

U.s. economy in the 19th century

Economics



Peter Hart History 1: 00-1: 50 U. S. Economy in the 19th Century The Industrial Revolution first took place in Britain where it spread like wild fire. Eventually it made its way to America in the late 1800's to the 19th century where it would eventually change America in every aspect. The American Revolution began because of a single British man named Samuel Slater who brought over manufacturing technologies. The creation of the cotton gin by Slater would soon be the beginning of the Industrial Revolution.

The Industrial Revolution brought many new ideas and inventions that made the economy boom. The North would be the first to start the Industrial Revolution while the South stayed true to their old ways; agriculture. The effects of the Industrial Revolution put a strain on both the South and the North. On top of all of this, many changes were being made in this time period such as transportation, manufacturing, and communications. All of these changes transformed the daily lives of Americans as much as it did as any other historical event that has happened in history.

Because of this major event, many effects were being taken place; Unions, working conditions and labor itself were accounted for the changes in the 19th century. The North started out as a commercial industry where trading and selling was a big part of American life. Before the Industrial Revolution hit America, people made all of their goods/products in their homes. Factories weren't that prominent in the North until the Industrial Revolution came by. Technological advancements were nowhere to be found because they were used to making everything at home by hand.

The South was farther behind in innovations than the North itself. They were strictly agricultural and farming. In due time though, a man named Samuel
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Slater brought over new manufacturing technologies from Britain to the United States where it would start the Industrial Revolution. From there, many more inventions were created such as the steamboat by Robert Fulton which marked the beginning in technological innovations. This invention would make transportation of goods and services quicker and more effectively. Another invention during this time period was the telegraph. The telegraph was reated by Samuel Morse. This invention was created in 1837 which allowed America to send messages to international countries all around the world. The new inventions being created in America would lead America in a direction of prosperity and a dominant force in production and at the same time agricultural ways. America would eventually emerge as the center of industry and agricultural in the late 19th century. As an effect of the Industrial revolution, population tripled, farming doubled in the amount of work due to technological inventions such as the steel plow by John Deere. This invention allowed farmers to plow fields faster and plow more fields without having to change the iron plow every time they uproot the ground. Due to this invention, more workers were needed to harvest the crops when the time came. Fortunately, a certain invention was made that helped the harvesting process go quicker and more efficiently. This invention was known as the reaper which was made in 1831 by Cyrus McCormick. Certain inventions helped working production go a lot faster than it was before the Industrial Revolution started. The U. S.

Patent Office had a record of 276 inventions during the 1790's, during the 1890's a record of 235, 000 inventions were registered. At first, the South was resistant against this new generation of inventions and industrialized

cities. Ultimately, the South would fall under the new ways of the North. From 1880 to 1900, the amount of cotton mills increased dramatically; 161 to 400 in less than decade. As the need for workers rose, so did the amount of cotton. The amount of cotton increased by eightfold while the amount of workers increased by fivefold.

All of these increases resulted in the creations of new inventions. As production increased, so did the need for labor. But as labor increased, so did changes in working conditions, labor itself, and Unions were created on behalf of all of the workers. Even though all of these inventions prospered America, working conditions in the factories that were producing goods such as steel, cotton fabric, and other goods were bad and harmful for the workers. The life of a 19th-century American industrial worker was far from easy. Even in decent times, wages were low, hours were long, and working conditions hazardous.

Little of the wealth which the growth of the nation had produced went to its workers. The situation was worse for women and children, who made up a high percentage of the work force in some industries and often received but a fraction of the wages a man could earn. Periodic economic crises swept the nation, further eroding industrial wages and producing high levels of unemployment. At the same time, the technological improvements, which added so much to the nation's productivity, continually reduced the demand for skilled labor.

Yet the unskilled labor pool was constantly growing, as record numbers of immigrants, 18 million between 1880 and 1910, entered the country, looking for work. Before 1874, when Massachusetts passed the nation's first

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legislation limiting the number of hours women and children factory workers could perform to 10 hours a day, there was literally no labor legislation that existed in the country. It was not until the 1930s that the federal government would become actively involved. Until then, it was left to the state and local authorities, few of whom were as responsive to the workers as they were to wealthy industrialists.

The laissez-faire capitalism, which dominated the second half of the 19th century and fostered huge concentrations of wealth and power, was backed by a judiciary which time and again ruled against those who challenged the system. For millions, living and working conditions were poor, and the hope of escaping from a lifetime of poverty was slight to none. As late as 1900, the United States had the highest job-related death rate of any industrialized nation in the world. Most industrial workers still worked a 10-hour day (12 hours in the steel industry), yet earned from 20 to 40 percent less than the minimum deemed necessary for a decent life.

The situation was only worse for children, whose numbers in the work force doubled between 1870 and 1900. On top of working in harsh conditions, workers had to face low wages and long hours that consisted of a 60 hour week load. These conditions were outrageous and then eventually led to the forming of unions. The first major effort to organize workers' groups on a nationwide basis appeared with The Noble Order of the Knights of Labor in 1869. Originally a secret, ritualistic society organized by Philadelphia garment workers, it was open to all workers, including blacks, women and farmers.

The Knights grew slowly until they succeeded in facing down the great railroad baron, Jay Gould, in an 1885 strike. Within a year they added 500,000 workers to their rolls. The Knights of Labor soon fell into decline, and their place in the labor movement was steadily taken by the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Rather than open its membership to all, the AFL, under former cigar union official Samuel Gompers, focused on skilled workers. His objectives were straight-forward and simple: increase wages, reduce hours and improve working conditions.

Per se, Gompers helped turn the labor movement away from the socialist views earlier labor leaders had supported. Due to the capital not granting their goals, riots started to break out. A certain riot known as the Great Rail Strike of 1877 was taken place because of 10 percent cut in wages. This started a line of riots that spurted throughout the country. Finally, after many riots and negotiating with the bosses at the factories, conditions in factories were better and hours were decreased and wages were increased.

Child labor laws were forced upon everyone, while women were given the chance to have equal opportunities and equal wages as men. All of these effects of the Industrial Revolution played a vital role in forming what is now known as America today. The Industrial Revolution led America in a way that forever changed it. It was one of the most historic events to ever happen in American history. Due to new inventions and ideas, America was led into an Industrial Revolution. With the Industrial Revolution came more jobs and Unions to protect the people in the factories from harsh working conditions, long hours, and small wages. .