

# Chapter 18, The Age of the City

## The Urbanization of America

- I. The Lure of the City—Rapid urban growth
  - A. Not as a result of natural increase; low reproduction rates in cities
  - B. Really a result of the allure of entertainment, etc.
  - C. High paying jobs
  - D. Accessible because of new transportation
- II. Migrations
  - A. Farms grew more commercial so young unmarried girls moved to cities from farm areas
  - B. Blacks left the rural South for cities, with jobs as janitors and cooks instead of factory work; large black populations in many cities, especially after WWI
  - C. New immigration from many sources was the main contribution to American cities
- III. The Ethnic City
  - A. Most people in cities were 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations
  - B. Very diverse, many different groups
  - C. Immigrants had a hard time adjusting from rural to urban life
  - D. Benefits of Ethnic Communities
    1. Similar churches, synagogues, same-language newspapers in common communities
    2. Helped ease the pain of separation
    3. Jewish and German immigrants were the most successful (valued education)
    4. Some were hated by natives (blacks, Asians, Mexicans)
    5. Some had money already, huge advantage
    6. Some got political power
- IV. Assimilation
  - A. Immigrants were usually young and lived in cities, had to compete against native desire for assimilation
  - B. Americanization—disillusioned romanticism with the “New World,” many first generations, and most second generations tried to break with the old culture
  - C. Changing Gender Roles—many immigrants had stricter gender roles, women worked in America, however
  - D. Forced assimilation from natives: public schools taught English, must speak English at work; American norms for clothes, diets, etc were at stores
  - E. Reformed religion (Reformed Judaism, etc) were efforts to make Protestants more accepting
- V. Exclusion
  - A. Nativism—racism against many immigrants; “scum of Europe,” (newspaper), “They crowd the ocean, conveyed by a crew / Of master pirates who have work in hand / Old Europe’s nation wreckers lay in view / And lo, to aid them on our margin stand / Our citizens, the Jesuit and the Jew” (KKK poem)
  - B. Immigration Restriction League—Henry Bowers, lawyer who hated Catholics, founded American Protective Association; Harvard alums found Immigration Restriction League
  - C. Anti-Asian sentiments in California
  - D. Congress made “undesirable” (convicts, etc) pay extra taxes
  - E. President Grover Cleveland vetoed literacy requirement for immigrants
  - F. Advancement of Cheap Labor—many business leaders encouraged cheap labor from immigrants

## The Urban Landscape

*Great contrasts in cities included the mansion of Carnegie compared with the slums of immigrants and the connivances from technology compared with the filth and epidemics that were common.*

- I. The Creation of Public Space
  - A. Until the nineteenth century, cities grew haphazardly until reformers and architects pushed for central planning
  - B. Frederick Law Olmstead and Calvert Vaux—planned Central Park, parks were important ways to get away from urban life within the city itself; Central Park is very natural in appearance
  - C. Architecture—Metropolitan Museum of Art, operas, other museums, theaters, libraries; results of philanthropy from wealthy citizens who wanted more amenities
  - D. “City Beautiful Movement”—inspired by Europe, American wanted to make cities better looking and more opulent; the 1893 Columbian Exposition (for 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Columbus) featured neoclassical buildings around a former lagoon; Daniel Burnham led the “City Beautiful Movement”; politics were too difficult and too much land was privately owned; never as great as European cities
  - E. “Back Bay” in Boston was filled in bay area and developed, recreated in many other cities
- II. Housing the Well-to-DO
  - A. Housing for the rich was not a worry like it was for the poor (cheap labor helped)
  - B. Extremely rich lived in the center of affluent areas of cities in mansions
  - C. Growth of Suburbs—the moderately rich and later the extremely rich began to settle in the nostalgic country-like suburbs outside of cities with cheaper real estate, appealing landscapes, peacefulness, and cleaner air
- III. Housing Workers and the Poor
  - A. Workers and the poor could not afford to buy so they rented; they had little bargaining power and were packed in like sardines, 700 persons per square acre in the lower East side of Manhattan
  - B. Despite any conditions, landlords believed they could rent anything; “triple deckers” in Boston, rowhomes in Philly, slave quarters in the South
  - C. Tenements—the word went from meaning multi-family rented houses to slum dwellings; although an improvement on previous living arrangements, tenements became “miserable abodes” without windows and plumbing; NY law required windows later but they were built small

- D. Jacob Riis—photographic essay *How the Other Half Lives* outlined the terrible conditions of tenements; however, reformers like him just suggested leveling tenements (without replacement)
- E. Boarders—about half of New York home owners took boarders by 1900, sometimes relatives, sometimes just random people
- IV. Urban Transportation
  - A. Streets were crowded and usually unpaved
  - B. Paving increased near the turn of the century
  - C. Too much volume of people on streets; horse cars were not sufficient; new mass transportation had to be invented
  - D. Mass transit—new “filthy” elevated railways in NYC; trolleys in Richmond, cable cars, subways in Boston; new roads and bridges, especially in NYC like John A. Roebling’s Brooklyn Bridge
- V. The “Skyscraper”
  - A. Until around 1860, buildings were about 4 stories because of the number of stairs and the building materials; new cast iron and steel beams combined with elevators, made building taller buildings possible
  - B. Building rose from 4 stories to 7 to 12 and eventually came to be described as skyscrapers
  - C. Steel-girder construction made very tall buildings possible
  - D. Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright were the pioneers of skyscrapers

### Strains of Urban Life

*Increased congestion led to crime, fire, disease, and other hazards in cities; governments had few resources to handle these conditions.*

- I. Fire and Disease
  - A. Great fires in Boston, Chicago and elsewhere were the result of wooden buildings, earthquakes in San Francisco called for more services as well; new fireproof and sturdier buildings were constructed and fire departments were established
  - B. Inadequate Sanitation—human waste was basically everywhere, even when flush toilets became popular in the 1870s
- II. Environmental Degradation
  - A. Industrialization caused environmental problems: overcrowding, plague, etc.
  - B. Bad removal of waste: pollution in rivers
  - C. Presence of farm animals contributed to environmental problems
  - D. Air Pollution—respiratory infection, problems were greater in London which burned soft coal
  - E. Reformers pushed for cleaner water; major projects
  - F. Public Health Service—Alice Hamilton (MD) worked for US Bureau of Labor, catalytic in identification of pollution; government creates Public Health Service; Occupational Health and Safety Administration helped protect workers in unsafe health workplaces
- III. Urban Poverty
  - A. Organizations created to help the poor, some where “undeserving” by the fault of their own, others were “deserving” and usually had restricted help to avoid dependency
  - B. Salvation Army—founded in London, focused more on religion than anything
  - C. Orphans and runaways, etc. attracted attention “street arabs”
- IV. Crime and Violence
  - A. High Crime Rates—overcrowding and poverty led to crime; usually minor but sometimes violent, violence exploded everywhere: the South (lynching), the West’s lawless boom towns, immigrant gangs, and native born American city dwellers
  - B. Police forces were established, helpful but sometimes had corruption themselves
  - C. Middle class established urban national guard groups to prevent insurrections that never occurred
- V. Fear of the City—some were scare of cities, realistic fear for single women; prostitution etc.
- VI. The Machine and the Boss
  - A. The political machine was the major source of assistance for inner city groups
  - B. Boss Rule—bosses (often Irishmen) tried to mobilize the voting power of immigrants, gave gifts like groceries and coal as well as patronage (political positions)
  - C. Graft and Corruption—you buy land that you know the city need and then sell it to the city for higher prices or make contractors pay you for letting them build something (paid with tax money)
  - D. William M. Tweed, boss of NYC’s Tammany Hall was the most corrupt; ended up in jail
  - E. Often times, bosses helped improved city infrastructure although they were usually corrupt
  - F. Reasons for Boss Rule—1) immigrant voting power, 2) wealthy benefiting from them gave money, 3) structural weakness of city governments
  - G. “Invisible governments (political machines) made up for real government’s shortcomings
  - H. Machines faded in power quickly and had about a .500 record for elections; critics argued for basic reforms like “structural changes in the nature of city government”

### The Rise of Mass Consumption

*Middle class begins to effect all of America*

- I. Patterns of Income and Consumption
  - A. American industry grew because of a larger market (middle class)
  - B. Raised salaries and new techniques in production made products available to more people (larger market)
  - C. What was happening with income?
    - 1. Income was rising for everyone, although unevenly
    - 2. Vast fortunes sprouted (Vanderbilt, Carnegie)
    - 3. Middle class “white collar” professions saw rise in income
    - 4. Women and children worked (family income increases)

5. Lower class jobs also see slow rise
- D. New Merchandising Techniques—mass market grew; ready-made clothing
- E. More (women especially) became interested in clothing, bigger wardrobes, closets in homes
- F. Food canning industry arises, with invention of cans; food preservation techniques
- G. Life expectancy rises 6 years
- II. Chain Stores and Mail-Orders Houses
  - A. National networks of stores increase competition (Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company) was the first chain (grocery store)
  - B. Variety and lower prices at chain stores, put out local merchants
  - C. Social Consequences of Mail-order Catalogues—chain stores were slower than catalogues in reaching remote rural areas; Montgomery Ward and Richard Sears were the first; changed the lives of rural people by explaining fashion and luxuries to them in bulky catalogues
- III. Department Stores
  - A. Impact of the Department Store—department stores help transform buying habits
  - B. Variety in one huge store
  - C. Suggested wonder, excitement, and luxury, vibrant decorations
  - D. Lower prices
- IV. Women as Consumers
  - A. Women were the primary consumers in families
  - B. Women usually prepared food, interested in food products
  - C. Clothing changed faster for women than men so they bought it more often
  - D. Women had new opportunities as sales clerks, etc.
  - E. National Consumers League—mobilize women as consumers, transforming policies for working women

## Leisure in the Consumer Society

*Working time declined, leisure time increased*

- I. Redefining Leisure
  - A. New conceptions of Leisure—earlier, rest was for God, time for oneself was laziness; leisure was becoming a normal part of life
  - B. Simon Patten—wrote *The Theory of Prosperity* and *The New Basis of Civilization* saying that new economies could make desires real (beyond just meeting needs)
  - C. Public Leisure—new demands for entertainment; instead of staying at home, people “went out” to Coney Island and other amusement parks, dance halls, concerts, movies became popular
  - D. Central Park—for affluent to seen and be seen by other affluent people
  - E. Usually not widely diverse (saloons for men, luncheonettes for women, clubs based on race)
  - F. Sometimes there was conflict, the rich tried to protect Central Park
  - G. “A vigorous public culture” prevailed
- II. Spectator Sports
  - A. Baseball, the “national pastime” became popular around 1900
  - B. Football was the second most popular, originally an elite college sport (first game was Princeton vs. Rutgers)
  - C. Major League Baseball—as baseball grew in popularity, cities formed teams (Cincinnati Red Stockings was first) and first world series in 1903
  - D. Established conferences in football, “Big Ten” to eliminate using non-students; football became dominated by the mid western schools
  - E. After serious deaths and injuries, Roosevelt’s National College Athletic Association (NCAA) monitored matches
  - F. Other sports became popular—basketball, boxing (John Sullivan), horse racing (Kentucky Derby)
  - G. Gambling and Sports—gambling was closely associated with sports, the “throwing” of World Series in 1919 helped prompt leaders to clean up the game; horse racing was founded for betting
  - H. Men dominated most sports; women participated in the more unpopular sports of golf and tennis
  - I. Later they began to participate in cycling and croquet, then track, crew, and swimming in girl’s colleges, and finally basketball; challenging the idea that exercise was bad for women
- III. Music and Theater
  - A. Ethnic Theater—ethnic communities became popular places for theater (Yiddish theater, etc.)
  - B. Musical Comedy evolves
  - C. Vaudeville—inexpensive productions at saloons, bars etc.
- IV. The Movies
  - A. After Edison invented movie technology, short “peep shows” became popular
  - B. Before *Birth of a Nation* and other movies by D. W. Griffith, movies were meant to show off technology; Griffith’s movies had real plots (although twisted KKK propaganda)
- V. Working-class Leisure
  - A. Working classes spent time on the streets making friends and chatting; leisure was more important to them because it was new and a bigger contrast to work
  - B. The neighborhood saloon was the major place of leisure for the working class; political centers, urban machines were involved in them; sometimes places of crime and prostitution as well
  - C. Anti-Saloon League were established
  - D. Boxing was popular among the working class
- VI. The Fourth of July
  - A. The Fourth was one of the only days off, most days off (Christmas, Sundays) were for religion
  - B. Ethnic organizations sponsored picnics, games, parades, etc. in cities; the upper middle class preferred resorts for the Fourth

- C. In the South it was more a remembrance of the reestablishment of southern white supremacy
  - D. Whites in the South restricted blacks from celebrating and made themselves feel more powerful with Independence Day
- VII. Private Pursuits
- A. Novels and poetry became popular for private leisure time
  - B. Novels for “moral uplift” (Horatio Alger), detective stories, and “dime novels” about the Wild West were popular
  - C. Music too, was popular; many middle-class families placed a high value on learning to play an instrument
- VIII. Mass Communications
- A. Daily newspapers increased; journalism became professional
  - B. The telegraph was used to transport news and became standard throughout America
  - C. Emergence of Newspaper Chains—individuals began to buy many papers, William Randolph Hearst owned 9
  - D. “Yellow Journalism” was for the masses with large pictures and fiery style
  - E. New magazines for the masses like Edward W. Bok’s *Ladies’ Home Journal*

## High Culture in the Age of the City

*A new distinction between highbrow and lowbrow culture was invented so that elites and intellectuals could have their own distinct culture.*

- I. The Literature of Urban America
- A. Foreign critics looked at American life as corrupt, lacking deep culture
  - B. Some writers tried to revive an older natural world in America, others dealt with what they had
  - C. Social Realism—Steven Crane (*The Red Badge of Courage*) tried to emphasize urban social realism in America about the plight of the working class
  - D. Writers
    1. Theodore Dreiser wanted to “abandon the genteel traditions of earlier times” to discuss modern problems
    2. Frank Norris wrote *The Octopus* about the struggle between oppressed wheat farmers and railroads
    3. Upton Sinclair wrote *The Jungle* about capitalist corruption
    4. Kate Chopin wrote *The Awakening* about breaking the bonds of marriage
    5. William Dean Howells wrote *The Rise of Silas Lapham* about the corruption of the American lifestyle
    6. Other wrote about withdrawing from society (Henry Adams, Henry James)
- II. Art in the Age of the City
- A. American art refused to be regarded less highly than European art around 1900 and produced new styles
  - B. Ashcan School—naturalist social realism in art; abstraction and expressionism
  - C. Modernism—art that rejected glorified high society; this glorified the ordinary
- III. The Impact of Darwinism
- A. “Natural Selection”—Darwin’s theory of evolution, the strong survive to reproduce; challenged Bible, applied to history
  - B. After resistance from schools, etc., Protestant churches began to accept it, changed theology
  - C. Schism between liberal Protestantism in the city, following science, and Protestant fundamentalism in rural areas
  - D. Pragmatism—William James of Harvard (brother of Henry James) outlined Pragmatism (so did Charles S. Peirce)
    1. Society should rely on scientific inquiry, not moral ideals
    2. Beliefs and faiths had to work
  - E. Sociologists and economists applied scientific method to their fields
  - F. New ideas in schooling to help students acquire more knowledge
  - G. Growth of Anthropology—studying other cultures, finally Native American culture began to be understood
- IV. Toward Universal Schooling
- A. American schools and universities underwent a transformation in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century because of the demand for skills
  - B. Spread of public education—numbers of schools increased exponentially (100 in 1860 to 12,000 in 1914) with required attendance, however, rural areas lagged behind
  - C. Black colleges and Indian Colleges were established
  - D. “Land-grant Institutions”—Morril Land Grant Act from Civil War times allowed the federal government to donate land to states for public schools (UC System, Illinois, Wisconsin)
  - E. Philanthropy—Ivy League, Northwestern, Syracuse, and other were endowed with large amounts of money
  - F. New universities—Vanderbilt, Johns Hopkins, Cornell, Duke, Tulane, Stanford
- V. Education for Women
- A. Before the Civil War, few women ever got an education, it became more accessible after it
  - B. Women’s Colleges—after the Civil War, there were increases in coeducational institutions as well as women’s schools (7 Sister Schools [to the Ivy League], etc.)
  - C. A distinct women’s community was evolving in America, promoted by women’s colleges
  - D. Women pursued careers other than (or beyond) marriage and/or motherhood, many educated ones did not marry; education was a great liberator for women

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