

Getting Oriented



By 1673, when this map was drawn, European nations had established colonies in North America. They wanted colonies to increase their wealth and power. The people who crossed the Atlantic Ocean to settle the English colonies came for a wide range of reasons—religious freedom, escape from debt, the opportunity to own land, the chance to start a new life. Some, however, did not come by choice.

1607

Colonial settlement begins in Jamestown, Virginia

1600

1700

1800

1900

2000

A Nation and Its Ideals Emerge



After defeating the French in North America in 1763, the British started tightening control over their colonies. The colonists believed these actions violated their rights. For example, Great Britain raised taxes, limited trade, and forced colonists to house British soldiers in their homes. In 1770, a crowd began taunting some of these soldiers with snowballs. The soldiers fired on the mob and killed five colonists. Known as the Boston Massacre, this event helped fuel the resistance to British rule that led to the American Revolution.



The Growth of and Challenges to American Ideals



The Granger Collection, New York

Less than a century after winning independence from Great Britain, the United States almost split in two. The Civil War divided the nation because of questions about states' rights and equality. In the battle shown here, black Union soldiers of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment attack Confederate troops at Fort Wagner, South Carolina, in 1863.

Four months after this battle, President Abraham Lincoln dedicated the military cemetery at Gettysburg with a renewed commitment to American ideals:

Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal . . . [W]e here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation 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.

—Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address, 1863

1861–1865
The Civil War



Growing Pains and Gains



After the Civil War, tens of thousands of people streamed westward to settle the vast American heartland. Many believed it was America's "manifest destiny" to occupy North America from the Atlantic to the Pacific. John Gast painted *American Progress* in 1872, capturing that spirit. Trains, wagons, farmers, miners, the telegraph—all moved west in the late 19th century. What was progress to these pioneers, however, meant the end of the Indian way of life.



The Progressive Era



In the late 19th century, American cities rapidly progressed with the growth of industry. Needing more and more workers, factories hired immigrants, and even children, at low wages. Child labor was one of the problems caused by industrialization. Many people were outraged by these problems and called for reform. This photograph shows two girls at work in a textile mill early in the 20th century. Lewis Hine, the social reformer who took this photograph, urged American industry to change:

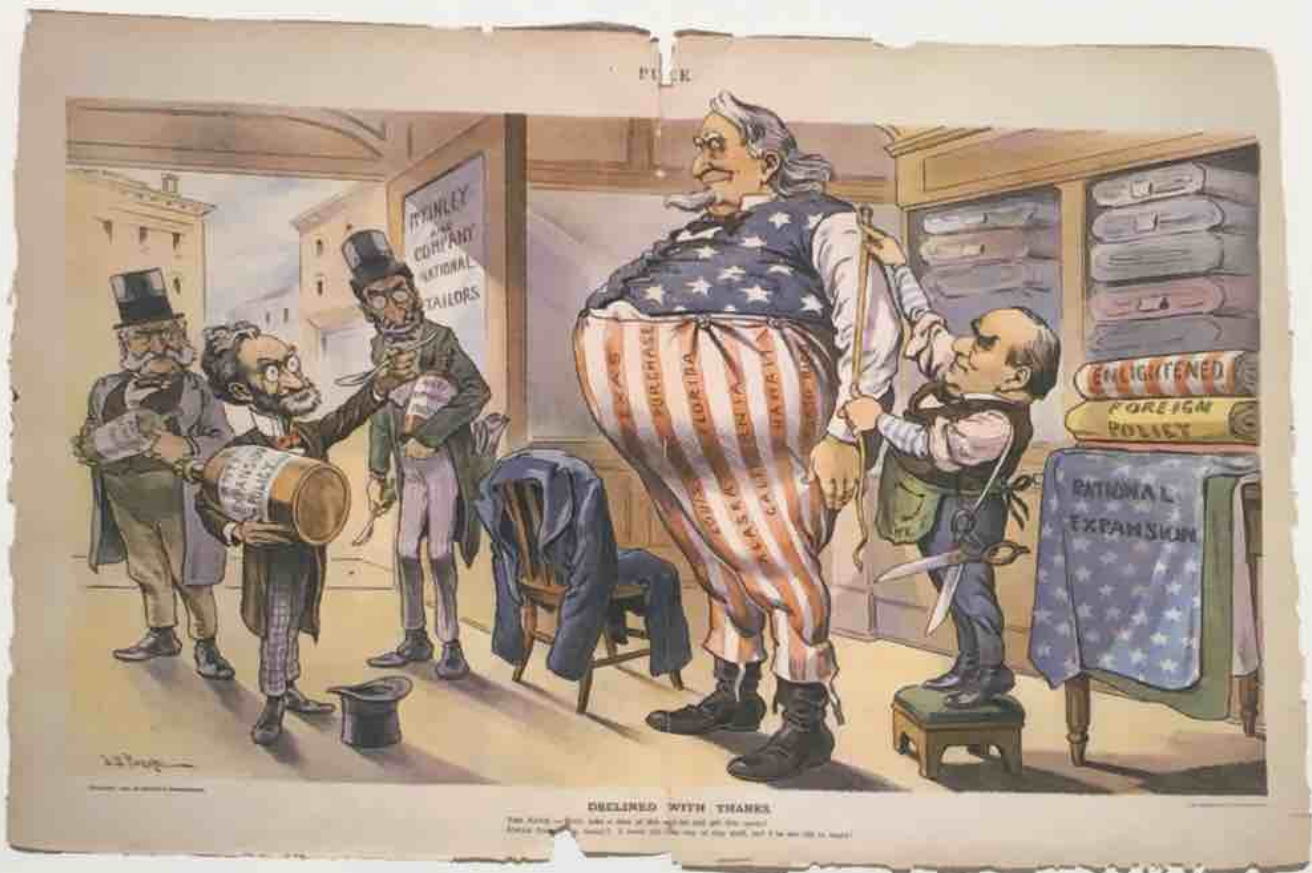
Perhaps you are weary of child labor pictures. Well, so are the rest of us, but we propose to make you and the whole country so sick and tired of the whole business, that when the time for action comes, child labor pictures will be records of the past.

—Lewis Hine, 1911

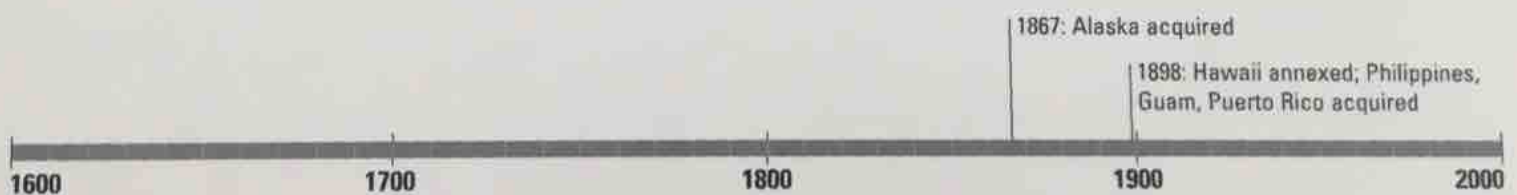
1890–1920
The Progressive Era



Building an Empire



In this cartoon, Uncle Sam is being fitted for a new suit of clothing. He has grown very large and is getting larger—a reference to the new territories the United States was acquiring in the late 19th century. Some Americans believed the United States should acquire the new territories. Others disagreed. The tailor is President William McKinley, who generally supported expansion abroad. The figures on the left want Uncle Sam to go on diet medicine. They think Uncle Sam is too large already. They are opposed to U.S. expansion.



World War I



In 1914, Germany invaded neutral Belgium and attacked France. The Allied powers of Europe fought back in what would become World War I. The United States entered the war in 1917 to support its allies. This recruiting poster echoes President Woodrow Wilson's stirring appeal to American ideals when he explained why the United States chose to fight:

The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty. We have no selfish ends to serve . . . We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind.

—Woodrow Wilson, Declaration of War Address to Congress, 1917



The Twenties



The 1920s are often referred to as the Roaring Twenties because of the economic growth, social changes, and cultural events that took place during this decade. New styles of literature, music, dance, and clothing swept the country. The 1920s also witnessed a flowering of black culture called the Harlem Renaissance. Bessie Smith, shown here in the stylish dress of 1923, was the most famous blues singer of the decade. She was also the highest paid black entertainer of her time.

1923
Bessie Smith gains national fame singing the blues

1600

1700

1800

1900

2000

The Great Depression and the New Deal



This woman and her children were impoverished by the Great Depression, an economic collapse in the 1930s. The photograph, called "Migrant Mother," was taken by Dorothea Lange. Sadly, the woman pictured here was not alone. Millions of Americans suffered through years of poverty during the 1930s.

1936
Dorothea Lange photographs "Migrant Mother"



World War II



The United States entered World War II in 1941 to help defeat the dictatorships of Germany, Italy, and Japan. The entire nation came together to fight the war. Any smaller effort might have meant the end of the American way of life. As part of this effort, American industry was converted to manufacture weapons, supplies, ships, tanks, and aircraft.

1941–1945
U.S. troops fight in World War II



The Early Cold War



This photograph shows an American transport plane carrying food and supplies to the war-torn city of Berlin, Germany, in 1948. After World War II, the communist armies of the Soviet Union attempted to take control of the city through a blockade. American planes supplied Berlin's citizens with supplies for more than a year and broke the blockade. The Berlin Airlift was one of the first incidents in the decades-long Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. President Harry Truman stated the reasons why the United States should fight the Cold War:

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation [takeover] by armed minorities or by outside pressures.

I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way.

—Harry Truman, March 12, 1947

1948–1949
The Berlin Airlift



The Fifties



The growth of suburbs like this one symbolized the economic boom that the United States experienced after World War II. During the war, Americans had saved more than \$100 billion. In the 1950s, they spent that money on new homes, cars, and televisions. The boom created jobs and opportunities for millions.

1950s
Economic Boom



The Civil Rights Movement



This photograph was taken in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963, at the height of the African American civil rights movement for equal rights. Images like this one alerted the nation to racial injustice in the United States. Civil rights leader Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. was jailed in Birmingham for nonviolent protest. Below is an excerpt from a letter he wrote while in jail.

Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself, and that is what has happened to the American Negro. Something within has reminded him of his birthright of freedom, and something without has reminded him that it can be gained.

—Martin Luther King Jr., Letter from a Birmingham Jail, 1963

1963
Birmingham demonstrations



The Sixties



During the 1960s, some American youth had a very free-spirited attitude. These young people expressed their disappointment in the traditional ways of life through their clothing, music, food, and even transportation, such as the painted bus shown here.

1969
Woodstock music festival held

1600 1700 1800 1900 2000

The Seventies



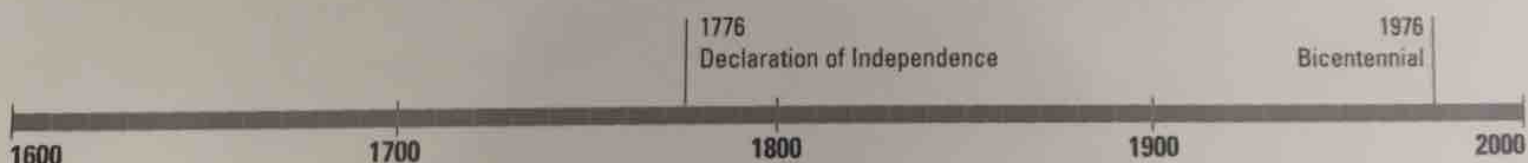
The Fourth of July had special meaning in 1976. Not only was it the bicentennial (200th anniversary) of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, but it was also a time to celebrate the wisdom of the Founding Fathers in building a democratic government that could withstand the massive challenges the nation endured in the 1970s—political scandal, military defeat, and an energy crisis. In this photograph, a float of patriotic symbols takes part in the Bicentennial Parade in Washington, D.C.

In his Bicentennial Address at Philadelphia's Independence Hall, President Gerald Ford explained the importance of that day:

Each generation of Americans . . . must strive to achieve these aspirations anew. Liberty is a living flame to be fed, not dead ashes to be revered . . .

It is fitting that we ask ourselves hard questions even on a glorious day like today. Are the institutions under which we live working the way they should? Are the foundations laid in 1776 and 1789 still strong enough and sound enough to resist the tremors of our times? Are our God-given rights secure, our hard-won liberties protected?

—Gerald Ford, Bicentennial Address, July 4, 1976



The Reagan Revolution



Ronald Reagan became president in 1981 and set out to make government smaller by cutting taxes and encouraging individual responsibility. A former actor, President Reagan was an inspiring speaker.

History is a ribbon, always unfurling . . . Now we hear . . . the echoes of our past: a general falls to his knees in the hard snow of Valley Forge; a lonely president paces the darkened halls, and ponders his struggle to preserve the Union; the men of the Alamo call out encouragement to each other; a settler pushes west and sings a song, and the song echoes out forever and fills the unknowing air.

It is the American sound. It is hopeful, big-hearted, idealistic, daring, decent, and fair. That's our heritage; that is our song.

—Ronald Reagan, Second Inaugural Address, 1985

1981–1989
Ronald Reagan's presidency

1600

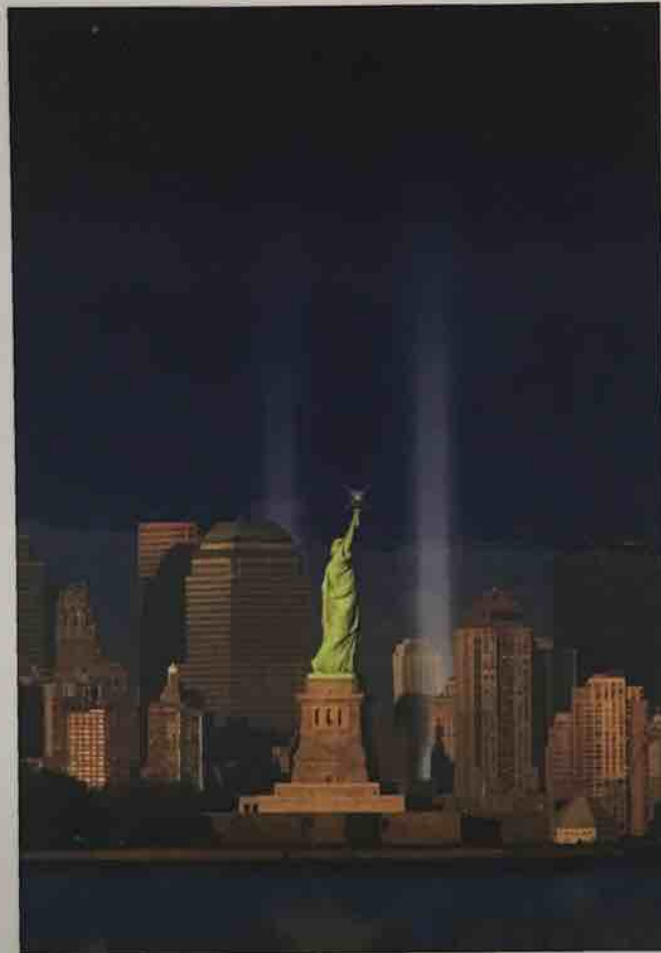
1700

1800

1900

2000

Framing the Present



This view of the New York City skyline includes the Statue of Liberty and two bright pillars of light representing the World Trade Center buildings, which terrorists destroyed in 2001. On the day of the attack, President George W. Bush spoke to the nation:

Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America.

America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining.

—George W. Bush, Address to the Nation, September 11, 2001

