The USA in the 19th Century – Selected Political, Economic and Social Issues

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The 19th century was crucial for the United States of America, as the new republic had to face many problems and protect its interests. In the first half of the century, Britain represented danger for American trade and played a significant role in aggravating American relations with Indian tribes, which eventually led to a war America was unprepared for.

Since 1783, when Great Britain officially recognized the independence of its thirteen colonies across the Atlantic Ocean, America had grown in size as well as in population. In the course of the 19th century, new territories became part of the USA and were explored and later settled by people from the eastern part of the country. Westward movement led to clashes with Native Americans who were expected to leave their habitat and move to Indian Lands further west. In the second half of the 19th century, America became a colonial superpower and acquired also territories outside the USA – in the Caribbean and the Pacific.

In the 1860s Americans got involved in the worst conflict in the history of the country, the Civil War, which was the result of long-running disputes between the northern and southern parts of the Atlantic coast. The sectional crisis was worsened by the issue of slavery, particularly in new areas which were gradually admitted as states to the Union.

The 19th century also witnessed great economic changes. Particularly in the second half of the century, America experienced a shift from agriculture to industry, and the Industrial Revolution brought forth many new technologies and inventions. New factories were opened particularly in the North, and job opportunities attracted not only Americans from rural areas but also large numbers of immigrants from all over the world. Cities where factories were located expanded and America became an urban society.
I Conflicts with the British in Canada and the War of 1812

In the first half of the 19th century, Americans once again found themselves at war with Britain. The War of 1812, rather unpopular with most Americans, was not the result of a single incident, but was brought forth by a series of events.

1 Economic Causes of the War

One of the main causes of the war was trade and the associated freedom of the seas. The main naval power, Britain, focused particularly on trading in Europe and Asia, while the USA took advantage of the situation and started to dominate trade between Europe and the West Indies.

At the beginning of the century, the two most important European superpowers, Britain and France, competed for supremacy, while America remained neutral and continued trading with both nations. The French emperor Napoleon, whose navy had been decimated by the British, was planning to dominate Europe by land. His strategy called the Continental System was aimed at preventing both British and neutral ships touching at British ports from landing their cargoes at ports controlled by France and its allies. On the other hand, Britain responded by blockading Europe. According to several orders issued by the British government, all goods imported to Europe had to be carried in British or neutral ships that had to stop at British ports.

America, whose neutrality was violated by both British and French policies, had to choose the lesser of the two evils and decide whom to support. Eventually, Britain seemed to be more dangerous and its measures affected the USA in a more drastic way. Moreover, British ships frequently stopped American ships on the high seas and implemented their impressment policy\(^1\). Anglo-American relations were particularly harmed by the Chesapeake-Leopard incident from 1807, when the American frigate Chesapeake was attacked by the British. Apart from the casualties caused by the attack, four alleged deserters were taken away by the British. Americans called for a war. However, President Jefferson, determined to maintain peace, wanted the British government to renounce impressments, which the British refused to do.

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\(^1\) As the conditions in the British navy were unbearable, sailors had to be forced (impressed) into the service, which led to numerous desertions. Many deserters then sought refuge in the American navy. Therefore, the British claimed the right to search American vessels, to retrieve the deserters, and to reimpress them.
Instead of waging war against Britain, the American government believed in the power of economic pressure. Therefore, in 1807 Congress passed the so called **Embargo** which prohibited American ships from leaving the USA for any foreign port. The law had a serious impact not only on France and Britain, but particularly on the USA itself. Therefore, in 1810 trade with all countries, including Great Britain and France, was renewed. Napoleon promised not to interfere with American shipping and Britain was expected to do the same. Otherwise, America was ready to impose embargo against Britain alone.

### 2 The Indian Question

Another problem which led to the War of 1812 was the role of the British in the conflicts between white Americans and Native American tribes. In the 19th century, the British still controlled large parts of Canada and tried to make the local Indians their allies. Therefore, many tribes considered the British to represent a lesser danger than the ever-expanding Americans, and looked to them for help and protection. Due to the growing tension between the USA and Great Britain (particularly after the already mentioned Chesapeake incident), the British authorities in Canada started to fear an American invasion and desperately tried to turn also the American Indian population into their friends.

With civilization moving westwards, Americans were eager to settle on lands that had belonged to American Indians. Laws were passed to make the acquisition of land easier. President Jefferson gave Natives the opportunity to either assimilate and become farmers, or move to the west of the Mississippi. No matter which option they chose, Indians were not allowed to keep their tribal lands in the Northwest.

Frequent clashes between white settlers and Indians occurred in the frontier areas where whites treated the native population as inferior, deprived the individual tribes of their land, killed wild game, and used violence against Indians.

Even though the native population was constantly oppressed by whites, American Indians lacked unity to organize any resistance. However, two leaders realized the need to start united action and inspired the native population to fight for their traditional way of life. The first of these two personalities was a religious leader known as the **Prophet**. Having recovered from alcoholism, he blamed all the evils of the modern world on the white population and inspired a religious revival among many tribes. The Prophet’s brother, **Tecumseh**, was determined to stop the white expansion, regain the lands in the Northwest,
and set the boundary between the USA and the Indian country at the Ohio River. When Tecumseh had set out for the South to persuade the local tribes to join the alliance he had initiated, the American army destroyed his brother’s town and dispersed the Indians. As a reaction, Tecumseh and his followers (encouraged and armed by the British in Canada) started to attack white settlers along the frontier.

To make the West safe for white settlers, Americans believed that the British had to be driven out of Canada and that the province was to become part of the USA. Apart from Canada, also the Spanish-controlled Florida was desired by Americans. As Spain was Britain’s ally, by waging war against the British, America would have a reason for taking Florida as well.

3 The War of 1812

As many American politicians called for an open conflict with Britain (particularly young radical Congressmen referred to as “war hawks”), war was eventually declared on June 18, 1812. At first, Britain was too busy fighting against Napoleon’s France to react to this declaration. However, once Napoleon’s army had been destroyed, from 1813 the British could focus on the conflict with the USA.

The American army tried in vain to conquer Canada by land. On the other hand, the USA experienced some success on the sea. The American navy even approached the coasts of Britain and burned its vessels, which provoked the British and led to a blockade of the USA. Despite losing dominance on the sea, Americans took control of the Great Lakes, particularly of Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. This way, Americans were able to invade Canada and at the same time to weaken the Native American tribes that had joined the British.

The year 1814 represents a turning point in the war, as the British no longer relied on the Indians to fight on their behalf, but transferred parts of the British army from Europe to America. In August 1814 the British entered Washington and burned many public buildings, including the White House. The British army proceeded to Baltimore, where it was already expected by Americans. Baltimore, guarded by Fort McHenry, survived the attack and the British withdrew from the place. On the occasion of the Battle of Baltimore, a young
American lawyer and an amateur poet **Francis Scott Key** wrote a poem that gave birth to the American national anthem called the **Star-Spangled Banner**.²

The American army scored an important victory at **Plattsburgh** on December 11, 1814 and thus managed to secure the northern border of the country. The final important battle took place at **New Orleans**, already after a peace treaty had been signed in Ghent, Belgium. The American army led by the future **President Andrew Jackson** resisted several attacks and finally made the British retreat.

The peace treaty signed on August 8, 1814 did not bring any surprising changes in the already existing order. The Americans did not insist on the British renouncing impressment and gave up their demand for Canada. The British, on the other hand, stopped their efforts to create an Indian state between the USA and Canada. Several treaties that followed the peace treaty further improved the Anglo-American relations and the Canadian-American border eventually became unguarded.

² Key’s poem *On the Defense of Fort McHenry* was accompanied by an old English tune and was supposed to inspire American soldiers in their fight against the British. The Star-Spangled Banner officially became the American anthem in 1931.
II Territorial Acquisitions and Westward Expansion

1 Louisiana Purchase and Explorations of the New Territory

The 19th century was a period of territorial expansion (see Image 2). Already at the very beginning of the century, the size of the USA doubled due to the purchase of Louisiana, which stretched from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains and from Canada to New Orleans. Louisiana had been seized by France (its original ‘owner’) from Spain. In 1803 the French emperor Napoleon, in need of money to finance his military campaigns in Europe, decided to sell the land to the USA for 15 million dollars. Thirteen new states were eventually created from the Louisiana territory and expeditions were sent to explore the area.

In 1804 the Lewis and Clark Expedition3 (also known as the Corps of Discovery Expedition) was commissioned by President Thomas Jefferson to explore and map the newly acquired territory. Jefferson wanted to develop the fur trade, the political uses for the west, and to expand the knowledge of science through its exploration (studying the local flora, fauna and geography). The expedition lasted for three years and was the first one to cross the western part of the USA. Other expeditions followed.

The Pike Expedition, named after its leader - Lieutenant Zebulon Pike, Jr., took place between 1805 and 1807 and represents the first official American effort to explore the western Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains.

Image 1: Explorations of the Louisiana Purchase

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3 The expedition was led by Captain Meriwether Lewis and Second Lieutenant William Clark.
Once the new territory had been explored and mapped, the westward expansion started. America was in the initial stage of the Industrial Revolution and new technologies facilitated economic expansion. As products had to be shipped and passengers transported across the continent, new trade routes were built. In 1811 the construction of the first wagon toll road called the National Road (Cumberland Road) began. The approximately 620-mile long road connected the Potomac and Ohio Rivers and functioned as a gateway to the West. In 1811 the first commercial steamboat started to operate on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers and steamboat traffic, including passenger and freight business, flourished in the first half of the 19th century. The Great Lakes and the Atlantic Ocean were linked by the Erie Canal (constructed between 1817 and 1825 and originally approximately 363 miles long).

2 The Monroe Doctrine and Manifest Destiny

With the size of the USA growing, it was necessary to define the borders of the country. Therefore, a convention of 1818 settled the Canadian boundary at the 49th parallel to the Rocky Mountains. In 1823 the USA also took an important step to secure its territorial interests and prevent any intervention from abroad.

The Monroe Doctrine, issued by the 5th American President James Monroe (1817 - 1825) and inspired by American nationalism, stated that America was no longer a field for colonialism. As Monroe said in his seventh annual message to Congress on December 2, 1823, “The American continents... are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers.” (Tindall, Shi 311)

The doctrine further stated that any European intervention in New World affairs would be considered unfriendly: “...we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety.” (Tindall, Shy 311). The northern hemisphere was thus closed for further colonization. Even though America was too weak to defend this doctrine, nobody challenged it.

On the one hand, the Monroe Doctrine was the first step in America’s imperialistic interference in Central and South America. On the other hand, it also defined the role of the USA in Europe, stating that “Our policy in regard to Europe, which was adopted at an early stage of the wars which have so long agitated that quarter of the globe, nevertheless
remains the same, which is, not to interfere in the internal concerns of any of its powers.” (Monroe Doctrine)

Expansion fever hit the USA in the first half of the 19th century and Americans were determined to seize all the land between the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. With the costs of living rising in the East, many Americans decided to cross the ‘Great American Desert’ and the Rocky Mountains in search of freedom and economic opportunities. The most popular destinations were Texas, Oregon, and Utah, later followed by California where gold was discovered in 1848.

In 1840, nearly 40% of the American population lived in the trans-Appalachian West. In 1845 a journalist named John O’Sullivan coined the term manifest destiny. According to O’Sullivan, America’s obligation was “to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions (Tindall, Shi 434). ‘Manifest destiny’ was used to justify the American expansion.

In Texas and Oregon, Westward expansion met with opposition by Mexico. In 1836, Texas was a Mexican territory but Americans outnumbered Mexicans and wanted to form their own republic. As a reaction, Mexicans launched an attack to maintain their territory. From February to March 1836, Mexican troops led by President General Antonio López de Santa Anna attacked the Alamo Mission near modern-day San Antonio, killing all the Texan defenders. The Battle of the Alamo was an important event and inspired many people to join the Texan army. “Remember the Alamo” became a popular slogan and Americans believed that they were fighting for freedom against the tyranny of Mexico. The Mexican army was defeated at the Battle of San Jacinto in April 1836, thus bringing the Texas Revolution to an end.

Between 1838 and 1845 the Texan request to become a state was repeatedly denied by Mexico. Despite the Texas Revolution, Mexico still considered Texas to be a Mexican territory, and more troops were sent to settle the Texas question. Eventually, the American government decided to take Texas and declared war on Mexico. The Mexican War (1845) was part of the ‘Manifest Destiny’ and Americans achieved several victories before the war was even declared; Americans occupied New Mexico, California, invaded parts of Northeastern and Northwest Mexico and eventually took the nation’s capital Mexico City. The war ended by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The result of the war was the forced
**Mexican Cession** of Alta California and New Mexico to the USA for $15 million. Due to the loss of Texas, Rio Grande became the Mexican border.

More territories were gained from Mexico due to the **Gadsden Purchase**. The large region of southern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico was purchased in 1853, at a cost of $10 million, to be used for the construction of a Pacific railroad. The purchase was the last major territorial acquisition in the contiguous USA.

Image 2: Territorial Growth of the USA in the first half of the 19th century

The size of the USA further increased with the purchase of **Alaska** from Russia in 1876. The purchase was initiated by the US Secretary of State **William H. Seward** and was ridiculed by many Americans, who frequently referred to it as to Seward’s folly. ‘Seward’s Icebox’, as Alaska was called, cost the USA $7.2 million and has returned the investment many times; gold was discovered there in 1848 (but gold mining started only in 1870) and the new territory also represented a good source of oil, fish and furs.
3 The Frontier and Further Conflicts with Native Americans

The period between 1870 and 1890 is considered to be the period of the Wild West or of the Frontier. The American public was interested in what was going on beyond the Mississippi River, and gunfighters, Native Americans as well as stories of bank robbers filled the media. People like Billy the Kid, Jesse James, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, Calamity Jane, Annie Oakley, Wyatt Earp, Wild Bill Hickok, Buffalo Bill, or Native American chiefs such as Sitting Bull or Crazy Horse became famous. The media created the first and most successful American myth, and stories from the American West became a source of entertainment for people living in the East. The myth showed undaunted cowboys enduring exhausting cattle drives, individuals who were able to survive in the harsh environment and even conquer nature, and impulsive and dispassionate violence resulting in fights between white people as well as towards Indians. The media and dime novels featured saloons, whiskey and prostitutes, which satisfied the people’s hunger for excitement. Despite all the folk legends, the period was not as wild or romantic as the public imagined it to be.

American westward expansion brought forth further clashes between white settlers and Native Americans. As white people needed more land to settle on, Native American tribes were pushed away from their original habitat and forced to move further west. Contrary to the 18th century when white people had considered Native Americans to be noble savages whose culture differed from the European standard, yet represented at least some kind of civilization, the 19th century deprived Natives of the attribute “noble” and treated them as mere savages unfit to be civilized.

When the new president Andrew Jackson was inaugurated in 1829, his policy towards Native Americans was clear. Jackson, a frontiersman, considered American Indians to be an impediment on the way to progress and expansion, and was determined to move Natives to the plains beyond the Mississippi River. In 1830 the Indian Removal Act was passed by Congress, confirming Jackson’s policy. On the basis of this act, the majority of Indian tribes had already been moved by 1835, or the process of displacing them was in progress.

Even though resistance to the Indian Removal Act was not very common, several rebellions occurred. In 1832 the Sauk and Fox led by Chief Black Hawk confronted the local militia in Illinois and Wisconsin. This clash known as the Black Hawk War ended with the Natives being denied haven, chased into Wisconsin Territory, and the escaping women and
children being massacred. Chief Black Hawk was captured by whites and, despite his disillusionment and desperation, remained proud and courageous.

In the state of Florida, the Seminoles put up resistance. Their guerilla war lasted in the Everglades from 1835 to 1842, when the Seminole leader Osceola was tricked and arrested. After his seizure, the resistance movement faded away and the remaining Seminoles were removed to the West.

The fate of another Indian tribe, the Cherokees, is particularly notorious. Living in the mountains of northern Georgia and western North Carolina, the Cherokees relied on previous treaties with the American government. However, once gold had been discovered in their territories, the Indian tribe had to face many problems and legal measures violating their sovereignty. Even though the Supreme Court granted the Cherokees the right to occupy their lands until they wished to cede them to the USA, the tribe lacked any political backing and eventually decided to exchange their lands for lands in the Indian Territory west of Arkansas. The federal government promised to pay the tribe a compensation worth $5 million and to cover the transportation expenses.

The thousand-mile-long journey westward, referred to as the Trail of Tears, proved to be a total disaster for the Cherokees, as only one fourth of them survived the grueling march and eventually arrived at their destination.

Image 3 – Indian Removal between 1820 and 1840

(Tindall, Shi 346)
The situation of Native Americans grew even worse in the second half of the 19th century. As white settlers kept coming to the American West in ever larger numbers, they started to represent a threat to the Indian tribes living in the territories assigned to them by the federal government. Indians depended mainly on the buffalo as a source of food, clothing as well as shelter (buffalo hides were used to create traditional Indian dwellings).

Chiefs of the most important tribes met at Fort Laramie in 1851, where they defined tribal borders and promised not to harm the white emigrants passing through their territories. Unfortunately, the white settlers gradually not only passed through the Indian lands but started to move into these territories, thus breaking all the fragile agreements.

Disrespecting the limits of the Indian Territory and ever reducing the area of the lands allotted to the individual tribes led to many Indian wars between the 1860s and 1880s. While Indians resorted also to attacking trains or emigrant and mining camps, the American army often massacred whole tribes.

In 1867 an Indian Peace Commission was established with the aim to eliminate the causes of Indian wars. As a result, Native Americans were to be displaced to reservations even further west, out of the way of white settlers. Even though the majority of the tribes in question (the Kiowa, Comanche, Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Sioux) eventually had no other choice but to accept the deal, resistance in the southeastern plains continued and resulted in an armed conflict known as the Red River War (1874-1875).

In the mid-1870s the situation in the north changed again. The Sioux, who had agreed to move to the Black Hills reservation in Dakota Territory, experienced problems with white adventurers and miners. Assisted by the American army, these people kept trespassing the Indian lands and threatened the livelihood of the Sioux. The Great Sioux War lasted for more than a year and culminated by the defeat of 210 soldiers, under the command of the ambitious Lieutenant-Colonel George Armstrong Custer, at Little Bighorn in June 1876. The battle, called Custer’s Last Stand, was a triumph for the Indians, as 2,500 Indian warriors (including the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho) led by chiefs Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse annihilated the whites.

The Indian victory at Little Bighorn precipitated retaliation and the Sioux were forced to give up their hunting grounds and gold fields, and move to other, hardly valuable, lands. As a result, many Indians died there due to starvation or disease.
The Sioux were not the only tribe that desperately tried to preserve their way of life and dignity. In Idaho the Nez Percés, led by Chief Joseph, resisted being deprived of their lands, which resulted in a large military campaign. Joseph was eventually captured and sent to Oklahoma. Another famous chief who led resistance, the Apache Geronimo, was defeated in 1886.

The spirits of Native Americans were low in the second half of the 19th century and Indian tribes had been confined to sterile lands far away from their original habitat. However, the ceremonial Ghost Dance was initiated in the late 1880s. According to the legend, rescue was coming to Native Americans and the Ghost Dance Movement spread among the Natives. News of this spiritual awakening alarmed the American government which sent the army to solve the problem. The Sioux Chief Sitting Bull was killed and Wounded Knee in South Dakota became the scene of a vicious massacre of Indians willing to surrender (about 200 Indians were killed) in 1908.

From 1887 to 1934, Indians lost about 86 million of their 130 million acres of land. The American government signed many treaties with the individual tribes; however, most of the promises were broken and the Indian policy remained more or less the same. In 1924, Native Americans were eventually recognized as American citizens with the right to vote.

Image 4: Indian Wars between 1864 and 1890

(Tindall, Shi 659)
4 Territorial Acquisition outside Mainland USA

At the very end of the century, America once again waged a war which resulted in territorial gains. The Spanish American War (1898) was the result of the American involvement in the Cuban War of Independence (Cuba had been under Spanish control and wanted to break free).

A war with Spain had been desired by many interest groups including manufacturers, missionaries, bankers, steelmakers, and oilmen. In the late 1890s, American journalists such as Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer stirred up anti-Spanish sentiments and criticized the Spanish rule in Cuba and the repression of Cuban natives. Hearst and Pulitzer used yellow journalism to increase the circulation of their newspapers and thus increase profit.

In February 1898, the American battleship Maine mysteriously exploded in Havana Harbor, killing 260 American soldiers. The cause of the explosion is still unknown; however, the American public blamed it on Spain. President William McKinley yielded to political pressure and called for a military conflict. Eventually, war was declared. Even though the main issue was the Cuban question, there were also other goals the USA pursued; America wanted to expand and protect its trade markets overseas, capture valuable mineral deposits, and acquire land which was suitable for growing fruit, sugar, and tobacco.

The 10-week-long war ended with American victory. The combined Cuban, American, and Filipino forces outnumbered the Spanish troops and forced the Spanish to surrender at Santiago de Cuba and Manila. The Battle of San Juan Hill was the most important battle of the war and a great victory for the Rough Riders⁴ led by the future president Theodore Roosevelt.

Spain sued for peace and the war ended with the Treaty of Paris. The terms of the treaty were favorable for the USA which took control of the Philippines, Guam, Wake Island, and Puerto Rico. Cuba became an American protectorate. Most of the American casualties were caused by malaria, yellow fever, and other diseases Americans were not used to.

After being transferred from Spain to the USA, the Philippines started to rebel against the American rule. English was introduced as the official language of government, education, and business, and the Catholic Church was disestablished. The war between the USA and

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⁴ This is a nickname used for the 1st United States Volunteer Cavalry, which was called upon to assist the understaffed American army in the Spanish-American War.
Filipino revolutionaries lasted from 1899 to 1902 and brought many casualties. The Philippine Organic Act of 1902 granted Filipinos limited self-government.

Image 5: American interests in the Pacific in the 19th century

(Tindall, Shi 809)
III The Sectional Crisis and the Civil War

In the course of the 19th century, the differences between the southern and northern parts of the USA were getting bigger and bigger. By the 1840s and 1850s, in fact, four distinct regions existed within the USA: the Northeast, the Northwest, the Southeast, and the Southwest. In the northern part of the Atlantic coast, industry flourished and the density of population was increasing. The industrial Northeast produced mainly textiles, lumber, clothing, machinery, and goods made of leather or wool. The Northwest depended on agriculture (growing particularly wheat) and expanded rapidly. In the Southeast, where the plantation system was well-established, tobacco, rice, sugar cane, and cotton were grown. Apart from the above mentioned crops, corn was grown and half of the nation’s cattle were bred, particularly in the upper South. The booming Southwest focused primarily on cotton. Therefore, the southern economy depended on slave labor to cultivate all the crops.

The North and the South differed also in terms of population. While the North attracted many immigrants, the South consisted mostly of black and white Americans. The idea of competing with slave labor deterred many foreigners from settling in the South.

The regional and economic differences between the North and the South got even deeper due to the issue of slavery. The South was aware of the backwardness of the section and blamed the North for capitalizing on the South and its agriculture. By staking everything on agriculture, the South had neglected trade and manufacturing and had become largely dependent on the North. The reasons for the lack of industry in the South were the belief that blacks were unsuitable for factory work, and the contempt of the traditional southern elite for commercial activities. On the other hand, the North considered slavery to be the main reason for the unsatisfactory situation in the South. The main argument against slavery was that it violated the basic rights of human beings and deprived them of personal freedom.

1 Slavery and the Plantation System

Slavery had existed in North America since the beginning of the 17th century. Even though the import of new slaves was forbidden by Congress in 1808, Southerners still kept their slaves and considered this ‘peculiar institution’ to be an inseparable part of their lifestyles. Therefore, on their side there was no willingness to change this time-tested order. Even
though only a minority of rich Southerners owned slaves, the abolition of slavery was opposed even by lower social classes. The poor feared that freed slaves might represent a competition for them and would no longer occupy the lowest position on the social ladder.

Slaves were employed as field workers as well as domestic servants. Even though there were many Southerners with just one or two slaves who worked as their personal servants, most slaves were used at plantations. A planter was defined as someone who owned 20 slaves or more. According to statistics, in 1860 only 1 out of 30 whites was a planter, and owning more than 100 slaves represented rather an exception.

Apart from black slaves, also free blacks lived in the South. Most of those free blacks were mulattoes – people of mixed ancestry, who created a special social group. Some blacks even owned slaves themselves; however, such cases were rather rare. Moreover, black slave owners often treated other blacks in a way similar to how white people were used to doing it.

Slaves were treated as property and any slave could be sold to work on some other plantation (in the 1850s, a slave cost between $1,500 and $2,000 and skilled laborers were valued even more). This led to the disintegration of families, as family members were scattered all over the South. As it was necessary to keep slaves in a subordinate position and make sure they remain ignorant about what was going on outside a particular plantation, education was strictly prohibited and attempts to learn how to read or write were punished. Slave codes applied in the Southern states further forbade slaves to own any property; slaves were deprived of freedom of movement, were not allowed to meet other slaves, and did not have any legal standing.
At first slaves were supervised by their master personally; however, as the production of cotton grew in volume and more slaves were needed, planters ended up hiring professionals to oversee the slaves. To please the masters and keep their jobs, the overseers needed the slaves to perform as much work as possible. Therefore, those men used various methods including violence to achieve maximum productivity of labor.

2 Southern Expansion and the Conflict over Slavery in New States

As the soil used for growing cotton soon became exhausted, the South was determined to expand to western regions and to install the plantation system there. The Old Southwest (including states such as Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, or Florida) offered many opportunities and attracted people from traditional southern states like Virginia or the Carolinas, where the economic situation was not so good.

The unity of the nation had been threatened already shortly after the War of 1812. When Missouri applied for admission to the USA in 1819, the question of whether it was to be admitted as a free or slave state arose. Missouri was part of the Louisiana Purchase territory and its original French and Spanish inhabitants had had slaves. When the Louisiana Purchase Treaty was signed in 1803, the American government promised to protect the property of the inhabitants, including their slaves. Therefore, it seemed to be only logical to
allow slavery in Missouri. However, the solution was not so easy; by determining the status of a particular state, the American government in fact had to decide about the future of the new regions of the West and whether they would be controlled by the North or by the South.

The usual practice was that states were admitted to the Union in pairs – one from the North as a free state and one from the South as a slave state. This way, balance was maintained and there was an equal number of free and slave states in the Union (11 states allowing slavery and 11 states banning it in 1819). Therefore, the status of Missouri was important, as not only this fragile balance was to be broken, but also a precedent would have been set.

Missouri was followed by Maine which also wanted to become part of the Union. Southern legislators took advantage of the situation and blocked the admission of Maine. The problem with both potential states was solved in 1820, when the Missouri Compromise was adopted. According to this provision, the already existing states kept their status of either free or slave states. As for new states, Maine was admitted as a free state, Missouri as a slave state and slavery was prohibited in the rest of the Louisiana Purchase Territory to the north of the southern boundary of Missouri (latitude 36°30’).

The Abolitionist Movement
The Southern effort to expand to the Southwest met with strong opposition by the North and the abolitionist movement. The movement was created in 1830s and it was quite radical, demanding an immediate abolition of slavery. The movement’s key figure, William Lloyd Garrison, expressed his ideas in the newspaper The Liberator he himself founded: “I shall strenuously contend for the immediate enfranchisement of our slave population... On this subject I do not wish to think, or speak, or write with moderation... I am in earnest – I will not retreat a single inch and I will be heard”. (Brinkley 363-64) His zeal inspired many Northerners who perceived the institution of slavery as cruel and humiliating.

Even though white male abolitionists hesitated to fully recognize their achievements, also male and female black abolitionists played an important role in the antislavery movement. One of them was the runaway slave Frederick Douglass, who soon became very famous and respected. After publishing his Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass in 1845, Douglass eventually managed to collect enough money to buy his freedom. Another
well-known black abolitionist was Sojourner Truth, a devoted Christian and a woman, who combined abolitionism with women’s rights issues. Unlike the radical Garrison, other Abolitionists believed that legal measures were to be taken to address the issue of slavery.

As part of the antislavery movement, the so called Underground Railroad was established. The main purpose of this organization was helping escaped slaves to get from the South to the North and even further to Canada. The Underground Railroad represented a system of secret routes and hideouts operated by volunteers who either just provided funds or got involved directly. One of the famous conductors of the Underground Railroad was Harriet Tubman, who made more than nineteen trips to the South and managed to rescue more than 300 slaves.

3 Economic Divergence, Disputes over Tariffs, and Further Events Leading to the Civil War

Apart from problems connected with the possible expansion of slavery into the American West, the federal government had to settle disputes over the different economic interests of the individual sections.

Already after the War of 1812, protection tariffs proved to be unfavorable for the agrarian South. When the tariff of 1828 was passed, the South again felt to be harmed by it, and the region even threatened to secede from the Union. One southern politician, John C. Calhoun, worked out a theory that the tariff was unconstitutional and, based on the concept of popular sovereignty, the individual states had the right to nullify it. Calhoun’s opinion was opposed for example by Daniel Webster, who claimed that the Constitution was the supreme law of the country and did not empower the states to interpret it. Even though the nullification crisis concerned tariffs, it was obvious that efforts to nullify federal laws could be extended to the issue of slavery.

In 1840s Southerners again wanted to extend their control over the new parts of the USA and demanded slavery to be introduced in all the lands acquired from Mexico, while Northerners strongly opposed this idea. The argument was settled by the so called Compromise of 1850. According to the Compromise, California was admitted as a free state.

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5 Conductors were free people (frequently former slaves themselves) who helped runaway slaves (referred to as cargo) escape from the South to the North, guiding them through dangerous areas and using safe houses called stations.
In New Mexico (which became a territory by the Texas and New Mexico Act) and Utah (made into a territory by the Utah Act) slavery was not mentioned, and the new territories were to be organized according to the principle of popular sovereignty. Texas got $10 million for the part of New Mexico east of the Rio Grande it had claimed. Catching runaway slaves was to be made more effective. Finally, slavery was to be upheld in the District of Columbia but slave trade was abolished across its boundaries.

The seemingly successful compromise had a crucial flaw in the form of the New Fugitive Slave Act passed in 1850 which not only outraged many abolitionist Northerners but even encouraged their participation in the Underground Railroad. In 1850s the issue of slavery divided the whole nation and politicians were unable to come up with any solutions. The public opinion was to some extent shaped by a bestseller by Harriet Beecher Stowe called *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* which presented slavery as cruel and inhuman. The book inspired many whites to advocate the abolition of slavery.

Another crucial year was 1854 when the issue of slavery in the new territories became topical again. As Kansas and Nebraska were settled by large numbers of people, it was necessary to consider their position within the Union. Even though the Missouri Compromise had banned slavery in those regions, the subsequent Compromise of 1850 made the original provision unclear. There were voices that the latter superseded the former, and settlers from Kansas and Nebraska should have the right to bring slaves with them.

Some politicians believed that the new territory of Nebraska was suitable for the construction of the railroad. To gain the support of southerners, popular sovereignty was included in the bill that created the Nebraska Territory. Therefore, inhabitants were to decide themselves whether they wanted to enter the Union as a free or slave state. Fights between antislavery families and slaveholders became so fierce, that Kansas started to be called ‘Bleeding Kansas’.
Several other events sharpened the clash between Southern slave owners and Northern abolitionists. In 1857 the Supreme Court dealt with the case of a Missouri slave called Dred Scott who had been taken by his master to live in a slave free state. Scott wanted the court to recognize his claim to freedom, arguing that residence in Illinois and Wisconsin Territory, where slavery was forbidden, entitled him to become a free man. However, the verdict disappointed not only Dred Scott but also many people opposing slavery. The Supreme Court decided that Scott was not an American citizen and therefore could not raise any legal claim. Besides that, despite living in a free state, he was still the resident of a slave state and was subject to its laws. The verdicts also stated that the slaveholders’ right to take their slaves with them anywhere in the USA could not be restricted.

Two years later, in 1859, an act of resistance led by John Brown stirred the public opinion. Brown, an ardent abolitionist, and his followers (both black and white) attacked the federal arsenal at Harper’s Ferry and intended to use the stolen weapons to start a slave rebellion. The attack eventually failed and Brown and his men were captured and punished – Brown was tried for treason and hanged to warn other people and discourage them from
similar attempts. Nevertheless, Brown’s execution inspired many Americans and he became a martyr who had died for his cause.

In the late 1850s the political career of Abraham Lincoln was gaining momentum. Lincoln expressed his antislavery attitude and considered the principle of popular sovereignty to be wrong. When he ran for election to the U.S. Senate, his famous speech called *House Divided* included the following passage:

A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure, permanently, half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved — I do not expect the house to fall — but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward, till it shall become lawful in all the States, old as well as new — North as well as South. (Brinkley 399-400)

As Lincoln was elected American President in 1860, South Carolina took advantage of the situation and decided to secede from the Union. South Carolina was soon followed by six other states (Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas) and in 1861 the Confederate States of America were formed. Jefferson Davis was chosen for the new Confederate President and Richmond, VA, became the country’s capital.

In his 1861 inaugural address, President Lincoln refused to recognize the secession and wanted to restore the country again. However, the Confederacy was not willing to negotiate, which resulted in fights that began at Fort Sumter (Charleston), SC, in April 1861. After the events at Fort Sumter, other Southern states decided to join the Confederate States of America. The Civil War, which became infamous for the extremely high number of casualties, started.
Each of the two parties had its advantages as well as disadvantages. The Union consisted of twenty-three states and surpassed the Confederacy as for population and financial resources available for military campaigns. Due to its industrial character, the region also took advantage of factories producing military supplies, arms and ammunition, better transportation and communication, and operated a much better navy. On the other hand, the Union army was not as well-trained as the Confederate one and at first suffered from lack of capable leaders. President Lincoln eventually entrusted General Ulysses Grant with commanding the Union forces. Another leader who became famous for his military campaigns was General William T. Sherman.

The Confederate States of America consisted of eleven states and capitalized on the knowledge of the land most battles of the Civil War were fought on. Moreover, the South had a longer military tradition and relied on the warfare skills of the reputable Colonel Robert E. Lee. Lee was aided by another military leader, General Thomas J. (‘Stonewall’) Jackson. Agriculture, which was the main sector of Southern economy, represented a drawback, as the most common crops such as cotton or tobacco could not be used for food.
Therefore, the Confederate army had problems with food shortage and soldiers had to overcome hunger.

Already the first battles of the war made it clear that the conflict would not be a short one and easy to win. In the first two years, the South achieved many partial victories but none of those bloody battles meant winning the war as such. While the Confederate army was more successful along the Atlantic coast of the USA, the Union dominated the sea and western parts of the country. By blockading the Southern coast, the Union Navy even managed to prevent the Confederacy from trading with Europe and importing military supplies, which had a tremendous impact on Southern economy as well as on their army.

The Union relied on its three-pronged Anaconda strategy which included defending the nation’s capital Washington, trying to capture the confederate capital Richmond, and using the navy to blockade the southern coast. On the other hand, Confederacy hoped for foreign support if the country managed to pacify the Union.

The Union scored several important victories in the Mississippi area. Union troops managed to advance some 320 kilometers into the Confederacy. The bloodiest battle of American history took place at Shiloh in Tennessee in April 1862 (20,000 casualties were reported). The Union forces were led by Ulysses S. Grant and were encamped on the bank of the Tennessee River at Pittsburg Landing, where they were unexpectedly attacked by Confederate forces. The Union army not only withstood the surprise attack but even managed to launch a counterattack with reinforcements that arrived at the end of the first day of the battle. The Confederates were forced to retreat and the Union army was not stopped from advancing further into Mississippi.

Contrary to the success in the West, the Union took one trimming after another in Virginia. The Union forces tried to take the Confederate capital Richmond in vain and were repeatedly driven away. The excellent Southern commanders Lee and Jackson made it difficult for the Union army to score any victories. The Confederates even invaded Maryland and the Battle of Antietam, the first major battle to be fought on Union soil, was the bloodiest single-day battle totaling 22,717 dead, wounded, and missing.

The Battle of Antietam had also political consequences, as neither Great Britain nor France eventually recognized the Confederacy as an independent country like they had planned to. Without diplomatic and economic support from abroad, the position and strength of the Confederacy was weakened.
In 1862 President Lincoln also started to prepare his executive order that would free slaves. His Emancipation Proclamation stated that:

...on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom. (The Emancipation Proclamation)

Even though the Proclamation concerned slaves held in the South only, the document made the abolition of slavery the main objective of the war. This way, the debate over slavery no longer concerned only the new areas that were added to the Union, but was extended to the abolition of slavery in general. Moreover, the Emancipation Proclamation also officially allowed recruiting blacks into the Union Army, which resulted in an influx of enthusiastic new soldiers ready to fight and die for their freedom.

After many indecisive victories on the side of both the Union as well as Confederacy, the turning point of the war came with the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863. When the Confederate army tried to advance towards Pennsylvania, it met with resistance by Union troops. The two armies met at Gettysburg where Lee’s soldiers had to retreat after three days of heavy fights.

After the battle, President Lincoln arrived at the battle field and dedicated a portion of it as a military cemetery. On this occasion, he delivered a speech called Gettysburg Address which is considered to be a masterpiece of rhetoric. In this short but compassionate speech Lincoln stated that:

...it is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain -- that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom -- and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth. (Gettysburg Address)

In the Mississippi Theater, the Union scored an important victory at Vicksburg, where Grant’s men managed to capture the city and get control over the Mississippi River. Moreover, the Union succeeded in driving a wedge between the two parts of the Confederate army which were prevented from sending supplies or reinforcement to each
other. The victorious Ulysses S. Grant was appointed the commander-in-chief of all Union forces and transferred to the East, while the West was in the hands of William T. Sherman whose task was to invade Georgia in 1864. His campaign, known as Sherman’s March to the Sea (or the Savannah Campaign), lay in moving from the captured city of Atlanta northwards and finally arriving at Savannah one month later. During their march, Sherman’s troops destroyed strategic targets such as factories, the infrastructure as well as civilian property, thus hurting the Southern economy, disrupting the morale, and destroying the hope of people. Sherman was fully aware of the psychological impact of plundering the South and his campaign proved to be very efficient.

The war came to its end in March 1865 when General Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Courthouse in Virginia. Despite protests by his men, Grant allowed the Confederate soldiers to leave without any punishment, declaring that: “The rebels are our countrymen again”. The result of the war was the extremely high number of casualties, and the conflict turned Lee, Grant and Lincoln into national heroes.

Image 9: Grant’s campaigns in Virginia between 1864 and 1865

(Tindall, Shi 584)
5 The Reconstruction Period

Once the war was over, the main objective of the re-elected President Abraham Lincoln was to unite the country again. Lincoln did not intend to use force or to punish the rebellious South but made it clear that his government wanted to treat the former Confederacy friendly and with respect. As Lincoln said: “... With malice towards none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation’s wounds; to care for his widow and orphan...”

Unfortunately, Lincoln did not get the chance to secure peace and prosperity in the Union again, as he was assassinated on April 14, 1865. The assassin, an actor named John Wilkes Booth who resented the Southern defeat, shot the President at Ford’s Theater during a play Lincoln and his company were watching. Even though Lincoln was dead, the issues that had been on his agenda remained to be addressed. Lincoln’s vice president Andrew Johnson became the new leader of the country.

One of the problems to be solved was the question of former slaves. In 1865 Congress established the Freedmen's Bureau to be in charge of African American matters. Moreover, several amendments dealing with African Americans were added to the Constitution. Amendment number 13, ratified in 1865, abolished slavery. In the following year, another amendment was added, giving African Americans the right of citizenship.

The end of the Civil War did not mean settling all the disputes between Northerners and Southerners. Southern legislators were denied seats in the US Congress, and a plan of reconstructing the American South was adopted. In 1866 all but one of the Southern states refused to ratify the 14th Amendment to the Constitution. Moreover, the South still discriminated former black slaves and new laws were passed to keep blacks in an inferior position. Known as the Black Codes, these laws aimed at restoring the old order, and African Americans were required to continue working for their former masters on the basis of labor contracts. If laborers violated the terms of these contracts, they were penalized (fines were imposed and even corporal punishment was used).

As a reaction to the discrimination of African Americans in the South, the North ignored the existing Southern governments, placed the South under military rule, and initiated the formation of Reconstruction governments consisting of Southerners loyal to the
Union, African Americans and primarily of white Northerners called carpetbaggers. Southern states that wanted to free themselves from the military rule had to establish civil governments, recognize the rights of former slaves by adopting the 14th amendment, and grant African Americans the right to vote. This way, most of the Southern states had been readmitted to the Union by mid-1868. The remaining states (Mississippi, Texas and Virginia) eventually accepted the congressional conditions and reentered the Union in 1870.

The 15th amendment which granted African Americans the right to vote was finally ratified in 1870, saying that: “The rights of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude”.

During the Reconstruction Period, the South was boiling with racial hatred, and the persecution of former slaves became a common issue. The so called Jim Crow Laws segregated public schools, and public facilities like restaurants, parks, hotels etc. either denied access to African Americans or at least limited it. Even though blacks officially had the right to vote, poll taxes or literacy tests were introduced in some states to limit the number of African Americans eligible to vote. The so called grandfather clauses exempted those whose grandfathers had been free (had had the right to vote) before the Civil War, thus not affecting poor whites.

Apart from discriminatory laws, blacks also had to face intimidation and violence by organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). The Klan’s goal was to prevent blacks from exercising their rights and keep them in a subordinate position. By appearing at blacks’ homes at night (both the Klansmen and their horses were covered with white sheets and wore white hoods to resemble ghosts), burning crosses in front of their houses and lynching rebellious blacks, the Klan managed to spread terror among the black community.

The illegitimate discrimination of African Americans was made legal by the verdict in Plessy v. Ferguson from the year 1896. The case concerned a Louisiana octoroon (seven-eighths Caucasian and one-eight African descend) Homer Plessy, who boarded a ‘white only’ train car. The Supreme Court upheld racial segregation in public facilities as constitutional under the doctrine of separate but equal. This principle separated whites from blacks,

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6 These people had taken advantage of the political opportunities the South offered and left the North with all their belongings packed in bags made of pieces of carpets.

7 Jim Crow was originally a caricature of blacks and the term was used as a pejorative reference to people of African American origin.
officially granting each ethnic group the same standard of service. The separate but equal doctrine was eventually repudiated only in 1954 by the verdict in Brown v. Board of Education.
IV Industrialization, Urbanization and Immigration

In the 19th century America experienced a great change also in terms of economy. Before the Civil War the nation was primarily rural and agriculture represented the main economic sector; however, in the second half of the century America turned into an urban industrial society.

1 The Path to Economic Boom – the First Half of the Century and Protection Tariffs

The economic growth of the USA was spurred by the War of 1812. The country had depended on importing manufactured goods from Europe. During the war, imports were blocked, goods were scarce and therefore American manufacturers, who took advantage of the market void, prospered. Particularly the textile industry expanded. However, once the war was over, the British renewed trade with the USA and glutted the American market with their products, often sold below cost.

American manufacturers, particularly in the new industries, called for government protection and initiated the passage of the 1816 tariff law which limited foreign competition by imposing tariffs on a range of items, including cotton cloth. The law was welcomed by northern manufacturers, while those dealing in agricultural produce objected to the fact that they had to pay higher prices for manufactured goods.

The rapid growth of American economy following the War of 1812 also facilitated the construction of new roads. Without better transportation, manufacturers were doomed to having no access to raw materials and were unable to get their products on markets.

The period of economic boom came to its end with the Panic of 1819 which was a reaction to the War of 1812 and the years of prosperity that followed it. America had experienced a land boom; many settlers had bought their property on credit, and easy credit contributed to the speculative boom. However, when the Bank of the United States was reorganized in 1819, the management feared instability, called in loans, and foreclosed mortgages. State banks, short of cash, went bankrupt and a financial panic started. In the following six years of depression, the prices of American manufactured goods and agricultural produce decreased. Subsequently, a new tariff was passed in 1824 and farms could be bought only without credit.
2 The Second Industrial Revolution and Urbanization

As the number of people living in the USA trebled in the second half of the century, economy also grew to satisfy the needs of Americans. Small businesses were replaced by larger factories which integrated production and distribution. Mass production together with new technologies and inventions played a crucial part in the industrialization of America. Companies merged into larger units or even formed trusts and pools which took over particular industries and created monopolies.

The so called second industrial revolution, which started in the mid-nineteenth century, concerned primarily the USA and was facilitated by technological advancement. One of the key factors was the construction of a national transportation network which made it possible to ship American goods not only within the country but also abroad. The railroad, the telegraph, or steamships contributed to the development of a larger market.

Even though railroad lines had existed in the USA even before the Civil War, it was only in the second half of the 19th century when the two coasts were connected by a transcontinental line built by two companies – the Union Pacific Railroad and the Central Pacific Railroad. The Union Pacific, which employed many Irish immigrants and ex-soldiers, was moving from the east across the Plains. On the other hand, the Central Pacific hired mostly Chinese laborers and proceeded from Sacramento to the east. The two lines met in 1869, thus completing the first transcontinental railroad.

The railroads were built by private companies who often took advantage of generous state or federal aid. The by-products of railroad construction included greed, corruption, and unethical behavior which resulted in abusing unlimited control and overcharging the railroad companies by construction companies. One of the people who took advantage of the situation and became rich was the railroad entrepreneur Jay Gould.

Major economic change came with the use of electric power and practical application of theoretical scientific research. The telephone, typewriter, sewing and adding machines, vacuum cleaner and other electrical devices, barbed wire, steam turbines, elevators, and many other products first saw the light due to close cooperation between science and industry. People like Alexander Graham Bell, who invented the telephone, or Thomas Alva Edison, the ‘father’ of the phonograph and the light bulb, contributed to the rise of American economy and industrialization of the society.
Apart from inventors like Edison or Bell, most of the industrial giants of the late 19th century were unscrupulous businessmen who used the skills of others and dominated particular branches of US industry. People like Cornelius Vanderbilt, John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, or J. Pierpont Morgan are referred to as ‘robber barons,’ and they became experts at accumulating capital and forming huge and highly profitable companies. These captains of industry did not represent competition for each other, as they specialized in different industries – Vanderbilt was a railroad baron, Rockefeller founded the Standard Oil Company, which controlled most of the oil production in the country, Carnegie’s field was the steel industry, and Morgan built his empire as an investment banker.

In the late 19th century, America disposed of many sources of raw materials and industry was booming. Many new factories were built, offering jobs to both Americans and immigrants who were willing to work for less money and in worse conditions than Americans. The standard of living for most people increased and earnings rose as well. Nevertheless, working conditions were far from being ideal.

The average workweek was fifty-nine hours long (almost six ten-hour workdays) but working longer hours was not an exception. Also women and children were expected to work in unsuitable conditions with poor hygiene and almost no safety regulations. Injuries at the workplace were not unusual and the attitude of the management towards workers was becoming more and more impersonal. Despite the rising wages, the living conditions of workers were dreadful, as particularly immigrants tended to live in overcrowded tenement houses where diseases spread and crime proliferated.

Even though many people were dissatisfied with the working conditions in big factories and sweatshops, an organized protest movement was missing. The workforce was too diverse to be united and the process of forming labor unions was very slow and painful. In 1866 the first National Labor Union (NLU) was founded. The organization later succeeded at enforcing an eight-hour workday for federal employees and managed to abolish the abuse of immigrant contract laborers, who had to work for low wages in exchange for the costs of their passage from Europe. Unlike many European labor unions, the American ones were not associated with socialism or left-wing ideologies.

Many originally small towns grew rapidly due to industry (factories of mines had been opened in their vicinity) or their status of a crossing station. The urban population increased from 6 million to 44 million in 50 years (from 1860 to 1910). People from rural areas
migrated to cities where jobs were available and hoped for a better future. Those who had money could buy various kinds of consumer goods and the gap between the poor and the rich was getting wider.

Higher social classes gradually abandoned city centers and moved to suburbs, while the poor and particularly immigrants were stuck in the only housing they could afford. The old tenement houses were unsafe and did not provide much comfort. City centers had not been designed to house so many people and experienced problems with the sewage system, fresh water supplies as well as with transportation.

Cities expanded both vertically and horizontally – elevators, steam heating, and radiators facilitated the construction of higher buildings, including the first skyscrapers in cities like Chicago. The individual parts of the city were connected by streetcars and automobiles.

3 Immigration
One of the results of the industrial revolution was the influx of immigrants from all continents. Foreigners represented a cheap source of labor but at the same time posed a threat to native-born Americans (and the already naturalized immigrants) and aroused anti-immigrant sentiments. Most immigrants settled in big cities along the Atlantic Coast or in the area of the Great Lakes, hoping that one day they would earn enough money to move further west and settle on their own land. The individual nationality groups tended to live together and created national or ethnic enclaves where particular languages were spoken, religion was practiced and traditions were kept.

Most immigrants came to America for the same reasons – economic conditions in their mother countries, racial, religious and political persecution, as well as diseases caused by poverty and overpopulation.

The composition of new immigrants differed from the old stock. While the original immigrants had come to the USA mostly from the north and west of Europe, in the second half of the 19th century mostly people of Latin, Slavic, and Jewish origin from Southern and Eastern Europe arrived. The new immigrants brought with them not only their languages but also cultures and religions.
As many immigrants entered the USA in New York City, a new immigration center was opened on Ellis Island in 1892. The nearby Statue of Liberty, with the message inscribed on its base, became a symbol of immigration.

The average number of arrivals was 5,000 per day, and immigrants had to undergo several check-ups before being admitted to the USA. Apart from legal inspection, medical examination (aimed at both physical and mental health) was carried out to exclude immigrants with dangerous contagious diseases (see image 11). Those arrivals that were not admitted to the USA were sent back to their places of origin at the expense of steamship companies.

The statue displays a poem by Emma Lazarus which reads:

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to be free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

The whole procedure is illustrated in Appendix 1.
The 19th century was, without any doubt, crucial for the USA, and the strength of the country was tested many times. Americans competed with other nations and were determined not only to protect their already existing economic, political, and territorial interests, but also to expand. At the same time, the nation had to face disunity which resulted in a civil war. The American society gradually adopted the urban lifestyle and its structure changed as well, particularly due to the influx of immigrants from all parts of the world. Newcomers considered the USA to be a land of opportunities and great economic potential. Due to all these events, the USA entered the 20th century as a colonial superpower which was ready to play a significant role in global affairs.
Works Cited List


Appendices

Appendix 1 – The Inspection Process at Ellis Island

Step by Step Through the Inspection Process

1. **Arriving in New York**
   - Third- and second-class passengers were examined aboard their ship.
   - Steerage passengers were brought to Ellis Island for medical and legal inspection.

2. **Entering Ellis Island**
   - Officers directed immigrants from the ferries and into the main building.

3. **Medical Inspection**
   - Doctors examined the waiting line of immigrants, looking for signs of illness.
   - The healthy were allowed to pass.
   - Those who appeared ill were marked with chalk and sent for further medical examinations.

4. **Legal Inspection**
   - Inspectors asked immigrants a series of questions to determine their eligibility to land.
   - Those who passed and were admitted.
   - Others, whose answers aroused the inspectors’ suspicions, were detained for a hearing before the Board of Special Inquiry.

5. **Further Medical Examination**
   - Doctors gave immigrants a more thorough check-up which could include a brief overall physical or mental examination.
   - Some were given a free bill of health and returned to the inspection line.
   - Others had to be sent to the hospital.

6. **Board of Special Inquiry**
   - Those detained for a hearing presented their cases to a Board of Special Inquiry, which allowed friends and relatives of the immigrants to testify on their behalf.
   - After hearing the evidence, the Board granted admission to most immigrants.
   - Those who were rejected could appeal the Board’s decision.

7. **Exclusion**
   - Exiled immigrants had to return to their point of embarkation, then wait to re-enter the United States.

8. **Hospitalization**
   - The sick were taken to Ellis Island hospital for observation and care.
   - Once they had recovered, they could return to the inspection line.

9. **Appeals**
   - Immigrants could appeal to the Board of Special Inquiry directly to Washington, D.C.
   - Appeals could take either.
Appendix 2 – Major American Indian Tribes