

# America Between the World Wars

Class 4

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# What We Will Cover Today

- Finish up on the Automobile
  - The Auto and the Suburbs
  - Social Inventions Resulting from the Automobile
- Discuss the Media
  - Movies
  - Tabloid Newspapers & Magazines
  - Radio

# Creating the Auto Suburbs

- Autos created the modern auto-dependent suburbs
  - Prior to the auto, the city consisted of a commercial hub surrounded by residences within walking distance followed by development of businesses and residences radiating out from the central hub like spokes from a wheel, with the railroad and the horse-car and then the trolley lines providing the spokes
- The creation of the auto-dependent suburbs began in the 1920s, but really took off after World War II

# Creating the Auto Suburbs - 2

- The auto's ability to move laterally or perpendicularly to fixed trolley track opened up land for settlement that was previously too remote
  - This meant that vacant land between the transportation corridors could be platted and sold for home and business sites
- The auto released potential home buyers and renters from the necessity of living close to a bus or trolley line

# Creating the Auto Suburbs - 3

- The auto transformed the central business district (CBD) from a shopping district to a skyscraper district of government and corporate headquarters
  - The skyrocketing rents, downtown traffic snarls, and inadequate parking forced small retail businesses out and they relocated elsewhere, usually to outlying areas of the city or to the new suburbs

# Creating the Auto Suburbs - 4

- What set the modern suburb off from what existed previously was
  - Dependency on the auto not only for commuting to work but also for shopping
  - Relatively low density and larger average lot size due to cheaper land prices
- With the modern suburb and the auto eventually came the centerless city and commuting from suburb to suburb

# Creating the Auto Suburbs - 5

- In the city before the car, life often took place on the sidewalk, the front porch or front steps, and the adjacent street
  - With the auto, urban residents now began to see the streets primarily as arteries for motor vehicles
- Instead of congregating at a trolley or bus stop to commute to work, people now began to commute individually in their cars
  - Instead of meeting neighbors at nearby stores that one walked to, people did their shopping at stores they drove to

# The Auto and Rural America

- Auto reoriented rural space by:
  - Centralizing institutions and activity
    - Instead of shopping at the crossroads or village general store, farmers now drove to nearby towns
    - School buses permitted consolidation of rural schools, bringing about the demise of the one-room schoolhouse
  - Increased the amount of rural travel
    - Instead of traveling to town once or twice a year, farmers now traveled every week to a nearby town



# Autos and Social Inventions - 1

- By its very existence, the automobile led to the following innovations - 1
  - Installment purchases
  - Auto insurance
  - Used car markets
  - Camping & picnicking
    - Auto campgrounds
    - Private campgrounds

# Autos and Social Inventions - 2

- By its very existence, the automobile led to the following innovations – 2
  - Gasoline stations
  - Drive-in restaurants
    - Fast-food franchise restaurants
  - Motels and Motor Hotels
  - Gasoline credit cards
  - Traffic police & State highway patrols
  - Parking meters

# Autos and Social Inventions - 3

- By its very existence, the automobile led to the following innovations – 3
  - Drive-in movies
  - Shopping centers
  - Malls
  - Parking lots
  - Traffic courts
  - Automobile tags
  - Driver's Licenses

# Movies in the 1920s & 1930s

# Motion Pictures

- Motion pictures are based on the illusion of continuous motion. This results from:
  - The persistence of vision
  - The Phi phenomena
- Because of persistence of vision, we do not see the dark interface areas of a projection print as it moves through the projector

# Emergence of Hollywood - 1

- Prior to WWI, France and Italy regularly surpassed the U.S. in film exports
- WWI shut down the European film industry as celluloid film production was diverted to the production of explosives
- By the end of World War I, Hollywood had emerged as the center of U.S. film production

# Emergence of Hollywood - 2

- Large demand for films required that film production be put on a year-round schedule
- Slow film speeds required that most shooting take place outdoors in available light
- Hollywood had an average 320 days of sun a year, a temperate climate, and a wide range of topography within a 60-mile radius

# Why Hollywood Won Out

- Why Hollywood Became the Center of World Feature Film Production
  - Large domestic audience and consequently larger profits to finance productions with lavish sets and expensive stars
  - Development of the Star system
  - Studio control over distribution networks
  - Heterogeneity of the American population
  - Dependency of American films on commercial success



# The Results

- Effects of WWI and the emergence of Hollywood
  - By the mid-1920s, approximately 95% of the films shown in Great Britain, 85% in the Netherlands, 70% in France, 65% in Italy, and 60% in Germany were American films
  - The beginning of the “Americanization” of first European and then World popular culture

# Talking Pictures - 1

- The idea of uniting motion pictures and sound actually began with Edison
  - Edison's associate, Dickson, synchronized Edison's kinetoscope with his phonograph & marketed the device as the Kinetophone
  - By the 1910s, producers regularly commissioned orchestral scores to accompany prestigious productions

# Talking Pictures - 2

- In 1927, Warner Bros released *The Jazz Singer* which included dialog as well as music. Its phenomenal success ensured the film industry's conversion to sound.
  - Warner Bros pioneering of talkies propelled it from the smallest, most poorly financed movie studio to a major studio and a force to be reckoned with in Hollywood

# Talking Pictures - 3

- Rather than use Warner Bros sound system, however, the other studios decided to use a sound-on-film system
  - This enabled images and film to be recorded simultaneously on the same film medium, insuring automatic synchronization
  - Competition between Western Electric's Movietone and General Electric's Photophone competing sound-on-film systems led RCA to form RKO Pictures

# Talking Pictures - 4

- Talking Pictures' interesting consequences - 1
  - Increased Hollywood's share of world cinematic revenue
  - Led to the demise of many "Silent Era" film stars
  - Made Bank of America a major financial institution since they, unlike other banks, were willing to finance Hollywood productions

# Talking Pictures - 5

- Talking Pictures' interesting consequences – 2
  - Led most theaters to drop the interspersing of vaudeville acts and live music with motion pictures
    - Resulted in the fading of vaudeville
  - Led to the dominance of the studio system
    - Studios that seized the opportunity to make talkies – Warner Bros, Fox, M-G-M, & Paramount - soon gained dominance
  - Altered the behavior of moviegoers
    - The talking audience for silent pictures became the silent audience for talking pictures

# Talking Pictures - 6

- Talking Pictures' interesting consequences – 3
  - Sound gave filmmakers new ways to attract and excite audiences
    - Allowed films to become more fast paced and complex
    - Boosted ticket sales
      - In 1930, weekly movie attendance rose to 90 million. This equaled 75% of the total American population
    - Boosted the popularity of war movies, horror movies, westerns, and films that depended on clever, fast-paced, and witty dialog

# Talking Pictures - 7

- Talking Pictures' interesting consequences - 4
  - Sound allowed movies to become more complex and dramatic
    - Movie genres that benefited from dialogue and sound effects – such as westerns, war films, horror films, films with singing and dancing, and comedies with humor and witty dialog – became popular
  - Sound in turn led to the creation of distinct genres to facilitate marketing



# Movies – The Studios - 1

- By the 1920s, the Hollywood studio system had fully emerged
  - The concept for this system originated in France with Charles Pathé
    - Involved actors under exclusive contract
    - Vertical integration – screenwriting, production, promotion, distribution & exhibition under one roof
    - Use of the profits of one film to fund the production of another

# Movies – The Studios - 2

- To the ideas of Charles Pathé, the Hollywood studio system added the ideas of Thomas Harper Ince.
  - Ince at his studio in Inceville CA:
    - Functioned as the central authority over multiple production units, each headed by a director
    - Had each director shoot an assigned film according to a detailed continuity script, a detailed budget, and a tight schedule
    - Supervised the final cut

# Movies – The Studios - 3

- Emergence of the Hollywood Studios reflected:
  - The successes of Pathe and Ince and the adoption of their approach by American moviemakers
  - Oligopolistic success in a highly competitive industry
  - The need to finance ever increasing production costs and the conversion of theaters to sound
    - Required an ability to obtain bank loans and Wall Street investment bank financing

# Movies – The Studios - 4

- By the mid-1930s, Hollywood was dominated by 8 studios – the Big 5 and the Little 3
  - Big 5 – Paramount, 20th Century Fox, Warner Bros, RKO, and M-G-M
  - Little 3 – Universal, Columbia, and United Artists
  - A few independents – Republic & Monogram
- This system dominated Hollywood until the early-1950s

# The Hays Office

- 1915 – The Supreme Court ruled that movie making was a business not subject to the protections of the First Amendment
- In the 1920s, the motion picture industry was rocked by sex scandals, sensational divorces, and accusations that sex was for sale in exchange for movie roles
- The 1920s saw conflict between those concerned that movies adversely affected public morals and movie producers/directors who resisted censorship and felt that movies devoid of sex and violence would not sell at the box office

# The Hays Office - 2

- By 1927, the Hays Office developed a list of 11 DON”Ts and 25 BE CAREFULs
- In 1927, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences was created with Douglas Fairbanks as first president
  - One of its projects was to bestow “Awards of Merit” to “encourage the improvement and advancement of the arts and sciences” of motion pictures – the Oscars (which were first awarded in 1928)

# What Hollywood Wrought - 1

- Movies had the following effects:
  - Constituted a lifestyle classroom on a whole host of topics – clothes, hairstyles, social attitudes, behavior, and much else
  - Provided a set of shared experiences for almost the whole population
  - Affected people's concepts of historical fact
  - Served as a purveyor of a whole host of consumer goods

# What Hollywood Wrought - 2

- Movies had the following effects – 2
  - Along with the automobile, movies led to the Drive-in movie
  - Initially supplemented and then supplanted lecture hall and vaudeville theater audiences
  - Brought the “Star” system to full fruition
    - Led to fan magazines and fan clubs
  - Played a major role in popularizing the myth of the “Wild West”



# What Hollywood Wrought - 3

- Movies had the following effects – 3
  - Films made cultural production a major economic force
  - Films made commercial entertainment a center of American social life
  - As noted earlier, films constituted a major force in Americanizing world popular culture
    - As a backlash, it also led both intellectuals and traditionalists to react against aspects of American culture deemed incompatible with traditional values

# What Hollywood Wrought - 4

- Movies had the following effects – 4
  - Popularized air conditioning
    - Seeing movies in comfort on hot summer day fueled a desire for air conditioning in the home and office
  - Gave us the animated feature cartoon
    - The marriage of the newspaper comic strip with the movie gave us the animated cartoon feature film

# What Hollywood Wrought - 5

- Movies had the following effects - 5
  - Helped turn the American people against Prohibition
    - The urban jazz-age flapper and her boyfriend conveyed the impression that drinking was widespread and that violating Prohibition laws was socially respectable
  - Diverted artistic talent from other endeavors to the movies
    - People who formerly composed symphonies now wrote movie scores; persons who in the past wrote novels now wrote screenplays

# Movies and the Great Depression - 1

- Movies were a low-priced amusement
  - 25 cents to see a double feature as late as 1940 (\$3.78 in 2009 prices)
  - For the unemployed and underpaid, they were comfortable places to sit
  - In 1940, weekly attendance averaged 80 million

# Movies and the Great Depression - 2

- Effects of the Great Depression on Movies
  - Popularized escapist as distinct from topical films
    - Historical or literary-based films that showed people coping with difficult times and overcoming them
    - Animated films – Walt Disney
  - Led to various innovations as theater owners sought to attract customers
    - Drive-in movies
    - Serials
    - Double Features
    - Popcorn & candy sales
    - Bank Nights and Giveaways

# Tabloid Newspapers & Magazines

# Tabloid Newspaper

- A **tabloid** is a newspaper (generally smaller in size and spread than a regular newspaper) that contains lots of photos (both news and feature), and focuses on local-interest stories and entertainment. It tends to emphasize (and sensationalize) crime stories; scandals involving the personal lives of celebrities, sports stars, and politicians; and other so-called “junk food news.”

# Tabloid Newspapers

- Combined the following:
  - The “yellow journalism” that William Randolph Hearst pioneered prior to the Spanish-American War
  - The tabloid or portrait (as opposed to the traditional landscape) newspaper format
  - Large-scale use of photographs – both from wire photos and from their own staff news photographers
  - Simple prose that let the picture tell the story



# Photography - Newspapers

- Newspaper Photography and Photojournalism
  - In the early-1890s, it became commercially feasible to incorporate photographs in large newspaper editions. This was because of Halftone printing.
  - Halftone printing uses dots that vary in either size or spacing to create the optical illusion of a smooth tone photograph
    - Thus the halftone print of a black & white photograph that we see as containing a range of continuous tone shades of grey will consist of black and white dots that are so small that we perceive them as a continuous tone

# What Photography Gave to the Newspapers

- The photograph depicts and organizes objects in space
- Verbal information in the form of a Narrative or Story places and organizes people and objects in time
- Describing space –whether it be a landscape, a street scene, or a person’s features – takes a considerable amount of words, but only one picture
- Thus photographs enabled a reporter to make the story shorter – to tell the story with fewer words by making the picture(s) take the place of words
  - \_ It enabled the newspaper to make itself appealing to less educated people whose reading skills were poor

# Tabloid Newspapers

- First U.S. tabloids were:
  - the *New York Daily News* – launched on June 26, 1919
    - Founded by Joseph Medill Patterson, a co-owner of the *Chicago Tribune*
    - Strongly influenced by Viscount Northcliffe's London tabloid *Daily Mirror*
    - By June 1920, circulation was over 100,000. By 1925, over a million
  - Soon followed by the *New York Daily Mirror* (1920) and the *New York Evening Graphic* (1920)

# Notes About Tabloid Newspapers

- Tabloids were popular not only because of their content but because they could be read while standing up on a bus or subway
- Tabloids got people used to reading the news with a dose of pictures
  - This paved the way for both
    - The picture essay (a group of photos on a single event or subject)
    - The picture magazines – *Life* and *Look*

# What the Tabloids Did - 1

- Focused on news as entertainment
  - Turned popular focus on crime, natural disasters, scandals, celebrities, and sports
  - Generally ignored foreign affairs, economics, national politics (except for Prohibition) and the Federal Government (except for scandals)
- Popularized the idea that photos could be used as publicity stills for sustained narratives or serials of an ongoing story
  - E.g. the Snyder-Grey Murder Case

# What the Tabloids Did - 2

- Popularized the gossip column
  - The *New York Graphic* launched the career of Walter Winchell
- Popularized the notion of using celebrities to cover and write about new events and trials
  - The *Graphic* hired prominent historian Will Durant, impresario David Belasco, the Reverend John Roach Stratton, and historian W. E. Woodward to cover the Snyder-Gray trial

# What the Tabloids Did - 3

- Pushed non-tabloid newspapers into more of the same type of news coverage as the tabloids focused on
  - Thus tabloids helped give national play to the same entertaining events, celebrities, and scandals covered by the tabloids
- Distorted public perceptions on the prevalence of crime, suicide, and corruption

# What the Tabloids Did – 4

- Helped popularize such newspaper features as crossword puzzles, comic strips, horoscopes, contests, and other features
- Helped popularize such spectator sports as baseball and college football by their extensive sports coverage



# What the Tabloids Did – 5

- Launched the Age of Ballyhoo or Hype
  - Definition: A clamorous and vigorous attempt to win customers or advance any cause; blatant advertising or publicity.
  - E.g. the death and posthumous stardom of Rudolph Valentino
- Made celebrities out of a whole host of personalities, ranging from Charles Lindbergh to John T. Scopes to Al Capone
  - Initiated the era in which as Andy Warhol noted, everyone would have 15 minutes of fame

# Tabloid Magazines

- Concepts originated by the tabloid newspapers soon migrated to magazines
  - Focus on entertainment, scandal, and the personal lives of celebrities
  - Plenty of pictures
  - Simple prose directed to readerships with a low educational level

# Tabloid Magazines - 2

- The application of the above concepts led to the following types of magazines:
  - Led to picture magazines, such as *Life* and *Look*
  - Led to confession magazines, such as *True Confessions* & *True Story*
  - Led to fan magazines, such as *Photoplay* and *Modern Screen*

# Electrification of the Home & Workplace

# The Electricity Revolution

- What started the Electricity Revolution was:
  - Invention of the electric motor and generator
  - Adoption of Alternating Current at 60 cycles per second at 120 volts as a standard
    - This took place after the so-called “current wars” over whether AC or DC would be the standard
      - AC won out because
        - » It could be easily stepped up to high voltage for long-distance transmission and then stepped down for use the home or factory while DC could not
        - » Nikola Tesla invented a polyphase induction motor that used AC and was as efficient as DC motors

# The Four Phases

- The electricity revolution had four phases
  1. Electricity replaces steam and water power
  2. City street lighting with electricity replaces gas lighting
  3. Electricity in the home replaces gas and kerosene lighting
  4. The application of electric power to the factory which:
    - Enables the separation of factory and power supply
    - Permits the rationalization of the production process

# Factories Prior to Electricity

- Depended on water power or steam
  - Water power was free but restricted factory location, size, and layout
  - Steam allowed factories to locate away from streams but still restricted factory size and layout
- Both types of power led to:
  - Multistory buildings
  - Power in the form of gears, shafts, pulleys, and belts
  - Factory layout tied to the power requirements of individual machines rather than the logical flow of the production process

# Electricity & the Factory

- Initially, factory owners added electric-powered machines to the already-existing power system
  - It took a while for factory owners to realize that to gain the efficiency benefits of electricity, they had to restructure the whole work process
  - Often it made sense to continue to use the already-existing plants and machinery until they had reached the end of their useful service life
  - Thus, it was not until the 1920s that electricity began to have major impacts on factory productivity and output



# The New Electrified Factory

- The result – a new kind of factory based upon the following:
  - Single-story factory with sky-lighting and windows
  - Single-function machines
  - Machines arranged according to the sequence of work in the manufacturing process
  - The continuously-moving belt or assembly line
- Began to exert its major productivity effects in the 1920s

# Economic Effects - 1

- Proved a boon to small machine shops
  - Electric presses, lathes, and polishers breathed new life into small machine shops, helping them stay competitive
    - Particularly in industries requiring many small batches of goods, such as printing
  - Small workshops and repair shops quickly adopted electric hand tools

## Economic Effects - 2

- Electricity enabled small producers to outcompete larger producers that still used steam or water power
  - This helped newer textile mills in the South outcompete the older New England textile mills that still used steam and water power
    - One result is that the Great Depression came early to Massachusetts and Rhode Island – the states where the New England textile mills were concentrated

# Economic Effects - 3

- The Increased productivity and output:
  - Created a new problem – how to sell all that could be produced
    - Led to large scale advertising and mass merchandising
    - Led to credit innovations, such as installment buying – especially for cars and consumer durables
    - Led to planned ‘psychological’ obsolescence

# Economic Effects -4

- The Increased productivity and output:
  - Allowed for either higher wages, higher profits, or lower prices, or some combination of the three
  - In the 1920s, it led mostly to higher profits with only slightly higher wages and minimally lower prices
    - This led to an increasing maldistribution of wealth – the rich got richer while the income of everyone else stagnated
    - In the 1920s, this led to conspicuous consumption and speculative bubbles in both Florida real estate and the stock market

# Economic Effects - 5

- Replaced gas and kerosene lighting
  - Electric lighting was cleaner, brighter, safer, did not produce soot, and could not be blown out by wind
- Improved the work environment
  - Made for cleaner interior air
  - Fostered better visual acuity by providing better and more appropriate lighting
  - Reduced the danger of fire

# Impact on the Home

- Reconfigured the typical house
- Led, in contrast with the Victorian house, to houses with:
  - More open floor plans
  - Fewer doors
  - Light colors for walls and ceilings
  - Flexible placement of furniture and lamps, and
  - An increasing number of electrical appliances and devices using electricity

# Other Effects

- Allowed sporting and other events to take place 'under the lights'
- Encouraged more reading at home
  - It was much easier to read by electric light than by fire, candlelight, or gaslight
- Dispersed the family within the house
  - The family no longer congregated around the hearth



# Electricity

- Once a home had electricity, a sequence of electricity-using products occurred:
  - Electric lights
  - Small appliances, such as electric irons, fans, toasters, and coffee makers
  - Vacuum cleaners
  - Entertainment media, such as radios & phonographs
  - Major appliances, such as washing machines, dishwashers, and later refrigerators

# Electrical Appliances in the Home

Item	1900	1920	1930	1940
Washing Machine	<1%	8%	24%	60%
Icebox	18%	48%	40%	27%
Refrigerator	<1%	<1%	8%	44%
Vacuum Cleaner	0	9%	30%	40.5%
Electric lights	3%	35%	68%	79%
Telephone		35%	41%	37%
Iron		27%	60%	67%
		(1922)		
Radio	0	<1%	33%	83%