

US History/Age of Invention and Gilded Age

Politics of the Gilded Age

The Political Machines

During the Gilded Age, politics were characterized by the political machines of the cities and states. The "spoils system" was still in use. When a political machine won an election, it could remove all appointed office holders, leading to change in make up of the body as well as the heads of government departments. At that time many political offices were also elected. Many elected officials were elected to represent their ward, and not by the entire city. This system led to the election of people personally known to their communities, as opposed to people voters had heard of but didn't know.

The machines in the cities tended to be controlled by the Democratic party which allied with new immigrants by providing jobs, housing, and other benefits in exchange for votes. This was a challenge to the power of the old elites, whose families had lived in the US for generations. Political machines routinely used fraud and bribery to further their ends. On the other hand they also provided relief, security, and services to the crowds of newcomers who voted for them and kept them in power. By doing this they were able to keep the peoples loyalty, thus giving themselves more power.

The political machines gave lucrative government contracts and official positions to supporters. Opponents of the political machines called this corruption, and wished to give a corrupt government contracts and official positions to people they preferred. One of the most well known machines was that of Tammany Hall in New York. Long led by William Tweed, he was better known as Boss Tweed. In addition to rewarding supporters, they saw themselves as defending New York City from the residents of upstate New York and the New York state government who saw New York city as a ready source of funds to benefit upstate New York.

Most bosses such as "Duke" Vare, Tom Pendergast, and Richard Croker had an official income that was very low but were still able to live in luxury despite this fact.

Republican political machines also existed, one of the most important was the Republican machine in Ohio run by Mark Hanna. Ohio had a comparatively large population and was very important in national politics. Mark Hanna was a successful businessman and political operator and long time friend of Rockefeller. He later helped mastermind McKinley's run for president.

There was a darker side to early politics in the Gilded Age in the form of Jim Crow segregation laws. Although slavery was now abolished, many whites still saw themselves as better than blacks and sought out new ways to oppress them. In the 1896 Supreme Court case Plessy v. Ferguson, the Supreme Court ruled that segregation was legal as long as the institutions maintained separate-but-equal qualities. After the ruling segregation laws in the South began to pop up. Known as Jim Crow laws, they relegated blacks to sit in the back of street cars, separate public drinking fountains and toilets, and separate sections of cemeteries and hospitals. Jim Crow laws created even more of a separation and gave whites the opportunity to continue to treat African Americans as inferior.

Industrialization

In the 1870's, the United States became a leading Industrial power. Advances in technology drove American Industrialization, as did access to the immense and untapped resources of the North American continent. Industrialization brought the growth of new American cities such as Chicago, and the arrival of a flood of immigrants from all over Europe to man the factories. The Civil War had transformed the North into one of the most heavily industrialized regions in the world, and during the Gilded Age, businessmen reaped enormous profits from this new economy. Powerful tycoons formed giant trusts to monopolize the production of goods that were in high

demand. Andrew Carnegie, for one, built a giant steel empire using vertical integration, a business tactic that increased profits by eliminating middlemen from the production line. Though industrialization caused many long-term positives, it did cause problems in the short-term.^[1] Rich farmers who could afford new machinery grew even richer, while poorer farmers were forced to move into urban areas as they could not compete in the agricultural sector.

In 1878 the U.S. had entered a time of success after a long downfall of the mid 1870's. The number of manufacturing plants and number of people doubled. Also, by the 1900's the South had consisted of more than 400 mills. Women and also children worked in bad conditions for long periods of time, mostly about 12-16 hours per day. They only made about a half a dollar per day, which was not much in that day of time.

Early innovations in the technology of the internal-combustion engine took place in Europe. In 1885 a German engineer, Gottlieb Daimler, built a lightweight engine driven by vaporized gasoline. This development inspired one of America's most visionary manufacturers, Henry Ford. In the 1880's, Ford, an electrical engineer in Detroit's Edison Company, experimented in his spare time using Daimler's engine to power a vehicle. George Selden, a Rochester, New York, lawyer, had already been tinkering with such technology, but Ford applied organizational genius to this invention and spawned a massive industry.^[2]

As industrialization boomed, more job opportunities than ever opened up. Factory line jobs were perfect for women and children, mostly because the factory owners could pay the women less. Despite terrible work conditions, increasing numbers of women began to move from purely domestic workers to factory help. Although women now had a part in the workforce, sexual discrimination lasted. Where women had the opportunity to take some low positions, virtually no women were trusted with responsibilities such as managing, or even handling money. The factories also took advantage of immigrants and used them as cheap labor. Immigrants from Ireland, Germany and other European countries were considered second class citizens and this was evident in the work place. Immigrants received extremely low wages and no benefits, it was common for a worker to suffer a serious injury and lose his job if he was unable to perform.

Workers adjusted to mechanization as best they could. Some people submitted to the demands of the factory, machine, and time clock. Some tried to blend old ways of working into the new system. Others turned to resistance. Individuals challenged the system by ignoring management's orders, skipping work, or quitting. But also, anxiety over the loss of independence and a desire for better wages, hours, and working conditions drew disgruntled workers into unions.^[3]

In the cities, laborers and employers often clashed over wages, sanitary conditions, working hours, benefits, and several other issues. Laborers organized themselves into unions to negotiate with companies. The companies, however, attempted to shut down labor unions. Some imposed *yellow dog contracts*, under which an employer could dismiss a worker who participated in union activity.

In 1886, the American Federation of Labor was formed to fight for laborers in general. The AFL and other union groups employed as many tactics as possible to force employers to accede to their demands. One tactic was the strike. Some strikes escalated into riots, as with the Knights of Labor's strike in 1886 becoming the Haymarket Riots. The Haymarket Riots of 1886 occurred when an unknown person threw a dynamite bomb into a group of police officers. Eight officers were killed in the explosion and gunfight that ensued. As a result, eight anarchists were tried for murder -- four were sentenced to death and one committed suicide.

The Pullman Strike occurred in 1894, in response to Pullman Company workers' wages being cut following the Panic of 1893, an economic depression which was caused in part by excessive railroad speculation. Approximately 3,000 workers began the strike on May 11. Many of the workers were members of the American Railway Union, and although the strike began without authorization from union officials (known as a "wildcat strike"), the ARU eventually supported the strike by launching a nationwide boycott of Pullman cars on June 26. Within four days, approximately 125,000 ARU members had quit their jobs rather than switch Pullman cars. On July 6, President Cleveland sent Army troops to break up the strike, ostensibly because it prevented delivery of mail and was

considered a threat to public safety.

The companies sometimes retaliated against strikes by suing the unions. Congress had passed the Sherman Antitrust Act to prevent trusts, or corporations that held stock in several different companies, from obstructing the activities of competitors. Though the Sherman Act was intended to target trusts, the companies sued the union under it, claiming that unions obstructed interstate commerce.

During the machine age, there were a number of strikes that took place due to the demands from factories and time clocks. It was hard for individuals to adjust to that system, and as a result, they challenged the system by ignoring management's orders, skipping work, or quitting. The desire and longing for better wages led to anxiety and frustration. Like farming and mining, industry was massive in size and changed not only the nature of the work but the person doing it. Soon, all of these disgruntled individuals formed specialized groups into unions. The different jobs varied in not only skill, but other things as well that were non-related to worker conflict; race, sex, ect. These jobs were such as working on/in railroads, steel factories, and automobiles. The outcome for many working in labor during the Gilded Age led to horrific labor violence. Industrialists and workers literally fought over control of the workplace. Many suffered due to the strikes and riots and it inevitably led to deaths, loss of jobs, and often continuous violence. For most American workers, the Machine age had varying results. At times there was no job stability and when costs of living would increase drastically there were even more problems. ^[4]

Urbanization

With industrialization came urbanization. The increasing factory businesses created many more job opportunities in the cities. Soon people began to flock from rural, farm areas, to large cities. Minorities and immigrants added to these numbers. Factory jobs were the only jobs some immigrants could get, and as more came to the cities to work, the larger the urbanization process became. In 1870 there were only two American cities with a population of more than 500,000, but by 1900 there were six, and three of these, New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia had over one million inhabitants. Roughly 40 percent of Americans lived in cities and the number was climbing. These large populations in the cities caused the crime rates to go up, and disease was rapidly spreading. Not only did urbanization cause cities to grow in population, it also caused cities to grow in building size. Skyscrapers were being built in the cities and the idea of mass transit had started. With these mass transits being built it allowed people to commute to work from further distances. Suburbs were beginning to form and higher class families began to move to them to get out of the over crowded city but still gave them the ability to go into the city to work each day. City living was for the lower class the upper class had enough money to get away from all of the pollution and the city stench. This still holds true today in larger cities a lot of the nicer homes are located further out from the center of the city. For example, in the city of Chicago, you will find a lot of the nicer homes away from the city, and more towards the suburbs. In this case, this is because there are a lot of violence in the inner city. Therefore, people try to live more further out from the city in order to stay away from the violence.

Agriculture

In the late 1880s and early 1900s, a typical farm would be just about 100 acres. Farmers had only one way of farming, which was by horse or a mule. Now, today we use tractors for the farm work. Farmers raised cows, pigs, chickens, and horses. They grew turnips, potatoes, carrots, grain, wheat, and corn. Farmers often ate off of their own establishment, because it was cheaper and it also was a way of life.

While industry generally increased in importance, farmers struggled due to debt and falling prices. The crop failures of the 1880s greatly exacerbated the situation.

The economic transformation taking place created prosperity and new lifestyles for some, but some states still dominated by farming, these changes also had a widespread negative impact. Crop diversification and the greater focus on cotton as a cash crop offered some potential for farmers to get ahead, but other forces worked against that

success.^[5]

Agriculture reformed the railroad system, when the farmers crop needed transported they had to rely on the railroads but the railroads implements outrageous prices. This caused farmers, small merchants and reform politicians to demand rate regulations. By 1880 fourteen states had established commissions to limit freight and storage charges of state-chartered lines. In 1877, in *Munn v. Illinois*, the supreme court upheld the principle of state regulation, declaring that grain warehouses owned by railroads acted in the public interest and therefore must submit to regulations for the common good.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s the number of farms had tripled from 1860-1905 from 2 million to 6 million. In the year of 1905 the number of people living on farms grew to an outstanding 31 million. The value of farms went from 8 billion in 1860; to 30 billion in 1906. Wheat has also been the main crop in the 18th century, because it can produce common foods such as bread, pastries, pizza and pasta.

Chicken's eggs were gathered every evening, cleaned and packed in cases. They were mostly stored in cardboard boxes. Female chickens were called pullets and the male chickens were roosters. Hen houses had individual bins so that each chicken could have their own form of privacy while laying eggs. Women often wore shoes while entering hen houses because it will often be messy and smelly in there.

Ever since the civil war, farmers have been using more and more machinery to plant and harvest their crops. In 1879 the centrifugal cream separator was patented. In 1885, chicken raising became a lot more profitable due to the invention of the mechanized incubator. Because of all the machines that were invented, a farmer went from being able to harvest about 7.5 acres of wheat to being able to harvest about 135 acres in the same amount of time. In short, the American farmer produced far too much for his own good.

In the 1920s, farmers did not do so well. Europe often bought food from America, but after European countries start growing their food back on their own, they stopped buying food from America. In the 1920s, America started to over produce food and it began to be hard for farmers in America to sell their product to anyone.

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In 1925-1927 George Washington Carver patented two uses for peanuts, and hundreds of more inventions from soybeans, pecans, and even sweet potatoes. Some inventions he made from peanuts and soybeans are paper, instant coffee, shaving cream, mayonnaise, and talcum powder. All of the procedures he practiced were never recorded by him in a notebook. In 1931 he made all kinds of inventions using soybeans, and peanuts especially. Some of these inventions are shaving cream, soap, other eating foods, and meat tenderizer. The meat tenderizer was often used for people, and especially women to use on their meat because back then this was a new thing to people. You would sprinkle some of this meat tenderizer on raw meat in order to help the meat to be soft.

Conditions for farmers in the south were bad in the 1920s. A lot of farms did not have running water, electricity, and pay was also low, due to over producing. Many farmers were dependent on main crop, such as cotton. In the 1920s, the price of cotton plummeted because man-made materials then became available.

Imperialism

Industrialization caused businessmen to seek new international markets for their goods. This led to the idea that the United States had to secure foreign markets before the powerful nations of Europe did so for themselves. America soon becomes the world's biggest industrial leader, and a world power who rivals with Britain and Germany. This concept, and other causes, led to Imperialism, the practice of a stronger nation seeking to influence a weaker one. American imperialism happened in places mainly in the far east, the South Pacific, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The earliest victims of Western European imperialism were other Europeans. Some 800 years ago,

Ireland became the first colony of what later became known as the British empire.

Imperialism was supported by other ideas. For instance, the concept of social Darwinism suggested that the US had the inherent right to rule over others because "savages" were naturally inferior. Also, some American Imperialists claimed that they had the divine right to conquer and spread Christianity.

Anti-imperialists, on the other hand, felt that the US, which was founded on the principles of liberty, ought not to infringe on the liberty of other nations. Imperialists responded that the US would not act like European powers and tyrannize foreign lands. They claimed that the US would merely help other nations govern lands that they could not. The Spanish did not like this idea of imperialism and the Spanish-American war would break out.

China

In China, several foreign nations exercised power, taking advantage of a weak Chinese ruling class. The region in which a particular nation exercised most power was known as its *sphere of influence*. Russia, Japan, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany all exercised influence. Secretary of State John Hay endorsed the *Open Door Policy*, under which all foreign powers would exercise equal economic power. Russia was the only country with influence to not agree. The US thus protected its interests in China, and it also maintained a balance of power there.

China though also resented being used by other countries and it was a handful of Chinese peasants that resented all of the outside influence. Therefore to resist the influence of other countries the peasants revolted The "Boxer Rebellion". It was named after the style of fighting that the Anglo-Europeans witnessed by the Chinese. Unable to put down the rebellion by themselves, the European nations relied on the U.S. to step in and put down the rebellion. The U.S. would go onto to support a Chinese dynasty that would be pro-U.S.

Cuba

In 1895, Cuba rebelled against Spain. The *Yellow Press*, a group of pro-conflict American journalists, reported exaggerations of Spanish atrocities in an attempt to encourage the US to interfere in Cuba. In 1898, the American battleship USS *Maine* was destroyed by an explosion in the Cuban Harbor of Havana. Although later investigations proved that an internal problem was to blame, the yellow journalists blamed Spain.

Pushed by Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt, President William McKinley asked Congress to declare war on April 11, 1898. The weak-willed McKinley did so despite the fact that Spain was ready for peace. On April 25, Congress complied and declared war.

The Spanish-American War lasted only four months. The United States Navy won two one-sided naval battles, destroying the Spanish Pacific Fleet at Manila in the Philippines and the Atlantic fleet at Santiago, Cuba. The U.S. then landed forces in Cuba, which fought the tropical climate and associated diseases as well as the Spanish forces. In the Battle of San Juan Hill (actually Kettle Hill), Lt. Colonel Theodore Roosevelt earned a reputation as a military hero by leading the attack entrenched Spanish positions. The regiment to which Roosevelt belonged, the First U.S. Volunteers, was recruited throughout the United States and known as the *Rough Riders* because of the number of cowboys. The 10th Cavalry, a regiment of black soldiers, supported the Rough Riders in the attack.

The Spanish-American War was also seen domestically as a sign of increasing national unity. Joseph Wheeler, a Confederate general of the Civil War, commanded U.S. forces in Cuba. Two of Robert E. Lee's nephews were also U.S. generals.

In December, both sides signed a peace treaty. The US gained control of the Philippines, Guam, Cuba (1898-1901), and Puerto Rico for the nominal payment of \$20 million.

Hawaii

An event that took place before the Spanish-American War happened in Hawaii, Americans deposed Queen Lili'uokalani in 1891. Reacting to a recent tariff that ruined profit margins on Hawaiian exports, like sugar, American planters decided that the easiest way to solve the difficulty would be for Hawaii to be incorporated into the US. The planters incited a revolt against Lili'uokalani, and American troops intervened to assist it. The Americans in Hawaii asked the US to annex the islands. President Benjamin Harrison's annexation treaty was stalled in the Senate by Democrats until a Democratic President, Stephen Grover Cleveland, took office. After an investigation, Cleveland found that the majority of Hawaiians were opposed to annexation. Although unable to restore Lili'uokalani to her former position, Cleveland withdrew the treaty and Hawaii remained separate from the US. While McKinley was in office, however, the Congress passed a resolution annexing Hawaii, and the task of taking over the islands was accomplished.

President Grover Cleveland

Stephen Grover Cleveland was born on March 18, 1837 and died on June 24, 1908 at the age of 71. He was the 22nd and 24th President of the United States. Cleveland is the only president to serve two non-consecutive terms (1885–1889 and 1893–1897) and therefore is the only individual to be counted twice in the numbering of the presidents. He was the winner of the popular vote for president three times—in 1884, 1888, and 1892—and was the only Democrat elected to the presidency in the era of Republican political domination that lasted from 1860 to 1912.

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