

# Child labor in the 1800's



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Child Labor in America Throughout the 1700's and the early 1800's child labor was a major issue in American society. Children have always worked for family businesses whether it was an agricultural farming situation or working out of a family business in some type of workplace. This was usually seen in families of middle or lower class because extra help was needed to support the family. Child labor dramatically changed when America went through the Industrial Revolution. When America's industrial revolution came into play, it opened a new world to child labor.

Children were now needed to work in factories, mills, and mines. These were not ordinary jobs for young children, these jobs required much time, effort, and hard work. " American children worked in large numbers in mines, glass factories, textile, agriculture, canneries, home industries, and as newsboys, messengers, bootblacks, and peddlers" (www. continuetolearn. uiowa. edu). This had a significant impact on society and in the production in America. Throughout this time, this caused terminal effects on the children who were put to work in these extreme conditions.

First, it was common to see children working along side a parent or gaurdian in an agricultural setting. The young boy's would help their fathers in farming the land and keeping livestock. They would also help in different kinds of workshops depending on what the family business consisted of. Young females would often help their mothers around the house with the cooking, cleaning, sewing and other " feminine" jobs. Often young girls would be sent to an upper class home to clean and cook for someone else to help support their families. Parents sent out children as young as 6 to contribute to the family income" (" Child Labor in America"). Without children working to help

maintain a regular income for their families, they would just fall deeper into poverty. When America moved into their industrial revolution, work began to change for the nation, especially the child work force. Parents were forced to send their children into these factory labor forces, due to the lack of income. " Many children worked 16 hour days under atrocious conditions, as their elders did" (www. victorianweb. org), children were what you could consider " little adults".

Children were actually preferred for some jobs over adults for various reason, such as being able to fit in smaller places to where a grown person could not, or simply because children were easier to control, because they were not mentally grown. " As industrialization moved workers from farms and home workshops into urban areas and factory work, children were preferred, because factory owners viewed them as more manageable, cheaper, and less likely to strike" (www. continuetolearn. uiowa. edu), this was considered a control issue that factory owners knew they could not pull with adults but could easily pull with children.

Although many children had to make extra income to help their family survive, the work had a detrimental impact on their well-being. Children would work under intensive conditions for long periods of time without any relief. These conditions usually occurred when a child was working in either a some or mine type of factory; these had the most dangerous conditions especially for a child. Children were welcomed at various mines "[b]ecause they were small and could climb into narrow passages" (" Child Labor in America"), many children got caught underneath rubble or stuck in small closed spaces either being in a mine or factory. Working conditions for [...]

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children were generally wretched" (" Child Labor in America"), but they were still expected to work to the best ability to complete the tasks at hand. " Children from 8 to 12 years old worked like slaves... most every day it happened that a finger or hand was cut off, but what did it matter, they were paid off and sent home, and others would take their places (" Child Labor in America"), this led to many handicap.

Throughout this time, children were crippled everyday, and without any sympathy factory owners would simply go on and higher more children to take their places, leaving the handicap one to fend for themselves in life as a cripple. Conditions of factories were not safe for anyone, let alone a small child. Due to these conditions many children died before their prime. Many children " began work at age 5, and generally died before they were 25" (www. victorianweb. org), America was beginning to lose an entire generation due to these working conditions that so many had to endure.

Children were hired at an alarming rate. " In 1870, the first time census reported child workers, there were 750, 000 workers in the United States age 15 and under, not including those who worked on family farms or in other family businesses" (" Child Labor in America"), these numbers were not something that was looked over, it astonished many. " A cotton manufactory of 5 or 6000 spindles will employ those 200 children" (Bremner 232). The workforce would continuously grow, hiring more and more children each day.

Factories were good for using children as a means of their productivity. " Textile factories, for the most part [...] were in the forefront of this industrial revolution, and children formed an essential component of the new industrial

workforce" (Bremner 232). Many times without these children working some of these factories would not have survived through the revolution. Another issue that was experienced during this time was the lack of education the children had. Although they were helping their families, children were hurting themselves by not attending school.

Many children did not have time to attend school due to their long hours at work, and the days they did have off they would likely want to rest, due to the intensive hours they had to work. This led America to an uneducated society of middle and lower class children, which would grow into an uneducated adult generation, for those who made it to adulthood. This was hindering America development, but on the other hand, they were able to produce massive goods but this only made it possible for certain people could move on to become something in life. All of these issues had to come to an end.

They slowly but surely began to make laws against child labor. They began in 1836 by requiring " children under 15 working in factories to attend school at least 3 months/year, this at least gave the children some education to help them later on in life. Then the Fair Labor Standard Act was passed, this law prohibited children under 16 from working in manufacturing and mining and various other hazardous jobs. Children ages 14 and 15, however could still be employed in nonindustrial, nonmining, and nonhazardous jobs during school vacations and outside of school hours (" Child Labor in America").

This dramatically cut down on children being injured, crippled and uneducated. Throughout time, laws have become stricter on how many

hours a person under a certain age can work; where they are they can be employed and other regulations to insure the safety of young children. In conclusion, during the Industrial Revolution there were many issues dealing with child labor. Due to the Industrial Revolution, children were becoming slaves to factory owners. Although they were being paid, they were put under hazardous conditions, which they could not refuse.