

# The Growth of the Cities

After the Civil War great changes took place in *where* people lived in the United States. Before this time most people had lived in small towns and on farms. The growth of factories led to the growth of cities.

Cities grew in this way. Many people were needed to work in the factories. Those workers had to live close to the factories. Cities grew up around the factories and other places of business where large numbers of people worked. A great many of these people were the new immigrants.

The cities, in turn, attracted other people who ran shops, food stores and other services needed by the workers.

As more and more farming was done by machine, fewer people were needed on the farms. These people moved to the cities to make their fortunes.

The cities became the centers for business in the United States. As business grew stronger, the cities became more important to most people than the country.

One good example of the growth of large cities was Chicago. In 1850 Chicago was a small town of 30,000 people. By 1870 Chicago had become a city of 120,000 people. By 1900 more than two million people lived in Chicago. In 1800 there were only five cities in America with 50,000 or more people living in them. By 1900 there were 77 such cities in the United States.

Cities grew in areas where there were opportunities for work. We have seen that many grew around factories. Some grew up near coal and iron **deposits** (areas under the ground where minerals are found). Others grew up near sources of water power and still others near transportation centers.

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, for example, grew up in an area rich in iron ore. Large factories made steel from this iron. It was also where three major rivers come together. They gave good transportation for the iron ore and the finished steel.

Baltimore, Maryland, and New York City were railroad centers. New York City also had the busiest seaport in America.

## City Problems

The growth of large cities brought about many human problems. As the cities grew, ways had to be found to take care of the needs of the

people who lived there. Many new inventions came about to take care of problems.

In the small towns, people got water from nearby wells. They buried their garbage. They worked at home or in a nearby house. When a fire broke out all the men in the town turned out to fight it.

Everything was different in the city. The brooks and ponds within the city limits could not provide enough water for all the people living in the city. Water had to be brought to the city by **aqueducts** (structures which look like bridges) and pipes.

People had to be hired by the city government to pick up the garbage and take it far from the city where it could be burned. Burning the garbage polluted the air. This also had to be taken care of.

People had to be hired to put out fires. These men stayed at the fire stations all night long. Policemen were hired to stop crime and protect the people.

One of the major problems was transportation. People in the cities worked far away from their homes. They had to get from their homes to the places where they worked.

Some streets were paved with **cobblestones** (flat-topped rocks) or with wood. Many were not paved a tall and became muddy in the rain and had deep ruts in the dry season.

Horse-drawn cars pulled people through the streets. Later these cars were replaced by electric trolley cars. More and more streets were paved with black asphalt.

The first **elevated** (above the roadway) railway was opened in New York City in 1867. The first major subway was opened in New York City in 1904. It then became much easier for people to get from their homes to their jobs.

So many people crowded into the cities that tall buildings were built to house them. Elevators were invented to help people reach the top floors more easily.

By 1900 many apartments and houses had hot and cold running water and electricity. Some had built-in bathrooms.

Many people lived better in the city than they had on the farms or in their native land. These people had good jobs and money to spend. Big crowds went to baseball games, circuses, amusement parks and other entertainments.

The cities offered many things that small

towns and country living could not offer. There were better newspapers, museums, larger public libraries. There was better public education. Many people in cities were able to finish their schooling. More jobs were open to women.

### The Poor Of The Cities

Not everyone had a good job, and not everyone in the big cities lived well. In many of the cities there were some very rich people, and others who were very poor.

Many of the poor were people who had come from farms to seek their fortune, but were not prepared for life in the city. They had none of the skills needed for working in the big cities.

"There is little need here for a man who can bale hay or feed and care for animals." one such man complained.

Black people who had left the southern plantations came to the cities of the north. They hoped to find a better life there, but many found that it was hard to get a job.

Many people who came from far-away nations had trouble speaking English. Even though many of them had skills learned in the "old country". they had trouble using those skills in a foreign country.

These families moved into the older tenement buildings of the city slums. As many as four or five families would sometimes crowd into one small apartment called a **flat**. Many of the flats only had two or three rooms.

Most of the people living in the slums were immigrants. People tried to help the immigrants. Community centers were set up where they could meet with their friends and learn how to get along in their new homeland.

As the immigrants got better-paying jobs. they were able to move to better neighborhoods. This is called **upward mobility**, the ability of the poor to "move up in the world".

### Spotlight On Sweatshops

Most of the people crowding into America's cities from farms and other nations worked in

factories. Life was often hard for those people, because some factories had terrible working conditions.

The worst factories were often found in the poorest parts of the cities. A story like the following might have been told by a young woman working in such a factory.

"When I was 14 I went to work in a small factory here in New York City. I did not want to give up school and go to work, but my family needed the money.

I work in a clothing factory. There are many such factories around the city. They are all called **sweatshops**. That's because the people who work in them sweat all the time from the heat and hard work. My job is sewing clothes on a sewing machine.

I am paid for each piece of clothing that I sew. My hours each day are from six in the morning until nine at night. For that work I earn about fifty cents each day - about three dollars each week.

The girl who works on the next machine is only six years old. She sews on buttons for thirty-five cents a day, working the same long hours as the rest of us. I suppose I'm lucky that I didn't have to start work until I was nearly fourteen.

The room we work in is very dark. We can hardly see the machines and the cloth. It is hot. Some of the younger children are always just about to fall, they are so tired.

Many have scars on their hands where the needles have gone through their fingers. They cannot stop, however, to get help. If they don't finish sewing their shirts. they get no pay for that day.

I suppose that I am not too bad off. At least I am working. My friend had to quit her job here at the factory. Her husband was killed when the machine he was working on exploded.

She and her family got no money from her husband's company-not even his last day's wages. She says she may take her family out west where there is land and fresh air.

Maybe she has a good idea. When I get old enough to be on my own-sixteen or seventeen-maybe I will do the same and get away from this horrible sweatshop for good."