

## **Taking a Snapshot of American Life from the 1870s to the 1890s**

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## Economic Reminders and What Is Happening to Workers

Traits	What Is Happening in America?
Economic Reminders	1872 – Mail order – Montgomery Ward 1880 – Woolworth – “Five and Ten Cent Store”
General changes	1880s – Mail order – Sears, Roebuck, and Company 1867 – \$50M in advertising 1900 – \$500M
Railroads	1870s+ – Government aid (all levels) \$500M + \$179M acres 1883 – 4 standard time zones 1886 – South – standard gauge
Depression	1894 – ¼ railroads bankrupt 1893 – 15,000 businesses closed 1894 – 2.5M unemployed (17-19% of work force)
South’s per capita income	1860 – 60% of North’s 1900 – 40% of North’s
South’s manufacturing	From 1880 to 1900, climb of 2 X In % = Climb to 10% of total US manufacturing
What’s happening to workers?	Pre- 1900 60-hr., 6 day/week 20 cents/hr. if skilled 10 cents/hr. if not
Averages, national	<i>Average</i> income – \$400-\$500/yr. <i>Minimum</i> cost of living – family of 4 = \$600/yr.
	1880-1914 Real wages ↑ \$7/yr – that’s about a 1% ↑ (for \$400, .0175; for \$500, .0104)
Factory, South	12 hrs/day – frequently women/children ½ pay rate of North
	Tobacco \$100/yr. in NC Cotton 60 hrs/week – 15 cents/day
Children, employed	1880s – Drop from 17% to 12% of children (over age 10) employed 1890s – Climb to 18%.
	1900 – 1 in 10 girls employed 1900 – 1 in 5 boys employed
Women, employed	1870 – 15% over age 16 employed 1890s – Climb from 3.7M to 5M women employed 1900 – 20% of white women (5.3M); 25% of black women wage = average ½ of men

## What Is Happening to Workers (Continued) and to Farmers

Traits	What Is Happening in America?
What's happening to workers?	1867 – 1 <sup>st</sup> drive to railhead 1871 – 700,000 (peak) 1886-87 – blizzard
Cattle drovers	Trail boss \$125/month – white Hands – average 8 men – ½ black or Mexican
Miners, in West	Corporate mines in the post-boom period 1870s – 1/30 disabled, 1/80 dead Anti-Chinese movement
Miners, coal in Midwest and East	14 hrs/day; 1/3 injured, 1/12 died in mines Pre-1890 – English and Irish Post-1890 – SE Europeans 1894 – strikes in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio 1900 – 25,000 boys under 16 in mining
What's happening to farming?	1873 \$1.16/bushel – wheat 1874 \$0.95/bushel 1889 \$0.70/bushel
Mid-West	1874 \$0.64/bushel – corn 1875 \$0.42/bushel
South	1867 – 33% farms – tenancy 1900 – 70% farms – tenancy
	tenant – tenant “owned” crop sharecropper – owner “owned” crop furnish merchant – interest to 50%
	1870 – 3.1M cotton bales 1880 – 5.7M cotton bales
	1881 \$0.11/pound – cotton (10 cents/pound break even) 1890 \$0.085/pound 1894 \$0.046/pound

## What Is Happening Politically and Demographically?

Traits	What Is Happening in America?
Political Reminders	1877-1887 – 8 of 10 voters voted 1890s – city reform – Examples: Chicago Civic Federation; National Municipal League
What is the urban/rural pattern?	<p>Cities: Over 80% immigrant in Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, New York City 1869 – 9 cities 100,000+ 1890 – 28 cities 100,000+</p> <p>Central core = skyscraper + elevator + tenement + settlement house + parks – working class Suburbs = subways + streetcars – middle class</p> <p>Rural response: Populism</p>
What migrations are occurring?	<p>1877-1890 – 6.3 M immigrants - from N and W Europe - to NE or Midwest US cities (mainly)</p> <p>1880-1917 – 17.9M immigrants – mainly Catholics and Jews and unskilled - 20.2% from NW Europe - 18.5% from E Europe - 27.1% from Central Europe - 24.3% from S Europe</p>
What's the response?	<p>Examples: 1882 Chinese Exclusion 1887 American Protective Association formed – Clinton, La.</p>
What's the black situation?	<p>1879 Exodusters 1880s Some Southern blacks to industrial cities</p> <p>1881 Tuskegee Institute – Alabama – Booker T. Washington 1883 <i>Civil Rights Cases</i> – not on individual actions 1895 Atlanta Exposition speech – Washington 1896 <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> 1896 National Association of Colored Women</p>
What's happening to prohibition?	<p>1873 – women's march against saloons, dealers 1874 – Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) – 1000 organizations, 26K members 1888+ – Republicans, state-level, social activists – prohibition laws 1895 – Anti-Saloon League (uniting Protestant churches)</p>

## What Is Happening to Social, Cultural, and Intellectual Life?

Traits	What Is Happening in America?
What's happening to family and role of women?	Birth control ↓ – 1870s – laws to restrict Divorce – 1880 – 1/21 marriages 1870 – 7,000 high school graduates 1872 – 100 colleges, universities admit 1873 – Supreme Court – A degree did not guarantee right to apply to be admitted to the bar (Myra Bradwell case). 1875 – Supreme Court – Citizenship did not guarantee right to vote ( <i>Minor v. Happersett</i> ). 1890 – General Federation of Women's Clubs 1890 – National American Woman Suffrage Association – re-merged 1890 – 4 states women's suffrage – WY, UT, CO, ID
What's leisure?	1883 – 3-ring circus 1876 – National League – baseball 1879-1885 – museums – St. Louis, Detroit, Cincinnati
What are people reading?	1866 – Horatio Alger – <i>Ragged Dick: or, Street Life in New York</i> (total 106 books) 1868-69 – Louisa May Alcott – <i>Little Women</i> 1876 – Mark Twain – <i>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</i> 1877 – Anna Sewell – <i>Black Beauty</i> 1880 – Lew Wallace – <i>Ben Hur</i> 1883 – <i>Ladies' Home Journal</i> 1885 – <i>Good Housekeeping</i> 1900 – Theodore Dreiser – <i>Sister Carrie</i>
What is happening with religion?	Social Darwinism Social Gospel
What is happening with theories of society?	1879 <i>Progress and Poverty</i> – Henry George – “single tax” <b>1880s</b> Social Darwinism - William Graham Sumner, Andrew Carnegie 1881 <i>A Century of Dishonor</i> – Helen Hunt Jackson 1883 <i>Dynamic Sociology</i> – Lester Frank Ward 1888 <i>Looking Backward</i> – Edward Bellamy <b>1890s</b> Social Gospel 1890s Pragmatism – William James 1893 Frederick Jackson Turner – “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” 1901 Frank Norris – <i>The Octopus</i> (railroad)

## Sources Used for This Data

The data in the tables is from:

- Robert A. Divine's *The American Story*
- Alan Brinkley's *The Unfinished Nation*
- Edward L. Ayers' *American Passages*
- General reference books, including the *Encyclopedia of American History* (edited by Jeffery B. Morris and Richard B. Morris)

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