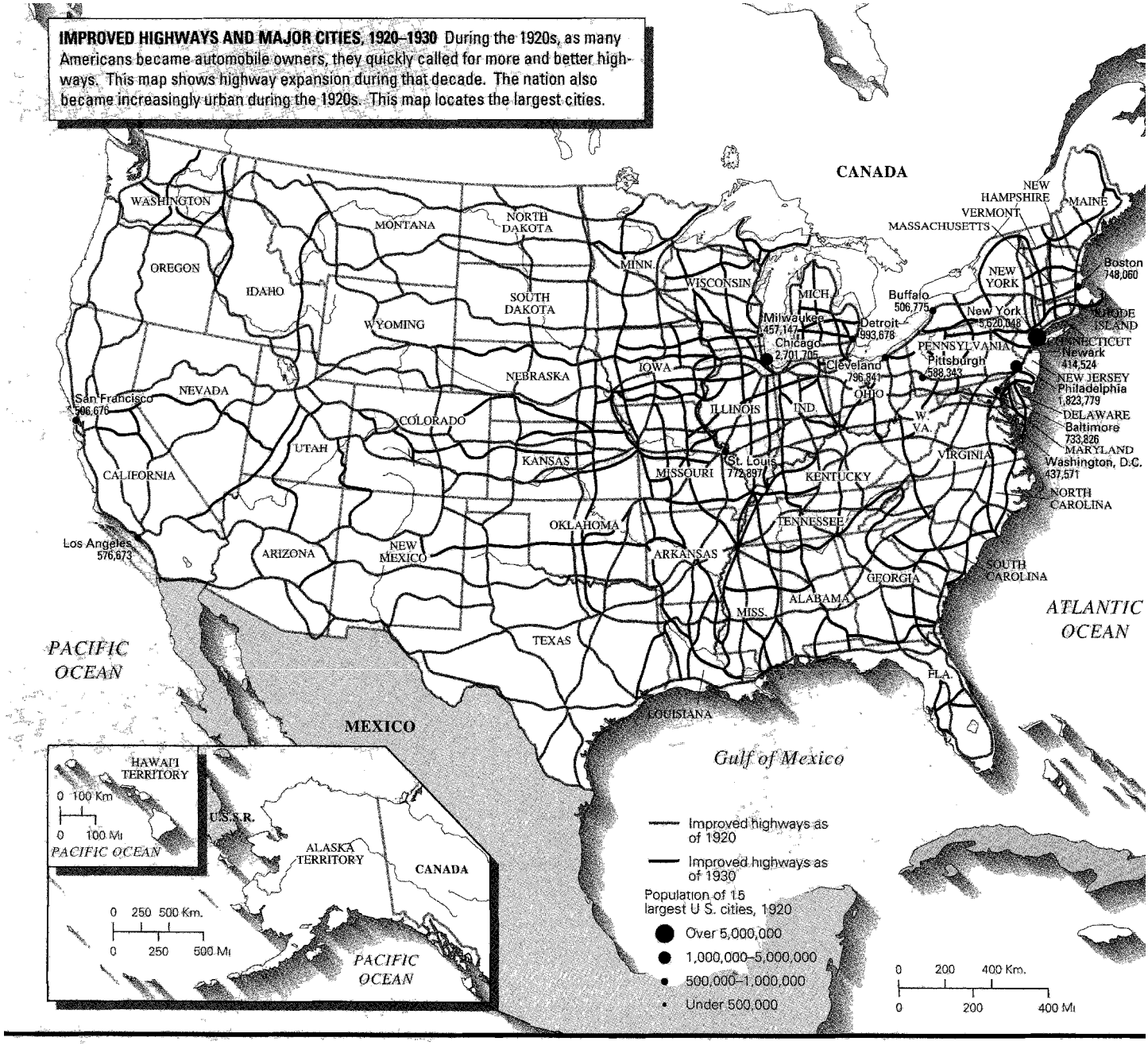
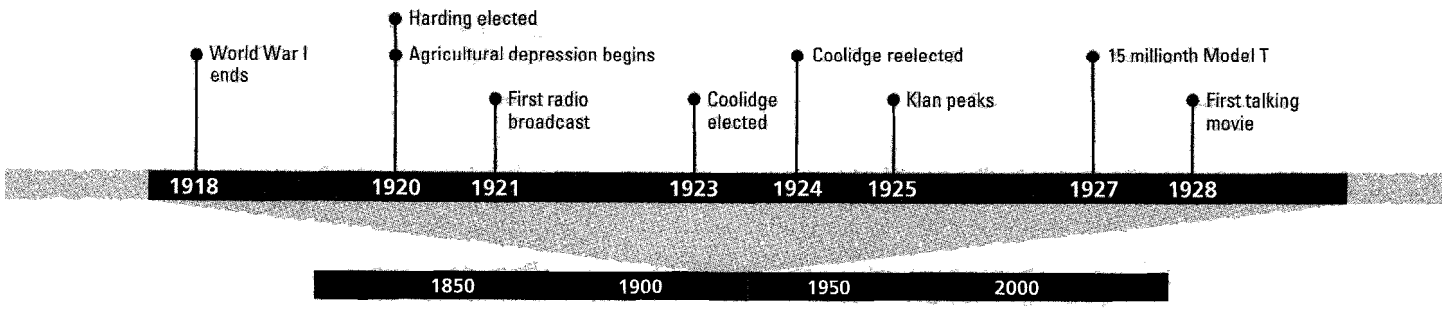
IMPROVED HIGHWAYS AND MAJOR CITIES, 1920–1930 During the 1920s, as many Americans became automobile owners, they quickly called for more and better highways. This map shows highway expansion during that decade. The nation also became increasingly urban during the 1920s. This map locates the largest cities.





CHAPTER 23

The 1920s, 1920-1928

The Prosperity Decade

•What new economic choices opened for consumers during the 1920s? What new choices opened for business?

•What constraints did farmers face?

The "Roaring Twenties"

•What new expectations and choices shaped American society in the 1920s?

- How did they reflect or contribute to the important social changes of the period?

Traditional America Roars Back

- How did some Americans try to restore traditional social expectations and values during the 1920s?

•What were the outcomes of their choices?

Race, Class, and Gender in the 1920s

- During the 1920s, what expectations and constraints influenced choices faced by American Indians, Mexicans, working people, women, and homosexuals?

•What were the outcomes of their choices?

The Politics of Prosperity

•What were the expectations of the Republican administrations of the 1920s?

•What were their resulting policy choices?

(INTRODUCTION)

Called the "Jazz Age" and the "Roaring Twenties," the decade of the 1920s sometimes seems to be a swirl of conflicting images. Prohibition attempted to control Americans' drinking habits at the same time the flapper was flaunting the liberation of women from previous *constraints.* The booming stock market promised prosperity to all with money to invest at the same time that thousands of farmers were abandoning the land because they could not survive financially. Business leaders celebrated the expansion of the economy at the same time many wage earners in manufacturing endured the destruction of their unions and their legal protections. White-sheeted armies of the Ku Klux Klan marched as self-proclaimed defenders of Protestant American values and white supremacy at the same time African Americans were creating impressive art, literature, and music. The values of big business reigned supreme in politics at the same time the economy was lurching toward a collapse that few anticipated.

In the 1920s, business turned as never before to focus on the consumer. Americans suddenly found themselves facing a range of consumer *choices* beyond all previous *expectations,* as they were deluged with new products such as automobiles, radios, and electric household appliances of every description. Americans began to purchase on credit as installment-plan buying swept the nation, shattering old *constraints* about paying cash and avoiding debt. By the mid-1920s, it seemed as though much of the nation had *chosen* to borrow money and go on an extended buying binge.

Not everyone shared in the *expectations* bred by the consumer culture of postwar America. The poorest farmers and wage earners were *constrained* from doing so by their economic situations. Some others *chose* not to. Disillusioned with the "war to end war" and scornful of the widespread infatuation with consumer buying, many intellectuals became alienated from American culture. Some *chose* to move to Europe to escape what they saw as the emptiness of American life. For them, modern America had become a spiritual and cultural wasteland.

Expectations
Constraints
Choices
Outcomes

Few other Americans shared the gloom of such intellectuals. For most, the 1920s were a time of glittering *expectations.* Many revealed an unfettered optimism as they picked out their new radio or signed papers to buy a new automobile on the installment plan. For them, the immediate *outcome—new* car, new radio, new styles—seemed to fulfill the rosy *expectations* bred by advertising.

This optimism fed into an expansive popular culture that seemed to reflect a nationwide "age of excess." Radio and movies popularized nationwide tastes, trends, and "heroes" as never before. Led primarily by youths of white, middle-class background, many young people *chose* to flaunt behavior that defied the values of their parents' generation.

Like the shiny new roadsters that filled the advertising in popular magazines, the economy roared along at high speed, fueled by easy credit and consumer spending, virtually unregulated. It carried most Americans with it—until the economic engine sputtered and seemed to die in 1929.

America in the 1920s

1908 Ford introduces Model T
General Motors formed

1914 Universal Negro Improvement Association founded
War breaks out in Europe

1915 Ku Klux Klan revived

1917 United States enters World War I

1918 World War I ends

1920 Eighteenth Amendment (Prohibition) takes effect
Nineteenth Amendment grants women the vote
Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*
Harding elected president

1920-1921 Nationwide recession
Agricultural depression begins

1921 Temporary immigration quotas First commercial radio broadcasts Bad breath sells Listerine
Farm Bloc formed

1922 Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt*
T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*

1923 Harding dies; Coolidge becomes president
Marcus Garvey convicted of mail fraud
Jean Turner's *Cane*
American Indian Defense Association formed

1923-1925 Harding administration scandals revealed

1924 National Origins Act
Coolidge elected president
Wheaties marketed as "Breakfast of Champions"
Crossword puzzle fad
Full citizenship for American Indians

1925 Scopes trial
F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*
Ku Klux Klan claims 5 million members Klan leader convicted of murder
One automobile for every three residents in Los Angeles
Chrysler Corporation formed

1926 Railway Labor Act
Florida real-estate boom collapses
Ernest H e m in gway's *The Sun Also Rises*

1927 Coolidge vetoes McNary-Haugen bill
Charles Lindbergh's transatlantic flight
15 millionth Model T sold
Duke Ellington conducts jazz at Cotton Club

1928 Coolidge vetoes McNary-Haugen again
Confederacion de Uniones Obreras Mexicanas formed
Ford introduces Model A

1931 Frederick Lewis Allen's *Only Yesterday*
Al Capone convicted and imprisoned

The Prosperity Decade

After World War I ended in 1918, the economy completed an important shift toward consumer goods. Previously, U.S. manufacturing efforts had been dominated by railroads, steel, and heavy-equipment manufacturing, few of which made products for sale to the average consumer. During the 1920s, though, the rise of the automobile industry dramatized the new prominence of **consumer-goods** industries.

The Economics of Prosperity

The 1920s was a prosperous decade for most Americans. Although the economy experienced a sharp recession in 1920-1921, it quickly rebounded. By 1923, unemployment had fallen to 2 percent and remained under 5 percent for the rest of the decade. Manufacturing workers saw their average weekly paycheck grow from $21 in 1922 to $25 in 1929 (see Figure 23.1). Increased productivity meant that prices for most manufactured goods remained stable or even went down. Declining prices for agricultural products brought lower food and clothing prices. Thus many Americans seemed better off by 1929 than in 1920: they earned about the same, and they paid somewhat less for necessities.

Advertisers encouraged Americans to spend their money on more than just necessities. In 1931, journalist Frederick Lewis Allen noted in *Only Yesterday*, a perceptive history of the 1920s, that "business had learned as never before the immense importance to it of the ultimate consumer." Persuading Americans to consume an array of products became crucial to keeping the economy healthy.

The marketing of Listerine demonstrates the rising importance of advertising. Listerine had been devised as a general antiseptic, but in 1921 Gerard Lambert devised a more persuasive approach. Through aggressive advertising, he fostered anxieties about the impact of bad breath on popularity and made millions by selling Listerine to combat the offensive condition. In 1924, General Mills first advertised Wheaties as the "Breakfast of Champions," thereby tying the consumption of cold cereal to success in sports. Americans responded by buying those products and others with similarly creative pitches. "We grew up founding our dreams on the infinite promises of American advertising," wrote Zelda Fitzgerald, wife of F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Changes in fashion also encouraged increased consumption. The popularity of short hairstyles for women, for example, led to the development of hair salons. Cigarette advertisers began to target women. The American Tobacco Company advised women to "Reach for a Lucky instead of a sweet" to attain a slim figure. Technological advances also contributed to the growth of consumer-oriented manufacturing. In 1920, about one-third of all residences had electricity. By 1929, electrical power had reached most urban homes. Advertisers began to stress the time and labor that housewives could save by using vacuum cleaners, washing machines, irons, and toasters. Between 1919 and 1929, consumer expenditures for household appliances grew by more than 120 percent.

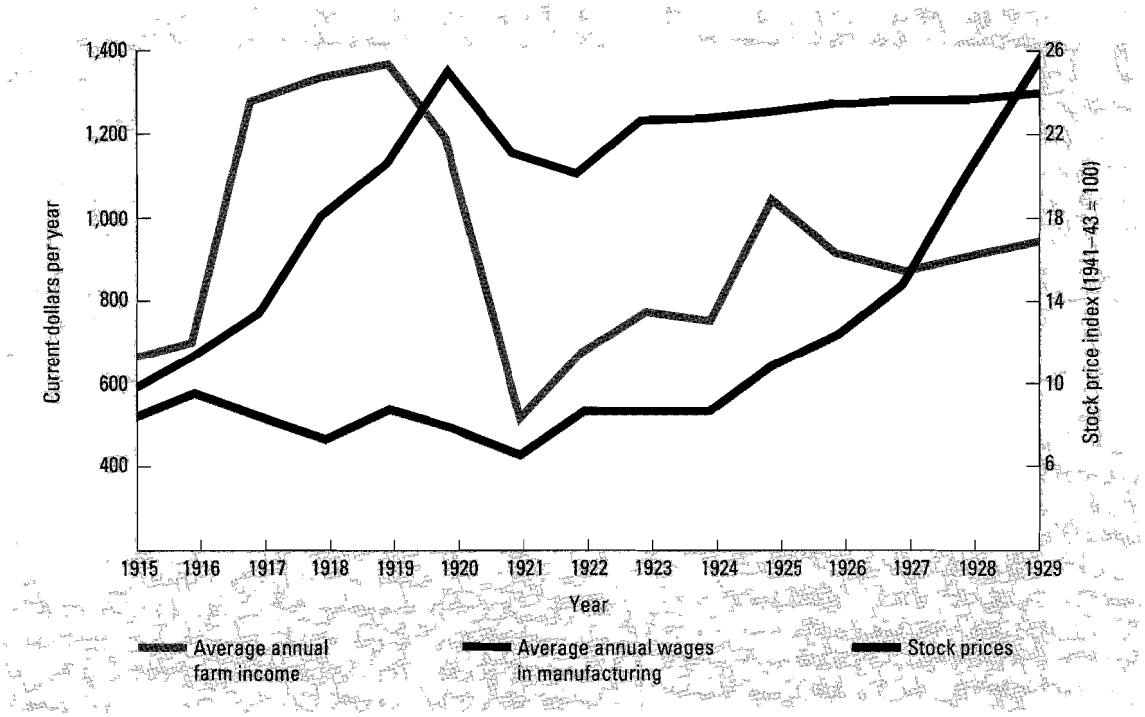
This increased consumption contributed to a change in people's spending habits. Before the war, most urban families paid cash for what they bought. But many consumers in the 1920s listened to the advice of retailers: "Buy now, pay later." By the late 1920s, about 15 percent of all retail purchases came through the installment plan. Charge accounts in department stores also became popular.

The Automobile: Driving the Economy

The automobile more than any other single product epitomized the consumer-oriented economy of the 1920s. Automobiles remained a luxury item until Henry Ford developed a mass-production system that drove down costs. Other companies jostled with Ford for the patronage of American car buyers. By the late 1920s, America's roadways sported nearly one automobile for every five people.

consumer goods Products such as food and clothing that directly satisfy human wants.

Henry Ford Inventor and manufacturer who founded the Ford Motor Company in 1903 and pioneered mass production in the auto industry.



♦ **FIGURE 23.1 Economic Indicators, 1915-1929** This figure presents three measures of economic activity for the period covering World War I and the 1920s. Farm income and wages should be read on the left-hand scale; stock prices should be read on the right-hand scale. *Note:* Incomes are in current dollars, not adjusted for changes in purchasing power. *Source:* U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970,* Bicentennial Edition, 2 vols. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), 1: 483, 170; II: 1004.

Ford built his success on the **Model T,** introduced in 1908. By 1927, Ford had produced more than 15 million of them, dominating the market by selling at the lowest possible prices. "Get the prices down to the buying power," Ford ordered. His dictatorial management, technological advances, and high worker productivity brought the price of a new Model T as low as $290 by 1927. Cheap to buy and maintain, the Model T made Henry Ford into a wealthy folk hero.

Competition helped keep prices low for middle-class automobile purchasers. General Motors (GM), established in 1908, and Chrysler Corporation, founded in 1925, adopted some of Ford's techniques but also emphasized comfort and style, both missing in the purely functional Model T. Ford finally ended production of the Model T in1927 and introduced the more stylish Model A the next year.

Ford's company also illustrates how efforts to reduce labor costs by improving labor efficiency caused work on Ford's assembly line to become a thoroughly dehumanizing experience. He prohibited his workers from talking, sitting, smoking,

Model T Lightweight automobile produced by Ford from 1908 to 1927 and sold at the lowest possible price, on the theory that an affordable car would be more profitable than an expensive one.

dehumanizing That which deprives of human qualities, such as individuality, by rendering a task mechanical and routine.

singing, or even whistling while working. However, Ford paid his workers more than any of his competitors so that they, too, could afford a Model T.

The automobile industry in the 1920s often led the way in promoting new sales techniques. Installment buying became so widespread that, by 1927, two-thirds of all American automobiles were sold on credit. The introduction of new models every year enticed owners to trade in their cars to keep up with the latest fashions in design, color, and options. Dozens of small automakers closed down when they could not compete with the low prices and yearly models offered by the Big Three. By 1929, Chrysler, Ford, and GM manufactured 83 percent of all the cars in the country.

Business giants like Henry Ford emerged as popular and respected figures in the 1920s. In 1925, in a book titled *The Man Nobody Knows*, Bruce Barton suggested that Jesus Christ could best be understood as a chief executive who "had picked up twelve men from the bottom ranks of business and forged them into an organization that conquered the world." Barton's book led the nonfiction bestseller lists for two years.

"Get Rich Quick": The Speculative Mania

The stock market captured people's fancy in the 1920s as a certain route to riches. Speculation—buying a stock and expecting to make money by selling it at a higher price—ran rampant. Magazine articles proclaimed that everyone could get rich in no time. By 1929, some 4 million Americans, or about 10 percent of American households, owned stock.

Driven partly by real economic growth and partly by speculation, stock prices rose higher and higher. Standard and Poor's index of common stock prices tripled between 1920 and 1929. As long as prices kept going up, it seemed that prosperity would never end.

Although the stock market held the nation's attention as the most popular path to instant riches, other speculative opportunities abounded. One of the most prominent was the Florida land boom. The mania was fed by rapid growth in the population of Florida, especially Miami. People poured into Florida, attracted by the climate, the beaches, and the ease of travel from the chilly Northeast. Speculators began to buy almost any land amid slick predictions that it would boom in value. Stories of land that had increased in value by 1,500 percent over ten years circulated. Like stocks, land was bought on credit with the intention of reselling it at a quick profit. The boom began to falter early in 1926, however, as the population influx slowed, and collapsed later that year when a hurricane slammed into Miami. By 1927, many speculators faced bankruptcy.

Agriculture: Depression in the Midst of Prosperity

Prosperity never extended to agriculture. Farmers never recovered from the postwar recession and struggled to survive financially throughout the 1920s. Many had expanded their operations during the war in response to government demands for more food. After the war, as European farmers resumed production, the glut of agricultural goods on world markets caused prices to fall. Exports of farm products tumbled by half within a few years of the end of the war.

Prices fell as a consequence of this overproduc**tion.** When adjusted for inflation, corn and wheat prices never rebounded to their prewar levels. The average farm's net income for the years 1917 to 1920 had ranged between $1,196 and $1,395 per year. This fell to a dreadful $517 in 1921, then slowly began to rise. But farm prices did not reach 1917 levels until World War II.

Throughout the 1920s, farmers pressed the government for help. In 1921, the bipartisan congressional Farm Bloc formed to promote legislation to assist farmers. Congress passed a few assistance measures in the early 1920s, but none addressed the central problems of overproduction and low prices. In the mid-1920s, proposals to tackle these

overproduction Production that exceeds consumer need or demand.

Farm **Bloc** Bipartisan group of senators and representatives formed in 1921 to promote legislation to assist farmers.

two key issues invariably met with presidential vetoes. The average farmer saw the value of his land fall by more than half between 1920 and 1928. Hundreds of thousands of people left farms each year in the 1920s. The prosperity decade did not include rural America.

The "Roaring Twenties"

"The world broke in two in 1922 or thereabouts," wrote novelist Willa Cather. She disliked much that came after. F. Scott Fitzgerald, another novelist, agreed with the date but embraced the change. He thought 1922 initiated an "age of miracles" and an "age of art." For most Americans, evidence of sudden and dramatic social change was on all sides, from automobiles, radios, and movies to a new youth culture and an impressive cultural outpouring by African Americans.

The Automobile and American Life

During the 1920s, the automobile profoundly changed American patterns of living. Highways significantly shortened the travel time from cities to rural areas, thereby reducing the isolation of farm life. One farm woman, when asked why her family had an automobile but not indoor plumbing, responded, "Why, you can't go to town in a bathtub." Trucks allowed farmers to take more products to market more quickly and conveniently than ever before. The spread of gasoline-powered farm vehicles also reduced the need for human farm labor and so stimulated migration to urban areas.

If the automobile changed rural life, it had an even more profound impact on life in the cities. Cities continued to grow. The 1920 census recorded more Americans living in urban areas than in rural ones for the first time. The automobile freed suburban developments from their dependence on commuter rail lines. Suburbs mushroomed, sprouting single-family houses. From 1922 through 1928, construction began on an average of 883,000 new homes each year. New home construction rivaled the auto as a driving force behind economic growth.

A look at Los Angeles shows the automobile's pervasive impact on urban life. From 1920 to 1930 the population of Los Angeles County more than doubled, from fewer than 1 million to 2.2 million. Los Angeles became the first large city organized around the auto. By 1925, Los Angeles counted one automobile for every three residents, twice the national average. The auto made it possible for residents to live farther from work than ever before. In the 1920s, Los Angeles developed the lowest urban population density in the United States. By 1930, about 94 percent of all residences in Los Angeles were single-family homes, an unprecedented figure. The first modern supermarket appeared in Los Angeles. So did the first large shopping district designed for the automobile. Los Angeles set the precedent for organizing life around the automobile.

By the late 1920s, the automobile had also begun to demonstrate its ability to strangle urban traffic. Detroit introduced the first traffic lights in 1920. Although they spread rapidly to other large cities, traffic congestion worsened. By 1926, cars in Manhattan's rush hour crawled along at less than three miles an hour—slower than a person could walk.

A Homogenized Culture

Searches for Heroes

As the automobile cut travel times, restrictive immigration laws were closing the door to immigrants. These factors, together with the new technologies of radio and film, began to **homogenize** the culture by breaking down cultural differences based on region or ethnicity.

In 1921, the first commercial radio broadcasting station opened. Within six years, 681 were operating. By 1930, 40 percent of all households had radio sets. Movie attendance increased rapidly as well, from a weekly average of 40 million people in 1922 to 80 million in 1929. The equivalent of two-thirds of the nation went to the cinema every week. As Americans across the country tuned into the

homogenize To make something uniform throughout.

same radio broadcast and families laughed or wept at the same movie, radio and film did their part in homogenizing American life, particularly in urban areas.

Radio and film joined newspapers and magazines in prompting national trends, fashions, and fads. In 1923, the opening of the fabulous tomb of the Egyptian pharaoh Tutankhamen led to a passion for things Egyptian. Crossword puzzles captured the attention of many Americans in 1924. Such fads, in turn, created markets for new consumer goods, from Egyptian-style furniture to crossword dictionaries.

The media also contributed to the development of national sports heroes. By the 1920s, as Frederick Lewis Allen observed, sports "had become an American obsession." Radio now began to broadcast baseball games nationwide. Boxing and college football vied with baseball for spectators' dollars. Most Americans were familiar with the exploits of such baseball greats as Lou Gehrig, Ty Cobb, and Babe Ruth, as well as boxers like Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney and golfers like Bobby Jones.

The rapid spread of movie theaters created a new category of fame: the movie star. Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd, and others brought laughter to the screen. Tom Mix was the best-known cowboy of the silver screen. Sex made stars of Theda Bara, the vamp, and Clara Bow, the "It Girl," whose publicists not only said she had "it" but also insisted that no one had to ask what "it" was. Rudolph Valentino soared to fame as a male sex symbol in *The Sheik.* Several women committed suicide after Valentino's death in 1926. "Valentino had silently acted out the fantasies of women all over the world," claimed screen star Bette Davis.

The greatest popular hero of the 1920s, however, was neither an athlete nor an actor but a small-town airmail pilot named Charles Lindbergh. In 1927, Lindbergh decided to collect the prize of $25,000 offered to the pilot of the first successful nonstop flight between New York and Paris. Flying *The Spirit of St. Louis* for 33% sleepless hours, Lindbergh earned the $25,000 and the adoration of crowds on both sides of the Atlantic. His accomplishment seemed to proclaim that old-fashioned individualism, courage, and self-reliance could still triumph over adversity.

Alienated Intellectuals

Other Americans went to Paris in the 1920s, but for a different reason. They left to escape what they considered America's dull conventionalism and dangerous materialism. Whether they left for Paris or not, many American writers bemoaned what they saw as the shallowness, greed, and homogenization of American life. Sinclair Lewis in *Main Street* (1920) and *Babbitt* (1922) presented small-town, middle-class existence as not just boring but stifling. The title character, George F. Babbitt, is Lewis's version of a typical, narrow-minded suburban businessman who speaks in clichés and buys every gadget on the market. H. L. Mencken, the influential editor of the *American Mercury*, relentlessly pilloried the "booboisie," jeered at all politicians, and celebrated only those writers who shared his distaste for most of American life.

Other writers also rejected traditional values in their disillusionment with postwar society and search for self. Edna St. Vincent Millay captured the spirit of rebellion and pleasure seeking in 1920:

My *candle burns at both ends;*
It will not last the night;
But alt, my foes, and oh, my friends—It
gives a lovely light!

F. Scott Fitzgerald, in *The Great Gatsby* (1925), revealed the dark side of the hedonism of the 1920s, as he portrayed the pointless lives of wealthy pleasure seekers. Ernest Hemingway, in *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), depicted jaded and disillusioned

vamp A woman who uses her sexuality to entrap and exploit men.

Charles Lindbergh American aviator who made the first solo transatlantic flight in 1927 and became an international hero.

Sinclair Lewis Novelist who satirized middle-class America in works such as *Babbitt* (1922) and who became the first American to win a Nobel Prize for literature.

H. L. Mencken Editor and critic who founded the *American Mercury* and who wrote essays of scathing social criticism.

F. Scott Fitzgerald Fiction writer who captured the Jazz Age in novels such as *The Great Gatsby* (1925).

expatriates who go to Spain to see the bullfights in an effort to introduce some excitement into their lives. The novel's dominant tone is one of frustration, futility, and suffering.

Others took the theme of hopelessness even further. **T. S. Eliot,** a poet who had fled America for England in 1915, published *The Waste Land* in 1922, in which he presented a grim view of the barrenness of modern life, where a search for meaning yielded "the empty chapel, only the wind's home." Some writers predicted the end of Western civilization. Joseph Wood Krutch in 1929 concluded that modern civilization was so decadent that it could not rejuvenate itself and would be overthrown by barbarians.

Renaissance Among African Americans

Krutch's fear of the imminent end of Western civilization was limited largely to white intellectuals. Such views were little reflected in the striking outpouring of literature, music, and art by African Americans in the 1920s.

Harlem, a predominantly black neighborhood in New York City, quickly became a symbol of the new, urban life of African Americans. The term **Harlem** Renaissance describes a literary and artistic movement in which black artists and writers insisted on the value of black culture and used African and African-American traditions in literature, painting, and sculpture. Pointing to this renaissance in 1925, the black writer Alain Locke argued that African Americans were "achieving something like a spiritual emancipation" and that henceforth the nation "must reckon with a fundamentally changed Negro." Black actors, notably Paul Robeson (see page 612), began to appear in serious theaters and earn acclaim for their abilities.

Among the movement's poets, **Langston Hughes** became the best known. His poetry rang with the voice of the people, as he sometimes used folk language to convey powerful images (see Individual Choices: Langston Hughes). Zora Neale Hurston began her long writing career with several short stories in the 1920s. Jean Toomer's novel *Cane* (1923) has been praised as "the most impressive product of the Negro Renaissance." In it, Toomer combined poetry and prose to produce sketches and short stories dealing with African Americans in rural Georgia and Washington, D.C.

The Renaissance included jazz, which was becoming a central element in distinctly American music. Created and nurtured by African-American musicians in southern cities, especially New Orleans, jazz had been introduced to northern and white audiences by World War I. It became so popular that the 1920s have *been* called the Jazz Age. Jazz also began to influence leading white composers, notably George Gershwin, whose *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924) brought jazz into the symphony halls. Some attacked the new sound, claiming it encouraged people to abandon their self-restraint, especially with regard to sex. Despite such condemnation, the wail of the saxophone became an integral part of the 1920s.

Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong emerged as the leading jazz trumpeter. Bessie Smith, the "Empress of the Blues," was the outstanding vocalist of the decade. The great black jazz musicians drew white audiences into black neighborhoods to hear them. As increasing numbers of whites went "slumming" to Harlem, the area came to be associated with exotic nightlife and glittering jazz clubs such as the Cotton Club. Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington went there in 1927 and began to develop the works that made him a respected composer.

expatriate A person who has taken up residence in a foreign country or renounced his or her native land.

T. **S. Eliot** American poet who settled in England and whose long poem *The Waste Land* (1922) chronicles the barrenness of modern life.

Harlem Renaissance Literary and artistic movement in the 1920s centered in Harlem, in which black writers and artists described and celebrated African-American life.

Langston Hughes Poet of the Harlem Renaissance whose work, inspired by the rhythms of jazz and the blues, dealt with the joys and sorrows of African Americans.

jazz Style of music developed in America in the early twentieth century, characterized by strong, flexible rhythms and improvisation on basic melodies.

Choosing to Live in Harlem

Langston Hughes

Langston Hughes, an acclaimed author, chose to celebrate black people in his writing and to develop opportunities for other black artists to cultivate their creativity. This portrait by Winold Reiss was made in 1925, when Hughes, in his early twenties, was already a significant figure in the Harlem Renaissance. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution/Art Resource, NY.

In the late 1940s, Langston Hughes bought a house on East 127th Street in central Harlem. He could have afforded a house in a wealthy suburb if he had wished, but he chose Harlem. It symbolized other choices he had made throughout his writing career, for he chose to write for and about African Americans.

Born in Joplin, Missouri, in 1902, he lived for a time with his grandmother Mary Langston, from whom he learned lessons in social justice. He began to write poetry in high school, briefly attended college, then chose to work and travel in Africa and Europe. He continued writing poetry, some of which won prizes from African-American journals.

Hughes had become a significant figure in the Harlem Renaissance by 1925, sometimes reading his poetry to the musical accompaniment of jazz or the blues. Some of his work then presented images from black history, like "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" (1921). Other works, like "Song for a Dark Girl" (1927), vividly depicted the constraints of racism.

Way Down South in Dixie
(Break the heart of me)
They hung my black young lover To a cross roads tree.

The sparkle of the Cotton Club was remote from the experience of most African Americans. But one Harlem leader affected black people throughout the country and beyond. Marcus Garvey, born in Jamaica, advocated a form of black separatism. His organization, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), founded in 1914,

Marcus Garvey Jamaican black nationalist active in America in the 1920s.

black separatism Doctrine of cultural separation of blacks from white society.

Way Down South in Dixie
(Bruised body high in air)
I asked the white Lord Jesus
What was the use of prayer.

Way Down South in Dixie
(Break the heart of me) Love
is a naked shadow
On a gnarled and naked tree.

Other poems looked to the future with an expectation for change and for new choices, as in "I, Too" (1925).

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker
brother. They send me

To eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow
I'll sit at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.
Besides
They'll see
How beautiful I am
And be ashamed.

I, too, am America.

In the early 1930s, as the Harlem Renaissance waned and the Depression deepened, Hughes, like other American intellectuals, turned to socialism. He traveled again and began writing short stories and plays. Few theaters at that time would stage works by or about African Americans, and few hired African-American actors. Hughes, therefore, chose to use his prestige and his time to create black theater companies in Harlem, Los Angeles, and Chicago.

Hughes's writings poured forth in a near-torrential stream. By the end of his life, in 1967, he had produced ten volumes of poetry; sixty-six short stories; some twenty plays, musicals, and operas; two autobiographical volumes; more than a hundred published essays, both serious and humorous; and several novels, histories, and children's books. The outcome of Hughes's devotion to writing and his choice to focus on the African-American experience was that he established a prominent place for himself among American authors of his time. Also, and perhaps more significant, he helped define the Harlem Renaissance, and he greatly encouraged the development of African-American poetry, fiction, drama, and other writing.

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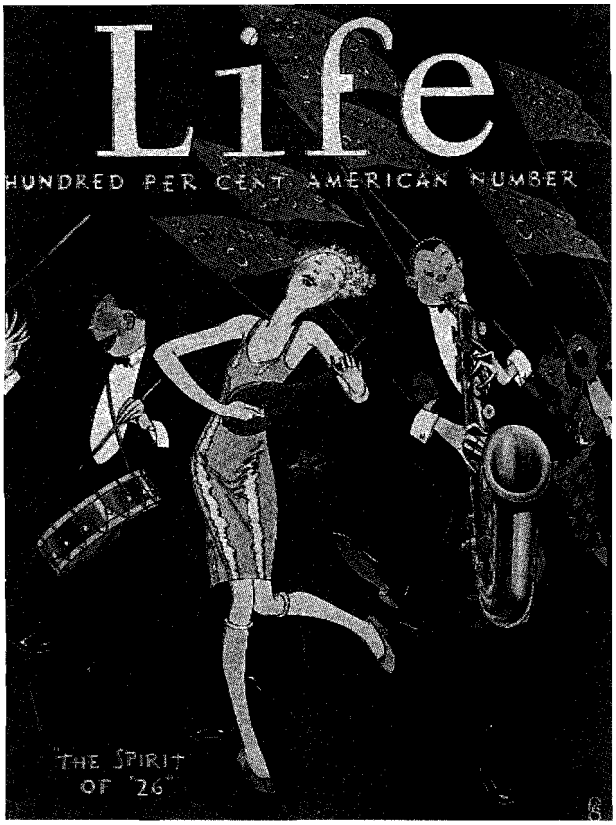
stressed racial pride and solidarity across national boundaries. Garvey argued that whites would always be racist. Therefore blacks from around the world needed to assist Africans in overthrowing colonial rule and building a strong African state. Garvey established a steamship company, the Black Star Line, which he hoped would carry

Black Star Line Steamship company founded by Marcus Garvey to carry blacks to Africa; Garvey was convicted of mail fraud in connection with its finances and imprisoned in 1923.



♦ On the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, *Life* presented this cover parodying the famous painting *The Spirit of '76* by depicting *"The Spirit of '26* "—an uninhibited flapper, a jazz saxophonist and drummer, and banners with the snappy sayings of the day. The caption reads, "One Hundred and Forty-three Years of LIBERTY and Seven Years of PROHIBITION." *Harvard College Library.*

American blacks to Africa. UNIA attracted wide support among urban blacks in the United States.

Black integrationist leaders, however, condemned UNIA for its separatism. The NAACP, especially W. E. B. Du Bois, took the lead in opposing Garvey, arguing that the first task facing blacks was integration and equality in the United States. Garvey and Du Bois called each other traitors.

Federal officials eventually charged Garvey with irregularities in his fundraising for the Black Star Line, and he was convicted of mail fraud in 1923. He spent two years in jail and then was deported to his native Jamaica. Garvey continued to lead UNIA in exile, but most of the local organizations lost members and influence.

"Flaming Youth"

Although African Americans created jazz, those who danced to it, in the popular imagination of the 1920s, were white: a male college student, clad in a swank raccoon-skin coat with a hip flask of illegal liquor in his pocket, and his female counterpart, the uninhibited flapper with bobbed hair and a daringly short skirt. This stereotype of "flaming youth" reflected startling changes among many white, college-age youths of middle- or upper-class background.

The prosperity of the 1920s allowed many middle-class families to send their children to college. The proportion of the population ages 18 to 24 enrolled in college more than doubled between World War I and 1930. On campus, students reshaped colleges into youth centers, where football games and dances assumed as much significance as examinations and term papers.

For some college women, the changes of the 1920s seemed particularly dramatic. Young women scandalized their elders by wearing skirts that stopped at the knee, stockings rolled below the knee, short hair often dyed black, and generous amounts of rouge and lipstick. Many observers assumed that the outrageous look reflected outrageous behavior. In fact, women's sexual activity outside marriage had begun to increase before the war, especially among working-class women and radicals. In the 1920s, such changes began to affect middle-class college and high school students. About half of the women who came of age during the 1920s had intercourse before marriage, a marked increase from prewar patterns.

flapper Name given in the 1920s to a young woman with short hair and short skirts, who discarded old-fashioned standards of dress and behavior.

Such changes in behavior were often linked to the automobile. It brought greater freedom to young people, for they could go where they wanted. Sometimes they went to a **speakeasy.** Before Prohibition, few women who valued their reputations entered saloons. Prohibition, however, seemed to glamorize drinking. Now men and women went to speakeasies to drink and smoke together, and to dance to popular music derived from jazz. While some adults criticized the frivolities of the young, others emulated them.

Traditional America Roars Back

Many Americans felt threatened by the upheaval in social values that originated in the cities. Although their efforts to stop the tide of changes that threatened their way of life dated to the prewar era, several movements to preserve traditional values came to fruition in the 1920s.

Prohibition

Prohibition epitomized the cultural struggle to preserve white, old-stock Protestant values and to make immigrants whose values were judged to be quite different conform to "American" standards. Spearheaded by the Anti-Saloon League, prohibition advocates gained strength throughout the Progressive era. They convinced Congress to pass a temporary prohibition measure in 1917 to conserve grain during the war. A more important victory for the "drys" came later that year, when Congress adopted the **Eighteenth Amendment,** prohibiting the manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcoholic beverages. The amendment took effect in January 1920 after three-fourths of the state legislatures ratified it.

Many Americans simply ignored the Eighteenth Amendment from the beginning, and it grew less popular the longer it lasted. By 1926, a poll indicated that only 19 percent of Americans supported Prohibition. Nonetheless, Prohibition remained the law until 1933. Prohibition did reduce drinking and apparently drunkenness. It was most effective among those groups and in those areas that had provided its greatest support. It was never well enforced anywhere, however, and was ignored in most cities. Congress never provided enough money for more than token federal enforcement, and most city police didn't even try because of the immensity of the task. New York State admitted the impossibility of enforcing Prohibition by repealing its enforcement act in 1923.

Prohibition produced unintended consequences. It glamorized drinking. **Bootlegging** flourished. The thirst for alcohol provided criminals with a fresh and lucrative source of income. Al **Capone** and his gang took in more than $60 million from bootlegging in 1927 alone. The scar-faced Capone realized such huge gains in part by systematically eliminating the competition. Gang warfare raged in Chicago throughout the 1920s, producing some five hundred slayings. Despite Capone's undoubted role in murders, bootlegging, and other illegal activities, his extensive political influence kept him immune from local prosecution. Only in 1931 did federal officials finally convict him of income-tax evasion and send him to prison.

The gangs of Chicago had their counterparts elsewhere. Profits from bootlegging not only provided bribes to police and political officials but also led gangsters into gambling, prostitution, and racketeering. Through racketeering, they gained power in some labor unions. Some Americans blamed these developments on Prohibition. For other Americans, however, the gangs, killings, and corruption confirmed their long-standing distrust

speakeasy A place for the illegal sale and consumption of liquor during Prohibition.

Eighteenth Amendment Amendment to the Constitution ratified in 1919 forbidding the manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcoholic beverages.

bootlegging Illegal production, distribution, or sale of liquor.

Al Capone Italian-born American gangster who ruthlessly ruled the Chicago underworld until he was imprisoned for tax evasion in 1931.

racketeering Commission of crimes such as extortion, loansharking, bribery, and obstruction of justice in the course of illegal business activities.

of cities and immigrants, and they clung to the vision of a dry America as the best hope for renewing traditional values.

Fundamentalism and the Crusade Against Evolution

Fundamentalist Protestantism also sought to maintain traditional values. Fundamentalism emerged from a conflict between Christian modernism and orthodoxy. Where modernists tried to reconcile their religious beliefs with modern science, fundamentalists rejected anything incompatible with a literal reading of the Scriptures.

In the early 1920s, some fundamentalists focused on evolution as contrary to the Bible. Fundamentalists saw in evolution not just a challenge to the Bible's account of creation, but also a challenge to religion itself. William Jennings Bryan, the former Democratic presidential candidate, provided fundamentalists with their greatest champion. His energy, eloquence, and enormous following guaranteed that the issue received wide attention.

Bryan played a central role in the **Scopes trial,** the most famous dispute over evolution. In March 1925, the Tennessee legislature made it illegal for any public school teacher to teach evolution. Promised the assistance of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), John T. Scopes, a young biology teacher in Dayton, Tennessee, challenged the law. Bryan volunteered to assist the local prosecutors. He claimed that the only issue was the right of the people to regulate public education in the interest of morality. But defense attorney Clarence Darrow insisted that he was there to prevent "bigots and ignoramuses from controlling the education of the United States."

Toward the end of the trial, Darrow called Bryan to the witness stand as an authority on the Bible. Under Darrow's withering questioning, Bryan revealed that he knew little about findings in archaeology, geology, and linguistics that cast doubt on biblical accounts. He also admitted that he did not always interpret the Bible literally. "Bryan was broken," one reporter wrote. "Darrow never spared him. It was masterful, but it was pitiful." Bryan died a few days later. Scopes was found guilty, but the Tennessee Supreme Court threw out his sen tence on a technicality, preventing appeal. The Tennessee law remained on the books until 1968, although it was not enforced.

Nativism and Immigration Restriction

Since the 1890s, nativists had urged Congress to cut off immigration, but earlier efforts met with either congressional indifference or presidential vetoes. However, the disquieting presence of so many German Americans during World War I, the Red Scare, and the continued influx of poor immigrants from southern and eastern Europe after the war combined in 1921 to convince Congress to approve a temporary act limiting immigration.

The **National Origins** Act of 1924 established permanent restrictions. It limited total immigration to 150,000 people each year and established quotas for each country based on how many Americans came from that country as of 1890. The law thus attempted to freeze the nation's ethnic composition by stopping immigration from southern and eastern Europe. The law completely excluded

fundamentalism An organized, evangelical movement originating in the United States in the early twentieth century in opposition to liberalism and secularism.

orthodoxy Traditional or established doctrine of faith.

evolution The central organizing theorem of the biological sciences, which holds that organisms change over generations, mainly as a result of natural selection; it includes the concept that humans evolved from nonhuman ancestors.

Scopes trial Trial in 1925 in which a high school biology teacher was prosecuted for teaching evolution in violation of Tennessee law; it raised issues concerning the place of religion in American education.

Clarence Darrow Lawyer known for his defense of unpopular causes; his merciless cross-examination of Bryan in the Scopes trial made the argument against evolution look weak.

National Origins Act Law passed in 1924 establishing quotas that discouraged immigration from southern and eastern Europe and encouraged immigration from Scandinavia and western Europe; it also prohibited Asian immigration.

Asians but permitted unrestricted immigration from Canada and Latin America.

Nativism and discrimination flourished throughout the 1920s. In West Frankfort, Illinois, for example, rioting townspeople beat and stoned Italians in 1920 before setting their houses on fire. Nativist-inspired discrimination was more subtle. Exclusive eastern colleges placed quotas on the number of Jews admitted each year. In 1920, Henry Ford, writing in the *Dearborn independent,* began to accuse international Jewish bankers of controlling the American economy. In 1927, Ford was forced to retract his charges and to apologize when he was sued for libel and challenged to prove his charges.

The Ku Klux Klan

Nativism, anti-Catholicism, anti-Semitism, and fear of radicalism all contributed to the spectacular growth of the Ku Klux Klan in the early 1920s. The original Klan, created during Reconstruction to intimidate former slaves, had long since died out. Formed by William Simmons, the new Klan portrayed itself as a patriotic order devoted to America, Protestant Christianity, and white supremacy.

The new Klan grew spectacularly after 1920, when local organizers were offered $4 of every $10 initiation fee. Membership grew from 5,000 in 1920 to as many as 5 million by 1925. The Klan attacked Catholics, Jews, immigrants, and blacks, along with bootleggers, corrupt politicians, and gamblers in the name of old-fashioned Protestant morality. In rural areas, the Klan's terror was sometimes carried out by **nightriders,** who roved country roads to carry out beatings, kidnappings, torture, brandings, floggings, and even murder.

The Klan was strong not only in the South but also in the Midwest, West, and Southwest. It sometimes exerted a powerful political influence, most notably in Texas, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Indiana. In Oklahoma, the Klan led a successful impeachment campaign against a governor who tried to restrict their nightriding.

Extensive corruption underlay the Klan's self-righteous rhetoric. Some Klan leaders joined primarily for the profits, both legal (from recruiting) and illegal (from political payoffs). And some lived personal lives in stark contrast to the morality theypreached. In 1925, D. C. Stephenson, a prominent Klan leader, was convicted of the second-degree murder of a woman who had accused him of raping her. When the governor of Indiana refused to pardon him, Stephenson produced records that proved the corruption of the governor, a member of Congress, the mayor of Indianapolis, and other officials endorsed by the Klan. Thereafter, Klan membership fell sharply.

Race, Class, and Gender in the 1920s

For most people of color, the reality of daily life fell somewhere between the liberation experienced by those in the Harlem Renaissance and the terror felt by those who confronted Klan nightriders. For working people, the 1920s represented a time when many gains from the Progressive Era and World War I were lost. For women, the 1920s opened with a political victory in the form of suffrage, but the unity developed in support of that measure soon broke down.

Race Relations: North, South, and West

Race relations changed little during the 1920s. Terror against African Americans continued after the rioting and bloodshed of 1919. Southern legislators defeated every effort by the NAACP to secure a federal antilynching law. Discrimination and violence were not directed only at blacks. In the West and Southwest, American Indians and those of Asian and Latino descent were frequently the victims of racism.

Californians led the way in passing laws discriminating against Asian immigrants and Asian Americans. In 1920, California voters by a margin of 3 to 1 approved an initiative forbidding Asian

nightriders Bands of masked white men associated with the Ku Klux Klan who roamed rural areas at night, terrorizing and murdering blacks.

immigrants to own or lease land in the state. Some Californians even sought a constitutional amendment to remove citizenship from Asian Americans.

Beginnings of Change in Federal Indian Policy

In the early 1920s, American Indians experienced an intensification of previous assimilationist policies (see page 379). Interior Secretary Albert Fall's attempts to wrest lands along the Rio Grande from the Pueblo Indians, however, did not succeed. In fact, his schemes prompted the formation of the **American Indian Defense Association (AIDA) in** 1923. The AIDA soon emerged as the leading voice for change in federal Indian policy. Its goals were to end land allotments, to improve health and educational services on the reservations, to create tribal governments, and to gain tolerance for Indian religious ceremonies. The AIDA encouraged recognition of Indian cultures and values.

The political pressure applied by the AIDA and by Indians themselves secured several new laws favorable to American Indians. One measure, in 1924, extended full citizenship to all Indians who were still not citizens—about one-third of the total. Some had been reluctant to accept citizenship for fear of losing their tribal rights, so the law included provisions specifically protecting those rights.

Mexicans in California and the Southwest

California and the Southwest attracted growing numbers of Mexican immigrants in the 1920s. Many Mexicans went north to escape the revolution and civil war that devastated their nation from 1910 into the 1920s. Nearly one Mexican in ten may have fled to the United States between 1910 and 1930. More than half went to Texas, but by the mid-1920s, increasing numbers were arriving in California.

Population changes in southern California and south Texas followed change in the agricultural economies of those regions. In south Texas, some cattle ranches were converted to farms, especially for cotton. The 1920s also saw dramatic increases in the commercial production of fruits and vegetables. By 1925, the Southwest produced 40 percent of the nation's fruits and vegetables, crops that were highly labor-intensive. In the late 1920s, Mexicans made up 80 to 85 percent of farm laborers in southern California and south Texas. These changes in population and economy reshaped relations between Anglos and Mexicans.

In south Texas, many Anglo newcomers looked on Mexicans as a "partly colored race" and tried to import sharecropping, disfranchisement, and segregation. Disfranchisement was relatively unsuccessful, but some schools and other social institutions were segregated despite Mexican opposition.

In California, Mexican workers' efforts to organize and strike for better pay and working conditions often sparked violent opposition. In the early 1920s, strikes involving thousands of workers were broken brutally. Workers began organizing on a larger scale in 1928, with the formation of the Confederacion de Uniones Obreras Mexicanas, an umbrella group for various unions in southern California. Local authorities arrested and often beat strikers. Leaders found themselves subject to deportation. But growers adamantly opposed any proposals to restrict immigration from Mexico.

Labor on the Defensive

Difficulties in establishing unions among Mexican workers mirrored a larger failure of unions in the 1920s. When unions tried to recover lost purchasing power by striking in 1919 and 1920, they nearly all failed. After 1921, business took advantage of the conservative political climate to challenge Progressive-era legislation benefiting workers. The Supreme Court responded by limiting workers' rights, voiding laws that eliminated child labor, and striking down minimum wages for women and children.

Many companies undertook anti-union drives. Arguing that unions had become either corrupt or radical, some employers refused to recognize them. At the same time, many companies initiated an approach known as "welfare capitalism." The strat-

American Indian Defense Association Organization founded in 1923 to defend the rights of American Indians; it pushed for an end to allotment and a return to tribal government.

egy was to provide workers with benefits such as insurance, retirement pensions, cafeterias, paid vacations, and stock purchase plans. Such innovations stemmed both from genuine concern about workers' well-being and from the expectation that such improvements would increase productivity and discourage unionization.

Only the railroad unions made significant gains in the 1920s. The Railway Labor Act of 1926 established collective bargaining for railroads. But the gains of the railroad unions were unique. The 1920s marked the first period of prosperity since the 1830s when union membership declined. Hostile government policies, welfare capitalism, and lost strikes all contributed to this decline.

Changes in Women's Lives

The attention given to the flapper in the 1920s should not obscure other significant changes in women's gender roles during the decade. Marriage among middle-class couples came to be increasingly valued as a companionship between two partners. Although the ideal of marriage was often expressed in terms of equality, the actual responsibility for the smooth functioning of the family typically fell on the woman.

The 1920s also saw a significant decline in the birth rate. This decline reflected changing social values and the wider availability of birth-control information and devices. More women used diaphragms rather than relying on males to use condoms. Margaret Sanger, the pioneer in the birth-control movement, was able to persuade more doctors to spread birth-control information. As birth control gained the backing of male physicians, it became more respectable. Nonetheless, until 1936, federal law restricted public distribution of information about contraception.

Although the lives of many middle-class women lightened with the introduction of laborsaving devices such as vacuum cleaners, working-class women still spent long days struggling to maintain families. As before, these women often worked outside the home because the family needed the income. The proportion of women working for wages remained quite stable during the 1920s, at about one in four.

Perhaps the most publicized event in women's lives was national woman suffrage. In June 1919, Congress approved the Nineteenth **Amendment** and sent it to the states for ratification. After a grueling state-by-state battle, ratification came in August 1920.

The unity of the suffrage movement quickly disintegrated thereafter. Some suffrage activists joined the League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan group committed to social and political reform. The Congressional Union converted itself into the National Woman's party and, after 1923, focused its efforts on securing an Equal Rights **Amendment** to the Constitution. The League of Women Voters argued that such an amendment would endanger laws that provided special rights and protections for women. In the end, woman suffrage did not dramatically change either women or politics.

Development of Gay and Lesbian Subcultures

In the 1920s, gay and lesbian subcultures became more established and, in places such as New York, Chicago, New Orleans, and Baltimore, relatively open. *The Captive*, a play about lesbians, opened in New York in 1926, and some movies included unmistakable references to gays or lesbians. Novels with gay and lesbian characters circulated in the late 1920s and early 1930s. By the late 1920s, some nightclub acts included material about gays and lesbians in performances intended for largely heterosexual audiences. A relatively open black gay and lesbian community emerged in Harlem.

Railway Labor Act Law passed in 1926 that replaced the Railway Labor Board with a board of mediation only loosely connected with the federal government.

Nineteenth Amendment Amendment to the Constitution in 1920 that prohibited federal or state governments from restricting the right to vote on account of sex.

Equal Rights Amendment Constitutional amendment first proposed by the National Woman's party in 1923, giving women in the United States equal rights under the law.

As many as seven thousand revelers of all races attended the annual Hamilton Lodge drag ball in Harlem, the nation's largest gay and lesbian event.

At the same time, however, more psychiatrists and psychologists were labeling homosexuality a **perversion.** As the work of Sigmund Freud became well known, psychiatrists and psychologists came to regard homosexuality as a sexual disorder that required a cure. Thus Freud may have been a liberating influence with regard to heterosexual relations, but he proved harmful for same-sex relations.

The late 1920s and early 1930s brought increased suppression of gays and lesbians. New state laws gave police greater authority to crack down on them. In 1927, New York police raided *The Captive,* and the New York legislature banned all such plays. In 1929, Adam Clayton Powell, a leading Harlem minister, launched a highly publicized campaign against gays. Motion-picture studios instituted a morality code that prohibited any depiction of homosexuality. The end of Prohibition after 1933 allowed local authorities to use their regulatory power to close businesses with liquor licenses that tolerated gay or lesbian customers. Thus, by the late 1930s, many gays and lesbians were forced to become more secretive about their sexual identities.

The Politics of Prosperity

After 1918, the Republicans returned to the majority role they had played from the mid-1890s to 1912, and they were the unquestioned majority party throughout the 1920s. Progressivism largely disappeared, although Robert La Follette and George Norris persisted in their vigil to limit corporate power. The Republican administrations of the 1920s, however, thought that government should be the partner of business, not its regulator.

Harding's Failed Presidency

Warren G. Harding, elected in 1920, looked like a president—handsome, gray-haired, dignified—but he displayed little intellectual depth below the charming surface. For some cabinet positions, he named the most respected leaders of his party. He chose Charles Evans Hughes for secretary of state, Andrew Mellon for secretary of the treasury, and Herbert Hoover for secretary of commerce. Harding, however, was most at home in a smoke-filled room, drinking whiskey and playing poker with friends. He gave hundreds of government jobs to his cronies. They betrayed his trust and turned his administration into one of the most corrupt in American history. Harding tried to ignore their misdeeds.

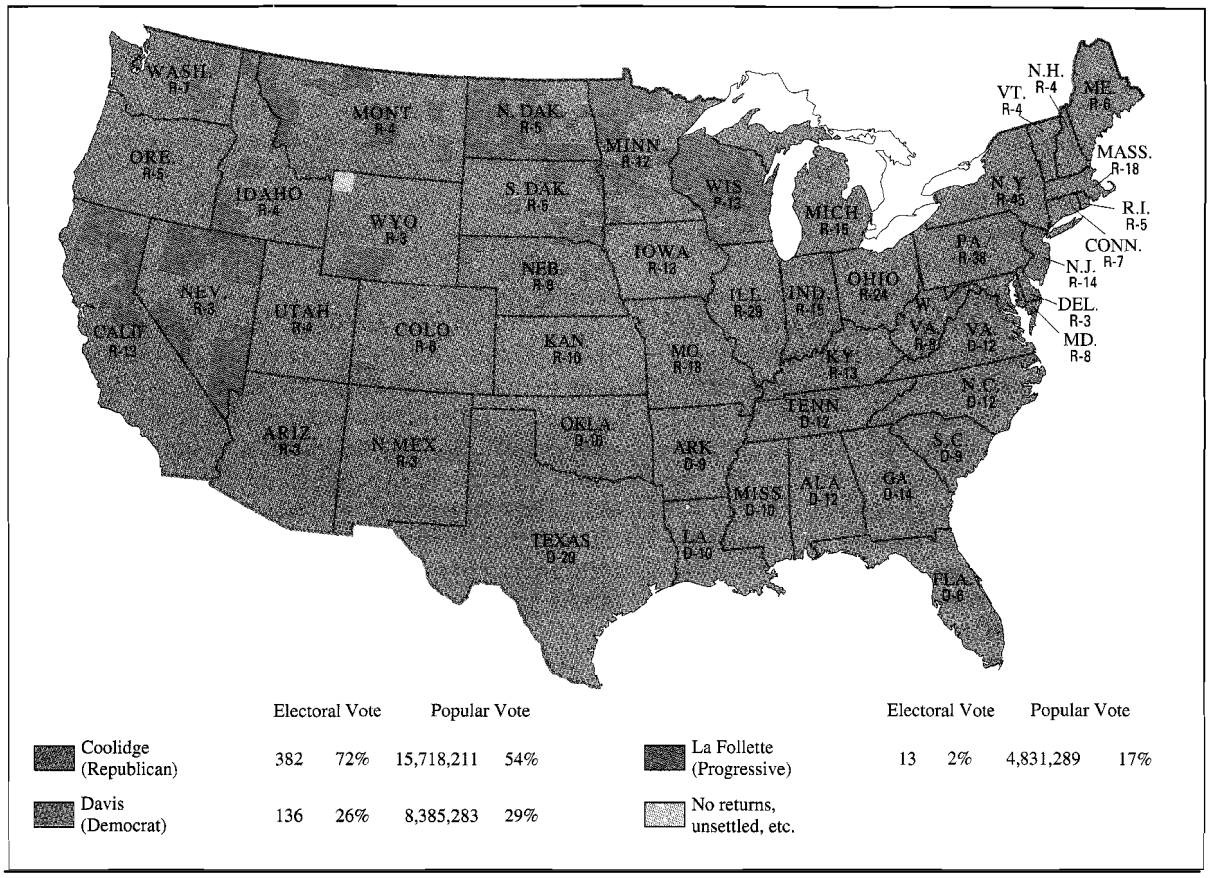
The full extent of corruption became clear after Harding died in August 1923. Interior Secretary Albert Fall had accepted huge bribes from oil companies for leases on government oil reserves at Elk Hills, California, and **Teapot Dome,** Wyoming. Attorney General Harry Daugherty had accepted bribes to approve the sale of government property for less than its value. The head of the Veterans Bureau had swindled the government out of more than $200 million. In all, three cabinet members resigned, four officials went to jail, and five men committed suicide.

The Three-Way Election of 1924

Fortunately for the Republican party, the new president, Calvin Coolidge of Vermont, exemplified the honesty, virtue, and sobriety associated with New England. In 1924, Republicans quickly chose him as their candidate for president. The Democratic convention, however, sank into a long and bitter deadlock between its northern and southern wings before turning to John W. Davis, a leading corporate lawyer. The remaining progressives welcomed the independent candidacy of Senator Robert M. La Follette of Wisconsin. La Follette at-

perversion A sexual practice considered abnormal or deviant.

Teapot Dome Government-owned Wyoming oil field that Interior Secretary Albert B. Fall leased to private developers in return for a bribe, causing one of the scandals that disgraced the Harding administration.



MAP 23.1 Election of 1924 The presidential election of 1924 was complicated by the campaign of Senator Robert La Follette of Wisconsin, who ran as a Progressive. Much of his support came from Republicans living in the north-central and northwestern regions, where the agricultural economy was most hard hit.

tacked big business, embraced collective bargaining, and advocated public ownership of railroads.

Republican campaigners largely ignored Davis and focused on portraying La Follette as a dangerous radical. Coolidge claimed the key issue was "whether America will allow itself to be degraded into a communistic or socialistic state or whether it will remain American." Coolidge won with nearly 16 million votes and 54 percent of the total. Davis held onto most traditional Democratic voters, especially in the South, receiving 8 million votes. La Follette carried only his home state of Wisconsin but garnered almost 5 million votes nationwide (see Map 23.1).

The Politics of Business

Resolved to limit government, Coolidge tried to reduce the significance of the presidency—and succeeded. Having once announced that "the business of America is business," he believed that the free market would provide economic prosperity for all.

The Coolidge administration's commitment to an unfettered market economy meant it had little sympathy for proposals to assist the faltering farm economy. Congress tried to address the related problems of low prices for farm products and persistent agricultural surpluses with the

McNary-Haugen bill. This bill would have created federal price supports and authorized the government to buy farm surpluses and sell them abroad at prevailing world prices. Coolidge vetoed the bill in 1927 and again in 1928.

Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon did secure substantial tax cuts for the wealthy and for corporations. He argued that these tax cuts would cause the wealthy to make "productive investments" that would benefit everyone. Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, however, was unsuccessful in urging Coolidge to regulate the increasingly wild use of credit, which encouraged stock market speculation.

Coolidge cut federal spending and staffed Washington's agencies with people who shared his distaste for government. Unlike Harding, Coolidge found honest and competent appointees. Like Harding, he named probusiness figures to regulatory commissions and put conservative, probusiness judges in the courts. The *Wall Street Journal* described the outcome: "Never before, here or anywhere else, has a government been so completely fused with business."

McNary-Haugen bill Farm relief bill that provided for government purchase of crop surpluses during years of large output; it was vetoed by Coolidge in 1927 and again in 1928.

SUMMARY

Expectations
Constraints
Choices
Outcomes

The 1920s were a decade of prosperity: unemployment was low, gross national product (GNP) grew steadily, and many Americans fared well. Sophisticated advertising campaigns created bright *expectations,* and installment buying freed consumers from the old *constraints* of having to pay cash. Many consumers did *choose* to buy more and to buy on credit—stimulating manufacturing and an expansion of personal debt. Easy credit and *expectations* of continuing prosperity also helped to loosen *constraints* on speculation. Fueled by many individual *choices,* the stock market climbed higher and higher. Agriculture, however, did not share in this prosperity.

As *expectations* changed during the Roaring Twenties, Americans experienced significant social change. The automobile, radio, and movies broke down old *constraints* on travel and communication and produced, as one *outcome,* a more homogeneous culture. Many American intellectuals, however, *chose* to reject the consumer-oriented culture. During the 1920s, African Americans produced an outpouring of significant art, literature, and music. Some young people *chose* to reject traditional *constraints.*

Not all Americans embraced change. Some *chose* instead to try to maintain or restore earlier cultural values. The *outcomes* were mixed. Prohibition was largely unsuccessful. Fundamentalism grew and prompted a campaign against teaching evolution. Nativism helped produce significant new restrictions on immigration. The Ku Klux Klan, committed to nativism, traditional values, and white supremacy, experienced nationwide growth until 1925, but membership declined sharply thereafter.

Discrimination and occasional violence continued to *constrain* the lives of people of color. Federal Indian policy had long stressed assimilation and allotment, but some groups *chose* to promote different policies based on respect for Indian cultural values. Immigration from Mexico greatly increased the Latino population in California and the Southwest. Nearly all unions faced strong opposition from employers, and only the railroad unions made significant gains during the twenties.

Some older *expectations* and *constraints* regarding women's roles broke down as women gained the right to vote and exercised more control over the *choice* to have children. An identifiable gay and lesbian subculture emerged in cities.

Politics became less prominent. Warren G. Harding and his successor, Calvin Coolidge, both *expected* that government should act as a partner with

business, and they made *choices* that minimized regulation and encouraged speculation. Progressive reform largely disappeared from politics, and efforts to secure federal assistance for farmers fizzled. One *outcome* was a federal government that was strongly conservative and probusiness.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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