

## The Gilded Age

- I. What was it?
  - A. gilded – a layer of gold over a base of filth
    1. term coined by Mark Twain
  - B. opulence of upper class – enormous mansions
  - C. money often ill-gotten – contemporary critics called them “robber barons”
    1. cheat government
    2. cheat workers
- II. How did they get rich?
  - A. 2nd Industrial Revolution
    1. increased mechanics in factories
    2. new tier of workers
      - a. now peons do repetitive work
      - b. growing middle class of engineers & maintenance - skilled
  - B. trusts – corporations combining into super-huge proportions
- III. Big Names
  - A. Carnegie – steel (combined natural resources, smelting, manufacture, all under one company)
  - B. Rockefeller – oil
  - C. Vanderbilt – steamships & RR
- IV. Philanthropy (define)
  - A. Carnegie called it “the Gospel of Wealth”
- V. Working conditions – terrible
  - A. company towns; tenements (many families in an apartment designed for one family)
  - B. Social Darwinism – Herbert Spencer
  - C. Challenges
    1. “Social Gospel” – YMCA, Salvation Army, settlement houses
    2. labor unions
      - a. Samuel Gompers’s American Fed. of Labor est. 1886
      - b. Great RR Strike of 1877 – 45 days, then Pres. Hayes sent in fed. troops
- VI. Politics
  - A. “waving the bloody shirt” – when the northern Republicans blamed the democrats for the Civil War
    1. The South became almost exclusively democratic; north republican
  - B. dominated by “political machines”
    1. spoils system – trade jobs for support
    2. i.e. Tammany Hall – Boss Tweed of NYC
- VII. Challenges to corruption
  - A. much money made by manipulating the poor or the government
    1. i.e. RRs work together to keep prices artificially high

- B. government tries to protect people
  - 1. Interstate Commerce Act
    - a. requires RRs to charge fairly
  - 2. Sherman Anti-trust Act – 1890
    - a. a trust is a group of corporations

VIII. Thomas Alva Edison

- A. invented light bulb, phonograph, & movies