**Problems of The City**

By Quang Huynh

There were some interesting problems and positives that were in American cities. Problems that involved health issues and people having to live in filth, and positives included hygiene-based machines to help clean yourself. After the Civil War, there was a big rush of immigrants and farmers moving into the cities, leaving lots of problems. Firstly, a problem that was abundant was sanitation. For instance, factories spewed out toxins that made the air dark and polluted. The polluted air would make many families sick and dark air made it more difficult for people to see in the streets. Similarly, the cities would smell bad because you would find human and animal waste laying on the streets. There were stables on almost every block with hay drenched in urine. People threw garbage on the streets, where it would eventually pile up. Lots of flies were in the city because they’re attracted to all the filth in the city.

Furthermore, another problem in the city was the slums. Slums were these dirty overcrowded urban districted where very poor people lived. Equally important, the slums consisted of extremely dirty tenements. The city was crowed in these small buildings. For instance, 7 or more families had to live in a single building. Could you imagine a small room with 15 people or more inside? They often had no sewage connection or working water because many families who lived in slums were very poor and could not afford sewage connections or running water. Several families would have to use one toilet because the families could not afford more than one. The rooms were very dirty, with urine on the walls, and dirty liquid dripping down the stairs. Since it was so crowed, sleeping in these building was no easy task. Families would have to sleep on the same rag, because there was no bed to sleep on. But if the rags were full, you would have to sleep on the dirty, cold floor. Then, because there was no clean water for laundry, families would have to wear the same clothes for months.

In addition, it was very rare to find a house or building with running water during the Civil War. Running water was very expensive and could only be afforded by the wealthy at the time. But near the end of the 1800s, people in the middle class could acquire running water. Having clean, running water was a privilege because then you can clean yourself and you can use it to drink from, and many other poor families could not afford running water. Similarly, residents of a house could install a flush toilet if they had a sewer connection. But if they didn’t have a sewage connection, then they would use chamber pots at the back of their house to do their business.

Likewise, in 1868, European capitals such as London and Paris were paving their streets with asphalt, but American cities could not afford to pave their streets with asphalt, so the Americans had to do something else. Some of the cities tried paving the streets with wood or stone blocks, which were not very durable. However, New York had spent 5 million dollars paving their streets with chemically treated stone blocks, making New York the best paved city in America. These stone blocks were very durable and did not decay like the wooden blocks. But these special stone blocks had their own problems as well. For example, horse waste would collect between stone blocks, and made the streets very disgusting.

Finally, smog was a big issue in these American cities due to the upcoming invention of the automobile. The term, smog, came from the combination of words, “smoke” and “fog,” first used in 1905 by a Scottish engineer. Smog was worse during the days of rapid industrial growth, with factories spewing gas in the air, causing the air to darken and become sickening. In addition, a city in Pennsylvania, named Pittsburgh had 14,000 chimneys each spraying Pittsburgh with ashes and soot. All these gases would affect the air in such a way, that if you hung white clothes up to dry in the sun, those clothes would turn into a yellow color because of all the polluted air in the sky. People were breathing these gases into their lungs, becoming very ill and queasy.

Therefore, there were many problems in American cities after the Civil War. There were also some positives to American cities as well. These problems made the cities very dirty and very crowed, leaving families to have to live in very cramped rooms.