

Web version: http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/historyonline/gildedage_chron.cfm (with edits by Mr. Broach)

As mentioned in class, the Gilded Age is a very complex time period and covered thematically in class. This is a period often confusing to students, yet important to understanding the development of the United States in the late 1800s and in setting the stage for the twentieth century. Therefore, I have taken this timeline from a trusted website and made my own notes and questions for you as a "guided notes" handout. I hope that you find this helpful.

The major themes of this era are:

- Stalemate national politics and the "forgettable" presidents
- Corrupt state & local politics
- Westward Expansion and Indian Wars
- Industrial Expansion (Technology, Business Practices, Political, Social and Economic Effects)
- Growth of Labor Unions as a result of poor working conditions and corrupt business practices
- End of Reconstruction and Segregation in the South, the "Jim Crow" Era
- Growth of the cities (with problems) and a new urban culture
- Mass Culture in the late 1800s: Skyscrapers, baseball, etc...
- Diverse Immigration (S & E Europe; China; Japan; Mexico)
- Education, Literature, Philosophy (pragmatism movement)
- Beginnings of another women's rights movement, crusades to improve morality and other social reform movements
- Imperialism and a growing influence of the United States in World Affairs (leading to the Spanish-American War)

1868

- Congress enacts an 8-hour workday for workers employed by the government.
- The **14th Amendment** to the US Constitution grants citizenship to anyone born in the United States and guarantees due process and equal protection of the laws. ...

1869

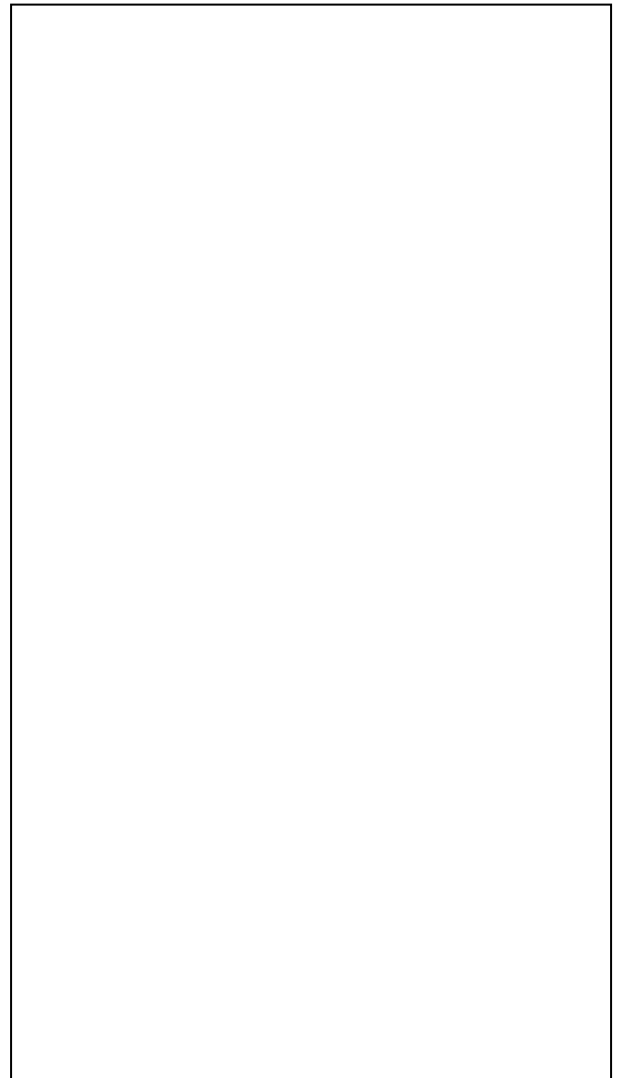
- A golden spike is driven into a railroad tie at Promontory Point, Utah, completing the **transcontinental railroad**. Built in just over three years by 20,000 workers, it had 1,775 miles of track. The railroad's promoters received 23 million acres of land and \$64 million in loans as an incentive. **(Review Pacific Railway Act of 1862, change in the role of the federal government: land grants to RR companies to spark westward expansion)**

1870

- US population: 39,818,449.
- 31-year-old **John D. Rockefeller forms Standard Oil of Ohio**. (review term **horizontal integration**)
- NOTE: Be sure to know the major "Captains of Industry":** Rockefeller, Carnegie, J.P. Morgan, Vanderbilt and why they are important to understanding the politics of the era
- Hiram R. Revels of Mississippi becomes the first African American to serve in the US Senate. Joseph H. Rainey of South Carolina becomes the first black Representative.
- The **15th Amendment** to the US Constitution guarantees the right to vote regardless "of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

1871

- The Great Chicago Fire claims 250 lives and destroys 17,500 buildings.



1872

- Montgomery Ward begins to sell goods to rural customers by mail. **(Notice here how the American market economy is changing because of new transportation technology, this begins a period of mail-order houses and catalog buying and the beginnings of the modern advertising industry)**
- Nov. 5: Susan B. Anthony and other women's suffrage advocates are arrested for attempting to vote in Rochester, N.Y.

1873

- The Financial **Panic of 1873** begins. 5,183 business fail. **(Result: Specie Resumption Act, federal government returns to gold standard, causes DEFLATION)** ← It is very important that you understand how inflation/deflation cycles affected the economy of the 1800s. (how does this affect farmers? Industrial workers? Businesses?)

1874

- The introduction of **barbed wire** provides the first economical way to fence in cattle on the Great Plains. **(helps end the "long drives" era of cowboys herding cattle across the plains and begins the period of ranching. The later invention of the refrigerated car by G. Swift will also end the era of the cowboy)**
- The discovery of gold leads thousands of prospectors to trespass on Indian lands the Black Hills in Dakota territory.

1875

- Congress passes the **Civil Rights Act of 1875** to guarantee equal use of public accommodations and places of public amusement. It also forbids the exclusion of African Americans from jury duty.

1876

- 29-year-old **Alexander Graham Bell** patents the telephone.
- George A. Custer and 265 officers and enlisted men are killed by Sioux Indians led by Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse at the **Little Big Horn** River in Montana. **(be sure to review the Indian Wars and end of the Plains Indians)**

1877

- An electoral commission declares Rutherford Hayes the winner of the disputed presidential election.
- President Hayes begins to withdraw federal troops from the South, marking the **official end to Reconstruction**.
- The **Great Railroad Strikes** begins in Martinsburg, W. Va., after the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad imposes a 10 percent wage cut.
- 30-year-old **Thomas Edison** invents the phonograph.

1878

- The Senate defeats a woman's suffrage amendment 34-16. (pay attention to the women's rights movement of the era)

1879

- Thomas Edison invents the light bulb.
- Henry George publishes **Progress and Poverty** (what is life really like in the cities?)

1880

-US population: 50,155,783

1881

-**President James Garfield is shot by Charles Guiteau**, a disgruntled office-seeker. He died on Sept. 19.

-**Helen Hunt Jackson** publishes *A Century of Dishonor* (note the growing criticism of U.S.-Indian policy in the 1870s and 1880s)

1882

-Attorney Samuel Dodd devises the trust, under which stockholders turn over control of previously independent companies to a board of trustees.

-Congress passes the **Chinese Exclusion Act**, barring Chinese immigration for ten years.

1883

-Samuel Gompers testifies before a Congressional committee about his organization, the **American Federation of Labor. (pay close attention to the growth of labor unions in this era)**

-Congress passes the **Pendleton Act**, establishing a Civil Service Commission and filling government positions by a merit system, including competitive examinations.

-The Supreme Court rules that the Civil Rights Act of 1875 only forbids state-imposed discrimination, not that by individuals or corporations.

(Civil Rights Cases of 1883 unravel the legal achievements of Reconstruction)

-**Brooklyn Bridge** opens

1884

-Construction begins in Chicago on the first building with a steel skeleton, William Jenney's ten-story Home Insurance Company, marking the **birth of the skyscraper**.

-With help of Irish-American voters, Democratic presidential nominee **Grover Cleveland** carried New York by 1,149 votes and won the election.

1880s Politics Note: Be sure to pay attention to the topics of party patronage, tariff policies and the currency debate (who supported what? And why?)

1886

-Dr. Stanton Coit opens the first settlement house in New York to provide social services to the poor.

-Over 300,000 workers demonstrate in behalf of an eight-hour work day.

-The **Haymarket Square bombing in Chicago** kills seven police officers and wounds sixty.

-The Supreme Court holds that corporations are persons covered by the 14th Amendment, and are entitled to due process.

-President Grover Cleveland unveils **the Statue of Liberty**.

-The **American Federation of Labor was founded, with Samuel Gompers as president**. Membership was restricted to skilled craftsmen. ← why skilled craftsmen? In the development of labor unions, what was the debate here?

-**Wabash v. Illinois case** (important for understanding ICC below)

1887

-The **Interstate Commerce Act** requires railroads to charge reasonable rates and forbids them from offering rate reductions to preferred customers. ← **This is very important. What were farmers complaints here? How did farmers organize to address this?**

-The **Dawes Severalty Act** subdivides Indian reservations into individual plots of land of 160 to 320 acres. "Surplus" lands are sold to white settlers. (**understand the concept of assimilation**)

-**American Protective Association** formed (nativism returns again! And stronger – why?)

1889

-New Jersey permits holding companies to buy up the stock of other corporations.

-**President Benjamin Harrison opens a portion of Oklahoma to white settlement.** (Review boomers & sooners)

-Secretary of State **James G. Blaine** hosts the First **Pan-American Conference**

-**Jane Addams** founds **Hull House** (beginning of the **settlement house movement**)

1890

-US population: 62,947,714.

-**The US Bureau of the Census announces that the western frontier was now closed.**

-Congress passes the **Sherman Anti-Trust Act** (was this effective for the time period?)

-Mississippi Plan. Mississippi restricts black suffrage by requiring voters to demonstrate an ability to read and interpret the US Constitution. (**literacy tests for voting in the South**)

-**Wounded Knee Massacre.**

-High protective tariffs created a **surplus** in federal revenue, in 1890, most of this was spent by the "**Billion Dollar Congress**" – know **McKinley Tariff Act** and the **pension bill**

-Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan publishes ***The Influence of Sea Power upon History***

1891

-James Naismith, a physical education instructor at the YMCA Training College in Springfield, Mass., invents basketball.

-The **Populist party** is founded in Cincinnati, Ohio.

1892

-**Ellis Island opens** to screen immigrants. Twenty million immigrants passed through it before it was closed in 1954.

-Henry Clay Frick, who managed Andrew Carnegie's steelworks at **Homestead, Pa.**, cuts wages, precipitating a strike that begins June 26. In a pitched battle with **Pinkerton guards**, brought in to protect the plant, ten strikers and three Pinkertons are killed. Pennsylvania's governor then sent in the state militia to protect strikebreakers. The strike ended Nov. 20.

-**Populist Party adopts its "Omaha platform"** ← The Populist Party is extremely important to understand (and often appears on the AP exam). Know the platform issues and why it eventually failed.

1893

- Pro-American interests depose Queen Liliuokalani of **Hawaii**.
- Largest financial crash to date, **Panic of 1893 (know causes – from the farming frontier, to the business practices of the late 1800s to the currency debate)**
- Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History***

1894

- Coxey's Army**. Jacob Coxey leads a march on Washington by the unemployed.
- Pullman Strike**. Workers at the Pullman sleeping car plant in Chicago go on strike after the company cut wages without reducing rents in company-owned housing. The American Railway Union begins to boycott trains carrying Pullman cars.
- Federal troops enforce a court injunction forbidding the American Railway Union from interfering with interstate commerce and delivery of the mail.
- Wilson-Gorman Tariff of 1894** reduces tariffs (supported by Democrat President Grover Cleveland)

1895

- The Supreme Court strikes down an income tax.
- J.P. Morgan** loans \$65B to federal government.

1896

- Plessy v. Ferguson**. The US Supreme Court rules that segregation of blacks and whites was permitted under the Constitution so long as both races receive equal facilities. (**landmark Supreme Court case, overturned by ___ in 1954**)
- "You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold." William Jennings Bryan electrified the Democratic convention with his "**Cross of Gold**" speech and received the party's nomination, but was defeated Nov. 3 by Republican William McKinley.

1898

- Spanish-American War**. As a result of the conflict, the United States acquires Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines.
- President McKinley signs a resolution **annexing Hawaii**.

1899

- Delegates from the US and 25 other nations meet at The Hague to discuss disarmament, arbitration of international disputes, protection of noncombatants, and limitations on methods of warfare.
- John Hay's "**open door notes**" on China
- John D. Rockefeller comments on Industrial Combinations.