in the Black Hills. A few Lakota who settled on the new reservation found conditions so wretched that they abandoned it. The resulting stand-off led to the Battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876, the death of George Armstrong Custer, and the Lakota's dispossession from their land.

In the meantime, prospectors found what they came for, but few of them got rich. A man working alone could pan flakes from the streambeds, but these were

just the eroded edges of an immense 480-foot-wide underground vein of gold. Extracting that wealth required advanced equipment and engineering. Investors from California and elsewhere, led by railroad magnate George Hearst, were the ones who built and profited from the Black Hills' gigantic Homestake Mine. By 1880 it produced more than a million dollars worth of gold per year, enabling the lead investor to pass on a stupendous fortune to his son William Randolph Hearst. The 2,200 men who actually mined Homestake—immigrants from Britain, Ireland, Scandinavia, Serbia, Turkey, Russia, and elsewhere—worked seven days a week for less than \$3 a day.

The seizure of the Black Hills was one of a long series of nineteenth-century gold rushes, starting in California with the "'49ers" and ending with the Klondike strike of 1898. Other minerals also provoked rushes. Copper and zinc, for example, came into great demand for industrial applications, and Nevada's Comstock Lode yielded such a flood of silver that it altered world silver prices and helped keep the Union afloat during the Civil War. But gold was the great bonanza prize, a metal of extraordinary economic and political significance. With the United States on the gold standard, it underpinned the nation's money supply. In a literal sense Homestake miners dug money out of the ground.

The fabulous and corrupting power of money was late nineteenth-century Americans' great obsession. Women who tried to woo wealthy men were "golddiggers." A person with a gold tooth had a "California smile." In a broader sense, from the icy streams of Dakota Territory to the plush executive offices of Standard Oil, men bent their energies to the search for dollars. Government monetary policy, finance, enterprise, speculation, and new extremes of wealth and poverty all proved critical topics of national debate.

WALL STREET AND WASHINGTON

The gold standard established key conditions of the nineteenth-century economy. To pay the enormous cost of the Civil War, the Union printed paper dollars, popularly known as greenbacks, that could not be exchanged for a fixed amount of gold from the Treasury. In addition, Republicans set up a system of designated national banks whose notes also circulated, backed by U.S. bonds that the banks purchased and on which they received interest (at a hefty profit). This system, skillfully managed during the war, played a significant role in Union victory. But hard-money Republicans viewed the circulation of millions of greenbacks, unsupported by equal reserves of gold, as inflationary and "unnatural," a temporary expedient that ought to end after the war. After intense debates in the 1870s, Congress resumed specie payments in 1879. This meant that, at the federal subtreasury window in New York, anyone could exchange a greenback dollar for its equivalent in gold. Western and southern congressmen forced some concessions to silver, which was monetized during parts of the postwar era. But in 1897, the hardest of hard-money advocates won out and put the United States fully on the gold standard.

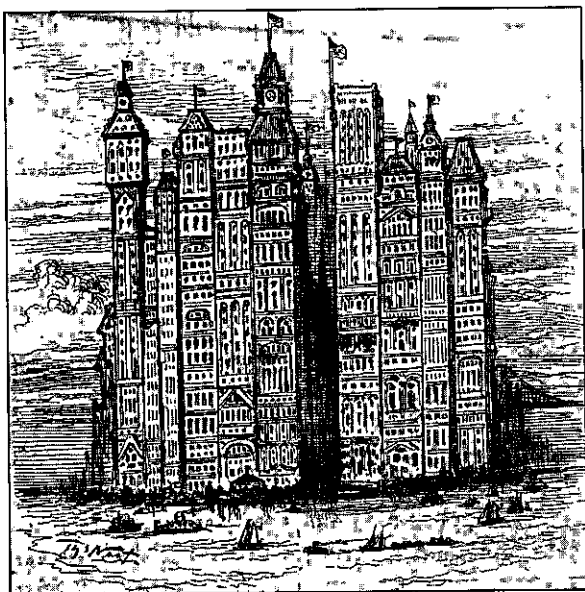
This system had critical flaws. Republicans failed to expand the money supply at a time when the economy was growing rapidly, a policy few economists today would endorse. The national banks, privately owned and run for profit, enjoyed special privileges but were under no obligation to issue notes. They often had little incentive to do so, and between 1882 and 1891 the number of banknotes in circulation declined by half. Lack of money kept interest rates high, wreaking tremendous hardship. Money was tight for ordinary people, especially in the West and South, because bank reserves remained concentrated in the northeastern industrial core. Interest rates on farm and home mortgages, for example, averaged below 5 percent on the island of Manhattan, 8 percent in Louisiana, and more than 12 percent in western Kansas.

In the South, where the Confederacy's collapse destroyed old banking networks, cotton farmers could go years without seeing a dollar. Many owed the entire value of each crop to landlords and local store owners, whose extensions of credit often forced them, in turn, to do without much cash. The shrinking money supply placed severe pressure on debtors. A farmer, merchant, or home buyer who borrowed \$500 had to pay back that loan plus interest in dollars that were worth more and more. In the same decades, industrial workers experienced sharp, repeated wage cuts. Not surprisingly, many protested a monetary system that enriched bankers and investors at the expense of those who grew wheat and cotton and crafted steel and textiles. Republican policies, they argued, impoverished these producers while rewarding men who shuffled papers or lived on accumulated wealth.

During the depression of the 1870s, midwestern critics organized the Greenback Labor Party, which at peak won more than a million votes and fourteen seats in Congress. Greenbackers sought a return to the Civil War system of unhitching paper dollars from the gold supply. They denied that gold had any special value: government, they asserted, had the right to define money as it chose. As one argued, "Gold is not money until coined, and made money according to the law. . . . Paper is equally money, when conditioned and issued according to the law." Paper dollars, by this view, could be issued on the nation's whole wealth—land, labor, and capital—rather than reserves of one metal. An increased money supply would create wealth in turn by giving borrowers access to cash and loans on easier terms.

In the twentieth century, the federal government accepted Greenbackers' central idea, and today Americans use paper dollars marked "United States of America—This Note Is Legal Tender for All Debts" without expecting to exchange them for gold at a government window. During economic crises the Federal Reserve lowers interest rates in an attempt to make credit (that is, money) easier to obtain and to stimulate economic activity, a policy Greenbackers would have understood and approved. At the time, however, Greenbackism was viewed as heresy by the financial and political establishment.

Ironically, financiers and officials in Washington had an acute understanding of the perils of the existing system. The Treasury faced the daunting task of



Thomas Nast, "New York in a few years from now. View from the harbor." With rapid urban growth, property owners began to build up as well as out, aided by technological innovations like elevators and structural steel beams. Chicago played a leading role in this trend, with architect Louis Sullivan designing some of the first acclaimed "skyscrapers." Sullivan became disillusioned with the priorities of his corporate clients, whose key interest was not architectural purity but increased rental income from their valuable downtown real estate. *Harper's Weekly*, 27 August 1881. Courtesy Vassar College Library.

keeping a "safe" level of at least \$100 million in gold coin and bullion on hand at all times, in case a panic caused thousands of note-holders to suddenly demand gold. But European investors were a powerful force in the U.S. economy: interest on their loans flowed steadily out of the United States, often in the form of gold. During periodic depressions European lenders called in as much gold as they could get to stabilize their own finances, and ships filled with gold left New York for London and the Continent. During such moments of economic pressure, the U.S. financial system became virtually unmanageable.

Most spectacular was the crisis of 1893, when the nation's gold reserves dropped sharply and kept on dropping. Banks failed, depositors lost their savings, the Treasury's gold reserve plunged, and it took President Grover Cleveland three years to stabilize the situation with extensive help from J. P. Morgan and August Belmont. These private financiers sold the government \$65.1 million worth of gold coin in exchange for \$62.3 million in bonds, which they resold through their extensive personal networks at a profit of \$1.5 million (not counting interest on the bonds). The deal was risky, but as the dominant American financier, Morgan was forced to act, since collapse of the gold standard would have been catastrophic



"The Buckeye Lawn Mower." This trade card advertises the suburban ideal, complete with a lawn mower that is allegedly so easy to operate, middle-class women and girls can use it for a bit of healthy exercise. Author's collection.

for the whole U.S. economy. Watching maneuvers like this, foreigners marveled that the United States managed to stay afloat. "God is good to his little children, to drunken men, and to the people of the United States," said one observer, "or they would have gone to eternal smash long ere this."

The country maintained its unwieldy and unfair monetary system for two main reasons. The first was financial: all of western Europe was on the gold standard, and until 1900 the United States was a net borrower of European money. British and Dutch investors who bought railroad stock and western land did not want currency fluctuations to devalue their holdings. Keeping the United States tied to gold stabilized the dollar in relation to pounds, francs, and marks (or so everyone thought until the crisis of World War I, but that is a story for another book). The post-Civil War financial system brought much-needed capital into the

United States, but at a high price for American wage workers and farmers. During the depressions of the 1870s and 1890s, unemployment soared and wages plunged. Even in boom periods farmers struggled to make mortgage payments due to deflation and falling crop prices, and thousands watched as homes and land they had partly paid for were seized by lenders for nonpayment. The system operated much like those of many Latin American and African nations today, where governments enforce domestic misery in order to meet the demands of foreign investors and the World Bank. The United States' immense domestic market and diverse economy, however, to some extent helped offset the disadvantages.

The second reason the United States clung to gold was political. Soft-money advocates like the Greenbackers did not have enough power to change the monetary system, but they looked threatening enough that even doubtful conservatives rallied to defend the status quo. The climactic fight was the presidential campaign of 1896. Democrat William Jennings Bryan was the first major-party candidate to run against the gold standard, though he advocated not greenback dollars but the more limited goal of coining silver as well as gold, fixing the ratio at sixteen to one. Bryan's opponent, Republican William McKinley, had remarked in the past on the advantages of bimetallism, but as a candidate backed by northeastern capital he toed the gold-standard line. Gold, Republicans claimed, was the only sound and honorable form of money, and they labeled advocates of "free silver" as anarchists and thieves.

In retrospect, it seems unlikely that Democrats' cautious proposal for a bimetallic system would have produced the desired effect. And since most financiers and businessmen backed the gold standard, Republicans' promise to restore business confidence when they took office was something of a self-fulfilling prophecy. But Bryan eloquently expressed the grievances of millions of Americans disadvantaged by the gold standard, especially rural people in the South and West who had come to hate the northeastern "money power." In a famous speech, Bryan reminded urban middle-class voters where true value lay:

You come to us and tell us that the great cities are in favor of the gold standard; we reply that the great cities rest upon our broad and fertile prairies. Burn down your cities and leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic; but destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in the country. . . . We answer the demand for a gold standard by saying . . . : You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.

In the midst of a severe depression that had begun on the Democrats' watch, McKinley won. The currency issue then faded through an accident of fate most fortunate for the Republicans: immense gold strikes in the Klondike, South Africa, and Australia boosted the world's gold supply and saved the system for another forty years.

Republicans may have clung to their gold creed in part because other financial assets were becoming less and less tangible. Capital, traditionally held in the form of land and slaves, took on a new array of abstract forms, prompting an exuberant era of risk and speculation. Stocks, which had once held a fixed par value, now

fluctuated in price. On the New York Stock Exchange, which had settled into its permanent home in 1865, an investor with inside connections could buy \$50,000 worth of stock on margin for a down payment of only \$5,000. He might end up either rich or ruined, owing the remaining \$45,000 of the price and more besides. Unscrupulous corporate directors created and manipulated secret hoards of stock, diluting the value of the certificates in general circulation. Brokers peddled stocks for nonexistent mines, while ranching companies listed as assets the theoretical offspring of uncounted cattle wandering on the Plains. Even an honest chief executive could rarely tell how much he or his company was worth on any given day. The scale and complexity of the financial system made simple answers obsolete.

Thus, the line between investment and speculation blurred, and the success of a new class of financiers and corporate managers came to depend on shrewd manipulations of numbers. Successful men (and a very few women) had to master cost accounting and excel at deal making on a grand scale. Many importers profited by grossly undervaluing products such as bananas to get them through foreign and U.S. customs barriers at minimal cost and then revaluing them far higher for sale in the United States. Theodore Dreiser described some of the new financial maneuvers in his novel *The Financier*, based on the life of streetcar magnate Charles Yerkes. "He knew instinctively what could be done with a given sum of money," Dreiser wrote, "how as cash it could be deposited in one place, and yet as credit and the basis of moving checks, used in not one but many other places at the same time." Often such transactions were illegal but secret; sometimes there were no laws on the books that could be applied.

Most bewildering to many observers was the growing trade in commodity futures, in which buyers purchased contracts for cotton or hogs to be delivered at an agreed-upon date. Futures were designed to help companies manage and predict costs. Cereal manufacturers such as Kellogg's and Post could, for example, buy wheat, oat, and barley futures in January for crops that would mature in September. They then knew in advance what they would pay for key ingredients in Grape-Nuts and Shredded Wheat. Companies paid a premium for this guarantee, but they preferred predictability over lower cost. Designed for such uses, futures markets quickly took on a speculative life of their own. By the mid-1880s brokers on Chicago's Board of Trade were exchanging contracts for twenty times more wheat than actually passed through the city in a given year. Savvy dealers "cornered" markets, secretly buying up contracts until they controlled a product and could command exorbitant prices. As early as 1868 a Chicago observer reported "three [corners] on wheat, two on corn, one on oats, and one attempted on rye." The novelist Frank Norris used the famous Leiter Corner of 1896 as the basis for his novel *The Pit*. With each corner grain prices fluctuated wildly, and prices ceased to bear any relation to quality or supply. The spectacle outraged farmers, who with falling crop prices saw their own fortunes fail. Why, they asked, should farmers fall deep into debt while brokers gambled and got rich on a crop they never saw? Even the railroad magnate James J. Hill complained that the nation's financial markets focused not on building tangible wealth but on "selling sheaves of printed securities."

In their novel *The Gilded Age*, Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner poked fun at Americans' speculative urges through the character of Colonel Mulberry Sellers, a hapless Kentuckian who tried to make money by raising mules, lobbying for a railroad to run through his property, and selling a patent medicine called *The Infallible Imperial Oriental Optic Liniment and Salvation for Sore Eyes*. Despite repeated failures, Sellers greeted each new idea and swindle with the exclamation, "There's millions in it!" (A group of Colorado prospectors honored the character by naming their Leadville site the Colonel Sellers Mine. It turned out, remarkably, to have millions in it.) Sellers, with his fatal ability to draw others into disastrous schemes, was instantly recognizable to Americans in 1873. "Everyone knows Mulberry Sellers at once," wrote the *New York Tribune*, "and recognizes in him his next door neighbor, his chum at college, his wife's uncle—the one that ruined the family." Twain and Warner were hardly alone in criticizing Americans' attitude toward money. Ministers warned of the perils of greed. Advice books cautioned (somewhat in the face of facts) that only hard work made men rich. Reformers denounced government's lack of control over speculation, and after the crisis of the 1890s, many Americans looked back on the previous decades with a critical eye. No less conservative a figure than Republican president William Howard Taft remarked in the 1910s that "for thirty years we had an enormous material expansion in this country, in which we all forgot ourselves in the enthusiasm of expanding our natural resources and in making ourselves the richest nation on earth."

At the time, however, critics seemed outnumbered by those seeking to strike it rich. Immigrants from China and Poland came looking for what they called "Gold Mountain." Gambling houses in San Francisco's Chinatown posted large signs promising "riches ever flowing." An African-American author argued that freedom would come "when we [blacks] have more bank and railroad stock." Boys read Horatio Alger's stories about urchins who worked their way up from rags to riches, and young men studied success manuals called *Pushing to the Front* and *The Way to Win*. Crowds flocked to hear Baptist minister Russell Conwell give his famous address "Acres of Diamonds," which he supposedly delivered more than 5,000 times. "I say you ought to be rich; you have no right to be poor," Conwell thundered. "Money is power; money has power, and for a man to say 'I do not want money,' is to say, 'I do not wish to do any good to my fellow man.'" "There is not a poor person in the United States," Conwell claimed, "who was not made poor by his own shortcomings."

Like Conwell, many commentators argued that if a man suffered financial ruin, it was the result of his own flaws, even as they acknowledged steep odds against success. The author of *Onward to Fame and Fortune* warned readers that only three out of every hundred American business ventures succeeded. But despite this daunting estimate, he told those who failed they could blame only themselves; they were "lacking in tact, economy, judgment and persistence." Samuel Smiles echoed the sentiment in four books that sold more than one million copies each, with the titles *Self-Help*, *Character*, *Thrift*, and *Duty*. Published between 1860 and 1881, they

promised to guide young men through the competitive world of work, which Smiles and other authors described as a violent "battle of life." A man of insufficient boldness, authors advised, "must expect not only to be outstripped but knocked, crushed, and trampled underfoot in the rush and roar of the nineteenth century."

Following this creed to its conclusion, some unemployed and bankrupt men deserted their families in shame or committed suicide. Tens of thousands who were desperate to overcome a debilitating addiction to alcohol chose a more positive course of action, but one that aptly represented Americans' obsession with money and especially gold. The famous Keeley Cure, promoted by former Civil War surgeon Leslie Keeley, consisted of doses of a mysterious compound called Bichloride of Gold. The drink contained little or no gold, but it had powerful symbolic appeal. Its name was a "concession," one observer remarked, "to the prevailing materialism." Bichloride of Gold supposedly purged the body and ended alcohol cravings. It apparently did help some patients, though whether this was due to secret ingredients or the power of optimism only the inventor knew. In any case, the product proved valuable for Keeley himself. He made bundles of money on the Keeley Cure and retired to a mansion in Los Angeles, where he died a millionaire.

CONSUMER APPETITES

With the rise of mass consumer culture, Americans devoted themselves to spending money as well as making it. One of the things they bought most frequently was information, including reams of advertisements and advice about what they should buy. With developments in printing and chromolithography as well as new bulk mailing rates, newspapers and magazines found that advertisements could subsidize much of their production cost, enabling them to lower subscription prices and achieve mass circulations. The 10¢ magazines *Munsey's* and *McClure's* became so famous for the appeal of their illustrations and ads that writers complained they were just filling gaps between the pictures. The magazine that innovated most brilliantly was *Ladies' Home Journal*, which in the 1880s built an unheard-of circulation of more than 500,000 at a price of 5¢ and in 1903 became the first magazine to reach a million subscribers. *Journal* readers eagerly awaited columns such as "Heart to Heart Talks" as well as diet and fashion news, sheet music, and glimpses into the homes of the famous. The diary of Mary Dodge Woodward, a widow homesteading with two grown sons and a daughter in Dakota Territory, suggested how important such publications became. "We have all been reading nearly the whole day long," she recorded one winter Saturday. "I have read *Harper's Monthly*, 'Easy Chair' and all. Walter takes the Fargo papers and the *Weekly Wisconsin*; I take the *Examiner*; Katie, the *Ladies' Home Journal*; and Fred, my baby, the *Police Gazette* [a racy sports and 'true crime' magazine]." She added that "without material to read we could not live here."

Advances in printing also brought an array of illustrated books, posters, and trade cards at decreasing prices, and by the 1890s Sunday color comics. The Irish tenement boy featured in one of the most popular comics, F. J. Outcault's "Yellow

Kid," was a special hit with working-class readers. There was a national craze for stereographs, in which viewers placed a double-image card in a stereoscope and got a three-dimensional effect. Stereograph sets offered photographs of world landmarks, steamships and engineering marvels. "Do you wish to travel around the world and not leave your own household?" asked the president of the National Photographic Association as early as 1871. "Photography will give you hill, valley, mountain, plain and river, city and hamlet, and the inhabitants, too, of every nation, placing all before you for your examination."

Like advertisers, wholesalers used the rail and telegraph networks to build nationwide marketing networks. "Commercial travelers are more numerous today than ever before," noted a candy-makers' trade journal in 1875. "No firm can get along without them." By the early 1890s America's traveling sales force had expanded to more than 60,000, with top sellers earning \$2,000 or more per year. Barnum & Bailey's Circus used the railroads to build a sophisticated multimillion-dollar enterprise. Special trains transported lions, elephants, and circus performers, and advance cars crisscrossed the nation on a carefully orchestrated schedule. Employees on the advance cars contracted for supplies, took out advertisements in local newspapers, created handbills, and arranged "excursion trains" to bring folks from outlying areas. The company spent as much as \$128,000 a year just on its brightly colored posters.

With their pace of life accelerating, Americans were captivated by a host of convenience products. After 1889 Eastman Kodak offered hand-held cameras loaded with film that could be mailed intact for processing. "You press the button," Kodak promised, "we do the rest." The Gillette safety razor with disposable blades arrived in 1895. Meanwhile, James Buchanan Duke had pioneered the 5¢ cigarette pack. Though wealthy men still savored hand-rolled cigars and rural folk chewed tobacco, time-pressed urban consumers chose premade cigarettes, easy to carry and quick to smoke. By the 1890s housekeepers opened their pantry doors and reached for Jell-O, while Aunt Jemima mixes offered tempting shortcuts at breakfast time. Aunt Jemima herself made an appearance at the Chicago World's Fair. The company hired Nancy Green, a freedwoman working as the cook for an elite Chicago family, to dress in a bandanna and apron and dispense pancakes to fairgoers, showing how good they tasted "right out of the box." In creating the character of Aunt Jemima, the company harked back to the mythic values of the antebellum South: a slower pace of life, rural hospitality, and attentive service by allegedly cheerful slaves. In this and many areas of consumer culture, manufacturers evoked nostalgia in order to persuade customers to accept the new.

Aunt Jemima won quick success because customers were accustomed by this point to other processed foods. Even poor tenants in the rural South used canned meat, vegetables, and fruit. Condensed milk, invented in the 1850s, had been a staple of Union soldiers' rations, giving veterans a taste for it in their coffee. Out on the range, cowboys celebrated the product with a witty song:

*Carnation milk, best in the land,
Comes to the table in a little red can;*

*No teats to pull, no hay to pitch,
Just punch a hole in the son of a bitch.*

By the 1890s some products succeeded largely on the basis of clever packaging. Uneeda Biscuit sold ten million packages a month not by claiming their cracker tasted good but by touting its humorous name and portable airtight package. The company's slogan, "Lest you forget, we say it yet, Uneeda Biscuit," proved so popular that a host of less successful imitators followed, including Uwanta Beer and *Ureada Magazine*.

Some of the most popular products offered consumers energy to compete in the economy. With Americans' hurried, striving attitude, the use of depressants such as alcohol was widely frowned on, but stimulants of all kinds gained favor. By 1900 the United States bought almost half the world's coffee crop; the average American used almost twelve pounds a year. Both industrial operatives and "brain-workers" found that coffee allowed them to work longer and harder on fewer calories, especially with sugar added. Sharecroppers were as likely to drink it as Pittsburgh steel executives. "Families whose aggregate incomes do not amount to three dollars a week," wrote one southern observer, "will rather let their youngsters run barefoot" than give up coffee. Living with her traditional Dakota mother on the Yankton reservation, young Zitkala-Sa remembered making coffee over an open fire as a key ritual of hospitality.

Sugar also took on mass-market forms with the introduction of such all-American treats as chewing gum, Cracker Jack, and Tootsie Rolls. Chocolate, once an elite indulgence, became a popular mainstay. At the 1893 World's Fair, caramel magnate Milton Hershey purchased a collection of German chocolate-making machines and soon introduced Americans to the nickel chocolate bar. One of Hershey's by-products, cocoa bean shells, was rich in the stimulant theobromine, and he began selling it to the makers of another famous pick-me-up, Coca-Cola. Invented by an Atlanta doctor and licensed for bottling in the 1890s, Coca-Cola was touted for its stimulating effects as a "Brain Tonic" that would "Renew and Refresh."

Thus, the economic transformations that hurt many Americans as workers helped them as consumers: deflation and mass production slashed prices and delivered an ever larger and more enticing range of consumer goods. The cost of food dropped, and on the whole Americans enjoyed wider variety on the table than they had in the past. One undercover journalist working in a Chicago department store was astonished at how a low-paid clerk comforted herself when she had a headache. Fed up with weeks of scrimping, the young woman marched to the department store's restaurant and splurged on 25¢ worth of Swiss cheese sandwiches, coffee, chocolate ice cream, and plum pudding with wine sauce. Observing such exuberant purchases—especially the popularity of cheap beef shipped in from the West—German sociologist Werner Sombart famously wrote that "on roast beef and apple pie, all socialist utopias founder." In other words, Americans identified themselves increasingly as consumers rather than as workers. Struggling families

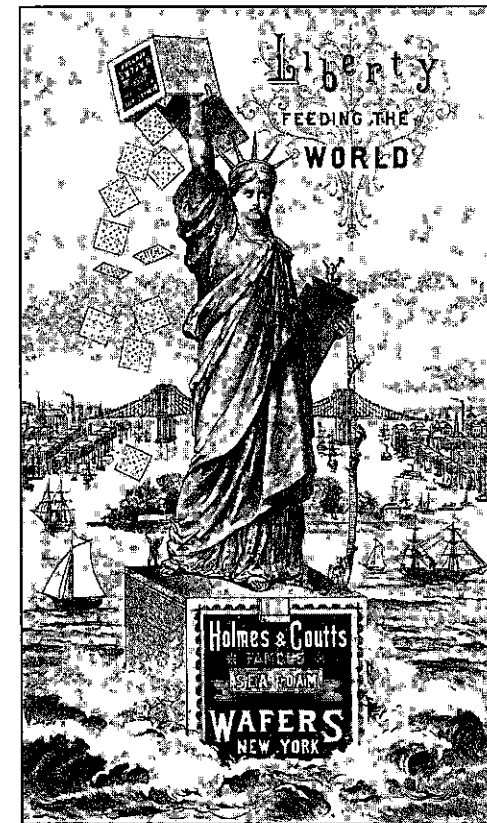
put up with loss of craft pride, grueling hours, and risky conditions on the job in order to sit down for steak on Saturday night.

Mass consumer culture had clear democratic tendencies, offering the promise of material comfort and pleasure to anyone who could raise the cash. Macy's advertisements promised "goods suitable for the millionaire at prices in reach of the millions," and many former luxury items did drop in price and become widely available. At the 1876 Philadelphia Exposition, wealthy tourists bought individual bananas as expensive curiosities; two decades later a dime bought a large bunch at new chain groceries such as A&P, Grand Union, and Kroger. (One family of poor immigrants played a prank on a greenhorn relative by serving her a banana, which she had never seen before. After watching her struggle to eat it with a knife and fork, the onlookers burst out laughing and showed her how to remove the peel.) Similarly, the tradition of Christmas cards—inspired by an antebellum craze for St. Valentine's Day cards—began in the 1880s with expensive and fashionable cards



"Let the advertising agents take charge of the Bartholdi Business, and the money will be raised without delay." In the early 1880s, French citizens raised money to present to the United States *Liberty Enlightening the World*, the immense sculpture by Frederic-Auguste Bartholdi. American fund-raising to build the pedestal took considerably longer, proving something of an embarrassment until publisher Joseph Pulitzer ran a high-profile campaign in the *New York World* and secured the needed \$100,000. While fund-raising efforts were still struggling, cartoonist Frederick Opper offered this wry suggestion.

Puck, 1 April 1885. Courtesy Vassar College Library.



"Liberty Feeding the World," trade card for Sea Foam Wafers printed by Holmes & Coutts, circa 1890. Many companies, selling products that ranged from kerosene to sewing thread, used the Statue of Liberty in their advertisements. Courtesy Winterthur Library. Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera.

offered by the lithographer Louis Prang. By the 1890s cheap imported cards enabled many Americans to take up the custom.

In fact, holidays and special occasions were a major focus of consumer culture. Births and weddings acquired long lists of consumer "must-haves" for the properly outfitted baby or bride. Funeral rituals were increasingly complex, involving the purchase of fancy caskets, memory books, mourning clothes, and stationery. Christmas became more and more a celebration of material abundance, marked by trees, stockings, and gifts. The cartoonist Thomas Nast drew the first modern Santa Claus during the Civil War, and Macy's introduced its famous Christmas display windows in 1874. Within a decade, Santa's arrival with presents defined the holiday for millions of American children. At the same time Easter became an important time to buy new ready-made clothes, carrying forward in new ways the traditions summed up by the old Irish adage, "for Christmas, food and drink; for

Easter, new clothes." In New York by the 1880s, afternoon parades of churchgoers in their spring dresses and bonnets became an urban public spectacle, a sort of informal fashion show. Clothing retailers quickly incorporated it into a preholiday marketing blitz.

Mass consumer culture did not prompt Americans to reshape their identities completely, but instead to interpret old traditions in new ways. While many Christians feared rising commercialism was undermining faith, others saw no contradiction. "Went to town looking for Easter cards and buying myself a dress," wrote one New York woman in 1881, "and then went to Bible class and heard a lovely lecture from Dr. Hall on the resurrection." Networks of trade and advertising might even advance the gospel cause. One religious writer urged "the Christian business men of America" to "make the marketplace as sacred as the church." Christian retailing was on its way to becoming a major industry by the 1880s. Customers could choose an increasing array of Bibles, filled with color illustrations and informative articles about the coins, plants, and customs of Bible times. The Gospel Trumpet Company of Indiana (precursor to today's Warner Press) offered postcards, tracts, and inspirational mottoes for sale through independent agents.

Consumer culture could reinforce other traditional identities, for example, the affirmation of manhood. Attending sports events became an important form of male bonding across class lines. And while saloons and taverns were increasingly owned by large commercial breweries, they nonetheless carried on the tradition of the tavern, serving as informal working men's clubs. Surrounded by colorful advertisements as they enjoyed mass-market Budweisers, working men confirmed bonds of class and masculinity. Saloons also sustained the ethnic identities of Irish, Germans, Italians, Russian Jews, and other recent immigrants. In large cities merchants and grocers competed to help immigrants maintain and celebrate their distinctive cultures, offering everything from kosher and ethnic foods to fireworks for the Chinese New Year.

While saloons and Chinese groceries looked disreputable to native-born Protestants, urban department stores became celebrated sites for the fulfillment of middle-class material desires. A. T. Stewart began the trend during the Civil War with his large New York emporium. The Philadelphia merchant John Wanamaker learned a great deal from the 1876 exposition in his city, winning customers through museumlike exhibits, concerts, and lectures as well as fantastic window displays. (Frank Baum, the author of *The Wizard of Oz*, was a professional display artist in Chicago whose belief that people loved to be deceived helped to inspire the novel.) Department stores offered personal services ranging from credit accounts to free delivery. Stores in New York's department store district, christened the Ladies' Mile, vied to attract middle-class women by offering ladies' lounges, tea rooms, and indoor playgrounds, encouraging women to bring friends and children and linger all day. Macy's, Wanamaker's, and Marshall Fields installed elevators and electric lights when they were still novelties. This fascinated the public and gave stores an aura of public service. In theory, at least, any American

could walk in and stroll the aisles, enjoying a store's amenities without spending a dime.

But the commercial space of department stores was not quite like a public park or town hall. Managers quickly realized that their profits came from consumers who made multiple purchases, and they discouraged the poor from entering while avidly seeking customers with discretionary income. A tasteful mannequin or window tableau encouraged such women and men to buy on impulse once they had entered the magical world of the store. Managers also quickly comprehended the "Diderot effect," in which buying one item precipitates further purchases. The acquisition of a suburban home, for example, required not only furniture and carpets but also drapes, linens, lithographs to decorate the walls, bookcases (which needed books and knickknacks to cover their shelves), and perhaps a gazebo and croquet set for the backyard.

Merchants and advertisers, then, made it their specific goal to entice people to buy products they did not need or had not thought they needed. Department stores experimented with dazzling displays through the use of vibrant colors and glittering lights. They placed items on open tables to be touched and admired, and they suggested that particular items were not just products but affirmations of a buyer's respectability, religious faith, or love of home and children. The big retailers did this so effectively that a few respectable middle-class women, lost in the fantasy world of the department store, began to steal. In a series of well-publicized trials, women from prosperous families confessed that they could not stop themselves from roaming department stores and engaging in repeated shoplifting. The phenomenon seemed to have no precedent. Why should a well-to-do woman choose to shoplift? Puzzled by the impulse, doctors labeled it *kleptomania*.

Well before 1900, then, the supposedly natural laws of supply and demand were turned on their head in the consumer marketplace, just as they were in the abstract world of futures markets and stock exchanges. "The time to advertise is all the time," declared John Wanamaker. "Without advertising," wrote Frank Baum, "the modern merchant sinks into oblivion." Advertisers launched sophisticated campaigns to familiarize Americans with such products as the W. L. Douglas \$3 Shoe for Gentlemen, the \$8 American Typewriter, and medicines such as Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound ("for female complaints—from a woman who knows"). Ads plastered city sidewalks, buildings, and barns. Edward Bellamy commented on the phenomenon in his famous utopian novel *Looking Backward*. Waking up back in 1887 after dreaming of a pristine ad-free future in the year 2000, Bellamy's protagonist is revolted by all the ads he sees on a Boston street. "The walls of the buildings, the windows, the broadsides of the newspapers in every hand, the very pavements, everything in fact in sight, except the sky, were covered with the appeals."

While products begged to get bought through advertising, one journalist observed in 1876 that money was "shouting itself hoarse in the effort to get itself loaned." "On credit" became a more and more common way to buy, whether one was a farmer assembling bare necessities or an urban lady choosing to splurge. Though commentators constantly warned Americans about the dangers of going

into debt, no admonishment stemmed the tide of loans and installment purchases. Asked how she balanced her family's meager budget, one German-American woman wrote in 1882 that "I buy everything on credit until I get no more, then I go to another store and do the same there." "Borax stores," so named because they could clean you out, offered high-interest purchases to the urban poor, and pawn shops and loan sharks did a thriving business. "We Trust the People" was the motto of Bell's Easy Payment Store in Chicago, though it accompanied its expression of faith in humanity with very high interest rates.

By the late 1880s the level of private debt in the United States became a political issue, though no attempt had yet been made to measure it statistically. In response, Congress directed census-takers to collect data for the first time on private debt. Robert Porter, the 1890 census director, warned in his final report that he had probably missed billions of dollars in informal loans, but the figure he produced was stunning: at minimum, private debt in the United States totaled more than \$11 billion. It was a dramatic example of the direction in which Americans were heading in the new economy.

THE PROBLEM OF PECUNIARY STANDARDS

The total of \$11 billion worth of private debt flew in the face of some of Americans' most deeply held convictions in the 1890s. Many commentators continued to declare that debt was shameful and should be avoided at any cost. They linked thrift and savings to the much-admired traits of hard work and self-control, without which no man could succeed. At the same time, women's highest calling was said to be the nurturance of noncommercial values: domesticity, faith, self-sacrifice, and charity. Among the many things Americans were buying were millions of copies of books such as Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, published in 1869, with its story of how frugal, benevolent Marmee and her four daughters spend Christmas morning sharing their gifts and holiday breakfast with poorer neighbors. Catherine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe's best-selling guide *The American Woman's Home*, published one year later, urged Christian women to practice "self-denying benevolence." Beecher and Stowe condemned the "mind that is worldly, living mainly to seek its own pleasures instead of living to please God." As late as 1875 Abraham Lincoln's son Robert managed to get his mother, Mary Todd Lincoln, committed to an insane asylum in part by demonstrating that she purchased things she did not need.

If this was the standard of sanity, then Americans' mental health was in serious trouble. In his brilliant book *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, published in 1899, Wisconsin-born sociologist Thorstein Veblen satirized Americans' acquisitive practices. Practitioners of "pecuniary emulation," he argued, spent money to mimic the habits of wealthier people. A "pecuniary standard of living" promoted sheer waste rather than taste, comfort, education, or moral improvement. Veblen observed that people often suffered great discomfort and inconvenience to vacation in the "right" way or hold the "right" social event. The beauty of a silver spoon or a

manicured lawn, Veblen proposed, lay in what it signified: the power to command someone else's labor to keep the spoon polished and the lawn mowed.

Most famous was Veblen's concept of "conspicuous consumption." He argued that particular types of carriages, clothing, or even diseases (such as gout from rich eating) served to demonstrate social position. They enabled people to establish "invidious distinctions" between themselves and those lower on the social scale. Veblen observed that fashionable dresses were heavy and restrictive, hampering the ability of women who wore them to move around or even breathe. Their design, he concluded, "showed the wearer's exemption from or incapacity for all vulgarly productive employment." In other words, ultratight corsets and heavy brocades advertised a woman's status as a lady of leisure and by extension her husband's or father's ability to pay for her to do nothing.

No one exemplified Veblen's analysis more clearly than Alva Smith Vanderbilt, an Alabama belle who married the heir to a great shipping fortune. Alva had a burning ambition for social glory, but she and her family were shunned as "new money" by Caroline Astor, arbiter of the New York elite. Alva took revenge by engaging famous architect Richard Morris Hunt to design an extravagant mansion on Fifth Avenue, complete with turrets and flying buttresses. With all New York curious to peek inside, Alva announced that a housewarming costume ball would be held on a Monday evening—the night Mrs. Astor traditionally received callers at her home. The Astors' daughter, who loved to dance, pleaded desperately with her parents to recognize the Vanderbilts so she would receive an invitation. Her mother relented, paid a social call to the Vanderbilts, and promptly received her daughter's wish. Alva had broken the power of Mrs. Astor's "Four Hundred" (supposedly the number of people who could fit in the Astor ballroom) and opened New York society to money, old or new.

The party that followed astounded the nation. Having spent \$3 million on the house (roughly \$43 million today), the Vanderbilts lavished another quarter-million on food, music, and decorations for the ball. Among the guests was Alva's sister-in-law Alice, dressed as The Electric Light in an evening gown fitted with gas jets that periodically spouted flames. Other guests appeared as famous royal figures, including Elizabeth I of England and Louis XV of France. The host and hostess dressed as the duc de Guise and a Venetian princess, and their mansion featured bronze sculptures that had once belonged to Marie Antoinette. Clearly, among the most flamboyant faction of America's rich, democratic pride was giving way to "pecuniary emulation" of European monarchs and aristocrats.

The getting and spending of money became a central theme in the work of American fiction writers as well as a topic of research for social scientists such as Thorstein Veblen. The relationship of women to money was especially fascinating, as writers made the transition from romanticism to more realistic treatments of American life. William Dean Howells's *The Rise of Silas Lapham* described the efforts of a Vermont paint manufacturer and his wife and daughters to break into Boston society. The Laphams shed their country virtues of honesty and compassion as they attempt to rise—thus, in fact, sinking morally until they come to

their senses. Henry James's *Portrait of a Lady* told the story of Isabel Archer, an heiress who travels through Europe with her sophisticated aunt and becomes entangled in others' financial intrigues. Lily Bart, the heroine of Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*, is a "hothouse flower" from a wealthy family who is devoted to material comfort and unable to prioritize love over money. American writers also explored the underside of the class structure. Stephen Crane's *Maggie, a Girl of the Streets* offered a landmark portrait of life in New York's slums, tracing the descent of a young girl from abuse and seduction into prostitution and suicide. Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* was even more controversial because its heroine does not die. Instead, young Carrie Meeber conducts a lucrative affair and ends up a Broadway star.

Material standards posed many moral problems. The very goals of capitalism seemed at odds with human decency and the collective good. Grain speculators rejoiced in bad harvests. Speculators on the volatile New York Coffee Exchange were thrilled in 1899 when Brazil went under quarantine during an outbreak of bubonic plague. Anger mounted at the way individuals and corporations used great wealth to purchase influence, and many writers explored money's impact on civic life as well as individual character. Twain and Warner's *The Gilded Age* launched a cottage industry in novels about Washington corruption, including Henry Adams's *Democracy* and Hamlin Garland's *A Spoil of Office*. The machinations of streetcar companies inspired such diverse treatments as Howells's *A Hazard of New Fortunes* and Dreiser's *The Financier*. "The misapplication of public money has become the great crime of the age," intones a judge in Dreiser's novel. "If not promptly and firmly checked, it will ultimately destroy our institutions. When a republic becomes honeycombed with corruption its vitality is gone." But the judge himself is an appointee of Philadelphia's Republican ring, and he reaches the verdict his bosses demand.

Novelists produced an array of broad critiques of industrialization, ranging from Rebecca Harding Davis's *Life in the Iron Mills* in 1861 to Upton Sinclair's indictment of Chicago meatpacking companies, *The Jungle*, in 1906. Frank Norris's *The Octopus* condemned the stranglehold railroads maintained over California's economy, a theme María Amparo Ruiz de Burton had explored years earlier in *The Squatter and the Don*. By the 1890s nonfiction treatments also gained prominence. Henry Demarest Lloyd's *Wealth Against Commonwealth* pointed out that assets were concentrating in the hands of a few. Ida Tarbell offered a scathing account of Rockefeller's rise to power in *The History of the Standard Oil Company*, while Lincoln Steffens condemned urban machines in his famous tract *The Shame of the Cities*. Magazines such as *Arena* and *McClure's* made their reputations on article-length investigations. By the turn of the century, critiquing American business had become an industry itself.

Some powerful titans dismissed the Vanderbilts as nouveau riche and strove to give away large sums of money—while simultaneously defending how they had gotten it. Even before he created his famous charitable foundations, John D. Rockefeller, Sr., gave great sums to the Baptist Church, the temperance

movement, and projects for medicine and education. Rockefeller kept his pocket full of dimes to give away to children, keenly aware of the public relations value of largesse. Most overt in his efforts to develop an ethics of wealth was Andrew Carnegie, who was tormented as a young man by the belief that he had sacrificed religious principles for financial gain. Carnegie tried to reconcile the two, arguing that a rich man's money was a public trust he must spend for the common good. Such a man, Carnegie wrote, should strive to "set an example of modest, unostentatious living, shunning display or extravagance; to provide moderately for the legitimate wants of those dependent on him; and after doing so, to consider all surplus revenues . . . simply as trust funds." He must spend his riches in the way "best calculated to produce the most beneficial results for the community." If a wealthy man failed to follow such a course, Carnegie proposed that the government levy a 100 percent estate tax. He followed his own advice by founding an array of charitable and reform institutions.

While one of the country's richest men mulled over the proper disposition of money, commentators lamented what they saw as dramatic new extremes of wealth and poverty. Amid furious debate over inequalities of wealth, few hard facts were available until the 1890 census, which on this as on other questions unleashed a storm of controversy. The economist George K. Holmes summarized what census-takers found: 71 percent of the nation's private wealth belonged to 9 percent of the population, while 91 percent of the population held the other 29 percent. Conditioned, like most Americans of his day, to believe that industrialization was promoting widespread prosperity, Holmes could scarcely believe these numbers. "This result seems almost incredible," he wrote. He reluctantly concluded that "the concentration of wealth has probably gone too far" and warned that "the problem that is to vex the coming ages of the republic is already clearly manifest."

Holmes's figures roughly matched those of historians today, who estimate that in the post-Civil War decades, roughly 27 percent of America's private wealth belonged to the top 1 percent of households and 49 percent to the top 5 percent. Expressed in quintiles (dividing the entire population into five groups of equal size), this meant that 87 percent of private wealth belonged to the richest fifth, 11 percent to the next fifth, 2 percent to the next fifth, and virtually none to the rest. Wealth had, in fact, been highly concentrated since the colonial era; the greatest increase in inequality occurred in the three decades before the Civil War, when industrialization began. A study of Massachusetts suggests that during the severe depression of the 1870s, middle-class wealth did erode and the richest 5 percent got substantially richer. Equally important, extremes of wealth and poverty were increasingly noticeable to Americans in the late nineteenth century, as wealth took new forms (stocks and bonds rather than land and slaves) and a new class of multimillionaires became highly visible. This tiny group constituted less than one-third of 1 percent of the U.S. population in 1900, but they owned about one-sixth of the nation's private wealth.

At the same time Americans could see all around them signs of economic desperation, even starvation. In towns and cities across the country, women's relief

organizations geared up each winter to feed and shelter the destitute. In the depression of 1873, one Massachusetts editor reported the "pitiful and miserable sight which we have seen night after night in front of the fruit and vegetable stands . . . A drove of poverty-stricken children, often girls, clad only in one or two ragged and dirty garments down on their hands and knees in the gutters, greedily picking out of the mud and dirt and eating the bits of spoiled and decaying fruit which have been thrown away." Visiting New York, the Chinese diplomat Lin Shu was shocked by juxtapositions of luxury and homelessness. They reminded him of a line by the classical poet Du Fu: "Crimson mansions reek of wine and meat, while on the road lie frozen bones. Rich and poor but a foot apart; sorrows too hard to relate." "New York is the most prosperous city in the world, and also the bleakest," Lin Shu wrote. "I look at the slums of New York and think with a sigh that socialism cannot be avoided."

The pain of poverty was made all the keener by lavish displays in grocery and department stores and mail-order catalogs. It was bad enough to be poor while millions in the professional and business classes prospered; it was even worse to see what they had, temptingly laid out in the pages of the Sears catalog and in Macy's windows. The ultimate insult was a grotesque display like Alva Vanderbilt's party. During the terrible 1870s, financier August Belmont threw his daughter a debutante ball "more splendid than the famous one given the previous year in London by the Prince of Wales." American heiresses began to marry European noblemen. The years between 1874 and 1911 brought 115 such weddings. For noblemen such marriages brought a much-needed financial lift. For heiresses these unions were the logical result of the quest for status: in the United States a title was the only thing money could *not* buy.

American onlookers were fascinated and outraged. "Of what account is it," demanded *Life* in 1889, "that Thomas Jefferson perspired, and our forefathers fought and bled in the Revolution to be quit of titles and class distinctions?" Populist orator Mary Lease accused the elite of auctioning off their daughters: "Once we made it our boast that this nation was not founded upon any class distinction," she declared, but now the super-rich were "selling our children to titled debauchees." Newspapers anxiously calculated the sums flowing overseas with every match between a daughter of Goulds or Pfizers and a British duke or earl. "American Dollars the Prop of Europe's Tottering Aristocracy," blared the *New York World*. "The millions belong in America," declared the *New York Journal*, which printed caricatures of puny British fops marrying tall, athletic American brides.

The phenomenon of the titled match reached its apex with the infamous wedding of eighteen-year-old Consuelo Vanderbilt, daughter of the ambitious Alva who had bested Mrs. Astor. Alva had named her daughter in honor of a friend, an heiress of Cuban-American descent who married Britain's Viscount Mandeville. Little Consuelo was groomed to marry a nobleman as well, and though she longed to go to college and inconveniently fell in love with a plebian suitor, her mother got her way. In November 1895 Consuelo Vanderbilt, her eyes red from hours of crying, married the ninth duke of Marlborough. The fashionable Fifth Avenue

church was buried in roses and orchids. *Vogue* devoted pages to describing Consuelo's wedding dress, diamond tiara, and trousseau. In a move that appalled arbiters of taste, wedding gifts were put on display at the reception, accompanied by social cards so guests could see who had spent what. (Consuelo eventually got the last laugh. After her husband cheated on her repeatedly and ridiculed the charities to which she devoted herself, she separated from him in 1906, won a divorce in 1920, and remarried happily to a Frenchman. In a lively memoir, *The Glitter and the Gold*, she later depicted her unhappy life in England.)

Ten years after Consuelo boarded a steamship for London as the new duchess of Marlborough, novelist Henry James returned to the United States at age sixty-two following two decades as a European exile. James, like Consuelo, was struck by the contrasts between cultures on either side of the Atlantic, and he struggled to come to terms with the new United States in an extended essay called *The American Scene*. Sitting in a theater in New York's Bowery district, James concentrated less on the melodrama than on people in the audience—Americans of many ethnic and national backgrounds, sitting together in a way, James recognized, that "we had not dreamed of in my day." Pondering the presence of Greeks, Italians, Germans, Irish, and many other European immigrants, James reflected that he had toured their home countries and knew the beautiful landscapes and rich legacies of literature and culture that flourished there. Why, then, had these people come to America? What did they find here? He watched peddlers moving up and down the aisles selling treats to the audience. He pondered the variety of candies that many in the audience (including himself) were happily munching. "These almost 'high-class' luxuries," he observed, "circulating in such a company, were sort of a supreme symbol of the promoted state of the aspirant to American conditions." Immigrants, James suggested, had "been promoted, more or less at a bound, to the habitual use of chocolate creams."

James captured in this brilliant passage many of the ironies of American consumer culture. For the past twenty years, while he had been admiring London, Berlin, and Florence, working-class Europeans had been streaming into the United States. All hoped to partake of what James called "a sense of material ease"—the goods Werner Sombart referred to when he described great reefs of beef dashing the little ship of socialism. Having come to a place where money was the measure, immigrants would earn it, save it, spend it. But, James wondered, would they keep their religious faith? What would they remember from the cultures of their childhood? Would they build a great civilization in America? Would they pass down any values other than material ones? In other countries, James observed, "the wage-earners, the toilers of old . . . were known by the wealth of their songs." "Has it been given to the American people," he wondered, "to be known by the number of their candies?"

FOR FURTHER READING

On gold rushes see William S. Greever, *The Bonanza West* (Norman, OK, 1963). In addition to key works cited in previous chapters, especially Bense's *Political Economy* and

Cronon's *Nature's Metropolis*, three books are central to this chapter. They are William Leach's sweeping history of the rise of consumer culture, *Land of Desire* (New York, 1993), Judy Hilkey's study of success manuals, *Character Is Capital* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1997), and Thomas J. Schlereth's overview of daily life and material culture, *Victorian America* (New York, 1991). On consumerism and domesticity Ellen Garvey, *The Adman in the Parlor* (New York, 1996) is also helpful. See also the essays in *Consuming Visions*, ed. Simon J. Bronner (New York, 1989). On money questions in politics see, in addition to Bense's book cited earlier, Walter T. K. Nugent, *Money and American Society, 1865-1880* (New York, 1968), Gretchen Ritter, *Goldbugs and Greenbacks* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), Milton Friedman, "The Crime of 1873," *Journal of Political Economy* 98 (1990): 1159-94, and Stanley L. Jones, *The Presidential Election of 1896* (Madison, WI, 1964).

An enduring overview of the social impact of industrialization is Thomas C. Cochran and William Miller, *The Age of Enterprise* (New York, 1942); see also Walter Licht, *Industrializing America*, cited in Chapter 2. On Barnum & Bailey's business strategy see Janet M. Davis, *The Circus Age* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2002), and on the selling of Aunt Jemima, Grace Hale, *Making Whiteness* (New York, 1998). On stereographs and photography see Peter Bacon Hales, "American Views and the Romance of Modernization," in *Photography in Nineteenth Century America*, ed. Martha A. Sandweiss (Fort Worth, TX, 1991). Leigh Eric Schmidt looks at holidays in *Consumer Rites* (Princeton, NJ, 1995); on religion and consumer culture see Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity* (New Haven, CT, 1995), and on the saloon, Madelon Powers, *Faces Along the Bar* (Chicago, 1998). H. Wayne Morgan discusses the Keeley cure in *Drugs in America* (Syracuse, NY, 1981). For Americans' diverse experiences with consumer culture see also passages from David S. Cohen, ed., *America, The Dream of My Life* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1990), Daniel S. Boorstin, *The Americans* (New York, 1973), and Elaine S. Abelson's wonderful study of department store shoplifting, *When Ladies Go A-Thieving* (New York, 1989). Histories of two peppy products are Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds* (New York, 1999—on coffee, of course), and Joël G. Brenner, *The Emperors of Chocolate* (New York, 2000).

On the super-rich, Gail MacColl and Carol McD. Wallace's book *To Marry an English Lord* (New York, 1989) is both well researched and fun. For more scholarly treatments see Eric Homburger, *Mrs. Astor's New York* (New Haven, CT, 2002), and Sven Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis* (Cambridge, MA, 2001). I rely also here on Ellen Adams, "Noble Husbands and Republican Wives: American Perceptions of International Marriages, 1874-1911," senior history thesis, Vassar College, 1998. On broader critiques of consumption see Michael Barton, "The Victorian Jeremiad," in *Consuming Visions*, cited earlier, 55-71. On Werner Sombart see, in addition to Glickman's *A Living Wage*, cited earlier, Eric Foner, "Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?" *History Workshop* 17 (Spring 1984): 57-80.

On debt and credit I am, well, very much indebted to Lendol G. Calder's detailed history, *Financing the American Dream* (Princeton, NJ, 1999). On measures of wealth I depend on Richard H. Steckel and Carolyn M. Moehling, "Rising Inequality: Trends in the Distribution of Wealth in Industrializing New England," *Journal of Economic History* 61 (March 2001): 160-83, Carole Shammas, "A New Look at Long-Term Trends in Wealth Inequality in the United States," *American Historical Review* 98 (1993): 412-31, and Jeffrey G. Williamson and Peter H. Lindert, *American Inequality* (New York, 1980). The views of Chinese visitors to the United States are documented in *Land Without Ghosts*, ed. R. David Arkush and Leo O. Lee (Berkeley, CA, 1989).

PART II



The Exchange

For a young woman of the 1880s who needed a job, one of the best opportunities was to become a telephone operator—a "hello girl." The pay was fairly good, up to \$6 a week, and working conditions were not dangerous. Hello girls wore big headsets and sat side by side facing the walls of the exchange room, scanning panels that held operating keys, connecting holes, transmitters, and receivers. Each operator served a specific set of subscribers (in the 1880s usually between fifty and eighty). Whenever one rang, a metal flap dropped to indicate service was desired. The operator connected to the line in question, asked whom the caller wanted to speak to, and routed the call. After 1900 operators began to handle much higher volumes of calls, making their work frantic and stressful. But in the early years, the pace was manageable as long as a worker kept her attention focused on her panel and refrained from talking to others in the room.

We can think of the telephone exchange as a metaphor for the rearrangement of Americans' identities in the late nineteenth century. Sitting elbow to elbow with fellow operators wearing their headphones, a hello girl had less connection to them than she did to subscribers sitting in their homes several miles away. The transformed economy disconnected and reconnected individuals. Mass-market magazines, products, and associations created new communities made up not of people in a particular town or county but of bicyclists, ragtime aficionados, baseball fans, and users of Pear's Soap. Political interest groups, from wildlife defenders to women's rights advocates, developed extensive national networks, as did young people who developed an exuberant sense of generational identity. Even Americans' sense of geography got rearranged. Villagers with a railroad station might find themselves more connected to stations down the line, reachable in fifteen minutes, than they were to nearer towns accessible only by dirt roads. With Chicago newspapers arriving on the morning train, residents of Davenport, Iowa, might know more about doings in that city than in their own state capital.

Economic growth and dislocation, especially the "reach" of transportation and communication lines, disrupted old identities and encouraged Americans to reshape their ideas and beliefs. Part II of *New Spirits* examines four realms in which these sweeping rearrangements occurred. Chapter 5 looks at the lives of young

PART III



The Fires

At the age of twenty-four, José Martí, born in Havana in 1853, had already joined the movement for Cuban independence from Spanish rule and been convicted of treason by Spanish authorities. He had served part of a six-year sentence at hard labor, had the sentence commuted to exile, and lived by turns in Spain, Mexico, and Guatemala. Not long afterward he moved to the United States, where he wrote for a number of North American and Latin American newspapers. In the late 1880s and early 1890s, convinced that peaceful methods would never succeed against Spain, Martí helped plan and lead the Cuban Revolution. He died on a Cuban beach in 1895, as he and his compatriots launched their rebellion.

In the meantime, Martí reported for Argentina's *La Nación* on the funeral of four anarchists who were hanged in Chicago in 1886 after allegedly throwing a bomb in Haymarket Square. Martí argued that the anarchists had been wrong to advocate violent revolution in a democracy, but he was fascinated by their rhetoric. He compared them to volcanoes erupting from an underground reservoir of molten rock—the working class in the new economy. The United States, he observed, “is terrified by the increased organization among the lower classes. . . . Therefore the Republic decided, by tacit agreement resembling complicity, to use a crime born of its own transgressions as much as of the fanaticism of the criminals in order to strike terror by holding them up as an example.”

The anarchists, Martí wrote, “come from hell; what language must they speak but the language of hell?” He was less worried about their influence than he was about what he saw happening more broadly in the United States. Earlier in the nineteenth century, he argued, European immigrants had found in America

a republican form of government [that] enabled the recent arrival to earn his bread and lay aside a portion of his earnings for his old age, and in his own house. But then came the corrupting war and the habit of authority and domination which is its bitter aftereffect. Then came the credit that stimulated the creation of colossal fortunes and the disorderly foreign influx. . . . The Republic changed from a wonderfully desirable village to a monarchy in disguise.

The United States, Martí concluded, "because of its unconscionable cult of wealth, and lacking any of the shackles of tradition, . . . has fallen into monarchical inequality, injustice, and violence."

Martí, like many Latin Americans, had long hoped the United States would serve as a model republic and defend the rights of other American nations to resist European aggression. During the years he lived in the United States, Martí did come to see parallels between it and Latin America, but they were not such flattering ones. Noting that Anglo Americans thought of their country as more rational, civilized, and orderly than its southern neighbors, he saw instead "the crude, uneven, and decadent character of the United States, and the continuous existence there of all the violence, discord, immorality and disorder [that North Americans] blamed upon the peoples of Spanish America." By the early 1890s Martí warned that the United States, was likely to develop its own imperial ambitions. His prediction proved accurate. The United States "helped" Cuba win independence and then asserted its own forms of control over the island.

U.S. intervention in Cuba was in some ways an extension of the conflict Martí had observed in Chicago. Post-Civil War America was a tremendously violent place, and by the 1890s the domestic conflicts generated by rapid transformation spilled over into other parts of the world. American policy makers sought overseas markets for U.S. products to ensure domestic stability and deflect the prospect of "socialistic" solutions. Chapter 9 of *New Spirits* examines various wars of incorporation that raged within the boundaries of the United States over lands in the West and control of labor. Workers of all classes and trades, as well as the landscape itself and the people who had lived on it for centuries, were integrated into a hierarchical corporate and political order, managed from urban centers of financial power. Chapter 10 describes a series of creative nonviolent responses that arose in the face of these conflicts. Chapter 11 explores how, in the wake of a massive depression in the 1890s, such projects were postponed or transformed, paving the way for long-term changes in the twentieth century but also defeating the most radical options and setting narrower limits on Americans' reform vision.

Reactions to the depression included a hardening of class and racial lines, and they ended with the consolidation of new powers both in Washington, D.C., and in corporate boardrooms. Those powers are the subject of Chapter 11, and they included the building of an overseas commercial and military empire. Justifications for new military exploits ran along racial lines, and here the continuities between domestic and foreign policies were also strong. Having rejected the legacy of Reconstruction, shunted American Indians onto reservations, and passed an Exclusion Act barring Chinese workers from the United States, Americans had laid the groundwork for offering second-class citizenship to Cubans and Filipinos. José Martí was right: the United States had changed. The fires of incorporation, both at home and abroad, left future generations a legacy of material progress and hope, but also violence and confusion.

CHAPTER 9

A State of War

If the club of the policeman, knocking out the brains of the rioter, will answer, then well and good; but if it does not promptly meet the exigency, then [use] bullets and bayonets. . . . Napoleon was right when he said that the way to deal with a mob was to exterminate it.

—THE INDEPENDENT, NEW YORK

[The propertied classes] everywhere and always fall back upon the use of force. . . . In the midst of such a struggle, to talk of peace and peaceful methods . . . is blasphemous and exasperating to the last degree.

—THE ALARM, CHICAGO

For Europe's most powerful nations, the 1870s and 1880s were an era of high imperialism. Britain crowned Queen Victoria empress of India. France laid claim to Indochina. Germany, Belgium, and Italy joined them in carving up coastal China into spheres of influence, and the Great Powers divided eleven million square miles of Africa into colonial territories. The United States took a different path in these decades. It had already claimed an empire in the West, contiguous to existing states; while Europeans sought colonies overseas, Americans waged ferocious battles for control and development of what the nation had already claimed. The two-million-square-mile West yielded most of the raw materials European powers sought abroad: gold, silver, copper, coal, oil, old-growth timber, and diverse lands that could support cattle, sheep, grain, and semitropical crops.

In 1893 historian Frederick Jackson Turner famously described the American frontier as a zone of "free land," but in fact, the process of wresting it from people who already lived there was bloody, complicated, and costly. Subjugation of western tribes brought little peace in its wake, since conquering whites clashed with Mexicans, Chinese immigrants, and one another. Among the most famous of dozens of violent incidents was California farmers' war against the Southern Pacific Railroad, which Karl Marx followed with interest in the London papers and which became the basis for Frank Norris's novel *The Octopus*. The conflict centered

on Mussel Slough, a patch of land thirty miles south of Fresno where homesteaders and the Southern Pacific held conflicting claims. In 1880 a judge who was a close friend of the railroad's leading shareholders ruled in favor of the road. When the Southern Pacific sent an armed posse to evict farmers, the resulting gun battle left seven dead. Daring train robbers later carried out a three-year crime spree against the Southern Pacific, during which many farmers cheered for the outlaws.

In the meantime, western mining and railroad workers organized thousands of strikes, shutdowns, and even acts of sabotage. Corporate managers fought back by calling in armed detectives, state militias, and the U.S. Army. Conflict was especially violent in the mining industry. In 1892 six men died in clashes at Idaho's Coeur d'Alene mines, whose owners ultimately destroyed the local affiliate of the Western Federation of Miners (WFM). A few years later Idaho's ex-governor was assassinated in a revenge killing orchestrated by leaders of the WFM. In Colorado conflict between owners and miners was so bloody and constant that historians have dubbed it the Thirty Years' War. At one point vigilante businessmen in Cripple Creek forced the pro-labor sheriff to resign at gunpoint. In 1914 at Ludlow, Colorado, state militia and local deputies killed thirty-nine people in a camp of striking coal miners. Among the dead were two miners' wives and eleven children, whose tents were set on fire by the attack.

As violent as the West became, labor conflict was equally fierce in many other parts of the country. Pennsylvania miners waged the same kinds of fights against employers as their compatriots in Colorado and Idaho, including several assassinations carried out in the 1870s by a secret cadre of Irish-born workers known as the Molly Maguires. Whether protests were peaceful or not, eastern employers struck back with the same repressive measures as they did in the West, often escalating strikes into full-scale war. The Great Railroad Strike of 1877, centered in Pittsburgh and other eastern cities, resulted in ten times more deaths than the shootout at Mussel Slough in the so-called Wild West. The new economy also brought violence to the South. In Appalachia the famous Hatfield-McCoy feud resulted partly from the rising value of Hatfield land, as railroads and coal companies undertook large-scale operations. The folktales surrounding "Railroad Bill," a famous black train robber in Alabama, had much in common with those attached to Jesse James's gang and the California bandits who attacked the trains of the Southern Pacific. Bill won admiration from both whites and blacks who resented the wealth and power that railroads represented. Long after Bill was shot dead by an Alabama sheriff, blues songs celebrated him (inaccurately, it appears) as a man who stole from the rich and gave to the hungry.

So vicious and continuous were the battles of these decades that we might call them "wars of incorporation," a second Civil War that persisted into the twentieth century. Incorporation was a geographic process, consolidating networks of control across the continent; it also consolidated power in the hands of a few.

About the best that can be said for the violent processes of incorporation is that they produced results that were more democratic—by some measures, at

least—than similar conflicts in other parts of the world. The Australian Outback ended up even more dominated by big landholders than did the American West. In the conquest of the Argentine pampas, which took place in the same years, native peoples were hunted to extinction like the wild ostriches, while Argentina's dictator handed over enormous tracts of land to his cronies. Considering the unspeakable atrocities that occurred in the African Congo under the sponsorship of Belgium's King Leopold, the wars of incorporation in the United States look relatively mild. Yet what happened in Europe and America (for example, the arrival of bicycles and automobiles with rubber tires) was inextricably bound to what happened in the cruelest corners of the Congo and Peru (rubber harvesting). Confronted with violence and dislocation on a global scale, many came to agree with Social Gospel minister Washington Gladden: the new economy brought with it a "state of war."

INCORPORATION IN THE WEST

The most famous of America's violent struggles in the post-Civil War years was not new: it was the final stage in a three-century-long conquest that dispossessed American Indians of their land. Consolidation of the continent seemed inevitable to most observers; an army that had just defeated the Confederacy could surely subdue small bands of nomads, even if the latter had intimate knowledge of their home terrain. By 1870 the federal government had created reservations for almost every surviving Indian nation, and President U. S. Grant proclaimed a "Peace Policy" focused on education and assimilation rather than military campaigns. But conquest looked far from inevitable to Indians themselves. "All the land south of the Arkansas belongs to the Kiowas and Comanches, and I don't want to give away any of it," Kiowa chief White Bear informed treaty commissioners in 1869 in a speech that brought shouts of support from men standing behind him. Comanche chief Ten Bears explained that his people had no interest in white customs. "I want to live and die as I was brought up," he declared. "I love the open prairie." What followed were a series of conflicts that one historian has ironically dubbed "the Wars of the Peace Policy."

In these wars the U.S. Army bore responsibility for a long string of atrocities. Men such as General Philip Sheridan, sent west after the Civil War, ruthlessly punished Indians who left reservations or attacked invading settlers. In January 1870, after a series of murders and revenge killings by white ranchers and Blackfoot warriors in Montana, Sheridan ordered a strike on the camp of a resisting chief. With the band's warriors away hunting, U.S. troops opened fire and set lodges ablaze in a surprise dawn attack beside the Marias River. Bear Head, a young boy at the time, heard the screams of women and children as burning lodge covers collapsed around them (a scene eerily similar to the militia attack on miners at Ludlow, Colorado, forty-four years later, though the casualties at the Marias were far higher). "I sat before the ruin of my lodge and felt sick," Bear Head remembered. "I wished that the seizers had killed me, too. . . . I could not pull up the

lodge-skin and look under it. I could not bear to see my mother." At least 173 people died. They turned out to be members of a friendly band whom the army had attacked by mistake.

In other acts of violence, though, U.S. troops were last on the scene. Unlike the Canadian West, where the Royal Mounted Police served as respected go-betweens and law enforcers, the American West was weak in federal authority. Disputes and revenge killings between Indians and local traders, ranchers, and farmers triggered escalating cycles of violence, with federal agents playing confused or secondary roles. Before the 1872 Modoc War on the Oregon-California border, the Modoc believed they had reached an agreement with U.S. negotiators on their future. But officials in Washington changed the terms, refusing to situate the tribe near their ancestral lands. One faction of Modoc, led by a chief named Kientpoos or "Captain Jack," resisted the move and stuck to the terms of the treaty they had signed. U.S. troops, accompanied by local armed whites, went to relocate them by force. They were shocked to find themselves beaten back. Captain Jack and his followers fled to nearby lava beds, where they hid out for months, eluding capture and killing many men sent after them. The U.S. Army defeated the rebels only with the help of other Modoc—including, ironically, men who had killed white settlers and persuaded the reluctant Captain Jack to launch a surprise attack on a U.S. peace commission. These Modoc were pardoned, while Jack and three others, none of whom had at first advocated violence against negotiators or civilians, were convicted and hanged.

Whether they won or lost a battle, the U.S. Army's role was almost always controversial. Bungled campaigns such as the Modoc War aroused the wrath of westerners at army incompetence, while incidents such as the slaughter on the Marias River provoked public outrage. The latter atrocity, in fact, persuaded Congress to reject a measure that would have transferred the Bureau of Indian Affairs back from the Interior Department (where it had been since 1849) to the War Department. Reformers in the Northeast clashed with western politicians who saw the "Indian problem" as their own affair. Congress and a succession of presidents fought over what policy to follow, and in the meantime local agents and missionaries pursued their own conflicting agendas. Kiowa chief Sitting Bear pointedly observed that he was tired of hearing contradictory pledges. "We do not break treaties," he said of his people. "We make but few contracts, and them we remember well. The whites make so many they are liable to forget them. The white chief seems not to be able to govern his braves." Chief Joseph of the Nez Percé voiced similar frustration. "I cannot understand why so many chiefs are allowed to talk so many different ways, and promise so many different things," he wrote. "It makes my heart sick when I remember all the good words and all the broken promises."

The first source of dispute was often, as in the Modoc War, the question of what was being given up. Some chiefs hoped to keep peace by sharing their territories with encroaching settlers; few believed they were consenting to be

removed from ancestral homes. Some managed to stay: the Crow, for example, who allied with the United States in defense against their traditional Sioux and Cheyenne enemies, retained a portion of their lands for their reservation. The Crow cooperated with federal officials, Chief Plenty Coups said later, "not because we loved the white man who was already crowding other tribes into our country, . . . but because we plainly saw that this course was the only one which might save our beautiful country for us." Yet many other tribes were carted off to arid wastelands far from home. The Wichita, Osage, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, and Comanche, all of whom lived on coveted lands, were deposited in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma), just as the Cherokee of Georgia had been during the 1830s "Trail of Tears."

Most of the era's Indian wars occurred *after* such removals, as peoples who had reluctantly moved to reservations found themselves subject to new forms of oppression. Appalling corruption among agents in the field exacerbated federal stinginess. Pensions, blankets, medical supplies, and rations never materialized or were skimmed off by agents while the intended recipients froze and starved. When the Ponca, a settled farming people in Nebraska, were shipped to Indian Territory, more than a third of the nation died of exhaustion, starvation, and contaminated water. "They took our reapers, mowers, hay rakes, spades, ploughs, bedsteads, stoves, cupboards, everything we had on our farms," remembered Chief Standing Bear. "After we reached the new land, all my horses died. The water was very bad." Standing Bear led repeated escape attempts, in one case taking the body of his son back to his homeland for secret burial.

Similar conditions led to the last major Indian war, fought by the Mimbres and Chiricahua Apache in the 1880s. Despite promises to the contrary, these Apache were forced onto a consolidated reservation at San Carlos, along Arizona's Gila River, in brutally hot country rife with malaria. "There was nothing but cactus, heat, rattlesnakes, rocks, and insects," one man remembered. "No game; no edible plants. Many, many of our people died." After a two-year struggle to live under these conditions or negotiate a move, the Apache revolted. Mimbres leader Victorio led the first fight, eventually crossing into Mexico, where he and seventy-seven warriors were killed in a battle with Mexican soldiers in 1880. A year later Chiricahua leaders Juh and Geronimo also abandoned San Carlos and engaged in a rebellion that lasted six years. When Geronimo finally surrendered, the federal decision to imprison 300 Apache at Fort Marion, Florida, seemed an exercise in randomness as capricious as the hanging of the Modoc Captain Jack. The prisoners included not only Geronimo but also scouts who had fought with U.S. forces *against* him as well as a number of men who had never left the reservation at all.

Many Americans were distressed by these events. A San Francisco newspaper judged the government "murderous," calling the country's Indian policy "a miserable one and a failure." President Rutherford B. Hayes bluntly stated in a message to Congress that "many, if not most, of our Indian wars have had their origins in broken promises and acts of injustice on our part." Helen Hunt Jackson's *A Century*



Frank Leslie's *Illustrated Newspaper*, 10 November 1877. "Not Much! Uncle Sam to Sitting Bull—If you will come back peaceably, we will forgive you the Custer matter, and give you everything you ask for.' Sitting Bull to Uncle Sam—'Don't trouble me. You have lied to us before. You have more lies now. I shall stay here with my White Mother. Go home by easy stages—and don't come back.'" This cartoon was published when Sitting Bull had led his Hunkpapa band and other Lakota into Canada (under the protection of Queen Victoria, the "White Mother"), after defeating General George A. Custer at the Battle of the Little Big Horn. Sitting Bull is not depicted very sympathetically, but the image is far more friendly than many ugly caricatures of native peoples sketched at the time. Note the reasons for conflict that the cartoonist has written on papers scattered across the ground: "corrupt traders," "false friends," "bad faith," "knavish settlers," "lying agents," "broken contracts," and "reservation swindles." Courtesy Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center.

of *Dishonor*, which was published in 1881 and remains one of the most damning accounts of U.S. Indian policy ever written, won widespread praise, and its author hoped it would serve as another *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to sear the national conscience. But the abolition of slavery had been synonymous with progress and uplift, while few Americans—even Jackson herself—could imagine letting "primitives" live in traditional ways. As Theodore Roosevelt put it crudely in his book *The Winning of the West*, "The Indians never had any real title to the soil. . . . This great continent could not have been kept as nothing but a game preserve for squalid savages." The federal courts ruled in *Standing Bear v. Crook* that the U.S. government could



Cohoe, *War Dance at Fort Marion*, circa 1875–77. A Cheyenne taken as a prisoner of war, Cohoe was held for several years at Fort Marion, Florida. In this sketch from one of several notebooks left by Fort Marion prisoners, Cohoe records a dance performed by prisoners for tourists. The detail with which Cohoe renders the tourists' clothing and accessories suggests that the prisoners observed the visitors at least as carefully as tourists watched them. From *A Cheyenne Sketchbook* (Norman, OK, 1964), 83. Courtesy University of Oklahoma Press.

not treat Indians as permanent noncitizens, but they did not set a clear limit or deadline on this "temporary" status.

The "Wars of the Peace Policy" launched a new attempt to replace armed conflict with Indian assimilation and citizenship. The crux of the plan was to divide reservations into individual parcels for families to farm, a goal set forth in the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887. Ownership of private property, the bill's sponsors believed, would motivate Indians to follow white ways. They demanded acceptance of this system as a precondition for citizenship. In many ways the Dawes Act finished the job that violent removal had begun. Under the allotment system, Indian peoples lost enormous swaths of their remaining lands to intruders. A few agricultural peoples who, like the Ponca, kept or regained part of their traditional lands fared decently under the system, and some large nations such as the Navajo and Cherokee held on to significant resources. But most tribes entered a nether region between citizenship and dependency. Catastrophic losses of land continued until the New Deal of the 1930s. Allotment also divided tribes. When the Choctaw nation in Indian Territory was given a choice of adopting or rejecting the new land

system, the election created a rift. "There was bitter feeling on both sides and even some killing," remembered one council member. A similar decision split the Hopi pueblo of Oraibi. The winning assimilationists forced 400 traditionalists to leave the village and go into exile, taking only what they could carry. The refugees formed the new town of Hotevilla.

Despite severe hardship, Indians found ways to resist. Indeed, within a decade of Geronimo's surrender, young men and women such as Dr. Charles Eastman and Zitkala-Sa were exploring new avenues for cultural survival, while Indian leaders mounted legal challenges over land and human rights. Sacred dances and feasts continued secretly, while grandparents passed down legends in the traditional tongues. Well aware that census-takers thought they all looked alike, people on the Lakota reservation in South Dakota filed by the census table multiple times to raise their official count and thus their rations. On the second and third time through the line, they quietly registered their contempt by submitting names that translated into obscenities such as "Shit Head." In Indian Territory, the Creek writer Alexander Posey used the same kind of biting satire to critique federal policy, referring to Theodore Roosevelt as "President Rooster Feather" and the local Indian agent, a Mr. Shoenfelt, as "Sho-am-fat."

On some reservations Indians who accepted white ways found themselves ostracized. Laura Pedrick, one of the first full-blooded Indians appointed a field matron among her own people, exposed the performance of secret dances and feasts to reservation authorities. She found herself under pressure as Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache on the reservation told authorities they found Pedrick "objectionable." Other native leaders skillfully blended old and new. Local agents considered William Wash of the White River Ute to be "pro-white"; when the tribe debated the land allotment system, he accepted it, prospering afterward as a rancher and farmer. Yet Walsh used his power to advocate on behalf of all Ute, and he shared much of his prosperity with less fortunate neighbors, building community ties in the fashion of a traditional chief.

In the decades when the United States quelled the last armed Indian resistance, wars of incorporation were also waged over Mexican-American ranches and farms in the Southwest. At issue were property titles in the Mexican cession, lands the United States had seized in 1848 after the Mexican-American War. The lives of Mexicans living in remote parts of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona had been largely undisturbed for decades afterward, and these rural outposts—as well as small cities such as Tucson and Santa Fe—remained overwhelmingly Mexican. But after the Civil War, white ranchers and developers began moving in to stake their claims. As in the Indian wars, some used violence and intimidation to get what they wanted. Faustino Morales, a cowboy employed on a giant Texas ranch, described the process there. "There were many small ranches belonging to Mexicans, but then the Americans came in and drove the Mexicans out. . . . After that they fenced the ranches."

Some Mexicans fought back, especially in New Mexico and south Texas, where their communities were strong. Men such as Juan Patrón and Juan Gonzalez,

a county clerk and deputy sheriff in New Mexico's Pecos Valley, tried to protect neighbors during waves of violent land seizures, in this case instigated in the 1870s by invading Texans. The resulting Lincoln County War temporarily stalled the newcomers. New Mexico Territorial Governor Edmund G. Ross, sympathetic to his state's Mexican residents, wrote to one cattle company in indignation. "I understand very well," he wrote, "and so do you, what a cowboy or cattle herder with a brace of pistols at his belt and a Winchester in his hands, means when he 'asks' a sheepherder to leave a given range. It means instant compliance or very unpleasant consequences to the herder and his flock." Ross denounced the company for setting "these men and your cattle upon a quarter of the public domain that has been occupied exclusively by these Mexican sheep herders for a generation or more." But officials more friendly to white interests soon replaced men like Ross.

When intimidation did not work, property rights could be manipulated. With taxes overdue on one coveted Mexican ranch in Hidalgo County, Texas, during the depression of the 1870s, the sheriff sold all 3,000 acres to an associate for \$15. More often, powerful business interests hired teams of lawyers to contest Mexican land titles, most of which were communally held, poorly documented, and decades or even centuries old. In New Mexico, leaders of the notorious Santa Fe Ring got immensely rich through such litigation. Lawyers played both sides of the fence, working for corporate investors but also offering to defend Mexican land titles in exchange for a portion of the estate as their fee. By these methods, as well as armed occupation of several parts of the territory, Santa Fe attorney Thomas Catron came to possess nearly two million acres of land.

Because property claims in the Mexican cession were so tangled, Congress set up a federal Court of Private Land Claims in 1891 to sort them out. The results were dramatic: the court recognized almost no Mexican *ejidos*, or traditional communal properties, returning only 5 percent of the thirty-five million disputed acres to Mexicans living there. The court awarded most of the other acres to another kind of collective owner: corporations, who consolidated their landholdings and undertook ranching, lumbering, and mining on a grand scale. Some of the court's rulings precipitated protracted battles on the Maxwell Land Grant in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. This tract was occupied by villages of Mexican farmers who held their land by informal recognition from large landholders. The grant had also attracted Anglos such as Richard and Marian Russell, a Union veteran and his wife, who staked a claim in a Colorado valley where they built a ranch, dug a small lake, planted an orchard, and raised six children. When Lucien and Luz Maxwell, brothers who owned the "two million acres more or less" of the Maxwell Grant, sold out to a consortium of European investors, a lengthy and violent conflict ensued. As early as 1875 a Methodist minister who opposed corporate takeover was found dead in a canyon near Cimarron, New Mexico. The conflict escalated after 1882, when the Supreme Court ruled that the grant belonged to the consortium. Investors proceeded to "clear the grant"; they wanted it empty to begin a vast cattle ranching operation of their own.

The consortium's agents employed a divide-and-conquer policy, brokering deals with individual residents and isolating those who tried to hold out. Pressured by the agents, county sheriffs all over the grant undertook eviction procedures. They met stiff resistance. In Raton, New Mexico, armed men defended the property of outspoken editor O. P. McMains. Along the Vermejo River farmer Jacinto Santistevan and his sons led their neighbors in a decade of stubborn refusal to leave. Farther south, along the Poñil, the killing of rancher Julio Martínez by two deputies triggered a wave of shootouts. But ultimately, across the grant, the consortium prevailed. One of the last episodes of protest took place on Main Street in Stonewall, Colorado, where farmers and ranchers barricaded corporate agents inside the local hotel. In the shootout that followed, homesteader Richard Russell watched as two of his neighbors, "Frenchy" Giradet and Rafael Valerio, were gunned down. Russell himself was shot. He died five days later at home. Though his wife pursued her legal right to hold on to the family's land, she, too, was forced to leave.

On the Maxwell Grant some white and Mexican-American farmers worked together to resist eviction, but such cross-racial cooperation was more often the exception than the rule. Americans had always been divided along ethnic and racial lines, and the upheavals of incorporation intensified long-standing hatreds and precipitated new ones, not only among whites, Indians, and Mexicans but even more against immigrants from China. Some Chinese had entered California as early as the Gold Rush in 1849, but starting in the 1870s employers pinned their hopes on a much larger supply of cheap Asian labor. In several parts of the South, planters sought (unsuccessfully) to replace militant freedmen with Chinese workers. In 1870 shoe manufacturer Calvin Sampson shipped seventy-five Chinese workers into Massachusetts to replace French Canadians and Irish who were out on strike. His maneuver forced the strikers back to work with a 10 percent pay cut, fomenting bitter resentment against the Chinese. Around the same time, the owner of a large steam laundry in South Belleville, New Jersey, recruited Chinese men to replace Irish-American women. In almost every case the goal was to cut wages, though the long-term results were mixed. As soon as they could, many Chinese quit low-paid jobs and set up small businesses of their own.

Thus, the Chinese, like blacks in the South, confounded the stereotype that they were pliant and obedient employees. During anti-Asian violence in San Francisco, Chinese business leaders wrote to the mayor warning that if attacks continued they had "neither the power nor disposition to restrain our countrymen from defending themselves to the last extremity and selling their lives as dearly as possible." Having endured a winter of avalanches and subzero temperatures in the Sierra Nevada, 5,000 Chinese construction workers on the Central Pacific Railroad struck in the spring of 1867. They asked for wages of \$45 a month (the company offered \$31) and showed keen awareness of the national campaign for an eight-hour workday. "Eight hours a day good for white men," they declared, "all the same good for Chinamen." Bosses cut off food to the camps and wired New York about the possibility of importing 10,000 blacks as replacements. The strikers held out a week before they surrendered.

Despite evidence that they shared common goals with the Chinese, some leaders of the American labor movement devoted more energy to anti-Chinese agitation than they did to more constructive goals. The most notorious was Dennis Kearney, head of San Francisco's Workingmen's Party, who denounced Chinese immigrants as "almond-eyed lepers" and promoted the slogan "The Chinese must GO!" During one boycott of businesses in San Francisco that employed Chinese, a group of Chinese workers at one of the boycotted firms went on strike for higher wages. Instead of seeing them as potential allies, white workers announced they were exempting that employer from the boycott, on the grounds that if the Chinese disliked him, he must be OK. Kearney stirred up a public that was already deeply anti-Asian. Chinese faced hostility not only because they worked for low wages but also because they were not from Europe and for the most part not Christians. A typical article in the *New York Tribune* denounced Chinese immigrants as "utter heathens, treacherous, sensual, cowardly and cruel."

In the West, hatred of the Chinese fueled brutal violence. Mobs in San Francisco went on a three-day rampage in July 1877, burning and looting Chinatown and beating up residents. Eight years later in Rock Springs, Wyoming, vigilantes burned to death twenty-eight Chinese men in one of dozens of incidents in which Chinese were lynched or driven out of mining camps and towns across the West. One of the first activities of the Knights of Labor in Wichita, Kansas, was to organize a boycott of Chinese laundries. African-American women who resented competition had already forced Chinese laundrymen out of Galveston, Texas. Even in the absence of large-scale violence, Chinese faced steady harassment. "We kept indoors after dark for fear of being shot in the back," recalled one man. "Children spit upon us as we passed by and called us rats." Chinese-American workers had to negotiate between two worlds. Family and friends at home in China might think a man was happily collecting riches in "Gold Mountain," while he actually found himself living as a pariah, sometimes in fear of his life. Maintaining their pride, some immigrants told relatives in China that they were "clothing entrepreneurs" to hide the fact that they worked in sweaty laundries.

Hostility toward the Chinese expressed itself in two federal laws of pathbreaking significance. The first, the 1875 Page Act, subjected all female Chinese immigrants to interrogation and exclusion as potential prostitutes. Rigid enforcement denied entry to almost all Chinese women, even wives seeking to join their husbands. Since the early Chinese population in the United States, like that of many other immigrant groups, was overwhelmingly male, the Page Act kept the gender ratio skewed. It thus had the opposite of its intended effect, perpetuating prostitution while also sustaining hostile stereotypes about Asians' supposed inability to sustain proper family life. As late as 1900, less than 5 percent of all Chinese in the United States were women. Though a few worked as cooks and seamstresses, most were indeed prostitutes: in a community of single men and others with families thousands of miles away, they aptly fulfilled the Chinese name for their work, *baak haak chai*, or "hundred-men's wife."

In the meantime, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 barred all poor Chinese laborers from entry into the United States. In an era of unrestricted immigration, this was an unprecedented measure to bar newcomers of a single nationality. It was extremely popular with voters, but never as effective as supporters claimed. Though immigration became more difficult, Chinese men found ways to get in and out of the country—and powerful business interests helped see to it that they did. Indeed, both the Chinese and U.S. governments estimated after the act's passage that nine out of ten Chinese men in America had entered illegally. Some disguised themselves as Mexicans and crossed through the desert from Mexico, a dangerous journey that regularly claimed lives. Others arrived as stowaways on cargo ships or, in the Pacific Northwest, on local ferries from Canada. Many others, known as "paper sons," established false identities based on fictitious relationships with Chinese who were already in America and permitted to bring their children. Border officials kept extensive records and interrogated newcomers, but their screening procedures proved ineffectual.

The Chinese thus became the nation's first illegal immigrants. As Congress tried to ratchet up enforcement, the issue remained a focus of public anger for three decades, especially in the West, while the Exclusion Act remained a sore point in U.S.-Chinese relations until its repeal in 1943, when the two nations allied during World War II. China set up a permanent consulate in San Francisco, and its representatives protested that Chinese should have the right to enter the United States on the same basis as everyone else. Chinese Americans also protested their treatment. "The Chinese must stay," asserted journalist Yan Phon Lee, contradicting Dennis Kearney's rallying cry. He noted that "it was by the application of Chinese 'cheap labor' to the building of railroads, the reclamation of swamp-lands, to mining, fruit culture, and manufacturing, that an immense vista of employment was opened up for Caucasians, and that millions now are enabled to live in comfort and luxury. Besides," he added, "are you sure that Chinese laborers would not ask more if they dared, or take more if they could get it?" While defending themselves from racism, Chinese spokesmen sometimes revealed prejudices of their own. Lai Chun-Chuen, a San Francisco merchant, bridled at being classed with "Indians and Negroes"—especially the former, whom he described as barbarians living naked in caves.

The Page and Chinese Exclusion acts had a profound long-term impact on immigration policy. As the first laws barring entry to people of a specific race or nationality, they served as models for twentieth-century immigration quotas. Follow-up legislation required Chinese immigrants to register with the government and carry identification cards. Chinese Americans put up vigorous legal challenges to these and other discriminatory laws. In the decade after 1882 they filed more than 7,000 habeas corpus petitions in northern California courts, and these helped shape definitions of U.S. citizenship. By the early twentieth century, the Supreme Court had confirmed that anyone born in the United States was a citizen, and judges had struck down a range of discriminatory laws. But the courts also granted the federal government broad leeway to naturalize or deport

immigrants as it saw fit. Congress made increasing use of these powers, excluding polygamists in 1891, anarchists in 1903, and four years later, people suffering from tuberculosis, epilepsy, or physical disabilities. By the 1920s this evolved into a stringent quota system for immigrants from all parts of the world. Enforcement was, in the meantime, handed over to a Bureau of Immigration (later the Immigration and Naturalization Service), and those subject to deportation were denied access to the courts, even if they had evidence that they were U.S. citizens. "If the Commissioners [of Immigration]," remarked one federal judge, "wished to order an alien drawn, quartered, and chucked overboard they could do so without interference."

In every major case that denied due process to aliens, plaintiffs were Asian-born. Occasionally they were Japanese (as in the 1892 case *Nishimura Ekiu v. US*), but most often they were Chinese. It was thus hostility to Asians that fueled the rise of a Bureau of Immigration with unprecedented powers, and the definitions of legal and illegal immigrants have remained highly racialized ever since. As economic growth brought millions of Europeans into the harbors of New York, Philadelphia, and Boston and thousands of Mexicans across the unmarked and unguarded border into El Norte, anti-Asian prejudice laid the foundations for later policies that would shut those doors.

LABOR, RACE, AND VIOLENCE

The wars of incorporation were racial conflicts in at least some of their dimensions. In the West they pitted whites against American Indians and Mexican *ejidos*, in the South struggles between landowners and laborers often boiled down to white versus black, and across the country hostility toward the Chinese fueled violence and exclusion. One Massachusetts writer described French-Canadian workers as "the Chinese of the Eastern States." The leader of a Pennsylvania steelworkers' union voiced disgust at Italians, Hungarians, Bohemians, and Poles, whom he also compared to the Chinese. One Irish-American woman angrily told a visitor that there ought to be a law "to keep all them I-talians from comin' in and takin' the bread out of the mouths of honest people."

Such attitudes sprang in part from lived reality. Many of the new immigrants *did* work for lower pay and lived as cheaply as they could, saving to return home or send money back to families in poorer parts of the world. Employers exploited the divisions within the working class. Hawaiian sugar planters, for example, carefully maintained a one-half Chinese and one-half Japanese workforce, and when they suspected the two halves were beginning to cooperate, they imported Portuguese. Employers brought in Italians to break a strike in the New York construction trades in 1874. Italians arrived in Pennsylvania coalfields that same year as employers sought to cut local wages. Three were murdered in the ensuing conflict. A Vermont quarry owner, when Irish-American workers demanded union recognition and an eight-hour day, wrote to a steamship company and asked for 300 Swedes. Fifteen years later steamboat operators on the



Thomas Nast, "Sectarian Bitterness," detail from a political cartoon satirizing conflicts over school funding. In this schoolyard fight, Nast captures an array of prevailing stereotypes: against Jews and Irish (the central figures) and African and Chinese Americans (on the right). *Harper's Weekly*, 26 February 1870, 140. Courtesy Vassar College Library.

Mississippi also tried to recruit Swedes, in this case to replace blacks (though the new workers quit, having many other employment options). Discrimination did not always start at the top, but with white unions. "I was on the Southern Pacific Railway in 1884," recalled one black rail worker, "when 295 colored firemen and an equal number of brakemen were discharged. . . . I could name five more roads where colored men have been relieved by the request of the white brotherhoods."

Labor activism did occasionally cross ethnic and racial lines, especially at the local level. The labor movement was loose and decentralized, and most strikes began at the grassroots rather than with a decision by union leaders. Such "wildcat strikes" were most often prompted by a wage cut or another sudden injustice. An enormous number of such spontaneous protests—as many as 1,500 in a single year—took place in the late nineteenth century. At Montana's Gregory Consolidated mine in January 1887, company officials announced that they were closing down and workers would not receive pay for their previous two months' employment. After a hasty meeting, miners seized the town and took four company hostages. They then wired A. J. Seligman's New York banking firm, which held a large interest in the mine, and warned that they would not surrender until back pay arrived. They got their money right away. (Astutely, they had chosen as one of their hostages Jesse Seligman, the banker's son.)

The first nationwide upheaval was even more explosive, centering on that transformative enterprise, the railroad. The Great Railroad Strike jolted the nation for two weeks in July 1877. It began when managers of the four largest railroads met and agreed to slash wages, on top of a series of cuts already made over the previous three years. When the Baltimore & Ohio announced reductions of 10 percent, workers in West Virginia walked off the job, followed by railmen all over the East Coast and as far away as St. Louis and Chicago. Within days the strike shut down the transportation system. Ironworkers, dockworkers, and thousands of others gathered in the streets to join the revolt. In an indication of the breadth of



Police during the 1903 Chicago City Railway strike. In hundreds of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century conflicts between labor and capital, urban police played a decisive antilabor role. Courtesy Chicago Historical Society.

anger against the roads, those arrested for joining a militant crowd in Buffalo included masons, blacksmiths, clerks, merchants, and even a stove manufacturer.

As railroad officials pressured state governors to send in the militia, Republican president Rutherford B. Hayes declared the strike an "insurrection" and called up U.S. troops. The arrival of armed units with instructions to get the trains running, no matter what, transformed the walkout into a bloody fight. After a militia unit fired into a crowd in Baltimore, killing eleven, the mob went wild. In Chicago strikers clashed with police near the McCormick Reaper Works and the Burlington & Quincy roundhouse, where they destroyed two locomotives. The *Chicago Times* demanded in response that hand grenades be used against the "unwashed mob."

Two infantry regiments, two cavalry companies, and an artillery unit were called from the South Dakota Indian wars to patrol Chicago's streets. The struggle was equally dramatic in Pittsburgh, hub of the much-hated Pennsylvania Railroad. Knowing that most local residents sympathized with the strikers, the railroad's president called up militia units from other parts of the state. "My troops," he

declared, "will see that the trains pass." Met by an angry mob, the militia killed twenty people with random rifle fire. Infuriated workers then looted and set fire to the Pennsylvania rail yard, leaving behind the charred hulks of freight cars and engines. By the time federal troops suppressed the strike in Pittsburgh, forty-five people were dead.

The 1877 strike exposed a widening chasm between affluent Americans and those who identified with the working classes. Many of the former—and most of the press—considered the strike itself illegitimate. No matter how much strikers disciplined their ranks and how many deaths were caused by militia rifles, protesters were depicted as disruptive and violent thugs. Spectacular strikes brought visibility and mass solidarity, but they also provoked backlash as prosperous Americans became panicked by labor militancy. Small wonder that labor leader Terence Powderly struggled desperately to *prevent* strikes.

Powderly led the most visionary labor organization of the era, the Knights of Labor. Its growth depended in part on a successful 1885 strike against Jay Gould's Southwestern Railroad, begun at the grassroots by workers who had not yet joined the union. The Knights sought to bring under their umbrella skilled and unskilled workers of all races and backgrounds, whether rural or urban, male or female, immigrant or native-born. (They made one crucial and predictable exception: they denounced the Chinese and refused to accept them even when they applied to join.) "Each for himself" is the bosses' plea," proclaimed a sign carried by Knights members in a Detroit parade; "Union for all will make you free." Or as a Boston man explained, the Knights' strength came from "the fact that the whole life of the community is drawn into it, that people of all kinds are together, . . . and that they all get directly the sense of each others' needs."

Knights were visible across the country. St. Louis and Cleveland workers founded one hundred assemblies each, and twice that number were established in Brooklyn. Philadelphia, where garment cutters had first founded the order in 1869, boasted almost 300 locals. Knights in Omaha, Nebraska, organized grocery clerks, mattress makers, and musicians. The Arkansas Knights boasted locals in forty-eight counties, including coal miners, cotton mill workers, and farmhands. At one point a strike by Knights telegraphers in the ex-Confederacy halted communications in Atlanta, Montgomery, Charleston, Jacksonville, and Wilmington. In Pensacola, Florida, lumbermen and stevedores joined the Knights in 1886, followed by laundrywomen and housekeepers. The Knights boasted all-black, all-German, all-Jewish, and all-Italian locals; some women formed their own separate assemblies, while others joined clubs along with men. In San Miguel County, New Mexico, the Knights organizer Juan José Herrera and his brothers Pablo and Nicanor organized secret midnight raids. Calling themselves Las Gorras Blancas, or "White Hats," they cut barbed-wire fences and burned railroad bridges to protest Anglo intrusion. "There is a wide difference between New Mexico's 'law' and 'justice,'" Las Gorras Blancas declared in their 1890 manifesto (signed "1,500 Strong and Growing Daily"). "Justice is God's law, and that we must have at all hazards."

Law and politics eventually defeated the Knights after other tactics did not, as events illustrated in the town of Rutland, Vermont. Rutland's marble quarries employed large numbers of Irish and French-Canadian immigrants. Under the banner of the United Labor Party in 1886, such workers and their allies swept a full slate of Knights candidates into office. But well-connected quarry owners pressured the state legislature to divide Rutland. They then unseated a newly elected judge and fifteen justices of the peace on grounds that they had no jurisdiction in the three newly created districts; they also demanded that each local official post an expensive \$1,000 bond. As a historian of the incident writes, "It was as if [the Knights] had sat down to dinner only to discover that the main course had just been removed." The new town of Proctor (named after the leading quarry owner) became staunchly Republican; West Rutland, saddled with debts by the reorganization, fell back in the hands of old-line Democrats. Only in the third district, the now much smaller town of Rutland, did the Knights of Labor continue to hold sway.

At the time of the Rutland election, the Knights, with nationwide membership peaking at 750,000, were suffering from repercussions from an infamous episode of violence that shaped the course of American labor relations. During a strike at the McCormick reaper plant in Chicago, police killed several protesters. Leaders of Chicago's militant anarchist movement called for a protest rally the following day at Haymarket Square. On May 4, 1886, as teamster and labor leader Samuel Fielden addressed a sparse crowd, someone threw a bomb that killed a policeman and wounded dozens more. In the chaos that followed, several more officers and three bystanders died from police gunfire.

Amid public hysteria, blame for the violence was quickly pinned on anarchists. Police found bomb-making equipment in the possession of one anarchist leader, Louis Lingg. Forensics experts at the trial testified to similarities between Lingg's bombs and fragments of the one that had killed Officer Mathias Degan, whose murder was charged against eight anarchists who stood trial. But even today, having reexamined the forensic evidence, historians are not sure who made the bomb thrown at Haymarket Square, nor who threw it. The eight anarchists were convicted largely because they advocated violent overthrow of the U.S. government and refused to renounce those views.

Among the eight men who stood trial for the incident was Albert Parsons, a charismatic anarchist who had grown up in Texas and fought in a Confederate regiment at age fourteen. As active Republicans during Reconstruction, Parsons and his wife, Lucy, had been harassed because of their politics and their interracial marriage (Lucy was of mixed Mexican and African-American descent) and had moved to Chicago, where they joined the anarchist cause. Knowing police wanted him for questioning, Parsons fled into hiding in Wisconsin, but on the first day of the Haymarket trial he created a sensation by walking into the courtroom and asking to be tried along with the defendants. "As in former times," Parsons declared in a public statement, "a privileged class never surrendered its tyranny, neither can it be expected that the capitalists of this age will give up their rulership without

being forced to do it. . . . There remains but one resource—FORCE! Our forefathers have not only told us that against despots force is justifiable, because it is the only means, but they themselves have set the immortal example.” Lingg, a twenty-two-year-old immigrant carpenter, put it more bluntly in his final statement. “I do not recognize your law, jumbled together as it is by the nobodies of bygone centuries, and I do not recognize the decision of the court,” Lingg said. “I am the enemy of the ‘order’ of today.”

In the small number of lives lost, the violence at Haymarket paled in comparison to that of many other clashes of incorporation, but its influence on public opinion was profound. A jury convicted all eight defendants of conspiracy and sentenced four to death. Despite a nationwide petition campaign, Parsons and three others were hanged, while Lingg killed himself in his cell to resist execution by the state. Across the nation the labor movement divided over how to respond. Knights of Labor leader Powderly distanced himself from the defendants, declaring that he would rather see the hanging of “seven times seven” innocent men than show any sympathy for anarchism. Powderly even viciously slandered Parsons’s wife as a “woman of bad reputation.” After Haymarket, in fact, Powderly became obsessed with purging the Knights of dissenters. Divided and discredited, the Knights lost two-thirds of their members within a year. Meanwhile, some Americans were shocked at the unfair convictions, and the anarchists became known as the “Haymarket martyrs.” Journalist Henry Demarest Lloyd feared the results portended “government by police,” a massive erosion of the rights of free speech and fair trial. Novelist William Dean Howells called the executions, an “atrocious piece of frenzy and cruelty, for which we must stand ashamed forever before history.”

But Lloyd and Howells were in the distinct minority among the country’s prosperous and intellectual classes. Both faced social ostracism because of their stand, as public sentiment turned against the entire labor movement. In what has been called the nation’s first “Red Scare,” Chicago police helped feed the hysteria. Captain Michael Schaack and Inspector John Bonfield, in particular, used Haymarket as a career-making opportunity. They and other police arrested hundreds of Chicagoans, mostly without warrants, and alternately beat and bribed many to extract confessions. For weeks they issued almost daily warnings of imminent danger, suggesting they were uncovering an immense nationwide anarchist conspiracy. Newspapers reprinted these reports under banner headlines. “[Captain Schaack] saw more anarchists than vast hell could hold,” one commentator wrote later. One of Schaack’s superior officers admitted later that the captain “wanted bombs to be found here, there, all around, everywhere” and sought to “keep himself prominent before the public.” Nonetheless, the damage was done. Editors denounced all labor leaders as the “scum and offal of Europe,” “long-haired, wild-eyed, bad-smelling, atheistic, reckless foreign wretches.” In the wake of Haymarket, many Americans concluded that the whole movement for worker rights and an eight-hour workday was a violent, antidemocratic conspiracy.

Employers used the opportunity provided by Haymarket to roll back the labor movement. Before the end of 1886, 100,000 workers had been locked out and replaced. Strikes across the country were crushed, including protests by packing-house workers in Chicago and laundry workers in Troy, New York. The following year, striking under the banner of the Knights of Labor, African-American sugarcane cutters in Thibadaux, Louisiana, were mown down by field artillery and a Gatling gun wielded by state militia and local sheriffs’ posses. These defeats further divided a labor movement whose more conservative leaders were already so fixated on distancing themselves from radicalism that they rejected May Day—the labor holiday recognized in other industrialized countries—and invented a separate Labor Day in September. (Already, the year before Haymarket, Chicago union leaders had banned any red flags or socialist symbols from their Labor Day parade.) Haymarket intensified the predicament that labor editor John Swinton had described three years earlier: “We have openly arrayed against us,” he wrote, “the powers of the world, most of the intelligence, all the wealth, and even law itself.”

Economic incorporation, then, brought violence not just to the Reconstruction South and the western frontier but also to the entire nation. The single year of 1877, for example, witnessed not only the Great Railroad Strike but also the Combahee rice workers’ strike in South Carolina (discussed in Chapter 1); in the same year the National Guard was created to respond to domestic unrest, partly because the understaffed army was fully occupied fighting Indians in a series of battles including Wolf Mountain in Montana and Clearwater in Idaho. In the very same year, anti-Chinese demagogues were inciting riots in San Francisco, while Jesse James was still at large somewhere in Missouri (or perhaps Nebraska), and the Santa Fe ring was wrapping up the first phase of its consolidation of property in New Mexico.

In most of these conflicts, public opinion, as reflected in both popular culture and the mainstream press, projected violence onto the victims (who were, themselves, not always inclined toward peaceable self-defense). Not only did Anglos widely accept stereotypes of bloody-minded Indians, cruel Mexicans, and treacherous Chinese immigrants, similar stereotypes applied to labor activists. A New York newspaper called the Haymarket defendants “foreign savages . . . as much apart from the rest of the people of this country as the Apaches of the plains.” John Hay, later secretary of state under William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt, anonymously published a novel on the same theme. The hero of Hay’s *The Breadwinners* fought in the Black Hills against the Sioux and then came east to suppress the Great Railroad Strike in Chicago.

Western artist Frederic Remington was one of the most extreme proponents of this view. Remington, in fact, expressed more admiration for Indian warriors than for strikers, though in his increasingly racist rants he did not differentiate groups with a great deal of clarity. At one point he referred to the Sioux War as a “jihad” against the United States, and in private correspondence he expressed hatred toward all non-Anglos. “Jews, Injuns, Chinamen, Italians, Huns,—the rubbish of the earth I hate,” Remington wrote. “I’ve got some Winchesters and

when the massacring begins, I can get my share of 'em, and what's more, I will." Though few Americans expressed views as crude as Remington's, many shared them in part. Across the country, middle-class whites looked down on Indians, Mexicans, African Americans, and strikers for similar reasons: all were supposedly dirty, violent, and unwilling to accommodate themselves to the "natural" order of the new economy.

Such judgments were changing and unstable; the categories of "colored" and "working class" were not the same, and sometimes popular commentary pitted one against the other. In 1879, when thousands of blacks migrated out of the South into Kansas to seek a better life, observers compared these earnest "Exodusters" favorably with strikers in the Northeast. An Anglo in the Southwest might characterize a pious Mexican housekeeper, with her flower garden and well-scrubbed children, as a "Spanish woman"; her husband, brothers, and sons, resisting Anglo encroachment on their grazing lands or striking with a mineworkers' union, were more likely to be classed as "greasers" or "Indians." Hardworking people received praise from antilabor conservatives when they "knew their place," but in episodes of protest and conflict the same people became "indolent, bigoted, cheating, dirty, cowardly."

In this reading of the world, up was down and down was up. New systems of corporate capital and labor relations, which were causing immense disruption and dislocation, were seen as agents of order and civilization. Gold-seekers who encroached on Indian lands were, if Indians retaliated, innocent victims. Militia units that fired into unarmed crowds were preservers of the peace. This explains why the term *riot* became mysteriously affixed to various confrontations such as the "Haymarket riot" and a long series of "race riots" in the South, which, in fact, were carefully planned military attacks. In a "riot" the exact source of violence became fuzzy and could be shifted about. Despite considerable evidence to the contrary, comfortable Americans needed to believe that the sources of violence were meeting defeat.

Above all, Americans needed to believe that incorporation was a form of progress. Politicians and editors often expressed this view, and it also circulated through paintings and sketches such as Remington's as well as in popular novels. Starting in the 1860s, an avid public bought thousands of dime westerns that told the tales of "savage redskins, vicious greasers, or heathen Chinese" who met their defeat at the hands of manly white heroes. Books such as *Diamond Dick's Decoy Duck* and *Out with the Apache Kid* typically featured the rescue of a white maiden from the clutches of a dark-skinned captor (though working girls relished dozens of stories in which frontier heroines defended themselves). Some dime novels celebrated real incorporators such as Buffalo Bill Cody, who had started his career as a bison hunter feeding railroad construction crews. By the time of his death, Bill had been featured in more than 1,700 dime novels.

Buffalo Bill himself was one of the most successful salesmen for incorporation. His Wild West made a huge splash at the Chicago World's Fair and

toured Europe before immense crowds. As the show began, small herds of bison thundered into the arena pursued by skilled Sioux and Pawnee riders (whom Bill, to his credit, treated as respected employees). Bill claimed to display more buffalo in his arena than remained wild "on the whole American continent," a claim that was, sadly, off by only a few hundred or so. The climax of the Wild West was a re-creation of the famous killing of George Armstrong Custer by Sioux and Cheyenne warriors at Little Big Horn in 1876, one of the few battles incorporators had lost. Americans dwelled almost obsessively on this incident; by depicting the tragedy and heroism of "Custer's Last Stand," they reassured themselves that the Indian wars had been a necessary fight against a ruthless and savage foe.

Buffalo Bill suggested such a lesson when he strode into the arena to reenact his killing of a Cheyenne warrior in a sequence called "First Scalp for Custer." These scenes became such a popular part of the Wild West that the Anheuser-Busch brewing company, seeking a promotional angle for Budweiser beer, commissioned a lithograph of Custer's Last Stand on the twentieth anniversary of the battle. (Borrowing from a book on South Africa, it depicted Custer's attackers carrying Zulu shields.) Reprinted many times, the lithograph hung for decades in saloons across the United States. Neither Buffalo Bill nor Anheuser-Busch had much interest in the complexity of the events they depicted—but they were hardly alone. The first reports of Custer's death had been filed by a man who falsely claimed to have been at the battle and built a lucrative career out of his "eyewitness" account. Buffalo Bill carried on the tradition when he brought on tour with him the real scalp of Cheyenne warrior Yellow Hand, without explaining that he had orchestrated the encounter in anticipation of selling the story. (Nor did Bill ponder, apparently, the irony of taking a scalp on behalf of civilization.)

Significantly, by the 1890s Buffalo Bill's Wild West began to draw connections between conflicts in the West and those emerging overseas. After an international coalition, including 5,000 U.S. troops, suppressed the Boxer Rebellion in China in 1899, the Wild West introduced "Buffalo Bill's New and Greatest Military Spectacle: The Rescue at Pekin[g]." (Sioux and Cheyenne employees of the Wild West donned pigtailed to play the Chinese.) Popular narratives of incorporation, like incorporation itself, were already assuming international dimensions. Mythologizers like Buffalo Bill found large and enthusiastic audiences for their message that violent conquest was inevitable and brought political, economic, and cultural progress to all the races of humanity. Among peoples subject to such conquest, responses were as varied elsewhere as in North America. But to many observers, the presumed triumph of civilization was a matter of serious doubt.

FOR FURTHER READING

My analysis in this chapter draws first of all on Richard Maxwell Brown's essay "Violence," in the *Oxford History of the American West* (cited in Chapter 2; 803–34). In *The*

Incorporation of America, Alan Trachtenberg also uses the term *incorporation* in both geographic and hierarchical senses to describe consolidations of power. In analyzing the international dimensions of such conflicts, Walter LaFeber's *The American Search for Opportunity, 1865–1913* (New York, 1993) has been immensely helpful here as well as in Chapter 11. For international comparisons see Walter T. K. Nugent, "Comparing Wests and Frontiers," also in the *Oxford History of the American West*, 393–425. On conflict in the South see Altina Waller, *Feud* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1988), Gordon McKinney, "Industrialization and Violence in Appalachia in the 1890s," in *An Appalachian Symposium*, ed. Joel W. Williamson (Boone, NC, 1977), 131–44, and Burgin Mathews, "Looking for Railroad Bill," *Southern Cultures*, 9.3 (Fall 2003): 66–88.

Patricia Nelson Limerick, "Haunted America," in her collection of essays *Something in the Soil* (New York, 2000), 33–73, is quite possibly the most eloquent forty pages ever written about the so-called western Indian wars; I borrow from her analysis here. For Plains Indian viewpoints see Colin G. Calloway, ed., *Our Hearts Fell to the Ground* (Boston, 1996). "Wars of the Peace Policy" is the title of Chapter 6 in Robert M. Utley's *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1846–1890* (Albuquerque, NM, 1984). On assimilation policy see Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, cited in Chapter 5. Material on Native Americans here is also drawn from the articles by Thomas Biolsi, Lisa E. Emmerich, and David Rich Lewis in *American Nations*, ed. Frederick E. Hoxie, Peter C. Mancall, and James H. Merrell (New York, 2001). On Posey see Betty Booth Donohue, "Alexander Posey," in *Native American Writers of the United States*, ed. Kenneth M. Roemer (Detroit, MI, 1997), 233–41.

For conflicts over the Mexican cession I depend on six books: Howard R. Lamar, *The Far Southwest, 1846–1912* (New Haven, CT, 1966), Robert J. Rosenbaum, *Mexicano Resistance in the Southwest* (Austin, TX, 1981), David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836–1986* (Austin, TX, 1987), Richard White, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own*, and Richard G. de Castillo, *La Familia*, both cited earlier, and most of all, María E. Montoya's study of conflict on the Maxwell Grant, *Translating Property* (Berkeley, CA, 2002). See also Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge* (New York, 1987). On conflict over the arrival of new immigrants see works on immigration cited in Chapter 2, as well as Gwendolyn Mink, *Old Labor and New Immigrants in American Political Development* (Ithaca, NY, 1986). On anti-Chinese agitation and violence see in addition James W. Loewen, *The Mississippi Chinese* (Cambridge, MA, 1971), Robert G. Lee, *Orientalism* (Philadelphia, 1999), John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown* (Baltimore, 1999), and Patricia Nelson Limerick, "Disorientation and Reorientation in the American West," in her book *Something in the Soil*, cited earlier, 186–213. On Chinese exclusion see Erika Lee, *At America's Gates* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2003), the essays in Sucheng Chan, ed., *Entry Denied* (Philadelphia, 1991), and Charles J. McClain, *In Search of Equality*, cited in Chapter 5.

On labor organizing and labor conflicts, in addition to works cited in Chapter 3, see John Higham's *Strangers in the Land* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1955), Leon Fink's *In Search of the Working Class* (Urbana, IL, 1994), and Robert M. Fogelson, *America's Armories* (Cambridge, MA, 1989). On the Knights of Labor see Melton McLaurin, *The Knights of Labor in the South* (Westport, CT, 1978), Jonathan Garlock, *Guide to the Local Assemblies of the Knights of Labor* (Westport, CT, 1982), and Rosenbaum, *Mexicano Resistance*, cited earlier. On the Southwest see also Juan Gómez-Quiñones, *The Roots of Chicano Politics, 1600–1940* (Albuquerque, NM, 1994). For the great 1877 strike see Robert V. Bruce, *1877* (Chicago, 1959), David O. Stowell, *Streets, Railroads, and the Great Strike of 1877* (Chicago, 1999), and David Roediger, "Not Only the Ruling Classes to Overcome, But Also the So-Called Mob," *Journal of Social History* 19 (Winter 1985): 213–39. The best general source

on Haymarket is Paul Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy* (Princeton, NJ, 1984); see also Carl S. Smith, *Urban Disorder and the Shape of Belief* (Chicago, 1995). For new forensics research see Timothy Messer-Kruse, James O. Eckert, Jr., Pannee Burckel, and Jeffrey Dunn, "The Haymarket Bomb: Reassessing the Evidence," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 2 (2005): 39–51.

On the popular mythology of the frontier see two massive studies by Richard Slotkin, *Fatal Environment* (New York, 1985) and *Gunfighter Nation* (New York, 1992), as well as Joy S. Kasson, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West* (New York, 2000), and Janet M. Davis, *The Circus Age*, cited in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 10



Cooperative Dreams

I am for development and progress along social and spiritual lines, rather than those of commerce, nationalism, or material efficiency.

—DR. CHARLES EASTMAN (OHIYESA), SANTEE SIOUX

In 1885 a former surveyor from Chester, Pennsylvania, set out to build a spectacular city on the Pacific coast of Mexico. While touring there, Alfred Kimsey Owen had glimpsed paradise north of Mazatlán at a site called Topolobampo Bay. He published a book, *Integral Cooperation*, to describe his proposed project. Pacific City would guarantee each shareholder a home and job. Its internal economy would work on the principle of cooperative exchange, and colonists could choose to build private homes or live in cooperative hotels that would feature restaurants, libraries, and day care centers. Twenty-five-acre parks would be scattered through the city. Homes and businesses would have electric light and the latest sanitary plumbing. Public schools would educate each citizen free to the age of twenty, after which he or she would work eight hours a day, six days a week, for thirty years and then retire to enjoy the balmy climate. Pacific City would have no taxes, no rents, no prostitution, no saloons, and very little crime. With such encouragements to family life, Owen believed few residents would be single for long. To avoid religious conflicts he planned to allow no churches, but he said individual residents could preach whatever they chose. Pacific City would be modern, scientific, and harmonious in every detail.

Unfortunately, the future of Pacific City depended on Owen's related plan to build a railroad from Topolobampo to the U.S.-Mexican border, where he hoped his rail connections would create a "Great Southern" stretching all the way from his colony to Norfolk, Virginia. The dream of such a road was the chief reason that Mexican president Porfirio Díaz permitted Owen to try his cooperative experiment. But building across the Mexican Sierras would have been a spectacular feat, and Owen, in the end, had neither the money nor the engineers to pull it off. In the meantime, dozens of enthusiastic colonists arrived before Owen was ready for

them; few had useful skills, and many wrangled over the harsh conditions they found at the site. Utopian author Marie Howland created a scandal by bathing nude in the ocean and conducting an affair with a businessman from Enterprise, Kansas, who had emigrated with his family. Owen himself proved short-tempered and autocratic under stress. About 200 colonists managed to set up houses and schools, dig irrigation canals, start farms, and sustain themselves for a decade, but Pacific City never materialized. In fact, it was the Mexican government, after the revolution of the 1910s, that eventually achieved two of Owen's goals. In the 1930s it nationalized the old Topolobampo property (which had fallen into the hands of a wealthy U.S. sugar planter) and gave it back to local farmers as *ejidos*, village allotments that were communally held. Thus, Topolobampo became a co-operative farming community for Mexicans. In 1961 the Mexican government also undertook one of the great engineering feats of the twentieth century and completed a railroad over the Sierras.

Owen's Pacific City experiment was one of dozens of utopian schemes and communities created by Americans in the post-Civil War decades, an era marked by the watchword *cooperation*. After Emancipation some freedmen and freedwomen created economic cooperatives to work the land. Two decades later Jews arriving from Russia created agricultural colonies in seventeen states, ranging from Arkansas to New Jersey. A leader at a socialist colony in Tennessee proudly told a reporter that "in our new cooperative kitchen the people can be fed at a cost of eighty cents to one dollar a week, a great saving upon the individualistic plan of single homes." A host of projects like Topolobampo could be found all over the United States: the single-tax Fairhope Colony in Alabama, the Kaweah Cooperative Commonwealth in California, and the Nixsur Cooperative Colony in Minnesota, for example. The list was particularly long in Washington Territory, where the Puget Sound Cooperative evolved into the city of Port Angeles.

Millions of Americans who did not move to utopian colonies partook of a spirit of hopeful cooperation. Urban women's groups formed shopping cooperatives and exchanges to sell female handicrafts. There were cooperative boardinghouses and kindergartens and farmers' cooperative stores. Workers and farmers paid dues to cooperative insurance ventures such as the Farmers' Mutual Benefit Association. Across the country Americans founded alliances, unions, commonwealths, sisterhoods, and brotherhoods. Such projects took many troubling forms. Leading industrialists, for example, spoke directly of the benefits of cooperation when they created corporate pools and trusts. Even members of the Ku Klux Klan saw themselves as a cooperative brotherhood banding together to protect white supremacy, just as vigilante lynchers in the West claimed to represent the collective voice of their communities. In racial terms, one American's utopia could be another's nightmare. To its founders Washington's Puget Sound Cooperative was an experiment in harmony, but to Chinese workers it was just another hostile venture, one that emerged out of a spate of anti-Chinese protests in Seattle.

Utopia, then, was in the eye of the beholder. Which, for example, was the truest cooperative experiment in Chicago: was it the company town of Pullman,

founded as a supposed worker paradise by manufacturer George Pullman? Or was it the beautiful suburb of Riverside, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted as a place where prosperous families could escape urban noise and crime? Or was it Eugene Debs's Social Democracy of America, a union-led cooperative launched in Chicago a quarter-century later? Cooperation could serve purposes of exclusion and social control, it could bridge class and racial divides, or it could accomplish a little of both. Various impulses competed with each other as Americans sought to reorder their lives in a tumultuous era.

Many of the more radical experiments in collective living were inspired by books such as *The Cooperative Commonwealth*, published in 1885 by Danish immigrant Laurence Gronlund, who argued that socialism would arrive in America through gradual change rather than the violence predicted by Karl Marx. Evolution, rather than revolution, reflected Americans' trust in democracy, their religious faith, and their hope of scientific progress. But the cooperative dreams of the post-Civil War years were shaken to their foundations by an earthshaking crisis in the 1890s. Confronted by a massive economic depression and unprecedented upheaval, many Americans wondered how to move their democracy forward, or whether progress was possible at all.

THE OTHER HALF

Over the course of the nineteenth century, prosperous Americans took advantage of new opportunities to set themselves apart. In the decades before the Civil War, as cities grew, middle-class and professional families had begun withdrawing into distinct residential neighborhoods. That process accelerated in the postwar years, aided by commuter railroads that fueled the growth of suburbs. As early as the 1870s, a key marker of success was to move to a place such as Riverside. Sited on a major rail line eleven miles from downtown Chicago, it was far enough away that the annual cost of commuting excluded all but professionals and businessmen and their families. Olmsted envisioned Riverside as a place of "healthfulness and permanent rural beauty." Arguing that "the essential qualification of a suburb is domesticity," he provided playgrounds and meandering parkways along the Des Plaines River. Almost half of Riverside's land was set aside for parks. A more exclusive expression of the desire for shelter and security was the town of Tuxedo Park in Orange County, New York (two of whose founders introduced a new type of men's formal wear without tails that took the name *tuxedo*). Developed by the heir to a tobacco fortune and built by a crew of 1,800 Italian and Slovak immigrants, Tuxedo Park featured a clubhouse, hotel, commuter rail station, and three fishing lakes as well as homes and shops. It seems to have been America's first gated community. Following the tradition of aristocratic estates, a stone wall surrounded the resort, and visitors entered through a staffed gatehouse.

Along with the exclusive suburb came the country club, a well-recognized institution by the 1890s. Country clubs offered members the pleasures of boating, swimming, fox hunting, clay-pigeon shooting, tennis, and golf. In Philadelphia

polo was the craze. The Elkridge Fox-Hunting Club outside Baltimore was noted for its fine chef. Country clubs offered the assurance that fellow members were the "right sort," protecting women and children, especially, when they went out for pleasure or exercise. Henry James, who waxed rhapsodic over country clubs on his 1905 visit to the United States, noted their centrality to elite domestic life. He wrote that in the country club—as opposed to the traditional gentlemen's club—one saw "everything staked [on] the active Family as a final social fact." Within the enclave of the club, an elite family could withdraw from the public eye.

One did not have to move to the suburbs to see many forms of such segregation. Visitors to a port city such as New York or Baltimore could wander through large slum districts where poverty was the norm. Even in an inland city such as Detroit, cross-class ethnic neighborhoods faded, and rich and poor increasingly went the rounds of daily life without encountering each other. Public celebrations as well as residential space diverged. By the 1880s citizens in the factory town of Worcester, Massachusetts, held an array of distinct Fourth of July gatherings. Working-class Irishmen gathered for firecrackers, music, and drinking at a picnic sponsored by an Irish fraternal order. Swedish workers marched from church to their own picnic grounds, while French Canadians gathered in family enclaves for "pique-niques," as did Welsh, Finns, Armenians, and Jews. In the evening many working-class groups mingled at a nearby lake and amusement park, but native-born Protestants retreated for the holiday to private clubs and summer resorts away from town.

Segregation was equally obvious in hundreds of other factory and mining towns, where wage workers and immigrants were nearly synonymous categories. In Clifton, Arizona, copper mine managers built their homes and country club in North Clifton, while Mexican residents were shunted into polluted districts along the narrow canyon of Chase Creek. In Los Angeles, burgeoning numbers of Mexican-American residents were increasingly segregated into separate *barrios*, creating by 1900 the foundations of East Los Angeles.

Journalists ventured into tenements and slums to report with pen and camera on what they saw. The most famous was Jacob Riis, a Danish working-class immigrant who became a police reporter for the *New York Tribune*. Persuading friends to help him experiment with new flash photography equipment, Riis published the results in his 1890 book *How the Other Half Lives*. He charged that "the half that was on top cared little for the struggles, and less for the fate of those who were underneath, so long as it was able to hold them there and keep its own seat." Riis took middle-class readers on a tour through the streets of "Jewtown" and "The Bend," interiors of stifling tenements and sweatshops, cellars where immigrant workers slept for 5¢, and heating grates where homeless children huddled against the cold. Riis blamed "wealthy absentee landlords," and being pessimistic about the prospects of government action, he suggested instead that private investors buy and improve notorious slums. His book attracted the attention of prominent reformers such as Theodore Roosevelt while stimulating a much broader debate over urban poverty.



Children on the playground at the Webster School, Chicago, 1902. Across the United States, settlement workers and other civic activists worked to beautify city neighborhoods, improve health practices and combat disease, and build schools, day care centers, and safe play spaces for children. Courtesy Chicago Historical Society.

Riis was not the pioneer of this form of journalism, though he made it vivid through photography. Among his notable predecessors was Helen Campbell, also a writer for the *New York Tribune*, who in the 1880s published exposés such as *Studies in the Slums* and *Prisoners of Poverty*. Campbell considered herself an instructor in “survival economics” who brought the latest findings in sanitation, diet, nutrition, health care, and budgeting to the poor. As an investigator she conducted interviews and published detailed statistics on women’s wages, working hours, and the effects of layoffs and injuries. Far more sweeping than Riis in her vision, Campbell advocated equal pay for women, labor organizing, abolition of sweatshops, appointment of factory inspectors, and more educational opportunities for the next generation.

An influential group of young reformers proposed that middle-class people not just read about the slums but connect themselves directly to the poor by living among them. The settlement movement began in London in the mid-1880s, but idealistic Americans soon brought the idea across the Atlantic. The first U.S. settlement began in 1886 on New York’s Lower East Side, founded by a group of young men influenced by Felix Adler’s Society of Ethical Culture. It was followed a year later by a coalition of Smith graduates led by the Wellesley instructor Vida Scudder, whose College Settlement Association drew interested members from northeastern women’s colleges and beyond. The movement grew rapidly. In 1891 there



Virginia Day Nursery, East Fifth Street, New York City, 1906. Founded in 1879, the nursery cared for the children of working mothers on the Lower East Side. It is still in operation today. Courtesy Museum of the City of New York. The Byron Collection.

were 6 settlements in the United States; by 1905 there were 200, and five years later, 200 more.

The movement brought together professionals from the new social sciences, advocates of the Social Gospel, and most of all energetic, educated young people. Almost all settlement founders and participants were young, and four-fifths were recent college graduates. The most famous was Jane Addams, who founded Chicago’s Hull House in 1889 at the age of twenty-nine. A graduate of Rockford Female Seminary in Illinois, Addams experienced a crisis when she left school. Addams quoted a young woman from a wealthy family who met her on a European tour: “I am simply smothered and sickened with advantages. It is like eating a sweet dessert the first thing in the morning.’ This then, was the difficulty,” Addams wrote, “the assumption that the sheltered, educated girl has nothing to do with the bitter poverty and the social maladjustment which is all about her, and which, after all, cannot be concealed, for it breaks through poetry and literature in a burning tide which overwhelms her; it peers at her in the form of heavy-laden market women and underpaid street laborers, gibing her with a sense of her uselessness.”

Addams suffered special griefs, having lost her mother when she was a young child and her father only six weeks after she graduated from college. But she shared

her passionate need for a life of moral purpose with other young women who held college degrees and had no clear sense of what profession they might follow. (Belle Kearney, from a wealthy Mississippi family, felt similarly paralyzed after she left an Ohio boarding school. "If my life had to be spent on the plantation," she wondered, "what was the use of reading, of trying to cultivate my mind, when it would have the effect of making me more miserable?" Kearney added, "In those days I died ten thousand deaths. I died to God and to humanity. . . . A deadness settled upon my soul . . . for ten dreary agonizing years." She eventually built a career as an advocate of temperance and women's suffrage.) Addams borrowed the phrase "the snare of preparation" from Russian writer and pacifist Leo Tolstoy. That snare, she wrote, was the education "we spread before the feet of young people, hopelessly entangling them in a curious inactivity at the very period of life when they are longing to construct the world anew and to conform it to their own ideals."

Despite Addams's grief over the death of her father, his will provided her with the opportunity she craved by leaving her independently wealthy. After years of travel and indecision, she moved to Chicago with several close friends and purchased a run-down mansion in one of the city's poorest immigrant districts, formerly the property of Charles J. Hull. Like many other settlement workers, those at Hull House sought, at first, to provide "uplift" to the poor through concerts, art exhibits, and classes in literature and history. With humor and self-deprecation, Addams later described these early efforts as naïve. The programs of many settlement houses fit the satirical description of novelist Sinclair Lewis, who claimed they offered to the downtrodden lectures on "trout fishing, exploring Tibet, pacifism, sea shell collecting, the eating of bran, and the geography of Charlemagne's Empire."

But culture was not always alien to poor immigrants: settlement founders discovered many who were delighted to study history, gain access to a piano, or gather for readings of poetry from their home country. A fruit vendor from Athens beamed when he found a picture of the Acropolis at Hull House. He told Addams that he had talked to thousands of Chicagoans and never yet found one interested in the glory of classical Greece. At the same time, wise settlement workers such as Addams learned much from their new neighbors about the urgent problems of urban poverty. Within a few years Hull House, like many other settlements, was building safe play spaces for children and tackling the urban crises in housing, medical care, and garbage collection. A mere five years after Hull House opened, Addams was serving as a citywide mediator in tense Chicago strikes and lobbying for the appointment of Illinois factory inspectors. The first such appointee, Florence Kelley, was a Hull House resident whose socialist views influenced Addams's outlook on labor and poverty. Still another Hull House luminary, Julia Lathrop, served on the State Board of Charities and helped design the nation's first juvenile court system.

Similar campaigns went on around the country. Boston settlements, for example, played a leading role in reducing the use of child labor and advocating public

ownership of utilities. For its day, the settlement movement was remarkably diverse. Jamie Porter Barrett, an African-American graduate of the Hampton Institute, remained in Hampton and formed the Locust Street Settlement to provide work and child care training for troubled young women. The White Rose Mission, founded by African-American reformer Victoria Earle Matthews, helped blacks arriving in New York City from the South. Lillian Wald, founder of Henry Street Nurses' Settlement in New York, was a Jew who won the support of the city's leading Jewish charities. Her team of 175 nurses, including 25 African-American women, pioneered in healing the sick and teaching hygiene in the tenements. Settlement houses thus offered an array of public roles and professional careers for women. A reporter observed in the early 1900s that "twenty years ago . . . a young woman who was restless and yearned to sacrifice herself, would have become a missionary or married a drinking man in order to save him. Today she studies medicine or goes into settlement work." Even more important, settlement houses laid the groundwork for an array of twentieth-century public welfare projects.

At the same time settlements arose, another movement began to address some of the same economic and political ills, but it emerged from a very different sector of society. The Farmers' Alliance had been founded in Texas during the depression of the 1870s. In the 1880s, with cotton, corn, and wheat prices plunging to new lows and drought devastating the West, it supplanted the Grange and other farmers' groups in mobilizing rural people. Like these groups, the alliance brought farm families together for picnics, debates, and educational lectures. But it took self-help in bolder directions as its leaders, like other innovators of the day, hailed the benefits of cooperation. Texas alliance members formed cooperative stores, inviting members to pool their money to obtain bulk discounts from manufacturers. Alliance wheat farmers in South Dakota experimented with offering crop insurance and establishing direct links to British milling companies to eliminate middlemen and get a better price. Alliance leaders in North Carolina set up their own tobacco warehouse as an alternative to the American Tobacco Company's control of crop auctions. In the Deep South, alliance leaders organized a coordinated response after makers of jute, a wrapping for cotton bales, used their monopoly power to raise prices by 60 percent. The Farmers' Alliance persuaded millions of farmers to substitute cotton bagging, and this forced the "jute trust" to lower prices.

Cooperative organizing also pushed the alliance into electoral politics, since much of its agenda rested on government action. A looser money supply and more federal regulation of railroads—demands held over from the Greenback movement of the 1870s—topped the wish list. In addition, some alliance leaders endorsed a subtreasury plan, modeled on the national banking system, that would allow farmers to store crops in government-run warehouses so that they, rather than middlemen and futures traders, could benefit from seasonal price swings. Southern Farmers' Alliance members tried to work through the Democratic Party until 1892, when they became disillusioned with Democrats' conspicuous lack

of action. In the meantime, Alliance farmers nationwide began to hope for partnership with the Knights of Labor, which was also turning its energies to politics. A gathering in St. Louis in February 1892 to create a new national party featured representatives from an array of groups. They included the various Farmers' Alliances; sympathetic middle-class reformers in the West who organized themselves as the Citizens' Alliance and the Women's Alliance; the Knights of Labor and a number of other unions; proponents of Henry George's single tax on land and of Edward Bellamy's Nationalist utopian ideas; and the economically progressive wing of the Prohibition Party, led by Frances Willard herself. It was one of the era's most diverse and radical gatherings.

The new People's Party (soon known as Populists) held a second convention to draft a platform and nominate national candidates. Their platform, adopted at Omaha, Nebraska, on July 4, 1892, called for federal expansion of the money supply, public ownership of railroad and telegraph networks, and a progressive income tax levied on the very rich. Among other proposals were laws enforcing the eight-hour workday and the establishment of public savings banks at the nation's post offices, where people could safely deposit small sums. The People's delegates offered a scathing assessment of the state of the union in their preamble:

We meet in the midst of a nation brought to the verge of moral, political and material ruin. . . . The newspapers are largely subsidized or muzzled; public opinion silenced; business prostrated; our homes covered with mortgages; labor impoverished; and the land concentrating in the hands of capitalists. The urban workmen are denied the right of organization for self-protection; imported pauperized labor beats down their wages. . . . The fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few, unprecedented in the history of mankind; and the possessors of these, in turn, despise the republic and endanger liberty. From the same prolific womb of governmental injustice we breed two great classes—tramps and millionaires.

In blaming "governmental injustice," Populists recognized the active role of state and federal policies that over the prior three decades had favored corporations over small business, investors over producers, and the Northeast over the West and South. Populists declared themselves not so much in favor of more government as of a different kind of government, one that served "the plain people," . . . to the end that oppression, injustice, and poverty shall eventually cease in the land."

With similar state platforms, the People's Party won considerable power in the West in the early 1890s, from Nebraska and Kansas through the Rocky Mountain states to Oregon and Washington. Nationwide their presidential ticket won a million votes in 1892, even though southern opponents engaged in fraud and acts of terror to keep power in Democratic hands. Few southern alliance members were racial egalitarians, but they did court black voters, denounce disfranchisement attempts, and cooperate with a separate Colored Farmers' Alliance that had organized its own cooperative experiments, such as a Norfolk, Virginia, cotton exchange. Democrats deeply feared an alliance of poor southerners that crossed

racial lines, and while the People's Party never fully embodied this dream, it came closer to doing so than any other movement after Reconstruction's end.

Democrats, in response, refused to accept their opponents' legitimacy and justified any tactic to crush them. One Georgia Democrat, who assisted in an 1894 "recount" that turned a Populist victory into defeat, said later, "We had to do it! Those damned Populists would have ruined the Country." Where they could not win by such means, Democrats removed opponents from office in ways that harkened back to the overthrow of Reconstruction. Instigators described an 1898 coup in Wilmington, North Carolina, where Republicans and Populists had forged an effective coalition, as a "race riot." But in fact, it was a carefully planned attack by Democrats, who had maintained a vigilante presence throughout the preceding political campaign. (One observer wrote that it was "an awesome sight to drive through town in the dark and see synods of armed men standing at each corner.") The "race riot," carried out with a Gatling gun, resulted in not only the deaths of two dozen African Americans but also the resignation at gunpoint of local Populist and Republican officials.

The People's Party faced a number of other daunting challenges. Backed by relatively poor voters, it suffered from a chronic lack of cash. The mainstream press, centered in New York and Boston, ridiculed its leaders as hayseeds and wild-eyed fanatics, echoing the media hysteria over strikes and other protests by the working class. In addition, the U.S. winner-take-all political system and its complex set of checks and balances hampered the Populist cause. Kansas Populists won control of the lower house of the legislature in 1890, but since the Republican-dominated upper house did not face reelection until 1892, the result was deadlock and lost momentum. Colorado's Populist governor faced a hostile legislature backed by powerful mining corporations, which along with railroads spent liberally to defeat the new party. In states such as Iowa, savvy Democrats picked up aspects of the Populist agenda and prevented the new party from developing. In other states "fusion" arrangements (usually with Democrats in the West and Republicans in the South) watered down the party's program and led to infighting and disillusionment. Thus, the People's Party fell prey to some of the very conditions it arose to combat: the poverty of farmers, rifts within the American working class, the power of elite interests, and the entrenchment of Republicans and Democrats. Most of all, a national economic cataclysm spelled doom for the party as an institution, if not for some of its most enduring ideas.

DEPRESSION

Between 1890 and 1892 the success of the People's Party showed how seriously the rural economy had deteriorated in the South and West. Unluckily for Populists and for the nation as a whole, the situation got much worse. Even as Populists met in Omaha, railroad investment was slowing down. Early in 1893 the Philadelphia & Reading went bankrupt, and many businessmen began to feel uneasy. Then, on May 5, 1893, the storm broke: Philadelphia's National Cordage Company went

under, taking with it two Chicago banks and three brokerages heavily invested in its stock. As in previous economic panics, during the era before federal deposit insurance, people who held savings in private banks risked losing every dime. Desperate financiers in the heartland began calling in their deposits from New York's national banks; by July 25 those banks partially "suspended," turning away depositors who wanted to withdraw funds. People began frantically hoarding cash. Manufacturers laid off workers. Railroads lost shipping revenue and began to go under. By the end of the summer, the country had slid into a deep depression that lasted until decade's end.

Once again it appeared that the nation was headed not toward lasting peace but into distress and turmoil. While J. P. Morgan and the Cleveland administration struggled to shore up the gold standard, unemployment in major cities rose to 20 or 25 percent. The resulting misery was starkly obvious to settlement workers such as Jane Addams, who nearly bankrupted herself keeping Hull House open to provide emergency aid. Walter Rauschenbusch, serving as a street minister in New York City's Hell's Kitchen during these years, wrote that "one could hear human virtues cracking and crumbling all around." Urban police, finding themselves overwhelmed, ended their long-standing practice of allowing homeless people to take shelter on station floors. Year-round, but especially during the terrible winters between 1893 and 1897, urban newspapers published a steady stream of reported deaths from starvation, freezing, and suicide.

The impact was as severe in small towns and the countryside as it was in the great cities. "Never in my life of forty-five years of responsible activity," wrote one Ohio congressman, "have I seen a time when in spite of the hardest labor, strictest temperance, plainest frugality, and closest economy, the 'average farmer' has grown so poorer." Camps of wanderers sprang up along railroad sidings. Tramps became a familiar sight at farmhouse doors, begging for work or food. In Wisconsin, business failures and bankruptcies triggered suicides and mental breakdowns. "Jan. 3, 1894," read a typical entry at the state insane asylum. "Town of Melrose. Norwegian. Age 27. Single. Farmer. Poor. . . . Deranged on the subject of finances. Disposed to injure others." A Nebraska banker wrote in January 1895 that it made him "heartsick to look at this once prosperous country. The suffering is terrible. . . . We have several families who for a month past have had nothing to eat but flour and water and they are very thankful to get that. Scores of women and children have to stay in their sod shanties bare-footed for the want of something to cover their feet. All this was brought on these people through no fault of theirs. They are hard working, industrious people."

The United States had suffered depressions before and would do so again. But by some measures, the crisis of the 1890s was larger even than the Great Depression of the 1930s, and it was accompanied by determined, collective protests that shocked the nation's elite. In 1892, the year before the depression hit with full force, Americans had already witnessed showdowns in the steel mills of Pennsylvania and the mines of Idaho, along with a general strike in New Orleans and smaller ones in such diverse locations as Buffalo, New York, and Tracy, Tennessee. The first full year of depression, 1894, brought two more large-scale labor conflicts. In April,

125,000 Pennsylvania coal miners walked off their jobs (the United Mine Workers' official membership rolls counted 20,000). The strike spread to mines in Illinois, West Virginia, Ohio, and elsewhere. Two months later the American Railway Union (ARU) announced that its members would no longer carry Pullman cars, in sympathy with workers at Pullman's Illinois plant who had walked out after wage cuts of 25 to 40 percent. (There had been no corresponding cut in their rents for company-owned housing, nor in shareholders' dividends.) Eugene Debs had purposely built the ARU as a broad-based, industrywide union, having witnessed past defeats when brakemen, switchmen, and engineers tried to negotiate separately. The strategy worked. On June 26, ARU workers all over the Midwest began shunting Pullman cars to the sidings. By the following day, traffic on twenty railroads had slowed to a near halt, and at passenger stations as far apart as Delaware and California, Pullman cars ceased to run.

While the Pullman boycott paralyzed parts of the country for a month, Americans were also astonished witnesses to a novel form of protest: the first march on Washington, undertaken by legions of unemployed men in an appeal for federal aid. The founders of this project called it the Commonweal of Christ, but the press dubbed it Coxe's Army after its leading spokesman, Ohio businessman Jacob Coxe. Coxe proposed an immense public works project to prevent starvation. Hundreds of thousands of Americans needed jobs and bread, he observed; at the same time, the nation's dirt roads were in terrible condition for wagons, bicycles, and automobiles. Coxe proposed that the federal government hire unemployed men to build good roads.

Only 122 men accompanied Coxe as he left Massillon, Ohio, on Easter Sunday morning in 1894, but the number swelled to more than 400 by the time they arrived on the outskirts of the District of Columbia. In addition, throughout spring and summer new "armies" organized across the West, with thousands setting out from Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, Tacoma, and many inland points. Crossing into the Midwest and Pennsylvania, appointed "generals" worked hard to keep marchers organized and prevent theft. Having reviewed the California army led by Charles T. Kelley, a manager of the Rock Island Railroad described them as "intelligent determined men. . . . Their leader is a man of brains and character and great determination. He is a religious man, too." The manager added that "it is a terrible thing, and it made me sad to find that there were sixteen hundred respectable, well-meaning men reduced to such desperate straits in this country."

The Commonweal of Christ prompted an outpouring of compassion. Chapters of the WCTU organized lunch stations to feed marchers along the route. People in dozens of cities and towns held mass meetings of welcome, and churches opened their sanctuaries and basements as sleeping quarters. In Omaha, where the People's Party had taken its stand, Mayor George Bemis and prominent merchant Emil Brandeis joined a crowd of 40,000 who greeted Kelley's marchers and helped raise money and gather supplies. The Populist governor of Kansas issued a statement of support. "I am in sympathy with these men," declared the sheriff of Council Bluffs, Iowa. "They are creatures of circumstances." But more ominously, the cities of Detroit

and Cleveland offered a cold shoulder. As the armies traveled down rural roads and suburban streets, some citizens sat on their front porches cradling shotguns.

In the major protests of the early 1890s, as well as in the march of Coxey's Army, labor leaders tried to make sure their followers were law abiding. Officials of the ARU stressed again and again that participants must use "no threats" and "let liquor of all kinds alone." But hungry men walking across the continent got weary, and unemployed marchers "borrowed" at least fifty trains in various parts of the country, including some during the weeks when the Pullman boycott had already brought chaos on the railroads. Having walked all the way from San Francisco, Kelley's Army decided to speed things up in Council Bluffs. They flooded aboard an eastbound train that sympathetic local women were decorating with American flags. "Pop, you are our prisoner," a jobless railroadman informed the engineer as he took over the cab. In Montana Hogan's Army fired up the Northern Pacific's most powerful locomotive, attached it to empty coal cars to carry their men, loaded up three tons of food and supplies donated by Bozeman supporters, and ordered rail officials to clear the tracks. Furious, railroad managers complied, but they also telegraphed Washington. Hogan made it 300 miles east to Forsyth, where a superintendent spiked the switches and U.S. troops, under instructions from the attorney general, intercepted the train.

The wild ride of Hogan's Army highlighted two factors that ultimately defeated the protests of the 1890s. First, many Americans were terrified by such bold challenges to the established order. Newspapers and magazines played a major role in shaping public opinion, especially in the East. "This is no time to arbitrate," declared the *Christian Advocate*. "The battle of law and order must be fought to the end. . . . Despotism would settle this matter better than we can." The *Chicago Tribune* covered ARU activities under screeching headlines such as "Law Is Trampled On—Riotous Emissaries of Dictator Debs." "Chicago at the Mercy of the Incendiary's Torch," echoed the *Washington Post*. During Hogan's ride, when police deputies panicked and fired into a Billings crowd, headlines in the *New York Times* screamed "Blood Flows from Coxeyism" and "Battle Between Law and Anarchy." Many Americans remained firm in their conviction that striking and marching were illegitimate tactics; disrupting rail traffic and demanding government aid went beyond the pale.

The Pullman conflict proved especially bloody. While the Republican governors of Pennsylvania and Idaho called in state militia to Homestead and Coeur d'Alene, Illinois governor John Peter Altgeld chose not to do so in response to the ARU boycott. He observed that it was a peaceful stopping of trains and ruled that Illinois did not need any help from outside. Over his outraged protests, the U.S. attorney general sent federal troops to Illinois anyway. ARU leaders such as George Howard, a Union Army veteran, found themselves facing ranks of rifles. In a replay of the uprising of 1877, mobs joined in looting and rioting, with at least fifty-three killed in violence that, like the strike, radiated outward from Chicago to other locales. Angry crowds overturned trains, burned engines, and attacked rail stations and roundhouses, destroying millions of dollars worth of equipment.

It is not quite right to call these conflicts showdowns between labor and capital. Though labor relations were clearly at stake, it was government intervention on the side of capital that, as in the days of Reconstruction, decided the outcome. Thus, Pullman, Homestead, and the march of Coxey's Army can be described as three-way struggles in which government proved to be the critical corner of the triangle. U.S. troops halted both the Pullman strike and Coxey's marchers after courts granted injunctions ordering each protest to cease. In Washington officials prepared for Coxey's arrival by mobilizing the Secret Service and troops from surrounding states. With rumors circulating that Coxey's men intended to attack the Treasury, though they were armed only with white flags, department officials stockpiled weapons and ordered clerks to prepare for defense. After his parade into town, Coxey tried to stand on the Capitol steps to appeal for government aid. Police beat back the marchers, and Coxey was, to his shock, arrested, tried, and sentenced to twenty days in jail for the crime of trespassing on the Capitol grass.

The impulse for law and order in the mid-1890s accompanied a hardening of racial and religious antagonisms. During the 1890s Jews began to be systematically excluded from elite resorts and social institutions—even from New York's Union League Club, which Jews had helped establish during Reconstruction. The American Protective Association (APA), peaking at perhaps half a million members in 1894, campaigned against immigration and circulated fraudulent "proof" that the pope was instigating the murder of non-Catholics. The APA advised Protestants to boycott Catholic businesses and fire Catholic workers. Their agitation provoked at least three riots, partly because some APA members were, ironically, immigrant Protestant Orangemen who had brought sectarian hatreds with them from northern Ireland. Many Scandinavian and English immigrants also joined the APA's call to shut the door against new arrivals.

Meanwhile, in sports, the League of American Wheelmen excluded African Americans in 1894. Chicago's YMCA, one of a handful that was racially integrated, held out until 1900 before it segregated—the same year the South's last black congressman, George H. White of North Carolina, left office, and the ex-Confederacy's congressional delegation turned all-white for the next six decades. Meanwhile, 1898 was the last year any black player appeared in major- or minor-league baseball until Jackie Robinson joined the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947. Separate Negro leagues began to arise in the face of exclusion. The same was true among women's literary and social clubs. The newly formed General Federation of Women's Clubs barred black clubs from joining, despite protests from the National Federation of Afro-American Women. Advocates of women's suffrage sailed with the prevailing tide. In a particularly nasty episode, Susan B. Anthony asked her elderly colleague Frederick Douglass, a longtime champion of women's rights, not to attend an 1894 suffrage convention in Atlanta because his presence might alienate white women in the South. Douglass stayed home. Southern suffragists argued that white women's votes would be "a means to the end of securing white supremacy."

In central Texas, as the turn of the century loomed, school segregation began extending to Mexican Americans as well as blacks, and a few districts in the South

even forced Italian students into nonwhite schools. One group of Anglo Texans undertook a legal campaign to disfranchise all Mexican immigrants, though federal courts rejected their case in 1897. In New Mexico Territory, still predominantly Latino, the 1890s brought a transformation in attitudes toward the long-standing practice of bilingual schooling. By the early twentieth century, Anglos fought to conduct public schools on an English-only basis, and Congress rejected New Mexico statehood in 1902 on the grounds that too many of its residents were "alien" in language and custom.

Many racial animosities spilled over into violence. In the Deep South, Jews not only were targets of social discrimination, as in the North, but also had their farms and businesses attacked and burned. In the coal fields of western Pennsylvania, two dozen unarmed Polish and Hungarian miners were gunned down by police in one of many incidents stemming from suppression of strikes. (The United Mine Workers were by this point, wisely, bringing recent immigrants into the union fold.) Chinese farmworkers were beaten and driven out of California fields and orchards. Violence intensified most of all against blacks. During the 1890s lynchings occurred in almost every state outside New England, and the number of lynchings during the decade exceeded 1,500. Most of the victims were black men, but they included Mexican and Italian men and even some women.

While increasing in number, lynchings also became a public blood sport, with large crowds of white men and women gathering to watch for hours as victims were tortured and burned alive. Though such rituals of terror were most frequent in the former Confederacy, they also occurred in the West and Midwest. Newspapers advertised the places and times in advance, and photographers rushed to the scene to sell souvenir pictures. Two of the most notorious examples were the lynchings of Henry Smith in Paris, Texas, in 1893 and of Sam Hose in Newman, Georgia, in 1899. Both men were accused of the rape and murder of whites, but the charges later proved false. Investigators found that Hose, for instance, had been involved in a dispute with his employer. At the time, however, newspapers asserted that "the usual crime" had been committed, with the alleged rape victims cloistered from interviews. Smith, Hose, and others were slowly burned and cut to death, with railroads running excursion trains for those who wanted to watch. Afterward some onlookers hacked off victims' fingers and toes to keep as mementos.

Why did such a confluence of race hatreds take place in the 1890s? Or, to put it another way, why did Americans respond to economic crisis and social upheaval in racialized ways? As we have seen, they had long been conditioned to do so, and with a new century approaching it was clear that whites no longer securely dominated any part of the country, at least in numerical terms. An influx of Mexicans, Asians, and southern and eastern Europeans was remaking the national landscape; nervousness about their presence was openly expressed in calls for "Anglo-Saxon" rule. Southern whites also responded with fear and anger to the coming of age of the first freeborn generation, who in the late 1880s and 1890s were reaching adulthood. Writers noted that this generation had never known the submission

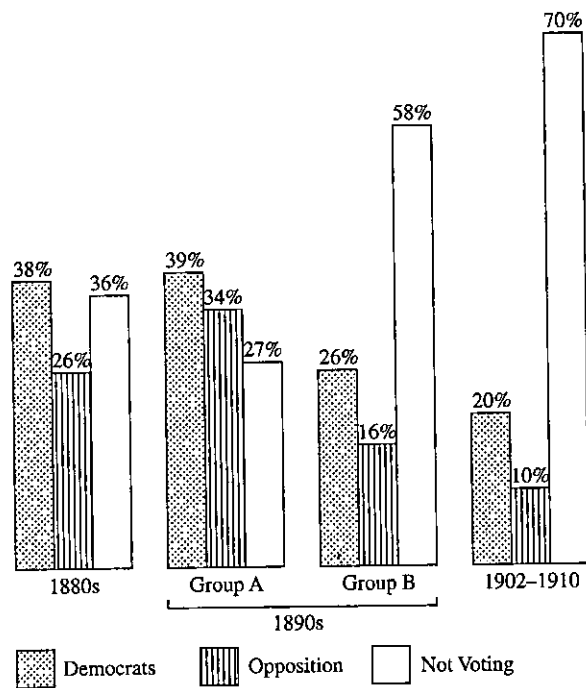
of enslavement. Lynching victims were often described as "strange Negroes"—itinerant laborers in transit, men unknown in the community and thus suspect and vulnerable. But in a broader sense, by the 1890s all young African Americans were "strange" to whites, and those with education, property, and ambition were strangest of all. Three young men lynched in Memphis in 1891, for example, had committed the crime of opening a grocery store across the street from a white competitor. Their murder launched their friend Ida B. Wells on a distinguished but lonely career as an antilynching investigator.

A Texas lynching in 1901 prompted Mark Twain to write his powerful essay, "The United States of Lyncherdom." Twain quoted from a telegraph report on the lynching, which had been delayed for several hours after the victim was nearly hung: "It was suggested that the man ought not to die too quickly, and he was let down to the ground while a party went to Dexter, about two miles distant, to procure coal oil. This was thrown on the flames and the work completed." Noting that 203 lynchings had been carried out in the previous year, Twain asked his readers to



"United we stand, divided we—fight one another." An 1892 People's Party cartoon envisioning cooperative political action by American farmers and working men. Those coming to the ballot box include a former northern Republican and former southern Democrat who have joined the Farmers' Alliance; a Colored Allianceman; and members of the Knights of Labor, the American Federation of Labor, and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. *Kansas Commoner*, 14 January 1892.

read that telegraph again, and yet again, and picture the scene in their minds. . . . Then multiply it by 115, add 88; place the 203 in a row, allowing 600 feet of space for each human torch, so that there may be viewing room around it for 5,000 Christian American men, women, and children, youths and maidens; make it night, for grim effect; have the show in a gradually rising plain and let the course of the stakes be uphill; the eye can take in the whole line of twenty-four miles of blood-and-flesh bonfires. . . . All being ready now, and the darkness opaque, the stillness impressive—for there should be no sound but the soft moaning of the night wind and the muffled sobbing of the sacrifices—let all the far stretch of kerosened pyres be touched off simultaneously and the glare and the shrieks and the agonies burst heavenward to the Throne.



The impact of disfranchisement. Party politics remained competitive in the South during the 1880s; it remained so in the following decade wherever suffrage restrictions had not been passed (in the states of Group A, consisting of Alabama, Louisiana, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia). In the states of Group B (Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Tennessee), poll taxes, grandfather clauses, and other restrictive measures were in place by 1894. Group A followed suit over the next decade. The results were dramatic. With Democrats fully ascendant, apathy and nonvoting set in even among those still eligible to go to the polls. From J. Morgan Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South, 1880-1910* (New Haven, CT, 1974), 225.

"O compassionate missionary," Twain concluded, "leave China! Come home and convert these Christians!"

If anyone had the authority to make Americans confront such hard truths, it was the beloved Mark Twain, who found himself a celebrity as far away as Cape Town and Calcutta. But Twain never published "The United States of Lyncherdom." He and his publisher worried that it would damage his reputation and sales in the South. "I shouldn't have even half a friend left down there," Twain wrote privately, "after it issued from the press." So he set aside the essay, which was found years later after his death, and turned his attention to a little parody of Sherlock Holmes.

REACTION AND REINVENTION

In all parts of the country, the depression of the 1890s provoked a sharp response at the ballot box. For the previous twenty years, since the midterm election of 1874, the national balance of power between Republicans and Democrats had been extremely close. A succession of presidents won narrowly, in three cases winning the electoral vote but not the popular vote; except for U. S. Grant, none served two terms. Control of both the Senate and the House changed multiple times. Bases of power in both chambers were also destabilized by the reentry of the South, rapid population growth, and the admittance of ten new western states. When U. S. Grant took office, there had been 68 senators and 226 representatives in Congress; by 1893 there were 88 and 356. In an era of close party competition, campaigns in key swing states such as Ohio and New York were hard-fought and exhausting. Close margins of victory prompted fraud and high-pressure tactics as each party struggled for advantage.

For a brief moment in 1889 and 1890, Republicans won control of both houses of Congress and the White House. Benjamin Harrison, the last Union general to serve as president, adhered to the issues of the Civil War: he ran on his military record and denounced the disfranchisement of southern blacks. Republican leaders, in what became known as the "Billion Dollar Congress" of 1890, passed a major new pension program for Union veterans, built up the navy, and renewed the high protective tariff. These measures proved unpopular: Democrats won control of the House in November 1890 and recaptured the Senate by a slim margin two years later as Democrat Grover Cleveland recaptured the presidency. But unfortunately for Democrats, these events put them fully in control when the United States was hit by the depression of 1893.

Voters apparently blamed the party in power for the economic cataclysm, and the election of 1894 brought overwhelming Republican victories. Across the North and West, Democrats were voted out; in the few western states where Populists had won control, they were also swept from office. Democrats, who had held the House of Representatives by a margin of 218 to 124 (with 2 Independent Democrats, 11 Populists, and 3 Silver Party members), now found themselves in the minority, 254 to 93 (with 9 Populists and 1 Silverite). Two years later William McKinley

completed Republicans' national power with a decisive presidential victory. It became clear over the next few years that the era of close party competition had ended: after 1896, Republicans controlled the White House and both houses of Congress until 1910.

The Republican Party that came to power in 1894 and 1896 was very different from its predecessor of the Civil War era. Republicans had made their last effort to preserve a piece of Reconstruction during their active session in 1890, through a bill sponsored by Massachusetts senator Henry Cabot Lodge. The Lodge elections bill would have created a new federal board empowered to investigate any election when 100 or more citizens petitioned for aid. If passed, it would have provided ordinary citizens with a tool to push for fair elections. But the bill created an uproar in the South, where it was known as the "Force Bill" and generated hysterical warnings of "Negro supremacy." It also generated opposition in the West and among leaders and allies of urban political machines. Lodge's bill passed in the House, but it met defeat in the Senate by one vote.

The bill's failure had the worst possible results. It failed, and its failure persuaded Republicans to abandon any further effort to enforce fair elections in the South. At the same time, its near-passage galvanized southern Democrats, who worked to blunt the impact of any future such bill. In the 1890s they chose white supremacy as the banner under which to unite white voters and defeat southern Populism. Having taken power—in some cases through fraud or terror—southern Democrats secured their position. They passed disfranchisement laws that entrenched white supremacy for decades to come. Black voters were shut out almost completely. As poll taxes and new registration laws came into effect, the number of poor white voters also declined, as much as 46 percent in Louisiana and 48 percent in Virginia. It was "horrible," wrote an observer in Virginia's Appalachian districts, "to see the marks of humiliation and despair that were stamped on the faces of honest but poor white men who had been refused registration. . . . We saw them as they came from the presence of the registrars with bowed heads and agonized faces." The South, as one historian puts it, became less a democracy than "a broad-based oligarchy." This result had a profound impact beyond the South. In Washington, no one challenged southern states' right to continue using their total populations to calculate their electoral votes and congressional delegations. This gave the South's voting elite an extremely disproportionate share of national power.

Whites in other parts of the country acquiesced in disfranchisement, in part because they had come to share many of the views of southern white elites. Anglos in the West were fighting to control Asians and Mexicans. (It was no accident that the hero of Owen Wister's best-selling western novel, *The Virginian*, hailed from the South.) Commentators such as E. L. Godkin of the *Nation* heartily agreed with Virginia politician Carter Glass that "nothing can be more dangerous to our republican institutions than to see hordes of ignorant and worthless men marching to the polls." Meanwhile, as early as 1888 one critic noted that American literature was becoming "not only Southern in type, but distinctly Confederate in sympathy." Popular novelists such as Mrs. E.D.E.N. Southworth described the

antebellum South as an idyllic place, where plantation families had dwelled in beauty and chivalry while contented slaves frolicked in the quarters. By 1900 professional scholars joined writers like Southworth and Thomas Dixon, author of virulently racist national best-sellers like *The Clansman*, in rewriting history. School textbooks reported that slavery had been benign or even beneficial to slaves, while Reconstruction had been an orgy of rape and arson instigated by northern carpetbaggers.

Such ideas were difficult to challenge anywhere in the United States by 1900; in the South the attempt could be perilous. A number of outstanding black and white southerners became exiles in the North—notably novelist George W. Cable, congressman George H. White of North Carolina, antilynching journalist Ida B. Wells, historian John Spencer Bassett, and Emory College professor Andrew Sledd. A degree of intellectual chill touched other regions of the country as well. University of Wisconsin economist Richard Ely, for example, faced pressure to resign after he wrote sympathetically about socialism.

It was a measure of the narrow, blinkered experience of prosperous Americans that many remembered the decade of depression as the "Gay Nineties—full of fun—while millions spent desperate years between 1893 and 1899 struggling to find work and food. Lecturing in eastern Pennsylvania, Nebraska Populist Cecilia O'Neill found that when she described the plight of farmers and the unemployed, she met "heartless indifference." Warned of "the dangers imminent from the unrest of the people," her listeners airily replied, "O, that is only around the mines, the Army and our Militia will keep order there." No one," O'Neill wrote, "can make the fortunate and comfortable comprehend that humanity around the mines is of the same nature as his own."

Amid hardship and political backlash, few cooperative dreams survived the 1890s in unaltered form. Instead, the theme was regrouping and retrenchment. "Oh I have been through the partisan battle," remarked a weary Susan B. Anthony, whose suffrage movement got caught in battles between western Republicans and Populists. The suffrage cause was a notable casualty of political realignment: it became associated with western Populists, who endorsed it, and was discredited after the party's defeat. With Populist support, Colorado women won full voting rights in 1893, and Idaho women in 1896. But after that, suffragists endured a "decade in the doldrums," as one later put it, winning no further victories for fourteen years. Antisuffrage writer Helen Kendrick Johnson claimed that female voters in Colorado had endorsed "Free Silver and Populism of the most extravagant type." In California, on the other hand, male voters had rejected a referendum for women's voting rights and at the same time elected Republicans, choosing "sound money against repudiation" and "authority against anarchy." Only in 1910, with the revival of close party competition and the rise of a pro-suffrage Progressive Party in the West, did the women's suffrage movement begin once again to achieve state victories.

After the Prohibition Party fragmented and declined, Frances Willard sadly dismissed parties as "of no more value than so many tin cans." With progressive

Illinois governor John Altgeld replaced by a conservative Republican, Hull House reformer Florence Kelley lost her post as a factory inspector to a pro-business successor. Numerous cooperative colonies and experiments failed in the economic crisis, and new ones focused on the cause of sheer survival. The Salvation Army created unemployment colonies in California, Colorado, and Ohio. One Maine activist proposed abandoning reform at the national level and moving radicals to a single western state, which he hoped to convert into a cooperative commonwealth. The plan, briefly supported by Eugene Debs and others, brought a series of socialist and anarchist colonies to Washington, but it did not ultimately succeed.

Other reformers suggested withdrawing from the United States altogether. Populist Henry Demarest Lloyd toured New Zealand, which had given women the vote and instituted a host of labor reforms; he returned on lecture tours to describe New Zealand's charms to disillusioned Americans. Among African Americans, interest in overseas colonization reached an unprecedented peak. AME bishop Henry McNeal Turner proposed establishing an African state whose "glory and influence will tell upon the destinies of the race from pole to pole." The International Migration Society carried several shiploads of migrants to Liberia, while several thousand more left the Gulf states and emigrated to a Mexican colony founded by black Texas businessman William Ellis.

But emigration schemes proved far less important and popular than other strategies for cooperation and self-defense. During the 1890s African Americans created a striking number of organizations for race pride and defense of human rights. Among them were the Afro-American League, formed in 1890 in Chicago, and the National Association of Colored Women, created in 1895 from the merger of several women's groups. A year later the American Negro Academy gathered intellectuals from across the nation for a convention in Chicago, which became an annual event, and Atlanta University began hosting an annual Conference on Negro Problems. Between 1900 and 1906 black leaders in a number of southern cities launched boycotts against segregated streetcars in a campaign that presaged the later strategies of the civil rights movement. The streetcar boycotts showed—like interest in emigration projects—that ordinary blacks in places such as Houston, Memphis, Pensacola, and Mobile held on to a strong collective dream of equal treatment under the law. Unfortunately, conditions were not ripe for sympathetic whites or the national press to offer a supportive response.

Nonetheless, in the summer of 1905, W. E. B. DuBois and other race leaders gathered near Niagara Falls to draft a statement of principles. Young and well-educated, the Niagara signers represented a new generation of leaders who were setting out to challenge Booker T. Washington's strategy of compromise and conciliation. They argued, instead, for the defense of voting rights, good schools, decent work and pay, and healthy housing and streets. They reminded Americans of the meaning of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth amendments—"articles of freedom" that Reconstruction had enshrined in the Constitution—and insisted that they be enforced. Follow-up meetings in 1906 and 1907 helped lay the

foundations for the twentieth-century civil rights movement, and most immediately for creation of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) in 1909.

In the same years, Mexican men in Arizona developed the Alianza Hispano-America, a mutual aid society that spread rapidly across the Southwest and became a vehicle for labor advocacy. The Texas equivalent was La Unión Occidental Mexicano, and Mexican-American women matched this with their own Sociedad Benificencia. Meanwhile, a coalition of American-born Chinese founded the Native Sons of the Golden State (later renamed the Chinese American Citizens' Alliance). The group's founders came from a generation of merchants' sons, often criticized by their Chinese-born elders for lacking seriousness and respect for tradition. But the Native Sons gained grudging admiration when they defended themselves from the virulently anti-Chinese Native Sons of the Golden West, who brought suit claiming that the term *native sons* was proprietary to their white group. The Chinese, to their great satisfaction, won the right to keep their name.

The obvious plight of the unemployed during the depression—and the bias of courts—began to provoke regret and reconsideration. Attorney General Richard Olney, for example, much hated for his central role in suppressing the Pullman and Coxey protests, found to his dismay that he had been duped by railroad executives. A commission investigating the Pullman conflict discovered that 3,600 of the U.S. marshals whom Olney had authorized in Chicago had been handpicked, armed, paid, and supervised by the railroads themselves. Olney also discovered that the railroads had deliberately attached Pullman passenger cars to U.S. mail trains in order to hinder those trains and provoke federal intervention. Confronted with these facts, Olney began to lean toward arbitration, seeing the need for government to take a more even-handed role in struggles between capital and labor.

In a broader sense, the massive depression began to slowly undermine affluent Americans' assumption that poverty and unemployment resulted from personal moral failings. Even earlier, amid the depression of the 1870s, the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics and Labor had begun to use the term *unemployed* to describe those who wanted work and could not find it, rather than those who did not want to work. The noun *unemployment* made its debut in 1887 in one of the bureau's reports. By the 1890s, the New York Charity Organization Society, which had once warned that soup kitchens would damage the morals of the poor, changed its views. In 1898 it undertook a joint scientific study with social scientists from Columbia University and concluded that unemployment, illness, and disabling accidents were the overwhelming causes of poverty. One charity leader declared that such troubles were "as much beyond [workers'] power to avert as if they had been natural calamities of fire, flood, or storm." "Personal depravity," wrote another reformer, "is as foreign to any sound theory of the hardships of our modern poor as witchcraft or demonic possession."

Thrown out of power in the 1890s, Democrats began to gradually reshape their party, even as their southern leaders settled the "race question" (and the

Populist question) by securing power for the white elite. Democrats had mistrusted central authority and championed small government. But they began to argue that ordinary Americans needed government allies to counter the power of trusts and large corporations. As early as the late 1880s, Democrats provided key votes for regulatory measures like the Interstate Commerce Act. They began to champion a federal progressive income tax on the wealthiest Americans, a measure that passed the Democratic-controlled Congress in 1894 and received President Grover Cleveland's signature, only to be overturned by the Supreme Court.

Perhaps the most important figure in this transition was Nebraska Democrat William Jennings Bryan, whose presidential nomination stunned the country in 1896. Though Bryan lost the election, he inspired millions of Americans with his stump-speaking tours and his impassioned rhetoric. Nominated by his party again in 1900 and 1908, Bryan helped his party enter the modern age with a new agenda: fair labor laws, regulation of trusts, and government aid to farmers. By 1906 Bryan came out for government ownership of the nation's transportation system. The railroads, he declared, "must ultimately become public property and be managed by public officials in the interest of the whole community." Bryan and his followers helped put Democrats on a path that would lead to Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal in the 1930s. (An irate Herbert Hoover would dismiss the New Deal as "Bryanism under new words and methods.")

In fact almost all the major leaders of early twentieth-century progressive reform had arrived on the public stage by 1905. They ranged from Jane Addams at Hull House, to John Muir of the Sierra Club, to Carrie Nation and the Anti-Saloon League, which initiated a new high-profile antiliquor campaign that eventually carried the Prohibition movement to national victory. Investigative journalism was carried forward by the powerful documentary photographs of Lewis Hine, taken for the National Child Labor Committee. After witnessing the impact of the depression, Jane Addams's colleague Florence Kelley launched the national Consumers' League, which organized female shoppers to choose products made by workers who earned fair wages in decent working conditions. The Women's Trade Union League began to experiment with similar cooperative ventures that brought together women from the elite and the working class.

Having expanded their public roles over the previous four decades, women claimed a prominent place in much of the work that emerged during and after the 1890s. Women's literary and study clubs, which had flourished over the past two decades, began to turn their attention to education and civic reform. Joining settlement activists, professional nurses and social workers, and advocates of the Social Gospel, club women argued that they had a role to play in "municipal housekeeping," since forces outside the home were threatening their families' health and safety. "Very early," wrote an officer of the General Federation of Women's Clubs in 1906, "club women became unwilling to discuss Dante and Browning over the teacups in some lady's drawing room . . . while unsightly heaps of rubbish flanked the paths over which they had passed in their journey thither." Reformers in rural areas also undertook campaigns to improve education, housing, hygiene, and

health care. Across the South, chapters of the WCTU and other groups worked across racial lines for prohibition and public health.

City governments, especially in the Midwest, underwent a new wave of innovation as dramatic as that which had followed the Civil War. Rebuilding after a horrific hurricane in 1900, Galveston, Texas, introduced the commissioner system of city government, copied soon afterward from Oakland to Buffalo. Samuel "Golden Rule" Jones of Toledo, Ohio, proved to be one of the nation's most inspiring mayors between 1897 and 1904. An industrialist who had prospered in the oil well business, Jones believed in treating workers as he would his kin. He established an eight-hour workday and a minimum wage for city workers, as he had in his company's plants, and he gained broad support for construction of better parks and schools. Mayor Tom Johnson of Cleveland offered similar social welfare programs beginning in 1901, while during the depression years Detroit mayor Hazen Pingree had already won nationwide praise by opening vacant lots for community gardens. Dubbed Pingree's Potato Patches, the gardens fed thousands of grateful residents and were copied as far away as the Netherlands.

In the meantime, ARU leader Eugene Debs, arrested for failure to heed the Pullman injunction, refused bail on principle and spent several weeks in the rat-infested Cook County Jail. His cell there overlooked the courtyard where the Haymarket anarchists had been hanged. Debs emerged from the experience as a socialist, and the new party he led became the first homegrown, English-language movement for socialist democracy in the United States. At once more narrow in its base and more radical than the People's Party, it nonetheless included practical municipal gas-and-water socialists such as Milwaukee's Victor Berger. While socialism grew in the heartland amid economic distress, the arrival of radical Russian Jews and "Red Finns" invigorated the ranks of the political left. Abraham Cahan's socialist *Jewish Daily Forward*, founded in the 1890s, soon had the largest circulation of any Yiddish newspaper in the world.

At the state level, Wisconsin's Republican governor "Fighting Bob" LaFollette carried forward such progressive reforms as higher corporate taxes and tougher railroad regulation. In 1900 Maryland became the first state to make employers compensate employees injured on the job, and western states such as Utah and Oregon were at the forefront in setting minimum wages and maximum working hours. State and local reforms were accompanied by federal initiatives such as antitrust and environmental conservation measures, marking the first great peak of progressive reform around 1906. Eventually, voters in the states that had given birth to Populism elected many of the congressmen who championed federal deposit insurance for investors, the Federal Trade Commission, the Federal Reserve, and the progressive income tax.

In the long run, then, even though the Populist Party and other cooperative dreams of the 1890s foundered, many of their ideas endured, though they did so in an altered political climate. Evolution away from capitalism had been at the core of utopian projects and books such as Owen's *Integral Cooperation* and Gronlund's *The Cooperative Commonwealth*. The slow transformation of that vision set crucial

precedents for the future. Had Americans, for instance, nationalized their telegraph system during the late nineteenth century, a measure seriously debated by Congress at several junctures, that single reform would have had important implications for future generations. Accustomed to a public communication network, later Americans might have been more inclined to insist on public ownership of telephone lines, radio and television stations, cable bandwidths, cell phone frequencies, and Internet service. As one looks down such paths not taken, the scenery fades into the mists of uncertainty. To take just one example, a Populist proposal that *did* win later adoption, the federal income tax, was originally designed to tax only a small percentage of Americans, the very richest, and use the proceeds to help level the playing field for all. Over nine decades the program has mutated into something very different indeed.

In a similar way, the ideas advanced by utopian colonists, settlement workers, Populists, and other reformers and dreamers changed shape during the critical decade of economic depression. They established a lasting legacy in American politics, a deep well into which future progressives could dip their buckets. But America's immediate collective response to depression and crisis was grounded in experiences of conflict and privation. In her novel *A Lost Lady*, Willa Cather later wrote that the 1890s brought to the forefront "a generation of shrewd young men, trained to petty economies by hard times. . . . The space, the color, the princely carelessness of the pioneer they would destroy and cut up into profitable bits, as the match factory splinters the primeval forest." More than the frontier West was at stake. The 1890s also brought a consolidation of new powers by U.S. presidents and corporate leaders.

FOR FURTHER READING

Ray Reynolds tells the story of Topolobampo in *Catspaw Utopia*, 2nd ed. (San Bernardino, CA, 1996). A wonderful source on such projects generally is Donald E. Pitzer, ed., *America's Communal Utopias*, cited in Chapter 8; for another case study see W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *A Socialist Utopia in the New South* (Urbana, IL, 1996). On suburbanization see Stuart Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class* (Cambridge, MA, 1989) and Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier* (New York, 1985); on urban segregation see Olivier Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality* (Chicago, 1982), and Roy Rosenzweig, "Eight Hours for What We Will" (Cambridge, MA, 1983). I have also relied on Nora E. Schlesinger, "Riverside, Illinois: Frederick Law Olmsted's Bourgeois Utopia," research paper, American Culture 250, Vassar College, fall 2003.

On settlement houses see Allen Davis, *Spearheads for Reform* (New York, 1967), and Victoria Bissell Brown's introduction to her edition of Jane Addams's *Twenty Years at Hull-House* (Boston, 1999). On Addams see Louise W. Knight, *Citizen* (Chicago, 2005). On Hull House see also Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Florence Kelley and the Nation's Work* (New Haven, CT, 1995). The best short overview of Populism is Robert McMath, *American Populism* (New York, 1993); see also the first two chapters of Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion* (New York, 1995), as well as John D. Hicks, *The Populist Revolt* (Minneapolis, 1931), and Lawrence Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise* (New York, 1976). Also helpful here was Barbara

Fields, "Ideology and Race in American History," cited in Chapter 1, and Stephen Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2000).

In *Protestant Churches and Industrial America*, cited in Chapter 8, Henry F. May uses the metaphor of "three earthquakes" that I borrow here. Also see Charles Hoffman, *The Depression of the Nineties* (Westport, CT, 1970), Kenneth L. Kusmer, *Down and Out, On the Road* (New York, 2002), H. Roger Grant, *Self-Help in the Depression of the 1890s* (Ames, IA, 1983), and Michael Lesy's nightmarish and disturbing *Wisconsin Death Trip* (New York, 1973). On Pullman see David Ray Papke, *The Pullman Case* (Lawrence, KS, 1999), and the essays in *The Pullman Strike and the Crisis of the 1890s*, ed. Richard Schneirov, Shelton Stromquist, and Nick Salvatore (Urbana, IL, 1999). The best account of the Commonwealth of Christ is Carlos A. Schwantes, *Coxey's Army* (Moscow, ID, 1994).

For a broad analysis of the rise of "radical racism," see Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race* (New York, 1984). On various forms of heightened racial and ethnic segregation and animosity see also three works previously cited: John Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, Steven A. Riess, *Sport in Industrial America*, and Gerald Sorin, *Tradition Transformed*. In addition I have drawn on Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850-1920* (Bloomington, IN, 1998), and Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, "Race, Reform, and Reaction at the Turn of the Century," in *Votes for Women*, ed. Jean H. Baker (New York, 2002), 102-17. On Mexican Americans throughout this chapter, see four books on the Southwest that were cited earlier: Linda Gordon's *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction*, Matt S. Meier and Feliciano Ribera's *Mexican Americans/American Mexicans*; Arnaldo De León, *The Tejano Community, 1836-1900*, and David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas*. Also helpful on New Mexico is Erlinda Gonzales-Berry, "Which Language Will Our Children Speak?" in *The Contested Homeland*, ed. Erlinda Gonzales-Berry and David Maciel (Albuquerque, NM, 2000), 169-89.

On lynching see James Allen's powerful book *Without Sanctuary* (Santa Fe, NM, 2000), W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* (Urbana, IL, 1993), and for both lynchings and the broader pattern of political and racial conflict in the South, Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South*, cited in Chapter 1. A statistical summary is the NAACP's *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1918* (originally 1919; reprinted New York, 1969). On Ida B. Wells's investigations see Patricia Schechter, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2001), as well as the introduction by Jacqueline Jones Royster in her edition of Wells's *Southern Horrors and Other Writings* (Boston, 1997).

On politics, see Charles Calhoun, *Conceiving a New Republic*, cited in Chapter 1, R. Hal Williams, *Years of Decision* (New York, 1978), and Samuel T. McSeveney, *The Politics of Depression* (New York, 1972). On western Populism and the structures of the political system see Peter H. Argersinger's two books, *Structure, Process and Party* (Armonk, NY, 1992), and *The Limits of Agrarian Radicalism* (Lawrence, KS, 1995), as well as Jeffrey Ostler, *Prairie Populism* (Lawrence, KS, 1993). On legacies of Populism see, in addition to McMath's *American Populism*, Elizabeth Sanders's impressive *Roots of Reform* (Chicago, 1999). On Bryan see Michael Kazin, *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan* (New York, 2006). On disfranchisement in the South, see J. Morgan Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics* (New Haven, CT, 1974); the quote on the rise of southern "oligarchy," from Walter Dean Burnham, appears on p. 224. On southern sympathies in literature and the chilling of the intellectual climate, see Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1993), Ayers's *Promise of the New South*, cited earlier, and David W. Blight's *Race and Reunion*, cited in Chapter 1. On the case of Richard Ely, see Mary O. Furner, *Advocacy and Objectivity* (Lexington, KY, 1975).

For shifting responses to poverty amid the crisis of the 1890s, see Alexander Keyssar, *Out of Work* (Cambridge, MA, 1986), Walter I. Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State*, cited in Chapter 1, Daniel T. Rogers, *Atlantic Crossings*, cited in Chapter 2, and Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies* (Urbana, IL, 1991), and Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1996). On the rise of socialism, see Howard S. Quint, *The Forging of American Socialism* (Columbia, SC, 1953); on black nationalism and pan-Africanism, Edwin S. Redkey, *Black Exodus* (New Haven, CT, 1969); and on the Niagara movement, John Hope Franklin's *From Slavery to Freedom*, cited in Chapter 1. On the origins of the Chinese American Citizens' Alliance see Sue Fawn Chung's article in *Claiming America*, cited in Chapter 5, and on boycotts see August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, "The Boycott Movement Against Jim Crow Streetcars in the South, 1900-1906," *Journal of American History* 55 (1969): 756-75. Willa Cather's comment on the depression's impact is in *A Lost Lady* (New York, 1923), 90. For emphasis on positive long-term outcomes of the crisis of the 1890s, see Steven J. Diner, *A Very Different Age* (New York, 1998), and Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent* (New York, 2003).

CHAPTER 11

Executive Powers

The world lies before us. It'll not be the same world when we get done with it.

—WALTER HINES PAGE

It is hard to pinpoint an exact date when the United States took over the Hawai'ian Islands. Protestant missionaries arrived in 1820, and over the decades that followed they converted the island's royal family. New laws in the 1840s, advocated by the missionaries, opened land for market purchase and resulted in rapid takeover by American-born landowners, at the same time that American whaling ships made Honolulu a key port and brought an influx of foreigners and trade. By the 1850s and 1860s, Hawai'i's legal code had been thoroughly transformed, and high-quality sugarcane was replacing whales as the most lucrative natural resource. Cane planters imported thousands of laborers from China, Japan, and Portugal, who soon made up a majority of Hawai'i's population. Rapid growth of the sugar industry created, in turn, momentum for U.S. political annexation. In 1887 militant planters forced King David Kalakaua to accept a constitution that brought "American-style democracy" to the islands. (Eligible voters included all whites, no Asians, and only some native Hawai'ians.) A coup by U.S.-born locals in 1893 against Kalakaua's successor, Queen Liliuokalani, when she tried to replace the 1887 constitution with a royal charter of her own, paved the way for Hawai'i to become a territory of the United States.

The conquest of Hawai'i illustrated in microcosm almost all the major themes of U.S. history in these years. Epidemic diseases—smallpox, typhoid, leprosy, syphilis—reduced the islands' native population from perhaps a half-million to 30,000, making resistance as difficult for Hawai'ians as it had been for native peoples on the North American continent. The land reforms of the 1840s offered lessons that the authors of Reconstruction should have heeded: missionaries hoped it would turn the peasantry into landowners, but instead 85 percent of the islands' land fell to outsiders, most of whom were elite men from the United States. No one wanted an Asian majority on the islands, but the interests of powerful sugar planters brought that about. The result was hysteria and violence against Chinese and Japanese cane workers. They, in turn, struck repeatedly for better wages and working conditions despite planters' attempts to keep the labor force racially divided.

Many planters opposed U.S. political annexation for many years, fearing that enforcement of the Chinese Exclusion Act would undercut their source of cheap labor.

But sugar planters had become enmeshed in American politics. In the coveted U.S. market they competed with Louisiana cane growers and western sugar beet farmers, whom Republicans protected with a high tariff. After an 1875 treaty placed Hawai'i inside the tariff barrier, the islands' sugar exports to the United States grew twentyfold in two decades. When the treaty came up for renewal in 1887, U.S. negotiators demanded exclusive naval rights to Pearl Harbor, and after some debate they received it. But in 1890, notwithstanding this concession, Congress lifted all tariffs on sugar in response to intense lobbying from beet growers and instead began paying a direct subsidy of 2¢ a pound to producers inside the United States. The result in Hawai'i was catastrophic. Sugar prices plummeted. Some smaller-scale planters went bankrupt, precipitating, in part, the final drive for annexation so that Hawai'i could claim a secure place in the U.S. economy.

The machinations of annexationists show that it was hardly inevitable as late as 1890. Officials repeatedly denied that they sought to conquer Hawai'i. U.S. diplomats who pulled strings in island politics often did so without help from Washington, or even against direct orders. But by the 1870s U.S. warships began to materialize offshore when business interests were at stake. After 1891 the U.S. consul-general in the islands, Republican appointee John L. Stevens, flouted diplomatic protocol by joining a secret Annexation Club that conspired to overthrow the queen. During the subsequent coup he called in U.S. Marines armed with Gatling guns, who stationed themselves near the royal palace to "watch" as the queen surrendered control. (The queen had ten Gatling guns herself and without direct U.S. intervention might well have fought to keep her throne.) Stevens recognized the new government before it had even secured control of Honolulu.

The coup leaders hoped the United States would immediately annex the islands, but that did not happen for five more years. In the intervening period, uncertain whether their political and economic system would even survive the crisis of the mid-1890s, policy makers in Washington undertook a massive quest for new foreign markets in which to sell U.S. products. This initiative helped lead to war in 1898 and the acquisition of not only Hawai'i but also the Philippines, both way stations for American ships headed to and from Asia. Soon afterward, in coastal China, the Caribbean, and Central America, U.S. policy makers made bold grabs for control.

Two critical configurations of power emerged clearly between 1896 and 1906. First was the growing dominance of the presidency in relation to Congress, so closely linked to the nation's rising power on the world stage that some historians describe William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt as creators of an "imperial presidency." In many ways Roosevelt shared the worldview of Liberal Republicans such as E. L. Godkin of the *Nation*, who fiercely attacked "socialistic" ideas but wanted stronger forms of government administration and regulation—as long as government lay in the hands of experts and the elite.

Roosevelt, who came from a wealthy and privileged family, called for men of his class to reclaim political power from immigrants and men of "lesser breeding," and he saw his own career as an embodiment of that ideal. As president he pioneered overseas police actions and executive agreements, circumventing the constitutional rules that gave Congress authority over war making and required presidents to seek the Senate's consent for foreign treaties. In the domestic arena Roosevelt's expansion of presidential authority brought him head-to-head with another set of chief executives who wielded unprecedented power: leaders of multinational corporations. Through intervention in a 1902 coal strike and through vigorous Justice Department actions, Roosevelt's administration made some of the first federal attempts to block corporate monopolies and force CEOs to negotiate with workers. The imperial presidency, the multinational corporation, and the struggle between them left Americans a double legacy of consolidated power.

IMPERIAL CLAIMS

From the depression of the 1870s onward, intellectuals and policy makers in the United States, fearful of a rising tide of strikes and political protests, worried that the country would adopt "socialistic" measures. The brief success of the People's Party, which advocated just such measures, heightened their anxiety. The alternative, imperialists believed, was to secure overseas markets for American products, ensuring jobs and prosperity to ease domestic distress. The result was what some historians call "social imperialism," focused not on building a European-style administrative empire but on creating favorable conditions for commerce—but at gunpoint, if necessary.

Social imperialism stemmed directly from William Seward's vision of "the flag following trade." It was under way as early as 1879, when the United States and Germany muscled into the South Pacific kingdom of Samoa to claim rival harbors and coaling stations. By 1890 a Republican-controlled Congress appropriated funds for steel battleships to match those of Britain and Germany. Vermont senator Justin Morrill, arguing for aggressive trade policies and "enlargement of our Lilliputian Navy," noted that Russia, Germany, France, and Britain were already competing for economic supremacy. "To lag behind when all the world is on the move," he stated, "is to accept the fate of the decrepit and dull-pated bison who lingers on the prairie in the rear of the ongoing herd."

On the domestic front, commentators worried in the 1890s that workers were tending toward socialism or even revolution. Apocalyptic forecasts abounded, with one newspaper predicting that "fire and sword will devastate the country." Political thinker Brooks Adams, in his influential 1896 book *The Law of Civilization and Decay*, wrote that "the time has now come" when surplus American products "must be sold abroad," especially in the immense markets of Asia. Otherwise the United States "would be devoured by the gangrene which attacks every stagnant society and from which no patient recovers." Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of

Massachusetts argued that “we must have new markets . . . unless we would be visited by declines in wages and by great industrial disturbances, of which signs have not been lacking.”

The elections of 1894 and 1896 brought to national power Republicans (and some Democrats, especially in the South) who were committed to solving domestic conflict by opening overseas markets. To implement this vision, American policy makers had to readjust their view of the country’s role in the world. Many decades earlier, President James Monroe, in the Monroe Doctrine, had told Britain and Spain that the United States would come to the aid of any fellow republic in the Western Hemisphere that was threatened by European powers. The crisis of the 1890s culminated in 1904 with Theodore Roosevelt’s Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, which was, in fact, an entirely different doctrine. Roosevelt asserted that the United States had an exclusive right to intervene in other New World countries as it saw fit.

The war that brought the United States to power on the world stage and swept away the last vestige of Spain’s New World empire started not in Washington, but with Cuban rebels such as José Martí. They conducted their revolution at a time when Cuba’s sugar economy was suffering through the same crisis that hit the U.S. mainland. Cubans’ fight for independence was widely popular in the United States. Men smoked Cuba Libre cigars, and editors sympathized with the plight of a people who, like the thirteen colonies of North America had in 1776, sought freedom from European monarchy. Newspaper magnates such as William Randolph Hearst used front-page headlines to trumpet Spanish atrocities. (They did not need to exaggerate much: rounding up Cubans into concentration camps and conducting a war of extermination, Spanish commanders unintentionally deepened resistance and spread the revolt across the island.) When the U.S. battleship *Maine* sank in Havana harbor, apparently due to a boiler explosion, Spain was instantly blamed, and President McKinley faced a surge of support for American troops to assist in making Cuba free.

Congress, through a law called the Teller Amendment, reassured Cubans that this was, in fact, their country’s goal. It declared that the Cuban people “are, and of right ought to be, free and independent,” and that the United States “disclaims any disposition or intention to exercise sovereignty, jurisdiction, or control over said island except for the pacification thereof.” The resolution, one senator stated, ensured “the absolute and unqualified independence of the Cubans.” But the actions of the McKinley administration suggest that its objectives were distinct from those of Congress and much of the American public. The *Maine* had been sitting in Havana harbor because administration officials (as well as jubilant Cubans) perceived that Spanish control was already collapsing. “Cuban independence is absolutely impossible,” wrote McKinley’s minister to Spain. State Department officials, explored the option of buying the island, since “some way must be found by which Spain can part with Cuba . . . with certainty of American control.”

At the same time, the McKinley administration focused considerable attention on Spanish holdings in the Pacific. In Asia both American and European

interests were facing sudden and aggressive competition from Japan, which had handily won a short war against China at mid-decade. “Japan has leaped, almost at one bound, to a place among the great nations of the earth,” wrote the U.S. secretary of the navy. With China weakened, Germany had moved swiftly to seize a portion of Shandong province for a port and development of railroads. Britain, France, Russia, and Belgium then fought for their own pieces of the pie. Their combined invasions along the coast provoked an uprising of militant Chinese societies known in the West as “Boxers,” who won the backing of dowager empress Cixi. In 1898 these patriotic groups began attacking Germans in Shandong, seeking to drive out the invaders. To American and European officials, much-coveted access to Asian markets seemed imperiled.

Thus, before the United States declared war against Spain in April 1898, the McKinley administration prepared carefully in the Pacific as well as the Caribbean. U.S. military forces actually launched attacks on the Wake Islands, the Philippine Islands, and Guam—all Spanish holdings in the Pacific—during April and May, well before they joined the Cuban revolutionary front in late June. With Spanish control already weakened by years of rebellion, the fighting in Cuba lasted only a few months. Spain formally withdrew its claims to Cuba, Puerto Rico, and an array of Pacific possessions before the end of the year. But the resulting pact differed sharply from the goals Congress had set forth in the Teller Amendment. The United States took Puerto Rico and the Philippines as “protectorates,” and although negotiators acknowledged Cuban independence, they excluded Cubans themselves from negotiations with Spain. Two years later the Platt Amendment officially amended U.S. intentions. Congress and the president now asserted the right to intervene in Cuba whenever the United States deemed necessary. The United States set limits on Cuba’s government budget, established a permanent naval base at Guantánamo Bay, and banned treaties between Cuba and any other power. Cuba, as one U.S. general wrote to Roosevelt after the amendment passed, had “little or no independence left.”

In the war of 1898 the United States acquired, for the first time, territories with no apparent prospect of future statehood, though many Cubans and Puerto Ricans had hoped for U.S. statehood as a second-best outcome. Instead, the McKinley and later the Roosevelt administrations justified continued “protectorate” status on the grounds that the islands needed economic “stability.” The United States could not leave Cuba, they argued, unless American business interests were fully secure. Given this opening, U.S. sugar interests tightened their hold over the plantation economy of Cuba and extended their reach in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. By the early twentieth century these islands produced 1.6 million tons of sugar a year, with Hawaiian and soon Philippine sugar added to this total. (Per capita consumption of sugar on the American mainland, not coincidentally, rose to 75 pounds a year in 1910, more than double what it had been on the eve of the Civil War.) In the Pacific, imperialists spoke of the Philippines as “our only safeguard for our trade interests in the East.”

In explaining their policies to the American people, the architects of social imperialism appealed to the same racial thinking so evident in domestic affairs.

In both the Philippines and Cuba, the indigenous revolutionary movements that had challenged Spanish rule were overwhelmingly made up of non-whites. Local elites in both Cuba and the Philippines, threatened by popular uprisings, encouraged North Americans in the belief that the rebels were incompetent to govern and that race war would result if the United States did not remain in control. Officials in Washington needed little encouragement. "My own belief," Roosevelt wrote privately of the Filipinos, "is that there are not 100 men among them who comprehend what Anglo-Saxon self-government even means." "God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing," declared influential senator Albert Beveridge of Indiana. "No! . . . He has made us adept in government that we may administer government among savage and senile peoples."

Filipinos presented something of a complication to such views. Inhabitants of the islands were racially and linguistically diverse, indisputably Asian if one consulted a map, but including both Spanish-speaking Catholics and ethnic groups such as so-called Negritos, whom Americans saw as black. Many U.S. soldiers dismissed all Filipinos as "gu-gus" and "niggers" and compared the islands to the American South. But Indian wars served as the most convenient analogy for the conflict that ensued in the Philippines after the United States set itself to subdue the islands. Since Americans denied a voice in government to the Indian at home, asked Beveridge, "how dare you grant it to the Malay abroad? . . . There are people in the world who do not understand any form of government . . . [and] must be governed." If the United States was "morally bound to abandon the Philippines," declared Theodore Roosevelt, it was "also morally bound to abandon Arizona to the Apaches."

Such connections were more than rhetorical. Most military leaders in the Philippine war came directly from Indian-fighting (a few having detoured for riot control in Chicago). Even more important, the legal treatment of American Indians set the stage for annexing "dependent peoples." In 1871 the Supreme Court had ruled that Congress no longer had to negotiate treaties with Indian peoples but instead could enact legislation without their consent. In 1885 the Court gave the federal government jurisdiction over crimes on Indian reservations. American Indians belonged to a new category, "nationals," or "persons owing allegiance to the United States but without those privileges which go only with citizenship." The Court drew on these precedents in the *Insular Cases*, a series of rulings between 1901 and 1910 that relegated Filipinos and Puerto Ricans to the same category. Like American Indians, they were "nationals" without citizenship rights. The justices suggested that such a status could not be indefinite, but they did not set any deadlines on its use.

The anti-imperialist movement, meanwhile, suffered internal divisions. Most of the leading anti-imperialist spokespeople came from the white elite; their arguments ranged from humanitarian and democratic to openly racist, and since the latter struck a powerful chord, many rivaled the imperialists in championing Anglo-Saxon superiority. The *Nation* warned of the perils of admitting "alien, inferior, and mongrel races to our nationality." Senator Ben Tillman of South

Carolina drew explicit comparisons to white supremacy at home. Being from a state, he said, "with 750,000 colored population and only 500,000 whites, I realize what you [imperialists] are doing, while you don't; and I would save this country from the injection into it of another race question which can only breed bloodshed." Though there was considerable anti-imperialist sentiment among working-class immigrants and African Americans, arguments such as Tillman's hardly fostered alliances.

In the wake of the popular Cuban campaign, the McKinley administration moved swiftly to protect U.S. access to Asian markets. When Boxer revolutionaries in China reached Beijing, the United States sent a contingent to join Russian, British, French, German, and Japanese troops, who marched together on the capital. In August 1900 the combined expeditionary force took Beijing, engaging afterward in brutal acts of rape, looting, and indiscriminate murder. (German and Japanese soldiers were especially rapacious, but their allies made no efforts to stop



National Geographic, May 1903, 209. U.S. occupation of the Philippines brought a spate of reports about the islands in *National Geographic*. The images and language used in these articles suggest some of the ways in which scientific racism helped justify military conquest. Depictions of bare-chested women, a key marker of "primitivism," had only recently begun to appear in the magazine. "Adult Negrito woman, showing relative size," readers learned in the text accompanying this photograph. "The Negritos are physical and mental weaklings, and are rapidly disappearing." I am grateful to Vassar student Anna Kichorowsky, who located this image in her research.

them, and some joined the fray.) The Beijing expedition marked a crucial turning point in American foreign policy. For the first time since the American Revolution, U.S. troops joined those of other nations in a multinational force, and they fought side by side with European imperial powers.

Having participated in a rank campaign of conquest, the United States got its share of the spoils: 7 percent of a \$333 million indemnity that China was forced to pay for its rebels' resistance. ("Poor China!" exclaimed Sarah Conger, wife of the U.S. minister in Beijing. "Why cannot foreigners let her alone with her own? China has been wronged, and in her desperation she has striven as best she could to stop the inroads." The United States later had second thoughts and returned the indemnity.) The United States and Britain enforced China's open door to foreign trade. As in Cuba and the Philippines, this entailed sharp restrictions on China's political and economic autonomy. Unlike Cuba and the Philippines, though, China fell under the sway of many competing powers rather than just one. Germany, France, Belgium, Russia, Japan, and the United States all pursued railroad contracts and access to Chinese markets.

As in China, upheavals arose in many parts of the world as the Western powers—including, now, the United States—made aggressive demands for empire and trade. Thus, while U.S. policy makers claimed to bring stability to turbulent parts of the world, in fact they helped precipitate the reverse. The decision to support or repress rebellion in a given place depended on what policy makers perceived American interests to be. In Panama, for example, U.S. warships intervened in 1901 to stop a popular uprising against Colombia, which had long claimed Panama as part of its territory. But in late 1903, when the Roosevelt administration felt ready to press a broader claim, the United States sent naval vessels to block Colombia from ending the Panama uprising, essentially backing a coup and violating a long-standing treaty. In exchange for abetting the Panamanian revolution, the United States demanded from the country's new government "titular sovereignty" over a strip of land on which it planned to build a canal, the long-yearned-for shortcut to Pacific trade.

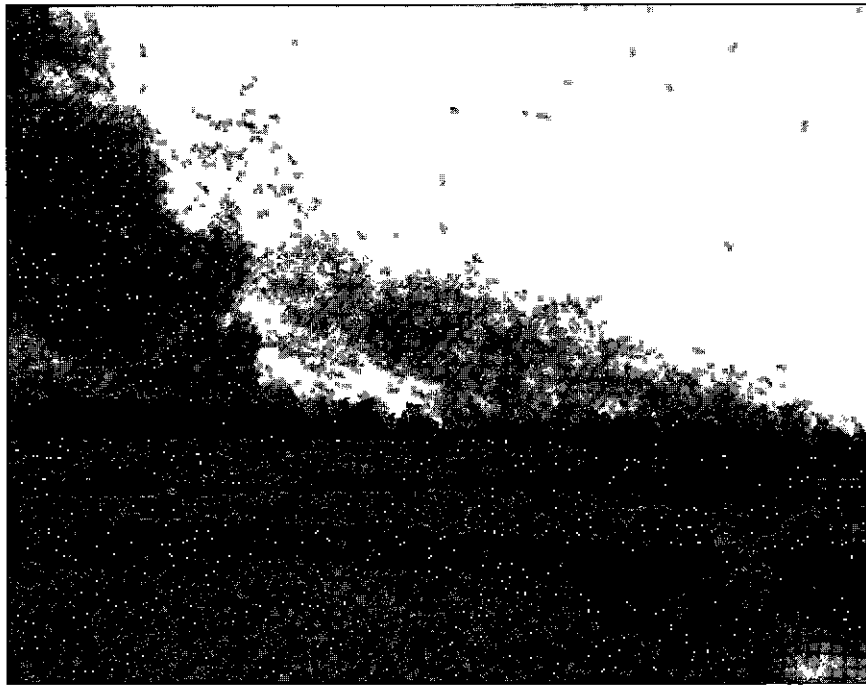
The Philippines offered the greatest challenge to Americans' belief in their country's good intentions. Following a brief opening campaign in 1898 to take control of the islands after Spanish withdrawal, U.S. forces found themselves bogged down in a frustrating guerrilla conflict against Filipinos fighting for their independence. American military men quickly realized that they were not "liberating" a grateful people. Referring to Emilio Aguinaldo, the veteran leader of resistance to Spain who now led nationalist forces against the United States, General Arthur MacArthur wrote, "When I first started in against these rebels, I believed that Aguinaldo's troops represented only a faction. I did not like to believe that the whole population of Luzon . . . was opposed to us and our offers of aid and good government. But after having come this far, after having occupied several towns and cities in succession, . . . I have been reluctantly compelled to believe that the Filipino masses are loyal to Aguinaldo and the government which he heads." A sergeant in the 1st Nebraska Regiment put it more bluntly. "I am not



Life, 8 December 1898. This anti-imperialist cartoon questions Uncle Sam's "purchase" of the Philippines from Spain. Like many cartoons, both pro- and anti-imperialist, it depicts conquering Western powers as men and their new overseas territories as women—often young, beautiful, and exotic. Here, the woman's chains are a reminder of slavery in the United States. Courtesy Vassar College Library.

afraid, and am always ready to do my duty, but I would like someone to tell me what we are fighting for." "I deprecate this war," wrote an officer of the 13th Minnesota, "because it seems to me that we are doing something that is contrary to our principles in the past." Both Filipino and American critics of the war found it ironic when a U.S. commander in Manila seized copies of the U.S. Declaration of Independence that had been translated into Spanish, calling it "an incendiary document."

Many African-American soldiers found their loyalties conflicted. "The future of the Filipino, I fear," wrote a private in the 24th Infantry, "is that of the Negro in the South. Matters are almost to that condition in Manila now. No one (white) has any scruples respecting the rights of a Filipino. He is kicked and cuffed at will and he dare not remonstrate." Yet fighting with fellow Americans as proud volunteers, other black soldiers rejected any identification with the enemy. One described the slaughter of Filipinos in battle as "awful" but added simply, "it was fight or die with us." Thinking back later on his war service, another black veteran wrote, "I was



"Ground Over Which the Montana Troops Advanced on Caloocan. Dead American Soldier in the Foreground." Caloocan was the first major battle of the opening stage of the Philippine War, in 1898. Modern standards of documentary photography had not yet emerged. Like his counterparts in the U.S. Civil War, this photographer may have repositioned the soldier's body to achieve the effect he desired. From Marrion Wilcox, *Harper's History of the War in the Philippines* (New York, 1900), 126.

anguished the anti-imperialist *New York World*, remarking on how little soul-searching Smith's trial provoked. "[It] takes another sip of its coffee and remarks, 'how very unpleasant!' . . . Where is that vast national outburst of astounded horror which an old-fashioned American would have predicted at reading such news? Is it lost somewhere in the 8,000 miles that divide us from these abominations?" President Roosevelt sent General Smith quietly into retirement, arguing that he had faced "well-nigh intolerable provocation" from savage foes. "I heartily approve of the employment of the sternest measures necessary," Roosevelt wrote, while skillfully dissociating himself from torture and military crimes. The president went on to crush his Democratic opponent in 1904, and his subsequent assertions of power in Panama, the Dominican Republic, and elsewhere seemed to enhance rather than dim his popularity.

McKinley's and Roosevelt's foreign exploits depended to a large extent on disjunctions between policy makers' public statements and their private calculations. Presidents who were ambitious for land and trade were not, in themselves, something new. In the 1840s James K. Polk had become perhaps the most successful

imperialist in all U.S. history when he waged a popular war against Mexico. But Polk had made his objectives clear to voters, who elected him on a platform of annexation and, by implication, war. The new imperial presidency rested on a somewhat different relationship between Americans and their chief executive. McKinley and his successors expanded their powers by circumventing Congress and undercutting the Senate's role in foreign policy, which one imperialist dubbed "the constitutional lion in the path" blocking full presidential control.

Moves in this direction had taken place during the Civil War and in 1879, when the Hayes administration had negotiated an agreement with Samoa without bothering to ask for Senate approval. But it was Roosevelt who most expanded presidential authority, partly because anti-imperialists in Congress succeeded in blocking some of his early initiatives, and Roosevelt refused to recognize their right to do so. In 1905, after the Senate defeated a pact that would have put the United States in charge of customs revenues in the Dominican Republic, Roosevelt went ahead on his own to sign an "executive agreement" with the compliant Dominican government. (Roosevelt had already sent troops to protect U.S. sugar and shipping interests.) The president followed up with further executive agreements in Latin America and Asia, setting a precedent for enormous presidential authority in foreign policy. Already, during the wars of 1898, one English newspaper had observed that the U.S. presidency was becoming "neither more nor less than elective monarchy, limited as to duration, and regulated as to finance, but otherwise nearly unfettered." His remark echoed José Martí's claim that the United States was becoming a "monarchy in disguise."

McKinley and Roosevelt pioneered tools of executive power used by a succession of presidents in the decades since. Both were skillful managers of information and public opinion. They staged press conferences at locations ranging from the front porch of McKinley's home in Canton, Ohio, to wilderness settings where Roosevelt spoke of his support for conservation. Both kept tight control of news from overseas in order to accent positive reports. In elections they experimented with an array of modern techniques, from McKinley's expensive, sophisticated marketing campaigns to Roosevelt's forceful stump-speaking tours, which followed the precedent set by his archrival, Democrat William Jennings Bryan. But the imperial presidents were successful innovators, in part, because they operated in a different climate from that of their predecessors. The electorate had been considerably restricted, Republicans had secured dominance in Washington, and Democrats held the South.

Americans' support for a strong presidency resulted from a shadow of disorder that had international as well as domestic dimensions. Violent anarchists, in particular, provoked public fear. Anarchist assassins succeeded in killing the French president Carnot in 1894, a year when Americans were worrying about the Pullman boycott and the march of Coxe's Army. There followed, between 1897 and 1905 the assassinations of Spain's prime minister, the empress of Austria, King Umberto I of Italy (an assassination planned in Paterson, New Jersey), the king of Serbia, and two Russian ministers. In 1901, amid this string of European assassinations

and several more botched attempts, an anarchist in the United States shot and killed President William McKinley. For those who believed European conditions might be emerging in the United States, McKinley's death offered grievous confirmation. It also marked the third assassination of a U.S. president since 1865, and though anarchists had had nothing to do with Lincoln or Garfield's deaths, public alarm ran high. In retrospect, violent anarchists were a tiny and politically isolated cadre, but at the time frightened Americans equated anarchists with all labor unions, European immigrants, and the entire political left. Before McKinley's assassination, and even more afterward, they accepted harsh measures to deal with the threat.

While projecting an aggressive image on the global stage, McKinley's successor proved willing to use his presidential powers at home for innovative ends. The Roosevelt administration launched key federal initiatives for environmental and consumer protection, creating the Food and Drug Administration in 1906, for example, to oversee food and medicine safety. Roosevelt even undertook efforts to reign in the power of corporations. During a 1902 Pennsylvania coal strike, he refused to follow his White House predecessors in sending troops to crush the protest. Instead, he insisted that mine owners hear the union's grievances, and when they refused to take arbitration seriously, he threatened to seize the mines and run them under federal authority. The owners hastily agreed to talk, and Roosevelt brokered a compromise. Two years later his Justice Department went to court to block an attempted merger of two giant railroads by J. P. Morgan and James J. Hill. In the resulting *Northern Securities* case, the Supreme Court upheld the government's right to prevent the merger under the Sherman Antitrust Act. The administration's crowning achievement was the 1906 Hepburn Act, which strengthened the Interstate Commerce Commission by giving it the right to set railroad rates, subject to court review.

While Roosevelt helped usher in the first wave of twentieth-century progressivism at home, other Americans were offsetting imperialism by joining international campaigns for human rights. Mark Twain criticized both the United States and the European powers for their conquests; his pamphlet "King Leopold's Soliloquy" was a devastating indictment of atrocities in Belgian Central Africa. The Ottoman massacre of thousands of Armenians in the mid-1890s provoked a humanitarian mobilization in the United States. Industrialists such as John D. Rockefeller, Sr., helped fund a National Armenian Relief Committee. The American Red Cross sent teams to help refugees, marking the organization's first work outside the United States. Congress's 1896 resolution condemning Sultan Abdul Hamid II for the murder of 100,000 Armenians marked the first U.S. resolution on international human rights. Four years later it was the farmers of Kansas, organized by People's Party leaders, who sent the first shipments of donated grain to India during a famine, and a pogrom against Russian Jews in Kishinev in 1903 provoked a series of public meetings in American cities to condemn czarist policies. "The most important fact in this new century," Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote that year, "is the rapid kindling of the social consciousness." She hoped that

"America, with the blended blood of all peoples in her veins," would lead the civilized world in demanding "international law to restrain, prohibit, [and] punish; best of all, to prevent."

Thus, there were signs, even amid grim reports of U.S. atrocities in the Philippines, that Americans had the capacity to translate their democratic heritage into what Jane Addams called "an international patriotism." In a series of lectures given at the peak of U.S. imperialism around the turn of the century, Addams sought to articulate what that might mean. "Some of us," she told a Chicago audience, "were beginning to hope that we were getting away from the ideals set by the Civil War, that we had made all the presidents we could from men who had distinguished themselves in that war, and were coming to seek another type of man. That we were ready to accept the peace ideal, to be proud of our title as a peace nation. . . . Then came the Spanish war, with its gilt and lace and tinsel, and again the moral issues are confused with exhibitions of brutality." "Unless the present situation extends our nationalism into internationalism," she warned, "unless it has thrust forward our patriotism into humanitarianism, we cannot meet it."

Future reformers, intellectuals, and policy makers would answer Addams's call in a variety of ways. But American history books went on to describe the Philippine conquest as "benevolent" and the defeat of Aguinaldo's forces as a brief addendum to Americans' glorious liberation of Cuba. As the twentieth century unfolded, Americans largely forgot that the Philippine war had happened at all. When the United States granted Philippine independence in the wake of World War II, the turn-of-the-century war receded even further in American national memory. It was only in 1968, after U.S. troops perpetrated the My Lai massacre in Vietnam, that journalists went looking for elderly veterans who remembered the earlier conflict. Most expressed few regrets. They argued that harsher tactics should have been used earlier and even more ruthlessly in the Philippines; troops in Vietnam should beware, they said, of the treachery and cruelty of "Asiatics." Only a few looked back with doubt. One interviewee who had served on Samar, avenging the Balangiga massacre, remembered his platoon advancing through tall grass to make a stealth attack on a village of fishermen. "We opened fire and killed all but one," he recalled. "They were unarmed." There had been, this soldier remarked, "earlier My Lais." Veterans of an even earlier generation, who had witnessed General Sheridan's burning of a Blackfoot village on the Marias River back in 1870, or any number of other massacres inside the United States, could have said the same.

GLOBAL LEVIATHANS

By the early twentieth century, the United States was providing overseas missionaries and businessmen with military protection and aids to travel, such as the \$720 million Panama Canal that U.S. engineers would complete in 1914. Control over Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic secured access to the mouth of the canal, while the navy's Great White Fleet sailed the world to protect Americans

and their property abroad. In domestic policy, also, despite Roosevelt's modest antitrust and pro-labor initiatives, Republicans in the main catered to corporate interests. They maintained protective tariffs and the gold standard, considerably benefiting manufacturers and investors.

The Supreme Court played a central role in protecting corporate power, as it struck down state and federal laws designed to protect workers and mitigate extremes of wealth. The Court had already showed such leanings in *Wabash v. Illinois* (1886) and the *Minnesota Rate* case (1890), which struck down regulatory laws of the 1870s and limited the ability of state legislatures to set shipping rates and counter the power of monopolies. In the Minnesota case the Court began to define property as not just land, buildings, and other possessions but as the "exchange value" of anything; regulation of rates was thus a theft of private property. In response to this weakening of state-level power, Congress passed the 1887 Interstate Commerce Act, creating an Interstate Commerce Commission for business oversight, and followed this three years later with the Sherman Antitrust Act, a vague law that made a first attempt to prohibit combinations "in restraint of trade." But in *United States v. E. C. Knight* (1895), the Court ruled that the Sherman Act gave the federal government no authority over manufacturing, even if the sugar refinery in question belonged to the American Sugar Refining Company, which controlled 98 percent of the national market.

The same year, 1895, brought other pivotal decisions, as the Court came under the sway of dogmatic Justice Stephen Field and his allies. In a case stemming from the Pullman affair, *In re Debs*, the justices upheld injunctions to halt strikes. Ironically, they based their opinion on the Sherman Antitrust Act, arguing that a boycott by a labor union, unlike a sugar refiner's bid for monopoly power, was an act "in restraint of trade." In *Pollock v. Farmers' Loan and Trust*, meanwhile, the Court struck down a federal income tax that Congress had passed in 1894. The Court argued that unless a constitutional amendment were enacted, such a tax must be apportioned on a state-by-state basis (a requirement that proved unworkable, leading eventually to passage of the Sixteenth Amendment for a federal income tax in 1913). The justices followed up these rulings with two more in 1897 that shaped the relationship between government and the economy. In *Smyth v. Ames* they declared that state regulators could set rates only according to guidelines written by the Court itself; in *ICC v. Cincinnati, New Orleans, and Texas Pacific Railroad*, they declared that the federal Interstate Commerce Commission had no power to set rates at all. As in the years of Reconstruction, a conservative Supreme Court effectively gutted the most progressive legislation that reformers had managed to obtain.

The justices did mitigate these decisions with some that recognized new government regulatory powers. In the 1899 case of *Addystone Pipe*, they ruled that price-fixing among corporations was illegal and upheld government sanctions against it. They also responded favorably to the Roosevelt administration's anti-trust work and followed this up in *Swift and Company* (1905) by reconsidering the ruling in *E. C. Knight*, acknowledging to some extent that corporations engaged in

interstate commerce fell under federal authority. By 1911 the justices would shift even further in this direction, upholding the U.S. government's right to break up a massive monopoly such as Standard Oil. Yet in cases relating to the states' police powers to protect the health, safety, and welfare of citizens, the Supreme Court proved hostile to reforms sought by labor advocates, a stance it maintained until the 1930s. The justices defined "police powers" by old-fashioned moral principles: laws to regulate or prohibit liquor met approval, as did bans on prostitution and gambling. In cases such as *Holden v. Hardy* (1898), they also allowed states to regulate working conditions and hours in certain dangerous industries, such as mining, and to end child labor. But they refused to let the states or Congress set minimum wages, and in most industries they struck down laws limiting working hours. The crowning case in this area was *Lochner v. New York* (1905), which overturned a New York law setting a sixty-hour workweek for bakers. Workers, the Court argued in essence, had the contractual right to labor as many hours as they chose. If they did not want to work more than sixty hours a week, they should look for a different employer.

The Court's juggernaut between 1890 and 1905—especially in cases related to unions, working hours, and wages—rivaled in significance its critical role in the collapse of Reconstruction. *In re Debs* had a long-term effect on the labor movement, paralleling in some ways the impact that *U.S. v. Cruikshank* and related cases had had on black voting rights. One historian estimates that between 1880 and 1930, state and federal courts issued more than 4,000 injunctions to stop strikes, almost always at the request of employers. By upholding this tactic (until Congress finally made the practice illegal in 1932), the Supreme Court tipped the odds in labor conflicts heavily in favor of employers, even before state militias or the U.S. Army intervened. It is hardly surprising that after the 1890s, trade unions such as the American Federation of Labor chose narrower and more limited goals.

The justices did not believe they were rolling out a red carpet for unrestrained corporate power. Instead, the aging judges on the court (Stephen Field, the oldest, had been born in 1816) reacted to another set of imperatives, similar to those felt by the era's natural scientists. Over their lifetimes the American judiciary had overturned English common law and systematized legal thought, creating elaborate theoretical categories. The justices believed such categories were scientific, universal, and immutable; their chief task was not to balance competing interests but to make expert rulings about the category into which a particular case fell. Judges, in other words, shared with many other professionals a serene confidence in the scientific basis of their enterprise. Believing themselves experts who were uncovering natural and universal laws, they prided themselves on dismissing the real-world impact of their decisions. This approach to law, which historians have called "legal formalism", reached its apex between 1894 and 1905 in some of the cases just noted.

Formalists were influenced by their conviction that the United States was a Christian nation, and that Christianity meant the defense of private property and

public order. The Court's thinking was also rooted in anachronistic assumptions about government, labor, and capital. Their primary reference point for tyranny remained European-style monarchy, and the justices associated this with the power to tax. In decisions such as *Pollock*, they thus saw themselves as guardians of private property and the health of the republic, menaced by an overreaching Congress. In seeking to keep the playing field "level," they assumed businessmen and laborers contracted as equals and that government intervention on the side of labor would oppress business. The aging justices conceived of business as primarily the small-scale enterprise that had dominated the American economic landscape during their youth.

In this as in many other matters they were behind the times, and nothing showed this more clearly than their acquiescence on the issue of corporate personhood. As late as the early 1900s, the Court clung to an old definition of the corporation, assuming state governments were setting limits on what such entities could do. This had once been correct: as late as 1888 all states continued to set certain boundaries on corporate activity. But then New Jersey, seeking to attract enterprise, passed a revolutionary law inviting trusts, which were beset by legal challenges, to form "holding companies" under extremely lenient terms. The vast American Sugar Refining Company, with operations stretching from Cuba and Louisiana to California and Hawai'i, was among the first to take advantage of New Jersey's offer. Henry O. Havemeyer, a leader of the sugar trust in the 1880s, summed up the result of becoming a New Jersey holding company. "From being illegal as we were," he observed, "we are now legal as we are."

The result was a mass migration of corporations to New Jersey and later Delaware, after it also relaxed regulations. By 1904 all seven of the largest trusts, with a combined capitalization of \$2.5 billion, operated under New Jersey charters. By 1905 the Supreme Court had essentially accepted New Jersey's definition of the corporation. In *Hale v. Henkel* it extended to corporations the Fourth Amendment right against self-incrimination, as if a corporation had a "self." In doing so the Court shifted from a definition of a corporation as a special entity, created by the state for public purposes, to the modern idea that it was the functional equivalent of an individual citizen (albeit one that existed in many places at once and could, in theory, live forever).

By the time Theodore Roosevelt and his successors bestirred themselves to limit the powers of these new leviathans and the Supreme Court began accepting their right to do so, corporate power had already undergone a dramatic concentration. New Jersey's and Delaware's laws, combined with the depression of the 1890s, enabled the largest trusts and holding companies to press their advantage against smaller competitors, many of which failed in the economic crisis. The depression also convinced businessmen in some sectors that they must merge to prevent price wars. Between 1895 and 1904, with a sharp peak at the depression's end in 1899, hundreds of American firms took this path, usually moving their headquarters to New Jersey or Delaware in the process. Almost 2,000 companies vanished, joining consolidated holding companies such as American Locomotive, DuPont, Eastman

Kodak, International Harvester, International Paper, Otis Elevator, and U.S. Gypsum, each of which controlled more than 70 percent of its product's national market share by the turn of the century. Laurence Gronlund had foreseen this development in *The Cooperative Commonwealth*. "These gentlemen," he wrote of the nation's leading executives, "have already found that while Competition is a very excellent weapon against their weaker rivals, Combination pays far better in relation to their peers."

Not all consolidations achieved such dominance, and not all businessmen found the strategy successful. But taken as a whole, the wave of mergers transformed the economy further in the direction of large-scale multinational enterprise. In the 1890s many of these consolidated companies won trademark protection through the courts, so that Ivory became synonymous with soap, Wrigley's with gum, and Gillette with razors. It is no accident that these names remain famous today. The most successful corporations became "first movers," taking a position of overwhelming dominance from which they could use their power (much as Republicans and southern Democrats were doing in politics) to shut out newcomers and rivals.

The result was an American economy even further integrated and financially centralized. A single national market in short-term credit linked the West Coast with the East by 1900. J. P. Morgan assumed control of the bankrupt Southern Railway (formerly thirty different companies), which gave his investors access to coal, iron, cotton, tobacco, lumber, sulphur, turpentine, and Florida fruit. The 1890s also saw a substantial movement of textile mills from New England to the low-wage South, starting with three Massachusetts firms that moved in 1895. At the behest of John D. Rockefeller, Sr., Henry Flagler opened a series of southern luxury resorts. "By 1896," wrote one historian, "palace cars from Bar Harbor and Newport could roll unimpeded through the poverty-littered Carolinas and all the way to Miami and its Royal Palm Hotel."

The most successful corporations emerged from the depression with multinational reach. Companies ranging from Borden to International Silver acquired factories in Canada. American Tobacco enlarged its empire with plants in Germany, Japan, and Australia. Behemoths such as United Fruit and U.S. Rubber regularly made purchasing and marketing decisions that impacted two or three continents. By 1897 U.S. direct investment overseas totaled \$635 million, and in the next decade it rose to more than a billion and a half. By 1900 New York's most powerful financiers had intertwined their fortunes with those of the great industrialists, creating unprecedented centers of power. National City Bank, predecessor of today's Citigroup, counted among its directors not only John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and his brother William but also Henry Clay Frick of Carnegie Steel; Cleveland Dodge from the Phelps Dodge Corporation, one of the nation's largest mining concerns; reaper magnate Cyrus McCormick; railcar manufacturer George Pullman; and financier J. P. Morgan. National City Bank could by the first decade of the twentieth century exchange any currency into another in twenty-four hours and deliver it virtually anywhere in the world.

The bank knew what it was doing in choosing J. P. Morgan for its board. It was Morgan who had knocked Thomas Edison's name off Edison General Electric and taken it over in 1892. It was Morgan who had bailed out the gold standard during the Cleveland administration and in 1901 engineered the triumphant merger that created U.S. Steel, the first company in America with a billion-dollar valuation. Morgan's famous "Trio," consisting of himself and two close associates, provided links to investors and banks in Britain, France, Belgium, and Germany. The Trio, by this date, customarily swapped 15 percent shares in their U.S. and Mexican ventures for equivalent interests in Asian and African investments organized by their European partners. Association with the "House of Morgan" offered the most influential businessmen access to fabulous sums of investment capital and financial networks that stretched around the globe.

No one exemplified the new configuration of executive power better than Andrew Carnegie, who officially became the world's richest man when Morgan bought out his company. Carnegie Steel had thrived during the depression of the 1890s, largely through government contracts for the naval fleet that helped make America a world power. Back in 1886, when Carnegie had been approached about such contracts, he had lectured Grover Cleveland's secretary of the navy on the dangers of a military buildup, stating flatly that he was "opposed to every dollar spent by our Republic upon instruments of any kind for destructive purposes." Carnegie pointed out that Britain and Germany were unlikely to attack the United States, and he suggested that a naval arms race would increase rather than reduce the possibility of war. But on Christmas Eve 1886, Carnegie announced that a new open-hearth mill at Homestead would be built to roll out armor plates of the size the navy needed. "There may be millions for us in armor," he wrote privately.

The prices Carnegie charged the U.S. government for steel became the focus of repeated congressional investigations. Four former employees, embittered among other things by the defeat of the Amalgamated Steelworkers at Homestead, came forward in 1893 with persuasive evidence that the company had masked flaws and weakness in its armor. Carnegie was fined 10 percent on his current contracts, though officials to some extent hushed up the damage. Four years later Congress investigated allegations of overcharging. Carnegie, it turned out, was making profits of 30 percent or more on U.S. government contracts while selling similar steel to the Russian navy for a much lower price. "We are in the hands of this great steel combine," fumed Colorado senator Henry Teller. "The Republicans seem to have set their hearts upon giving to these people practically whatever they ask." Despite evidence that competing bids from smaller firms such as Midvale Steel were more cost-effective, Republicans handed most contracts to two big firms, Carnegie and Bethlehem. Carnegie then had the temerity to challenge the very policies that had made him rich. Amid debate over annexation of the Philippines, he offered to buy the islands outright from the United States for \$20 million in order to give Filipinos their freedom. (The government declined.)

No incident was more telling than the moment in early 1897 when Grover Cleveland's secretary of the navy, Hilary Herbert, got fed up with the false

information he was receiving from U.S. steel suppliers and boarded a ship to confer with European manufacturers. Herbert wanted to know what French and British steelmakers were charging their governments for naval steel, and he wanted to hear the answers directly from them. He made his trip top secret, but Carnegie, who had negotiated price-fixing agreements with Krups, Vickers, and other European steelmakers as well as with Bethlehem Steel, had agents in the administration who tipped him off. Unbeknownst to Herbert, the ship that carried him to Europe also carried a Carnegie employee who disembarked immediately and rushed to reaffirm the steelmakers' pact and warn of Herbert's visit. The secretary of the navy got vague answers on his tour and came home with little useful information. In the meantime, he and the French minister of marine commiserated with each other in Paris. Both governments, they felt sure, were at the mercy of steelmakers who were fixing prices and charging exorbitant rates, but neither man could prove it.

The late 1890s, then, at first glance marked the dawn of an era of fierce nationalism and unprecedented military escalation, in which the United States vied with European powers to amass battleships and claim overseas prizes, with each government eyeing the others suspiciously over the turrets. The U.S. government (as this story goes) had been weak in the Gilded Age but was now emerging as an invigorated global power, with Theodore Roosevelt equally aggressive in his policies abroad and his attack on trusts at home. There is some truth to this interpretation, as any Cuban or Filipino could attest. The significance of the imperial presidency can hardly be overstated.

Secretary Herbert's journey, however, offers a glimpse into a different reality. During the Civil War and its aftermath, the U.S. government had exercised immense powers and engaged in a series of bold experiments. But that war, along with the wars of incorporation that followed, had launched an economic revolution that left the authority of even the American president and the German kaiser humbled by that of Carnegie and his secret pool. Carnegie frequently argued that he placed his enterprise at the service of his country. (He went on to create the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and fund construction of the Peace Palace in the Netherlands, home of today's World Court—while his company simultaneously forged the steel for dozens of warships.) But however much Carnegie did or did not serve his nation's interests, the reverse was clearly true: through its rising military expenditures, the U.S. government served the interests of Mr. Carnegie.

FOR FURTHER READING

An excellent short account of the U.S. conquest of Hawai'i is Scott B. Cook, "Islands of Manifest Destiny," in his book *Colonial Encounters in the Age of High Imperialism* (New York, 1996). See also Sylvester K. Stevens, *American Expansion in Hawaii, 1842-1898* (Harrisburg, PA, 1945), Merze Tate, *The United States and the Hawaiian Kingdom* (New Haven, CT, 1965), Gary Y. Okihiro, *Cane Fires* (Philadelphia, 1991), and Sally Engle Merry, *Colonizing Hawai'i* (Princeton, NJ, 2000).

My key sources on U.S. foreign relations throughout this chapter are Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire* (Ithaca, NY, 1963), and also his book *The American Search for Opportunity*, cited in Chapter 1; Louis A. Pérez, *The War of 1898* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998); Thomas J. McCormick, *China Market* (Chicago, 1967); Dennis Merrill and Thomas G. Paterson, *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations to 1920*, 5th ed. (Boston, 2000); and Thomas Schoonover, *Uncle Sam's War of 1898 and the Origins of Globalization* (Lexington, KY, 2003). For excellent background on U.S. imperialism from 1782 onward, see Walter Nugent, *Habits of Empire: A History of American Expansion* (New York, 2008). Very helpful in placing foreign relations in cultural context is Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues* (New York, 2000). On the economic and cultural dimensions of expansion, see also Emily S. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream* (New York, 1982), and for an environmental angle on U.S. consumption of tropical crops, Richard P. Tucker, *Insatiable Appetite* (Berkeley, CA, 2000).

Links between western frontier expansion and overseas imperialism are brilliantly analyzed in Walter L. Williams, "United States Indian Policy and the Debate over Philippine Annexation," *Journal of American History* 66 (1980): 810–31. On the perhaps underrecognized influence of Brooks Adams see William A. Williams, "Brooks Adams and American Expansion," *New England Quarterly* 25 (1952): 217–32. For alternative views of American imperialism see, for example, Ernest May's influential *Imperial Democracy* (New York, 1961), Kevin Phillips, *William McKinley* (New York, 2003), and James A. Field, Jr.'s provocative article, "American Imperialism: The Worst Chapter in Almost Any Book," *American Historical Review* 83 (1978): 644–68. On Jose Martí see the introduction by Deborah Shnoorkal and Mirta Muñiz in *The Jose Martí Reader* (Melbourne, Australia, 1999).

For the economic results of the 1898 wars in the Caribbean, see César J. Ayala, *American Sugar Kingdom* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1999). On the conflict in the Philippines I have drawn primarily on Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006), on Stuart Creighton Miller, "Benevolent Assimilation" (New Haven, CT, 1982), and on black soldiers in the Philippines, Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., "Smoked Yankees" and the Struggle for Empire (Fayetteville, AR, 1987). On Americans' response to the massacre of Armenians, see Peter Balakian, *The Burning Tigris* (New York, 2003), and on Populist shipments of grain to India, Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts* (London, 2001).

My treatment of the U.S. Supreme Court draws primarily from Morton J. Horowitz, *The Transformation of American Law, 1870–1960* (New York, 1992), Owen M. Fiss, *The Troubled Beginnings of the Modern State, 1888–1910* (New York, 1993), and William E. Forbath, *Law and the Shaping of the American Labor Movement* (Cambridge, MA, 1991). On the importance of Christian faith, see Linda Przybyszewski, "Judicial Conservatism and Protestant Faith: The Case of Justice David J. Brewer," *Journal of American History* 91 (2004): 471–96. An overview of laissez-faire constitutional thought is Michael Les Benedict, "Laissez-Faire and Liberty," *Law and History Review* 3 (1985): 293–331. I also rely here once again on Richard F. Bensel, *The Political Economy of American Industrialization*, cited in Chapter 1, as well as on the following: Lawrence M. Friedman, *A History of American Law* (New York, 1985), Charles W. McCurdy, "The Knight Sugar Decision of 1895 and the Modernization of American Corporate Law, 1869–1903," *Business History Review* 53 (1979): 304–42, and Papke, *The Pullman Case*, cited in Chapter 10.

On the consolidation of power by multinational corporations see Naomi R. Lamoreaux, *The Great Merger Movement in American Business, 1895–1904* (Cambridge, MA, 1985), and

Walter Licht, *Industrializing America* and Mira Wilkins, *The Emergence of Multinational Enterprise*, both cited in Chapter 2. On credit markets see John A. James, "The Evolution of the National Money Market, 1888–1911," and "The Development of the National Money Market, 1893–1911," which appear respectively in *Journal of Economic History* 36 (1976): 271–75 and 878–97. On trademarks see Susan Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed* (New York, 1989). The quotation on palace cars rolling through the Carolinas is from C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877–1913* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1951), 297. The phrase *first movers* is drawn from Alfred D. Chandler's *Scale and Scope* (Cambridge, MA, 1990). On Mexico I return here to John M. Hart, *Empire and Revolution*, cited in Chapter 2. On Carnegie see Joseph Frazier Wall, Andrew Carnegie, and B. Franklin Cooling, *Gray Steel and Blue Water Navy*, both cited in previous chapters.