



Cities

Urbanization—the movement of population from the countryside to cities

Problems of Cities

- ▶ Overcrowding and slums—cheap tenement housing often lacked air ventilation or proper sanitation
- ▶ Traffic congestion—horse-drawn cars, trains, narrow streets
- ▶ Lack of garbage collection services and proper sewage—led to water contamination and diseases like cholera
- ▶ Vast differences in wealth—sharpened social antagonisms

Political Machines—corruption—Example: Boss Tweed and Tammany Hall

- ▶ The "Boss" and members of the machine provided various social services to the immigrants and the poor.
- ▶ The "political machine" encouraged immigrants and the poor to vote for its candidates.
- ▶ Officials elected by the "political machine" then charged excessive amounts on public contracts or received "kickbacks," making huge fortunes.

Immigration

Before 1880: “Old Immigrants” came from Great Britain, Ireland and Germany. Most people spoke English.

1880–1924: “New Immigrants”

- ▶ The “**New Immigrants**” came from Southern and Eastern Europe: Poland, Russia, Italy, Greece.
- ▶ Most were Catholic, Jewish, or Greek Orthodox. Many spoke no English. Most were desperately poor.
- ▶ They had different traditions than most “mainstream” Americans and faced prejudice and discrimination.

Asian Immigrants

- ▶ Chinese men began arriving during the California Gold Rush and helped to build the transcontinental railroad in California. Afterwards, they faced prejudice and discrimination.
- ▶ The *Naturalization Law of 1870* prevented Asian immigrants from becoming naturalized citizens.
- ▶ The **Chinese Exclusion Act** (1882) banned almost all immigrants from China, and was the first restriction ever placed on immigration to the United States (other than against criminals or unhealthy persons).
- ▶ Japanese Americans began arriving at the end of the century; their immigration was cut off by the **Gentlemen’s Agreement** (1907) between Japan and the United States.

The Immigrant Experience

The Voyage: Steamship companies made it more affordable to come to America.

Admission: After 1892, poorer Europeans in “steerage” class were processed at **Ellis Island**. They could be sent back if they did not pass a medical examination. After 1910, Asians generally were processed on **Angel Island** in San Francisco, where they faced even longer delays—sometimes for several months.

Ethnic “Ghettos”: Most immigrants went to live in ethnic neighborhoods in cities, known to historians as “**ghettos**.” There they lived with others who spoke the same language and practiced the same traditions.

“Americanization”: Usually the children of the immigrants were the first to be “**Americanized**”—or assimilated into “mainstream” society by learning the values and behaviors of American culture. By attending public schools, immigrant children learned English and American ways. This often led to conflict between generations.

Nativism: **Nativists** generally believed that white, Protestant native-born Americans were superior to others, and that immigrants and their diverse cultural influences were undesirable. Nativist feelings led to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and later restrictions on immigration in the 1920s.

Farmers’ Problems

In the late 19th century, a large number of Americans were still farmers, growing crops or raising livestock for sale. They began experiencing problems when food prices fell, even though their costs remained high.

Why Food Prices Fell

- ▶ Agricultural overproduction
- ▶ International competition
- ▶ Scarcity of money kept food prices low

Other Problems Faced by Farmers

- ▶ Profits of middlemen
- ▶ High shipping costs—unfair railroad rates
- ▶ High costs of manufactured products—protective tariffs and trusts
- ▶ Farmer indebtedness
- ▶ Natural disasters
- ▶ Rural isolation

Farmers Organize

Farmers organized into social and political groups to meet these challenges.

Grange Movement: National association of farmers' social clubs—served social and educational purposes

Farmers' Cooperatives: Attempts by Grangers to set up their own businesses for buying and selling bulk

Populist Party: Grangers formed "Farmers' Alliances," which formed the **Populist Party** in the early 1890s—a new national political party to represent the common interests of farmers and workers.

Granger Laws

- ▶ Grangers entered state legislatures and passed laws to regulate grain elevators and railroads.
- ▶ The Supreme Court upheld state regulation of a grain elevator in *Munn v. Illinois* (1877)
- ▶ The Supreme Court overruled a state law regulating railroad rates in *Wabash v. Illinois* (1886) on the grounds that only Congress could regulate interstate commerce

Interstate Commerce Act (1887)

- ▶ Passed by Congress after the *Wabash* decision.
- ▶ The first federal law to regulate business practices.
- ▶ Railroads could not give different rates for hauling the same freight the same distance.
- ▶ Railroads could not charge more for short hauls than long hauls.
- ▶ Congress set up a new agency, the *Interstate Commerce Commission*, to oversee enforcement of the act.

The Populist Party

- ▶ **Populist Platform of 1892 ("Omaha Platform")**
 - Included many far-reaching proposals that were later adopted: direct election of U.S. Senators, secret ballot, progressive income tax, initiative and referendum procedures, eight-hour work day, restrictions on immigration.
 - Other ideas were never adopted: government ownership of railroads and utilities, postal savings banks, unlimited silver coinage.
- ▶ **William Jennings Bryan's "Cross of Gold" Speech**—Bryan chosen as Democratic Party nominee in 1896. Populist party follows suit rather than divide the "free silver" vote.
- ▶ 1896 Presidential election campaign: Populists and Democrats focused on "**bimetallism**"—basing money on silver as well as gold to raise prices and make it easier for farmers to repay their debts.
- ▶ Bryan lost to McKinley in a close election: Populists won support in the South, Great Plains and the Rocky Mountain states.