19

Immigration, Urbanization, and Everyday Life, 1860–1900
ON A SWELTERING DAY IN AUGUST 1899, Scott Joplin, a young black pianist, signed an unusual contract with his music publisher in Sedalia, Missouri. Instead of receiving the usual one-time fee for his new piano composition, “Maple Leaf Rag,” Joplin would earn one cent for every copy sold. The contract signaled a new era in the popular music industry. Over the next two decades, “Maple Leaf Rag” would sell more than half a million copies a year and make Joplin the king of ragtime, the syncopated dance music that had become a national sensation.

Scott Joplin’s rise from unknown saloon piano player to renowned composer sheds light not only on the extraordinary expansion of the entertainment industry at the turn of the nineteenth century but also on the class and racial tensions that pervaded popular culture. Joplin published more than seventy-five songs or piano rags before 1917, but his success was undercut by white competitors who stereotyped his compositions as “Negro music” and “Coon songs.” His publishers refused to accept his classical compositions, including his opera “Treemonisha.” Opera was considered a high art form for the upper classes; blacks, even those with Joplin’s talent, could not enter the field. Scott Joplin died in 1917, an admired leader in the entertainment industry whose full genius would not be recognized for another half century. As Joplin’s experience revealed, racial discrimination could reinforce the barriers of social class.

Many Americans faced similar difficulties in moving up the economic ladder and adjusting to the changes taking place at the turn of the century. American society was slowly shifting from a rural producer economy that stressed work and thrift to an urban consumer economy in which new forms of entertainment, leisure activities, and material possessions were becoming the hallmarks of personal identity. Many middle-class Americans now enjoyed unheard-of levels of comfort and convenience. Industrialization had opened up new jobs and destroyed older ones, rearranging the occupational structure, altering the distribution of income within society, and sharpening class divisions. These changes, together with the expansion of salaried, white-collar occupations such as teaching and accounting, created new expectations for family life and fostered growing class awareness.

Nowhere were class divisions more visible than in the cities crowded with immigrants where the working class created its own vigorous culture of dance halls, saloons, vaudeville theaters, social clubs, and amusement parks. Middle-class reformers who strove to remake this working-class culture into their own image of propriety were soon frustrated. In the long run, the culture of the masses would prove more influential in shaping modern America.

BACKYARD BASEBALL, BOSTON, 1906, BY LEWIS HINE Often idealized as a rural pastime, baseball at the turn of the century became immensely popular in cities where professional teams turned the sport into entertainment for the masses. (George Eastman House)
of all Americans lived in cities. (In the census, cities were defined as having more than twenty-five hundred inhabitants.) In 1900, New York's 3.4 million inhabitants almost equaled the nation's entire 1850 urban population.

This spectacular urban growth, fueled by migration from the countryside and the arrival of nearly 11 million immigrants between 1870 and 1900, stimulated economic development. Like the frontier, the city symbolized opportunity for all comers. The city's unprecedented scale and diversity threatened traditional expectations about community life and social stability. Rural America had been a place of face-to-face personal relations. In contrast, the city was a seething caldron where immigrant groups contended with one another and with native-born Americans for jobs, power, and influence. Moreover, the same rapid growth that energized manufacturing and production strained city services, generated terrible housing and sanitation problems, and accentuated class differences.

Native-born Americans complained about the noise, stench, and congestion of this transformed cityscape. They fretted about the newcomers' squalid tenements, fondness for drink, and strange customs. When native-born reformers set about cleaning up the city, they sought not only to improve the physical environment but also to destroy the distinctive customs that made immigrant culture different from their own. The late nineteenth century thus witnessed an intense struggle to control the city and benefit from its economic and cultural potential. The stakes were high, for America was increasingly becoming an urban nation.

### The New American City

Everyday life was transformed most visibly in cities. During the late nineteenth century, American cities grew spectacularly (see Table 19.1). Between 1870 and 1900, New Orleans’s population increased by nearly fifty percent, Buffalo’s tripled, and Chicago’s increased more than fivefold. At the start of the new century, Philadelphia, New York, and Chicago all had more than a million residents, and 40 percent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>1870 Population</th>
<th>1900 Population</th>
<th>Percent Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>250,525</td>
<td>560,892</td>
<td>123.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>298,977</td>
<td>1,698,575</td>
<td>468.12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cincinnati</td>
<td>216,239</td>
<td>325,902</td>
<td>50.71</td>
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<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>5,728</td>
<td>102,479</td>
<td>1,689.08</td>
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<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td>71,440</td>
<td>285,315</td>
<td>299.37</td>
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<td>New Orleans</td>
<td>191,418</td>
<td>287,104</td>
<td>49.98</td>
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<td>New York</td>
<td>1,478,103</td>
<td>3,437,202</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>647,022</td>
<td>1,293,697</td>
<td>99.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pittsburgh</td>
<td>86,076</td>
<td>321,616</td>
<td>273.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland</td>
<td>8,293</td>
<td>90,426</td>
<td>990.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>51,038</td>
<td>85,050</td>
<td>66.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>149,473</td>
<td>342,782</td>
<td>129.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle</td>
<td>1,107</td>
<td>237,194</td>
<td>21,326.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Migrants and Immigrants

The concentration of industries in urban settings produced demands for thousands of new workers. The promise of good wages and a broad range of jobs (labeled by historians as “pull factors”) drew men and women from the countryside. So great was the migration from rural areas, especially New England, that some farm communities vanished from the map.

Young farmwomen led the exodus to the cities. With the growing mechanization of farming in the late nineteenth century, farming was increasingly male work. Rising sales of factory-produced goods through nationally distributed mail-order catalogs reduced the need for rural women’s labor. So young farmwomen flocked to the cities, where they competed for jobs with immigrant, black, and city-born white women.

From 1860 to 1890, the prospect of a better life also attracted nearly 10 million northern European
immigrants to American cities. Their numbers included nearly 3 million Germans, 2 million English, Scottish, and Welsh immigrants, and almost 1.5 million Irish. By 1900 more than eight hundred thousand French-Canadians had entered the New England mills, and close to a million Scandinavian newcomers had put down roots in the rich farmlands of Wisconsin and Minnesota. On the West Coast, despite the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (see Chapter 18), more than eighty-one thousand Chinese remained in California and nearby states in 1900.

In the 1890s, these earlier immigrants from northern and western Europe were joined by swelling numbers of “new immigrants”—Italians, Slavs, Greeks, and Jews from southern and eastern Europe, Armenians from the Middle East, and in Hawaii, Japanese from Asia (see Map 19.1). In the next three decades, these new immigrants, many from peasant backgrounds, would boost America’s foreign-born population by more than 18 million (see Map 19.2).

The overwhelming majority of immigrants settled in cities in the northeastern and north-central states, with the Irish predominating in New England and the Germans in the Midwest. The effect of their numbers was staggering. In 1890, New York City (including Brooklyn, still a legally separate municipality) contained twice as many Irish as Dublin, as many Germans as Hamburg, half as many Italians as Naples, and 2.5 times the Jewish population of Warsaw. That same year four out of five people living in New York had been born abroad or were children of foreign-born parents.

Overpopulation, crop failure, famine, religious persecution, violence, or industrial depression drove some of these immigrants from their homelands. (Historians call these reasons for immigration “push factors.”) At the same time, the promise of high wages (a “pull factor”) lured more than one hundred thousand Japanese laborers to Hawaii in the 1890s to work on sugar plantations.

A large number of immigrants were single young men. Birger Osland, an eighteen-year-old Norwegian, explained his reasons for leaving to a friend: “as I now probably have a foundation upon which I can build my own further education, I have come to feel that the most sensible thing I can do is to emigrate to America.” Although significant numbers of young men remained in the United States after they had become successful, large numbers, especially Italians and Chinese, returned home as well.

Single women were less likely to come on their own, but Irish women often did so and sent their earnings back home. Most commonly, wives and children waited in the old country until the family breadwinner had secured a job and saved enough money to pay
In 1892, the federal government built a new immigration facility on Ellis Island in New York harbor. Angel Island in San Francisco Bay on the West Coast served a similar purpose after 1910. At the immigrant processing centers, America’s newest residents exchanged foreign currency for U.S. dollars, purchased railroad tickets, and arranged lodgings. Outside the facility, immigrants were hounded by tavernkeepers, peddlers, and porters who tried to exploit them. “When you land in America,” wrote one Swedish resident to friends back home, “you will find many who will offer their services, but beware of them because there are so many rascals who make it their business to cheat the immigrants.”

Those who arrived with sufficient cash, including many German artisans and Scandinavian farmers, commonly traveled west to Chicago and the rolling prairies beyond. Most of the Irish, and later the Italians remained in eastern cities like Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. The Irish and Italians who did go west typically made the trip in stages, moving from job to job on the railroad and canal systems.

MAP 19.2 PERCENT OF FOREIGN-BORN WHITES AND NATIVE WHITES OF FOREIGN OR MIXED PARENTAGE IN TOTAL POPULATION, BY COUNTIES, 1910 As this map indicates, new immigrants rarely settled in the South.

Adjusting to an Urban Society

In the cities, immigrants clustered together with compatriots, often friends or relatives from their original town, to ease the stress of adjusting to a new life. (Historians call this tendency “chain migration.”) If a map of New York City’s streets and neighborhoods were colored in by nationality, Jacob Riis observed in 1890, it “would show more stripes than on the skin of a zebra, and more colors than any rainbow.” Between the West Side Irish and the East Side German neighborhoods, the streets of Manhattan teemed with Poles, Hungarians, Russians, Italians, and Chinese.

Within the cities, some immigrant groups adjusted more easily than others. Skilled workers and those familiar with Anglo-American customs had relatively few problems. Ethnic groups that formed a substantial percentage of a city’s population also had a major advantage. The Irish, for example, who by the 1880s made up nearly 16 percent of New York’s population, 8 percent of Chicago’s, and 17 percent of Boston’s, facilitated Irish immigrants’ entry into the American mainstream by dominating Democratic Party politics and controlling the hierarchy of the Catholic church in all three cities. Because of their success, upwardly mobile Irish became known as “lace curtain” Irish, a reference to their adoption of middle-class ideals.

The domination of urban institutions by one immigrant group, however, often made adjustment to American society more difficult for others. In cities like Milwaukee, Germans excluded Poles from desirable jobs. Elsewhere, English and German dominance of the building trades enabled those nationalities to limit the numbers of Italians hired.

The experience of being discriminated against helped create a new common ethnic identity for many groups. Groups of immigrants forged a new sense of ethnic distinctiveness as Irish-Americans, German-Americans, or Jewish-Americans that helped them compete for political power and move into mainstream society.

Not all immigrants intended to remain in the United States. Expecting only a brief stay, some made little effort to learn English or understand American customs. Of the Italians who immigrated to New York before 1914, nearly 50 percent went back to Italy. Although the rate of return migration was greatest among Chinese and Italians, significant numbers of other nationalities eventually returned to their homelands as well.

As the number of foreigners in U.S. cities ballooned toward the turn of the century, all immigrant groups faced increasing hostility from white native-born Americans who disliked the newcomers’ social customs and worried about their growing influence. Fearing the loss of the privileges and status that were associated with their white skin color, native-born whites often stigmatized immigrants as racially different and inferior. Only gradually, and with much effort, did Irish, Jews, Slavs, and Italians come to be considered “white.”

Slums and Ghettos

Every major city had its share of rundown, overcrowded slum neighborhoods. Generally clustered within walking distance of manufacturing districts, slums...
pollution, and foul odors of tanneries, foundries, factories, and packing houses. Coal-fired steam engines and apartment house furnaces produced vast quantities of soot and dust that tinged the atmosphere a hazy gray and coated buildings with a grimy patina.

Most immigrants stayed in the shabbiest tenements only until they could afford better housing. Blacks, in contrast, were trapped in segregated districts. Driven out of the skilled trades and excluded from most factory work, blacks took menial jobs whose low pay left them little income for housing (see Chapter 18). Racist city-dwellers used high rents, real-estate covenants (agreements not to rent or sell to blacks), and neighborhood pressure to exclude them from areas inhabited by whites. Because the numbers of northern urban blacks in 1890 remained relatively small—for example, they composed only 1.2 percent of Cleveland’s population and 1.3 percent of Chicago’s—they could not overcome whites’ concerted campaigns to shut them out. Instead, wealthy black entrepreneurs established their own churches and charitable organizations in the black neighborhoods where they lived.

Fashionable Avenues and Suburbs

The same cities that harbored slums, filth, suffering, and violence also boasted of neighborhoods of dazzling opulence with the latest lighting and plumbing technologies (see Technology and Culture). The wealthy built monumental residences along thoroughfares radiating from the city centers, among them Commonwealth Avenue in Boston, Euclid Avenue in Cleveland, and Summit Avenue in St. Paul (see Going to the Source).

In the 1870s and 1880s, city-dwellers began moving to nearby suburbs. Promoters of the suburban ideal contrasted the rolling lawns and stately houses on the city’s periphery with the teeming streets, noisy saloons, and mounds of garbage and horse excrement downtown. Soon, many major cities could boast of their own stylish suburbs.

Middle-class city-dwellers followed the precedents set by the wealthy. Skilled artisans, shopkeepers, clerks, accountants, and sales personnel moved either to new developments at the city’s edge or to outlying suburban communities (although those at the lower fringe of the middle class typically rented apartments in neighborhoods closer to the city center). Lawyers, doctors, small businessmen, and other professionals moved farther out along the main thoroughfares served by the street railway, where they purchased homes on large lots.

In time, a pattern of informal residential segregation by income took shape in the cities and suburbs.
Frederick Law Olmsted and the Redesign of the Urban Environment

No changes to the urban landscape in the late nineteenth century were more dramatic than the filling-in of Back Bay in Boston. Between 1857 and 1900, special gravel trains ran round the clock, raising the ground level by an average of twenty feet in the 450 acre tidal basin. But filling the tidal flats left open the question of what to do with the Muddy River, whose noxious, sewage-soiled waters emptied into the Charles River basin. In 1881, landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, who had designed Central Park in New York in the 1850s, offered the following plan.

“The tidal part of Muddy River above the basin now under construction has the usual character of a salt creek winding through a valley. … The city is rapidly advancing in compact blocks towards the region, and public convenience will, before many years, require a more comprehensive treatment of it.

It usually happens when a town is building up on both sides of a small water-course and valley that the sanitary and other disadvantages of the low ground prevent it from being much occupied, except in a way damaging to the value of the adjoining properties. In… time, the stream and valley and the uses to which they are put, come to be regarded as a nuisance, and radical measures, such as the construction of a great underground channel, and the filling up of the alley, are urged as the only adequate remedy. The cost of these, and the local disturbance they make, excite opposition to them; their complete beneficial operation is long-delayed. Though necessary, therefore, to public health and to convenience of general transit through the district, the result in the increased tax-bearing capacity of the locality is no compensation for the required outlay.

As an alternative to such a possible course the policy now suggested for Muddy River would look to the preservation of the present channel with certain modifications and improvements adapted to make it permanently attractive and wholesome, and an element of constantly increasing advantage to the neighborhood… The indirect course of the parkway, following the river bank, would prevent its being much used for purposes of heavy transportation. It would thus, without offensive exclusiveness or special police regulation, be left free to be used as a pleasure route…

…the result would be a chain of pleasant waters, … all of natural and in some degree picturesque outline, with banks wooded and easily furnished with verdure and foliage throughout…

Taken in connection with the mall upon Commonwealth Avenue, the Public Garden and the Common, the parkway would complete a pleasure-route from the heart of the city a distance of six miles into its suburbs. These older pleasure-grounds, which continuing to serve equally well all their present purposes, would, by becoming part of an extended system, acquire increased importance and value. They could have a larger use, be more effective as appliances for public health, and every dollar expended for their maintenance would return a larger dividend.”


QUESTIONS
1. What problems does Olmsted’s plan for a connected park system solve?
2. Does Olmsted’s argument that the preservation of nature will pay for itself foreshadow features of the modern environmental movement?

Go to the website at www.cengage.com/history/boyerenduring7e for additional primary sources on this period.
Flush Toilets and the Invention of the Nineteenth-Century Bathroom

The development of a system of indoor plumbing was typical of the technological breakthroughs that simplified everyday life in the late nineteenth century. In the 1860s, only about 5 percent of American houses had running water. Most Americans used chamber pots or outhouses that emptied into slimy, smelly cesspools. Two decades later, indoor plumbing standards had been established in most major U.S. cities, and wealthier urban Americans used flush toilets connected to municipal sewer systems.

The driving force for change came from outbreaks of cholera, typhoid, and yellow fever, diseases spread by polluted water, that periodically terrorized American cities. Building on the discovery of germs by Louis Pasteur and Robert Koch, sanitary reformers established stringent metropolitan health laws, created state boards of health, and mandated the licensing of plumbers and the inspection of their work. By the turn of the century, George E. Waring, Jr., a prominent sanitary engineer, could confidently declare that “Plumbing, as we know it, is essentially and almost exclusively an American Institution.”

The decision to adopt a water-based system for the removal of human wastes depended on a series of inventions. First, municipal water systems had to be built with reservoirs, pumps, and water towers to provide water to the pipes that supplied buildings. A sewage system of interconnected pipes was also necessary to remove and process wastes. Machines to manufacture lead, cast-iron, and glazed stoneware pipes had to be created, as did a uniform system of pipe threads and melted lead joints to create a reliable standardized system for connecting them. Finally, a porcelain toilet with a built-in gas trap was needed because the bacteria in feces produce methane or sewer gas. (A trap is a U-shaped joint in which the water at the low part of the U prevents gas from seeping back into the bathroom. The gas vents through a pipe in the roof.)

Despite its usefulness, the new technology was not rapidly adopted. In 1890, only 24 percent of American dwellings had running water. As late as 1897, over 90 percent of the families in tenements had no baths and had to wash in hallway sinks or courtyard hydrants. By 1920, 80 percent of American houses, particularly those in rural areas, still lacked indoor flush toilets. The reason was simple: indoor plumbing was expensive and depended on the availability of water and sewer systems. Adding indoor plumbing increased the price of a new house by 20 percent.

Advertisers did their best to increase demand. They skillfully used the findings of science to advocate new standards of cleanliness or “hygiene,” as it was called, which they associated with upper-class principles of respectability and decorum. Bathing and hand washing were touted as symbols of upper-class refinement.

Indoor plumbing not only reinforced higher standards for personal hygiene; it also enmeshed the homeowner in a web of local and state regulations. As sewage and water systems expanded to cover larger constituencies, political control moved from local to state and sometimes national arenas. Once largely independent, the homeowner now had to deal with water and power companies that often functioned regionally.

The adoption of strict sanitation systems and the use of indoor plumbing did achieve their intended result: they dramatically reduced the spread of disease. But the advances had unintended consequences. Indoor plumbing encouraged...
the phenomenal waste of water. A single faulty toilet could easily leak a hundred gallons of water a day. Not until the 1990s with the development of new low-water-usage toilets, which could save between 18,000 and 26,400 gallons of water a year, would new standards be established to reduce the use of water, an increasingly precious natural resource.

**QUESTION FOR ANALYSIS**

- Why does the successful introduction of new technologies often involve a system of inventions rather than a single invention?
Built up for families of a particular income level, certain neighborhoods and suburbs developed remarkably similar standards for lot size and house design. Two-story houses with front porches, set back thirty feet from the sidewalk, became the norm in many neighborhoods. Commuters who rode the new street railways out from the city center could identify the social class of the suburban dwellers along the way as readily as a geologist might distinguish different strata on a washed-out riverbank.

By 1900, whirring trolley cars and hissing steam powered trains had burst the boundaries of the compact midcentury city. As they expanded, cities often annexed contiguous suburbs. Within this enlarged city, sharp dissimilarities in building height and neighborhood quality set off business sectors from fashionable residential avenues and differentiated squalid manufacturing districts from parklike suburban subdivisions. Musing about urban America in 1902, James F. Muirhead, a popular Scottish guidebook author, wrote that New York and other U.S. cities reminded him of “a lady in a ball costume, with diamonds in her ears, and her toes out at her boots.”

Manners and Morals

Several fundamental assumptions shaped the Victorian worldview. First, human nature was malleable: people could improve themselves. Second, work had social value: working hard not only developed self-discipline but also helped advance the progress of the nation. Finally, good manners and the cultivation of literature and art ennobled society. Although these genteeel assumptions were sometimes ignored, they were held up as universal standards.

Victorian morality stressed the importance of manners and social rituals. Middle-and upper-class families in the 1870s and 1880s increasingly defined their own social standing in terms not only of income but also of behavior. Good manners, including knowledge of dining and entertaining etiquette, and good posture became important marks of status.

In her popular advice book, *The American Woman’s Home* (1869), Catharine Beecher (the sister of Henry Ward Beecher) displayed the typical Victorian self-consciousness about proper manners. The following dinner-table behaviors, she said, should be avoided by those of “good breeding”:

- Reaching over another person’s plate; standing up to reach distant articles, instead of asking to have them passed . . . using the table-cloth instead of napkins; eating fast, and in a noisy manner; putting large pieces in the mouth; . . . [and] picking the teeth at the table.

For Beecher and other molders of manners, meals became important rituals that differentiated the social classes. The elaborate china and silver that wealthy families exclusively possessed also provided telltale clues to a family’s level of refinement and sophistication.

The Victorian code—with its emphasis on morals, manners, and proper behavior—thus heightened the sense of class differences and created visible distinctions among social groups. Victorian Americans made bold claims about their interest in helping others improve themselves. More often than not, however, their self-righteous, intensely
moralistic outlook simply widened the gap that income disparities had already opened.

The Cult of Domesticity

Victorian views on morality and culture, coupled with the need to make decisions about a mountain of domestic products, had a subtle but important effect on middle-class expectations about women’s role within the home. From the 1840s on, architects, clergymen, and other promoters of the so-called cult of domesticity had idealized the home as “the woman’s sphere.” They praised the home as a protected retreat where women could express their maternal gifts, including sensitivity toward children and an aptitude for religion. “The home is the wife’s province,” asserted one writer; “it is her natural field of labor...to govern and direct its interior management.”

During the 1880s and 1890s, Victorian advocates of the cult of domesticity added a new obligation to foster an artistic environment that would nurture her family’s cultural improvement. Houses became statements of cultural aspiration with front parlors cluttered with artwork and curiosities. Excluded from the world of business and commerce, many middle- and upper-class women directed their energies to decorating their homes, seeking to make the home, as one advice book suggested, “a place of repose, a refuge from the excitement and distractions of outside...provided with every attainable means of rest and recreation.”

Not all middle-class women pursued this domestic ideal. For some, housework and family responsibilities overwhelmed the concern for artistic accomplishment. For others, the artistic ideal was not to their taste. Sixteen-year-old Mary Putnam complained privately to a friend that she played the piano because of “an abstract general idea...of a father coming home regularly tired at night (from the plow, I believe the usual legend runs), and being soothed by the brilliant yet touching performance of a sweet only daughter upon the piano.” She then confessed that she detested the piano. In the 1880s and 1890s, as middle- and upper-class women sought other outlets for their creative energies in settlement-house work, social reform, and women’s club activities, the older domestic ideal began to unravel.

Department Stores

Although Victorian social thought justified the privileges of the well-to-do, many people found it difficult to shake the thriftiness of their early years and accept the new preoccupation with accumulation and display. To lure these consumers, merchandisers in the 1880s stressed the high quality and low cost of the objects they sold, encouraging Americans to loosen their purse strings and enjoy prosperity without reservations. This argument particularly appealed to women who, to provide for their families, now had to shop for soap, canned foods, and other products formerly made at home.

Department stores set the standard for consumption. In the final quarter of the nineteenth century, Rowland H. Macy in New York, John Wanamaker in Philadelphia, and Marshall Field in Chicago built giant department stores that transformed the shopping experience for their middle- and upper-class patrons. The stores advertised “rock-bottom” prices and engaged in price wars. To avoid keeping their stock too long, they held giant end-of-the-season sales at drastically marked-down prices. Department stores made shopping an exciting activity. Rapid

TRADE CARD, CA. 1880 For middle-and upper-class Victorian families, the front parlor, with its elaborate curtains and artwork, reflected the domestic ideal. Like the sleeping dog in the picture, pets were seen as appropriate means for teaching children kindness, compassion, and discipline. (Picture Research Consultants & Archives)
turnover of merchandise created a sense of constant novelty. With stained-glass skylights, marble staircases, sparkling chandeliers, and plush carpets, the large urban department store functioned as a workplace for the lower classes and as a social club for comfortably fixed women. For those who could afford it, shopping became an adventure, a form of entertainment, and a way to affirm their place in society.

The Transformation of Higher Education

At a time when relatively few Americans had even a high school education and only 4 percent of the nation’s eighteen- to twenty-one-year-olds were enrolled in institutions of higher learning, colleges and universities represented another stronghold of the business and professional elite.

Wealthy capitalists gained status and a measure of immortality by endowing colleges and universities. Leland Stanford and his wife, Jane Lathrop Stanford, launched Stanford University in 1885 with a bequest of $24 million; John D. Rockefeller donated $34 million to the University of Chicago in 1891. Industrialists and businessmen dominated the boards of trustees of most educational institutions.

Not only the classroom experience but also social contacts and athletic activities—especially football—prepared affluent young men for later responsibilities in business and the professions. Adapted by American college students in the 1860s from English rugby, football became an elite sport played by college teams. But the game, initially played without pads or helmets, was marred by violence. In 1905, eighteen students died of playing-field injuries. Many college presidents dismissed football as a dangerous waste of time and money. In 1873, when the University of Michigan challenged Cornell to a game in Ann Arbor, Cornell’s president Andrew D. White huffily telegraphed back, “I will not permit thirty men to travel four hundred miles merely to agitate a bag of wind.”

But eager alumni and coaches strongly defended the new sport. Some—among them Henry Lee Higginson, the Civil War veteran and Boston banker who gave Harvard “Soldiers’ Field” stadium as a memorial to those who had died in battle—praised football as a character-building sport. Others, including famed Yale coach Walter Camp, insisted that football could function as a surrogate frontier experience in an increasingly urbanized society. By 1900, collegiate football had become a popular fall ritual, and team captains were campus heroes.

More than 150 new colleges and universities were founded between 1880 and 1900, and enrollments more than doubled. While wealthy capitalists endowed some institutions, others, such as the state universities in the South and Midwest, were financed largely through public funds generated from public land sales under the Morrill Land Grant Act (1862). Many colleges were also founded and funded by religious denominations.

Following the precedent set by Oberlin College in 1836, coeducational private colleges and public universities in the Midwest enrolled increasing numbers of women. In the East, Columbia, Brown, and Harvard universities admitted women to the affiliated but separate institutions of Barnard (1889), Pembroke (1891), and Radcliffe (1894), respectively. Some colleges—Mount Holyoke (1837), Vassar (1865), Wellesley and Smith (1875), and Bryn Mawr (1884)—were founded solely for women. The generation of women educated at female institutions in the late nineteenth century developed
the self-confidence to break with the Victorian ideal of passive womanhood and to compete with men by displaying strength, aggressiveness, and intelligence—popularly considered male attributes. Nationally, the percentage of colleges admitting women jumped from 30 percent to 71 percent between 1880 and 1900. By the turn of the century, women made up more than one-third of the total college-student population.

At the university level, innovative presidents such as Cornell’s Andrew D. White and Harvard’s Charles W. Eliot, influenced by new discoveries in science and medicine, sought to change the focus of higher education. In the 1850s, most physicians had attended medical school for only two sixteen-week terms. They typically received their degrees without ever having visited a hospital or examined a patient. The Civil War exposed the abysmal state of American medical knowledge. Twice as many soldiers died from infections as from wounds. Doctors were so poorly trained and ignorant about sanitation that they often infected soldiers’ injuries when they probed wounds with hands wiped on pus-stained aprons. “The ignorance and general incompetency of the average graduate of American medical schools, at the time when he receives the degree which turns him loose upon the community,” wrote Eliot in 1870, “is something horrible to contemplate.”

In the 1880s and 1890s, leading medical professors, many of whom had studied in France and Germany, began restructuring American medical education. Using the experimental method developed by German scientists, they insisted that all medical students be trained in biology, chemistry, and physics, including working in a laboratory. Although medical school reform improved health care in some areas, it also effectively shut out African-American and poor women who could not afford the tuition. New educational and professional standards, similarly, were established for architects, engineers, and lawyers.

These changes were part of a larger transformation in higher education, the rise of a new kind of institution, the research university. Unlike the best of the mid-nineteenth-century colleges, which focused on teaching Latin and Greek, theology, logic, and mathematics, the new research universities offered courses in a wide variety of subject areas, established professional schools, and encouraged faculty members to pursue basic research. At Cornell University, President Andrew D. White’s objective was to create an environment “where any person can find instruction in any study.” At Cornell, the University of Wisconsin at Madison, Johns Hopkins, Harvard, and other institutions, this new conception of higher education laid the groundwork for the central role that America’s universities would play in the intellectual, cultural, and scientific life of the twentieth century.

Reforming the Working Class

The contrast between the affluent world of the college educated middle and upper classes and the gritty lives of the working class was most graphically on display in the nation’s growing urban centers, where immigrant newcomers reshaped political and social institutions to meet their own needs. If fancy department stores and elegant hotels furnished new social spaces for the middle and upper classes, saloons became the poor man’s club, and dance halls became single women’s home away from home. While the rich and the wellborn looked suspiciously at lower-class recreational activities and sought to force the poor to change their ways, working-class Americans, the immigrant newcomers in particular, fought to preserve their own distinctive way of life. Indeed, the late nineteenth century witnessed an ongoing battle to eradicate social drinking and curb lower-class recreational activities.

“...is something horrible to contemplate.”
Battling Poverty

Stunned by the levels of poverty and suffering in the expanding industrial cities, middle-class city leaders sought comprehensive solutions for relieving poverty. Jacob Riis and the first generation of reformers believed that immigrants’ lack of self-discipline and their unsanitary living conditions caused their problems. Consequently, Riis and his peers focused on moral improvement and exposing squalid tenement housing. Only later would Jane Addams, Florence Kelley, and other settlement-house workers examine the crippling impact of low wages and dangerous working conditions. Although many reformers genuinely sympathized with the suffering of the lower classes, the humanitarians often turned their campaigns to help the destitute into missions to Americanize the immigrants and eliminate customs that they perceived as offensive and self-destructive.

Poverty-relief workers first targeted their efforts at the young, who were thought to be most malleable. Energized by the religious revivals of the 1830s and 1840s, Protestant reformers started charitable societies to help transient youths and abandoned street children. In 1843, Robert M. Hartley, a former employee of the New York Temperance Society, organized the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor to help poor families. Hartley’s voluntaristic approach was supplemented by the more coercive tactics of Charles Loring Brace, who founded the New York Children’s Aid Society in 1853. Brace admired “these little traders of the city . . . battling for a hard living in the snow and mud of the street” but worried that they might join the city’s “dangerous classes.” Brace established dormitories, reading rooms, and workshops where the boys could learn practical skills; he also swept orphaned children off the streets, shipped them to the country, and placed them with families to work as farm hands.

Where Brace’s Children’s Aid Society gave adolescents an alternative to living in the slums, the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), founded in England in 1841 and exported to America ten years later, provided housing and wholesome recreation for country boys who had migrated to the city. The Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) similarly provided housing and a day nursery for young women and their children. Both organizations subjected their members to curfews and expelled them for drinking and other forbidden behavior.

By 1900, more than fifteen hundred YMCAs and YWCAs served as havens for nearly a quarter-million young men and women. But YMCA and YWCA leaders reached only a small portion of the young adult population. Although charity workers made some progress in their efforts to aid youth, the strategy was too narrowly focused to stem the rising tide of urban problems.
New Approaches to Social Reform

The inability of the Children’s Aid Society, YMCA, YWCA, and other relief organizations to cope with the explosive growth of the urban poor in the 1870s and 1880s convinced reformers to search for new allies in the fight against poverty. One effective agency was the Salvation Army. A church established along pseudomilitary lines in England in 1865 by Methodist minister “General” William Booth, the Salvation Army sent uniformed volunteers to the United States in 1880 to provide food, shelter, and temporary employment for families. Its members ran soup kitchens and day nurseries and dispatched its “slum brigades” to carry the message of morality to the immigrant poor. The army’s strategy was simple. Attract the poor with marching bands and lively preaching; follow up with offers of food, assistance, and employment; and then teach them the solid middle-class virtues of temperance, hard work, and self-discipline.

The New York Charity Organization Society (COS), founded in 1882 by Josephine Shaw Lowell, implemented a similar approach to poor relief. To make aid to the poor more efficient, Lowell and the COS leaders divided New York City into districts, compiled files on all aid recipients, and sent “friendly visitors,” who were trained, salaried women, into the tenements to counsel families on how to improve their lives. Convinced that moral deficiencies lay at the root of poverty and that the “promiscuous charity” of overlapping church welfare agencies undermined the desire to work, the COS tried to foster self-sufficiency in its charges. In 1891, Lowell helped found the Consumers’ League of New York, which encouraged women to buy only from manufacturers who paid fair wages and maintained decent working conditions.

Although the COS did coordinate relief efforts and developed helpful statistics on the extent of poverty, critics justly accused the society of seeking more to control the poor than to alleviate their suffering. One of the manuals, for example, stressed the importance of introducing “messy housekeepers” to the “pleasures of a cheery, well-ordered home.” Unable to see slum problems from the vantage point of the poor, they failed, for the most part, in their underlying objective: to convert the poor to their own standards of morality and decorum.

The Moral-Purity Campaign

While Josephine Shaw Lowell and other like-minded social disciplinarians worked to eradicate urban poverty, other reformers pushed for tougher measures against sin and immorality. In 1872, Anthony Comstock, a pious young dry-goods clerk, founded the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice. The organization demanded that municipal authorities close down gambling and lottery operations and censor obscene publications.

Nothing symbolized the contested terrain between middle- and lower-class culture better than the fight over prostitution. Considered socially degenerate by some and a source of recreation by others, prostitution both exploited women and offered them a steady income and a measure of personal freedom. After the Civil War, the number of brothels expanded rapidly. In the 1880s, saloons, tenements, and cabarets hired prostitutes of their own. Even though immigrant women do not appear to have made up the majority of big-city prostitutes, reformers often labeled them as the major source of the problem.

In 1892, brothels, along with gambling dens and saloons, became targets for the reform efforts of New York Presbyterian minister Charles Parkhurst. Blaming the “slimy, oozy soil of Tammany Hall” (the Democratic organization that dominated New York City politics, discussed in the next chapter) and the New York City police—“the dirtiest, crooked-est, and ugliest lot of men ever combined in semi-military array outside of Japan and Turkey”—for the city’s rampant evils, he organized the City Vigilance League to clean up the city. Two years later a nonpartisan Committee of Seventy elected a new mayor who pressured city officials to enforce the laws against prostitution, gambling, and Sunday liquor sales.

The purity campaign lasted scarcely three years. The reform coalition quickly fell apart. New York City’s population was too large, and its ethnic constituencies too diverse, for middle- and upper-class reformers to curb all the illegal activities flourishing within the sprawling metropolis.

The Social Gospel

In the 1870s and 1880s, a handful of Protestant ministers who served upper-class congregations and were appalled by slum conditions took a different approach to helping impoverished city dwellers. These ministers argued that the rich and the well-born had a Christian responsibility to do something about urban poverty.

William S. Rainsford, the Irish-born minister of New York City’s Saint George’s Episcopal Church, pioneered the development of the so-called institutional church movement. Large downtown churches in once-elite districts that had been overrun by immigrants would provide their new neighbors with social services as well as a place to worship. With the financial help of J. Pierpont Morgan, a warden of his church, Rainsford organized a boys’
club, built church recreational facilities for the destitute on the Lower East Side, and established an industrial training program.

Other Protestant ministers, led by Washington Gladden, a Congregational clergyman in Columbus, Ohio, launched the Social Gospel movement in the 1870s. Gladden insisted that true Christianity commits men and women to fight social injustice wherever it exists. Thus, in response to the wave of violent strikes in 1877, he urged church leaders to mediate the conflict between business and labor. Their attempt to do so was unsuccessful.

If Gladden set the tone for the Social Gospel, Walter Rauschenbusch, a minister at a German Baptist church in New York’s notorious “Hell’s Kitchen” neighborhood, articulated the movement’s central philosophy. Educated in Germany, Rauschenbusch argued that a truly Christian society would unite all churches, reorganize the industrial system, and work for international peace. Rauschenbusch’s appeal for Christian unity led to the formation of the Federal Council of Churches in 1908, but his other goals were never achieved. Although the Social Gospel attracted only a handful of Protestants, their earnest voices blended with a growing chorus of critics bemoaning the nation’s urban woes.

The Settlement-House Movement

In the 1880s, a younger generation of charity workers led by Jane Addams developed a new weapon against destitution: the settlement house. Like the Social Gospelers, these reformers recognized that the hardships of slum life were often beyond the individual’s control. Living in the poor neighborhoods where they worked, they could see firsthand “the struggle for existence, which is so much harsher among people near the edge of pauperism.”

The youngest daughter of a successful Illinois businessman, Jane Addams purchased a dilapidated mansion in Chicago’s south side in 1889 and opened it as Hull House. Putting the middle-class ideal of true womanhood into action, Addams turned Hull House into a social center for immigrants. She invited them to plays; sponsored art projects; held classes in English, civics, cooking, and dressmaking; and encouraged them to preserve their traditional crafts. She set up a kindergarten, a laundry, an employment bureau, and a day nursery for working mothers. Hull House also sponsored recreational and athletic programs and dispensed legal aid and health care.

In the hope of upgrading the filthy and overcrowded housing in its environs, Addams and her coworkers conducted surveys of city housing conditions and pressured politicians to enforce sanitation regulations. For a time, demonstrating her principle of direct engagement with the lives of the poor, Addams even served as garbage inspector for her local ward.

By 1895, at least fifty settlement houses had opened in cities around the nation. Settlement-house leaders trained a generation of young college students, mostly women, many of whom would later serve as state and local government officials. Florence Kelley, for example, who had worked at Hull House, became the chief factory inspector for Illinois in 1893. For Kelley as for other female settlement workers, settlement houses functioned as a supportive sisterhood of reform. Many settlement-house veterans would later draw on their experience to play an influential role in the regulatory movements of the Progressive Era (covered in Chapter 21). Through their sympathetic attitudes toward the immigrants and their systematic publication of data about slum conditions, settlement-house workers gave Americans renewed hope that urban problems could be overcome.

In their attempt to promote class cooperation and social harmony, however, settlement houses had mixed success. Although many immigrants appreciated the settlement houses’ resources and activities, they believed that the reformers had little interest in helping them gain political power. Settlement-house workers did tend to overlook immigrant organizations and their leaders. In 1894, Hull House attracted two thousand visitors per week, but this was only a fraction of the more than seventy thousand people who lived within six blocks of the building. “They’re like the rest,” complained one immigrant, “a bunch of people planning for us and deciding what is good for us without consulting us or taking us into their confidence.”

Working-Class Leisure in the Immigrant City

In colonial America, preachers had warned against leisure and idleness as temptations to sin. In the rural culture of the early nineteenth century, the unremitting routines of farm labor left little time for relaxation. Family picnics, horse races, county fairs, revival meetings, and Fourth of July and Christmas celebrations had provided occasional permissible diversions. But most Americans continued to view leisure activities skeptically. Henry Clay Work’s popular song “My Grandfather’s Clock” (1876), which praised the ancient timepiece for “wasting no time” and working “ninety years, without slumbering,” bore witness to the tenacity of this deep-seated reverence for work and suspicion of play.
As urban populations shot up after the Civil War, striking new patterns of leisure and amusement emerged, most notably among the urban working class. After spending long hours in factories, in mills, behind department-store counters, or as domestic servants in the homes of the wealthy, working-class Americans craved relaxation and diversion. They thronged the streets, patronized saloons and dance halls, cheered at boxing matches and baseball games, and organized group picnics and holiday celebrations. As amusement parks, vaudeville theaters, sporting clubs, and racetracks provided further outlets for workers' need for entertainment, leisure became a big business catering to a mass public rather than to a wealthy elite.

For millions of working-class Americans, leisure time took on increasing importance as factory work became routinized and impersonal. Although many recreational activities involved both men and women, others attracted one gender in particular. Saloons offered an intensely male environment where patrons could share good stories, discuss and bet on sporting events, and momentarily put aside pressures of job and family. Young working women preferred to share confidences with friends in informal social clubs, tried out new fashions in street promenading, and found excitement in neighborhood dance halls and amusement parks.

Streets, Saloons, and Boxing Matches

No segment of the population had a greater need for amusement and recreation than the urban working class. Hours of tedious, highly disciplined, and physically exhausting labor left workers tired and thirsting for excitement and escape from their cramped housing quarters. In 1889, a banner carried by a carpenters' union summed up their wishes: "EIGHT HOURS FOR WORK, EIGHT HOURS FOR REST, AND EIGHT HOURS FOR WHAT WE WILL."

City streets provided recreation that anyone could afford. Relaxing after a day's work, shop girls and laborers clustered on busy corners, watching shouting pushcart peddlers and listening to organ grinders and street musicians play familiar melodies. For a penny or a nickel, they could buy bagels, baked potatoes, soda, and other foods and drinks. In the summer,
When the heat and humidity in tenement apartments reached unbearable levels, the streets became a hive of neighborhood social life. One immigrant fondly recalled his boyhood on the streets of New York’s Lower East Side: “Something was always happening, and our attention was continually being shifted from one excitement to another.”

The streets were open to all, but other leisure institutions drew mainly a male clientele. For example, in cities with a strong German immigrant presence like Baltimore, Milwaukee, and Cincinnati, gymnastic clubs (called Turnverein) and singing societies (Gesangverein) provided both companionship and the opportunity to perpetuate old-world cultural traditions.

For workmen of all ethnic backgrounds, saloons offered companionship, conviviality, and five-cent beer, often with a free lunch thrown in. New York City had an estimated ten thousand saloons by 1900 and Denver nearly five hundred. As neighborhood gathering places, saloons reinforced group identity and became centers for immigrant politics. Saloonkeepers, who often doubled as local ward bosses and turned out the vote in their neighborhoods, performed small services for their patrons, including finding jobs and writing letters for illiterate immigrants. Sports memorabilia and pictures of prominent prizefighters adorned saloon walls. With their rich mahogany bars, etched glass, shiny brass rails, and elegant mirrors, saloons provided patrons with a taste of high-toned luxury. Although working-class women rarely joined their husbands at the saloon, they might send a son or daughter to the corner pub to fetch a “growler”—a large tin pail of beer.

The conventions of saloon culture thus stood in marked contrast to both the socially isolating routines of factory labor and the increasingly private and family-centered social life of the middle class. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to view the old-time saloon through a haze of sentimental nostalgia. Prostitution and crime flourished in the rougher saloons. Moreover, drunken husbands sometimes beat their wives and children, squandered their limited income, and lost their jobs. The pervasiveness of alcoholism was devastating. Temperance reformers, in their attack on saloons, targeted a widespread social problem.

The Rise of Professional Sports

Contrary to the prevailing myth, schoolboy Abner Doubleday did not invent baseball in Cooperstown, New York, in 1839. As an English game called rounders, the pastime had existed in one form or another since the seventeenth century. If Americans did not create baseball, they did turn it into a major professional sport. In 1845, the first organized baseball team, the New York Knickerbockers, was formed. In the 1860s, rules were codified and the sport assumed its modern form. Overhand pitches replaced underhand tosses. Fielders wore gloves, games were standardized at nine innings, and bases were spaced ninety feet apart.

In that same decade, promoters organized professional clubs and began to charge admission and compete for players. The Cincinnati Red Stockings, the first team to put its players under contract for the whole season, gained fame in 1869 by touring the country and ending the season with fifty-seven wins and no losses. Team owners organized the National League in 1876, took control from the players by requiring them to sign contracts that barred them from playing for rival organizations, and limited each city to one professional team. Soon the owners were filling baseball parks with crowds of ten to twelve thousand fans and earning enormous profits. By the 1890s, baseball had become big business.

Although baseball attracted a national following from all social levels, the working class particularly...
Louisville's Kentucky Derby became an important social event for the rich, but professional boxing aroused more passionate devotion among laborers. Bare-knuckled prizefighting became a testing ground where men could demonstrate their toughness and physical prowess.

For many working-class Americans, heavyweight fighter John L. Sullivan, "the Boston Strong Boy" personified these traits. Of Irish immigrant stock, Sullivan began boxing in 1877 at the age of nineteen. His first professional fight came in 1880 when he knocked out John Donaldson, "the Champion of the West," in a Cincinnati beer hall. With his massive physique, handlebar mustache, and arrogant swagger, Sullivan was enormously popular among immigrants. Barnstorming across the country, he vanquished a succession of local strongmen, invariably wearing his trademark green tights with an American flag wrapped around his middle. Yet, Sullivan refused to fight blacks, supposedly in deference to the wishes of his fans. This policy conveniently allowed him to avoid facing the finest boxer of the 1880s, the Australian black, Peter Jackson.

Sullivan loved drink and high living, and by the end of the eighties he was sadly out of shape. But when the editor of the Police Gazette, a sensational tabloid, designed a new heavyweight championship belt—allegedly containing two hundred ounces of silver and encrusted with diamonds and pure gold—and
Vaudeville, Amusement Parks, and Dance Halls

In contrast to the male preserve of saloons and prizefights, the world of vaudeville, amusement parks, and neighborhood dance halls welcomed all comers regardless of gender. Some of them proved particularly congenial to working-class women.

Vaudeville evolved out of antebellum minstrel shows that featured white singers made up as blacks. The shows typically opened with a trained animal routine or a dance number, followed by a musical interlude. Comic skits then ridiculed the trials of urban life, satirizing police and municipal ineptitude, poking fun at immigrant accents, and mining a rich vein of broad ethnic humor and stereotypes. Blackface skits were sometimes included. After a highbrow operatic aria and acts by ventriloquists, pantomimes, and magicians, the program ended with a “flash” finale such as flying-trapeze artists swinging against a black background. By the 1880s, vaudeville was drawing larger crowds than any other form of theater.

The white working class’s fascination with vaudeville’s blackface acts has been the subject of considerable recent scrutiny by historians. Some have interpreted it as a way for the white working class awarded it to Sullivan’s rival Jake Kilrain, the champion had to defend himself. The two met on a sweltering, hundred-degree day in New Orleans in July 1889 for the last bare-knuckles championship match. After seventy-five short but grueling rounds, Kilrain’s managers threw in the towel. Newspapers around the nation bannered the story. Contemptuously returning the championship belt to the Police Gazette after having had it appraised at $175, Sullivan went on the road to star in a melodrama written specifically for him. Playing the role of a blacksmith, he (in the words of a recent historian of bare-knuckles boxing) “pounded an anvil, beat a bully, and mutilated his lines.” But his fans did not care; he was one of them, and they adored him. As one admirer wrote,

His colors are the Stars and Stripes,
He also wears the green,
And he’s the grandest slugger that
The ring has ever seen.
to mock middle-class ideals. By pretending to act like the popular stereotypes of blacks, white working-class youths could challenge traditional family structures, the virtue of sexual self-denial, and adult expectations about working hard. In this view popular culture was making fun of the ideals of thrift and propriety being promoted in marketplace and domestic ideology. Other historians have argued that blackface buffoonery, with its grotesque, demeaning caricatures of African-Americans, reinforced prejudice against blacks and restricted their escape from lower-class status. Paradoxically, therefore, the popularity of blackface vaudeville acts reinforced white racial solidarity and strengthened the expanding wall separating whites and African-Americans.

Where vaudeville offered psychological escape from the stresses of working-class life, amusement parks provided physical escape. New York's Coney Island, a section of Brooklyn's oceanfront evolved into a resort for the masses in the 1870s. At Coney Island, young couples went dancing, rode through the dark Tunnel of Love, sped down the dizzying roller coaster in Steeplechase Park, or watched belly dancers in the carnival sideshows. Customers were encouraged to surrender to the spirit of play, forget the demands of the industrial world, and lose themselves in fantasy.

By the end of the nineteenth century, New York City had well over three hundred thousand female wage earners, most of them young, unmarried women working as seamstresses, laundresses, typists, domestic servants, and department-store clerks. For this army of low-paid young working women and their counterparts in other cities, amusement parks exerted a powerful lure. Here they could meet friends, spend time with young men beyond the watchful eyes of their parents, show off their new dresses, and try out the latest dance steps. As a twenty-year-old German immigrant woman who worked as a servant in a wealthy household observed, I have heard some of the high people with whom I have been living say that Coney Island is not tony. The trouble is that these high people don't know how to dance. I have to laugh when I see them at their balls and parties. If only I could get out on the floor and show them how—they would be astonished.

For such women, the brightly decorated dance pavilion, the exciting music, and the spell of a warm summer night could seem a magical release from the drudgery of daily life.

Ragtime

Nothing could illustrate more sharply the differences between middle- and working-class culture than the contrasting styles of popular music they favored. The middle class preferred hymns or songs that conveyed a moral lesson. The working class delighted in ragtime, which originated in the 1880s with black musicians in the saloons and brothels of the South and Midwest and was played strictly for entertainment.

Ragtime developed out of the rich tradition of sacred and secular songs through which African-Americans had long eased the burdens of their lives. Like spirituals, ragtime used syncopated rhythms and complex harmonies, but it blended these with marching-band musical structures to create a distinctive style. A favorite of “honky-tonk” piano players, ragtime was introduced to the broader public in the 1890s and became a national sensation.

The reasons for the sudden ragtime craze were complex. Inventive, playful, with catchy syncopations and an infectious rhythm in the bass clef, the music displayed an originality that had an appeal all its own. Part of ragtime's popularity also came from its origin in brothels and its association with blacks, who were widely stereotyped in the 1890s as sexual, sensual, and uninhibited by the rigid Victorian social conventions that restricted whites. The “wild” and complex rhythms of ragtime were widely interpreted to be a freer and more “natural” expression of elemental feelings about love and sex.

Ragtime's great popularity proved a mixed blessing for blacks. It testified to the achievements of brilliant composers like Scott Joplin, helped break down the barriers faced by blacks in the music industry, and contributed to a spreading rebellion against the repressiveness of Victorian standards. But ragtime simply confirmed some whites' stereotype of blacks as primitive and sensual, a bias that underlay the racism of the period and helped justify segregation and discrimination.

Cultures in Conflict

Even within the elite and middle classes, Victorian morality and genteel cultural standards were never totally accepted. As the century ended, increasing numbers of people questioned these beliefs. Women stood at the center of the era's cultural turbulence. Thwarted by a restrictive code of feminine propriety, they made their dissatisfaction heard.

The rise of women's clubs, the growth of women's colleges, and even the 1890s bicycle fad testified to the emergence of what some began to call the “new woman.”

At the same time, a widening chasm divided the well-to-do from urban working-class immigrants. In no period of American history have class conflicts—cultural as well as economic—been more open and raw. As middle-class leaders nervously eyed the sometimes disorderly culture of city streets, saloons,
boxing clubs, dance halls, and amusement parks, they saw a challenge to their own cultural and social values. Some middle-class reformers promoted the public school as a way to impose middle-class values on the urban masses. Others battled urban “vice” and “immorality.” But ultimately it was the polite mores of the middle class, not urban working-class culture, that proved more vulnerable. By 1900, the Victorian social and moral ethos was crumbling on every front.

**The Genteel Tradition and Its Critics**

What was this genteel culture that aroused such opposition? In the 1870s and 1880s, a group of upper-class writers and magazine editors, led by Harvard art history professor Charles Elliot Norton and New York editors Richard Watson Gilder of *The Century* magazine and E. L. Godkin of *The Nation*, codified Victorian standards for literature and the arts. They campaigned to improve American taste in interior furnishings, textiles, ceramics, wallpaper, and books. By fashioning rigorous criteria for excellence in writing and design, they hoped to create a coherent national artistic culture.

In the 1880s Norton, Godkin, and Gilder, joined by the editors of other highbrow periodicals such as the *Atlantic Monthly* and *North American Review*, set up new guidelines for serious literature. They lectured the middle class about the value of high culture and the insights to be gained from painting and music. They censored their own publications to remove all sexual allusions, disrespectful treatments of Christianity, and unhappy endings. Expanding their combined circulation to nearly two hundred thousand copies, Godkin and the other editors of “quality” periodicals created an important forum for serious writing. Novelists Henry James, who published virtually all of his work in the *Atlantic*, and William Dean Howells, who served as editor of the same magazine, helped lead this elite literary establishment. James believed that “it is art that makes life…. [There is] no substitute whatever for [its] force and beauty…”

This interest in art for art’s sake paralleled a broader crusade called the “aesthetic movement,” led in England by William Morris, Oscar Wilde, and other art critics, who sought to bring art into every facet of life. In America, Candace Wheeler and other reformers made its influence felt through the work of architects, jewelers, and interior decorators.

Although the magazines initially provided an important forum for new writers, their editors’ elitism and desire to control the nation’s literary standards soon aroused opposition. Samuel Langhorne Clemens, better known as *Mark Twain*, spoke for many young writers when he declared that he was through with “literature and all that bosh.” Attacking aristocratic literary conventions, Twain and other authors who shared his concerns explored new forms of fiction and worked to broaden its appeal to the general public.

These efforts to chart new directions for American literature rested on fundamental changes taking place in the publishing industry. To compete with elite periodicals costing twenty-five to thirty-five cents, new magazines like *Ladies’ Home Journal*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *McClure’s* lowered their prices to a dime or fifteen cents and tripled or quadrupled their circulation. Supporting themselves through advertising, these magazines encouraged new trends in fiction while mass-marketing new products. Their editors sought writers who could provide accurate depictions of the “whirlpool of real life” and create a new civic consciousness to heal the class divisions of American society.

Some of these authors have been called regionalists because they captured the distinctive dialect and details of local life in their environs. In *The Country of
the Pointed Firs (1896), for example, Sarah Orne Jewett wrote of the New England village life that she knew in South Berwick, Maine. Others, most notably William Dean Howells, have been called realists because of their focus on the truthful depiction of the commonplace and the everyday, especially in urban areas. Still others have been categorized as naturalists because their novels and stories deny free will and stress the ways in which life’s outcomes are determined by economic and psychological forces. Stephen Crane’s Maggie: A Girl of the Streets (1892), a bleak story of an innocent girl’s exploitation and ultimate suicide in an urban slum, generally is considered the first naturalistic American novel. Yet in practice, these categories are imprecise and often overlap. What many of these writers shared was a skepticism about literary conventions and an intense desire to understand the society around them and portray it in words.

The careers of Mark Twain and Theodore Dreiser highlight the changes in the publishing industry and the evolution of new forms of writing. Both authors grew up in the Midwest, outside the East Coast literary establishment. Twain was born near Hannibal, Missouri, in 1835, and Dreiser in Terre Haute, Indiana, in 1871. As young men, both worked as newspaper reporters and traveled widely. Both learned from direct and sometimes bitter experience about the greed, speculation, and fraud that figured centrally in Gilded Age life.

Of the two, Twain more incessantly sought a mass-market audience. With his drooping mustache, white hair, and white suits, Twain turned himself into a media personality, lecturing from coast to coast, founding his own publishing house, and using door-to-door salesmen to sell his books. The name Mark Twain became his trademark, identifying him to readers as a literary celebrity much as the labels Coca-Cola and Ivory Soap won instant consumer recognition. Although Dreiser possessed neither Twain’s flamboyant personality nor his instinct for salesmanship, he, too, learned to crank out articles.

Drawing on their own experiences, Twain and Dreiser wrote about the human impact of the wrenching social changes taking place around them: the flow of people to the cities and the relentless scramble for power, wealth, and fame. In The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1884), Twain tells a story of two runaways, the rebellious Huck and the slave Jim, drifting down the Mississippi in search of freedom. Their physical journey, which contrasts idyllic life on the raft with the tawdry, fraudulent world of small riverfront towns, is a journey of identity that brings with it a deeper understanding of contemporary American society.

Dreiser’s Sister Carrie (1900) also tells of a journey. In this case, the main character, Carrie Meeber, an innocent girl on her way from her Wisconsin farm home to Chicago, is seduced by a traveling salesman and then moves in with the married proprietor of a fancy saloon. Driven by her desire for expensive department-store clothes and lavish entertainment, Carrie is an opportunist incapable of feeling guilt. She follows her married lover to New York, knowing that he has stolen the receipts from his saloon, abandons him when his money runs out, and pursues her own career in the theater.

Twain and Dreiser broke decisively with the genteel tradition’s emphasis on manners and decorum. Century magazine readers complained that Huckleberry Finn was coarse and “destitute of a single redeeming quality.” The publisher of Sister Carrie was so repelled by Dreiser’s novel that he printed only a thousand copies (to fulfill the legal terms of his contract) and then stored them in a warehouse, refusing to promote them.

Growing numbers of scholars and critics similarly challenged the self-serving certitudes of Victorian mores, including assumptions that moral worth and economic standing were closely linked and that the status quo of the 1870s and 1880s represented a social order decreed by God and nature alike. Whereas Henry George, Lester Ward, and Edward Bellamy elaborated their visions of a cooperative and harmonious society (see Chapter 18), economist Thorstein Veblen in The Theory of the Leisure Class (1899) offered a caustic critique of the lifestyles of the new capitalist elite. Raised in a Norwegian farm community in Minnesota, Veblen looked at the captains of industry and their families with a jaundiced eye, documenting their “conspicuous consumption” of expensive products and lamenting the widening gap between “those who worked without profit” and “those who profited without working.”

Within the new discipline of sociology, Annie MacLean exposed the exploitation of department-store clerks, Walter Wyckoff uncovered the hand-to-mouth existence of unskilled laborers, and W. E. B. Du Bois documented the suffering and hardships faced by blacks in Philadelphia. The publication of these social scientists’ writings, coupled with the economic depression and seething labor agitation of the 1890s, made it increasingly difficult for turn-of-the-century middle-class Americans to accept the smug, self-satisfied belief in progress and gentility that had been a hallmark of the Victorian outlook.

**Modernism in Architecture and Painting**

The challenge to the genteel tradition also found strong support among architects and painters.
By the 1890s Chicago architects William Holabird, John Wellborn Root, and others had tired of copying European designs. Breaking with established architects such as Richard Morris Hunt, the designer of French châteaux for New York's Fifth Avenue, these Chicago architects followed the lead of Louis Sullivan, who argued that a building's form should follow its function. In their view, banks should look like the financial institutions they were, not like Greek temples. Striving to create functional American design standards, the Chicago architects looked for inspiration to the future—not to the past.

The Chicago architect Frank Lloyd Wright designed “prairie-school” houses that represented a typical modernist break with past styles. Wright scorned the three-story Victorian house with its large attic and basement. His designs, which featured broad, sheltering roofs and horizontal silhouettes, used interconnected rooms to create a sense of spaciousness.

The call of modernism, with its rejection of Victorian refinement, influenced late-nineteenth-century American painting as well. The watercolors of Winslow Homer, a magazine illustrator during the Civil War, revealed nature as brutally tough and unsentimental. In Homer’s grim, elemental seascapes, lone men struggle against massive waves that constantly threaten to overwhelm them. Thomas Eakins’s canvases of swimmers, boxers, and rowers (such as his well-known Champion Single Sculls, painted in 1871) similarly captured moments of vigorous physical exertion in everyday life. While Mary Cassatt shared Eakins’s interest in everyday life, she often took as her subject the bond between mother and child, as in her painting The Bath (ca. 1891). After studying at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, she moved to Paris in 1874, where she worked closely with French Impressionist painters such as Monet and Degas.

The revolt by architects and painters against Victorian standards was symptomatic of a larger shift in middle-class thought. This shift resulted from fundamental economic changes that had spawned a far more complex social environment than that of the past. As Protestant minister Josiah Strong perceptively observed in 1898, the transition from muscle to mechanical power had “separated, as by an impassable gulf, the simple, homespun, individualistic world of the... past, from the complex, closely associated life of the present.” The increasingly evident gap between rural or small-town life—a world of quiet parlors and flickering kerosene lamps—and life in the big, glittering, electrified cities of iron and glass made nineteenth-century Americans acutely aware of differences in upbringing and wealth. Given the disparities between rich and poor, between rural and urban, and between native-born Americans and recent immigrants, it is no wonder that pious Victorian platitudes about proper manners and graceful arts seemed out of touch with the new social realities.

Distrusting the idealistic Victorian assumptions about social progress, middle-class journalists, novelists, artists, and politicians nevertheless remained divided over how to replace them. Not until the Progressive Era would social reformers draw on a new expertise in social research and an enlarged conception of the federal government’s regulatory power to break sharply with their Victorian predecessors’ social outlook.

From Victorian Lady to New Woman

Although middle-class women figured importantly in the revolt against Victorian refinement, their role was complex and ambiguous. Dissatisfaction with the cult of domesticity did not necessarily lead to open rebellion. Many women, although chafing against the constraints of deference and the assumption that they should limit their activities to the home, remained committed to playing a nurturing role within the family. In fact, early advocates of a “widened sphere” for women often fused the traditional Victorian ideal of womanhood with a firm commitment to political action.

The career of temperance leader Frances Willard illustrates how the cult of domesticity, with its celebration of special female virtues, could evolve into a broader view of women’s social and political responsibilities. Like many of her contemporaries, Willard believed that women were compassionate and nurturing by nature. She was also convinced that drinking encouraged thriftlessness and profoundly threatened family life. Resigning as dean of women and professor of English at Northwestern University in 1874, Willard devoted her energies full-time to the temperance cause. Five years later she was elected president of the newly formed Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU).

Willard took the traditional belief that women had unique moral virtues and transformed it into a rationale for political action. The domestication of politics, she asserted, would protect the family and improve public morality. Choosing as the union’s badge a bow of white ribbon, symbolizing the purity
of the home, she launched a crusade in 1880 to win the franchise for women so that they could vote to outlaw liquor. Willard soon expanded WCTU activities to include welfare work, prison reform, labor arbitration, and public health. Under her leadership the WCTU, with a membership of nearly 150,000 by 1890, became the nation’s first mass organization of women. Through it, women gained experience as lobbyists, organizers, and lecturers, in the process undercutting the assumption of “separate spheres.”

An expanding network of women’s clubs offered another means by which middle- and upper-class women could hone their skills in civic affairs, public speaking, and intellectual analysis. In the 1870s, many well-to-do women met weekly to study topics of mutual interest. These clubwomen soon became involved in social-welfare projects, public library expansion, and tenement reform. By 1892, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, an umbrella organization established that year, boasted 495 affiliates and a hundred thousand members. Middle-class black women, excluded from many white clubs, formed their own National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs in 1900.

While older women eroded the Victorian constraints placed on them by social conventions by joining women’s clubs, younger women challenged social conventions by joining the bicycling craze that swept urban America at the turn of the century. The fascination with bicycle riding developed as part of a new interest in health and physical fitness. Middle- and upper-class Americans explored various ways to improve their vigor. Some used health products such as cod liver oil and sarsaparilla for “weak blood.” Others played basketball, invented in 1891 by a physical education instructor at Springfield College in Massachusetts to keep students in shape during the winter months. But bicycling, which could be done individually or in groups, quickly became the most popular sport for those who wished to combine exercise with recreation.

Bicycles of various designs had been manufactured since the 1870s, but bicycling did not become a national craze until the invention in the 1880s of the so-called safety bicycle, with smaller wheels, ball-bearing axles, and air-filled tires. By the 1890s, over a million Americans owned bicycles.

Bicycling especially appealed to young women who had chafed under the restrictive Victorian attitudes about female exercise, which held that proper young ladies must never sweat and that the female body must be fully covered at all times. Pedaling along in a shirtwaist or “split” skirt, a woman bicyclist made an implicit feminist statement suggesting that she had broken with genteel conventions and wanted to explore new activities beyond the traditional sphere.

Changing attitudes about femininity and women’s proper role also found expression in gradually shifting ideas about marriage. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, a suffrage advocate and speaker for women’s rights, asserted that women would make an effective contribution to society only when they won economic independence from men through work outside the home (see Chapter 21). One very tangible indicator of women’s changing relationship to men was the substantial rise in the divorce rate between 1880 and 1900. In 1880, one in every twenty-one marriages ended in divorce. By 1900, the rate had climbed to one in twelve. Women who brought suit for divorce increasingly cited their husbands’ failure to act responsibly and to respect their autonomy. Accepting such arguments, courts frequently awarded the wife alimony, a monetary settlement payable by the ex-husband to support her and their children.

Women writers generally welcomed the new female commitment to independence and self-sufficiency. In the short stories of Mary Wilkins Freeman, for example, women’s expanding role is implicitly compared to the frontier ideal of freedom.
Feminist Kate Chopin pushed the debate to the extreme by having Edna Pontellier, the married heroine of her controversial 1899 novel The Awakening, violate social conventions. First Edna falls in love with another man; then she takes her own life when his ideas about women prove as narrow and traditional as those of her husband.

Despite the efforts of these and other champions of the new woman, attitudes changed slowly. The enlarged conception of women's role in society exerted its greatest influence on college-educated, middle-class women who had leisure time and could reasonably hope for success in journalism, social work, or nursing. For female immigrant factory workers and for shop girls who worked sixty hours a week to try to make ends meet, however, the ideal remained a more distant goal. Although many women were seeking more independence and control over their lives, most still viewed the home as their primary responsibility.

Public Education as an Arena of Class Conflict

While the debate over women's proper role remained largely confined to the middle class, a very different controversy, over the scope and function of public education, engaged Americans of all socioeconomic levels. This debate starkly highlighted the class and cultural divisions in late-nineteenth-century society. From the 1870s on, viewing the public schools as an instrument for indoctrinating and controlling the lower ranks of society, middle-class educators and civic leaders campaigned to expand public schooling and bring it under centralized control. Not surprisingly, the reformers' efforts aroused considerable opposition from ethnic and religious groups whose outlook and interests differed sharply from theirs.

Thanks to the crusade for universal public education started by Horace Mann and other antebellum educational reformers, most states had public school systems by the Civil War, and more than half the nation's children were receiving some formal education. But most attended school for only three or four years, and few went on to high school.

Concerned that many Americans lacked sufficient knowledge to participate wisely in public affairs or function effectively in the labor force, reformers such as William Torrey Harris worked to increase the number of years that children spent in school. First as superintendent of the St. Louis public schools in the 1870s and later as the federal commissioner of education, Harris urged teachers to instill in their students a sense of order, decorum, self-discipline, and civic loyalty. Believing that modern industrial society depended on citizens' conforming to the timetables of the factory and the train, he envisioned the schools as models of punctuality and precise scheduling: "The pupil must have his lessons ready at the appointed time, must rise at the tap of the bell, move to the line, return; in short, go through all the evolutions with equal precision."

To achieve these goals and to wrest control of the schools from neighborhood leaders and ward politicians, reform-minded educators like Harris elaborated a philosophy of public education stressing punctuality, centralized administration, compulsory-attendance laws, and a tenure system to insulate teachers from political favoritism and parental pressure. By 1900, thirty-one states required school attendance of all children from eight to fourteen years of age.

The steamroller methods used by Harris and likeminded administrators to systematize public education quickly prompted protests. New York pediatrician Joseph Mayer Rice, who toured thirty-six cities and interviewed twelve hundred teachers in 1892, scornfully criticized an educational establishment that stressed singsong memorization and prisonlike discipline.

Rice's biting attack on public education overlooked the real advances in reading and mathematics made in the previous two decades. Nationally, despite the influx of immigrants, the illiteracy rate in English for individuals ten years and older dropped from 17 percent in 1880 to 13 percent in 1890, largely because of the expansion of urban educational facilities. American high schools were also coeducational, and girls made up the majority of the students by 1900. But Rice was on target in assailing many teachers' rigid emphasis on silence, docility, and unquestioning obedience to the rules.

When a Chicago school inspector found a thirteen-year-old boy huddled in the basement of a stockyard building and ordered him back to school, the weeping boy blurted out, "[T]hey hits ye if yer don't learn, and they hits ye if yer whisper, and they hits ye if ye have string in yer pocket, and they hits ye if yer seat squeaks, and they hits ye if ye don't stan' up in time, and they hits ye if yer late, and they hits ye if ye forget the page."

By the 1880s, several different groups found themselves in opposition to centralized urban public school bureaucracies. Although many working-class families valued education, those who depended on their children's meager wages for survival resisted the attempt to force their sons and daughters to attend school past the elementary grades. Although some immigrant families made great sacrifices to enable their children to get an education, many...
daughters in female seminaries such as Chatham Hall in Chatham, Virginia, and their sons in private academies and boarding schools like St. Paul's in Concord, New Hampshire. The proliferation of private and parochial schools, together with the controversies over compulsory education, school funding, and classroom decorum, reveals the extent to which public education had become mired in ethnic and class differences. Unlike Germany and Japan, which created national education systems in the late nineteenth century, the United States, reflecting its social heterogeneity, maintained a system of locally run public and private institutions that allowed each segment of society to retain some influence over the schools attended by its own children. Amid the disputes, school enrollments dramatically expanded. In 1870, fewer than seventy-two thousand students were attending the nation’s 1,026 high schools. By 1900, the number of high schools had jumped to more than five thousand and the number of students to more than half a million.

Furthermore, Catholic immigrants objected to the overwhelmingly Protestant orientation of the public schools. Distressed by the use of the King James translation of the Bible and by the schools’ failure to observe saints’ days, Catholics set up separate parochial school systems. In response, Republican politicians, resentful of Catholic immigrants’ overwhelming preference for the Democratic Party, tried unsuccessfully to pass a constitutional amendment cutting off all public aid to church-related schools in 1875. Catholics in turn denounced federal aid to public schools as intended “to suppress Catholic education, gradually extinguish Catholicity in this country, and to form one homogeneous American people after the New England Evangelical type.”

At the other end of the social scale, upper-class parents who did not wish to send their children to immigrant-thronged public schools enrolled their daughters in female seminaries such as Chatham Hall in Chatham, Virginia, and their sons in private academies and boarding schools like St. Paul’s in Concord, New Hampshire. The proliferation of private and parochial schools, together with the controversies over compulsory education, school funding, and classroom decorum, reveals the extent to which public education had become mired in ethnic and class differences. Unlike Germany and Japan, which created national education systems in the late nineteenth century, the United States, reflecting its social heterogeneity, maintained a system of locally run public and private institutions that allowed each segment of society to retain some influence over the schools attended by its own children. Amid the disputes, school enrollments dramatically expanded. In 1870, fewer than seventy-two thousand students were attending the nation’s 1,026 high schools. By 1900, the number of high schools had jumped to more than five thousand and the number of students to more than half a million.

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By the 1890s, class conflict was evident in practically every area of city life, from mealtime manners to popular entertainment and recreation. As new immigrants flooded the tenements and spilled out onto neighborhood streets, it became impossible for native-born Americans to ignore their strange religious and social customs. Ethnic differences were compounded by class differences. Often poor and from peasant or working-class backgrounds, the immigrants from southern and eastern Europe took unskilled jobs and worked for subsistence-level wages. The slums and tenements in which they lived had high rates of disease. Middle- and upper-class Americans often responded by moving to fashionable avenues or suburbs and by stigmatizing them as nonwhite and racially inferior.

To distinguish themselves from these newcomers, native-born Americans stressed their commitment to Victorian morality, with its emphasis on manners, decorum, and self-control. Although never fully accepted even among the well-to-do, these Victorian ideals were meant to apply new standards for society. Lavish department stores and artistically designed houses reflected the middle- and upper-class faith that the consumption of material goods indicated good taste.

To raise standards, the prosperous classes expanded the number of high schools and created a new research university system for training educators, lawyers, doctors, and other professionals. As defenders of the new Victorian morality, educated middle- and upper-class women were expected to become the protectors of the home. Some members of the upper classes also tried to address the problems of poverty and congestion in the inner city. While Jacob Riis, Jane Addams, and other reformers worked to improve overcrowded housing and dangerous working conditions, Anthony Comstock and less sympathetic reformers attacked immigrant values and cultures in an effort to uplift and Americanize them.

Nowhere was the conflict between the social classes more evident than in the controversy over leisure entertainment. Caught up in the material benefits of a prospering industrial society, middle- and upper-class Americans battled against what they deemed “indecent” lower-class behavior in all its forms, from dancing to ragtime, gambling, and prizefighting to playing baseball on Sunday and visiting bawdy boardwalk sideshows. Even public parks became arenas of class conflict. Whereas the elite favored large, impeccably groomed urban parks that would serve as models of orderliness and propriety, working people fought for parks where they could picnic, play ball, drink beer, and escape the stifling heat of tenement apartments.

Although the well-to-do classes often appeared to have the upper hand in these clashes, significant disagreements about moral standards surfaced early within their own ranks. Critics, among them...
Charlotte Perkins Gilman, faulted middle-class society for its obsession with polite manners, empty social rituals, and restrictions on the occupations open to women.

By 1900, the contest for power between the elite classes and the largely immigrant working class was heading toward a partial resolution. As Victorian morality eroded, undermined by dissension from within and opposition from without, new standards emerged that blended elements of earlier positions. For example, new rules regulated behavior in the boxing ring and on the baseball field. Still, it was immigrant heroes who captured the popular imagination. The elite vision of sport as a vehicle for instilling self-discipline and self-control was transformed into a new commitment to sports as spectacle and entertainment. Sports had become big business and an important part of the new consumerism.

Similar patterns of compromise and change took place in other arenas. Vaudeville houses, attacked by the affluent for their risqué performances, evolved into the nation's first movie theaters. Ragtime music, with its syncopated rhythms, gave rise to jazz. In short, the dashing, disreputable, and raucous working-class culture of the late-nineteenth-century city can be seen as the seedbed of twentieth-century mass culture. And everywhere popular culture became increasingly dominated by commercial interests that capitalized on the disposable income created by the nation’s explosive urban growth.

**KEY TERMS**

- Scott Joplin (p. 567)
- “new immigrants” (p. 569)
- Ellis Island (p. 570)
- Victorian morality (p. 576)
- department stores (p. 577)
- research university (p. 579)
- Salvation Army (p. 581)
- Josephine Shaw Lowell (p. 581)
- Anthony Comstock (p. 581)
- Social Gospel (p. 582)
- Jane Addams (p. 582)
- Florence Kelley (p. 582)
- John L. Sullivan (p. 585)
- Mark Twain (p. 588)
- modernism (p. 590)
- Frank Lloyd Wright (p. 590)
- Frances Willard (p. 590)
- Kate Chopin (p. 592)

**FOR FURTHER REFERENCE**


See our interactive eBook for larger maps and other study/review materials.