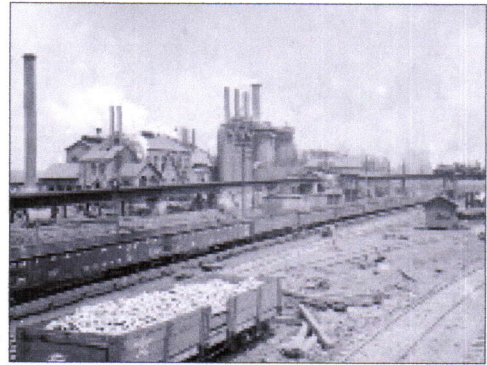


THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION IN THE UNITED STATES

The Industrial Revolution took place over more than a century, as production of goods moved from home businesses, where products were generally crafted by hand, to machine-aided production in factories. This revolution, which involved major changes in transportation, manufacturing, and communications, transformed the daily lives of Americans as much as—and arguably more than—any single event in U.S. history.



Illinois Steel Works, Joliet
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/det1994004559/PP/>

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

An early landmark moment in the Industrial Revolution came near the end of the eighteenth century, when Samuel Slater brought new manufacturing technologies from Britain to the United States and founded the first U.S. cotton mill in Beverly, Massachusetts. Slater's mill, like many of the mills and factories that sprang up in the next few decades, was powered by water, which confined industrial development to the northeast at first. The concentration of industry in the Northeast also facilitated the development of transportation systems such as railroads and canals, which encouraged commerce and trade.

The technological innovation that would come to mark the United States in the nineteenth century began to show itself with Robert Fulton's establishment of steamboat service on the Hudson River, Samuel F. B. Morse's invention of the telegraph,

and Elias Howe's invention of the sewing machine, all before the Civil War. Following the Civil War, industrialization in the United States increased at a breakneck pace. This period, encompassing most of the second half of the nineteenth century, has been called the Second Industrial Revolution or the American Industrial Revolution. Over the first half of the century, the country expanded greatly, and the new territory was rich in natural resources. Completing the first transcontinental railroad in 1869 was a major milestone, making it easier to transport people, raw materials, and products. The United States also had vast human resources: between 1860 and 1900, fourteen million immigrants came to the country, providing workers for an array of industries.

The American industrialists overseeing this expansion were ready to take risks to make their

businesses successful. Andrew Carnegie established the first steel mills in the U.S. to use the British "Bessemer process" for mass producing steel, becoming a titan of the steel industry in the process. He acquired business interests in the mines that produced the raw material for steel, the mills and ovens that created the final product and the railroads and shipping lines that transported the goods, thus controlling every aspect of the steel-making process.



John D. Rockefeller, Jr
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/94511569/>

Other industrialists, including John D. Rockefeller, merged the operations of many large companies to form a trust. Rockefeller's Standard Oil Trust came to monopolize 90% of the industry, severely limiting competition. These monopolies were often accused of intimidating smaller businesses and competitors in order to maintain high prices and profits. Economic influence gave these industrial magnates significant political clout as well. The U.S. government adopted policies that supported industrial development such as providing land for the construction of railroads and maintaining high tariffs to protect American industry from foreign competition.

American inventors like Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas Alva Edison created a long list of new technologies that improved communication, transportation, and industrial production. Edison made improvements to existing technologies, including the telegraph while also creating revolutionary new technologies such as the light bulb, the phonograph, the kinetograph, and the electric dynamo. Bell, meanwhile, explored new speaking and hearing technologies, and became known as the inventor of the telephone.

For millions of working Americans, the industrial revolution changed the very nature of their daily work.. Previously, they might have worked for themselves at home, in a small shop, or outdoors, crafting raw materials into products, or growing a crop from seed to table. When they took factory jobs, they were working for a large company. The repetitive work often involved only one small step in the manufacturing process, so the worker did not see or appreciate what was being made; the work was often dangerous and performed in unsanitary conditions. Some women entered the work force, as did many children. Child labor became a major issue.

Dangerous working conditions, long hours, and concern over wages and child labor contributed to the growth of labor unions. In the decades after the Civil War, workers organized strikes and work stoppages that helped to publicize their problems. One especially significant labor upheaval was the Great Railroad Strike of 1877. Wage cuts in the railroad industry led to the strike, which began in West Virginia and spread to three additional states over a period of 45 days before being violently ended by a combination of vigilantes, National Guardsmen, and federal troops. Similar episodes occurred more frequently in the following decades as workers organized and asserted themselves against perceived injustices.

The new jobs for the working class were in the cities. Thus, the Industrial Revolution began the transition of the United States from a rural to an urban society. Young people raised on farms saw greater opportunities in the cities and moved there, as did millions of immigrants from Europe. Providing housing for all the new residents of cities was a problem, and many workers found themselves living in urban slums; open sewers ran alongside the streets, and the water supply was often tainted, causing disease. These deplorable urban conditions gave rise to the Progressive Movement in the early twentieth century; the result would be many new laws to protect and support people, eventually changing the relationship between government and the people.