

Chapter 19 Outline - The Vitality and Turmoil of Urban Life, 1877–1920

- I. Introduction

Cities gained great importance in the 1880s, and by 1900 urbanization affected every section of the United States.

- II. Growth of the Modern City

- A. Industrial Development

Product specialization became common in many American cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In the late nineteenth century, the compact city of the past gave way to urban sprawl and to cities subdivided into distinct districts.

- B. Mechanization of Mass Transportation

Commuter railroads, cable cars, and street cars allowed for greater mobility in urban America.

- C. Urban Sprawl

Improved transportation led city dwellers to move into outlying neighborhoods, creating urban sprawl.

Urban sprawl altered commercial patterns as well as residential patterns.

- D. Population Growth

Between 1870 and 1920, the number of Americans living in cities increased from 10 million to 54 million.

During these years cities grew primarily as a result of annexation and

net migration rather than from natural increase.

- E. Urban In-Migration

In-migration from the countryside and immigration from abroad were the greatest contributors to urban growth.

Many Americans migrated from rural to urban areas during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In the 1880s and 1890s, thousands of rural African Americans seeking better economic situations moved to cities. In the West, many Hispanics also moved from rural to urban areas.

- F. New Foreign Immigration

Most urban newcomers were immigrants from Europe.

A new wave of immigrants, from eastern and southern Europe, frightened Americans because of the emigrants' customs, different faiths, illiteracy, and poverty.

- G. Geographic and Social Mobility

In addition to movement from rural to urban areas, large numbers of people not only moved from city to city but within cities as well.

Migration and occupational change were two paths to improved opportunity. Advance up the social scale through occupational mobility to new jobs was mostly available to white males.

Rates of upward occupational mobility were slow but steady between 1870 and 1920.

A person could also achieve social mobility by acquiring property.

- III. Urban Neighborhoods

- A. Cultural Retention and Change

Immigrants' cultures helped sustain them in their new home, and Old World institutions also helped them adapt.

- B. Urban Borderlands

Immigrants in large cities lived in multi-ethnic neighborhoods.

- C. Racial Segregation and Violence

By the late nineteenth century, institutionalized racism forced African Americans to live in highly segregated ghettos. Within these neighborhoods, African Americans nurtured cultural institutions that helped them cope with urban life.

The movement of African Americans to urban areas led to white violence in northern and southern cities. A series of race riots spread across the nation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Asians faced discrimination and an isolated residential experience similar to that of African Americans.

- D. Mexican Barrios

In southwestern and western cities, Mexicans found themselves confined in barrios.

- E. Cultural Adaptation

Immigrants adapted their Old World cultures to the realities of life in America.

The influx of immigrants from 1870 to 1920 changed the United States from a mostly Protestant nation into one of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. Many Catholics and Jews supported liberalizing trends within their religions to accommodate their faiths to their new

American environment.

- IV. Living Conditions in the Inner City

- A. Inner-City Housing

Urban growth meant masses of people jammed into the inner cities, which led to housing shortages and unsanitary living conditions.

- B. Housing Reform

Reform campaigns led to some improvements in housing conditions.

- C. New Home Technology

New technologies such as central heating, artificial lighting, and modern indoor plumbing led to changes in home life.

The establishment of water purification and sewage disposal systems helped control the spread of disease. Steel-frame construction made possible the building of skyscrapers.

- D. Poverty Relief

The uncertainties of the business cycle meant that many families lived in poverty. Private relief agencies often acted out of the belief that poverty was caused by personal defects. However, some humanitarians began to advance the more progressive belief that people's environments caused poverty.

- E. Crime and Violence

Many people feared urban crime. In all likelihood, cities did not have increased crime, but urban problems proved more conspicuous and sensational than rural crime.

- V. Managing the City

- A. Water Supply and Sewage Disposal

Acceptance of the germ theory of disease led many cities to take steps to reduce chances that human waste and other pollutants would endanger water supplies.

Disposal of waste was a major problem in urban areas.

- B. Urban Engineers

Some problems required technical and professional creativity, and cities increasingly depended on engineers.

- C. Law Enforcement

By the early 1900s, law enforcement had the complicated role of balancing the idealistic intentions of criminal law with people's desire for individual freedom.

- D. Political Machines

Urban growth strained city governments and led to the rise of political machines, which in turn created bosses.

Bosses held their power because they knew the people's needs, and they solved the problems of everyday life by exchanging favors for votes or money.

- E. Civic Reform

Business-minded reformers wanted to elect officials who would control expenses and prevent corruption.

Civic reformers often supported structural changes such as the city-manager and commission forms of government and the nonpartisan,

citywide election of officials.

- F. Social Reform

Social reform occurred at all levels of the urban society. Settlement houses fought for school nurses, building codes, public playgrounds, and labor unions.

- G. The City Beautiful Movement

Many architects and city planners worked to beautify the urban environment with civic centers, parks, and boulevards.

- VI. Family Life

- A. Family and Household Structures

The vast majority of households consisted of nuclear families, although some extended families existed.

- B. Declining Birth Rates

As infant mortality rates fell, couples had fewer children. Smaller families also improved standards of living.

- C. Stages of Life

Distinct social changes occurred: Decreasing birthrates shortened the period of parental responsibility, and formal education made childhood more unique. New institutions assumed tasks once performed by the family.

- D. The Unmarried

A subculture of unmarried young people living separate from their parents emerged in urban areas. Some of the unmarried were homosexuals who formed their own gay subculture.

- E. Boarding and Lodging

Young people who left their families often became boarders in the cities. Many urban families took in boarders to help pay the rent.

- F. Functions of Kinship

Families served as the primary social institution, but some kinship obligations, such as caring for the aged, proved stifling for young immigrants.

- G. Holiday Celebrations

Holidays and birthdays became a special time for family reunions and child-centered activities.

- VII. The New Leisure and Mass Culture

- A. Increase in Leisure Time

A shorter work week allowed more Americans to enjoy a variety of leisure-time diversions. As a result, a segment of the economy began providing entertainment.

- B. Baseball

Baseball gained great popularity. The National League of Professional Baseball Clubs was founded in 1876, and the American League emerged in 1901. In 1903, the first World Series enshrined baseball as the national pastime.

- C. Croquet and Cycling

Both men and women played croquet, and the game swept the nation. The popularity of bicycling grew, especially after the invention of the safety bicycle with pneumatic wheels of identical size. The bicycle was influential in freeing women from the constraints of Victorian

fashions.

- D. Football

College football caused a scandal in 1905 when eighteen players died from game-related injuries. This, in turn, led to the founding of the organization that came to be known as the National College Athletic Association.

- E. Show Business

Dramas with simple plots and settings captured the imaginations of the urban population. Musical comedies raised audiences' spirits with song, humor, and dance.

Vaudeville shows gained mass appeal. Shows like the Ziegfield Follies gave the nation a new model of femininity, but some producers exploited females.

- F. Opportunities for Women and Minorities

African Americans, immigrant performers, and women found new opportunities in show business, but it also encouraged stereotyping.

- G. Movies

Shortly after 1900, moving pictures started to grow in popularity, and by 1910 motion pictures had become a distinct art form used to tell a story.

- H. Yellow Journalism

Yellow journalism, pioneered by people such as Joseph Pulitzer, made the news a consumer product because of growing interest in the bizarre and the sensational.

- I. Other Mass-Market Publications

In this era, mass-circulation magazines appeared, telephone ownership increased, and Americans sent more mail through the United States Post Office.

The new ways in which Americans entertained themselves in their leisure time often had a homogenizing influence by bringing different ethnic and social groups together.

- J. Anthony Comstock

Comstock sought to censor sexually explicit and suggestive literature. He lobbied Congress to pass a law banning the distribution of certain “lewd” materials.