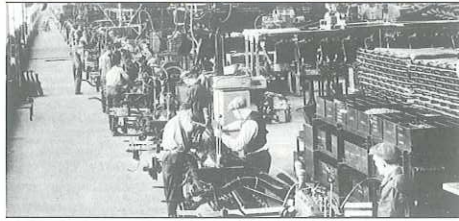




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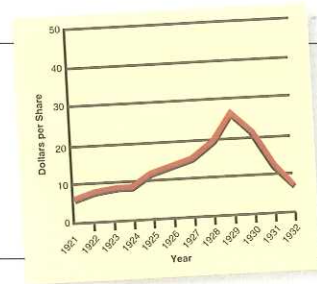


TOWARD A MODERN AMERICA THE 1920s



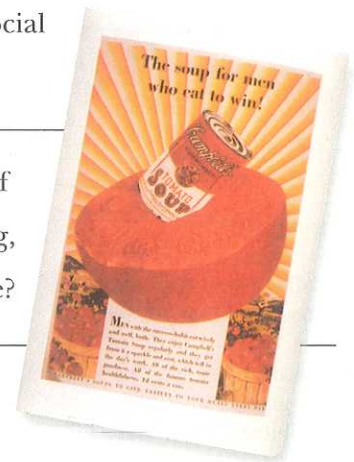
WHY WERE the 1920s referred to as the “Roaring Twenties?”

HOW DID big business shape the economy of the 1920s?



WHAT WAS the Great Migration, and how did it affect social life in the 1920s?

HOW DID new systems of distributing, marketing, and communication create culture?



WHAT CONFLICTS divided social groups in the 1920s?

WHAT WERE the reasons for U.S. involvement overseas in the 1920s?



Happy times were here again. American industry, adopting Henry Ford's policy of mass production and low prices, was making it possible for everybody to have his share of everything. The newspapers, the statesmen, the economists, all agreed that American ingenuity had solved the age-old problem of poverty. There could never be another depression. . . .

The war had done something to Henry, it had taught him a new way to deal with his fellow men. . . . He became more abrupt in his manner, more harsh in his speech. "Gratitude?" he would say. "There's no gratitude in business. Men work for money." . . . From now on he was a business man, and held a tight rein on everything. This industry was his, he had made it himself, and what he wanted of the men he hired was that they should do exactly as he told them. . . .

Every worker had to be strained to the uttermost limit, every one had to be giving the last ounce of energy he had in his carcass. . . . They were tired when they started in the morning, and when they quit they were grey and staggering with fatigue, they were empty shells out of which the last drop of juice had been squeezed. . . .

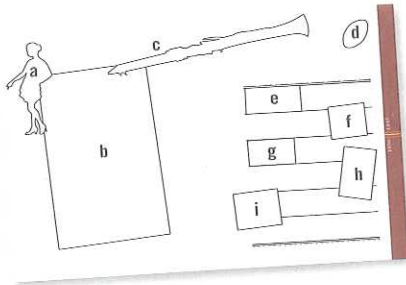
Henry Ford was now getting close to his two million cars a year goal. . . . From the moment the ore was taken out of the ship at the River Rouge plant [in Detroit], through all the processes turning it into steel and shaping it into automobile parts with a hundred-ton press, and putting five thousand parts together into a car which rolled off the assembly line under its own power—all those processes were completed in less than a day and a half!

Some forty-five thousand different machines were now used in the making of Ford cars, in sixty establishments scattered over the United States. . . . Henry Ford was remaking the roads of America, and in the end he would remake the roads of the world—and line them all with filling stations and hot-dog stands of the American pattern.

Upton Sinclair, *The Flivver King: A Story of Ford—America*. (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1999).

IMAGE KEY

for pages 628–629



- a. Silent film star Gertrude Olmstead wears a ruffled flapper dress with a striped hat in 1925.
- b. "Toward A Modern America: The 1920's More than a car. FORD. A National Institution "poster", 1923.
- c. A clarinet.
- d. An old football.
- e. Men are shown piecing together automobiles on an assembly line in the Rouge Plant of the Ford Motor Company.
- f. The price of stocks through the 1920s and early 30s.
- g. A Black family from the south arrives in Chicago, ca. 1910.
- h. Campbell's Tomato Soup ad.
- i. Women dressed in the white robes and hoods of the Ku Klux Klan in 1924.

UPTON SINCLAIR'S 1906 novel *The Jungle* graphically depicted the wretched conditions endured by Chicago's immigrant meatpacking workers. In *The Flivver King*, Sinclair portrayed the rise of the automobile industry and the revolutionizing vision of Henry Ford—the entrepreneur who symbolized modern America to the world.

"Machinery," proclaimed Henry Ford, "is the new Messiah." Ford had introduced the moving assembly line at his automobile factory on the eve of World War I, and, by 1925, it was turning out a Model T car every ten seconds. Mass production was becoming a reality; in fact, the term originated in Henry Ford's 1926 description of the system of flow production techniques popularly called "Fordism." The system symbolized the nation's booming economy: In the 1920s, Europeans used the word Fordize as a synonym for Americanize. Ford coupled machines and technology with managerial innovations. He established the "five-dollar day," twice the prevailing wage in Detroit's auto industry, and slashed the workweek from forty-eight to forty

CHRONOLOGY

1915	Ku Klux Klan is founded anew.		Country Club Plaza in Kansas City opens.
1919	Volstead Act is passed.		
1920	Urban population exceeds rural population for the first time. Warren Harding is elected president. Prohibition takes effect. First commercial radio show is broadcast. Sinclair Lewis publishes <i>Main Street</i> .	1923	Harding dies; Calvin Coolidge becomes president.
1921	Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Act is passed. Washington Naval Conference limits naval armaments.	1924	National Origins Act sharply curtails immigration. Coolidge is elected president.
1922	Fordney-McCumber Act raises tariff rates. Sinclair Lewis publishes <i>Babbitt</i> .	1925	Scopes trial is held in Dayton, Tennessee. F. Scott Fitzgerald publishes <i>The Great Gatsby</i> .
		1927	Charles A. Lindbergh flies solo across the Atlantic.
		1928	Kellogg-Briand Pact is signed. Herbert Hoover is elected president.
		1929	Ernest Hemingway publishes <i>A Farewell to Arms</i> .

hours. These changes, Ford argued, would reduce the costs of labor turnover and boost consumer purchasing power, leading to further profits from mass production.

The assembly line, however, alienated workers, and even Ford himself conceded that the repetitive operations of the assembly line were “so monotonous that it scarcely seems possible that any man would care to continue long at the same job.” Ford first tried to adapt his mostly immigrant workers to these conditions through an Americanization program. His “Education Department” taught classes in English, sobriety, obedience, and industrial efficiency to the unskilled laborers entering the factory. After the course, they participated in a symbolic pageant: They climbed into a huge “melting pot,” fifteen feet across and seven feet deep. After Ford managers stirred the pot with ten-foot ladles, the workers emerged wearing new clothes and waving American flags—new Americans made for the factory system.

When the labor market became more favorable to management in the early 1920s, Ford relied on discipline to control workers. To maximize profits and increase efficiency, he prohibited talking, whistling, sitting, or smoking on the job. Ford also banned unions and used spies to guard against their formation.

But Ford remained conflicted about the changes he saw and had helped facilitate. Cars and cigarettes were among the most intensively advertised goods in the 1920s, and for some they signaled rebellion and freedom. Women in short skirts and the rise of the Jazz Age—all contributed to what Ford saw as the evils of the “new America.” Embracing nativism and protestantism, Ford, an ardent anti-Semite, blamed Jewish Americans for radicalism and labor organization and singled out the “International Jew” for allegedly controlling the financial community.

Henry Ford—and Fordism itself—thus reflected the complexity of the 1920s. Economic growth and technological innovation were paired with social conflict as traditions were destroyed, values displaced, and new people incorporated into a society increasingly industrialized, urbanized, and dominated by big business. Industrial production and national wealth soared, buoyed by new techniques and markets for consumer goods. Business values pervaded society and dominated government, which promoted business interests.

But not all Americans prospered. Many workers were unemployed, and the wages of still more were stagnant or falling. Farmers endured grim conditions and



worse prospects. Social change brought pleasure to some and deep concern to others. City factories like the Ford Works attracted workers from the countryside, increasing urbanization; rapid suburbanization opened other horizons. Leisure activities flourished, and new mass media promoted modern ideas and stylish products. Workers would have to achieve personal satisfaction through consumption—and not production. But such experiences often proved unsettling, and some Americans sought reassurance by imposing their cultural or religious values on everyone around them. The tumultuous decade thus had many unresolved issues, much like the complex personality of Henry Ford himself. And Ford so dominated the age that when college students were asked to rank the greatest people of all time, Ford came in third—behind Christ and Napoleon.

THE ECONOMY THAT ROARED

WHY WERE the 1920s referred to as the “roaring twenties”?

Following a severe postwar depression in 1920 and 1921, the American economy boomed through the remainder of the decade. Gross domestic product soared nearly 40 percent; output per worker-hour, or productivity, rose 72 percent in manufacturing; average per capita income increased by a third. Although the prosperity was not evenly distributed and some sectors of the economy were deeply troubled, most Americans welcomed the industrial expansion and business principles of the “New Era.” (See American views, “The Cult of Business.”)

BOOM INDUSTRIES

Many factors spurred the economic expansion of the 1920s. The huge wartime and postwar profits provided investment capital that enabled business to mechanize. Mass production spread quickly in American industry; machine-made standardized parts and the moving assembly line increased efficiency and production. Businesses steadily adopted the scientific management principles of Frederick W. Taylor. These highly touted systems, though often involving little more than an assembly-line “speed-up,” also boosted efficiency. In factories, electric motors cut costs and improved manufacturing; in homes, electricity spurred demand for new products. Henry Ford was right: Mass production and consumption went hand in hand. Although not one in ten farm families had access to electric power, most other families did by 1929, and many bought electric sewing machines, vacuum cleaners, washing machines, and other labor-saving appliances.

The automobile industry drove the economy. Sales rose from about 1.9 million vehicles in 1920 to nearly 5 million by 1929. The automobile industry also employed one of every fourteen manufacturing workers and stimulated other industries from steel to rubber and glass. It created a huge new market for the petroleum industry and fostered oil drilling in Oklahoma, Texas, and Louisiana. It also encouraged the construction industry, a mainstay of the 1920s economy.

New industries also sprang up. The aviation industry grew rapidly, with government support. The U.S. Post Office subsidized commercial air service by providing air mail contracts to private carriers. Congress then authorized commercial passenger service over the mail routes, with regular traffic opening in 1927 between Boston and New York. By 1930, more than one hundred airlines criss-crossed America.

The Great War had stimulated the chemicals industry. The government confiscated chemical patents from German firms and transferred them to U.S. companies like Du Pont. With this advantage, Du Pont in the 1920s became a



WHERE TO LEARN MORE

Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, Dearborn, Michigan
www.hfmgv.org

◆ AMERICAN VIEWS ◆

THE CULT OF BUSINESS

During the 1920s, publicists and politicians joined manufacturers and merchants in proclaiming that business promoted not only material but also social and even spiritual well-being. In *The Man Nobody Knows* (1924), advertising executive Bruce Barton portrayed Jesus Christ as the founder of modern business. The following excerpt from an article by Edward E. Purinton, a popular lecturer on business values and efficiency, makes even more extensive claims for business.

HOW ACCURATE are Purinton's claims of great opportunity in the corporate world of the 1920s? Of occupational mobility in the factory economy? What does this view of business imply about the role of government? How might Protestant fundamentalists have viewed the cult of business?

Among the nations of the earth today America stands for one idea: Business. National opprobrium? National opportunity. For in this fact lies, potentially, the salvation of the world.

Through business, properly conceived, managed, and conducted, the human race is finally to be redeemed. How and why a man works foretells what he will do, think, have, give, and be. And real salvation is in doing, thinking, having, giving, and being—not in sermonizing and theorizing. . . .

What is the finest game? Business. The soundest science? Business. The truest art? Business. The fullest education? Business. The fairest opportunity? Business. The cleanest philanthropy? Business. The sanest religion? Business.

You may not agree. That is because you judge business by the crude, mean, stupid, false imitation of business that happens to be located near you.

The finest game is business. The rewards are for everybody, and all can win. There are no favorites—Providence always crowns the career of the man who is worthy. And in this game there is no “luck”—you have the fun of taking chances but the sobriety of guaranteeing certainties. The speed and size of your winnings are for you alone to determine. . . .

The soundest science is business. All investigation is reduced to action, and by action proved or disproved. The idealistic motive animates the materialistic method. . . . Capital is furnished for the researches of “pure science”; yet pure science is not regarded pure until practical. Competent scientists are suitably rewarded—as they are not in the scientific schools. . . .

The fullest education is business. A proper blend of study, work and life is essential to advancement. The whole man is educated. Human nature itself is the open book that all business men study; and the mastery of a page of this educates you more than the memorizing of a dusty tome from a library shelf. In the school of business, moreover, you teach yourself and learn most from your own mistakes. What you learn here you live out, the only real test.

The fairest opportunity is business. You can find more, better, quicker chances to get ahead in a large business house than anywhere else on earth. . . . Recognition of better work, of keener and quicker thought, of deeper and finer feeling, is gladly offered by the men higher up, with early promotion the rule for the man who justifies it. There is, and can be, no such thing as buried talent in a modern business organization. . . .

The sanest religion is business. Any relationship that forces a man to follow the Golden Rule rightfully belongs amid the ceremonials of the church. A great business enterprise includes and presupposes this relationship. I have seen more Christianity to the square inch as a regular part of the office equipment of famous corporation presidents than may ordinarily be found on Sunday in a verbalized but not vitalized church congregation. . . . You can fool your preacher with a sickly sprout or a wormy semblance of character, but you can't fool your employer. I would make every business house a consultation bureau for the guidance of the church whose members were employees of the house. . . .

The future work of the businessman is to teach the teacher, preach to the preacher, admonish the parent, advise the doctor, justify the lawyer, superintend the statesman, fructify the farmer, stabilize the banker, harness the dreamer, and reform the reformer.

Source: Edward E. Purinton, “Big Ideas from Big Business,” *Independent*, April 16, 1921. National Weekly Corp., New York.

chemical empire producing plastics, finishes, dyes, and organic chemicals, which it developed into enamels, rayon, and cellophane.

The new radio and motion picture industries also flourished. Commercial broadcasting began in 1920. By 1927, there were 732 stations, and Congress created what became the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to prevent wave band interference. Corporations dominated the new industry. Westinghouse, RCA, and General Electric began opening strings of stations in the early 1920s.

The motion picture industry became one of the nation's five largest businesses. Twenty thousand movie theaters sold 100 million tickets a week. Hollywood studios were huge factories, producing films on an assembly-line basis. While Americans watched Charlie Chaplin showcase his comedic genius in films like *The Gold Rush* (1925), corporations like Paramount were integrating production with distribution and exhibition to maximize control and profit and eliminate independent producers and theaters.

CORPORATE CONSOLIDATION

A wave of corporate mergers swept over the 1920s economy. Great corporations swallowed up thousands of small firms. Particularly significant was the spread of oligopoly—the control of an entire industry by a few giant firms. Three companies—Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler—produced 83 percent of the nation's cars. In the electric light and power industry, nearly four thousand local utility companies were merged into a dozen holding companies. By 1929, the nation's two hundred largest corporations controlled nearly half of all nonbanking corporate wealth.

Oligopolies also dominated finance and marketing. By 1929, a mere 1 percent of the nation's banks controlled half of its banking resources. In marketing, national chain stores like A&P and Woolworth's displaced local retailers.

The corporate consolidation of the 1920s provoked little public opposition. Americans mostly accepted that size brought efficiency and productivity.

OPEN SHOPS AND WELFARE CAPITALISM

Business also attacked labor. In 1921, the National Association of Manufacturers organized an **open shop** campaign to break union shop contracts, which required all employees to be union members. Denouncing collective bargaining as un-American, businesses described the open shop, in which union membership was not required and usually prohibited, as the "American plan." They forced workers to sign so-called **yellow dog contracts** that bound them to reject unions to keep their jobs. Business also used boycotts to force employers into a uniform antiunion front. Bethlehem Steel, for example, refused to sell steel to companies employing union labor. Where unions existed, corporations tried to crush them, using spies or hiring strikebreakers.

Some companies advocated a paternalistic system called **welfare capitalism** as an alternative to unions. Eastman Kodak, General Motors, U.S. Steel, and other firms provided medical services, insurance pensions and vacations for their workers to persuade workers to rely on the corporation. Welfare capitalism, however, covered scarcely 5 percent of the work force and often benefited only skilled workers who were already tied to the company through seniority. Moreover, it was directed primarily at men.

Corporations in the 1920s also promoted company unions, management-sponsored substitutes for labor unions. Company unions were usually forbidden to handle wage and hour issues. Their function was to implement company policies and undermine real unionism.

Open shop Factory or business employing workers whether or not they are union members; in practice, such a business usually refuses to hire union members and follows antiunion policies.

Yellow-dog contracts Employment agreements binding workers not to join a union.

Welfare capitalism A paternalistic system of labor relations emphasizing management responsibility for employee well-being.



Partly because of these pressures, membership in labor unions fell from 5.1 million in 1920 to 3.6 million in 1929. But unions also contributed to their own decline. Conservative union leaders neglected ethnic and black workers in mass production industries. Nor did they try to organize women, nearly one-fourth of all workers by 1930. The growing numbers of white-collar workers regarded themselves as middleclass and beyond the scope of union action.

With increasing mechanization and weak labor unions, workers suffered from job insecurity and stagnant wages. Real wages (purchasing power) did improve, but most of the improvement came before 1923 and reflected falling prices more than rising wages. After 1923, American wages stabilized. The failure to raise wages when productivity was increasing threatened the nation's long-term prosperity. In short, rising national income largely reflected salaries and dividends, not wages.

Overall, the gap between rich and poor widened during the decade. By 1929, 71 percent of American families earned less than what the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics regarded as necessary for a decent living standard. The maldistribution of income meant that eventually Americans would be unable to purchase the products they made.

The expansion of consumer credit, rare before the 1920s, offered temporary relief by permitting consumers to buy goods over time. General Motors introduced consumer credit on a national basis to create a mass market for expensive automobiles. By 1927, two-thirds of automobiles were purchased on the installment plan. However, installment loans simply added interest charges to the price of products.

SICK INDUSTRIES

Several "sick" industries dragged on the economy. Coal mining, textile and garment manufacturing, and railroads suffered from excess capacity (too many mines, factories and lines), shrinking demand, low returns, and management-labor conflicts. Unemployment in the coal industry approached 30 percent; by 1928, a reporter found "thousands of women and children literally starving to death" in Appalachia and the remaining miners held in "industrial slavery." The textile industry coped with overcapacity and declining demand by shifting operations from New England to the cheap-labor South, employing girls and young women for fifty-six-hour weeks at 18 cents an hour. Nevertheless, textile companies remained barely profitable.

American agriculture never recovered from the 1921 depression. Agricultural surpluses and shrinking demand forced down prices. After the war, foreign markets dried up, and demand for cotton slackened. Moreover, farmers' wartime expansion left them heavily mortgaged. Many small farmers lost their land and became tenants or farm hands. By the end of the 1920s, the average per capita income for people on the nation's farms was only one-fourth that of Americans off the farm.

THE BUSINESS OF GOVERNMENT

The Republican surge in national politics also shaped the economy. In the 1920 election, the Republican slogan was "Less government in business, more business in government." Under such direction, the federal government advanced business interests at the expense of other objectives.

REPUBLICAN ASCENDANCY

Republicans in 1920 had retained control of Congress and put Warren Harding in the White House. Harding was neither capable nor bright, but he had a genial touch that contrasted favorably with Wilson. He pardoned Eugene Debs, whom



22-9
Warren G. Harding,
Campaign Speech
at Boston (1920)

HOW DID the big business
shape the economy of the 1920s?



WHERE TO LEARN MORE



Warren G. Harding House,
Marion, Ohio
www.ohiohistory.org/places/harding



WHERE TO LEARN MORE



George Norris Home,
McCook, Nebraska
www.nebraskahistory.org/sites/norris/index.htm

QUICK REVIEW

The Teapot Dome Scandal

- Corruption and scandals plagued the Harding administration.
- Albert Hall, the secretary of the interior, leased petroleum reserves in exchange for cash and cattle.
- As a result of his part in the Teapot Dome scandal, Fall went to prison.

Wilson had refused to release from prison, and he spoke out against racial violence. He also helped shape the modern presidency by supporting the Budget and Accounting Act of 1921, which gave the president authority over the budget and created the Budget Bureau and the General Accounting Office. Two of his cabinet appointees, Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover and Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon, shaped economic policy throughout the 1920s.

Hoover made the Commerce Department the government's most dynamic office. He cemented its ties with the leading sectors of the economy, expanded its collection and distribution of industrial information, pushed to exploit foreign resources and markets, and encouraged innovation. Hoover's goal was to expand prosperity by making business efficient, responsive, and profitable. Andrew Mellon had a narrower goal. A wealthy banker and industrialist, he pressed Congress to reduce taxes on businesses and the rich. Despite the opposition of progressives, Mellon lowered maximum tax rates and eliminated wartime excess-profits taxes in 1921.

The Harding administration promoted business interests in other ways, too. The tariff of 1922 raised import rates to protect industry from foreign competition. Attorney General Harry Daugherty aided the business campaign for the open shop. And the Republicans also curtailed government regulation. By appointing advocates of big business to the Federal Trade Commission, the Federal Reserve Board, and other regulatory agencies established earlier by the progressives, Harding made government the collaborator rather than the regulator of business. Progressive Republican Senator George Norris of Nebraska angrily asked, "If trusts, combinations, and big business are to run the government, why not permit them to do it directly rather than through this expensive machinery which was originally honestly established for the protection of the people of the country against monopoly?"

Finally, Harding reshaped the Supreme Court into a still more aggressive champion of business. He named the conservative William Howard Taft as chief justice and matched him with three other pro-business justices. The Court struck down much of the government economic regulation adopted during the Progressive Era, invalidated restraints on child labor and a minimum wage law for women, and approved restrictions on labor unions.

GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION

The green light that Harding Republicans extended to private interests led to corruption and scandals. Harding appointed friends and cronies who saw public service as an opportunity for graft. The head of the Veterans Bureau went to prison for cheating disabled veterans of \$200 million. Albert Fall, the secretary of the interior, leased the petroleum reserves set aside by progressive conservationists to oil companies in exchange for cash, bonds, and cattle for his New Mexico ranch. Exposed for his role in the Teapot Dome scandal, named after a Wyoming oil reserve, Fall became the first cabinet officer in history to go to jail. Attorney General Daugherty escaped a similar fate by destroying records and invoking the Fifth Amendment.

Harding was appalled as the scandals began to unfold. He died shortly thereafter, probably of a heart attack.

COOLIDGE PROSPERITY

On August 3, 1923, Vice President Calvin Coolidge was sworn in as president by his father while visiting his birthplace in rural Vermont, thereby reaffirming his association with traditional values. This image reassured Americans troubled by the Harding scandals.



Coolidge supported business with ideological conviction and cultivated a deliberate inactivity calculated to lower expectations of government. He endorsed Secretary of the Treasury Mellon's ongoing efforts to reverse the progressive tax policies of the Wilson years and backed Secretary of Commerce Hoover's efforts on behalf of the business community (although he privately sneered at Hoover as the "Wonder Boy"). Coolidge continued, like Harding, to install business supporters in the regulatory agencies. To chair the Federal Trade Commission he appointed an attorney who had condemned the agency as "an instrument of oppression and disturbance and injury instead of help to business." The *Wall Street Journal* crowed, "Never before, here or anywhere else, has a government been so completely fused with business."

"Coolidge prosperity" determined the 1924 election. The Democrats, took 103 ballots to nominate the colorless, conservative Wall Street lawyer John W. Davis. A more interesting opponent for Coolidge was Robert La Follette, nominated by discontented farm and labor organizations that formed a new Progressive party. La Follette campaigned against "the power of private monopoly over the political and economic life of the American people." The Republicans, backed by immense contributions from business, denounced La Follette as an agent of Bolshevism. The choice, Republicans insisted, was "Coolidge or Chaos." Thus instructed, Americans chose Coolidge, though barely half the electorate bothered to vote.

THE FATE OF REFORM

The fate of women's groups illustrated the difficulties reformers faced in the 1920s. At first, the adoption of woman suffrage prompted politicians to champion women's reform issues. In 1920, both major parties endorsed many of the goals of the new **League of Women Voters**. Within a year, many states had granted women the right to serve on juries, several enacted equal pay laws, and Wisconsin adopted an equal rights law. Congress passed the **Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Act**, the first federal social welfare law, in 1921. It provided federal funds for infant and maternity care, precisely the type of protective legislation that the suffragists had described as women's special interest.

But thereafter women reformers gained little. As it became clear that women did not vote as a bloc but according to their varying social and economic backgrounds, Congress lost interest in "women's issues." In 1929, Congress killed the Sheppard-Towner Act. Nor could reformers gain ratification of a child labor amendment after the Supreme Court invalidated laws regulating child labor. Conservatives attacked women reformers as "Bolsheviks."

Disagreements among women reformers and shifting interests also limited their success. The National Woman's Party campaigned for an Equal Rights Amendment, but other reformers feared that such an amendment would nullify the progressive laws that protected working women. Reform organizations lost their energy, and many younger women rejected the public concerns of progressive feminists for what the president of the Women's Trade Union League called "cheap hopes and cheaper materialism."

CITIES AND SUBURBS

The 1920 census reported that, for the first time, more Americans lived in urban than in rural areas. The trend toward urbanization accelerated in the 1920s as millions of Americans fled the depressed countryside for the booming cities. This massive population movement interacted with technological innovations to reshape cities, build suburbs, and transform urban life (see Map 24-1).

WHERE TO LEARN MORE



Calvin Coolidge Homestead,
Plymouth, Vermont
[www.calvin-coolidge.org/
pages/homestead](http://www.calvin-coolidge.org/pages/homestead)

League of Women Voters League formed in 1920 advocating for women's rights, among them the right for women to serve on juries and equal pay laws.

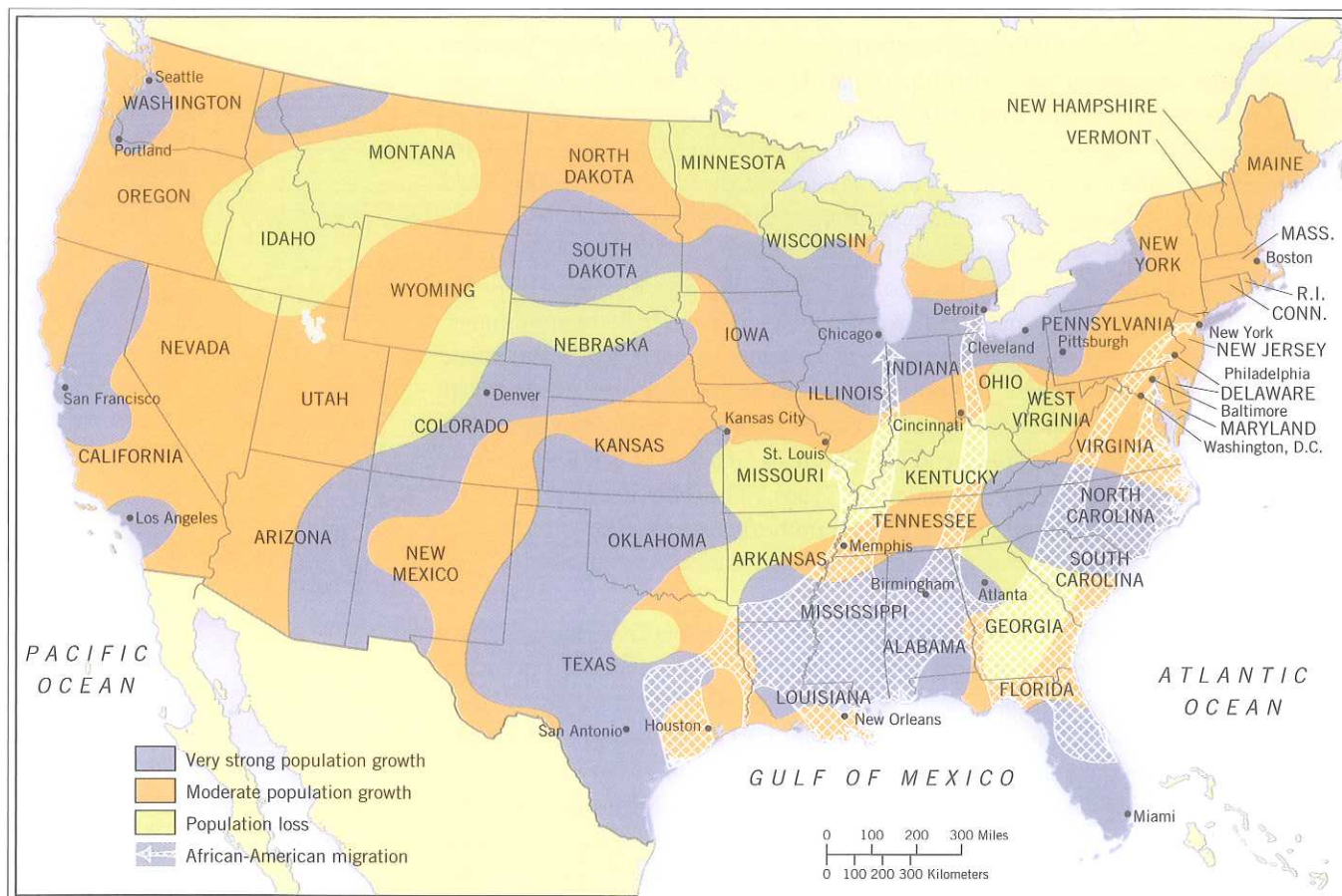
Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Act The first federal social welfare law, passed in 1921, providing federal funds for infant and maternity care.

WHAT WAS the Great Migration, and how did it affect social life in the 1920s?



MAP EXPLORATION

To explore this map, go to <http://www.prenhall.com/goldfield2/map24.1>



MAP 24-1

Population Shifts, 1920-1930 Rural Americans fled to the cities during the 1920s, escaping a declining agricultural economy to search for new opportunities. African Americans in particular left the rural South for Eastern and Midwestern cities, but the urban population also jumped in the West and in the South itself.

WHY DID certain states and areas gain population during this period, and why did others see population decreases?

EXPANDING CITIES

Urbanization affected all regions of the country. The older industrial cities of the Northeast and Upper Midwest attracted migrants from the rural South and distressed Appalachia. Rural Southerners also poured into Atlanta, Birmingham, Memphis, and Houston. Little more than jungle before 1914, Miami became the fastest-growing city in the United States during the 1920s—"the Magic City." In the West, Denver, Portland, and Seattle (each a regional economic hub) and several California cities grew rapidly. By 1930 Los Angeles was the nation's fifth-largest city, with over 1.2 million people.

The population surge transformed the urban landscape. As land values soared, developers built skyscrapers. By the end of the decade, American cities had nearly four hundred skyscrapers taller than twenty stories. The tallest, New York's 102-story Empire State Building, symbolized the urban boom.



THE GREAT BLACK MIGRATION

A significant feature of the rural-to-urban movement was the **Great Migration** of African Americans from the South in search of job opportunities. Prosperity created jobs, and with the decline in European immigration, black workers filled the positions previously given to new immigrants. Though generally the lowest paid and least secure jobs, they were better than sharecropping in the rural South. Black men worked as unskilled or semiskilled laborers; black women became domestics in white homes. More than a million and a half African Americans moved to Northern cities in the 1920s.

Black ghettos developed in most Northern cities more because of prejudice than the wishes of the migrants. With thousands of newcomers limited to certain neighborhoods by racist restrictions, housing shortages developed. High rents and low wages forced black families to share inferior and unsanitary housing that threatened their health and safety. In Pittsburgh, only 20 percent of black houses had bathtubs and only 50 percent had indoor toilets.

However, the Great Migration also increased African Americans' racial consciousness and power. In 1928 black Chicagoans elected the first black man to Congress since the turn of the century. Mutual aid societies and fraternal orders proliferated. Churches were particularly influential.

Another organization also sought to appeal to poor black ghetto dwellers. The Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), organized by Marcus Garvey, a Jamaican immigrant to New York, rejected the NAACP's goal of integration. A black nationalist espousing racial pride, Garvey exhorted African Americans to migrate to Africa to build a "free, redeemed, and mighty nation." UNIA organized many enterprises, including groceries, restaurants, laundries, a printing plant, and the Black Star Steamship Line. UNIA attracted half a million members, the first black mass movement in American history. When Garvey was convicted of mail fraud and deported, however, the movement collapsed.

Racial pride also found expression in the **Harlem Renaissance**, an outpouring of literature, painting, sculpture, and music. Inspired by African-American culture and black urban life, writers and artists created works of power and poignancy. The poetry of Langston Hughes reflected the rhythm and mood of jazz and the blues.

BARRIOS

Hispanic migrants also entered the nation's cities in the 1920s, creating their own communities, or *barrios*. Fifty thousand Puerto Ricans settled in New York, mostly in East ("Spanish") Harlem, where they found low-paying jobs. Far more migrants arrived from Mexico, usually settling in Western and Southwestern cities. The *barrios*, with their own businesses, churches, and cultural organizations, created a sense of permanency.

These communities enabled the newcomers to preserve their cultural values and build social institutions like *mutualistas* (mutual aid societies) that helped them get credit, housing, and health care. But the *barrios* also reflected the hostility that Hispanics encountered in American cities, for racism often restricted them to such districts. The number of Mexicans in Los Angeles tripled during the 1920s to nearly 100,000, but segregation confined them to East Los Angeles. Other areas of the city boasted of being "restricted to the white race."

Some Hispanics fought discrimination. *La Orden de Hijos de America* (The Order of the Sons of America), organized in San Antonio in 1921, campaigned against inequities in schools and the jury system. In 1929, it helped launch the larger League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), which would help advance civil rights for all Americans.

WHERE TO LEARN MORE



Smithsonian Institution,
Washington, D.C.



23-1

F. J. Grimke, "Address of
Welcome to the Men Who Have
Returned from the Battlefield"
(1919)

Great Migration The mass movement of African Americans from the rural South to the urban North, spurred especially by new job opportunities during World War I and the 1920s.

Harlem Renaissance A new African-American cultural awareness that flourished in literature, art, and music in the 1920s.



QUICK REVIEW

Growth of the Suburbs

- ◆ The suburbs grew rapidly in the 1920s.
- ◆ The single family house became the middle-class ideal.
- ◆ Suburbanization and the automobile brought a variety of changes.

HOW DID new systems of distributing, marketing, and communication create mass culture?

THE ROAD TO SUBURBIA

As fast as the cities mushroomed in the 1920s, the suburbs grew twice as fast. Automobiles created the modern suburb for it enabled people to live in formerly remote areas. A single-family house surrounded by a lawn became the social ideal, a pastoral escape from the overcrowded and dangerous city. Many suburbs excluded African Americans, Hispanics, Jews, and working-class people.

Suburbanization and the automobile brought other changes. In 1922, J.C. Nichols opened the Country Club Plaza, the first suburban shopping center, in Kansas City; it provided free, off-street parking. Department stores and other large retailers began leaving the urban cores for the suburbs, where both parking and more affluent customers were waiting. Drive-in restaurants began with Royce Hailey's Pig Stand in Dallas in 1921. Later in the decade, the first fast-food franchise chain, White Tower, appeared, with its standardized menu and building. To serve the automobile, governments spent more on road construction and maintenance. By 1930, road construction was the largest single item in the national budget.

MASS CULTURE IN THE JAZZ AGE

The White Tower chain symbolized a new society and culture. Urbanization and the automobile joined with new systems of distributing, marketing, and communications to mold a mass culture of standardized experiences and interests. Not all Americans participated equally in the new culture, however, and some attacked it.

ADVERTISING THE CONSUMER SOCIETY

Advertising and its focus on increasing consumption shaped the new society. Advertisers exhorted consumers via newspapers, billboards, streetcar signs, junk mail, radio, movies, and even skywriting. They sought to create a single market where everyone, regardless of region and ethnicity, consumed brand-name products. Advertisers attempted to stimulate new wants by ridiculing previous models or tastes as obsolete, acclaiming the convenience of a new brand, or linking the latest fashion with status or sex appeal.

The home became a focus of consumerism. Middle- and upper-class women purchased mass-produced household appliances, such as electric irons, toasters, vacuum cleaners, washing machines, and refrigerators. Working-class women bought packaged food, ready-made clothing, and other consumer goods to lighten their workload. Advertisers attempted to redefine the housewife's role as primarily that of a consumer, purchasing goods for her family.

A shifting labor market also promoted mass consumption. The increasing number of white-collar workers had more time and money for leisure and consumption. Women clerical workers, the fastest growing occupational group, found in the purchase of clothes and cosmetics a sign of social status and an antidote to workplace monotony.

Under the stimulus of advertising, consumption increasingly displaced the traditional virtues of thrift, prudence, and avoidance of debt. Installment buying became common. By 1928, 85 percent of furniture, 80 percent of radios, and 75 percent of washing machines were bought on credit. But with personal debt rising more than twice as fast as incomes, even aggressive advertising and credit could not indefinitely prolong the illusion of a healthy economy.

LEISURE AND ENTERTAINMENT

During the 1920s, Americans also spent more on recreation and leisure, important features of the new mass society. Millions of people packed into movie theaters whose ornate style symbolized their social importance. Movies helped set national trends in dress, language, and behavior. Studios made films to attract the largest audiences and fit prevailing stereotypes. Cecil B. De Mille titillated audiences while reinforcing conventional standards with religious epics, like *The Ten Commandments* (1923) or *The King of Kings* (1927).

Radio also helped mold national popular culture. The first radio network, the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), was formed in 1926. Soon it was charging \$10,000 to broadcast commercials to a national market. Networks provided standardized entertainment, personalities, and news to Americans across the nation. Radio incorporated listeners into a national society. Rural residents welcomed the “talking furniture” for giving them access to the speeches, sermons, and business information available to city-dwellers.

The phonograph allowed families to listen to music of their choice in their own homes. Record companies promoted dance crazes, such as the Charleston, and developed regional markets for country, or “hillbilly,” music in the South and West as well as a “race market” for blues and jazz among the growing urban population, black and white. The popularity of the trumpet player Louis Armstrong and other jazz greats gave the decade its nickname, the **Jazz Age**.

Jazz derived from African-American musical traditions. The Great Migration spread it from New Orleans and Kansas City to cities throughout the nation. Its improvisational and rhythmic characteristics differed sharply from older and more formal music and were often condemned by people who feared that jazz would undermine conventional restraints on behavior. But conductor Leopold Stokowski defended jazz as, “an expression of the times, of the breathless, energetic, superactive times in which we are living; it is useless to fight against it.”

Professional sports also flourished and became more commercialized. Millions of Americans, attracted by the popularity of such celebrities as Babe Ruth of the New York Yankees, crowded into baseball parks to follow major league teams. Ruth treated himself as a commercial commodity, hiring an agent, endorsing Cadillacs and alligator shoes, and defending a salary in 1932 that dwarfed that of President Hoover by declaring, “I had a better year than he did.”

Another celebrity who captured popular fascination was the aviator Charles Lindbergh, who flew alone across the Atlantic in 1927. In the *Spirit of St. Louis*, a tiny airplane built on a shoestring budget, Lindbergh fought bad weather and fatigue for thirty-four hours before landing to a hero’s welcome in Paris. Named its first “Man of the Year” by *Time*, one of the new mass-circulation magazines, Lindbergh won adulation and awards from Americans who still valued the image of individualism.

THE NEW MORALITY

The promotion of consumption and immediate gratification weakened traditional self-restraint and fed a desire for personal fulfillment. The failure of wartime sacrifices to achieve promised glories deepened Americans’ growing disenchantment

The soup for men who eat to win!

MEN with the success-habit eat wisely and well, both. They enjoy Campbell's Tomato Soup regularly and they get from it a sparkle and zest, which tell in the day's work. All of the rich, tonic goodness. All of the famous tomato healthfulness. 12 cents a can.

Advertisements for brand-name products, like this 1929 ad for Campbell's tomato soup, often tried to link simple consumption with larger issues of personal success and achievement.

By permission of Campbell Soup Company

Jazz Age The 1920s, so called for the popular music of the day as a symbol of the many changes taking place in the mass culture.



with traditional values. The social dislocations of the war years and growing urbanization accelerated moral and social change. Sexual pleasure became an increasingly open objective, as the growing availability of birth control information enabled women to enjoy sex with less fear of pregnancy; and movie stars like Clara Bow, known as “the It Girl,” and Rudolph Valentino flaunted sexuality to mass audiences. Traditionalists worried as divorce rates, cigarette consumption, and hemlines went up while respect for parents, elders, and clergy went down.

Young people seemed to embody the new morality. Rejecting conventional standards, they embraced the era’s frenzied dances, bootleg liquor, smoking, more revealing clothing, and sexual experimentation. They welcomed the freedom from parental control that the automobile afforded. The “flapper”—a frivolous young woman with short hair and a skimpy skirt who danced, smoked, and drank in oblivious self-absorption—was a major obsession.

But the new morality was neither as new nor as widespread as its advocates and critics believed. Signs of change had appeared before the war in new clothing fashions, social values, and public amusements among working-class and ethnic groups. But most Americans still adhered to traditional beliefs and values. Moreover, the new morality offered only a limited freedom. Women remained subject to traditional double standards, with marriage and divorce laws, property rights, and employment opportunities biased against them.

THE SEARCHING TWENTIES

Many writers rejected what they considered the materialism, conformity, and provincialism of the emerging mass culture. Their criticism made the postwar decade one of the most creative periods in American literature. The brutality and hypocrisy of the war stimulated their disillusionment and alienation. What Gertrude Stein called the **Lost Generation** considered, in the words of F. Scott Fitzgerald, “all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken.” Ernest Hemingway, wounded as a Red Cross volunteer during the war, rejected idealism in his novel *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), declaring that he no longer saw any meaning in “the words *sacred*, *glorious*, and *sacrifice*.”

Novelists also turned their attention to American society. In *The Great Gatsby* (1925), Fitzgerald traced the self-deceptions of the wealthy. Sinclair Lewis ridiculed middle-class society and its narrow business culture in *Babbitt* (1922), whose title character provided a new word for the smug and shallow.

CULTURE WARS

Despite the blossoming of mass culture and society in the 1920s, conflicts divided social groups. Some of these struggles involved reactions against the new currents in American life, including technological and scientific innovations, urban growth, and materialism. But movements to restrict immigration, enforce prohibition, prohibit the teaching of evolution, and even sustain the Ku Klux Klan did not have simple origins, motives, or consequences. The forces underlying the culture wars of the 1920s would surface repeatedly in the future (see the Overview table “Issues in the Culture Wars of the 1920s” on p. 644).

NATIVISM AND IMMIGRATION RESTRICTION

For years, many Americans, from racists to reformers, had campaigned to restrict immigration. In 1917, Congress required immigrants to pass a literacy test. But renewed immigration after the war revived the anti-immigration movement, and



WHERE TO LEARN MORE

★ F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald Museum, Montgomery, Alabama
www.alabamatravel.org/central/szf.html

WHAT CONFLICTS

divided social groups in the 1920s?



the propaganda of the war and Red Scare years generated public support for more restriction. Depicting immigrants as radicals, racial inferiors, religious subversives, or criminals, nativists clamored for congressional action.

The Emergency Quota Act of 1921 reduced immigration by about two-thirds and established quotas for nationalities on the basis of their numbers in the United States in 1910. Coolidge himself urged that America “be kept American,” meaning white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant. Congress adopted this racist rationale in the **National Origins Act of 1924**, which proclaimed its objective to be the maintenance of the “racial preponderance” of “the basic strain of our population.” This law restricted immigration quotas to 2 percent of the foreign-born population of each nationality as recorded in the 1890 census, which was taken before the mass immigration from southern and eastern Europe. Another provision excluded Japanese immigrants.

Other actions targeted Japanese residents in America. California, Oregon, Washington, Arizona, and other Western states prohibited them from owning or leasing land. In 1922, the Supreme Court ruled that, as nonwhites, they could never become naturalized citizens. Dispirited by the prejudice of the decade, Japanese residents hoped for fulfillment through their children, the **Nisei**, who were American citizens by birth.

Ironically, as a U.S. territory, the Philippines was not subject to the National Origins Act, and Filipino immigration increased ninefold during the 1920s. Similarly, because the law did not apply to immigrants from the Western Hemisphere, Mexican immigration also grew. Nativists lobbied to exclude Mexicans, but agribusiness interests in the Southwest blocked any restrictions on low-cost migrant labor.

THE KU KLUX KLAN

Nativism was also reflected in the popularity of the revived Ku Klux Klan, the goal of which, according to its leader, was to protect “the interest of those whose forefathers established the nation.” Although founded in Georgia in 1915 and modeled on its Reconstruction predecessor, the new Klan was a national, not a Southern, movement and claimed several million members by the mid-1920s. Admitting only native-born white Protestants, the Klan embodied the fears of a traditional culture threatened by social change. Ironically, its rapid spread owed much to modern business and promotional techniques as hundreds of professional recruiters raked in hefty commissions selling Klan memberships to those hoping to defend their way of life.

In part the Klan was a fraternal order, providing entertainment, assistance, and community for its members. Its picnics, parades, charity drives, and other social and family-oriented activities—perhaps a half million women joined the Women of the Ku Klux Klan—sharply distinguished the organization from both the small, secretive Klan of the nineteenth century and the still smaller, extremist Klan of the later twentieth century.

But the Klan also exploited racial, ethnic, and religious prejudices, attacking African Americans in the South, Mexicans in Texas, Japanese in California, and Catholics and Jews everywhere. A twisted religious impulse ran through much of the Klan’s organization and activities. It hired itinerant Protestant ministers to spread its message, erected altars and flaming crosses at its meetings, and sang Klan lyrics to the tunes of well-known hymns. The Klan also resorted to violence. In 1921, for example, a Methodist minister who belonged to the Klan murdered a Catholic priest on his own doorstep, and other Klansmen burned down Catholic churches.

QUICK REVIEW

Restrictions on Immigration

- ◆ Emergency Quota Act of 1921 reduced immigration and established quotas for nationalities.
- ◆ National Origins Act of 1924 restricted immigration on the basis of national origins.
- ◆ Other steps targeted Japanese residents in the West.

National Origins Act of 1924 Law sharply restricting immigration on the basis of immigrants’ national origins and discriminating against southern and eastern Europeans and Asians.

Nisei U.S. citizens born of immigrant Japanese parents.



OVERVIEW

ISSUES IN THE CULTURE WARS OF THE 1920S

Issue	Proponent view	Opponent view
The new morality	Promotes greater personal freedom and opportunities for fulfillment	Promotes moral collapse
Evolutionism	A scientific advance linked to notions of progress	A threat to religious belief
Jazz	Modern and vital	Unsettling, irregular, vulgar, and primitive
Immigration	A source of national strength from ethnic and racial diversity	A threat to the status and authority of old-stock white Protestants
Great Migration	A chance for African Americans to find new economic opportunities and gain autonomy and pride	A threat to traditional white privilege, control, and status
Prohibition	Promotes social and family stability and reduces crime	Restricts personal liberty and increases crime
Fundamentalism	An admirable adherence to traditional religious faith and biblical injunctions	A superstitious creed given to intolerant interference in social and political affairs
Ku Klux Klan	An organization promoting community responsibility, patriotism, and traditional social, moral, and religious values	A group of religious and racial bigots given to violent vigilantism and fostering moral and public corruption
Mass culture	Increases popular participation in national culture; provides entertainment and relaxation	Promotes conformity, materialism, mediocrity, and spectacle
Consumerism	Promotes material progress and higher living standards	Promotes waste, sterility, and self-indulgence

The Klan also ventured into politics, with some success, but it eventually encountered resistance. In the North, Catholic workers disrupted Klan parades. In the South, too, Klan excesses provoked a backlash. After the Klan in Dallas flogged sixty-eight people in a “whipping meadow” along the Trinity River in 1922, respect turned to outrage. Newspapers demanded that the Klan disband, and district attorneys began to prosecute Klan thugs. Elsewhere the Klan was stung by revelations of criminal behavior and corruption. By 1930, the Klan had nearly collapsed.

PROHIBITION AND CRIME

Like the Klan, prohibition both reflected and provoked social tensions in the 1920s. In 1920 the Eighteenth Amendment, prohibited the manufacture, sale, or transportation of alcoholic beverages. Congress then passed the **Volstead Act**, which defined the forbidden liquors and established the Prohibition Bureau to enforce the law. But many social groups, especially among urban ethnic communities, opposed

Volstead Act The 1920 law defining the liquor forbidden under the Eighteenth Amendment and giving enforcement responsibilities to the Prohibition Bureau of the Department of the Treasury.

prohibition, and the government could not enforce the law where public opinion did not endorse it.

Evasion was easy. By permitting alcohol for medicinal, sacramental, and industrial purposes, the Volstead Act enabled doctors, priests, and druggists to satisfy their friends' needs. City dwellers made "bathtub gin," and rural people distilled "moonshine." Bootleggers often operated openly.

The huge profits encouraged organized crime—which had previously concentrated on gambling and prostitution—to develop elaborate liquor distribution networks. Crime "families" used violence to enforce contracts, suppress competition, and attack rivals. In Chicago, Al Capone's army of nearly a thousand gangsters killed hundreds.

Gradually, even many "drys"—people who had initially favored prohibition—dropped their support, horrified by the boost it gave organized crime and worried about a general disrespect for law that it promoted. In 1933, thirty-six states ratified an amendment repealing what Herbert Hoover had called a "noble experiment."

OLD-TIME RELIGION AND THE SCOPES TRIAL

Religion provided another fulcrum for traditionalists attempting to stem cultural change. Protestant fundamentalism, which emphasized the infallibility of the Bible, including the Genesis story of Adam and Eve, emerged at the turn of the century as a conservative reaction to religious modernism and the social changes brought by the mass immigration of Catholics and Jews; the growing influence of science and technology; and the secularization of public education. But the fundamentalist crusade to reshape America became formidable only in the 1920s.

Fundamentalist groups, colleges, and publications sprang up throughout the nation, especially in the South. The anti-Catholic sentiment exploited by the Klan was but one consequence of fundamentalism's insistence on strict biblical Christianity. A second was the assault on Darwin's theory of evolution which contradicted literal interpretations of biblical Creation. Fundamentalist legislators tried to prevent teaching evolution in public schools in at least twenty states. In 1925, Tennessee forbade teaching any idea contrary to the biblical account of human origins.

Social or political conservatism, however, was not an inherent part of old-time religion. The most prominent antievolution politician, William Jennings Bryan, feared that Darwinism promoted political and economic conservatism. The survival of the fittest, he complained, elevated force and brutality, ignored spiritual values and democracy, and discouraged altruism and reform. How could a person fight for social justice "unless he believes in the triumph of right?"

The controversy over evolution came to a head when the **American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)** responded to Tennessee's violation of the constitutional separation of church and state by offering to defend any teacher who tested the anti-evolution law. John Scopes, a high school biology teacher in Dayton, Tennessee, did so and was arrested. Scopes's trial riveted national attention after Bryan agreed to assist the prosecution and Clarence Darrow, a famous Chicago lawyer and prominent atheist, volunteered to defend Scopes.

Millions of Americans tuned their radios to hear the first trial ever broadcast. Though the local jury took only eight minutes to convict Scopes, fundamentalists suffered public ridicule from reporters like H. L. Mencken, who sneered at the "hillbillies" and "yokels" of Dayton. But fundamentalism retained religious influence and would again challenge science and modernism in American life.



Indiana Klanswomen pose in their regalia in 1924. The Klan combined appeals to traditional family and religious values with violent attacks upon those who were not white, native-born Protestants.

Getty Image Inc./Image Bank

WHERE TO LEARN MORE



Rhea County Courthouse
and Museum,
Dayton, Tennessee



23-2
The Sahara of the Bozart
(1920)



FROM THEN TO NOW

The Culture Wars

Cultural conflict raged through American society in the 1920s as people reacted to great social changes, including new roles for women, increasing ethnic and racial diversity, rapid urbanization, and the “new morality.” Nativists demanded immigration restriction; the Ku Klux Klan played on fears of racial, ethnic, and religious minorities; prohibitionists grappled with the minions of Demon Rum; and Protestant fundamentalists campaigned to prohibit the teaching of evolution in public schools.

Such conflicts are rooted in the moral systems that give people identity and purpose. As a result, the challenges of the Great Depression and World War II dampened but did not extinguish them. Beginning in the 1960s, fueled as before by challenges to traditional values and beliefs—African American demands for civil rights, opposition to the Vietnam War, the women’s rights movement and women’s growing presence in the workplace, a new wave of immigration (dominated this time by Asians and Latin Americans), the gay rights movement—cultural conflict flared again and continues to burn.

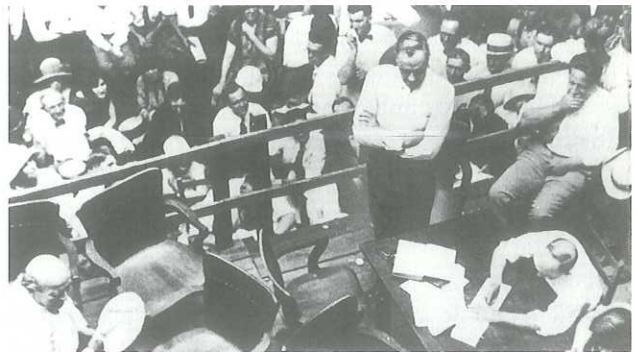
In the 1920s nativists succeeded in curtailing immigration with the passage of the National Origins Act of 1924. In 1994, the people of California approved Proposition 187, which barred undocumented aliens from public schools and social services. Again, as in the 1920s, fundamentalists are mounting an attack against the teaching of evolution in public schools, sometimes seeking to persuade local school boards to give equal time to the pseudoscience of creationism. And today rap and rock-and-roll provoke the same kind of worried condemnation that jazz provoked in the 1920s.

The central battleground of today’s culture wars, however, is women’s rights, and especially abortion rights. Ever since the Supreme Court ruled in *Roe v. Wade* in 1973 that women had a right to an abortion, opponents, primarily religious conservatives, have sought to curtail or abolish that right in the name of “family values.” Antiabortion protests became increasingly violent in the 1980s and 1990s. Demonstrators have harassed women trying to enter abortion clinics, clinics have been bombed, and several abortion providers have been murdered. Although the Supreme Court has upheld *Roe v. Wade* and laws restraining demonstrations at abortion clinics, it has also upheld state laws imposing limits on abortion rights. Abortions have become harder to obtain in many parts of the country.

Gay rights is another new battleground in the culture wars. Religious conservatives, again in the name of “family values,” have sought to counter efforts to extend civil rights protections to gays and lesbians. In 1992, for example, Colorado approved a measure (overturned by the Supreme Court in 1996) that prohibited local governments from passing ordinances protecting gays and lesbians from discrimination.

The hostility to the Catholic Church and Catholic immigrants that had long been characteristic of American nativism has been largely absent from the current culture wars. On the contrary, conservative Catholics have joined forces with evangelical Protestants on many fronts, particularly on abortion and gay rights.

According to one popular analysis, the antagonists in today’s culture wars are, on one side, those who find authority in transcendent universal sources like those that religious traditions lay claim to, and, on the other, those who find authority in society and human reason. From this perspective, perhaps the most prominent recent engagement in the culture wars was the impeachment of President Clinton. Republican leader Tom DeLay of Texas, for example, declared in 1999 that the impeachment debate was “about relativism versus absolute truth.” Polls, however, showed that most Americans were more tolerant and flexible, willing to separate the president’s public performance from his personal morality. With the failure to convict Clinton, one Republican lamented. “We probably have lost the culture war.” But given the deeply rooted convictions that motivate it, cultural conflict is likely to remain a persistent undercurrent in American life.



The packed courtroom for the Scopes Trial in 1925 illustrates the intense interest that Americans have persistently taken in conflicts stemming from differing cultural values and ethical visions.

Getty Images Inc.



A NEW ERA IN THE WORLD?

A broad, as at home, Americans in the 1920s sought peace and economic order. Rejection of the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations did not foreshadow isolationism. Indeed, in the 1920s, the United States became more deeply involved in international matters than ever before in peacetime.

WAR DEBTS AND ECONOMIC EXPANSION

The United States was the world's dominant economic power in the 1920s, changed by the Great War from a debtor to a creditor nation. The loans that the United States had made to its allies during the war troubled the nation's relations with Europe throughout the decade. American insistence on repayment angered Europeans, who saw the money as a U.S. contribution to the joint war effort against Germany. Moreover, high American tariffs blocked Europeans from exporting goods to the United States and earning dollars to repay their debts. Eventually, the United States readjusted the terms for repayment, and American bankers extended large loans to Germany, which used the money to pay reparations to Britain and France, whose governments then used the same money to repay the United States. This unstable system depended on a constant flow of money from the United States.

America's global economic role expanded in other ways as well. By 1929, the United States was the world's largest exporter, responsible for one-sixth of all exports. American investment abroad more than doubled between 1919 and 1930. To expand their markets and avoid foreign tariffs, many U.S. companies became **multinational corporations**, establishing branches or subsidiaries abroad. Ford built assembly plants in England, Japan, Turkey, and Canada. American oil companies invested in foreign oil fields, especially in Latin America. The United Fruit Company developed such huge operations in Central America that it often dominated national economies.

The government worked to open doors for American businesses in foreign countries. Secretary of Commerce Hoover's Bureau of Foreign Commerce opened fifty offices around the world to boost American business. Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes negotiated access to Iraqi oil fields for U.S. oil companies. The government also exempted bankers and manufacturers from antitrust laws to exploit foreign markets.

REJECTING WAR

Although government officials cooperated with business leaders to promote American strategic and economic interests, they had little desire to use force in the process. Popular reaction against the Great War, strengthened by a strong peace movement, constrained policymakers. Indeed, the State Department sought to restrict the buildup of armaments among nations.

At the invitation of President Harding, delegations from nine nations met at the Washington Naval Conference in 1921 to draft a treaty to reduce battleship tonnage and suspend the building of new ships for a decade. The terms virtually froze the existing balance of naval power, with the first rank assigned to Britain and the United States, followed by Japan and then France and Italy. The U.S. Senate ratified the treaty with only one dissenting vote. The United States made a more dramatic gesture in 1928 when it helped draft the **Kellogg-Briand Pact**. Signed by sixty-four nations, the treaty renounced aggression and outlawed war. Without provisions for enforcement, however, it was little more than symbolic.

WHAT WERE the reasons for U.S. involvement overseas in the 1920s?

QUICK REVIEW

America's Economic Power

- U.S. was the world's dominant economic power in the 1920s.
- U.S. war-time loans to European countries were a trouble spot throughout the decade.
- To expand their markets and avoid tariffs, many U.S. companies became multinational corporations.

Multinational corporations Firms with direct investments, branches, factories, and offices in a number of countries.



QUICK REVIEW

U.S. Policy in Latin America

- ◆ U.S. moved away from gunboat diplomacy.
- ◆ Continued to occupy Haiti and intervened when it felt its interests were at stake.
- ◆ Such interventions provoked Latin American hostility.

MANAGING THE HEMISPHERE

The United States continued to dominate Latin America to promote its own interests through investments, control of the Panama Canal, invocation of the Monroe Doctrine, and military intervention.

In response to American public opinion, the peace movement, and Latin American nationalism, the United States did retreat from the extreme gunboat diplomacy of the Progressive Era, withdrawing troops from the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua. But Haiti remained under U.S. occupation throughout the decade, American troops stayed in Cuba and Panama, and the United States directed the financial policies of other Latin American countries. Moreover, it sent the marines into Honduras in 1924 and back to Nicaragua in 1926. Such interventions provoked further Latin American hostility. “We are hated and despised,” said one American businessman in Nicaragua. “This feeling has been created by employing American marines to hunt down and kill Nicaraguans in their own country.”

The anger of Latin Americans prompted the State Department to draft the Clark Memorandum. This document, not published until 1930, receded from the Roosevelt Corollary and helped prepare the way for the so-called Good Neighbor Policy toward Latin America. Still, the United States continued to dominate the hemisphere.

HERBERT HOOVER AND THE FINAL TRIUMPH OF THE NEW ERA

As the national economy steamed ahead in 1928, the Republicans chose as their presidential candidate Herbert Hoover, a man who symbolized the policies of prosperity and the New Era. Hoover was not a politician—he had never been elected to office—but a successful administrator who championed rational and efficient economic development. Hoover’s stiff managerial image was softened by his humanitarian record and his roots in rural Iowa.

The Democrats, in contrast, chose a candidate who evoked the cultural conflicts of the 1920s. Alfred E. Smith, four-term governor of New York, was a Catholic, an opponent of prohibition, and a Tammany politician tied to the immigrant constituency of New York City. His nomination plunged the nation into cultural strife. Rural fundamentalism, anti-Catholicism, prohibition, and nativism were crucial factors in the campaign. The fundamentalist assault was unrelenting. A Baptist minister in Oklahoma City warned his congregation: “If you vote for Al Smith, you’re voting against Christ and you’ll all be damned.”

But Hoover was in fact the more progressive candidate. Sympathetic to labor, sensitive to women’s issues, hostile to racial segregation, and favorable to the League of Nations, Hoover had always distanced himself from what he called “the reactionary group in the Republican party.” By contrast, despite supporting state welfare legislation to benefit his urban working-class constituents, Smith was essentially conservative and opposed an active government. Moreover, he was as parochial as his most rural adversaries and never attempted to reach out to them. With the nation still enjoying the economic prosperity so closely associated with Hoover and the Republicans, the Democrats were routed.

But 1928 would be the Republicans’ final triumph for a long time. The prosperity of the 1920s was ending, and the country faced a future dark with poverty.



WHERE TO LEARN MORE

Herbert Hoover National Historic Site, West Branch, Iowa



American President Herbert Hoover in a color engraving.

The Granger Collection, New York



CONCLUSION

The New Era of the 1920s changed America. Technological and managerial innovations produced giant leaps in productivity, new patterns of labor, a growing concentration of corporate power, and high profits. Government policies from protective tariffs and regressive taxation to a relaxation of regulatory laws reinforced the triumphs of a business elite over traditional cautions and concerns.

The decade's economic developments stimulated social change, drawing millions of Americans from the countryside to the cities, creating an urban nation, and fostering a new ethic of materialism, consumerism, and leisure and a new mass culture based on the automobile, radio, the movies, and advertising. This social transformation swept up many Americans but left others unsettled by the erosion of traditional practices and values. The concerns of traditionalists found expression in campaigns for prohibition and against immigration, the revival of the Ku Klux Klan, and the rise of religious fundamentalism. Intellectuals denounced the materialism and conformity they saw in the new social order and fashioned new artistic and literary trends.

But the impact of the decade's trends was uneven. Mechanization increased the productivity of some workers but cost others their jobs; people poured into the cities while others left for the suburbs; prohibition, produced conflict, crime, and corruption; government policies advanced some economic interests but injured others. Even the notion of a "mass" culture obscured the degree to which millions of Americans were left out of the New Era. With no disposable income and little access to electricity, rural Americans scarcely participated in the joys of consumerism; racial and ethnic minorities were often isolated in ghettos and barrios; and many workers faced declining opportunities. Although living standards rose for many Americans and the rich expanded their share of national wealth, much of the population fell below the established poverty level. The unequal distribution of wealth and income made the economy vulnerable to a disastrous collapse.

SUMMARY

The Economy that Roared Following a postwar depression in 1920 and 1921, the American economy boomed through the rest of the decade. Mechanization of production, investment, new industries such as broadcasting and motion pictures and the automobile industry drove the economy. Oligopoly eliminated competition; Americans accepted the idea that size brought efficiency and productivity. While many businesses boomed, "sick" industries such as textiles, coal mining, agriculture and railroads dragged the economy down. Not all Americans shared in the economic boom; the gap between rich and poor widened.

The Business of Government The Republican surge in national politics also shaped the economy; a business government went hand in hand with a business country. Government regulation was curtailed, business supporters were installed in regulatory agencies, and the Supreme Court became a champion of business. While the Progressive party had little impact on politics, progressivism was not dead but had lost much of its energy and focus.





Cities and Suburbs By 1920 more Americans lived in urban than rural areas; the massive population movement interacted with technological innovations to reshape cities, build automobile-accessible suburbs, and transform urban life. The South was the most rapidly urbanizing region; however, African Americans left the South for job opportunities in Midwestern and Northern cities; increased racial pride found expression in the Harlem Renaissance. Puerto Ricans and Mexicans moved into U.S. cities creating their own communities. Suburbs grew more rapidly than cities as middle-class enclaves created by automobiles.

Mass Culture in the Jazz Age Fast food chains symbolized a new society and culture; advertising and its focus on increasing consumption shaped the new society. Brand-name goods, mass consumption, and buying on credit became hallmarks of the new American economy. People also spent more on recreation and leisure; radio, the phonograph, and the movies competed with college football, professional baseball, and boxing during the Jazz Age. The social dislocations and America's growing disenchantment with traditional values fueled the new morality among the young; writers of the Lost Generation criticized the new era.

Culture Wars Despite the new mass culture of the 1920's, conflicts divided social groups. Some of these struggles involved reactions against the new currents in American life, including technical and scientific innovation, urban growth, and materialism. Nativism, racism, religion, dislike of modernism and the expanding role of science, and the desire to return to and strengthen traditional rural values were all underlying issues in the culture wars.

A New Era in the World? The United States was changed by the Great War into a creditor nation. The loans made to the Allies troubled America's relations with Europe as America insisted on repayment; however, high tariffs blocked Europe exporting goods and earning money to repay those debts. America's global economic role expanded and companies became multinational corporations; Europe and Latin America resented this economic invasion. Reaction to the Great War resulted in America, along with sixty-four other nations, outlawing war in 1928.

Herbert Hoover and the Triumph of the New Era Herbert Hoover's election as president in 1928 seemed the "final triumph over poverty"; in 1929, the Great Depression would begin.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did the automobile industry affect the nation's economy and society in the 1920s?
 2. What factors characterized the "boom industries" of the 1920s? What factors characterized the "sick industries"?
 3. What role did politics play in the public life of the 1920s?
 4. How did the World War I experience shape the 1920s?
 5. What was the U.S. level of involvement in world affairs in the 1920s?
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KEY TERMS

Great Migration (p. 639)	National Origins Act of 1924 (p. 643)	Volstead Act (p. 644)
Harlem Renaissance (p. 639)	Nisei (p. 643)	Welfare capitalism (p. 634)
Jazz Age (p. 641)	Open shop (p. 634)	Yellow-dog contracts
League of Women Voters (p. 637)	Sheppard-Towner Maternity and	(p. 634)
Multinational corporations (p. 647)	Infancy Act (p. 637)	

WHERE TO LEARN MORE

- 🏠 **F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald Museum, Montgomery, Alabama.** The novelist and his wife lived a short while in this house in her hometown. www.alabamatravel.org/central/szfm.html
- 🏠 **Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.** “From Farm to Factory,” a permanent exhibition at the National Museum of American History, splendidly portrays the human side of the Great Migration.
- 🏠 **Herbert Hoover National Historic Site, West Branch, Iowa.** Visitors may tour Hoover’s birth-place cottage, presidential library, and museum.
- 🏠 **Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, Dearborn, Michigan.** Among many fascinating exhibits, “The Automobile in American Life” particularly and superbly demonstrates the importance of the automobile in American social history. www.hfmgv.org
- 🏠 **George Norris Home, McCook, Nebraska.** This museum, operated by the Nebraska State Historical Society, is dedicated to a leading progressive Republican of the 1920s. www.nebraskahistory.org/sites/norris/index.htm
- 🏠 **Warren G. Harding House, Marion, Ohio.** Harding’s home from 1891 to 1921 is now a museum with period furnishings. www.ohiohistory.org/places/harding
- 🏠 **Rhea County Courthouse and Museum, Dayton, Tennessee.** The site of the Scopes Trial, the courtroom appears as it did in 1925; the museum contains memorabilia related to the trial.
- 🏠 **Calvin Coolidge Homestead, Plymouth, Vermont.** Operated by the Vermont Division of Historic Sites, the homestead preserves the exact interiors and furnishings from when Coolidge took the presidential oath of office there in 1923. www.calvin-coolidge.org/pages/homestead and www.dhca.state.vt.us/HistoricSites/sites.htm



For additional study resources for this chapter, go to:
www.prenhall.com/goldfield/chapter24

VISUALIZING THE PAST...

Advertising and the Modern Woman

DURING the 1920s, for the first time in American history, consumer demand was the chief impetus to economic growth. As a direct consequence, the 1920s witnessed the emergence of advertising as a major industry. Most of the ads from this period promoted benefits that had little to do with product. Why? The simplest explanation is that the ad agency and the manufacturer believed that youth and feminine beauty would sell. By the late twenties, advertisements for all sorts of products touted the “modern young woman” as the arbiter of taste and beauty. In so doing, the advertisers signaled a deep shift in American culture. Which specific feminine characteristics are promoted in the advertisements shown here?

The image of a young, attractive in this Lucky Strike ad from the 1920s is much more prominent than the product she is promoting. How does the ad make the connection between cigarettes and feminine beauty? What is the underlying message of the command to “reach for a Lucky—instead of a sweet?”

ADS-TOBACCO

“Reach for a Lucky - instead of a sweet”

LUCKY STRIKE
“IT’S TOASTED”
CIGARETTES

“A flavor that completely satisfies”

Billie Burke
Billie Burke
Popular American Actress

“It’s toasted”
No Throat Irritation - No Cough.

© 1929, The American Tobacco Co., Manufacturers



▲ Virtually all ads during this period, except those aimed explicitly at African Americans, avoided any ethnic or racial references. "La Creole" ads are exceptions. The product name itself referred to a specific Community of people in Louisiana, descendants of French settlers. But the term was also used to refer to individuals of mixed racial background. How does the "La Creole" ad deal with this? What does that suggest for how you might interpret the other ads?

This ad for a line of hair products created and manufactured by Madame C.J. Walker, one of the first African-American millionaires. The ad promises "fascinating beauty" to users of its product.

The Creoles of Louisiana are of the purest French and Spanish blood and their charm is the charm of costly France and of Italian Spain. A distinguishing mark of their aristocratic ancestry is their wonderful hair, thick, dark, lustrous and beautiful.

The Wonder of Creole Hair

CREOLE charm has been as much admired in aristocratic European circles as in America. Empress Josephine, wife of Napoleon, was a Creole. Queen Hortense of Holland and Prince Eugene, Viceroy of Italy, were Creoles. The glorious Creole hair has always been especially admired. The hair is a special pride and care of the Creoles and for generations La Creole Hair Dressing has been favorite among them. It preserves the youthful color and beauty of the hair even through advanced years.

La Creole Ends Gray Hair

La Creole not alone prevents gray hair. La Creole treatment will bring back to its youthful color and beauty, hair that has become gray, gray-streaked, or faded. La Creole contains no dyes. It promotes the youthfully vigorous healthy condition of hair and scalp which nature intended. Its effect on the hair is gradual but certain. Two to five weeks treatment is required to bring back any shade—lightest brown to deepest black—whatever the natural color was. After that an occasional application will preserve the vigorous healthy color permanently.

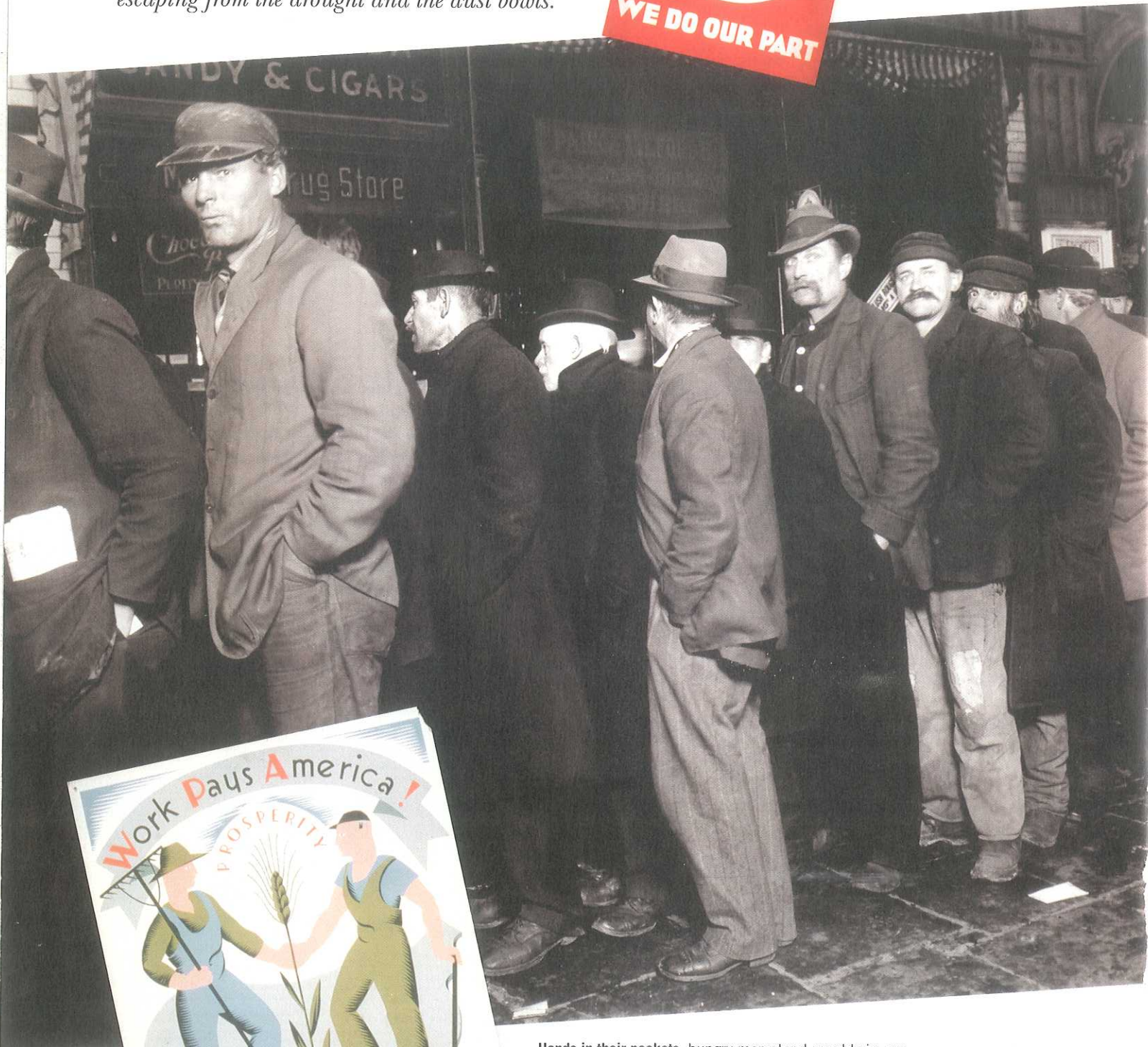
Good taste and good breeding approve the use of La Creole and there is no reason for making any secret of its use, though it can never be detected. La Creole must not be confused with dyes—it can not give color to hair and there is nothing to stain the scalp or to wash or rub off. It makes old hair soft, wavy, lustrous and beautiful. Eliminates dandruff. Absolutely guaranteed to bring back the hair's color or money refunded. Send coupon for booklet "La Creole—Hair Beautiful." Shows style of hair-dressing best suited to each type of face.

At Drug Stores and Toilet Counters, Price \$1.00
If your Dealer can't supply you, send his name and address.
We will see that you are supplied.

VAN VLEET-MANSFIELD LABORATORIES
132 Tenth Street, Memphis, Tenn.

Van Vleet-Mansfield Laboratories
132 Tenth St., Memphis, Tenn.
Please send booklet "La Creole—Hair Beautiful," showing the hair styles best becoming to each individual.
Name
Address
City State

I remembered seeing the people passing on their way to California . . . It hurt me to see the people in their rickety old cars, their clothes in tatters, escaping from the drought and the dust bowls.



Hands in their pockets, hungry men stand numbly in one of New York City's breadlines. Said one observer: "The wretched men, many without overcoats or decent shoes, usually began to line up soon after six o'clock—in good weather or bad, rain or snow."