

Taking a Snapshot of American Life from the 1870s through the 1920s

The column 1870s to 1890s is the same data shown previously, repeated here for comparison.

Abbreviations Used:

CP = Consumer Price Index equivalent

SP = Stock price index equivalent

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Economic Reminders and What Is Happening to Workers

Traits	1870s to 1890s	1895 to about 1920	1920s – The Jazz Age
Economic Reminders	—	—	From 1920 to 1930 these trends: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 200% ↑ Corporate profits 65% ↑ Dividends
General changes	1872 – Mail order – Montgomery Ward 1880 – Woolworth – “Five and Ten Cent Store” 1880s – Mail order – Sears, Roebuck, and Company	Mail order, retail chains continue More mass market food products – new examples: Coca Cola and Crisco 1900 9 of 10 males wear “ready to wear”	Trends continue
		1910-1920 factory production 12% ↑	1920-1930 factory production 64 % ↑
		1908 Ford Model T – 5, 986 1912 78,611	1920 - 10M cars; 1920s General Motors (GM) – over Ford 1927 Ford Model A – new car design 1930 26M cars
	1867 – \$50M in advertising 1900 – \$500M	Psychological study/sampling for advertising \$ spent - 1900 \$95M	1920 \$500M ↑
New technology	Railroads: 1870s+ – Government aid (all levels) \$500M + \$179M acres 1883 – 4 standard time zones	New production methods Scientific Management (Frederick W. Taylor) New middle class of experts – engineers, bankers, managers	Marketing/advertising becomes “as crucial as production.”
General economy	1894 – ¼ railroads bankrupt 1893 – 15,000 businesses closed 1894 – 2.5M unemployed (17-19% of work force)	General economic recovery except for panics – 1903, 1907, and just before WWI	CP: 1923 100.6 1929 95.3 SP: 1922 67.7 1929 190.3 <i>Compare CP and SP.</i>
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	1900 – 48-54 – 5.5 day/week IF white collar/managerial class 1914 – Ford - \$5.00/8-hr. day	1920- 51 hr /week ↓
Averages, national	<i>Average</i> income – \$400-\$500/yr. <i>Minimum</i> cost of living – family of 4 = \$600/yr.	—	11% ↑ Wages – factory (higher for managerial class)
	1880-1914 - Real wages ↑ \$7/yr – that’s about a 1% ↑ (for \$400, .0175; for \$500, .0104)	1899 58% of income for food/clothes	1920s 44% ↓ of income for food/clothes Dropping prices on key goods yielded more consumerism.
Labor,	1890s, end of - 300,000 American Federation of	1904 AFL - 1.7M ↑	1920s AFL – one remaining – did not unionize

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general	Labor (AFL) – skilled laborers	1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Co. fire - Women’s Trade Union 1919 Violent strikes (steel)	factories Business – positioned unions as radical/anarchist: 1920 5M 1929 3M
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 20% 5-15 years worked full- time 20K girls under 12 still in mills 1911 Bureau of Labor investigation (pushed by Women’s Trade Union)	Decline in child labor Adolescence without having to work to eat HS enrollment 400% ↑; junior colleges
	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	1900 1/5 adults; 1/3 of 14-24 worked By 1920 1/4 of those working are clerical	1920 to 1930 - only 1% more in workforce – low- paying jobs
	wage = average ½ of men		

What Is Happening to Workers (Continued) and to Farmers

Traits	1870s to 1890s	1895 to about 1920	1920s – The Jazz Age
What's happening to workers?	1867 – 1 st 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	1913 Ludlow (CO) strike - fire & gunfire on strikers - 11 kids among the dead	—
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 still in mining	—
What's happening to farming?	1873 \$1.16/bushel – wheat 1874 \$0.95/bushel 1889 \$0.70/bushel	Declining population on farm, but: ▪ 1900-1913 Rural Free Delivery, US Parcel Post ▪ 1900-1920 irrigation in CA ▪ End of WWI farm prices ↓	1920 \$0.10/pound – wheat 1924 \$0.0926/pound 1925 \$1.437/pound
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	—	1920 \$0.40/pound – cotton 1921 \$0.10/pound
Averages			1/2 ↓ Per capita farm income compared to general income
What's happening in the professions?	Doctors, lawyers, and historians start their associations in this period.	Organize and establish credentialing in education. Examples: ▪ Business 1912-Chamber of Commerce ▪ Doctors 1901-American Medical Association (reorganization) ▪ Teachers 1905-National Education Association ▪ Social workers 1911-National Federation of Social Workers	

What Is Happening Politically and Demographically?

Traits	1870s to 1890s	1895 to about 1920	1920s – The Jazz Age
Political Reminders	1877-1887 – 8 of 10 voters voted 1890s – city reform – Examples: Chicago Civic Federation; National Municipal League	1917 Russian Revolution – communism 1919 communist 60K max—cities 1919 bombings (one identified Italian anarchist) 1919 Palmer Raids – Red Scare 1920 Palmer forecasts May 1 takeover, but doesn't happen	—
What is the urban/rural pattern?	Cities: Over 80% immigrant in Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, New York City 1869 – 9 cities 100,000+ 1890 – 28 cities 100,000+	—	1920 –FIRST time over ½ Americans in cities (2500+) Result: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Land price ↑ Skyscraper ↑ ▪ Group activities with strangers ▪ Anonymous
	Central core = skyscraper + elevator + tenement + settlement house + parks – working class Suburbs = subways + streetcars – middle class		
	Rural response: Populism		
What migrations are occurring?	1877-1890 – 6.3 M immigrants - from N and W Europe - to NE or Midwest US cities (mainly)	1900-1920 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 14.5M Catholic/Jewish; Italian/Serbs; Japanese ▪ Mexican-SW (TX, AZ, NM, CA) 2X↑ EACH decade ▪ African Americans-N 	Anti-immigrant legislation 1921; 1924 (no Asians; mainly N Europe; a quota system)—rural support in Congress
	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		
What's the response?	Examples: 1882 Chinese Exclusion 1887 American Protective Association formed – Clinton, La.	1906 San Francisco school segregation of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean children 1907 Intervention by TR and “Gentlemen’s Agreement” with Japan blocking immigration from its side	1920-1927 Sacco & Vanzetti (MA) – worldwide response
What's the black situation?	1879 Exodusters 1880s Some Southern blacks to industrial cities	White South = Jim Crow + <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1900-1914 1000 blacks dead, killed by white mobs ▪ White attacks, race riot - Atlanta-1906; Springfield-1908; Washington D.C.-1919; Chicago-1919 	Migration African Americans—1M ↑ Chicago 2X NY-Harlem 2X

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	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	1900 Booker T. Washington rejected - W.E.B. Du Bois <i>Souls of Black Folk</i> - “talented 10 th ” (1903) 1905 Niagara Movement – NAACP; publication <i>The Crisis</i> 1911 National Urban League 1916 Marcus Garvey and Pan-Africanism	Harlem Renaissance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ W.E.B. Du Bois—editor NAACP’s <i>The Crisis</i> ▪ Langston Hughes 1925 Garvey convicted of fraud
What’s happening to prohibition?	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)	1916 19 states forbade alcohol 1918 18 th Amendment- Prohibition (1920 Volstead)	Rural dry; cities (upper) drank; speakeasies; bootleggers; Al Capone

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

Traits	1870s to 1890s	1895 to about 1920	1920s – The Jazz Age
What's happening to family and role of women?	Birth control ↓ – 1870s – laws to restrict Divorce – 1880 – 1/21 marriages	Birth control ↑ (Margaret Sanger) Divorce ↑ from 1/21 marriages-1880; 1/12-1900; 1/9-1916 IMAGE: Gibson girl (1890-95); later suffragette	1928 – 1 divorce/6 marriages IMAGE: flapper
	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	1910 Petition for women's suffrage for Congress to start the Constitutional Amendment process (400,000 signatures – by National American Women's Association) 1913 Suffrage parade in Washington 1914 Formation of more radical group – Congressional Union (Alice Paul) 1918+ Suffrage positioned as “war measure”	1920 19 th Amendment passed 1923 National Woman's Party (Alice Paul) – Equal Rights Amendment
	1890 – 4 states women's suffrage – WY, UT, CO, ID	1910-1912 States grant women's suffrage – WA, CA, AZ, KS, OR	
What's leisure?	1883 – 3-ring circus	Amusement parks (Coney Island); vaudeville	1920-1930 – 300% ↑ \$s on leisure
	1876 – National League – baseball	Sports – baseball, football	1921 World Series broadcast 1927 20M attended (year of Babe Ruth)
	1879-1885 – museums – St. Louis, Detroit, Cincinnati	1910 Movies – 10M people watching/week (of 91M people) 1914 <i>Birth of a Nation</i> - D.W. Griffith	1929 - “Talkies” 100M watching/week (of 122M, 1930)
	—	Music Ragtime + dancing (and beginnings of jazz and the blues) 1919 Phonographs 2.25M	Jazz – Louis Armstrong 1921 Phonographs 100M
	—	—	1920 800 independent radio stations; 1926-NBC; 1927-CBS; 1929 Amos 'n' Andy 1930 Radio owned by 12M families
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>	1908 - <i>Anne of Green Gables</i> - Lucy M. Montgomery Bobbsey Twins Series Muckrakers: ▪ Jacob Riis – on the ghettos ▪ Ida Tarbell – <i>McClure</i> magazine series on Standard Oil ▪ Lincoln Steffens – <i>McClure's</i> on city corruption ▪ <i>The Jungle</i> – Upton Sinclair	1920 - <i>Main Street</i> – Sinclair Lewis 1921 <i>Reader's Digest</i> 1923 H.L. Mencken <i>American Mercury</i> magazine 1925 <i>The Great Gatsby</i> – F. Scott Fitzgerald 1926 Book of Month Club 1929 <i>Farewell to Arms</i> – Ernest Hemingway -
What is	Social Darwinism	1919 World's Christian Fundamentals	Scopes Trial – guilty but token fine

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happening with religion?	Social Gospel	Association <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Block teaching of evolution in schools ▪ Block new theology in churches Church membership: 1916 – 41.9 M	Clarence Darrow, William Jennings Bryan, H.L. Mencken Church membership: 1926 – 54.5 M but # of churches down
What is happening with theories of society?	1879 <i>Progress and Poverty</i> – Henry George – “single tax” 1880s 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 1890s 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)	Eugenics – positioned as a science (continues through Nazi era and beyond)	See religion and reading.

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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