**CHAPTER 17**

**The Industrial Revolution**

**Learning Outcomes**

* 1. Describe and discuss the development of the Industrial Revolution in America after the Civil War, concentrating on the major industries and their leaders.

**Objectives**

1. List and discuss the major factors that contributed to the Industrial Revolution in America during the latter part of the 1800s.

2. Describe the developments in the major industries, particularly steel, railroads, and petroleum, and discuss the business leaders in each major industry.

3. Explain how the advances in technology contributed to America’s industrialization and modernization.

4. Describe the new legal and financial practices that allowed both individuals and companies to make the most of the new technological breakthroughs.

* 1. Describe how the United States’ regional and local markets merged into one national market and how this influenced consumer demand for products and services, as well as some of the costs associated with the transition.

**Objectives**

1. Explain how widespread advertising and the development of branded products sold across America contributed to an exploding consumer demand for new products.

2. Describe the ways in which Americans shopped, including the new types of stores and the development of national mail order catalogues.

* 1. Discuss the functioning of national, state, and local politics during the late 1800s.

**Objectives**

1. Discuss the various reasons put forth to justify the accumulation of wealth in America during the industrial era.

2. Explain the concept of Social Darwinism, and show how its acceptance led to an increasing distance between America’s “haves” and “have nots.”

3. Examine the growth of political machines in America’s larger cities. Describe how they operated, and give both pros and cons about their growing power.

4. Discuss some of the most outrageous scandals that involved local and state governments during the late nineteenth century.

* 1. Describe the formation of the early labor unions in the United States, including their goals, activities, and confrontations at the end of the nineteenth century.

**Objectives**

1. Describe the first major strike in the United States, the Railroad Strike of 1877, including its causes and results.

2. Provide the reasons why workers began to consider establishing or joining unions, and give reasons why owners of factories and other businesses opposed unions so strongly.

3. Discuss the major unions that evolved before the end of the nineteenth century, including the leaders, aims, strikes, and final results for the unions.

**Chapter Summary**

Even during the Civil War, Americans were trying to figure out better ways to produce the things needed by soldiers, and they were bound to discover improvements for everyday life as well. The effects of this transformation were felt outside the business world, resulting in two key social transitions: (1) more and more Americans left farming to work in factories or retail, which spurred the rapid growth of cities and (2) the American economy became dominated less by family businesses and more and more by large-scale corporate firms. Some major discoveries were being made, inventions were plentiful, and new uses for old products were also changing the face of America.

Three major industries, railroads, steel, and petroleum, led the way. This age of innovation included a vast amount of new technologies and creation of new products previously unknown. Thomas Edison put his stamp on the Industrial Revolution with his hundreds of patents, including the electric light bulb, but so did Alexander Graham Bell with the invention of the telephone and Elisha Otis with the mechanized elevator. J. Pierpont Morgan introduced financial innovations that helped in the creation of giant corporations with business structures suitable for a national and worldwide market. Beginning in the mid-1800s, federal and state governments made changes in corporate law that supported these financial schemes and encouraged growth.

Mass production needed large markets, and producers and retailers devised new ways to entice the buyers. Advertising in newspapers, placards, and billboards became ubiquitous. Improvements in marketing and packaging allowed brands such as Nabisco crackers to become nationally known and preferred. Chain stores attracted urban customers, while mail order catalogues connected rural families to distant products. The wide availability of consumer goods prompted some entrepreneurs to open department stores, which quickly became the greatest symbol of the emerging desire for consumption.

Although the Industrial Revolution benefited all consumers with a large drop off in prices for many goods, it also led to harmful business practices, such as monopolization, price gouging, and environmental damage. In addition, the growth in industry brought with it miserable working conditions, increasing hours, and decreasing pay for men, women, and children. Many employers also callously ignored the basic needs of their workers, most notoriously illustrated by the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, in the New York City garment district, near Washington Square Park.

Those at the top of the American society espoused reasons for the great divisions in status. The poor, according to Protestant Morality, were individually to blame for being so; others applied Darwinian science to economic classes to justify their own dominance. While the common person was sold the myth of success in the novels by Horatio Alger, Jr., the politically connected created their own success through corrupt practices such as in the Crédit Mobilier Scandal. The corruption was so blatant that company proxies handed out shares on the floor of the House of Representatives.

In the cities, powerful political organizations like Tammany Hall (controlled by the Tweed Ring) bribed, cheated, and swindled their way to wealth, while simultaneously providing needed services for immigrants, thereby ensuring the latter’s loyalty and vote. On a national level, the two parties had equal strength, and they swapped the presidency in a series of one-term presidents from 1876 to 1896. The system’s reliance on above-the-law patronage also bred inefficiency, corruption, and cynicism, as unqualified people filled important government positions and as bribes raised prices for consumers.

One of the most important developments of these years was the rise of organized labor. Job insecurity and working conditions fostered discontent that exploded in the Railroad Strike of 1877. The proliferation of workers’ unions faced obstacles from business owners, ethnic and racial divisions, and an initially uncooperative middle class. The first effective national union, the Knights of Labor, sought to unite all of America’s “toilers” into a single organization that, through the power of its vast membership, could deliver workers from their plight. The Knights shone briefly but then collapsed after the 1886 Haymarket Riot.

Regardless, workers continued their opposition against owners in the Homestead and Pullman Strikes, in both cases leading to government intervention. A new union organization that was more politically conservative, the American Federation of Labor, recruited skilled workers and appealed more to the middle class. By the turn of the century, most union groups focused on changes directly related to their employment, while their more radical brethren pushed for political revolutions.

**Chapter Outline**

I. The Advent of the Industrial Revolution

A. What It Was

B. The Basic Industries

1. Railroads

2. Steel

3. Petroleum

C. Technology

D. Innovative Financing, Law, and Business Practices

II. The National Market: Creating Consumer Demand

A. Advertising

B. National Brands

C. Stores and Mail Order

D. Harmful Business Practices

1. Monopolization

2. Price Gouging

3. Environmental Damage

E. Working Conditions

III. The Politics of the Industrial Age

A. Justifications of the Industrial Order

1. Mainline Protestant Morality

2. Social Darwinism

3. The Myth of Success

B. Political Corruption

1. The Crédit Mobilier Scandal

2. The Tweed Ring

3. The Appeal of Tammany

C. Political Divisions

IV. The Rise of Labor

A. The Railroad Strike of 1877

B. The Struggle over Union Expansion

1. Opposition of Business Owners

2. Business Resources

3. Divisions Among Workers

4. Labor Solidarity

5. Roles of Government and the Middle Class

C. The Knights of Labor

1. The Fall of the Knights

2. The Haymarket Riot

D. Growth and Frustrations

E. The Rise of the AFL

F. Labor and Politics

1. The Mainstream

V. Looking Ahead…

**Suggested Lecture Topics**

1. The Industrial Revolution in America: Industries & Leaders

2. Robber Barons? Captains of Industry? You Decide!

3. What makes a corporation? What have been its advantages, and what are its problems?

4. The Sears Roebuck Catalog: Something for Everyone [There are inexpensive replicas of the early catalogues in the market today. Every instructor should have one, just for fun.]

5. The major inventions in the United States politics during the Industrial Revolution.

6. Impact of the Industrial Revolution on the lives of the urban poor or the working class in the United States.

7. The significance of labor unions in the United States today. How have they evolved since the Industrial Revolution?

|  |
| --- |
| **The Reasons Why…** |
| (17-1a). There were at least three reasons why American industrialization expanded when it did:  a. The Civil War  b. Government support  c. Technological breakthroughs  Depending on class size, conduct a mock trial in which the leading industrialists have to answer the charges that they were Robber Barons. In return, the industrialists will argue that they were captains of industry. Each side will employ sympathetic witnesses (for example, workers hurt on the job site, business owners who lost out to a bigger competitor, an American consumer who benefited from the influx of cheaper products, a middle-class manager of a factory, etc.). Have a jury of students hear the case and determine judgment based on historical accuracy, enthusiasm, skill of the arguments, and the reliability of the witnesses. |

**Research Topics—Projects and Papers**

Students might choose to complete a project to be presented in class or to write a more traditional research paper. Alternatively, the instructors could decide which they prefer to have them do. Following are a few topics that are relevant to this chapter. Instructors may, of course, choose to develop their own topics.

1. Mail Order Catalogues: Let the students go on a scavenger hunt to see if they can find a copy of one of the early catalogues, from any company. Local museums usually have something along this line. Instructors should bring their copies to the class, have the students bring any notes they took, and have a discussion about the many uses of the catalogues.

2. Have the students look into the history of their city and locate information about the “five and dimes,” “five and tens,” etc. Some of the bigger names were Woolworth’s, Newberry’s, and Kress, but students may have a wide variety from their region of the country. Have students check the local library for City Directories that have all businesses listed and search the oldest ones they find. Discuss their findings in the class.

3. It would be interesting to have a guest speaker who could speak about just what the “five and dime” was like: soda fountains, bobby pins, clothes, garden tools, sewing needs, etc. It would be great fun to hear people describe what it was like to shop in such places.

4. Advertising: Have the students search the Internet for some early advertising slogans. They may first have to identify early products, but the text is a good place to start such a search. Collages of these slogans can be very interesting to discuss. Some students might search the early copies of their hometown newspapers. Local ads were informative, amusing, and often filled with downright lies!

**Additional www Resources**

Tarbell, Ida M., “John D. Rockefeller, A Character Study.” Ida M. Tarbell home page, Pelletier Library of Allegheny College.

<http://sites.allegheny.edu/tarbell/fromtarbell/rockefeller/>

“Cornelius Vanderbilt, 1794–1877,” New Netherland Institute.

<http://www.nnp.org/nni/Publications/Dutch-American/vanderbiltc.html>

“Celebrating Andrew Carnegie” Carnegie Corporation of New York.

<http://carnegie.org/about-us/foundation-history/about-andrew-carnegie/>

“10 Inventions by Thomas Edison (That You've Never Heard Of).” Martha Barksdale

<http://science.howstuffworks.com/10-inventions-thomas-edison.htm/printable>

“The 1911 Triangle Factory Fire

<http://trianglefire.ilr.cornell.edu/>

**Primary Source Discussions**

**Assignment Name: William Riordan, Plunkitt of Tammany Hall, excerpts (1905)**

*Introduction:* A Series of Very Plain Talks on Very Practical Politics, Delivered by Ex-Senator George Washington Plunkitt, the Tammany Philosopher, from his Rostrum—the New York County Courthouse Bootblack Stand

*Visit URL:* *http://college.cengage.com/history/shared/unprotected/ps/plunkitt.html*

[William Riordan, Plunkitt of Tammany Hall, excerpts (1905)](http://college.cengage.com/history/shared/unprotected/ps/plunkitt.html)

*Instructions:* After reading the primary source provided, answer the questions below.

1. According to Plunkitt, what is “honest graft”?

2. And what is “dishonest graft”?

3. What does Plunkitt think of efforts to reform government?

4. How does Plunkitt feel he helped his constituents? List at least three examples.

5. In what ways does Plunkitt typify the machine politics common in city governments in the late nineteenth century?

**Assignment Name: Read Terrence Powderly’s Thirty Years of Labor**

*Introduction:* Although not the original leader of the Knights of Labor, Terrence Powderly became its strongest and best-known voice. Powderly did not favor strikes, nor did he support anarchism, but his union dies out because of the actions of a few anarchists in the Haymarket strike. In this work, Powderly airs his feelings about those events. As you read his writing here, keep in mind that when Powderly speaks of the “General Master Workman,” he is speaking of himself.

*Visit URL:* *http://wadsworth.com/history\_d/special\_features/ilrn\_legacy/waah2c01c/content/amh2/readings/30labor.html*

[Read Terrence Powderly’s *Thirty Years of Labor*](http://wadsworth.com/history_d/special_features/ilrn_legacy/waah2c01c/content/amh2/readings/30labor.html) and then take a brief quiz to check your understanding.

*Reflection Questions:*

1. What resolution was being debated in the meeting Powderly described? What was Powderly’s problem with the resolution? How did he propose that it be changed?

2. What comparison did Powderly make between the old system of slavery and the modern system of monopolies? Was his comparison valid, or was it overstated?

3. What does Powderly believe about the education of children, especially children of poor immigrants?

4. How did Powderly state his true feelings about the anarchists who had been arrested after the Haymarket bombing?