



# Chapter Twenty-One

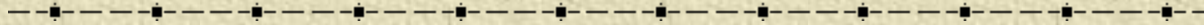
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**Urban America and  
the Progressive Era,  
1900—1917**

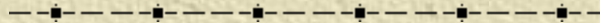
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Part One:



**Introduction**



# Urban America and the Progressive Era

- ✦ What does this painting illustrate about urban America?

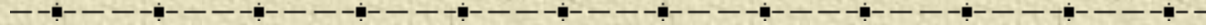
# Chapter Focus Questions

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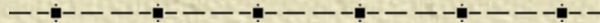
- ✦ What were the political, social, and intellectual roots of progressive reform?
- ✦ What tensions existed between social justice and social control?
- ✦ What was the urban scene and the impact of new immigration?
- ✦ How were the working class, women, and African Americans politically active?
- ✦ How was progressivism manifested in national politics?



Part Two:



**American Communities**



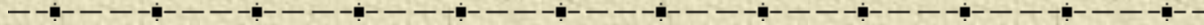
# The Henry Street Settlement House

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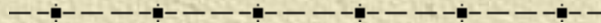
- ✦ Lillian Wald's Henry Street Settlement began as a visiting nurse service.
- ✦ At Henry Street, Wald created a community of college-educated women who lived among the urban poor and tried to improve their lives.
- ✦ Most settlement workers did not make a career out of this work, but several of the women went on to become influential political reformers.
- ✦ The workers served the community by promoting health care, cultural activities, and, later, by promoting reform legislation.



Part Three:



**The Currents of  
Progressivism**



# Unifying Themes

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- ✦ Progressivism drew from deep roots in American communities and spread, becoming a national movement.
- ✦ Progressives articulated American fears of the growing concentration of power and the excesses of industrial capitalism and urban growth.
- ✦ Progressives rejected the older Social Darwinist assumptions in favor of the idea that government should intervene to address social problems.
- ✦ Progressives drew upon evangelical Protestantism, especially the social gospel movement, and the scientific attitude to promote social change.



# The Female Dominion

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- ✦ Jane Addams founded Hull House in Chicago in 1889.
- ✦ Working there served as an alternative to marriage for educated women who provided crucial services for slum dwellers.
- ✦ Florence Kelley worked there and wrote reports detailing the conditions in sweat shops for women and children.
  - ◆ Her reports pushed legislation for the eight hour work day for women and child labor laws in Illinois.
- ✦ Women began to dominate new positions such as social workers, public health nursing, and home economics.

# The Urban Machine

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- ✦ Urban political machines were a closed and corrupt system that:
  - ◆ offered jobs and other services to immigrants in exchange for votes
  - ◆ drew support from businesses and provided kickbacks and protection in return
- ✦ By the early twentieth century, machines began promoting welfare legislation, often allying themselves with progressive reformers.
- ✦ Reformers also blamed the machines for many urban ills.

# Political Progressives and Urban Reform

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- ✦ Political progressivism arose in cities to combat machines and address deteriorating conditions, such as impure water.
  - ◆ They sought professional, nonpartisan administration to improve government efficiency.
- ✦ Following a tidal wave in Galveston, Texas, reformers pushed through a commissioner system.
  - ◆ Other cities adopted city manager plans and the commissioner system.
- ✦ Reformers like Samuel Jones of Toledo sought municipal ownership of utilities and pursued other welfare issues.

# Progressivism in the Statehouse: West and South

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- ✦ Governor and then Senator Robert LaFollette of Wisconsin forged a farmer-labor small business alliance to push through statewide reforms.
- ✦ Oregon passed referendum and initiative amendments that allowed voters to bypass legislatures and enact laws themselves.
- ✦ Western progressives like California's Hiram Johnson targeted railroad influence.
- ✦ Southern progressives pushed through various reforms such as improved educational facilities, but supported discriminatory laws against African Americans.
  - ◆ Southern progressives pushed for a completely segregated public sphere.

# New Journalism: Muckraking

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- ✦ A new breed of investigative journalist began exposing the public to the plight of slum life.
  - ◆ Muckrakers published accounts of urban poverty, and unsafe labor conditions, as well as corruption in government and business.
- ✦ Muckraking mobilized national opinion.
  - ◆ Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* exposed the unsanitary conditions in Chicago's meatpacking industry.
  - ◆ Ida Tarbell documented the use of unfair business practices by John D. Rockefeller in her *History of the Standard Oil Company*.
  - ◆ Lincoln Steffens exposed urban political corruption in a series titled *The Shame of the Cities*.

# Intellectual Trends Promoting Reform

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- ✦ The emerging social sciences provided empirical studies used by reformers to push for reforms.
  - ◆ Early twentieth-century thinkers like Lester Frank Ward challenged some of the intellectual supports for the prevailing social Darwinism.
  - ◆ John Dewey's ideas on education and John R. Commons and Richard Ely's ideas on labor were influential in shaping public policy.
  - ◆ Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. attacked constitutional interpretations that had prevented states from passing legislation that protected public interests.
- ✦ Sociological jurisprudence was used to support points instead of legal arguments.



Part Four:

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**Social Control and its  
Limits**

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# The Prohibition Movement

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- ✦ Many middle-class progressives worried about the increased numbers of urban immigrants and sought methods of social control.
- ✦ Groups developed to end the production, sale, and consumption of alcohol.
  - ◆ The Women's Christian Temperance Union became the largest women's organization in America.
    - They pushed for temperance laws as well as non-temperance laws such as women suffrage, homeless shelters, and prison reform.
  - ◆ The Anti-Saloon League was focused on the temperance issue.
    - They played on anti-urban and anti-immigrant sentiments.
- ✦ Native-born, small town and rural Protestants generally supported prohibition while recent immigrants opposed it.



# The Social Evil

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- ✦ Reformers also attacked prostitution, an illicit trade that was connected with corrupt city machines.
- ✦ A national movement used the media to try to ban the “white slave” traffic allegedly promoted by foreigners.
- ✦ Progressives investigated prostitution and documented its dangers, though they were unable to understand why women took it up.
- ✦ Progressive reform helped close down brothels, but they were replaced by more vulnerable street-walkers.

# The Redemption of Leisure

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- ✦ Reformers were aghast at the new urban commercial amusements, such as amusement parks, vaudeville, and the most popular venue, the movies.
  - ◆ These began to replace municipal parks, libraries, museums, YMCAs, and school recreation centers.
- ✦ Early movies were most popular in tenement districts with immigrants.
  - ◆ Movies became more sophisticated and began to attract the middle class.
- ✦ New York City reformers, along with movie producers and exhibitors, established the National Board of Censorship.

# Standardizing Education

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- ✦ For many progressives, the school was the key agency to break down the parochial ethnic neighborhood and “Americanize” immigrants.
- ✦ Expansion and bureaucratization characterized educational development as students started earlier and stayed later in school.
- ✦ High school evolved as comprehensive institutions that offered college preparatory and vocational education.



Part Five:

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**Working-Class  
Communities and  
Protest**

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# New Immigrants from Two Hemispheres

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- ✦ The early twentieth century saw a tremendous growth in the size of the working class.
  - ◆ Sixty percent of the industrial labor force were foreign-born, mostly unskilled workers from southern and eastern Europe.
- ✦ Driven out by the collapse of peasant agriculture and persecution, the new immigrants depended on family and friends to help them get situated.
- ✦ Many worked long hours for pay that failed to keep them out of poverty.
- ✦ Non-European immigrants included:
  - ◆ French-Canadians who worked in New England textile mills
  - ◆ Mexicans who came as seasonal farm workers. A large number stayed and established communities throughout the southwest.
  - ◆ The Japanese, who worked in fishing and truck farming

# Urban Ghettos

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- ✦ In large cities, immigrants established communities in densely packed ghettos.
- ✦ New York City became the center of Jewish immigrants, many of whom worked at piece-rates in the ready-to-wear garment industry.
  - ◆ Garment work was highly seasonal.
  - ◆ Working conditions were generally cramped, dirty, and dark.
  - ◆ Workers worked long hours to produce the quota for each day.
- ✦ A general strike by 20,000 workers contributed to the growth of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union.
- ✦ The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire in New York led to laws to protect workers.

# Company Towns

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- ✦ Some industrial workers lived in communities often dominated by a single corporation that owned the houses, the stores, and regulated life.
- ✦ Ethnic groups maintained many cultural traditions.
  - Immigrants resisted the discipline of the factory by taking time off for cultural activities, spreading out the work by slowing down, and becoming increasingly involved in unions.
- ✦ Factories were dangerous places with high accident and death rates.
- ✦ In western mining communities, corporate power and violent labor conflict occurred.

# The AFL: “Unions, Pure and Simple”

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- ✦ The leading labor organization at the turn of the century was the American Federation of Labor (AFL).
- ✦ With the exception of the mineworkers, most AFL unions were not interested in organizing unskilled immigrants, women, or African Americans.
- ✦ The AFL was on the defensive from “open shop” campaigns promoted by trade associations and court injunctions that barred picketing and boycotting.



# The IWW: “One Big Union”

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- ✦ Radical workers, especially from the mining camps in the West, organized the Industrial Workers of the World.
- ✦ Led by “Big Bill” Haywood, the IWW tried to organize the lowest paid workers.
  - ◆ Haywood boasted that the IWW excluded no one from their ranks.
- ✦ The IWW used direct action, including strikes.
- ✦ The IWW gained temporary power in the East but remained a force in the West.

# Rebels in Bohemia

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- ✦ A small community of middle-class artists and intellectuals in Greenwich Village, New York City, called “Village bohemians” supported the IWW and other radical causes.
- ✦ The term “bohemian” referred to anyone who had artistic or intellectual aspirations and who lived with disregard for conventional rules of behavior.
- ✦ The Village bohemia died out with the onset of World War I.



Part Six:

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**Women's  
Movements and  
Black Awakening**

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# The New Women

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- ✦ Middle-class women's lives were changing rapidly.
  - ◆ More were receiving an education and joined various clubs involved in civic activities.
- ✦ Women became involved in numerous reforms, from seeking child labor laws to consumer safety and sanitation.
- ✦ Margaret Sanger promoted wider access to contraceptives and opened a birth control clinic in a working-class neighborhood in Brooklyn.

# Racism and Accommodation

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- ✦ The turn of the century was an intensely racist era.
  - ◆ Segregation was institutionalized throughout the South.
  - ◆ Violent attacks on blacks were supported by vicious characterizations in popular culture.
- ✦ Racism was based on the assumed innate inferiority of blacks.
  - ◆ Racial Darwinism justified a policy of neglect and repression.
  - ◆ Southern progressives pushed for paternalistic uplift.
- ✦ Booker T. Washington emerged as the most prominent black leader.
  - ◆ Washington advocated black accommodation and urged that blacks focus on self-reliance and economic improvement.

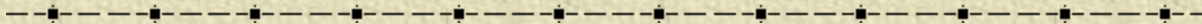
# Racial Justice, the NAACP, Black Women's Activism

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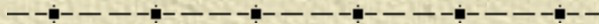
- ✦ W. E. B. Du Bois criticized Booker T. Washington for accepting “the alleged inferiority of the Negro.”
  - ◆ Du Bois supported programs that sought to attack segregation, the right to vote, and secure city equality.
- ✦ He helped found the interracial organization known as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.
- ✦ Black women became a powerful force for social services.
  - ◆ They organized settlement houses, campaigned for suffrage, temperance, and advances in public health.



Part Seven:



**National  
Progressivism**



# Theodore Roosevelt and Presidential Activism

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- ✦ Roosevelt viewed the presidency as a “bully pulpit” to promote progressive reforms.
  - ◆ He pressured mine owners into a settlement that won better pay for miners.
  - ◆ He directed the Justice Department to prosecute a number of unpopular monopolies, actions that won him the sobriquet “trustbuster.”
- ✦ Roosevelt favored passing regulatory laws including:
  - ◆ the Hepburn Act that strengthened the Interstate Commerce Commission
  - ◆ the Pure Food and Drug Act



# Trustbusting and Regulation

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- ✦ Roosevelt faced growing public concern with the rapid business consolidations taking place in the American economy.
  - ◆ He considered government regulation the best way to deal with big business.
- ✦ Some big businesses agreed with Roosevelt.
  - ◆ Stricter regulations would push smaller businesses out of the market.
  - ◆ American meatpackers could compete more profitably in the European market with the federal stamp of approval required under the Meat Inspection Act.

# Conservation, Preservation and the Environment

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- ✦ Roosevelt believed that the conservation of forest and water resources was a national problem of vital import.
- ✦ Roosevelt founded the Forest Service and supported the conservation efforts of John Muir, the founder of the modern environmental movement.

# Republican Split

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- ✦ In his second term Roosevelt announced his Square Deal program as a way to stave off radicalism through progressive reform.
- ✦ His Republican successor, William Howard Taft, supported some of his reforms but Taft wound up alienating many progressives.
- ✦ Roosevelt then challenged Taft for Republican leadership.

# The Election of 1912: A Four-Way Race

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- ✦ In the 1912 election, Roosevelt ran for president for the new Progressive Party touting his New Nationalism program.
- ✦ The Democrats ran a progressive candidate, Woodrow Wilson, who promoted his New Freedom platform.
- ✦ The Socialist Party, which had rapidly grown in strength, nominated Eugene Debs.
- ✦ Wilson won 42 percent of the vote, enough to defeat the divided Republicans.

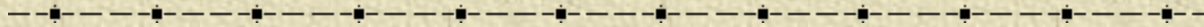
# Woodrow Wilson's First Term

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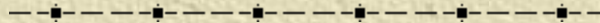
- ✦ Wilson followed Roosevelt's lead in promoting an activist government by:
  - ◆ lowering tariffs
  - ◆ pushing through a graduated income tax
  - ◆ restructuring the banking and currency system under the Federal Reserve Act. He expanded the nation's anti-trust authority and established the Federal Trade Commission
- ✦ On social reforms Wilson proved more cautious.



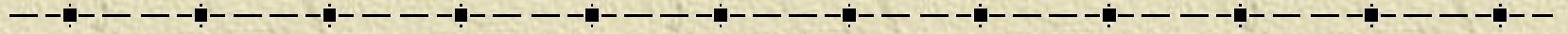
Part Eight:



**Conclusion**



# Urban America and the Progressive Era



## ✦ Media: Chronology