

Robber barons and their role during reformation

[History](#)



In the era following the Civil War, Industrialization had many business and industrial leaders. These leaders aided in the growth of the economy and industry of the United States, allowing it to become the strongest industrial power in the world. Though these men used extreme methods to control and concentrate wealth and power, "robber barons" paved the road to America's industrial domination.

Successful capitalists of the late 1800s were referred to as "robber barons" due to the common belief that they were responsible for the poor conditions of the working class in America. The weapon of these robber barons was their monopolies, created to gear economical power and domination toward themselves by "destroying competition and restraining trade" (Doc 4). These men utilized trusts and methods such as horizontal and vertical integration to achieve economic wealth and power. Their economic choices came along with many robber barons believing in they shouldn't work "for anybody's good but our own" (Doc 1). Robber barons had ultimate power and wealth by making decisions based on how it would affect themselves. Though this had a negative impact on the working class, robber barons consolidated their wealth and eventually gave back to the community and helped strengthen the foundation of ideals of America. Through the robber barons having concentrated wealth and power, they were able to have an influence on the politicians as shown in the cartoon "Standard Oil Company With Tentacles" (Doc 5). With politicians giving them a "laissez faire" treatment, which let big companies do as they please, robber barons were able to gain wealth and power. Many had the point of view on their harshness towards the working condition as, "While the law may be sometimes hard for the

individual, it is best for the race” (Doc 3). However, if these men did not create such methods to harness the industry, there would have been no other alternative for America as a whole to grow. The South had already proved that dependence on a one-crop economy was a failing gamble, and all other innovations were too primitive and needed these men’s wealth and power to grow anyway.

Though robber barons used extreme methods to consolidate wealth and power, they paved the way to make America stronger as a nation.

Throughout many robber baron’s lives, they resorted to philanthropy as they sought to make America stronger in all the key places. Rockefeller, the owner of The Standard Oil Company, before his death donated much of his wealth to public systems(Doc 7). Through this, he was able to fund colleges, the YMCA (a welfare movement) and many other things to help keep America a strong nation. Many deemed the working strategies and salaries from robber barons to be unfair to the masses as they forced competitors to reduce the wages of their men(Doc 6). Robber barons reduced salaries and focused on things other than the beautification of the working environment, because if not manufacturers would have had no wealth to redistribute to philanthropist purposes. The fact of the matter is that if it were not for these robber barons and their philanthropy, there would be no solid educational basis for America to grow from. And without some form of education, the innovations that Americas greatest inventors created would have not found their way to industrial success and popularity.

While it is true that these men widened the gap between the rich and poor, the argument that these men were more the leaders of a growing industry is <https://assignbuster.com/robber-barons-and-their-role-during-reformation/>

even more valid. These men reformed the way America's economy worked during this time period, just as during the reformation of public education changed the social classes during the antebellum era by allowing all access to education, furthering the American dream. These robber barons led the South away from sole agricultural economic dependence, but more importantly, they used their wealth for the growth of America's industry. If these men did not transfer their wealth towards philanthropic educational development, there would have been no means for industrial development. If the American industry could not develop, it would never have risen to the industrial excellence it is today.