

History 340  
Critical Periods in American History the 1890s  
Roger Williams University  
CAS 228  
M, W, F, 12:00 - 12:50  
Fall Semester, 2007

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Week of September 10, 2007

For **Monday, September 10**

**A Culture in Motion**

Read, in *Schlereth*:

Chapter 1: Moving pp. 7-31

In *Fink*:

5.1 *Population Growth in Selected U. S. Cities*, 1870-1920 118-119

5.2 *Immigrant Distribution in Six Cities*, 1870-1920 122

As *Schlereth* will demonstrate, all sorts of mobility dominated American culture at the turn of the century. It may help to organize thinking about this as a matter of scale of distance, as much as anything else. At the top of the scale would be immigration. At the bottom, the commute from domicile to workplace. In between would be the movement between regions of this country, and from the farms, villages and market towns to the emerging industrial centers. All of these happened more or less simultaneously and more or less continuously, and at an ever accelerating pace.

Highlight the *middle decades* on the chart in Fink 5.1 (1880-1910), and analyze the relative rates of growth of places in different regions. If you haven't given your character a locale yet, you might want to choose one of the cities mentioned and consider how the changes experienced would have effected him/her. Think, too, that persons and families who do not move around much are still affected by the mobility swirling around them.

For **Wednesday, September 12**

Read, in *Fink*, *Technology and the Treadmill of Urban Progress* (Klein & Kantor)

132-141

*Klein & Kantor* will shed light on the way that technology both stimulated mobility and made it possible. They will also direct your attention to certain aspects of technological change which ameliorated problems created by previous technological solutions. (*see p. 134*)

### **Additional Internet Investigation:**

Visit one of the following websites which present aspects of the transportation revolution:

<http://www.cmhpf.org/kids/TopicalEssays/TrolleyGuide.html> (Streetcars of Charlotte, NC)

<http://www.citybus.org/history1.html> (Williamsport, Pennsylvania)

<http://detnews.com/history/trolley/trolley.htm> (Detroit, Michigan)

*Note that electrified transit boomed in quite small places. Your persona may have had occasion to encounter one, or would certainly have dreamed of encountering one.*

### **For Friday, September 14**

Read, in *Fink*:

<i>Families Enter America</i> (Bodnar)	pp. 141-150
<i>5.5 Congress Takes Aim at the "Chinese Menace"</i>	pp. 123-124
<i>5.5 Huang Zunxian Expresses the Chinese Perspective in Poetry</i>	pp. 124-128
<i>5.8 Advice Column for Jewish Immigrants</i>	pp. 128-131

This period we focus on immigrants and the immigrant experience. Bodnar will show us why it is perhaps better to think of the immigrant family than of the immigrant individual. Pay special attention to the section on "family economy".

The three primary sources highlight some of the friction which arose as diverse groups made America home. The first of these, please note, is an official document of the United States Congress. Its tone may surprise you. The second looks at anti-Chinese racism from the perspective of the victim: in this case a victim who happens to be a sensitive poet. The third suggests some of the acculturation issues which new immigrants faced.

### **Further Internet Investigations.**

Another interesting kind of moving is "touring" and visiting exotic places (like Cleveland, or Indianapolis) was a favorite activity, and it led to the invention of a new communications genre, the *picture postcard*. The Library of Congress has a very large collection of turn of the century postcards available at <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/detroit/dethome.html>. I'd like to have you browse in the collection a bit.

Of course sedentary people toured, too. After all, someone received those postcards from exotic places (like Buffalo). *So have your character either get or send a few.*

As I'm writing this, I'm still basking in the glow of what I thought was a very enjoyable class on Wednesday, September 5. I'm now waiting to see how you adapt to the technological tools available to us, and I'm really hopeful that there can be a way to use the blogging tool successfully. Right now, I'm thinking of following up on the classroom exercise wherein you split yourselves in two, reflecting on the poem from today's viewpoint and from the viewpoint of your alter ego as well. It is possible for me to create individual blog areas for each of you, in which you can record your 21<sup>st</sup> century thoughts, and/or journal space for your semester long project. I think this would be a wonderful way for you to give others in the class an insight to your thinking and development across the semester, and it would also give you a chance to develop a tool which might be useful in other classes and later life, as well. Can I ask you to send me some feedback about this idea over the weekend? If we go this route, I may just decide to fold the research paper into these journals and eliminate it as a separate project. (You'll be encouraged to add entries, including pictures, from the resources I provide right into your alter ego's journal and your own reflections, instead).