

Department of Political Science  
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America in the World:  
Social, Cultural and Political Change  
in Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century United States

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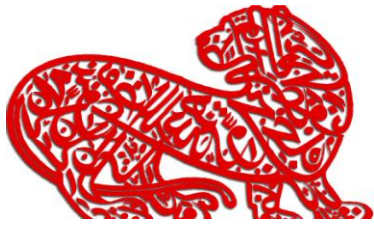
<http://new-middle-east.blogspot.com>

Talking History

American Institute for History Education

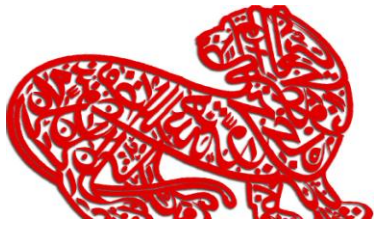
April 20, 2010

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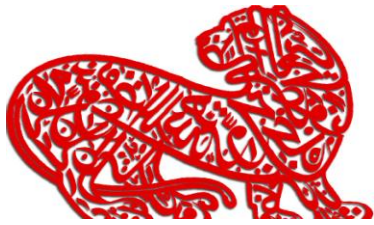
# Main hypotheses I

- ❑ Widespread social change and political unrest unnerved 19<sup>th</sup> century American elites
  - ❑ New and insecure American elites searched for mechanisms to cope with the unrest that would be more effective than the resort to violence
  - ❑ The World's Fair was an *institution* meant to encourage social and political *deference*, and eliminating need for use of violence
  - ❑ World's fair was an institution that became part of the struggle over *national identity* in late 19<sup>th</sup> century US
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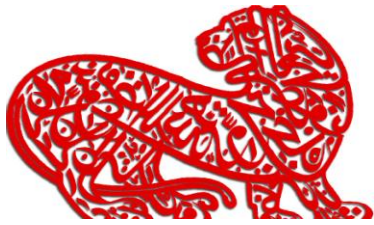
## Main Hypotheses II

- ❑ American elites found World's Fair vehicle for “Americanizing” immigrant populations
  - ❑ American elites used World's Fair to inform domestic populace of their moral superiority and right to lead the United States
  - ❑ American elites used World's Fair to compete with European elites as the post-Civil War *industrial revolution* transformed the US
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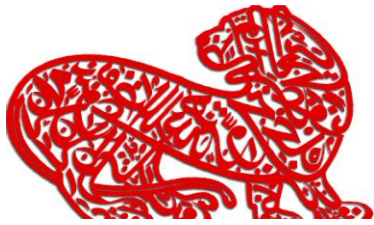
# What are this learning module's learning objectives?

- This module addresses the following questions:
  - How did American society respond to extensive social change in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century?
  - What types of social change did the US experience?
  - What was impact of industrialization, the rise of industrial elites (“robber barons”), rural-urban migration, immigration, and the labor movement?
  - What impact did American elites’ “status envy” of European achievements have on our society?
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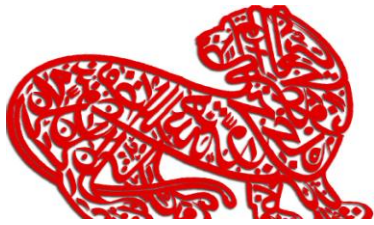
# America and the Republican ideal

- ❑ What image did Americans have of their society during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century?
  - ❑ The *Republican ideal* represented a core value
  - ❑ It stressed *rugged individualism* and *self-reliance*, values associated with rural life
  - ❑ In this model of America, the farm and small town was where the citizen controlled his life
  - ❑ Once rural to urban migration increased after the Civil War, this vision of life was disrupted
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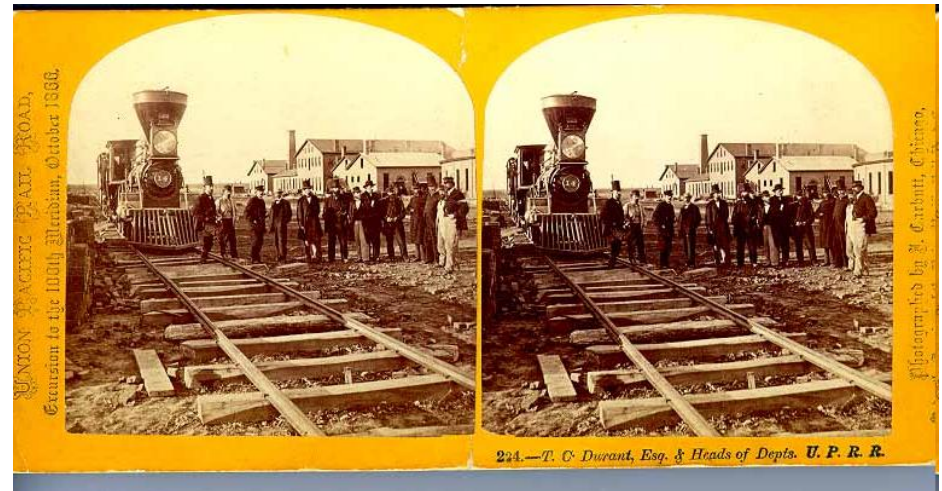
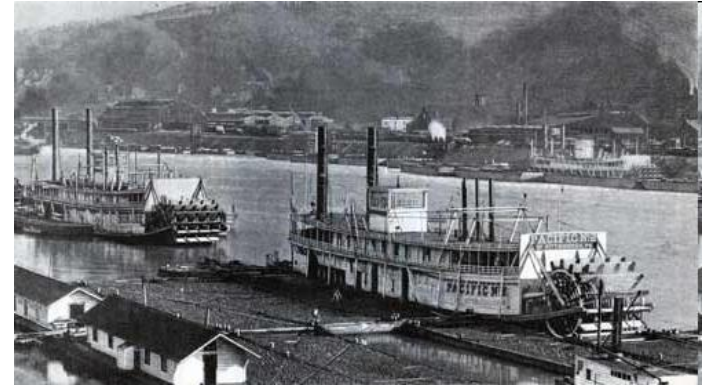
## How did the US change after the Civil War?

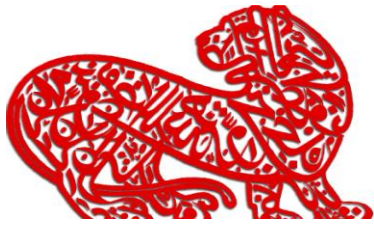
- ❑ Once the South's economic power destroyed, the North could begin its *Industrial Revolution*
  - ❑ The Industrial Revolution stimulated migration to cities and immigration to US from Europe
  - ❑ Agricultural machinery made much farm labor redundant as 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed
  - ❑ The “push” of fewer jobs in rural America was offset by “pull” of increased jobs in urban areas
-



# New forms of transportation

- Canals, steamships, railroads and new roads facilitated rural-urban migration
- Below: Erie Canal, Mississippi River steamboats, and transcontinental railroad





# The impact of immigration on 19<sup>th</sup> century US

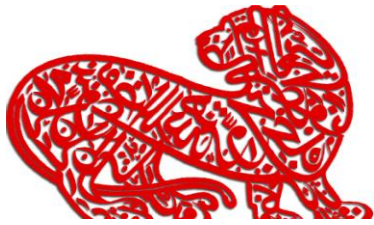
- ❑ 40 million immigrants came to US, 1840-1880; 8.8 million between 1900-1910; 60% lived in cities
- ❑ US pop. increased from 76 to 94.5 million, 1900-1910
- ❑ 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act passed and 1907 Japanese immigration to US restricted



Immigrants in Ellis Island



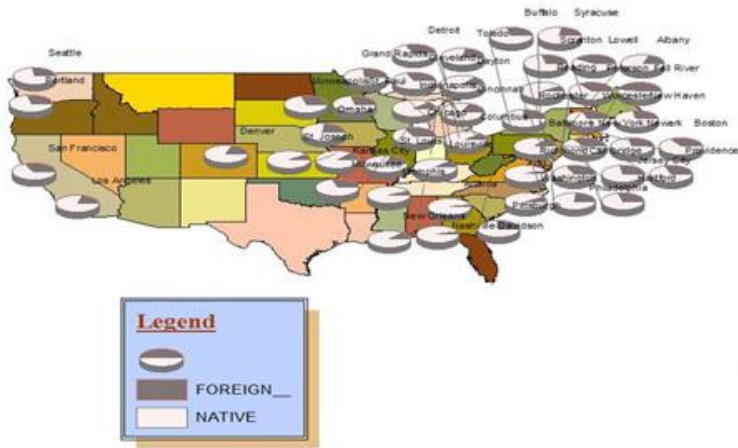
Lewis Hine's photograph of Italian street workers under 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. Elevated, NYC (1910)



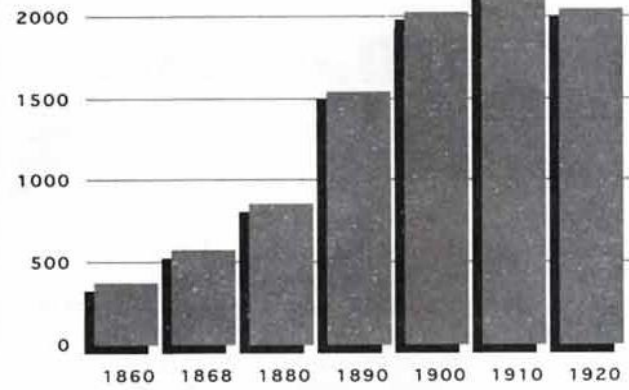
## Cultural tensions caused by immigration

- ❑ Immigrants usually did not speak English
  - ❑ Often Roman Catholic, Jewish, or Christian Orthodox, and rejected by Protestants (WASPs)
  - ❑ Immigrants usually lacked education and took unskilled jobs, threatening US workers
  - ❑ Immigrants dressed in “exotic” clothing, and lived in segregated urban quarters
  - ❑ Thus there was little opportunity for English speaking public to interact with them
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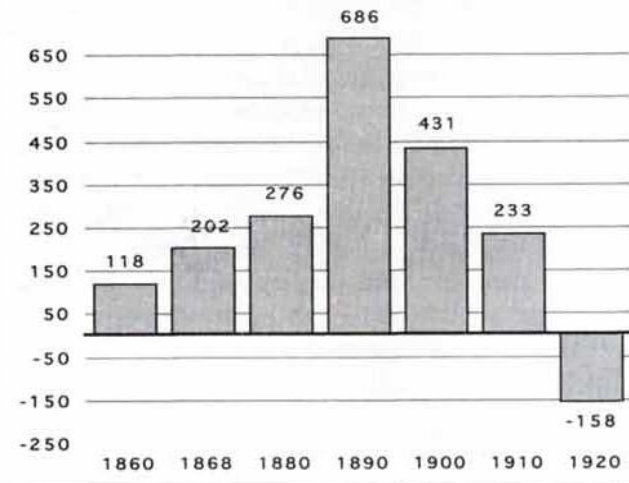
# LARGEST US CITIES IN 1900: % NATIVE AND %FOREIGN BORN



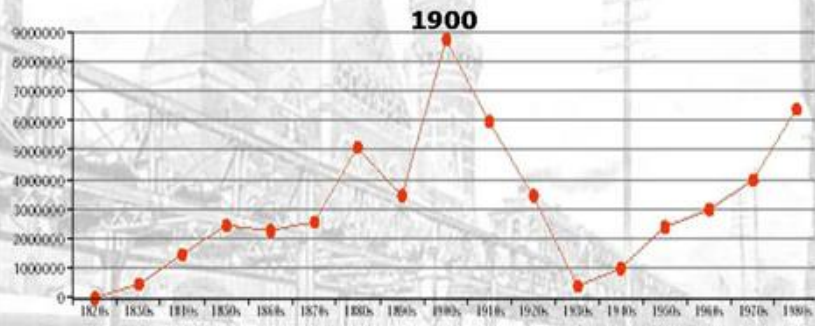
# Number of Daily Newspapers in the United States 1860-1920



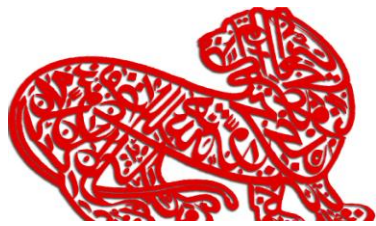
# Increase over Previous Decade



# CHART OF IMMIGRATION 1820 TO 1980



Urbanization, immigration and spread of press in 19<sup>th</sup> century US



# Technological change in late 19<sup>th</sup> century America

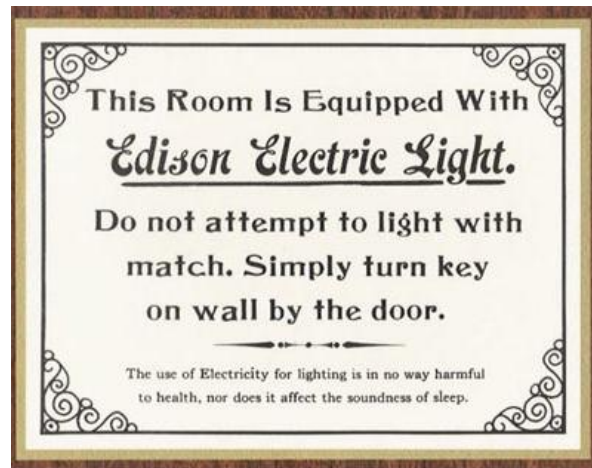


Edison phonograph

Telegraph



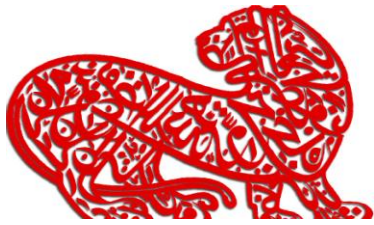
Alexander Graham Bell speaking into prototype of telephone



First incandescent light bulb

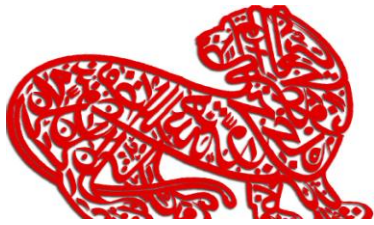


Edison's kinescope



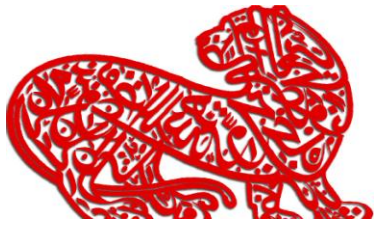
## The rise of economic elites

- ❑ Powerful economic elites arose after the Civil War in railroads and banking
  - ❑ Elites tried to establish *political legitimacy* by enhancing their social status
  - ❑ Increased status was achieved through cultural and material projects, e.g., art museums, monuments, urban buildings, estates, parks
  - ❑ To achieve *social status*, American elites sought to emulate behavior of European elites
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# American elites and Europe

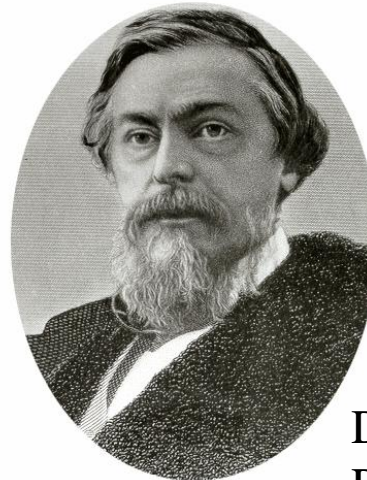
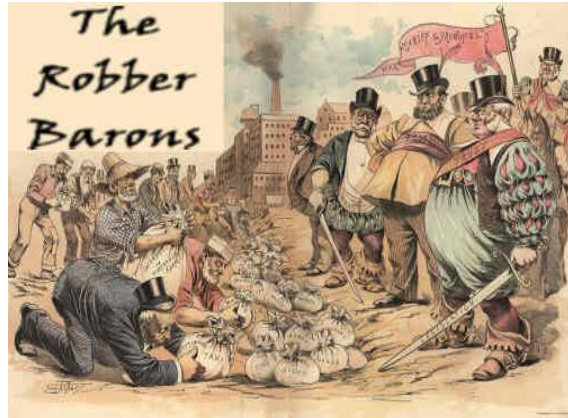
- ❑ Financial elites founded numerous museums and orchestras in late 1800s
  - ❑ The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Frick Museum, the American Museum of Natural History, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts,
  - ❑ The Frick, Field, Morgan, Pulitzer, Rockefeller, Vanderbilt, Walters and Mellon families all contributed to building art museums and cultural institutions
  - ❑ One of the innovations of European elites was the new concept of the *world's fair*
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# Images of the new elite



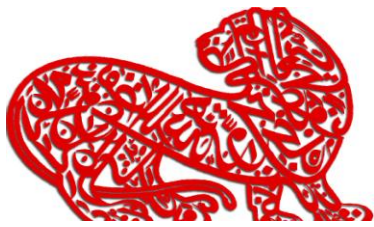
*(from left to right) John D. Rockefeller,  
Andrew Carnegie, Cornelius Vanderbilt,  
and J.P. Morgan*



Dr. Thomas C. Durant, Vice-  
Pres., Union-Pacific Railroad

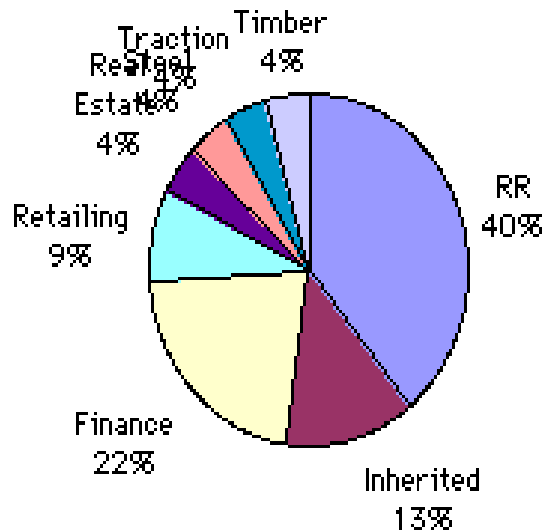


Jay Gould – the  
Archtype of the  
Robber Baron

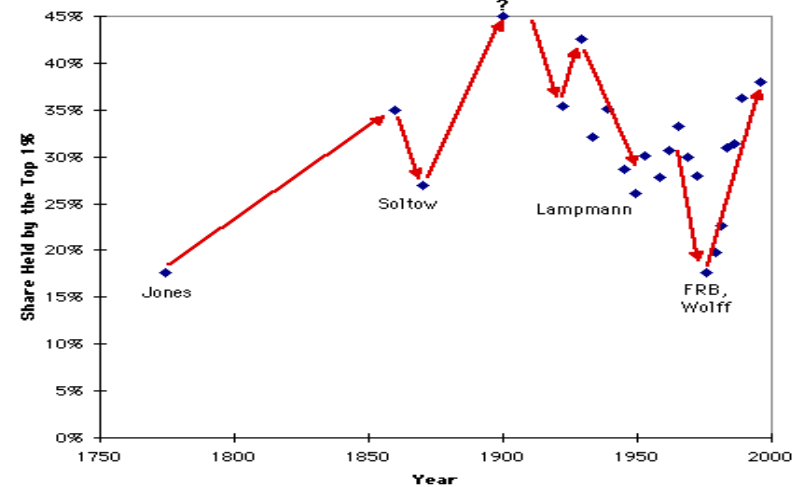


# Distribution of wealth in the Gilded Age

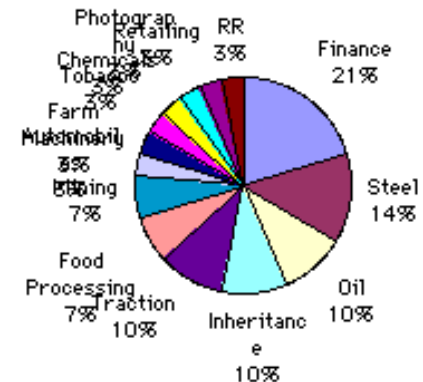
1900 Billionaires

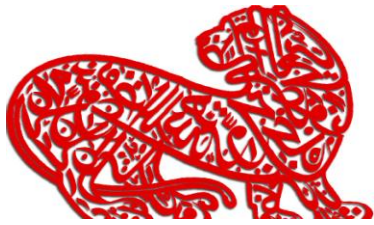


Wealth Concentration in the U.S.: Share Held by the Top 1% of Households



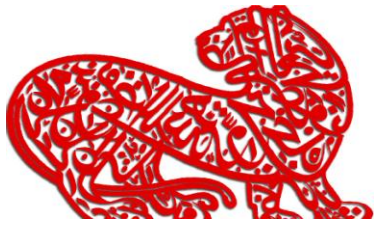
1918 Billionaires





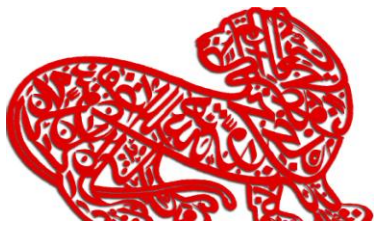
## The captains of industry in the Gilded Age

- ❑ 1870-1920 was particularly good era in which to become rich
  - ❑ Robber barons derived wealth from railroads and finance, esp. selling shares in railroads
  - ❑ After 1900, technology played key role in new products and railroads allow their distribution
  - ❑ Oil, steel and other industries became important
  - ❑ Income tax passed in 1913 via 16<sup>th</sup> Amendment
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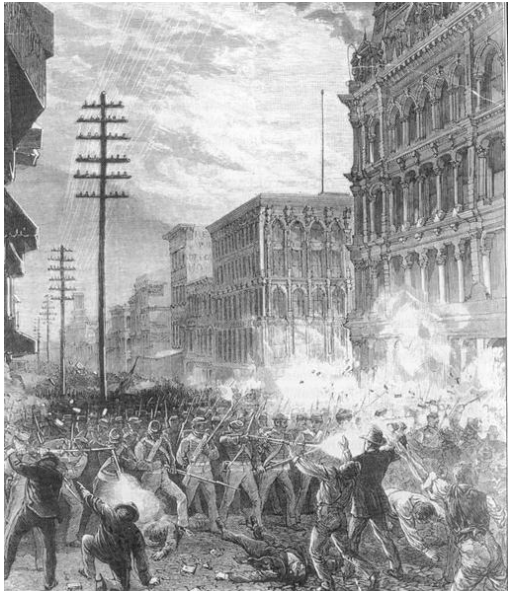


## The rise of the American labor movement

- ❑ *Labor unrest* developed as US industry rapidly expanded under the poor and dangerous working conditions of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century
  - ❑ The labor movement developed in the 1870s, e.g., Knights of Labor, American Federation of Labor, and “Wobblies” (International Workers of the World)
  - ❑ Labor movement often included immigrants and ethnic groups who seen as “subversive”
-

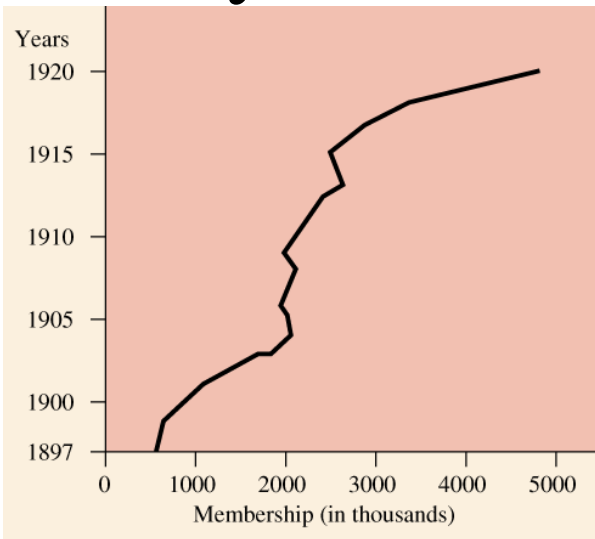


# Labor unrest and violence in late 19<sup>th</sup> century America



1894 Pullman Car workers strike

## century America

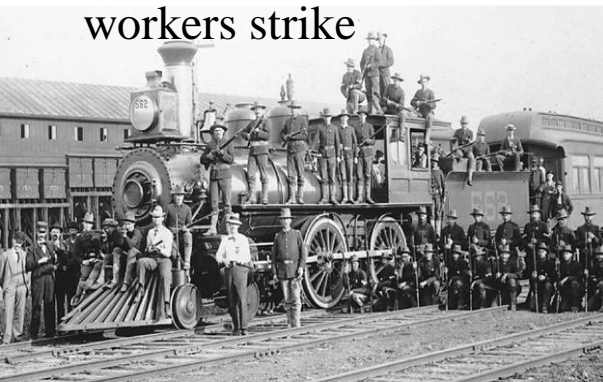


Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1982-83 (103rd edition) Washington, D.C., 1982.

Figure 22.1 Labor Union Membership, 1897-1920

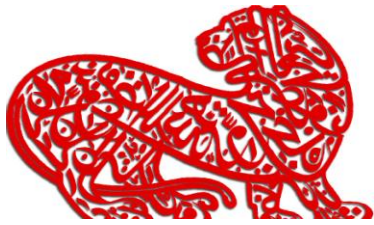


US cavalry breaks up 1894 Pullman Car workers strike



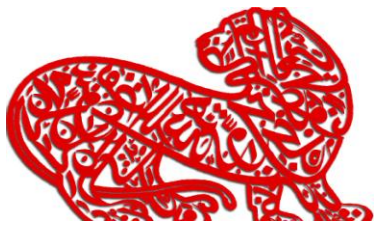
Eugene V. Debs, American Railway Union president, c. 1890





## 19<sup>th</sup> century labor unrest: Haymarket riots

- ❑ On May 1, 1886, unions called for national strike in support of an 8 hour work day
  - ❑ Thousands workers demonstrated in US cities but Chicago center with 40,000 demonstrators
  - ❑ After bomb through into crowd, police fired upon strikers killing unknown number workers
  - ❑ Several anarchist labor leaders arrested and tried and hanged without supporting evidence
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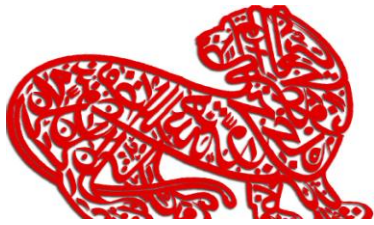


Haymarket Memorial,  
Chicago



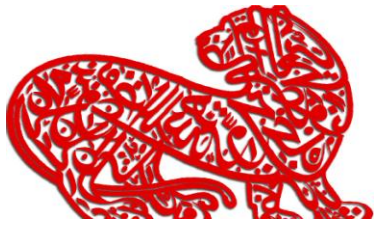
Images from Haymarket  
Riots, May 3, 1886





# Urbanization in the United States

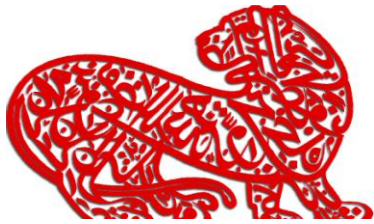
- ❑ 1790, 95% Americans agrarian; 1920, 50%, pop. agrarian; 1990, 3% of pop. agrarian
  - ❑ By 1900, 40% Americans lived in cities; number doubled between 1860 and 1900
  - ❑ 35 cities had populations over 100,000
  - ❑ *Urban overcrowding* created shortages of affordable housing, sanitation problems, outbreaks of diseases, water and air pollution
-



# Rise of mass media and culture

- ❑ Percentage children attending schools rose from 57% to 72% between 1870 and 1890
  - ❑ Literacy rate declined from 20% to 11%
  - ❑ From 1870-1890, number of mass circulation newspapers increased from 574 to 2226
  - ❑ Number of weekly magazines from 4-12,000
  - ❑ Late 19<sup>th</sup> century saw rise of newspaper chains, e.g., Scripps, Hearst and Pulitzer
  - ❑ Rise of *muckrakers* who criticized political elites
-

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SCRIBNER'S MAGAZINE.

Vol. I. JANUARY, 1887. No. 1.

REMINISCENCES OF

THE SIEGE AND COMMUNE OF PARIS.

By E. B. Washburne, Ex-Minister to France.

THE DOWNFALL OF THE EMPIRE.

I was on the point of leaving Paris for a brief rest, when, toward the last of June, 1870, there arose so suddenly what was known as the "Hohenzollern incident;" which assumed so much importance, as it led up to the Franco-German war. In June, 1868, the Queen Isabella had been chased from Spain and had sought refuge in France. The Spanish Cortes, maintaining the monarchical form, offered the crown of Spain to Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern, a relation of the King of Prussia. The French Minister at Madrid telegraphed that Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern had been nominated to the throne of Spain and had accepted. This produced the utmost excitement and indignation among the French people. The Paris press teemed with articles more or less violent, calling on the government to prevent this outrage, even at the cost of war. The journals of all shades were unanimous in their matter, contending that it was an insult and peril to France, and could not be tolerated. The opposition in the Chamber made the incident an occasion for attacking the government, alleging that it was to its weak and vacillating policy that she was indebted for her fresh humiliation. The government journals, however, laid the whole blame upon the ambition of Count Bismarck, who had become to them a *bête noir*. He was accused of every-

thing, and charged with doing everything for the grandeur of Prussia and the unification of Germany; all of which, they alleged, was on account of his hatred for France. The Duke de Gramont, Minister of Foreign Affairs, was interpellated in the Chamber on the subject, and, in reply, declared that France would not permit any foreign power to place one of its princes upon the throne of Charles the Fifth, and disturb, to the detriment of France, the present equilibrium of Europe. All parties in the Chamber received this declaration with the utmost enthusiasm. The opposition members, who were largely in the minority, made as much noise as the government deputies. Much of this was owing to the personal feeling against Bismarck, and both parties vied with each other in showing the extent of their dislike to the great Prussian Chancellor. Much pressure was soon brought to bear in the proper quarters, and the result of this was the withdrawal of the Hohenzollern candidacy. Explanations were made, better counsels seemed to prevail, and all immediate trouble appeared averted.

It became quite certain that all danger of a war between France and Germany was at an end; and, all being quiet on the banks of the Seine, on the 3d of July I left Paris in pursuit of health and recreation at the healing

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Literature, Science, Art, and Politics

VOLUME LXXXVIII

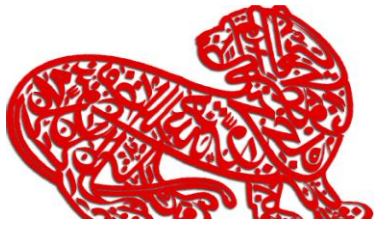


BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY  
The Riverside Press, Cambridge  
1901



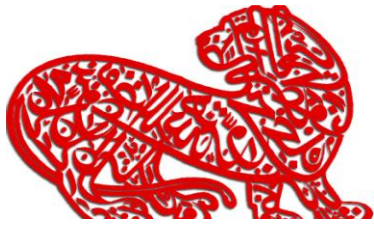
Image of cholera epidemic in NYC

Images of 19<sup>th</sup> century newspapers and magazines



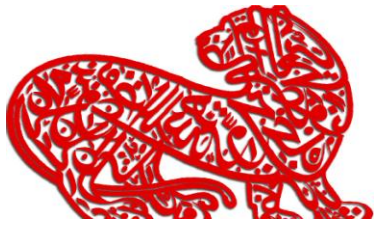
# Summary comments I

- ❑ By late 1800s, US industrial power, with population that was ethnically and culturally diverse
  - ❑ Much of economic elite *nouveaux riches*, i.e., made money after Civil War and insecure about their status
  - ❑ Society shaken by *rapid population growth* and *urbanization*, and *worker militancy*
  - ❑ Increased *political mobilization* of large segments of populace threatened elite prerogatives and power
  - ❑ Populace increasingly educated, literate and *politically conscious*
-



## Summary comments II

- ❑ Elites increasingly attempted to substitute *deference to status* for violence as core mechanism of control
  - ❑ Philanthropy a central tool in arsenal of *social control*, whether through building monuments, museums, universities, hospital, or other charitable works
  - ❑ Key to enhancing status and *political legitimacy* was to promote feelings of *nationalism* and *national identity*
  - ❑ Such feelings leveled *social class* and *ethnic* differences
  - ❑ Concept of *World's Fair* fit this new model of promoting social control and *social solidarity* through *pride in America*
-



# Bibliography

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  - ❑ T. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Anti-Modernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920*. NY: Pantheon, 2009
  - ❑ T. Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of America, 1877-1920*. NY: Harper Collins, 2009
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