

The Rise of the American City

“The greater part of our population must live in cities – cities much greater than the world has yet known. In due time we shall be a nation of cities.”
Josiah Strong, 1898

- **Urban Growth – from 1860 to 1910 – urban pop. ↑7X**
 - 1920 census – 1st time most Americans lived in urban areas
 - Growth due to immigration, migration of blacks, company towns
 - Lg. urban areas contained variety of ethnic groups
- **Urban Transportation – stimulated and was stimulated by growth**
 - Bricks & asphalt used to pave streets
 - 1870 – NYC opened 1st elevated railway
 - 1873 – SF cable cars
 - 1883 – Brooklyn Bridge – steel-cable suspension span
 - 1888 – Richmond, VA opened 1st electric trolley line
 - 1897 – Boston opened 1st subway
- **Urban Politics – the political machine**
 - **Political machines** a product of voting power of lg. immigrant communities
 - Machine consisted of a group of “**bosses**” who turned out voters for the political organization
 - Bosses provided food, fuel for needy, jobs for unemployed, expedited solutions to neighborhood problems
 - This won loyalty to the boss & the machine
 - Machine supporters rewarded w/ jobs in city govt., city agencies, in the transit system, or within the machine itself
 - Machines also involved in corruption
 - **William Marcy (Boss) Tweed** in New York’s **Tammany Hall** controlled 60K jobs.
 - **Tweed Ring** openly bought votes, encouraged judicial corruption, & controlled NYC politics during 1860-70’s
 - also took \$200 Million in bribes & kickbacks
 - **Cartoonist Thomas Nast** raised public awareness of the Tweed Ring with scathing images of criminal activity
- **Police forces were established to maintain law and order**
 - Hampered by poorly defined duties
 - Ineffective in controlling theft, prostitution, gambling
 - Relationships developed between police & institutions they were supposed to watch over – leading to bribery, etc.

- Reforming Urban problems
 - Reformers sought to counter poverty & other problems by focusing on moral uplift
 - YMCAs & YWCAs formed to provide housing & recreation
 - Salvation Army effective in providing emergency aid, housing, street kitchens
 - Comstock Law & other “anti-vice” laws sought to eliminate obscenity, pornography, prostitution, etc.
 - The **Social Gospel movement** fought problems of urban society with religion – blame for problems rested w/ society, not poor
 - Washington Gladden – true Christianity requires churchgoers to fight social injustice
 - **Walter Rauschenbusch** (*Christianity and the Social Crisis*) – strong advocate of Social Gospel - stated that churches should unite to reform abuses of industry & fight for peace
 - **Settlement Houses** (e.g. Hull House) founded to offer literacy & crafts classes, job training, and a sense of dignity to the poor
- **Most immigrants settled in “ethnic islands” – provided identity & cultural cohesiveness**
 - Ethnic papers, theaters, markets, churches links to homeland
 - **Americanization** – move to assimilate immigrants
 - Eventual acculturation – understanding of laws, govt., customs, & traditions – usually 2nd or 3rd generations
 - **Nativism** – Immigrants discriminated against because of race, religion, political beliefs, economic competition w/ native-born
 - Led to moves to restrict or bar immigration
- **Improved quality of life** – due to increased purchase pwr & better diet
 - Longer life, more leisure time (urban middle class), new forms of recreation & entertainment
 - Increased interest in spectator sports (baseball, football, boxing, etc.)
 - Musical comedy, vaudeville, circuses, Wild West shows, movies
 - Reading a popular pastime (literacy ↑)
 - Adventure & romance novels
 - Newspaper circulation ↑ 9X
 - Especially Yellow Journalism – sensational stories
 - Popular magazines – inexpensive, geared toward mass audiences